Chapter-II

Love as Transgression

Nadine Gordimer in her third novel, *Occasion for Loving*, published in 1963, comes out with a racialist politics progressing even more into command through several expressions. The novel explores disenchantment with reformist strategies of resisting apartheid and for attaining black liberation. According to Stephen Clingman, this novel:

[B]rings to completion an important dialectical movement in Nadine Gordimer’s first three novels, albeit one that ends with a negative conclusion. *The Lying Days* initiated this movement in embodying the beliefs and assumptions of a personal humanism. In *A World of Strangers* this humanism was socialized. In *Occasion for Loving*, however, this movement as a whole ends with the realization of social failure, and of the failure of humanism in general, whether in its personal or social forms. (72)

The novel investigates the failure of social humanistic quality, the ideology which remains dominant of opposition to apartheid in the 1950s, the novel also looks into the historical realities of the early 1960s. It brings out the elegiac mood of the characters that are struggling in their personal lives. Yet, *Occasion for Loving* stands on the verge of new realizations. Barbara Temple-Thurston remarks, “This third novel also acknowledges unequivocally the failure of liberalism as an ideology to resist the force of apartheid’s racial politics” (30).

With the rise of subjugation and brutality of the apartheid government, Gordimer has become more acquainted with the political occurrence in South Africa and the entire African continent. *Occasion for Loving* is undoubtedly far more politically occupied than the previous novel. The novel meditates its historical limitations in the light of political analysis. It also exhibit that how life in South Africa has become not only barbarous but also artificial and confound as the black population that had been distanced from their
homes. Various dramatic events in the history of modern South Africa took place during the writing of the novel; the most important of all is the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, which made the whole world familiar with the uselessness of peaceful opposition to the cruel apartheid regime. The Sharpeville demonstration was against pass laws, which efficaciously confined black Africans to work in the Sharpeville area. The protest became worse when the police opened fire on an unarmed crowd gathered outside the police station in which various people lost their lives and many were injured. Gordimer strongly criticized this act in a Johannesburg magazine called Drum. The writers associated with this magazine were driven into exile.

The novel places its focus on a cross-racial love affair between the black African painter, Gideon Shibalo and the young white woman, Ann Davis, who comes to South Africa with her husband, Boaz Davis, who is involved in a field research on the musical heritage of the black Africans. They come as guests in Jessie and Tom Stilwell’s house, the other two important characters in the novel. The protagonists in the novel are given various occasions for loving but their failure to take hold of these opportunities to love forms the significant point of the novel. The love between these characters breaks all barriers of age, class, and race, but the prejudices and disturbances appear to disrupt these occasions. Jessie Stilwell, who is the central character of the novel has peculiar fear which prevents her from loving her son, Morgan, from her first marriage without reservations while her suspicions and detest makes her hate her stepfather Bruno Fuecht who in reality is her own father.

In Occasion for Loving Gordimer ultimately disregards the liberal dogma of her earlier fictional work. The novel’s political interest rests in the sufferings of the liberal conscience. Gordimer analyses the liberal quandary of apartheid, which is voiced by Jessie who asks in despair, “what’s the good of us to him? What’s the good of our friendship or her love?” (272). She brings up their friendship with Gideon Shibalo and of Ann’s involvement with him and finally her desertion of him. This visit of Ann and Boaz and then their sudden departure from South Africa provides Jessie an insight into the unusual attitudes of her white community towards the blacks in South Africa. Apartheid penetrates to the most intimate of human relationships:
Even between lovers they had seen blackness count, the personal return inevitably to the social, the private to the political. There was no recess of being, no emotion so private ... So long as the law remained unchanged, nothing could bring integrity to personal relationship. (279)

In the first part of the novel Jessie suddenly becomes aware of her childhood awareness of the black life, “You know, the mine boys were not human to me. - Like a cage full of coloured parrots, screeching at the zoo. I watched them dancing and I walked home and forgot about them” (35). She compares the black people around her with animals. The childhood memories of the wild native world make Jessie distinguish a lasting race barrier between the white and the black people in the country of South Africa. Even as an adult, she again sees herself witnessing the “terrible fetish-faces of medicine men’s masks” and the “ugly faces of all clowns everywhere” in the African dance programme (36). Their voice fell on her ears “like the trumpeting of an elephant or the panting that follows the lion’s roar” (37). The performance of the black performers filled her mind with an “unspeakable sadness” and the black dancers “mummed an ugly splendid savagery, a broken ethos, well lost” which packed Jessie’s eyes “with heavy, cold tears” (37). However, “they were not tears of sentiment. They came from horror and hollowness” (37).

Jessie did not accept the South African apartheid, and mixed with the people of the other race as much possible as though the impediment of race did not exist. Her home is open to people of all colours. She and her husband travel freely to the townships and work with the political groups that are enthusiastically fighting against the system of apartheid. Tom Stilwell comes out as a positive political force, being an illuminate academic, he is involved in writing a history of Africa from the black point of view, or as he calls it, “the historical point of view” (15) where he “would present the Africans as peoples invaded by the white West, rather than as another kind of fauna dealt with by the white man in his exploration of the world” (14). It will introduce the people of Africa as a historical subject in their own right, rather than a part of a Eurocentric history. Tom is making an attempt to record black experience in the history of Africa. But the truth lies in the fact that it is a white person who is complicit in their suppression and is now writing
the history, thus making the thought of objectivity doubtful. In the same way, Jessie’s effort to recreate her past with the present requires a stretching out across racial and cultural limits along with a complete acquiescence not only of her personal history but also her complicity in the white political ascendancy.

Gordimer brings out a fragile connection through the Christmas theme. Jessie recalls of a Christmas she had spent with her mother and her stepfather Bruno Fuecht at some resort hotel. She brings to mind the sight of a woman in the hotel lounge sewing some cloth without any thread, her needle flashing in and out of the stuff, “connecting nothing with nothing” (44). The sewing image stands as a symbol for interracial relations, which look like non-existence threads, and thus are weak. The novelist again uses the Christmas theme subsequently to highlight the involvement of white political authority and control. Jessie and Tom while discussing their childhood Christmas with Boaz, their guest, ask him to share his own experience without realizing that he is a Jew. Dominic Head says: “The assumption of a uniform cultural experience is all the more sinister … it suggests an element of complicity in the broader political situation, which, as the novel shows, is in one sense the imposition of one culture on another” (64).

Tom is also involved in a campaign against the Bill, which proposes to close the Universities to all non-whites, and is about to be debated in Parliament. He at a meeting protests the closing of the Universities to those students who are not white. He soon realizes that it is difficult to generate public opinion in support of this concept:

Only let there be some noise and broken heads so that people begin to see that academic freedom is something to fight over in the street! People feel it’s a phrase that doesn’t concern most of them, like ‘higher income tax bracket’. Let’em understand it’s on a level with their right to their weekly pay-packet, the defence of their wife’s good name and blood-heating things like that. (64)

Even a student at a meeting points out that the University has always been biased towards the white students; the Africans and Indian students are not allowed to take part in sports and social events. An African acquaintance comments to him, “Fight them over this business if you want to, man, but don’t think that anything you do really matters.
Some of you make laws, and some of you try to change them. And you don’t ask us” (64-65). According to Lukacs, “[I]t must be agreed that the fighting power of a class grows with its ability to carry out its own mission with a good conscience and to adapt all phenomena to its own interests with unbroken confidence in itself” (66).

Another part of the novel brings to light Ann’s budding relationship with Gideon. She meets Gideon through Jessie’s friend Len Mafolo and starts socializing with his black friends. Ann comes across the blacks as a “white, top-class beauty, young; young and beautiful enough for the richest and most privileged white man” (92). Ann’s husband, Boaz is busy trying to collect the ancient tribal music of Africa, a part of their cultural heritage before it disappears completely. On the other hand Ann and Gideon meets regularly at the multiracial Lucky Star restaurant, picnic carelessly by the roadside and even try to get Gideon into a whites-only nightclub. Gideon Shibalo has been awarded a fellowship to study painting in Rome but the government of his country has denied him a passport because of his colour which becomes a hindrance on his way to scholarship shows that for an African equitable opportunity to grow in life is a distant dream. This shows that the whites are not ready to talk to the Africans. It is they who decide the fate of the blacks. This is where Gideon’s anger bursts out and he shouts, “We want guns, like everyone else. We’re prepared to fight with guns” (130). Later in the story, Ann comes across an experience in her sexual contact with Gideon where she gets in a dilemma that, “the dark positiveness of his skin, the mattness of it, the variations like markings shading one part of his body in difference from another - some nerve in her had become alive to it. She dwelt on it in secret as soon as she touched him” (181).

It is Ann’s whiteness, her difference from other women that captures Gideon’s imagination entirely. He had a failed relationship with black Ida and his wife in the past. It is his racial stereotyping that contrasts Ann’s ankles and beautiful build to those of black women indicates the way racial separation has seeped into his mind and spoiled his imagination. Though Gideon is condemned of treating women as objects, but he is also guilty of mixing up of class with colour and physical type. His troubling history with women makes his attraction to Ann questionable. Like Ann, Gideon is also confused about losing himself in the “confusion of her face” (181).
Such strong experience of colour consciousness creates a state of uncertainty in the lives of all the characters in the novel. Ann and Gideon are involved in an act of political transgression where interracial sexual contact is prohibited by a series of “Immorality Acts.” Through this affair politics will enter the door of Jessie’s private world, for it is in her house that the Davises are staying, and the Stilwells, Davises, and Gideon often gather for dinner and political talk. Given that personal histories and political viewpoint are expressive of public history and politics, the challenging details of certain moments like this are critical for any political assumptions the novel can reveal. This is predominantly relevant in taking into consideration the cross racial relationship between Gideon and Ann which forms the focal point of the novel. Gordimer, in Occasion for Loving concentrates on a theme that has dominated the political and cultural life of South Africa. Ann and Gideon go against the political laws of the country. As remarked by Dominic Head, “It is clear that Gordimer treats sexual relations between white and black without any residual notion of sin, or broken moral codes” (66).

However, there is a certain amount of anxiety with the affair, the opinions of all the major characters, which reveal significant opposition and bewilderment. Boaz refuses to react to the affair of Ann and Gideon because Gideon is black, illustrating how public and private lives are entangled in South Africa. Similarly, Jessie is deeply affected by the reaction of the white crowd’s to the African dance show. Ann is interested to know ‘savage rites, secret ceremonies’ (39), while Boaz is worried that the ancient musical instruments, which have been used in the show, are not conserved by the black performers and “In time, no one’ll remember how to make certain instruments any more” (38). Jessie is shocked to see Ann and Boaz distancing themselves from the black performers, “Ann was taking photographs of the warriors with feather-duster tails. They lined up for the photographers like children in class. “Come On!” She wheedled. “Let’s have some life.” But they only stood more stiffly to attention” (38). The whites have always lacked understanding and maintained a proper distance from the blacks. Tom makes a comment that, “They did not yet know each other well enough to talk all at once” (15). Jessie observes Ann’s excitement and a feeling of enjoyment of being “among these good-natured strangers” (31). She socializes with the blacks with a sense of adventure towards their native life, as she was not really concerned with politics:
The surge of feeling against the barriers of colour was the ethos of the decade in which she had grown up; her participation in it was a substitute for patriotism rather than a revolt. She had no lasting feelings about the abstractions of injustice; like many healthy and more or less beautiful women, she could only be fired to pity or indignation by what she saw with her own eyes. (89)

Like her white community Ann shows no commitment in her socialization with the people of black race nor does she show any faithful attitude in her love affair with Gideon Shibalo. This makes Jessie very disparaging of Ann’s indifference towards African life. Clingman observes:

Here external reality becomes entirely dominant in its control of private life. Indeed, in places the novel gives an extraordinary and bitterly ironical insight into the way in which the power of apartheid affects even the most basic of human passions. (83)

Gordimer discerns white moods in Occasion for Loving, an essential point she makes in her novel is that blacks are in no need of philosophy, “You don’t need philosophy; you’ve got necessity” (121), whereas whites, short of all necessity, shift their focus to philosophy. They are cut off from reality and are enclosed within the walls of their own world. It is difficult for them to accept blacks in their lives as Jessie puts it that Boaz is “so afraid of taking advantage of Gideon’s skin that he ends up taking advantage of it anyway by refusing to treat him like any other man” (272). His “filthy damn whiteness” (272) will not allow him to behave decently with a person from different colour whereas Ann sees Gideon from a different spectacle. It is Ann’s high-spiritedness that leads her to overstep the periphery of social law in the era of apartheid. She is fascinated by her physical relationship with Gideon regardless of the fact that “making love to Shibalo was breaking the law” (153). But her adventurous love affair with Gideon deteriorates after she plans to leave the country with him. Despite her intimate relationship with Gideon, Ann could not cope with the repercussions of loving a black man. She feels strange and distant during her journey to his native land. Ann tells Jessie,
“when the man in the garage looked at Gid, and I stood next to him seeing Gid at the same time, it wasn’t the same person we saw” (270).

The white owner of the garage treated Gideon as the “madam’s boy” (225). The racial prejudices of South African life played a major role in failing them in their attempt to live together as lovers. During their journey to Basutoland and in their short stay in an African village, they run into the barrier that contains them from meeting as equals. “Power in the towns automatically becomes power in the countryside” (Selections from the Prison Notebooks 213). A teacher who provides them with lodging is embarrassed for not being able to provide the kind of food, which Ann is used to eating as a white person. Ann finds him conscious of the law that prevents the whites and the blacks from any kind of social and public convention in South Africa. It is the fear of harassment, which finally forces the teacher to ask Gideon and Ann to leave the village and find shelter in some other place. The check on multiracial and multicultural couples in public places and elsewhere shows that love and friendship is seen with shame.

There is a hidden fear of being discovered which is linked to the politics, which controls the nerve of the entire country. Ann and Gideon are unable to find shelter and are forced to sleep by the road, as there is no space available for a cross-racial couple in South Africa. The farmer also took up with Ann “that indiscriminate comradeship that white people feel when they meet in the open spaces of a country where they are outnumbered” (234). Ann is scared at being caught in a country where blacks are in majority and whites in minority, which suggests that there is no place to hide, the entire country is under the blanket of racial legislation. The whites are under the monopoly of power and ownership and in order to maintain their position of dominance they have spread fear amongst the blacks so that they never indulge in revolutionary activities in order to achieve freedom from the racial oppression. This strange experience of poverty and terror in the country leads Ann to take refuge with Gideon in Jessie’s holiday resort at Natal and even there, Ann and Gideon are not allowed to be seen together in public as lovers as it will disturb the “peace of mind” (205) of the black servant, Jason, to witness a love affair between a white woman and a black man. Also, Jessie is conscious of the objection raised by the white residents of the holiday resort who hate the black’s presence
on the beach. After returning from Jessie’s resort, Ann in panic decides to leave South Africa with her husband, while Gideon is left alone to collect the debris of his life. Even “Jessie witnesses their relationship as it is reduced to a battle of social deception-exhausting, demeaning, and painful” (Head 33).

According to Gordimer, a failed love affair has far more threatening implications because a private love affair between a black and a white involves public difficulties. In the case of Ann and Gideon an external sanction played an important role in breaking their relationship, the repressions of apartheid weakened the very foundation of their love. As Stephen Clingman says, that it is the “prestructuring effects of apartheid that count” (82). Through the broodings and reminiscences of Jessie Stilwell, Gideon has become a victim of white oppression. Racial oppression penetrates to the most private of human relationships, ‘Even between lovers they had seen blackness count, the personal return inevitably to the social, the private to the political…. So long as the law remained unchanged, nothing could bring integrity to personal relationships” (279).

Here authenticity is thwarted by politics, and social relations confine the deepest recesses of human life. It is the South Africa’s political conditions where an Occasion for Loving simply cannot arise and cross-racial love amidst such tumultuous condition is considered as an offence. Besides going through a sense of estrangement, fear is another factor, which helps in shaping Jessie’s understanding of apartheid in South African society. Like Helen, in The Lying Days, she also gets disturbed after visiting the township where Gideon lives. Jessie examines:

When they were children they were cold and hungry, and when they were old they were cold and hungry again; and in between was a brief, violent clutch at things out of reach, or the sad brute’s life of obliviousness to them. That was the reality of the day, the time being. (270)

Jessie is scared at the idea of being associated with this kind of life and shares her experience with Ann of the big difference lying between the white and the black standard of living, which in any case cannot be avoided, “not even for love, that is supposed to cast it out” (270). Jessie’s belief is strengthened when she gets to know that Ann is not in
love with Gideon and has ended her association with him after realizing that her affair with Gideon has no future, finally deciding to go back to Europe with Boaz instead of carrying her journey to Johannesburg with Gideon. Jessie realizes that Ann abandons Gideon because “she did not leave him across the colour-bar” (268). Same racialist attitude exists in Boaz’s nature towards Gideon who did not treat him like any other man. Ann’s stay with Gideon in the native life worried Boaz about his wife getting picked up by the police who are hunting for such cross-racial couples and end up in jail with Gideon. Even in his first meeting with Gideon, Boaz calls him “‘Black bastard.’ All that filthy cock, man” (167).

Ann Boaz’s treatment of Gideon leaves him to a secluded life far away from the white world. Gideon’s experience of the unfortunate love affair with Ann fills him with hatred for every white woman. Jessie is bereaved of Gideon’s friendship, disclosing the failure of personal relations against the interference of laws and pressures of society leading to the formation of a wall that separates people like Jessie and Gideon in their relationship.

Jessie’s cross-racial friendly nature towards Gideon can be seen as a way of healing the rift, which is the effect of atrocious racial laws, but even this healing touch could not shun the evils of racial politics. Any kind of relationship between two persons of different colour has a political effect; even a sexual contact between Ann and Gideon could not escape the political axe. At a generalized level the breakdown of the love affair also leads to the collapse of prospects of interracial social commitment. The novel also demonstrates a greater realization of cultural history; there is also a cognizance of political undercurrent in both South Africa and Africa at large.

Gordimer in her work shows that there is no communication between the whites and the blacks, as there always exists a racial barrier that has made communication of any sort a difficult thing. In Occasion for Loving, Jessie realizes that apartheid has always played a policy of dividing the people. The politics of the country is playing with the emotions of the innocent black people. When Boaz shares his interest to work on the history of Africa, Jessie in a state of confusion questions him whether he wants to work
with the natives without hurting their sentiments or without being hurt by these natives. The reason behind Jessie’s question to Boaz is that she knows that the captivation of the white people with the peculiar world of Africa is short lived as the whites do not behave decently with the people of other race and there won’t be any fairness from their side. The escape of Boaz and Ann from South Africa is a proof in itself that there can never be any sort of commitment from the white community. W. E. B. Du Bois remarks that:

The worlds within and without the veil of color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism. (222)

Jessie gets embarrassed by looking at such a conceited behaviour of her white society towards the country and its poor people. Also, Jessie like Helen in *The Lying Days* sees a similar reaction in her stepfather’s approach towards the native blacks.

As Bruno Fuecht had grown older and more difficult he seemed to have become more and more markedly a stranger in South Africa…. Yes, Fuecht was unmistakably foreign, and the emotions of the situation he created about himself were foreign. (76-77)

Even in Ann’s case, Jessie knows that Ann can any time loose her interest in Gideon and can take flight from the country because “she’s white, she could go, and of course she went” (279). In the words of Barbara Temple-Thurston, “Ann is brought face to face with the enormous responsibility of an interracial relationship” (33).

Most of the relationships that occur across racial divide have a short span of life and break, as “none of us knows how much getting free of the colour bar means to us - none of us” (253). When Jessie sees Gideon at a party later in the novel, he is drunk and is in despondency, and at first he fails to recognize her, “But he was drunk, and did not
answer her. She spoke to him again, and his gaze recognized something, though perhaps it was not her. He mumbled, “White bitch - get away” (288).

Jessie who has worked all her life to free herself of racist prejudices and who sees blacks not as inferiors but as her own people and friends is forced to think that the wrong judgment of people is not only a white monopoly. She also acknowledges the reality that for Gideon she is an outsider like Ann. Under the influence of liquor he perceives Jessie to be Ann thinking that it is Ann who is providing him with help. Gideon’s turning down her gesture of concern and support disappoints her completely for he begins to treat all white women as conceited and vain. For Thurston, “This powerful scene exemplifies Gordimer’s destabilization and politicization of identity through perception and is an example of her evolving narrative power and politics” (34).

Subsequently, when Gideon and Jessie meet, Gideon is quite gracious towards her, as he clearly has no memory of the party. They continue to meet in a friendly manner at various places and occasions. But as Gordimer puts it, “So long as Gideon did not remember, Jessie could not forget” (288). In a country like South Africa, until there are substantial political changes for the general good of the people, the “occasion for loving” cannot take place. Therefore, this situation will lead to the phase of separation that has already been detected as an important aspect of political progress for the whites.

According to Gordimer, the novel is concerned with the development of autochthonic esthetic culture where different cultures interact. In a scene where the Stilwell family shares their Christmas experience and overlooks Boaz’s Jewishness and the picnic where Ann feels Gideon will also have the same romantic feelings about the landscape of the place suggests variation in the character’s thoughts and cultures. Boaz’s collection of traditional instruments of Africa which are considered by Gideon as mere fossils, the energetic communal performance of various mine dancers and the citing of the history of Chaka, the Zulu king - all indicate the heritage of African cultural upon which the artists of South Africa can depend.

The novel also encourages the perspective that culture is not still, it is evolving where past becomes a source with which present can be connected. The idea behind
preserving the history and culture of South Africa is that Boaz sees a possibility of connection between African and Western music traditions, “a parallel which implies a cultural future, rooted in an African past, that represents a fusion of cultures” (Head 69). However, Gideon shows least interest in a white man’s effort of preserving the African past and fusing it with the western culture, squabbling that the white man is responsible for wiping out the African past. In South Africa culture is also politicized to a large extent. It is through the political automation of the racial state, Gideon is denied visa to Italy to learn painting and get scholarship. This incident produces a white man’s mentality of not allowing a person of black origin to acquire a European form of art and suppressing him culturally and politically. The blacks are denied progress in almost every field. The social rules have always been formulated in favour of the hegemonic group; the black population had to assimilate these racialised rules into their lives, and continue to live life as if racism is natural and customary. The political system of the country has not even forgiven the white community; even their personal lives are being infested. Jessie is conscious of the fact that her life in South Africa is devoid of any privacy and gets raided every time she tries to stay away from what happens around her.

So far as our life is for each other. The rest of our lives is all set out open for anyone to see. Then it actually hardens into that which anyone can see, so that it stays set, fixed, accepted. But if one wants to change? How is it to change while everyone’s looking, being curious, and making comment?. (12)

Gordimer through her novel illustrates how the various characters try to come closer to each other and split because of the prevailing conditions around them. In Occasion for Loving, Jessie’s friendship with Gideon comes to an end, in the same way as Helen in The Lying Days moves away from her friends, Joel and Mary. Despite the rigorous racial policies of the government in South Africa the characters in Nadine Gordimer’s fiction always make an endeavor to come near and build a connection with each other that though is difficult to make. Nevertheless, the racial divide, which has plagued the lives of the characters makes Jessie see the uselessness of any attempt till the racial law is in force, no human touch of sympathy can produce veracity to personal relationships.
Gordimer tries to provide her characters with life and personal space where they can interact with persons from other race and culture, which could be nonracial in its disposition. When Jessie is going through Gideon’s paintings of Ann, she notices a number of paintings where Ann is shown as a black woman. The idea behind these pictures is that art knows no racial limits; an artist like Gideon can dare to envision his beloved as black as well as white. But there is again a communication failure on Ann’s part; she fails to comprehend Gideon’s art. She looks at the picture and finds no surface likeness to provide reassurance. She has no understanding of Gideon in relation to his family, and simply has “an awareness of him as a single creature unrelated to any other” (160). There is a clear sense of social rootlessness in Ann’s way of looking at her portrait. Dominic Head comments, “Gideon’s art does not seem, here, to offer the kind of communal possibilities that it does at other times, or which seem to be suggested as potentially present in other aspects of African culture” (71).

The novel tries to unwrap positive prospective in both art and personal relationships in order to achieve the purpose of freedom in South Africa, still there are several pitfalls in both areas, particularly where individual efforts have been interfered with by the political forces which acts as an institutionalized way of repression. The characters who try to establish relationships across racial divide soon grasps that “all this that was real and rooted in life was void before the clumsy words that reduced the delicacy and towering complexity of living to a race theory” (216). The racial problems constitute the main driving force of the novels written during the apartheid era in South Africa. The relationship in Occasion for Loving is so over-influenced by the local socio-political circumstances that it appears to be in trouble from the beginning and ultimately fails in the end. The apartheid laws and social sanctions that the lovers don’t want to accept are still imposed upon them thereby making it difficult for their relationship to survive.

Occasion for Loving also concentrates on the issue of alienation and cultural disconnection which apartheid created in the lives of people in South Africa. The whites are disjointed from the anti-apartheid struggle and the blacks are left to their own sad fate. The racial set up of the society has deteriorated the quality of life of the black
Africans on a wide scale. Left with no choice, the people of South Africa had to live in accordance with the interest of the powerful whites. Even, Jessie could no longer hold Gideon, Jason, and her other black countrymen at her house to provide solace and safety from the evils of racism. For Thurston, “It is the social and political forces that permeate and misshape South African consciousness” (35).

The novel supports Gideon’s lost trust in the whites after having a disastrous love affair with a white woman and approves that a black man cannot seek companionship in a white woman. Even a cultural association cannot dismantle the wall that exists between the blacks and the whites. As Clingman examines the claims of PAC that common brotherhood in the country is nothing but an illusion. Goodheart remarks:

If ‘white priviledge’ is an aggressive intruder into the integrity of personal relations, then any effort to live out one’s personal life free of politics is self-diminishing. The apolitical view, even the illusion of me, is possible only if one is free to constitute one’s own personal realm: for instance to have and enjoy one’s black or white friends, to intermarry. The answer to ‘white priviledge’ must be politics of another kind. To live apolitically even in the interest of the “integrity of personal relations” then is to accept implicitly the injustice of society. (108)

There is a growing tension related to the white control of space related to the issue of bathing rights at Isendhla. Jessie overhears a woman in the store having a discussion on the resident’s plans to protect against ‘natives’ using “our beautiful beach,” “they’ve got their bathing suits and all just like white people” (258), in order to set up a separate area for blacks. The fear to affirm ownership has been invigorated by occasional glimpses of Gideon, a black native, on the beach. The woman leaves a poster in the store calling a meeting to discuss the issue and makes her way out backing into Jessie, “Gasping a smiling apology, as she went. Jessie caught full on for a moment, like a head on a pike, the fine grey eyes, the cheerful bright skin, the full cheeks and unlined mouth of a tranquil, kind woman” (258). It clearly showed that the indigenous blacks are not allowed to enter beach in their own country also. “Space is a site for political struggle” (Head 75)
where whites are not ready to give up their claim on a land which originally belongs to the blacks.

Gordimer in her novel investigates the relation of love to power. Tom and Jessie Stilwell compliment each other as a couple and life also gives them various opportunities for loving. They have a large family along with a big heart to welcome guests from all walks of life. They are like many white liberals accommodative and polite. Despite their well-intentioned efforts they fail as the roots of racism in the country are too strong to uproot. T. S. Eliot thinks that families are “the most important channel of the transmission of culture,’ and ‘when family life fails to play its part, we must except our culture to deteriorate” (6).

The novelist in her novel rests all hopes of humanity in her main protagonist, Jessie, as she is the only person who can hold the human dignity in the face of apartheid. It is Jessie who amidst the social failure gives hope that there are people for whom the suffering of the human beings is above all race and colour, for her now to be anti-social is a failure, but to be socially engaged is also a challenge. She even turns to the novels of Joseph Conrad and Thomas Mann. As Mann believes that during his time the destiny of man presented its meaning in political terms. This leads to change and renovation in her perspective of the individual self along with a big world around them. Gordimer discloses:

[P]eople like myself have two births, and the second one comes when you break out of the colour bar. It’s a real rebirth when you break out of your background, the taboos of your background, and you realize that the colour bar is not valid, and is meaningless to you. (16)

Gordimer in *Occasions for Loving* links the physical surroundings with the African culture and past. She shows her absorption for the actual world of South Africa by looking deep at the position of white community in the country, their incongruity with the black people and their surroundings. In public terms, Gideon acknowledges the African past, which acts as a prerequisite for claiming the political future he desires. For Jessie, a major part of Gideon’s appeal lies in his having a public past offering a future in
the African society where she being a white has none. She appreciates him as one who has “a new kind of magic” of those “who held in themselves for this one generation the dignity of the poor about to inherit their earth and the worldliness of those who had been the masters” (269). Gideon on the other hand, refuses to take this public role.

John Cooke shows how the archaeological discovery in the initial years of 1960s of ancient African kraals brought a noteworthy change in Gordimer’s acuity about these ancient ruined cities on the Witwatersrand, which made her reject the colonial assumption that whites were the first ones to have settled there, and had a rightful claim to the gold the country contained. This proof of an African past proved all the whites wrong and challenged their wealth and power.

The novel tries to bring into question the values of the white colonial minority. The main protagonist, Jessie extracts strength from the society that exists around her by recovering their rich culture and great past. She does not take interest in the unkempt wallpaper in her sitting room, “We don’t see why we should ape Europe...” (13). She considers decorating walls with paper to be a tradition which has come from Europe and which does not go well with the South African way of life. During her holiday in Natal, looking at the landscape by the seaside Jessie ponders that this place was once known as the ‘Shaka’s Country’ but the present scenario is different, now various races from diverse origins have established their claims by occupying different areas of the land.

In almost every novel the writer has put the whole system of principles of the white community in South Africa to question and analyzes the contradiction lying beneath the white responsiveness to the African culture. She rightly points out that it is the downtrodden section of the society that is dominated by the economically dominant class and their culturally dominant thoughts. Black man takes the white man’s effort of preserving the African past as a way of dominating the culture of the blacks. “If culture is captured and conquered, it is easy to capture individual personality, men’s way of life and overall their consciousness” (Mallick 29).

In the presence of Ann and Boaz in an African dance programme, Jessie is astonished by looking at the appearance of black dancers. They appear wild and savage,
dancing in front of the white crowd who find their outlandish display of themselves as entertaining:

With bits of coloured rag tied to old bathing-trunks, lemonade bottle-tops making do for anklets round the legs of those who no longer had strings of rattling seed-pods, and, in their hands, cow-skin shields and wooden assegais, the black men went through the savage motions of warring. They jumped and yelled and shuffled ominously; they found, in their breasts and throats, as the dance took them up, that dreadful sighing grunt that belongs to the ecstasy of death dealt out. (36)

This passage put forth the uselessness of black culture’s basic right to exist by the control of the white master. It also makes evident that the political structure of apartheid in South Africa abnegate recognition to the history and culture of the rural and urban natives. The constant bondage reminded them of their lower status in society. The cultural history of a particular country offers a present political challenge. The reference to the Shaka’s country shows that the original control and ownership of the land was in the hands of the black Africans, which now are taken over by the whites who have in turn employed these Africans as their slaves. The complex reality is a continuous legacy from the past. In South Africa black population is not allowed to practice their cultural tradition. Historically, this maltreatment has generated conflicting response from the disturbed communities. Jessie overhears a similar township ‘shout’ which is heard by Charles and Helen while coming from Mary’s house in the novel, *The Lying Days*. The conversations of the inhabitants bring to light the actual treatment meted out to them by the whites that were ruling them.

The women slapped at washing and men squatted talking and gesticulating in an endless and unimaginable conversation that, as she passed, even at intervals of several miles, from one kraal to another, linked up in her mind as one. In this continuity she had no part, in this hold that lay so lightly, not with the weight of cement and tarmac and steel, but sinew of the earth’s sinew, authority of a legendary past, she had no share. Gideon had it; what an extraordinary quality it
imparted to people like him, so that others were drawn to them as if by some magic … a new kind of magic … the dignity of the poor about to inherit their earth and the worldliness of those who had been the masters. (269)

The novel fosters a masked wrath about the discrimination of social segregation based on the colour of the skin. As Jessie remarks, “There was no corner of the whole country that was without ugliness” (259). No part of the nation is left innocuous of the veracity of apartheid; there is a clear state of disillusionment. Amidst this political unfairness, Tom and Jessie Stilwell, a broadminded couple is driven to lead their lives in a racially separate country where relationships between blacks and whites are banned and ruthlessly punishable. Ann who in the initial stage of her love affair with Gideon is ignorant of white people’s intolerant attitude towards cross-racial relationships and does not feel preventive by the unforgiving laws against these kind of relationships but later she succumbs to the pressures of the society and decides to end the relationship by leaving the country with her husband Boaz.

In view of Judie Newman, white woman suffers from a suppressed fear of rape by the black man, which commands her behaviour towards this race. The failure of interracial affair used by Gordimer in this novel demonstrates that politics can intervene even into the most confidential experiences. Gordimer quotes Albert Camus in the beginning of the novel saying that there are hurdles created between people by certain forces that prevent them from reliving their lives.

[S]ervitude, falsehood and terror … these three afflictions are the causes of silence between men obscure them from one another and prevent them from rediscovering themselves in the only value which can save them from nihilism - long complicity between men at grips with their destiny. (5)

The characters do make an attempt to intersect the social barriers of the South African society by meeting at the parties and the mixed get-together where they can freely interact with the people of different race as equals. However, these efforts of building a bridge across the racial partition go waste, as there are laws, which create tribulation and render the undertaking of the liberal whites as futile. The only way the
white community can gain acceptance from the black Africans is by taking a strict political action against those who administer the policy of dividing people on the basis of race. It will assuage the white guilt and help in achieving the cause. As Gordimer remarks:

[T]he real influence of politics on my writing is the influence of politics on people. Their lives, and I believe their very personalities, are changed by the extreme political circumstances one lives in South Africa. I am dealing with people; here are people who are shaped and changed by politics. (Bazin & Seymour 138-39)

In *Occasion for Loving* all the white characters are pulled towards the African life. Tom Stilwell is busy in writing history, Boaz Davis, is lost in studying African music, Tom’s wife, Jessie admits that she sexually fantasized the Black male, Ann Davis proved to be different from all by making an intimate relation with Africa. She radiated a strident self-confidence that she can very easily muddle through this new world that has a striking contrast with that of England. She fell in love with a black man, Gideon Shibalo and willingly became a black Eve on the canvas of her black artist lover. Before her affair with Gideon, Ann was unaware of what is chaos in South Africa as she was shut off from the convoluted reality of Africa. It is when Ann takes on a precarious journey through the South African countryside with Gideon, which also leads her into the untraced wasteland of interracial closeness. The novel shows that all Gordimer’s characters are open to the charming hex of this black continent.

The oppression in South Africa was clearly oppression at the national level of the black indigenous majority by a minority of white settlers. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) was burly against the multiracialism and maintained its commitment to a non-racialist Africa where every individual irrespective of the colour is considered to be an African. Some of the white liberals also supported the PAC’s move that represented a big challenge to multiracialist vibe in the country in general. Stephen Clingman claims, *“Occasion for Loving* responds very strongly to this challenge or, rather, to those realities that gave the PAC argument such force” (73).
Various critics have pointed out the interracial love affair as a gripping theme in the fiction of South Africa, a theme that in one way or another takes South African fiction away from “the traditional European novel” (Thurston 34). The capacity to produce a love affair between two separate races in the oppressive atmosphere of South Africa makes the passion unexceptionally natural. In the words of Barbara Temple-Thurston, “By presenting inter-racial love as humanly normal, the novel makes the legal restrictions that damn such love appear all the more preposterous” (34).

The interracial world of Johannesburg was under a scrutiny, as the legislative policy of the country continued to separate the races in numerous social fields, these policies were especially designed to cut off multiracial exchange with whites in the area of education, health, recreation, and religion. “Cultural oppression was an intrinsic part of this attack” (Clingman 75). There is an immersed concern with the cultural discrimination prevalent in the South African society. Even black musicians who came to the limelight during the 1950s were also ousted from various performances. Gordimer pondered whether there would be unity between the whites and the blacks in Africa. The writer highlights the dynamic relationship between love affair and political life in the country with sternly disputed history. The fate of mixed love affairs in South Africa leads to fiasco. Lewis Nkosi, a South African novelist gave an example of similar tragedy in his introduction to a selection of Can Themba’s writings, another novelist from the country. He remarks:

The only time I’ve seen Can Themba’s nerve nearly snap was when he was in love with a beautiful young Englishwoman at a time when she was about to leave the country. He himself was trapped - and it seemed forever - in the land of apartheid. At that time I had a glimpse into someone’s suffering, and I don’t care to see it again. Nadine Gordimer’s novel, Occasion for Loving, may or may not be based on that period in Can Themba’s life, but it offers a striking parallel. (76-77)

Gordimer’s real interest was not to reiterate an original love story, in a way she brings into play the transformed social and political realities from which it radiates. In its inspection of the world surrounding, Occasion for Loving gives definite attention from
the widest to the most personal precedent. The novel brings political discussion in the black world apart from presenting an interracial love affair. Gramsci notes that:

[T]he dominant class establishes their hegemony in and over the society in alliance with other classes and where the state is in complex and integral relationship with the masses and is based on relationship between the leaders and the masses. (Mallick 213)

Gordimer’s previous novel too discussed the blacks but in the present novel, she acknowledges for the first time - past, present, and future of the blacks and not the whites as “the latter is a subset to the former” (Clingman 78). When Gideon discusses with his comrade Sol the relative position of the ANC and the PAC, he makes his idea of “guerrilla politics” (131) comprehensible by saying that there exist no ambition in him to climb up the ladder of any party. His main aim is to see “the blacks stand up on their hind legs, that’s all…. The chaps in the street have got the right idea, man” (131). Gideon is in a mood of dissatisfaction and rancor. In the course of the novel his mood turns into anger and desperation. It becomes apparent that for blacks hope of a better life can come only from a potent political commitment and participation that can protect them from devastation. Gideon’s life becomes a testing ground where he has to make a choice between the freedom of love and of art on the one hand, and the allegiance towards political involvement on the other. It seems that he gives preference to politics over art. Callie Stow, one of the white protagonists in the novel tells Gideon that his conduct corroborates that only politics find relevance in the existence of the blacks, “the only thing that means anything if you’re an African is politics…. You’ve got politics, that’s all” (121-22). But when Gideon capitulate his political association with the ANC for the love of a white woman, he finishes up by being almost demolished. Gordimer discovers how the world of art is demarcated by political realities in the perspective of the early 1960s.

In this novel, Gordimer diverges from a customary concept of art towards a more politicized form. *Occasion for Loving* brings out an important point that in South African conditions, love between blacks and whites cannot arise; whites who turn to loving blacks
can immediately turn to hating them. The failure of such a love affair in the novel marks the breakdown of an interracial social or any other kind of commitment. The oppressor’s regime seemingly relied on the policy of subjugation to the extent where the oppressed are left in no condition to rebel.

Nevertheless, oppression exists not only in interracial communities but within the same communities as well. Jessie had a strained relation with her mother because her mother never allowed her to mix up with the outside world and prevented her maturity to rise. She was kept at home as she was suffering from a congenital heart ailment, got married at a young age and soon widowed with a young son and then remarried. She feels cut out from the external reality and becomes a victim of emotional servitude. “In the name of love, her mother had sucked from her the delicious nectar she had never known she had” (45). It can be easily said that Jessie’s past has a direct resemblance to Gordimer’s childhood - both were subjected to their mother’s dominance which noticeably shows that power is not something limited to politics, but it functions also within the pressures of attraction and love.

Even in black community oppression takes place, Gideon’s commitment to Ida, a black nurse is not sufficient enough to make them a couple. A discrepancy in dedication is also a sign of coercion. Judie Newman maintains that, “Gordimer transforms her own personal trauma to political metaphor in the novel in order to investigate the relation of love to power” (26).

Gordimer’s fiction demonstrates that interracial relations is a rare possibility in South African society where politics intrudes into the most confidential experience, as there is no other space available to it. Ann is aware of this truth when she cogitates to display pictures of her painting by Gideon. “None of the seven or eight oils and numerous sketches he had done of her could be used; they smiled at each other at the thought of this. “Perhaps in another town,” she said. “On another planet,” he said” (180). The political life for the black and the white in South Africa is amorphous where there is no access to a public stage, therefore, the private man implements his political mind in personal relations, which eventually gets disturbed. Thus, Boaz who is a liberal Jew tries
to control his temper for sometime and acts with exceptional forbearance towards the black man who is involved in an affair with his wife, Ann Davis. Jessie scrutinizes the sticky situation of loving and later showing antipathy towards Gideon. She discusses with Tom not only about her interaction with Gideon and Ann, but also about the “vein that the experience had opened into herself” (271). Ann loved Gideon but:

Being in love with him isn’t simple; I mean, the whole business isn’t. We say it’s just like falling in love with anyone, but it isn’t, the whole affair isn’t. Not for us either. You said at the beginning Boaz couldn’t behave just as if this were any man running off with his wife. And Gideon knows it. Boaz wants to treat Gideon like any other man, but he can’t because Gideon isn’t a man, won’t be, can’t be, until he’s free. (271)

The novel evidently expounds how the political power of a racial state limits the intimate yearning by passing acts such as a law against miscegenation. Communal punishment and imposed imprisonment of the people are devices used by the government. There is perpetual supervision over black and white association and a situation gets created where human relations face injury because of prevailing pessimistic external conditions.

A line in a statue book has more authority than the claims of one man’s love or another’s. All claims of natural feeling are over-ridden alike by a line in a statue book that takes no account of humanness, that recognizes neither love nor respect nor jealousy nor rivalry nor compassion nor hate - nor any human attitude whatever where there are black and white together. (216)

Even if there is no interference from the state legislation, the novel still highlights how racial ideology has corrupted the minds of the people. As the novel reaches its climax, Tom and Jessie are confronted with the coldhearted manner of Ann’s choice. Tom is not able to figure out the reason of Ann’s decision of leaving Gideon abruptly, while Jessie says, “But what could the bloody woman do, if she didn’t want him, or couldn’t face wanting him?” (279). This love affair was witnessed by Jessie who also sanctioned it is now forced to concede to its failure. She strongly believed in the integrity
of this relationship against the alteration of repressive law. Tom and Jessie fail in their liberal belief that Ann is different from other whites of her race who value human being more than the colour of his skin but after Ann’s forsaking of Gideon it becomes clear that she is also one of them. “The Stilwells’ code of behaviour towards people was definitive, like their marriage; they could not change it. But they saw that it was a failure, in danger of humbug” (279). The social sanction of apartheid has completely eroded the love between the two lovers. Once rejective of the restrictions imposed by the society, Ann has now taken in the venom of apartheid and is under the grip of its fright and fixation. The deep-seated pattern of impassiveness of the system compelled white Ann with a way out when she could not deal with the fact of loving a black man. “There was no recess of being, no emotion so private that white privilege did not single you out there; it was a silver spoon clamped between your jaws and you might choke on it for all the chance there was of dislodging it” (279).

Due to several external pressures poor Gideon is left to the “position of a passive object, either as the beneficiary of white goodwill or as its victim” (Clingman 82), which shows that there are many like Gideon in Africa who are left devastated and broken at the end of their relationship with white women. Through this affair, many whites like Jessie, who empathize with blacks, become profoundly aware of the mordant power of racism enclosed within all South Africans. Jessie also recapitulates her childhood fear of her stepfather, Fuecht, coming upon her in the bathroom as the racist taboo of “the black man that I must never be left alone with in the house…. And how many more little white girls are there for whom the very first man was a black man?” (253). She sees that it is difficult for a white woman to escape from the shackles of racism even as an individual. The novel asserts that Jessie is fashioned not by Europe, but by an African past corrupted by the bad politics of Europe. Judie Newman confirms, “Her [Jessie’s] admission historicize her trauma, now comprehensible not as the individualist product of bourgeois repressions within a nuclear family, but as stemming from political and social conditions” (31).

Gordimer has very adroitly woven the characters of the novel into the cultural and artistic matrix of the work. The task of Boaz to preserve the African musical heritage is
phenomenal and so is the mine dance which Jessie and Ann attend. They represent a particular section of the white men who are making efforts to safeguard something, which is bustling and ethnic. This shows that history and culture of any nation can help in forming a possible contact, like, a cultural contact between African and western traditions. But no cultural contact can sustain in the long run unless they are given aid by the government. In order to promote and strengthen different cultures state support is necessary as the people in power are the owners of the means of production. It is determined by economic and political factors in the society. Though doubts do arise regarding the idea of upholding the culture of Africa by the whites that are themselves responsible for polluting the black culture of South Africa.

At the scene of the mine dancing where African tribal past is paraded as cultural idiosyncrasy, gives glimpses of a positive capability inherent in African tradition. As Dominic Head advocates, “Jessie is horrified at the sight of the dancing: she sense the prostitution of the event, which reduces the dance to a trampling of the past” (69). She feels:

And it was all fun. It all meant nothing. There was no death in it; no joy. No war, and no harvest. The excitement rose, like a breadth drawn in, between dancers and watchers, and it had no meaning. The watchers had never danced, the dancers had forgotten why they danced. They mummed an ugly splendid savagery, a broken ethos, well lost. (37)

The novel throws light on the politics of the 1960s and moves towards politicized posthumanist forms, best suited to the literature of Africa. Many South African writers have used the political setup of the country as the leit motif of their novels. Dan Jacobson also exploited the theme of love across the colour line in his famous novel, *The Evidence of Love*, written in 1960. The story revolves around a black man named, Kenneth Makeer, who through good fortune gets hold of a supporter who pays for his education and makes it feasible for him to pursue law in London. During his stay in London he develops a love affair with a white South African girl, Isabel Last. Being aware of the definite danger they can get into, they decide to marry and return to South Africa, where both face
imprisonment under the spiteful Immorality Act, a law under apartheid, which criminalized sexual relations between whites and non-whites in the country. The lovers suffer the wrath of an apartheid stricken society. There is a sense of triumph in this novel, the lovers become all the more valiant and face their trial bravely as their love is untainted.

In *Occasion for Loving*, however, the love affair between people from two different races ultimately breaks down because they fail to withstand the legislative sanctions of apartheid. Dan Jacobson gives a convincing portrayal of the struggle of South African blacks and whites, who like, Jessie, sympathize with those who are enduring such an oppressive society and still trying to overcome the restrictions imposed on them by their white masters. *The Evidence of Love*, like, *Occasion for Loving* is written at a time of deep racial tension in South Africa where people faced the racial intolerance at its most brutal form. Gordimer traveled in many parts of Africa when the colonies were fighting for independence. During her journey she became acquainted with the misery of the black Africans and became aware of how irrelevant the white rule has become in this continent. Wade points out:

Until the independence movements of the late 1950s and 1960s blacks had been seen as victims, but after that the struggle was no longer defined by the intellectual tools of the liberal establishments. Like Gideon’s “white bitch” remark, a shift has been signaled, from accessibility to nonaccessibility. (98)

As in the previous chapter, space and landscape are politicized in the current novel also. No part of the country is beyond the control of racial legislation. Reminiscent of Helen trapped in the car with Charles’ friend during the riot in the township in *The Lying Days* is noticed here also, Ann and Gideon are trapped in the car on their trip to countryside illustrates that any venture by them holds risk which will finally result in dangerous encounters. Ann becomes aware that now the love affair is no longer a jaunt and they would have to be more careful, wise, and apprehensive where they were earlier careless, they could not afford to get into any sort of trouble before they manage to leave the country forever.
Gordimer brings to vision the power of white control and their hunger for possession of land. While driving back with Ann, Gideon, and the children, Jessie observes kraals, various huddled huts at intervals all through the way, and is astonished at the African existence on the land. *Occasion for Loving* takes a leap from the realistic mode to a symbolic mode when the actual revulsion of apartheid’s pervasiveness is witnessed, giving a signal of a deep shift in the consciousness of the characters that are directly or indirectly facing the consequences of the repressive state policy. The novelist uses the ocean in order to signify deep levels of consciousness that give power to Jessie’s perception of the world around her. Even Ann, who usually does not see beyond the surface of things, undergoes emotional attachment with a black man and the African way of living of which she is not entirely mindful. Restless about Gideon, who after the breakup has drifted off too long on a walk to solitariness, Ann mouths the half wish, half fear, “he wouldn’t just walk out into the sea…?” Prior to the complex and painful situation which she and Gideon have generated, she discloses in deep blush to Jessie “the unconscious desire to have the course of this love affair decided by something drastic, arbitrary, out of her own power” (261).

The white woman in Jessie shares the power and guilt of the white rulers. Thus the white woman is lured away from the feeling of affinity of suppression with black men and the entire community. Visel writes about Gordimer’s colonial female protagonist:

The white woman is not allowed to claim innocence; nevertheless, she is increasingly prevented by the social and political conditions of apartheid from acting upon her responsibility. Furthermore, she is increasingly cut off from blackness, both by government decree and the rising hostility of her black brothers and sisters … the ambiguous, self-divided figure of the white girl or woman is the site of the hesitant, fraught rapprochement of white and black. She is the site of connection, while she is made to realize the impossibility of connection. (44)

Gordimer contrives an unquestionable cultural identity based on interracial communication and intellect. The personal interaction in the novel divulges extensive
political lesson. For her private situations in life are clear source of power, which is an
evident connection. She usually focuses on racial differences in her presentation of inter-
racial relations. She is contained both socially and politically within the fractured society
of modern apartheid; still she deeply addresses the concern of the people who are trying
to overcome from that fracture. The novel is a deliberate attempt to bring the predicament
of the black world of Africa. Gordimer’s novel establishes an unfathomable link with the
people of South Africa because it is here they find their dilemma being dealt with.

*Occasion for Loving* brings a chronological shift in the narrative perspective
along with individual perceptual changes as the novel progresses. Ann and Gideon are
presented with human follies: they are thoughtless, extravagant, and self-absorbed. Ann is
a shallow character who is devoid of reflection: she comprehends the life of Stilwell’s as
dull and lack life.

Ann saw the Stilwells’ life as a set of circumstances - children, the queer elder kid
from some other marriage, ugly old house, not enough money. There it was,remote as old age. She did not think of it as something that had begun somewhere
different and might be becoming something different. The present was the only
dimension of time she knew; she woke everyday to her freedom of it. (91)

There is a change in Ann’s perception, which is noticed in the comments of Ann
about Gideon, where she tells Jessie about the role Gideon and she performed in front of
the white man at the garage. She noticed a sudden change in Gideon that earlier she
ignored and after which she left him. Gideon on the other hand, is forced to lead a life of
split existence and completely loses control over himself in flabbergast produced by the
relationship which leads to nowhere and ends in a disaster. His opinion about Ann is
wrong, for “like many people he confused spirit with bravery, and he saw her old
thoughtlessness and recklessness as courage” (268). He after breaking off with Ann
accepts that his involvement with Ann has affected his priorities on the political front;
despite this he is too weak to act. She is concerned only with her own freedom and finds
packed expression in her lack of compassion for Jessie, and finally for Gideon, whom she
loves only till her excitement lasts. Gideon is captivated by Ann’s childlike nature, for
like other African children and Jessie, he is denied a happy and satiated childhood. Gideon feels that through Ann he will be able to attain the freedom of the present, which is denied to all the black Africans. Jessie feels “a deep, uncomplicated affection for this man” (287). She at the end mourns the loss of this man, who had seemed at the beach to be a member of her family. She feels not only regret but rage also. Jessie, the dominant force of the novel that judges Ann’s unreflective and negligent living also suffers from some disappointment. Her belief in the unity of personal relations is, in fact, a failure. Her behaviour towards people could not change the current circumstances. She shambles at her attempt to bring the different coloured people in her white house. Until, the law turns in favour of the Africans, they simply cannot be brought in. Gideon tells Jessie at the beach when she talks of the necessity to keep on corroborating one’s humanity. He responds, “You might have to prove it in jail one day. You know? Your house won’t be big enough any more” (244). Jessie though learns from him that her house isn’t big enough, but she is not even ready for jail.

Every human being is helpless and lacks strength and power to fight against those who advocate the inhibitory strategy of racial separation; there seems no passage into an equal and bright future for blacks and whites. Even their liberal attitude towards each other initially in the novel could not settle down the adamantine racist system of apartheid that so overpoweringly frightened the psyches of all South Africans. As the South African situation becomes worse, Gordimer through her power of writing moves noticeably to the public area where the noise is heard more. Gordimer’s hope for the success of human values in *The Lying Days* faced disenchantment in *Occasion for Loving* where all these values face rejections at the hands of these very characters. The hopes of liberal white South Africans, Jessie and Tom is dashed and they feel powerless and cut off from both black and white South Africans. Blacks like Gideon become more radical in their political thoughts whereas whites become more terrified and self-protective and support the government’s increasing exploitative laws and brutal actions.

In this novel Jessie Stilwell gains a subterranean political understanding but is unable to act because of lack of cooperation from other characters and the entire system of governance in the country. She could not connect politically with the majority of white
liberals for they openly supported the rudimentary law, which separated people in the society. She could not enjoy a sense of belonging, as she did not accept the blacks being tormented by the whites that considered themselves as superior because of their white colour. Gideon also says that:

The whites took away the African past; once we accepted the present from them, that was that … when we accepted the white man’s present, of industrialization and mechanized living, we took on his future at the same time - I mean, we began to go wherever it is he’s going. And our past has no continuation with this. So it is lost. For all practical purposes it is lost. (151)

Gordimer, in this novel reminds the readers of ever existing gulf between rich whites and poor blacks. There is a marked difference between the thinking and the living standard of the two different races. The white middle-class accepts life to be neat, tidy and to have order whereas the black world swarms with the abundance of nature. Their life dwells in the crowded location where the streets and the walls of the dwellings are alive with various kinds of voices. Even Ann notices freshness in their lives.

Ann’s response to black people and the world that they were forced to inhabit was one of pleasure; she saw the warmth and vitality, the zest and freshness that existed there in spite of all the white man could do, missed by the white man. She saw the defiant fun of it, not the uncertainty, pain and brashness. (224)

In a country like South Africa, all the whites who support the blacks and their cause should stick together, “we live by the sanction of our own kind … it’s not all politics - not for whites, at least” (243). However, Jessie feels the way they live becomes a political gesture above everything else. There is no room left in this country to grow as a person because any sort of change in oneself might seem to be an act of defection. And if a white person is not allowed to undergo a change within him then how can he bring a change in the life of a black person. It is the political struggle that binds every one together. Many critics consider The Lying Days and Occasion for Loving to belong to the ‘bourgeois phase,’ still there are formal accomplishments that can be traced in these novels. Thus, for Head:
The Lying Days bears a dual relation to the Bildungsroman structure, which is both employed and rejected. This formal ambivalence registers appropriately the situation of Helen, and also the situation of Gordimer: she is prepared, right at the beginning of her novelistic career, to question the formal properties of the European literary models upon which her work still partly depends.... In Occasion for Loving the formal ambiguities are used to expose ideological restriction, and so coalesce into a prescription for the basis of a liberated political consciousness. (76)

A close look at these two novels each written after a pause of a few years respectively shows how she has evolved her genius and inventive faculty. With the arrival of tumultuous time with the commencement of revolutionary radicalism, Gordimer becomes a more committed writer, giving hope, and fighting for good days to arrive soon.

The novelist through her work of fiction confirms what a traumatic experience the interracial couple has been through. Jessie in the face of Ann and Gideon’s relationship acknowledges the insolvency of the pursuit of the personal relations in South Africa. The early novels also highlight Gordimer’s fortitude to discover through her art a justifiable place for white South Africans in their country of birth. Through a narrative structure, she asserts her efforts to provide a heritage fix to the landscape and culture in modern South Africa. Gordimer remarks if only whites change their own attitude towards blacks, ignore and defy the colour bar. However, Clingman asserts:

Nadine Gordimer may write about blacks in South Africa; she may mix with them as well as have close black friends. But there is still a crucial sense in which she is divided from the black world, even at those moments of her closest approach. Gordimer, quite simply, is not of the black South African world, nor could she be under present circumstances. This basic social limitation is … between Gordimer and the black world. (208)

She embarks on most persuasively into black characterization and draws on her all-embracing exposure to township culture and sharing significant values. Occasion for
*Loving* initiates her questioning of the customary dichotomy between personal uprightness and the swathe laws of the public realm. The state is primarily the coercive instrument of the ruling class. Class-rule without laws and regulations are unthinkable. Ineluctably, the law becomes only an obligation on human relations. Gordimer’s novel cuts across the fundamental tendency to celebrate the fidelity of love or desire in the face of dehumanizing laws.