



## CULTURAL AND RACIAL CONFLICT IN NADINE GARDINER'S NOVELS: A RETROSPECT

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### Abstract

Nobel Prize winner writer Nadine Gordimer is one of the finest South African women writer and social reformer. As a writer and political activist and a member of ANC, Nadine Gordimer aptly highlights the complicated, personal, social and racial relationships in her writing. Gordimer was also a prominent member of the anti-censorship action group who won the CNA literary award for four times. Born in 1923 near springs, Transvaal, South Africa, Nadine Gordimer is the second daughter of a Lithuanian Jewish immigrant, Isidore Gordimer and an English Woman, Nan Myers. Gordimer was educated at a catholic convent school and the University of the Witwatersrand. South African Literature /the writing of Nadine Gordimer's novels highly focused on the racial and political issues. It is true that Gordimer's writing is inseparable from her political life.

### Keywords

*Racism, Feminism, Slavery, Humanity, Morality, Conflict, Sexism, etc.*

### Full Article

Being a writer, social and political activist, Nadine Gordimer always struggled for black's liberation. It is very difficult to imagine the writing of Gordimer without political involvements. As a versatile personality, Gordimer takes an unrelenting stand against apartheid. As a novelist, her novels explore the nature of entitlement and the concept of race. One of the dominant and an extraordinary spectrum of female protagonists portray women with their frailties as well as strengths, to name a few female protagonists: Rosa in *Burger's Daughter*, Maureen Smale in *July's People* and Hillela in *A Sport of Nature*. The female protagonists offer forthright, subtle and complex portraits of women's lives in such a country which obsessed with race.

Booker Prize winner writer, Nadine Gordimer has so far written thirteen novels: *The Lying Days* (1953), *A World of Strangers* (1958), *An Occasion for Loving* (1963), *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), *Guest of Honor* (1970), *The Black Interpreter* (1973), *The Conservationist* (1974), *Burger's Daughter* (1979), *July's People* (1981), *A Sport of Nature* (1987), *My Son's Story* (1990), *The House Gun* (1998) and *The Pickup* (2001). Beside the novels, Gordimer has also produced a rich collection of short fiction and nonfiction and screen plays. The writing of Nadine Gordimer had been of great benefit to humanity. She was a writer who fought hard to bring equality in their nation. Gordimer was an anti-apartheid activist whose writing helped to expose South Africa's Government of white minority rule to global leadership.

Nadine Gordimer's novels have always drawn on personal themes, although she has never written any autobiography. The first novel *The Lying Days* is an autobiographical in nature describes the awakening of a young girl to the hypocrisy of small town life with its extraordinary blindness to events going around it. The first novel followed with a steady output of fiction *An Occasion for Loving* deals with the absurdity of race laws as they restrict and complicate friendship of love. *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966) is about two competing moral positions in the



contemporary South Africa. It is a political novel centers around one white woman and her love, ex-husband, suicide and betrayal. The novel deals with the moral and racial issue during apartheid in South Africa. In 1974, Nadine Gordimer published one of her most acclaimed novel, *The Conservationist*. The novel awarded the prestigious Booker Prize award in England. The *Conservationist* centers around one Boer Farmer who attempts / tries to maintain his own moral purity amid the vile intrusions of racial violence.

Nadine Gordimer's first published books *The Soft Voice of the Serpent* (1952) and the novel *The Lying Days* (1953) exhibit the clear, controlled and unsentimental technique that became her hallmark. The writing of Nadine Gordimer centers around the devastation effects of apartheid on the lives of South African black people - the commitment to social justice, the numbness caused by the unwillingness to accept apartheid (apartness). The twentieth century South Africa was violent and brutal for blacks. A legacy from the British and Dutch colonial past, the system of apartheid had begun in 1910. It was the period when the majority of South African lands were assigned to whites. The apartheid period put hundreds of restrictions on the rights of black South Africans. At that time/in that period blacks were unable to live or attend school where they liked, work in professions they choose, marry whom they wished or even travel without permissions in various cities.

In 1948, the Government legalized racial segregation (Apartheid period) which was very brutal and repressive. It was also known as the scandal of the world for some decades. The 1950's saw the creation of black homelands - essentially reservations where blacks were awarded national self-government in exchange for their complete racial isolation. The homeland citizenship based on ethnicity exiled millions of blacks from South Africa. The pass law also even made required them to use passports to enter into their own nation to work. It is also said that (about the pass law) it was illegal for the blacks to be in the city after the ten O'clock Curfew.

*Burger's Daughter* (1979) is purely based on the life of a lawyer who challenges apartheid. The novel is about the historical and political happenings of the time of apartheid. It also highlights the wellknown freedom fighters and social activists like Nelson Mandela. The novel centers on Rosa and her struggle for equality against the established whites. Rosa struggles to get her lover Conrad and freedom, independence and equality to the blacks. Published in 1981, *July's People* is almost of science fiction highly presents a servant July who protects his former white employer from being murdered during the violent end of apartheid. It highlights the Civil War and the black South Africans struggle for their rights against the Whites. The novel celebrates the victory of blacks against dominant who lost everything and which they belongs and have much pride of those. *A Sport of Nature* (1987) is about an adventurous woman Hillela (earlier known as Kim) who prospers along with her homeland. The novel recounts the journey of Hillela and her identity as a Jewish (race and politics) and an embodiment of Liberation Movement. In short it is about Hillela's journey from a school girl to woman, a political observer to activist and passive mistress to active wife. The 1990 novel *My Sons Story* highly portrays a man's difficulty in choosing between fighting for freedom or remaining at home with his family.

In short, Nadine Gordimer novels deal with racial, social, political, moral, historical and psychological issues of her racially divided home country- South Africa. The theme of love is also an important part of her writing centring on ordinary people and the issue of race. Besides all, the South African writing / literature reflect two major influences traditional culture and colonial experience. Traditional culture varies from region to region and shapes the character of a regional literature. While the colonial experience is the shared experience which spans the diversity of African cultures. By and large, the literature of South Africa predominates with the theme of race relations and apartheid period in which blacks suffers a lot for their identity, equality, rights and belongings.



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**Article Received:**15/03/2026

**Article Accepted:**23/03/2026

**Published Online:**30/03/2026

**To Cite the Article:** *E., Victor*. "Cultural and Racial Conflict in Nadine Gardiner's Novels: A Retrospect." *Literary Cognizance: An International Refereed/Peer Reviewed e-Journal of English Language, Literature and Criticism*, Vol.-VI, Issue-4, March, 2026, 332-334. [www.literarycognizance.com](http://www.literarycognizance.com)

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