

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Relation between South African Whites and Blacks during the Transitional**

**Period: A Study of Nadine Gordimer's *July's People***

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**in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of**

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**By**

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### Abstract

The objective of the present research is to analyze power relation between South African whites and blacks during the interregnum in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*. Gordimer, while writing about power relations between whites and blacks, and between males and females, does not only grasp socio-economic and political situations of apartheid South Africa in early 1980s but also mixes the historicity up with her own imagination -- her creative vision on power relations between whites and blacks and between males and females in the would-be post-apartheid era -- to assert her belief on historicity of the text and textuality of history. There is a change in the socio-economic and political situation of South Africa, where the white Smales family -- Maureen, Bamford, Victor, Royce and Gina -- loses its power slowly and gradually, and is destined to take help of the black servant, July for their survival. The blacks on the other hand including July create new discourses and validate them to get power in their own hands. However, during the transitional period due to the role reversal, the old discourses formed by whites gradually become ineffective, whereas new discourses of blacks become effective. As a result, the powerful white masters who lose their power are destined to obey the black servant July, who exercises power strategically by forming new discourses for his own benefit.

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## I. General Introduction

Nadine Gordimer (1923-), a white South African Nobel Laureate (1991), started writing to raise awareness of the increasing strangeness and tensions brewing in South African society which adopted formal apartheid in 1948. She writes about racial conflict between whites and blacks and reveal the necessity of racial reconciliation in South Africa. In her opinion, apartheid -- the political system in South Africa from 1948 AD to 1990 AD -- should be abolished for the betterment of South Africa.

Gordimer has published twelve volumes of short stories and twelve novels so far. Among them *July's People* (1981) opens with a third person narration following a white South African woman, Maureen Smales' point of view about the situation of whites and blacks in South Africa toward the end of apartheid. It, ostensibly involves a white middle class family's flight from riot-stricken Johannesburg into the refuge of the black servant's native village. It takes its epigraph from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's: "The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms" (qtd. in *July's People*). Gordimer re-appropriates Gramsci's interregnum in order to suggest the 'morbid symptoms' that shape her novel's setting within the revolutionary movement of South Africa during the early 1980s. The relationship of Maureen, and Bam Smales -- the white South African couple -- with their black servant, July, is a nuanced relationship of dependence, defiance, communication and mis-communication. It dramatizes the racial, economic and sexual power dynamics underscoring white apartheid rule and the resistance to it. Gordimer uses the master servant relationship in *July's People* as an organizing motif that allows her to examine the themes like material and

economic basis of human interaction and construction of identity, the function of discourse as both an index of cultural difference and an exercise of power.

Gordimer employs a paradoxical mingling of continuity and change during the interregnum in order to introduce the Smales' unsettling impression into a foreign class structure. The fact, that July began that day for them as he has always done for them, suggests a static continuity or repetition in the radical setting change from affluent governors' residence, commercial hotel rooms, shift bosses' company bungalows and the aperture in thick mud walls that now serves as the Smale's front door. The setting as an abrupt transition does not only foreground the correspondence between place and the formation of identity but also introduces the inversion of power that characterizes the Smales' new dependence upon July. In another sense, the master's bedrooms of Johannesburg provide a setting in which the Smales exercise authority over July, whereas their displacement from his village suddenly invests July with a degree of power over them. And July's broken English in the first line "you like to have some cup of tea ?" underscores the language barriers that somewhat limit his recourse of power (1).

Since the publication of *July's People* many critics have analyzed it from various perspectives. The novel, regarded as one of Gordimer's best novels, shows individual, social and political problems of the white Smales family and self-consciousness of their black servant July. Carolyn K. Plummer, one of the South African critics, writes, "Gordimer is simply taking an ironic view of the reversal of fortunes for white South Africans who find themselves at the mercy of their black household servants" (71). In this sense she has given emphasis on reversal of fortunes for white South Africans which is determined by black servants and their mercy. But it is not black servants' mercy that determines the white position. It is necessary for

the servant, July to grab the system of power; only after that he is able to hold his own position in his society. People like July are more conscious about their position and futuristic mode, where they are trying to live a happy life.

Gordimer focuses on Maureen as the central character as it is her story. The first mention of her name is a case in point. Maureen is a female in a patriarchal system; her identity lies entirely in her association with powerful men. She exploits this position, but survival in a primitive village begins to erode Maureen's ability to control her environment through status. Maureen is reborn in course of this novel, i.e. she gets her own identity a fact that has profound implications for the theme of the work. In another response Jeffrey J. Folks opines that "[t]here is nothing more satisfying to buy than something made of straw; it is beautiful, cheap, and cannot last thus gratifying the eye, the desire to get something for nothing, and leaving one free of guilt of lying of treasures less ephemeral than the flesh" (116).

Here, he emphasizes on struggling, questioning, learning to lay hold of her place in history. People even having more wealth could be no more dominant. It is only for short period. He argues about the psychological thinking of the Smales family to dominate their servant forever. It exists between artistic imagination and the urgency of historical reality. At the same time, the people who want to be dominant forever by showing their power may fail in course of time. Maureen exists in a state of physical and temporal dislocation in a condition of delirium and of not knowing where she is. The abdication in *July's People* reverses the guest-host relationship between July and Maureen; instead of July's being encamp in the Smale's servant's quarters, the Smales live in July's mother's hut.

What the Smales understood as a stable relationship of marriage is shown to be dependent on a middle – class environment and especially on the sense of



ownership that props up the marriage. Bamford Smales finds his 'male role' as provider and 'reassurer' based as it is on economic control quickly exploded. Increasingly disoriented, he no longer knows how to address Maureen, since she no longer matches his understanding of 'wife', and 'mother'. Similarly, he becomes the 'blond man' or simply 'he'. For her part, the props to marriage are properly middle class focus on 'the house and children', her 'hobbies' of reading and gardening, with an intermittent unimportant to part-time job to fill up her time. Certainly irony is attached to both the fact that Maureen has enjoyed reading as a 'hobby' and the fact that the one novel she takes from Johannesburg is a historical novel that now could not compete with the reality of events but might earlier have led her toward comprehending her own with-drawl from social reality.

Another well known critic on African literature, Kenneth W. Harrow comments on the novel simply as the reflection of apartheid movement of Africa: "The most familiar novel [among farm novels] of utopian fictionalizing of the end of apartheid is Gordimer's *July's People*" (36). Here, what has been problematized is not the relationship between literature and power but the concepts or views in terms of provisional framework, subject to change and transformation rather than as timeless truths. This might be the space for a hyphen to reach across the deconstructive analysis of postmodernism to the political contextualizing of post colonialism, so that the literature that is currently produced in South Africa, Nigeria, Somalia could be said to be stretching generic boundaries. It is altogether appropriate that the contemporary literary discourse in South Africa should blend political discourse with narrative discourse. In course of soliciating manuscripts for this issue, and persuing the postcolonial literature that bears a question of nation and literature, that we seem to be at a crossroad. What appears to be most painful, necessary, and

extraordinary about our times is the degree to which the political struggle has turned excessive, matching the spectacular shift from historical and social realism.

According to Stephan Clingman, "*July's People* is an apocalyptic vision of a possible future in which South African whites must construct a new identity in the time between the overthrow of apartheid and the emergence of a new national consciousness" (201). He supports that it is the demand of time that white people should search for the new identity, despite their power they were not able to establish their position in July's village due to the consciousness of the people nationwide. There is a contradiction whether white people were really searching for their new identity or it was their compulsion to escape from their earlier position due to their kindness.

Stephen Clingman further writes about Maureen in *July's People* but he may just as well be speaking of Margaret Atwood's narrator in *Surfacing* when he says that the female protagonist "is running from old structure and relationship [...] but she is also running towards her revolutionary destiny. She does not know what the destiny may be [...]. All she knows is that it is the only authentic future awaiting her" (203). Here, he focuses on the position of female protagonist of the novel, Maureen who turns away from her husband and children and runs towards the unknown. The novel ends with an image, "a runner held moving in flight" (203).

Gordimer presumes to speak for the movement that lies ahead of time after the interregnum during which a new sensibility can be born. Maureen runs from her position for a new national and sensible self-conception. The end of interregnum is a place that is unspeakable, the movement when the conflict and sensible woman abdicates her position as a composer of an object with photographic frame of her

socialization. It is only from out of this movement of authority whether positive or negative, that the 'strange beast', the woman beyond civilization, may be born.

A well known critic, Sheila Roberts comments in "Sites of Paranoia and Taboo" the relationship of Maureen with July is natural seeming having the smooth appearance of an interaction between courtoirs service and generous reward, she believes that she and July understand each other. She writes, "Maureen Smales in *July's People* nurtures a humane creed and a belief in 'equality of need'. Maureen does not intrude on his privacy, on the rare occasion when July is ill, she brings him a 'tray' of light food she had prepared for herself" (66).

When July saves Maureen and her family from the violence of revolution and brings them to his village, she comes to assume their loss of white urban status which will lead to greater equality of interaction between her family and July. In this respect she is even more seriously mistaken in her assumption of the normal intimacy and understanding between herself and July. The uncomfortable one-room structure into which chickens and large insects wander where there is the rustling of rats and mice at night, and into which rain water leaks fakes on more disturbing ambience when, within its constricting space, the ordinary, satisfying white middle class marriage of the Smales' begins to destabilize.

Thirteen years before the official demise of apartheid, Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* foresees the inevitable collapse of white South Africa and the emergence of new political and social realities that would require white South Africans to fashion the contours of new identity. In this response, Ali Erritouni in "Apartheid Inequality and Post-apartheid Utopia in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*" writes, "*July's People*, however, dwells less on the pending demise of white South Africa and the Utopia of an alternative future, and more on the difficulties that arise

from the attempt to surpass the pitfalls of the old order in anticipation of a new one" (69). He studies the racial issue in the text where people of South Africa emerge victorious for their struggle for political and economic justice, and the whites will find themselves in a subordinate position, ruled by blacks. Gordimer does not imagine a full fledged post apartheid South Africa, rather she merely adumbrates possibilities for a more equal co-existence between the blacks and the whites. If apartheid, with its policies of racial segregation, tipped the economic balance in favour of the whites, Gordimer envisions a post apartheid future where whites remedy the economic disparities between them and their fellow black South Africans.

In *July's People*, Gordimer does not only expose the impasse to which apartheid condemned interracial relations but also envisions a utopian future in which South Africa tries to overcome the intractable social and economic problems. In this response Frederic Jameson argues in "The Seeds of Time" that "authentic Utopia is seldom prescriptive, serving, instead, as a beacon that points the way but is not itself a harbor – the ultimate destination" (158). Here he takes this novel as science fiction where everything comes true later. Indeed, it is not so for the writer of this novel being as a seer or prophet but utopia is neither apocalyptic hordocrine; it rejects prescription and teleological visionary history.

By analyzing the ending of the novel "Beyond the Interregnum: A Note on the Ending of *July's people*" Visser argues, "Yeats saw Leda as the recipient of an annunciation that would found Greek civilization given that her rape gave birth to Helen of Argos, whose abduction by Paris gives rise to the Trojan war. The imminent convergence of Maureen and the helicopter, like the convergence of Leda and the [...] Swan herald a new civilization a new epoch for South Africa" (64). He has taken this novel as an archetypal novel and connects with mythical poem "Leda and The Swan"

by W.B. Yeats. According to him Maureen's passive and hypnotic running towards helicopter recalls the encounter between Leda and the swan in Yeat's poem.

The afore-mentioned critics have analyzed this novel from old historicist, feminist, mythical, science fiction and Marxist perspectives. But the present researcher is going to analyze this novel from new historicist perspective. Therefore, it would be better to define terms like historicity of text, textuality of history, discourse, power, truth and other terms related to new historicist theory in brief.

New historicism is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. New historicist reading is based on : 'the textuality of history and the historicity of texts. 'Textuality of history' involves in willingness to read all the textual traces of the past with the attention traditionally conferred to literary texts. The 'historicity of the text' connects a text to the social, cultural and economic circumstances of its production. Similarly the idea of 'textuality of history' came as a jolt to the age old search for metaphysical spirit that was said to be all pervasive throughout the historical movement. New historicist takes history as a text but not as a scientific fact.

Discourse is taken as a knowledge throughout the experience and activities. But here it is focused on the discourse used by Michel Foucault where the term 'discourse' refers not to language or social interaction but to relatively well bounded areas of social knowledge. Foucault opines that "[i]t is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (*History of Sexuality*, 100). A discourse is whatever contains but also enables writing, speaking and thinking within a specific historical limits. However, discourses do not simply represent 'the real' but rather they are part of its production. All human subjects are positioned by discourses or knowledge of different fields. So to view discourse as a pure form of knowledge would be a flawed

approach, for no discourse could escape from the network of power, in power politics govern all the components.

Power refers to the idea of power, which means shift in direction of thinking as to form new system. Power is a creative source for positive value, and is practised hegemonically. It is not hierarchical flowing from top to bottom and is not used vertically to dominate the 'other'. Foucault's power does not adhere to the repressive hypothesis that sees power functioning in the form of chain which localizes it in a few hands. Power, for him, is not just the ruthless domination of the weak by the stronger. Foucault's conception of discourse is indispensable for an understanding of the role of 'power' in the production of knowledge. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate domination was dealt but with living beings, and mastery.

It would be able to be applied at the level of life itself. Power is taken as a form of chain. However, it is not stable in reality. It moves here and there according to the movement of time. Power is not constant but keeps on changing hand to hand which determines truth. There is a relationship between power and truth but truth is determined in the context of power. In Foucault's view, truth is subjective.

Due to socio-economic and political change in July's village, South Africa the mentality and actions of the whites, the Smales family and the black servant like July are radically shaped. So, here discourse is taken as a condition and opportunity for the blacks which helps to raise their consciousness where the Smales family is aware of the socio-political changes. So during the interregnum the Smales family which itself is in power obeys the so-called powerless black servant, July and leaves the settlement.

This dissertation is based on the thorough textual reading. The researcher will develop theoretical modality using the issues and themes related to New historicism in the succeeding chapter.

## **II. Relation between History and Fiction**

### **General Background**

History, which is the representation of the past has come to be an issue both in historiographic and literary theory today. Since postmodernism has irrevocably discredited the definitions of literature, history and so on there is now a historical turn sweeping through the humanities in response to the linguistic turn that was dominant over the past twenty years. These two turns have come to open up conflicting position among the historiographers and literary theorists alike. The problems of critical discourse mostly stem from these contending position and their corresponding dilemmas, namely the textualist position, which favours textual analysis of history on formalist principles, and the contextualist one, which privileges the historicity of text, placing it in relation to society, culture and politics. It is important to note that the significant role claimed for historization in literary studies has come about at the very time the role of textuality in historical writing has been in full swing. Implications of this debate can be seen in postmodernist fiction which relates to it in a significant way.

Since the historic turn marks the self-reflexive narratives of such fictions, the interrelated matrix of textuality and historicity as conflicting terms renders the question of history to be intensely problematic. Historicism incorporates the understanding of history both as poetics, a discursive practice, and as a discipline that investigates the relation of power to knowledge in the past. However, the historicist critics, in the late nineteenth century, viewed literature and history as related to each other. They treated literature in terms of the period it was produced. The old historicist critics like Hegel and Tillyard had a conviction that literature is also a



recreation of past. So, their function was to interpret the literary work in the light of the past.

In this context, Tillyard saw Elizabethan culture as a unified system of meanings. He found that the literary figures such as Shakespeare, Marlow never seriously challenged the settled world view of the age. His books on the Elizabethan world picture and Shakespeare's history plays are generally considered as the representatives of old historicism, in which centred on ideas of divine order, the chain of being and the correspondences between earthly and heavenly existence (qtd. in Seldon 104). Tillyard in this way, as usual to old historicist, finds the pattern in the history and treats literature as a mirror of history. He, thus, makes a hierarchical separation between history and literature.

For the old historicist critics, the interpretation of literary work forms the past as if it were an integrity of the work. The focus is at once on what he sees to be the chief value of the work, the formation of a presentation in the literary mode, not simply of some aspect of man's experience but of man's experience in the past (Handy 304).

Thus, for the old historicist critics, literary work belongs to the time it is created. History becomes important for them because it is essential for the interpretation of literary work. The criticism, for them, "is not simply elucidation of the work but the elucidation of the work in the light of what he regards as its most essential characteristics, its unique quality of pastness" (Handy 304). This is to say that the literary work, for them, is the product of history; fiction, therefore, is related to history.

Hegelian perspective of history as a linear and progressive phenomenon that one day will reach 'perfection' is highly glorified before the advent of postmodernism.

Humanists (Heglians) thought of an individual who always 'corrects' himself by identifying his deviation from the norm of the historical situation. The Hegelians' concept of universal reason that existed behind the surface forms of human knowledge is said to bring a change by synthesising the thesis and anti thesis in continuist history. Old historical critics believe that application of knowledge about history is necessary in order to understand a text.

Anglo-American New Criticism, the most dominant theoretical movement in mid-twentieth century, challenged the historical view of literature put forward by Hippolyte Taine. New critics treated the literary text as an object essentially independent of its author and historical context. All the leading figures of the New-critical school, in one way or the other, focused their views on the textuality of the text. New critics assigned full power to the text presenting it as an autonomous, self-sufficient entity.

The formal linking of history and fiction is historiographic metafiction which produces an interactive use of text and context. Postmodern novel as such, offers a richer perspective for historical interpretation. In fact, it may, as well, serve as the best evidence for understanding the complexity of historical context and its construction. Past evidence acquires meaning only through its interpretations, but narrative representation cannot provide an authority to support any claim to historical credibility due to its discursive nature.

The practice of giving 'equal' weight to literary and non-literary material is the first major difference between 'new' and the 'old' historicism. Old historicist basically focuses on practices of 'close reading', and the analysis of 'patterns of imaginary'. Actual thoughts or feelings, or intentions of a writer can never be recovered or reconstructed, so that the real living individual is now entirely suppressed by the

literary text which has come down to us. The old historicists used to believe that the word of the past replaces the world of the past. Since, for the new historicist, the events and attitudes of the past now exist solely as writing, it makes sense to subject that writing to the kind of close analysis formally reserved for literary texts.

### **Departure from Old Historicism : Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

Foucauldian historical reading moves forward to see the flaw in Hegelian perspective of history as a linear and progressive phenomenon that one day will reach perfection. The flaw, Foucault sees, lies in the humanists' (Hegelians') thinking of an individual who always 'corrects' himself by identifying his deviation from the norm of the historical situation. This is Foucault's analysis that sees the result to be the product of the cold alliance between an individual morality and his 'embeddedness' with discourse and power. The Hegelian concept of universal reason that existed behind the surface forms of human knowledge, irritated Foucault. So Foucauldian counter-history sees the ever present 'Geist' that is said to be bringing a change by synthesising the thesis and the anti-thesis in continues history as a myth of human progress.

In *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* Foucault comments on the nature of humanistic notion of history by finding in it a contradiction that began with Cartesian Mathesis. It is, as Foucault writes, "an exhaustive ordering of the world as though methods, concepts, types of analysis and finally men themselves [...] [are in] inevitable unity of knowledge" (75-76). The insight which is so dispensive sees histories as not having a casual law or final goal but as having a network of power relations to work upon an individual. Foucault's counter history by attacking [De]Cartesian 'cogito ergo sum' views the Cartesian man to be in a stage of misunderstanding. Cartesian man, as Foucault describes "is also

the source of misunderstanding that [...] also enables him to recover his integrity on the basis of what eludes him" (*The Order*, 323).

Foucault's radical anti-humanism is best expressed in his essay entitled "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History". Taking the concept of truth and power as described by Nietzsche in his idea of genealogy, Foucault in his essay has a three fold aim. First, he offers his arguments supporting his break with archaeology. Secondly, he expands the scope of genealogy; and thirdly he revises the role of the historian.

In arguments that support his break away from archaeology, Foucault describes genealogy as a diachronic method. Genealogy, for him, is Nietzschean effort to undermine all absolute grounds and to demonstrate the origins of things only in relation to and in context with other things. So genealogy, unlike archaeology which seeks to uncover the layers of civilization by positing in them the stability of systems of thought that stay long for arena, turns towards the problems of power and practice. Regarding his movement towards genealogy Foucault states, "The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations; on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified, it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself" (88). Writing about Foucault's shift from archaeology to genealogy Arun Gupto describes the Foucauldian concepts of these two historical readings to be complementary. Both of these historical approaches are, for Gupto, in disagreement with "a fairy tale like totalizing concept of history" (114).

Most interesting idea with genealogy is its scope. Firstly, genealogy attacks the supposed coherence of a thinking 'subject'. Secondly, it dissolves the fiction of singular identity. Thirdly, it attacks the notion of origins in historical investigations. Fourthly, it stresses the idea of history as discontinuity. Finally, it focuses not upon

ideas or historical mentalities but upon the body so as to show it totally imprinted by 'history'.

Foucault departing from the traditional concept of history reformed the role of the historian. A historian for Foucault has a three fold task. First while confronting the 'one' reality, a historian should be in the favor of history as a parody. Secondly he should be against singular *continuist* human identity. And thirdly, the investigations should be directed against truth. To sum up, from Foucault's idea of historical reading, we can say that he has the general approach that seeks to analyze "the order, mechanism, and exclusion that have been the feature(s) of western societies since enlightenment" (Gupto 14). This general approach contrasts to total history which looks at the overall development of the period, attempts to describe differences, changes, alternations, mutations and so on.

Foucauldian radicalism of history manifests itself in three dimensions. It rejects absolute truth or origin and argues for fictionalized history and historized fiction; it confutes the linearity of history and exposes how a body is imprinted and inscribed by history. The tendency of new historicism to view history as a social science and social successes as historical became very radical in its 'textualization of history' and 'historicization of text'. The demarcation between history and fiction was now indistinct and this merging of 'historical actuality' and fiction parodied the search for objective truth in history.

According to Foucault, history is an intersection of discourses that establish an episteme, a dominant ideology. Foucault refuses to see history as an evolutionary process, a continuous development towards present. For him, there is no objective history.

The formal approach of discourse analysis considers discourse in terms of text. Discourse is a way of presenting something. Generally, it is talking and communicating by using signs to designate things. It also shows implication for speech and the relationship between signifiers and what they signify. But in a broad sense, it can help us interpret many slices of our social and political systems that we have never even considered. The discourse is a major point in society that affects how we speak, act and interpret things. Discourse is not merely a sign but it is a set of practices; most importantly it is a system of constraint or exclusion which sets boundaries for what can and cannot be said or done in our everyday lives. The experts define the situation and then divide the line between reason and unreason for society. And it determines for us what is proper and improper through the eyes of experts. In most societies, it has never been a matter of what one does; the only thing that really matters is what is thought about it according to what can and cannot be said. The system of discourse with regard to everything constantly changes within years and decades and sometimes according to the one who has power. And power holders use discourse according to their benefits.

The discourse is formative and action oriented. It is constructed to achieve particular social goals rather than representing facts. It helps power holders control people. People have to believe on presented truth because when one does not have what s/he wants, one has to believe on what one has. Our social lives are dominated by the written words of discourse. Any form of discourse is considered to be a source of power because it helps us to speak and act in certain ways. Almost every slice of social life has taken over the rules and rituals of discourse that carries it out within society. This form of modern sociological theory has shown us a shift towards a different type of organization of power in ordinary world. So, discourse is more of an

invisible type of power that we take for granted, and do not even think to question it in our everyday lives.

In this way, moving away from idea of discourse as a system of language to define it as thought, Foucault challenges the formalistic trend of seeing subject as the source of knowledge: the human mind receives impression of the objects and puts them into 'transparent' words. Foucault sees discourse as the product of 'archive' of the material conditions. He sees discourse as inseparable from power because every discourse, according to him, becomes the ordering medium of the institution it belongs to though discourse is neither true nor false in itself; it attempts to represent the real and forms its limits and constraints for its subjects. It does so with the help of certain dichotomies related to normality or abnormality. For example, the discourses define madness, criminality, and sexual abnormality and so on in relation to sanity, justice and sexual normality. And "such discursive formations massively determine the constant forms of knowledge" (Selden 106). All human subjects, therefore, are positioned by discourse or knowledge of different fields and of themselves. So, to view discourse as a pure form of knowledge would be a flawed approach, for no discourse could escape from the network in which power politics governs all other components.

The term discourse signifies all practices which signify some meaning in a specific context. Discourse is 'the system of statement' and within the system we know the world. Discourse concerns the system of meanings. Being influenced by the lack of positive reference of language in its meaning system, the social critics of discourse began to analyze discourse within and through the social parameters (The present study concerns discourse in the social paradigm). Discourse carries the terrain of sources for signification -- symbols, gestures, images, languages, sounds, media

devices and so on. Being a social aspect, discourse is always involved with power and its interests. And thus, there is the play of ideology in discourse and consecutively in power. Power in the society creates notions of truth, knowledge and values and thereby tries to influence others through these values. The whole areas of discourses – religious discourses, colonial and post colonial discourses or whatever they are -- always involve with power relations. Therefore, there is always the involvement of 'ideology' in discourse. Ideology, entering into discourse, makes the interest of the powerful as the general interests, truths, values and knowledge.

According to Foucault, the term 'discourse' refers not like language and social interaction but it covers wide 'areas of social knowledge'. Actually 'a discourse' may whatever it contains but it enables to write, speak and think within its historical limitations. However, different discourses are different from each other. In *A Foucault Primer* Alec Mchoul and Wendy Grace opine that "[s]ometimes he treats the discourses separately; at other times he looks at their contribution to the possibility of each period having an overall view of world" (32). For this the tendency to view over discourses has been changing time and again.

### **New Historicism**

Postmodernist critique of Hegelian history as grand narrative has led to the new historicist debate over how the contextualization of the past can be represented in the histories written in the present. At the core of this debate is the premise that history is a verbal construct. It amounts to the argument that the past can only be known from its texts, its traces, be they literary or historical. It is because history manifests itself as a narrative construct, stories designed to yield meaning through narrative ordering. Yet the one major problem around which the question of history revolves in contemporary theory is the historical nature of all discourses. Historical



discourse too is produced in progresses of contextualization, and thus all systems of meaning are historically determined. But the historical evidence is unreliable, even in the absence of social pressure, people lie reality about their most intimate beliefs. Consequently historical knowledge can only be attained through texts and extra textual considerations defy proof and accordingly relevance.

In Louis Montrose's view, history is a textual reconstruction of the past, and as such it can possess no authoritative materiality. Dominick Lacapra, too, attacking contextual historicism, has claimed that "the context itself is text of sorts [...]. It cannot become the occasion for a reductive reading of texts" (95). Lacapra proposes "multiple interactive contexts" in historical writing which for all intents and purposes, apply to the discourses of historiographic metafiction (91). In *History and Criticism* he writes that "texts interact with one another and with contexts in complex ways, and the specific question for interpretation is precisely how a text comes to terms with its putative contexts" (128). This is a revisionist notion of contextualization where the relationship between text and context is a question of interpretation.

Contextualization, however, is central to historical practice. It is, as Beskhofer says, "the primary method of historical understanding and practice" (qtd. in Zammito 791). But contextualization alone cannot provide a fully historical understanding, because the context (the historical milieu) itself is created via historical documents which themselves are texts.

The debate centres on the textualist politics making the linguistic usage an object of historical inquiry. To put it in a nutshell, as Ankersmit writes, "We no longer have any texts, any past, but just interpretations of them" (278). On the other hand, a mere contextualist approach in the old sense as the object of historical study can no longer suffice and therefore, it is limited. We need to consider both ends of

this dichotomy between textualist and contextualist list positions in interpreting the past. This is what historiographic metafiction purposefully undertakes to deal with.

New historicists argue that we cannot know the texts in isolation from its historical context. Unlike traditional historicists, new historicists insist that all interpretations are subjectively filtered through one's own set of historically conditioned view points.

Texts sometimes reveal a resistance to the episteme, rather than reflect it. Each text is only one example of many types of discourses that reveal history. To understand a text, one should look at all sorts of other texts of the time, including social practices (as a kind of text). So, the concept of historicity of text represents the concept of text having the social cultural and economic circumstances of its production.

New historicism, as by general agreement, as the movement has eventually come to be called, is unified by its disdain for literary formalism. Specially, leaders of the movement describe themselves as unhappy with the exclusion of social and political circumstances (commonly known as the 'context') from the interpretation of literary works. They are impatient with the settled views that a novel is a self contained object, a verbal icon, a logical core surrounded by a texture of irrelevance. In this way, they are setting their jaws against '[old] criticism', albeit rather late in the day. But their hostility can never be unmediated. The French *nouvelle critique* and German philosophical hermeneutics have intervened at least in the history of fashions within the university; and the new movement has arisen at least as much in response to these later developments as to a critical establishment which has made a formalistic view of literary works. Thus, New historicism in literary study has emerged in the early 1980s not so much in the spirit of a counter insurgency as after the manner of a

corporate reorganization. It has been a response not to literary but to literary studies. It has been called forth not by the subject matter under study -- not by actual novels, plays -- but by the institutional situation in which young scholars now find themselves.

The situation in English as the century entered its final two decades was one that placed a greater premium on method than ideas. Besides, there was a rising sense that literary study had reached something of an impasse on one side were the students of New critics, still doing readings of long-accepted texts; on the other, the deconstructionists, showing how texts undo themselves. Both seemed remote from the true interests of the new professors, which had cut its teeth on political slogans of the sixties. As Jean E. Howard frankly says in a defense of the new movement, by the early eighties professors had grown weary by teaching literary texts as "ethereal entities floating above the strife of history [...]. For a spell, perhaps, feminism seemed close to solving the dilemma" (qtd. in Myers 27). It appeared to hold out the hope of transforming literary criticism into an agent for social change. But gradually many, within the discipline, began to awaken to the fact that feminism had no distinctive method of its own; the feminist critic knew what she wanted to say about a text, but she had to adopt other interpretive 'strategies' as the saying went, to make her themes appear. Younger critics were having to resort to a tandem operation, using deconstruction or some other variant of poststructuralist method to clear the ground on which an assortment of radical political notions were carted in to raise a new interpretation. But such a procedure left critics anxious as their interpretations failed to go beyond the already familiar readings of the text. It was in this situation that the New historicism emerged. It appeared to offer a distinctive approach, a rigorous method, along with the opportunity to salvage one's political commitments. Indeed, at

times new historicism seemed almost designed to methodolize the political interpretation of literature.

In the introduction of Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self Fashioning*, the title suggests the main focus of the movement. Within the ranks of New historicism, literature is considered to be one of its acts as a form of social control. Although most new historicists are scrupulous to distinguish themselves from Marxist critics, the fact remains that the central task of new historicism is the same as that of Marxist criticism: first to call into question the traditional view of literature as an autonomous realm of discourse with its own problem, forms, principles, activities, and then to dissolve the literary text into the social and political context from which it emerged. In fact, new historicism tries explicitly to solve the theoretical difficulty in Marxist criticism on relating the cultural superstructure to the material base. Its claim to newness might be put in terms of its claim to having solved that problem.

New historicism is critical of the 'enabling presumptions' of its more distant, but not of its more immediate, predecessors. For instance, the movement follows post-structuralism in its assurance that literary works mean number of things to number of readers, freeing new historicists to find the warrant for their interpretation not in the author's intentions for his work but in the ideology of his age. Similarly, the new historicist's attempt to assimilate the literary text to history is guaranteed by the poststructuralist doctrine of textuality which states that the text is not aloof from the surrounding context, that there is an ebb and flow, between text and whatever might once have been considered to be outside it.

Greenblatt calls the enabling presumptions behind new historicist method. This movement establishes itself upon four main contentions: Firstly, literature is historical, which means that a literary work is not primarily the record of one mind's

attempt to solve certain formed problems and the need to find something to say; it is a social and cultural construct shaped by more than one consciousness. The proper way to understand it, therefore, is through culture and society that produced it. Secondly, Literature, then, is not a distinct category of human activity. It must be assimilated to history, i.e. a particular vision of history. Thirdly, like works of literature man himself is a social construct, the sloppy composition of social and political force -- there is no such thing as human nature that transcends history. Renaissance man belongs to inescapably and irretrievably to the Renaissance. There is no continuity between Renaissance man and post-modern man; history is a series of rupture between ages and man. Fourthly, as a consequence the historian is trapped in his own 'historicity' (Renaissance 2). No one can raise above his own social formations, his own ideological upbringing in order to understand the past on its terms. A modern reader can never experience a text as its contemporaries experienced it. Given this fact, the best modern historicist approach to literature can hope to accomplish, according to Catherine Belsey, is to "use the text as a basis for reconstruction of an ideology" (qtd. in Myer 29).

The first principle of this movement is that the recovery of the original meaning of a literary text is the whole of critical interpretation. One of the premises of New historicism is that recovery of meaning is impossible, to attempt it is naïve. What practitioners of the new method are concerned with, by contrast, is the recovery of the original ideology which gave birth to the text, and which the text is in turn helped to disseminate throughout a culture. This dimension of critical interpretation has been neglected by traditional scholars not merely because the required concept, the "enabling presumptions" of ideology, was unavailable to them until recently; in new historicist's view it had never been widely attempted because literary texts

themselves suppress the means by which they construct ideology. A traditional formalistic approach, treating the text as self-contained entity, can never locate ideological operations, also known as 'representations'. Only a historicist approach, treating the text as one element in the ideology of an age, can hope to lay their base.

Stephen Greenblatt begins his most theoretical statement about new historicism: *Towards a Poetics of Culture*, by stating that his methodology is at best a practice rather than doctrine. One of the peculiar characteristics of 'New Historicism' in literary studies is precisely how unresolved and in some ways disingenuous it has been. He points out some of the influences on the school: discourse analysis of Michel Foucault and European anthropological and social theorists while distinguishing the approach from both Marxist critic like Frederic Jameson and post-modernist critics like Jean Francois Lyotard.

Greenblatt argues that New historicism, by contrast, works to remain always attuned to the contradictions of any historical moment, including those movements dominated by capitalism. On the issue of the relation between private and public or between the aesthetic and political realms, Greenblatt argues:

The effortless invocation of two apparently contradictory accounts of art is characteristic of American capitalism in the late twentieth century and an outcome of long term tendencies in the relationship of art and capital : in the same movement a working distinction between the aesthetic and the real is established and abrogated. (*Towards a Poetics of Culture* 7)

The result of attunement to the contradictions of any given historical moment leads Greenblatt into a number of basic premises: Firstly, one should begin with specific details, anecdotes, and examples in order to avoid a totalizing version of history. One

should proceed from such details to illustrate how they are tied up with larger contradictory forces in a given period, no matter how approvingly innocuous the detail may seem at first. In an introduction to *The power of Forms in the English Renaissance*, Habib Opines:

For [Greenblatt] [...] new historicism is different from both the new criticism, which views the text as a self contained structure, and the earlier historicism which was monological and attempted to discover a unitary political vision. Both of these earlier modes of analysis according to Greenblatt, engaged in a project of uniting disparate and contradictory elements into an organic whole, whether it is the text itself or in its historical background. The earlier historicism, moreover, viewed the resulting totality or unity as a historical fact rather than the product of interpretation or of the ideological languages of certain groups. (76)

The goal of new historicism, for Greenblatt, is to put cultural objects in some interesting relationship to social and historical processes and, thus, he distinguishes new historicism from old historicism. Moreover, Greenblatt focuses on the textual nature of history: "The simple way to describing new historicism is to say that its interested in the dimensions of symbolic practice" (*Poetics of Culture* 10).

Louis Montrose, a prominent new historicist critic, views literature and history as fully interdependent. He thinks that new historicism has been constituted as an academic site of ideological struggle between containment and subversion: "Within its context of the containment-subversion debate my own position has been that a closed and static, monolithic and homogeneous notion of ideology must be replaced by one that is heterogeneous and unstable, permeable and processual" (404). He further

argues that "the key concern of new historicist critic is a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of histories" (410). According to Montrose all texts are embedded in specific historical, social and material context. Literary texts too are the material products of specific historical conditions. Literary texts, therefore, must be treated along with its historical context. Likewise, by the textuality of histories, he means that access to a full and authentic past is never possible.

### **Power Relation during the Transitional Period**

Transitional period is the time of great diversity where lots of changes take place in the society but those changes cannot be totally established as authorised one. The facts keep on changing according to the expression of the people. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner opine that Foucauldian discontinuity refers to the fact that in a transition from one historical era to another "things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way" (217). It shows that such kind of situation arises because of the boundaries of knowledge and nature of transitional period; there arises the discontinuity and historical breaks always include some overlapping interaction and echoes between the old and new. There is a shift in the sciences of labor, life and language where all go to establish their own ideas. For that reason one has to struggle hard to create his/her own discourse. If they remain valid up to the end they become powerful but it is not so easy to establish their own discourse with the support of others.

Archaeology, however, seems to treat history only to freeze it, it ignores the temporal relations that may be manifested in discursive formations. It seeks rules that will be uniformly valid, in the same way, and at every point in time. But in transitional period, sudden formulation of discourses replaces the past ones and creates new perspective and view for betterment.



Interregnum or transitional period is a time of formation of group of statements. In this way, it shows how a succession of events may, in the same order in which it is presented, become an object of discourse, be recorded, described, explained, elaborated into concepts, and provide the opportunity for a theoretical choice. It provides the principle of its articulation over a chain of successive events. It is a time of flow where everything keeps on flowing according to movement and speed of time. If one does not like this change, then s/he has to freeze oneself, not others. In *Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault writes, "Archaeology is much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new form of positivity, and of sudden redistribution" (139). Here he means transitional period is the source of opening all types of possibility, ruptures and gaps among the people of society where all the people try to maintain their distance and move forward for their betterment but the future is unknown.

Discourses are made up of a series of homogeneous events but archaeology distinguishes several possible levels of events within the very density of discourse: the level of appearance of objects, types of enunciation, concepts, strategic choices operate positively. It is necessary to define precisely what these changes consist of. It is basically replacement of general conquer with the abstract principle of their succession. The disappearance of particular event is the symbol of emergence of new idea and modality.

Archaeology establishes the system of transformations that constitute change, it tries to develop empty, abstract notion with the view, according to the analysable status of transformation. Truth can be derived from the analysis of various transformations which are replaced by universal law and its status. In order to

theorize the birth of modern disciplinary and normalizing practices, genealogy politicizes all facets of culture and everyday life.

During the transitional period, various discourses are formed by the people for validating them as truth. The discourses of the earlier system cannot be totally ignored as they have been embedded in the minds of the people. On the other hand, new discourses cannot be made effective instantly as they require power holders to be implemented. Therefore, during the interregnum or transitional period there is the interplay of discourses of the old system and the would be system: the new cannot get a complete shape and the old produces 'morbid symptoms' as Gramsci claims.

In such situation, both the people related to ex-power and the people in would be possible power go through dilemma, and confusion. So, the features of both the old system and would-be system can be seen to be in conflict. The people related to earlier power try to remain in power at the beginning but when they realize that their discourses are disobeyed by the would be powerful people, they are destined to obey the discourses of would be system for their existence. On the other hand, as the would be powerful people are not accustomed to the new system or discourse, they have to struggle hard to validate the new discourses hegemonically. In the next chapter the researcher is going to study the discursive formations during South African interregnum -- transitional period between apartheid and post-apartheid --, power relations between whites and blacks during the interregnum from New historicist perspective in relation to the interregnum historicized and fictionalized by Nadine Gordimer in *July's People*.

### **III. Power Relation between South African Whites and Blacks during the Transitional Period: A Study of Nadine Gordimer's *July's People***

#### **Change in Socio-Economic and Political Condition in South African Society in Gordimer's *July's People***

Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*, a novel ostensibly involving a white middle-class family's flight from riot-stricken Johannesburg into the refuge of their black-servant's native village, takes an epigraph from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebook*: "The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms." Gordimer re-appropriates Gramsci's interregnum in order to suggest the 'morbid symptoms' that shape the setting of her novel within the revolutionary movement of early 1980s in South Africa. The relationship between Maureen and Bam Smales and their servant, July -- a nuanced relationship of dependence, defiance, communication and miscommunication -- dramatizes the broader racial, economic and sexual power dynamics underscoring white apartheid rule and resistance to it. Gordimer uses the master-servant relationship in *July's People* as an organizing motif that allows her to examine the economic basis of human interaction and construction of identity.

After the second World War, because of the development in industrialization in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa, many landless rural black Africans settled in Soweto. The informal settlements developed as a crowded city where Afrikaans dominated National party gained power in 1948 and implemented apartheid in the same year. Soweto came to the world's attention on 16 June 1976 with the Soweto Riots, when mass protests erupted over the government policy to enforce education in Afrikaans rather than English. Thousands of students marched towards Orlando

stadium where 566 people died. After that Soweto and other townships became the stage for violent state repression.

The novel is set on the historicity -- socio-economic and political situation -- caused by Soweto War and its aftermath. From the very beginning of the novel, Gordimer uses the real condition of the black servant, July as a person to serve the white master. The novel begins with the voice of July, a black servant: "You like to have some cup of tea ? July bent at the door way and began that day for them as his kind has always done for their kind" (*July's People* 4). It is a time where the Smales family has come from city and sleeps in mud hut with sack door. July is ready to serve tea to all the members of the Smales family. However, they refuse milk and accept tea. It shows that from the beginning of the novel the Smales become conscious about their power relation with their black servant.

Although the novel opens with the dialogue of July, the black servant, the whole novel is presented in third person narration following Maureen Smales' point of view. Thus, Maureen's role of self-examination parallels the role of that Gordimer increasingly imagines for herself as a writer and South African citizen. The similarity of name -- the echo of 'Nadine' in 'Maureen' for example suggests their affinity in this novel. After speaking her role as 'a minority within minority' Gordimer states, "Now I shall reduce my claim to significance still further, a white, a dissident white, a white writer" (16). *July's People* is most autobiographical in posing the central question of Maureen's/Gordimer's role in the political future of new South Africa. As a white South African wishing to participate co-operatively in a multi-racial South Africa, the author and her characters possess something to offer for the future.

The dirty setting of black settlement indicates the socio-economic condition of July (4). At first the Smales family gets surprised to see the condition of the house

where they are living. On the other hand, they are the people having all facilities including bakkie, a small truck with a three litre engine, fourteen – inch wheels with heavy duty ten ply tyres.

During the transitional period, the white government tries to improve the trade union of black people knowing that it is not possible to dominate them. So the government shows its hegemonic relation with the blacks:

While the government continued to compose concessions to black trade unions exquisitely worded to conceal exactly concomitant restrictions, the black workers concerned went hungry, angry and workless anyway, and shop-floor was often all that was left burned – out factories. (6-7)

When the government was not ready to validate the black trade unions taking the support of black workers, the workers started strike, therefore, black workers suffered from hunger, as they became workless.

So they marched towards Johannesburg with fifteen thousand blacks but they were stopped at the edge of business centre. It shows the awareness of black people about their own political and economic condition. After this strike Maureen withdraws one thousand seven hundred and fifty-six rands from the bank after the bank's declaration of moratorium and keeps it at home.

After the revolt, white people try to control the blacks by adopting some new method but it was invalid, so they controlled and imprisoned the blacks and repaired the broken infrastructure: "Thousands of blacks were imprisoned, broken glass was swept up, cut telephone lines were re-connected, radio and television assured that control was re-established" (8). The Smales family started controlling over the

infrastructure and then after imprisonment thousands of blacks' daily activities started to run properly.

Access to the issue that the novel raises is made through the consciousness of Maureen Smales who with her husband and three children has fled to a black uprising. The family becomes able to escape only because they are assisted by their former servant, July. In order to understand the full depth of *July's People*, it is crucial to understand Maureen's development which occurs in tandem with possible political events. Her very name damns her in a society based on the ramification of white exploitation of blacks in ventures such as mining. Gradually we do realize that Maureen's consciousness dominates the story, not an unusual technique but the inner voice is oddly preoccupied with external detail. Introspection intrudes only momentarily. When Maureen hears the unfamiliar sounds of chickens cheeping upon awakening in July's village where they receive sanctuary, and its gentleness, ordinariness produces sudden total disbelief. At first Maureen is one member of a marital partnership, then she is associated with her husband's business partner and finally she searches for her individuality.

Gordimer takes an ironic view of the reversal of fortunes for white south Africans who find themselves at the mercy of their black household servants during the fictional interregnum. But Gordimer focuses on Maureen as the central character as it is her story. At broad level Maureen symbolically represents new South Africa during the transitional period. The first mentioning of her name is in a case in point, because she is a female in a patriarchal system, Maureen's identity lies entirely in her association with powerful men like her father before marriage, her husband after marriage and black July during the interregnum. But the problem is that no male associated with her supports for her individuality. She realizes the impotence of

patriarchal system in the case of female's identity, therefore, she leaves her family for the quest of her own identity. It shows the rebirth of Maureen in the course of the novel; a fact that has a profound implication for the theme of the novel. Immediately following scenes of self – revulsion, Maureen meets July's family for the first time -- a wife, a mother, and several children --; Maureen recognizes familiar discards from her own household that has found its way into July's hut. The 'dreamy' behavior of the women in the hut further confounds her sense of time, and she finds herself "not knowing where she was, in time, in the order of a day as she had always known it" (17). Maureen finds no comfort in the company of the black because of their cultural differences. If anything, she is more aware of her alienation from all that had formally provided solace.

At the beginning Maureen surrenders to the reality of her new surrounding. She discounts the possibility of the usual avenues of escape, particularly by avoiding one novel she has brought to the village: "Fiction cannot transport her since she was in another time, place, consciousness [...] she was already not what she was" (29).

Maureen is aware that her host "has nothing" (29). The hut is a remnant of the world of the powerful – refuse to those who could afford more desirable replacements. The consciousness of power creeps into her awareness, and Maureen is swept into a reverse of youthful memory. Mentally returning to her father's household, she recalls a time when affection for a household servant placed Maureen in a situation in which a photographer captured the scene of her crossing a street hand-in-hand with the servant girl. The troubling aspect of Maureen's remembrance comes with the realization that in the photograph the servant had been carrying Maureen's school bag: "Why had Lydia carried [my] case?" (33). And she attempts to unravel now obvious nagging detail: "Did the photographer know what he saw, when

they crossed the road like that together ? Did the book, placing the pair in its context, give the reason. She and Lydia, on their affection and ignorance, did not know" (33). It shows Maureen's awareness about female empowerment.

But in reality Maureen's identity has been created out of her intimate association with her white father and her husband, therefore, their guilt is hers. So the novel is told from Maureen's perspective but without her voice. Maureen's motive is to look at the past more honestly, but Bam furiously transfers any responsibility for his actions to her as he says, "You women are such bloody cowards [...]" (46). The quarrel stops abruptly when Bam feels "her saliva on his face. It seemed for a moment her nails would follow" (46). It shows that Maureen's problem is caused primarily by patriarchy than racism. Her husband takes her as an inferior race. Clearly having failed to connect with Bam, Maureen steps outside into a warm, pouring rain, moving into a movement that becomes epiphanic when she sees July driving their car:

[W]hat she saw like the reflection of a candle flame behind a window – pane flowing with rain far off. The reflection moved or the glassy ripples moved over it. But it existed the proof was that there was a dimension between her and some element in the rain huge darkness [...]. Then a sense of direction came to her, from the luminous trace: she stuck a pin where there was no map – there in the dark and rain, was where the ruined huts were. (48-49)

It is clear that she becomes aware about South African history which is different from the history of other nations of the world. The whites of South Africa are not the same to the whites of Britain -- colonizers in colonies who leave the colonies after decolonization. But for South African whites South Africa itself is their proper



homeland. They are South Africans in a proper sense. Maureen formulates a sense of direction, and at this point in the study of the novel, it is appropriate to examine once again the political ramification of this work. "What similarities does Maureen share with South Africa ? Can either one survive the consequences of being reborn where there [is] no map ?" (49).

Gordimer's answers to these question lie in her treatment of Maureen in the rest of the novel. Despite the ominous tone of epiphany, Maureen painfully and haltingly goes on. Silence becomes a powerful tool in her interactions with Bam. When he gives her an inquiry glance upon seeing her rise the next morning naked, having stripped off her rain-soaked garment the night before, she says nothing. Bam, however, formulates his own perception: "[H]e noticed her thin white belly and brown pubic hair naked below the cardigan, like some caricature of a titillating photograph in a porn magazine, or – yes, more like – a woman in the Toulouse – Lautrec brothel drawings they had seen together in Europe" (52).

The comparison to the drawing is not idly made. Maureen's new persona is despoiled in the eyes of her husband and makes her new reality vibrate with the suggestion that can no longer be assured of his affection and support. Her survival, if she is to have one, will depend upon Maureen alone. She cannot expect assurance of her individuality from her husband who takes her as the 'second sex'.

The tenuousness of Maureen's ability to endure these experiences is even more evident in her next encounter with July. She summons him to her hut. But July's concurrence serves to alert Maureen to the inappropriateness of her hauteur: "[I]n getting him to come turned over inside her with a throb and showed the meanness of something hidden under a stone. These sudden movements within her often changed her from persecutor to victim, with her husband, her children, anyone" (68).

Maureen is not only lost in this 'unmapped territory' but compounds her petty actions by challenging July's right to the car key. When he reminds her that he has had access to every important key in the entire Smales household for fifteen years, she impales him with questions about his "town women". "What is happening to Ellen?" (72).

The argument clarifies for Maureen about July's power and even reshapes their former relationship. During their argument, July emphasizes a point by pounding his fist against his chest, and Maureen "felt the thud as fear in her own" (98). With the penetration of fear, felt for the first time in any relationship with any man, comes the awareness that: "[t]he special consideration she had shown for his dignity as man, while he was by definition a servant, would become his humiliation itself, the one thing there was to say between them that had any meaning" (98).

Maureen's new persona is complete with this final awareness that it is not only Maureen, the white female who has been the victim of patriarchal discourse but July, the black man has also been the victim of racial discourse. However, she cannot expect protection from July because July's power relation with the whites is different from her power relation with the males. Therefore, she is determined to assert her own identity on her own by leaving both her husband and July. July and his black friends try to assure their own identity by strategically taking the goods and objects like bakkie, the gun and so on from the whites.

### **Formation of Discourse during the Transitional Period in the Novel**

Any literary text is situated within social practices, institutions, and discourses that constitute the overall culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and producer of cultural energies and codes. It is not possible to deal with a text in isolation from its historical context, therefore, one

has to attend to the historical, cultural, social and political condition of its production, its meaning, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations.

The discourse of an era, instead of reflection of pre-existing entities, and orders, brings into being the concepts, oppositions and hierarchies of which it speaks determines its power. The particular discourse formation of an era determines what is at the time accounted as knowledge and truth: In the same way, the formation of discourse in *July's People* during transitional period plays a vital role to reverse the power relation among whites and blacks. Discourses change slowly in favor of the blacks, who are able to create their own discourses and able to oppose against the whites: "Frog Prince, saviour, July" (9). At first July is taken as a savior of the Smales family where he is free to roam with his friends on alternative Sunday holiday but he has to run all the household work. However, he is happy enough to serve the Smales family. But after the strike in the city the mind of the Smales family slightly changes and they become more liberal : "We'll cook for ourselves, July – we must make our own fire" (10). Now Maureen is not going to force him to do all the household activities.

Later July speaks, "I tell them to give it to me" (13). When they set a journey outside in vehicle where July claims that he can drive the vehicle easily. In spite of their rejection he asks for the key of the vehicle. Up to this time July is in learning phase of different things like driving, shooting and learning the language for his betterment. The blacks not only learn but also build their self confidence. July's mother tells July, "[W]hite people [...] are very powerful my son. They are very clever. You will never come to the end of the things they can do" (21). It signifies that though they gather courage still they have fear in real presence of white people.

So, in this confusing mode they are trying to revolt against whites following the discourses formed during the interregnum.

As we move forward it is found out that black protest and medias support the blacks and further make July and the other blacks more powerful and help them to reject white Smales' family's discourse. Maureen questions, "Would we go back ? They had fled the fighting in the streets, the danger for their children, the necessity to defend their lives in the name of ideals" (51). After the conflict, Maureen changes her mind to run but it is unknown where to go and which is the safe place for them for their further life. In this context it is not the time for the whites to dominate the blacks. Instead it is better to search for the new place. At the same time Maureen is ready to move from there and says, "We'll be out of here, with plenty of money" (58-59). She is weak now and makes a further plan to secure them. The money what they owned is only the source to keep them safe in their further life, inspite of this she is ready to give up all power and to do whatever July asks her. July shows his confidence and courage in front of them claiming "who is going to catch me ?" (59). July has no licence to drive the vehicle but he is ready to protest in front of white police. He further says, "No one there can ask me, where is my licence. Even my pass, no-one can ask any more. It's finished" (59). July has been totally changed in his mind for his safety and is able to refuge order given by his master, the Smales family and white authority.

The key of the house, which is owned by the Smales family as a symbol of power, is also taken by July and rejects to handover it to the Smales family: "Now I can see. But I am work for you. Me, I'm your boy, always I'm have the keys of your house. Every night I take that keys with me in my room, when you go away on holiday, I' lock up everything [...]. It's me I've got the key for all your things, isn't it"

(69). July considers himself as a protector of the Smales family but now he is no more ready to obey them because the days have gone and it is the time for the blacks to govern themselves but not be governed by the whites. In the past the whites were in power so the blacks had to obey and do according to the order of whites. But now days are in favor of July and owns all the keys by himself.

Maureen is aware about the service of July and his compulsion to revolt in the current days unlike the other Africans. She is afraid of Africaners and says, "I know one thing, not all Africans are nice like July. Some of them are horrible. Horrible"

(87). Maureen wants July to be kind towards the Smales. She is well aware about the help of July during her initial days. She tries to brainwash July by creating new discourse but in vain.

Maureen finds transformation in July: "I don't know why he didn't say so before" (102). Before leaving the village July never said anything bad to Maureen but due to the time and development of the current political affairs of the July's village, she is in favour of July and his kindness respecting his behaviour of the past. She is ready to leave the village giving all authority to July but it is unknown where she has to go for the survival of herself and her family.

Although they leave the village, again people remember their activities time and again. It is black people's compulsion to revolt against the whites. At the same time the blacks realize their contribution in the activities which blacks learn from them. Victor, son of Maureen, is often remembered as a naughty boy who also used to order July. Maureen and her family members are remembered time and again sometimes for their good and sometimes for their bad activities and their domination during apartheid but now just the opposite situation arises in July's village. At the end of the novel when Maureen is alone in the hut although not alone in settlement, no

one was ever alone there, feels some changes in the fabric of subconsciously identified sounds and movements that make the silence "On such a morning, lucky to be alive" (157). Maureen herself is happy to be alive, she is not so hopeful but the blacks do not show their brutality like the whites as a result she and other white people who made a plan to keep slave forever are able to live in the settlement and are going to run afar from the settlement. During the interregnum the whites are happy for being alive, whereas the blacks are forming various discourses to get power from the whites' hands. At the same time, even the white females, like Maureen are also trying to create feminist discourse for their identity during the interregnum.

### **Role Reversal during the Transitional Period in Gordimer's *July's People***

In the transitional period all the bodies exercise their power for their existence. The majority of the blacks who were dominated by the minority of the whites are radically shaped and their roles get changed in political, social and economic levels. In *July's People* the Smales family is no more able to keep its dominance for longer so that they have to run away from the settlement of the blacks. When political consequences occur in the village the black people create new discourse and accumulate new bodies of information. Discourse is not detached and independent, as a source of illumination, it is integral to the operation of power. When *July's People* struggle for new role with full consciousness then they are able to re-establish their position which white people captured and ruled. "She was in another time, place, consciousness [...]. She was already not what she was. No fiction could compete with what she was finding she did not know" (29). July, the servant of the Smales, changes his behaviour and the activities as time passes on. Maureen is hegemonized by the activities of July. It is because of the consciousness of the exercise of power by July. The Smales family ruled over July by creating discourses for their own

benefit before war. But during the nation wide strike in South Africa, people become conscious and search for their place in their own settlement. However, they are not claiming other place of the whites. According to change in time people of South Africa are changing their mind, behaviour and activities which cause the change in their position.

At once they cannot change, so it takes time to learn different activities which are helpful to upgrade their status. The Smales family which rejects to give key to July, now is ready to give it to July to drive the vehicle. "His friend was teaching him to drive" (57). At this stage July is interested in driving the vehicle by taking the help of his friend. Soon after that July goes out but the Smales family sits on the ground: "He had been in charge on the journey, they were on his ground" (40). Not only this, now Bam is ready to hand over the key, the symbol of white power and himself is ready to teach which was impossible and odd in the primitive stage: "I'd give him the keys anytime. I could teach him to drive myself" (58). The change in thinking and activities of Bam shows the miserable condition of the whites during the interregnum. The Smales family represents south African liberal whites during interregnum. The vehicle, key of the house of the Smales in city, gun and so on are now frequently used by July. Maureen is ready to address him as, "Here are your keys" (68). The possession of keys is being transferred to the hand of July, who was not allowed to touch it before. The relationship between Maureen and July is improving. Maureen doesn't behave with July as a servant: "She speaks nice always" (70). She also calls the doctor when he is sick: "I am sick one time she call the doctor" (70). However, July is ready to accept his fault as he worked as a servant for fifteen years without any comment. It is also mentioned that he was satisfied with Maureen in her last days' behaviour. At the same time he opposes to serve any more time now because the day

has changed. It is the blacks time, i.e. the time is in favor of blacks. July says, "That I'm work for you fifteen years. That you satisfy with me" (98). July is honest in duty up to the time he serves them.

After the revolution in July's village the Smales family is compelled to leave July's settlement and they seem worried about the current problem which they faced. Maureen prays for July's activities in the past but the time has changed a lot; no one can support them. Slowly they change the mind and are searching for a new place but everywhere there is revolution. People raise their voice from their settlement for their rights. The blacks are not the people born to serve the white, they should be equally treated in this world. Maureen tries to convince the other blacks: "Well you know the trouble there. It's like a war. It is a war. We could have been killed. The houses where we stayed [...]. They have been burned, bombed – some of them. People had to leave, our children might have been hurt, July brought us" (112).

There is a confusion, now the village is bombed and burned where people are forced to leave their settlement. The destruction of the settlement in the present and remembering of the past are just opposite. The person who serves the whites now stands against them. Maureen seems worried and confused; she never thought of this situation.

The people, who were destined to stay in Soweto to work in the mines reject to work and ignore the white's voice. People are fully aware of hegemony applied to make the blacks work in the mines. They raise the question and ask it is only the duty of servant to work in the mines where whites are getting benefit out of it. So they ignore every types of activities where there is involvement of the whites: "It was not for him to work as a servant or go down the mines" (115). The whites are afraid of such activities: "It's a war. It's not like that, any more [...] the blacks have also guns"



(116). After the war against the whites July is able to keep the key of the vehicle in his pocket: "July would have the keys of the vehicle back in his pocket" (123). After learning to drive July is able to capture the key of the vehicle. It shows that the blacks are in the position of power, whereas the whites are losing their power. The economic condition of the village which is under the whites, who used to give loan and low wage to the blacks, seems under the control of the blacks. The whites could not get it back; they run away from there and their written facts remain as a piece of paper. July is also not paid in time but now they are not there, however, July seems happy to be successful in his aim: "They had told him money was safe, written down in those books. But now that they had run away, those books were just bits of paper" (136). After the revolution all the infrastructures of July's hut have been changed: "[Maureen] and Bam had talked of converting the garage into a room where July could sit with his friends, putting an sofa there" (148). The blacks get back rights but it is difficult to arrange everything at this time.

The final image of *July's People* is not that of witch-like woman's corpse but of a dirty barefooted woman's fording a river, leaping over stones and running for her "life". She is not like her mother, a housewife who called her servant 'our Jim' to distinguish him from her husband who was named Jim, duplicating the implications of possession in the book's title. Maureen runs away from the known to the unknown. The text incorporates no projections of a better life to come, not even a clue. The ending of *July's People* is a powerful treatment of what one white South African writer predicts for the nation. They take a positive view of the necessity for a radical change. Maureen surrenders to a new reality for her identity. The novel ends with the statement: "she can still hear the beat, beyond those trees and those, and she runs towards it. She runs" (160). Gordimer has given the novel an entirely unambiguous

and appropriate ending. Maureen must be true to her new awareness. Trusting her 'self' the protagonist, after relinquishing her past, must take whatever chance remains to survive. Like July, she herself has to be powerful in terms of gender, therefore, she moves towards unknown for her identity.

### **Discourse as the Determinant of Power in the Novel**

Discourse is not only communicating approach in the society but it is also a measuring rod of power. Different discourses exist in the society but only one discourse dominant to others sustain and the group who follows the same discourse is regarded as powerful in the society. It can be changed according to its socio-economic and political context. Discourse is basically created to achieve certain goals by power holders. It is necessary to give validity to the discourse which determines power in the society. In *July's People* towards the beginning of the novel, the Smales, a white family is able to impose power over July. But at the end of novel they are not able to keep their discourses valid so they are forced to flee from the native village of the blacks ignoring all the facilities and their domination over black servant, July.

In the beginning of the novel, Maureen's family members create discourse according to their wish to dominate July: "No milk for me" (1). While bringing tea by July Bam refuses milk and orders to bring tea. July is unknown about the situation. July, as a server brings milk instead of tea but Bam's refusal of milk shows his inability for moving according to time and context. Bam is not conscious about the language spoken by July as if he could not express his inner feelings: "Often Bam could not follow his broken English, but he and she understood each other well" (13). July served for fifteen years to Bam but Bam creates this type of discourse so that he can enforce July to learn English language. July and Maureen easily can understand each

other but Bam cannot. It was Bam's discourse which helped him to remain himself in this position of power before the strike.

White people impressed the blacks about their presence all over the world, who were supposed to be born to rule over the world during the colonial era: "White people must have their own people somewhere. Aren't they living everywhere in the world ? [...]. Don't they go anywhere they want to go ? They have got money" (19). Though whites were fewer in number they were able to rule over the blacks hegemonically before interregnum. On the one hand the blacks are afraid of whites and on the other they are united to raise voice against whites' power as July's mother tells him about the white's discourse and about their power: "White people they are very powerful my son. They are very clever you will never come to the end of the things they can do" (21). The impression implanted by the whites cannot be easily erased from the mind of the blacks so they are in confusion because they are not accustomed to use power.

Maureen is surprised by July's activities. Among the several objects that represent power in text like Bam's gun, the yellow bakkie, and its keys owned by the Smales family are transferred to July. He first creates discourses and wins their heart. He takes these objects from the Smales family not by force but by winning their consent strategically. The transfer of ownership, like the parallel transfer that occurs in Johannesburg, is uncomfortable for the whites involved. July as well experiences some discomfort as he takes power, in the form of the keys as he is not accustomed. The characters in the novel are continually forced to negotiate with new ways of relating to one another, and Gordimer makes use of the awkward communication between the whites and blacks that result from a new power structure and the

language between them to illustrate the discomfort of that negotiation during the interregnum.

July asks the question: "why is it the whites who speak language are never people like us, they are always the ones who have no doubt that whites are superior?" (44). When July asks this question, he finds out that discourse is the determinant of power to rule over others. He thinks that discourse can create power. In this context the whites are superior because of their discourse. July is conscious about his blackness and its relation with inferiority. It shows embeddedness of such racial discourse in his mind. However, he realizes the fact that racial prejudice hinders development of black race during the transitional period.

July is no more afraid of white authority but starts to challenge them by protesting the whites. July claims everything and his rights against the Smales. "A your things is there, it's me I've got the key, always it's me" (69). There was a movement to ask for keys. But it was let pass. They stood in the mid day sun and watched over the deserted dwelling place, the yellow bakkie being reserved, bucking forward, leaping suddenly backwards again, kicking to stop. July claimed that the key is his for ever in this way. By claiming authority over the key he tries to possess power by himself. It shows the blacks also want to possess power as every one has 'will to power' as Nietzsche says. July says, "I'm big man, I know for myself what I must do. I am not thinking all the time for your things, your dog, your cat" (71). When he rejects the order given by the Smales claiming that he is not the person to look after every matter. The Smales family also changes voice, "You are not a servant" (71). When July is able to raise voice against them, the Smales family can not do anything. They are going to support July. He starts to give orders like an authorised person: "If I say go they must go. If I say they can stay [...] so they stay"

(82). July develops himself as a powerful person and holds a determining power because of the discourses on black empowerment formed during transition period.

Their role is changing from slave to ownership as July claims: "It's the chief's. If he's sending someone are me this or this, I must do" (100). Chief, one of the representatives of black society, also claims his authority over that village where he develops all his decisive power on what to do and how to manage everything in the village. July says: "That is our law" (100). The blacks are responsible persons to decide rules and regulations of their village. When they claim they are right and authorised persons to make rules and regulation for the whites. All whites including the Smales family are forced to move from their village, power of the village is totally in the hands of blacks, who claim themselves as capable. After all, July is able to reverse power and their relationship: "If there were no term to replace it, none that would express exactly the relationship between Bam and him was, for him" (111). July is able to come to power so that his previous relationship is also changed and no one calls him a servant of Bam. The blacks create a discourse like "the whole black nation is your nation" (120). This protest does not only happen in July's village but all over South Africa where blacks are able to regain their ownership. After getting authority in their nation the blacks seem quite happy: "We won't have to pay tax to the government" (135). Now they are totally free from tax and all white authority. They are happy enough to celebrate their happy days after being able to establish them as decision holders in every sector of the society. They seem quite happy and share their ideas with each other: "Well everybody here so nice at the music today, everybody know that gun its your gun" (150). They are celebrating good days possessing all power in their hands.

Both Gordimer, the writer and Maureen, the central white character are from white South African society. The novel is dominated by the perception of Maureen which indicates that the character and writer have similar existences in their society, i.e. they have affinity. So this novel can be taken partly as an autobiographical novel. At broad level the fictional characters Bam and Maureen are merely the fictional characters. They are products of the socio-economic condition of 1980s and early 1990s South Africa. In other words, they are the products of South African society. From this perspective, Maureen represents the condition of South African white females of the 80s and early 90s who, on one hand, suffer guilt of apartheid and on the other hand, have to prove themselves amidst patriarchal discourses, whereas Bam who represents South African liberal white males during the 80s and early 90s, who seems to be trying alternatives for the inclusion of blacks and fed up of apartheid later. So, the writer announces the demise of apartheid apocalyptically as a premature writer. It is hardly surprising that the ending of Gordimer's *July's People* should have occasioned a fair amount of puzzlement. As Maureen Smales runs towards the helicopter:

She walks out of the hut. The pace quickens, stalks past the stack of thatch and the wattle fowl-cage, Jolts down the incline, leaps stoens, breaks into another rhythm. She is running through the elephant grass, dodging the slaps of branches, stopping through thickets of thorn. She is running to the river and she hears them, the man's voice and the voices of children speaking English somewhere to the left. (159)

Maureen alone runs towards the river but the condition of other characters like Bam, her husband and her three children is unknown. Either they can live there or black people target only to Maureen. She reaches the edge of the river where she hears

echo of English children. It is the voice of her children who were left there in the city by their mother. Maureen's condition can be compared to that of Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

There is a confusing situation, why she is leaving all her family members whom she loved very much but the important thing is that she realizes the impotence of patriarchy and is ready for her female individuality. *July's People* moves to a world of future where the fears of whites in all Gordimer's fictions have become reality, the revolution has occurred; whites are disposed and have no means of escape from riots and the burning cities. The title of the novel reflects previously unconnected worlds which are brought together when July brings his city people -- the white Smales family of Maureen, Bam and their three children, to his bush people -- Martha, his wife, his elderly mother and his extended family. Neither side is prepared for the other and both are dismayed by reality that replaces their dream fantasies. Gordimer's gliding conception of the historical movement in which she was engaged in writing the novel, a zero ending of this novel would make sense.

The novelist Gordimer also seems affected by her own historicity and her responsibility towards the nation at hard times. Being a white female South African writer in minority, she becomes more aware of white females' condition more than the blacks -- both the males and females -- and the white males. Due to her such power politics, she tries to depict Maureen and her role better than other characters.

Nadine Gordimer tries to historicize her fiction by presenting the socio-economic and political condition of South Africa. South African black people, who were dominated by the white authority during 1980s, have poor economic condition and there is political disorder in their society. Gradually this situation of the black is improving day by day due to their consciousness. On the other hand, Gordimer

fictionalizes South African history of 1980 by presenting imaginary war against the white power. She uses her memory and imagination as a creative writer to show the future condition of South African people which, turned to be real later. She presents the socio-economic and political condition of South Africans during the interregnum and the possibility of the end of apartheid which is necessary for the betterment of the blacks. In this way, she blurs the demarcation between history and fiction to talk about 1980s South Africa.



#### IV. Conclusion

In the preceding chapters it has been analyzed that the main focus in *July's People* has been to question the basic relationship between historical actuality and fictionality and to show how realities are constructed to expose the contradiction in the whites and blacks. At the same time, the writer tries to expose white empowerment during interregnums. Despite her practice and aim the whites are doomed to lose their power in the society because of the discourses created in different times, situation and the political awareness of the blacks, so, in the novel the replacement of the whites by the blacks is seen. The central character, Maureen always suffers from identity crisis in the patriarchal society. In reality, Maureen is searching for her individual identity by taking the help of the male characters of different roles – father, husband and July. But at last, she cannot hold her existence so she is running towards the unknown, which creates confusion at the ending of the novel. Maureen tries to establish her knowledge in different sectors of the society but she is unable to prove her discourse as for her 'self' existence. Soweto war along with apartheid occurred in South Africa, the blacks' resistance against the whites' power shows transformation of discourse during the transitional period. The whites could not hold their position in African society, so they were compelled to run away leaving all power in the hands of the blacks. During the period of interregnum there arises a great diversity in the socio-economic and political condition as a result the blacks become powerful where the whites lost their position. It is also well-known that it took long time to replace the whites because the blacks had to learn all systems of civilization from the whites.

*July's People* stands as a testimony to Gordimer's staunch commitment to a post apartheid South Africa. The interregnum examines Janus-face; it locates the

origin of current impasse in a part of inequality and complicities, and sets its eyes on a potentially promising future that may break the unbreakable deadlock of apartheid.

Gordimer resists indicating the path in which post-apartheid South Africa may find salvation, she refrains from speculating on the details of that future because it belongs to the blacks more than the whites to decide its content. But she does not shy away from discussing, often perspectively the kind of role whites should fulfil in a prospective democratic society, constantly urging them to stop claiming privileges based solely on race and to remedy economic inequality by sharing property and skills with the black South Africans.

Discourse formation during the transitional period plays a vital role for the reversal of power in *July's People*. The whites could no more dominate the blacks from their discourse because of the growing consciousness of the blacks during the transitional period. In the transitional period the blacks accumulated new bodies and new knowledge of how whites were able to dominate them; it is helpful for the blacks to overthrow power of liberal whites. The Smales family tries to rule over the blacks at its last stage but they are unable to do so.

Throughout the study, the main concern is to show how Maureen, the representative of white African women tries to solve the obstacles faced in her time. Maureen, the main white fictional character for the representation of both Gordimer and the white African women, tries to settle down all the problems but she is a failure at last to validate her discourses and maintain her power because she is also no more powerful where her discourses are unable to establish herself as a powerful individual in a patriarchal society. So, she has to flee from July's village for establishing her own individuality.

As a pre-mature writer, Gordimer focuses on the real socio-economic and political instability of South Africa during white domination and the shifting of power which provided opportunity to the blacks to raise their voice against white power. However, Gordimer mixes fact with fiction, i.e. imaginary war of the blacks against the whites. The role reversal shows the improvement of their society and the blacks' achievement of individuality.

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