

ABSTRACT

The Politics of Self and Other

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This thesis examines, through a close study of literary texts by two South African writers, how identities are constructed, and in particular the power relations that generate, sustain and transform constructions of self and other. Reflecting on 'apartheid' (the former political system in South Africa), as a metaphor for race and gender relationships, the thesis analyses ideologies, based on notions of alterity, that produce positions of centrality and marginality in both material and discursive forms.

The study of texts by writers located in different positions of privilege serves to elaborate on the constitution of subjectivity, as the interplay between these two voices reveals the ambiguities, contradictions, gaps, ironies and fictions inherent in self/other discourse. The thesis argues for a reading of Head and Gordimer dialogically and thus extends the critical space in which these works have been usually positioned.

Additionally, the thesis locates these texts as participating in the struggle for hegemony, as they counter and establish new structures, through re-imagined identities and political relations.

Keywords: Head; Gordimer; reading dialogically.