Chapter 4

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE 'COLONIAL MYTH'

"While writing and educating herself, Nadine Gordimer experienced a radical psychological rapture which she calls a 'second birth' — she discovered the 'great South African lie'"

— Janmohammed

Gordimer was most concerned in analyzing the 'European experience' in relation to the African cultural context. She has given explicit answers to her own position as a writer in the post-colonial period, in her essay "Essential Gestures." In her own words "... the peculiar relation of the writer in South Africa, as interpreter, both to South Africa and to the world, of a society in struggle, makes the narrow corridor [and] ... can lead you one in which doors fly open on the tremendous happenings experienced by blacks" (272). Here she has defined the responsibility of a writer in a political context, and has reconciled the same with the greater commitment within the artist towards art. The medium of words can be more than a "self-regulatory act" (Myth, Literature and the African World, 62) as Soyinka

1 Manichean Aesthetics, 85.
asserts, and can be an integral part of the culture of a struggling nation. Nowhere can we trace the depth and conviction of Gordimer’s abiding concern more than in her fiction -- especially in her short fiction. In the freedom ‘of creativity’ Gordimer explores deeper and deeper into the minds and behavioral reasons of her society. And she brings in her language to bear upon itself the experience of a different kind. Gordimer’s position in the post-colonial context, can be interpreted as her attempt at studying the colonizer/colonized dichotomy. As a person -- marginal subject -- witnessing the political and social revolution in South Africa, Gordimer had the distinct advantage of entering the colonial edifice of lies and deconstructing it from the inside. Born as a privileged person, in the white section of the society Gordimer seems to have understood the Black ‘other’ in their cause of human liberalism and simple social justice. Even in the wake of the Black consciousness movement, when she was rather displaced from the main stream of political activity, Gordimer had worked from the outside as a major force in illuminating the social reality as opposed to the white man’s version of truth. This post-colonial feature is present throughout Gordimer’s works.

D. E. S. Maxwell had contained the post-colonial literature within two major categories, whereby a writer
brings his language to a fresh environment that had to be incorporated into his style, or when a writer uses the idiom of an alien language to bear the burden of his own cultural and social experience (Commonwealth literature, 82-9). In a broad sense of the term, post-colonialism is a kind of reaction to 'colonialism.' Colonialism though trans-historical and unspecified, is an enormously problematic category: it is, according to Stephen Slemon, "used in relation to very different kinds of cultural oppression and economic control" and it determined the "critique of past and present power-relations in world affairs" (Post-colonial Studies: Reader, 106). When postcolonialism was read as a simple binarism between west and the rest, Europe and its ‘other’, colonizer and the colonized, the most turbulent and ideologically ambivalent area remained the "semi-periphery." Gordimer was historically positioned at this blurred and rather transitional area of what Slemon terms "the radical ambivalence of colonialism’s middle ground"(107). Gordimer’s stories derive several of their features due to this positioning. The political concern was to reinscribe the centre/periphery relations and thus bestow the valency of legitimacy in the colonized discourse. This restructuring of the power relation, was achieved through the social realism of the text. Gordimer defines herself as "a romantic dealing with reality" (EG, 28).
But reality in her text privileges her ideology as a dominant structure determining its own imaginary 'pseudo-history.' In the Eagleton sense of the word, 'pseudo-history' explains the relation between word or the text and historical reality. In Criticism and Ideology, Eagleton has clarified that "rather than 'imaginatively transforming the real, the literary work is the production of certain produced representations of reality into an imaginary object'" (75). The truth of the social realism in a society legally segregated by apartheid rules had its peculiar disadvantages. The writer having to negotiate between extremes, she can only be a "syncretist" and "hybridizer." Stephen Gray comments that in a country of social fragmentation, like South Africa, the position of the writer becomes even more crucial for the 'realism' in the text. Then the "basic act of writing is one of carrying information across one or another socio-political barriers" (On Historiography of South African Literature, 48). Here Gray sees the realism of the narrative as part of the writer's duty to 'translate' or 'transfer' data across the boundaries "from one audience to another" (48). Gordimer's inaccessibility into the black world except in her imagination has seriously affected her concept of the black consciousness. As Gordimer herself admits in "English Language Literature and Politics in South
Africat, the "gap in experience between black and white lives. . . produces cardboard and unconscious caricature" (Christopher Heywood ed., 119). This flaw is applicable for the black writers too, when they portray white characters. Gordimer attributes guilt as the major emotion of a white writer and resentment as that of the black writer. Either case gets blurred by the inability to identify with the society as a whole. But she has the inside information about the white race and its colonial ideology, which she transfers across the color barriers. Thus awakening the whites to the reality in their colonial myth of lies, she strives for a better social consciousness. The very 'trembling instability of the balance' becomes the ultimate proof of the author's morality; her commitment to truth.

The truth of the society, calls for a change in the power relations, which in turn questions the legitimacy of the white authority. The relationship between literature and politics, through its medium of society which form the substructure of both, is illuminated in Gordimer's social realism. Sartre in his study has connected this aspect in "For Whom Does One Write." He has analyzed the effect of truth, on any society:

If the society sees itself . . . . the writer presents the society with its image; he calls upon it to assume it or to change it. At any rate it changes; it loses its equilibrium which its ignorance had given it; it wavers between
shame and cynicism; it practices dishonesty; thus the writer gives society a guilty conscience; he is thereby in a state of perpetual antagonism towards the conservative forces which maintain the balance he tends to upset” (What Is Literature?, 88).

Gordimer knows that words create reactions and she resolves the false myths of colonialism that has disfigured the culture and progress of the society.

Achebe, believed that the novelist is a teacher. Gordimer, on the other hand is primarily an artist, though committed to her society. She has no specific lesson to preach. But the very narrative mode she chooses conveys some hidden message. In other words, Gordimer equalizes her ideological commitment with her aesthetic sensibility. Most of Gordimer’s narratives being in the pure present, the mode is often transitory. Events follow one after the other and the owner[s] of the ‘voices’ are rarely identified. It is in the intepellation of these voices that, Gordimer fixes the meaning of her text. Dagmer Barnauw in he article, “Nadine Gordimer: Dark Times Interior worlds and Obscurities of Difference” asserts that Gordimer’s intense involvement with the black struggle has “enlarged the problematic of ‘mixed discourse’ or the presence of other voices not of her making and not entirely of her choice,” (Contemporary Literature, 266).
Achronistic and without a name, these voices bring out the 'real' meaning hidden within the situations. Being preoccupied with the glimpses of truth that flashes in the ordinary events of black/white relationships, the natural order of cause and effect in the narrative seems to recede into less obvious light.

Most of the stories focus on seemingly uneventful characters and as the plot thickens the emphasis previously placed suddenly gathers momentum and a political statement is unravelled. The cultural ambivalence in the author leads to a carnival of voices in the text. The culture of the oppressive race to which Gordimer belongs, and the culture of the oppressed black race for whom she fights, causes a certain oscillation in her narrative. The story "A City Of the Dead, A City of the Living" develops along this kind of an oscillation. The story is printed in the italics as well as normal print. The intermittent narrative serves to illuminate the different points of perceptions. While Naneki was supportive of her husband's political activities, she had her private hatred/fear of the aftermath of such an involvement. Her love for her husband and her children whom she cannot keep with her weakens her political commitment — her 'personal subjectivity,' clashes with her 'political subjectivity.' Gordimer studies Naneki from a universal platform, as a woman, and tries to yoke
this image with that of a political sympathizer. In the process of hybridization, several conflicts arise and the character of Naneki seems to have several shades of meaning at different points in the narrative. Living in a small quarter of the black township, she was forced into accepting a political activist as her house guest. Naneki’s attitude towards this intruder begins on a note of fear, and as the narrative progresses, it changes to intimacy (a kind of sexual attraction), and later to pity. At the end of the story she herself cruelly betrays his presence to the police and condemns him. This transformation of Naneki from an obedient housewife into a police spy, surprises and intrigues the reader. Gordimer herself is treading on soft grounds: Naneki being a black subject, outside the experience of the author, the narrative moves to a ‘free indirect style.’ Naneki’s use of colloquialism, cliché and euphemism draws attention to the uncertain distance between narrator and the character. And the ambient nature of the tone and diction adds to this effect. Naneki reflects on the noncommittal answer of the rebel to her inquiry about his children if any with a note of disapproval and pique. Her conscience reads his smile as a rebuff. She speaks to herself:

Perhaps it meant he does, pretends he doesn’t know -- thinks a lot of himself, smart young man
with a gold ring in his ear has plenty of girl-friends to get babies with him (SOT, 18).

The pig-din used by Naneki could be the reflection of the alienation she feels towards the rebel and her lack of understanding as to, the political energy that makes him and his kind, do what they do. The ‘inner dialogue’ of Naneki as a woman, and as a unit of a mass political awakening, is at conflict within her. Gordimer brings out the conflict between the individual and the society in the inner dialogues of Naneki. When Moreke initially brings in the political refugee, her attitude was outright resistance. ‘‘what for?,’’ was her reaction to Moreke’s pleading. Later when Moreke explained that her cousin Mtembu had brought the refugee, she argues:

Well I will tell him no. If Mtembu needs somewhere to stay, I have to take him. But not anyone he brings from the street (SOT, 13).

This resistance melts away as the days pass. She even buys him beer and makes conversation with him in the absence of Moreke. But finally she betrays him to the police. This incongruity in her behavior is not explained from within, but simply shown from the outside. The reader is kept in the dark as to the real reasons. Naneki, is presented without any authorial comment on her inner self and the reader is left to come to his own
conclusions. The splintered frame, of cultural ambivalence is transposed on to Naneki. The narrator’s implicit attitude wavers between sympathy and indifference. The reader is given an insight into the consciousness of Naneki and the authorial voice, without being led to assume that any one of them had dominance over the other. This technique implies a feeling that, the reader is not crudely being told about the plight of Naneki, but it is as if for a moment the reader is permitted into the collective consciousness and is allowed to experience it. Naneki the mother of the family is in conflict with Naneki the individual in a society scheming for a political revolution. Gordimer has portrayed the dilemma of individuals in the politically turbulent environment. She dramatizes the human side of the sacrifices and fears involved in a political resistance.

Gordimer has portrayed the ambiguity of cultural duality in the postcolonial context, from the white consciousness in the story “Comrades” (JAOS, 93). Here the incongruity between the thoughts and deeds of a sympathetic liberal is focused. Being kind enough to offer food for the hungry compatriots, the white narrator suddenly recoils into her own cultural framework and feels the alienation when she “did not want them to see that the maid waited on her’” (93). She herself carried
the heavy tray into the drawing room. What could have been the reason for this swift switch, in attitude? There is a condition of dual cultural platform from which the people of the society interacted with each other. This non-uniformity could be the major barrier in developing a national culture; a nation. In depicting the social reality of colonial society, Gordimer highlights these conflicts without resolving it... simply to awaken the social consciousness of these "semi-periphery" areas.

In the social reality of the colonized the most evident manifestation of oppression is in the economic sector. The widened gap between the colonizer and the colonized, and the legal system that maintained the disparity, could be zeroed in as the very basic problem of social injustice, in the post independent state. And Gordimer has dealt with this problem at large in her various short stories. Interchanging the color of the victim and the victimizer, the narrative ranges from mild emotions of pity and sadness to passionate explosions of political outbursts. The encounter between the 'poor' black man and the 'rich' white girl in the "Is There Nowhere else We Can Meet?," was at a physical level of "regression." The girl in the story later wonders why she did not give him the bag, even though she had felt pity towards his pathetic shirt and hungry face. At the actual moment when he grabbed her bag, her instincts were
to fight him. Here, the focus of the narrative is the ‘return of the repressed’ in the white girl which made her subdued by fear. Her racial unconscious takes precedence over her reason and judgment. The Whites were not willing to give up any of the power or the wealth they had exorted from the Blacks. The narrative exposes the racist (unconscious) in the white girl. The conqueror was not willing to part with the wealth which she has illegally collected from the colonized victim. That was the fundamental position of the colonial dialogues. According to Fanon, the fundamental characteristic of postcolonial literature is located in the "imperial colonial dialectic itself":

The act of writing texts of any kind in the post colonial areas, is subject to the political imaginative and social control, involved in the social relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (Empire writes Back, 29).

This resistance to part with the wealth that has been illegally amassed is perfectly illustrated by Gordimer in this story. The same theme gets repeated in several of Gordimer’s stories. But each would have a peculiar way of presentation which would bring out yet another perspective of the same colonizer/colonized dichotomy. A slightly different shade of ‘theft’ is
described in "Spoils." Here the dialogue leads to a discussion of the legitimacy of native criminality. And the argument goes that "can you say 'that is mine' to people whose land was taken from them by conquest, a gigantic hold-up at the point of imperial guns?" (JOAS, 168). The justification of natives in their acts of violence is a method of re-scribing the authority in the postcolonial context. Gordimer understands the black cause and their struggle for survival in a calcified and oppressed system, and tries in her narrative to show this 'truthful' image of the society to itself. This then becomes her political program of deconstructing colonialism.

Briefly, her postcolonial writings are all about the "crisis of authority of the European center" or "a crisis of cultural authority" (Empire Writes Back, 162). This transfer of authority both legal and social was the political purpose of Gordimer's text. Janmohammed has summarized Gordimer's dilemma and reactions to the colonial aspect of her society:

While writing and educating herself, Nadine Gordimer experienced a radical psychological rupture which she calls a 'second birth' -- she discovered the 'great South African lie.' The realization that the white society was trying to
conceal the simple fact that blacks were people, led her to understand her identity as a South African had to be formed through a resolution of the black/white dichotomy, that the two races had to be unified under a central definitive experience of black and white as people with undifferentiated claims to life, whatever else -- skin, language, culture -- might distinguish them from one another (Manichean Aesthetics, 85).

And her search for identity and 'placing' in the independent South Africa, can be traced in various political and ideological voices in her post-colonial narratives. Gordimer is exploring the possibilities of a peaceful and just co-existence of the black and white race, in a de-colonized South Africa.

When the social reality in the text, endeavors to deconstruct the myth of colonialism, then comes the problem of South African 'future'. In the text she advocates a 'cultural syncrenity' as referred to by Raymond Williams, in building a new state, finally free from the European experience. In this multicultural theory, the social framework shall be based on 'difference on equal terms.' And then "an acceptance of post-coloniality is no longer a badge, of shame, or of
immaturity, but a sign of distinction and difference" (Empire Writes Back, 163). A contemporary concept of post-coloniality is evident in Gordimer’s acceptance of the black world as an equal with a ‘difference’. Gordimer seems to abide by the definition of post-coloniality by Gauri Vishwanathan in her interview “Issues”[with Bahri]:

A study of the cultural interaction between the colonizing powers and the societies they colonized and the traces that this interaction has left on the literature, arts, and human sciences of both societies... being more or less an attitude or position from which the de-centering of Eurocentrism may ensue (Ariel, 26, 1, 52).

This study of post-colonialism begins on the term ‘difference.’ In colonial literature, the black man was the ‘other-side’ of the European civilized psyche; the dark side of man. The element of fear promulgates from the “frightening alternative of discovering in the ‘primitive’ the true and permanent face of the other, that ‘rough beast’ whose turn comes around at last, threatening to overwhelm the high European civilization” (Empire Writes Back, 158). This alienation felt by the white man made him suppress the native with the aid of
advanced scientific gadgets and organized legal systems. In the name of 'difference' the colonizer "destroys without any significant qualms the effectiveness of indigenous economic, social, political, legal, and moral systems and imposes his own versions of these structures on the other" (Post-colonial Studies Reader, 20).

The conqueror justified the injustice, on the basis of the false myth of 'civilizing the native.' And "while the surface of each colonialisat text purports to represent specific encounters with specific varieties of the racial other, the subtext valorizes the superiority of the European cultures''(19). This conditional factor which Janmohammed, determines as the very basis of racial oppression, is the area that gets re-scribed in the text of Gordimer. Thereby, while the colonial edifice rests on the belief that all the evil characteristics of the native resides in his blood, post-colonial writings attribute it to a mere 'difference;' thus illegitimatizing the white man's claim to rule the Native's land. The system of evaluating the culture of any land against the Eurocentric moral code was condemned by the post-colonial writers.

In the story "A Lion In the Freeway," Gordimer shows the white man's fear of the native as different from the typical colonialisat attitude. Instead of
ensuring the readers sympathy, the narrative enjoys terrorizing. The regal metaphor of the lion and the suggestive calm of the dark night becomes an allegory of the political arena in South Africa. The narrative is achronistic and lacks the normal flow of cause and events. It is just a collection of metaphors, closely packed together so that the adjectives and images often overlap. There can be three chains of parallel narratives: that of the sexual liberation, that of the lion that groans in the Zoo which escapes into the freeway, and that of the centipede advancing. The tempo of the narrative is built up into a crescent and the anticipation -- the jubilant anticipation -- of political liberation juxtaposed as the escape of the caged lion, gives the narrative the rhythm of a chant. The story has three independent images and train of thoughts, which are superimposed without actually resolving. The first among the parallel narratives is that of the sexual liberation. "Open up! Open up! Open your legs" (SE, 24). Spoken without a definite person to claim the monologue, this forms an interlude to the more important and relevant theme of political liberation that develops in the other two analogous. The allusion to 'leviathan (that) hooted from the night fog at sea' and the 'Baltic' gives the narrative a mythical archive of "winter" imagery in Frye's sense. Morbid and suggestive of an impending doom,
the images are tumbling one after another, developing a breathless anxiety that had the inevitability of an African Oracle. The second image is of a majestic lion, caged and tamed which subtly develops into a terror when it escapes. The abundant potential asleep in the suppressed native, that would soon awaken to claim their land, is crystallized into the story of the lion. The false notions that built up the 'colonial myth' of 'docile' native is deconstructed when Gordimer declares "'roar is not the word'"(25). The narrative brings out the incongruity of the word 'roar' in describing the majestic voice of the king of the jungle. "'Whoever decided that had never listened to the real thing'"(25). If only the whites had bothered to listen, they would have known the reality of the society. The foreign aspect of the settler made him unfit and ignorant of the land he conquered unlawfully, by the sheer power of his scientific advancement. The word roar was "onomatopoeically incorrect just as the heraldic beasts drawn by the thirteenth -- and fourteenth -- century at second hand from the observations of early explorers are anatomically wrong"(20).

The superficial complacency or 'docility' in the caged lion that "'yawns'" and "'waits for the ready-slaughtered kill to be tossed at them'" rings like a premonition of the political uprising that would
eventually awake the colonized to freedom. The lion "was born in the cage," as the present generation of blacks were born as 'colonized.' And although "they know nothing but the Zoo," the future warns of a time when they escape into the freeway. The terror of the narrative arises from the continual shift from the images of 'jungle' to that of 'modernity.' The concrete freeway represented the technically advanced west and the raw power of the Lion symbolizes the free native. The picture of an escaped lion in the freeway, illustrates the basic default of mixed-up power-relations within contradictory cultural corpus. Whites cannot or rather should not reject the native laws as primitive or wrong, just because they were alien to their value-system. The story "A Lion On The Freeway", deals with, the complete ignorance of the White race about the reality of the native, and the false myths they came to believe about the land they conquered, and the impending disaster caused by this incongruity in the white-man's ideology.

The false consciousness of the white man, and the difference in the native are presented in such a way as to reinstate honor into the (majestic) black race. The images that refer to the blacks are chosen from the regal order. The absoluteness of the violent fate that awaits the white race is effectively brought out in the imagery of the "advancing centipede" -- "a thick prancing black
centipede with thousands of waving legs advancing''(27). Terror rises from the slow but sure nature of the advancing black force. The narrative swiftly shifts its address from the white listener to the black revolutionary. In a single sentence the 'voice' of the Black, which is a challenge 'wait for it,' and the 'voice' of the Whites' fear 'waiting for it' is clubbed together. Later, the terrible observation of the white man who watches the ''prance'' of the centipede, is continued by the black man's slogan ''advance, over carefully -tended please keep off the grass''(27). But in refusing to disclose the narrator, the voices are ambiguously super-imposed. The tone suddenly becomes violent and aggressive, almost like a war-cry. The text encourages the bloody transition of power from the hands of sleepy white couple -- Jack and his woman, to the escaped Lion. The terms like 'delivered,' 'splendid head' and 'claim' bestow royalty on the black cause.

Gordimer here, re-functions the colonial myth of ''fear of the native,''' and renders it an illegitimate fear; not deserving of our sympathy. In the narrative, the 'fear of the native' becomes as reasonable as 'fear of God' or 'fear of the law.' Thus the white claim to rule the native is reduced to an illegitimate intrusion, which indeed it was. Towards the end, when ''he's delivered himself of it,'' and the lion moves into the
freeway, "bewildered, finding his way, turning his splendid head at last to claim, what he's never seen, the land where he's king", the voice is applauding the victory with a kind of patriotic passion. The theme of political deliverance transcends the 'present' and becomes a trans-historical prediction; a hope of the nation. Gordimer is creating the historical reality, on the ideology of a free and liberated South Africa, rid of the white sins of her forefathers.

This rebuilding of nation, is part of the resistance literature, which again is a trait of post-colonial writings. Stephen Slemon in his study "Resistance Theory for the Second World," clarifies resistance as "an act or set of acts, that is designed to rid a people of its oppressors and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression that it becomes an almost autonomous aesthetic principle (Post-colonial Studies Reader, 107).

Whenever, literature of any politically oppressed nation, takes on the element of resistance, it does so most effectively by presenting the social reality, interpelling 'political subjects' into the narrative. And the contradictory aspect of 'settler-subjectivity,' surfaces as the ambivalent nature of the tone and tenor of the voices in the narrative. Resistance writings being
"the contradictory representation of colonial authority" (108) the text often heralds several voices. Gordimer's text often contains this "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness," which evidences her marginality and its' resulting oscillation. As Clingman points out "...there is still a crucial sense in which she is divided from the black world, even at those moments of her closest approach" (Novels Of Nadine Gordimer, 208). Thus he understood her structural 'silences', 'gaps' and 'contradictions' as her "boundaries of vision", due to social fragmentation (210).

Gordimer's 'split historic position,' arises from the basic conflict within herself -- a colonizer advocating against colonialism. "Gordimer may be thought of as a non-organic intellectual -- linked mentally to the oppressed classes, but not physically or materially" (Clingman, 217). Her realism, hence, had the interplay of several voices and can be studied as a truly 'dialogic' narrative. In her fiction she effects the dialogue of the oppressor and oppressed and thus becomes the 'other place' where both the worlds meet.

What are the features Gordimer envisages in the 'other place' -- where the future rests. Here the question of national culture and national literature
arises. The African writer's task, like the politician's, Soyinka argues "is to work towards a future, in which the influence of colonial injustice, aesthetic and cultural constructions is modified (Post-colonial Literature, 7).

Gordimer is firmly part of a developing non-racial culture in South Africa and her life as a writer indicates the centrality of this aspect. Within such a 'new' South Africa she scribbles out the 'place' of the white race. Being a major feature of post-colonial writing, this "concern with place and displacement" (Empire Writes Back, 9), enters her narrative. In those texts that dealt with Gordimer's visions of future, "this crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (9). Here, 'place' becomes a vibrant and 'live' entity of postcolonial reality.

The significance of 'place' which is a post-colonial trait can be traced in Gordimer's story "Inkalamau's Place" (WHYW, 156). With a kind of determined effort, Gordimer builds the 'place' -- "Inkalamau's Place" -- in her fiction, as a symbol of colonialism and then enjoys the pleasure of watching it crumple. The text is deconstructing the white colonial myth in the very literary sense as well. The narrative voice is from a
white consciousness, and it is a settler-culture that it abhors throughout the text. Apart from the main narrator there are two other 'live' voices, that of the black man on the bicycle, and that of Nonny. The remaining subjects are perceived through the consciousness of the white narrator. The center of the narrative, Inkalamau, is long dead and gone before the time of the narration. The post-colonial story re-scribes Inkalamau from the myth of a superior conqueror, owner of wealth and knowledge, to that of a mere plunderer. This difference between myth and reality, in the life and home of Inkalamau, is the focus of the text.

It was said that Inkalamau Williamson had made this mile -- and -- a half long avenue to his house after the carriage way in his family estate in England; but it is more likely that, in the elevation of their social status that used to go on in people's minds when they come out to the colonies, his memory of that road to the great house was the village boy's game of imagining himself the owner as he trudged up on an errand (SE, 157).

Inkalamau was 'far from being an aristocrat.' He was nothing but a thief and an unlawful oppressor. In the post independent days, when the white narrator perceives
the end of colonial era in 'the house' that was 'sagging under its own weight,' she 'felt no nostalgia, only recognition' (158). The house that Inkalamau built as a petty replica of an English country house, did not fall on his head the way everyone predicted. But the narrator fears it might fall on her head. The fear that the colonial legacy would rebound on the sympathetic whites of the post-independent era is lurking in the words.

Depicted as a poor specimen of the White civilization, Inkalamau is the assimilation of all vices that corrupted the colonizer. His exploits of native women and his reluctance to accept his own wife and children as his family, shows his racist attitude. His unexplained love for books and medicines from abroad, could not save him from a prolonged and painful death. He never enjoys the sympathy of the narrator that no guilt or remorse is attached to the plight of his dilapidated 'place.' On the contrary, the narrator experiences a sadistic pleasure in seeing the destruction caused by nature and time on the epitome of colonial glory. She exclaims "how good that it was all being taken apart by insects, washed away by the rain, disappearing into the earth, carried away and digested, fragmented to compost" (SE, 160). The relief from guilt resonates in the return of the stolen goods back to the land itself. The white guilt that was a prominent feature of the post-colonial
white-writing, forms part of the theme of Inkalamaus place.

Excessive use of animal imagery is a notable feature of this story. Relevant and poignant these metaphors bring out the irony and dual graph of symbolism and reality, in the apparently action-less story. The similies are all on the African animal sector. While contemplating the final destruction of the colonial edifice, the narrative refers to the ‘swifts’ and the ‘bats’ that would join with the rains to bring down the mud castle. If ‘swift’ could be read as the motif for writers, and ‘bat’ that of a terrifying radical, ‘rain’ could be the advent of time, all of which played complimentary roles in bringing down the colonial edifice. Though the writers and the radicals did join with general change in the global attitudes, to crush the colonialism, “it is the ants who bring the grave to the house, in the end” (162). These insignificant black creatures that were in abundance in the jungles of the ‘dark continent,’ remind one of the black native whose collective consciousness finally drew the curtain on the white man’s performance. The story can be read as an allegory on the “fall of the Empire,” and the inherent satisfaction in the arrival of a new era for the blacks and the whites of South Africa. While discussing the local schools with Nonny, the narrator becomes aware of “a stab of satisfaction,” at
the past that they could "share" as they had never been able to before. Here, Gordimer romanticizes over the future where the black/white dichotomy is finally resolved. Romance enters the text as a wistful imagination, against all the stark realities of 'poverty' and 'disease.' The realist in the narrative is aware of the great odds against which the goals are set. Nonny is not a jubilant winner, but a skeptical watcher of the political happenings which are often pushed back due to reasons of abject poverty. The realist, in Gordimer refuses to idealize the white consciousness as an all-embracing lover of the black race. When Nonny explains to the narrator about the eye-infection of the baby, she reprimands herself not to touch her face until she can wash her hands. As if, within the subjectivity of a sympathetic white, she was fully aware of the poverty-stricken and disease-ridden social conditions of the blacks. This 'life-like' mixture of truth, dreams and reality, is one of the salient features of Gordimer's text. In the words of Althrusser "the peculiarity of art is to 'make us see', 'make us perceive','make us feel' something which alludes to reality" (Lenin and Philosophy and other essays, 204). He aptly says:

what art makes us see and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and 'feeling' ... is the ideology from which it is
born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes (204).

Gordimer tries to de-colonize the culture and set it free of the 'shame' and the 'stigma' of the servility undergone by the black race. Two major trends can be traced into the intellectual awakening towards an independent South Africa. The fundamentalist attitude of 'cleansing' the black world of the corrupting alien culture was suggested by many black writers. On the other hand, there were others who advocated 'cultural syncrenity.' A study on the cultural history of nations exposes the crudity or regression in the policy of racial purity. Diana Brydon, in her essay "The White Intuit Speaks," has analyzed the cult of authenticity. A blind arbitration of racial purity among the whites, according to her, will, "prove self-defeating because they depend on a view of cultural authenticity that condemn them to a continued marginality and an eventual death" (Post-colonial Studies Reader, 141). Gordimer on the other hand visualizes a 'new globalism,' that "simultaneously asserts local independence and global interdependencies" (141). Without attempting to ignore the white influence on the society and culture of South Africa, she takes a practical and commonsensical stance for 'cultural syncrenity.' Gordimer it seems, seeks a way "to cooperate without co-option a way to define
differences that do not depend on myths of cultural purity or authenticity but that thrive on an interaction that 'contaminates' without homogenizing. . .''(141).

The cultural syncrenity that Gordimer depicts in the text, emerges from the multitude of 'voices.' The poliphony of the unnamed voices, often reflect on the oppressive conditions of the voiceless subaltern. This tendency to lend voice, for the colonized, is a major post-colonial feature in the text of Gordimer. In the story of the young activists that the narrator takes home, after a political meeting they both attended, the interplay of voices can be studied. "Comrades," is about the gulf that always exists between the Blacks and the Whites who work for the political independence of the nation (JAOS, 91). The common goal that they work for differed in the matter of sourcing, and method. This is highlighted in the contrast between the youngsters and the White narrator. They were 'hungry' "not for iced whisky and feet up" (93). And the voice says "they need carbohydrate, they are hungry, they are young, they need it they burn it up"(94). This repetition emphasizes the basic nature of the black cause, as opposed to that of the white lady in the grand mansion equipped with English education and all the luxuries imaginable, who fights for human liberation. The narrative shifts rather swiftly from the dominant discourse to that of the subaltern. It
is difficult to be assured that the voice that is emerging is really the subaltern and not the simple European 'other'. The ambiguity in the authenticity of the white lady's commitment towards the black cause, and the degree of variation is projected in the story. Is she really on the side of the blacks? Or could she be pretending, even to herself that she is fighting for the downtrodden? Since she could never assimilate the black revolutionaries and their basic hunger, could she still be able to understand their much more complicated need to be free of the white culture?

The credibility of the narrator's understanding of the political struggle is rather doubtful in the story. The 'voice' is sometimes that of a polite English woman. Yet at other times, it acquires a deeper insight into the "other." The author does not clarify the true nature of the narrator and characteristically leaves the conclusions to the reader's sensibility. But, the text carefully captures the ambiguity in the white consciousness. When the lady asks "--are you at school --," the answer comes not from the children but the narrator herself:

Of course he is not at school -- they are not at school, youngsters their age have not been at school for several years, they are the children
growing into young men and women, for whom school is a battleground, a place of boycotts and demonstrations, the literacy of political rhetoric, the education of revolt against having to live the life their parents live (93).

Language is violated to bring out the effect of violations imposed upon the natives. Postcolonial writings have this tendency to avail of long-winding sentences that form a subtext of violence in themselves. Katrak points out in the essay "A Theory for Postcolonial Women's Text," the utilization of the very construction of the language in the text towards pronouncing a political statement. Katrak asserts that "a version of the cultural and economic violence perpetrated by the colonizer is now appropriated by writers in order to 'violate' the English language in its standard use" (Post-colonial Studies Reader, 250).

When the lady further inquires in the typical pattern of an European cultural conduct, "So what have you been able to do with yourself, all that time?" the shocking reply comes from the "little, boy neck -- I was inside --. Detained from this June for six months". The subtext of violence and power struggle that disrupts an unequal social condition, emerges as the voices overlap unceasingly. In Gordimer's text nothing really happens;
but much is suggested. The meditative quality in her writings can be attributed to the marginal nature of her existence. In the story of "Comrades," the cruelty and child violence of Sharpville is relived without the stench of blood. Suddenly as the narrator "cannot believe what she knows: that they, suddenly here, in her house will carry AK47s they will only sing about now, miming death as they sing" (96), the entire panorama of a nation sacrificing its children on the alter of freedom comes alive. Gordimer further analyses the black/white disparity in the story. When the narrator in her confusion, 'break the silence: says something, anything,' and blurts "how do you like my lion? Isn’t he beautiful? He’s made by a Zimbabwean artist, I think his name is Dube--," she unwittingly embarks upon the revelation. To the black children the affluence of an Eurocentric culture and values of its antiquity had no meaning. "Only the food that fed their hunger was real." This effectively brings out the wide gap that opens between the white and the black segments of the South African society. An authentic consciousness of this social reality is achieved in the narrative.

African cultural development can be studied as, an emergence of nationalism. The native intellectual in rebuilding the nation embarks upon the program of evolving a national literature; national culture/history.
Nationalism, Plamenatz, defines, "is primarily a cultural phenomenon though it can and often does take a political form" (Nationalism the Nature and Evolution Of an Idea, 24). It is, in the text of Gordimer, a reaction of the cultural disadvantage, experienced by the colonized.

The concept of culture in the present context takes a dialectical significance. Raymond Williams in his study on the meaning and origin of culture, points to the influence of terms like 'industry,' 'democracy,' and 'class' on our present definition of culture. In the study of national culture that Gordimer visualizes in the social future of South Africa, a clear understanding of the term culture would be relevant. The very spirit of the nation can be the latent factor of national culture. In a state legally segregated and suppressed, the spirit of the nation as different from the dominant culture was to be identified. This she does as the preliminary policy of deconstructing the colonial culture. Gordimer abhors the calcified nature of the slave society, which was 'not equal'. Williams affirms the necessity of equality in the organic and natural development of the culture of a nation because "the inequalities of many kinds which still divide our community make effective communication difficult or impossible" (Culture and Society, 316). This prevents a common culture from
developing. What could be signification of a common culture? According to Williams, "we shall not survive without it." Gordimer's perception on the future of South Africa, echoes this 'common culture.' It does not require equality of material aspects as the communist dogma envisages, rather, it prevails on a claim to 'equality of opportunity.' To identify the cultural nexus of a transitional society can be problematic. Often it gets associated with one or the other of the major forces that brings in the transition. In South Africa the cultural backdrop of the varied clans or tribes, and the European advent that resulted in the present culture of the society have to be recognized and accepted. Unlike those who blindly decry the white experience which lasted for more than three centuries, Gordimer is realistic enough to incorporate the synthetic or at times syncrenitic nature of social interactions. And that has made her promote conditions for a common culture where, everyone is offered an equal opportunity. While de-constructing the colonial myth of European supremacy and illuminating the inhuman aspects of it, Gordimer reconstructs the society without the 'guilt or the privileges of the white sins' (EG, 32). Gordimer is in fact rationalizing the cultural situation without 'self pity for the whites or sentiment about the blacks' (33). In her essay "Where Do Whites Fit In?," the passive role
of the white man in the future society is explained. Gordimer calls on the Whites "to forget the old impulses to leadership, and temptation to give advice backed by experiences and the culture of Western civilization" (35). Here she is actually replacing the value-system of the colonial legacy with a regional or local one. The new society has overthrown the authority of a European centre. In her address to the white community she further explains the tendency to 'be boss (or baas, rather)' is to be curbed even when the blacks actually needed it from sympathetic, well-meaning Whites in the process of building the nation. Because according to her, "what counts is the need of Africa, to acquire confidence through the experience of picking itself up, dusting itself down, and starting all over again" in the path of cultural growth. Thus, Whites are to trust the black 'masses' and "to move towards a more active conception of human beings and relationships, is in fact to realize a new freedom" (Culture And Society, 335). The human liberalist that she has always been, Gordimer wants this freedom for all, in her society. In the words of Raymond Williams,' such a free society, would experience a cognate shift "when we think again about human growth, its human tending in spirit other than that of the long dominative mode" (335).
Gordimer thus deconstructs the colonial myth from the inside and arbitrates a new hybridized nationalism the "may be neither the most representative nor the most fair but it’s very rootlessness brilliantly articulates the emotional life of decolonization’s various political contestants" (Postcolonial Studies Reader, 175).
Works cited


