

The Development of Nadine Gordimer's Career from 1953 to the Present Time

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Abstract:

Nadine Gordimer was born on 20 November 1923 in Springs, a small gold mining town of about 20,000 people on Johannesburg's East Rand. In 1991, Gordimer won the Nobel Prize. The main influence on Nadine Gordimer is her possessive mother, who invented the fiction of the former having a "heart problem" to maintain a suspicious relationship with the local doctor. Gordimer stresses that her mother's unforgivable action has influenced and shaped her life:

Gordimer's aim, throughout her writing career, is to be invisible, to create some sort of identification between the reader and what is being written about as well as the people in the work, and to involve the reader rather than to distance him. Both the false heart problem, invented by her mother, and her involvement in South African history define Gordimer's career. She provides her private history with public associations, being interested in the radical transformation in the interaction between the private character and the public landscape, which occurs during the course of her career. In her early novels, characters fail to develop a connection between their private lives and the public landscape. Unlike the firm restraint with which she depicts the South African situation in her early novels, Gordimer, in her later ones, including *A Guest of Honour*, *The Conservationist*, and *July's People*, portrays the increasing interaction of observer and world observed. She stresses the necessity of the artist getting involved with his or her world. The end of apartheid in 1994 marks a new beginning for Nadine Gordimer, creating fresh narrative possibilities, and presenting questions for the South African writer about the alternative subjects that are supposed to preoccupy him/or her. Gordimer has always written as a white liberal of the left, trying to project herself far enough out of the privilege of being a white South African. Her writing has been so subtle it helps and forces readers to find their way back from her words into her mind. She has sustained a tense dialectic between the personal and the political, being praised for her acute, almost lyrical sensitivity, richness of style, and detail. Gordimer has been heralded as having the ability to catch the implications of the smallest gesture or nuance, tracing its connections back to broader social and political arenas, and offering a kind of Freudian psychopathology of the everyday life.

Key Words:-

Possessive---invisible---identification---landscape---associations---involvement
apartheid----implications----psychopathology.

تطور مسيرة نادين جوردمر الروائية من ١٩٥٣ إلى الوقت الحاضر

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ملخص:

ولدت نادين جوردمر في العشرين من نوفمبر ١٩٢٣ في سبرنجز، وهي مدينة صغيرة لتعدين الذهب، إلى الشرق من جوهانسبرج، وقد حازت على جائزة نوبل عام ١٩٩١. وكان التأثير الرئيسي على جوردمر هو أمها الاستحواذية التي اختلقت أكذوبة مفادها أن نادين تعاني من "مشكلة بالقلب" لتبقى على علاقتها المريبة بالطبيب المحلي. وتؤكد جوردمر على أن فعلة أمها التي لا تغنفر قد أثرت عليها وشكلت حياتها.

إن هدف جوردمر، خلال مسيرتها الروائية، هو أن تكون غير مرئية، وأن تخلق نوعا ما من التوافق بين القارئ والموضوعات التي يكتب عنها وعن الشخصيات في العمل، فتشرك القارئ بدلا من أن تقصيه.

وكلا من مشكلة القلب العليل التي اختلقتها أمها، ومشاركتها في التاريخ الجنوب أفريقي يعرفان مسيرة نادين جوردمر، فهي تزود تاريخها الخاص بالتداعيات العامة، لكونها مهتمة بالتحول الجذري في التفاعل بين الشخصية الخاصة والمنظر العام الذي يحدث أثناء مسيرتها. في روايات جوردمر الأولى، تشغل الشخصيات في تطوير الارتباط بين حياتها الخاصة والمناخ العام، لكن فيما بعد تصور رواياتها التفاعل المتزايد بين المراقب والعالم الذي تتم مراقبته، حيث تشدد على ضرورة أن يشارك الفنان أو الأديب في عالمه/عالمها.

تسم نهاية التفرقة العنصرية بداية جديدة بالنسبة لنادين جوردمر، حيث تخلق إمكانات روائية جديدة وتطرح أسئلة للكاتب الجنوب أفريقي تتعلق بموضوعات بديلة من المفترض أن تشغل الروائي/الروائية. لقد كتبت جوردمر دائما ككاتبة ليبرالية من اليسار، محاولة أن تتأى بنفسها بشكل كاف عن امتياز كونها كاتبة جنوب أفريقية بيضاء. لقد تم التبشير بنادين جوردمر ككاتبة لديها القدرة على التقاط الدلالات لأصغر الإيماءات أو الفروق البسيطة، مقتنية أثر العلاقات المنطقية لتلك الدلالات بالحلقات السياسية والاجتماعية الأوسع، ومقدمة لنوع من علم النفس المرضي الفرويدي يتعلق بالحياة اليومية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

تملك - غير مرئي - تحديد - منظر طبيعي - جمعيات - مشاركة الفصل العنصري -
الآثار المترتبة - علم النفس المرضي.

I

Nadine Gordimer was born on 20 November 1923 in Springs, a small gold mining town of about 20,000 people on Johannesburg's East Rand. She is the daughter of Isidore Gordimer, a Latvian Jewish jeweler, and a mother, Nan Myers Gordimer, who was of British descent. Gordimer is a prolific and internationally acclaimed novelist and essayist of South Africa. She explores the effects of South Africa's Apartheid system on both ruling whites and oppressed blacks. Although the political conditions in her country are essential to the themes of her work, Gordimer concentrates mainly on the complex human tensions that are engendered by apartheid, focusing on the personal aspect of political turmoil. A member of the African National Congress, she tendered little moral hope for whites who lived under Apartheid and fought the system in her political life and her writing. Despite her being enthusiastically and passionately opposed to racism, Gordimer benefited from racist institutions with a privileged place in South African society. Many believe that this explains why Gordimer's storytelling talent was not acknowledged by the Noble Committee until the dismantling of the apartheid system began. Praised for her authentic portrayals of black African culture, Gordimer is also lauded for employing precise detail to evoke both the physical landscape of South Africa and the human predicaments of a racially polarized society. While some critics claim that Gordimer's detached narrative voice lacks emotional immediacy, others regard her fiction as compelling and powerful.

In 1991, Gordimer won the Nobel Prize for literature. Although Sture Ahlen, the permanent secretary of the academy that selects the prize winner, said that the award had nothing to do with political relations in South Africa, the citation also said: "her continual involvement on behalf of literature and free speech in a police state, where censorship and persecution of books and people exist, has made her the doyenne of south African letters".(ANC Author,"Gordimer's Nobel Prize", 13).Gordimer was the seventh woman to win the prize (after Selma Lagerlof, Grazia Madesani, Sigrid Undset, Pearl Buck, Gabriela Mistral, and Nelly Sachs) and the first South African. The aim of this paper is to trace the first stage of Gordimer's career from 1953 till the end of the apartheid system in 1994,to treat the second stage from 1994 till today, and to compare and contrast Gordimer's preoccupations, priorities and transformations throughout her career.

The main influence on Nadine Gordimer is her possessive mother, who invented the fiction of the former having a "heart problem" to maintain a suspicious relationship with the local doctor. Gordimer stresses that her mother's unforgivable action has influenced and shaped her life: "I retreated into myself. I became very introspective. She charged my whole character. ... It was such incredible loneliness – it's a terrible thing to do to a child". As a child, she did not have contact with other children, and became "a little old woman" (Hurwitt, "the Art of Fiction" 90). Both this false heart problem and her involvement in South African history have defined Gordimer's career. Both her actual mother and her mother country have stolen her life. She started from the very beginning to provide her private history with public associations, with her enforced dependency on the oppressive mother giving her a deep insight into the colonial dependencies, both of race and gender. As Gordimer

puts it, "First, you know, you leave your mother's house. Later you leave the house of the white race" (qtd in Barkham, "South Africa:..." 63). Apartheid has always been an obsession as well as a crucial experience in Gordimer's life. Commenting on this, she states: "If you write honestly about life in South Africa, apartheid damns itself" (Schwartz, "Pat Schwartz talks to Nadine Gordimer" 81). On another occasion, she says: "people like myself have two births, and the second one comes when you break out of the colour bar" (Terkel, "Nadine Gordimer" 44)..To her, the colour bar is wrong, unacceptable and completely indefensible. She has recorded the radical changes of her society over many decades, redefining her view of her society's direction and development as well as her position in it. Her radical hostility to apartheid was escalated in 1970 when she declared herself a socialist. Yet, the 1970s was difficult for the white writers, who were marginalized by the raised Black consciousness.

Critics have always failed to define Gordimer's career, with the personal interacting with the political at every level. According to John Cooke, "the shape of Gordimer's career has been elusive for a more significant reason: she has not been quite fit into any of the contexts her critics have used. Some have seen her as simply a European writer who happens to live in Africa" (335). Some reviewers compare her to the great nineteenth – century Russia, while others agree with Gordimer's own assertion that she is fundamentally an African writer, who has long been shaped by the African experience. Gordimer's early work concentrates on the intrusion of external reality into the pleasantly relaxed life of South Africa's middleclass white society. Her first novel, the *Lying Days* (1953), which is a mainly autobiographical description of a sheltered Afrikaner woman who obtains political consciousness through having sex with a social worker, presents the development of Helen Shaw, from being infantilized by parents into pursuing her own, independent life, when political violence has a damaging effect on her. Gordimer's second novel, *A World of Strangers* (1958), which is set in Johannesburg and deals with a British writer's attempts to establish relationships between his white intellectual companions and some black African friends, articulates the difficulty of having an equal human contact between both parts. It shows the cruelty and idiocy of apartheid as well as the dangers of daily life facing the blacks. It also stresses the theme of Eurocentric cultural domination in South Africa. Gordimer's career as a writer can be traced out through the chronology of her tales, which mirror and incarnate both changes in social attitudes and her own evolving fear of change for the worse. To quote her:

The chronological order turns out to be an historical one. The change in social attitudes unconsciously reflected in the stories represents both that of the people in my society – that is to say, history – and my apprehension of it; in the writing, I am acting upon my society, and in the manner of my apprehension, all the time history is acting upon me. ("No place Like" 13)

Thus, there is always the effect of the past, as the main component of history, on her. In *Occasion for Loving*, Gordimer draws upon her childhood experience – the fictional heart problem – to transform a personally emotional shock into political metaphor. Jessie Stilwell reconstructs the past, realizing that the fictitious heart complaint was meant only to create a relationship of dependency – in which her mother was the actual dependent – exactly as the whites in South Africa look at the

blacks in South Africa as children while, in reality, they depend completely on their labor. In this context of oppression and repression there is no possibility or occasion for loving between the whites and the blacks. Personal relationships are always jeopardized. The Sitwells realize that "even between lovers they had seen blackness count, the personal return inevitably to the social, the private to the political ... so long as the law remained unchanged, nothing could bring integrity to personal relationships" ("Occasion for Loving" 279). This transformation, from the personal to the social, and from the private to the political, develops in Gordimer's novels. In both the *Lying Days* and *Occasion for Loving* daughters realize that the total liberation, from private, familial fetters, necessitates challenging the dominant political order as well. Thus, in these novels, the daughters' leaving the "mother's house" requires leaving "the house of the white race". In Gordimer's fiction, there is a close relationship between the dominant tone, and the decline of race relation as well as the escalation of violence in South Africa. Unlike her first two novels, which conclude with hope for South Africa's future, Gordimer's later fiction is characterized by a growing sense of pessimism, and articulates her belief that the blacks as well as the whites are victims of apartheid. The *Late Bourgeois World* (1966) depicts the events leading to the suicide of a white political activist, Max, who had betrayed his compatriots in return for mercy. Liz Van Den Sandt remembers her former husband Max, who committed suicide. Max was an ineffectual saboteur, whose career was characterized by failure, betrayal, and jail. Gordimer underlines the fact that the whites, like the blacks, suffer because of apartheid. Liz breaks the news of the father's suicide to her son, who dares to say: "We've had a lot of trouble through politics, haven't we". The mother replies:

"Well, we can't really blame this on politics. I mean, Max suffered a lot for his political views, but I don't suppose this – what he did now – is a direct result of something political. I mean – Max was in a mess, he somehow couldn't deal with what happened to him, largely, yes, because of his political actions, but also because ... in general, he wasn't equal to the demands ... he took upon himself". (qtd in Banville 27-9).

The four novels through the *Late Bourgeois World* unify Gordimer's private and public themes, focusing on subjects such as interracial sex and private relationships prohibited by a series of "Immorality Acts" in South Africa. Both *The Late Bourgeois World* and the subsequent novel, *A Guest of Honor* are intensely influenced by Marxist thinkers. Both are Fictions of a failed revolution, with *The Late Bourgeois World* dealing with the unsuccessful efforts of a white activist against the background of the crushing of South African opposition in 1960s. *A Guest of Honor* (1970) is a novel of independence, treating the ill – fated return of Colonel James Bray to a newly-independent African nation from which he had been exiled for supporting black revolutionaries. Bray is disillusioned by the corruption, greed, and self-interest among the country's new leaders. He abandons his idealistic beliefs and criticizes the new government, with the result of being assassinated. In an interview Gordimer said of *A Guest of Honor*, "I tried to write a political novel treating the political theme as personally as a love story" (Cassere 4). She interrogates the connection between the political and the sexual, using the sexual relationships at the heart of the narrative to

examine the psychological causes of authoritarianism and of failed revolutions. In this respect, she draws on Wilhelm Reich's Freudian – Marxist theory of repression:

by liberating the instincts one could create the condition for an irrevocable liberation of human society. In his view, revolutions will fail if they are only political and economic and do not extend to the repressive morality of everyday life. For Reich, repression is the product of authoritarian patriarchy, as individuals are created with a character structure that renders them submissive to authority and willing to be ruled. Revolutions fail because rebels see authority figures subconsciously as their own fathers. However radical the revolution, as long as the family model persists, authority creeps back. Rebellions of sons against fathers therefore permit the return of the father in the character of the son (Newman, "An Overview of the Life and Career of Nadine Gardimer" 346-7).

Reich's ideas inform several of Gordimer's works, especially *A Guest of Honour*, in which national liberation is doomed to authoritarianism, with the British army being invited back by a dictatorial president to crush revolt. Gordimer underlines the process of omission in the novel, with Bray's life story being hushed in fabric of journalistic mendacity.

In Gordimer's early novels, *The Lying Days*, *A World of Strangers*, *Occasion for Loving*, and *The Late Bourgeois World*, the characters remain observers of the signs in the physical world, which serve as the locus from which these novels develop. They are unable to create a connection between their private lives and the public landscape. During the fifties and the sixties, while writing the aforementioned novels, Gordimer was more and more disappointed by the increasing enforcement of racial separation. She responded by withdrawing from her world, examining it from a more detached perspective. Her detachment from the world she illustrates gives evidence to the detachment of her early protagonists from their landscapes. Gradually, during the course of Gordimer's career, there is a radical transformation in the interaction between the private character and the public landscape. Unlike the firm restraint with which she depicted the South African situation in her early novels, she, in her later ones, *A Guest of Honour*, *The Conservationist*, and *July's people*, portrayed the increasing interaction of observer and world observed. She stresses the necessity of the artist being involved with his or her world. To her, both detachment from and identification with one's world makes a writer. Thus, her novels, beginning with *A Guest of Honour*, are articulated through observing her world from without and imagining it from within. In this regard, Esther B. Fein states:

In her very writing, she grew closer to the events fulminating around her and eventually drew others to a deeper understanding of South Africa. The actual writing comse from the tension of being involved and yet standing apart,' she said. "You have to become involved with life, not only in personal relationships but for social causes. But at the same time, you have to stand apart to pursue your writing to struggle with words to define the whole question of being and existence. (25)

In her *The Black Interpreters: Notes on African Writing*, which marks an important stage in her development, Gordimer presents a critical study of South African poetry

and black fiction in general. Her definition of African literature can apply to her own writing:

My own definition is that African writing is writing done in any language by Africans themselves and by others of whatever skin colour who share with Africans the experience of having been shaped, mentally and spiritually, by Africa rather than anywhere else in the world. One must look at the world from Africa to be an African writer, not to look upon Africa from the world. ("The Black Interpreters:..." 5)

In African fiction, content is more important than form, with realism and the external world taking precedence over experimentation and the internal and subjective world respectively. To Nadine, 'critical realism' represents the most significant type in African Writing.

In *The Conservationist* (1973), Gordimer tells the story of an African farm, exposing the colonialist biases of her predecessors, through the central character, Mehring, a wealthy white industrialist, whose self-incriminating interior monologues articulate his guilt and sense of displacement. The slow rising to the surface of an imperfectly buried black body symbolizes the return of the politically repressed, who will repossess the land. Mehring grows increasingly threatened by the presence of poor black squatters on his estate. According Judith Newman, "The Conservationist offers a prophetic image of a different South African future, in the best tradition of the visionary political novel. In formal terms, Gordimer throws into sharp relief the connections between conventional representations of realism and the imposition of colonial structures on the land and landscape of Africa" (Newman 348). The landscape the protagonist of *The Conservationist* inhabits is typical, absorbing everything, taking everything to itself and losing everything in itself. Mehring and the other later protagonists can no longer confront distinct public situations outside themselves, with their landscapes being and becoming something inhabited in imagination. Gordimer followed *the Conservationist* with *Burger's Daughter* (1979), which fully describes the efforts of Rosa Burger, the daughter of a martyred leader of the South African Communist party, to pursue an apolitical existence. The novel is more overtly political, examining the accusation that the white artist can produce only solipsistic art. Being the daughter of a white, Afrikaner communist hero, Rosa Burger is expected to reflect her father's views and to be defined in terms of race, sex, and position in the class struggle. To assert her independence, she joins with the forces of political repression, which are fought by her father, indulging in a belated act of sexual assertion in France. Most of the central images of the novel draws upon the theories which stress that racism is a result of sexual repression. Commenting on Gordimer's achievement in such novels as *The Conservationist* (1975), *Burger's Daughter* (1979) and *My Son's Story* (1990), Peter S. Prescott says: "... her style is self – consciously literary: Gordimer uses symbolism, surprise endings, a knotty prose and complicated forms of narration not usually employed in political fiction. But political fiction it is: a moral urgency informs everything she writes, and endows it with a virtue quite distinct from its literary merits" (40). To Nadine Gordimer, style is the point of view, or the point of view is style. The wide – ranging changing in her style centres on the novelist's distance from her world. Again, to her, writing is a process of withdrawing to create another world. Apartheid is an elaborate system,

separating a society's groups and making the presumption to look from the perspective of groups, to which one does not belong, impossible. In Gordimer's case, these amount to over three-quarters of her countrymen.

July's people (1981), which is set in the aftermath of a future revolution, depicts how a liberal white family is forced to depend on the providence of a black man who was formerly their servant. The novel highlights the complex interdependencies and tensions between the whites and the blacks in South Africa, shifting the focus from psychological to economic determinants. Maureen Smales, the protagonist, and her husband Bam flee to July's rural village, anticipating a future war-torn Johannesburg. She discovers that the qualities she admired in July, their servant, were not real. Her morality being dependent on her means, she steals medicine out of necessity and her husband kills for food. According to Judith Newman, "*July's People* draws attention to the problematic relation between narrative and cultural authority, implicitly signaling the need to cede interpretive control, to deconstruct the authority of the white "teller", in both economic and literary terms, as teller of the tale and as the one who makes the reckoning, financial or moral" (349). The confrontations rising in verbal violence between Maureen and July reveals the former's desire to translate the latter in her own cultural terms, and to interpret their relationship in ways pleasing to her own self – image. Now she realizes in a memorable sentence, "the present was his; he would arrange the past to suit it" ("*July's people*" 96). Thus, the liberal whites are degraded and dehumanized by their temptation not to get involved. Gordimer's steely gaze focuses on the victorious blacks, however corrupt they will be. *A Sport of Nature* (1987) embraces most of Africa, extending in time from 1950s to an independent black South Africa in the near future. It uses a picaresque form, marking a new departure through repudiating reformist Liberalism as well as the radical nature of sexuality. From the beginning of her career, Gordimer has proceeded from a recognition of the interaction of gender with genre. In this novel, she creates a female adventuress, Hillela, the heroine, to correct the patriarchal readings of empire that concentrate exclusively upon the male hero. The heroine is described as a sport of nature, "a plant, animal, etc. which exhibits abnormal variation or departure from the parental stock" (Oxford English Dictionary). *A Sport of Nature* is geographically and historically the most sweeping of Gordimer's novels, covering a trajectory moving from South Africa to Tanzania, Ghana, Eastern Europe, America, Europe, America, and back to South Africa for its independence celebrations. According to Newman, "Hillela's uninhibited sexuality introduces the politics of the body into more orthodox accounts of revolutionary history, often with deeply ironic effects, mixing passion with satire" (370).

Gordimer's essays have been a continual accompaniment to her fiction. In her *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places* (1988), Gordimer focuses on the question of the future for whites in South Africa as well as the transformations they must undergo, to remain and survive. The core of the collection of essays is articulated in the title essay's conclusion: "The transformation of experience remains the writer's basic essential gesture; the lifting out of a limited category something that reveals its full meaning and significance only when the writer's imagination has expanded it" ("*The Essential Gesture*;"...298). Like *A Sport of Nature* (1987), *My Son's Story* (1990) assumes the basic choice of commitment to the struggle for liberation. The

novel deals with the nature of heroism as well as the psychological conflicts in the revolutionary family, returning, for the first time since *The Lying Days*, to the mining town environment of Gordimer's youth. It is considered Gordimer's feminist novel, with the story passing from the control of the father Sonny to that of Aila, the mother. The novel incarnates the experiences of a respectable coloured school teacher, Sonny, who becomes an ANC activist and speechmaker, falls in love with a white revolutionary Hannah, and sees his son Will alienated. His daughter, Baby, becomes a political exile, after a suicide attempt. Will catches his father leaving a cinema with Hanna, with his father urging him to remain silent. Yet Will and Sonny's conspiracy of silence about the latter's adultery finally sets all the women free, articulating the feminist current in the novel. Hanna leaves, with both Baby and Aila becoming involved in politics and end up in exile in Zambia. Despite being fascinated by the bravery and single mindedness of those opposing apartheid, Gordimer examines the effect of commitment on their families and personal lives, making the political context fade into the background. In this connection, David Papineau states:

Gordimer herself has often insisted that she is an imaginative rather than a political writer. She aims to capture the precise modulations of experience, using her sometimes demanding prose to orchestrate a medley of perceptions and moods, working with telling details rather than elaborate description. In this novel she takes up a substantial challenge by making coloured teenage boy her narrator, and perhaps did not entirely intend the sullen, Oedipal youth who emerges (1037)

My Son's Story is a penetrating study of lives stretched tightly by the dangers of opposition to apartheid. It treats the variations of loyalty and betrayal, of dependence and autonomy, of kinship and community. Throughout her career, Gordimer has been obsessed with the evils, injustices and suffering resulting from the apartheid system. To quote Peter S. Prescott:

Gordimer's subject is the agony of South Africa under apartheid; her theme, an institutionalized corruption that leads to personal betrayal. Her great achievement has been to give the world a reckoning of the terrible cost of racism in her country that goes beyond what journalism can relate. For decades Gordimer has made one essential: it's not just the blacks who are brutalized by apartheid. By denying human rights to the majority of its people, the government dehumanizes the ruling white minority as well (167).

Throughout her career, Gordimer has remained loyal to the social mission of struggling against apartheid, stressing the point that art is always on the side of the oppressed, and underlining the role of the white liberals as the conciliator between oppressor and oppressed. When the white liberals come closer to the blacks they discover how meek and kind the latter are. Again, in *My Son's Story*, a group of liberal whites enter a black township to attend a political funeral:

No picnic party; the whites found themselves at once surrounded by, gazed at, gazing into the faces of these blacks who had stoned white drivers on the main road, who had taken control of this place out of the hands of white authority, who refused to pay for the right to exist in the decaying ruins of the war of attrition against their presence too close across the veld; these

people who killed police collaborators, in their impotence to stop the police killing their children. One thing to read about them in the papers, to empathize with them, across the veld; Hanna felt the fear in her companions like a rise in temperature inside the vehicle. She slid open the window beside her. Instead of stones. Black hands reached in, met and touched first her and then those of all inside who reached out to them (qtd in Packer 777-80).

Gordimer's eye transforms any scene she holds in focus into an abstract tableau. In the above scene, the novelist arouses pity and sympathy for the blacks, with the whites of good conscience being confronted with the simple and humble reality of black life. She has always been preoccupied with the moral situation of people of her own kind. According to Robert Coles,

Throughout her career, the South African novelist Nadine Gordimer has wanted to explore the Terrain where personal interests, desires and ambitions encounter (and, not rarely, contend with) the demands and trials of a politically active life. She has had a keen eye for the exceedingly precarious moral situation of her own kind – the privileged white intelligentsia that abhors apartheid, detests the exploitation of 25 million unfranchised, economically vulnerable citizens at the hands of five million people who, so far, have had a powerful modern army at their disposal, not to mention the wealth of a vigorous, advanced capitalist society (1).

In her subsequent work, Gordimer articulates her keen awareness of the significant role of the arts in the transformation of South Africa. In *Jump, and other Stories* (1991), she offers an examination of the relationship of literature to the struggle for freedom, covering the repressive years of the 1980s and early 1990s. In *Jump*, "Gordimer plays with one particular genre of the short story – the jump story, in which the tale ends abruptly in physical contact with, and consequences for, the audience, usually as the storyteller tickles, grabs, or pounces upon a listener" (Newman 351). She explores how apartheid insulates the daily lives of ordinary blacks and whites, emphasizing predation with its repeated images of the hunt ("Spoils") or the sexual chase ("A Find"), and of children caught, seized, or abducted ("Jump," "Once upon a Time"), or vulnerable to wild beasts. Hunters and hunted are also emphasized in "My Father Leaves Home" as the father, a child of thirteen, flees pogroms in Europe only to become a member of an oppressive racist regime. In "Some Are Born to Sweet Delight," a lover save the life of his unborn child (from threatened abortion) only to explode mother and fetus with a terrorist bomb. Gordimer's emphasis in the collection on political rapacity extends beyond the national borders of South Africa to other 'liberation' struggle. According to Newman, "Gordimer's achievement is to reveal the impossibility of any safety for the child – African or other – as long as political injustice is condoned and perpetuated. If the collection demonstrates the importance of action in the pursuit of justice, it also constitutes a searching inquiry into the ethics, and the aesthetics, of such action" (351-52). Gordimer's expansive vision, and the moral power and artistic integrity resulting from it, raises her fiction above that of most of her contemporaries. According to John Edgar Wideman, "Ms. Gordimer takes upon herself this burden of getting it straight and telling it straight, which far too many of her compatriots have refused. Her eloquence breaks through the

silence, parses it, shames it. She is a master of realistic narrative, the slow, patient accumulation of evidence” (7)

II

The end of apartheid in 1994. marked a new beginning for Nadine Gordimer, with her preoccupations and priorities being transformed. It has offered new narrative possibilities, presenting questions for the South African writer about the alternative subjects that are supposed to preoccupy him /her. The concept of the writer as a cultural worker disappears, leaving readers to wonder whether there is to be merely a return to the individualistic norms of bourgeois fiction, or whether the South African writer could construct a different form of subject. An aspect of the transformation and reformations in the cultural and social life in South Africa was the the election of Nadine Gordimer, in 1993, to be a member of a board of trustees responsible for supervising a foundation for arts and culture concerned with the process of cultural reconstruction. *In None to Accompany Me*(1994), set after “Nelson Mandela” release from prison in February 1990, and before the free elections of May 1994, issues of individual homelessness and isolation come to the fore and become important, leaving the imposed isolation and institutionalid self–enclosure of apartheid behind. *None to Accompany Me* is “a novel in wich ‘home’– the intersection of the politics of place with the nation of personal identity is the central focus”(Newman 352). Returning exiles discover that change is inevitable. The self is changed by the events of history, with social and political changes producing fluid identites. The past is honouered, but whoever lives in it ossifies and is rejected. Vera, the central protagonist of the novel, betrays her husband, Bennet Stark, because of his conformity, dependency, and living in the past. She seeks a home in a person rather than a place, moving from a European sense of self in free sexual freedom and identity and life of her own. Ggordiner has always considered sexual activity a route to freedom. Again, working for the legal foundation, redistributing land and touring Afrikaner farms, Vera lays before the reader the problems of a just relationship between self and society in South Africa. The novel finally discusses the theme of making a new nation a home with room for many different individuals and social groups .

In *Writing and Being: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures (1995)*, Gordimer meditates on the relationship of testimony to imagination, characterizing the writer’s relation to real personages as similar to Primo Levi’s “metamir”: a metaphysical mirror which does not obey the rules of optics but “reproduces your image as it is seen by the person who stands before you” (5). Gordimer also discusses three writers, Naguib Mahfouz, Chinua Achebe, and Amos Oz, for whom the domination of their society by an outside power had made “home” a vexed term, and produced resistance to the occupation of the national personality. For these three writers, “the truth is the real definition of ‘home’; it is the final destination of the human spirit beyond national boundaries” (45). Again, she stresses that sexual freedom is a form of rebellion against social domination: “the display of sexual energy as a force that has not been, can not be, touched by alien authority” (53). In *None to Accompany Me*, Didymus and his wife, Sibongile are always homeless and in Transit, with their sexual relationship being their only home.

The House Gun (1998) is one of Gordimer's most astounding works, exploring the complexities of post-apartheid society through a murder trial. The novel deals with two white privileged liberals, Harold and Claudia Lingard, whose twenty-seven year old architect-son, Duncan, kills his friend Carl Jespersion, after discovering the latter making love to his girlfriend. According to Newman,

Gordimer's novel the House Gun, which focuses on a murder trial, extends her range into the fields of literature as law and law as literature. Technically, the novel has the fierce concentration of the courtroom drama, its cast made up of a trio of triangles: mother, father, and son; male lover, woman, her other male lover (a triangle complicated by preceding homosexual attractions between the two males); and murder, detective, victim (352).

Gordimer's political agenda still stands, highlighting the fact that the murder weapon, the house gun, is there because of a prolonged liberation struggle and past violence in South Africa. Despite the fact that the Lingards have sold their house and moved into the luxury of townhouse a house gun is still kept like a house cat: a fact of ordinary life in South Africa at the end of the twentieth century where violence is still in the air:

The House Gun explores the reverberations of violence as it penetrates the family and home, where disbelief and guilt force the characters to restructure their definitions of their relationships with each other. It is a passionate narrative love. It is also an affirmation of the will to reconciliation that struts where it must, between individual men and women. Although Gordimer manages to reveal the residual tensions of post-Apartheid South Africa, her observation of the sustaining forces of human relationships is universal (exclusivebooks. Com)

On the other hand, in a reversal of the preceding relationships of dependency between the whites and the blacks, Harold and Claudia have to depend on a black lawyer, Hamilton Motsamai, who has returned from political exile, to defend their son Duncan, who has admitted the murder. Gordimer stresses "The necessity of understanding the past and its violence in terms of deeper human motives, and of recognizing that, in the structures of personal relationships, apartheid's effects live on (Newman 353). She shifts from present to past tense, avoiding the cut and dried narration of the documentary and factual, "sliding in and out of the point of view of different characters, and allowing direct and indirect speech to mingle, thus creating a sense of action taking place always within a context, a thickly-textured moral, social and political atmosphere (Newman 353). The opening sentence, "something terrible happened", is also where the reader concludes the novel to emphasize that the heritage of violence, terror and fear still coils under the surface of the new South Africa.

Gordimer's *The Pickup* (2001) contrasts with the short story *Some Are Born to Sweet Delight*, one of the stories in her collection *Jump* (1991), to mark a new development in her career. In the short story, she employs the stereotype of Islamic terrorism. A working class family in England takes in a lodger, a studious young man from the Middle East, who becomes intimate with the daughter of the family. This results in her falling pregnant, with her parents giving their consent on the proposed marriage. The student insists that she first travels to his home country to introduce

herself to his family. At the airport he secrets a bomb in her suitcase, with the plane being blown up killing all passengers including fetus and mother. Gordimer wrote stories in the 1980s, relying on the stereotype of the diabolical Islamic terrorist. According to J.M Goetzee.

Gordimer had not thought deeply about the question of why, in the human family, young muslim men have assumed the role of the bad boy, the delinquent. A decade later, as if to make amends, she revisited the kernel situation of the story: the Arab who for ulterior motives woos and marries a western woman. In it she found the potential for more original and interesting development, the *Pickup* (2001) is the fruit of that development ("The new york Review of Books, volume 5. nybooks").

When Julie Summers's car breaks down in a sleazy street, a young Arab, Abdu, who is a handsome, dark-eyed mechanic, helps her. She befriends him, developing relentless emotions leading to a love affair, which becomes a marriage. She insists on leaving South Africa with him because his residence in it turns out to be illegal. While Abdu is set on escaping again, to what he believes to be the perfect life in the west, Julie is attracted by the new affinities in his close family and the omnipresence of the desert. *The Pickup* has been described as a story of the rites of passages that are emigration/ immigration, anywhere in the world, where love can survive only if stripped of all certainties outside itself' (qtd in exclusivebooks.). Abdou, whose actual name turns out to be Ibrahim, has only contempt for the land of his birth, deciding that Permanent Residence is a blessed state, and that permanent residents in a rich western country own the world. Julie, in the new Islamic community, undergoes a fundamental change of a spiritual if not religious nature, understanding what it means to be part of a family. The spiritual development taking place in her is determined by what is only called the spirit of the place rather than by doctrine. Nobody raised the question of Julie converting to Islam. Only a few blocks separate Ibrahim's house from the desert. Julie develops the habit of rising before dawn and sitting at the edge of the desert, allowing the desert to enter her. In both *July's people* (1981) and *The Ppickup* (2001), the world picture of the protagonists undergoes chastening revisions. In both novels, it is the woman rather than the man who is sensitive and pliant enough to grow from the experience. On the other hand.

The *Pickup* has an inward, spiritual dimension absent from *July's People*. But it has its political thrust too, not only in its exploration of the mind of the economic migrant or one type of economic migrant, but in its critique and ultimately its dismissal of the false gods of the west, presided over by the god of market capital, to whose mercies Julie's South Africa has abandoned itself so unreservedly and who has extended his sway even into Ibrahim's despised patch of sand (nybooks 5).

The Pickup is an interesting book because it suggests, through Julie, Gordimer's personal Odyssey. Gordimer has chosen two types to explore:

The confused and conflicted young man, emotionally bound to his mother, blind to the history and culture that have formed, striking out against the desires of his own body, imagining he can remake himself by

relocating to a new country, and the unexceptional young woman who trusts her impulses and finds herself by humbling herself (nybooks 5).

Gordimer treats the lives of ordinary Muslims sympathetically and intimately, putting aside the western stereotype she employed earlier in one of the stories in *Jump* (1991).

Loot (2003), a story collection, traces the spiritual turn developing in Gordimer's thinking. In a cycle of stories called "Karma", she "follows the adventures of a soul as it achieves or fails to achieve reincarnation in various individual human lives" (nybooks 5). One of these stories is about a Moscow hotel chambermaid who falls for a visiting Italian businessman. Her lover brings her to Milan, where he marries her off to a cousin, a butcher and cattle breeder, who articulates the western European mentality of looking at women as an animal, a breeder, a female unit with a functioning reproductive system. She ends up aborting the child she is carrying because she does not accept such a humiliating role. In another of the "Karma" stories a lesbian couple, liberal white South Africans with a difficult history of apartheid activism behind them, decide to have a child. Fearful that the sperm they get from the bank may come from an apartheid torturer, and that the being they bring into the world may reincarnate the old South Africa, they cancel the idea. Thus,

In these two stories the soul knocks at the gate but is barred from entry: for its own sake the women who guard the gate decide not to let it into the world in its present state ... The "Karma" series blends historical critique mainly of the new world order, with wry observations, some of them cosmic in perspective, some metafictional: participating in one life after another, reflects the soul, is much like being a novelist inhabiting one character after another (nybooks 6).

Mission Statement is the second fundamentally long piece of fiction in *Loot*. Roberta Blayne is a divorced British woman in her forties, embodying the pessimism about earthly improvement pervading the collection. Working for an international aid agency in an unnamed Anglophone African country, she meets and has an extended affair with a senior civil servant, Gladwell Shadrack Chabruma, a married man. Roberta tells the story of how her grandfather, who used to run a mine in this very province, would send an African servant to fetch a case of whisky from the store, a trip that took several days on foot. The servant would bring back the case on his head "what heads they (Africans) have... Thick as a log", the grandfather would say, and his friends would laugh. Admitting that she is to blame for this legacy of racist contempt, Roberta lies weeping in Chabruma's arms, caressing his abused and insulted head. This is a perfect example of Gordimer's "most useful contribution to the theory and practice of fiction, the idea of 'essential gestures' epiphanic moments when, in a posture or motion or configuration of bodies, the truth at the heart of a story emerges more starkly and completely than pages of analysis could achieve (nybooks 6). Each story in this collection, *Loot*, is a revelation of our interior lives, deciphering the unknown and unpredictable areas in the contemporary world. The *Generation Gap* deals with how adult children are shocked by their father leaving their mother for a woman young enough to be one of his daughters. The story is emotionally resonant, depicting how all the family members attempt to cope in their own ways with this shocking development. *Homage* shows how a nameless assassin pays a visit to the grave of the

politician he killed. *Loot* is a very brief allegory about an earthquake that causes some of the ocean to recede, revealing relics of the past scattered all over the ocean floor. As people are busy trying to claim all the treasures, the ocean is coming back in the form of a tremendous tidal wave. Commenting on the development of Gordimer's career, J.M. Coetzee states:

The ethical framework of her own life's work was laid in the 1950s as the iron curtain of apartheid was descending, when she first read Jean-Paul Sartre and the Algerian-born Albert Camus. Under the influence of that reading she adopted the role of witness to the fate of South Africa. 'The function of the writer, wrote Sartre, is to act in such a way that nobody can be ignorant of the world and that nobody may say that he is innocent of what it is all about. The stories and novels Gordimer wrote in the next three decades are populated with characters, mainly white South Africans, living in a Sartrean bad faith, pretending to themselves that they do not know what it is all about; her self-ordained task is to bring to bear on them the evidence of the real in order to crack their lie (nybooks 7).

After the end of apartheid and the relaxation of ideological imperatives, Gordimer's latest fiction began to pursue new areas as well as a fresh sense of the world. Her recent writing has become somewhat bodiless and sketchy if compared with the writing of the major period. So, "if the devotion to the texture of the real that characterizes her best work is now only intermittent, if she is sometimes content to gesture toward what she means rather than pinning it down in words, that is, one senses, because she feels she has already proved herself, does not need to go through those Herculean labors again" (nybooks 7-8).

Throughout her career, Gordimer has been the moral voice of South Africa, struggling against the soul-killing nature of the racial laws as well as repressive governments. In the postapartheid South Africa, she tackles the problems and ills that still plague the nation, mainly poverty, the AIDS epidemic and widespread crime. *Get a life* (2005) deals with the crises facing the well-to-do Bannerman family to articulate the dangers and troubles lurking in and characterizing the present day South Africa. The family consisting of four persons is a microcosm of the white South African community. Lyndsay and Adrian are a successful couple in their 60's having a son, Paul, an ecologist, who is married to Berenice, an ad agency executive working in a world of white and black professionals. The comfortable lives of the Bannerman family is disturbed by Paul developing an aggressive form of thyroid cancer, which requires intense radiation treatment, and forces him, to quarantine himself at his parents house. Paul's wife Benni/Berenice and their son Nickie must settle for distant waves from outside the garden fence. The ironic thing is that Paul is being treated by the same kind of science he is trying to stop in his country, plans for a nuclear power plant. The isolated Paul heals from the fatal cancer, personifying South Africa's development from its apartheid exile into a vital member of the world community. On the other hand,

We can also read Gordimer's novel as simply the story of a family's progress through life, told with her sharp emphasis on the shifting emotions of people struggling between selfishness and sympathy ... Framed by the history of South Africa, Gordimer's novel is a small and precious gift of

hope and renewal, a message that the world is still worth saving and that we, in our individual actions, can do it (Hoover, "review of Get a life".stm)

Gordimer discusses the themes of conservation and survival, death, and compromise, articulating multiple reverberative variations on the theme of getting a life. She underlines the fact that while old South Africa was distorted by racism, the new South Africa suffers a lot of problems, troubles and fatal flaws resulting from apartheid. The novel is against the progressivism overriding the past, which can not be undone, and insisting on starting from today, on grounds both human and ecological. South Africa, in *Get a Life*, is a microcosm of the world and

making her hero an ecologist allows Gordimer a variety of strategies, above all, paralleling microcosm and macrocosm. The threat to Bannerman's body by a small, aggressive group of cells begins unobtrusively to map itself against the threat to South Africa from exploitation beyond that which a dry, fragile ecosystem can support. Paul's principal project at the time he was stricken was battling the siting of a nuclear reactor in an ecologically sensitive area. When he, too, becomes radioactive, he is forced into perceptions of the impact of radiation on even the miniature ecosystem which is a family ("Cast out of Eden, a review of Gordimer's *Get a Life*" 2-3)

Part two of the novel switches focus to the relationship of Paul's parents. Lyndsy recalls a four-year affair which ended 15 years previously, realizing that she lived a lie and did irreparable damage. This revelation explains why her husband, Adrian, pursues his avocation of archeology in Mexico. Many references are made to the Book of Genesis, which is significant :-

Genesis suggests that paradise will always be lost, that mistakes are irreparable and that the older brother, Cain, will always Kill Abel. Similarly, the novel suggests that paradise will be destroyed – and regretted – that the past can not be escaped, and that South African blacks will never catch up with the whites. Not for the first time, Nadine Gordimer is saying things which people are not going to want to hear ("Cast out of Eden" 3).

Over a dazzling 56-year career Gordimer has employed her microscope to examine the ironies and pathologies of South African life, magnifying the large number of ways in which the political apartheid perverts the personal. But, according to Jennifer Reese,

apartheid has been dismantled, and with it the subject for Gordimer's lacerating novels of the 1970s and 80s. Here, she gamely (but tentatively) tests out new materials; the junction of private life and an amorphous corporate judgement that is destroying Edenic African lands to make way for resorts and toll roads "(Review of *Get a Life* ". ew. com).

Commenting on the development of Gordimer's technique in *Get a Life*, Eileen Zimmerman Nicol gives a panorama:

Gordimer eschews quotation marks entirely, and question marks mostly, using dashes to set off dialogue. Careful reading is required at times to distinguish between the characters' internal thoughts and their spoken dialogue. She also is not hampered by conventional grammar. Sentences with no predicate clause abound, and reading this book is often like trying

to listen to four conversations at once, about four different topics ("Review of Get a Life".bookreporter. Com)

Gordimer's role in struggling against apartheid is compared to that of Alonso Quixana, in Don Quixote, both ending up being disillusioned. Like Gordimer in modern literature, Alonso had set out to correct the wrongs of the world, only to come home sadly aware not only that he was no hero but that there were no more heroes. To quote Coetzee:

As stripper-away of convenient illusions and unmasker of colonial bad faith, Gordimer is an heir of the tradition of realism that Cervantes inaugurated. Within that tradition she was able to work quite satisfactorily until the late 1970s, when she was made to realize that to black South Africans, the people to whose struggle she bore historical witness, the name Zola, to say nothing of the name Proust, carried no resonance—that she was too European to matter to the people who mattered most to her (nybooks 7).

The theme of disillusionment is always at the heart of the novel of realism, with Gordimer suffering a lot of disappointment because of being thought of as a white European rather than a fighter against apartheid. In her essays of the period she discusses what it means to write for people, and what it signifies to write and struggle on their behalf.

III

Gordimer's aim, throughout her writing career, is to be invisible, to create some sort of identification between the reader and what is being written about as well as the people in the work, and to involve the reader rather than to distance him. Both the false heart problem, invented by her mother, and her involvement in South African history define Gordimer's career. She provides her private history with public associations, being interested in the radical transformation in the interaction between the private character and the public landscape, which occurs during the course of her career. In her early novels, characters fail to develop a connection between their private lives and the public landscape. During 1950s, Gordimer's humanism was based on Forsterian liberalism, herself believing that personal contact across the colour bar could help the whites and the blacks overcome South Africa's racial division. She believed that personal relationship could make the blacks view the whites as fellow human beings. With the increasing application of apartheid through the early sixties, Gordimer found connection more difficult and less possible. Her radical hostility to apartheid was escalated in the 1970s when she declared herself a socialist. Yet, the 1970s was difficult for the white writers, who were marginalized by the raised black consciousness. Gordimer's first novel, the *Lying Days* (1953), is a mainly autobiographical description of a sheltered Afrikaner woman who attains political consciousness through having sex with a social worker. *A World of Strangers* (1958) presents a British writer's attempts to establish relationships between his white intellectual companions and some black African friends. It illustrates the brutality and idiocy of apartheid as well as the dangers of daily life facing the blacks. Gordimer is South Africa's restless white conscience, with her career being pursued through the chronology of her tales, which mirror and incarnate both changes in social attitudes and her own evolving fear of change for the worse. In *Occasion for Loving*

(1963), Gordimer draws upon her childhood experience- the fictional heart problem- to transform a personally emotional shock into a political metaphor. This transformation, from the personal to the social, and from the private to the political, develops in her novels. In both *The lying Days* and *Occasion for Loving* Gordimer realizes that the total liberation from private, familial fetters necessitates challenging the dominant political order as well. Unlike her first two novels, which conclude with hope for South Africa's future, Gordimer's later fiction is characterized by a growing sense of pessimism, and stresses her belief that the blacks as well as the whites are victims of apartheid. Over the years, she adopts a hard-line position, refusing to separate the writer in his study from the citizen in the street. To her, there is no alternative for the artist but commitment to the struggle against the oppression resulting from apartheid. *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966) illustrates the shift from peaceful opposition to a revolutionary and violent resistance against the background of the crushing of South African opposition in the 1960s. The first four novels unify Gordimer's private and public themes, focusing on subjects such as the interracial sex and private relationships prohibited by a series of "Immorality Acts" in South Africa. Both *The Late Bourgeois World* and the subsequent novel, *A Guest of Honour*, are intensely influenced by Marxist thinkers, being fictions of a failed revolution. *A Guest of Honour* is a political novel dealing with the political theme as personally as a love story. Gordimer interrogates the connection between the political and the sexual, drawing on Reich's Freud-Marxist theory of repression. According to Reich, liberating instincts paves the way and creates the condition for a liberation of human society. Unrepressed sexuality has always played a fundamental role in Gordimer's writing, often as an effective power for radical and political change. For her, sexuality is a liberating rather than a restricting force, giving the way out from the white family into political and social freedom. During the fifties and the sixties, the time of writing her first four novels, Gordimer was more and more disappointed by the increasing enforcement of racial separation. Her detachment from the world she illustrates gives evidence to the detachment of her early protagonists from their landscapes.

Unlike the firm restraint with which she depicts the South African situation in her early novels, Gordimer, in her later ones, including *A Guest of Honour*, *The Conservationist*, and *July's People*, portray the increasing interaction of observer and world observed. She stresses the necessity of the artist getting involved with his or her world. Her novels, beginning with the *Guest of Honour*, are articulated through observing her world from without and imagining it from within. To Nadine, critical realism represents the most significant type in African writing. *The Conservationist* (1974) offers a prophetic image of a different South African future. Mehring and the other later protagonists can no longer confront distinct public situations outside themselves, with their landscapes becoming something inhabited in imagination. *Burger's Daughter* (1979), is more overtly political, discussing the dilemma of individuals contending with the choices and compromises forced on decent people by brutal regimes. *July's People* (1981) highlights the complex interdependencies and tensions between the whites and the blacks in South Africa, shifting the focus from psychological to economic determinants. Gordimer's steely gaze focuses on the victorious blacks, however corrupt they will be. *A Sport of Nature* (1987) embraces most of Africa, extending in time from 1950s to an independent black South Africa in

the near future. It uses a picaresque form, marking a new departure through repudiating reformist Liberalism as well as the radical nature of sexuality. It is geographically and historically the most sweeping of Gordimer's novels, moving from South Africa to Tanzania, Ghana, Eastern Europe, America, and back to South Africa for its independence celebrations.

Gordimer's essays have been a continual accompaniment to her fiction. In her *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places* (1988), Gordimer comments on the issue of the future for the whites in South Africa as well as the transformations they must undergo to remain and survive. Like *A Sport of Nature, My Son's Story* (1990) assumes the basic choice of commitment to the struggle for liberation. The novel deals with the nature of heroism as well as the psychological conflicts in the revolutionary family, returning, for the first time since the *Lying Days*, to the mining town environment of Gordimer's youth. It is considered Gordimer's feminist novel, with the story passing from the control of the father, Sonny, to that of the mother, Aila. Gordimer employs Hannah Plowman to free Sonny's intellect and his sex drive from the narrowness of his fairly conventional wife and family. Throughout her career, Gordimer has been obsessed with the evils, injustices and suffering resulting from the apartheid system. To her, institutionalized corruption leads to personal betrayal, with art always being on the side of the oppressed, and the role of the white liberals is to conciliate the oppressor and the oppressed. In her subsequent work, Gordimer articulates her keen awareness of the significant role of the arts in the transformation of South Africa. In *Jump, and other Stories* (1991), she offers an examination of the relationship of literature to the struggle for freedom, covering the repressive years of the 1980s and early 1990s. She explores how apartheid insulates the daily lives of ordinary blacks and whites, with the images of predation being frequent. Gordimer's expansive vision, and the moral power and artistic integrity resulting from it, raises her fiction above that of her contemporaries.

The end of apartheid in 1994 makes a new beginning for Nadine Gordimer, creating fresh narrative possibilities, and presenting questions for the South African writer about the alternative subjects that are supposed to preoccupy him/ or her. In *None to Accompany Me* (1994), set after Nelson Mandela's release from prison in February 1990, and before the free elections of May 1994, issues of individual homelessness and isolation come to the fore and become important, leaving the imposed isolation and institutionalized self-enclosure of apartheid behind. The self is charged by the events of history, with social and political changes producing fluid identities. The novel discusses the theme of making a new nation, a home with room for many different individuals and social groups. In *Writing and Being: the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures* (1995), Gordimer discusses three writers, Naguib Mahfouz, Chinua Achebe, and Amos Oz, for whom the domination of their society by an outside power had made "home" a vexed term, and produced resistance to the occupation of the national personality. She also stresses that sexual freedom is a form of rebellion against social domination. In *None to Accompany Me*, Didymus and his wife, Sibongile, are always homeless and in transit, with their sexual relationship being their only home. *The House Gun* (1998) is one of Gordimer's most astounding novels, exploring the complexities of post-apartheid society through a murder trial. Gordimer's political agenda still stands, highlighting the fact that the murder weapon,

the house gun, is there because of a prolonged liberation struggle and past violence in South Africa. Like *July's people*, *The House Gun* presents a reversal of the preceding relationships of dependency between the whites and the blacks. Harold and Claudia have to depend on a black lawyer to defend their son, Duncan, who has admitted the murder. *The Pickup* (2001) contrasts with the short story *Some Are Born to Sweet Delight*, one of the stories in her collection *Jump* (1991), to mark a new development in her career. In the short story, she employs the stereotype of Islamic terrorism. In *The Pickup*, she treats the lives of the ordinary Muslims sympathetically and intimately, putting aside the western stereotype she employed earlier. *The Pickup* is an interesting book because it presents, through Julie, Gordimer's personal Odyssey. In both *July's People* and *The Pickup*, the world picture of the protagonists undergoes chastening revisions. In both novels, it is the woman rather than the man who is sensitive and pliant enough to grow from the experience. *The Pickup* has an inward, spiritual dimension absent from *July's People*, but it has its political thrust too. *Loot* (2003), a story collection, pursues the spiritual turn developing in Gordimer's thinking. This collection gives a perfect example of Gordimer's contribution to the theory and practice of fiction, with each story being a revelation of our interior lives, deciphering the unknown and unpredictable areas in the contemporary world. Under the influence of reading Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, Gordimer has adopted the role of witness to the fate of South Africa. After the end of apartheid and the relaxation of ideological imperatives, Gordimer's latest fiction began to pursue new areas as well as a fresh sense of the world. Her recent writing has become somewhat bodiless and sketchy if compared with the writing of the major period. In the postapartheid South Africa, she tackles the problems and ills that still plague the nation, mainly poverty, the AIDS epidemic and widespread crime. *Get a Life* (2005) deals with the curses facing the well-to-do Banner man family to articulate the dangers and troubles lurking in and characterizing the present-day South Africa. Gordimer underlines the fact that while old South Africa was distorted by racism, the new South Africa suffers a lot of problems, troubles and fatal flaws resulting from apartheid. The novel is against the progressivism which overrides the past and insists on starting from today, on grounds both human and ecological. The references to genesis in this novel indicate that the postapartheid paradise of South Africa will always be lost and destroyed. Gordimer says unpleasant things, stressing the fact that the South African blacks will never be able to catch up with the whites. She is an heir of the tradition of realism inaugurated by Cervantes, being an unmasker of colonial bad faith as well as a stripper-away of convenient illusions. The theme of disappointment is always at the heart of the novel of realism, with Gordimer coming home sadly aware not only that she is no hero but that there are no more heroes. She is disappointed by being thought of as a white European rather than a fighter against apartheid. On the other hand, the pessimistic side raises the sticky issue that if power corrupts all leaders, whether white or black, there is no point in celebrating the change from white power to black power, with the spread of AIDS and the prevalence of rape in South Africa casting shadows over the utopian images of freedom.

Gordimer has always written as a white liberal of the left, trying to project herself far enough out of the privilege of being a white South African. Her writing has been so subtle it helps and forces readers to find their way back from her words into

her mind. She has sustained a tense dialectic between the personal and the political, being praised for her acute, almost lyrical sensitivity, richness of style, and detail. She has also been attacked for her lack of narrative muscle and the coolness of her tone, with her early work being a stunning exploration of the white psyche, and her later work becoming too intricate and self-consciously labored. Again, Gordimer has been heralded as having the ability to catch the implications of the smallest gesture or nuance, tracing its connections back to broader social and political arenas, and offering a kind of Freudian psychopathology of the everyday life. She has been able to present various intersections of race, class, and gender, with the South African society offering such binary oppositions of black and white, male and female, art and politics, body and mind, and Europe and Africa. Gordimer considers feminism elitist, emanating from the bourgeois white intellectual's refusal to accept and deal with her true position of power. Her dislike for feminism is the product of her strong and persistent socio-economic grasp. Feminism becomes a substitute protest, with the racial situation being the real.

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