Chapter Two

Encounter Between the Private and the Public

An engagement with the realities of asymmetrical power relationships provides a common platform for writers who have witnessed the historical events such as colonialism, exploitation, postcolonialism and neocolonialism. A victim of colonization and apartheid, the African continent is always in a state of instability. It has shifted from rural to urban conditions, farming to industry, communal values to individualism and oral to written concepts of communication. These changes in social, economic and political scenario paved the way for the emergence of literary effusions which contain universal as well as local interest contributing to the complexity of African fiction. The sheer multiplicity of approaches in the novels of the Africans and the non-African authors and the nuances of their experiences provide different perspectives. Out of the eminent novelists, the writings of Nadine Gordimer stand out, as the perspective records of the allegory of the oppressed and the oppressor. African experiences silhouetted against the vast canvas of African history and political environment, the concrete firsthand knowledge of human drama and the undercurrent of psychological and social impact on helpless human beings form the thematic concerns of the novels of Gordimer.

The dichotomy of existence in the South African context, the cultural shock sustained by the colonizer and the animosity of the colonizer who could
not respond positively to the African ‘bush’, the ironical acknowledgement that the ideal world of the prosperous farmer supported by black labour, come under the purview of Gordimer. The writer inadvertently becomes an agent of empowerment disowning the legacy of privileged position. History, language and consciousness are the centre of the discourse of anti-colonialism. Simon Gikandi in “Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Discourse” observes: “the major proponents of this discourse, history was an indispensable term; they believe that only under the rubric of historical consciousness, the alienating forces of colonialism could overcome” (110).

The historical fact of European colonialism governs the understanding of specific, local circumstances with the result that all that came prior to the event become “precolonial”, and everything after, “postcolonial” progress narrative that postcolonial theory is interested in critiquing, remains firmly in the history of the world is re-written in terms of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial stages. These literary works have an overt political stance and often articulate the violence of a racist regime. The novels of Gordimer describe a continuum of experience in which colonialism is experienced as an agency of disturbance, unsettling notions of the settler culture.

Africa had a heritage of imperialism. With the great continental drift when fragments broke away from ancient Gondwanaland to form India, Australia and South America, Africans were exposed to new challenges from the outside world. The Europeans reached the scene bringing with them the
scourge of slave trade that divided Africa into colonies of Europe. The colonial period began from 1900 onwards and empire building powers shared Africa among the major powers such as Britain, France and Germany and the minor ones Portugal, Italy, Belgium and Spain. As Basil Davidson avers, “They marked out spheres of interest and invaded the continent within its own sphere” (5).

Africa, as a land of milk and honey, the South Africans lived off its bounty as hunters. The Khoisan or Bushmen lived in harmony with nature, roving across the land. The Khoisan’s sublime existence was disturbed over two thousand years by the Khoi Khoi who were farmers and herders. They settled in the south western part of the country and were “the first indigenous people the European explorers encountered” (Rissik 10). At that time the Bantu people from the central regions of Africa had migrated southward and settled in the north and north east of present day South Africa.

The Portuguese sailor Bartholomew, the first European, transversed the South African coast in 1488 in search of a sea route from Europe to the riches of the East. A permanent settlement was soon established on the southern tip of the continent by the Dutch. In 1952, Jan Van Riebeack, a member of the Dutch East India Company arrived in the Cape with over hundred men to establish a permanent base. Due to the clashes with the Khoi Khoi and a few Bushmen from the settlement in Cape Town, the Boer frontier farmers and the French Huguenots moved to the island. The Boers, the descendents of the
Dutch who had come to establish a half way station, were the forefathers of the present Afrikaners.

The French Huguenots left Europe to escape the religious persecution at the hands of King Louis XIV. In 1688, the French Huguenot refugees arrived and settled at the Cape. Soon Britain agreed to take over the administration of the Cape Colony. Though it was captured by the Dutch government, Britain recaptured it in 1806. The British missionaries abolished slavery, a year later. The second emigration of the British settlers to Cape Colony was in 1820 which Dee Rissik in *Culture Shock: South Africa* accounts as:

> Despite hardship, the settlers made their mark as farmers, traders and craftsmen. Their cultural contribution soon became firmly embedded in the nature of South Africa. … British influence was strong not only in government, law and administration but also in the broader social and cultural sense. Towns and villages had a higher concentration of English speaking people. The Afrikaners although overall greater in number, were mostly rural. (12)

The abolition of slavery by the British was a great blow to the Boers which provided the final impetus for their departure from the colony. The Boer frontier farmers found life under British misrule intolerable. In 1910, after the Boers were brought under British domination, the union of South Africa was
formed by an act of the British parliament, by which colonies were united in self-governing domination. General Louis Botha, the stalwart of the Anglo-Boer war became the first Prime minister of South Africa.

Prior to the discovery of gold and diamond, the economy of South Africa was based on agriculture. With the discovery of gold and diamond, the Africans were denied freedom to make a living on their own land and added to it, the 1913 Land Act made it illegal to purchase or lease land from the Europeans anywhere in South Africa except within the designated reserves called Bantustans or homelands. Thus, as Solomon T. Platjee has stated, “South Africa ceased to be the home of the native children whose skins are dyed with a pigment that does not confirm with regulation hue” (14).

By 1914, the Whites defeating most of the chiefs had taken possession of ninety percent of the law, forcing more and more Blacks to work as labourers in mines, towns and on white-owned farms. The British monopolized the gold fields, as it would give them control over the whole country. It resulted in the Anglo-Boer war, which uprooted an entire nation and placed families in relief camps. The 1948, election victory of the right-wing Afrikaner party was a turning point in South Africa’s political history. It ultimately ushered in more than four decades of institutionalized racial discrimination and white supremacy.
South African Literature, which is closely related to political, cultural and social factors, is directly and indirectly influenced by the political developments of the country. South African writers, with their peculiar history of ‘apartheid’ and the consequent political, cultural and psychological situations gave birth to pure protest literature, and portrayals of the hostility between the world of the Whites and the Blacks. Robert Boyers in *Atrocity and Amnesia: The Political Novel Since 1945*, opines that personal relations seem meaningful when “they are touched or threatened by a turmoil associated with the political realm” (121). Such a turmoil concerns itself with ongoing historical drama that determines the judgements they are inclined to make.

Gordimer believes that a writer is a part of the creative consciousness of the society in which he lives and that writers are shaped by the society reflecting a particular situation. In the ‘Introduction’ to her Selected Stories, Gordimer states that “in a certain sense a writer is ‘selected’ by his subject, his subject being the consciousness of his own era” (12). Consequently the themes of the novels are centered on the contemporary African experience. A study of the novels in the chronological order reveals that they closely follow the history of South Africa. She further states in the ‘Introduction’ to the *Selected Stories*:

The change in the 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, in all the time history is acting upon
me. (14)

The novelist has repeatedly maintained that as a South African, her allegiance
lies with the country and that as a writer, she has responsibility towards the
place of her birth. In an interview with Alan Ross, she explains her situation
as: “a White South African, brought up on the soft side of the colour-bar …
whether I like it or not. This has been the crucial experience of my life. …”
(22). Her subject being South Africa, it is quiet natural that all novels are
political in theme and tone for politics decides a person’s life in South Africa.

New Historicism, a school of literary theory developed in the 1980s
gained widespread influence in the 1990s. It is a “method of literary criticism
that emphasizes the historicity of a text by relating it to the configurations of
power, society, or ideology in a given time” (n. pg). It also reopened the
interpretation of literature to the social, political and historical milieu which is
claimed to be a more neutral approach to historical events, and to be sensitive
towards different cultures. According to Cuddon, New Historicism “sees
literary texts as the material products of specific historical and political
conditions…” (102) of the time. To a New Historicist, literature is not the
record of a single mind but the end product of a particular cultural movement.
They look at literature alongside other cultural products of a particular
historical period to illustrate the concepts, attitudes and ideologies operated across a broader cultural spectrum that is exclusively literary. They aim to understand the works through the historical, cultural and intellectual context, which document the new discipline of the history of ideas.

Although the influence of philosophers such as French Structuralist, Louis Althusser and Marxist, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton were essential in shaping the theory of New Historicism, the work of Michael Focault is significant. Focault based his approach both on the theory of the limits of collective cultural knowledge and on the technique of examining a broad array of documents in order to understand the episteme of a particular time. In addition to analyzing the impact of historical context and ideology, New Historicists acknowledge that their criticism contains biases that derive from their historical position and ideology. As it is impossible to escape one’s own ‘historicity’, the meaning of a text is fluid and not fixed. New Historicists attempt to “situate artistic texts both as products of a historical context and as the means to understand cultural and intellectual history” (n.pg).

New Historicism is also allied to the historical criticism of Hippolyte Taine, who argues that a literary work is less the product of its author’s imagination than the social circumstances of its creation, the three main aspects of which Taine named as race, milieu and moment. It is also a response to an earlier historicism, practised by early twentieth century critic, John Livingston Lowes, which sought to de-mythologize the creative process
by re-examining the lives and times of canonical writers. New Historicism differs from both of these trends in its emphasis on ideology: the political disposition, unknown to an author himself, that governs his work. New Historicists analyze text with an eye on history. The critiques of 1920s and 1950s also focused on historical content of literatures, basing their assumptions on the connection between texts and their historical contexts. Warner phrases New Historicism’s motto as, “Text is historical, and history is textual” (qtd. in Thomas 283). Frederic Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* insisted to historicize the text. Wilfred Guerin in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* opines: “New Historicism concerns itself with extra literary matters - letters, diaries, films, paintings, medical treatises – looking to reveal opposing historical tensions in a text” (283). New Historicists seek surprising coincidences that may cross generic, historical and cultural lines in borrowings of metaphor or popular culture. Scholars of cultural studies learned from Hayden White the figural relationships between present and past tropes which are shaped by historical discourses.

Gordimer evidently proves the motto of New Historicism in the novels which are solid testimony to the narration of the history of South Africa. The power of apartheid as a racist policy and a dehumanizing force in the society is equalled by the power as a symbol both of what man has done to man, and of a world divided and classified by surface distinctions. It is virtually impossible to think of South African Literature without politics. Derek Attridge argues that in Coetzee’s fiction, “the private serves as a corrective to
the public” (qtd. in Poyner 104). Gordimer, articulates the capacity of literature to make interventions into the public sphere in an essay suggestively titled “Three in a Bed: Fiction, Morals and Politics”: “Nothing I write in … factual pieces will be as true as my fiction” (14). Gordimer in *Living in Hope and History* enunciates: “May we see history fulfil rather than betray our hopes for restoration of the power of the imagination in the new millennium” (102). George Orwell is of the view that a society faces crisis when history is forgotten and neglected. Esther Lombardi in “Politics and Literature: George Orwell” speaks with a firm stance on history and “sees politics as an integral part of writing” (n. pg). Vocalizing that only by openly and honestly considering personal and historical history, the truth in its truest form could be understood.

Gordimer eventually rose to international fame through novels and short stories that stunned the literary world, and resulted in the banning of books such as *The Late Bourgeois World, July’s People, A World of Strangers* and *Burger’s Daughter*, in her native country. The author painted social background subtler than those presented by political scientists, thus providing an insight into the roots of the struggle and the mechanisms of change that no historian could have matched. Her works reflect the road from passivity and blindness to resistance and struggle, the forbidden friendships, the censored soul, and the underground networks. The novelist outlines a free zone where it is possible to try out, in imagination, what life beyond apartheid might be like. She wrote as if censorship does not exist and there are readers willing to
listen. The major currents of contemporary history intersect in the characters. Reji Nair, in the Preface to *Emerging Africa Potential and Challenges: Africa in the New Millennium* points out: “Africa, thus faces an immense, multifaceted development challenge. Africa’s conflicts are driven by poverty, underdevelopment and lack of economic diversification, as well as by political systems that marginalize large parts of the population” (vi).

Gordimer exemplifies a belief, seemingly forgotten in literary culture which has been under attack by the ubiquity of the superficial, that a writer is the mouthpiece of a crusade, and tireless examiner of moral and psychological truth. Her writing is closely involved with the contemporary politics of Africa. In an interview with Alan Ross in *The London Magazine*, Gordimer confesses:

> Whites among themselves are shaped by their peculiar position, just as black people are by theirs. I write about their private selves; often even in the most private situations, they are what they are because their lives are regulated and their mores are formed by political situations. (22-23)

Thus, typical of resistance literatures, the novels of Gordimer link the private and the public to the socio-political. It is possible to track down the deterioration in the South African political situation throughout her writing career of more than fifty years. The novels and short stories illustrate the growing powerlessness of the white minority in Africa. The many facets of
the encounter between the private and the public attribute to the works of Gordimer everlasting relevance.

The works of Gordimer reveal the writer’s affection for the homeland, its people, epic landscapes and potent past, which are juxtaposed with an examination of the devastating psychological effects of political persecution on the lives of the ordinary South Africans, by attributing moral force and imaginative richness. Similar to compatriots Alan Paton and Coetzee, Gordimer has dramatized the history of South Africa by addressing the violence of apartheid, the duplicity, physical tension and perversion of normalcy of the totalitarian state. In the novels *The Conservationist* and *Burger’s Daughter*, the characters such as Mehring and Rosa suffer from exile, compromise, exploitation and alienation. Gordimer explores the growth of black consciousness by examining the complexity of white privilege and by the weakness of the liberal response to apartheid, investigates and concludes that even in benevolence, there could be ugly egotism.

Eskia Mphahlele in *The African Image* devotes several pages for scrutinizing the picture of Africa as it is presented in the English novels. He refers to writers such as Charles Scully and Sarah Getrude Millin whose works teem with racial prejudices and welcome the attitudes of Gordimer, Olive Schreiner, William Plomer and Van der Post “who dwell sympathetically on the fate of oppressed negro” (39). To Stephen Clingman, it is possible to trace in Gordimer’s fiction a fairly dramatic ideological shift
over the period in which she has been writing. The novels of Gordimer are circumscribed by their historical situations; the system of rigorous social division maintained and regulated by the apartheid state, in the dual interest of the White profit and the White power in the hurdle of social limitation. Culturally separated worlds are created for the Blacks and the Whites and these separate worlds form the core of the novels *A World of strangers*, *Burger’s Daughter*, *July’s People* and *The Pickup*. The ideological position taken up by the novelist does not represent one single class but crosses both class and colour barriers. Thus, valuable art represents itself despite its historic limitations by virtue of theme.

The question of contradictions and silences within the text points to an acute historical consciousness in Gordimer marked by a wide difference between the short stories and the novels. The short stories, rooted in an identifiable social world depict general human intricacies of psychological or emotional nature. The novels investigate the social and historical situation deeply and in greater length. They are sustained meditations and examinations of the contribution of history, the world from which they emerge and deal with. In the words of Clingman, “As much as she is an observer of the life around her, she is still a social participant in what she observes. If hers is history from inside, she is also confined by its inside position” (44).

Reviews and essays on the works of Gordimer frequently raise the question of political commitment comparing her with J.M.Coetzee. Rowland
Smith in “The Seventies and After: The Inner View in White English-Language Fiction” compares the works of Gordimer and Coetzee, arguing that the former’s writing is historically grounded. In “Narrative and Ideology in Coetzee and Gordimer”, Richard Martin articulates the novelists’ use of history as borderline cases in their treatment as realist and non-realist form and content. Gordimer in “What Being a South African Means to Me”, detailed the problem precisely:

In South Africa, the strictly historical development of race and class domination becomes ideologically naturalized for most people, talking on the character of an immutable, eternal and to all interests and purposes god-given order. So growing up in such situation it becomes an almost the natural order of things that Whites should rule and be wealthy and Blacks should be workers. By trying to unravel this myth bound cocoon, one is born into second consciousness. (88)

From a novel of personal exploration, Gordimer’s novels follow the trajectory of human concerns in a broader social field. The novels present a panoramic and kaleidoscopic view of the changing scenario of South Africa. The ebb and flow in the volatile situations in South Africa are faithfully recorded without stooping down to the category of documentary realism. Colonial dilemmas and historical consciousness are given due importance in all the novels. The personal focus is gradually socialized and the feeling that only political
commitment and involvement could salvage the Blacks is brought out. A feeling of apprehension towards political realities and the demands it makes on the individual are lucidly portrayed in *The Late Bourgeois World* and *A Guest of Honour*. Encounters at personal, social and political levels are deftly sketched in all the novels. The characters who evince psychological trauma shifting perspectives in the novels point to psychological encounters and moments of tensions in the post-apartheid scenario. Political situations such as the Sharpeville Massacre, the Soweto Uprising and the wars of independence are dealt candidly in the novels. Gordimer’s unique perspective outlook lies in the presentation of historical transitions that are positive, progressive, and parallel to history and in tune with the times, different from the nostalgic recreations situated in the past.

In the *Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha raises the question whether Western theory is “collusive with the hegemonic role of the west as a power block and whether the language of theory is merely another power play of the culturally privileged western elite to produce a discourse of the other that reinforces its own power knowledge equation” (21). He rejects the opposition between theory and activism, since it only helps to produce rather than reflect their objects of reference. Using insights from British cultural critic Stuart Hall, Bhabha feels that “political positions are marked by hybridity and ambivalence” (22). It is a “way of acknowledging the force of writing … as a productive matrix which defines the ‘social’ and makes it available as an objective of and for action” (Bhabha 751). Hence, the language of political
critique is effective not because it maintains rigid oppositions between terms such as master and slave, but overcomes the given ground of opposition and opens up a new space of translation and a place of hybridity.

New Historicism evaluates a work influenced by the time by examining the social sphere in which the author moved and his psychological background. As such, the novels of Gordimer display the importance of hybrid movement of political changes. The Blacks of South Africa, regulated by “pass laws” were required to carry an official form of identification and were expected to produce it on demand for the members of the white security, forces on pain of imprisonment for reluctance or failure to do so. Pass laws were met with resistance during the twentieth century. The earlier forms of passes had been used in various instances since the eighteenth century, when slaves in the Cape were forced to carry “permission” documents. The issuing of the passes was one of the cornerstones of the colonial and later racial capitalism in South Africa. Passes were used to control the movement of the African, the Coloured and the Indian people, ensuring the provision of cheap labour source and enforcing the segregation of South African’s along racial lines. Pass laws were resisted in several significant instances; the first passive resistance campaign was initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1906. In 1913, the first mass action by the African men and women was initiated in the Free State. In 1918, the workers strike around the issue of passes took place and pass-burning campaigns were organized in the 1930s by the Communist Party and various trade unions. The pass and the resistance against the carrying of
the pass became an issue around which the liberation movements mounted their campaigns.

The African National congress (ANC) planned a campaign of demonstration against the pass laws on 21 March 1960. The police opened fire on the unarmed crowd gathered peacefully at Sharpeville on March 1960 to protest against the pass laws. The South African police failed to give the crowd the order to disperse before they began firing and they continued to fire upon the fleeing crowd, resulting in hundreds of people being shot in the back. As a result of the excessive force used, sixty nine people were killed and more than three hundred injured. Many participants in the march were apolitical, women and unarmed and had attended the march as they were opposed to the pass laws. Those who were shot upon and injured in the march were not politicized members of any political party. In 1960, a small group split from the ANC to form Pan-African Congress (PAC), which led mass demonstrations against pass laws. When a great many blacks in the town of Sharpeville refused to carry their passes, “the government declared a state of emergency and police began shooting at unarmed demonstrators” (O’Neill 466). The conflict lasted 156 days and left 69 dead and 187 wounded. Penalties imposed on political, nonviolent protests were always severe. During the state of emergency, which continued intermittently until 1989, anyone could be detained by the police without a hearing up to six months. Thousands of individuals died in custody, frequently after torture, tried, and sentenced to death and were imprisoned for life like Nelson Mandela.
Sharpeville become a byword for black resistance and government repression. The Sharpeville Massacre signalled the start of armed resistance in South Africa, and prompted worldwide condemnation of South Africa’s apartheid policies.

The sixties in South African history was a difficult time for the Blacks with the new Prime Minister Dr Hendrik Verwoerd laying out details for the launch of ‘grand apartheid’. It was the decade of the aftermath of Sharpeville Massacre (1959) in which ANC and PAC activists were mowed down by police for their mass protest against the notorious pass laws. In the wake of the Massacre, marches, mournings and boycotts were organized on a daily basis. Pretoria, in sharp retaliation, declared emergency, banned ANC and PAC and arrested prominent African leaders such as Mandela, Sisulu and Mbeki, the iconic first generation leaders of the black struggle.

Bhabha too affirms Frantz Fanon’s idea that those who initiate revolutionary change, “are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity” (229). He acknowledges the prevalence of a third space and by exploring their third space; they evade the politics of polarization and emerge as the others of ourselves. Gordimer carefully constructs the ‘social space’ for imaginative exploration of historical possibilities. Burger’s Daughter is concerned with the predicament facing the inheritor of a revolutionary tradition in the context of South Africa in the 1970s. Lionel Burger left a strong resemblance to the real life figure of Bram Fischer. Burger articulated a political future that could
be achieved only by revolution, a revolution based on industrial strikes such
as Witwatersrand strike, solidarity meetings and a refusal to honour the colour
injunction. He stood self-confessed, a pure souled idealist at the trail who rose
above the dictates of power politics. The nobility of his character is
unquestioned, even when it is assailed by the allegations of the Whites and the
figure of Lionel is idealized. He is “almost too good, too right to be true”
(Boyers 127). Being too good to be true, he remains humane. Gordimer
pictures Burger as the spokesman of the court in South Africa.

_Burger’s Daughter_ is regarded as a bildungsroman in which Rosa is
eventually expelled from the womb-like infantalization. She is “subjected into
the mature acceptance of her own life history which in turn leads to her to
another kind of womb, the prison cell” (Clingman 175). People in the house
maintained a personal connection with the Burgers. For Burger, the
consequences of his ideological inventories were frequent incarcerations,
often leading to the bounds for Rosa. Like _Martha Quest_ short stories of Doris
Lessing, _Burger’s Daughter_ is a journey, a quest for individualization of the
self. Rosa emerges from the all encompassing shadow of the father, to live a
life of her own.

The political sphere is the sphere of the public, an arena where political
issues are sorted out. In the novels of Gordimer, it centres on the life and
times of Lionel Burger, with a keen sense of history, alive to the injustices of
his country, and political activity ennobling its practitioner. Though politically
conscious, the novels hold testimony to the novelist’s encounter in Africa with the wider social, moral and psychological aspects. The human side to every situation is comprehensively analyzed in all the novels. They teem with human life, events and insights on the political encounters in Africa, affecting those invested with political legacy akin to the response of the character Rosa Burger in Burger’s Daughter affirming the notion of the author that politics is a character in South Africa. In an interview, while answering the questions on the aesthetics requirements of the novel as history, Gordimer states, “A historian can tell you the events came about through the power shifts in the world but the novelist is concerned with the history of the individuals who make up history” (Cooper-Clark 83).

Gordimer parallels Lionel’s dedication and service with that of Mandela’s struggle in shaping the history of South Africa. Lionel’s sense of belonging to the African cause is resonated in his avowal that “My covenant is with the victims of apartheid” (27). At the sixth underground Conference of the South African Communist Party in 1962, Lionel Burger “achieved the final perspective, the ideological disruption of family life and for his associates, imprisonment because of their failure to testify against him” (32). Police surveillance is an inescapable reality in the lives of the Burgers, so were arrests, trials and imprisonment. The Burger’s household sheltered from time to time political activists and exiles. Political events were a way of life for them. The failure of the Communist Party in South Africa to harmonize the cause of the Blacks with that of the Whites was well known and the onus
of restoring the party to establish its credentials as good unionists fell on the shoulders of Lionel. With concerted efforts, a series of strikes were organized and this eventually led to the arrest and trial of Lionel.

*Burger’s Daughter* presents a perspective, unique to an insider, a person constantly in touch with peculiar situation exclusive to South Africa mingling together of the inner and the outer, the public and the private to pave way for political commitment. A short respite from the scorching realities in South Africa convinces Rosa Burger that politics dominates South Africa. She could not de-centre her options merely trying to be outside “the place”. The opening quote of Claude Levi Strauss, “I am the place in which something has happened” (3) is true of the novelist as of the protagonist. As Stephen Clingman remarks:

The overall pattern of *Burger’s Daughter* takes on a dialectical form. In the first movement, we have Rosa together with her revolutionary inheritance; in the second, she rejects her inheritance in favour of her personal life; in the third, she reunites with the inheritance simultaneously finding her personal identity in becoming socially and historically committed. (179)

The destiny of Rosa is with South Africans and their suffering. Thus, a resolution of the inner-private conflict releases and reinforces Rosa to take up the cause of the Blacks in South Africa.
The political encounter in Africa encompasses a confrontation of public interest with the private and here in lies the ultimate focus of the novel. Eventually, in the novels of Gordimer, the self-willed individual is a product of society, culture and economics, a repository of the past situated in precise historical context. The many perspectives, the multiple voices, the inclusion of the supposed police reports and genuine black African student tracts, the mixing of the real with the imaginary, of the subjective with the objective and the parallels to actual events and lives create a structure in which despite the focus on Rosa’s story, other stories, perspectives and historical events intrude to disrupt and impinge on the narrative. The idea of “social engagement is thus brought under severe test in the novel” (Clingman 178).

*Burger’s Daughter* also examines among other facts the history of the South African Communist Party, its need to adapt Marxist theory to local realities and resistance to the white exploitation of the Blacks and the influence within the African National Congress leadership until the rise of the Black Conscious Movement undermined what had been one of the few examples of the Whites and the Blacks successfully co-operating as equals. The novel tests and revises ideas by actual historical experience. Intermingling personal and historical with the political in Gordimer facilitates for the characters Mehring, Rosa and Maureen the emergence of a “unified self” which the novelist achieves through the mode of character structuring and special ways of narrative strategies.
The Burgers are a political family and the burger household becomes the focal point in the political landscape of South Africa. “Political activities and attitudes of that came from the inside outwards and the blacks in that house where there was no god felt this embrace before the cross” (172). The Burgers’ residence, thus steeped in an ideological Marxist creed was the counterpart of the conventional uncommitted household. “The future he was living for until the day he died can be achieved only by the black people with the involvement of small group of revolutionaries who have solved the contradictions between black consciousness and class consciousness” (210).

The novels of Gordimer picture the history of South Africa and the corrosive effects of apartheid. *Occasion for Loving* acknowledges the drift of history in South Africa – its past, present and future. South Africa, for Gordimer, who is travelling in it since 1950, has been gifted with a chance to perceive current history. The novel ultimately points to the crucial feeling that only political commitment and involvement would save the Blacks from destruction. *The Late Bourgeois World* and *A Guest of Honour* are attempts to create new ways of understanding the political world and the demands it makes on the individual. The destruction of the world of 1950s caused isolation in Gordimer, as reflected in the works. The novelist recalls, “My short novel *The Late Bourgeois World* was an attempt to look into the specific character of the social climate that produced the wave of young white saboteurs in 1963-64” (qtd. in Clingman 96). A substantial part of the novel is devoted to an examination of the revolutionary movement of the early 1960s,
its impulses and weaknesses. *A Guest of Honour* (1971) gained independence from the colonial rule, revealing that history does not stop with the gaining of independence, for problems and commitments would continue forever.

*The Conservationist* which appeared in 1974 marks a deepening of vision and commitment of Gordimer towards the anti-apartheid movement. Deeply sensitive to the changing face of South African politics, the writer uses the novel as a vehicle of prophecy to warn the reigning pro-apartheid capitalist government of South Africa against alienating itself from the majority indigenous black population. The novel clearly exploits a number of paradoxes peculiarly pertinent to the South African situation of the man who owns the land, and has paid for it, but could never own it in the same way as African squatters do, since they belong to the land in a way he does not. “That four hundred acres isn’t going to be handed down to your kids and your children’s children” (177) signifies the South African situation of emerging black power. Yet, having no rights of ownership he could never own it either. At the end of the novel, a storm sweeping in prophetically enough from Mozambique Channel rises to drive Mehring from the land. Mehring does not literally die, but dies historically as he surrenders the farm which he has so desperately been trying to conserve. Moving away from the usual practice of portraying well-intentioned white liberals, Gordimer understands the secret fears and desires of the White Nationalist rulers of South Africa through the portrayal of Mehring, a wealthy, White pro-apartheid, influential, jet setting Afrikaner colonizer and capitalist who lives off from the profit of the land
benefitting richly from the Nationalist Party’s apartheid policies. The title *The Conservationist* is profoundly ironic indicating Mehring’s desire to conserve the infertile, unproductive landscape of the farm at the cost of the Zulus who depend on it for sustenance, and in the larger context, of apartheid, at a time when black history is swiftly altering its course.

The pass laws created a great hazard for the Blacks. They became no man in their own land and they were denied right to work without the pass in their place. The novelist pictures the difficulty of the natives in the novels. Jacobus, the herdsman as Mehring calls, does not care if anyone has got papers or not, as long as they work. He is even ready to reveal the police if caught, that “he can just look in your face and say he doesn’t know who you are, that’s all, you’re someone hiding with his boys on the farm” (92). It is true that people are without papers. Witbooi, who had arrived from Rhodesia illegally seventeen years ago had no pass;

it was not that he, whose real name was Simon Somazhgwana, had no papers; in the plastic fertilizer bag that held his clothes and possessions there was an old wallet paper- expired work permits from areas where he had been endorsed out, pages torn from school exercise books inscribed *Bearer, Witbooi, is a good boy…TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN… This is to say that Bearer, native Witbooi…* with the barely- literate signatures of white housewives and farmers as reference. (33)
He produced them to employer after employer over years, preserving them carefully against a day when they would meet the pair of eyes to find validity, like any other document given out by the Whites, as the bits of paper issued officially at the pass office. The Africans had papers that “made them temporary sojourners where they were born” (114). These harsh realities which led to the outburst of the Sharpeville are recorded by the author.

Ghosh in “White Man at the End of History: A Comparative Study of Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* and J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*” comments on Gordimer’s use of the stream-of-consciousness technique, as “with a special political purpose to unravel Mehring’s totally self-absorbed, predatory, aggressive and abusive consciousness that neglects to take stock of the changing historical scenario” (253), that gives preference to the individual consciousness at the expense of the individual’s historical role and identity in history. The symbols used are intricately tied up with Gordimer’s dialectical approach to history: black history in contestation with white history, with the latter eventually collapsing under the pressure of the former. A black dead body, perfunctorily buried by the white police, keeps resurfacing in the northern part of Mehring’s farm which the South African readers would recognize as symbolic reference to the independence of Namibia and Angola from Portuguese rule. The white man’s grip over Africa is loosening and thus in Mehring’s nightmare, the corpse is an invasive presence together with terrifying images of drought and flood. Sensitive amalgamation of realist narration with mythical prophecy of the black world depict the poverty,
hunger and meagerness of the life of the Zulu labourers of Mehring’s farm and their vital connection with the soil as a source of sustenance. Mehring knows “the labour crisis in the country” and is “one of the biggest employers of exploited black labour” (178). He urges Jacobus to make the black labourers work severely so that “Jacobus pretends to threaten a woman with his fists. So that’s how work gets going on the place” (182). Though Gordimer’s later novels portray the Whites playing dominant roles in the history of the South African postcolonial situation, *The Conservationist* depicts the vision of the future that exclusively belongs to the Blacks. Mehring, with the grasping attitude to the land, seeks to conserve its sterility to flaunt as a showpiece to his friends and mistress, is virtually at the dead end of history. The labourers of Mehring, indifferent to his presence or absence, solve their problems and enjoy livelihood without relying upon his assistance or patronage: “He and his son with the woman’s hair came and went away, leaving nothing, taking nothing; the farmhouse was empty” (172).

Gordimer makes use of the metaphor of the corpse to emphasize the resurging of the erased, mutilated black history:

One of them. The face is in the tacky mud; the tiny brown pinstripe ears, the fine, felted hair, a fold or roll where it meets the back of the neck, because whoever he was, he wasn’t thin…. the face, which struck a small break for pocket between clumps, his body isn’t actually on the earth or pocket between
clumps, but held slightly above it on a nest of reeds it has flattened, made for itself. (15)

The resurrection of the corpse symbolically reminds the slogan of ANC, “Africa will come back”, which acts as a link between the past and the present. “Everything needs changing” (199) and so the Whites “must have found some solution to their troubles long ago” (197). It is an unequivocal affirmation of black history coming of its own and “ousting the techno-savvy, capitalist white history at a time in the early seventies when no such actual possibility was at sight, either within South African borders or in the international forum of the UN” (Ghosh 257). Thus, The Conservationist, marks the victory of Gordimer as a visionary, the chronicler of socio-political events and their repercussions on private lives.

Gordimer reveals Marxist leanings by foregrounding the economic question of the Whites depriving the Blacks of economic gain at a time when the question of profit glossed over by the white liberals, emphasized interracial personal relations and friendships. Unlike Mehring, who is blinded by acquisitiveness, Antonia, his liberal mistress, acts as the mouthpiece of the novelist by prophesying,

That four hundred acres isn’t going to be handed down to your [Mehring’s] kids, and your children’s children. … That bit of paper you brought yourself from the deeds office isn’t going to be valid for as long as another generation. It’ll be worth about
as much as those our grandfathers gave the blacks when they
took the land from them. The blacks will tear up your paper. No
one’ll remember where you are buried. (177)

Antonia, thus speaks for Gordimer linking in her discursive warning the issues
of race, family and economic disparity. The fragility and provisionality of the
white man’s ownership of African land over the strength and legitimacy of the
black man’s claim over the same is emphasized.

Besides Mehring, there is another protagonist in *The Conservationist*,
the figure of a black body beneath the surface of Mehring’s farm. The body
becomes Mehring’s central antagonist and its role is significant. For a
moment, “he does not know where he is – or rather who he is; but this
situation in which he finds himself, staring into the eye of the earth with earth
at his mouth, is strongly familiar to him. It seems to be something already
inhabited in imagination” (410). The body is that of a murdered man dumped
in Mehring’s land, while making his way to or from the black location on
which the farm borders. In the location, fifty thousand black workers and their
families are concentrated in inhuman conditions to serve the needs of the
white owned industry, the source of the wealth of Mehring. The peace and
serenity he enjoys in the farm are dependent upon the institutionalized social
violence that keeps the location politically subdued and quiet, resulting in the
death of the man and the police. In order to save themselves of the trouble of
yet another murder investigation connected with the location, Jacobus and the
farm workers buried it in an improper manner. Just as Mehring represents the white world in its entirety, the body represents that of the Black; it is a symbolic of every man, a victim of the systematic oppression, exploitation and abuse afforded to the Blacks under apartheid. It haunts Mehring’s thoughts and when the storm from the Mozambique revives the body, and brings it back to the surface, driving Mehring in terror from the farm and reclaiming, in its representative capacity, the land. Decent burial was given to the corpse:

The one whom the farm received had no name he had no family but their women wept a little for him. There was no child of his present but their children were there to live after him. They had put him away to rest, at last; he had come back. He took possession of this earth, theirs; one of them. (260)

Lost history and land that are restored to the Blacks emblematically is denied to the corpse. He is no longer a nameless tramp, but the ancestor of the black children in Mehring’s farm. The white working man knows that “he couldn’t live as well anywhere else in the world, and the blacks want shoes on their feet” (252). Thus, The Conservationist records the point where white history ends and black history resumes.

The Conservationist (1974), the first novel symbolically points to the future overthrow of white power in South Africa. Mozambique, which is
the northern part of South Africa symbolizes its recent freedom from colonial exploitation. The time warp, in which Mehring is caught at the end of the novel where his actions get constantly repeated, is a definitive shift from realism, emphasizing his a historical position. In the doom of Mehring, Gordimer tears up the mask of capitalism with the inner analysis of the protagonist’s name and locates the symptoms of hidden mental crisis. The collapse of Mehring’s familial configurations is off-set by the resemblance of the larger community of Zulus at the funeral feast. The novelist prophesies a bleak future for the South African whites.

The historical events of South Africa namely the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre rendered significance to the novels of Gordimer. In 1953, the apartheid government enacted the Bantu Education Act, which established a black education department in the Department of Native Affairs. The role of the department was to compile a curriculum that suited the nature and requirements of the Blacks. Alistair Boddy-Evans refers the opinion of Dr. Hendrick Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs as: “Natives (Blacks) must be taught from an early age that equality with Europeans (Whites) is not for them” (n.pg). The Blacks were not allowed to receive the kind of education that would lead them to aspire positions in the society. Instead they were to receive education designed to provide them with skills to serve their people in the homelands or to work in labouring jobs under the Whites.
The lack of facilities such as the dilapidated school buildings, the overcrowded classes, under qualified teachers, inadequate instructions, and the lack of textbooks plagued African education. Students struggled to learn under such conditions. Due to the homelands policy, no new high schools were built in Soweto between 1962 and 1971 and students were to move to their relevant homeland to attend the newly built schools. In 1972, the government gave in to pressure from business to improve the Bantu Education system to meet business need for better trained black workforce. Forty new schools were built in Soweto and between 1972 and 1976, the number of pupils at secondary schools increased from twelve thousand six hundred and fifty six to thirty four thousand six hundred and fifty six. The increase in the secondary school attendance had a significant effect on youth culture. Previously, many young students spent the time between leaving primary school and obtaining jobs, in gangs which generally lacked political consciousness. Recently, secondary school students are forming their own, much more politicized identity. Clashes between gangs and students only furthered the sense of student solidarity.

In 1975, South Africa entered a period of economic depression. Schools were starved of funds: the government had spent six hundred and forty rupees a year for the education of a white child but only forty two rupees for a black one. At that juncture, the Department of Bantu Education announced that it was going to take away the standard sixth from primary schools. The department strictly demanded the students to obtain a first or
second degree pass in standard sixth to get into Form 1, thus enabling majority of the pupils to proceed to secondary schools. In 1976, two lakhs, fifty seven thousand, five hundred and five pupils enrolled in Form 1, but there was space only for thirty eight thousand students. As many of the students remained in the primary school, chaos ensued. Centralization of schools under the new government department which were not fulfilled was opposed by school administrators, parents and students. The African community resisted the creation of separate and unequal system of black education rather than single public schooling system for all South Africans. The white government made it clear that Bantu Education was designed to teach African learners to be ‘hewers’ of wood and drawers of water for a white-run economy and society, regardless of an individual’s abilities and aspirations. The Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd explained the government’s new education policy to the South African Parliament:

There is no space for him (Native) in the European Community above certain forms of labour. For this reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has its aim in the absorption of the European Community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European Society where he is not allowed to graze. (qtd. in Kallaway 92)
Bantu education served the interests of the white supremacy and denied the Blacks’ access to same educational opportunities and resources enjoyed by the white South Africans, denigrating the black people’s history, culture and identity. Hartshorne in his *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910-1990* enunciates that Bantu Education treated the Blacks “as perpetual children in need of parental supervision by whites, which greatly limited the student’s vision of ‘her place’ in the broader South African society” (41).

The African Students Movement, founded in 1968 to voice student grievances, changed its name in January 1972 to the South African Students Movement (SASM) and pledged itself to building a national movement of high school students who would work with the Black Consciousness (BC) organization at black universities and the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO). The link with the BC philosophies was significant as it gave students an appreciation for themselves as the Blacks and helped to politicize students. So when the Department of Education issued its decree that Afrikaans was to become the language of instruction at school, it increased an already volatile situation. High school students of Soweto who objected to being taught in the language of the oppressor started protesting for better education on 16 June, 1976.

“SOWETO”, the name given in 1963 to the collection of townships to the South-Western Townships of Johannesburg, on the morning of June 16, 1976 witnessed the gathering of thousands of students from the township,
outside Johannesburg, at their schools to participate in student-organized protest demonstration. The black residents of Soweto, protested the attempt to replace English with Afrikaans as the official language. The Soweto riots, with their martyred leader, Steven Biko, became the subject of international outrage. Bonner in “The Soweto Uprising in June 1976: A Turning Points Event” views the immediate cause for the Soweto uprising as “the implementation of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in the schools” (n.pg). Since the member of the ruling National Party spoke Afrikaans, black students viewed it as the language of the oppressor. They carried signs that read, ‘Down with Afrikaans’ and Bantu Education, ‘Hell’ with it; others sang freedom songs as the unarmed crowd of school children marched towards Orlando Soccer stadium where a peaceful rally had been planned. The crowd swelled to more than ten thousand students. Fifty policemen stopped the students on the way and tried to turn them back. The police responded with tear gas and live bullets and fired directly into the crowd of the demonstrators. Many students ran for shelter, while others retaliated by pelting stones on the police. In “My Spirit is not Banned, Part 2”, the protest of the native blacks against the Bantu Education is enumerated as:

We didn’t want this bad education for our children. This Bantu education Act was to make sure that our children only learnt things that would make them good for what the government wanted: to work in the factories and so on; they must not learn properly at school like the white children. Our children were to
go to school only three hours a day, two shifts of children every day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, so that more children could get a little bit of learning without government having to spend more money. … It was a terrible thing that act. (Bard)

Though Soweto and Sharpeville are merely incidental to the main narrative and point of reference than actual topic or crux, it is part of the air that Burger breathes. As vivid proof of the rottenness of the system and the necessity for change, it also owes to Black Consciousness Movement with its militant overtones.

In *Burger’s Daughter* and *July's People*, Gordimer comes down from the symbolic plane of *The Conservationist*. The political milieu that the novelist encounters is the role of the Whites in the context of Soweto and the practical implication of such a role. Rosa Burger, in *Burger’s Daughter* hails from an official and political tradition. Like *July’s People*, the novel deals with the subject of revolution by scrutinizing its effect on the subject, with the characters Rosa Burger in *Burger’s Daughter* and Maureen Smales in *July’s People*. The encounter of the individual with the political milieu is of utmost importance in both the novels. A novel of social and political import, *Burger’s Daughter* is a riveting history of South Africa and unfolds the story of a young woman’s slowly evolving identity in the turbulent, political environment of the present-day South Africa. In *Burger’s Daughter*, Gordimer concerns
herself with a recognizable public figure Lionel Burger, Rosa’s father. Positively and negatively, the career of Rosa is measured out in relation to the father who is portrayed as a man with significant, though fictional and personal history. An African born of staunch nationalist stock, Lionel Burger had betrayed his people in becoming a member of the Communist Party of South Africa in the late 1920s. His fictional career coincides with the major developments in the revolutionary opposition in South Africa in the twentieth century. The character of Lionel Burger bears a close resemblance to Bram Fischer, one of the prominent leaders within the SACP on whose personal history the former’s career has evidently been based. The figure of Burger acts as a bridge in the novel between fact and fiction, the past and the present. Burger, a member of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in the late 1920s betrayed his white people in the liberation of the Blacks. Involved in the ideological swings of the party at that time and in the decade following the campaigns of the 1940s and 1950s, Burger remained as a member of the central committee till the party had dissolved itself in the face of the Suppression of Communism Act and then went underground. He was too humanistic that his words echoed in the ears of the Whites, instigating them to arrest Lionel and his death in the prison. He declared:

we as communists black and white working in harmony with others who do not share our political philosophy have set our sights on in the national liberation of the African people, and thus the abolishment of discrimination and extension of
political rights to all the peoples of this country…that alone has
been our aim…beyond…there are matters the future will settle.
(20-21)

Captured in the mid-1960s and sentenced for life imprisonment, he died in the early 1970s. His fictional career coincided with the major developments in the revolutionary opposition of South Africa in the twentieth century. Thus the figure of Burger acts as a bridge in the novel between fact and fiction and the past and the present history of South Africa.

As a political novel, in *Burger’s daughter*, politics affects the personalities of the characters under extreme political pressure. Gordimer remarked that she had dealt with people who were changed and shaped by politics. The actual circumstances of South African politics had a significant role in evolution of Rosa. Two crucial events such as Soweto Uprising and Sharpeville Massacre had impact on her as a twelve year old child. The demonstrations mounted on that occasion and the carnage which followed had greatly influenced Burger’s family though Rosa recalled that she did not understand what it meant. The Soweto Uprising finds its representation in *Burger’s Daughter*, where Rosa with the black children fought for their rights.

Gordimer is primarily concerned with the predicament that faced the inheritor of revolutionary tradition in the context of South Africa. In the mid 1970s, the idea of political commitment came under direct challenge in *Burger’s Daughter* in the figure of Rosa. Throughout the novel, Rosa is in
revolt against both historical heritage and the demands of her current situations. After the death of her father, rejecting both the father and his ideology, Rosa Opt for what she had never had, the experience of private life. She feared that Lionel’s ideology was inadequate to cope with the complexities of existence in South Africa. So she decided to detect from the father and the historical legacy handed down to her and went to Europe. In Europe, Rosa, who is on the verge of finding the personal fulfilment she has never enjoyed, falls in love and her personal life of assumed enjoyment falters. She well acknowledges her own suffering; “I am making my own metaphors for suffering” (198). Precisely, she understands that it is imperative for her to return to South Africa and take up the social engagement which she has tried to avoid. The characters of Gordimer challenge social and historical destiny and later confirm to its final necessity.

The novel *Burger’s Daughter* follows closely the concepts of a political novel. The fact that it was banned by the South African Censorship Board is a clear reminder of its political context. As a powerful exposition of racial society, the novel consummately explores the South African Political scenario, and the novel deals with the theme of dismantling of the self and the awakening of the self to political identity. Rosa Burger, the protagonist is a prisoner of nomenclature. By virtue of being the daughter of the political icon, Lionel Burger, she is denied favours in the South African police state such as passport and a degree in law. A normal adult’s social life is out of reach for her and “came to awareness of her own being like the rising tick of a clock in
an empty room” (280). Lionel Burger has seen communism as a universal panacea for emancipating the Blacks from their colonized mind-set. The future, “he was living for, until the day he died, could be achieved by the black people with the involvement of the small group of White revolutionaries who have solved the contradiction that exists between the Black consciousness and class consciousness” (210).

Burger’s Daughter, on the other hand, situates itself in a determinate time and space- in South Africa, France, and England during the late 1970s. Rosa Burger’s personal history is located within an account of the history of South African racial and political conflicts which extends back to the 1920s. It is also placed within the complex structures of contemporary South African life, a complexity which is registered in the social, cultural and political differences between the rural dorp where her Nel relatives live, Fats’ ‘Place’ in the black township and Brandt Vermuelen’s fashionable suburb in Pretoria, as well as in the numerous ideological positions represented by Katya with whom Rosa came into contact. The social realities of South Africa are placed in the larger context with the revolutionary movements of France and England. Thus the depiction of the individual subject, itself a history, is located within a synchronic portrayal of South African society, which in turn is treated as the determinate product of a diachronic development of specific events, social relations and political practices.
Rosa is woven by the novelist in such a way that she resists any sort of idealism. Neither

the false sentimentality of the popular liberal press nor the limited and limiting idealisms of her father’s and the Terblanche’s Marxism and Conrad’s Freudian existentialism suffice for they all posit significance outside history and discourse in the thing itself or in terms of some totalizing theoretical framework. (Martin 18)

For Rosa, the gesture itself is historical, a resistance of the complex historicity of events and their interpretation itself, which is in effect a politicization of interpretation. Lionel knew that “his schoolgirl daughter could be counted on in this family totally united in and dedicated to the struggle” (6). Burger’s Daughter is such a politicization and exploration not of the events of South African history themselves, but of the ways of ordering, of understanding the events connected with Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville Massacre which are themselves characterized as implicitly political. The prolonged attempt of Rosa to understand herself and the society is dramatized in an extended dialogue between the Marxism which Rosa has inherited from her father and Freudian existentialism of Conrad, the hedonism of Katya, the liberalism of Bernard Chebalier, the progressive conservatism of Brandt Vermeulen and the radical black nationalism of Duma Dhladhla. Rosa articulates a political position within this multiplicity of discourses, a process not at all different
from her attempts to speak out at the various parties she has attended at Fats’ place, Flora Donaldson’s and London.

The reaction of Rosa to the Soweto school riots suggest that her relationship to the future might differ from her father’s, more agnostic than was his. She recognizes agnosticism in Lionel’s approach. Reflecting on the events in Soweto, she reveals to her father:

At last, the children avenge on the fathers. Their children and children’s children; that was the future, in the hands not foreseen….They have been radicalized – as the faithful would say – by their children; they are acting accordingly; they are being arrested and detained. The real Rosa [Rosa Luxemburg] believed the real revolutionary initiative was to come from the people; you named me for that? This time it’s coming from the children of the people, teaching the fathers – the ANC, BPC, PAC, all of them, all acronyms hastening to claim, to catch up, the theory chasing events. (348-49)

Rosa credits to her father with an awareness that the hands in which the future would be carried could not be foreseen – that practice marches ahead of theory. But Richard Peck in his article “One Foot before the Other into Unknown Future: The Dialectic in Nadine Gordimer’s *Burger’s Daughter*” opines: “still one senses in Rosa’s approach a greater agnosticism about the shape that the future will take, a greater deference to the masses, to the
children of masses, who will make that Future, a greater unwillingness to be the dominant professional revolutionary” (36). The works Rosa did are not to define future, as her father might have done, but rather ministers to the suffering children in whose hands the future will be carried. In the “country where there are still heroes” (22), her heroism would not be the lionized heroism of her father, but the quiet heroism of doing what she could like anybody else – committed and unwilling to be happy at the expense of others’ suffering, to be sure, but still like anybody else.

The life that is lived without pleasures and with precautions under the Whites is always a question of humiliation to the Blacks. After all Dingaan’s Day Demonstrations (1929), J.B.Marks declared ‘Africa belongs to us’, and then,

a white man shouted ‘You lie’ and shot Mofutsanyana dead on the platform, 700 blacks arrested; 1930, young Nkosi stabbed to death, Gana Makabeni took his place as C.P.Organizer in Durban, 200 black militants banished; all the passive resistance campaigns of the fifties, the pass-burnings of the sixties; after all the police assaults, arrests; after Sharpville; after the trials, detentions, the house arrests, the deaths by torture in the prison, the sentences lived through and the sentences being endured while life endures. (108)
exhibits Gordimer’s portrayal of the political trauma of South Africa. The imprisonment of Dick, Ivy, Lionel and Cathy and the waiting for the dawn for which they fought heightens the dedication and sacrifice of the living leader Nelson Mandela. Lionel is woven with the thread of Nelson Mandela and his lawyer Bram Fischer. Lionel’s sacrifice equally replicates Mandela’s symbolic suffering in the prison. Lionel, who was adored and loved by the people of South Africa as their saviour, struggled to liberate them from the Whites. Lionel’s imprisoned life parallels those of Mandela’s twenty seven years of life imprisonment and is linked with Fischer’s life in the prison and the resultant death. Gordimer has high regard for Fischer’s struggle for liberation. The novelist recollects: “I was there when Bram Fischer spoke as a prisoner and not as a distinguished advocate, repudiating the right of an apartheid court to administer justice, and went away to imprisonment ended only by death” (148). Just as Mandela and Fischer liberated the Blacks, Lionel too paved the way for their liberation. Lionel, like Mandela, made the twentieth century, “an era that achieved advancement for humanity” (Living in Hope 150). The living words of Mandela as quoted by Gordimer in *Living in Hope and History* thus:

> I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (151)
form the ideology of Lionel in the novel. Lionel has borne the sorrows and personal imprisonment for the freedom of his people in South Africa, the breath of his life, for whom the human family is his family. True to the ideology he died a death of immortality for the nation, a home for all South Africans.

Soweto, one of the urban ghettos the Bantustans built under apartheid law for the Blacks to live in, was set up for the disenfranchised Blacks. Vast stretches of black owned lands were transferred without compensation from the Blacks to the Whites and the real landowners became tenants and leaseholders on lands which were theirs by birthright. In “Crystallisation of Identity in Nadine Gordimer’s Burger Daughter”, Lekan Oyegoke describes Soweto as “a human island created by the apartheid system in a country of some twenty-two million people with four million whites holding eighteen million non-whites in bondage, keeping for themselves eighty-seven percent of fertile land and leaving non-whites with thirteen percent of the land in mostly arid unproductive parts of south Africa” (58). Thus, Gordimer’s Soweto becomes a symbol of man’s inhumanity to man, a befitting monument to oppression, degradation and exploitation. Sipho’s account of the incident where the black police men were asked to “pick up the brains with a shovel” (44), recalls Sharpeville, Soweto and other massacres of unarmed Blacks in the 1960s and 1970s.
Gordimer, registering the history of South Africa in the novels, turns a new leaf in the life of the black South Africans in *Burger’s Daughter* where the novelist pictures the vitality of the effect of the historical events in the lives of the South Africans.

A great many people were detained, arrested or banned on 19th October 1977; many organizations and the only black newspaper was banned. Most of the people were black – Africans, Indians, Coloureds. Most belonged to the Black Consciousness organizations – the black People’s convention, South African Student’s organization, Soweto Students’ Representative council, South African Student Movement, the black Parent’s Association … whites had never heard of before.

(365)

All organizations, newspapers and individuals are freshly motivated for more than a year by the revolt of school children and the students on the issue of inferior education for the Blacks. Hundreds of “teachers had accepted the authority of the children’s school boycott and resigned in support of it” (365). The novelist is sympathetic towards the Blacks who have sacrificed and would resume their lives for the future generation in the Soweto riots.

The school riots filled the hospital; the police who answered stones with machine-gun and patrolled Soweto firing revolvers at any street-corner group of people encountered, who raided
high Schools and picked off the targets of youngsters escaping in the stampede, also wounded anyone else who happened to be in within the random of their fire. The hospital itself was threatened by a counter-surge of furious sorrow that roused the people of Soweto to burn and pillage everything the whites had ‘given’ in token for all, through three centuries, they had denied the blacks. The million or more residents of Soweto have no municipality of their own. (354)

After the funerals of the first wave of children and the youths killed by the police, at each successive burial, black people were shot, while they gathered to pay homage to their dead or “at the washing of hands at the house of the bereaved that is their custom. The police said it was impossible to distinguish between the mourners and the mob; and they spoke more truly than they knew—mourning and anger were fused” (355). The author presents the students with steadfast determination, living to liberate their own people.

We the students shall continue to shoulder the wagon of liberation irrespective of these racists manoeuvres to delay the inevitable liberation of the blacks masses….the students have proved beyond all reasonable doubt … they are capable of playing an important role in the liberation of this country without arms. (359)
Rosa returns to South Africa resolving to take up action and fight against the atrocities meted out to the native as Liz did in *The Late Bourgeois World*. Rosa’s struggle for individualism and communal responsibility is a white’s personal struggle. She returns to South Africa to take up again her father’s work, in two senses: for a renewed political commitment and in the tending of black bodies. As a physiotherapist, like her doctor father, Rosa restores feeling to the nerves of the injured blacks in the riots. She returns to the world of repugnant bodies, horribly mutilated in the Soweto riots and could face those bodies and act in their world. Rosa is charged with the “aiding and abetting of the students’ and school children’s revolt” (356), thus playing a dominant role as a political activist. Rosa accepts her internal inscription and affirms, “I am what always I was…” (349). She transcends the conflicts that made her an exile and returns to South Africa “able to read and follow the map of Lionel’s country” (Rowe 53). She is completely aware of her role in the country. “It’s about suffering. How to end suffering. And it ends in suffering” (332). Her work in a black hospital, identity as Burger’s daughter and more consequently, the ultimate concern for a free future for all, make her the perfect target for vague charges in the Soweto student uprising when she is detained by the police and placed in solitary confinement. Gordimer’s “Lionel’s country” is still a future place and concern with its mapping often “ends in suffering in the present” (332).

*July’s People* reverses the order of domestic servant and paternalistic protector, “relegating full power and control to those who were previously
insignificant and invisible, revealing the difficulties of altering a self-definition that has been publicly codified” (Liscio 247). The novel lives in the interregnum between one order and the next in a subtle interplay of the present and the future where the regime of the present cultural, political and semiotic are exploded and that of the future is addressed. For the Whites, the trauma of black consciousness was passing and a striving for common culture was in offing. Clingman remarks:

All of Gordimer’s previous novels deal with the question of culture, but they tend to do so in a large and abstract kind of way, and generally treat it as a question of absence, in depicting the alienation of European as a lack. In July’s People, however Gordimer goes a step further, subjecting the features of the White bourgeois culture in South Africa to a radical and penetrating analysis. (170)

_July’s People_ is a reassessment of old-fashioned colonial conquest. The novelist has chosen the quotation from the Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci “The old is dying, and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms” for the epigraph of the novel. The choice of the motto for the novel states the reader that “South Africa is in a state of suspension, neither fully rid of the old not at all equipped for the new” (O’Neill 471). All that prevails is barbarous and sinister anarchy, in which the best lack all conviction. In a departure from
Gordimer’s traditional view of apartheid as a dead-end leading only to stalemate and failure, the novel describes a violent shift and its consequences. The novelist suggests that liberals could not escape for, their mild political convictions would be crushed by the crisis. The revolution engulfing the whole country began, as South Africa’s Blacks, aided by their neighbours, overthrow the white government, “downing jumbo jets with ground-to-air missiles and razing commercial centres and white suburbs” (Green 559).

In *July’s People*, Gordimer, turning to details of new culture, shows a new world in the making. Both Maureen and her husband Bam have fled for safety with their servant July to his rural home. While revolution shakes the rest of Africa in a way too old for any immediate transformation, it is in their children that all hopes are invested. The new culture in making is contained in the overall engagement of the novel. One of the most insistent assertive practices of *July’s People* along with the devastating analysis of white patronage is its critique of the black world. Far from presenting a united front in the movement of revolution, the black world in the novel is shown to be divided in directions along class and sexual lines and it finds the experience of revolution as complicated in ways as the Whites do. July, a migrant domestic worker’s world is nine-tenths that of the white city, with a brief holiday at home every year or once in two years. The condition of his wife is simpler: “The sun rise, the moon sets, the money must come, the man must go” (83).
In drawing the sheer poverty and depletion of the lives of the Blacks in the rural areas of South Africa, *July’s People* has made a powerful contribution to the understanding of the experience of its current history. When a servant is thrust overnight into the authority, and as the master and mistress have to learn their new parts of dependence, each figure is shown suddenly deprived of the social supports of previous identity. The novel pictures a revolution of roles, along the lines of culture, class and sex, as well as the destabilization of language. With these spheres, it is a sustained exploration of the effects of future revolutionary movements. According to Stephen Clingman “*July’s people* is the ultimate concern of Gordimer’s historical consciousness” and “… the present – an area that, overall, appears to be the greatest concern for Nadine Gordimer’s consciousness of history in general” (qtd. in Green 17).

Gordimer is essentially a liberal as the novels and stories are centrally concerned with the crisis of liberalism in South Africa, questioning the validity of liberal values in situations which demand radical solution in both moral and political terms. In recreating the freedom struggle of Africa as the backdrop of the novel, the novelist has skillfully blended history, politics and fiction with prophetic vision. The writer distills political events into personal pain, and suffering which resonate through the writings. Gordimer, with an imaginative integration of the private and the public experience, commits herself in *The Essential Gesture* “to describe a situation so truthfully that the reader can no longer evade it” (qtd. in Shinde 95). The year 1948, when the
Afrikaner Nationalist Party came to power and proceeded to implement its apartheid policy, stands as the watershed in her political consciousness. Irene Wettenhall in “Liberalism and Radicalism in South Africa Since 1948: Nadine Gordimer’s Fiction” praises Gordimer as the part of the “emerging liberal movement in the early fifties and viewed first hand its degeneration into a fashionable cult and consequent disillusion of former African allies with the patronage of white liberals” (36). In *Living in Hope and History*, Gordimer links the Liberation movement of 1961 to the revolutionary movement against the Whites in *July’s People*. She comments on the Whites dilemma as, “many white civilians have been killed by black Freedom Fighters” (141). The massacre was a revengeful act and retaliation of the Blacks against the Sharpeville Massacre in which the black civilians were killed by the Whites. The vocabulary of violence has become the common speech of both the Blacks and the Whites.

The works of Gordimer dramatize moments of history and historical events. Richard Eder remarks of Gordimer’s ability in using politics as the “fine psychological matrix of her characters” (6). Her works dramatize moments of history where events loom larger than individuals. *July’s People* reflects the situation of South Africa where the reversal of roles mark the history of chaos, in various and different circumstances, where objects and individuals turn out to be vital. In 1976, after the Soweto Riots, Pharmaceutical firms brought out a government-approved line in ‘First Aid’ boxes. The circumstances are incalculable in the manner in which they come
about, “even if apocalyptically or politically foreseen, and the identity of the vital individuals and objects is hidden by their humble or frivolous role in a habitual set of circumstances” (6). The strikes of 1980 dragged on with walkouts and shut-down as continuous phenomena rather than industrial chaos. While the government continued to compose concessions to the black trade unions “exquisitely worded to conceal exactly concomitant restrictions, the black workers concerned went hungry, angry, and workless” (7). A march in Johannesburg of fifteen thousand Blacks was stopped at the edge of the business centre and once again “thousands of blacks were imprisoned” (8).

In *July’s People*, Gordimer, as a historical witness, casts light on the condition of both the Blacks and the Whites while they are experiencing a revolutionary change in the political system of South Africa. Through their responses and reactions to the interregnum, the author pictures the way apartheid has constructed and constricted the capacities of the Blacks and the Whites by its imposing sign system. The Smalises felt insecure and threatened as July was gradually taking control of their lives. At the time, both in the city of Johannesburg and throughout the entire nation, the Blacks had started a revolt in response to the harsh treatment brought down on them by the Whites, who controlled all aspects of their lives. A shift in power took place in Johannesburg and in South Africa, during the duration of Smalises’ stay in July’s hut. Control has gradually shifted from the Whites to the Blacks. Meanwhile, in the village, a shift in the power eventually took the master status away from the Smalises and gave it to July. The two shifts in power
happen extremely, one on a national level and the other on a much smaller scale, thus clearly paralleling the shift between the Smaleses and July. In the city, the Smaleses treated July well and he was given due respect as a human being without showing any difference towards the colour and July too acted according to the role given to him. In the village, their ancient roles are no longer applicable and the colour began to take authority.

Gordimer depicts “the racial hatred and prejudice between the white and black” (Das 73) as she could read out the inner thoughts of the Whites as well as the Blacks, revealing an open declaration of the souls of the world of the Blacks and the Whites. The Smaleses’ family, who once mastered July, at present, lives at his mercy. The Blacks fight for their rights and “the white people are chased away from their houses” (13). People are burning those houses, “Those big houses! ...The whites are being killed in their houses” (19) and they are fighting against the Blacks. There is fierce fighting round Jan Smuts Airport;

the city centre, under martial law, had been quiet last night, but mortar fire was heard and confused reports had been received of heavy fighting in the eastern and northern suburbs. The Red Cross appealed for blood .... Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth airports were closed, and their ports bombed and blockaded. (25)
Maureen and her family are safeguarded by July and she could not count their life as worth living. She explodes in utter helplessness, “My, my, my. What can we do. Is terrible, everybody coming very bad, killing… burning… Only God can help us. We can only hope everything will come back all right” (95).

Gordimer as a staunch defender of free South Africa and of her right to be a literary witness to the country’s tragedies, with great intellectual, skill and formal control, has explored the attenuation of morality in political systems which distort human interaction. The anxiety of the chief to know what is happening in Johannesburg portrays the state of the nature of the violence. He enquires of July, “why the police doesn’t arrest those people like in 1976. Like in ’80. Why the police doesn’t shoot?” (116). The Blacks in the police have joined fighting and “they won’t arrest their own people any more. That was the beginning” (116). The White policeman on seeing the Black soldiers runs away and July feels happy that “Even my pass, no one can ask any more. It’s finished” (59). The Blacks too have risen to power for they possess guns and bombs as the white army. The people from Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and Mozambique have come back to join the revolution as they entertain the intuiting thought, “The whole black nation is your nation” (120). The extremely tense situation blows up when Maureen and July argue heatedly and exchange vile racial insults.

The anticipatory theme of subversion of white authority is best dramatized towards the end of July’s People which shows the deciphered
Maureen running towards an unknown helicopter “like a solitary animal at the season when animals neither seek a mate nor take care of young, existing only for their lone survival, the enemy of all that would make claims of responsibility” (160). Speaking of Maureen as “historically entrapped”, Stephen Clingman comments: “she is running from old structures and relationships … towards her revolutionary destiny. She does not know what the destiny may be, whether, it will bring death or life. All she knows is that it is the authentic future waiting for her” (203). Shocked and unable to cope up with the new state of affairs, she runs instinctively, not consciously, towards the helicopter, out of helplessness. Due to her inadaptability, Maureen is forced to leave the historical scene, akin to Mehring, the industrial owner in The Conservationist, who is chased out of his farm at the risk of the Black Conscious Movement in the early 1970s. Janmohamed compares Maureen’s escape to Rosa Burger in Burger’s Daughter thus:

in both cases withdrawal [from history] leads to further development of the protagonist’s consciousness and to a realization that one cannot escape history. Rosa … returns to accept her destiny by going to prison and Maureen’s escape from the village is in fact simultaneously a return to the war, and recognition of her own historical fate. (144)

Rosa’s flight is a progressive step bringing her to the consciousness requisite to fight and gain civil rights for all the Whites and the Blacks. In contrast,
“self-centered Maureen is taking flight from the reality that she should share commodities, symbolized in their car and gun, with the other whom she and her system had denigrated all the while” (Al-Rubaiee 54). Therefore, it is from the collaborative nature of the interregnum, entailing a new recoding of identity, roles and titles, that Maureen helplessly runs away. Richard I. Smyer in “Risk, Frontier, and Interregnum in the Fiction of Nadine Gordimer”, views that Maureen’s escape objectifies, “the polar extremes in the uncertainty in the mind of the South African white who, unable to see his place, ‘in history’ at this stage, exists in a no-man’s land between the hope of somehow being lifted out of the river of history and the obsessive fantasy of final peace in its dark, silent depths” (78). The indeterminacy of the fate of Maureen at the end of the novel signifies the historically bound vision of the novelist as a historical witness. The destiny of the white escapee is narrated in the literary context of South Africa. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* which emerges from the politico-historical necessity shares with *July’s people*, the underlying theme of violent dispossession and dislocation.

The novels of Gordimer are predominantly concerned with the relationship between the personal and the political. The emphasis upon wider socio-historical context encourages to view her as one “who shows the power and persistence of history and politics in all things ostensibly or defensively personal” (Medalle 2). Gordimer transforms both the fragmented society and the self in the name of history, an act which as Clingman expresses as a redemptive quality: “Gordimer has not written history of the whole of her
society; this has necessarily been beyond her … But [her] work has responded to the whole history of her society” (224). *The House Gun*, Gordimer’s first novel set firmly in post-apartheid South Africa, resists more strongly the imposition of paradigm which resolves the relationship between the personal and the political. The novel written after the dismantling of apartheid depicts a racist free South Africa where, trust and mutual understanding binds each and everyone together. In such a harmonious period, “Friday, 19th January, 1996, a man was found dead in a house he shared with two other men…David Barker and Nkululeko ‘Khulu’ Dladla …found the body of their friend Carl Jesperson in the living room”(150).

The title *The House Gun* suggests the extent to which violence remains insidiously habitual in South Africa, when Gordimer narrates the story revolving round the murder of Carl Jesperson by Duncan Peter Lindgard. Kenzaburo in a letter to Gordimer mentions that the novel “…talks about…the tragic incidents that took place in Bosnia and Somalia” (*Living in Hope* 83). Gordimer brings in the central social problem of violence in South Africa in the novel and is reminded of the same crucial problem in Japan too. At present, juvenile delinquency resorting to violence is the social problem faced by Japan. A Japanese boy mortally killed another physically inferior boy and hung up the victim’s head in public. On another occasion, a middle school boy fatally stabbed his teacher and an old man was beaten to death by two girls. There were a number of suicide cases as a result of bullying of weaklings.
Gordimer, thus moved by the fatal end of the present generation portrays the crucial issue in *The House Gun*.

Gordimer, in one of the letters to Kenzaburo wrote, “the futuristic vision children and adults are being conditioned to is of a world where …violence is normal and counter-violence is heroic” (Living in Hope 100). As a result, death, violence and pain became commonplace in the consciousness and sensibility of people. Emotions always lead to haste decisions as in the case of Duncan who could not accept the love between Natalie and Jesperson. The eroding pain in his mind does not allow him to take the incident of his own girl Natalie with his friend Jesperson in an easy way. Duncan broods over the plight of him and when Carl Jesperson arrives, he cheerfully drinks with latter, takes the house gun from the table and shoots him in the head. Duncan killed Jesperson because, “that little bitch who shacked up with him, who wasn’t too particular who attracted her fancy, and he’d tolerated this before, had a tumble on a sofa with one of her friends” (44). Moral and emotion tie up together in the novel towards violence. The moral weakness of Natalie paved the way to the death of Jesperson through the emotional pack of Duncan.

The ability to plunge into the intersection between the public and the private life defines the talent of Gordimer. The novelist neither relegates the richness of private life nor warns about the pressures of the political framework, the legal system, or social mores, to underscore the individuals
who are caught within them be hurt and misrepresented. One of the significant factors of the novel is its focus on the intimate canvas and on a larger scale, the point is suggested. It declared that no one could change the prison system overnight. The author who is aware of the codes of law speaks of the “value of human life … primarily enshrined in our constitution” (273) and “Our Constitution … the highest law of the land” (272). The government appointed “Motsamai, the Black senior counsel for Duncan. Your son’s defence being conducted by a black man” (38). Motsamai argued for Duncan with utmost sincerity but “there the foundations of Johannesburg, and in an extended way to Gordimer, South Africa is a country that has been built on murder. The murder of Jesperson by Duncan is “the past, an inscrutable past whose essence will not finally be interpreted, understood or redeemed” (Clingman 156), and does not bring change in the law irrespective of the colour” and after very careful consideration, the judge sentenced “Duncan Peter Lindgard, to seven years imprisonment” (273). The death penalty, though suspended, is still on the South African statute books. One of the themes employed by the novelist is the debate on capital punishment and the session of the new constitutional court which finally abolished it. The death penalty is abolished by the new Constitutional Court, and “Duncan’s sentence has already been given as seven years – right without being just, just without being right” (Clingman 156). The oscillating profusion of voices that make the future of South Africa, transcending the past, by building new relations beyond the fixed geometry of the old offers a vision of possibility.
Taking the present conditions of the new South Africa and its point of departure of apartheid, Gordimer’s *The Pickup* deals with the problem of race, class and the connections between the private and the public. It returns to Gordimer’s familiar theme of the possibilities of personal redemption through immersion in the politically alien and culturally other. The novel simplistically presents itself as representative of the “new” South Africa, depicting both the firmness of apartheid racial boundaries and the ability of these boundaries to be temporarily discarded in favour of non-racialism. Dealing with the sufferings of dislocation in post-ideological times, it as an exploration of immigration, as well as emigration, it affects the sense of self in human interaction. Clingman offers a rigorous analysis of the novels of Gordimer as representations of their historical moments and recovers the novelist from the charges of liberalism. The infringement of pass laws, “which control the African’s mobility and residence, and the nature of his work became criminal rather than a civil violation” (Janmohamad 79). The novelist reveals Abdu’s psychological inner turmoil and internal contestation of the presupposed monolithic ‘centre’, the continual movement and interchange between different mind-states and hypostases of the self” (Dimitriu 167). “Disguised as a grease-monkey without a name” (49), Abdu for “the first time he was ordered to quit the country, when his permit expired” (60). It had come to the notice of the Department of Home Affairs that (his real name) was living at the above address under the alias (the name grease-monkey answered to) in contravention of
the termination of his permit of such-and-such a date to reside in the Republic. This was a criminal offence (paragraph, section of law) and he was therefore duly informed that he must depart within 14 days or face charges and deportation to his country of origin. (52)

Like the White South Africans who became outsiders, Abdu too felt as an outsider in Julie’s land and always had a longing sense to go in search of his identity and fortune. The psychological trauma of Abdu is akin to the unnamed protagonist in Gordimer’s short story *Homage* in which the silent protagonist agonistically utters:

> I am no body; no country counts me in its census, the name they gave me doesn’t exist; nobody did what was done …. All the time I was being pushed out of one country into another, I was afraid, afraid of having no papers, afraid of being questioned, afraid of being hungry, but now I had nothing to be afraid of. I still have nothing to fear. *I don’t speak.* (137)

The situation hampered Abdu and Julie, who felt dislocated in South Africa. The novelist cites William Plomer’s poem *Another Country* to highlight the notion of the couple:

> Let us go to another country

> Not yours or mine

> And start again
To another country? Which?

… And carry dope or papers

In our shoes to save us starving?

Hope would be our passport. (88-89)

As a token to enter the new world, they undergo the process of immigration,

at one of the consulates an official of some other Oriental region, posted by a country of the west as perhaps likely to deal best with fellow Orientals, questions her with the regard of distaste: the way this glance compares her with the husband she has chosen shows that the choice, the world being the way it is, is inexplicable. (201)

A friendly black American official draws back Julie’s papers with a laugh and sarcastically asks her:

You really from Africa?… It was right to have spared her the tedium of all this. She had waited at the Dentist’s or the doctor’s, but never before had she shuffled along in a queue in hope to gain a right – that had been the history of blacks in her country, but she’s white, Nigel Ackroyd Summer’s daughter. (202)

Julie and Abdu’s attempt to establish identity of their dream across the borders of South Africa. The Sharpeville Massacre which aimed to end up the ‘dom pass’ brought light of hope in The Pickup too. The author brings in the
elements of history to analyze the lives of the characters such as Mehring, Lionel Burger, Rosa, Maureen, July, Hamilton Motsamai, Julie and Abdu in the light of historical situation.

Gordimer, during the lifelong fight against injustice has shown the true power of words and points out the kinds of pitfalls that have caused other post-revolutionary governments to stumble. For more than fifty years, the groundbreaking fiction of Gordimer has narrated the human story of the changing South Africa, from the present apartheid era. *Get a Life* traces the anguish of a cancer-stricken ecologist battling against a planned nuclear power plant, undergoing radiation therapy and bringing health hazard to the family. Set in a post apartheid period, Bannermann’s family strain under its conflicting commitments of the wider world. The novel is a deft portrait of the dilemmas facing South Africa. Rooted in the writer’s native Johannesburg, it is an exciting inside view of people beyond race and class and reaches out to the universal issues of conservation. The restaurant is where family celebrations are held,

they were familiar to their parents- good food and wine list to be counted on. It was in a suburb where white civil servants, mainly Afrikaners, had lived neatly around their Apostolic and Dutch Reformed churches and had been deserted by them when after their regime had been defeated, black people had the right to move in as neighbours. (44)
The shields of war and the sheer pains of war are well expressed in the novel which presents South Africa in the new perspective where the protagonist fights for the preservation of earth. The new history of the country ontologically declares the need to preserve earth for harmony and peace in life.

Gordimer explains on the power of literature to make interventions into the public sphere. The novels are analyzed in the light of New Historicism by linking the real life situations in the novels with that of historical issues and incidents. The author’s love for the homeland and its people, landscape, the past and the present are reflected in them attributing them a historical perspective. Gordimer highlights the individual psyche at the expense of historical reality. The novelist had registered the thirty-seven years period of the history of South Africa when the country was undergoing momentous changes and the real events of the South African history of the marginalized and the scandalized figures in the apartheid free new South Africa. The history of the country is thus mirrored through a transparent image of the country. The reflection of history of South Africa in the novels embodies the necessity of retranslation and re-evaluation of the Black as well as the White codes for the society to reach a state of stability, cherishing national unity. The past and the present of South Africa exhibited in the novels picture the transformation in the society and the societal members. The novelist expresses the urgency, commitment, tension, feeling and experience that have hardened the lives of the black South Africans in the historical scenario. The author skillfully
delineates the relationship between the private and the public by charting each stage of the history of South Africa. The writer, exhibits an acute awareness of the history of South Africa and the historical incidents that shaped the topography of the country. For the historian, the novels of Gordimer are valuable sources of information on liberalism and radicalism since 1948.

Gordimer links the private and the public to the socio-political in the novels, thus making it possible to trail down the corrosion in the South African political situation throughout the writing career of more than five decades. The novels and short stories exemplify the growing hopelessness of the White minority in Africa. The question of opposition and silences within the text points to the historical consciousness in Gordimer. The contribution and sacrifice of the Whites such as Lionel, Mehring and Maureen committed to the annihilation of the apartheid and their stake in future is also depicted in the novels. The novelist elaborately discusses the political issues which have rendered shape and effect in their lives. From a novel of personal exploration, Gordimer’s novels follow the arc of human apprehension in a broader social field. The many aspects of the encounter between the private and the public give the works of Gordimer lasting significance.

The political commitment of Gordimer is exhibited in the novels, by treating colonial dilemma and historical consciousness significantly along with the changing scenario of South African history painted naturally, sans artificiality. The novels are studied in the light of New Historicism where the
control of the marginalized is through power. The author affirms that politics is the character of South Africa; political commitment and involvement could only save the native blacks. In setting up the freedom struggle of Africa as the backdrop of the novels like *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*, Gordimer dexterously merges history, politics and fiction with a prophetic vision. Change is the need of the hour and the novelist highlights that South Africa would be subjected to change. The writer distills political events into personal pain, which reverberates through the writing. Gordimer, with an imaginative amalgamation of private and public experience, commits herself to the political institution of the country. The writer envisions the day of new South Africa with the Blacks and the Whites living together peacefully and symbolically suggests the end of the white history and the beginning of the black history.