

THE IRONY OF APARTHEID: A STUDY IN TECHNIQUE AND THEME IN THE FICTION OF NADINE GORDIMER

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In the introduction to her collection of short stories, *Some Monday for Sure*, the 1991 Nobel Laureate, Nadine Gordimer states that irony is her main tool of literary exposition. She makes this statement with specific reference to the stories "The African Magician" and "The Bridegroom". According to her, both stories depict "the average [South African] white man and woman's lack of consciousness of, or fear of, an unacknowledged friendship with blacks, and their emotional dependency upon them."¹ She adds that "My approach in these stories is that of irony. In fact I would say that in general, in my stories, my approach is the ironical one, and it represents the writer's unconscious selection of the approach best suited to his material."²

In this paper I argue that Nadine Gordimer does not limit her use of the ironical technique to the short stories only, but that she uses it extensively in her novels as well. The material she deals with in both literary forms is the same, and indeed best lends itself to the ironical approach. And through the use of this technique Gordimer is able to maintain a high level of artistic objectivity in her exposure of the various contradictions the apartheid system has created in South Africa.

According to D.C. Muecke, irony can be defined "as ways of speaking, writing, acting, behaving, painting etc., in which the real or intended meaning presented or evoked is intentionally quite other than, and incompatible with, the ostensible or pretended meaning."³ In terms of form Muecke argues that "In all instances of irony we can distinguish three essential elements." These are: two levels of reality - lower and upper; an opposition between the two levels; and an element of innocence.⁴ First, "At the lower level is the situation either as it appears to the victim of irony (where there is a victim) or as it is deceptively presented by the ironist (where there is an ironist) . . . At the upper level is the situation as it appears to the observer or the ironist."⁵ Secondly, the opposition between the two levels "may

take the form of contradiction, incongruity or incompatibility. What is said may be contradicted by what is meant; what the victim thinks may be contradicted by what the observer knows."⁶ And thirdly, there is "either a victim [who] is confidently unaware of the very possibility of there being an upper level or point of view that invalidates his own, or an ironist [who] pretends not to be aware of it."⁷ While the victim is genuinely innocent by virtue of his real ignorance, the ironist, because he only pretends to be innocent, is a pseudo-victim.

Nadine Gordimer features a wide variety of ironic situations, but they all fulfil these basic requirements and indeed share one major source of ironic contradiction: the apartheid system's intrinsic denial of human kinship between whites and non-whites. Contrary to this denial, the bulk of Gordimer's fiction mirrors a world in which the legislated separations are invalidated by the various people's inherent dependency upon one another. Not only does Gordimer expose this major ironic situation, but also presents others which result from it. Among the characters she depicts as caught up in these situations are those who are seen to be unaware of the contradictions of their positions, and those who are shown to be aware of them but feel trapped in their dilemmas.⁸ In general, most of the unaware victims are the average whites who accept the *status-quo* without any question. More enlightened whites who see themselves as liberals, radicals, and revolutionaries form the majority of the aware victims.

The novels and short stories which feature these characters are set in different periods of South African social and political history, between the forties and the eighties. Recent developments in the white-ruled Republic have illustrated the relationship between literature and life in the most spectacular manner imaginable. The illustration itself is heavy with irony: the very party which created apartheid, and ruthlessly reinforced it for decades, has officially acknowledged the untenability of the system, and actually started dismantling it.

A World of Strangers, first published in 1958, is one of the earliest novels in which Gordimer features the central ironic situation created by the apartheid system. As the title implies, the novel is about a world in which people are effectively strangers to each other by virtue of their racial differences. Yet these people share not just their humanity, but a country from which they derive a common identity as South Africans. Their superficial differences are

officially sanctified by the legislation prescribing that they live in separate areas.⁹ The author highlights this fact by continually shifting her focus from rich white suburbs to poverty-stricken black locations. Occasionally she depicts attempts to bridge the social gap between whites and blacks made by white liberals who organize multi-racial parties in their houses. Genuine though these attempts are, their political effectiveness is nullified by the rigid reality of apartheid which is always looming in the background.

Gordimer presents this "world of strangers" through the eyes of Toby Hood, an Englishman who comes to South Africa as a publisher's agent. Toby believes in freedom of association, but at the same time rejects politics in general. Consequently he refuses to take a stand either for or against apartheid. Inevitably this neutrality places him in an ironic position because the environment dictates that one be either for or against the system.

Toby states his determination to have nothing to do with South Africa's racial politics very early in the novel. He makes this assertion as he recollects the fact that his anti-apartheid mother and friends attempted to give his business trip an added political purpose. They wanted him to get in touch with their political contacts, study the situation in the country, and send them information. Referring to his refusal to oblige, he says:

I told them all that I would be going to Africa as a publisher's agent, to visit bookshops and promote the sale of books. I didn't want to investigate anything; I didn't want to send newsletters home.

I had no intention of becoming what they saw me as, what they, in their own particular brand of salaciousness, envied me the opportunity to become-- a *voyeur* of the world's ills and social perversions. I felt, as I had so often before, an hostility, irritation and resentment that made me want to shout, ridiculously: I want to live~ I want to see people who interest me and amuse me, black, white or any colour. I want to take care of my own relationships with men and women who come into my life, and the abstractions of race and politics go hang. I want to live~ And to hell with you all~¹⁰

While in the country, Toby lives up to his belief in freedom of association. He goes wherever he chooses, and associates with whomever he pleases. On the one hand he mixes with affluent white South Africans whom he meets regularly at the High House, suburban home of his mother's one-time school-mate, now wife of a tycoon called Hamish Alexander. On the other, he enjoys the friendship of young blacks who introduce him to life in their bustling but squalid and impoverished locations. In the white camp, he acquires a girlfriend named Cecil Rowe, and among the blacks he cultivates a regular companionship with a fast-living young man called Steven Sitole who also claims to be apolitical. Sitole states that he does not want to be bothered by "blackman's troubles."

Through these associations Toby enjoys the best of both worlds -- black and white -- without being politically committed to either. He does not tell his white socialites about the blacks he associates with, and he does not mention to his black friends the High House crowd he hobnobs with. Commenting on the fact that outside their relationship, Cecil and he have private lives best left unknown to each other, he says:

I had another life, outside the parenthesis of the time I spent with her; she too had hers. Each tacitly forewent inquiry into that of the other, because each suspected that the discovery of his own life by the other would make the parenthetic shared relationship impossible. I heard her say, to some people with whom we were having coffee after a cinema, "Toby does a lot of work among the natives." Later, when we were alone, I asked her, "What made you tell the Howards that I do a lot of 'work' among natives?" "Well, don't you?" she said, yawning. "I never have," I said. She let it drop; she assumed that anyone who had anything to do with Africans was concerned with charity or uplift, and that was that-- she wasn't going to quibble over what she satisfied herself could only be a matter of definition. And I, I left it at that, too. I had had my little flirt with danger by questioning her at all; thankfully, I hadn't had to take it any further.

For I knew that if I told Cecil that my closest friends in Johannesburg were blackmen, and that I ate with them and slept in their houses, I would lose her. That

was the fact of the matter. And I was damned if I was going to lose her. (p. 155)

Clearly, therefore, Toby realizes the apartheid system's denial of human connection between whites and non-whites, but he chooses to ignore it for his own purposes. In the process he places himself in an ironic position because he has to be false to himself and to his friends in order to affirm his humanity. He is false to himself because he thinks he can remain neutral in an environment where there is no room for neutrality. He is false to his friends because he thinks he can enjoy their friendship without acknowledging their political dilemma and at the same time retain his integrity. Later, when Sitole dies suddenly in a car accident, Toby is shocked out of his complacency, and the untenability of his position dawns on him.

This death disturbs him so intensely that he becomes aware of how deeply he was attached to Sitole as a person. The casual attitude of Sitole's black "friends" disturbs Toby further. Being admirers of the dead man for his defiant and reckless life, they lightheartedly drink to his "health" "as if his death were another, and the craziest of his exploits" (p. 245). Commenting on the frightening nature of this attitude, Toby acknowledges the genuineness of his own love for Sitole: "Something in their faces when they drank to him made me shudder inwardly; I had only loved him as a man" (p. 245). Prior to the accident Toby never admits this kind of affection for Sitole because of his assumed cavalier attitude toward human affiliations in general.

Significantly, soon after Sitole's death, Toby withdraws from the self-indulgent world of his white associates at the Alexanders' High House, and attaches himself to the family of Sam Mofokenzazi, a serious-minded black man he had met through Sitole. The personal connection he establishes with this family enables him to reassemble his identity, long fragmented by the demands of pleasures in mutually exclusive camps of a divided society:

I had not been to the Alexanders' for weeks. I couldn't go there anymore, that was all. Steven's death had provided a check, a pause, when the strain of the kind of life I had been living for months broke in upon me. While I had kept going, simply carried along, I had not consciously been aware of the

enormous strain of such a way of life, where one set of loyalties and interests made claims in direct conflict with another set, equally strong; where not only did I have to keep my friends physically apart, but could not even speak to one group about the others. I went to Sam's house because there I could sit in silence, the silence of my confusion, and they would not question me. (p.246)

When he later meets Cecil Rowe he openly tells her about his black friends. In her reactions to this disclosure Cecil typifies the average white character who accepts apartheid without question, and is completely blind to the absurdities of his position, attitudes and assumptions.

In the exposure of Cecil, Gordimer uses Toby as a narrating character with a sense of irony to observe and comment on the girl's confident impercipience *vis-a-vis* her dilemma. Like most of the average whites, Cecil is a victim of simple irony whereby her assumptions are invalidated by reality. The young woman consciously views blacks as subhuman, and therefore unfit for human interaction with whites. Exemplifying this attitude is her incomprehension of Toby's friendship with the blacks. When he explains to her his affection for Sitole, "She look[s] down at her hands" and says: "You know, I cannot imagine it--I mean, a black man next to me at table, talking to me like anyone else. The idea of *touching* their hands" (p.251). Describing her gesture, Toby observes: "Her hand came out in the imaginary experiment and hesitated, wavered back" (p. 251). This sense of physical revulsion at the idea of touching a black hand underscores Cecil's estrangement from the black people's humanity. This estrangement is first seen when she asks Toby: "And they seem like other people to you?" (p. 250). She asks the question in reaction to his assertion that his closest friends in the country are black. Clinching the matter is Toby's comment that explaining his affection for Sitole was embarrassing because it was like "trying to make comprehensible a liking for the company of snakes or chimpanzees" (pp. 250-251). Yet earlier in the novel, when witnessing a black man's suffering, Cecil is almost able to recognize her own spiritual anguish.

The black man who is high on drugs cries in the street near her flat on Christmas Eve. The young woman's immediate reaction is to assume a position of authority, ordering black by-standers to

call a doctor. She also asks Toby whether they should call the police. But her other actions reveal an instinctive sense of empathy with the man. She makes some coffee for him, and as Toby observes: "Cecil never took her eyes off him; when he panted, her hand flew to her breast, when he sobbed, her mouth twitched" (pp. 189-190). After returning to the flat she kept going from the living room where she and Toby "could not hear the man... to the bathroom, where [they] could" (p. 190). While there, "She sat on the edge of the bath and shushed [Toby] as if she must hear what there was to hear . . ." (p. 190). Then placing the man's suffering in its broad context of human estrangement, Toby says:

His was an unspeakable anguish of alienation, lostness, the howling of the wolf of the soul in a waste. The ghastly ritual went on: tearing anxiety of pacing and panting, climax of sobs, then panting again . . .

It was all the cries we do not cry, all the howls we do not howl, all the bloody furies in our hearts that are never, must never be, let loose. Even I was afraid, hearing it; not of the man, but of a stir of recognition in myself. We sat in a kind of shameful fascination, and did not look at each other. She was tight-lipped, her long hands were clenched on themselves, the spikes of both blood-red thumbnails folded back on the fists.

The sobs died; whistled away like a wind in a broken, empty place. There was a roaring cry that brought tears to attention in Cecil's eyes turned fiercely to me. (pp. 189-190)

The tears in the young woman's eyes indicate her unconscious identification with the man, thereby exposing the irrationality of her conscious attitude toward blacks in general; an attitude which precludes human considerations wherever interaction between blacks and whites is concerned.

Gordimer exposes not only the ironic contradiction between racist assumptions and human reality, but also the incongruity between the South African whites' adopted cultural identity and their environment. In a logical extension of the view that they are different from the blacks around them, the whites attempt to carve

out in an African environment an exclusively European community, replete with all its supposed cultural and social values. At the same time they fiercely assert their right to the land. Yet most of them do not seem to be aware that their imported European identity undermines this very claim by highlighting the fact that they are foreigners to the environment which is glaringly at odds with their mode of life. Toby Hood notes this situation in **A World of Strangers**, where Cecil Rowe and the High House crowd take to such high-brow hobbies as horse-riding and classical art appreciation, among others, in spite of the fact that they do not like them. Indeed, Toby describes the Alexanders' High House circle as practising Edwardian social and cultural values that are clearly out of joint with their setting and time.

Like Toby Hood, Helen Shaw in **The Lying Days** is aware of the fact that the adopted Eurocentric attitude and mode of existence disconnect the whites from their African environment.

The Lying Days was published in 1953, much earlier than **A World of Strangers**. In this work, Gordimer mainly focusses on the development of the heroine's moral consciousness. She vividly depicts the various stages of Helen's journey from childhood, through adolescence to young womanhood. Central to that journey is the evolution of her attitude toward blacks from the early stages in which she does not view them as real people, to the later ones in which she is shocked into an awareness of their humanity.

Helen comments on the incongruity between the "European" identity of South African whites and their environment with reference to her own childhood experience. As a little girl, she felt culturally disoriented because, both at home and at school, she was made to read novels that were about British characters, social life, and cultural values which were alien to her and the world she saw around her:

I had never read a book in which I myself was recognizable; in which there was a "girl" like Anna who did the housework and the cooking and called the mother and father Missus and Baas; in which the children ate and lived closely with their parents and played in the lounge and went to the bioscope.¹¹

Instead of providing her with an affirmative point of personal reference by reflecting her own world, the books she read depicted a fantasyland whose inhabitants she could only envy but never belong with:

To me, brought up into the life of a South African mine, stories of children living the ordinary domestic adventures of the upper-middle class English family-- which was the only one that existed for children's books published in England in the thirties-- were weird and exotic enough. Nannies in uniform, governesses and ponies, nurseries and playrooms and snow fights--all these commonplaces of European childhood were as unknown and therefore as immediately enviable as the life of princesses in legendary castles to the English children for whom the books were written. (p. 10)

Helen's sense of estrangement from her country of birth is accentuated when, for the first time, she visits the poverty-stricken and squalid black section of the Mine community which contrasts sharply with the affluent white quarters to which she belongs:

Yet now as I stood in this unfamiliar part of my own world knowing and flatly accepting it as the real world because it was ugly and did not exist in books (if this was the beginning of Colonialism: the identification of the unattainable distant with the beautiful, the substitution of "overseas" for "fairyland") I felt for the first time something of the tingling fascination of the gingerbread house before Hansel and Gretel, anonymous, nobody's children, in the woods. (p. 10)

This visit not only makes Helen feel more alienated from her environment, it also makes her realize the fact that there are two South Africas in the same country, divided along racial lines. While one is privileged the other is deprived of almost everything that makes life comfortable.

As Gordimer proceeds to scrutinize the matter in other novels, she makes it clear that while the transplanted European identity automatically stresses the white community's foreignness to the environment, the dispossessed blacks always have an irrevocable

sense of belonging to the land. She makes this assertion most eloquently in **The Conservationist**, a novel that is in many respects very different from both **The Lying Days** and **A World of Strangers**. Published in 1975, this novel reflects the period of political dead-end in South Africa which stretched from the early 60s to the mid-70s. This period saw the intensive entrenchment of apartheid which led to the creation of the black homelands. Significantly, therefore, the story of **The Conservationist** is told through the perspective of a man who is determined to conserve his position of white privilege and power, unlike the earlier novels in which South Africa is presented through the eyes of liberal characters who gain awareness of the untenability of the country's political system.

Mehring, the hero of **The Conservationist**, is a mining magnate, industrialist, and absentee farmer. Much of the novel comprises his critical recollections of his former mistress who has fled to England after failing to face up to the challenges of her professed liberal values. The farm, which he uses mostly as a weekend retreat, is the main reference point of his identity and that of his black labourers. Although Mehring materially owns the farm, he feels insecure on it, and at the same time enviously observes the natural ease with which his rugged employees feel at one with the place. One morning he watches, from his bedroom window, "the arrival of women and old men who have been taken on by Jacobus [the foreman] to come from the location to weed."¹² With intense fascination he notes the familiarity and easy harmony with which the workers set about their duties: "So that's how work gets going on the place. Everyone takes his time, nobody's developing ulcers out here, you've got to grant them that"(pp.172-173). After watching some more, Mehring exclaims: "Oh my God. What a crime to wake up morning after morning in that flat [in the city]. Never mind the huge firm bed and the good coffee" (p.174). In other words, the impersonality of his routinized urban life is thrown into vivid focus, through contradistinction, by the natural ease and emotional vitality the workers evince in relation to each other and to the farm. His rare visits to the place intensify the feelings of personal distance from it which already plague him because of his sense of foreignness to the land. He feels like a stranger on the premises every time he visits the farm.

Connected with Mehring's sense of insecurity and feelings of being foreign is his paranoia that the blacks are silently questioning

his possession of the place. He feels their eyes all over him, even when they appear to be ignoring him. Hence he finds consolation and reassurance in moments of total solitude, during which he feels at one with the land. For instance, he wakes up on a New Year's day and finds that there is nobody around: "There is absolutely no one. It's his own place. No eyes keep watch on him" (p. 200). Mehring does not hide his obsessive envy of the blacks' natural sense of belonging to the land. His consciousness of this tends to heighten his own feelings of being an alien, and of impermanence. When he considers pulling down their shacks for rebuilding he anticipates their discontentment about it: "There'll be dissatisfaction because they were here when he came, they were squatting God knows how long before he bought the place and they'll expect to have their grandchildren squatting after he is gone" (p.192). He also imagines what they think of him and his son: "He and his son with woman's hair came and went away, leaving nothing, taking nothing; the farmhouse was empty" (p. 192).

Mehring's frequent and prolonged absences from the farm also dramatize his detachment from it. Jacobus is practically the one who runs the place. During one of these absences a devastating storm hits the farm and much of the outlying countryside. When Mehring does not reappear for a prolonged period of time, his labourers presume him lost in the storm and set about restoring order to the farm on their own. Upon his return, he is disturbed by this order, and the workers' resumption of their normal routine of life. In effect, all this juxtaposes his sense of impermanence on the farm with the sense of belonging to it enjoyed by the blacks:

We think something is happen . . . and everything was kept in order, everything was maintained more or less as usual, as far as they know how. They were ready for the next white man. If it were not to be me, it would have been someone else. The next buyer. Perhaps they thought I was dead. They know another one will always come. They would take off their hats at the graveside as they would take them off to greet the new one. --We think something is happen-- But it can only happen to me. They have been there all the time and they will continue to be there. They have nothing and they have nothing to lose. (p. 246)

Ironically enough, the workers are totally unaware of this morbid sense of estrangement and impermanence. As far as they are concerned he is their keeper, and once he dies his son will inherit the place. For example, when Mehring tells Jacobus that some trees just planted on the farm take a very long time to mature, the foreman replies: "Well, is all right. Is all right, when Terry can get them, when he can get marry and bring them nice for his wife, his little children" (p. 211).

In addition to the problem of feeling like a foreigner, Mehring's rootlessness *vis-a-vis* the land is accentuated by the basically materialistic nature of his relationship to the farm. The element of possession in the relationship undermines any emotional or spiritual connection with the land he may wish to effect. Ultimately, Mehring realizes that his money cannot buy him everything. In contrast to his situation, the black workers do not have to assert their belonging to the place. Although he materially owns the farm, he cannot do so emotionally or spiritually. And while the blacks are materially impoverished, their emotional and spiritual connection to the land cannot be bought away from them. Mehring makes the impermanence of his material connection to it poignant when he says: "They know another buyer will always come." The only way he can thwart that other buyer is through an ancestral connection, which he desires. It is this desire that causes Mehring's repeated attempts to forge a sense of belonging to his farm by identifying with an unknown black man buried on it. Significantly enough, although the man was just dumped in a shallow grave by police, Mehring sees him as a symbol of absolute contact with the land. The man's anonymity is accentuated by the fact that even the cause of his death is not known, as he was found already dead on the farm. He was presumably murdered.

Mehring's frequent visits to the unknown man's grave indicate the conservationist's attempt to identify with him and what he symbolizes in spite of his anonymity. Through that identification Mehring contemplates his own death which he hopes will place him in a position of permanent possession of the farm. On one of the visits the contemplation is vivid and sombre: "He has been sitting so still he has the fanciful feeling that so long as he does not move the farm is as it is when he is not there. He is at one with it as an ancestor at one with his own earth. He is there and he is not there" (p.154). But this ancestral connection is closed to him, and he knows it. Even if he were to be buried there, as he wishes, he could not have an ancestral significance because of his being a foreigner.

The blacks have an ancestral connection with the land by virtue of being its indigenous inhabitants. The fact that generations of their relatives lived and died on this land is at the heart of their emotional and spiritual connection with it. The spiritual dimension lies in the belief that through that land the living and the dead commune with each other as members of the same "eternal" family. Hence, when the dead man is finally given proper burial, Gordimer describes him as having come home at last. The initial lack of proper burial denies him entry into the family circle because his humanity is negated and the ancestral powers are insulted. The police just dump him like a piece of rubbish. Even Mehring realizes this irreverence, but only after the storm has dug out his remains in symbolic demonstration of ancestral wrath: "If those *boere* bastards had done what they should, it would never have been there. They couldn't even see to it that a proper hole was made. Scratch the ground and kick back a bit of earth over the thing like a cat covering its business" (p. 234).

Significantly, after the dead man has been restored to the "eternal" family, Gordimer accords to him and his fellow blacks all the things Mehring desires: continuity and permanence, absolute contact with and belonging to the land:

The one whom the farm had received had no name. He had no family but their women wept a little for him. There was no child of his present but their children were there to live after him. They had put him away to rest, at last; he had come back. He took possession of this earth, theirs; one of them. (p. 252)

Some critics see these lines as Gordimer's prophecy on the eventual repossession of South Africa by blacks.¹³ But in the light of the ruthless way in which the South African government defended apartheid and white power for many years, this prophecy in a 1975 novel sounded like simple-minded wishful thinking. Indeed Gordimer herself, in various other works, repeatedly portrayed the political problems in South Africa as so complex that they defied easy optimism. The total picture that comes out of these works is one of political dead-end. The attempts at changing the system made by liberals, radicals, and revolutionaries from the forties to the eighties are seen to be futile. The individuals who made them are presented as victims of even more complex forms of irony than those discussed so far.

Gordimer intensifies the bleakness of the picture by portraying the endemic violence that has characterized the confrontation between the government and opponents of apartheid over the years. For instance, **The Late Bourgeois World** (1966) focusses on the abortive sabotage campaign that followed the silencing of peaceful political action after the 1963 Sharpeville Massacre. **Burger's Daughter** (1979) depicts the state suppression of left-wing opposition to the system. The story is told through the disillusioned eyes of Rosa Burger, daughter of Lionel Burger, a left-wing political leader who has died in prison. As a testament to the bleakness of the situation, the novel ends with the onset of the Soweto riots of 1975. This violent deterioration of the climate becomes the main focus of **July's People** (1981), a futuristic novel featuring an apocalyptic black insurrection in various parts of South Africa. **Something Out There** (1984), a novella which followed **July's People**, depicts the actual urban warfare intensified by the A.N.C. in the 80's.

In all these works Gordimer presents the events with an unflinching sense of irony aimed at exposing the dehumanizing effect of apartheid in general. But the ultimate irony of apartheid as a system is demonstrated in the monumental **A Sport of Nature**, published in 1987. In this novel Gordimer goes far beyond all her previous literary efforts. She presents a sweeping panorama of South Africa's political history from the earliest stages of apartheid to its future dissolution, and the ascent of black majority rule in a non-racial state. By compressing all the major events featured in the earlier works in one novel, Gordimer gives a unified critique of apartheid and exposes the inherent irony of the system in a final and magnified form.

At this point, the projected demise of apartheid no longer sounds like wishful thinking, as the South African government has, after years of ferocious intransigence, finally accepted the idea. And most remarkable of all is the fact that by 1987 Gordimer predicted the radical political moves the white government has made within the very short period of 1989 and 91. In the closing chapters of **A Sport of Nature**, the author depicts the release of Nelson Mandela and other long-suffering political prisoners; the unbanning of various opposition political parties including the African National Congress, long officially regarded as a terrorist organisation; and the opening up of dialogue between the government and its former enemies on the dismantling of apartheid and creation of a new South Africa. The installation of a new government headed by a black president

concludes the novel. By thus anticipating history itself, Nadine Gordimer shifts away from her objective stance as an ironist, and effectively becomes the artist-seer of literary tradition.

FOOTNOTES

1. Nadine Gordimer, Introduction, **Some Monday for Sure** (London: Heinemann, 1976), np.
2. Nadine Gordimer, Introduction, **Some Monday** np.
3. D.C. Muecke, **The Compass of Irony** (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 53.
4. Muecke, pp. 19-20.
5. Muecke, p. 19.
6. Muecke, pp. 19-20.
7. Muecke, p. 20.
8. For details on irony of dilemma see Muecke, pp. 113-115.
9. The Group Areas Act was only repealed this year, 1991, about 41 years after it was passed in 1950.
10. Nadine Gordimer, **A World of Strangers** 2nd Edition (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), pp. 33-34. All other references are incorporated in the text.
11. Nadine Gordimer, **The Lying Days**, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 10. All other references are incorporated in the text.
12. Nadine Gordimer, **The Conservationist**, (New York: The Viking Press, 1975) p. 172. All other references are incorporated in the text.
13. See Robert J. Green, "Nadine Gordimer: The Politics of Race," **World Literature Written in English**, Vol. 16, No. 2 (November, 1977), p. 258, and P. O'Sheel, "Nadine Gordimer's **The Conservationist**," **WLWE**, Vol. 14, No. 2 (November, 1975), p. 515.