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The literary, personal, and scio-political background of William Plomer's Turbott Wolfe

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The widespread obsession with the horrors of "miscegenation" found its way into fiction written by white writers, while inter-racial sexual relationships remains a major theme in South African literature. G. Heaton Nicholls's Bayetel (1923) looks at the catastrophic dangers of "race fusion", and is suffused with the imagery of biological degeneration. The pervasive fear of "miscegenation" also accounts for the massive popularity of Sarah Gertrude Millin's God's Stepchildren, perhaps the single most revealing novel in terms of its treatment of the theme of inter-racial sexual relationships. The novel made a tremendous and favourable impression when it was first published in 1924. Many liberal thinkers praised the novel for its "understanding" and "sympathetic" treatment of "coloureds", the "stepchildren" of the title. However, beneath the thin veneer of sympathy run the strands of horror and dread that characterized Millin's attitudes towards "miscegenation", for her an obsessive preoccupation. Moreover, God's Stepchildren reveals the powerful workings of biological racism and eugenics, long regarded as a respectable "science". The novel's immense popularity tells one a great deal about contemporary ideas about "miscegenation", and also illuminates the extent to which Plomer's Turbott Wolfe was unusual and controversial in its approach to the "miscegenation" issue. [146]

In God's Stepchildren Millin traces the history of a "flaw" - in other words, the dreaded taint of "black blood" - through four generations of a family. The flaw originates in the marriage of an English missionary, Andrew Flood, to a "Hottentot" woman, and the birth of a light-skinned but racially tainted daughter. As an adult this daughter sleeps with a white stranger, and gives birth to an even lighter-skinned son, Kleinhans. Kleinhans tries to "pass for white" but suffers only humiliation and rejection. Elmira, his daughter by a Cape woman, is sent to a white convent school thanks to the patronage of Kleinhans's employer. Once the secret of her parentage is discovered and she is forced to leave, Elmira agrees reluctantly to marry her patron. She gives birth to a son, Barry, who appears to be white, and then runs off with a stranger. Barry is schooled in Cape Town and at Oxford, where he becomes a clergyman and marries an Englishwoman. After the bride and groom return to South Africa, Barry's jealous half-sister reveals the secret of his "flaw" to his wife. Initially unable to understand why this should cause such a furore, the wife's peace of mind is gradually eroded by the colonial obsession with race, and she returns to England carrying their unborn child. Barry, hearing that his mother is about to die, returns to Namaqualand West to re-establish ties with his impoverished family, and dedicates himself to working among his own

people"; this self-imposed exile is seen as an appropriate form of repentance for the sin of being tainted by "black blood". Barry's suffering is predetermined for him by the relationship between Flood and a "Hottentot" woman: "His doom has been passed on to him in his blood", [147] he is tainted and defiled by the genetic inheritance of this "vile sickness".

J.M. Coetzee, in a fascinating essay on Millin, has shown that her ideas were by no means unusual:

> The vocabulary of degeneracy ("bad blood", "taint", "flaw", etc) was common to *nineteenth* century medicine and naturalistic fiction and was still very much in the air in Millin's earlier years. The notion of degeneracy as a biological means whereby a legacy of evil is passed on to succeeding generations is also so much part of the stock-in-trade of popular science around the turn of the century, and fits in so comfortably with Calvinist warnings *against* the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the heads of the children, that it is not surprising that Millin came to adapt it to miscegenation and the South African situation. Similarly, the notion that primitive man is a prototypical man and that deviations *from* the primitive (especially the half-breed) constitute degenerations was part of the ideology of colonialist racialism. [148]

Millin takes the idea of taint and degeneration a step further, arguing that those who stoop to miscegenation are inherently flawed, and mentally and physically degenerate to begin with. In the case of the "hybrid", "The Adam of

his line is likely to have been feeble of mind or ridden by senile lust, the Eva a woman from a 'broken tribe' with no race pride left". [149] The immense popularity of God's Stepchildren - it ran to several editions and has been translated into many languages [150] - even amongst self-professed liberals, indicates the extent to which the idea that "miscegenation" was taboo, unclean, degenerate and disgusting had taken root amongst the white intelligentsia as well as in the popular imagination.

In its obsession with "miscegenation" God's Stepchildren shares an important concern with Turbott Wolfe, despite their radically different approaches to the issue. Where Millin's treatment of "miscegenation" registers only repugnance and thinly veiled animosity and fear, Plomer's portrayal of inter-racial sexual relationships is extremely complex, encompassing a broad range of attitudes, experiences and emotions. God's Stepchildren, which Millin intended as a didactic "Tragedy of Blood" about the horrors of "miscegenation", addresses the question of inter-racial sexual relationships in a strangely anachronistic way. Perhaps unwilling to expose or explore the existence of such relationships in contemporary society, Millin attempts to give "miscegenation" a "long ago and far away" quality: thus the source of Barry's suffering lies in the "sin" committed by Andrew Flood a hundred years before. In

Turbott Wolfe, by contrast, the existence of inter-racial relationships is a crucial characteristic of the society Plomer portrays.

"Miscegenation" in Turbott Wolfe can play a comic as well as a tragic role. The theme of "miscegenation" is introduced near the beginning of the novel with a jaunty sang froid that would have horrified Millin, and which presents yet another striking contrast with her oppressive "blood tragedy".

Tyler-Harries, Wolfe's eccentric would-be biographer, returns to England in a rotten cargo-boat which is wrecked off the East Coast, and his death is described in an ironically cheerful tone:

> I was told [says Wolfe] that Tyler-Harries had last been seen with a coloured stewardess. They were both very far gone in raw cane-spirit, kindly supplied by the lady. [151]

Wolfe says goodbye to the doomed Tyler-Harries at "Dunnsport", and Plomer's selection of this name for Durban was not an arbitrary choice.

The inspiration for the name comes from the legendary, colourful and versatile trader John Dunn (1834 - 1895), who played a significant and controversial role in

nineteenth century Natal and Zululand, and acted as secretary and diplomatic adviser to Cetshwayo. [152] Dunn spent his childhood at Port Natal (Durban), established as a trading station in 1824. The legitimate authority in the region at this time was the Zulu Kingdom under Shaka. Beyond the reach of colonial authority, which effectively terminated at the Eastern Cape Frontier, the isolated traders and settlers at Port Natal adopted northern Nguni laws and customs. But with the advance of colonial authority and increased white settlement, the acculturated frontiersmen either renounced these affiliations or, in the case of Dunn, moved to a new frontier. By 1857 Dunn had rejected his tenuous European cultural heritage and had been absorbed into the dominant Nguni culture. Under Cetshwayo Dunn became one of the most wealthy and powerful chiefs in the Zulu Kingdom. He was also a prolific "miscegenator". Dunn contracted marriages - this would have horrified Millin - with no less than 48 Zulu women representing various important clans, paying ilobolo for all of them. [153] Dunn organised his domestic life strictly according to Nguni custom and practice:

> Dunn kept his private quarters in a single main residence ... located in the centre of his kraal. His wives lived separately in their own houses or individual beehive huts which were situated around the main house. Dunn's children lived with their mothers, and, like their mothers, were only admitted to Dunn's quarters when commanded ... [154]

Dunn was directly responsible for propagating an entire clan with a unique identity and ethnic consciousness of their own. He fathered 117 children and the Dunn community of Dunnsland comprised a very important element of the region. Today there are approximately five to six hundred of John Dunn's descendants living in a reserve set aside for them by the South African government.

Plomer, living in the same area some decades after John Dunn's death, not only pays pointed homage to Natal's most famous "miscegenator" by calling Durban "Dunnsport", but also sets the scene for the variety of intricate inter-racial relationships that form a major theme of the novel. Dunnsport becomes an ideological setting, imbued with the memory and history of inter-racial sexual contact which characterized frontier situations and which has always been an undeniable reality of South African society, despite preventative legislation and social taboos.

Significantly, it is at Dunnsport that Wolfe first wonders whether he has seen "a portent, preceding a half-caste world", when he witnesses a white man planting a kiss on the neck of a girl who is not white.

A social characteristic of frontier societies in Southern

Africa was the absence of a large white female population. It was thus not unusual for white traders or hunters to take wives and concubines from amongst the indigenous population. In the 1920s, for example, the Transkei still experienced a shortage of white women, and white traders in the region were to an extent isolated from the social implications of "crossing the bar":

> At Lusikisiki it was stated that out of 37 traders at least 30 were living with or were married to Native women. The great trouble was what to do with the children of these alliances, because a snuff and butter tinted race was springing up ... [155]

But even in places which were neither too isolated, nor experienced an acute shortage of white women, such as the Eshowe area where Plomer lived as a trader, relationships between white men and African women were not uncommon, as A.W. Lee (the original of Fotheringhay in Turbott Wolfe) attests. Addressing a conference of missionaries in 1926 on the "Problem of 'miscegenation'", Lee argues that whites have nothing to fear in terms of black "aspirations to Social Equality", since "most Black people are perfectly content with their race and with their colour". He continues:

> There would be nothing more to say on this point if it were not for the dreadful problem of "miscegenation" which exists in our midst ... the molestation of Native women by White men has

> been the scandal of our race ... The moral standard of the Natives has, in the past, been such that this kind of offence has not roused amongst them the passion of anger which it ought to have done. I know of my own experience many cases of this kind where the Native woman has at the least, been as much to blame as the white man ... The need for greater purity of life and modesty of conduct amongst all classes of Native women and girls is very urgent. [156]

The moral outrage generated by Turbott Wolfe amongst South African readers reveals not only the controversial nature of the "miscegenation" issue, but also the profound hypocrisy of many white South Africans.

In his portrayal of Wolfe's repugnant white neighbours, Plomer makes a pointed attack on the hypocrisy of contemporary white society. Many of the most racist of the white colonials have in fact had sexual relationships with African women. Bloodfield, for example, writes a letter of complaint to the "commissioner for Lembuland of the Department of Aboriginal Protection" (Department of Native Affairs), Colonel Valdarno, claiming that Wolfe has insulted his sister-in-law by asking her to pose for a portrait with an African girl:

> *I was only prevented from going and giving him a* horsewhipping by the knowledge that he was a newcomer to the district ... Wolfe is an unfit person to be licensed as a trader. He is a disgrace to Lembuland. [157]

Wolfe retorts:

> "Mr Bloodfield's unofficial native wife must have already presented him at that date with at least two children." "That's neither here nor there", snapped the Colonel. "Mr Bloodfield is not a trader." [158]

During a bout of the "local fever", Wolfe is forced to stay with another neighbour, the bigot Soper, an exponent of the crudest racism. Biological racism was based on a great deal of scientific research, and here Soper describes a local tradesman, Alfredson, in terms of a "scientific" ethnic diagnosis. [159]

> "Alfredson's coloured, do you know that? A touch of the tar-brush there, all right. You look at his nails. You can always tell them by their nails. Nails and eyes. You thought he was white? White? He's no more white than any blooming nigger on my farm." [160]

Soper's ideas are remarkably similar to those of Sarah Gertrude Millin, and here Plomer makes a pointed attack on "scientific" racism. Soper sees Alfredson as carrying the "taint" of "black blood" in his veins, which almost indiscernibly manifests itself, no matter how "white" the carrier appears to be. The "taint" is one of implied hereditary inferiority: Alfredson is accordingly no "better" than Soper's "niggers". Soper's contempt for Alfredson does not prevent him from coveting Alfredson's daughter:

> "Man, he's got a pretty daughter, Alfredson has. Pretty? Man, but she's a pretty girl. I don't fancy colour myself, but I'm ready to admit that I nearly married that girl before I met Mrs Soper." [161]

Later, Wolfe notices with irony Soper's child "playing on a dungheap with a little native boy, his small mean soul getting coloured with the monstrous intangible darkness of the native point of view. The child was in danger. His birthright was being sold over his head." [162] Soper's racism and hypocrisy are further revealed in an incident of extreme sexual horror. A white governess on a neighbouring farm becomes sexually involved with an African labourer. Soper recounts what follows with cheerful sadism:

> "Man, d'you know what we did? We castrated that nigger. We did. It was what he deserved, and he got it." [163]

Plomer later returned to the theme of castration and racial and sexual violence, in a short story which similarly portrays the consequences of a relationship between a governess and an African man. [164]

Turbott Wolfe portrays inter-racial sexual relationships from a variety of perspectives. The sexual encounters of Tyler-Harries and D'Elvadere are characterised by a jaunty earthiness. Bloodfield, Soper and old Schwerdt (who "was

murdered by a native woman to whom he had given a disease that shall be nameless") are the type of despicable "miscegenators" who would be perfectly at home in a Millinesque "Blood Tragedy", since they are the epitome of degeneracy, and morally reprehensible. On the other hand there is the sexually repressed and fastidious love of Wolfe for the beautiful Lembu girl, Nhliziyombi, and finally the courageous and pioneering marriage between Mabel van der Horst and Zachary Msomi which exemplifies the political philosophy of the "Young Africa" organization.

Wolfe, nicknamed "Chastity" by the Lembus, first becomes personally involved in the "miscegenation" issue when he falls hopelessly in love with Nhliziyombi:

> The girl came into the store and took my breath away. She took away the breath of Chastity Wolfe. [165]

Wolfe's response to this is strangely ambiguous. As soon as he has fallen in love with her, he is "afraid of falling in love with her": [166]

> I supposed myself to be in a very similar position to a monk in love with a nun ... I was in love with Nhliziyombi not only against my conscience, but against my reason; against my intellect; against my plans; against myself ...I saw that I should be sacrificing my own opinion of myself. [167]

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Plomer's portrayal of Wolfe's fear and trepidation is extremely complex. Certainly, inter-racial relationships in the 1920s were often punished by social ostracism if not by law. Here a contemporary commentator discusses "suggested remedies" for "miscegenation":

> The Bill which is known as the Immorality Act ought to make it quite clear that the White race has set its face most sternly against "miscegenation", and is therefore to be approved ... The Native woman who allows any familiarity from White men should be ostracised by her own people, just as the man should be, and frequently is, by his people. [168]

But Wolfe has already been ostracised by the white colonials he despises. He is also eager to assure "William Plomer" - the framing narrator and Wolfe's "biographer" - that he does not suffer from colour prejudice. [169] Nevertheless, Wolfe feels the overpowering presence of "a great forbidding law, like all great forbidding laws, subcutaneous." [170] Whether Wolfe is referring to a deeply ingrained racial or sexual taboo, is not clear. But in Wolfe's suppressed and fearful desire for Nhliziyombi can be traced Plomer's own trepidation about "miscegenation", and perhaps also the spectre of another sexual taboo - homosexuality - which affected Plomer personally and about which he maintained a discreet silence.

Wolfe's avoidance of sexual contact with Nhliziyombi presents a strong contrast with the behaviour of his degenerate neighbours: his unconsummated passion is clearly of a "higher order", ethereal, aesthetic, "pure." Wolfe clings desperately and fearfully to his European cultural heritage, and reminds himself that "every civilized white man, who considers himself sensitive, in touch with native peoples in his daily life should hold in his heart an image of the failure of Gauguin." [171] Nhliziyombi presents a threat to his carefully maintained cultural integrity, associated with his pervading fear of being suffocated or submerged by a "universal black darkness ... being sacrificed, a white lamb, to black Africa." [172] Conversely, Wolfe is also afraid of destroying the image he has created of Nhliziyombi as an "ambassadress of all that beauty (it might be called holiness), that intensity of the old wonderful unknown primitive African life - outside history, outside time, outside science." [173] Plomer adhered to the idea that western penetration in Africa was ultimately destructive, and in Turbott Wolfe Nhliziyombi is a "living image of what has been killed by people like Flesher, by our obscene civilization that conquers everything." [174] By avoiding sexual contact with Nhliziyombi, Wolfe not only disassociates himself from the Fleshers, Bloodfields and Schwerdts who play such a destructive and exploitative role in the Africa of the novel,

but also seeks to preserve a remnant of a "primitive", romantic, idealised "Noble Africa" in the dignified person of Nhliziyombi.

It is fascinating to see how in the course of the novel Nhliziyombi is increasingly portrayed as an integral and untouchable part of "old" Africa, an anachronistic symbol who must not be violated. Wolfe first meets Nhliziyombi in his store, amongst the clutter of cheap goods which he sells to the Lembus. Later he meets her walking in the bush, and the change in setting is significant: here Nhliziyombi is no longer an out-of-place African embassadress in the white man's store, but an integral part of nature:

> She was walking along in a leisurely way, playing an instrument called makwelane, made of a gourd ... She was playing this thing, and singing a melancholy milking song in a low metallic voice. She did not seem surprised at meeting me (as I was confused at meeting her) but stood aside in the foliage that I might pass. [175]

Nhliziyombi becomes a goddess in Wolfe's eyes, inviolate but also in need of protection:

> Is it truly I am afraid of myself that I am afraid of loving her? Is it not perhaps that I am afraid of her? How could I touch, perhaps to injure, that frail divine humanity, or human divinity? [176]

Plomer again explored this dilemma in a short story which focuses on the love of a young British trader (Frant) for an African girl, Seraphina. "The Child of Queen Victoria" -- the title derived from a nickname given to Plomer at Ntumeni [177] - bears a remarkable resemblance to Turbott Wolfe not only in terms of its central theme (inter-racial sexual relationships) but also in the similarities of setting (Lembuland) and main characters. [178]

Wolfe finally tells Nhliziyombi he loves her in a banana grove near his house. [179] The setting, like a painting by Rousseau, is imbued with romantic primitivism. Here they sit, "frankly content, without moving or uttering a word for more than an hour." [180] Wolfe records his feelings about this incident in his diary, in terms of an expressionist city-scape which reveals a powerful modernist influence: "Today was a city drunk with success ..." [181] For his last view of Nhliziyombi, Wolfe finds himself in a mango grove, with Nhliziyombi in the valley below:

> With a great earthenware pot on her head she was crossing a stream in the valley ... She walked more gracefully than anybody I have seen before or since. I watched her ascending slowly, and when she entered a grove of trees at the top of the hill her crimson dress went black, and she suddenly disappeared. [182]

Nhliziyombi is swallowed up by the bush and disappears

forever: the futility of his love is brought home to Wolfe (as is the case with Frant in "The Child of Queen Victoria") when he is told that she is to marry somebody else.

A striking contrast to Wolfe's trepidation and thin-blooded aestheticism - his shrinking from experience which earns him the name "Chastity" - can be found in Mabel van der Horst, whom Wolfe and the nonconformist missionary, Rupert Friston, meet during a visit to Frank d'Elvadere: "She had given me from the first to believe that she was a woman of character", recalls Wolfe; "it was a belief upon which subsequently I never had reason to go back." [183] Independent, lively, impulsive and politically courageous, it is Mabel van der Horst who first introduces the idea of "Young Africa." [184] The members of "Young Africa" believe:

1. That Africa is not the white man's country.
2. That "miscegenation" is the only way for Africa to be secured to the Africans.
3. That it is inevitable, right and proper.
4. That if it can be shown to be so, we shall have laid true foundations for the future Coloured World.

It is the promotion of "miscegenation" as a solution to the "colour question" - and the way two members put it into practice - that caused the most outrage amongst South

African readers. It was a unique solution: So widespread was the fear and horror of "miscegenation", and so powerful the idea of "race pride" amongst blacks as well as whites, [185] that "miscegenation" was rarely portrayed in a sympathetic light, let alone encouraged. In a sense, "Young Africa" turns upside down the prevailing social Darwinist notions of "degeneration" and "taint" through inter-racial contact: through a reversal of eugenicist notions Young Africa seeks to encourage inter-racial contact in order to create a "Future Coloured World", to bring about regeneration in the shape of "Eurafrica." [186]

Plomer was well aware that his unorthodox solution to the all-pervading "colour question" would cause controversy: indeed, on many occasions he commented that he intended Turbott Wolfe to raise a storm. [187] It is not clear how far Plomer was convinced by his own argument. There is a strong suggestion in Turbott Wolfe that "miscegenation", admirable in theory, may ultimately prove dangerous. Certainly, it is an idea which Wolfe and Friston adhere to in principle, but which they cannot come to terms with in reality. At a meeting of "Young Africa" Wolfe is suddenly seized by "a cold physical terror" when he realizes that Mabel shares none of his qualms about "miscegenation", and scorns his timidity:

> It was clear that Mabel van der Horst was attracted, how slightly it was hard to measure, towards Zachary Msomi. It was one thing to talk glibly about "miscegenation", to fool about with an idea, and another to find oneself face to face with the actual happening: it was the difference between a box of matches and a house on fire. [188]

Wolfe's trepidation and fear is compounded by the reaction of Friston who, himself in love with Mabel, may become "unbalanced" or even dangerous. Friston reacts to the relationship by taking a hallucinogenic drug which brings into the open the inherent dichotomy of his position; he is in love with Mabel, but also a proponent of "miscegenation" and a "Young Africa" enthusiast. Friston's hallucinations revolve around Zachary and Mabel. He imagines himself at a *funfair*, watching a whirling merry-go-round, which strongly echoes Wolfe's experience at "Schönstein's Better Shows", where he first becomes aware of "the question *of colour*." Friston describes his experience to Wolfe:

> And then there were dreams again. Young Africa. Eurafrica. "miscegenation". What uncomfortable ideas for a missionary. And I am a missionary. Perhaps I shall be a patriarch. The father of a half-caste nation, the father of Young Africa; of Eurafrica. [189]

Later Friston dreams about Mabel pushing a perambulator containing "a custard coloured child" called "Young

Africa" or "Eurafrica." Mabel tells Friston: "I am going to drown him. He doesn't come up to expectations." [190] Friston, like Wolfe, is plagued by premonitions and images of violence as the unavoidable consequence of "miscegenation", racial fear and hatred. The memory of Tyler-Harries drowning in the arms of a "coloured" woman resurfaces as an image of doom, and he is tortured by dreams in which the Dukela river (Tugela) "is running bevelled with red." [191]

Plomer is clearly aware of the confusion, contradictions and imbalance of the individual psyche. Moreover, he locates the source of this confusion in the nature of contemporary South African society. One of the most striking features of Turbott Wolfe is the extent to which Plomer succeeds in portraying a violent society on the brink of extreme social and political change, and this portrayal is centred in the experiences and attitudes of his characters.

Friston recovers in time to preside over the marriage between Mabel and Zachary; it is the second wedding-breakfast at the *Hlanzeni* mission house, and Friston's sermon is "a hazy mixture of sophistry, confused thinking and Bolshevism." [192] Unlike Wolfe, who turns to his art to escape from his uncomfortable love for Nhliziyombi,

Friston turns to political activism and a vaguely defined "Bolshevism." He plans to stay with an African family at the Dukela river: "I'm not quite sure of the family name", Friston tells Wolfe, "but their father's name is Langalibalele, and their mother's is - what is it? Oh yes. Nhliziyombi." [193] For Wolfe the name Nhliziyombi (meaning "bad-hearted") is "a deep wound." [194] Her husband's name is perhaps a direct tribute to John Langalibalele Dube.

While Wolfe is clearly shown to be inadequate by the end of the novel, Friston, who becomes a political activist and turns to "Russia" for inspiration, fares no better. He is killed in "Swedish East Africa" (Mozambique), and leaves behind only some unopened letters and cryptic papers. Once Friston has died, Wolfe and "Young Africa" disintegrate. Wolfe's hesitant and timid involvement in "Young Africa" is interpreted by Colonel Valdarno as a transgression of his trade licence agreement, and Wolfe plans to return to England where he "shall find emptiness, because I have reached a point where life offers nothing but a few sensations, more or less indecent, which I know are only illusions." [195]

While Friston and Wolfe, like Tyler-Harries and the Norwegian missionary Nordalsgaard, are defeated by Africa and

specifically by the nature of the "colour question" in South Africa, Plomer leaves us with a tentative symbol of hope and survival in the form of Mabel van der Horst. Plomer's portrayal of the relationship between a white woman and a black man was particularly shocking for South African readers: Indeed, it was something very rarely mentioned, except in the context of "Black Peril" where white women were invariably portrayed as the victims of "animal lust". Nevertheless, as Plomer knew and perhaps intended to expose, such relationships did exist. Ilanga lase Natal, for example, reported in 1921 that in Natal and Zululand there were "isolated cases of white women living with Kaffirs, and at Matatiele evidence was given of a white woman who had a daughter who was seduced by a Native, with whom she afterwards went to live as his wife." [196] Mabel is clearly a figure of extreme courage and determination. In her Wolfe momentarily perceives a harmony and synthesis of the ideals of "Young Africa", here symbolically portrayed:

> She was now Mabel Msomi ... there she was, in a gown of cream-white, lightly and curiously patterned with black. [197]

Just as Nhliziyombi is portrayed as a symbol, almost god-like, of an idealized African past, so Mabel becomes for Wolfe the embodiment of "Eurafrica", the spirit of an

idealised and unattainable future:

> As she walked away in her springing stride, with fine legs and buttocks, and a royal back, out of the early morning shadows into the early morning sun ... she was no less than a goddess. As she emerged across the open sward (dew drenched and sunlit) her departure acquired a colossal valedictory significance: her shadow travelled rapidly over the uneven verdure at her left hand (sinister, I thought) and she became the goddess of the future, going out to suffer. What was her name? Her name was Eurafrica. [198]

William Plomer did not "discover" the problem of colour, nor was he the first to satirize South African racial attitudes. His importance lies in his recognition of the "colour question" as the central moral issue of South African society; the awareness of colour is the dominant imaginative process at work in Turbott Wolfe. It is clear that while Plomer hopes that the awareness of colour will one day become an anachronism, this will not be easily achieved. Plomer suggests that it will take far more than Wolfe's scornful but ultimately impotent criticism of racism, or Friston's belief that "Russia" or a vaguely defined "Bolshevism" can provide an instant solution. It is in acts of extreme moral courage and determination that Plomer sees salvation, but even Mabel van der Horst, the embodiment of "Eurafrica", is a goddess "going out to suffer". In Turbott Wolfe Plomer portrays a society on the brink of extreme and violent change, and in this the novel

achieves a prophetic significance; the idea of a future South Africa, free from the obsession of colour, is suffering still.

Section III: The "Politico-Aesthete"

> A split personality must surely have at least two points of view. (William Plomer) [199]

In an "appendix" at the end of Turbott Wolfe, Plomer describes what he calls "The Politico-Aesthete":

> A man, fortunate or unfortunate, whose existence is hemmed in by wireless telegraphy ... He staggers, poor man, under the weight of the past; and he struggles, poor man, under the load of the future. He has not got over the French Revolution when he is faced with the Russian. He has not digested the Renaissance before he is confronted with Cubism. Dadaism he finds easier. He would like to focus his attention on the point where the rational in his character coincides with concupiscible; but is it really his character, he wonders - ? He is divided by a thin red line drawn down the middle. On the right hand he is a politico, on the left aesthete. His left eyelid droops in languor ... his right eye is fastened irrevocably upon the main chance ..."Post-War", murmurs the Politico-Aesthete ... [200]

This description, we are told, Wolfe finds amongst Friston's papers after his death. Who exactly is the "Politico-Aesthete", and what does he represent? It would be easy to assume that this is merely a satirical description of Friston himself, further illustration of his confused state of mind and severe inner conflict before his death. But Turbott Wolfe provides no easy answers: it is a novel that raises more questions than it suggests solutions, and this is one of the qualities that makes it a

complex and challenging book, and the ideas behind the "Politico-Aesthete" worth exploring in more detail. The description of the "Politico-Aesthete" is rather like an outline or skeleton that needs to be fleshed out before one can see the whole, and once this has been done it is revealing in a number of ways. Not only does it tell us a great deal about the characterisation of Friston as well as Wolfe, it also tells us a great deal about Plomer himself: his ideas about "art" and the relationship between "art" and "politics", the "post war" artist or writer, the "outsider", love, western civilisation and more. All these components subtly inform and permeate Turbott Wolfe.

What did it mean, in Plomer's generation, to be a writer? Any definition of a "writer" has a particular social history, it is an idea, like any other. The way in which Plomer defines himself as a writer is important not only for a fuller understanding of Turbott Wolfe, but also in understanding a particular literary crisis, itself part of a social crisis, at the historical moment when Plomer was learning to write, in the early 1920s.

Plomer tells us in his autobiography that:

> In the Sixties and Seventies of this century the frustrated, life-hungry, idealistic and disillusioned young have tended to join in public demonstrations and to utter their own inner tur-

> moil in some kind of poetry. In the Twenties it was more usual for them to write a novel. A literary historian with nothing better to do might find it curious to trace, in the minor English novel-writers of the period, the workings of revolt against the society to which they had been brought up to conform. [201]

The act of writing a novel, according to Plomer, is thus sometimes an act of rebellion: "I know," he writes, "because I was an unknown author myself; rebelliousness had made me one." [202] He remembers Turbott Wolfe as "a violent ejaculation, a protest, a nightmare ..." [203] This first novel was at one level a protest engendered by the social and political climate in South Africa in the 1920s. But Plomer also suggests that we explore a different context, that of the intellectual climate in England at the time he began to write.

Plomer grew up at a time and within a class in which the practice of writing was problematic. Writing was often thought of as an impractical secondary activity, an alternative to "doing something real", unless, of course, the writer was a successful author who could turn a pretty phrase into a pretty profit. Plomer recalls a childhood incident which tells us a great deal about family attitudes to artists, writers and other layabouts:

> [My Aunt] asked me if I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up. A little earlier it was thought that I wanted to be an engine driver, but now,

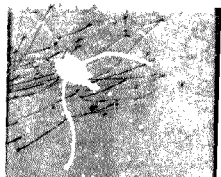
> without the least hesitation, I said, "Yes, I'm going to be an artist." My aunt recoiled as if stung by some harmful insect, and cast her eyes up dramatically with a look of horror. "Good heavens! I hope not!" [204]

In childhood, Plomer's artistic ambitions received little encouragement:

> It is all very well to find oneself a little aesthete - and I think I may say as an artist as well, because I have done something to create as well as to enjoy; but I did not find my inclinations altogether protected, fostered or indulged. I did not grow up in a family or in a society of leisured and cultivated aesthetes. My education and the social milieu in which I mostly found myself when young were conventional, practical and philistine. [205]

Plomer's determination to be an "artist" despite the orthodox view that "art" was a frivolous alternative to "real" work or the "real" world, required a conscious act of rebellion. Plomer's earliest experiences were defined by a sense of displacement, marginalisation and loneliness, which contributed to his perception of himself as an artistic, unconventional "outsider" and "rebel". These qualities he also associated with writers or artists he admired:

> At the age of seventeen, for instance, I was living in a remote place in Africa, not by my *own choice*, and the only books I had were a handful I had brought with me. They included the poems of Blake and of Rimbaud, and the letters of Vincent van Gogh. It occurs to me now that one could hardly choose from the nineteenth



> century or from any other time three men, three artists, more single-mindedly devoted to their art or more isolated from their contemporaries. With such great examples before me, how could I fail in my obscure and small and immature way to see that the world of imagination and of art was worth all one's loyalty? Its shapes were more defined, its colours were clearer. It was nearer to the truth than the everyday world. [206]

If the only orthodox test of achievement in art lay in recognition and success as an author or artist, then this could be opposed by a simple negation: the true "artist" should have no commercial aim, no social function, and by implication, his work should have no social content - "art for art's sake." [207] This polarisation is an important phase of late nineteenth century bourgeois life and thought, and was more or less a conventional perception in the 1920s: it is at the root of the conventional distinction between "content" and "form". Although social awareness in writers was widespread in the nineteenth century - some names that immediately spring to mind are Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Elliot and Hardy - by the end of the century a polarisation between the "social" and "aesthetic" emerged. This was seen by some writers and critics as the opposition between a composed, pure, essential art, and projected, committed, purposive writing. The former implies a definition of "being a writer" which excludes social experience and concern - the writer "outside" society. George Orwell comments scathingly that

at this time "in 'cultured' circles arts-for-arts-saking extended practically to the worship of the meaningless. Literature was supposed to consist solely of the manipulation of words". [208]

Turbott Wolfe is unusual in the South African context in terms of the understanding it reveals of literary and artistic undercurrents and developments in the metropolitan culture. Plomer had steeped himself in the works of a variety of English and European writers, and was, perhaps unconsciously, influenced by the contemporary crisis in aesthetics - the split between "pure", "aesthetic" art, and socially aware or "anti-aesthetic" art, as some current generalisations tended to define the two trends:

> I am, if you like the word, an aesthete ... When we come to the question of what my belief in art has meant to me in my own life, I would say that it has meant first and foremost a battle. I do not mean a battle against any wavering or weakening of that belief held by me, but a battle against the pressure of the everyday world. [209]

Plomer thus experiences a split between "art" and the "everyday world". "Art" also transcends social and political upheaval:

> Through later life, the dangers of war, the drudgery of duty and responsibility, the waste and folly of ordinary existence, the strain and anxiety of public and private life, my belief in

> the values of art has remained constant because they themselves have remained constant. [210]

It is difficult to reconcile these ideas with Plomer's equally strong insistence that Turbott Wolfe was an act of rebellion not only against orthodox values but also against the mediocrity of colonial society and the injustices of the political system in South Africa. Indeed, these conflicting ideas remained a contradiction in Plomer himself, and can be discerned as a powerful, inherent tension in Turbott Wolfe.

The "Politico-Aesthete", we are told,

> is divided by a thin red line drawn down the middle. On the right hand he is a politico, on the left aesthete ... His right hand pocket is full of slogans, and his left hand of epigrams. [211]

This describes precisely the kind of tension Plomer experienced between the idea of the artist as "aesthete" - "outside" society - and literary engagement with social and political concerns. The young Plomer aspired to metropolitan glory - then dominated by the idea of a "pure" art - not local fame amongst colonial "philistines". [212] Nonetheless, the political and social conflict inherent in South African society made it impossible for him to avoid engagement with "humdrum

reality". This conflict characterizes Plomer's definition of himself as a writer; he believes that art can "transcend" reality, and yet he believes that Turbott Wolfe was an act of rebellion engendered by his interpretation of social and political reality in South Africa.

This conflict or "split" finds direct expression in the characterisation of Wolfe and Friston in Turbott Wolfe. Using Plomer's formulation of the "Politico-Aesthete" - a personification of Plomer's idea of a conflict between "art" and "politica" - one can broadly categorise Friston as a "Politico" and Wolfe as an "Aesthete".

Wolfe personifies the artist as "outsider". He is "a fish out of water", [213] unusual, even at times exotic. The opening sentence of the novel tells us that "Turbott Wolfe may have been a man of genius". [214] In the bizarre room where we first meet him, Wolfe seems perfectly at home:

> I felt obscured by all those scentless bouquets, ["William Plomer" comments] but Turbott Wolfe seemed so little obscured that he might have purposely designed those enormous bistre-and-green roses that were tousled and garlanded up and down the coverlet on the bed; and the wall behind his head, with its bouquets of brown marguerites, its pomegranates and bows of ribbons and forget-me-nots, became for him an ideal background. He was dignified in a curious way perhaps peculiar to very intelligent people ... there was with him an assured grace, perhaps because of the fine culture that he had and because of the intense natural sensitiveness of

his nature. [215]

In the colonial milieu, which Wolfe regards as exceptionally mediocre, he is also portrayed as an insular outsider. Wolfe comes to South Africa to recover his health, to trade, to find meaning in his life. [216] Initially his primary interest is his art:

> At Ovuzane I passed my time between trade and folklore and painting and writing and music, between sculpture and religion and handicrafts. I even got down to landscape gardening. [217]

His artistic endeavours are not merely a way of keeping busy:

> They have been pleased to tell me, one or two who have had the chance and I hope the wit to judge, that the work I did during that period had value. They have been kind; I have been flattered. After a time I was surprised to get a communication ... from a very distinguished acquaintance whose wish it was to visit me at Ovuzane for the purpose of undertaking to compile a carefully illustrated record of what I had done. The name was Tyler-Harries ... [218]

Tyler-Harries is the founder of the "Pomegranate Press" (a reference to the *Hogarth* Press?) [219] and his interest in Wolfe's work elevates it to the status of "Art". But the manuscript of the book Tyler-Harries has written about Wolfe is lost at sea, perhaps an indication that the "aesthete" cannot hope to survive for very long in the

colonial milieu portrayed in Turbott Wolfe.

Wolfe's self-sufficient isolation and absorption with art is soon shattered. Political reality intrudes on his art: Attempting to paint a portrait of two young women, one white and one black, Wolfe finds that this outrages his white neighbours. An "aesthetic" act is inevitably also a political statement, and slowly but surely Wolfe becomes aware of the central "colour question". He finds himself "taking sides" with the Lembus, and with the eye of an artist admires "the over-developed marvellous animal grace of each Lembu individual ... I was losing my balance." [220].

One of the characteristics of the "Politico-Aesthete" is that he

> would like to focus his attention on the point where the rational in his character coincides with the concupiscible; but is it really his character, he wonders - ? [221]

This is precisely Wolfe's dilemma when he finds himself in love with Nhliziyombi, and is immediately thrown into turmoil. Nicknamed "Chastity" - a name Wolfe is rather proud of - Wolfe's peace of mind and self-imposed isolation is further destroyed by the intrusion of reality in the shape of Nhliziyombi. His passion for her not only leads to

severe inner conf'ict, but breaks into the insulated "world of art" he has created around himself. He initially believes that art is a refuge, an escape from reality, and the idea of a conflict or "split" between "art" and "reality" is graphically illustrated in Wolfe's inner confusion: "I gave up walking abroad from Ovuzane for fear of meeting the girl, and sought to drown my struggles in music." [222] Wolfe soon finds that "there is so much pain in music: that was why I chose to use words instead": [223]

> I planted words round my emotions as you plant trees round a house: They draw attention to the white walls of truth within, which at the same time they partly conceal. [224]

Art becomes for Wolfe a realm of conflict: it is "invaded" by the "outside world", by love, by politics. It is an unavoidable conflict, and one which Wolfe, the "Aesthete", is not equipped to cope with. Unable to remain isolated from society, Wolfe is forced to engage with reality. It is a political but also an "aesthetic" decision: Wolfe rejects the white colonials who are as physically repulsive as they are morally degenerate, "whose eyes and thoughts were shifty; and whose speech came from mouths filled with venom instead of spittle," [225] and chooses the moral purity and physical beauty and magnificence he perceives in the Lembu people.

When Wolfe meets Rupert Friston, he sees in him a "reflection of myself. Vanity. Or perhaps excitement at getting in touch with a point of view something removed from the usual point of view to be found in Lembuland." [226] This recognition is based partly on Friston's political views, which coincide with his own, and on Friston's "unusualness" in the context of the colonial milieu; like Wolfe, Friston is an "outsider" and a "rebel". But Friston is also an inversion - like a mirror image - of Wolfe, and in many way his opposite. If Wolfe is primarily an "Aesthete", then Friston is the other side of the equation, a "Politico". Where Wolfe's "pockets are full of epigrams", Friston's contain "slogans":

> "Credo", he announced in a voice of awe ... speaking as distinctly as an oracle. "I believe that the white man's day is over. Anybody can see plainly that the world is quickly and inevitably becoming a coloured world". [227]

But like Wolfe, Friston is also "divided by a thin red line drawn down the middle." [228] His political convictions and involvement with "Young Africa" result in inner confusion when Mabel van der Horst decides to marry Zachary Msomi. Like the "Politico-Aesthete" he is torn between "the rational in his character" and "the concupiscible"; his right ear listens to the cacophony of

a national anthem, while "his left ear is devoted to a saxophone (or is it a sexophone?) ..." [229] The tension between his love for Mabel and pro[illegible]on of "miscegenation" as a political ideal and solution to the "colour question" is vividly illustrated by his descent into a drugged madness, the psychological expression of the conflict between irreconcilable ideas and emotions. Where Wolfe, the "aesthete", finds expression for his inner conflict through political involvement, Friston, the "Politico", expresses his turmoil and confusion in poetry:

> Dukela, your tide
> Is running bevelled with the red
> Issue of pride ... [230]

Amongst Friston's papers Wolfe also finds three poems which vividly illustrate Friston's (and Wolfe's) predicament. [231]

Both Wolfe and Friston are portrayed as distinct "outsiders" in the colonial milieu. As Tyler-Harries comments on his arrival in South Africa: "how many fish there are here out of water!" [232] Turbott (Turbot?) Wolfe defines himself as an "outsider" in terms of his status as an "aesthete" and an artist, and later in terms of his rejection of white colonial values. Friston is an "outsider" in terms of his unconventional ideas about

religion, [233] and his political activism. It would be true to say that in many ways Turbott Wolfe is about individuals' attempts to get away from an oppressive normality. Both Wolfe and Friston "escape" to South Africa, here described by Wolfe with graphic intensity:

> My life seemed to be then a structure that had grown steadily without the least deviation from the architect's plan - every stone was being put in place, every malicious ornament. Lack of money, perhaps an extreme sensitiveness; a deep-rooted immovable cowardice; sudden flowers of courage - all these seemed due to an invisible constructor of my life, who must have been Gothic, so intent was he upon his work, so nice with satire. But the cruel building was suddenly ruined ... I was suddenly ordered to Africa ... [234]

Friston, "a parson ... because of a kind of family tradition", tells Wolfe: "I don't think England would hold me. That's why I'm here." [235] Once in South Africa, Wolfe and Friston reject the mediocrity and racism of contemporary society, and attempt to escape through art or politics. This experience of awareness, rejection and flight is repeatedly enacted, and significantly also forms a distinct pattern in Plomer's own life. [236]

It would be equally true to say that Turbott Wolfe is about people who try to get away, but fail. In the end that failure - either reabsorption, or death - is seen as an inevitable, inescapable fate. In the words of one of

Friston's poems, discovered after his death and aptly titled "Manifesto By a Man in a Trap":

> I am constrained to play a part -
> An actor, only free to act. [237]

Just as Wolfe seeks escape in his art and in politics, so Friston attempts to escape from reality through political activism and a vaguely defined "Bolshevism". Friston is murdered, and Wolfe returns to England, disillusioned and empty of ideals, to die of an "African Fever." One can recognise a deep pattern here: The man who tries to break from the standards and conventions of his group but who is drawn back into it, or, in the case of Friston and Wolfe, eventually destroyed. In Turbott Wolfe Plomer creates an entire social, political and physical milieu within which the social criticism and the personal breaks are distinct elements. Friston disappears to "Swedish East Africa" and a telegram curtly announces that he is "presumed murdered political or religious reasons by members quzo tribe." [238] Wolfe is left a broken man. He tells Caleb of his intention to return to England while sitting beneath a barren pear tree, an apt symbol for Wolfe's fruitless search for meaning to his life in trade, in art, in love and in politics:

> My life, Caleb, is like a bucket with no bottom.
> Nothing can fill it. Once I thought Africa

> could fill it, but I doubted. Now the lady is married, and has children. Once I thought fame could fill it, but Mr Tyler-Harries, who was going to get it for me, went down to the bottom of the sea - very unreasonably. With Young Africa I allowed myself to be cheated into the idea that politics would give me what I sought. Now, under the barren pear tree, I see that Young Africa was a monstrous farce. Caleb, I have looked at everything ... Caleb, I am an egoist. [239]

The "outsider", the "Politico-Aesthete", is reabsorbed by an oppressive normality, and eventually destroyed.

The "Politico-Aesthete", we are told, carries under his arm "the complete works of Freud". Plomer wrote at a time when a deeper awareness of psychological complexities was present at the same time as a deeper awareness of social complexities. Through the inner conflict and turmoil of Wolfe and Friston, social and political conflict are symbolically enacted.

The source of the moral and social complexities addressed in Turbott Wolfe and of Wolfe's defeat and emptiness can be found not only in the South African milieu, but also in the intellectual climate of postwar England, as Friston's description of the "Politico-Aesthete" indicates: the "Politico-Aesthete" is

> a man, fortunate or unfortunate ... He staggers, poor man, under the weight of the past; and he struggles, poor man, under the load of the fu-

> ture ... 'Post war', murmurs the Politico-Aesthete ... [240]

Plomer, growing up between Africa and England, and remaining in most ways essentially English, was profoundly affected by some of the ideas circulating amongst intellectuals in post war England. If the First World War had begun with the cacophony of military marches and nationalist fervour, it ended with despair and disillusionment. For many, it signalled a turning point. With the First World War, the ideals of comfort, security, certainty and self-confidence which dominated nineteenth century bourgeois thinking were shattered. The South African war, the Irish "Troubles" and the Bolshevik revolution presented further challenges to the existence of these myths. Gone was an era of peace and prosperity, and the end of the war represented for many the dawning of a new era of uncertainty and trepidation. The post war climate was one of profound ambiguity: in Plomer's definition, "post war man" staggers under the illusions of an irretrievable past, and struggles under the load of an uncertain future. The impact of the First World War is made explicit in the striking contrast between Klodquist, symbol of nineteenth century rationalism, confidence, security and determination, and his successor Nordalsgaard, who personifies the ambiguity of "post war man".

The war also called western civilisation itself into question; its values and "inherent" superiority could no longer be taken for granted. Plomer, like many others of his generation, believed that western civilization was in a state of severe crisis - corrupt, degenerate, decadent and ultimately destructive - an idea that gained momentum as the horrors and waste of the war became apparent. The young and selfconsciously rebellious Plomer expressed his disillusionment in Turbott Wolfe: in the words of his protagonist Wolfe, "our civilisation is obscene." [241]

Both Friston and Wolfe are personifications of "post war man", insecure, ambiguous, searching for alternatives to "western civilisation", filled with doubts and fears about the future. They believe that Europe is "as dead as mutton", [242] and that western civilisation and dominance in Africa is based on a fallacy:

> The white man's as dead as a doornail ... We think we're invincible because we fly around the world in an aeroplane, and because we can send our silly voices flying round the world by wireless. Wait a little, the black man will break our aeroplanes, and the yellow man will effectually silence even our loudest loud speakers. The strength of the Natives is in their weakness. [243]

These words are prophetic: Plomer predicted the crumbling

of white domination in Africa, and later, while living in Japan, he witnessed with alarm the growing militarism which catapulted Japan into the Second World War. [244]

Both Wolfe and Friston grasp eagerly and desperately at alternatives in the shape of "Young Africa" and the vain hope of a harmonious future society, "Eurafrica". In their desperate attempts to find meaning in their lives, they are revealed as personifications of "hollow men" from post war Europe. But the vision of the future pursued by Wolfe and Friston is doomed, as are Friston and Wolfe themselves: the image of "Eurafrica", tentative symbol of hope, "going out to suffer", [245] echoes the pessimism of the post war years.

The modernist disintegration portrayed in the characterisation of Wolfe and Friston is a common theme in much English writing of the post war era. Plomer's formulation of the "Politico-Aesthete" and the way this formulation is integrated into the narrative of Turbott Wolfe, reveals the powerful influences of contemporary literary debate on his early writing. Moreover, the "Politico-Aesthete" is ultimately a figure of parody, a profound comment on the sense of crisis which pervaded literary and political debate in post war England.

CONCLUSION

On William Plomer's death in England in 1973, the following obituary appeared in The Times (22 Sept. 1973):

> Mr. William Plomer, C.B.E. ... novelist, poet, discoverer and editor of the Kilvert Diaries, the publisher's reader without whose encouragement Ian Fleming might never have created James Bond, has died at the age of 69.

This obituary is more or less typical of the many that appeared in London and elsewhere in England to commemorate this event. Most of them recall the older Plomer, a respectable, urbane and reticent London "man of letters"; editor, publisher's reader, librettist, mentor to younger writers, and minor English poet and novelist. It is very difficult to find any trace of a younger, less conventional Plomer here; the young man who wrote Turbott Wolfe in a "spirit of revolt" seems virtually to have disappeared.

To rediscover this rebellious, idealistic young Plomer, one needs to turn to his earliest work. Perhaps the most appropriate monument to the young Plomer is Turbott Wolfe itself; it speaks more eloquently than any obituary can about Plomer and about the socio-political milieu and historical moment he wrote about. Through Turbott Wolfe we

can trace the young author's struggles to cross the "great divide" of a segregated society, and also see the extent to which he - like so many South African writers - is himself a victim of the "great divide" and the segregated imagination.

We have seen how Plomer chronicles a colonial past, engages with contemporary socio-political issues, and foretells the end of a colonial era. We have seen how he attempts to reach towards a common humanity, beyond the barriers of class and colour, and yet remains inescapably part of the society he condemns. We have also seen that Turbott Wolfe is not merely a spontaneous and isolated outpouring of visionary genius, but a highly mediated, complex creative response to the milieu Plomer found himself in.

Turbott Wolfe must be seen as both influenced by and a reaction against existing literary traditions as well as socio-political ideas and developments. If writers like Pringle and Schreiner were an inspiration to Plomer, isolated and lonely at Marsh Moor in the Eastern Cape, then European writers such as Rimbaud, Joyce and Blake were equally influential in terms of Plomer's literary development. But Turbott Wolfe must also be seen as a response to many of the imperial myths about Africa which found ex-

pression in imperial adventure romances.

Turbott Wolfe is at one level a parody of the conventional imperial hero, while the disintegration of Wolfe and the episodic narrative structure of the novel give powerful expression to literary modernism. Turbott Wolfe's modernist register makes the novel a curious and striking exception to the development of South African literature in the first decades of this century.

In terms of its political ideas and concerns Turbott Wolfe is also informed by a variety of socio-political influences. In its focus on the central "colour question", the novel follows a deeply ingrained pattern in South African literature. However, the idea that the "native question" is not a question, but an answer, represents a distinct shift in literary approaches to this central social and political issue.

The narrative fragmentation of much modernist fiction is ideally suited to giving metaphorical expression to individual uncertainty, and the episodic structure of Turbott Wolfe echoes Plomer's fragmentary and fractured experience of South Africa. Indeed, it is the idea of a "fracture" or "split" that is one of the novel's most striking characteristics, and one which permeates Turbott

Wolfe at every level. Turbott Wolfe is a harsh and outspoken critique of colonial society, yet simultaneously reveals the extent to which the author shares this society's point of view. The "fracture" is personified by the novel's protagonist, Wolfe, and is mirrored by Plomer's idea of a conflict between "art" and "politics" as well as between the individual and the society he finds himself in.

A "fractured" point of view or fragmented experience is by no means surprising or unusual in a society which is characterized by "fractures" on many levels, the most obvious being racial segregation. It is this central issue - the "colour question" - that provided Plomer with a central focus for his first novel. His approach to the issue - that it is not a question, but an answer - is one which no subsequent writer of note has been able to ignore. Turbott Wolfe, for many years neglected and ignored, has certainly left its mark on South African fiction of this century.

The most striking feature of Turbott Wolfe is the fact that many of the issues it addresses are as crucial today as they were in the 1920s. Turbott Wolfe represents Plomer's responses - often fragmentary and contradictory - to the historical moment in which he wrote, and also his

struggle to confront and challenge the society he lived in as well as his own "segregated imagination". It is this struggle which is deeply, sometimes invisibly, embedded in South Africa's history, and which gives Turbott Wolfe such a powerful resonance today.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. See Chapter Two, Section II of this dissertation.
2. See Stephen Gray's introduction to William Plomer, Selected Stories (1984), p.vii.
3. Ibid., p.viii.
4. Plomer's years in Japan are vividly described in his Autobiography (1975). His novel Sado (1931) and a short story collection titled Paper Houses (1929) can be called his "Japanese" work. Laurens van der Post claims that in Japan Plomer is till regarded as one of the country's finest "foreign writers". (Interview with Laurens van der Post, Johannesburg, 1984).
5. The stories in Four Countries can be divided into the following categories: Africa, Japan, Greece and England.
6. Plomer's South African work includes: His novel, Turbott Wolfe; 15 short stories and novella's published in collections such as I Speak of Africa (1927), The Child of Queen Victoria and Other Stories (1933), Four Countries (1949) and elsewhere; many poems - such as "The Scorpion", "The Doves at Louis Trichardt" and "Transvaal Morning" - collected in Selected Poems (1940), Collected Poems (1960, 1973), numerous anthologies, and elsewhere.
7. William Plomer, Double Lives (1944), p.166.
8. Ibid., p.160.
9. William Plomer, Electric Delights (1978), p.36.
10. See for example Laurens van der Post's introduction to the 1965 edition of Turbott Wolfe, and Nadine Gordimer's "A Wilder Fowl" 1965), both reprinted in Turbott Wolfe (1979). See also Cosmo Pieterse, "Conflict in the Germ", Protest and Conflict in African Literature (1969).
11. Stephen Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", Turbott Wolfe (1979), p.192.
12. In "A Wilder Fowl" for example, Gordimer stresses the importance of examining Turbott Wolfe within its socio-political context, in particular the author's experiences in South Africa.
13. Wade's article, published in The Journal of Commonwealth Literature 8, 1, (1973) pp.20-32, highlights the critical emphasis placed on Turbott Wolfe's position within the South African literary "liberal tradition" in English. For further discussion of Turbott Wolfe and the "liberal tradition", see Chapters One and Three.
14. See David Brown, "Africa Through English Eyes: The

1920s and Turbott Wolfe", Turbott Wolfe (1979).
15. See Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context".
16. Ibid. Gray eloquently demonstrates the importance and value of exploring Plomer's experiences in South Africa, for example in the Eastern Cape, in order to illuminate aspects of setting and characterization in Turbott Wolfe. He also suggests that situating Turbott Wolfe within the literary "liberal tradition" alone can be severely limiting, and that the novel has a great deal in common with colonial "adventurer" fiction. This and other suggestions for further possible research has proved to be immensely valuable. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to many of the ideas expressed by Gray in his essay, since they have contributed greatly to the direction and scope of parts of this dissertation, in particular Chapter One.
17. These issues will be examined in more detail during the course of this dissertation. See for example the introduction to Chapter One and to Chapter Two.
18. Double Lives, p.161.
19. See J.R. Doyle, William Plomer (1969), pp.59-63.
20. Double Lives, p.160.
21. Ibid.
22. See Turbott Wolfe, p.65.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Plomer, Campbell and van der Post are often referred to as the "Voorslag writers" because of their involvement with Voorslag (1926), one of the first attempts at a bilingual journal in South Africa.
2. Predominantly negative reader responses to Turbott Wolfe led to its virtual demise. A second edition appeared only in 1965, and a third in 1979.
3. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.192.
4. Nadine Gordimer, "English Language Literature and Politics in South Africa", Aspects of South African Literature (1976), p.104.
5. See for example Roy Campbell's defence of Turbott Wolfe in Voorslag 1 (1926), reprinted in Turbott Wolfe (1979), and also Laurens van der Post's "The Turbott Wolfe Affair", Turbott Wolfe (1979). See also Cosmo Pieterse, "Conflict in the Germ", where he refers to Turbott Wolfe as a "revolutionary document" (p.1), and Gordimer's comment that Turbott Wolfe is a "work of genius" in "English Language Literature and Politics in South Africa".
6. Although there are thematic similarities between Turbott Wolfe and earlier South African novels, it is important to note that Turbott Wolfe represents a distinct shift in style: the novel is a peculiar example of literary modernism, which generally failed to take root in South Africa.
7. Wade, "William Plomer, English Liberalism and the South African Novel", p.21.
8. Martin Tucker, Africa in Modern Literature: A Survey of Contemporary Writing in English (1967), p.209.
9. Stephen Watson, The Liberal Ideology and some English South African Novelists, MA Thesis, U.C.T.(1980), p.85.
10. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.193.
11. For a critique of formalist South African literary criticism,see for example Michael Kirkwood, "Beyond Butlerism" (1974), or Tim Couzens, "Ideology and the Teaching of Literature", Snarl 4 (1976), pp.16-17.
12. See for example E.M. Forster's A Passage to India (1924).
13. Brown, "Africa through English Eyes: The 1920s and Turbott Wolfe", p.186.
14. Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (1984), p.83.
15. Turbott Wolfe, .10.
16. See Chapter Two, Section III of this dissertation.
17. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.196.
18. The term "coming country" was one used by Plomer's father and his contemporaries to describe South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries, when South Africa was widely regarded as a land of opportunity for Englishmen with a sense of adventure. See Chapter Two, Section I of this dissertation.

19. See Williams, The Long Revolution, pp.83-84.
20. Ibid., p.83.
21. Ibid.
22. Other "trader adventurer" characters can be found in works such as: Captain Marryat, The Mission (1854); E.W. Phillips, Richard Galbraith (1872); Parker Gillmore, The Amphibion's Voyage (1885); H. Rider Haggard, Allan Quatermain (1887); Douglas Blackburn, Richard Hartley, Prospector (1905) and others. See Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.196.
23. See Stephen Gray, Southern African Literature An Introduction (1979), p.45.
24. See ibid., pp.38-71. Gray explores the fictive "Hottentot Eve" - including "Narina" - as a recurring figure in South African fiction in English.
25. F. Le Vaillant, Travels from the Cape of Good Hope into the Interior Parts of Africa vol. I (1790), p.214.
26. Ibid., pp.358-359.
27. The idea of a "racial hierarchy" later acquired a "scientific" veneer in the pseudo-scientific Social Darwinism and eugenics, used extensively in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to justify racism. See Chapter Three, Section II of this dissertation.
28. It is not entirely certain who the author of Sylvester Tramper was, but it was probably George Walker. See Gray, Southern African Literature An Introduction, p.79.
29. Ibid.
30. See ibid., pp.72-92, for Gray's fascinating discussion of Sylvester Tramper which he examines within the context of "The Imaginary Voyage through South Africa".
31. Tramper is tempted by both Africa and America, but eventually decides on the former, since "I viewed [it] as a country, which, for infinite ages, had been trod by man; abounding in monsters of every species and description, and yet unknown to modern Europe ..." Sylvester Tramper (1816), p.13.
32. Ibid., p.22.
33. See ibid., p.20, and also Gray, Southern African Literature An Introduction, p.84.
34. Sylvester Tramper, p.207.
35. Ibid., p.216.
36. Ibid., p.82.
37. Ibid., p.200.
38. See ibid., pp.80-83.

39. See Anthony Brewer, Marxist Theories of Imperialism A Critical Survey, (1982), p.5.
40. For a fascinating discussion of the relationship between literature and "scientific" racism, see J.M. Coetzee, "Blood, Flaw, Taint, Degeneration: The Case of Sarah Gertrude Millin", English Studies in Africa, vol.23, no.1 (1980).
41. See for example: Thomas Forester, Everard Tunstall (1851); Harriet Ward, Jasper Lyle (1852); H. Rider Haggard, King Solomon's Mines (1885), Allan Quatermain (1887) and She (1887); Percy Fitzpatrick, Jock of the Bushveld (1907); John Buchan, Prester John (1910), and many others.
42. See for example R.J. Stapleton's Poetry of the Cape of Good Hope (1828), or A. Wilmot's The Poetry of South Africa (1887).
43. See Ben Maclennan's A Proper Degree of Terror (1986), which explores aspects of the history of conflict at the Eastern Cape Frontier during the first few decades of the nineteenth century.
44. Tunstall has a great deal in common with Davie Crawfurd for example, the protagonist and hero of Prester John (1910).
45. Thomas Forester, Everard Tunstall: A Tale of the Kaffir Wars (1851), p.136.
46. Harriet Ward, Jasper Lyle: A Tale of Kaffirland (1852), p.275.
47. Ibid., p.44. This incident may be based on the fate of the "Abercrombie Robinson", shipwrecked in 1842. Ward gives an eyewitness account of the event in her Diary (1951), p.51.
48. Jasper Lyle, p.78.
49. Makanna (or Nxele) was a remarkable figure in Xhosa history, a warrior prophet, and the destruction of the white race became a recurring theme in his teachings. He was a leading figure in the Frontier war of 1818 - 1819, led an attack on Grahamstown, and was later exiled to Robben Island. Ward refers to Makanna in her Diary as "the pretended Kaffir prophet". (p.26).
50. Jasper Lyle, p.289.
51. The full title is The Cape and the Kaffirs: A Diary of Five Years' Residence in Kaffirland; with a Chapter of Advice to Emigrants. Based on the Latest Official Returns and the most Recent Information regarding the Colony.
52. Thus Ward describes Africans in her Diary as "intruders on the lands that they occupy; their habits are the most savage imaginable; their treachery is well known ..." (p.30).
53. See Everard Tunstall (1851), pp.89,156,157.
54. See Ward's Diary, p.30.

55. Jasper
56. Ibid,
57. Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology (1976), p.56.
58. Paul Rich, "Romance and the South African Novel", Literature and Society in South Africa (1984), p.122.
59. Prester John was one of Buchan's most popular books. See T.J. Couzens, "'The Old Africa of a Boy's Dream' - Towards Interpreting Buchan's Prester John", English Studies in Africa vol. 24, no.1 (1981), pp.1-2.
60. Rich, "Romance and the South African Novel", p.122.
61. See Couzens, "The Old Africa of a Boy's Dream'", and Norman Etherington, "Rider Haggard's Imperial Romances", Meanjin 36, 2, Winter (1977), p.198.
62. Limited space has necessitated extreme selectivity. John Buchan's protagonist Davie Crawfurd epitomizes the qualities and characteristics of many of the heroic imperial "trader adventurers" found in colonial literature.
63. This stock figure is sometimes replaced by an equally loyal animal, such as Crawfurd's dog, Colin, in Prester John.
64. See Couzens, "'The Old Africa of a Boy's Dream'".
65. From 1901 - 1903, Buchan was private secretary to the High Commissioner in South Africa. As a member of Milner's Kindergarten, he was directly concerned with the administration of the territory and profoundly influenced by the development of segregationist thinking and the consolidation of British Rule in Southern Africa.
66. The character of Laputa was perhaps inspired by Tiyo Soga, who studied in Scotland.
67. Prester John (n.d.), p.26.
68. The mythical Prester John is associated with Abyssinia - Ethiopia. See Couzens, "'The Old Africa of a Boy's Dream'", p.8.
69. Crawfurd narrates that it "was not long before I found a mighty organization at work from the Zambezi to the Cape. The great tribes were up to their necks in the conspiracy, and all manner of little sects had been taken in ..." (pp.101-102). For a detailed discussion of "Ethiopianism" in South Africa, see Paul Rich, "Black Peasants and Ethiopianism in South Africa 1896-1915", Conference on the History of Opposition in South Africa, Johannesburg, 1978.
70. Prester John, p.103.
71. Ibid., p.202.
72. See Chapter Three, Section II of this dissertation. See also Saul Dubow, "Race, Civilization and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years", African Studies Institute Seminar Paper (1986), pp.1-8.

73. Prester John, p.276.
74. Ibid., p.280.
75. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.169.
76. Plomer's use of his own name for the framing narrator and Wolfe's "biographer", is a clear indication that the author did not intend Wolfe to be seen as a veiled portrait of himself.
77. Turbott Wolfe, p.9.
78. Ibid., p.10.
79. Ibid.
80. See Chapter Two, Section III of this dissertation.
81. See for example Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines (1885) and She (1887).
82. See The Autobiography of William Plomer (1975), pp.149-150.
83. "Lembuland" is based largely on Natal-Zululand, and also on the Storaberg region of the Eastern Cape. See Chapter Two, Sections II and III of this dissertation.
84. Aucampstroom is probably based on Molteno. See Chapter Two, Section II.
85. See Paul Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism (1984), pp.2-6.
86. Ibid, p.5.
87. See for example Plomer's portrayal of the "Lembus from the Reserve" in Turbott Wolfe.
88. Michael Herbert, "Turbott Wolfe and the Critics", in Turbott Wolfe (1979), p.171.
89. Gordimer, "A Wilder Fowl", p.166.
90. Turbott Wolfe, p.20.
91. A similar twentieth century "noble savage", named Narida, can be found in Ethelreda Lewis's Wild Deer (1933).
92. Turbott Wolfe, p.31.
93. See for example Jasper Lyle. Harriet Ward unintentionally allows Lyle to express valid criticism of imperialism.
94. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.31.
95. See Chapter Three, section II, of this dissertation.
96. Although the "trader adventurer" fiction examined here is by no means exhaustive, the absence of major female character is striking. See Prester John, for example.
97. Turbott Wolfe, p.105.
98. Gordimer, "A Wilder Fowl". p.166.
99. See Turbott Wolfe pp.70-71.
100. See for example Jasper Lyle and Everard Tunstall.
101. Turbott Wolfe, p.9.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid., p.20.

105. Ibid., p.11.
106. Ibid., p.88.
107. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.197.
108. Turbott Wolfe, p.66.
109. Ibid., p.84.
110. Ibid., p.12.
111. Ibid., p.108.
112. Ibid., p.59.
113. See Ibid., pp.15-17.
114. Paul Rich, "Liberal Realism in South African Fiction, 1948 - 1966", English in Africa vol. 12, no.1, May (1985), p.52
115. David Rabkin, "Race and Fiction: God's Stepchildren and Turbott Wolfe", The South African Novel in English (1978), p.89.
116. Turbott Wolfe, p.60.
117. In Electric Delights Plomer pays tribute to his favourite writers, including Couperus. See pp.58-65.
118. See Louis Couperus, De Stille Kracht (1984), pp.111-112. Plomer also used a quote from Couperus' work as an epigraph to his novella, "Ula Masondo": "Sometimes the native knows and understands subconsciously things that we do not know or understand". Selected Stories (1984), p.51.
119. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.197.
120. Examples of Plomer's use of "stream of consciousness" can be found in Wolfe's journal extracts (pp.37-40). Wolfe comments that "this journal was kept without any punctuation except that afforded by the days. It was an experiment". (p.37) In terms of its structure and style, Turbott Wolfe could perhaps also be called a modernist "experiment".
121. Rob Nieuwenhuys, Mirror of the Indies: A history of Dutch Colonial Literature (1982), p.123.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid., p.124.
124. Translated from De Stille Kracht (1984), p.9.
125. Ibid, pp.109-110.
126. In his avoidance of sexuality, Van Oudijk is remarkably similar to Wolfe, who is nicknamed "Chastity".
127. Translated from De Stille Kracht, p.146.
128. Electric Delights, pp.58-59.
129. Nieuwenhuys, Mirror of the Indies, p.23.
130. Translated from De Stille Kracht, p.110.
131. Electric Delights, pp.61-62.
132. Translated from De Stille Kracht, p.233.
133. In "Liberal Realism in South African Fiction" Rich comments that "the classical modernist theme [is that] of the individual pursuit of moral and cultural liberation, especially from the past ..." (pp.53-54). Van Oudijk's disintegration is a variation on this

theme.
134. Electric Delights, p.64.
135. Ibid., pp.63-64.
136. Ibid., p.59.
137. See for example De Stille Kracht, p.76. Van Oudijk's first wife is also a "good-looking half-caste", to use Plomer's words.
138. Turbott Wolfe, p.60.
139. Ibid.
140. Ibid., p.20.
141. Ibid., p.51.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid., pp.51-52.
144. Ibid., p.52.
145. Ibid.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid., pp.52-53.
148. Ibid., p.54.
149. Ibid., p.109.
150. See De Stille Kracht, p.233.
151. See Chapter Three, Section I of this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Gordimer, "A Wilder Fowl", p.165.
2. Herbert, William Plomer (1903 - 1973): A Biographical and Critical Study, p.2.
3. Plomer's first autobiography is aptly titled Double Lives.
4. Four Countries, pp.8-9.
5. René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (1980), p.79.
6. Alan Paton, "William Plomer, Soul of Reticence", in Theoria 46, (1976) p.15.
7. Ibid., p.11.
8. Quoted by Paton, Ibid.
9. Paul Bailey, "A Way of Staying With You", London Magazine, December 1973 - January 1974, p.29.
10. Interview with Laurens van der Post, Johannesburg, 1984.
11. I have made use of several of Plomer's letters (see Plomer Papers, NELM), as well as information from his brother, James Plomer, living in Canada. I have also interviewed Laurens van der Post, and several residents of the Eshowe district who recalled information and anecdotes about the Plomer family.
12. Interview with Peter Orr, printed in Orr's anthology, The Poet Speaks (1966), p.173.
13. See Chapter Three, Sections I and III of this dissertation.
14. See Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context".
15. See for example Wade, "William Plomer, English Liberalism and the South African Novel".
16. William Plomer, "Several Revolutions", Twentieth Century CLXV, April 1959, p.385.
17. See The Autobiography of William Plomer (1975), p.75.
18. Ibid., p.74.
19. Ibid., p.76.
20. Herbert, William Plomer (1903 - 1973): A Biographical and Critical Study, p.8.
21. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.11.
22. Ibid., p.72.
23. See "The Boer War", A Century of South African Poetry (1981), p.134.
24. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.45.
25. D. Hammond and A. Jablow, The Africa that Never Was (1970), p.86.
26. Plomer recalls in his Autobiography that his mother took heirlooms such as Georgian candlesticks and embroidered table-cloths and napkins with her to the most "outlandish" places.
27. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.12.
28. For a fascinating analysis of "British South Africa"

see Chapter I of Belinda Bozzoli's The Political Nature of a Ruling Class Capital and Ideology in South Africa 1890 - 1933 (1981).

29. Quoted in J. Morris, Pax Britannia The Climax of Empire (1975), p.120.
30. John Buchan, Memory Hold-the-Door (1940), pp.119-120.
31. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.95.
32. Ibid., p.12.
33. Ibid., p.95.
34. Ibid., p.86.
35. James Plomer was for the most part educated in Britain, but spent a short while at St. John's College, Johannesburg. He now lives in Canada.
36. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.91.
37. See Electric Delights, pp.28-40.
38. Ibid., p.29.
39. See Chapter Three, Sections I and III of this dissertation for further discussion of this issue.
40. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.78.
41. Ibid., p.80-81.
42. See Doyle, William Plomer, p.115.
43. See Herbert, William Plomer (1903 - 1973): A Biographical and Critical Study, p.12.
44. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.81.
45. See Collected Poems (1960), p.39.
46. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.79.
47. Ibid, p.75. See also Plomer's comments in Electric Delights, p.31.
48. See Chapter Three, Section I of this dissertation.
49. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.83.
50. Herbert, William Plomer (1903 - 1973): A Biographical and Critical Study, p.13.
51. See Turbott Wolfe, pp.9-10.
52. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.86.
53. Electric Delights, p.30.
54. Ibid, pp.29-30.
55. See Herbert, William Plomer (1903 - 1973): A Biographical and Critical Study, p.15.
56. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.87.
57. See for example Plomer's portrayal of Wolfe's unpleasant neighbours, Schwerdt, Flesher, Soper and Bloodfield.
58. The Autobiography of William Plomer, pp.89-90.
59. Ibid., p.94.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p.98.
62. Ibid., p.108.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p.109.
65. Ibid., p.121.
66. Ibid., p.123.
67. Ibid., p.129.

68. See ibid., pp.44-50.
69. Quoted in The Johannian vol.6, no.8, October (1952), p.7.
70. Letter dated 15 November 1959, Plomer Papers, NELM.
71. Letter from the secretary, St. John's College, to Charles Plomer, dated 3 December, 1921, St. John's College Archives.
72. Letter from Charles Plomer to the secretary, St. John's College, dated 30 November, 1921, St. John's College, Archives.
73. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.131.
74. Ibid.
75. See Chapter Three, Section III of this dissertation.
76. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, pp.114-115.
77. See the introduction to John R. Taylor's Edward Wolfe (1986).
78. Ibid., p.12.
79. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.132.
80. Letter dated 18 June, 1929, Plomer Papers, NELM.
81. Taylor, Edward Wolfe, p.26.
82. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.132.
83. Taylor, Edward Wolfe, p.28.
84. See for example Turbott Wolfe, p.11.
85. Quoted in The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.133.
86. Ibid., p.129.
87. Ibid., p.95.
88. See for example ibid., p.56.
89. See Plomer's Collected Poems (1960), and Selected Poems (1985).
90. See Selected Stories (1984).
91. See Electric Delights, p.36.
92. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.95.
93. Electric Delights, p.34.
94. Ibid.
95. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.146.
96. From a manuscript bound as William Plomer to Harold Monro 1921 - 1923, in the private collection of Simon Nowell-Smith, quoted in Herbert, William Plomer (1903 - 1973): A Biographical and Critical Study, pp.28-29.
97. Ibid.
98. Quoted by Herbert, ibid., pp.29-30.
99. See ibid., pp.30-32.
100. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.134.
101. Ibid., pp. 135-136.
102. Letter from Plomer to Johannes Meintjies, 11 June 1972, Plomer Papers, NELM.
103. William Plomer, "Down on the Farm", in Selected Stories (1984) p.33.
104. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, pp.44-50.
105. Ibid., p.137.
106. See Ibid., p.138.
107. Ibid.

108. See Ibid., p.140.
109. See Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", pp.198-199. Gray comments that: "Local memory insists that Plomer was a rather incompetent agriculturalist, and once when he was given a sack and told to retrieve a lamb lost in a snow-storm, he returned with the sack over his head and the lamb dangling by the tail". (p.203).
110. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.142.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid., p.143.
113. Ibid., p.145.
114. See ibid., pp.48-49.
115. "Portraits in the Nude" appeared in serial form in Voorslag 1, 2, and 3.
116. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.145.
117. In Electric Delights Plomer pays tribute to both Pringle and Schreiner; they remained two of his favourite writers. See pp.113-117 and pp.169-172.
118. Quoted in The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.146.
119. Ibid., p.145.
120. Ibid., p.146.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid., p.145.
123. See Gordimer's discussion of Pringle, Schreiner and Plomer in "English Language, Literature and Politics".
124. See for example some of the poems Plomer published in Ilanga lase Natal under the pseudonym "P.Q.R.", included in The Return of the Amasi Bird (1982).
125. Plomer Papers, NELM.
126. Ibid.
127. See the "Introduction" of Selected Stories for a brief discussion of these and other Plomer short stories.
128. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.199.
129. Turbott Wolfe, pp.82-83. An interesting comparison can be made between this extract and one of Plomer's "Stormberg" stories; see "Down on the Farm", in Selected Stories, p.43.
130. Turbott Wolfe, p.85.
131. Ibid., p.21.
132. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.198.
133. See Plomer's letter to Johannes Meintjes, dated 24 January, 1965, Plomer Papers, NELM.
134. However, Plomer did not begin writing Turbott Wolfe until later, when he was living at Ntumeni.
135. Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.198. These fragments, sketches and cartoons are now included in the Plomer Papers, NELM.
136. See Ibid., p.64.
137. Turbott Wolfe, p.29. "Goldenville" is Plomer's fictive name for Johannesburg, while "Nigel Blades" and

"Bladesia" are references to Cecil John Rhodes and Rhodesia.
138. Ibid., p.64.
139. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.144.
140. Ibid.
141. Notes for Poems (1927), p.41.
142. Turbott Wolfe, p.28.
143. Ibid., p.177.
144. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.76.
145. Ibid., p.139.
145. See for example ibid., p.95.
147. The Natal and Zululand Annual, Nov. (1926), p.23.
148. Brown, "Africa through English Eyes: The 1920s and Turbott Wolfe", p.186.
149 Gray, "Turbott Wolfe in Context", p.198.
150. See The Johannian vol.6, no.8, October (1952) p.40.
151. See for example "Conversations with my Younger Self", in Electric Delights.
152. Turbott Wolfe, p.10.
153. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.149.
154. Ibid., pp.149-150.
155. See "Extract" from a letter from Mr. C. Faye, dated 22nd October 1906, Minute Papers, SNA 1908, 1/1/398, Pietermaritzburg Archives.
156. Mrs. Ballenden never knew the Plomers, but her parents did. Interview with Mrs. Ballender, Ntumeni, 1984.
157. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.150.
158. Ibid.
159. See A.W. Lee, Once Dark Country (1949), p.86.
160. Ibid., p.92.
161. See Electric Delights, p.36.
162. Letter from James Plomer to Michelle Adler, April 17, 1984.
163. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.151.
164. Ibid., p.159.
165. Interview with Estelle Gerricke, Eshowe, 1984.
166. Interviews with Estelle Gerricke, Eshowe, 1984, and Mrs. Ballenden, Ntumeni, 1984.
167. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.160.
168. See ibid., p.159.
169. See for example Lee's Once Dark Country (1949).
170. Ibid., p.2.
171. Interview with Mr. Lee, Eshowe, 1984.
172. The Zululand Times, p.6.
173. Lee, Once Dark Country, p.94.
174. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.159.
175. Turbott Wolfe, p.14.
176. Ibid., p.15.
177. Ibid., pp.16-17.
178. See Rev. G.O. Lislerud, "Entumeni", in Native Teachers' Journal 34, (January 1955), p.102. See also

P. Hernaes and J. Simensen, "The Zulu Kingdom and the Norwegian Missionaries, 1845 - 1880", Conference on the History of Natal and Zululand, Conference Papers, Durban (July 1985).

179. Native Teachers' Journal, p.103.
180. See ibid., pp.104-109.
181. See letter from James Plomer to Michelle Adler.
182. Native Teachers' Journal, p.109.
183. See letter from James Plomer to Michelle Adler, and also a list of Schreuder's successors in the Native Teachers' Journal, p.109.
184. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.157. See also the contrast between Lembus and white colonials in "The Child of Queen Victoria", in Selected Stories.
185. See for example Turbott Wolfe, pp.30-31.
186. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.158.
187. Latter from James Plomer to Michelle Adler.
188. See Turbott Wolfe, pp.20 and 31.
189. Ezekiel Mphahlele, The African Image (1974), p.149.
190. See Turbott Wolfe, p.75.
191. Quoted in Jeff Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom (1982), p.3.
192. Ibid. Guy also explains how the physical environment of Zululand contributed to the social and political strength and resilience of the Kingdom.
193. Ibid., p.xix.
194. See Shula Marks, The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa, (1986) pp.28-30.
195. Ibid., p.29.
196. Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, pp.xix-xx.
197. See ibid., p.xx-xxi.
198. Turbott Wolfe, p.31.
199. Ibid., p.32.
200. Ibid., p.69.
201. Ibid., p.51.
202. Letter from James Plomer to Michelle Adler.
203. See for example Chapters I and II in B.G.M. Sundkler's Bantu Prophets in South Africa (1970).
204. This name may have provided the inspiration for the naming of "Nordalsgaard" in Turbott Wolfe.
205. Drum, June (1963), p.75.
206. Ibid.
207. See Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa pp.44-46.
208. Double Lives p.152.
209. Lobolo, for example, was a hotly debated issue in mission circles.
210. Double Lives, p.152.
211. Ibid., p.153.
212. Ibid., p.155.
213. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.164.
214. Ibid., p.165.

215. Turbott Wolfe, p.10.
216. Ibid., p.120.
217. See Chapter Three, Section II which explores Plomer's engagement with contemporary socio-political issues.
218. Letter from James Plomer to Michelle Adler.
219. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.165.
220. Marks, The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa, p.43.
221. Ibid., p.44.
222. Ibid., p.43.
223. Ibid., p.44.
224. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.165.
225. Herbert, William Plomer [1903 - 1973]: A Biographical and Critical Study, p.39.
226. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.166.
227. Ibid., p.167.
228. Ibid., p.170.
229. Ibid., p.167.
230. See Robin Hallet, "The Importance of Voorslag: Roy Campbell, William Plomer and the Development of South African Literature", in Theoria 50, (1978) pp.29-39.
231. The Autobiography of William Plomer, pp.174-175.
232. See for example Plomer's contributions to the first three issues of Voorslag.

CHAPTER THREE

1. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.170.
2. See for example ibid., pp.166-167.
3. See for exampl Wade's "William Plomer, English Liberalism and the South African Novel" and The Liberal Tradition in South African Fiction in English, PHD, University of Sussex, 1973. See also Gordimer's "English Language Literature and Politics".
4. Colin Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry (1979), quoted in David Robbins and Wyndham Hartley, Inside the Last Outpost (1985), p.53.
5. Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom (1982), p.xx.
6. T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa A Modern History (1987), p.230.
7. See ibid., pp.278-279.
8. See ibid., p.279.
9. For a discussion of the relationship between the "Ethiopian" churches and African nationalism, see George Shepperson, "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism", Phylon, vol.vix no.1, (1953), pp.9-18.
10. The Battle of Adowa in 1896, where the Italians were decisively beaten, decided the outcome of Ethiopia's struggle for survival in the period of the "Scramble for Africa".
11. Davenport, South Africa A Modern History, p.232. See also Shepperson, "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism", p.13.
12. Peter Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism (1987), p.89.
13. See ibid., p.93. Walshe argues that actual socialist and Communist Party involvement in African political affairs has been greatly exaggerated.
14. Turbott Wolfe, p.31.
15. Ibid.
16. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.170.
17. Gordimer, "A Wilder Fowl", p.167.
18. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.7.
19. For example, Turbott Wolfe's engagement with the "colour question" and Plomer's portrayal of his African characters presents a striking contrast to Schreiner's novel, in which racial issues are not directly addressed and Black characters play a peripheral role.
20. See Section II of this chapter.
21. Turbott Wolfe, p.17.
22. Ibid., pp.65-66.
23. Ibid., p.19.
24. Ibid., p.18.

25. Ibid., p.19.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., pp.44-45.
28. Michael Herbert, "Turbott Wolfe and the Critics", Turbott Wolfe (1979), p.172.
29. Turbott Wolfe, p.97.
30. Ibid., pp.49-50.
31. Gordimer, "A Wilder Fowl", p.166.
32. Turbott Wolfe, p.52.
33. Ibid., p.59.
34. Ibid., p.118.
35. Van Der Post, "The Turbott Wolfe Affair", p.158.
36. Wade, "William Plomer, English Liberalism, and the South African Novel", pp.22-23.
37. See Section II of this Chapter.
38. Olive Schreiner (pseudonym: Ralph Iron), preface to The Story of an African Farm (1987), p.ix.
39. Turbott Wolfe, p.46.
40. Ibid., p.89.
41. Ibid., p.31.
42. H.N. Fairchild, The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism (1928), quoted in David Maughan Brown, "The Noble Savage in Anglo-Saxon Colonial Ideology, 1950-1980: 'Masai' and 'Bushmen' in Popular Fiction", English in Africa vol.10, no.2, October (1983), p.55.
43. See for example Van der Post's Venture to the Interior (1952), The Lost World of the Kalahari (1958), A Story Like the Wind (1972) and A Far-off Place (1974).
44. See Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.31.
45. Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (1963), p.84.
46. Turbott Wolfe, p.88.
47. Conrad, Heart of Darkness, p.6.
48. David Maughan Brown, "Ideology and Fiction, with Special Reference to Conrad", unpublished paper, AUETSA Conference. (1981), p.12.
49. Conrad, Heart of Darkness, p.80.
50. Turbott Wolfe, p.109.
51. See Paul Rich, "Liberal Realism in South African Fiction, 1948-1966", English in Africa vol.12, no.1, May (1986), p.53. See also Section III of this chapter.
52. See Turbott Wolfe, pp.37-40.
53. Rich, "Romance and the South African Novel", p.133.
54. Turbott Wolfe, pp.51-52.
55. Michael Chapman (ed.), A Century of South African Poetry (1981), p.134.
56. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.422.
57. Wade, "William Plomer, English Liberalism, and the South African Novel", p.26.
58. Nadine Gordimer, "The Novel and the Nation in South Africa", quoted in David Rabkin, "Race and Fiction:

God's Stepchildren and Turbott Wolfe", pp.89-90.
59. Turbott Wolfe, p.13.
60. The Zululand Times, Thursday April 1st, 1926, p.6.
61. See van der Post, "The Turbott Wolfe Affair", p.133.
62. Ibid.
63. Roy Campbell, "The Significance of Turbott Wolfe", Turbott Wolfe (1979), p.126.
64. William Plomer, "The Return of Turbott Wolfe", p.1.
65. See Paton, "William Plomer, Soul of Reticence", p.3. In "The Turbott Wolfe Affair" Laurens van der Post describes how he, employed as a journalist on the Natal Advertiser, quarrelled with Wodson about Turbott Wolfe: "I was writing letters under my own name disagreeing with Wodson and his literary critic in the columns of the Natal Advertiser and he was answering back in his leading articles!" (p.139).
66. See Paton, "William Plomer, Soul of Reticence", p.3. See also the review by 'Z.Z.', titled "Garbage", in The South African Nation, 3 April 1926, p.12.
67. Van der Post, "The Turbott Wolfe Affair", pp.134-135.
68. Excerpts from reviews can be found at the back of I Speak of Africa (1927).
69. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.170.
70. Brown, "Africa through English Eyes: The 1920s and Turbott Wolfe", p.186.
71. Some newspapers such as The Star, combine concern with the "colour question" with an even deeper concern with what is happening "at home", that is in England.
72. See Edward Roux, Time Longer than Rope (1978), p.147.
73. J.C. Smuts, quoted in Ilanga lase Natal, December 10, 1920, p.5.
74. See for example G.M. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa (1979), Peter Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa (1987) and André Odendaal, Vukani Bantu! (1984) amongst many others.
75. See Brown, "Africa through English Eyes: The 1920s and Turbott Wolfe", p.187.
76. Sol Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa (1982), p.21.
77. Gail Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa (1979), p.23.
78. C.W. De Kiewiet, A History of South Africa Social and Economic (1957), pp.234-235.
79. Quoted in Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, p.23.
80. For a fascinating discussion of the role of eugenics or biological racism in the development of segregationist discourse in South Africa, see Dubow, "Race, Civilisation and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years".
81. Ibid., p.7.
82. See ibid., p.8.

83. Plomer, "The Return of Turbott Wolfe", p.3.
84. Campbell, "The Significance of Turbott Wolfe, p.126.
85. See for example the influence of the Joint Council movement on Turbott Wolfe, discussed later on in this chapter.
86. See Section I of this chapter, and see Rich's comments on liberal responses to territorial segregationism in White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.8.
87. See Chapter Two, Section III of this dissertation.
88. Turbott Wolfe, p.17.
89. Ibid., p.69.
90. Ibid., p.13.
91. Carel Birkby, The Pagel Story (1948), p.103.
92. E.H. Bostock, Menageries, Circuses and Theatres (1927), p.196.
93. Turbott Wolfe, p.14.
94. Ibid., p.55.
95. See for example Doyle, William Plomer, p.70.
96. Coetzee, "Blood, Flaw, Taint, Degeneration: The Case of Sarah Gertrude Millin", p.42.
97. Ibid.
98. See for example Turbott Wolfe, p.36.
99. Lord Selborne, speaking at U.C.T. in 1908, quoted in Bernard M. Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa (1979), p.12.
100. See Turbott Wolfe, pp.19-20, for Plomer's description of Flesher.
101. Ibid., pp.42-43.
102. Ibid., p.67. Plomer was no admirer of Rhodes, as he made abundantly clear in his irreverent biography, Cecil Rhodes (1933).
103. Turbott Wolfe, p.31. See also Mabel's comments, p.66.
104. Ibid., p.56.
105. Ibid., p.66.
106. Ibid., p.40.
107. Ibid., p.41.
108. Ibid., p.42.
109. Ibid.
110. See Section III of this chapter.
111. Turbott Wolfe, p.67.
112. Brown, "Africa through English Eyes: The 1920s and Turbott Wolfe", p.187.
113. See Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.12.
114. Roux, Time Longer than Rope, pp.161-162.
115. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.12.
116. Ilanga lase Natal, February 1, 1924, p.7.
117. See Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, pp.13-14.
118. Ibid., p.14.
119. J.C. Smuts, quoted in Ilanga lase Natal, December 10,

1920, p.5.
120. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.17.
121. See Ibid., pp.16-17. Loram in many ways took over the role of chief ideologist of white liberalism in the 1920s.
122. See Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, pp.96-99.
123. Ilanga lase Natal, February 1, 1924, p.7.
124. See Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, p.24.
125. Address by John L. Dube, The Clash of Colour, Conference Papers read before the Natal Missionary Conference, July 7, 1926, p.11.
126. See Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, pp.97-99, and Tim Couzens, "'Moralising leisure time': The Transatlantic Connection and black Johannesburg 1918 - 1936", Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870 - 1930 (1982), pp.314-337.
127. Turbott Wolfe, p.70.
128. Ilanga lase Natal, October 21, 1921, p.5.
129. Turbott Wolfe, p.70.
130. Another important figure in the "Africa for the Africans" movement in Southern Africa was the English missionary, Joseph Booth (1851 - 1932). See Shepperson, "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism", pp.13-14.
131. Amy J. Garvey, Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey (1967), p.xvi.
132. Ibid., p.xxvi.
133. Ibid., p.xviii.
134. Turbott Wolfe, p.70.
135. Edgar Brookes, The Colour Problem of South Africa (1934), p.2.
136. See Nancy Stepan, The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800 - 1960 (1982), p.111.
137. See Ibid.
138. Dubow, "Race, Civilisation and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse", p.8.
139. See Charles van Onselen, Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886 - 1914. Volume 2. New Nineveh (1982), pp.45-54.
140. Ilanga lase Natal, August 26, 1921, p.5.
141. Ibid. See also Plomer's short story "Black Peril", Selected Stories, pp.82-89.
142. Ilanga lase Natal, November 16, 1917, p.5.
143. Stubbs, quoted in Edgar Brookes, The Colour Problem of South Africa (1934), p.73.
144. Zululand Times, Thursday, March 5, 1925, p.7.
145. Maurice Evans, Black and White in South East Africa A Study in Sociology (1911), p.223.

146. See David Rabkin's interesting comparative study of Turbott Wolfe and God's Stepchildren, "Race and Fiction: God's Stepchildren and Turbott Wolfe".
147. Coetzee, "Blood, Flaw, Taint, Degeneration: The Case of Sarah Gertrude Millin", p.43.
148. Ibid., p.46.
149. Ibid., p.54.
150. Ironically, but not surprisingly, God's Stepchildren was extremely popular in Nazi Germany.
151. Turbott Wolfe, p.12.
152. For biographical details about John Dunn, see Charles Ballard, John Dunn The White Chief of Zululand (1985).
153. Ibid., p.66.
154. Ibid., p.71.
155. Ilanga lase Natal, November 25, 1921, p.5.
156. Address by A.W. Lee, The Clash of Colour, p.6.
157. Turbott Wolfe, p.114.
158. Ibid.
159. See Stepan, The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800 - 1960, for a fascinating analysis of the "scientific" nature of biological racism.
160. Turbott Wolfe, p.73.
161. Ibid.
162. Ibid., p.77.
163. Ibid., p.75.
164. See "Portraits in the Nude", Selected Stories, pp.1-32.
165. Turbott Wolfe, p.30.
166. Ibid., p.31.
167. Ibid., p.33.
168. Lee, The Clash of Colour, p.7.
169. See Turbott Wolfe, p.33.
170. Ibid., p.34.
171. Ibid., p.20.
172. Ibid.
173. Ibid., p.31.
174. Ibid.
175. Ibid., p.35.
176. Ibid.
177. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.158.
178. Wolfe and Frant are both traders, Englishmen who come to Lembuland and are shocked by the racial attitudes of local whites. They both fall in love with a beautiful African woman, who is a personification of Africa.
179. Turbott Wolfe, p.39.
180. Ibid.
181. Ibid.
182. Ibid.
183. Ibid., p.65.
184. See ibid., p.67.

185. See for example a comment in Ilanga lase Natal, January 18, 1924, p.7: "We agree with the Rand Daily Mail that a coloured South Africa is an unthinkable thing; but there is nothing objectionable in the prospect of a white and black South Africa, the races marching abreast, each with its separate social systems, and each cultivating that pride of race which alone can give check to the horrors of miscegenation".
186. See Turbott Wolfe, p.70.
187. See for example Plomer's "The Return of Turbott Wolfe", p.3, and Double Lives, p.161.
188. Turbott Wolfe, p.69.
189. Ibid., p.95.
190. Ibid., p.101.
191. Ibid., p.96.
192. Ibid., p.100.
193 Ibid., p.102.
194. Ibid., p.103.
195. Ibid., p.110.
196. Ilanga lase Natal, November 25, 1921, p.5.
197. Turbott Wolfe, p.103.
198. Ibid., p.105.
199. William Plomer, Electric Delights, p.37.
200. Turbott Wolfe, pp.118-119.
201. The Autobiography of William Plomer, pp.166-167.
202. Plomer, "The Return of Turbott Wolfe", p.1.
203. Plomer, Double Lives, p.160.
204. The Autobiography of William Plomer, p.88.
205. William Plomer, "A Writer's Faith", Electric Delights, p.21.
206. Ibid., p.21.
207. For a general discussion of various theories of the relationship between literature and society, see Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, pp.94-109.
208. George Orwell, Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, vol.I (1968), p.508.
209. Plomer, "A Writer's Faith", pp.20-21.
210. Ibid., p.21-22.
211. Turbott Wolfe, pp.118-119.
212. See Stephen Gray, "William Plomer's Short Stories: The South African Origins of New Literature Modes", copy of manuscript article, p.2, later published in Journal of Commonwealth Literature, vol.21, no.1, (1986).
213. See Tyler-Harries' remark, Turbott Wolfe, p.12.
214. Ibid., p.9.
215. Ibid.
216. See Ibid., p.10.
217. Ibid., p.11.
218. Ibid.
219. Plomer was familiar with the work of Virginia Woolfe

at the time he wrote Turbott Wolfe, which is partly why he decided to send the manuscript of his first novel to the Hogarth Press.

220. Turbott Wolfe, p.20.
221. Ibid., p.118.
222. Ibid., p.35.
223. Ibid., p.38.
224. Ibid.
225. Ibid., p.54.
226. Ibid.
227. Ibid., p.56.
228. Ibid., p.118.
229. Ibid.
230. Ibid., p.96.
231. See ibid., pp.120-121.
232. Turbott Wolfe, ibid., p.12.
233. See for example ibid., p.54. On meeting Wolfe, Friston announces that he is "a priest [but] I have my own views about God".
234. Ibid., p.10.
235. Ibid., p.55.
236. Like his character Wolfe, Plomer recognized and rejected the racism of South African society and found solace in writing before eventually leaving the country.
237. Turbott Wolfe, p.121.
238. Ibid., p.108.
239. Ibid., p.109.
240. Ibid., pp.118-119.
241. Ibid., p.31.
242. Ibid., p.66.
243. Ibid.
244. See The Autobiography of William Plomer, pp.218-219.
245. Turbott Wolfe, p.105.

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