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Political Ideology of Nadine Gordimer

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ABSTRACT

The three disturbing elements in the formulation of an identity are race, gender and roots. The beliefs, desires and experiences all coagulate and seem to come to a standstill. Gordimer has created such kind of identity issues which reflect the various strings of rupture. There are various kinds of voices which are created due to understanding through the identities which she creates. On the other hand these images are also part of reflections of the tension raging inside her. This article is trying to prove what makes Nadine Gordimer such a valuable and increasingly valued writer. In a way it is her capacity to meet the demands of her political sense of right and wrong without becoming a person having any specific agenda and the confrontations which she faced during her literary commitment. She was never a person detached to the sensitivity towards art and beauty. But her primary concern was always political upheaval. The paper will also try to understand Gordimer's style of suggesting and reminding something. It is basically the natural beauty of South Africa and the basic dilemma of the contemporary society which is to an extent is also a racially polarized one.

Keywords: South Africa, Ideology, Identity Crisis, Political Activism, Apartheid, Man Booker Prize, Nobel Prize, Short Stories.

1. PAPER

There is a lot of interest in the question of identities today. But alongside there is also considerable confusion around the question of why identities continue to exert power. Everyone agrees that social identities such as ethnicity, sexuality and nationality have been center stage due to the cultural revolution of the 1960. What is also seen is that all these three issues complicate the concept of identity - so that at time one cannot distinguish what eventually formulates the essence of an identity or what distraught it. In certain cases, ethnicity surfaces to the forefront, at other times sexuality and sometimes nationality. Thus the three disturbing elements in the formulation of an identity are race, gender and roots.

In the case of Nadine Gordimer her roots, the African context, led to her first displacement. Thus she brought in the problematic of both cultural location and historical epoch in her writings. There was an essay written by Fanon where he says that 'color can turn an individual subject into stone' (The fact of Blackness). The beliefs, desires and experiences all coagulate and seem to come to a standstill. Then moved by other determinants like race and politics they simmer and then burst forth into rebellion. As a rule cultural identities are non-coercive consensual and voluntary. But once enforced by law identities cease to be all these. The law recognizes you as one, and as none other. Such an identity cannot be considered a vestige of tradition nor can it be dismissed as just an invention of the colonial powers. This leads to the making of a political identity.

In Africa, the configuration of a state post-colonially colonial intervention and then tried to unpack tradition, to disentangle history from development, to separate the authoritarian from the emancipator. This resulted in the pitting of fervor and civilization against one another giving rise to much of the literature of protest that comes from Africa. This protest is both against the super-imposed forces and the contesting self conscience. Gordimer is implicated in all these strands of split and voices her compassion through the identities she creates. They are reflections of the confusion raging within her.

Nadine Gordimer was born in nineteen twenty three. She received the highest award in literature i.e. Nobel Prize for writing numerous short stories and novels. Most of these literary works reflect breakdown in South African society to an extent which is never examined before. And she continued her journey for more than 60 years. She was writing all the time for her native country with a genuine effort. Her 26 books which can namely be categorized into fictional and non fictional works including essays, novels and short stories discover the root causes of disturbances, ups and downs and fragile balances. There is a division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different in a very old and well established country. It can be called established in financial sense but not in societal sense because it is a country where the problem of an unending voyage, language and the color and texture of hair and skin remain at prime concern. It can be taken as a central factor of everyday life. Her early works were a little bit mild in a sense that they expressed the sense of moderate South African whites who are talking against apartheid but her later works, which can be taken as in matured sense more developed, reproduce a shift toward the fundamentals of political and fictional formulations.

Gordimer tried to discover the effects and outcome which are related to South Africa's apartheid groups on both whites who are in power and the Blacks who are oppressed due to various reasons. Although the political scenario of apartheid which started in 1948 and continued till 1990 is one of the necessary themes of her work but she focuses primarily on the complex day to day tensions. She generates ideas by the means of accurate details to explain both the physical scenery of South Africa and the human problems of a racially polarized society. At her best she gives us radiant writing, masterful storytelling and a considerate understanding of the multifaceted lives of her characters. She has a perceptive and elegant language with full of positivity. The pressures of being a woman in nation which is still in the grip of disturbance, of the past being erased without a point of view which is purposeful and directional to an extent, makes her sense of herself insecure. Such a psyche feeds into the creation of uproarious identities that are worth mentioning in her short stories.

Gordimer is, with certainty, against notions of racial separation and apartheid. She wrote in an increasingly distributed society. The result is a sense of isolation clearly seen in the society of her protagonists. This concluded in pioneering attempts at developing the South African novel in English beyond its

conventional custom of realist literary representation by exploring the isolated realization and skill in what she treated as a bit-by-bit decomposing society. Gordimer is often critical about the militant activities provoked in South Africa. It is evidently seen in her short fiction. She always says that there is little moral expectation for whites who lived under apartheid. She fought with the system with her writings. In most of her creations she deals with subjects of politics and personal bonding in a culturally varied and multiracial society. Always concerning power relations and reality, Gordimer tells stories of common and real people to an extent, revealing ethical ambiguities and choices. Her characterization is nuance which is expressed more through the choices her characters make and not through their claimed identities and outlook. Her slender weaves in slight details within the character's names. She always judges the issues of displacement, separation and immigration, class and financial power, religious belief and the capability for people. Her characters can go beyond their individual gains and think about something bigger.

Gordimer's parents play vital role in shaping her early age curiosity in racial and economic disproportion of South Africa. Both of her parents were Jewish settlers. Her father was from Lithuania in Russia (Wastberg, 2001) and her mother was from London. He was an ordinary watchmaker. His understanding as a Jewish refugee in czarist Russia made Gordimer to form a portrait of political individuality. The readers can understand it from the available facts that, he was neither a promoter nor particularly apprehensive towards the problems of Black people who were living under the influence of apartheid. Gordimer saw political activism to an extent in her mother whose apprehension about the poverty, suffering and favoritism faced by black people in South African region motivated her to begin a crèche for Black children (Wastberg, 2001). Gordimer also witnessed suppression first handedly by the government in her early age when she was a teenager. The police once compellingly entered into her house 'confiscating letters and diaries from a servants room' (Wastberg, 2001).

Several of her short stories discover the penalty of immigration to South Africa, a continuing issue as many professionals have gone since the end of apartheid only to be replaced by overseas born arrivals. One of her short stories, "Mother Tongue" is a fable of dislocation where a German woman marries a South African man and has intricacy fitting into society. The stories of Nadine Gordimer are undoubtedly an authentication of her conviction in the act to save humanity from error or evil and its capability to overcome, what she has called as the violence of pain. That kind of tenderness is always inflicted by the authoritarian state like South Africa. Her characters with the help of their courage and willingness are able to succeed against insoluble odds. Her stories find room for the opportunity of hopefulness. Although Gordimer never, in a straight line, became a sufferer of racism but her skill and formal control identified the reduction of morality in the political system. Her major works discover intimacies, the depth of desire and the multiple betrayals of human relationship. She has always been more than a supplier of fictional protestor to the many distortions of exploitive government.

Almost all the stories of Nadine Gordimer are the reflections of bravery. They have ethical vision and the beauty of complexity created with a sense of inventing something new. She scrutinizes, with passionate exactness, the ins and outs of both of common lives and to an extent of the ver powerful political and orderly forces that encircle them. There is an organized way of exploitation created through propaganda. What makes this South African writer being considered into literary canon and as one of the major writers of the world in the field of Post Colonialism is her ability to call together the burden of political sense of right and wrong without becoming a propagandist and the confrontations of her commitment. She is never found against anything but in search of something. Her attitude towards looking at problems is thus

different from James Joyce. She chose not to discard the uncongenial country of her birth. She is never found forcefully accepting the citizenship of her native country rather she seems to be always willing to make her country a better place to live.

Generally short stories provoke a succinct sight of character's life, but Gordimer, like the best story writers before she finds an essential flake, the crucial moment, the delicate and cherished circumstance that defines the men and women who live in her tales. Some of her stories pull the reader in with ease, and then curl uncomfortably. Let us take the example of the short story "A Beneficiary" where a young woman receives surprising news of her paternal origins. In "Safety Procedures" a lengthy plane journey is suddenly turned over by every flier's terrible nightmare and our narrator with everyone else abroad, the plane owes his existence to his seat mate and her shadowy undisclosed facts. The title story talks about a white academic, a former anti apartheid activist who heard a discourteous remark on the radio about Beethoven's way of life. This sets him on a pursuit to discover if he himself has any black blood - a hitch of the past before apartheid.

Nadine Gordimer thinks that South Africa's apartheid system has not only effected Blacks but also ruling whites. She is always found exploring new outcomes of tensions which are continuously emerging in not only apartheid but also post-apartheid society. Widely appreciated for her genuine sketch of black Africans and their native culture, she tried to always make a balance between the human nature and the physical nature. Throughout her time as a short fiction writer, Gordimer has struggled to reveal individuals who are consistently struggling to avoid, confront or make an effort to change the situation under which they breathe every day and night. Nobody among her peers was able to explain the exploitive South African political structure of apartheid and post apartheid society. Her first reflection of political ideology is *Something Out There* (1984) where she tried to examine the individuals who unwittingly accept the social system of racial separation. *Jump and Other Stories* (1991) continued her investigation on the daily problems of Blacks and Whites in South Africa. *Loot and Other Stories* (2003) expressed, on the other hand, South Africa's conversion to a post-apartheid social order.

These fictional works try to walk around with the new facets and apprehensions in the personality of the characters that are living amidst an uninvited, disorderly and crucial time in South African history. These fictional works also explore the reasons behind their identities shaping by the conditions that carve them in the middle of political turmoil. Nadine Gordimer everywhere stands somewhere between the role of a social activist and a fictional writer of not only South Africa but the entire world. Thus, it can be said that the purpose of her writing is not only to create pleasure but to convey a social message on one side and to present a genuine portrayal of the post apartheid South African society with all its colors and undeniable circumstances on the other side. There is also commonness in the selected literary works but they are also unique of its own. The universality which is evident everywhere in these works is similar to that of the works of William Shakespeare. And this is something which puts Nadine Gordimer different from her contemporaries.

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