



V.H.N. SENTHIKUMARA NADAR COLLEGE

(An Autonomous Institution affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University)

VIRUDHUNAGAR – 626001, TAMILNADU

RESEARCH CENTER IN ENGLISH



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As per the regulations of Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Mr. A. Mohanraj, (Register Number P5158), Part-time Research Scholar of English, Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College (Autonomous), Virudhunagar, will defend his research work at a Viva-voce through Video Conference mode using Google Meet Platform.

Title of the Thesis

DISPLACEMENT, INDIVIDUAL STRUGGLE, AND CORRUPTION IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF NADINE GORDIMER

Date & Time

23.11.2021 (Tuesday) at 10.15 am

Venue

Research Centre in English, VHNSN College (Autonomous), Virudhunagar.

Video Conference Platform

Google Meet

Meeting ID: <https://meet.google.com/psu-vrbe-uyx>



Scan QR code to join

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The Synopsis of the thesis is available in the College Website and a copy of the thesis is available in the Department Library, for reference. Faculty members, Research scholars and Students are most welcome to attend the Viva-voce and take part in the discussion through Google Meet.

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**DISPLACEMENT, INDIVIDUAL STRUGGLE, AND CORRUPTION IN
THE SELECT NOVELS OF NADINE GORDIMER**

**Synopsis submitted to
Madurai Kamaraj University for the award of Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH**

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DISPLACEMENT, INDIVIDUAL STRUGGLE, AND CORRUPTION IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF NADINE GORDIMER

Synopsis

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014) was the most celebrated, distinguished and committed socio-political South African writer. She got her early education at home under the guidance of her mother, and then she went to Witwatersrand University for her higher study. Though she left the university without receiving a degree later, she has been awarded fifteen honouaries decorates in literature from various universities worldwide.

Russians such as Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky influenced her very much. She was a keen observer and cultivated worldly taste for the best in all the literature she encountered. She was an active member of the anti-apartheid movement and joined the African National Congress (ANC). She acted as an advisor for Nelson Mandela on his '1964 defence speech'. She was also active in HIV/AIDS causes. Gordimer, the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991, wrote fifteen novels, eleven volumes of short stories and a host of essays. She was known for her fearless and lionhearted activism in the struggle against apartheid.

Gordimer has garnered international recognition for her works. Her oeuvre has been shaped by the struggle against apartheid political issue, apartheid movement and psychological tension due to racial prejudices of her home country. Globally all of her works focus on the themes of love, violence, bloodshed, freedom, exile, nature, revolution, alienation, familial relationship, slavery, white's domination, and mainly focusing on racism in South Africa. Her works question power relations and truth.

The story of the novel, *The Pickup*, takes place in two parts: Johannesburg and an unnamed village in Arab desert land. The novel centres on two individuals from vastly different backgrounds and their love affair intensively portrayed. Julie is a young woman from a wealthy middle-class white family in Johannesburg. Abdu/Ibrahim is an illegal immigrant from an unnamed Arabic country to South Africa, considered an illusory 'promised land' for those without hope elsewhere. The love affair begins as a casual pickup and later develops into an intricate relationship. Because of Abdu's illegal entry into South Africa, the immigration authorities order him to leave South Africa. Even though he wants to stay in South Africa, he is forced to leave South Africa and journey to Abdu's homeland. Julie and Abdu get married before they go to his desert country. Finally, Julie is happy to stay in Abdu's land, but Abdu leaves his politically corrupt land and immigrates to the United States.

Get a Life tells a personal story of an ecologist, Paul Bannerman, with a broader environmental issue of South Africa. Bannerman is diagnosed with thyroid cancer. He undergoes surgery, followed by radiation treatment which leads him radioactive, so he has to live in quarantine for some time. On leaving his beloved wife and child, he starts living in his family house. He spends his time in the garden, which he sees as his personal 'Eden'. The novelist creates the bond between the protagonist and the garden. The notion of home and its relation to nature and wilderness is one of the principal subjects of the novel. Bannerman encounters his inner world in the garden and finds a way of expression in a broader sphere. In South Africa, a project that aims to build a nuclear reactor in an ecologically sensitive area comes to the fore. Gordimer dwells on the deep connection between nature and human psychology and develops a critical perspective on the relationship between ecology and globalization. Thus, with this duality of microcosm and macrocosm in its narrative, the novel represents the intertwined relationship between

human and nature, thereby illustrating issues of the environmental crises of the day like nuclear technology, the idea of development, and globalization.

In *No Time Like the Present*, the central characters are Steve and Jabulile, a mixed race couple. They are fallen in love and married when their interracial union is illegal. Steve and Jabu have been fighters in the struggle for freedom against apartheid. Once racist law disallowed white and black lovers to have sexual relations, they can now as they are now in the 'new South Africa'. Steve and Jabu, with his South African comrades, have fought for and promised to bring a "better life for all". It is being created but also challenged by political corruption, bribery, sexual violence and racial tensions. The vast and growing gap between affluence and mass poverty continue to haunt the present.

The thesis entitled "Displacement, Individual Struggle, and Corruption in the Select Novels of Nadine Gordimer" attempt a detailed study on Gordimer's prominent themes in the three post-apartheid novels – *The Pickup*, *Get a Life* and *No Time Like the Present*. The present thesis is divided into five chapters.

The First Chapter, "Introduction," provides sufficient biographical material enabling the readers to have a comprehensive idea about Gordimer's mind and art. In addition, it gives details of apartheid in South Africa. The chapter also dwells on her significant contribution to the growth of the South African novel in English.

The Second Chapter, entitled "Displacement in *Pickup*," takes up the theme of displacement as Gordimer depicts in her post-apartheid novel *The Pickup*. The chapter examines how Gordimer portrays displacement through the two protagonists in the novel: Julie Summer, an upper-middle-class Western woman and Abdu / Ibrahim, an upper-middle-class Eastern man. Abdu's displacement from an unnamed Arab country to Johannesburg, South Africa, is due to his financial constraint. Alienation is one of the salient futures of

displacement. Julie, who comes from a background of economic prosperity, feels displaced as she finds her father's materialistic values disgraceful. She moves out of her wealthy home and starts living in a modest part of the city. Julie marries Abdu and travels with him to his home country in search of her identity. She is happy to shift from South Africa to the desert land. But Abdu aims to earn more money for her mother, so he is not satisfied with his country. At last, he alone leaves for the US. Julie's displacement in the alien land helps her experience fluidity of identity, but Abdu is still searching for his own in the foreign country. Thus, they experience displacement in their process of the border crossing between the East and the West.

The Third Chapter, titled "Individual Struggle for Survival in *Life*," deals with the story of an individual, Paul Bannerman, a suburban middle-class white environmental activist. He is affected by thyroid cancer and diagnosed with it. He is ingested radioactive iodine and becomes a radioactive threat to others. To protect his beloved wife, Benni and child, Nicholas, he is forced to stay alone in his parent's house. In his quarantine, Paul, as an individual, struggles with loneliness. He struggles with his personal life and struggles with his married life. He, with his associates, also fights against the government nuclear reactor project, the dams in the Okavango Delta and the Pondoland National Toll Road and mining scheme. Thus, He also struggles for environmental protection – struggles for national liberation and struggles over ownership of nature. It also brings to the fore how Paul recuperates his physical and psychological anxieties and insecurities, his marital life with Benni, his relationship with his parents, and social, political, and professional problems. In the end, all the individual characters such as Paul and Benni, Paul's parents Adrian and Lyndsay have a life – 'get a life.'

Under the caption “Corruption, Bribery and Sexual Violence in *Present*,” the Fourth Chapter explores the theme of Corruption in *No Time Like the Present*. After the end of the apartheid era, post-apartheid South Africa becomes the victim of corruption, violence, poverty, Xenophobia, and so on. Steve, a former chemist who acted as a bomb-maker during the apartheid period and Jabu, a school teacher, protested against the racism in apartheid. Now both get married and are living in a suburb in South Africa. Corruption leads to a major role in the post-apartheid period. Steve does moral corruption by hiding his plan from his wife to going to Australia to provide a better life for his family, and he also has an illicit affair with a lady in London, and he has not confessed this to his wife. The political leader Jacob Zuma commits graft as he gets bribe from the French arms dealer, and government officials also get corrupted. Due to this corruption, the South African economy is not stabilized. South African people have resorted to violence, thereby leading to poverty. Through the couple’s portrayal, Steve and Jabu Gordimer allude that old South Africa was distorted by racial prejudice, and post-apartheid South Africa also has a potentially fatal flaw – the corruption which has to be eradicated.

The Fifth Chapter, “Summation,” sums up the research findings. Specific reflections and thoughts emerge naturally from a careful study of the thematic concerns as expounded in the select novels of Nadine Gordimer. It analyses Gordimer as an ecologist, rebellion, and protest writer and describes various themes and styles she has used in the novels taken up for study. This chapter also suggests the scope for future research.