

**POWER, RACE AND SEX AS EVIDENT IN THE
ROLE OF THE PSYCHIATRIST IN LEWIS NKOSI'S
*MATING BIRDS AND THE BLACK PSYCHIATRIST***

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DECLARATION

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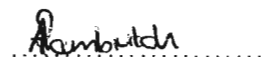
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is the result of my own investigation and research and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or to any other university.



A. RAMBIRITCH

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I will look at the interlinked issues of power, race and sex in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1986) and *The Black Psychiatrist* (1994) using the psychiatrist figure to provide the focus on these intersections of power, race and sex. It becomes clear after even a cursory reading of these texts that it is these very issues that inform both texts, one a novel and the other a play. It is important to note as well that these texts were selected because they have at their center inter-racial sexual relations set against the backdrop of apartheid in South Africa. *Mating Birds* is the story of Ndi Sibiya, ex-student of the University of Natal, left to a life of aimless wandering after being expelled for participating in student boycotts, now imprisoned and sentenced to death for the rape of a white woman, Veronica Slater. What is interesting about this text is the doubt set in the reader's mind about Ndi's guilt or innocence, by Ndi himself. *The Black Psychiatrist* deals with a black psychiatrist Dr Kerry, practising in Harley Street, London, who is visited by a white female patient, originally from South Africa. What is interesting about the play is the fact that the doctor seems to take on the role of patient and the patient that of the doctor. What is ironic however is that in her attempts to analyse the doctor, she is faced with the realities of her own life. With both texts dealing clearly with inter-racial relations, it is thus necessary to take into account the historical context in which these texts are set. *Mating Birds* was published in 1986 but set during the 1950's and 1960's while *The Black Psychiatrist* was published in 1994. Both texts were written and published before South Africa's first democratic elections and set during the time of apartheid.

Selected theorists that will be looked at in relation to the two texts will be Freud (1949), Memmi (1965), Fanon (1967), Said (1978) and Young (1995). Freud is a useful starting point as it is his theory of the Oedipus Complex that forms the basis of psychoanalysis in which the role of the psychiatrist in curing patients of neurosis is very important. Freud's essays on the Oedipus Complex, "A Child is Being Beaten" and "Fetishism" though not written with the black man in mind are useful in analysing the effects of colonisation on the colonised and the way the colonised sees the world. This is something Fanon discusses in detail in his book *Black Skin White Masks* (1967), where he describes the feelings of inadequacy and dependence experienced by people of colour in a white colonial world. Robert Young's *Colonial Desire* (1995) will be a key text for this thesis as it allows insight into definitions

and theories of race, power and sex in a colonial and oppressive context. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) will help provide insight into colonial discourse and its effects. Though written specifically with the Orient in mind it is a text that can be used to understand all subjugated people. His opinions on the notion of Othering will be of particular importance: the idea that the colonised will always be the Other, object and not subject. Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* helps provide useful insight into colonialism, creating portraits of the coloniser and the colonised, allowing one access into the minds of both. The theorists selected provide definitions and theories about power, race and sex, issues which form the basis of *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist* and which can best be understood by looking at the psychiatrists Dr Dufre and Dr Kerry. Issues of power, race and sex are essential in any discussion of colonialism and colonised people. The basis of colonisation was one of power, in the case of South Africa power of the white man over black people. Of particular importance to the white man in his reign of power were the extreme oppression of black people and an absolute prohibition of any sexual contact between black and white. It is these issues then that underline the work of Lewis Nkosi and that form the basis of his texts *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist*.

Chapter Two provides the historical context of Nkosi's work as well as a short biography. Of particular importance in this chapter will be a discussion of why Nkosi writes the way he does; why the emphasis on power, race and sex in his work. This requires one to look at the political situation under which he lived and worked for a time before leaving the country having signed away his right to return. Nkosi's work outlines clearly the effects of apartheid and oppression. Discussed in this chapter as well are his comments on African literature, particularly South African 'protest' fiction. This will be linked to his work and the reasons for him writing the way he does.

Chapter Three provides an in-depth analysis of *Mating Birds* looking specifically at power, race and sex using the role of the psychiatrist as a focus. A useful beginning will be an outline of the plot of the play followed by a discussion of Freud's Oedipus Complex and how it can be used to interpret the black man's view of the world according to Fanon. Deleuze and Guattari's theories will be useful as well in understanding the coloniser as the Father figure, the patriarch. This can be linked to the control that the coloniser has over things like language, communication, place, and the prohibition of inter-sexual relations – looked at in

relation to the text. Freud's essay on "Fetishism" will help provide insight into the black man's desire for the white woman while at the same time using her as a substitute for the freedom and power that he so covets. The issue of Othering is important as well – what do black and white men represent to each other? Fanon's views on the African rapist will be referred to as will be Said's object–other theory.

Chapter Four presents a brief plot outline of the play *The Black Psychiatrist* followed by a detailed analysis of the psychiatrist figure Dr Kerry, a successful, black South African having flown his home to practise in London's famous Harley Street. Issues of power are evident immediately as Kerry's authority in his office is undermined by the white woman who should be his patient but prefers to do the questioning. Freud's theories on Repression, which are based on the Oedipus Complex are important here but what needs to be discussed is which character is really guilty of this repression? It is in this chapter as well that a contrast between Dr Dufre and Dr Kerry will be made. Dufre, by coming to South Africa becomes a white man operating in a black man's world, representing the coloniser while Dr Kerry living and working in London is a black man in a white man's world, representing the colonised. Linked to Freud's Oedipus Complex is the issue of incest, which becomes evident only at the end of the play and can also be linked to his theories on Repression. Fanon's views on relationships between black and white make for useful discussions pertaining to the text.

Chapter Five presents a short conclusion looking briefly at whether the thesis has achieved what it set out to do: that is, provide a discussion of the issues of power, race and sex in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist*. It will include a discussion of whether Nkosi has found a new way of writing about apartheid. Chapter Five includes as well a discussion of Nkosi's use of psychoanalysis in his writing and presents a short account of his article "The Wandering Subject: Exile as Fetish".

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Chapter One

Introduction

In this thesis I will look at the interlinked issues of power, race and sex in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1986) and *The Black Psychiatrist* (1994) using the psychiatrist figure in both works to provide the focus on these intersections. This will be done using a Freudian perspective supplemented by the post-colonial theories of Frantz Fanon (1967), Albert Memmi (1965), Edward Said (1978) and Robert Young (1995). It becomes clear after even a cursory reading of these texts, that it is these very issues of power, race and sex that inform both texts, one a novel and the other a play. It is important to note as well that these texts were selected because they have at their center inter-racial sexual relations set against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa. Psychoanalysis and Freud's Oedipus Complex are important to this thesis particularly because the character of the psychiatrist plays an important part in both the texts. Also important is the fact that some post-colonial theorists in their study of the coloniser and the colonised refute Freud's claim that the Oedipus Complex is universal, claiming instead that neurosis in the black person is not a result of the Oedipus Complex but a result of colonisation. This thesis will explore this claim in relation to the two selected works by Lewis Nkosi. The historical context of Nkosi will be explored in the next chapter but in order to establish the theoretical framework to explain this thesis' chosen focus in Nkosi's work, it will be necessary to describe certain theoretical points.

A useful beginning then for this thesis would be a study of Sigmund Freud's Oedipus Complex. Freud (1856-1930) studied extensively what he has termed the Oedipus complex within his studies in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, which is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the therapeutic method for treating mental disorders by investigating interactions of conscious / unconscious elements in the mind" (Sykes 1978:717), was a movement that began with Freud's study based on the assumption that, "hysteria was the product of a psychical trauma which had been forgotten by the patient" (Freud 1933:14). This led to the development by Freud of the whole system of ideas to which he gave the name of psychoanalysis. The 'Oedipus Complex' Freud constantly referred to, was based on the Greek Tragedy *Oedipus Tyrannus* by Sophocles. In this tragedy an oracle warned that Oedipus, son of Laius and Jocasta, would kill his father and marry his mother. To prevent this oracle being fulfilled the infant Oedipus was sent away to be killed. He was, however, rescued and raised

by two strangers but did go on to do exactly what the oracle had warned. He killed his father Laius in a quarrel on his way to Thebes, solved the riddle set by the Sphinx and in appreciation the Thebians made him their king and husband to his mother Jocasta, who later bore him four children. The oracle had been fulfilled; Oedipus had killed his father and married his mother. The horror and disgust of this act led Jocasta to kill herself by hanging and Oedipus to blinding himself in both eyes with the pins of Jocasta's brooch.

This Greek tragedy holds important hidden meanings for Freud. Loosely defined, the Oedipus complex is being in love with one parent while hating the other. This explanation is more clearly explained in Freud's analysis of *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Freud's confidence in the Oedipus complex is very obvious in his statement that, "I venture to assert that if psychoanalysis could boast of no other achievement, that alone would give it a claim to be counted among the precious new acquisitions of mankind" (1933:61). According to Freud, the tragedy of Oedipus lies in the contrast between the will of God and the attempts of man to escape this will or the evil that threatens him. Oedipus, when he learnt of the oracle attempted to prevent it by leaving his home, coming to Thebes, which ironically led to the oracle being fulfilled. Had he not attempted to play God and remained where he was, the tragedy would have been averted. Freud believed that the lesson we learn from this tragedy is, "submission to the divine will and realisation of his own impotence" (1933:69). He states also that men back then and now are deeply moved by the tragedy of Oedipus because his story could be ours, that it is, "the fate of all of us to direct the first sexual impulse to the mother and hatred for the father" (1933:70). He claims that our dreams are proof of this, that Oedipus shows us, "fulfillment of childhood wishes" (1933:71); and that the tragedy of Oedipus can be linked to dreams in which a child has the first stirrings of sexuality in relation to his mother.

Freud presents us with an example from the play to justify his claim. He states that this is evident when Jocasta states that many a man has dreamt of having sexual relations with the woman that bore him and that today just as many men dream of having sexual relations with their mothers. This, he says, is treated with shock and disgust, as is the legend. This innate desire in men has its beginnings in infantile sexuality. According to Freud (1933:50): "A child's first erotic object is the mother's breast that feeds him, and love in its beginnings attach itself to the satisfaction of the need for food.... By her care of the child's body she becomes his first seducer." This would be the beginning of the Oedipus complex in boys,

where he sees his mother as the love-object and hates his father who becomes the enemy. The child “tries to seduce her by showing her the male organ of which he is the proud owner” (1933:57). The Oedipus Complex leads to a conflict. His mother, aware these actions are wrong, threatens him with castration, a punishment that will, she threatens, be carried out by the father. According to Freud (1949:71), “For to begin with the boy does not believe in the threat, nor obey it in the least. The observation that finally breaks down the child’s unbelief is the sight of the female genitalia.” The little boy will remember the castrated genitals of a little girl or even his mother and will believe that this threat really can be carried out. Freud states as well that the boy on seeing the genitals of the female for the first time experiences one of two things: horror of the mutilated creature, or contempt for her. It is at this point that the difference between girls and boys with regard to the Oedipus complex becomes obvious. With boys, the child starts off with the complex, which is obvious in his behavior. This leads to a conflict that is the threat of castration leading the child to turn away from the complex. The ego is then built up and the identity is formed. Repression of the complex leads to the latency period. For girls, however, the Oedipus complex only begins with the castration threat. According to Freud:

It is an interesting thing that the relation between the Oedipus complex and the castration complex should be so different... be just the opposite in the case of females and of males. In males, as we have seen, the threat of castration brings the Oedipus complex to an end; in females, on the contrary, we find that it is the effect of their lack of a penis that drives them into their Oedipus complex.

(Freud 1949: 63)

All children begin with the mother as the love-object. The important question to be asked is how does this change to the father for girls? The girl wants a penis and this leads to the ‘masculine complex’ (Freud 1933:58) that could lead to the beginning of psychosis, refusing to believe that she cannot have one and behaving like a man. The consequences of penis-envy as outlined by Freud are feelings of inferiority and contempt for the lesser sex, jealousy for the sex that has it, blaming the mother for sending her into the world ill-equipped and an aversion to masturbation. The girl realises that she cannot have a penis or compare with a man so she settles for being a woman. She then gives up hope for a penis and this desire is replaced by one for a child given to her by her father. The father has now replaced the mother as the love-object. For Freud, there are two changes for the girl, renouncing of the clitoris for

the vagina and renouncing the mother for the father. The girl turns away from her mother because she blames her for not giving her enough milk, not giving her the right genitals and forbidding sexual activity. Freud believed that girls rid themselves of the Oedipus complex later than boys which impacts on the formation of the super-ego leading females to be less strong and independent.

While Freud in his essay 'The Oedipus Complex' (1933) claims that, "In my experience, which is already extensive, the chief part in the mental life of *all* children who later become psychoneurotic is played by the parents" (1953:69) (my emphasis). Fanon in his book *Black Skin White Masks* (1967) argues otherwise. Fanon says,

It is too often forgotten that neurosis is not a basic element of human reality. Like it or not, the Oedipus Complex is far from coming into being among Negroes. With the exception of a few misfits within the closed environment, we can say that every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation, every affective crythrism in an Antillean is the product of his cultural situation.

(Fanon 1967:152)

Loomba reiterates this view by stating, "Now it is colonialism that is regarded as psychopathological, a disease that distorts human relations and renders everyone within it 'sick' " (Loomba 1998:143). It becomes clear that, for Fanon, it is not the Oedipus Complex that is responsible for neurosis in black people, it is colonisation. Loomba sums up Fanon's theory succinctly stating:

Whereas for the European child, the nation is an extension of the family, for the Antillean child the family is not reflected at all in the colonial nation. His/Her father is subject to colonial authority, hence the law of the father becomes the law of the white man.

(Loomba 1998:145)

She states as well that Fanon, "does not entirely break away from the Oedipus Complex but rewrites it in racial terms" (Loomba 1998:145). This can better be understood if one compares the effects of the Oedipus Complex on the female to the effects of colonisation on the

colonised. It is this point that is of particular importance to this thesis, as this issue features prominently in the work of Lewis Nkosi.

It becomes clear, after a study of Freud's essays and his views on the Oedipus Complex, that Freud's views on female sexuality and the difference between the sexes can be explained as follows: the clitoris in the little girl is considered a "truncated penis, a smaller penis" (Irigaray 1985:35); the little girl is really a little man and all her feelings and desires are masculine. It is as a boy that she loves her mother. The penis when seen is desired by the girl. It shows, "the girl to what extent her clitoris is unworthy of comparison to the boys sex organ" (Irigaray 1985:39). This begins penis envy, which affects the formation of her super-ego. According to Irigaray,

We may infer, under such conditions, the formation of the super-ego will be compromised, and that this will leave the girl, the woman, in a state of infantile dependency with respect to the father, to the father-man, and making her unfit to share in the most highly valued social and cultural interests. Endowed with very little autonomy, the girl child will be even less capable of making the objective cathexes that are at stake in society, her behavior being motivated either by jealousy, spite, penis-envy, or by the fear of losing the love of her parents or their substitutes.

(Irigaray 1985:40)

Fanon (1967) outlines the effects of colonisation on the colonised. At the beginning of his book *Black Skin White Masks* he states, "At the risk of arousing the resentment of my colored brothers, I will say the black is not a man" (Fanon 1967:10). Loomba (1998) explains Fanon's view stating that, "The colonial experience annihilates the colonised sense of self, 'seals' him into a crushing objecthood which is why he is not a man" (Loomba 1998:143). Just as the female is seen as the weaker sex, as negative, as the second choice, so to is the black man seen by the white man. He is 'not a man' because his manhood is snatched away by the coloniser, like the female he is "endowed with very little autonomy" (Irigaray 1985:40); the female lacks a penis, the black person lacks white skin. The colonised in many ways becomes or represents the female, powerless, dependent, suffering an inferiority complex,

because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that

proclaims the superiority of one race; to the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation.

(Fanon 1967:100)

It becomes clear from the above that Fanon has rewritten the Oedipus Complex in racial terms bringing to the fore issues of power and race in the colonial situation, themes that play a major role in the texts selected for this thesis. While for Fanon the inferiority complex the black man suffers is as a result of colonisation, Mannoni, author of *Prospero and Caliban: Psychology of Colonisation* (1964), quoted in Fanon states that the “germ of the inferiority complex was latent in him from childhood” (cited in Fanon 1967:84). Mannoni states further that:

Not all people can be colonized; only those who experience this need (for dependency). Wherever Europeans have founded colonies of the type we are considering, it can safely be said that their coming was unconsciously expected – even desired – by the future subject peoples.

(cited in Fanon 1967:99)

David Macey in his book *Frantz Fanon*, in discussing Fanon’s view of Mannoni’s arguments states that Fanon saw these arguments as an honest but dangerous piece of work. He states further that according to Fanon,

Mannoni’s disastrous psychologisation of the colonial situation is akin to the medicalising discourse that explains the appearance of varicose veins in terms of the constitutional fragility of the walls of the vein, and forgets that the sufferer had to spend ten hours a day on his or her feet; we must not lose sight of the real.

(Macey 2000:192)

Fanon’s words that Mannoni “lacks the slightest basis on which to ground any conclusion applicable to the situation” (Fanon 1967:108), indicate that he refutes strongly Mannoni’s claim that the dependency complex in the black man is innate, arguing instead that it is the result of colonisation.

Deleuze and Guattari in their book *Anti-Oedipus* (1977) argue, like Fanon, that it is colonisation that creates the Oedipus Complex. They state: “It is colonisation that causes the Oedipus Complex to exist” (Deleuze and Guattari 1977:178); and, “To the degree that there is oedipalisation it is due to colonisation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1977:169). They look at the case of an Indian or African Oedipus. They state that people studying the Indian or African Oedipus themselves claim that they “re-encounter none of the mechanisms or attitudes that constitute our own Oedipus (our own presumed Oedipus)” (Deleuze and Guattari 1977:168). It is clear that while certain structures must be in place for Oedipalisation to occur, these structures are missing in the case of the Indian or African Oedipus. They state that the only condition the African Oedipus has to exist is colonisation, “it does not even have (apart from colonization) the necessary conditions to begin to exist” (Deleuze and Guattari 1977:170). If then, as Deleuze and Guattari claim, colonisation creates the Oedipus Complex, one can assume that the Father in the Oedipus Complex is the coloniser, reigning supreme over the colonised; and it is the coloniser, in his control of the black man, that causes the latter, according to Fanon, “be thrust into a neurotic situation” (Fanon 1967:100).

However, any discussion of the Oedipus Complex, rewritten racially or not, is not complete without its link to sex and sexual relations. As Fanon stated,

If one wants to understand the racial situation psychoanalytically ...considerable importance must be given to the sexual phenomena. In the case of the Jew, one thinks of money and its cognates. In that of the Negro, one thinks of sex.

(Fanon 1967:160)

The view of automatically linking the Negro with extreme sexual prowess and large penises is very evident in the texts selected for this thesis as will be shown later. Fanon outlines clearly the European view of the black man with regards to sex. The picture Fanon creates for us is one of the Negro as not a man but a penis. He states, “one is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis” (Fanon 1967:170). This, however, can create a contradiction in terms of the way the black man is perceived. He is seen as only a penis, he is not a complete person, he is, as mentioned earlier, the second weaker sex. This is where the contradiction lies. Psychoanalytically the penis does not just refer to the sexual organs of a man. According to Thurswell (2000:124), Simone de Beauvoir in her aptly named *The Second Sex* argued that psychoanalysis focused entirely on the masculine mode of development, placing the boy's

woman's fear of rape is in fact a desire to be raped" (Macey 2000:193). *If He Hollers Let Him Go* is the story of Bob Jones and the racism he experiences in the shipyards in California in the 1940's. It also deals with the "attraction-repulsion between a black man from Cleveland, Ohio and a white woman from Texas" (Macey 2000:193). Fanon's view that the white woman desires a sexual experience with the black man is evident in the following words from the novel:

We stood there for an instant, our eyes locked, before either of us moved then she deliberately put on a frightened, wide-eyed look and backed away from me as if she was scared stiff, as if she was a naked virgin and I was King Kong....she caught it and kept staring at me with that wide-eyed phoney look...as if she got a sexual thrill, and her mascaraed eyelashes fluttered.

(Himes 1947:19)

Later the same woman, Madge Perkins, in inviting Bob Jones to have sex with her states, "All right, rape me then, nigger!" (Himes 1947:147). When, however, there is a knock on the door and they are about to be caught by the Navy Inspector, Madge Perkins, for fear of ostracisation for having sex with a black man, cries rape. Her words "Help! Help! My God, help me! Some white man, help me! I'm being raped" (Himes 1947:180), are reminiscent of the cry of rape by Veronica Slater, the white woman in *Mating Birds*.

Inter-racial sexual relations are important to this thesis as these relations deals with issues of power, race and sex. For Fanon, the desire of the man of color for the white woman is a desire "to be acknowledged not as black but as white" (Fanon 1967:63). We are told that: "When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (Fanon 1967:63). Very clearly, issues of power and race are a part of this version of inter-racial sexual relations. The white woman, in this view, represents to the black man everything he desires: power, freedom and dignity. Louis T. Achille in his report to the Interracial Conferences of 1949 stated: " Among certain people of color, the fact that they are marrying someone of the white race seems to have overridden every other consideration. In fact they find access to complete equality with that illustrious race, the master of the world, the ruler of the peoples of color" (cited in Fanon 1967:72). Fanon, in the chapter entitled, "The Man of Color and the White Woman", outlines the case of Jean Veneuse, a Negro in love with a white woman. Veneuse himself discusses this desire for a white woman stating,

The majority of them, including those of lighter skin who often go to the extreme of denying both their countries and their mothers, tend to marry in Europe not so much out of love as for the satisfaction of being the master of a European woman...so that without my knowledge I am attempting to revenge myself on a European woman for everything that her ancestors have inflicted on mine throughout the centuries.

(cited in Fanon 1967:70)

Veneuse raises as well the issue of 'The Other', an issue of importance in any discussion of post-colonial literature, an issue of importance to this thesis and one that will be discussed later in this chapter. Veneuse, in his desire for the white woman, Andree Marielle, attempts to become white, to be accepted as white but, "to him there is 'The Other'. To be 'The Other' is to feel that one is always in a shaky position, to be always on guard, ready to be rejected and...unconsciously doing everything needed to bring about exactly this catastrophe" (Fanon 1967:76). While the issue of the self as an object is important in Lacan's later essay, "The Mirror Stage" (1977), Fanon has looked at the self in relation to racial issues. Lacan, in "The Mirror Stage", begins by looking at an infant looking into the mirror. We are told that for a time the child may be "outdone by the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence, but can nevertheless already recognise as such its own image in a mirror" (Lacan in Adams and Searl 1986:734). Lacan states,

This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the infant's stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject.

(Lacan in Adams and Searl 1986:735)

What we can understand from this is that the child is excited at recognising its image. The self becomes an object to the child, it becomes conscious of its own identity, it identifies with the other. All of this occurs before the entrance of language which will turn the child into a subject. Loomba explains this as well, stating: "According to Lacan, when the infant first contemplates itself in mirror, it sees a reflection smoother, more co-ordinated and stable than itself. The subject constructs itself in the imitation of as well as opposition to this image" (Loomba 1998:144). Fanon, in looking at 'The Mirror Stage' in racial terms states,

When one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no further doubt that the real other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely. Only for the white man the Other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self – that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable. For the black man...historical and economic realities come into the picture.

(Fanon 1967:161)

It becomes clear that for Fanon: “ For the white subject, the black other is everything that lies outside the self. For the black subject however, the white other serves to define everything that is desirable, everything that the self desires” (Loomba 1998:144).

The issue of the colonised as an object is one that is also raised in Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965). He states,

What is left of the colonized at the end of this stubborn effort to dehumanize him? He is surely no longer an alter ego of the colonizer. He is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly towards becoming an object. At the end in the colonizer’s supreme ambition, he should exist only as a function of the needs of the colonizer, ie, be transformed into a pure colonized.

(Memmi 1965:86)

Memmi, like Fanon, outlines the effects of colonisation on the colonised. He helps provide useful insight into colonialism, creating portraits of the coloniser and the colonised, allowing one access into the minds of both. Memmi’s statement that, “one does not have a serious obligation towards an animal or an object” (Memmi 1965:86), helps one understand why the colonised is treated as such. Memmi outlines as well the circumstances that lead to the colonised being seen as an object,

The history which is taught him is not his own...The books talk to him of a world which in no way reminds him of his own...The entire bureaucracy, the entire court system, all industry hears and uses the colonizer’s language...Furthermore, the

colonized's mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued.

(Memmi 1965:106/7)

The colonised then, in seeking solutions to these problems, to these feelings of inadequacy attempts "to change his condition by changing his skin" (Memmi 1965:120). Like Jean Veneuse in Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1967), Memmi's colonised also desires a mixed marriage. He attempts to shake off anything black, he attempts to become white. Issues of power are always at the fore in any discussion of colonialism and are important to this thesis as well. Memmi's statement that, "the colonized is not free to choose between being colonized or not being colonized," (1965:86) and "just as the colonizer is tempted to accept his part, the colonized is forced to accept being colonized" (1965:89), creates a picture of exactly how powerless the black man is in the face of colonisation. The effects of this are that the black man becomes, in Fanon's words, "phobogenic" (Fanon 1967:154). Fanon defines phobia as, "a neurosis characterized by the anxious fear of an object (in the broadest sense of anything outside the individual) or, by extension, of a situation" (Fanon 1967:154). What this clearly means is that the black man, as a result of the effects of colonisation, begins to fear himself because he begins to believe that, "one is a Negro to the degree to which one is wicked, sloppy, malicious, instinctual. Everything that is opposite to these Negro modes of behaviors is white" (Fanon 1967:192). Memmi reiterates this view by stating that as a result of Negrophobia, Negro woman try desperately to uncurl their hair and torture their skin to make it white. He states: "Just as many people avoid showing off their poor relations, the colonized in the throes of assimilation hides his past, his traditions, in fact all his origins which have become ignominious" (Fanon 1967:122).

While Fanon and Memmi outline the effects of colonialism on the black man, Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978) outlines the effects of colonial discourse. Though written specifically with the Orient in mind, it is a text that can be used to understand all subjugated people. Like Fanon and Memmi, the notion of 'othering' of the colonised as object but not subject is of particular importance to Said. His theory on Orientalism is important to this thesis as well because it inevitably deals with issues of power, as Loomba states: "Said's project is to show how 'knowledge' about non-Europeans was part of the process of maintaining power over them; thus the status of 'knowledge' is demystified, and the lines

between the ideological and the objective blurred” (Loomba 1998:45). Said himself, in explaining the ‘Orient’ states,

it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.

(Said 1978:2)

Orientalism, then for Said, “was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, West, Us) and the strange (the Orient, East, Them)”. Said states further that, “The Orient was Orientalised...made Oriental,” (Said 1978:3). This makes very clear the fact that: “The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony...” (Said 1978:4). As stated earlier, while *Orientalism* was written with the Orient in mind it is a text that can be used to understand all subjugated people. Said’s theories are valuable in understanding the effects of colonialism on colonised people because colonisation too, “is a relationship of power, of domination” (Said 1978:5). Young in his book *Colonial Desire* (1995) in discussing Said’s views on Orientalism states that the, “discursive construction of Orientalism was self generating, and bore little, if any relation to the actuality of its putative object, ‘the Orient’ ” (Young 1995:160). Young states as well that this knowledge has no relation to the actual at all. This view is of particular importance to this thesis and its emphasis on power and race. While many white people in the colonial era have pre-conceived notions of black people as barbaric, uncultured and animal-like, this too, “has no relation to the actual at all” (Young 1995:160). Said’s statement that,

Orientals or Arabs are therefore shown to be gullible, ‘devoid of energy and initiative’, much given to ‘fulsome flattery’, intrigue and unkindness to animals... fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately...are inveterate liars, they are ‘lethargic and suspicious’, and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.

(Said 1978:39)

is clearly reminiscent of the view that the white man has of the black man, that the black man is unintelligent and animal-like. Said's picture of the Orient as othered by the West; Balfour's belief that "Westerners dominate and Orientals must be dominated" (Said 1978:38); and Cromer's view that the "Oriental generally acts, speaks and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European" (Said 1978:39), are indicative of the way the black man is seen. He too is 'Other' to the white man, he too must be dominated and he too is exactly opposite to the European. It does not matter where in the world oppression takes place, it does not matter what color the colonised is, whether they are brown Arabs or black Negroes, the effect of the oppression, of colonisation are the same. It becomes clear as well from reading Memmi (1965), Fanon (1967) and even Said (1978) that one is always presented with a picture of the colonised as in Mannoni's words, "experiencing this need for dependency" (cited in Fanon 1967:98); as in Memmi's words suffering, "a dependency complex" (1965:83), suggesting that the colonised comes to accept, even become dependent upon, being colonised.

It is here that Robert Young's *Colonial Desire* (1995) is extremely helpful as a text which allows insight into the definitions and historical background to the theories of power, race and sex in a colonial and oppressive context, theories that have been used to justify that treatment and oppression of the black man. As early as 1859 Theodor Waltz, quoted in Young's *Colonial Desire* (1995), observed,

If there be various species of mankind, there must be a natural aristocracy among them, a dominant white species as opposed to the lower races who by their origin are destined to serve the nobility of mankind, and may be tamed, trained, and used like domestic animals, or may, according to circumstances, be fattened or used for physiological or other experiments without any compunction.

(cited in Young 1995:7)

It becomes clear from this that the battle between the races is an old one, still finding expression a hundred years after Waltz's writing, if not before too. Already the issues of power and race that are important to this thesis are evident here. Young, in explaining his title *Colonial Desire* (1995) states,

And so too racial theory, which ostensibly seeks to keep races forever apart, transmutes into expressions of the clandestine, furtive forms of what can be called

‘colonial desire’: a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, inter-racial sex, hybridity and miscegenation.

(Young 1995: xii)

Very simply, no discussions of race are complete without issues of power and sex. This becomes very clear when Young states,

Colonialism, in short, was not only a machine of war and administration, it was also a desiring machine. This desiring machine, with its unlimited appetite for territorial expansion, for ‘endless growth and self-reproduction’, for making connections and disjunctions, continuously forced disparate territories, histories and people to be thrust together like foreign bodies in the night. In that sense it was itself the instrument that produced its own darkest fantasy – unlimited and ungovernable fertility of ‘unnatural’ unions.

(Young 1995:98)

We are also told that,

What has not been emphasized is that the debates about theories of race in the nineteenth century, by settling on the possibility or impossibility of hybridity, focused explicitly on the issue of sexuality and the issue of sexual unions between whites and blacks. Theories of race were thus also covert theories of desire.

(Young 1995: 9)

As stated earlier, Young presents the reader with the arguments of theorists used to justify the oppression and separation of the races as a means to prohibit any sexual contact between the races. One such argument is that of Count Gobineau, author of the “Essay on the Inequality of Races” (1853-5). According to Young, Gobineau’s main emphasis in his essay was the metaphor of the birth and death of civilisations. According to Young, what one is to understand from Gobineau’s theory is that the white male, belonging to a strong, conquering race, is in a position of power. It is his mastery and domination that allows him to overcome the alleged resistance of the black female. Young states: “This sadistic imperative, increased by the repugnance felt by the black for the white, is inevitably accompanied by the requirement of a masochistic submission by the subordinated, objectified woman” (Young 1995:108). What we can infer from this ‘masochistic submission’, is that the black woman

really is not repulsed but instead derives pleasure from the pain and humiliation, reminding one of Fanon's white woman who wants to be raped by the black man. The black woman is 'subordinated, objectified', meaning she is inferior to the white man, she is not a thinking, feeling human being but an object. It is also her submission to the master that "produces the offspring who initiates the degeneration that eventually brings about civilisation's end" (Young 1995:108). So, in addition to being masochistic and a subordinated object, the black woman's offspring with a white man will bring about civilisation's end. It is theories such as this that were used to justify the treatment of black people and even when science proved otherwise - that black people were not a separate race or species, that inter-racial mixing would not bring to an end civilisation - there was no change. As Young states, "racism knows no division between the sciences and the arts" (Young 1995:92). Another important point raised by Young in his discussions of power, race and sex is one raised by Fanon and Memmi as well; the desire of the white woman for the black man and that of the black man for the white woman, especially where these relationships are forbidden. Young uses an example especially pertinent to one of the texts selected for this thesis, Lewis Nkosi's *The Black Psychiatrist* (1994) : that of the slave girl and her white master. We are told that the controlling power relations between slave-owner and slave was eroticised, that black women were victims of white male violence and that there is evidence of this in Thomas Thistlewood's private diaries where he details his, "often sadistic sex-life with his slaves" (Young 1995:152). The exploitation of the slave-girls is a pertinent example of the power relations between races in times of oppression. One point raised by Fanon and Young is the belief of the white male that what the white woman really desires is a black man and that if blacks were not controlled and oppressed, there would be chaos. In an anonymous pamphlet published in 1864 in London, the authors state,

Nor are the Southern women indifferent to the strange magnetism of association with a tropical race. Far otherwise. The mothers and daughters of the aristocratic slaveholders are thrilled with a strange delight by daily contact with dusky male servitors...And this is the secret of the strange infatuation of the Southern woman with the hideous barbarism of slavery.

(Young 1995:145)

The author's claim that the freeing of the slaves would bring about, "sexual pandemonium between black men and white women" (Young 1995:145), is an issue especially pertinent to

this thesis and will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four respectively. Young, in emphasising the interlinked issues of power, race and sex states that, “Nineteenth-century theories of race did not just consist of essentialising differentiations between self and other: they were also about a fascination with people having sex – interminable, adulterated, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex” (Young 1995:181). Finally he states,

It was therefore wholly appropriate that sexual exchange, and its miscegenated product, which captures the violent, antagonistic power relations of sexual and cultural diffusion, should become the dominant paradigm through which the passionate economic and political trafficking of colonialism was conceived.

(Young 1995:182)

Very clearly, colonialism and slavery have at their base power, race and sex.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, I will be looking at the interlinked issues of power, race and sex in Lewis Nkosi’s *Mating Birds* (1986) and *The Black Psychiatrist* (1994) using the psychiatrist figure to provide the focus on these intersections. Each of the theorists selected is useful in providing insight into issues that play a major role in the work of Lewis Nkosi, especially the texts selected. Issues of power, race and sex are essential in any discussion of colonialism and colonised people. This is also true in a discussion of apartheid South Africa whereby the power of the white man over the black people was enforced. Of particular importance to the white man in his reign of power in the apartheid years was the oppression of black people and an absolute prohibition of any sexual contact between black and white. It is these issues then that underline the work of Lewis Nkosi and that form the basis of the selected texts. While each text will be looked at in detail in Chapters Three and Four respectively, it is important to note at this point how the selected theorists will be used in relation to the texts selected. The issue of the colonised as described by Memmi and Fanon is useful in understanding the two main characters in the texts selected, Ndi Sibiyi in *Mating Birds* (1986) and Dr Kerry in *The Black Psychiatrist* (1994). Both suffer the effects of apartheid and are voiceless, powerless and oppressed. This can be linked to Fanon rewriting the Oedipus Complex in racial terms. One is led to understand more clearly why colonised people like Ndi Sibiyi and Dr Kerry behave the way they do. Freud’s findings in the field of psychoanalysis, is important to this thesis as well because in psychoanalysis the role of the psychiatrist is very important. Freud saw psychoanalysis as a ‘talking cure’ that could help

cure neurosis. In both the texts selected, the role of the psychiatrist is an important one. In *Mating Birds*, Dr Dufre, an anagram of Freud, is a Swiss psychiatrist brought in to study Ndi Sibiya and find out the reasons behind his actions. In *The Black Psychiatrist* the psychiatrist is Dr Kerry, a black South African now in London. What is important about these psychiatrists is that one represents the coloniser, while Dr Kerry represents the colonised. It is important for both psychiatrists that they delve into the past, into childhood, like Freud, to find answers. An important issue raised in both texts is the way black and white people see each other. Both Ndi Sibiya and Dr Kerry are seen as the oversexed black male, lusting after a white woman of the superior race. One is given a picture of black people as animal-like, lustful. Clearly, Said's theory of the issue of 'othering' is useful in understanding this. As stated earlier in this chapter, one is inevitably led to wonder how it came to be that black people were perceived as inferior. Young's theories help us to understand more clearly why characters like Ndi Sibiya and Dr Kerry were perceived the way they were. As stated earlier, the effects of colonisation on the colonised can be used to understand the effects of apartheid on black people.

The texts selected were selected because they have at their center inter-racial sexual relations against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa. With both texts dealing clearly with inter-racial sexual relations, it is thus necessary to take into account the historical context in which these texts are set. *Mating Birds* was published in 1986 but set during the 1950's and 1960's in South Africa; while *The Black Psychiatrist* was published in 1994. Both texts were written and published before South Africa's first democratic elections and set during the time of apartheid when issues of power, race and sex were of paramount importance and subject to legislation. It is necessary in the next chapter, therefore, to look at the historical context of Nkosi's work, focusing on his reasons for writing the way he does about power, race and sex against a particular historical moment.

Chapter Two

Situating Lewis Nkosi

Wanjala, in his description of Nkosi states that Nkosi, “is one of the most accomplished non-fiction writers that the continent had produced” (Wanjala in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:33). He states as well, that Nkosi was instrumental in formulating important questions regarding literature in the 1950’s and 1960’s. These important questions were, “What kind of literature ought the Africa of the 1950’s and 1960’s evolve? What lesson could African writers learn from the European literary masters? What role should the writer play in political struggle?” (Wanjala in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:34). Nkosi has also been severely criticised for writing the way he does. He has been accused of being fascinated with inter-racial sexual relations, of being guilty of “distortion and exaggeration” (Brink 1992:16), as “rehearsing some more old scripts from the patriarchal stockroom with his subtle interrogation of inter-racial rape fantasy” (Dodd 1990:117). It is the focus of this chapter then, to attempt to look at Nkosi’s reasons for focusing on these particular issues and concerns. It is also necessary to look at the way Nkosi writes and his reasons for writing the way he does. Nkosi’s two texts selected for this thesis highlight the issues of power, race and sex. One is led to wonder why it is that these issues feature so prominently in the work of Nkosi. In order to address these questions, it is essential to look at the historical context in which Nkosi was writing.

It would be no exaggeration to call the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s in South Africa a time of turbulence. Whilst in the 1950’s apartheid was not as firmly entrenched as in the 1960’s and 1970’s, there was unease in the country as people of color realised that only worse was to come. 1948 proved to be a crucial year in the history of South Africa with the Afrikaner National Party gaining control of the government. It was this act that saw the erection of “an official government policy of separateness”, the Afrikaans word for which is ‘apartheid’ ” (Sheckels 1996:7). Laws passed after this time entrenched firmly what would become known internationally as the apartheid era in South Africa spanning some forty-six years. The Population Registration Act, implemented in the 1950’s,

declared all South Africans to be members of one of four racial groups, White, Asian, Colored and Black. Where one could work and where one could live would hereafter

be tied to which group one was in, where one could eat lunch and where one could see a movie or a play would hereafter be tied to which group one was in.

(Sheckels 1996:7)

1950 saw the passing of the Group Areas Act that separated the four race groups. It was a law that ensured that certain areas would be white only and other areas black only. It was no surprise that the better, more conveniently situated areas were reserved for whites while the “townships that almost ring Johannesburg with a ‘no man’s land’ buffer zone in between became a black-only city” (Sheckels 1996:8). In expropriating land to ensure that it became white-only, people of color were forcibly removed from their homes “and transported to their tribal homelands” (Sheckels 1996:8). With the Group Areas Act came the introduction of the Pass laws, where one had to carry at all times a passbook.

This book indicated where one could work and where one could live. Carrying a passbook (and presenting it upon demand for inspection) was a sign of second-class (or lower) citizenship. The passbooks were, as a result, resented and figure in many literary works as a symbol of oppression.

(Sheckels 1996:10)

The anger and hatred that black people felt at the implementation of the pass laws is evident in the poetry written at that time. Mongane Wally Serote, in his poem “City Johannesburg”, describes the pass as his “life”, stating that his greeting to the city of Johannesburg is presenting his pass on demand. He states, in words that reinforce for the reader the stifling nature of the pass laws,

This way I salute you:
My hand pulses to my back trouser pocket
For my pass, my life.

(Serote 1974: 68-69)

It was in the 1950’s as well, that the Nationalist government put in place a law that gave the South African government, especially the police, the power to act against anyone or any group suspected of being communist (Sheckels 1996:10). It was this law, the Suppression of Communism Act, that ensured “detention without trial, torture while in prison and the suspension of rights during frequently declared states of emergency” (Sheckels 1996:10).

Black people could feel the power of the repressive Afrikaner government. The 1950's and the 1960's became a time "of sporadic and turbulent political activism", when black people felt the need to rebel against the system's "unjust and oppressive laws" (Shava 1989:38). The Defiance Campaign of 1952 was a campaign based on Gandhi's principle of non-violence or Sathyagraha, passive resistance.

Blacks were to disobey various oppressive laws, suffer arrest, assault and penalty if need be, without violence..., to make challenging use of the alternative white facilities,... In addition to this, the flouting of curfew and pass regulations was encouraged.

(Shava 1989:38)

The Defiance Campaign received a lukewarm response from police while the Sharpville Campaign against pass laws was met with violence. The 1960 Sharpville massacre saw sixty-seven blacks being shot dead and one hundred and eighty-six wounded. The defiance of the black people had become a threat to the government and needed to be curbed. The two major political parties, The African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress were banned, their leaders imprisoned, including Nelson Mandela who would spend the next twenty-one years on Robben Island. The banning of political parties and the Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963, "demonstrated the naked force that would be used to control and dominate the black races. In response, many writers fled into exile rather than face imprisonment" (Watts 1989:3). The Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963 "ensured the exile of their writings as effectively as the threat of violence had ensured the exile of their bodies" (Watts 1989:3).

It was into a climate of oppression, violence and uncertainty that Lewis Nkosi was born and raised. Born in Durban in 1936 and orphaned at the early age of eight, he was raised by his grandmother. He began his career as a journalist in 1955, working first for *ILanga lase Natal* and then in 1957 for *Drum* magazine. It is the fifties that Nkosi has called "The Fabulous Decade" (Nkosi 1981:1). He states,

The fifties were important to us as a decade because finally they spelled out the end of one kind of South Africa and foreshadowed the beginning of another...While there was a fantastic array of laws controlling our lives it was still possible to organise

marches to police stations, to parliament, to the very prisons holding our political leaders. It was possible to go to the same universities as white students.

(Nkosi 1981: 4)

While the 1950's may have been 'fabulous', it was the 1960's that really changed Nkosi's life. Of the 1960's he states,

Sharpsville and the brutal massacre of unarmed Africans marching to a local police station brought us bang into 1960 and into a different era altogether. Henceforth the times would be troubled indeed.

(Nkosi 1981: 4)

It was in 1960 that Nkosi was awarded a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard in the United States. Oliphant remarks how his departure from South Africa came about:

When his application for a passport was refused, his friend the lawyer and political activist Harold Wolpe, advised him to exploit a provision in the Departure from South Africa Act. He left on a one-way ticket to the rest of the world.

(Oliphant 2002: 2)

It was in 1960 as well, that Nkosi was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this Act allowed the South African government literally to do as it pleased. South Africa had no Bill of Rights at that time and, since all black activists were seen as communist, Nkosi who as a journalist for *Drum* "wrote up these grim stories of farm labor brutalities, police torture and township riots" (Nkosi 1981:8), was considered communist and obviously a threat to the government. Hence the one way exit. He arrived in New York in January 1961. Despite living abroad he continued to work in the field of African literature. Goddard and Wessels, in the book *Out of Exile* (1992) state that,

He is perhaps best known as one of the most erudite critics of South African literature and culture, though he has also published numerous short stories, a novel and a play and has done research into varying fields of literature including work on Conrad during his stay in Poland.

(Goddard and Wessells 1992:26)

Nkosi has, since his exile, published *The Transplanted Heart: Essays on South Africa* (1975), *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles in African Literature* (1981), *Home and Exile and Other Selections* (1983), *Mating Birds* (1986) a novel; *The Black Psychiatrist* (1994), a play; *Underground People* (2002), a novel; as well as numerous other short stories, plays and essays of literary criticism.

It would be no exaggeration to call Nkosi ‘a child of the apartheid era’, having lived in the era that saw the implementation of laws such as the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act, the Bantu Education Act, the removal of people of color from Sophiatown and the Sharpsville Massacre. It comes as no surprise that Nkosi as novelist and critic has concerned himself with, “questions and problems posed by African literature, with providing a sketch of the ideology to which African literature is attached” (Nkosi 1981:1). Nkosi states in his book *Tasks and Masks* (1981) that, “What we see in a text is what our ideology has equipped us to see” (Nkosi 1981:1). This is a statement that can be applied to his own writing and will be discussed later in this thesis. Annie Gagiano, in Stiebel and Gunner’s *Still Beating the Drum* (2005), in describing Nkosi states,

In all his critical writing, judicious and far-sighted as it mainly is, Nkosi remains a unique and candid personality – never adopting the grey cloak of academic ‘objectivity’...Nkosi is always open, if often controversial and sometimes pugnacious. Though he speaks with the authority of both great knowledge of, and full commitment to, his subject, he is the very opposite of the aloof, anonymous commentator – he involves his reader, demanding (always) a thoughtful response, whether one agrees or disagrees with the points he articulates.

(Gagiano in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:13)

This is a description one would have trouble disagreeing with after having read the work and criticisms of Nkosi. It becomes clear as well, after a reading of Nkosi’s work, that there are a few issues and arguments that are present in all his writing. His argumentative nature is clear too and Gagiano’s description of Nkosi as “‘tell[ing] it like it is,” (Gagiano in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:14) is fitting when one reads his occasional harsh critiques.

An issue close to the heart of Nkosi is “questions and problems posed by African literature” (Nkosi 1981:1). One of these problems is evident in a widely used quotation from Nkosi’s non-fictional writing of the 1980’s,

What we do get from South Africa therefore – and what we get most frequently – is the journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature. We find here a type of fiction which exploits the ready-made plots of racial violence, social apartheid, inter-racial love affairs which are doomed from the beginning, without any attempt to transcend or transmute these given ‘social’ facts into artistically persuasive works of fiction.

(Nkosi 1981:132)

This, in a nutshell, is the problem Nkosi has with South African literature, an argument he has presented the reader with time and time again. In discussing this “much quoted essay” (Nkosi 1981:78) Nkosi states,

I have been dismayed to see parts of that essay occasionally wheeled out to support critical positions which it was no intention of mine to uphold... My complaints about black South African literature in the past have had nothing to do with the mere fact that it is protest. How well, and how significantly it utters that protest, has been my main pre-occupation.

(Nkosi 1981:78)

It becomes clear that it is not the intention of Nkosi blatantly to dismiss the protest literature produced by South African writers. Instead he is concerned with the fact that “most black writers tend to be indifferent to traditional narrative forms and motifs” (Nkosi 1981:81), and that:

All the elements which have fertilised the African novel elsewhere, the proverb, the myth, legend and all other linguistic procedures which give their own peculiar stamp to social relationships in a traditional African setting appear as a kind of distraction in the urban environment of South Africa.

(Nkosi 1981:79)

Nkosi’s comments on two stories, *A Glass of Wine* and *The Stone Country*, by Alex La Guma help us understand more clearly the points he is making. *A Glass of Wine* Nkosi states, “is a superbly observed story with an appropriate dialogue that relies on the speech idioms of the Cape Malay folk” (Nkosi 1983:137). On the other hand his comments on *The Stone Country*, are less glowing. He states,

Nonetheless, the characters are still 'types'. Prison 'types', to be sure. In themselves they have very little weight as people...For those who have never been on the non-white side of a South African jail, I suppose the story is instructive in its realistic detail, but for me it is very little else...he tells everything about what happens to them in jail but illuminates nothing.

(Nkosi 1975:115)

Nkosi, very clearly, is not simply concerned with the fact that the literature is simply protest. His concern, as he states, is the way it is written. Nkosi's sometimes stinging criticism of South African literature can be traced back to as early as 1965, when in his book *Home and Exile Critical Essays* (1965), he made some pertinent points regarding the type of literature he was raised on. In a chapter entitled "The Fabulous Decade" he states that, "A great deal of this writing, stimulated as it was by missionary endeavors was purposefully Christian and aggressively crusading: the rest was simply eccentric or unacceptably romantic" (Nkosi 1983:2). He states further that his generation had no literary heroes of their own, as did other people in other parts of the world and that,

As a generation we longed desperately for literary heroes we could respect and with whom we could identify. In the moral chaos through which we lived we longed to find a work of literature, a drama or film, home-grown and about us, which would contain a significant amount of our experience and in which we could find our own attitudes and feelings.

(Nkosi 1983: 3)

It is these comments and concerns that have very obviously influenced the way Nkosi writes. His concern with the way the writer writes rather than simply the content of the writing has always been important to him. He states that,

black fiction has renounced African tradition without showing itself capable of benefiting from the accumulated example of modern European literature...nothing stands behind the fiction of black South Africans – no tradition, whether indigenous,

such as energises *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* or alien such as is most significantly at work in the latest fiction by Camara Laye...black South Africans write as though Dostoevsky, Kafka or Joyce had never lived.

(Nkosi 1983:131)

This makes clear his belief that “form was as important in the composition of literature as content” (Wanjala 2005:32). In his book *Tasks and Masks* (1981), in a chapter entitled “The New African Novel: A Search for Modernism”, Nkosi outlines his belief that while the earlier traditional novel style attempts to conceal art in favor of content, “the later novel style deliberately and provocatively calls attention to itself and becomes the object of its own contemplation” (Nkosi 1981:54). In attempting to define modernism, Nkosi states,

modernism in art is not so much the oddity of the subject matter as the deliberate focusing of our attention on techniques as interesting in itself so that instead of the object which it is supposed to represent, artistic form itself now becomes its own subject matter.

(Nkosi 1981:54)

In outlining the main characteristics of modernism, Dr Mary Klages, in an essay titled “Post-Modernism”, states that modernism includes,

an emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity in writing (and in visual arts as well), an emphasis on how seeing (or reading or perception itself) takes place, rather than on what is perceived. An example of this would be stream-of-consciousness writing...a movement away from the apparent objectivity provided by omniscient third-person narrators, fixed narrative points of view, and clear-cut moral positions. Faulkner’s multiple-narrated stories are an example of this aspect of modernism.

(Klages 2003:4)

An important point that Nkosi makes in his book *Tasks and Masks* (1981) is that, while a modernist movement is now taking shape in Africa,

to see what is now occurring in African fiction merely as an extension of a development occurring somewhere else (chiefly Europe), is seriously to misjudge the nature of the African phenomenon, its roots and its ideological compulsions. For one

thing the modernist movement in Africa faces both ways at once; it faces forward to the latest innovations in fiction as well as backward to the roots of African tradition.

(Nkosi 1981:54)

These statements by Nkosi bring to mind his earlier contention that his complaints about black South African literature have had nothing to do with the fact that it was protest literature. His concern was how well and how significantly it uttered that protest. What does become clear is that while Nkosi is optimistic about the emergence of a new African novel, a modernist African novel, he does not ignore the fact that “whatever their obsession with form, African novelists are still deeply committed to the simple act of telling a ‘story’ ” (Nkosi 1981:54), and that this combination of traditional styles and modernism ensures that “the modern African writers constitute almost without exception, the most valuable documentation of the vicissitudes of African society at major points of crisis” (Nkosi 1981:55).

Nkosi’s concerns about African literature are echoed in the questions of Starck-Adler. She states,

How does one render the reality of racist South Africa of the apartheid era where to be black, to be non-white, is to have one’s being negated? How does one evoke the ‘colour bar’ without falling prey to the ‘colour bore’ as some have called it?

(Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005: 81)

Nkosi’s answer lies in his statement that,

The writer’s role is to find new forms. The only epic theme we have is apartheid and only new ways of telling the story about apartheid and about resistance to apartheid can help us to dust off the old mysteries around forced removals, resettlements, police shootings, if we are to make them look new again.

(cited in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:81)

“This new form” of writing about apartheid is closely linked to Nkosi’s interest in Modernism. It is in the quest for new forms as well that has led Nkosi to introduce the character of the psychoanalyst who, by delving into his patient’s past, is able to find the answers they seek. The role of the psychoanalyst is discussed in greater detail in Chapters Three and Four. It is however important to understand at this point, that it is through the questioning technique of the psychoanalyst, in his excursions into the childhood of his

patients, that issues of power, race and sex are brought to the fore in Nkosi's text. Nkosi's interest in modernism is evident in Ndi Sibiya's words in *Mating Birds* when he states:

The story I told to the court, to the judge, and his assessors was essentially the same story I have been telling here off and on; the same story I later told to Emil Dufre, to my mother, to my friend and to my relatives. But in telling and retelling it to the court I found in the end that the whole thing had become somewhat garbled, confused, it had lost any clear logical outline, had become a story without any apparent shape or form, like a modern novel whose plot resembles the shapelessness of emotion itself.

(Nkosi 1986:163-164)

In explaining this, Graham states that Sibiya likens his non-linear narrative, with its gaps and absences, to a modernist text. She states as well that Nkosi's text, which breaks with realism and draws on the strategies of European Modernism, was "an 'outsider' in the territory to which black South African writing had been relegated" (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:126). This is an issue that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

With Nkosi's interest in modernism, it should come as no surprise that, in an interview, when asked whether any specific writers, artists or theorists influenced his work or thinking, it was the name William Faulkner that arose. He states,

and it's obvious why William Faulkner, because William Faulkner was writing about the South, and I came from another South and so those two worlds seemed to coincide. And it is curious why a writer like William Faulkner because he was so entangled in the relationship between black slaves and the white citizens of the South of the United States. He was so suggestive in the ways of handling these situations and the language he developed to handle these situations that he became one of the greatest influences.

(Molver in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:179-180)

One of the most obvious similarities between Faulkner and Nkosi is the fact that both had lived and worked in a country fraught with racial tension, Faulkner in the old South of the United States aware of the tensions between the black slaves and the whites, and Nkosi who, as stated earlier, saw the implementation of laws that would welcome in the apartheid regime

in South Africa. Faulkner was born in 1897 in Mississippi, left public school well before finishing and attended only a few college classes. Padgett, in an article entitled “William Faulkner”, described him as,

More than simply a renowned Mississippi writer, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist and short story writer is acclaimed throughout the world as one of the twentieth century’s greatest writers, one who transformed his ‘postage stamp’ of native soil into an apocryphal setting in which he explored, articulated, and challenged ‘the old verities and truths of the heart’.

(Padgett 2004:1)

In an interview with Achille Mbembe, referred to by Schwartz, Nkosi states that other black writers – one of whom is the African American writer Toni Morrison – have also chosen Faulkner as their ‘ancestor’. Larry Schwartz, in an essay entitled “Toni Morrison and William Faulkner: The Necessity of a Great American Novelist” (2002), outlines why Faulkner has influenced these writers, stating that Faulkner’s,

stories of human frailty and passion were told from the heart, with deep-felt compassion. His style of fusing past and present was so daring as he worked to capture it all in one breath, in one sentence that he came define modernist technique.

(Schwartz 2002:4)

In comparing Faulkner to Morrison, Schwartz states that Faulkner is,

in love with lyrical and mesmerising language that conveys love of a community and offers hope in a chaotic world, a world drenched not only with the evil of race thinking, but also the evil of sexism.

(Schwartz 2002:1)

It becomes clear from both the statements that there are similarities in the work of Faulkner and Nkosi. Nkosi’s stories too are filled with “deep-felt compassion” (Schwartz 2002:4). Faulkner’s “style of fusing past and present” (Schwartz 2002:4) is reminiscent of the style he uses in *Mating Birds*, in Sibiya’s smooth movement from past to present in telling Dr Dufre his life story. It is, however, Schwartz’s description of Faulkner’s work as describing “a world drenched not only with the evil of race thinking, but also the evil of sexism” (Schwartz

2002:1), that rings true of the work of Nkosi as well. Schwartz's words about Faulkner, quoted above, are clearly reminiscent of Dr Kerry's words in *The Black Psychiatrist*:

Kerry: I thought socialism means constructing a society in which men and women live in peace and freedom. A society in which the human eye has a sharp, enduring, penetrating gaze in which a person's face absorbs the sun like a sponge; the mouth is curved with joy and the chin is a little stern with pride.

(Nkosi 1994:18)

Nkosi's words here attempt to create hope like Faulkner does, that there can be 'peace and freedom'. The message of hope Faulkner's and Nkosi's texts hold, is as a result of what both had seen happening in the countries in which they were born. Both the United States of America and South Africa have long histories of racial conflict. As stated before in this thesis, issues of race are interlinked with issues of power, and especially with that of sex. It is these issues that feature prominently in the work of Faulkner and Nkosi and that are the main focus of this thesis.

An important point to be considered in this chapter is the reasons for Nkosi writing the way he does, particularly in the texts pertinent to this thesis, *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist*. Very clearly, a number of issues have led to Nkosi writing the way he does. A most important factor would have been the political situation in the South Africa Nkosi lived in. As stated earlier, Nkosi could easily be called a child of the apartheid era, having lived and worked in South Africa during the years that saw the implementation of the toughest apartheid laws. In addition to being considered a second-class citizen and subject to these laws, Nkosi was forced to leave the country with no chance of return. It is no surprise then that themes of apartheid, segregation and oppression feature prominently in his texts. Oyekan Owomoyela, describing Nkosi's short play *The Rhythm of Violence* (1964) states that it dramatises, "the irrationality of apartheid and its random destructiveness" (Owomoyela in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:40), a description that can be applied to all of Nkosi's work, including *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist*. In an interview conducted by Zoë Molver, when posed with the question of whether his early experience mediates his work Nkosi states,

I'm Freudian enough to know that you suppress some of those memories of what really shapes your conscious life. And it comes through in your writing again and

again and it comes as a surprise when you actually notice that it is linked to an earlier experience.

(Molver in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:184)

Very clearly Nkosi's experiences have influenced his work. In some of his writing Nkosi has described characters and their experiences that have clearly been inspired by his own life. In *Home and Exile* (1983), Nkosi describes the figure of the shebeen queen in the Johannesburg shebeens that he frequented while working for *Drum* and partying with Can Themba. His description of the shebeen queen as a "tough resourceful, archetypal 'black mamma' of the Negro world" (Nkosi 1983:11) is clearly recreated in Ma-Mlambo, the shebeen queen in *Mating Birds*. In the interview, mentioned earlier, Nkosi remembers his mother as a "beautiful young woman, she was still in her twenties...she had lots of beautiful dresses" (Stiebel and Gunner 2005:184), a description that reminds one of Sibiya's mother, Nonkanyezi, whom Nkosi describes as "young, unusually slim and willowy for a Zulu woman, with high pointed breasts, very dark, glossy hair and flashing white teeth" (Nkosi 1986:45).

It is however Nkosi's experiences with laws forbidding any inter-racial affairs that have featured prominently in his work. In *Home and Exile*, Nkosi describes a relationship with a young, white actress, stating that she was "someone moreover from whom I was separated by an immovable apartheid wall" (Nkosi 1983:19). He describes how inter-racial relationships became "nightmares of worry and effort to have some privacy where we could meet as friends or lovers without the interference of the over-zealous police" (Nkosi 1983:22). Both these statements describe themes present in *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist*. In *Mating Birds* Sibiya's words that, "We could feast our eyes on each other's bodies but we could say nothing to each other to express what we felt" (Nkosi 1986:127), and in *The Black Psychiatrist* Dr Kerry's words, "You see, I couldn't go on seeing you because your father found out about us. He made it sound like a great scandal, his pure-white daughter holding hands with the coffee-colored son of the house-maid" (Nkosi 1994:19), describe the experiences of Nkosi and other black people. His statement that, "white men who voted for apartheid in public sent their wives away on holiday in order to take up with their dark vivacious maids from Sophiatown" (Nkosi 1983:23), sums up the theme of *The Black Psychiatrist*.

From the above it becomes obvious why the issues of power, race and sex underline the work of Nkosi. As stated in the previous chapter, issues of power, race and sex are essential in any

discussion of colonialism and colonised people, issues that will feature prominently in any struggle between races. Nkosi, as a black man, had been subjected to the cruelties of apartheid, inflicted on him by the powerful, white Afrikaner race. They determined where he lived, where he went, and even the education he received. For Nkosi, this powerful white government ensured that he left the country, returning to visit only thirty-one years later. So powerful was this government that they determined with the Group Areas Act where he would live and, with the Immorality Act, with whom he would have sexual relations. It should come as no surprise therefore that these issues would feature prominently in his work.

As stated earlier in this chapter, Nkosi stated that what we see in a text is what our ideology has equipped us to see. One realises then, that this statement holds true for Nkosi himself, for it is what he has seen and experienced under apartheid that forms the basis of his work, including *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist*. Nkosi states,

Some South African children grow up knowing only the arms of their black 'nannies', their first intimations of bodily warmth, and the emotions they develop around the body of a parent is confused with the childhood experiences they have had with a black nanny, who is a figure mostly warm and more indulgent than their stern parents; yet at a crucial level of their development, these are the people whom they are taught to hate or distrust as political opponents, people whose children they are taught to regard as prohibited to them, either as sexual objects or social equals.

(Nkosi 1983:37)

This is an issue Nkosi tackles in the novel and the play selected. Veronica Slater, the white woman in *Mating Birds* and Gloria Gresham, the white woman in *The Black Psychiatrist* both desire the black man, both have had sexual relations with him, yet are quick to accuse him: in the case of *Mating Birds* of being a rapist, and in the case of *The Black Psychiatrist* as taking advantage of their history and expecting to be favoured. Both black characters, Ndi Sibiya and Dr Dan Kerry, despite being desired by the white woman in the texts, are accused of being typical black men lusting after white women. Nkosi states that it is ironic that the Afrikaners and the Nationalist Government have put laws in the statute book to control the sexual conduct of citizens, as it was found that more Afrikaners than English South Africans were found transgressing the laws prohibiting interracial sex. It is these oppressive sex laws, discussed earlier in this chapter, that play a major role in the texts selected. The issue of power, an important one in this thesis, is evident when Nkosi states,

As I said, more often than not, it is the white boy who runs after the black woman or the white woman who runs after the black male; this is explicable only in terms of the social advantages whites enjoy over blacks which permit them to make their wishes more explicit when they so choose.

(Nkosi 1983:38)

In *Home and Exile* Nkosi makes reference to the agonising and humiliating effects of apartheid. He states,

Everywhere I went in public places notices shouted at me: 'Non-Whites Only' and every time I read the message it vividly brought to mind the crude fact that in the eyes of the world my life represented something negative, something non! Whereas the whites considered themselves unimaginatively beautiful I was considered unspeakably ugly; whereas they considered their lives as worthy of emulation they regarded my cultural experience as utterly resistable. In that small prefix put before the word white I saw the entire burden and consequence of European colonialism: its assault on the African personality; the very arrogance of its assumptions.

(Nkosi 1983:32)

The issue of 'Whites Only' is an important one in *Mating Birds* and will be discussed in Chapter Three. What is important to note here, however, is the effect of apartheid on black people, something Nkosi deals with in great detail in his writing. Nkosi makes an important point about this, directly related to *Mating Birds*. He states,

What is shocking in South Africa is that people who have committed no crime are turned into criminals, forced to apologise and plead before the law for what in a normal country no one would dare to take them to court.

(Nkosi 1983:41)

This statement could very well sum up the case of Ndi Sibiya. It is these issues, raised by Nkosi in *Home and Exile*, that form the basis of *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist* and that will be discussed in detail in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

Chapter Three, therefore, turns to provide an analysis of *Mating Birds* looking specifically at the issues of power, race and sex, using the character of the psychiatrist as a focus.

Chapter Three

Mating Birds

Lewis Nkosi's first novel *Mating Birds* was published by St Martin's Press in New York in 1986. It tells the story of Ndi Sibiya, ex-student of the University of Natal, who is awaiting execution in a prison in Durban. He has been found guilty of raping a white 'girl' Veronica Slater. Because the crime Sibiya committed is considered so horrific and barbaric, a Swiss psychiatrist has been brought in to treat Sibiya to find out what led him to commit such a crime. Sibiya is also writing his life-story and it is this that allows the reader, through flashbacks, a glimpse into his life, rather than the questioning techniques of Dr Dufre. Nkosi presents the reader with characters that can be considered caricatures. Ndi Sibiya becomes the typical black male, innocent yet found guilty by a racist white government. Veronica Slater is to be seen as the white female who encourages, even desires, a sexual encounter with a black man and then, for fear of being ostracised, cries rape. Kakmekaar represents the typical Afrikaner, who in his hatred of black people, is eager to see Sibiya made an example of, "as a deterrent for other misguided natives" (Nkosi 1986:33), while Van Rooyen represents the view of many whites that, "natives, left to their tribal environment were all right, their morals were even superior to those of some whites, but given a smattering of education, they become spoiled and thought of themselves as equals of white men", that education encourages, "not only a love of a western style of living but also an unbridled desire for white women" (Nkosi 1986:82). Nkosi also presents us with a character, the psychiatrist Dr Dufre, who in his analysis of Sibiya, allows one to look at the interlinked issues of power, race and sex, issues that are the focus of this thesis. Dr Dufre, as well, represents the typical Freudian psychoanalyst, who believes firmly in the 'talking cure', believing that all the answers lie in Sibiya's childhood.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Nkosi lived in a South Africa that was fraught with racial tension. When he left the country in 1960, South Africa's first democratic election was years away and black people were being subjected to the most oppressive of apartheid laws. It is these memories, of an apartheid South Africa and the suffering of his people, that Nkosi took with him when he left. He had, by this time, himself been a victim of the Suppression of Communism Act and lived in a country which had as law the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949,

the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Immorality Act of 1959. It therefore comes as no surprise that it is these issues that feature prominently in his work. Issues of power, race and sex are evident in the first few pages of *Mating Birds*. Reference is made to the “non-white boys” (Nkosi 1986:3), and the sexual undertone is immediately evident when Nkosi states, “Her flesh was surrendered, as it were, to the hungry gaze of African youths who combed the beach everyday for lost or discarded articles” (3). Henry Louis Gates Jr, in describing the novel, states that it “confronts boldly and imaginatively the strange interplay of bondage, desire and torture inherent in interracial sexual relations within the South African prisonhouse of apartheid” (Gates 1986:3).

One is led to wonder then, as to the reception the novel received considering that it was published during the apartheid regime and dealt with the controversial issues of power, race and sex. Graham, in answer to this question states, “there is a curious schism in the reception of the novel: while outside the country *Mating Birds* was almost unanimously perceived as one of the best pieces of writing to emerge in world literature, most South African critics seemed determined to find fault with the novel” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:124). While the opinions of critics like Brink and Dodd are discussed in detail later in this chapter, it is important to note at this point the type of reception the novel received in South Africa as opposed to overseas. According to Graham, *Mating Birds* was selected by Michiko Kakutah of *The New York Times* as part of the weekly selection of the best new fiction in March 1986. *The New York Times* also recommended the novel as one of the top one hundred books published in 1986. Clearly, on the international front, the novel was received positively. According to Graham, “From Hugh Barnes in *The London Review of Books* (7 August 1986) to Margaret Walters in *The Observer* (27 August 1986) and Paul Pickering in *New Society*, who thought ‘the moral implication of *Mating Birds* are as disturbing as the writing is brilliant’, overseas reviewers seemed to concur that the novel was a finely crafted piece of work that offered complex insights into the distortions of desire in a racist and prohibitive society” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:123). In the United States of America in 1986, the novel was awarded the prestigious Macmillan Pen Prize Award. In South Africa however, despite the Directorate of Publications finding the novel “not undesirable” (Scholtz 1987:87-88), and recommending that no restriction be placed on it, the novel was not well received. According to Graham, the novel was seen as lacking in ‘topicality’ and was seen as a “historical anachronism” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:123). In attempting to explain

the lukewarm reception the novel received, from both readers and critics, Graham states that readers in South Africa expected a representation of contemporary life under apartheid. Nkosi, on the other hand, discards “petty realism” (Nkosi 1998:77) and instead uses techniques of European modernism in his work, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The focus of Chapter Three will be an analysis of *Mating Birds*, looking specifically at the intersections of power, race and sex using the psychiatrist figure as a point of focus. *Mating Birds*, Nkosi’s first novel, has been described by Henry Louis Gates Jr, in a review for *The New York Times*, as

a prison memoir which 25 year old Ndi Sibiya writes as he awaits execution by hanging, convicted of raping a white woman Veronica Slater. Sibiya, expelled from university for his political activities, is a sensitive, articulate and lyrical narrator. He tells of his irresistible and manic obsession with a woman he chances to see sunbathing on a beach in Durban – he on the non-white side and she in the border area between the two sides. Meeting on the beach almost daily, the two – according to Sibiya’s not untroubled account – enter a dreamlike ritual replete with the subtle gestures of wordless flirtations and the silent exchanges of cues of desire.

(Gates 1986: 3)

It is these “silent gestures of wordless flirtations and the silent exchanges of cues of desire” that culminate in what for Sibiya is making love, and what for Slater becomes rape. What is interesting about the novel is the doubt set in the reader’s mind about Sibiya’s innocence or guilt, by Sibiya himself. Gates’ description of Sibiya’s account as, “not untroubled” is highly appropriate. To the reader, to the judge, to the public listening to Sibiya’s account of events and to Dr Dufre, Sibiya’s account of the events seem troubled. This is so because every white person listening to or reading of Sibiya’s case prefers to believe that it was rape as the thought of a white woman consenting to sexual relations with a black man is too shocking to contemplate. The novel is set in the 1950’s and the 1960’s and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, any form of sexual contact between black and white was prohibited. What is ironic, however, is that these laws failed to prevent sexual contact between the blacks and whites, an issue discussed later in this thesis. This brings to mind Nkosi’s statement in *Home and Exile* that,

Black Africans often wonder why if white South Africans find the idea of mixing with blacks so appalling they have nevertheless found it necessary to prevent this by enacting legislation as though were legal sanctions to disappear the desire for sexual contacts would be too strong for anyone to bear.

(Nkosi 1983:38)

It is this issue that is the focus of this thesis and this chapter. Inherent in the not so simple relationship of Sibiya and Veronica Slater is the powerplay of the coloniser and the colonised.

Nkosi, in *Mating Birds*, introduces us to the character of the Swiss-German Dr Dufre, the psychiatrist figure, that provides the focus on the intersections of power, race and sex. The psychiatrist figure is a prominent one in the field of psychoanalysis, a field of study began by Freud. As mentioned in Chapter One, psychoanalysis was a movement based on the assumption that hysteria was the result of some psychical trauma in the person's past. Very clearly, the role of the psychiatrist or psychoanalyst is an important one. In discussing the role of the psychiatrist Freud states,

We guided the patient's attention directly to the traumatic scene in which the symptom had arisen, we endeavored to find therein the psychic conflict, and to free the repressed effect. We thus discovered the procedure characteristic of the psychic process of the neuroses which I later named regression...This regressive direction became an important characteristic of the analysis. It was proved that psychoanalysis could not clear up anything actual, except by going back to something in the past. It even proved that every pathological experience presupposes an earlier one, which, though not in itself pathological, lent a pathological quality to the later occurrence.

(Freud 1957:28)

Freud's words above outline succinctly the role of Dr Dufre in *Mating Birds*. He is brought in to, in Sibiya's words, "inquire, to prod, to probe," (Nkosi 1986:18). It becomes clear to the reader from early on in the novel that psychoanalysis and the psychoanalyst will play an important role in the novel. Sibiya's description of Dufre as "using the persistent questioning routine familiar to those who seek to unravel the mysteries of the unconscious as physicians use instruments for sounding and testing for defects in an unhealthy body" (18), alerts the reader immediately to the technique of psychoanalysis as described by Freud earlier in this chapter. The task then of Dr Dufre is one of questioning and drawing answers from Sibiya, his

questions the type that inevitably lead to Sibiya's past and his childhood. Dufre, like all psychoanalysts, believes that the answers to Sibiya's behaviour, his madness, as will be discussed later in this chapter, can be traced back to his childhood, to his parents, to the Oedipus Complex. Astrid Stark-Adler describes Dufre as, "an anagram for Freud, ... also a Jew, but Swiss-German and he tries to find out, from the outside what in Sibiya's childhood could have caused the aggression which leads him to commit a crime" (Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:82). She states further that,

In *Mating Birds*, the psychoanalyst Emile Dufre is a kind hearted, patient and courteous man, who, as a Jew, 'has seen much that is odd and unpleasant in the world' (25): having arrived suddenly into a foreign country with all his scientific know-how, he seeks to apply to Sibiya's case the criteria which he believes to be universal but which are eventually revealed to being reductionist.

(Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:82)

Starck-Adler's words lead one directly to an important aspect of psychoanalysis and of *Mating Birds*: the Oedipus Complex. Very early in Dufre's discussions with Sibiya, the doctor attempt to draw Sibiya back to his childhood, to his past, to find answers to his questions. Sibiya states,

With this man, huge, white, bespectacled, friendly but remote, childhood stories are a speciality. Again and again he asks about my mother, he asks about my feelings towards my father. Did I ever wish to kill him, or perhaps did I not secretly hope that while my father was cutting the trunk of a tree, the tree would come crashing over his head. When I laugh, Dr Dufre remains imperturbable. 'You think it never happens?' he asks. You will be surprised how often children wish catastrophe to befall their parents!

(Nkosi 1986:18)

As stated in the previous chapter, Freud believed that parents played a large part in the lives of children who later became psychoneurotic. Freud's studies in psychoanalysis were based on the Oedipus Complex, as stated in Chapter One. According to Freud, all children start off with the mother as the love object as a result of the love and care she showers on him or her. The father is thus seen as the enemy, as competition for the love and attention of the mother. This leads to a conflict and the mother in an attempt to end this conflict threatens the little boy

with castration, a threat he only believes when he sees what he considers to be the castrated genitals of a female. The Oedipus Complex ends here for boys but only begins here for females, as she will spend the rest of her life believing that she has been castrated, that she is lacking a penis, that she is inferior. This leads to penis-envy, explained in the previous chapter, leading to the female's super-ego being compromised, she suffers an inferiority complex and is rendered powerless.

It is with this background in psychoanalysis that Dufre believes that the answers to Sibiya's crime lie in his past. What is ironic, however, is that Dufre is unable to acquire the answers he so desires. In drawing Sibiya back to his past, Dufre and the reader find no evidence of the Oedipus Complex, no evidence of any hatred Sibiya felt for his father, no desire to have him killed or see him dead. What is surprising, to Dufre at least, is that Sibiya's delving into his past provides a picture quite contrary to what Dufre expects. Dufre believes that Sibiya, going back in time to his "pastoral childhood, could help us to trace the origins of the obsession, your aspiration to obtain sexual gratification from a female source other than a woman of your own race" (Nkosi 1986:40). As stated earlier, Sibiya's childhood does not provide the answers Dufre expects. Dufre is presented with a picture of Sibiya's childhood that can only be described as idyllic, having grown up as,

the favored son of a large Zulu household, loved, cherished and made much of by my various 'mothers' and various 'fathers', by my sisters and brothers, by the many cousins and aunts who normally inhabit a large Zulu kraal.

(Nkosi 1986:42)

In discussing Sibiya's description of his childhood in Mzimba, Stiebel states, "In terms that remind one of Sol Plaatje's earlier work *Mhudi* (1930) Nkosi gives Ndi words that describe a self-sufficient, literally and metaphorically 'well-grounded' community" (Stiebel in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:143). Sibiya, in answer to Dufre's questions about his parents states,

They got on well. They got on fine. Indeed, if I can venture to put a name to so obscure an emotion as that which binds a woman to a man, I would say my father and my mother loved each other...I have to say yes, I think my father loved my mother

and perhaps my mother loved my father too. Certainly, on both sides there was affection, there was physical desire, there was respect.

(Nkosi 1986:63)

Sibiya in describing Dufre's reaction to his answers and the descriptions of his childhood states,

I could tell that despite his heroic show of cheerful satisfaction he was somewhat disappointed with the narrative, especially its lack of relevance to the specific area of his investigation.

(Nkosi 1986:63)

Very simply put, Dufre is "somewhat disappointed" simply because Sibiya's answers do not fit in with Freud's and Dufre's belief that it was the Oedipus Complex that led to Sibiya's crime. It is this point that leads to an important aspect of this thesis, that is the issue of race. While for Fanon, "the analyst clings to the concept of the family as a 'psychic circumstance and object' " (Fanon 1967:141), Fanon himself is of the belief that it is not the Oedipus Complex that is the cause of neurosis and psychical trauma in the black man. Unlike Freud who believed that the Oedipus Complex is inherent in all children, Fanon believed that, "[a] normal Negro child, having grown up with a normal family will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world" (Fanon 1967:143). As stated in Chapter One, Fanon stated that neurosis in the black man is a result of his cultural situation. When one considers the many references to Sibiya's madness – for example, Sibiya makes reference to "my diseased mind"(24); Dufre is called "the doctor of mental illness" (40); Sibiya states that he "is lost" (47); Sibiya wonders if Dufre would find in him "some mental distortion that would indicate the culmination of a paranoid history of mental aberration and sexual disease" (67); Dufre questions Sibiya about whether he considers his behavior "normal," (73); Dufre in describing Sibiya's behavior states "in short you had become mad! Unhinged!" (134) - one is led inevitably to Fanon's conclusion that it is not the Oedipus Complex that leads to neurosis in the black man, but colonisation.

The issue of Sibiya as suffering some of the effects of the 'colonised' is one the reader is faced with early in the text when Sibiya makes reference to "the silent forbidden crowds of non-white boys in a black mutinous rage" (Nkosi 1986:3). Reference is also made to the

“whites only bathing area” (4), or “the legendary warning: Bathing Area – For Whites Only” (6). As stated earlier, any discussion on colonisation and colonialism inevitably deals with issues of power, race and sex. Graham’s statement that, “the novel turns a mirror on the diseased mind of apartheid itself, and points to the difficulty of accessing ‘truth’ in a context where institutionalised racism has invaded the most intimate space” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:125), sums up succinctly the issues important to this thesis. Sibiya represents the colonised black man, suffering the ill effects of apartheid. He has experienced first hand the ravaging effects of the oppressive race laws in South Africa during the 1950’s and 1960’s. His suffering at the hands of the white man can be traced back to his early childhood when his family was displaced and forced to move away from what was home to “make way for a new white settlement” (Nkosi 1986:60), an act that led to what Sibiya’s mother believes led to the death of his father. Stiebel states, “So Ndi’s sense of belonging physically to one spot is broken, a process which is exacerbated by his father’s decision to get him educated and finally after his father’s death, by his mother’s decision to move with him to the city” (Stiebel in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:143). She states further that the township Cato Manor, in which Sibiya and his mother are forced to live - “ ‘the sprawling, fetid black slum five miles outside the center of the city’ (Nkosi 1986:90) - is the urban counterpoint to rural Mzimba in this novel,” (Stiebel in Stiebel and Gunner 2005: 143). It is here that Sibiya faces not just poverty but the stringent race laws of the 1950’s and the 1960’s.

When the reader first meets Sibiya he is on the non-white side of the beach, a ‘Bathing Area – For Whites Only’ sign staring him in the face (Nkosi 1986:6). He mentions too that what he felt for the white girl sunbathing on the beach, “was not exactly sexual desire for a body I must have known I could never possess, the race laws being what they are in South Africa” (Nkosi 1986:7), emphasising for the reader the prohibitive nature of the Immorality Act. Sibiya outlines for the reader as well the effects of apartheid on a black man. Sibiya’s words that, “Even before they had heard my side of the story they were going to hang me,” (29) ring true. Before the case is even tried, Sibiya has been labelled a rapist. It is here that Fanon’s words are apposite, that if one wants to understand the situation of the black man, in an oppressed society, importance must be given to both the sexual and the racial aspects.

As stated in the previous chapter the effects of the Oedipus Complex on the female can be compared to the effects of colonisation on the black man. Just as the female is seen as

endowed with little or no autonomy, as the weaker sex, as negative, as the second choice, the black man is perceived as such as well by the white man. This is very clear in the character of Sibiya who lacks autonomy most importantly because he lacks the most important tool of language. This is an argument presented by Ashcroft et al in the book *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) who claim that the novel *Mating Birds* “provides a penetrating example of the silence into which the colonised conscious is driven by the cultural conditions of South Africa and by the state control over the means of communication” (Ashcroft et al 1989:84). They state further that “in the oppressive climate of apartheid South Africa the means of communication was held by the white racist government” and that, “learning, with its necessary initiation into the mystic process of writing, is an assumption of the power to dominate” (Ashcroft et al 1989:85). It is with this view, that knowledge is power, that whites attempted to silence blacks. This view is reiterated in the words of the prison commandant in *Mating Birds*, Van Rooyen, who states as quoted earlier, “the natives, left to their tribal environment, were all right, their morals were even superior to those of some whites, but given a smattering of education, they become spoiled and thought of themselves as equals of white men” (Nkosi 1986:82). Sibiya has no voice, as it were, as the racist white state has silenced him. For Ashcroft et al, Sibiya represents the black oral society and Slater the white literate world. Evidence to this effect in the text is the fact that the entire relationship between Sibiya and Slater is conducted entirely in silence, “to the point at which the two people engage in a simultaneous orgasm, conducted entirely in silence and separated by the gulf of the barrier indicated by the beach sign itself” (Ashcroft et al 1989:87).

In view of the oppressive nature of colonisation and apartheid, one would have to agree with Fanon’s view that neurosis in the black man is a result of colonisation and not the Oedipus Complex. Deleuze and Guattari in their book *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) claim as well that it is colonisation that creates the Oedipus Complex, leading one to assume that the father in the Oedipus Complex is the coloniser that controls and oppresses the black man causing him, according to Fanon, to be thrust into a neurotic situation. This view is reiterated by Graham who states “the ultimate law of the father becomes a figure for representing the law of the autocratic apartheid state” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:131).

The theme of inter-racial sex is at the center of the novel *Mating Birds*. One is led to believe that Sibiya is a rapist, that he had been found guilty even before his case was tried. Sibiya’s

description of himself as “a native who in order to gain a glimpse of a white paradise, of that heaven from which many blacks are excluded, tore up barriers, trampled down fences, and even defied customs and conventions to sleep with a lily-white ‘virgin’ woman” (Nkosi 1986:12), and his statement that, “What beefy, red-faced Afrikaner farmers from the platteland came down to the coast to see is a ‘kaffir-boy’ who had the temerity, the audacity to seize a ‘respectable’ white woman in her bungalow and insert his horrible, oversized ‘black thing’ into her” (Nkosi 1986:12), make evident that Sibiya’s guilt or innocence is not the issue here. What is important is the audacity of the black man to have sexual intercourse with a white woman. The issue of inter-racial sexual relations can be traced back to Fanon who believed that one of the effects of colonisation became the desire of the black man to be white. The black man believes that this is something a white woman can do for him. Fanon asks “who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man” (Fanon 1967:63). Fanon states further that “without my knowledge I am attempting to revenge myself on a European woman for everything that her ancestors have inflicted on mine throughout the centuries” (Fanon 1967:70). Sibiya’s words reiterate Fanon’s view when Sibiya, in describing his feelings for Slater states, “Mingled with that feeling was another emotion: anger. Yes, it was anger I felt for that girl. A sudden, all-consuming fury and blinding rage” (Nkosi 1986:7). Her power over and, at the same time, her indifference to Sibiya, is evident in his words. He states, “She lay there in my path like a jibe, a monstrous provocation, and yet she was not really aware of my presence. People like her never are” (Nkosi 1986:7).

The anger Sibiya feels for Slater, for a woman he has never set eyes on before, is the anger he feels for the white race. The colonised black man therefore experiences contradictory feelings at the same time. He desires the white woman yet feels intense anger at her. She represents to him a superior race and he believes that any relation with her will elevate his status, yet at the same time he experiences a burning anger. For Freud, a sign of neurosis is the experiencing of two emotions at the same time such as love and hate. Very clearly, as a result of colonisation and apartheid the black man can become neurotic. The white man’s view of the black man as a rapist and a danger to white woman is one discussed in detail in the novel. First and foremost is the fact that Sibiya knows he will be found guilty even before his case is tried. Sibiya is asked, by what he calls “trained personnel” (Nkosi 1986:14), whether, “if an

uprising by the blacks were to take place, would every native go on a rampage, raping every white woman and child in sight” (Nkosi 1986:14). Kakmekaar, the prosecutor states,

Until such time as white women of this city, ... can walk about freely in the streets and beaches of our towns without fear of molestation, our police and our courts are obliged to see to it that everything is done to uphold the law.

(Nkosi 1986:34)

These views can be linked to Fanon’s argument that to the white man the Negro represents the sexual instinct (in its low state). According to this view, “the Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions” (Fanon 1967:177); the “black man is the symbol of Evil and Ugliness” (180); and “the natives have tremendous sexual parts... They copulate at all times and in all places. They are generally genital” (157). In the novel there are numerous references to Sibiya as nothing but an oversexed animal. References are made to “his black thing ” (Nkosi 1986:12). Sibiya states that some people would like to examine his “oversized penis” (14) and Veronica Slater refers to him as “pulling out his huge black thing” (157). As stated earlier, the black man is expected to fit the mould created for him by the Europeans, he is to be seen as inferior, dependent and simply a sexual organ rather than a thinking, feeling individual. By referring to a black man as a penis, he is expected to be seen as a non-intellectual, as lustful and animal-like while the white man represents the intellectual, intelligent, reasonable individual, able to use language.

Despite Slater’s efforts to cast Sibiya as the oversexed, black rapist or in Graham’s words “as the rapacious, black beast” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:132), doubt is set in the reader’s mind about Slater’s role in all of this. If one is to believe Sibiya’s account of the events then very clearly there was no rape. Annette Barkowski, in discussing Slater states, “Although she claims to be free of prejudice, she ultimately rejects the black, whose desire might jeopardise her privileges. For her, the only escape is denial: admitting her lust would mean endless ostracism, and would probably not help Sibiya” (Barkowski 1990:2). Barkowski’s words can be linked to another point that must be raised in this thesis, the desire of the white woman for the black man. As stated in Chapter One, this is an issue Fanon discusses at length even rewriting Freud’s essay “A Child is being Beaten” (1924) in racial terms calling it instead “A Negro is Raping Me”. Fanon’s view here can be explained as the desire of a white woman to be raped by a black man. Fanon states that white men, as a result

of the negative way they perceive blacks, believe that, “A white woman who has had a Negro lover finds it difficult to return to white men.” (Fanon 1967:169). In stretching this point further Fanon quotes Michel Cournot who stated, “The black man’s sword is a sword. When he has thrust it into your wife, she has really felt something. It is a revelation. In the chasm that it has left, your little toy is lost” (Fanon 1967:169). What we can understand from this is that white men, according to Fanon, see black men as only sexual, as representing nothing but the penis and as a result believe that white women really do want a sexual experience with what Fanon calls, “the black athlete” (Fanon 1967:158). One is faced with a good example of this when during the court case Slater is asked to describe the actual rape. In what Graham calls a “playful parody of ‘black menace’ rhetoric” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:132), the reader cannot help but believe that Slater enjoyed not just relating the experience, but living it as well. Her words and graphic details highlight this point:

and he just kept on touching me, playing with one of my breasts, feeling me up... To my absolute horror, the native responded by pulling out his huge black thing, sort of rubbing it gleefully with the palm of his hand, getting it ready for action .

(Nkosi 1986:157)

These do not sound like the words of a woman traumatised by the rape of a black man. One senses even a certain amount of pleasure in her relating of the events. The issue of the desire of a white woman for a black man is one that is discussed by Young in his book *Colonial Desire* (1995). Young, quoting Agassiz, states that the reason that racial theory is based on the insistence on inalienable separation is “the fear and delicious fantasy that the white woman really wants to proclaim, ‘I love the black man’” (Young 1995: 108).

What is surprising however is that despite evidence that the Oedipus Complex and Sibiya’s childhood are not responsible for turning him into the animal he is seen as being, despite the fact that Sibiya probably did not rape the girl, the psychoanalyst Dr Dufre insists on applying psychoanalysis and the rest of Freud’s writing on the Oedipus Complex to analyse Sibiya. A good example of this is when Sibiya dreams of a beautiful Zulu princess dancing provocatively for him. He has however been warned by the Zulu king that,

at the very first sign of physical lust my head will go to the chopping block. I am to hold firm, to resist all desire, to hold firm on my flesh, in short to prove me ability to overcome temptation, which is the basis of all wicked deeds and earthly sorrow.

(Nkosi 1986:120)

Sibiya, however, proves to be too weak to resist, is overcome with desire and temptation and is pierced through the heart with a glittering spear. For Dufre this is obviously a wish-fulfilling dream. For Freud,

there was a particular class of dreams in which the content could be viewed as direct and undisguised images, having to do with obtaining a satisfaction. For example, a hungry child might dream of eating his favorite food.

(Fisher and Greenberg 1977:23)

Freud states further that a painful dream, probably like the one Sibiya experienced “is a punishment of the dreamer for a repressed, prohibited wish impulse,” (Fisher and Greenberg 1977:24). It is on these theories that Dufre bases his claims. For Graham, “Sibiya’s dreams reflect upon the ways in which, in Nkosi’s novel, the prohibition that is the ultimate law of the father becomes a figure for representing the law of the autocratic apartheid state” (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:131). While Dufre may see the dream simply as Sibiya’s desire for the white woman, it has more important meanings as explained by Graham.

Another dream that Sibiya has is about the history professor he met during his short stay at university. Professor Van Niekerk, whom Sibiya refers to as, “that ogre, that racist pig, that academic fraud” (Nkosi 1986:102), presents us with issues that are important to this thesis. Van Niekerk makes reference to “the eventual amalgamation of races, never using the word ‘integration’ if he could help it” (102), stating that the “Bantu, the Indian and the Kleurling have proved to be as anxious as we are to preserve their racial purity” (103). He states further that “before the white man came there was no African history to speak of in this darkest of the dark continents” (104), that “we live in a continent marked by the absence of human thought, science and philosophy, a continent in which there is a visible lack of art, music and architecture” (105).

The issues Professor Van Niekerk raises are ones discussed in Young's *Colonial Desire* (1995). As explained in Chapter One, Young's text is helpful in understanding the origins of the beliefs that people like Professor Van Niekerk hold; theories that have been used to justify the treatment and oppression of the black man. What becomes most evident from Professor Van Niekerk's words and Young's text is that "the question of racial difference was focused on a very particular feature of human sociability: sex" (Young 1995:101). Sibiya states that Professor Van Niekerk referred to the amalgamation of races but never to the integration of races. This can be better understood if one looks at the meanings of the two words. According to the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (1978), to "amalgamate" is to "mix, unite (classes, societies, ideas)" (Sykes 1978:23); while to "integrate" is to "complete by addition of parts, combine (parts) into a whole, bring or come into equal membership of society esp. disregarding race or religion, and (racial) segregation" (1978:449). If one considers the historical background to the issues of power, race and sex that Young provides, discussed in Chapter One, it is evident why 'amalgamate' and not 'integrate' is used. Integrate suggests the coming together of parts of a whole, that these parts are equal to all the other parts. Blacks were not seen as equal, were not part of the whole. Young, quoting Waltz, emphasises the way the lower races i.e. blacks were perceived. According to Young, Theodore Waltz, a liberal German anthropologist, commented on how the lower races were perceived. Waltz in 1859 stated:

Whenever the lower races prove useless for the service of the white man, they must be abandoned to their savage state, it being their fate and natural destination. All wars of extermination, wherever the lower species are in the way of the white man, are not only excusable, but fully justifiable.

(Young 1995:7)

Professor Van Niekerk's reference to 'racial purity' is important as well. Gobineau's theory, referred to in Chapter One, outlines the nineteenth century belief that the white race was pure and that amalgamation with lower races would lead to the production of a hybrid, defined by Webster in 1828 as "a mongrel or mule; an animal or plant, produced from the mixture of two species" (Young 1995:6). According to Young the term was used to refer to the interbreeding of people of different races. As it was believed in the nineteenth century that blacks were an inferior race, hybridity it was feared would lead to the end of the white civilisation. Young, in explaining the theories of Gobineau states, "Civilisation therefore contains its own tragic flaw, because the Aryan races are impelled by a civilising instinct to mix their blood with the

very races that will bring about their downfall” (Young 1995:108). What is ironic, however, is Professor Van Niekerk’s statement that the “kleurling” (Nkosi 1986:108) wishes to preserve his/her racial purity. This is an issue tackled by Domus Maynard, a coloured student in the same class as Sibiya, who states,

I am not sure that I understand you correctly, but many colored people like myself must wonder if they still possess any racial purity to defend after your people made sure to mingle with the blacks in order to produce us brown folk!

(Nkosi 1986:103)

This issue, one of mixing of races which is alluded to in *Mating Birds*, of the “submission of the slave to the master” (Young 1995:108) is one that will be the focus of Chapter Four when the play *The Black Psychiatrist* will be discussed.

Professor Van Niekerk’s thoughts, conveyed in his lectures, that the history of Africa only began with the white man and his belief that African people lacked science, human thought, art, philosophy and music are beliefs that can be used to understand the arguments Said presents in his book *Orientalism*. As has been stated already in this thesis, this book, though written with the Orient in mind can be used to understand all subjugated peoples. Said, in discussing the theories of Balfour, states

There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power.

(Said 1978:36)

This is a description that can be used to describe the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Loomba, referring to Said’s book, states, “Said’s project is to show how ‘knowledge’ about non-Europeans was part of the process of maintaining power over them” (Loomba 1998:45). She states as well that the study of the Orient “was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’)” (Loomba 1998:47). According to Loomba, in the binary opposition referred to, Europeans are seen as rational, civilised,

developed, masculine while the Orient is seen as static, barbaric, sensual, lazy and feminine. She shows how, Said's views on *Orientalism* emphasise the fact that "every colonial person was in some sense, already 'other'" (1998:52). This is a view held by Fanon, who in discussing Jean Veneuse, the black man in love with a white woman states,

Affective self-rejection invariably brings the abandonment-neurotic to an extremely painful and obsessive feeling of exclusion, of having no place anywhere, of being superfluous everywhere in an affective sense... 'I am The Other' is an expression that I have heard time and again in the language of the abandonment-neurotic.

(Fanon 1967:76)

Said's theories help us to understand the picture created of Sibiya who is constantly referred to as a 'native'. He states that he should have behaved "as all good natives do in the presence of a white woman" (Nkosi 1986:18); Kakmekaar refers to him as "this native male" (158); and Slater refers to him as "some vagrant native" (133). Stiebel in assessing the term 'native' states that:

The word 'native', ..., is usually associated with origins, but in apartheid South Africa the word came to mean 'illegitimate or interloper...' Settlers positioned themselves as belonging in certain spaces and thus afforded certain rights, whilst 'natives' were allocated separate spaces with correspondingly fewer or no rights.

(Stiebel in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:138)

This definition helps one understand why the white students at the University of Natal, after listening to Professor Van Niekerk's lectures "continued to see us as interlopers who should have shown proper gratitude" (Nkosi 1986:105). Stiebel states further that the two characteristics of the 'native' in apartheid South Africa were to be mute and invisible. Sibiya then, is a native in the sense that he does not belong, that he is an intruder, that he has no voice and that he is not noticed or 'seen' as explained below. This can better be understood if one considers the fact that Sibiya is restricted from places reserved for whites only, he cannot speak because he has been denied the most important tool of language and communication by the white government who fear that knowledge is power, and he is invisible to Slater who was "not really aware of my presence" (Nkosi 1986:7).

The theme of inter-racial sex, which is at the core of the novel *Mating Birds*, and which also forms the focus of Dufre's questioning, is one that has drawn severe criticism from other critics. Andre Brink in the essay entitled, "An Ornithology of Sexual Politics: Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*", begins by suggesting that the theme of inter-racial sexual relationships is the focus of all Nkosi's writing, that it reveals "a persistent fascination with the subject" (Brink 1992:1). He states as well that,

from the outset there is an attempt, in the narrator's written, autobiographical defence, to offer the central act of transgression as, primarily, an act of political defiance: as such, it would enter into the power-play of the country and have little to do with sexuality as such.

(Brink 1992:3)

The rest of the article goes on to suggest that this is really not the case, however, and that, in fact, *Mating Birds*

fits in only too well into the traditional master narrative of colonialism, as well as the master narrative of sexism: the male who in order to justify his aggression against and his 'possession' of the female, blames her for provoking the attack, and for 'deserving what she gets' because of her innate libidinal provocation; in every possible respect she has to be degraded, turned into Object and (despicable, hence accessible) Other, dehumanised, in order to validate the imperial conquest of her body as locus, as (colonial) territory.

(Brink 1992:6)

Brink cites examples from the text that he believes make the text look like "an overheated sex thriller" (Brink 1992:8). An argument he uses to validate this claim is the fact that Nkosi uses "the same kind of sexual observation" (Brink 1992:8), even in the rural areas and to describe his mother. He asserts that Sibiya's constant reference to Slater as an animal is the "only way in which he can (re)assure himself of his own passion/power/identity and its validity, is by imagining/degrading the girl into the kind of other his own sense of self requires" (Brink 1992:12). Brink ends his attack on *Mating Birds* with harsh words:

Mating Birds is a return to the past distorted by subjective memory, anger and distance. The text demonstrates, devastatingly, the corrosions of absence. Below the exaggerations of the surface lurks a different ornithology. As its central Machereyan 'silence', alternatively its Jamesonian 'political unconscious', the text bears the weight of the author's desperate need to vindicate his own exile. By exaggerating the horrors of the South African situation, even to the point of undermining the creditability of his own narrative, he justifies his own decision to leave.

(Brink 1992:12)

Josephine Dodd in her essay entitled "The South African Literary Establishment and the Textual Production of 'Woman'" (Dodd 1990:117) presents arguments that are reminiscent of Brink's arguments. She refutes strongly the claim by Ashcroft et al that the novel can be read as a conflict between the literate white and oral black cultures. To their argument she answers, "They seem to suggest here that Sibiya, or indeed anyone's desire to rape is just as understandable as the desire to learn and write. Such statements are outrageous nonsense" (Dodd 1990:125). Like Brink, she quotes incidents from the text that demonstrate that the novel "reeks strongly of sweaty, old male fantasy masquerading as literary sophistication" (Dodd 1990:126). Similarly Lucy Valerie Graham in an article entitled "A Hidden Side to the Story: Reading Rape in Recent South African Literature" argues that rape stories in South Africa have served to justify racism and legitimise oppression. She states that in response to rape in South African literature,

I thus propose a dialectical approach that acknowledges the suffering of those who are subjected to sexual abuse, without losing sight of the ways in which certain rape narratives have been exploited for political ends in South African history.

(Graham 1990:12)

However, Graham, has recently offered a reading of *Mating Birds* which refutes some of this earlier criticism. She suggests *Mating Birds* has been misread as a realist text rather than a modernist one, thus highly symbolic and suggestive. Graham states:

Nkosi's novel, which to some extent breaks with realism and draws on the avant-garde strategies of European Modernism was an 'outsider' in the territory to which

Black South African writing has been relegated. But the novels innovative and transgressive aspects are not limited to narrative form.

(Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:126)

The story Sibiya tells to the court can be compared to the story Nkosi tells his readers: Sibiya states,

But in telling and retelling it to the court I found in the end that the whole thing had become somewhat garbled, confused, it had lost any clear logical outline, had become a story without any apparent shape or form, like a modern novel whose plot resembles the shapelessness of emotion itself. In such novels, things happen but the causes remain unclear. The ending is often said to lie concealed in the very beginning, but to discover in what this beginning consists is not such a simple matter, believe me.

(Nkosi 1986:164)

Nkosi reiterates this view when he states in the preface to the 2004 edition of the novel,

Written as it was about the racial divide in the 1950's and the 1960's, and at its publication inserted willy-nilly into the politics of the 1980's in South Africa *Mating Birds* became a scapegoat in the feminist sex wars. Although the history of racial oppression is replete with examples in which white woman first demanded sex then lied about being sexually attacked, some white South African feminists felt not only offended but fondled by Ndi Sibiya.

(Nkosi 2004:8)

What becomes clear from the above is that if one intends reading the novel, seeing it simply as an example of literary realism, one is bound to see it then as a black man making excuses for lusting after and raping a white woman, but if it is read as a novel that draws on European Modernism, as one in which "the self-reflexivity, experimentalism and intertextuality" (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:126) are acknowledged, then one will realise that the novel is not one simply about rape, but a novel that shows that "apartheid was an unnatural system, diabolically cruel and inhuman, that as social beings we make love in and by using language, and the abrogation of speech results in a distortion of these relationships" (Nkosi 2004:6).

The focus of this chapter as stated earlier, is the intersection of power, race and sex using the psychiatrist figure to illuminate these intersections. As Dodd states, “What the reader gets, at second hand as it were, are the memories, dreams and reflections which the great Swiss doctor has prompted” (Dodd 1990:123). It is these memories, dreams and reflections of Sibiya that have helped in discussing the issues pertinent to this thesis. A point that must be raised is that both Freud and Dr Dufre were Jews – an important fact that impacts on Dufre’s analysis of Sibiya. Sander L. Gilman in his book *Freud, Race and Gender* (1993) states that Freud lived in a period “in which being Jewish meant being marked or different” (Gilman 1993:12). Jews, it was believed, had “the skin color of ‘kaffers’, of blacks”, that,

Just as every Jew has a Christ complex, so every Negro has a white complex...as a rule the colored man would give anything to change his skin, and the white man hates to admit that he has been touched by a black.

(Gilman 1993:32)

It can be assumed that in early twentieth century Europe, Freud, as a Jew, was perceived in some of the same ways blacks were perceived in South Africa during apartheid. Is it not possible then that Freud’s writings were not as reductionist as is claimed? Is it not possible that Freud wrote with the intention that his essays be open to interpretation the way Fanon does? With regards to the text however, what is surprising is Dufre’s willingness to reduce Sibiya to simply a product of the Oedipus Complex, as Dufre is a Jew himself. The answer lies in the fact that Dufre considers himself a Swiss-German Jew, a Western European, who Gilman states considered themselves “commanding the language of a high culture” (Gilman 1993:13), as being separated from the “diseased, corrupt Jews of the East” (Gilman 1993:16), by the boundary of geography. In many ways then Dufre, who perhaps considers himself above other Jews, is of the opinion (like the whites) that Sibiya is a rapist. He is in many ways a coloniser himself and Sibiya’s words are very apt, “What can a Swiss-German Jew say to a black South African convict that can ease the pain and loss and create between us a bridge of communication across vast differences of social background and history?” (Nkosi 1986:41). The answer, simply, is nothing. Dufre, as a result of his own history and social background, arrives in South Africa with a preconceived idea of black people. If, as Gilman indicates, Western European Jews considered themselves above other Jews, whom they associated with

blacks, then it is obvious that for Dufre, Sibiya is nothing but an oversexed black man lusting after a white woman.

There is evidence in the novel as well of the fact that Nkosi, like Fanon and others, refutes the claim that it is the Oedipus Complex that causes neurosis in the black man. There is evidence as well that Nkosi attempts to disregard psychoanalysis as a cure. One of the main aims of the psychoanalyst is to get the patient to divulge as much information about his past as is possible. This does not work with Sibiya who chooses what he will reveal to the doctor. What is surprising is that, despite Dufre's intense questioning, he is unable to get answers from Sibiya. In fact Sibiya himself states that it is the African visitors who really get him to talk. He states, "It is a magnificent well-trying method, this silence, never asking any questions. A trap. It opens me up. At such times I want to talk; it is I who want to mention everything," (Nkosi 1986:19). Graham sums this up well when she states, "he resists 'the talking cure', the powerful intervention of European psychoanalytic discourse, represented in the promptings of the Swiss psychoanalyst, Dr Emile Dufre" (Graham in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:124). Sibiya's words at the end of the novel sum up an important message the novel holds. He states,

Dufre will receive from his academic peers throughout the enlightened world the accolade of one whose labors deserve the highest recognition for having conducted such an illuminating study of the benighted tormented mind of an African criminal.

(Nkosi 1986:182)

The answers Dufre's study will provide are not the only truth, they are simply the truth the way Dufre intends that it be seen. Everyone has had their say. Slater has had her day in court and Dufre's findings will be read throughout the academic world. It is only Sibiya who is silent, who has not had a chance to speak bringing to mind Graham's words quoted earlier, that the novel reflects the difficulty of assessing the truth in a context where racism has invaded the most intimate of spaces.

The psychiatrist figure features prominently in Nkosi's *The Black Psychiatrist* and Chapter Four will now provide a study of this character, once again looking at the intersections of power, race and sex in this work.

Chapter Four

The Black Psychiatrist

Nkosi's work *The Black Psychiatrist* (1994) is a one-act play based on two characters: Dr Dan Kerry, a black psychiatrist, from South Africa, now practising in prestigious Harley Street, who is visited by a white woman, Gloria Gresham, also a South African. The reader and Dr Kerry are for most of the play unsure of why Gloria Gresham visits Dr Kerry, even assuming at one point that she has been sent by the "South African Special Branch" (Nkosi 1994:10). According to Starck-Adler, "The suspense in the play lies in the fact that Gloria seems to know everything about Kerry although she is constantly mistaken" (Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:87). It is only at the very end of the play, after being taunted by Gloria Gresham into admitting the existence of a sexual relationship between them, that Dr Kerry admits angrily that while there was a sexual relationship between them, it was an incestuous one as her father, Johannes Joubert, had been taking advantage of his house-maid, and that he, Dr Kerry, was the product of that union. What is interesting about the play is the fact that the doctor seems to take on the role of the patient and the patient that of the doctor.

The play, though published in 1994, was first staged in 1983 in Lusaka. According to Steffen:

It was then published in England in 1994, produced at the John Stripe Theatre in Winchester, USA, in 1995, translated into French and finally, in 2002, into German. It was produced in Paris (2002) and was scheduled to be read at the Berlin Literary Festival in 2003.

(Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:96)

The play, written during the period of apartheid in South Africa, deals with issues pertinent to that time. References are made to "the apartheid laws" (Nkosi 1994:19), referring to laws such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1957.

According to Starck-Adler, Nkosi in *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist* "introduces a character whose role is that of a catalyst: the psycho-analyst. He is someone who "'triggers speech', who wants to be 'master of the truth'" (Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:82).

This is the character we find in *The Black Psychiatrist*, Dr Dan Kerry, whose task it is to “trigger speech” and be “master of the truth”, but whose role is undermined by his white visitor, Mrs Gresham. The very title of the play, *The Black Psychiatrist*, conjures up notions of race. One is led to wonder why Nkosi has made direct reference to the psychiatrist being black. Steffen in an article entitled “Nkosi’s play: ‘The Black Psychiatrist’ ” asks the question: “Why would psychiatrists, both black and white, populate the work of a Zulu?” (Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:94). Starck-Adler suggests that Nkosi’s reply to both questions would be met with a ‘Why not?’ (Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:94).

The play opens with stage directions laying out the stage in a prison-like manner, a description one would have little trouble disagreeing with. Nkosi writes:

The consulting room of a psychiatrist on Harley Street. The walls are bare, white, unadorned except for a single Zulu cowshield hanging on the back wall with two Assegais lying across its center in the form of an emblem.

The room must have a feeling of narrow confinement; the windows are permanently closed and set high up as though in a prison cell. There is also a door leading out to the waiting room. This door is kept shut.

(Nkosi 1994:1)

These words are reminiscent of the prison cell of Ndi Sibiya. Starck-Adler explains the significance of this prison-like environment when she states that the universe of prisons is multiplied before us and is both fictitious and real. She states, “The only escape possible in either space or time is through the liberation of memory, a compartmentalised, fragmented memory” (Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:82). For Gloria Gresham and Dr Kerry, the only way to escape this prison they have been in is by remembering and accepting their past and their history. This issue of remembering is one that the reader is faced with early in the play when Dr Kerry encounters Mrs Gresham, whom he very clearly believes is mistaken in her assumption that he knows her. Early on in the play Mrs Gresham states, “It’s one gift you all seem to possess, forgetting” (Nkosi 1994:3). Kerry’s answers to Mrs Gresham’s insistence that they know each other add to the suspense created in the play. While the suspense created is by no means that created by a murder mystery, the reader is curious to find out the exact nature of the relationship between Kerry and Mrs Gresham. To Mrs Gresham’s insistence,

Kerry replies, "I don't think I've ever set eyes on you in my whole life!" (3), "That's absurd!", and "I've never had anything to do with you"(3).

To psychoanalysts like Freud and Dr Kerry, the issue of forgotten memories is linked directly to psychoanalysis and is called repression. Reber in his book *Dictionary of Psychology* (1995) defines repression as: "From the classical Freudian model onward, a hypothesised mental process of operation that functions to protect the individual from ideas, impulses and memories which would produce anxiety, apprehension or guilt were they to become conscious" (Reber 1995:662-663). For Freud,

This effortless and regular turning away of the psychic process from the memory of anything that had once been painful gives us the prototype and the first example of psychic repression.

(Freud 1938:534)

Peterson in his book, *Psychology: A Biopsychosocial Approach*, in explaining repression states, "In repression, we actively keep an upsetting memory out of our conscious minds" (Peterson 1997:188). He states further that Freud's theories on repression and forgetting continue to be significant today because they are central to the processes and implications of psychoanalytical theories and that psychoanalysis has proved to be beneficial in drawing forgotten events and memories into consciousness. What is surprising about the play then, is the assumption on the part of the reader that Dr Kerry has repressed painful memories and that Mrs Gresham is there to help him "face up to the facts" (Nkosi 1994:14). Her advice to Dr Kerry is "only through acceptance of one's life and history lies the path to health and happiness" (Nkosi 1994:14). Ironic words, as the reader later realises. Mrs Gresham's words: "I'm your memory" (Nkosi 1994:19), reinforce the reader's belief that she is here to reveal to him something he would rather not hear.

Steffen, in discussing this scene, states:

In urging him to tell the whole story, Gloria first assumes her classic western role as the female embodiment of memory. Yet, on a more traditional South African level, she might also be perceived as an *insangoma*, a fortune-teller who challenges her griot,

Dr Kerry. Ghost-like she appears to attack the professional guru-griot who is charge of the master-narrative.

(Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:102).

However, Steffen states as well, that “the so far unchallenged insangoma, begins to face difficulties with her guru/griot in the following scene” (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:103). In what can be called the climax of the play Kerry states,

Kerry: You want me to be frank with you? Okay, just this once I'll be frank with you. Remember, you asked for it. *(Pause)* Right? Okay, let's admit you and I were lovers. You see, I couldn't go on seeing you because your father found out about us. He made it sound like a great scandal, his pure-white daughter holding hands with the coffee-colored son of the house-maid, the old fake! They all became very excited about it. Threatened to get my mother and me off the farm. God, what damn hypocrisy! What I didn't know then and what you obviously don't know now, is that our affair was totally unacceptable in more ways than meets the eye.

Woman: *(She laughs scornfully)* If you mean because of the apartheid laws? Save your breath.

Kerry: By any other laws it was completely unacceptable.

Woman: *(Suspiciously)* What do you mean?

Kerry: I'll tell you what I mean. *(He goes and stands at the window, his back turned on her)* Your father, Gloria, is also my father. For a long time Old Joubert was sleeping with his black maid in the backyard. I am the result of that squalid union.

(Nkosi 1994:19)

Finally all is revealed to the reader. It becomes clear that it is not Dr Kerry who is guilty of repression. It is Mrs Gresham, who has chosen to repress the memory of her father's adulterous relationship with a mere housemaid. It is this memory that would, according to Reber, cause anxiety, apprehension and guilt. Mrs Gresham's words come back to haunt her.

Kerry has become her memory, it is she who cannot face up to her responsibilities and it is she who needs to realise that it is only through the acceptance of one's life and history that one can find the path to health and happiness. Mrs Gresham's words: "God! The deceit! The humiliation. I don't think I can stand anymore" (Nkosi 1994:20), indicate her refusal to accept the truth, a refusal to accept that her father had sex with a house-maid and produced "the coffee-coloured son" (Nkosi 1994:19), an issue that will be discussed later in this chapter. An important revelation is made to Mrs Gresham, that the young coloured boy she had been intimate with was really her half-brother. Yet, it is not this thought that disgusts her. What she cannot, and will not accept is that her father dared betray her white mother with a black housemaid. In an essay entitled "The Savage Dread of Incest", Freud discusses the measures "savage races" (Freud 1938:820) take to prevent incest. According to Freud, man's incest wishes "which later are destined to become unconscious, are still felt to be dangerous by savage races who consider them worthy of the most severe defensive measures" (Freud 1938:820). A valid question regarding incest would be why, if incest is so disgusting and morally wrong, would one need defensive measures to prevent it? Freud, in discussing the Oedipus Complex answers this question. He states that men are deeply moved by the tragedy of Oedipus because his story could be ours; that it is the fate of all of us to direct the first sexual impulse to the mother and hatred for the father. He claims that our dreams are proof of this and that Oedipus shows us the fulfillment of our childhood wishes. He states further that the tragedy of Oedipus can be linked to dreams in which a child has the first stirrings of sexuality in relation to his mother. This innate desire in men has its beginnings in infantile sexuality as discussed in Chapter One. According to Freud,

Psychoanalysis has taught us that the first object selection of the boy is of an incestuous nature and that it is directed to the forbidden objects, the mother and the sister; psychoanalysis had taught us also the methods through which the maturing individual frees himself from these incestuous attractions. The neurotic, however, regularly presents to us a piece of psychic infantilism; he has either not been able to free himself from the childlike conditions of psycho sexuality, or else he has returned to them.

(Freud 1938: 819)

These comments are especially pertinent to this chapter. When, at the end of the play, Kerry reveals to Mrs Gresham his real relationship to her, the reader realises, as stated earlier, that it

was she who was guilty of repression and not him. It is clear that he knew from the very beginning that Mrs Gresham was really his half-sister. Yet, there is proof in the play that Kerry desires and is attracted to Mrs Gresham. When Mrs Gresham raises her legs onto the couch, her skirt fall falling apart, "*Kerry steals another glance, then drops his look*" (Nkosi 1994:12).

Later in the play:

Kerry crawls into her arms and for a while they lie on top of each other. Motionless. Then slowly they kiss. They fondle. They groan and roll on the couch. They grapple and roll off the couch to the floor. Then silence. A few minutes later Kerry jumps off her and starts to brush himself off quickly.

(Nkosi 1994: 18)

One is led to wonder why Kerry allows such intimate contact with a woman he knows is his half-sister. Could it be that Kerry himself is a neurotic who has not freed himself from these incestuous desire? This brings to mind Freud's belief cited earlier in this chapter when he stated that the neurotic - in this case Kerry - has either not been able to free himself from the child-like conditions of psycho sexuality, or else he has returned to them. This can then be linked to Fanon's claim, that in the case of the black man, it is not the Oedipus complex that has rendered him neurotic. It is instead colonisation that has done this. This view is explained by Steffen when she states, "However, parallels between Frantz Fanon and Lewis Nkosi's 'The Black Psychiatrist' end abruptly when Freudian psychoanalysis is concerned" (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:97). What we can infer from this is that while Freudian psychoanalysis suggests that it is the Oedipus Complex that can render one neurotic, this claim is refuted by Fanon and by the message in Lewis Nkosi's play *The Black Psychiatrist*. Kerry, despite practising in Harley Street, cannot escape his roots, his history, his past. He cannot escape the fact that despite living and working in London, he is simply a colonised black man. As stated earlier in this chapter, the title of the play itself suggests its link to issues of race. It is also as early as the first page that the issue of race arises when Mrs Gresham says:

Woman: I couldn't believe it was really you! But there it all was:
"COLOURED SOUTH AFRICAN ACHIEVES INTERNATIONAL

FAME: FIRST EMINENT BLACK PSYCHIATRIST TO PRACTICE IN LONDON'S HARLEY STREET." Well, I was absolutely bowled over just seeing your name in print! (*Slight Pause.*) Anyway, how does it feel? To be the first eminent psychiatrist of your race, I mean?

(Nkosi 1994:1)

It is on page one as well that the reader is presented with a description of Kerry's consulting room which can be described as stark, as mentioned earlier:

The walls are bare, white, unadorned except for a single Zulu cowshield hanging on the back wall with two Assegais lying across its center in the form of an emblem.

(Nkosi 1994:1)

These Zulu implements are the only external things linking Kerry to his race and culture. Nkosi, in describing this room, states ironically that "it borders on the puritanical" (1). Steffen refers to the cowshields and assegais as defensive and offensive tools. She states that they cannot protect him from "Gloria's insinuations of intimacy" (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:98), nor can they protect Kerry from the effects of colonisation. His bare consulting room with its white walls creates a picture of the colonised who "in the throes of assimilation hides his past, his traditions, in fact all his origins which have become ignominious" (Memmi 1965:122). Kerry, living and working in the United Kingdom, world of the coloniser, presents a picture of the colonised whose first ambition "is to become equal to that splendid model and to resemble him to the point of disappearing in him." (Memmi 1965:120). The supremacy of the white race over the colonised black man is clearly evident in the text.

Steffen defines psychiatrists as "private and public investigators, even predators of every nook and cranny of their patients' innermost life," (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:94). Yet, immediately that Mrs Gresham enters, it is she who becomes the investigator, the predator. Even Kerry's identity is in question. Mrs Gresham states: "Yes, I mean if you really are *the* Dan Kerry" to which Kerry replies, "Well, I sincerely hope I am *the* Dan Kerry." (Nkosi 1994:1). While it is Kerry who should ask the questions, Mrs Gresham takes over:

Kerry: I'm sorry. You want to say something.

Woman: Does he throw nice parties?

Kerry: Who?

Woman: This Dr. Barlow.

Kerry: I don't know what **you'd call 'nice'**.

Woman: Interesting then. *(Pause)* Are his parties interesting?

Kerry: I suppose so. *(Pause)* One always meets the most extraordinary people there.

Woman: I see. *(She gets up from the couch and wanders around the room again.)*

Is that why you think you might've met me there? Because you think I'm odd? A bit off my rocker? *(She swivels around)* Is that what you think?

Kerry: No, that's not what I meant at all.

Woman: What did you mean then?

Kerry: Well, nothing offensive, really.

Woman: But you do think I'm odd, don't you? At the very least, extraordinary?

Kerry: No.

(Nkosi 1994:8)

Mrs Gresham seems to take on the role of psychiatrist, even wandering around the room as one might do when questioning a patient. The normally “cool and efficient” Kerry is suddenly unsure of himself (Nkosi 1994:4). The reader is told: “Kerry seems uncertain what to do next” (4). This can be explained by Fanon, when he says: “When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person” (Fanon 1967:154). The white man’s view of black people as a stereotyped collective is referred to as well:

Woman: It only confirms what they all say about you.

Kerry: Who?

Woman: White people. They say you all have chips on your shoulders.

Kerry: Mrs Gresham, I don't care a damn what white people say about us.

(Nkosi 1994: 6)

This is explained by Memmi when he states:

Another sign of the colonized's depersonalization is what one might call the mark of the plural. The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity, ("They are this." "They are all the same")

(Memmi 1965:85)

It is however Nkosi's reference to inter-racial sexual relations, an important focus to this thesis, that allows one a greater understanding of the interlinked issues of power, race and sex. Early in the play Kerry is told by Mrs Gresham that "There must be many women, Dr Kerry, white, middle-class women like myself, who find the idea of a personal encounter with you positively overpowering" (Nkosi 1994:2), and Mrs Gresham laughs suggestively saying: "I'd say you and I have enjoyed what you might call ... very *intimate* moments" (2). What this points to very clearly is the white woman's desire for the black man, an issue discussed in Chapter Three. Fanon explains this by stating that white women have endowed the Negro with powers that other men (husbands, transient lovers) did not have. He states: "There is one expression that through time has become singularly eroticized: the black athlete" (Fanon 1967:158). Fanon states further that: "The women among the whites, by a genuine process of induction, invariably view the Negro as the keeper of the impalpable gate that opens into the realms of orgies, bacchanals, of delirious sexual sensations..." (Fanon 1967:177). This leads one to agree with Kerry when he says to Mrs Gresham that she is "obsessed with being chatted up" (Nkosi 1994:6). While Kerry very clearly is not chatting her up, but trying to get her to reveal who she is, she prefers to believe that he is chatting her up. While Mrs Gresham's desire for Kerry is blatantly obvious by her constant references to them having been intimate, by her deliberate revealing of "her soft, glossy thighs," (Nkosi 1994:13) and by her attempts to embrace him: "She turns quickly, flinging herself into his arms, embracing the startled psychiatrist" (Nkosi 1994:13), she is quick to accuse him of "trying to sex me up" (5). This reinforces for us Fanon's view that to the white man the Negro is seen as nothing more than a sexual animal, a view explained in Chapters Two and Three.

When Kerry attempts to "carry on in the spirit of a harmless flirtation," which Mrs Gresham has encouraged, she retorts:

Woman: I'm warning you Kerry! I don't care if you're black and South African and have been oppressed for as long as anyone can remember. This is not South Africa. Here you're just another psychiatrist, a professional man, like anybody else. No favours. You're supposed to perform your duties like anyone else without fear or favour.

(Nkosi 1994:5)

Steffen explains Mrs Gresham's words stating, "Gloria's racism only thinly disguised by her admiration, becomes increasingly manifest in her lecturing Dr Kerry on his duties" (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:100). Mrs Gresham's words reinforce for us the coloniser's belief that black people, after having been severely traumatised by colonisation, should now pick up the pieces of their fragmented lives and continue as normal. To theorists like Fanon and Memmi, this is not possible. Black people can never lead normal lives after the devastating effects of colonisation. Mrs Gresham's words quoted above, her belief that she is being chatted up, that Kerry is attempting to 'sex her up', and her words:

Woman: That's what I ought to do. Go away somewhere nice with a bit of a breeze and a cooling ocean. *(Pause)* I've often dreamed of the sea, you know, always the same sea, with golden sands and fringed by nice palm trees with bright green fronds trembling in the breeze Sometimes there are people bathing on the beach, disgraceful men waddling about in the nude; sometimes it's just fishermen, simple peasants with hard calloused hands and faces burned to black cork by the blazing sun. Then it's me who's swimming in the never-never. Showing off, I suppose. Being provocative. And there are always these men, running after me, trying to get their hands on my twat.

(Nkosi 1994:12)

can be understood using Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Mrs Gresham's dream can be likened to Freud's wishfulfilling dreams, explained in Chapter Three. According to Freud, these wishfulfilling dreams have to do with obtaining a satisfaction. What we can understand from this, is that Mrs Gresham's dreams indicate a desire for sexual relations with men she sees on the beach. The reader is left in no doubt of the fact that she enjoys watching these men in the nude as well as having strange men feel her about in the 'underground buses' (Nkosi

1994:12). When Mrs Gresham states: “I was really living in a dream-world of those childhood years in the bush, on a lonely South African farm. When to be loved by you seemed the very heaven on earth” (Nkosi 1994:13), one is inevitably led to believe Freud’s theory that hysteria was the product of a psychical trauma that had been forgotten by the patient. According to Steffen then: “ It is the aim of the talking cure to unearth the subconsciously repressed past and to integrate the show into a conscious whole” (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:100). This then is the task of the psychoanalyst. In the case of Mrs Gresham, her psychoanalyst fulfills his task and integrates the fragmented pieces of her memories and life into a whole. So traumatised was Mrs Gresham by the fact that her father had an adulterous relationship with the housemaid that she repressed the memory, unearthed by the psychoanalyst, Kerry. Mrs Gresham’s words that Kerry was locked in a mental prison are ironic. It was she who had locked away memories she was not prepared to face.

The issue of white men taking advantage of their powerless black maids is an important one to this thesis. In the play, this theme comes to the fore in the climax:

Kerry: There are ties of blood between us.

Woman: You're a bloody liar!

Kerry: Oh, yes, Old Man Joubert, bloody tyrant and White Supremacist
Extraordinaire was not above mixing it with the maid in the kitchen.
Isn't that what they used to do in slavery days after all?

(Nkosi 1994:20)

Young, in discussing this, states that “in the pursuit of the ‘white gallants’ for the ‘sable beauty’ even the authority of a master must bend to the more absolute empire of a Cupid” (Young 1995:131). The mention of Cupid creates the impression that this union is a beautiful one, with the full consent of the slave. However Young goes on to explain that slave narratives are full of the testimony of black female slaves as victims of white male violence. Kerry’s words indicates his parent’s union was forced:

Kerry: My mother was a poor ignorant girl out of the bush when she came to
work for your corrupt, rotting family. She never knew what she had
let herself in for. The midnight knocks in the servant's quarters. The
demands for late-night cocoas and hot-water bottles. (*Softly*) Your

damned father. Our father used her, old Johannes Joubert. Do you understand that? He took advantage of his position as an employer. That was rape. The result was me. I'm your past! Why don't you accept me!

(Nkosi 1994:20)

His mother had been a young, naive girl, taken advantage of by her employer. When Mrs Gresham replies:

Woman: Are you suggesting my father was betraying my mother with a housemaid? Are you going to stand there and repeat such lies?

(Nkosi 1994:20)

Kerry's answer is simple:

Kerry: It wasn't your mother Old Joubert was betraying, you cow! It was my mother he betrayed! (*calming down*). It was my mother he exploited.

(Nkosi 1994:20)

As stated earlier in this chapter, despite finding out the shocking truth, that she had had sexual relations with her half-brother, it is the fact that her father betrayed her mother with a black housemaid that disgusts her. While it is acceptable that she desired black men, it is unacceptable and humiliating that there be blood ties between them. It is here that the interlinked issues of power, race and sex are glaringly obvious, leading one to agree with Hyam when he states: "One thing is certain. Sex is at the very heart of racism" (Hyam in Young 1995:97).

Nkosi, in *Mating Birds* and *The Black Psychiatrist*, presents us with two psychiatrists, very different from each other. Starck-Adler explains this by stating:

In *Mating Birds*, Dr. Emile Dufre, an anagram for Freud, is also a Jew, but Swiss-German, and he tries to find out, from the 'outside' what in Sibiyi's childhood could have caused the aggression which leads him to commit a crime; whereas in *The Black*

Psychiatrist, Dr. Kerry, a black South African who has set himself up in Harley Street, London is himself analysed.

(Starck-Adler in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:82)

Dr. Dufre represents the coloniser while Kerry the colonised. While in *Mating Birds* Dufre asks all the questions, in the play it is Kerry who is questioned. Another important difference between the two psychiatrists is the fact that while the answers Dufre seeks lie with Sibiya, in the play the answers do not lie with the 'patient' Mrs Gresham, but with Kerry himself. As explained in Chapter Three, in *Mating Birds* Nkosi attempts to refute psychoanalysis as a cure. Dufre is unable to find the answers he seeks, despite making constant references to Sibiya's childhood. Sibiya's African visitors get more information from him than Dufre does. The truth, according to Sibiya, will be recorded in the book he is writing. In the play, however, Mrs Gresham does find answers, allowing repressed memories to resurface. One is led to believe, in this case, in the success of Freud's 'talking cure', that it is in going back to the past that one can find answers. Despite the fact that it is Mrs Gresham who does most of the questioning, "Dan Kerry also subjects his patient to a process of memory" (Starck-Adler Stiebel and Gunner 2005:88) that allows the patient to face the ghosts of the past.

Mngadi, in an article entitled "Hostage Drama: *The Rhythm of Violence* and some comments on *The Black Psychiatrist*" presents arguments in a similar vein to those of Brink and Dodd, discussed in Chapter Three. While Brink suggests that Nkosi has a persistent fascination with the subject of inter-racial sexual relations, Dodd and Graham believe that rape narratives have been exploited for political ends in South Africa. Mngadi states that the play "is embroiled in what is arguably Nkosi's longstanding pre-occupation with inter-racial sexual encounters" (Mngadi in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:77). He goes on to suggest that while in *Mating Birds* it was white female flesh that was sought after, in the play *The Black Psychiatrist* it is black male flesh that is sought after. Mngadi cites examples from the play that reinforce his argument. He states that from the introduction of the play Mrs Gresham presents a picture of "feminine coyness and sensual/sexual appeal" (Mngadi in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:77), that "the reader is invited to gaze and devour with Dan and Nkosi white flesh, as Mrs Gresham's thigh is revealed through the 'slit right down the front' of 'a soft shirt dress' (Mngadi in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:77). Mngadi states as well that Mrs Gresham is portrayed as being "sex-starved" (77) and that she is "like the 'English girl' " in *Mating Birds*, "a bait put there

to destroy our men [but] soft and round and desirable” (77). While Mngadi’s points are valid, his concluding statement:

It seems to me that a much longer project that will take on board Frantz Fanon’s theorisation of the sex-race question in *Black Skin, White Masks* would be ideal for the study of this phenomenon in Nkosi’s writing.

(Mngadi in Stiebel and Gunnar 2005:78)

suggests a more complex reading of Nkosi is necessary, as has been attempted in this thesis. What Mngadi’s statement suggests, is that Nkosi’s obvious fascination with inter-racial sexual relations could yield more complex answers given the appropriate theoretical investigation.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis then, has been a study of the interlinked issues of power, race and sex using the psychiatrist figure to provide these intersections. This was done through a close analysis of the two psychiatrists that feature in Nkosi's work, Dr Emile Dufre, the white psychiatrist in *Mating Birds* and Dr Dan Kerry, the black psychiatrist in *The Black Psychiatrist*. A key issue in this thesis was the rewriting of Freud's Oedipus Complex in racial terms. According to post-colonial theorists like Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, it is not the Oedipus Complex but colonisation that is the cause of neurosis in the black man. As stated earlier, issues of power, race and sex are tied up closely with the issue of colonisation. It was then the psychiatrist figure, using his 'talking cure', that brought these issues to the fore. It was this 'talking cure' that allowed the reader to see clearly how colonisation affected the way black and white people reacted to issues of power, race and sex.

It becomes apparent, after an analysis of the characters in *Mating Birds*: Ndi Sibiyi, Veronica Slater and Dr Emile Dufre; and of the characters in *The Black Psychiatrist*: Dr Dan Kerry and Gloria Gresham; that colonisation and apartheid are shown by Nkosi to have rendered the black man voiceless, if not powerless. One is led to agree with Fanon when he states that a normal Negro child, having grown up with a normal family, will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world. Nkosi's numerous references to a black man's sanity- "For a black man to live in South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century and at the same time preserve his sanity, he requires an enormous sense of humour and a surrealistic kind of brutal wit, for without a suicidal attack on Dr Verwoerd's armed forces, these qualities seem to provide the only means of defence against a spiritual chaos and confusion which would rob any man of his mental health" (Nkosi 1983:25); and that "Africans have learned that if they are to remain sane at all, it is pointless to try to live within the law" (28) - reiterate Fanon's view that colonial oppression does render one neurotic. One is led to believe that to preserve one's sanity as a black person, it was impossible to live within the oppressive laws of the government.

In his book *Home and Exile and Other Selections*, Nkosi asks a valid question: “How does one begin to write about apartheid in a way that would be meaningful to people who have not experienced it?” (Nkosi 1983:25). Nkosi himself answers this question by introducing the character of the psychoanalyst, who, as stated earlier, brings to the fore issues of power, race and sex. Steffen, in discussing the role of the psychiatrist, states that psychiatrists, both black and white, initiate as well as mirror modern man’s confessions in Nkosi’s work. This reiterates the view echoed in this thesis, that it is in the figure of the psychiatrist, that Nkosi has found new ways of writing about apartheid and the important issues of power, race and sex linked to it. Steffen makes another important point when she refers to psychiatrists as “private and public investigators, even predators of every nook and cranny of their patient’s innermost life” (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:93). It is this issue, that of psychiatrists as public and private investigators that must be looked at. Issues of power and race are common denominators in much non-fictional writing. This is evident in the work of Nkosi, Can Themba, Bloke Modisane and other writers writing about colonisation and apartheid. Issues of power and race are public issues, discussed openly. The focus of sex however, which is the result of the interplay of power and race, is a private issue. It becomes the role of the psychiatrist therefore to align the public and the private. The psychiatrist becomes someone to whom private thoughts, feelings and memories are related, a paid public person to whom the private is revealed. This is especially true in the case of Sibiya and Dufre. Steffen describes Dufre as “an Eurocentric expert who is mainly interested in confining a black man’s sexual behaviour into the cage of his Freudian theory” (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:94). The issue of that which is public and private is one that can be looked at in relation to the apartheid laws in South Africa. As stated earlier, desire is a private experience. The oppressive apartheid laws were a public issue, brought about to regulate that which was private. An important point to note, however, is the fact that the attempts by the architects of apartheid to ban this, did not stop the desire – an issue that is an important one in the texts selected for this thesis. This brings to mind a statement by Nkosi, discussed earlier in this thesis, that it is only in South Africa, that people who have committed no crime are turned into criminals and brought before the law for what in a normal country no-one would dare take them to court.

It is not only the figure of the psychiatrist that Nkosi has borrowed from Freud. In an essay entitled, "The Wandering Subject; Exile As Fetish", Nkosi looks at the Freudian issue of the fetish. Freud, in discussing Fetishism stated that it refers to the case in which,

the normal sexual object is substituted for another, which though related to it, is totally unfit for the normal sexual aim. The substitute for the sexual object is a part of the body but little adapted for sexual purposes, such as the foot or hair or some inanimate object (fragments of clothing, underwear), which has some demonstrable relation to the sexual person, preferably to the sexuality of the same.

(Freud 1938:566)

Freud's theory on the Fetish is closely linked to the Oedipus Complex, discussed in detail in Chapter One. The little boy sees what he considers his mother's castrated penis. The fetish then becomes a way to deal with the agonising sight the child is faced with. Freud states, "The fetish is a substitute for the woman's (mother's) phallus, which the little boy once believed in and does not wish to forego" (Freud 1956:199). In defining exile Nkosi states that, according to Robert Edwards, exile means separation, banishments, withdrawal, expatriation and displacement. Edwards states further that its emotional expression is loss, usually manifested in sorrow, though sometimes as nostalgia. In discussing exile as fetish, Nkosi states,

In the rhetoric of exile discourse more is known about its traumas than about its pleasures, more about its physical anguish than its precarious rewards; but as Freudian investigation of the 'fetish' has discovered, so with exile: there is a grey area of ambiguity where an insecure knot is tied between pleasure and displeasure, a 'mourning' for a lost object and a use of a fetishised object as a replacement and consolation; this is a complex process of avowal and disavowal in which a fetish as substitute and compensation for an object feared lost is paralleled in the discourses of exile by an individual's attempt to find consolation in the pleasures afforded by asylum as the twin term and alternative of mothercountry.

(Nkosi n.d.:5)

What one can infer from this, is that the exile, having lost the place known as home, attempts to find a replacement or a substitute in the country in which s/he has found refuge. Nkosi states further that exile can be read as a form of castration, a dismemberment and estrangement, where 'mother' country and native community are transposed into the 'body'

of the nation from which the exile suddenly finds him/herself separated, a limb amputated from family and native land. He states:

The cleverest trick of despotic regimes is to turn the exile into a diseased part of the body. The nation, real or imagined, is **then** held up to be the perfect body from which the diseased limb must be excised, banished, **discarded** or exiled.

(Nkosi n.d.:4)

It is also not just colonisation and apartheid that turns people into objects as opposed to being subjects. The issue of the black man as object is discussed in Chapter One. Of the exile as object Nkosi states that the “exiled person is suddenly reduced from subject to object, circulating like a commodity from one country to another through the global conduits of international politics” (Nkosi n.d.:4). Another important point that Nkosi makes is the fact that exile can be external or it can be interior; you do not have to leave your country to feel ‘exiled’. Nkosi states that “every year under the apartheid regime hundreds of black South Africans were daily exiled from urban areas to the barren countryside in the so-called Bantu ‘homelands’” (Nkosi n.d.:6). This is something that Nkosi had seen first-hand and that he discusses in *Mating Birds* when Sibiya’s family is moved from their home to the Bantu homelands. The agonising effects of this becomes clear when Sibiya reveals that it is this that led to his father’s death. Dr Dan Kerry, the black psychiatrist in *The Black Psychiatrist*, whom Steffen refers to as, “the successful South African exile in London” (Steffen in Stiebel and Gunner 2005:106), may have attempted to escape his past but it returns in the form of Gloria Gresham. Kerry could represent the exile whose fetished object becomes the United Kingdom – as stated in Chapter Four, there is no representation of his past or his culture in his consulting rooms except the highly symbolic cowshield and the assegais. He has obviously attempted to adopt everything English yet he cannot escape what or who he really is. He has found no escape in exile.

A study of Nkosi’s character of the psychiatrist that has brought to the fore issues of power, race and sex indicates that psychoanalysis is a useful tool in the analysis of Nkosi’s writing. It provides for Nkosi, “the new forms and the new ways of telling the story of apartheid” (Nkosi 1989:167) and it provides the reader with new tools to analyse these stories.

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