

An Ecocritical Study of Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (1974), *The Pickup* (2001), and *Get a Life* (2005)

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Abstract

The main premise behind this research is to investigate the peculiar role of the environmental representation in literature through the new literary approach called "Ecocriticism" or "Green Studies". Nadine Gordimer, the recipient of the 1991 Nobel Prize in literature, is one of the novelists who commit themselves to discuss the interconnection between literary studies and environmental issues especially in South Africa. Gordimer argues that the deep recognition of environmental justice is the only means of negotiation between the two struggling sides. The research will tackle in detail Gordimer's literary green masterpieces: *The Conservationist* (1974), *The Pickup* (2001), and *Get a Life* (2005) to raise the human consciousness of the critical environmental dilemmas. Gordimer is highly concerned with the politics of land in terms of power relations, the sense of justice in land ownership and distribution, and the concept of multicultural ecocriticism. Ultimately, legislative laws must take the necessary procedures to protect the environment from pollution and degradation,

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reinforce the principles of conservationism, and positively exploit the natural resources which lead to economic and social developments.

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Introduction

In the wake of the numerous environmental disasters which have taken place around the world since the last decade, the most catastrophic of which is the Tsunami of 2004, it has been an urgency to raise public awareness towards the environmental changes threatening human existence on the planet. Since then, environmental issues have been most widely discussed in literature and mass media as well. It is not surprising that many writers insist on investigating such issues in their narratives. The term 'Ecocriticism' was first coined by William Rueckert in a 1978 essay titled, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." It is defined as the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty XIX). Ecocriticism was first recognized as a literary term in the USA in the early 1990s and has widespread over the last two decades. In this concern, Cheryll Glotfelty established an association called ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) in 1992 for discussing how social, political, cultural, and ecological fields are explored in the light of ecocriticism.

M. H. Abrams gives a concise definition of Ecocriticism as an earth-centered approach which focuses on the place as a new critical category; it "designates the critical writings which explore the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on that environment by human activities" (71). Thus, the driving force behind the development of this new literary approach is the apparent interest in nature and environment in which people believe that they must contribute to saving the planet especially after the recent incidents of the global environmental crisis. In this context, ecocritics call for raising awareness of the earth and how people's behaviors affect it.

Ecocriticism in South African Literature with Reference to Nadine Gordimer

South Africa witnessed a violent history of environmentalism due to the tension between humanistic and ecological concerns represented in displacement, dispossession of the indigenous population, and the unjust European mastery over the natural resources of the land. In this concern, Beinart and Hughes point out that conflicts were fueled between blacks and whites over the exploitative conservationist practices of whites who assume managing the privileged areas of land. As a reaction, blacks assert their rights to land and its natural resources in the face of colonial conservationism through strategies of resistance

(16). Similarly, Graham Huggan refers that ecology is mismanaged due to the capitalist ideologies and the historical legacies of exploitation and authoritarian abuse (702).

Hence, it can be argued that deep recognition of environmental justice, which acknowledges the interconnection between the social and political injustice and the deterioration of nature leading to the environmental crisis, is the only means of negotiation between the two struggling sides. In his article entitled “The Emergence of Environmental Justice in Literature”, Sahu points out that The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines Environmental Justice as the fair treatment of all people regardless of their race or skin color. This agency, consequently, calls environmental laws upon enforcing regulations and policies that provide equal protection from environmental and health hazards for all. Such environmental laws should not only apply to humans but, also, to other species and ecosystems as a whole (547- 548).

In consequence, ecocritical studies pay considerable attention to investigate the inter-human relations concerning the environmental concern in South Africa (Love 1). It is noteworthy that South African literature was characterized by the general absence of ecocriticism as a vital literary academic approach in earlier years. It focused, instead, on challenging issues such as race, gender, and violence, setting aside any focus on the

environment itself (Steenkamp 29). The reason beyond such an absence was that some South African critics thought that discussing ecocritical studies was viewed as "one more hegemonic discourse from the metropolitan West" (132). Thanks to the 1992 AUETSA conference entitled "Literature, Nature and the Land: Ethics and Aesthetics of the Environment" which was highly concerned with including ecology as a valuable literary approach in South African literature (Barker 55).

Julia Martin clarifies the intersection between literary studies and eco-politics, indicating that environmental degradation is interwoven with social and political injustice. In the framework of her theoretical perspectives, she asserts that "(w)e need to begin by acknowledging that most people in this country have historical justification for seeing ecological issues as irrelevant, and even inimical to the struggle for social and political justice" (76). She eventually assumes that there is hope to settle the dispute between the two struggling sides and put an end to human and environmental exploitation (80). Moreover, Anthony Vital refers to the relationship between environmental and sociopolitical tendencies, discussing environmental justice in the South African context as an integrated approach to environmentalism (298). In a similar vein, Susie O'Brien recognizes the interrelationship between environmental and social concerns, arguing that ecocriticism is a critical movement that

emerges as a reaction against the unheard dialogue (178). Hence, the environmental representation in literature becomes more insistent and demanding because it contributes to a better understanding of how cultures and environments shape each other especially in the critical period of the environmental crisis.

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014) wins the 1991 Nobel Prize in literature for her influential literary contributions in both apartheid and post-apartheid eras. She is obsessed with making her novels coincide contemporarily with the concerned issues; therefore, she pays great attention to discuss the interconnection between literary studies and environmental issues especially in South Africa. Gordimer's interest in tackling environmental studies was noted in the earlier interview with Karen Lazar in November 1993 when she stressed the importance of highlighting the environmental concerns and the politics of land (Lazar 14).

South African politics should be reviewed before going through Gordimer's green concerns. The apartheid system started in 1948 with the victory of the National Party. It imposed strict laws leading to great segregation between whites and blacks. They were divided into two split groups: whites who had great advantages in society and great shares of fertile lands, and blacks who had lower positions in society and a restricted share of contaminated lands. As a result, most blacks in South Africa were vulnerable to dire environmental risks (Lijcklama à Nijeholt 12).

The reason behind environmental injustice and the unfair distribution of the land is the Land Act of the apartheid system in 1913 which stated that blacks, on the one hand, were not permitted to own land because of their color and inferior status in society; they had to have particular documents to locate in the land and move from one place to another. Besides, they had to take the whites' permission to work on their land. If they did not fulfill their charged duties optimally, whites could dismiss them immediately. Whites, on the other hand, enjoyed all the advantages of owning land and benefiting from its graces because of their color and superior status in society. They also had the absolute right to dispossess black laborers or replace them at any time. They could manage, exploit, conserve, or relate to the land in the way they determined. Thus, it can be argued that the management of land by whites according to the Land Act is regarded as an obstacle in the way of the black's freedom (23).

The land dispute lasted for decades and caused great segregation between blacks and whites. After decades of colonialism, racial discrimination, bloodshed, oppression, and resistance, the present Republic of South Africa managed to put an end to the apartheid system. Liberation from this oppressive system did not occur through repression and wars; rather, the great shift to democracy happened through negotiations between the National Party and the African National Congress that exerted

their best efforts to reshape the national identity of South Africa by recording the most important events of their distorted history (Bassan 19).

Since 1994, South Africa has entered a new political phase of its history. Nelson Mandela was democratically elected, declaring the beginning of the post-apartheid era or what is called "the New South Africa". In consequence, the oppressive laws of land distribution and deprivation of blacks of all advantages were abolished; and a new legislative constitution has been passed and implemented for the benefit of all. Moreover, equality has been restored as the right of all regardless of their gender or skin color (De Smet 8). During her youth, Gordimer witnessed the establishment of the Nationalist Party in 1948, in which whites imposed major restrictions and rigid laws on indigenous blacks to humiliate them on their own land (Talat & Guha 16159).

The Conservationist

In *The Conservationist* (1974), Gordimer tackles the issues of the Black Consciousness Movement whose main concerns are upon the blacks' struggle to return to their roots, gain their usurped land, restore their heritage, and recognize their cultural properties. The novel gives an account of the struggle over land in South Africa through Mehring, the white owner of the land, who practices power on his black laborers, exploiting them, taking their services for granted, treating them as inferior beings, and

depriving them of their simplest right of living. Regrettably, blacks have no choice to decide anything in this concern. The relationship between Mehring and his black laborers parallels the relationship between whites and blacks in the apartheid era.

The Conservationist recalls the dilemma of the forgotten ancestors by the emergence of an unknown corpse of a black man on Mehring's land which stresses, on the one hand, the fact that blacks are the true owners of the South African land and reveals, on the other hand, the firm and intimate relationship between the living blacks and their ancestors. Gordimer argues that blacks' power comes from their ancestors. The black body is discovered in the nest of reeds; thus, it is linked to his ancestors buried under the earth; "The Amatongo, they who are beneath. Some natives say, so called, because they have been buried beneath the earth" (*Conservationist* 163). Mehring's relation to land is cracked and distorted by the ancestral power of blacks. The emergence of the black body on Mehring's land leads him to meditate on his life, mortality, and illegitimacy as a white man in possessing the black land. He realizes that blacks are the first and true owners of that land. Colomeda and Wenzel explain how blacks relate to the land: "(To indigenous people) (t)he land is the ashes of their ancestors who fought to keep the land from becoming destroyed by others, the ancestors on whose shoulders we stand in this generation" (7).

The pastoral notion has an essential significance in power relations during the apartheid era. Power relations and representation of land are interrelated in *The Conservationist* in which she shows the firm relationship of their characters to the land, and how it is distorted by power. Land is a place of reverence and honor for blacks who pray for the continuation of life after the expected years of drought and dearth: "I pray for corn, that many people may come to this village of yours and make a noise and glorify you" (*Conservationist* 39). Moreover, when the black body is discovered among reeds, he is honored by blacks who give him a proper and honorable grave on the farm. On the contrary, it is a place of adventure, entertainment, and practicing power for whites.

Mehring feels dizzy and faints on the land. When he restores his consciousness, he finds that his whole body strongly touches the earth to the extent that he breathes "intimately into the earth... it is the air from his nostrils... sand on his lip... staring into the eyes of the earth with earth at his mouth.... Earth is his mouth" (*Conservationist* 41). Fainting and recovering among the reeds get him to think about mortality. The posture which Mehring finds himself in after recovering is paralleled to the pasture the dead man was found in. Thus, he becomes sure that he will share the same fate of the black corpse buried beneath the

surface of this barren land. Now, Mehring and the dead man are found on the African land; but who can inherit it?

Nature has a great contribution to revitalizing the historical memory and restoring the blacks' seized power. The climate and natural phenomena cannot sustain the idea of prolonging the whites' control of the land; rather, they predict the whites' devastation and the blacks' prosperity. Therefore, what is forgotten, hidden, and repressed by history apparently emerges by the act of nature (Azzam 102). Throughout the events of the novel, the fire burns a part of Mehring's property, destroying his favorite location on his land. Even the willows and reeds are also burnt, leaving no trace of this part of his property. While walking by the river, Mehring sticks his foot into a profound mud; "the more he pulls the greater the vacuum. He pulls and pulls; down there" (*Conservationist* 228). Mehring imagines that someone ties him up for a few minutes before he can loosen himself. He thinks that the black body comes to life and grabs his own foot. The only available recourse is pulling up and swimming in the mud. However, Mehring deals with the situation differently; he refuses to be pulled or even touched by the mud.

Right after the appearance of Mehring and his son Terry in the celebration, the fire is sparked again by the river; it erupts through the third pasture and centers in the compound. Later, Mehring notices a heavy storm near the black body. After that, the

rain starts suddenly and continues for two weeks without interruption. This heavy flood, which exhumes the whole area, pushes the black dead body onto the ground, cleans the burnt ashes, and consequently enlivens the burnt area again. This proves that the fertility of the land is related to the black ancestors who were buried beneath the earth; besides, they can be considered the black ancestors' resistance against such a celebration of Mehring, the usurper of their land. By the end of the novel, Mehring will leave the land to its true owners and head for another town where he can practice his authority. Thus, white usurpers will not be remembered at all by nature in general and by the black individuals in particular. On the one hand, Africans will reclaim the land and erase any traces of them. On the other hand, such natural forces as flood and rain, in the form of rain birds, will destroy the whites' property "when the reeds and the grass grew so high again, just as if nothing had ever forgotten" (*Conservationist* 250).

Such natural forces will make the reeds grow and hide what was buried beneath them. Hence, they will be forgotten; no one will remember where they were buried, or when the farm was burned. In contrast, nature sustains the prolonged relation of blacks to the land and proves the continuous occupation of South African land by blacks who will still be kept in mind even after their death by nature and by the ancestors' future contact with the

black people living on earth. "So we came out possessed of what sufficed us, we are thinking that we possessed all things" (*Conservationist* 213). They will always be remembered by the act of the natural phenomena which will exhume and push it forever every time it occurs. "The heaven was hard, and it did not rain.... I heard it said that it rained excessively that it might cover the dead body of Umkqaekana with earth. I heard it said they poisoned him and did not stab him. I heard it said that those people were troubled, for their gardens were carried away by a flood" (231). Moreover, nature is depicted as dealing gently with the black body: "The grasses nearly met overhead and moved under the weight of a body, gently feeling at it. The sun went behind a cloud and a cool palm of a shadow rested a moment on cheeks warm from sleep" (250). This is an honor from heaven as well. These environmental catastrophes hitting areas of South Africa are regarded as fierce attacks from heaven and earth as well as a prediction of ending the desperate conditions of blacks who will continue to be there and restore their usurped heritage.

The end of *The Conservationist* offers hope of achieving environmental justice by transforming the possession of land from white usurpers to black indigenous owners. It is worth mentioning that the final words of the novel unveil the identity of the dead body. He is a homeless man whose children come to occupy their ancestral land: "They had put him away to rest, at last; he had

come back. He took possession of this earth, theirs; one of them" (*Conservationist* 276). This is a striking contrast between the conditions of whites and blacks in terms of possessing the land. Black children can not only breed heirs and exert great efforts in searching for their ancestral genealogy in past generations, but also embrace their own repressed culture, admit their being the rightful inheritors of the land, and do their best to restore their usurped land. On the contrary, white children strongly reject inheriting the usurped land. The whites' genealogy, represented in Terry, strongly rejects the colonial inheritance of their ancestors. The whites' deficiency of inheriting the land explicitly reveals the desolation of their occupation of the African land.

The Pickup

In *The Pickup* (2001), Gordimer establishes the notion of "home" within a globalized world and how the sense of home transcends the South Africa's borders and even the idea of the nation itself (Mount 102). She reflects her preoccupation with land, referring to it as a purely topographical space that has a considerable concern for organizing social relations and identifying people's identity. She also shows how immigration to another land is a struggle to gain power for Western and Eastern people alike. Some of the Eastern people have a great desire for relocation "because of the constrictions of poverty or politics, or

by choice of ambition and belief that there's be an even more privileged life...." (*Pickup* 48).

On the one hand, Ibrahim has a deep desire to relocate in order to gain power. Ibrahim cannot afford the expenses of migrating to the West, so he takes Julie as a pickup, a feasible means to facilitate his travel. Ultimately, he picks up his goal and exploits all the available tools in order to gain power in European countries. He also keeps constant contact with Julie's wealthy family to achieve his goal and eventually gets a visa to the USA. On the other hand, Julie has the privilege to move from one place to another; so she decides to go beyond the limited border of her country to achieve her identity. She chooses Ibrahim's community as an appropriate place to start again to form her identity. She fulfills this desire by marrying Ibrahim and moving to his Arab country despite her family's disapproval. In this concern, the concept of "the country" has a profound significance for Julie and Ibrahim. They do their best to seek the third space, a new place that is different from their own cultures and traditions for gaining power and restoring their lost identities away from their home. In this context, Julie reads William Plomer's poem aloud to Ibrahim as follows:

Let us go to another country...

One without fires, where fever

Lurks under leaves, and water

Is sold to those who thirst?

And carry dope or papers

In our shoes to save us starving? (*Pickup* 88-89)

Through this poem, Gordimer explores the geo-political realities that love confronts, and how the relationship between people can easily be created in a globalized world by means of relocation. In this connection, Heise suggests that place is characterized by "spatial closeness, cognitive understanding, emotional attachment, and an ethic of responsibility and 'care'" (33). Thus, people must connect to places as a way to get rid of the sense of alienation.

In a similar vein, Gordimer discusses land cultivation and its great role in achieving identity and gaining power. According to C. Mount, *The Pickup* discusses how citizenship and identity are tied to place and presents a critique of the restorative power of the pastoral (101). The desert has a vital contribution to Julie's personality; she realizes that gaining power entails moving to a space outside her restricted country; that is why her cultural identity blossoms in the desert. She eventually loses her sense of alienation and finds the desert a refuge from the coldness, pressure, and exploitation of her Western cultures. Julie is very

excited about the fact that there is neither demarcation, struggle, nor discrimination in the desert:

The desert. No seasons of bloom and decay. Just the endless turn of night and day. Out of time... for it has no measure of space, features that mark distance from here to there... there is no horizon, the pallor of sand, pink traced, lilac-luminous with its own color of faint light, has no demarcation from land to air. Sky-haze is indistinguishable from sand-haze. All drifts together, and there is no onlooker; the desert is eternity. (*Pickup* 172)

There is a striking contrast between Ibrahim's and Julie's views towards the desert. The desert is a source of empowerment for Julie and a source of disempowerment for Ibrahim. While Julie discovers the true meaning of freedom, hope, peace, comfort, equality, consistency, and belonging through her experience in the desert, Ibrahim sees it as a lifeless, motionless, and hopeless place that imposes oppressive barriers. According to him, desert means desolation and silence (*Pickup* 34). Unlike her husband, Julie is eager to settle in the desert town and possess the land in an oasis near it. She is so excited by the expanse of the green fields of rice in Ibrahim's poor village and decides to buy land and invest her money in this prosperous project by financing a rice paddy in the lush green oasis. Thus, the desert, in general, and the rice paddy, in particular, have a key role in constructing

her new identity and urging her to reconsider her place in the world.

Ibrahim is surprised at Julie's decision which is considered a powerful threat to his prospects; therefore, he confronts her saying: "You can buy part of the oasis already under cultivation.... And you can get permission to drill for a well... With money, you can buy anything from the government. The landowners who call themselves a government" (*Pickup* 215). He still believes that Julie just wants to rejuvenate her life, claiming that her desire to relocate and settle in the desert is a mirage of an adventure, innocence, and ignorance (216). Thus, Ibrahim's and Julie's attitudes towards the desert reflect their own personal ideologies and desires. In sum, the desert is a place that drives Julie in, drives Ibrahim out, and proves their inevitable separation.

Furthermore, the desert symbolizes independence and empowerment for the white women, represented in Julie, who can walk freely in the desert, while it denotes subordination and disempowerment for the black women, represented in Ibrahim's sisters and neighbors whose movements are restricted. By articulating the role of the desert in gaining power and achieving identity, Gordimer reaches the phase of spreading reconciliation and peaceful co-existence between Eastern and Western people: "The sands of the desert dissolve conflict: there is space, space for at least one clear thought to come" (*Pickup* 231).

Get a Life

Get a Life (2005) is one of Gordimer's masterpieces which is included and longlisted for the prestigious Man Booker Prize in 2006 (Szcurek 36). It is one of the most important green novels published after the demise of the apartheid era in South Africa. The importance of this novel lies in its discussion of the focal points of local and global politics in the 21st century represented in the exploitation of the natural environment, the violation of the rights of nature, and the critical environmental crisis which disturbs the real developments in South Africa. *Get a Life* examines wider issues such as ecology, globalization, industrialization, and racial and political tensions in post-apartheid South Africa through penetrating deeper into the private lives of the family of Paul Bannerman. The whole family experiences a turning point by confronting a private catastrophe affecting Paul, the ecologist, who is diagnosed with thyroid gland cancer and must receive a radioactive iodine treatment. Paul, gradually, becomes literally radiant; he radiates unseen danger to others through the radiative poisonous substances he took to counter cancer. Ironically, the ecologist, who fights against nuclear power, becomes his "own pebble-bed nuclear reactor" (*Get a Life* 59).

The survival of the planet is fragile once confronting the fierce threat of nuclear power. *Get a Life* reinforces the

interrelationship between the instability of the private lives of humans and the instability of ecosystems through exploring the experience of Paul's illness and its effect on his family (Szczyrek 45). Paul's entire family is wholly influenced by his illness not only because of radioactive treatment, but also because of the lack of closeness, oneness, and unity between family members. Paul must be deposited to the quarantine for a certain period until the full recovery in order not to expose his family to the dangers of radiation. Paul's parents decide to send Primrose and his friend Thapelo as servants to their son. In fact, they are black who literally expose their life to the danger of radiation. Paul feels astonished by their acceptance to accompany him.

This is a pure sense of multicultural ecocriticism. In this context, Tenenbaum notes that the temerity of the black characters depicts the enduring power of South Africa's natural environment and claims that Gordimer uses social elements of class orientation, racial origin, in addition to environmentalism in order to reveal the influence of nature on human existence (44). In a similar vein, Vital indicates how *Get a Life* tackles racism as a dominant issue in South Africa through the character of Thapelo, the poor black labor who should keep in mind the common cultural concepts of nature as a means of negotiation with the colonizing privileged whites. Further, Thapelo must realize the relation between his resistance against legalized white privileges

and his work as a conservationist (108). Hence, environmental justice must be applied to the poor black people who always confront the ongoing dire effects of the colonial past and are still marginalized in the dominating political and economic atmosphere.

Cheryll Glotfelty proposes that the ethical systems implemented by individuals are the major reasons for the environmental crisis which leads to devastating consequences on the planet as a whole, referring to the disturbing awareness that we have reached the peak of environmental limits and the consequences of the damaging human actions on the basic life of the planet (XX). In her review of the novel, Jacqueline Rose suggests that the earth and the political control are the focal topics leading to the prevalent tensions in *Get a Life* (20). In this regard, Gordimer, in her green novels in general, investigates the issues of the earth which are over-controlled by the political domination, warning of the possibility of the destruction of the whole planet not only by the individual landscape and the social relations embedded within it but also by the human intervention in the landscape. However, she argues that land renews itself despite human intervention and the social behaviors of the population.

Szczurek declares that the interrelation between eco-conscious and eco-ethical response to our world becomes a matter of life and death in the 21st century; that is why *Get a Life*

indicates that we are on the average of the possible annihilation of the whole planet and species as well not only because of the weapon of mass destruction but also because of our gradual destruction of the environment. If one does not follow the command to get a life, he will be confronted with mortality and death as an alternative (66-67). In this regard, the environment is exposed to hazards out of the development of industrialization for raising the standard of living of the poor. Although the economic advantages of industrialization strengthen economy and fight poverty, it causes much harm to the environment and destroys ecosystems. Thus, it can be stated that civilization is against nature. However, Paul observes that "whatever civilization does to destroy nature, nature will find its solution in a measure of time we (humans) don't have" (*Get a Life* 168). He believes that nature will prevail and survive in the end; it will eventually renew itself as long as the earth is not endangered by the explosions of permanent radiation.

Get a Life is considered a climate novel that demonstrates how climate change policies would be better implemented and realized if climate change is not viewed as an ecological phenomenon only, but also as a tangled network conveying numerous racial, political, economic, global, and local perspectives relevant to environmental issues (David & Regenia 60). Gordimer intricately weaves some environmental events that

mirror the present-day context; for example, she refers to the catastrophe of Hiroshima bombing and the ongoing effect of the nuclear threat. She also reveals that the most fearful and dangerous threats in the world beyond terrorism are its "nuclear capability" (*Get a Life* 99); i.e., suicide bombings, the emergence of fatal viruses, toxic chemical substances, etc.... Although Paul's cancer is the main disastrous event in the novel, there are three other key environmental issues represented in the novels; the dam project located in the Okavango Delta, the campaign against the development of the pebble-bed nuclear reactor, and the Pondoland national project of mineral extraction scheme (David & Regenia 147). Thus, this green novel attempts to expose the unseen forces of environmental disasters to the public. For example, portraying Paul's body as a microcosm of the ecosystem is a matter of complexity indicating the existence of the invisible forces within environmental disasters.

Get a Life redirects the public awareness towards the threats of nuclear annihilation and the environmental catastrophe which disturb our survival as species and threaten our existence on the planet. Here is the idea of the necessity of taking notes and leaving any sign behind; otherwise, "the basis of being human is undermined by the threat" (Szcurek 42). In this connection, Gordimer juxtaposes the two spheres of conservationism in the story through Adrian, the father, and Paul, the son. Adrian is an

archeologist who takes notes of the signs and traces left by previous generations and their entire civilizations; so he represents the preservation of the past through archeology. Paul is an ecologist who protects the environment from diverse threats among which is nuclear energy; so he represents the preservation of the future through ecology.

In his regard, Paul believes in his vital role as a conservationist who participates in nature's cycle and commits himself to securing nature from the dangers of the industrial revolution. He claims that his sublime mission is not only saving souls but also saving the earth. (*Get a Life* 94). The end of the novel is very hopeful, the halting of Paul's cancer and the nuclear reactor is juxtaposed with the coming of a new baby to Paul (169). Although Paul fears the idea of having a new baby who might carry the poisonous radiation and may be aborted or deformed, he hopes that the baby will carry the safe instinct from his mother. According to him, children as symbols of everlasting hope. Like his predecessors, the newborn will be equipped with all the necessary tools to perform his duties and to get a life. Hence, the phrase of the title is applied not only to all members of the Bannerman family but also to humanity on the whole.

Conclusion

The foregoing evidence leaves no doubt that Nadine Gordimer has articulated the vital representation of land and

environment in terms of power relations in her green masterpieces covering the South African apartheid and post-apartheid eras. Moreover, she has demonstrated the environmental injustice behind racism in South Africa as well as the common hope in spreading the sense of justice in land ownership, restoration, and distribution. In this concern, people's identity and social relations are part and parcel of their relation to the environment in general.

In *The Conservationist*, she has indicated that land is what conserves the corpse and arouses its memories over its inhabitants forever. She has also explored how blacks could conserve their own land while whites could not. She eventually has highlighted that gardening or returning to the land is some sort of curing what the apartheid era caused. In *The Pickup*, Gordimer has revealed that what is forgotten, marginalized, and repressed by history apparently emerges by the act of land and nature. In *Get a Life*, Gordimer has revealed the environmental injustice behind racism and has solved the dilemma of racial conflict over land by referring to the importance of earth for blacks and stressing the fact that their existence depends on it. Thus, reform, renewal, and hope in spreading the environmental justice behind racism are the emergent motifs in her South African fictions in which she stresses the absolute right of people in regaining their seized land and living a stable life in peace and good health. Accordingly, the sense of justice and the effects of democracy in South Africa have

been felt in the post-apartheid era concerning the system of land property, restoration, and division in rural areas.

Everyone must live in a clean environment without any harm threatening one's health or well-being. Legislative laws must take the necessary procedures to protect the environment from pollution and degradation, reinforce the principles of conservationism, and positively exploit the natural resources which lead to economic and social developments. Further, it is a prerequisite for concerned bodies to exert much effort to prevent pollution by recycling or treating wastes in an environmentally safe manner whenever feasible, reducing the emission of gases and the use of hazardous materials. Furthermore, they must raise public awareness of the profound impact of their harmful activities on the environment and the planet, urging them to utilize natural resources that contribute to a more sustainable economy.

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دراسة نقدية بيئية لروايات المُحافظ (١٩٧٤) والالتقاط (٢٠٠١) واطفر بحياة
(٢٠٠٥) لنادين جورديمر

ملخص

يتمثل الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة في تناول الدور الفريد للتمثيل البيئي في الأدب من خلال المنهج الأدبي الجديد المُسمى بـ "النقد الأدبي البيئي" أو ما يُعرف بـ "الدراسات الخضراء". تُعد نادين جورديمر (الحائزة على جائزة نوبل في الأدب عام ١٩٩١) واحدة من الروائيين الذين تعهدوا بمناقشة الترابط بين الدراسات الأدبية والقضايا البيئية لاسيما في جنوب أفريقيا التي شهدت حالة توتر عارمة بين كلٍ من الاهتمامات الإنسانية والبيئية في أعقاب نشأة حركة المحافظة على البيئة. وبهذا الشأن، تزعم جورديمر بأن تحقيق العدالة البيئية هو السبيل الوحيد للحد من حالة التوتر هذه. ستتناول الدراسة تفصيلاً ثلاث روايات أدبية خضراء لنادين جورديمر وهم: روايات المُحافظ (١٩٧٤) والالتقاط (٢٠٠١) واطفر بحياة (٢٠٠٥) على التوالي وذلك لرفع الوعي الإنساني تجاه المشكلات البيئية الحرجة. علاوة على ذلك، تُولي جورديمر اهتماماً كبيراً بسياسة الأرض من حيث علاقات القوة، وتُبين الظلم البيئي في سياق العنصرية في جنوب أفريقيا، وكذلك تنادي برغبتها في تحقيق الآمال المرجوة بنشر روح العدالة في ملكية الأرض وتوزيعها والاستفادة من خيراتها في جميع أنحاء جنوب أفريقيا بجميع أطرافها دون تفرقة عنصرية. كما تُسلط جورديمر الضوء على مفهوم التعددية الثقافية في سياق الأدب النقدي البيئي، مؤكدة على الدور الحيوي للأرض في تحقيق هوية الفرد. وفي النهاية، من حق الجميع العيش في بيئة نظيفة خالية من أي ضرر يُهدد صحة الفرد وسلامته. ومن ثم، يتحتم على القوانين التشريعية اتخاذ الإجراءات والتدابير اللازمة لحماية البيئة من التلوث والتدهور وما شابه؛ فضلاً عن ضرورة تعزيز تلك القوانين لمبادئ المحافظة على البيئة واستغلال مواردها الطبيعية، الأمر الذي يؤدي بدوره إلى تطورات اقتصادية هائلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب النقدي البيئي – أدب جنوب إفريقيا – سياسة الأرض – العدالة البيئية – التعددية الثقافية