

Discourse, Power and Resistance in Nadine Gordimer's *Occasion for Loving*: A Foucaultian Reading

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ABSTRACT

*This paper is concerned with two fundamental phenomena in any society: discourse and power. It focuses on how power is being reproduced by discourse in society. Many forms of social inequality, such as those based on gender, class, sexuality and race, are construed, perpetuated and legitimated by discourse. The critical method in this study is influenced by Michel Foucault's theories on power and discourse. It is in discourse, as Foucault puts it, that power and knowledge are joined together. However, Foucault argues that discourse is both the means of oppressing and the means of resistance. This study examines these forms of the discursive reproduction of power in Nadine Gordimer's novel, *Occasion for Loving* (1963). The researchers aim to explore how the control and power shaping and defining discourse in the prison-society of apartheid South Africa reveals the inevitable entanglement of the personal and the political and how such a relationship can be used by the artist to resist and subvert the controlling social and political discourses. The paper also sheds light on how Gordimer generates a discourse that challenges the apartheid's legal discourse on race and interracial sexuality.*

Keywords: Foucault; discourse; power; resistance; Gordimer

INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with two fundamental phenomena in any society: discourse and power. It focuses on how power is being reproduced by discourse in society. Many forms of social inequality, such as those based on gender, class, sexuality and race, are construed, perpetuated and legitimated by discourse. The critical method in this study is influenced by Michel Foucault's (1920-1984) theories on power and discourse. This study examines the discursive reproduction of power in the racially- and culturally-divided society of apartheid South Africa in Nadine Gordimer's (1923-2014) third novel, *Occasion for Loving* (1963). As Fowler and his team showed in *Language and Control* (Fowler et al. 1979), the crucial theoretical notion of power and domination is 'control.' Applying this to discourse means that we must ask who has access to the fundamental power resource of discourse in any society. Power is related to control, and control of discourse means preferential access to its production and hence to its contents and style, and finally to the public mind. It is demonstrated that the reproduction of political power needs to be backed by political discourse, and that such discourse again needs to be produced and understood in terms of various kinds of political cognition, such as ideologies. Foucault's work is largely concerned with the relation between social structures and institutions and the individual, the analysis of the effects of various institutions on groups of people and the role that those people play in

affirming or resisting those effects. The present paper explores the discourses of race and interracial sexuality and the institution of white family and its collusion with apartheid in Gordimer's *Occasion for Loving* in the light of Foucault's theories. The paper also explores how Gordimer's fiction per se serves as a discourse resisting and opposing the institution of apartheid.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study differs from that of other critics who have written on various aspects of Gordimer's writing since its emergence more than six decades ago. Although an enormous body of criticism has been done on Gordimer's work, very few studies of Gordimer's novels through the lens of Foucault's theories have been attempted so far. Rita Barnard stresses the need for a new characterisation of South African literature:

Despite the fact that two South African writers have been awarded the Nobel Prize, South African literature is still in some ways an emerging field of enquiry and one that continues to require redefinition in view of the changed circumstances in the country.
(Barnard 2007, p. 4)

The current study has been made to fill the gap in Gordimer's studies. Any reader of Gordimer's work will want to be aware of the following significant studies. Abdul Jan Mohamed's *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (1983) examines Gordimer's work in the context of colonialist society's Manichean structure and ultimately saves her from the label of colonial writer. Stephen Clingman, author of *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside* (1986), shows how Gordimer's work is caught up in the major literary and ideological movements of South Africa. He examines Gordimer's apprehension of how she as writer acts upon history, while at the same time history is acting or shaping her conscious thoughts as well. Clingman examines Gordimer's work within a historical framework and notes how Gordimer's development, both political and formal, can be traced in her writing. His contribution to the critique of Gordimer's writing is crucial to the exploration of the close relationship between the historical change inside South Africa and Gordimer's development as a writer which is sensitively manifested in each of her texts. Clingman remains the leading critic of the historical and political dimensions of her work, while other critics focus on other conditioning factors.

John Cooke's study, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: Private Lives/Public Landscapes* (1985), looks at the link between the private and public domains in Gordimer's novels. It explores the ways in which Gordimer intertwines her private and personal preoccupations with her political and public themes. Cooke argues that the private and the political in her novels unite through the "gradual accretion of public resonances around her private themes" (Cooke, 1985, p. 10). Cooke examines how the private theme concerning the liberation of children from powerful parents is associated with the political situation of Gordimer's society and the greater liberation of the country itself. The researchers share Cooke's argument that "complete liberation from private, familial restraints requires challenging the dominant political order as well" (p. 11). The focus of this paper is on that liberation in Gordimer's work which is continually explored in the very nexus of racial and sexual relations.

Judie Newman's *Nadine Gordimer* (1988) examines the way gender complicates the intersecting themes of race, sex, and colonialism in the novels. Newman draws attention to the connection between the psychological and political in Gordimer's writing, particularly in relation to the categories of gender and sexuality. Rowland Smith's *Critical Essays on*

Nadine Gordimer (1990) and Bruce King's *The Later Fiction of Nadine Gordimer* (1993), whose focus is "the changing face" of Gordimer's later fiction, are two collections of essays that provide a variety of challenging readings of Gordimer's novels and short fiction.

Dominic Head in *Nadine Gordimer* (1994) discusses each of her novels in detail, paying close attention to the texts both as a reflection of events and situations in the real world, and as evidence of her constant rethinking of her craft. His discussion of the novel is focused mainly on the idea of the construction of identity; but he makes some fine observations regarding the way this matter is implicated in the politics of the body. Head (1994) shows how Gordimer's concerns, apparent in her earliest novels, are developed through increasing stress on the politics of sexuality and he pursues the implications of this development to consider how Gordimer's later work contributes to a recentring of political engagement in an era of uncertainty.

Emerging out of the author's long-standing interests in the history of racial segregation, Saul Dubow's *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (2014) offers a fresh interpretation of apartheid South Africa. Dubow situates apartheid in global as well as local contexts. The overall conception of this new study is to integrate studies of resistance with the analysis of power, paying attention to the importance of ideas, institutions, and culture. Dubow approaches South Africa's white supremacist past from new perspectives. He asks not only why apartheid was defeated, but how it survived so long. He neither presumes the rise of apartheid nor its demise.

Many articles have also been written on discourse and power and on issues related to race, sexuality and transgression. Simon Lewis in his article *Under the Sign of the Gun: Welcome to the Postmodern Melancholy of Gordimer's Post-Apartheid World* (1999) discusses how Gordimer's 1994 publications, and *The House Gun* (1998) in particular, lend to being read as illustrative of two of Michel Foucault's insights: the ubiquity of power, and the consequent idea that given that ubiquity, care of one's self becomes of political obligation. Lewis explores how *The House Gun* indicates a new looking at an old subject facing new circumstances - the old subject being the psychological and material effects of white racism in the apartheid era, the new circumstances being those of post-apartheid South Africa.

Collin Jerome in his article entitled *Sexual Identities of the Malay Male in Karim Raslan's Go East and Neighbours* (2008) investigates the formation of sexual identity in Karim Raslan's short stories. The study explores the depiction of male sexuality in Malaysian literature in English and concludes that the fictional Malay men in Raslan's short stories "not only transgress the concept of male sexuality but also the sociocultural and religious norms and boundaries" (Jerome 2008, p. 35).

Marwan Kadhim Mohammed et al. in their article *Truth Problematisation and Identity Formation: A Foucauldian Reading of Martin Amis's Money* (2016) applied Foucault's theory of transgression to Martin Amis's novel, *Money* (2000), and discussed the theme of transgression in postmodern age as a unique social and cultural aspect in re-forming the identity of the postmodern man. The researchers also explore how Amis mirrors the identities of his characters through their transgression of the social norms and concluded that "Amis's obvious manipulation of transgressing the established norms of truth marks a turning point in his literary production" (Mohammed et al. 2016, p. 133).

MICHEL FOUCAULT'S THEORIES ON DISCOURSE, POWER AND RESISTANCE

Michel Foucault continues to be one of the most influential figures in intellectual life. Foucault's writing, which would seem so intensely focused on France, or at most, on Europe, has in fact proven to be relevant to discussions of colonial power and discourse. Foucault has

been very influential within the field of post-colonial theory. In the General Introduction to their book, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Ashcroft et al. observe that:

When Arthur James Balfour stood up in the House of Commons, at the height of British imperial power, on June 13 1910, to answer challenges to Britain's presence in Egypt, Edward Said tells us (Said 1978, p. 32), he spoke under the cover of two indivisible foundations of imperial authority— knowledge and power. The most formidable ally of economic and political control had long been the business of 'knowing' other peoples because this 'knowing' underpinned imperial dominance and became the mode by which they were increasingly persuaded to know themselves: that is, as subordinate to Europe.
(p. 1)

In both *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976), Foucault developed an influential account of the interconnections among power, discourse, and the subject. Foucault suggests that discourses structure our sense of reality, and our thoughts and actions are influenced, regulated and controlled by discourses. In the *History of Sexuality*, however, Foucault argues that discourse is both the means of oppressing and the means of resistance, that discourse enacts its own effect of destabilisation. For Foucault society is a complex field in which different discourses compete for power. Power actually works through discourses and discursive practices. Foucault challenges traditional notions of power. Famously, he writes that "power is exercised, rather than possessed" (Foucault 1977, p. 26). He also sees power as "productive" rather than repressive. Foucault shows how subjects are produced through certain institutional and cultural practices. Here his focus is on the practices of disciplinary power which are created with the development of human sciences in the nineteenth century. Foucault argues that disciplinary practices establish binary oppositions such as sane/mad, legal/criminal, and body/mind. These binary oppositions gain authority and can be used as a means of social control. Such divisions have a widespread effect in society, conditioning the way individuals label themselves and each other according to established norms (p. 199). These controls also involve the actual physical segregation of the population through incarceration.

It is only in his later work that Foucault was to turn to the question of racism, in the very different context of his analysis of what he called bio-politics, the regulation of the individuated bodies of the social body through disciplinary techniques. The final, sixth volume of *The History of Sexuality* was originally to have been entitled 'Populations and Races', and this suggests the importance that Foucault attached to racialism within the general field of what he called 'bio-power' within his history of sexuality. It is notable that in *The History of Sexuality* bio-power describes one of the two great regulating techniques of the politics of sex. According to Foucault, its power involves the forms of control carried out in the name of the race, for the welfare of the species, for the survival of the population. For Foucault racism is not a phenomenon in Western society that can be safely compartmentalised as an aberration but constitutes an expansive part of the general production of sexuality. He describes it as operating in two phases. First of all, in the form of eugenics, it is directed towards the survival of class supremacy (like the case of Whites in South Africa), and then it is deployed with respect to the control, ordering and supervision of the exploited classes (like non-Whites in South Africa).

Racism, in its eugenicist form, encouraged and enabled the state to intervene and control the body through the technique developed for the production of sexuality. The appeal of the argument about maintaining racial purity through 'blood' can be seen enacted by major apartheid laws in South Africa, as Ashcroft et al. recorded in *Post-colonial Concepts: The Key Concepts*, including the Population Registration Act (1950); which registered all people by racial group, the Mixed Amenities Act; which codified racial segregation in public

facilities, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949); which banned cross-racial marriages and the Immorality Act (1950); which criminalised sexual relationships across the colour line (Ashcroft et al. 2007, p. 14). The Immorality Act was designed to preserve ‘racial purity’ and white supremacy. Thus, the socio-political world of South Africa harboured the inhuman ideology of an apartheid system that segregated and brutalised people according to the colour of their skin.

Foucault points out that where there is power, there are resistances. In Foucault’s view, where there is no possibility of resistance there can be no relations of power. Foucault believes that the study of power should be the study of “the total structure of actions brought to bear” (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus 1983, p. 220) on the actions of others, and of the resistances and evasions encountered by those actions. Resistances arise, it seems, from within the power network, are produced by it, each a special case: “Resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations” (Foucault 1978, p. 96). These “points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilising groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour” (p. 96).

The productive nature of power has profound implications for how it can be resisted and here we see one of the most positive aspects of Foucault’s thought. The idea here is that rather than attempting to identify centralised sources of power, there are localised instances of it which individuals can address themselves to. This is not to deny the existence of state power, but rather to insist that effective resistance can be mobilised by locating the pervasive power relations which obtain in the lives of individuals at the micro-level of society. This conception of power and the appropriate arenas for its resistance inevitably involves questions of sexuality and sexual behaviour. The individual body becomes the smallest unit or focus of productive power and simultaneously the smallest identifiable site from which resistance can emerge. Foucault’s exposition in *The History of Sexuality* shows us how sexuality has increasingly become a significant location of power in contemporary Western society, and how the struggle for control of sexuality is carried out through the increasing and varied discourses inscribing it. In M. Keith Booker’s words, “For Foucault, sexuality is not so much a matter of natural instinctive impulses as of socially and discursively conditioned responses” (Booker 1996, p. 126). Foucault saw sexuality as a profoundly political issue. Foucault’s analysis of shifting power relations in a society helps us understand how Gordimer’s contributory discourse on sexuality in fact furthers a resistance to racist ideology embodied in controlling discourses on sexuality in South African society. Foucault’s analysis is pertinent to the understanding of the attitude to sex in the South African context, in which racial purity and miscegenation were major concerns. Foucault’s approach to the Western discourses of sexuality is certainly applicable to the South African context where sexuality is categorised, controlled and subjected to relations of power which control the human body. Gordimer’s fictional inscriptions of sexuality create the very specific subject positions of her characters who attempt to transgress social and cultural boundaries.

DISCOURSE, POWER AND RESISTANCE IN GORDIMER’S FICTION IN THE CONTEXT OF APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

For many decades Nadine Gordimer has been at the centre of South Africa’s literary and socio-political developments. As a writer whose career covers more than sixty years, from the beginning of apartheid until its demise and well into the post-apartheid period, Nadine Gordimer’s fiction represents a history of the problems the South African nation has faced

throughout these years. Gordimer was South Africa's leading voice depicting the realities of life under apartheid, one of the dominating influences on Gordimer's life and writing. In South Africa, one must pay attention to the specific effect of the rigorous social divisions maintained and regulated by the apartheid state. It is these divisions which most immediately regulate culture in general, and it is within culture that subjects are constituted. The word apartheid which means 'separation' was coined by General Smuts in London in 1917 and Afrikaner politicians and intellectuals began to use it in the 1930s. It came to gain international currency after the National Party's initial victory in 1948 in the general election with the vigorous campaign "for the separate development of each race in the geographic zone assigned to it" (Derrida 1986, p. 292). "Race is a product of language", as Derrida claims: "There's no racism without a language" (p. 292). The racial ideology of social and political control was systematically consolidated and culminated in the apartheid system which eventually created an internally compartmentalised society. Apartheid clearly represents Foucault's argument that modern power operates through continual classification, surveillance and intervention.

In apartheid era the racist organisation of South Africa was systematically intensified by means of legislation and brutal state control. Apartheid publicly voiced the ideology of racial purity and white supremacy, legislated into political reality in many different forms. Apartheid was a political program of separate development which was justified by the colonial perception that Africans were a distinct subspecies of humanity and inferior to whites, and had no historical claim to the territory of Southern Africa (Witalec 1996, p. 356). During the apartheid era, South African historical propaganda tended to view that the whites reached South Africa before the black inhabitants. The distortion and suppression of historical fact was one of the weapons of apartheid. The political program of apartheid attempted to control individuals by manipulative discursive machinations of law. In fact, apartheid constituted a system in which racial discrimination was institutionalised by law. In South Africa, after the rapid enactment of the program of Apartheid legislation it is, in Foucault's terms, "the population that were being overimprisoned" (Foucault, cited in Macey 1994, p. 258). The policy of segregation extended to every aspect of society, with separate sections in public transport, public seats, beaches and many other facilities. There is an evident connection here between the ideological practices of apartheid and Foucault's idea about the actual physical segregation of the population through incarceration. The actual incarceration of blacks under directly repressive measures of apartheid was imposed and beyond this physical incarceration, the apartheid ideology demanded a consciousness in individuals of their racial separateness.

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault demonstrates that control and management of sexuality have been affected from the seventeenth century onwards, through increasing the public discourses on sexuality, particularly the medical, social-scientific and psychological modes of analysis and intervention, and through the growth of state power in channelling sexual energies to preserve the existing social order. In South Africa, for example, the anti-miscegenation uproar became part of the legal, medical, and moral discourses of the country, resulting in laws such as the Prohibition of the Mixed Marriages Act enacted in the early fifties, which forbade sex across the 'color bar.' These laws were responsible for brutal police intimidation and humiliation of mixed-race couples such as the crude and humiliating scene in Gordimer's very first novel, *The Lying Days* (1953) as one of her characters describes the horrors of a mixed-race couple arrested in bed, dazzled by police flashlights (Gordimer 2002, p. 162).

Gordimer's novels expose the ubiquity of power, focusing on discourses of racism and sexuality. The politics of the body has always been important for Gordimer, and it has, of course, a special relevance in South African fiction. The outlawing of transracial

relationships, a cornerstone of apartheid in the 1950s, makes the exploration of personal and sexual relationships an implicitly politicised activity in South Africa. Often in Gordimer's novels political commitment goes hand-in-hand with free sexual expression. For example, in both *A Guest of Honor* (1970) and *A Sport of Nature* (1987), there is a renouncement of fidelity in marriage that is presented as a felicitous aspect of the protagonists' political advancement. Gordimer's treatment of sexuality can also be seen in *None To Accompany Me* (1994) in which Vera's extramarital affair which, initially, gives her "a sense of pride and freedom rather than betrayal" (Gordimer 1994, p. 63) and which, consequently, seems a necessary aspect of her personal growth. According to Gordimer's politics of the body, sexual expression and transgression flout the biological policing intended in the racist social structure of South Africa; and the biological hybridity implied in free sexuality indicates, by extension, a cultural hybridity. Throughout her career Gordimer has been preoccupied with how such cultural hybridity can be achieved for postcolonial Africa in general and South Africa in particular. To Gordimer, hybridity is a key way to go beyond the limitations and restrictions of South African society where apartheid prevents different groups from knowing and mingling with each other.

Foucault recognises "the swarm of points of resistance traversing social stratifications and individual unities" and comments that "it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible" (Foucault 1978, p. 96). Gordimer's interracial relationship represents new possibilities within the South African scene. In her portrayal of interracial sexuality, Gordimer has focused on the relationship between white women and black men. She has been criticised for this focus because as Ian Glenn notes, all evidence suggests liaisons between black women and white men are more frequent in South Africa (Glenn 1987, as cited in Waxman 1993, p. 139). But Gordimer's choice may be explained by her understanding of the possibilities for resistance in this type of relationship. She appears more interested in a relationship that resists the traditional imbalances of power. The black woman/white man pattern can be read as reinforcing the colonising pattern of the white patriarchal structure. By recording the negative consequences for the black female victim, one can be said to enhance the power of the coloniser. White men involved with black women, however sincerely, are inevitably read as agents for white patriarchy, and their intentions are tainted with white male attitudes and actions from the eighteenth century onwards.

Gordimer chooses instead the relationship that allies itself with the disenfranchised, that offers her more possibilities of subversion for the future. She provides an alternative discourse to the more prevalent social discourses by focusing on the connection between sex and power. Foucault describes sexuality as "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power" (Foucault 1978, p. 103). Gordimer explores the intricacies of power relations between racial groups in South African society, using her characters' personal encounters to expand the discourses of sexuality, and to seek out new forms, mutations, alliances, resistances, which may help to precipitate a power shift and therefore greater personal freedoms, for South Africans. Foucault believes that resistance to power begins at the level of the individual subject. "Power comes from below," he says (p. 103). Poststructuralist feminist Chris Weedon endorses this view. She believes that the individual subject is the first stage in the production of alternative forms of knowledge, or where such alternative discourses already exist, of winning individuals over to them and gradually increasing their social power (Weedon 1987, p. 111).

Because Gordimer has been such a prolific writer over a period of sixty years, we can read subtle responses, both conscious and unconscious, to historical moments meticulously recorded in her works. In the introduction to her *Selected Stories*, Gordimer admits that although she consciously was trying to affect history, all the time history was acting upon her

(Gordimer 1975, pp. 12-13). Her novels have frozen these historical moments, moments of resistance, collusion, despair. They reflect Foucauldian flux, shifts, and realignments of sexual and racial attitudes that have taken place among the precariously rising and changing forces in South Africa. They chronicle and anticipate the shifts that have been taking place, demonstrating Foucault's hypothesis of resistance. However, Gordimer's work is not merely a record of shifts in changing discourses. Her work is a contribution to the creation of the alternative discourses in the country. Gordimer understands the power of literature to change its readers. She notes in an interview with Jannika Hurwitt that at the age of fifteen her eyes were opened to the injustice black mineworkers suffered in South Africa when she read about the conditions of Chicago meat packers in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, the novel which Gordimer believes "started me thinking about politics: I thought, good God, these people who are exploited in a meatpacking factory—they're just like blacks here" (Carver 1983, p. 8). Readers are changed by what they read, and dissemination of Gordimer's work has contributed greatly to a discourse that resists and challenges the apartheid's legal discourse on race and interracial sexuality.

DISCOURSES OF RACE AND INTERRACIAL SEXUALITY IN *OCCASION FOR LOVING*

In *Occasion for Loving*, Gordimer debunks the Eurocentric psychological novel that emphasises the primacy of personal relationships rather than facts of cultural and social difference (Newman 1988, p. 29). With the hardening stance of the apartheid government, the rise in repression and brutality, the determined resistance of the African people, and her travels in Africa, Gordimer has become more aware of political currents in South Africa and her consciousness has become more historical. The change in South African society following the Sharpeville protest and massacre on March 20, 1960, was extreme and had a negative impact on writers. The Nationalist Government instituted emergency measures with the result, as John Lawrence commented, that the "taste of pure totalitarianism apparently proved too much for the South African government and . . . the state of emergency has never really ended at all, and has been getting more and more strict year by year" (p. 172). Gordimer's basic response to the new situation she confronted was to give increased emphasis to the effects of political, as opposed to private, factors in human relationships. In 1965 she noted that whites as well as blacks were shaped by their "peculiar situation" in South Africa:

I write about their private selves; often, even in the most private situations, they are what they are because their lives are regulated and their mores formed by the political situation. You see, in South Africa, society is the political situation. To paraphrase, one might say (too often), politics is character in South Africa? (Bazin 1990, p. 35)

Following Engels and Marx's assertion that "it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness" (Marx & Engels 1975, pp. 36-37), Foucault was preoccupied in his work with social structures and institutions and the social constitution of the subject. It is in the relationship between the individual and the institution that we find power operating most clearly. Gordimer's work, *Occasion for Loving*, explores the political and social implications of the institution of apartheid. The researchers read in this novel of how the control and power shaping and defining the discourses of race and sexuality in South Africa lays bare the inevitable entanglement of the personal and the political, and of how such a relationship can be used by the artist to resist and subvert such controlling cultural discourses.

Power, for Foucault, is exercised by "a wide variety of efforts in both the "public" and "private" spheres" (Ransom 1997, p. 28). For example, family, as a private sphere, is "a privileged instrument for the regulation or management of the population" (Smart 2002, p.

127). According to Foucault, family is an important sphere for the workings of power in society. The first part of the novel, *Occasion for Loving*, is devoted to Jessie's scrutiny of her past in her relationship with her mother. It tells of tears of rage when she realised that her mother's confining love had cheated her of a normal youth. Jessie was taken out of school aged 10, on the pretext of a nonexistent heart complaint, cocooned in a state of dependency by her unhappily married mother. At the beginning of the novel, while watering her garden, Jessie is revisited by a sense that she has "never left her mother's house" (Gordimer 2013, p. 6). This sense is symptomatic of Jessie's inner struggle to unravel the meaning that her psychologically convoluted past has for her present. Jessie's private quest to unravel the implications of her stifling childhood is distracted, yet ironically also facilitated, by the arrival from England of her husband's friend, musicologist Boaz Davis, and his young wife, Ann, who are to stay with the Stilwell until Boaz finishes his field research. Jessie, who is the deeper and more dominant consciousness of the novel, watches as Ann becomes embroiled in a complicated and ultimately disastrous affair with the African artist Gideon Shibalo.

Tom Stilwell, Jessie's husband, is an academic, engaged in a campaign against the Extension of University Education Bill. The Bill, designed to close the universities to non-whites, provokes a violent outburst from Tom. As Leonard Thompson explains, this apartheid legislation became an Act in 1959, preventing the established universities from enrolling black students, unless special permission from a cabinet minister was granted (Thompson 1990, p. 197). At a meeting to protest the closing of the universities to nonwhite students, an African acquaintance of Tom comments to him as Tom turns to say goodbye: "Fight them over this business if you want to, man, but don't think that anything you do really matters. Some of you make laws, and some of you try to change them. And you don't ask us" (Gordimer 2013, p. 40). This exemplifies the exclusion of nonwhites from the mainstream of politics and law.

Part two of *Occasion for Loving* explores the developing relationship of Ann and Gideon. Ann meets Gideon through Jessie's friend Len Mofolo and socialises with his black friends. Soon a recognisable pair, Ann and Gideon lunch regularly at the multiracial Lucky Star restaurant, picnic carelessly by the side of the road, and even try to get Gideon into a whites-only night club. This interracial relationship represents an example of Foucauldian points or knots of resistance within the racist hegemony of South African society. The novel, however, notes that "There are certain human alliances that belong more to the world than to the two people who are amusing themselves by making them; this diversion taken up by Shibalo and Ann was one" (p. 62). Here we learn that through the political machinations of the apartheid state, Gideon loses his scholarship to Italy. Because he is black, the government refuses Gideon a passport, which would allow him to accept a scholarship in Italy. This incident shows in the context of apartheid South Africa culture is also politicised. The Scottish rationalist Callie Stow warns Gideon that the passport issue shows that "the only thing that means anything if you're an African is politics" (p. 75). When Ann informs Boaz of the relationship, he refuses to respond to the affair and socialises tolerantly with Gideon at the Stilwell's home, because, as Tom puts it, "Boaz cannot kick a black man in the backside" (p. 98). Jessie explains that "Boaz—he's so afraid of taking advantage of Gideon's skin that he ends up taking advantage of it anyway by refusing to treat him like any other man" (p. 168). Boaz' refusal to respond to the affair because Gideon is black is a telling illustration of how public and private lives are intertwined and warped in South Africa.

Part three finds the couple in flight. Haggard from emotional strain, Ann and Gideon crisscross the country desperately in her little black car. Masquerading as madam and boy in public, they avoid dangerous racial situations everywhere they go. In one scene Ann is disturbed, sleeping by the road, by a local white farmer who warns her of "drunk boys" (p. 144). He leaves before Gideon comes into sight, but the fear of discovery provokes a series of

nervous spasms in Ann when the man has gone. The fear of discovery is here linked to the political question of the control of races. Here Ann's shock of fear, at being almost discovered even in this open country where blacks predominate, suggests an inner realisation that there is nowhere to hide, that there is no space beyond the control of racial legislation. The farmer's implicit fear, however, suggests that white control in apartheid South Africa is tenuous, that the logic of numbers creates an ever-present challenge to the monopoly of power and ownership. The fear involved in the maintenance of this insecure power is an implicit violence offered to those – such as Ann – who would challenge its codes. Ann's spasms of fear may also suggest a consciousness of a potential imminent disruption to these codes, a fear of being swept helplessly along in a wave of revolutionary change. Eventually Ann and Gideon turn up at Jessie's family beach cottage. At first, resentful of being drawn away from her personal meditations, Jessie soon recognises the affair is more serious than she and Tom first assumed. She learns what a harrowing experience the interracial couple has been through. Surrounded by a hostile, racist white community at the beach, Jessie witnesses their relationship as it is reduced to a battle of social deception. Jessie recognises that,

What Boaz felt towards Ann; what Gideon felt towards Ann; what Ann felt about Boaz; what she felt for Gideon—all this that was real and rooted in life was void before the clumsy words that reduced the delicacy and towering complexity of living to a race theory. (p. 133)

In this context, stripped bare of the protection granted them by the liberal environment of their Johannesburg milieu, Ann is brought face to face with the enormous responsibility of an interracial relationship.

The last part of the novel chronicles Ann's failure of nerve to choose a life with Gideon. She ultimately lacks the courage to be claimed by his people and history, by the "men and women and children outcast for three hundred years" (p. 168). This shows the effect of Foucault's disciplinary practice which is designed to produce 'normalised' and 'docile' subjects fearful of transgressing a particular binary opposition, especially through inter-racial sexual contact. By virtue of her whiteness, Ann is always seen – despite her black friendships – in the context of the white city, "to which, after all, she belonged, and to which she could return whenever she chose" (p. 62). Without any warning, Ann leaves the country with Boaz.

The interracial relationship between Ann and Gideon facilitates and questions Jessie's exploration of her private past. Jessie, caught up in the tangle of her mother's controlling love for her as a child, admits that power is not something restricted to politics, but that it operates also within the tension of attraction and love. She calls it "a ghastly thing to resist taking hold of, anywhere" (p. 89). Jessie's private meditation on love and family relations is forced – through the intrusion of Ann and Gideon's affair, which demonstrates that even between lovers, blackness counts – to recognise the social and political forces that permeate and misshape South African consciousnesses.

In South Africa the construction of individuals has political ramifications which can be discerned in how problems and confusions are manifested psychologically. This means that while external politics (state intervention of 1950 Immorality Act) – the line in the statute book forbidding miscegenation – accounts in part for the failure of Ann and Gideon's relationship, it is also the silent internalisation – the "prestructuring effects" (Clingman 1993, p. 82) – of apartheid's social sanctions that erode it. In Clingman's words, "the repressions of apartheid have become psychologically inscribed" (p. 82). Once dismissive of the society's legal restrictions, Ann has now absorbed the poison of apartheid and is gripped by its fears and obsessions. The deeply ingrained patterns of irresponsibility and indifference sanctioned

by the system provide white Ann with a way out when she cannot cope with the reality of loving a black man:

There was no recess of being, no emotion so private that white privilege did not single you out there; it was a silver spoon clamped between your jaws and you might choke on it for all the chance there was of dislodging it. (Gordimer 2013, p. 174)

Those same internalised patterns, however, only guarantee black Gideon the “position of a passive object, either as the beneficiary of white goodwill or as its victim” (Clingman 1993, p. 82) and leave him devastated and broken at the end of his relationship with Ann.

Jessie Stillwell provides an excellent example of Foucault’s contention that the process of producing ‘docile’ bodies and minds is not confined to state institutions and discourses watching over, regulating and controlling people’s thoughts and behavior. As Danaher et al. explain, bio-power transferred in Britain in the nineteenth century many regulatory functions that had been the responsibility of the state partly or wholly to the family and, in particular, to the mother of the family. So mothers were assigned the national responsibility of ensuring that the resources of the state were properly developed and perpetuating the values of the institutions of the state (Danaher et al. 2000, pp. 75-76). In South Africa, the institution of the white family is closely linked to the racial institution of apartheid. Jessie was confident that for her “the race business” (Gordimer 2013, p. 156) had been settled long ago. Through her closeness with Ann and Gideon, however, Jessie comes to see that this is not the case and she learns that racial associations lie at the core of her identity. She grows gradually aware of the deeply corrosive power of racism embedded within all South Africans. When Jessie retreats to a beach house, Ann and Gideon descend upon her. As a result she discovers the pre-structuring effects of apartheid upon her own psyche. In conversation with Gideon she suddenly recognises her childhood fear as emanating from:

The black man that I must never be left alone with in the house. No one explained why, but it didn’t matter. I used to feel, at night, when I turned my back to the dark passage and bent to wash my face in the bathroom, that someone was coming up behind me. (p. 156)

Now able to see the inescapable inscription of apartheid’s sanctions in her psyche, Jessie recognises the source of her childhood fear of being assailed in the dark by her stepfather, Fuecht, not as the Freudian taboo of the European father, but as the racist taboo of the black African ingrained in her by her mother. This exemplifies the role of family as a major institution of the racial politics of apartheid. Judi Newman confirms that “her [Jessie] admission historicises her trauma, now comprehensible not as the individualist product of bourgeois repression within a nuclear family, but as stemming from political and social conditions” (Newman 1988, p. 31). Gordimer is interested in exploring how this repression has been socially constructed and inscribed. So, however distorted her consciousness may be, the novel insists that Jessie has been constructed not by Europe and its psychological theories, but by an African past tainted by the politics of Europe.

Like Jessie, Ann begins the novel in a state of apparent colour-blindness. On the road with Gideon, however, forced to assume the role of white ‘madam’ travelling with her ‘boy’, Ann discovers a fatal ease of adaptation to the dominant cultural conventions, “fitting an identity imposed from outside herself” (Gordimer 2013, p. 147). She becomes aware of Gideon as a black first, as a man second. In the context of institutional repression, there can be no occasion for loving between white and black:

They believed in the integrity of personal relations against the distortion of laws and society. What stronger and more proudly personal bond was there than love? Yet even

between lovers they had seen blackness count, the personal return inevitably to the social, the private to the political ... So long as the law remained unchanged, nothing could bring integrity to personal relationships. (p. 174)

The intransigent racist system of apartheid deeply scarred the psyches of all South Africans. The intensity of the illegal interracial relationship proves too shattering for Ann, who, unable to see it through, flees back to England with Boaz. By witnessing the insidious power of apartheid to infect the relationship of the interracial couple and the lives around them, Jessie ultimately understands that her personal quest for understanding is utterly inadequate in the face of the overwhelming political intrusion.

Like Foucault, Gordimer understands sexuality as a site of power relationships dominated increasingly by the voices of the social institutions. Gordimer recognises interracial sex as the crux of racism in South African society. By generating a discourse about interracial sexuality in *Occasion for Loving*, Gordimer violates the taboo of miscegenation, shattering the silence and secrecy that are a shelter for power. She begins a discourse that Foucault would describe as a “hindrance, a stumbling block [of power], a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (Foucault 1978, p. 101). As Foucault says “discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (p. 101). Gordimer understands that until interracial sexuality finds its own voice, “to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged” (p. 101), until it ceases to be a legal issue, no real shift in power will be able to take place.

CONCLUSION

According to Foucault, the transgression of particular sexual taboos can represent a challenge to restrictive ordering practices. This has certainly been a primary feature in Gordimer’s *Occasion for Loving* in which the racist apartheid ideology is often shown to be effectively challenged at the level of micro-politics by trans-racial sexual liaison. Like Foucault, Gordimer also perceives the necessity of resisting the existing discourses of sexuality. Because sex is a locus of control in the political arena, both sex and politics are inevitably intertwined. In *Occasion for Loving*, the black artist Gideon Shibalo’s affair becomes conspiracy, a resistance, with protagonist Jessie Stilwell, who endorses the affair, drawn in as co-conspirator. But the forces of the dominant social discourses prove too much for Ann and she flees South Africa and Gideon. Yet seen as a whole, Gordimer’s novel demonstrates that short-lived and seemingly trivial acts of resistance like Gideon and Ann’s effect some change in the consciousness of the individuals involved. Their experience of resistance, failed or otherwise, within the realm of the dominant discourses that administer sexuality, prepares the ground for future eruptions of resistance when circumstances align once more. The space between the position offered to the individual by the dominant discourse and the personal interests of that individual has certainly widened, and the resulting alienation increases the chances for more significant disaffection. Gordimer’s work has greatly contributed to the creation of the alternative discourses in the country. Gordimer’s contributory discourse on racism and sexuality in fact furthers a resistance to racist ideology embodied in controlling discourses on sexuality in South African society. The shift in power and attitude towards race and sex can be evaluated by the repeal of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in the late eighties. This indicates that dissemination of Gordimer’s work has contributed greatly to a discourse that resists racism.

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