CHAPTER – IV
Subversion of Power and Alienation
The South African Nationalist party in 1948 designed an absolute “racial distinction” between blacks and whites. This resulted in no feigned equality under apartheid. The blacks felt suffocated by acts and laws created against them.

From 1950-90 apartheid legislation altered native existence through banning: interracial sexual relations and marriage; the use of public libraries and universities; admittance to entertainment facilities such as movie theaters, public bathrooms, mass – movement of natives to resettlement camps, any black person without a valid pass in his possession was liable to summary arrest. Members of the state police force had the right to raid search, and arrest any black citizen under any pretense – many were tortured in detention. All these things lead to a kind of alienation among people in South African society.

In *July’s People*, Bam as the provider of money was merely a source of income that his wife and children milked for their happiness in their cultural mores around them. Once he is unable to fulfill his duty, he is rejected. Maureen defines herself by “things” bought or brought to her by the three meals that have taken care of her entire life: father, husband and servant.

For Maureen’s children bought items in their lives bring enjoyment, no matter how trivial is the object: “... *Nothing made them so happy as buying things*” (6). Once in the bush, they demand Coca-cola instead of water. It has been their dialectic of privilege throughout their young lives. For elderly, sex/infidelity is ultimately defined by a monetary exchange *“The absolute nature she and her*
kind were scrupulously just in granting to everybody was no more than the price of the master bedroom and the clandestine hotel tariff” (65).

Maureen and Bam’s world is created and supported by a capitalistic economy that affects blacks even out in the bush. July’s wife, Martha, reflects, “The sun rises, the moon sets; the money must come, the man must go” (83). Money is akin to the centrality of the universe. It rules the lives of the blacks and the whites who have agreed or who were forced to follow such economy guidelines.

The whites have robbed the black natives of their land, along with basic literacy and a decent wage to vie competitively in a capitalistic society. Thus, they are infantilized by the white culture in a never-ending round. Moreover, black revolution has derailed their lives completely as evoked in July’s People with lack of “normal” pursuits, going to the salon, working during the week, attending international conferences, the lack of privacy, and being surrounded day in and day out only by the native blacks. This aspect of life begins to alter Maureen’s views of life, a view of herself, her marriage, and her loyal servant, July. For the whites, black resolution has derailed their lives completely. Moreover, the novel is a revelation to the fact that the capitalistic life style is toxic in the extreme and the author sees it through the eyes of the subaltern: a living hell.

On the other hand, in July’s People, the novelist shows how the black revolution replaces the power of the White family and their comfort in their
city home. How it reversely gives power to the servant, July, how the servant shares their power and modern belongings.

The novel shows how urban space facility is given to July when Bam’s family is reluctantly dislocated. Homi K. Bhabha’s idea of “unhomeliness” as imaged in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), shows the impact of black resistance and revolution on the white family. This idea is not given to black people and their exiled living on the contrary, it is viewed that the white family’s journey is not in exile but a flight under difficult circumstances created by black riots and fear of death, when the entire state is disturbed. In this context Bhabha notes that “this process is relocation of home to another territory where the occupants cross to another culture” (Bhabha 13). However, “to be unhomed is not to be homeless” (Bhabha 13) or shelterless it is a condition where another house structure, unknown space takes the place of the former home with its materials and the family relations are taken care of.

In the novel, there are two sets of relationship. In this, the first set consists of Maureen and Bam, and the Smales with their Black servant, July. The ambiguity in the novel’s title revolves around the economic context of material position and disposition. It consists of the change of power relationship between the White and Black people. The title of the novel is a play on “possession”. It has several senses. It raises a question, who are July’s people really, are they the Smales or the villagers? The characters’ roles are reversed as the riots in the state transform July’s master’s family into helpless guess. The novel has an epigraph from Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks: “The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, there arises a great diversity of sickly symptoms”. The
epigraph alludes to the novel’s plot in a moral and political way. In the novel “customary relationships have been overthrown and new ones are still embryonic” (Green 562). Besides the reversal of roles, the idea of ownership and the location of the place are reshaped. The progress through the colonial space and the movement of the Smales from the centre i.e. Johannesburg to the boundary is unlike the traditional journey and exploration of the explorers associated with the power of exploring the place, conquering the territory, or going on an adventure and undertaking a religious pilgrimage. This journey is undertaken because of the torture of the black revolt and the reason for subversion of power and displacement of urban facilities benefited to the white family members. One of the results of the revolution and black people’s revolt in July’s People is that the Bourgeois are denuded of their civil power to protect their people wealth and privileges of the white South Africans. The White government is trembling in their shoes to face the revolt of black angry mobs armed by other African countries. The white have become the target for the revolutionaries because of the racial inequalities and for their policy of apartheid.

The black insurgency forces attack the white people as a result of which the white families fly away to a space where black people who are geographically, historically and culturally are separated before, now come into contact with each other and establish an ongoing relationship and the Smales’ escape to July’s native hinterland forces a reconfiguration of the power dynamic between the white family members and their servant, July. In the bush, they have to redefine the power of their dignity they exercised before. Maureen, specially, realizes that her “previous interactions with the world she inhabits, necessitates a revaluation that encompasses race, class,
and gender” (Lock 6). As liberals, Maureen and Bam want to belong to a multi racial society but they stick to their old jealousy of possessing material privileges to elaborate on the tension between two specific races the white and the black and being at home and not being at home. In this context, Mohanty quotes Pratt’s narrative about home, i.e. “being home” refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries, “not being home” is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of operation and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself” (Mohanty 90). This description of home is also applicable to Gordimer’s July’s People but the only difference is, in July’s People the political circumstances, the white family members are forced to leave home for a safer place. Consequently, the small families, drive through the bush for three days and nights, have to spend the night in July’s village. After arriving, they immediately realize that they are great burden on their host. July’s wife raises the question “why do they come here? Why to us?” (Gordimer, July’s People 18). While the village is a familiar African dwelling, and seems “the prototype from which all the others had come” (2), yet the space, the interior design, furniture and details of other facilities they possessed ‘back there’ is not available at the village. The novelist describes the position of the village in a detailed manner:

“…stamped mud and dung floor, above her, cobwebs stringy with dirt dangling from the rough wattle steeple that supported the frayed grey thatch. Stalks of light poked through. A rim of shady light where the mud walls did not meet the eaves; nests glued there, of a brighter-colored mud - wasps or bats” (2).
The rondavel is contrasted to the Smales family’s urban home. In that rondavel Maureen is shocked to notice “the tale of an animal and a rodent skull” in a host’s hut (29). She is displaced not only culturally but also out of her familiar modern locality. Therefore, her sojourn disturbs her with an unhomely atmosphere. Sheila Roberts remarks that this uncomfortable one room hut infested with chickens and large insects wandering about, where there is swishing about of rats, mice and unimaginable insects. She notices, the rainwater dripping on “more disturbing ambience when, within its constricting space, the ordinary, satisfying, white middle-class marriage of the Smaleses’ begins to destabilize” (Roberts 80). Maureen is deeply distressed and dissatisfied with her present living arrangement in July’s village. She gives vent to her anger by nagging Bam who has been helpless from his both manly power and the dignity of his profession “And here; what was he here, an architect lying on a bed in a mud hut, a man without a vehicle” (98).

Maureen’s disgruntlement highlights the uselessness of Bam’s old identity. His validity and the strength of his patriarchal authority and the headship of his family are displaced in a strange place. Bam is also disconcerted with his stay because he is underprivileged “The third category, that organized suburban invention called leisure, did not exist” (34). As Bam’s urban leisure is removed, he tries to calm down into the routine of survival. In this new and strange area, the inadequate and insanitary baths and toilets stop the Smales from cleaning their sweats and bad smells and “there were no windows in the mud walls to open wide and let out the sour smell of this man” (103). She finds bad smell between her legs for the first time with her monthly course. In the absence of her private
washing place and equipment, she follows the African women and uses old rags during her menses. Bam is also horrified at the scene of Royce wiping his back with stone at the scarcity of toilet paper. This stopover deprives them of a sanitized bathroom, equipment and medicine that were earlier to be had in their own home.

Limited to a hut without water, electricity and proper sanitation, Maureen is afraid to cook in the pot used by the African people. She is affected by contaminated surroundings and insists on Bam that she will cook on her own. Gordimer continues to expose civilized unease by manipulating the colonial traveler’s fear of disease and contaminated conditions. Maureen conceals this fear with civilized manners. Maureen suggests to July that they must make their own fire and she likes to maintain power over her family’s nutritional habits. Maureen not only complains about the lack of her kitchen paraphernalia but she is also worried about the strength and construction of the native hut. She questions the security of the hut by saying “everything in these villages could be removed at the sweep of a bulldozer and turned to ashes by a single match in the thatch” (113-114). It embarrasses her with her disturbed feeling about the staying place she is forced to live in and these are in contrast with the strong structured concrete and safe city house where she lived and is desirous of going back to it.

Bam and Maureen owned “A seven-roomed house and a swimming-pool” (25), they could bear to hire live-in helpers. They went often on hunting trips, had their “growing savings and investments”, and could afford to entertain their friends by throwing extravagant parties. In short, they led a luxurious, comfortable middle-class life.
The morning, when they decided to visit the chief, they dressed in clean but un-ironed clothes and looked dirtier than July and Daniel in their dress because Maureen was reluctant to replace her city home appliance with the wall fashioned iron heated on the fire. When they visited the chief’s settlement, Bam’s expectations of his home with brick construction and rectangular shape did not come true. To his astonishment, he observes a dwelling free from basic city conveniences. He doubts about the position and the lifestyle of the chief whose place has neither a church nor a school but has a dusty patch of ground. The absence of basic facilities in the house of the chief make Bam think that the chief is also practically dispossessed not only from the white modern infrastructure but also from the white cultural beliefs and his religion.

In their dislocated journey, Bam and Maureen are bewildered from calculating time and from the unfamiliar home and protection, July has provided them with. Bam is constantly checking his watch for time but for Maureen it is a pointless matter to think about it, “On the bed, the man kept glancing at his watch but she knew hers was a useless thing” (p.43). The Smales, are deprived of home security, privacy, power, ownership, disinfected utensils, modern facilities and comfort, are left devastated with a nostalgic wish to return home. The family’s bitter experience of both physical and cultural dislocation is best fit with Bhabha’s concept of unhomeliness, because they are not at ‘home’ in themselves. They have nothing, which can be called their belonging in this primitive house of blacks. Along the incidence of the novel, the evocative desire of ‘back there’ is constantly repeating and exaggerating the depth of the yearning they have for their private space, namely their lost city home.
On a rare occasion of celebration in July’s village, the Smales family enjoys a dinner of roasted warthog that Bam killed. Returning to the hut, Maureen and Bam are sexually aroused by the aphrodisiac strength of meat and are bereft of their private bedroom; they then use the bakkie cabin to satisfy their sudden sexual desire. When Bam wakes up, he sees blood on his penis; he has appalling delusion that it is the blood of the dead pig. He did have sexual intercourses with her in their private, comfortable and modernized bedroom but he did not ever experience her blood of the menses. The everyday sexuality they had in the master bedroom, which is now in the village becomes an event of horror; “the quasi-castration image also underlies the extent to which, divested of the attributes of male power (bakkie and weapon, both commandeered by blacks) Bam is progressively desexualized” (Newman 87).

The difference between the center (white settler), and the (black land) in the colonial area is distinct as its people’s culture and their method of living. Similarly, Gordimer presents July and the other men in his village as both economic and cultural products of the contact sector where they are situated between two phases of city’s technological development; the urban road and rail network and commercial local occupancy and the rural backward settlement. The man who brings a battery-operated amplifier to the village and July’s western dress or the collection of his city possessions, like plastic cups and scissors, indicate them as active agents of introducing white city culture of consumerism and greed of possessions. In July’s narrative about the wonders of the city, Gordimer depicts the gap between the lifestyles of the rich whites and poor blacks:
A room to sleep in, another room to eat in, another room to sit in, a room with books … a room with how many books … Hundreds I think. And hot water… – the room for bathing– … [to] wash your clothes… there was a machine in some other room for that– (19).

In the context of the colonial interregnum space, the novelist presents the black and white facts who oppose their socio-cultural systems. Apartheid’s rigorous policy of segregation suggests black and white dispute for power, capitalism and habit of consumerism. In this in-between culture and contact area, both the white and the black are turned into characters when they see each other’s rigging of former social status and exercise of power hierarchy during the interval spent in July’s village, Maureen’s conception of her marriage to Bam and her status as a wife breaks down.

Despite the fact that Maureen, as a suburban cultured wife, had been very much in a lesser position to Bam, back in Johannesburg. Even desire for sexual relationship is incapacitate as the “lack of privacy killed desire; if there had been any to feel” (p.79). In her unwanted stopover, he sees no feminine role available to her and she can notice no substitute role to spend her every daytime. Because of dissatisfaction with her current position, she is unsuccessful to generate care and maternal love, which she once performed in her metropolitan home. Instead, Bam has taken over her role. Her previous roles as a city wife and mother have been irrecoverable and she is no longer worried about her children, as they already know how to fend for themselves. She is jealous of the black village women who have their duties and their own status. She feels dislocated to a place that gives her no meaningful role to contribute to the happiness of her family or her
community because “she was not in possession of any part of her life” (139).

The Smales have always been proud of themselves on having equal relationship with July, providing with a room in their house and paying him courteously, giving him Wednesdays and interchanging Sundays free, and allowing to have his friends visit him or stay with his mistress, Ellen. However, in their helpless and marooned situation, the Smales family members seem to stop the “redistribution of inalienable home materials” they bring with them. As Rose Marie Bodenheimer puts it: “struggling unsuccessfully to maintain the rights of possession, the Smales couple manifestly, ‘morbid symptoms’ of a dying consumerist culture in which identity is created by ownership and relationships are mediated by objects” (Boddenheimer 109). Victor shows a materialistic image of the white figure that desires to impress the black children with his city toys he brings his electric racing-car toy to the place that he is informed there will be no electric power to run it. He is only infatuated with showing his city toy to the black children and is worried about the native children possibly damaging his possession. He demands his mother “but tell them they mustn’t touch it. I don’t want my things messed up and broken” (14). He also reacts with fervor to the villagers using water from the tank that his father has fixed: “Everybody’s taking water! … I told them they’re going to get hell, but they don’t understand. Come quick, dad!” (62). Fearless by his parents, dismissal of his complaint, he insists, “It’s ours, it’s ours!” (62).

The conflict of power starts when July takes possession of the bakkie key and drives it to the Indian store to buy foodstuff for them but it is not only hard for the Smales to entertain July’s claim over the bakkie without
seeking their permission but also they see his newly-gained power as a threat to their material equalities; “Their reaction to his assertive use of the car betrays the limitations of their liberalism. As long as July was obedient and vulnerable, they felt outraged by the racism of Apartheid, but as soon as his relationship with them entails material equality, they resent him” (Erritouni 117). In disbelief that July has contested his private right to the bakkie, Bam complains, “I would never have thought he would do something like that. He’s always been so correct” (58). The black man has crossed his limits; he does not know his proper place. Interregnum and civil disorders have made July powerful to acquire new skills of taking possession of the bakkie key. In spite of the fact that Bam issues out his warning, he continues driving the bakkie without any fear of being arrested by the white police who would inspect his driving license or pass. “If they catch you, without a license …– He laughed. – Who’s going to catch me? The white policeman is run away when the black soldiers come that time” (59). July not only ignores the authority of Bam but also questions the whole power of the white government in which the helpless police is playing its role.

On one occasion, Maureen calls July to her hut to restart the white supremacy that imaged their relationship in Johannesburg: “–Go and say I want to see him. –” (68). However, he appears calm and without any sign of his former obedience. Maureen realizes then that now owing to the sudden change of time and the normality of white place, July’s total subordination and obligations have turned into an assertive power of new roles, as stated in “His refusal to ask for permission to use the car indicates his rejection of the Smales’ previous status as white bosses and a reminder to them that the old order is defunct” (Erritouni 118-119). With the exchange of roles
because of the revolution, he now asserts his wishes and demands. Bam has been weak from his male authority, status and profession that he enjoyed in the city. The lack of privacy in the hut and the lack of the limits where everyone can enter into their private area make Bam understand that he has lost his authority as the head of the family and this idea reaches its climax when his gun is stolen. He is uprooted of his power and authority that he was proud of in the past. Moreover, the absence of facilities that he got in the city, the social security and infrastructures in July’s village, such as non-availability of a phone to call the police make him helpless and hopeless detached and deprived of his civil rights. Bam thinks that his shotgun is replacement for the police. It would have protected his family if they were in a non-acclimatized place. Therefore, he frantically searches for his shotgun in every nook and corner of the hut. In searching for his gun, he mistakes the hut for his old home with a vast space. Finally, July and Daniel are the culprits to be blamed for the theft of the gun. Therefore, Maureen is worried about the loss of power of her husband.

In this interval, Maureen’s relationship with July undergoes a sea change and it reveals the fluctuating economic bases of their existence. She presupposes that her past interactions with July in English show that their close relationship is based on considerate service and kind reward. This meant that they knew each other but now the previous language of servant and master becomes not only futile but also strengthens July to correct new form of language tacit to them before.

As the novel progresses, the Smales are virtually disabled to control and guide their children’s activities. Bam guarantees Maureen that “they’ve been drinking water wherever they find it, already... it’s impossible to stop
them” (14). Royce, the youngest child yowls for his parents to buy Coca cola but in its absence, he quenches his thirst with water from the riverside. The romantic novel, *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed), that is expected to fortify her love to Bam fill her spare time is an ironical reminder that the bondage of marital life and union of Bam Smales and Maureen Hetherington is destabilized due to estrangement with city life style and urban home possessions and power.

Battery is a valuable asset for them to get the signal from the radio to know about the recent happenings of the city. For that they are worried about how to protect the new battery from the hut dampness, they have to raise the hut floor a level higher in spite of the fact that Bam is an architect, he has lost his technical skill to use bricks where they are a “cherished commodity; in every hut” (55). He is bereft of building materials. Had he been in city, he would have easily got that material. Maureen asks a solution from July.

Newman argues this conflict among July and the Smales “dramatizes Gordimer’s concern as to whether people can make a common culture if their material interests conflict dramatically” (Newman 86). July takes the benefit of his master family’s degrading position and as he removes his showy honesty and loyalty mask, “an explosion of roles” ensues. Maureen tackles July’s theft of small household articles which she rediscovers in the village and this damages the good boy image of July she had ‘back there’. She comes to understand that “as the economic base crumbles, so other abstractions (honesty, dignity, fidelity) disappear” (Newman 89). To assess the degree of transfer of power, the traditional travel narrative in which the usual position of the native is to be an assistant in expedition who usually
carries the white-man’s luggage is reversed. In *July’s People*, July is the leader of the expedition. He decides the program and the unit of the expedition. July is not only in charge of the first trip from Johannesburg to the village, but is also in charge of the second journey to chief’s village. He not only decides the date and time of the visit to chief, but also spells out who will be included in the allocation. While Maureen wants only Bam to go and visit the chief, July persists that the entire Smales’ family must go.

July not only undoes Bam’s role as owner of material goods and family resolution maker but also wrests Bam’s masculinity. He also meddles with the Smales’ marital relationship. Feeling powerful as a home decision maker, he decides Maureen’s extent of social interaction and bans her extent from the routine spinach gathering with the other woman. Now the Smales, ripped up from their old home space and its power, are uprooted and displaced and weakened. Royce begs Victor to ask July; “Why don’t you ask July? Vic? (87).

Gordimer further shows a transfer of power from white to black in Bam’s imagistic emasculation and July’s increasing power and absolute control. July learns to drive not only the bakkie but also decides as to who will drive the vehicle on their visit to the chief. For Bam, the hierarchy of power between July and the chief is reassessed when he learns that July has no absolute authority in his village and he has to meet the orders of the chief. “My place it’s here. But all people here, all villages, it’s the chief’s” (100). It’s very difficult for the chief to believe the explosion of roles and the capture of the white people’s authority, property, and army paraphernalia by black revolutionists. The chief, noticing the white family’s weak status, takes the chance to assign Bam a new responsibility as a weapon instructor.
He claims, from the past time the white authorities had deprived him and his father of purchasing a gun, but now, Bam is able to make up for that by teaching him shooting skills.

Bam is unable to grasp the fact that the social hierarchy and the authority granted by the apartheid system are now defunct, and resultantly, the master servant power dynamic that was once operational, is now presenting towards July’s benefit. Although July is comparatively elated to appropriate some portion of the white power and wealth, unfavorably on the other hand, July tries to maintain the master/servant equation in his village to preserve the image of madam boy ‘back there’. The former image of July’s power and position as a householder, protector is ignored in the eyes of his extended family members when they see the white family’s despicable and desperate condition. July does not plead for the black revolutionaries but he closely identifies with them. As a product of the white capitalist system, July understands himself in reference to that system.

Another significant challenge that the people who are relocated experience the subversion of the language of patriarchy that comes between the master and the servant. Linguistic confrontation and verbal onslaught occur between them and it turns into a bitter conflict as Maureen insists on finding the food for her family by herself. For the first time July scolds her in his own language when she intimidates him to reveal the tales of his city mistress (Ellen) to Martha. However, the last tactics she uses for July’s disempowerment for his defeat proves useless, as she understands their total reliance on him. Maureen tells July their earlier relationship has ended, that he is no longer a servant. He then shocks her by asking if she is going to pay him this month. She is still thinking of an urban home and wants to bring in
her role of a boss she had ‘back there’. She is not willing to digest her ordinary dependent position on July as long as they are free from their old system of leading a comfortable life with modern facilities. Meanwhile, July has been affirming himself more and more as he grows used to being in the strange position of having power over Maureen and Bam.

One of the sickly symptoms of the interval is the ending of the novel, in spite of the fact that the novel lends to multiple interpretations, the ending of the novel and Maureen’s desperate rushing towards the helicopter, reveals her horrible life with the present hut condition and the torture that it offers her. Her final act also shows her weakness to give up the reminiscent feeling of ‘back there’. Maureen reaches a harrowing impasse when she feels hopeless in a better future to return to her urban home. She is ready to risk her life at the cost of approaching a modern means of escape by a helicopter. She is not afraid whether the helicopter crew or saviors are murderers. The helicopter also remains “as a final sign of the ambiguous status of power-objects in the transitional world” (King 119). Maureen’s mad rush toward the helicopter indicates her tragic situation for the unknown future lying ahead rather than continuing a frustrated life empty of city possession and its pleasures.

The novelist juxtaposes physical conditions between “the life back there” and the present accommodation, food, sports, hobby, sanitation facilities and economic grade. A seven-room house is contrasted with one room hut, food during banquette, morning milk tea and evening fresh fruit is contrasted with a meal of porridge and wild spinach. Bam’s bird hunting versus wart-hog hunting for survival, playing with toys versus playing with nothing in the real jungle, clean and bathed body versus body smells and
menses; and sense of power and ownership versus disempowerment and dispossession. The Smales and July’s disruption of their habitual circumstances confuse them with a profound psychological conflict. Bam is helpless to restore the former dignity of his city profession as, July’s plan for the future and his dream to open a business in the white town is shattered. A dream of homeless existence reaches its climax in loosing command and authority and it makes July to misuse the powerless and dependent state of his former master. He takes control of some of the small belongings that are important symbols of their differences. The power that money gave them in the city to buy goods is no longer there showing its value and remains a useless bundle of papers although Bam learns that paper money is of no use in the chaos of village life. He sticks to city standards and values and wants to pay July for his help. His quality of the white people leads to the building of a water tank for the welfare of villagers, which introduces more city goods, which were not available to the black natives so far. With all these bad experiences and sad events caused by their dislocation from their white standards, qualities, values and city life style, the Smales world is destroyed beyond recognition and there remains little hope of getting it back in the village of the Africans. Therefore, dislocation and dispossession has an internal impact on the personal and family life of the Smales. Bam and Maureen in their new environment have less value. Bam cannot maintain the quality of life he had in the city. The unhomeliness created by the unwilling flight creates Bam’s cultural and psychological fall and it creates familial, social and cultural conflicts. Bam and Maureen are physically and psychologically disturbed. In the end, Maureen in her deep frustration with her life gives up her family members and sacrifices them for the sake of own survival.
Ironically, the fact is that the whites are stripped virtually of all the material possessions that supported their status as members of the master-race in their previous location. The only leftovers they have from the golden past are a gun and a canopied pick-up. The pick-up is particularly valuable as it was their means of escape to the relative safety of July’s village. Nevertheless, as the story unfolds, the helpless whites witness their gradual dispossesssion of these last two symbols of white affluence, privilege, and power.

Their possessions are part of their identity. However, whatever they have “The Smales can be reduced to a series of vacuous titles and roles” (Head 124). The Smales are referred to as July’s people, because July was their servant and has brought them to his village. July does not use the Smales as servants but is able to take the possession of their truck. The Smales become July’s property and they turn into his pets. Maureen narrates, “She looked at her servant: they were their creatures, like their cattle and pigs” (96). The Smales were part of the old power and July is a part of the new power. According to July’s mother, “white people. They are very powerful, my son. They are very clever. You will never come to the end of the things they can do” (21). This shows how blacks thought about the whites. She adds that they can go anywhere they want to go because “they’ve got money” (19). It shows that there is a great gap between the black and the white people. Because of the revolution, this division of power will finally change. Maureen realizes that she has to be submissive because they are powerless. By Maureen’s decision to escape, the supremacy of power finally shifts. Maureen was not very far apart from July in the hierarchy, but now they have moved to July’s village, she becomes the
lowest in the hierarchy and she is therefore most motivated to run. According to Head:

When Maureen runs to the sound of the helicopter at the end of the novel, just such an acceptance is implied: it is not clear whether the helicopter heralds the arrival of revolutionary forces, or of government forces re-establishing the old order. This is an apocalyptic moment for the bankrupt white identity: the white woman finally accepts that she has no inner resource and no residual power or control to deal with her situation. She runs to accept the inevitability that her fate lies in the hands of others. (Head 134)

Maureen’s, Bam’s and July’s behavior shows that they all know that Maureen and Bam have to give up power, name and authority, because they have become July’s dependants. When July goes to the store, according to the narrator, “people-black people-would certainly have seen him at the store, in possession of the yellow bakkie” (Gordimer, July’s People 56). This gives confidence to July because it is a reversal of the old situation because now July can choose his own comfort.

July’s mother’s gesture is one of magnanimity in vacating her hut for Bam and his family to stay. However, she has her views about them: “white people must have their own people somewhere” (19). Her question is: “Don’t they go anywhere they want to go? They’ve got money” (19). July’s mother’s suggestion for them is that they should have gone elsewhere. It indicates that they are “…born white pariah dogs in a black continent” (8). She does not believe in the atrocities committed by black people: “-who shot? Black people? Our people? How could they do that?” (20).
Finally, in *July’s People* Maureen believes in the fact that she is at the mercy of black people. She is well aware of July’s power. She notices the distinction between July’s life in town as a servant and his life now as a master. According to Maureen, “*now he chose what he wanted to know and not know. The present was his; he would arrange the past to suit it*” (96). While July could not choose as a servant, he is free and able to choose now. His freedom and the reversal of the situation give him power, while Maureen and Bam have to give up power.

The main theme of the novel is the shift of power due to the revolution. According to Head, “*the situation of the Smales’ new dependence on their former servant creates a simple reversal of the power relationship, but it also produces a complex analysis of the network of forces that has created these individuals and the matrix in which they interact*” (Head 125). All that happens in the novel is caused by the overturn of power. Maureen also understands that there is a new division. Head adds that there is “a transition of power from white to black” (132). All clashes in the novel are caused because of the importance of power. July’s brave endeavour by risking his own life gives him authority. The Smales are forced to leave the city and they therefore become powerless. The power relations in the whole country are reversed.

On the other hand, Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* deals with the problem of alienation. The problem of alienation is dealt with the character of Mehring as he is interested in his property to be passed on to his son and wife but they are not interested in that property. They live in separate environment far from him. No one understands anyone. This creates misunderstanding and alienation in them. Thus,
the vision of the novel is one of estrangement, alienation and displacement.

The central problem in the novel is of existentialism. Man has come into the world without his intention and will depart from it without his wish. He is lonely soul, whom no one understands nor does he understand others. Simple survival hardly raises the human above the animal level. The important question is not what to eat, but what to be. A human being, Sartre argued, is characterized not by inert characteristics, not by being something in the way that the stone is something, but by a lack of being. The difference between an ‘in – itself’ (e.g. a stone) and a ‘for – itself’ (a person). A man becomes what he chooses to be, and what he becomes does not follow automatically from heredity, environment or social structure. What he becomes depends upon his freely made decisions that constitute his substance, a substance never fixed but always revisable in a new decision. This problem is closely linked with alienation in the novel. Every character is an island to her or him. Out of this predicament, the question of apartheid arises. Neither can the whites consider blacks as human beings, nor do the blacks know them what they are in themselves. This is the dilemma-giving rise to the psychic problem arising in the novel. Each tries to compare the other in his own way. In this agony, the other grossly misunderstands the one leading to comical parody. Gordimer demonstrates that the individuals living in the South African system are alienated from their own acts of speech, which are collective, prestructured. It may be called ‘double trouble’. This starts with the opening of the book. Mehring wants Jacobus to stop the children from collecting wild guinea fowl eggs, but Jacobus tells Mehring that he saw the presence of the dead body of the black man on the
Neither Mehring understands what Jacobus tells him nor Jacobus understands what Mehring wants him to do. Gordimer implies that there is a double-talk by Mehring, which is misunderstood by Jacobus. This mismatched incident parallels the dress put on by Jacobus which is not suitable for the season “... although there has been no rain and none can be expected for five months, he has on the rubber boots meant for wet weather” (Gordimer, The Conservationist 10). The news by Jacobus finally penetrates, but Mehring remains upset by the death of the guinea fowl than by the presence of the unknown dead black man. Implicitly, Gordimer hints at the fact that for the white, the blacks are just objects no better than animals or birds for that matter.

There is a similar communication gap between Mehring and Bismillah and between Bismillah and the blacks. This predicament creates alienation among them. Mehring is unable to distinguish one African from the other. They look alike like birds of the same feather.

Indian Bismillah’s interchange is woefully limited while he sells his goods to blacks who come to buy their necessaries: “I want for ten cents.– – No ten cents, only fifteen. – Demand. Response. Counter-demand. Statement. No word was given away. Communication, narrowed down to its closest immediate confines, was complete” (113). Language becomes a big hurdle in reaching each other and in emotional contact of the minds. This great gulf of difference creates animosity among them. Bismillah and his father are staying illegally in the area. Therefore, they need the white to legalize their stay. However, they know the white men only by their racial and social characteristics. According to the belief of Jalah: “They will get the last
penny from us if you want something from them” (116). In order to get more money for the license, Bulbulia, a lawyer wants to get more money from them for that. The alienation between the Indians and Dorcas and her husband William reaches a climax with William starting a quarrel in Bismillah’s shop when he refuses to pay Bismillah for the things bought from the shop. William threatens the Indians that the African would: “... kick them out. This is not India’s country. You’ll see, one day all Indias must get out” (118). As it is stated above, that Mehring cannot distinguish his African neighbors from one another: Whenever he hears the voice of one of the locals on the phone, he recognizes the accent they all have:

If they speak English, and the authentic mother tongue intonation if they speak Afrikaans) his own response takes on the firm pleasantness of the defensive, because they usually phone to complain (44).

Their alienation from Mehring is brought out significantly when they come to borrow his truck for a day during the week. Even then, they do not ask him straight but go through “a whole preamble of small talk about the weather, the drought, the usual thing before getting to the point” (45).

The Africans are aliens in their own motherland: “... the Africans had papers that made them temporary sojourners where they were born” (108). Bismillah is an alien always under threat of eviction from “a white man with the right to serve an eviction order” (108). He was neither a Proclaimed White? Nor White by Occupation? His alienation status was simply postponed as if “he were buying something on the installment plan....” (109).
Among modern theorists, Ernest Becker presents a complete theory of alienation, which applies, particularly to South Africa. Man is free and healthy when he enjoys a rich participation in a broad panorama of life experiences. When separated from the community of others by social forces man tends to become aggressive to express his needs. Becker sees this alienation from social forces as the root of all human evil (Becker xii-xiii).

The Africans, Europeans, Indians, Dutch are separated from their community. In case of the Africans, their economical condition creates their alienation. Whereas the rest of the people are separated from their community because of social forces. This results in their aggressiveness. Language is at the root of the barrier of amicable human relationship: As symbolic failure of communication between Mehring and African children becomes the basis of relation between the white and the black:

*He asks a question of the cross – legged one and there are giggles. He points down at the eggs... asks again. The children don’t understand the language. He goes on talking with many gestures. The cross – legged child puts its head on one side, smiling as if under the weight of praise, and cups one of the eggs from hand to hand.*

*Eleven pale freckled eggs. A whole clutch of guinea fowl eggs (Gordimer 8-9).*

The passage indicates how there is an unbridgeable abyss of non-communication where Mehring tries to talk and gesture with the children. It is a symbol and a prefigurative attempt by the novelist to show how there is a much larger process that is to take place.
between the white and the black. The novelist indicates that the individual living in the South Africa is alienated from his own acts of speech. How the blacks are constrained by partial vocabulary and deficient communication:

*Jacobus admires the trees although they are nothing to see, this small, because he is told they are special trees. He asks a great many questions about them; he thinks this is the way to please, he knows how to handle the farmer... he may not speak the language but he understands the conventions of polite conversation all right* (210-211).

For Mehring every one is an object. He treats them as inanimate things. He classifies his mistress as one classifies fruits. She is a type of an object who holds radical or liberal ideas about the exploitation of the black South African. He does not pay more attention to the murdered man on his farm than he thinks about children playing with the eggs of wild guinea fowl. The laborers working on his farm are considered as the locals these Boers palm – greasers. This is what he calls the Indian shopkeepers also.

Mehring’s intention is to conserve business and sex with minimum of efforts. His farmhouse is sensual Eden, a place to camp and to sleep with his mistress. On his own tour to Japan, he molest a young Portuguese girl on a plane in African airspace:

*But at Lisbon a Portuguese family came abroad and after sulky looks between the two daughters who both wanted to sit with mama, one of them had to take the seat [next to his]. So that was the end of his intention to lift the*
dividing arm and spread himself for sleep. It was midnight. She was a subdued girl, not pretty, nor perfumed beside him when the cabin lights were lowered and conversations gave way to hen-house shufflings. She had not said good evening, just looked at him with cow-eyes, someone who never got her own way, resigned to any objections that might be made as she approached the seat (120).

Both are covered with blankets. As the night wears on, Mehring’s hand explores the young girl’s body, until his finger finds what it was looking for. “As the night wore on – oh God knows how long it went on – the finger was able to enter, many times” (124). Only dawn and growing light in the cabin end the exploration. Not a word is spoken while tennis is going on, and the girl will not touch him or acknowledge his presence by looking at him. There is no love, no tenderness, and no curiosity. Only the possibility of conquest a vulnerable female body.

Later, after the plane lands, Mehring has no feelings of guilt, of the realization that he might have been caught:

*Her fluid on his hand as one says a man has blood on his hands. She screamed, or got up and told her mother. What an insane risk. A prosecution for ‘interfering’ with a young girl; yes, crimen injura. That was the name; the girl had no name. A TAP mohair rug. Who would have thought it. Not without tenderness, but who is ever to know that is part of the scandal – perhaps even of rape and murder? – sometimes the only tenderness possible (125-126).*

However, at the end, Mehring thinks: “It was so easy, and god knows who the stranger was and where, in these streets or those, this
town or that, she may anytime be quite near, with the mother and sister and whole clan those people have, guarding young girls” (126). Mehring feels that he has gotten away with something by frustrating efforts of the “whole clan” who guard such girls. In short, he experiences pleasure in retrospect.

One wonders why Mehring chooses to be a sex – maniac and wants his son to be so: It is surprising to read about a man like Mehring that he considers women as possessions. This comes out from the horses month, as it were, when Mehring tells his mistress Antonia that he likes to buy a woman for three times in a day and make full payment for purchasing them – for the afternoon, night or day. He does this to avoid any sort of emotional entanglement with them. One ventures to think that his wife has not left him for nothing and gone to the USA. As already referred to above, while speaking to Antonia about his son, Mehring indicates:

*He wants the boy to have a good time while he is a youngster— that was the way he put these things to her — get it out of his system, not miss anything, so that he’ll see the whole business isn’t all that important, when he is older* (95).

This is why Mehring’s mistress calls him a sexual fascist and actually, he regards everything outside of himself as material to be exploited. His attitude toward women matches his attitude toward the land and those who work on it. The young Portuguese immigrant girl, already commented upon above becomes the land as Mehring locates it, explores, explicitly compares her flesh to water in the desert, experiences the “grain” of the skin, guesses his location, and
moves over the terrain, exploring the ridges of her anatomy. In his lustful exploitation with the girl, she becomes surrogate for his colonial lusts.

In *The Conservationist*, Mehring keeps farm not for profit or agricultural interests but for a trysting place with lovers and a tax write-off. The farm is artificially created and bought by the white regime to contain those not allowed to live in the city. There are 150,000 blacks staying around the farm. Without the “pass” needed to work, the black workers are denied “validity”. The Indian general store is meant for the displaced and dispossessed. The storekeeper is Indian family. They should pay off the government periodically to remain illegally, on their bit of land, also surrounded by a high fence. Mehring frequents the store as he purchases delicious meals for weekends on the farm.

The general store is constantly peopled with a motley crowd of impoverished blacks, literally in rags, looking over the displayed goods that they cannot afford, as their daily wage is insufficient to buy everything. It is this fraught sight, displaying the learned wants of white privilege that one can possess with money, which demonstrates the triangle of tired society in South Africa: at the top is Mehring stopping his Mercedes outside the door; then the Afrikaner police government officials that threaten with expulsion; after the whites is the Indian family existing separately from the segregation, and lastly the blacks with their starvation and beggarly existence. The stream – of – consciousness technique used in the novel allows the reader to skim the surface of the text, to “hear”
Mehring’s repetitive thoughts. The monotony conceals the true intent. In the novel, language is used to deconstruct the racist/capitalist ideology. The stream of consciousness is used to gloss over disturbing details. The horrific is rendered commonplace, echoing the sentiments of the Nationalist Party – which ignored the increasing poverty of blacks.

Jacobs manages the farm every day of the year. A tenet of colonialism demands cheap, exploitable workers to simultaneously produce goods and services to maintain white societal standards of living. The black natives have been robbed of their land along with basic literacy and a decent wage to vie competitively in a capitalistic society. Thus, they are infantilized by white culture in a never-ending round.

Mehring refers to all workers regardless of rank and age, as his “boys”. For him their benign neglect is more apt. Whether in or out the farm, the blacks have seldom enough to eat. Mehring ignores the signs of malnutrition in the gaggle of children that match his luxury can zoom by. The lack of protein in their diet is noted: “Many of them had not had any since a calf had broken a leg and been slaughtered two months before” (162).

The luxurious life that Mehring leads is evident as Jacobus’s wife, Alina prepares Mehring’s meals. She does not have any idea, which, condiment in the refrigerator would be suited for the bag of delicious food. It evokes a lack of cultural knowledge so basic in the victimization of blacks.
On Mehring’s way to the farm, he picks up a girl Hitchhi-King. When they stop at an out–of–the–way spot to eat, they engage in the sexual intercourse. The woman becomes a sort of land for Mehring not a paradise conserved but an ecological disaster. Her face is like a cyanide dump: “The grain of the skin is gigantic, muddy and coarse. A moon surface. Grey–brown with layers of muck that don’t cover the blemishes” (246). As Mehring is about to possess the woman, he becomes aware “of a feature of a landscape not noticed before” (246). At this moment, he sees a thug and recalls the police enforcing the race laws. He recalls the police at the start of the novel:

These are the bastards who shoveled him in as you might fling a handful of earth on the corpse of a rat … dispose of the body, and so you dump your rubbish on somebody’s private property (248-249).

The black man, the body, the body of the woman, and the rubbish dumps form one massive image of colonial guilt.

The Zulu myth is used in the novel to indicate the image of the oppressed woman and the alienation of Mehring with the South African tradition. His wife is a spirit medium illustrating the African culture.

To become diviners is for pagan Zulu women the only socially recognized way of escape from an impossible situation in family life; it is also the way an outstanding woman can win general social prestige. For them earning social status by taking a job or starting their own business enterprise is blocked. It is a deterrent inset effect
of barren women, of enforced marriage proposals or confusion on getting menopause. Phineas’s wife “had no living children” and is “somewhere around the end of childbearing age” (156).

Mehring should have known the cultural and sex life of African people around but he is ignorant of this life. His alienation from this knowledge does not incorporate Gordimer’s total picture of African life and Mehring’s ignorance of it shows that the novel lacks the integrated vision of African culture and the white man’s ignorance of it. It indicates Gordimer’s lack of technique to incorporate comprehensive theme of the novel.

As stated above the female exploitation and exploitation of the land are linked; sexual guilt functions as a metaphor for colonial guilt. This is clearly indicated through the treatment of women in the novel such as, Dawood’s Indian wife longs for Durban; Mehring’s mistress is forced to flee; the Portuguese immigrant girl is molested; even the Afrikaans – speaking daughter – in - law and grand – daughters of old De Beer are thoroughly cowed. Mehring represents a civilized man driven mad by sexual urge to have sex with many women and even wish to have sex with a baby who is imagined by him how she would fulfill his wish after she grows up:

She’s a beautiful child as their children often are – where do they get them from? – and she’ll grow up – what do they do to them? – the same sort of vacant turnip as the mother. … To go into one of those women must be like using the fleshly succulent plants men in the Foreign Legion have to resort to (48).

This statement shows the lust of Mehring for women. Moreover, he imagines how to enjoy with the little innocent girls who are still growing up;
and who do not know yet the meaning of sexuality. This leads for the alienation and gap of communication between Mehring and people around him.

Nadine Gordimer gives a realistic portrayal of the reality of the emptiness of success in making Mehring see that neither his wife nor his son ever succeeds him to the farm. Nobody will ever know where his body will be buried. Thus, he knows for sure, his family is disintegrated. His industrial and business enterprise, his racial and economic progress constitute his failure. Mehring, his Afrikaner neighbors, the blacks working on the farm, the Portuguese girl, and his son and wife and the Indians live in different worlds. No one understands any one. It is a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing. Thus, the novelistic vision is one of estrangement, alienation and displacement. Mothers cannot make any meaningful contact with their children, wives with their husbands, lovers with their beloveds, blacks with the white, Masters with their servants, merchants with their customers. Thus, Gordimer’s vision of life is people are personally and individually responsible for the world they live in.

Mehring comes to know that his situation in the South Africa is of repression. He, as well as the South Africans should realize that they must acknowledge that their situation is one of loneliness, and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate. They must recognize that there is no transcendent power, which can solve their problem. They must do this since they cannot escape their responsibility for themselves and primarily because only by using their powers can they give meaning to their life.
Mehring hangs on to his farm, his Johannesburg flat, his mistress as a claim to African place. His lift to a white prostitute while driving on the free way is all in the pursuit of his illusory goal: “O Mehring, how you romanticize, how you’ve fallen for that place – a stink to high heaven” (236). Just as the industrial wasteland, he has taken the whore to contradict his ideal of the beautiful and sublime, so does the flood coming from Mozambique destroy the pastoral ideal, which he has decided to develop his weekend farm. The pastoral farm becomes a locus for a demonic world of alienation, violence and colonial conquest.

There is a symbolic significance of the dead body found in the reeds. The situation refers to the myth of origins. In The Religious System of the Amazulu Callaway points out that, the cult of ancestors is connected with a bed of reeds. A father is the uthalanga or ancestor of his children; from him they broke off. Uthalanga is a reed which throws its off shoots and therefore metaphorically a source of being. The nest of reeds suggests the guinea fowl. From this arises Mehring’s misunderstanding with Jacobus when Jacobus tells Mehring about the dead body lying on the farm but Mehring misunderstands him and he is worried about the eggs with which the children were playing. Therefore, language is the main culprit to create confusion among the people such as the white, black, Indian, Dutch and the other immigrants.

Another significant factor connected in the novel is based on the events in the novel, which are, the drought, the discovery of the body in the pasture, the attack on Solomon, the fire, the spirit
possession of Phineas’s wife, and the feast and the dance connected with it, the flood and finally the reburial and the dead man.

The theme of the burial of the dead man rises to the surface like the black man and obliterates the paper possession of Mehring and his story. This aspect indicates there is an opposition between ownership and alienation about Mehring’s farm. The dead man is discovered in the reed bed. This is associated with a myth of origins referred to above. It symbolically refers to Mehring’s despair and the birth of ownership of the land by the Africans. Moreover, the question of Mehring’s wish to conserve the land is connected with the image of guinea fowl eggs, which leads to the fundamental question: Who shall inherit Africa? This is set out in terms of Zulu myth. The cursory burial of the dead black conditions later events. One wonders about the death of Solomon. He is discovered unconscious on the veld. The legend goes that “he was attacked in the night by a spirit” (85).

The fact is that he was beaten up for non-payment of debts. Symbolically he is alienated from his responsibility of paying debt to his culture.

Mehring is alienated from the Zulu myth in which rainmakers burn the earth around their homes in the belief that the god, seeing the black area knows that the rainmaker is seeking rain, touching the grass with fire. Rainmakers sacrifice colorful birds in the belief that, as drought takes color from the land; the killing of color (e.g. the rainbow – feathered hornbill) will cause the sky to weep. In the
novel when it rains it is called a bird: “taking off again with a sweep that shed, monstrous cosmic peacock, gross paillettes of hail, a dross of battering rain” (218). Here there is no interlinking of images among drought, the dead black fire and the images of the rain bird.

There is an incident of insignificance, which may be linked, with the alienation motif of the novel. That is the ceremony held by Phineas’s wife to celebrate Solomon’s recovery from his wounds and dreams. Gordimer herself questions this. What significance, does it hold in the novel’s thematic importance when instead of their best cattle, they kill a goat with not enough meat? Solomon sees his wife washing hands in a tin basin in the yard as a woman does after completing an ordinary work. Hence, there is a considerable desecration of the power of the religious symbols that the spirit medium Phineas’s wife represents.

*The Conservationist* is similar to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* or Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Mehring reminds one of the Conradian creations. He reminds us of the mysterious life of wilderness that stirs in the farm and the places around the farm in the hearts of the wild men. As Kurtz’s relationship with the Russian in *Heart of Darkness* becomes a perverse union with death, so Mehring deals with the corpse lying on the border of his field. Thus, it becomes a perverse union with death. The dead man’s image haunts him with a sort of eager fatalism.

On the other hand, *July’s People* exposes more awareness and truth of the unfair political situation of the South African people. The novel deals with the black revolution, which dispossessed the white family of their power and urban home facility and it reversely,
subverts the power of the white and empowers their servant, July. The novel also deals with the alienation of the Bam’s family when they undertook the journey under duress caused by black riots and fear of death. The Bam’s family not only takes shelter in July’s village but also comes in conflict with the blacks’ mode of living. Everyone in the family is reversed as the revolution subverts July’s master’s family into his impotent guests. Therefore, the novel evokes the truth of the epigraph from Gramsci’s Prison Note-books “The old is dying and the new cannot be born”.

The basic thematic nexus in July’s People is based on falseness and alienation of the white ruling class and the vitality and true friendship of the black. The alienation arises in the black and the white because of lack of communication. The black understands the white only when they use the words such as, bring, take, sweep, go out, come in etc. and do not understand them when words expressing human emotion are used.

Alienation in the novel is brought out by Judie Newman in the discussion confronting Maureen with the realization that “honesty is how much you know about anybody” (Newman 86).

As mentioned above, the theme of July’s People is estrangement, alienation, displacement and subversion of power. In the novel, the protagonist is threatened with insecurity for the land and to his right to it. It comes through the depiction of the land as unnatural, unproductive, unyielding and in – communicable:
Beyond the clearing – the settlement of huts, livestock kraals, and the stumped and burned – off patches which were the lands -- the buttock – fold in the trees indicated the river and that was the end of measured distance. Like clouds, the savannah bush formed and re-formed under the changes of light, moved or gave the impression of being moved past by the travelling eye; silent and ashy green as mould spread and always spreading, rolling out under the sky before her (Gordimer, *July’s People* 26).

In *July’s People*, spiritual significance is attributed to veld, desert, empty space and poor soil. Cultural poverty and oppression are human in *July’s People*. The insufficient food, the uncomfortable, decrepit houses and drab clothing and the lack of even necessities of daily life such as sugar, tea, and pad for menses starve the self by which human values of love and loyalty are at a discount.

Family relationship and its bond falls apart when Maureen runs frantically toward a helicopter which appears suddenly, abandoning her husband, her children and everything, “like a solitary animal at the season when animals neither seek a mate nor take care of young, existing only for their lone survival” (160). She runs away towards the helicopter without a care ever for her life because she can no longer live as July’s people.

Maureen Smales thinks that she is liberal and liberated, but events prove her wrong. Believing herself to be an enlightened employer, she finds it incomprehensible to that the tables have
turned and she can no longer manage July as she had in the city. It is Maureen and not Bam that clashes with July over the truck and the gun. She even plans to tell July’s wife about his romantic adventures with the town woman – Ellen. The problem is not that of July’s actions and attitudes, as it is Maureen’s inability to cope with the problems of primitive living. The fleas, “the menstruating in rags” and the absence of all beauty aids are her physical adversaries to strike at her essential femininity. Maureen is leading the life of a black stripped off the things she values. Had she the sense of vicarious sufferings of the blacks, she would have known what the whites have made the black to endure under their rule. Nevertheless, unfortunately, neither Gordimer has evoked this sensitive problem, nor does Maureen has that sense of understanding of vicarious suffering. Therefore, she is alienated from the reality of existence even though she is placed in the thick of the problem of the blacks’ suffering.

July’s wife cannot even imagine that white people in the cities use different rooms for different specific functions. The Smaleses’ awareness understanding of the poverty of July’s people does not produce any sympathy for the blacks. They are so selfish that they are worried about their own sufferings rather than express what a pitiable life the whites have dished out for the blacks.

Gordimer’s view of sex for the Africans is different from the sex for the wealthy whites. July’s wife can hope to have pleasure and luxury of sex only once in two years when July goes home for vacation but Maureen and Bam find their sexual desire is dead:
... Lack of privacy killed desire; if there had been any to feel — but the preoccupation with daily survival, so strange to them, probably had crowded that out any way (79).

For the Africans, sex is as natural as it is for the animals. However, not so for, the whites. They need extra stimulation and beauty aids to make women feel attractive; Maureen is now:

... lean, rough-looking—the hair on her calves, that had always been kept shaved smooth, was growing back in an uneven nap after so many years of depilation (89).

This physical change in Maureen not only stripes her of what she considers feminine, but of her identity.

The white women can never realize how the black endure a life apart from parents for years on end. For the black women Gordimer does not envisage lie without pain or change without struggle nor does she indicate that white women are exempt from similar ordeals in life. Women, in Gordimer’s view must struggle toward consciousness and responsible decision.

Gordimer’s view of alienation and existential stance depends upon repression. The South African must accept his fundamental loneliness and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate; for him there is no transcendent power to solve his problem. Only by using his power, he can give meaning to his life. The South Africans must choose the good in them, or be annihilated by the evils surrounding them.
In Africa, powerful historical and cultural factors divide Afrikaners and English speakers. The English for them are descendants of enemies, colonizers and exploiters as is indicated by Joseph Conrad in his most famous novel: *Heart of Darkness*. Gordimer vindicates the rights of the individual against the claims of the government. The blacks have only functional, never human contacts. Alienation is accurately linked to despair in *July’s People*, for if ever black and white could be expected to understand each other, it should be Maureen and July. In this novel, the best – intentioned, liberal white employer cannot hope to understand a black worker. The setting of the novel, even the air is one of alienation, because of the revolution. The Smales are physically and psychologically removed from their society and when immersed in the black one, they cannot cope and are disparate. The separation in *July’s People* between the white and the black is really one of an immense darkness.

In *July’s People*, Maureen wants to bring about neocolonialism, primarily economic and politically exploitation, but they have their cultural/physic counterpart, which is both cause and consequence. Colonialism, in this counter sense, means the imposition of one world – view on peoples of another world. In this sense, Maureen wants to impose her command. Maureen’s view about July is one of – the Judases Christian consciousnesses that look at the world in either or, black/white way, the evil being out there, the good inside: the good people versus the bad people, the good with the white and the bad with the black. Thus, Maureen does
not like July dealing with her in the way he does. Therefore, she thinks: “to be intelligent, honest, dignified for her was nothing; his measure as a man was taken elsewhere and by others. She was not his mother, his wife, his sister, his friend, his people” (152).

In adversity, they finally tell each other the truth, but their words cannot undo fifteen years of misunderstanding. Hatred and not comprehension, results from their exchange.

Alienation is linked in July’s People with despair. Only July and Maureen, if black and white could be expected to understand each other, do. In this novel even the best – intentioned liberal white employer cannot hope to understand black worker. Because of alienation, the race relations and the turmoil of blacks and whites trapped in South Africa operate as silent backdrop of forest and veld with its geographic isolation, and physical apartness. Blacks and whites wait in alienation and despair.

Alienation in July’s People is well reflected the text: “… out of sheer misunderstanding, the black man’s English was too poor to speak his mind” (97). This represents the “cultural gulf between two races” (175).

Goedimer’s novels, thus, portray the subversion of power of the whites because of the black revolution. The power and possession of the whites changed into the fist of the blacks. This is the nature of universality that change is the law of life. Moreover, Gordimer depicts the picture of alienation as a background of exploitation, degradation and repression of the black people in South African society.