



KARL MARX'S METABOLIC RIFT AS A BLESSING IN DISGUISE IN NADINE GORDIMER'S *GET A LIFE*

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Abstract

This paper explores Karl Marx's political-economic and ecological analysis of capital, investigating how expropriation and exploitation lead to the formation of social classes, significant disparities in wealth, and environmental deterioration across several levels. Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life* (2005) offers ground for exploring Karl Marx's concept of metabolic rift through the lens of environmental degradation. The novel centers on Paul Bannerman, an ecologist diagnosed with thyroid cancer. *Get a Life* examines the connection between humans and the environment by portraying a habitable future amidst distant environmental catastrophes. Paul, as a cancer sufferer due to radiation, refrained from openly expressing his sympathy and empathy for black characters who he believed would face social exclusion and marginalization otherwise. Based on the evidence, I can infer that metabolic rift is a hidden advantage. Paul's encounter with the unsettling nature of nuclear power is situated within the framework of Western awareness of nuclear energy, as opposed to South Africa's acquisition of nuclear technology influenced by neo-colonialism. *Get a Life* aims to establish a basis for ethical behavior and opposition to the divisive belief in the separation between oneself and others. Therefore, dismantling the dichotomy between the two extremes of South African society enables both factions to resist Euro-centric capitalism, which is perceived as a contemporary manifestation of colonialism. This can contribute to the establishment of a new, environmentally friendly, and economically prosperous society in South Africa. So metabolic rift could be a blessing in disguise.

Keywords: Karl Marx; Metabolic Rift; Dualism; Eco-system; Neocolonialism; *Get a Life*; Nadine Gordimer

Introduction:

An adverse consequence of contemporary technology is the prevailing era of environmental crises, arising from mankind's ecologically detrimental behaviors that harm the sustenance of our planet. Severe ecological catastrophes, such as water and food scarcity, climate change, deforestation, depletion of natural resources, extinction of certain bird and animal species, global warming, loss of biodiversity, and contamination, pose a significant threat to human life and well-being on Earth. Ecocriticism emerged as a movement in the 1990s in response to humanity's treatment of the natural world, namely drawing attention to the recurring ecological catastrophes that the planet faces.

The continuous progression of capitalism, driven by its relentless pursuit of accumulating riches through the surplus value generated by labor, has resulted in the emergence of a distinct social metabolism. In this system, the primary focus is on the quantitative growth of capital (Foster and Clark, 2020). Karl Marx (2004) asserts that the actual exchange of commodities, which is the social metabolic process, involves a transition where the two aspects of a commodity - its use-value and exchange-value - become evident. The estranged metabolic process, structured to optimize financial gains and enhance output, is based on theft and exploitation, and it significantly contributes to the formation of worldwide disparities. Simultaneously, it systematically gives rise to multiple ecological tensions, which become evident through metabolic rifts and extensive ecological damage.

In Nadine Gordimer's novel *Get a Life* (2005), the main character Paul Bannerman is undergoing medical treatment for thyroid cancer. Despite his weakness, he demonstrates a deep understanding of the world and a strong commitment to the well-being of the non-human eco-system and people of color. Paul, as a cancer sufferer due to radiation, refrained from openly showing his support and empathy towards black characters who he believed would face social exclusion and marginalization without his endorsement. Consequently, I can deduce that "slow violence" is a hidden advantage. Paul's encounter with the unsettling nature of nuclear power is situated within the framework of Western awareness and understanding of nuclear energy, as opposed to South Africa's acquisition of nuclear technology under the influence of neo-colonialism. *Get a Life* explores the interconnected relationship between humans and non-humans, as well as the connection between whites and blacks. It aims to establish a basis for moral action and resistance against the divisive belief in a binary opposition between oneself and others. Paul Bannerman's comprehension of his own identity and his connection with a wider non-human ecology demonstrates a mutual susceptibility with this eco-system due to the gradual harm caused by thyroid cancer. Nuclear radiation is

presented as a blessing in disguise, as Paul's disease serves as a metaphor for the connection between different racial groups in their efforts to defend the environment and challenge binary thinking. Therefore, dismantling the dichotomy between the two extremes of South African society enables both factions to resist Euro-centric capitalism, which is perceived as a contemporary manifestation of colonialism. This can contribute to the establishment of a new, environmentally friendly, and economically prosperous society in South Africa.

This paper investigates the exhaustion of natural resources and the profound alteration of the South African way of life resulting from the capitalist system portrayed in Nadine Gordimer's controversial novel, *Get a Life*. The paper aims to examine the impact of capitalism systems on human physical well-being and the environment by examining *Get a Life* via an eco-Marxist perspective. Eco-Marxism is a political ideology that integrates the anti-capitalist principles of Marxism with ecological concerns and measures that support the environment. The paper intends to argue that *Get a Life* exhibits two characteristics: the interconnectedness of environmental degradation and social injustice, and the environmental activism focused on protecting South Africa against neocolonialism. I contend that *Get a Life* effectively exposes how the capitalist system employs violent processes to exert control over both the natural world and human beings. Furthermore, the novel highlights how the exploitation of nature is brought to light through individuals' physical and mental exploitation. My argument is predicated on the hypothesis that the novel serves as an astute exploration of the extensive magnitude with which capitalists' relentless pursuit of quick profits estranges humans from their environment. The purpose is to emphasize the socio-ecological divide and endeavor to reinstate social metabolism, thereby creating an opportunity for a potentially sustainable South African society.

Get a Life explores many viewpoints related to environmental concerns. Gordimer's narration of the environment explores its interconnectedness and integration from various perspectives, including racial, political, economic, global, and local. She portrays ecological occurrences as deeply interrelated and immersed within these contexts. She strives to take into account the intricacy, transience, and spatial aspects of environmental problems. Gordimer endeavors to delineate the occurrence of ecocide across different magnitudes and circumstances. *Get a Life* is a multifaceted and comprehensive narrative that has faced significant criticism for its unique and complex writing style, but there has been relatively less discussion concerning its portrayal of international, modern environmental concerns. The main character of the novel, Paul Bannerman, an ecologist, has recently been diagnosed with thyroid cancer. As a result, he is required to undergo a period of isolation due

to the radioactive iodine treatment. This treatment is used to eliminate any remaining cancer cells following his thyroid surgery, but it also makes him emit radiation. Nevertheless, Gordimer employs her character's disease to explore the wider scope and driving force behind environmental concerns, rather than using it as a trigger for the plot. The tale delves into the life of the Bannerman family. Gordimer employs the family as a focal point to explore wider concerns, including ecology, development ethics, globalization, and racial and political problems in post-apartheid South Africa. *Get a Life*, highlights the ecological devastation of the South African indigenous terrain due to rapid industrial expansion, specifically emphasizing the peril of global environmental collapse. The novel showcases the struggle to protect the stunning natural scenery of the untamed South African coast. This landscape is under threat from various projects, including the proposed pebble bed nuclear reactor, toll highway in Pondoland, and dams in the Okavango Delta. In the pursuit of industrial development, the South African government allows multinational corporations to exploit the native environment.

Springs, Transvaal (now Gauteng), an East Rand mining town near Johannesburg, was the birthplace of South African author Nadine Gordimer in 1923. Global universities have granted Gordimer 10 honorary doctorates in literature. She won the 1974 Booker Prize for her *The Conservationist*. She contrasts apartheid's psychologically devastating impact on South Africans. Globally famous Gordimer has produced fourteen novels, many short stories, and articles. In her fictional works, she depicted white individuals who identified as "radicals" and were driven by a desire to free themselves from an apartheid system that dehumanized both the oppressors and the oppressed. However, these depictions of white individuals striving for their own freedom consistently implied that the future success of white South Africans depended on the establishment of a "shared culture" with their black fellow citizens. This paper examines the conflict between Gordimer's attempts to redirect white resistance against apartheid in a manner that supported black separatism, and the belief that if white individuals were to be included in a post-apartheid South Africa, they needed to participate in a blended cultural identity. Therefore, while analysing the text, I could argue that Gordimer tries to dismantle the dichotomy that exists within South African society, enabling individuals to resist and reject Euro-centric capitalism, which is perceived as a contemporary manifestation of colonialism. In addition, I contend that the portrayal of violence against nature in *Get a Life* can be seen as a blessing in disguise, as Paul's cancer serves as a metaphor that prompts him to consider the interconnectedness of different races in their efforts to protect nature, while also challenging the notion of dualism.

Get a Life is also considered an apocalyptic reading to our present days as it conveys a message that humanity is currently facing the imminent risk of complete extinction, both for our species and the planet. This threat arises not only from the existence of nuclear weapons but also from our ongoing degradation of the environment. Gordimer employs Paul, an environmentalist, as the protagonist, to raise consciousness regarding environmental preservation. Additionally, Paul's black colleagues serve as a means of resistance against the detrimental initiatives offered inside the native African landscapes. This paper centers around the notion that various initiatives implemented under the guise of advancing and enhancing indigenous environments ultimately result in their own demise. Nevertheless, the paper contends that the devastation inflicted upon the South African eco-system might be seen as a hidden advantage. Paul Bannerman might be seen as a representation of a small-scale ecological system that is being affected by thyroid cancer. Paul Bannerman's comprehension of his own identity and his connection with a wider non-human ecology reflects a mutual susceptibility with this eco-system due to the gradual harm caused by thyroid cancer. Paul's illness serves as a symbol of unification between whites and blacks, as well as a means to both protect nature and destroy dualistic thinking. In this context, the metabolic rift can be seen as a hidden blessing. Therefore, by dismantling the dichotomy between the two extremes of South African society, both factions are empowered to reject Euro-centric capitalism, which is perceived as a contemporary manifestation of colonialism.

Get a Life explores the centralization of land, addresses eco-degradation, emphasizes the importance of raising awareness about eco-system sustainability, and deconstructs the binary opposition between nature and culture. Thus, I utilize Eco-Marxism to embrace an "earth-centered approach" (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, pp. xix), and to address the inquiry of how capitalism contributes to the estrangement of humans from their surroundings. Additionally, I will investigate to what degree the capitalist system has contributed to the deterioration of human well-being and the natural environment, by what means capitalist power has structures altered traditional rural lifestyles.

What is Eco-Marxism?

As described by David Pepper, Eco-Marxism is a sociopolitical philosophy that combines the Marxist critique of capitalism with ecological concerns and pro-environment movements (Pepper, 1993, pp.23). By drawing on the ecological Marxist theories of Karl Marx and John Bellamy Foster, this study examines the destructive impact of Capitalist practices on the eco-system in *Get a Life*. The article

can be analyzed from an Eco-Marxist perspective, highlighting how the harmful political and economic systems created by capitalists are the root causes of environmental degradation and social inequality. Karl Marx highlights:

[Hu]man lives from nature, i.e. nature is his body, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that [hu]man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for [hu]man is a part of nature. (Marx, 2004, pp. 328)

Marxist ideology places significant importance on achieving a state of harmony between humanity and nature. Marxists vehemently condemn capitalist systems as the fundamental source of human estrangement and the oppression of the earth. The capitalist dictatorship extensively exploits nature and its resources through globalization and industrialization to accumulate money and achieve rapid profit. Additionally, it imposes servitude on the working class through force. Globalization has led to trade liberalization, allowing for the unrestricted movement of goods and capital between countries. In order to optimize their financial gains, enterprises, and companies exert influence on governments to reduce labor expenses. The expansion of global trade and the exchange of products between countries has led to detrimental emissions from the use of fossil fuels in transportation, as well as oil spills that cause harm to the natural environment.

Eco-Marxism is based on four fundamental notions first introduced by Marx and widely employed by Bellamy Foster, a prominent ecological Marxist. The following concepts are included: "Social Metabolism", "Metabolic rift", "Commodity Economy", and "Second Nature". Social Metabolism is the concept that describes how humans, via their activities, manage and regulate the exchange of resources between themselves and the natural environment (Marx, 2004, pp. 554). It involves the interplay between humans and the natural world, which ensures the survival of humans and the ongoing existence of nature. Nevertheless, this interplay has been disrupted by capitalists prioritising economic concerns over ecological considerations. Consequently, the exploitation of capitalist policies and practices has led to metabolic rift, which refers to the harsh degradation of the biosphere and the unstable connection between humans and the environment. These practices encompass activities such as a widespread industrial sector that leads to environmental damage and high energy usage.

As a result, capitalism thoroughly exploits nature. Rubin Patterson argues that the environment is not capable of supporting capitalism, and conversely, capitalism is unable to support the environment (Patterson, 2010, pp. 74). Many environmentalists highlight the discrepancy between capitalists' activities and environmental social justice principles. The capitalists prioritize production and consumption without considering environmental sustainability. The term "Commodity Economy" describes the concept that laborers have been reduced to commodities within the capitalist production method, disregarding their humanity. Coal, oil, and natural gas depletion, which involves the exploitation of nature, is closely associated with the manipulation of people and is considered one of the contributing factors to the phenomenon known as the Metabolic Rift. The shortage of raw materials and the alienation of farmers from nature have resulted in this outcome. Foster argues that as capitalism expands, its ecological demands become more acute and imposes greater ecological harm (Foster, 2000, pp. 66). Capitalist forces are seeking a "Second Nature" as Marx described to address the ecological rift and restore balance. Following the destruction of the biosphere, capitalists have sought various methods to exploit the ruined agricultural landscape and increase their fortune. Their objective is to construct an economy focused on generating profits, without considering ecological sustainability. Capitalists have employed artificial fertilizers to address the soil issues they have created. However, this practice has led to pollution, which has detrimental effects on both society and the environment (Bell, 2015, pp. 2). Therefore, the paper focuses on the metabolic rift, its relation with capitalism, and how it could be a blessing while whites and blacks could unify their efforts to defend their land against neocolonial capitalism.

Metabolic Rift

The production process exerts various pressures on the natural environment, leading to the need for restorative measures that involve capital. The metabolic rift concept allows the development of new ecological policies that are more effective than current projects and also challenges the established growth paradigm. This paradigm does not consider the biophysical aspects and is not accounted for in classical economic equilibrium models or most alternative economic visions. The concept of the Metabolic Rift challenges us to reconsider economic growth models that rely on increased use of environmental resources. It also suggests alternative approaches to manage population infrastructure. The metabolic rift theory originated in the 19th century as part of an ecological critique of a political economy that was heavily influenced by the appropriation of surplus products by individual capitalists and the growing fragmentation of the social sciences. Due to this, numerous present-day

analysts regard the rift theory as a crucial basis for contemporary research in political ecology, Green Marxism, and the burgeoning interdisciplinary area that combines ecology and anthropology in the biophysical social sciences.

Marx's notion of the metabolic rift is founded on the understanding that capitalism induces a profound existential dilemma in the human connection to the natural world. The notion pertains to the "permanent division in the interconnected process of social metabolism, a metabolism dictated by the inherent laws of life" (Marx, 2004, pp. 949). The intractable division in social metabolism is comprehensively addressed in *Get a Life*. Gordimer's work addresses social and political inequalities and delves into environmental and ecological themes within the South African backdrop. Nevertheless, given a global perspective, it becomes evident that the issues commonly seen as the world's economic concerns are, in fact, predominantly environmental problems. Gordimer extensively examines the world of ecological discourse in the novel, revealing that the diversity of the narrative gives greater importance to ecological issues rather than political or economic matters.

Get a Life serves as a literary representation of the scientific report, highlighting the negative consequences of metabolic rift on both the environment and humans. These consequences, which are often overlooked and not accounted for, are mostly due to the delayed impacts and the disadvantaged status of the victims. Foster argues that according to Marx, the relentless pursuit of accumulating value, achieved by exploiting the earth and disregarding the essential needs of nature, has caused a fundamental disruption in the connection between human society and the broader natural world from which it originated (Foster and Clark, 2020, pp. 192). Marx highlights the actions of capitalists in exploiting the earth's natural riches and disregarding social metabolism.

In *Get a Life*, Gordimer depicts the imperceptible and elusive aspects of the environment. The novel focuses on three prominent environmental concerns: the construction of a dam in the Okavango Delta, the opposition to the pebble-bed nuclear reactor development, and the plans for the Pondoland national toll road and mineral extraction project. However, the primary ecological occurrence is Paul's cancer, as it is employed as a metaphor to investigate environmental concerns on a broader scale. I argue that Paul's body functions as a microcosm of the eco-system. Gordimer uses this method to communicate the intricacies and complexities of the broader ecology succinctly. Within the context of his illness, he embodies his work and the environmental catastrophes he strives to avert. For instance, he describes himself as "I'm my own experimental pebble-bed nuclear reactor," and his wife perceives him as a "threatened species" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 47).

Gordimer provides a comprehensive analysis of the thyroid gland. It embodies an intangible energy that flows through the body, acting as a force that impacts and molds. This highlights the significance of both the tangible component, the brain, and the intangible aspect - the "small pockets of substances" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 9). The Okavango Delta offers an ecological contrast since imperceptible factors govern its existence. The Okavango is characterized by its complexity, intricacy, and reliance on countless interdependent processes. It defies human planning and cannot be replicated on a drawing board. The alterations of the subject, which occur naturally and without external influence, were not able to be imagined or planned.

Once again, the description emphasizes the Okavango Delta's 'inconceivable' nature. Thus, Paul's illness serves as a tool for examining and facilitating discussions regarding the time and spatial dimensions of ecological concerns. This device reduces the size to match the dimensions of his body. Furthermore, it diminishes the temporal domain, which was previously considered infinite, as the statement "Okavango left to itself will renew eternally" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 182) is now limited to a measurable human lifespan. By utilizing the framework of the human body, we enhance our understanding of measurement and make these processes more tangible.

However, the radiation emitted by Paul's body continues to remain invisible. The cancer and radiation are imperceptible, autonomous forces operating throughout his body. They cannot be perceived or understood since they are not visible. This leads to Paul experiencing a "confrontation with an incomprehensible state of his own being" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 67). Paul's sickness compels him to withdraw from communication and seclusion. Both literally and figuratively, the individual's vocal cords are impacted following the thyroidectomy, requiring a period of isolation. figuratively, this experience is unsharable, since the person feels excluded from the transformative process and confined to a state of safety. Paul perceives himself as assuming a role that was traditionally designated for those of African descent, specifically the role of being afflicted and socially marginalized. His existential dilemma, the abrupt transition into a new condition of being, has made him acutely aware of forms of agonizing solitude that were before inaccessible. He experiences a process of being unfamiliar with what is natural in his life, which allows him to develop a critical awareness that has been suppressed or numbed by apartheid.

Nevertheless, Paul's quarantine leaves him inactive and overwhelmed, while his African colleagues Thapelo and Derek continue their political work as extreme activists. Quarantine does not serve as a means of aligning oneself with the non-human nature. Rather, it arises from Paul's anger in comprehending his situation. He exists in a state of protracted and delayed stress caused by radiation, which poses a

hazard to both himself and his family. The radiation has a profound and tangible impact on both the individual and those nearby while being undetectable. It elicits a sense of sensory deprivation and mental disorientation. In addition, Paul's ecological mindset is strongly influenced by romantic ideals that view nature as untamed wilderness or the garden as a place for leisure. However, the Bannermans are unaware "of the economic and environmental factors that surround the production and consumption of goods" in their household and garden (Vital, 2008, pp. 108).

Domestic settings, such as his family's garden, might be considered "ideological apparatuses" since they play a role in perpetuating hierarchical relationships (Barnard, 2006, pp. 49). The garden embodies a manufactured representation of the world, characterized by hierarchies and physical fences, which might be seen as a dream-like landscape or a false fabrication. According to Paul, the garden is a place "where the leaves of jacaranda trees touch the same wind that gently stroked his son's cheek" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 78). It is also a place where he can see a small snail moving slowly across a stone using peristalsis, a type of muscular movement. The significance of this may be seen in Paul's environmentalism, which fails to address the social disparities between the wealthy and the impoverished caused by the effects of contemporary colonization due to his privileged position as a detached observer of history. His suburban surroundings protect him from any real or imminent danger resulting from environmental degradation.

On the other hand, for other individuals, the opposition to the building of nuclear reactors holds greater personal significance. Thapelo, for instance, was affiliated with Umkhonto we Sizwe, the militant faction of the African National Congress, which actively targeted and obstructed the development of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station during the apartheid era. The opposition against the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor is seen as an extension of the fight for freedom, namely against the continued practice of capitalist extractivism. Paul refers to this opposition as a type of combat in the wilderness, albeit with a touch of irony. While Paul supports a conservationist and environmentalist approach that aligns with a white ideal, Thapelo promotes the "organization of indigenous resistance movements through the Amadiba Tribal Trust and by mobilizing traditional leaders" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 85). Thapelo's strategies are hindered by the monetary rewards offered to these customary leaders by the multinational firms constructing these projects. As a result, Paul is compelled to subsequently "orchestrate his campaign by influencing the story surrounding it through an advertising campaign" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 146). Thapelo's perspective challenges Paul's narrow and isolated view of the environment in the novel. It also highlights the contrast between indigenous movements for environmental justice and Paul's eventual surrender to the promotional culture of

multinational capitalism and neoliberal economic development (Graham, 2010, pp. 203).

Get a Life demonstrates self-awareness regarding the constraints of its narrative voice through the social status of its protagonist. The author places significant emphasis on the metafictional elements, which demonstrate a lack of commitment to endorsing the perspectives of its characters. The novel may challenge the prevailing narrative by highlighting the blind spots in Paul's awareness through the portrayal of black characters such as the street-sweeper and gardener (Vital, 2010, pp. 94–95). One major drawback in Paul's viewpoints is that while he appreciates the uniqueness of nature and enjoys feeling disconnected from the center, he cannot imaginatively engage with the distinctiveness of individuals and “the sense of otherness that arises from a shared national history” (Vital, 2010, pp. 100). In addition, Paul does not accurately depict the experiences of black laborers and environmentalists in his thoughts and emotions, nor does he acknowledge the harm caused to the non-human ecology. Paul's limited understanding of class and racism raises challenging concerns about how the novel approaches these issues.

Paul's current state of being, caught between trauma and menace, creates a feeling of psychological bewilderment and dread that is described as the "nuclear uncanny" (Masco, 2006, pp. 45). Paul's comprehension of radiation signifies a significant transformation in the comprehension of mortality, illness, and well-being in Western civilization after the emergence of nuclear technology. Death “has transformed into a type of well-being that is now considered normal and goes unnoticed, resembling a new aspect of nature” (Masco, 2017, pp. 339). This is due to the increasing prevalence of catastrophic risks such as sudden mass fatalities, individualized cellular mutations, and diseases caused by radiation. The concerns over a nuclear disaster have deeply influenced people's perception of their daily lives and have occupied their thoughts and emotions extensively.

Environmental Degradation and Social Oppression

The repressive approach towards the environmental concerns of impoverished individuals involves asserting that the actions undertaken by the capitalist entity are in the general public's best interest. However, the depiction of reality in *Get a Life* can be perceived as entirely contrary. Gordimer exposes the reality that the impoverished must endure hardships for progress to occur. The burden of development is consistently borne by the impoverished. The author emphasizes the concept of "the psychology of denial" as described by (Nixon, 2011, pp.20). This refers to a strategy employed by capitalism to hide the harmful effects it has on the environment by denying its connection to environmental degradation. Additionally,

it manipulates people into believing that their actions are beneficial for the greater good.

In response to neo-imperial nuclear technology transfer to South Africa, Paul experienced the nuclear uncanny. Paul is against nuclear programs like the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor, which reinforce colonial hierarchies in a capitalist world. Paul represents the white, liberal elite, and civilian nuclear reactors pose a nuclear calamity threat. The “first” and “third” worlds diverge in technical growth and concentration due to a “massive failure to transfer precisely these aspects of a culture that would support the furtherance of high technology” (Ihde, 1990, pp. 132). However, labeling these unequal transfers a “failure” ignores the often deliberate strategies used to maintain hierarchical relations between “first” and “third” world regions and to enforce distinctions between human and non-human, or colonial self and colonized other, due to contiguous ideologies of exploitation. We should call this an unequal or asymmetrical transfer rather than a “failure of transfer”. If technology transfer can affect values and situations in a society, then technological exchange regimes can modify values in these civilizations.

Disempowered communities lack ecological protection, making them vulnerable. Many economically vulnerable people would rather not speak up because they cannot afford to lose their jobs or land to the government or multinational firms. Environmental degradation turns a generation of South African kids into criminals and unemployed, a type of slow brutality against the powerless. Since South Africans lost their land, riches, heritage, and identity, they turned to violence and criminality. Nadine Gordimer illuminated capitalism power's willful impoverishment of the impacted masses. *Get a Life* supports Joan Martinez Alier's book argument that “environmental risks are not randomly distributed. They may disproportionately affect the poor or racial minorities.” (Alier, 2003, pp. 187-188). Thus, because the disempowered are physically and/or culturally isolated, their predicament goes unnoticed.

Despite having great potential, South Africans are convinced that their underdeveloped system would never allow them to achieve much. Here, neocolonial exploitation is presented as an attempt to save the nation and their resources because their underdevelopment is hindering their progress. In other words, the performer of the damage represents himself as the savior who is doing them a favor. However, the fact of the matter is that this corruption is an outcome of the exploitation of the land. Therefore “it is a fantasy to think that the West can change complex societies with very different histories and cultures into some image of itself. The main hope for the poor is for them to be their own searchers, borrowing ideas and technology from the West when it suits them to do so” (Easterly, 2006, pp. 74).

Get a Life underlines the hidden violence as dispersed across time and shows the writers' attempts to show it to the public by telling stories of underappreciated locations and people. Decades pass before animal and tree species perish and landscape changes. Therefore, gradual violence must be seen and addressed with more diligence. I also support Nixon's claim that hidden violence targets the powerless. The ruling class exploits its territory without consideration for the residents. I also believe oppression need not be colonial. The oppressor of a developing nation need not be the cause. National oppression can occur. *Get a Life* shows how Black South African government organizations persecute poor Blacks. Gordimer represents the belief that South African minorities are oppressed and discriminated against like developing nations. Nixon says, "White people oppressing blacks in South Africa draws instant condemnation" because it is seen as racism. "Well, it's their business, isn't it?" people shrug when faced with black-on-black tyranny (Nixon, 2011, pp.115). Nixon also claims that when members of the same race oppress each other, it is ignored and considered a nation's own affair.

Get a Life's focus on Paul and his quarantine allows for close attention to how his radiation exposure causes a profound reconfiguration of his self and its interaction with his environment due to neocolonial nuclear technology. Gordimer imagines a new way to interact with the rearranged human-nonhuman connections. The novel shows Paul's growing empathy and knowledge of others as he becomes more irradiated. Through the embodiment of vulnerability to nuclear fallout, Gordimer's novel investigates how the individual and non-human nature are mutually constructed.

Environmental Activism and Challenging the Dualism Between Blacks and Whites

Val Plumwood, an Australian philosopher and ecofeminist known for her work on anthropocentrism, argues that the capitalist exploitation of nature is connected to colonialism through a logic that is rooted in the extreme separation of the human/white self from the non-human/black other. This separation can be traced back to the dualistic thinking that emerged during the European Enlightenment. The logic is further reinforced by denying the equal existence of the self and the other, and by treating the other as a passive backdrop for human exploitation (Plumwood, 2003, pp. 54–59). On the other hand, Paul's state of being exposed to radiation demonstrates a mutual relationship between oneself and others that challenges these opposing concepts. According to Jason W. Moore, a careful examination of the history of capitalism shows that it is not simply a binary relationship between capitalism and human society. Instead, capitalism and human society are intertwined

in a complex way with non-human nature and the environment. This relationship can be described as a "dual internality", where there is an overlap between "humanity-in-nature" and "nature-in-humanity". Furthermore, there is a mutually constitutive relationship between "nature" and capitalism (Moore, 2015, pp. 42-44). Both Paul and his family, as well as the surrounding eco-system, are susceptible to the potential danger of a nuclear catastrophe. His willingness to take on this risk makes him acutely aware of his position within this environment. He gains insight into how the eco-system influences and shapes his identity and his impact on the environment, just as his activities have repercussions for the broader eco-system. Paul's evolving self-perception is particularly impactful due to his acute awareness of a mutual susceptibility between himself and a much larger environment that exceeds his comprehension. This awareness becomes most evident to him when he reflects on the broader consequences of his radioactivity during a time of deep thought:

What is the threshold of risk to be decreed for different people — what about the paper plates touched by radiant saliva on spoons and forks, got rid of. Thrown away in the trash to lie on waste dumps picked over by kids from black squatter camps. What is “rid of” in terms of any pollution, it’s a life’s work to inform us that it’s not only what is cast into the sea that comes back to foul another shore, no matter whose it is. (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 60)

Paul practices meditation while being isolated at his parents' residence to protect his family from his radiation. He used disposable China and silverware to prevent contamination of household members and their domestic staff. Nevertheless, he realizes that his radiation danger is not confined to a certain area, and he endangers individuals who are distant from him. The shift in his linguistic style, as he vividly portrays expansive natural elements such as the sea and the shore, stands in stark contrast to the physical limitations of his own body, which extends far beyond the primary setting of the novel: a garden located within a middle-class suburban household, providing a space of relative domestic ease. This daydream can be regarded as disturbing the dream-like landscape the garden portrays. The intrusion of a broader environment into the home enclosure undermines the hierarchical structures that are replicated within domestic settings.

The author's depiction of individuals and locations as wholly abstract, such as "children from impoverished settlements" or "an unidentified shore", is particularly

enlightening. Although these individuals are mentioned indirectly, they are largely absent from the text. Black characters in the novel are shown as voiceless and marginalized, similar to the man sweeping the streets at the beginning and the Bannermans' domestic assistance. They are depicted as background figures with little significance. Nevertheless, the indirect reference to these characters in the story brings awareness to their absence inside the viewpoint from which the novel is narrated. The text highlights the characters' positionalities and the constraints of their viewpoints. The lack of presence in Paul's consciousness is clearly apparent in the language used in the story, which is focused on him. Gordimer's recognition that the consequences of actions, such as nuclear fallout, can have far-reaching and detrimental effects is noteworthy. However, it is notable that the author avoids explicitly referring to nuclear fallout and instead uses a euphemistic comparison to the dumping of waste in the oceans, which subsequently spreads throughout a transnational eco-system. The absence of precision in his language mirrors the dispersed atmosphere of the contamination: there will perpetually exist locations that are unidentifiable and beyond knowledge that will be impacted by nuclear pollution. The contamination in question is a subtle and widespread manifestation of hidden violence against the eco-system (Nixon, 2011). This type of violence, characterized by its extensive duration and geographic scope, eludes comprehension within the human imagination. Paul possesses knowledge about the physical processes of ocean and wind currents that transport waste and nuclear radiation. However, his use of imprecise language indicates the difficulty of accurately describing certain interconnected elements of reality. These elements can only be understood indirectly through their absence and evoke a sense of boredom and dissatisfaction. The ecology in which Paul is involved lives in a perpetual state of otherness, as it is never completely understood by a human observer but remains elusive and cannot be accurately represented. The concept of "planetary" as described by Gayatri Spivak refers to the inherent otherness of the ecology. It signifies that the planet is a perpetually elusive phenomenon that the subject cannot fully understand or control (Spivak, 2015, pp. 291).

Spivak argues that the planetary, which is fundamentally different from human experience, does not imply the passivity of non-human nature or the anthropocentric desire for representation and understanding of human subjects. In contrast, the implicit recognition of the physical mechanism via which ocean currents transport human waste indicates a perception of self-governance and influence within the natural environment, separate from but nevertheless heavily influenced by human actions. Paul feels imprisoned and frustrated by the dichotomy between an alterity that cannot be represented and a continuing sense of commitment and moral

obligation. He realizes that his previous use of liberal political terms, scientific and conservationist language, and the common critical views on development projects, which analyze the connection between foreign investment, government authority, and neoliberal ideology, are not suitable for addressing the ethical concerns related to his own radioactive contamination and the massive ecological disaster. The ambiguity of his moral frameworks exemplifies a nuanced shift between several approaches to contemplating the ecological consequences of human actions.

The evolution of Paul's ethical thinking becomes most apparent shortly before he departs from his period of isolation. During their final week together, Paul and Thapelo reunite in the garden. Paul observes that their deep engagement in their gardening work in the suburban area shapes their perception of the world and their role as active participants in it. This perspective acknowledges that everyone, whether they acknowledge it or not, impacts the world through their actions. Paul's comprehension of his position within and the consequences of his actions on the environment is based on his lawn, which greatly influences his ethical thinking, particularly in his experience in the garden. He acknowledges this fact about himself, as he characterizes himself as a "conservationist [...] one of those new missionaries here not to save the souls but to save the earth" whose "heresy is born of the garden" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 94), and he also "views his deep involvement in it as a representation of the wonder of the larger world" (Gordimer, 2005, pp.95). Paul gains an understanding of his role in nature and, at the same time, he also feels disconnected "from his professional identity" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014, pp. 123). Paul's embodiment of radioactive radiation highlights the internal connection between himself and nature. However, when he contemplates the immense magnitude of the Okavango Delta, he realizes the limitations of his knowledge about nature.

He acknowledges that he had previously considered the eco-system in an overly theoretical manner, constrained by his own professional perspective, failing to fully appreciate the immense scale and intricate intricacy of a whole eco-system, encompassing both cosmic and tiny elements. In addition, he develops a sense of doubt towards the specialized and technical language used by professionals and scientists to convey his understanding of nature, which he criticizes as a "computer speak label" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 91). Nadine Gordimer challenges established ecological knowledge by highlighting contradictions in Paul's thinking. It explores the fundamental principles of ecology, such as the preservation of identity and life, "while also emphasizing the limitations imposed on the study of ecology by political organization and ideology" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2005, pp.129).

Paul's complete integration into the eco-system, manifested through his physical exposure to radioactivity in his garden, without the influence of computer-mediated ecological language, confirms the fundamental tenets of ecology by offering a transformed perception of the human self as an inseparable part of its surroundings. This transition encompasses not just a change in our understanding of ecological knowledge constraints, but also a transformation in our perception of the human self, non-human nature, and their interconnectedness. The novel portrays the interdependence of the human self and non-human nature by depicting the transformation of nuclear radiation into a physical embodiment through Paul's own radioactive state. This challenges the notion of separating the human self from the non-human nature, which is often exploited in colonial extractivism. Paul's comprehension of his position within the eco-system and his mutual susceptibility to disaster aligns with a broader conceptual transformation in environmental thinking regarding the connections between the human individual and the natural world.

The juxtaposition of the secure isolation Paul's quarantine and the imminent apocalyptic danger posed by radiation defines the disorienting sensory experience of the nuclear eerie. Paul's fears about extinction are evident in his portrayal of an apocalyptic vision. The individual's perception of the calamity is particularly mixed, as they acknowledge the possibility that they may not have the longevity to witness the survival solution during the catastrophe, hence highlighting their uncertainty. The author's contemplation on extinction is framed within the extensive timeframe of extinctions spanning thousands of years, including examples such as the "white rhino, dinosaurs, and mastodon" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 94). Paul's awareness of the vast and widespread time frame of this calamity, as well as its lack of visibility due to its continuous nature, exemplifies the concept of slow violence. This concept is crucial to understanding the eerie character of nuclear catastrophes.

Despite contemplating extinction, these reflections motivate Paul to assert himself as a conservationist. Given these concerns, Paul perceives himself, rather ironically, as one of the contemporary missionaries who aim to preserve the planet. He seeks solace in his activity, "which originated in the garden" (Gordimer, 2005, pp. 94). The individual's close connection with their surroundings serves as the foundation for their moral reaction to the fears of extinction. This connection leads to a transformation in their perception of the non-human eco-system and the gradual harm caused by nuclear contamination. Rather than perceiving these as external factors, they view them as integral parts of their own existence. The author's personal experience with radiation has transformed the concept of nuclearity into a tangible and technical reality. This is evident in his choice of possessive pronouns to

characterize his situation as "his own Koeberg experimental nuclear reactor" and "his Chernobyl" (Gordimer, 2005, pp.60). His encounter with his disease and mortality confirms his susceptibility, which in turn allows him to empathize with the concept of extinction within a broader eco-system. There is an "ethical recognition" of the connection between natural eco-systems and those manufactured by humans, which is a shared vulnerability (Graham,2010, pp. 198). The precision of this experience lies in its embodiment, as the individual becomes a metaphorical nuclear reactor, allowing for the development of a response-ability towards radiation contamination in the non-human eco-system.

The most notable aspect of Paul's ecological awareness is that his political and ethical ideals are shaped by the current political climate in South Africa. Paul's feeling of aimlessness and dissatisfaction with the previous approaches of involvement is intensified by the continued existence of colonial-era power structures and racial inequities in post-apartheid society. Indeed, Paul's ability to observe historical events and contemplate them in the comfort of his parents' home is a result of his racial and class privilege. However, his comprehension of the ecological and ethical concerns that influence his life suggests that he is becoming more aware of the broader colonial politics associated with nuclear technology. Paul exemplifies a "divided historical stance" (Clingman,1986, pp. 218)which, means that Paul's period of isolation might be compared to the segregation of black and white individuals under apartheid. Paul himself recognizes this similarity when he observes Thapelo's indifference towards radiation exposure, attributing it to the profound impact of being subjected to a more severe "quarantine of segregation" (Gordimer , 2005, pp. 61).

When Thapelo embraces Paul in the garden and continues to socialize and drink with him, their physical closeness serves as a symbolic act against racial segregation and the separation of individuals based on their health status. Paul interprets this hug as a metaphor for the collective struggle for liberation among black males during the independence movement. Paul's firsthand encounter with marginalization and susceptibility serves as the foundation for his empathy towards black activists such as Thapelo, as they collectively combat the exploitation of neo-colonialism. However, Paul's comprehension of their role in the anti-colonial movement is limited by his historical awareness. Although Paul's perspective limits the narrative, it conveys a willingness to embrace the larger ecology by showing vulnerability. This openness reflects a sense of responsibility towards the non-human entities. This is particularly evident in the fact that the effects of nuclear contamination are directly represented through Paul's experience of being radioactive. This manifestation of shared radioactivity transforms into something comprehensible within the context of

human existence. Paul possesses a keen understanding of the extent to which humans are interconnected with the natural world, especially in terms of his knowledge about the widespread geographical and historical impact of radiation and extinction. The alterations of his own identity serve as the foundation for his activism and his connection with black individuals who were otherwise portrayed as insignificant in his viewpoint. This novel explores a relationship where humans and non-humans mutually shape each other, and both share a sense of vulnerability and mortality. This challenges the idea of humans being separate from non-humans and sets the foundation for ethical behavior and resistance. In order to challenge capital and promote ecological sustainability, true equality, and the reinstatement of the individuals who work with nature as the intermediaries, it is imperative to merge the fights for land and labor, as well as for the economy and ecology.

Conclusion

Gordimer's narration of the environment encompasses a comprehensive analysis from racial, political, economic, global, and local viewpoints. She skillfully portrays ecological events as intricately interconnected and deeply rooted. She strives to reveal the intricacy, transience, and spatial nature of environmental concerns. By choosing texts that address the urgency of environmental problems, we may observe that these concerns continue to be hidden from sight, even in Gordimer's case, where she endeavors to depict ecocide in all its different dimensions and situations. The nuclear energy sector in South Africa is intricately connected to its colonial history. Additionally, it emphasizes the hierarchical exploitation of the natural world by human extractive practices. The discussions surrounding environmentalism and political resistance against nuclear energy, which are centered on criticizing capitalism, are insufficient in comprehending the magnitude and extent of ecological disaster. This disaster is evident in the form of gradual violence that is spread across vast geographical and temporal dimensions through nuclear fallout. However, *Get a Life* envisions a way of actively participating that can understand and embrace intricate connections, and uses them as the foundation for its ecological principles. *Get a Life* explores a relationship where humans and non-humans mutually influence each other and share a sense of vulnerability and mortality. This challenges the idea of a strict division between humans and non-humans and sets the foundation for ethical behavior and resistance. Gordimer explores the consequences of this physiological disconnection, examining topics of exploitation, alienation, and ecological devastation. *Get a Life* employs a compelling narrative and complex characters' development to fight against the metabolic rift and prompt readers to reassess their connection with the environment and consider ways to achieve

harmony and sustainability. The message becomes crystal-clear: regaining natural order in the universe is deeply linked to reclaiming man's humanity. This message seems to be in harmony with the ecocritics' assertion that environmental problems can never be solved without paying attention to social injustice and oppression of the indigenous people. Thus, Gordimer's exploration of the need for a healthy environment enables her to explore issues of political as well as social concerns. So, Karl Marx's concept of metabolic rift could be a blessing in disguise.

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الصدع الأيضي لدى كارل ماركس كنعمة مقنعة في رواية نادين جورديمر "احصل على حياة"

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المستخلص:

تستكشف هذه الورقة تحليل كارل ماركس السياسي والاقتصادي والبيئي لرأس المال، وتحقق في كيف تؤدي المصادرة والاستغلال إلى تكوين طبقات اجتماعية، وتفاوتات كبيرة في الثروة، والتدهور البيئي عبر عدة مستويات. تقدم رواية نادين جورديمر "احصل على حياة" (2005) أرضية لاستكشاف مفهوم كارل ماركس حول الصدع الأيضي من خلال عدسة التدهور البيئي. تدور أحداث الرواية حول بول بانرمان، عالم البيئة الذي تم تشخيص إصابته بسرطان الغدة الدرقية. يبحث فيلم "الحصول على حياة" في العلاقة بين البشر والبيئة من خلال تصوير مستقبل صالح للسكن وسط الكوارث البيئية البعيدة. وامتنع بول، بصفته أحد مرضى السرطان بسبب الإشعاع، عن التعبير علناً عن تعاطفه وتعاطفه مع الشخصيات السوداء التي كان يعتقد أنها ستواجه الإقصاء الاجتماعي والتهميش بخلاف ذلك. استناداً إلى الأدلة، أستطيع أن أستنتج أن الصدع الأيضي هو ميزة خفية. إن مواجهة بول مع الطبيعة المزعجة للطاقة النووية تقع في إطار الوعي الغربي بالطاقة النووية، على عكس حصول جنوب أفريقيا على التكنولوجيا النووية متأثرة بالاستعمار الجديد. يهدف الحصول على الحياة إلى إرساء أساس للسلوك الأخلاقي ومعارضة الاعتقاد الانقسامي بالفصل بين الذات والآخرين. ولذلك، فإن تفكيك الانقسام بين النقيضين في مجتمع جنوب أفريقيا يمكن كلا الفصيلين من مقاومة الرأسمالية الأوروبية المركزية، والتي يُنظر إليها على أنها مظهر معاصر للاستعمار. وهذا يمكن أن يساهم في إنشاء مجتمع جديد صديق للبيئة ومزدهر اقتصادياً في جنوب إفريقيا. لذلك يمكن أن يكون الصدع الأيضي نعمة مقنعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كارل ماركس؛ الصدع الأيضي. ثنائية؛ النظام البيئي؛ الاستعمار الجديد. احصل على حياة؛ نادين جورديمر