

## The Impact of Deracination on Colonial Zone: Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*

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### ABSTRACT

One of Nadine Gordimer's major obsessions has been raising awareness about the unjust and discriminatory policy of apartheid law in South Africa. She has dramatised the history of her country in her fictions to expose more awareness and truth of the unfair political situation of her homeland to the world. This study explores Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* to analyze the effects of an impromptu journey of the Smales, a white family, into their black servant's hinterland. Apartheid atrocities and racial segregations of the white government of South Africa caused an interregnum of white reign and consequently led to black insurgency, tumult, sudden abandonment of home and therefore displacement of the Smales family. This deracination into the primitive settlement of the black servant July renders the Smales family members to have a nostalgic feeling of returning to their metropolis home, which is a manifestation of their inability to assimilate with and adapt into black culture and standard of living. The aim of this study is to analyze the deep impact of unhomey sojourn on each member of the Smales family and on July, who feels a sense of in-betweenness after his regression from city life style to his village environment that is devoid of the city qualities and values. Even though the Smales family's authority, power and social prestige are diminished while they are in the black contact zone, they emerge to be the embodiment of the white civilization – modern, secure and hygienic, which are the modes of urban life standards.

**Keywords:** assimilation; civilizing mission; displacement; in-betweenness; uprootedness

### INTRODUCTION

Nadine Gordimer lived through the system of apartheid in South Africa and she fought to bring about its end. In her eighth novel, *July's People*, she foresaw an inevitable overthrow of the apartheid law of the white government. And owing to the wide exposure to racial segregations imposed by the apartheid regime, her novel is an attempt to impart the truth of the unfair political situation of her homeland to the world. Gordimer, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1991, addresses the violence and atrocities of apartheid, duplicity, physical tension and "perversion of normalcy" of the totalitarian state. This is, of course, her favorite theme that as Edward Quinn puts it "has been the dilemma of the apolitical or moderate white person opposed to apartheid but inextricably caught up in its social fabric" (2004, para. 4). *July's People* is a story about the aftermath of apartheid and this study tries to investigate the impact of colonial oppression on the major characters. The objectives of this study are to show the assimilation of a white family into their black servant's indigenous settlement and July's adaptation of the social and cultural norm of white urban life. It also endeavors to reveal the deep effects of dislocation and "unhomeliness" on the Smales while they seek refuge in the faraway hinterland in a period when interregnum and lack of order, security and discipline have confused both white and black people of Johannesburg. Dislocation may be a result of "transportation from one country to another by slavery or

imprisonment, by invasion and settlement, a consequence of willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007, p. 65). This term is often used to describe the experience of dislocation in Martin Heidegger’s term *unheimlich* or “unhomeliness” – literally ‘unhousedness’– which is also sometimes translated as ‘uncanny.’ Homi K. Bhabha, a prominent postcolonial theorist develops and defines “unhomeliness” as the “condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations.” I borrow the concept of “unhomeliness” reflected in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) to explore the impact of black resistance and revolution on white family. This concept is not attributed to the black people and their exiled setting. On the other hand, it is viewed that the white family’s journey is not an exile but a flight under duress caused by the black people’s resistance and fear of death when the whole structure of the state is dismantled. Bhabha (1994, p. 13), notes that “this process is relocation of home to another territory where the occupants cross to another culture”, however “to be unhomed is not to be homeless” or shelterless. It is a condition where providing another house structure in an unknown space cannot take the place of the former home with its materials and occupants’ ties and affinity.

By analyzing the Smales’ displacement and their sense of “unhomeliness” and estrangement among July’s people, and through foregrounding July’s in-between identity this paper attempts to explain how the characters become the other through the course of the story and why they cannot integrate into the new culture. In general terms, the ‘other’ is anyone who is separate from one’s self. The colonized subject is characterized as ‘other’ through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, “as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007, pp. 154-155).

This paper argues that Gordimer presents the new travel narratives of South Africa which highlights the differences between the White metropolis and the black primitive community. To borrow Alkali’s words that consider Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel, *Our Sister Killjoy*, “a trying exercise in whining or complaining about being a woman” (2013, p. 244) I believe that *July’s People* is a similar exercise to complain about being an ‘other.’ She further points to the modern materials of the white settlement in the city, race and class hierarchy created by the White policy of apartheid. As Williamson argues, through July’s narrative about the wonders of the city, she “exposes the gap between the lifestyles of the affluent Whites and poor Blacks” (1999, p. 84). Such a gap becomes evident when July, the white family’s black servant, is contemplating on different types of rooms white race are enjoying: “a room to sleep in, another room to eat in, another room to sit in, a room with books ...a room with how many books... And hot water . . . the room for bathing. .. [to] wash your clothes” (Gordimer, 1981, p. 19). Rowland Smith also reveals the gap at “the point of contact between the city past and the village present” (1984, p. 95) and shows the ambiguity of the roles of master and servant in every situation of the novel.

To show the impact of interregnum, Darren Felty in his 1998 essay examines Nadine Gordimer’s depiction of the relationship between her characters’ social status and their self-perceptions, which collapse after the overthrow of white rule in South Africa. He argues that the Smales family has been dispossessed not only from their political, cultural, economic and social status but also has lost any firm sense to maintain their own identities. He also explores the nature of revolution, both on a political and a personal level that caused “an explosion of roles.”

## DISCUSSION

### IN-BETWEENNESS AND ASSIMILATION

Gordimer sets her novel during a fictional civil war in which the black South Africans violently overturn the powerless white government. As a result of the black insurgency, the white family has to set up an impromptu flight to a space where black people have been geographically, historically and culturally separated from for a long time. Through establishing relationships that follow this sort of union some conflicts take place and cultural in-betweenness occurs for the main characters. Coming into contact with the indigenous people in July's village and the struggles of the reluctant family members throughout the unavoidable assimilation and acculturation process affects them strongly and leaves them with a newly forged social and psychological identity produced in a state of in-betweenness whereby one is caught between two situations, things or feelings.

It also shows the white couple's unwilling transformation into black customs while they are bereft of accustomed physical and psychological supports. Maureen, Bam's wife, for instance, appears to be deeply affected by this condition. The commandeering housewife of the Smales loses her ability to explore her unmapped new world and cannot lead her new life according to its chart. To exacerbate Maureen's situation, the previous normalized language of servant and master becomes not only ineffective but also empowers July to appropriate new form of language unspoken to them before. In their former roles, the type of English they used to speak in Johannesburg was not a problem because "it was based on orders and responses, not the exchange of ideas and feelings" (Felty, 1998, p. 201). That is why Maureen "does not understand the gender-dynamics of July's village" and gets "frustrated in her attempts to be a part of the life of the women there" while to her surprise "angry with and contemptuous of her, he [July] berates her in his own language, which she does not understand" (Roberts, 1993, p. 81). July's outburst is an indication of the lack of authenticity in his former interactions with the Smales. Gordimer's depiction of July foregrounds him as being ambivalent with a dilemma about his in-between identity towards adhering to white social values and life styles and his current state back at the village. Although July has been given the opportunity of shacking with his mistress, Ellen by Maureen's consent and is also provided with a comfortable room with attached bathroom, his inclination to mingle with the white family changes. His true personality is revealed when he is challenged by his villagers because he has brought his master's family with him. In his village, he is recognized as the figure in-between 'civilization' and 'primitivism' still with more materialistic tendencies toward the whites. July's identity is equally based on contradictions such as his status in the village, which has always been derived from the fact that he was associated with white people.

The fact that he brings the Smales to the village along with their helplessness and powerlessness at that moment diminishes July's status in the eyes of the villagers. As Janeite Treiber argues, July tries to simultaneously "treat the Smales as masters even in the village, in order to maintain the image the village people used to have of them, and subsequently, of him. He too is affected by the modalities of 'home' and 'not home', but there is a difference" (1983, p. 150). Although he had comforted his way of living in the city, he is no longer willing to continue his former subservient position; he wants to enjoy his newly gained power. That is why he takes possession of some of the Smales's belongings that are crucial marks of their difference and superiority. He appropriates the key for the pickup truck, Bakkie, and drives to another location without his master's permission.

July has closely associated himself with the Smales' system and life standard, he understands himself as being more attached to the white system than his native people. It is for this reason that he does not advocate the black insurgency and revolution that caused his

deracination from city town and his job. He refers to the black revolutionaries as ‘them’ while his wife, Martha, and his mother, Mhani, favor the blacks’ uproar by calling them ‘our people.’ Therefore, while close cultural association transforms the Smales into ‘July’s people,’ cultural disassociation occurs between July and his own kin. The first implication of July’s cultural disintegration with his tribe’s people is his appropriation of the English language. As Williamson maintains, “July represents the culturally in-between figure of the urban Black who speaks a hybrid English and occupies the space between Martha who is “black-black” and the white Smales” (1999, pp. 87-88). July, by appropriating the imperial language, tries to take over the cultural and social aspects of the dominant discourse.

Ironically, Maureen assumes that her past communications with July in English indicates that their intimate relationships based on courteous service and generous reward meant that they understood each other. Even when July shelters them in his village she comes to “assume that their loss of white urban status will lead to a greater equality of interaction between her family and July’s” (Roberts, 1993, p. 80). Later in her journey of self-discovery and powerless state of knowledge she realizes that mutual relationships cannot be constructed based on intimacy when master-servant commands exist on verbal and “gestured niceties.” And she cannot assimilate or be absorbed with July’s people because both she and they cannot escape the “cultural definitions and prejudices” that prohibit real intimacy between them. She is in-between of the wrongful assumption that she created earlier and the harsh reality that brought about a new understanding. Only her daughter, Gina, is successful in integrating with black children. She mingles with them and she learns an African language, manners, perceptions, and is trained to sing African lullabies with the help of black children.

Erritouni maintains that the type of relationship that Gina establishes with them “encourages not only the white racist of ‘going native’ but also hopes a possible utopian future and rebirth with more coexistence of black and white through the avenue of children’s interaction” (2004, p. 141). Gina’s break with the old order is evident in her relationship with the African children of the village. The lack of racial consciousness in her attitude towards them contrasts favorably with the inequality that characterized the friendship of the young Maureen and Lydia. Although Maureen regarded Lydia as her best friend and her confidante during their school days, their interactions could not completely evade the hierarchy of white and black. She discovers her false perception of equality when she is reluctantly located in the real black homogenous space. It seems that her son, Victor, shares his mother’s feeling as Gina makes progress in uniting black and white; Victor’s perceptions of apartheid and avoiding contact with the black children do not promise of this optimistic future. Victor demonstrates extreme jealousy and an aggressive sense of ownership that Gordimer finds objectionable in white South Africa.

When Victor arrives at the village, he wants to impress other children with his racing car track but demands his mother to “tell them they must not touch it. I don’t want my things messed up and broken. You must tell them” (Gordimer, 1981, p. 14). He also reacts with vehemence to the villagers using water from the tank which his father had installed. “Everybody’s taking it! I told them they’re going to get hell, but they don’t understand. Come quick, dad. Undaunted by his parents’ dismissal of his complaint, he insists, it’s ours, it’s ours” (Gordimer, 1981, pp. 62-63). Victor, however stubborn and immature, thwarts the process of his assimilation and perhaps destroys the bridge his sister had managed to build. Their remarkable differences in terms of culture, standard of living and values are “an uncompromising barrier” to reconcile with each other.

Commenting on the way that Gordimer presents the confrontation of “opposing socio-cultural systems” such as Black and White, indigenous and foreign, rural and consumer, Williamson argues that “Gordimer creates an in-between space in which the refigured “colonizer” (White) confronts the refigured “colonized” (Black) and recognizes the

inadequacy and falsehood of bourgeois liberalism, colonialism, and capitalism as manifested by Apartheid” (1999, p. 80). This cultural dynamic and white family’s persistent sense of material possession result in cultural in-betweenness which destabilizes the strict categories, rigid separations, and binaries of the apartheid state. Likewise, Bam is an embodiment of white idealism who represents an in-between identity that he develops in the new frontier. He builds a water tank for the welfare of villagers, and teaches Daniel how to shoot. Besides, he goes hunting with them in order to procure source of food for all, but on the other hand, he does not partake in the drinking party of the black people or is reluctant to teach the chief the skill of shooting. The process of his assimilation does not progress when he is reminded of the architectural job he had in the city and the social prestige he secured ‘back there.’ His wife nags him saying that his social position was belittled when he laid on the mud floor of a filthy hut, and finally the faintest hope he had, is shattered when his shotgun is stolen. It is the only possession by which he can maintain his male authority, power and means of protection for his family. They suspected July to be the culprit but later they realized the true story. Unlike a native who has to travel to white territory to fetch western music instruments Daniel does not need to cross the border to obtain modern means of protection or hunting. He appropriates Bam’s gun during the white family’s absence from their hut to join the rebels.

July and the native who brings the battery-operated amplifier to the village to entertain villagers are both in an in-between situation positioned between the metropolis and the village. His modern and metropolitan souvenir transforms the village into a culturally in-between space because it introduces township music into the village culture: “He is not only introducing white cultural development but also their consumerism between their rural and primitive way of existence which is less or nonconsumer” (Williamson, 1999, p. 83). The temporary nature of black job contracts that cause them to be displaced or always be in-between places and between jobs is another example of such in-betweenness. Similarly July is deracinated from his job in the city.

Owing to the sudden rupture of time and place Maureen distinguishes the difference between intimacy and friendship, and being a master and a servant. Maureen’s naïve and false perception of intimacy and assimilation that she started with Lydia in pre-revolutionary context was celebrated and successful, but when she is placed/ displaced as the ‘other’ in her post revolution context she realizes that the printed photograph of her and Lydia carrying her school bag is not a reflection of intimacy, equality or friendship, but a deflection of the racial relationship of master and servant. When she is located/dislocated as the ‘other’ and is powerless “she deciphers details of the village people’s everyday life, artifacts, and souvenirs. In the process of deciphering, Maureen begins for the first time to doubt the truth of her previous perceptions” (Treiber, 1983, pp. 138-39). It is in her moment of powerlessness that she acquires knowledge of the photo printed on ‘Life Coffee table’ edition. It conveys the deceitful meaning of white reception of black that establishes and focuses only distance and gap and no intimacy.

The lack of a center, or a true perspective and “absolute validity” to her new acquired knowledge can be another reason that Maureen is unable to adapt to the native’s surrounding. Believing that her conscience is clear, and thinking that she has granted equality to the blacks “she realizes now that it was she who had defined the terms of equality according to her own standards, to her own background, and to her personal perspective” (Treiber, 1983, p. 143). Her surface definition and equal treatment that she maintains with the black in her pre-revolutionary context gives Maureen “an impermanent plausible sense of integration” and assimilation which she later understands as being false, superficial and naively constructed.

Another example of the construction of assimilation is the scene where black women are working together in the field. Gordimer meticulously depicts Maureen walking across the field with yellow bruise on her legs and purple-red ruptured blood-vessels on her

thighs...coarse hair of her calves against her white-skinned body. It is in this scene that Maureen reaches the epiphany of the strangeness of her own white body. She notices that even her white legs are kind of mismatched and imbalanced if she wants to adjust and join them in their work. Observing the nasty laugh on the unsmiling face of July's wife, she understands that she is the 'other', different from the mass cultural and racial perception. She learns that she can neither mingle with them nor accepted by them. The black women assume that she does not have the skill and physical stamina they possess and this is an additional reason for Maureen to consider herself as a misfit in this situation.

Dislocation and dispossession has an internal impact on the personal and familial life of the Smales. The identity transition of Bam and Maureen in the course of the novel reveals that in their new environment Bam is still obsessed with his values, urban standard and quality of life he maintained in his former society. Although they face a shortage of garments and settle in a new but small hut which does not provide privacy and a boundary, he is uneasy with his wife's improper and shabby dress and is not ready to reconcile with the new situation. In another instance Bam is constantly looking at his watch to check time and date but Maureen's perception of time measurement in the bush is that it was a pointless matter to think about. "On the bed the man kept glancing at his watch but she knew hers was useless" (Gordimer, 1981, p. 43). In the indigenous settlement of July the mechanical clock is a useless instrumental marker of time because their sense of reality has been disrupted.

Another indicator of their insistence on the former situation and their inability to adapt to a new environment devoid of the former qualities and values is Bam and Maureen's struggle to tune the radio in the hope of receiving transmission. As Madden argues "his unthinking assumption of what he must believe to be his rightful place in society, and his efforts to maintain his white values, demonstrate Bam's inability to reassess how he must live in the new community" (2007, p. 20). Accordingly, Bam's thoughts are in-between the comfort and leisure of the city's modern equipment and the village's primitive accommodation. Gordimer presents this "in-betweenness as an inevitable outcome of colonialism and capitalism that negates apartheid's separation of races, cultures, and ethnicities" (Williamson, 1999, p. 89). She shows less optimism about the assimilation of elderly characters who are put in an in-between situation and are unwillingly inhabited into an inbetween location.

#### **DISPLACEMENT AND UPROOTEDNESS**

The concept of place is a very significant notion for individuals in a colonized society because it is a determining factor in shaping individuals' identity. A strong reason for such significance "lies in the disruption caused by 'modernity' itself in the links between time, space and place" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007, p. 161). This study shows that not only the concepts of time measurement and urban space facility as being significant, but also other modern equipment of the Johannesburg home has affected Bam's family when they are reluctantly dislocated. "Unhomeliness" in its postcolonial sense, is a term developed by Homi. K. Bhabha and it:

refers to the way a colonial subject perceives the world as divided between two antagonistic cultures: that of colonizer and of the indigenous community. This "double consciousness" often leaves the colonial subject feeling caught between two cultures, with neither of them providing a sense of belonging; the subject lacks the experience of having a "home" culture.

(cited in Bressler, p. 336)

The Smales family, having driven through the bush for three days and nights, has to spend the night in a rondavel. While the rondavel is a familiar African dwelling, yet the space, the

interior design, furniture and details of other facilities they enjoyed possessing 'back there' are not available. The meticulous details with which Gordimer describes the position of the rondavel is:

Stamped mud and dung floor, above her, cobwebs stringy with dirt dangling from the rough wattle steeple that supported the frayed grey thatch. Stalks of light poked through. A rim of shady light where the mud walls did not meet the eaves; nests glued there, of a brighter-colored mud wasps or bats.

(Gordimer, 1981, p. 2)

One overwhelming scene is when Maureen encounters "the tail of an animal and a rodent skull in the host's hut" (Gordimer, 1981, p. 29). Upon seeing such an unfamiliar scene she feels that she is culturally and physically deracinated from her familiar modern contact zone. The term, contact zone is developed by Mary Louise Pratt to describe social spaces where "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination like colonialism and slavery." (2008, p. 7) All these features of the rondavel are contrasted to the Smales family's urban home, their familiarity and expectation with their earlier surroundings. Therefore, the sojourn they are experiencing disturbs them with an unhomey atmosphere. Robert describes this 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 take on "more disturbing ambience when the ordinary, satisfying, white middle-class marriage of the Smaleses' begins to destabilize" (1993, p. 80).

Here Bhabha's definition is applicable to the white family as their experiences are also associated with this term. The black revolution and white hunting forced them to flee and leave the house and its belongings behind to save their own lives. The only safe place they could take refuge in was July's village. But upon their arrival they soon realize that they are an unwelcome burden to that small society as July's wife criticizes their presence. Packing in a hurry they could not bring the valuable equipment that they were familiar with and most common materials which they used. In one of the early scenes in the novel, Maureen realizes her difference through a sudden rupture of time and place because their journey was a kind of "transition between the two worlds of urban white affluence and rural black deprivation" (Green, 1988, p. 560). Now they had entered a new frontier and feeling the gap between the 'experienced' place and 'unexplored' space which disrupts their "equilibrium" and it results in an uncomfortable ambience. Being trapped in an "unmapped territory" and far from white civilized concept of modernity, date and time, Maureen seeks refuge to the impoverished settlement of her servant and she finds herself unable to acclimatize and "not knowing where she was, in time, in the order of a day as she had always known it" (Plummer, 1990, p. 17).

Roberts adds that the first deflection of change, is Maureen's "disorientation in time". For Maureen, the decent, concerned woman on whom the novel is largely focused, the change is cataclysmic, jumbling the sequence of her past lives, uprooting her to another time, place, and consciousness. Even the novel she has brought to read in her leisure time cannot transport or uplift her "since she was already not what she was" (Gordimer, 1981, p. 29). Since the meaning of time and place has been changed for her the leisure she had earlier 'back there' is either unattainable or meaningless in her new situation.

Through the course of the novel, the nostalgic desire of 'back there' is constantly repeated and intensifies the depth of the longing they have for their privileged space, namely their lost urban home. On one occasion, upon having a dinner of roasted pig Maureen and Bam are sexually aroused with the aphrodisiac strength of meat but deprived of their private bedroom they use the Bakkie cabin to gratify their sudden sexual urge. When he wakes to see

menstrual blood on his penis he experiences a momentary but “horrificing hallucination” that he has the dead pig’s blood on him. For the first time, Maureen discovers that she smells a bad odor between her legs and later she is forced to use old rags during her menstruation. While critics like Roberts have interpreted the blood on Bam’s penis as an “an image of castration” and a signification of the sense of “unhomeliness” (Roberts, 1993, p. 81) it is evident that the sojourn has overwhelmingly affected Bam and Maureen by depriving them of a hygienic bathroom, equipment and medication that were earlier available to them in their own home.

Consequently, both Maureen and Bam are deeply disturbed by being uprooted and separated from their comfortable mansion. Bam is also terrified at the scene of Royce wiping himself with a stone in the absence of toilet paper. He is appalled by Maureen’s ungroomed and ungroomable female body, unshaven legs and armpits, broken nails, hair ... skinny chest without bra and her filthy T-shirt. Limited to a shelter without water, electricity and proper sanitation Maureen is afraid to cook in the pot used by the native black people. She is certainly affected by the unhygienic scene that she observes and insists that she will cook ‘on our own.’ Here ‘going native’ indicates the colonizers’ fear of contamination by absorption into the native life and customs and most importantly the native culinary methods. Gordimer continues to “expose civilized unease by manipulating the colonial traveler’s fear of disease and unhygienic conditions. Maureen camouflages this fear with civilized etiquette, ‘July, we must make our own fire’ and she prefers to maintain control over her family’s dietary habits” (Williamson, 1999, pp. 101-102).

Not only does Maureen complain about the lack of kitchen utensils but she also worries about the strength and structure of the native hut. She questions the safety of the thatches by saying “everything in these villages could be removed at the sweep of a bulldozer or turned to ashes by a single match in the thatch” (Gordimer, 1981, pp. 113-114). Her view reflects her discomfort and insecure feeling of the residential place she is forced to shelter in and this is in contrast to the strong structured concrete and secure metropolitan house where she lived and is longing to return to. Deracination and uprootedness have impacted Bam’s relation with his wife. In Maureen’s eyes he has changed into “an architect lying on a bed in a mud hut, a man without a vehicle” (Gordimer, 1981, p. 98). Thus, he has been emasculated from his male authority, status and profession that he enjoyed in the city. Lack of privacy in the squalid hut and lack of boundary in the bush where everyone can intrude or trespass into their private zone has doubled Bam’s understanding of his loss of authority and as head of the family and this reaches its turning point when his shotgun is stolen. He is uprooted from his power and the authority he was proud of in his former life. The absence of white facilities, civil security and basic infrastructures in July’s village and the lack of a phone to call the police culminate in a feeling that makes him more hopeless, detached and deprived of his civil right.

Another significant challenge that the displaced people experience is the subversion of language hierarchy that emerges between master and servant. “A sense of dislocation, of the lack of fit between language and place, may be experienced by those who possess English as a mother tongue or by those who speak it as a second language” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007, p. 162). Similarly Maureen knows that their relationship based on the former language is no longer practiced; July’s newly acquired aggressive tone who dares to disobey or insult her by demanding ‘if she is going to pay him this month’ leads to their consistent argument on economic grounds and consequently a division occurs in their relationship. The uprootedness culminates in the loss of command and authority and it enables July to abuse the powerless and dependent state of his erstwhile master. Despite the fact that Maureen is culturally and linguistically unfit amongst the natives and that there is nothing for her to do but simply to be there, she tries to persuade July to allow her to join the women to gather



food. Lalbakhsh believes that “domestic labour and housewifery are other facets of oppression for the females.” (2014, p. 23) Similarly, Maureen’s attempt to show her desire for socialization and integration with native women through doing domestic chores is neglected by the black community. Her unconvincing argument clarifies for her that July has appropriated power to disobey and even to restructure their old established relationships. With all these shocking experiences and unpleasant events caused by their displacement from their white standards, qualities, values and urban lifestyle the Smales’ world is ‘irreparably destroyed’ and there remains little hope to retrieve their former life of middle class comfort or to rely on black African’s resources. The “unhomeliness” wrought by the unwilling flight provokes Bam’s “cultural and psychological paralysis” and it restructures familial, social, and cultural relationships.

### CIVILIZING MISSION

The recurrent positive colonial motif of the Civilizing Mission that aims at building infrastructure, giving education and spreading religious doctrines are presented like the archetypal colonial. Likewise, Bam attempts to control nature by setting up the water tank in the village. His altruism and generativity is manifested in a “civilizing zeal,” showing white creativity and comfort provider, “paternalism,” and self-confidence. The types of possessions they introduce to the villagers are all the tokens of civilization and manifestation of the so-called white mission to introduce their culture to primitive blacks. The Bakkie, shotgun, malaria pill, radio, plastic tea cups, soap, note of money, tinned food, toilet tissue and Victor’s race car toys are all elements of white urban life style. The novel, *I Promessi Sposi*, that Maureen brings to read at her leisure time stands for the white woman’s hobby and norm of civility. Generally, books can transport white religion, value, literature, language and etc. Hunting is also considered as a white sport. Bam joins the natives to present his weapon for hunting in its modern, complicated and more effective form than the primitive natural tools available in wilderness. However, in this instance the main purpose of the hunt is to obtain food rather than provide entertainment. The helicopter offered at the end of the novel is another sign of white technology and modernity that comes to rescue or kill an individual.

In sum, cultural in-betweenness enables the black themselves to be the means of transferring or appropriating the white civilizing mission. The native’s player recorder, July’s western attire, Bam’s set of commodities and tools from the white consumer world, have been introduced and transported to the village to highlight how the two men in their own ways contribute to “transcultural familiarization.” The consumer economy and white modernization the Smales and July introduce to the village make Martha wish the black government adopted their system of mechanization of agriculture. In terms of human right and freedom, white people always claim to be forerunners. The Smales have always prided themselves on their ‘egalitarian’ relationship with July, providing him with a room in their yard and paying him decently, giving him Wednesdays and alternate Sundays free, and allowing him to have his friends visit him.

### CONCLUSION

Maureen and Bam are located in an in-between space and there is a lack of solid identity as they are neither able to merge with native socio/cultural structure nor can they recover the former privileged state. They suffer in their demoted life and their attempt to get along with native cultural beliefs and infrastructures had almost failed; however Gina could cross the “cultural chasm” and integrate with black children. She builds some hope for assimilation in the new generation. Somehow Bam and Maureen are not able to contribute to village life as they cannot speak the native language or even when they try to gather food or hunt, their

efforts are “ineffectual” and the “existing social structure” has no place for them to occupy. Eventually, the Smales discover that the protection July has extended to them is only partial, since July in turn must obey a district chieftain who has his own requirements and goals. They were uprooted both physically and psychologically from the very base of their home and at the end Maureen in her deep frustration with her environment abandons her family members and sacrifice them for the sake of her own survival.

Maureen reaches this awareness that the intimate relationship and egalitarian principles she assumed with July, no longer exists. At the moment of her powerlessness and “unhomeliness” she doubts the truth of equality that she naively defined with Lydia. In the village she discovers not only does her cultural identity render her as the ‘other’ but also her white face and legs desperately contribute to being more detached from the mass culture. The linguistic confrontation between Maureen and July ensues in a bitter argument and it reveals the gap in understanding that has always been hidden in the past. What she comes to realize is that “she has been benefiting from a psychological apartheid that mirrors the larger social institution. *July’s People* is a powerful study of people caught at a time when [t]he old is dying and the new cannot be born” (Quinn, 2004, paragraph, 4).

In their dislocated sojourn both Bam and Maureen are disoriented from calculating time and the type of unfamiliar home and protection July has provided them with. The Smales being deprived of home security, privacy, power, ownership, hygienic utensils, modern facilities and comfort are left shattered with a nostalgic wish to return home. The family’s traumatic experience of both physical and cultural displacement best fits with Bhabha’s concept of “unhomeliness,” because they are not at ‘home’ in themselves. They have no sense of belonging in this primitive house of the blacks. Although Bam is terribly appalled with his stay in the black colony, his motivation in the civilizing mission compels him to introduce white modernity, technology and an urban standard of life to the indigenous people. As for July, he seems to be culturally and economically dissatisfied with the black resistance to the white discriminatory system. The revolution against apartheid law impacted on his job security and the loss of white urban standards and life styles. He had been granted the privileges of experiencing the luxurious life of city but now in his village he is ‘in-between’ or caught in modalities of ‘home’ and ‘not home’.

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