

Words as Catalysts: The Indelible Legacy of Nadine Gordimer

Known for her boldness and ability to vividly depict the hardships faced by citizens under the oppressive South African apartheid government through her literary works, Nadine Gordimer, won a Nobel Prize as an author, literary consultant, a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and friend to legendary leaders of the liberation movement. No one can argue that Nadine Gordimer lived an accomplished life, a writer's life that refused to be silenced and refused to be censored. She wrote to free others, to understand life and to leave a legacy to motivate others to speak up and change parts of society that needed changing.

Since the death of Nadine Gordimer, there has been many attempting to define her legacy and categorize her extensive body of work. As a prominent author and activist in the anti-apartheid movement, Gordimer, a white woman in South Africa, navigated the complexities of life before, during, and after apartheid. Gordimer not only wrote about the injustices she witnessed but also actively supported the legendary leaders of the liberation movement in various capacities, she encouraged young artists to speak up through their gifts, and she was a vocal activist for those who didn't have a platform to be heard.

My goal is to answer two profound questions: Has Nadine Gordimer's body of work made the world a better place? And will her life's work have any positive affect on future generations? Examining Gordimer's prolific achievements and her insights into what drove her to live the way she did will lay the groundwork of my research. I will also illuminate the less celebrated actions of her life, highlighting her resilience in the face of opposition and her unique approach to portraying the struggles of black South Africans under apartheid. While Gordimer's work and activism have been explored by many, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of her

complete life, to determine if there is an enduring legacy and to better understand her attempts to make the world not only a better place, but one with more understanding into the nature of unfairness.

Nadine Gordimer's life was a testament to the power of the environment and upbringing in shaping a person's path. Gordimer was a daughter of Isidore Gordimer, a jeweler, and Nan (Myers) Gordimer. She was born in the modest mining town of Springs, near Johannesburg, on November 20, 1923. Her mother, a compassionate woman, instilled in Nadine an early appreciation for the value of all human life. Nadine attended a Catholic convent school for a few years but was home-schooled from the age of eleven due to alleged heart problems, as her mother claimed. This isolation from Nadine's peers led to a period where Gordimer considered herself self-taught. During this period of self-education, she developed a passion for reading and writing, and spent much of her time in the library engaged in these activities.

Nadine was influenced by her mother's activism—particularly her efforts to address the poverty and discrimination faced by Black people in South Africa. Her mother even founded a daycare for Black children, which was not something a white woman would do in South Africa at that time. Through watching her mother and her deep respect for all humans, Gordimer began to find her own voice. Her first article published in an adult journal happened when she was only fifteen, and a decade later, her story "Come Again Tomorrow" appeared in *Forum*, a weekly magazine published and circulated in Johannesburg. This marked the beginning of Gordimer's upward trajectory in a prolific literary career.¹

¹ Robert F. Haugh, "Chronology," in Nadine Gordimer, *Twayne's World Authors Series 315* (New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 11, Gale eBooks, accessed April 1, 2024, <https://link-gale.com.byu.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/CX2549300010/GVRL?u=byuprovo&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=61a3eeab>

Gordimer's literary journey unfolded against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa, a period of intense segregation and injustice that spanned from 1948 to 1994.² This era, fraught with social and political turmoil, provided fertile ground for her narratives, which often probed into the heart of these volatile racial issues.

Gordimer's efforts to advocate for social change through her writing during this period in South Africa were highlighted in her works that explored the complex relationship between art and politics. Her novels were not only deeply rooted in the realities of apartheid South Africa, but also served as a critique of the system while providing a source of support and a unique opportunity to bestow a beacon of hope for a more equitable society. The unique and brilliant dual role of her literature—as a reflection to society and a beacon guiding it towards change—emphasizes the potential for creative expressions to influence societal norms and values, even in the face of rigid and oppressive political structures.

Gordimer's used her novels as her personal approach of activism for social change, which gained more influence and significance for individuals on both sides of the apartheid. Her deepening understanding of the apartheid system, her growing compassion, her evolving literary skill, and her rising notoriety assisted her in her journey as an artist activist.

However, the challenges Gordimer faced in bridging the gap between literary expression and political action are emblematic of artists' broader struggles when confronting entrenched systems of power. While her novels and essays provided a critical platform for discussion and awareness, the journey from awareness to action is fraught with obstacles. The social, economic, and political factors that influence legislative change are often resistant to the sway of artistic

² F History.com Editors. "Apartheid." Accessed March 18, 2024. <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/apartheid#apartheid-in-south-africa>.

endeavors, requiring a concerted effort from various sectors of society to achieve meaningful progress.

Nadine Gordimer's career offers a compelling study of the potential and limits of literature as a tool for social change. Her novels, short stories, and essays had a commitment to understanding and articulating the complexities of human existence which not only enriched the literary world but also contributed to the discourse on apartheid, freedom, and human rights. Her influence on public consciousness within South Africa and her role in mobilizing international support for the anti-apartheid movement solidified with time. In a way this process of gathering support from around the world displays that Gordimer's legacy includes the method to make change and future generations need to recognize the opportunity of literature is not just a form artistic expression to gain notoriety but it can become catalyst for social and political transformation.

Gordimer's influence grew to a point where the apartheid government decided some of her books needed to be banned in South Africa to protect the apartheid status quo. The banning of her books, including "The Late Bourgeois World," "Burger's Daughter," and "July's People," These works, while fictional, offered stark insights into the social and political fabric of South Africa, challenging readers to confront the moral bankruptcy of apartheid. "Burger's Daughter," was inspired by her acquaintances with individuals close to Nelson Mandela, and "July's People" envisioning the end of apartheid through civil conflict and unrest, were particularly poignant in portraying the tension and potential for change within the anti-apartheid South African society.³

The banning of these books by the serves as a marker of the power of literature to incite fear among oppressive regimes. Yet, it also highlights the limitations imposed on free expression

³ <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1991/gordimer/bibliography/>

in a society striving to maintain systemic inequalities. Gordimer's resolve to illuminate the injustices of apartheid through her writing, despite censorship and the risks of imprisonment associated with dissent, exemplifies the courage required to use one's art as a form of resistance.

These banned books, far from silencing her voice, amplified her message on a more global stage, and served as beacons of resistance within South Africa and symbols of solidarity to the international community. The banning, in effect, acknowledged the potency of her narratives as instruments of political and social critique and spawned fear in those who were in power. Gordimer's experience through the banning of her works underscores a broader truth about censorship: it often reveals more about the fears and vulnerabilities of those doing the censoring than the potential chaos the censored work can create itself. Gordimer's novels, banned by the apartheid regime but celebrated worldwide, highlighted the regime's fear of dissenting voices and the power of literature to inspire others internationally to galvanize around a cause for change.⁴ Gordimer is quoted to have said "The tension between standing apart, and being fully involved; that is what makes a writer."⁵

Beyond writing Nadine Gordimer took action to bring her concerns of apartheid into the global view. Nadine was known to hold meeting for Anti-Apartheid, ANC activists in her home. Her home became an intellectual hub where anti-apartheid strategies were discussed and solidified. She did this at great personal risk as any anti-government meeting like these were strictly prohibited by the government and those caught participating were usually sentenced to prison. Additionally, Gordimer used international literary tours and public readings of her works

⁴ Susan Barrett, "'What I say will not be understood': Intertextuality as a Subversive Force in Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter*," *e-Rea* 2, no. 1 (2004): Online since June 15, 2004, <https://journals.openedition.org/erea/570>.

⁵ Nadine Gordimer, "The tension between standing apart, and being fully involved; that is what makes a writer," *QuoteFancy*, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://quotefancy.com/quote/1211833/Nadine-Gordimer-The-tension-between-standing-apart-and-being-fully-involved-that-is-what>.

to raise awareness to the difficulties of the oppressed in South Africa. She was an eloquent and motivating speaker and was able to effectively appeal to global organizations to mobilize resources for the ANC and its followers. Gordimer was also involved in organizing and participating in benefits that raised funds for the ANC. These funds were crucial for supporting the families of political prisoners and sustaining the day-to-day operations of the ANC's underground activities. Nadine personally contributed financially to the defense funds for anti-apartheid political prisoners. These funds were used to pay for legal representation and helped secure the release of activists sentenced to prison for having a dissenting opinion to the apartheid systems. Finally, Gordimer used her voice publicly to advocate for the release of political prisoners. She wrote open letters, participated in campaigns, and spoke at international forums. Gordimer's persistent advocacy brought global attention to the plight of individuals such as Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders which produced immense international pressure on the apartheid regime to begin to release these prisoners.⁶

Gordimer's association with the African National Congress (ANC) during its outlawed years and the subsequent branding of the group as a terrorist organization by various national governments add rich, complex layers to her narrative and her actions. Her allegiance to the ANC's cause mirrors a profound belief in the anti-apartheid fight, yet also thrust her into the midst of moral and ethical dilemmas stemming from the organization's resort to armed struggle and political dissent. This juxtaposition of her ideological commitments against the backdrop of apartheid's broader conflict underscores the nuanced dance between personal convictions and the collective dynamics of political movements.

⁶ Clingman, Stephen, ed. *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places*. New York: Knopf, 1988.

Gordimer's progression from an observer to an active participant in the struggle against apartheid epitomizes a profound journey of conscience and awareness. Her insistence on harnessing literature as a tool to confront and challenge societal norms and injustices underscores the unique role writers play as both mirrors and shapers of cultural and political terrains. Contrary to a predetermined political agenda, Gordimer's activism arose organically from her deepening comprehension of apartheid's impact on humanity. This evolution underscores literature's transformative potential, not solely for the audience but also the authors themselves.

As a writer seeking to comprehend the world around her is an example of personal conviction and the pursuit of truth through art. Her realizations about the inherent injustices of apartheid did not remain confined to the pages she wrote but propelled her into active. By facing the harsh realities of apartheid and its effects on the human spirit, Gordimer's work became a catalyst for her own activism and pushed her to do more to stop unfairness.

While some critics attempt to argue that Nadine had only a small role in the eventual fall of the Apartheid government, the honorary degrees and awards suggest others felt her actions were commendable. Gordimer was awarded honorary degrees from some of the world's most prestigious institutions, including Yale, Harvard, Columbia, the New School for Social Research, the University of Leuven in Belgium, the University of York in England, and the universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand in South Africa, as well as Cambridge University in England. These accolades underscored her global impact and the universal resonance of her chosen themes of injustice, civil rights, freedom, and human dignity.⁷

⁷ <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1991/gordimer/bibliography/>

Her academic recognition paints a comprehensive picture of a woman who was a product of her environment and a transformative figure within it. Her journey from a young local writer to an honored global author exemplifies the potential for words written to transcend its pages and influence the broader societal and political landscape of the masses.

In 1991 Nadine Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. In her Nobel Lecture, which is an acceptance speech when a Nobel prize is awarded, she made some interesting comments that speak to the root of her perception of her life and accomplishments. As a professed atheist, it was surprising when Nadine Gordimer started Nobel Lecture with the words, "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, signified God's Word, the word that was Creation."⁸ She eventually goes on to explain that: "The writer in relation to the nature of perceivable reality and what is beyond—imperceivable reality—is the basis for all these studies, no matter what resulting concepts are labelled, and no matter in what categorized micro files writers are stowed away for the annals of literary historiography."⁹

Through Gordimer's eyes, writing was an artistic endeavor and a moral obligation to witness, document, and critique the world. Her determination to "make sense" of life through her writing led her to recognize and challenge the injustices of apartheid, making her novels and essays instrumental in the broader struggle for freedom and equality in South Africa. Her works did not merely describe the apartheid era; they contributed to the intellectual and moral case against it, offering visions of a society founded on fairness and human dignity.

⁸ "Nadine Gordimer – Facts," The Nobel Prize, last modified 2024, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1991/gordimer/facts/>.

⁹ "Nadine Gordimer – Facts," The Nobel Prize

Although the direct legislative impact of her work may be challenging to quantify, the breadth of her influence—spanning literary, academic, and socio-political spheres—underscores the profound legacy she leaves behind. When considering Gordimer's life and work, it becomes evident her contributions extended far beyond the immediate impact of her literary achievements, embedding her firmly in the chronicles of both South African and global history. Nadine Gordimer's imprint on South Africa's history and society through her literary achievements and her activism are well documented.

The significance of Gordimer's contributions is broad, offering insights into the power dynamics and universal human struggles. Through her stories, Gordimer discarded geographical and cultural barriers, engaging with a global audience, and fostering a sense of empathy and understanding towards the anti-apartheid cause. Her ability to create complex narratives that capture the essence of human experience in times of conflict and transition has made her work a crucial point of reference for scholars, activists, and readers worldwide.

The legacy of Gordimer's work in the post-apartheid era continues to resonate, offering lessons on the enduring relevance of art in the struggle for human rights. Her narratives, rich in complexity and nuance, invite ongoing dialogue about the paths to reconciliation and justice in societies transitioning from oppressive regimes. Gordimer's life and literature remind artists and intellectuals of critical roles in challenging the status quo and envisioning alternative futures.

In the inclusion of Mary Rohrberger's perspective on the short story as an "analogical mode" that challenges traditional concepts of time, along with Henri Bergson's distinction between clock time and the psychic experience of duration, provides a rich framework for re-

examining Nadine Gordimer's literary contributions.¹⁰ This theoretical backdrop allows us to explore Gordimer's narrative techniques and thematic focus through a lens that appreciates the complexity and depth of her storytelling. The temporal dimension of Gordimer's work, with its intricate weaving of personal and collective experiences within and against the backdrop of apartheid, can be seen as a reflection of Bergson's concept of duration, where the past continually informs the present, creating a layered reality that resists simple linear progression.¹¹

Gordimer's ability to capture the multiplicity of the present, to frame her narratives in a way that they embody both the immediacy of the moment and the weight of history, is a testament to her skill as a storyteller and her deep engagement with the social and political fabric of South Africa. Her stories are not just accounts of individual experiences but are imbued with the collective consciousness of a society undergoing profound transformation. This narrative approach aligns with Rohrberger's and Bergson's ideas, positioning Gordimer's work as a literary exploration of time and consciousness that transcends the conventional boundaries of storytelling.

However, Gordimer's position as a white South African author writing about the experiences of black South Africans under apartheid has prompted critical debates regarding the authenticity, authority, and potential appropriation in her portrayal of these experiences. These questions touch upon broader issues of representation, voice, and the capacity of literature to transcend the specificities of the author's identity to capture universal truths. Critics like Stephen Clingman have engaged deeply with Gordimer's work, offering nuanced analyses that recognize

¹⁰ Bergson, Henri. *Key Writings*. Trans. Melissa McMahon. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Clingman, Stephen. *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1986, 75-7.

¹¹ Mary Rohrberger, "Origins, Development, Substance, and Design of the Short Story: How I Got Hooked on the Short Story and Where It Led Me," in *The Art of Brevity: Excursions in Short Fiction Theory and Analysis*, ed. Per Winthers, Jakob Lothe, and Hans S. Skei (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 1-13.

its literary achievements and complexities. Clingman's exploration of Gordimer's narrative techniques and thematic depth acknowledges her work's inherent contradictions and tensions, reflecting the broader contradictions and tensions within South African society.

The debates surrounding Gordimer's work highlight the multifaceted role of the writer in society, especially within contexts of profound social and political upheaval. Gordimer's narratives, while providing insightful critiques of apartheid and its impacts on the human psyche, also raise important questions about the limits and possibilities of literary representation. Her engagement with the complexities of South African society and her innovative narrative techniques that defy linearity invite readers to engage with the past and the present in a dynamic and reflective manner.

Nadine Gordimer's career offers a compelling study of the potential and limits of literature as a tool for social change. Her novels, short stories, and essays not only enriched the literary world but also contributed to the global discourse on apartheid, freedom, identity and human rights. While the direct impact of her work on legislative changes may be debated, her influence on public consciousness and her role in mobilizing international support for the anti-apartheid movement is undeniable. Gordimer's legacy challenges future generations to recognize the value of literature not just as a form of artistic expression but as a catalyst for social and political transformation, but also the ongoing challenges of understanding and representing the human condition in literature. emphasizing the multiplicity of the present and the psychic experience of duration, offers a profound commentary on the nature of time, memory, and identity in the context of apartheid and beyond.

This engagement with Gordimer's narratives, through the lens of temporal complexity and the multifaceted nature of societal representation, underlines the enduring relevance of her work. Literature, especially that which emerges from contexts of conflict and transition, possesses a unique capacity to explore the nuances of human experience and societal dynamics. In their depth and complexity, Gordimer's stories invite a contemplative engagement with history, memory, and identity, offering pertinent insights across time and space.

The critical discourse surrounding Gordimer's portrayal of apartheid South Africa, especially her attempts to represent experiences beyond her immediate purview, speaks to broader questions of narrative authority and ethical representation in literature. These discussions reflect the ongoing challenges writers face who seek to illuminate the lives and struggles of others, highlighting the need for sensitivity, humility, and a deep commitment to listening and understanding. Despite—or perhaps because of—its complexities and contradictions, Gordimer's work can also serve as a valuable case study of the power and limitations of literature as a vehicle for social critique and empathy.

Gordimer's exploration of time, as it intersects with the personal and political, offers a robust framework for understanding the enduring impact of apartheid on South African society. Her narratives, which capture the simultaneity of past injustices and present struggles, resonate with Bergson's concept of duration, where time is not merely a sequence of moments but a continuous flow of interconnected and cumulative experiences.¹² This perspective enriches our understanding of how apartheid's legacy continues to shape the lives and consciousness of individuals and communities long after its formal dismantlement.

¹² Bergson, Henri. *Key Writings*. Trans. Melissa McMahon. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
clingingMan, Stephen. *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1986, 75-7.

Considering these points, Nadine Gordimer's legacy and literary corpus beckon ongoing contemplation and discourse. Her narratives, characterized by their temporal intricacy and ethical immersion in societal truths, compel readers and writers to ponder the inherent responsibilities of storytelling to hopefully change the world for good in the face of many types of unfairnesses, not just racism and censorship.

Her dedication to dissecting life's complexities through her writing has significantly impacted the literary domain, proven by the number of critics studying her works. Gordimer masterfully crafts stories that not only confront the harsh truths of life but also engage in a broader discourse on what it means to be human, addressing themes of morality, resilience, and the quest for change. For example, Gordimer's novel entitled *July's People* explores master/servant relationship and the moral challenges and a desire for change was impossibly difficult during the age of apartheid. These narratives transcend their immediate settings, resonate across cultural and temporal boundaries, and underscore the universal struggle for rights, dignity, and equality faced by many in the past, present and presumably into the future.

The discussions surrounding Gordimer's oeuvre, particularly her approach to storytelling and the authority behind it, underscore the dynamic interplay between literary critique and shifting societal norms. Far from mere academic rhetoric, these dialogues are essential questions into narrative ownership, visibility of diverse narratives, and the role narratives play in molding our perceptions of reality and interpersonal connections. Gordimer's dual legacy as a writer and activist enriches this discourse, showcasing how literature can profoundly touch upon and sway these pivotal debates.

The examination of Gordimer's political leanings and the potential influence underscores a broader contemplation of the writer's place within political turmoil. Debates swirl around whether her association with the ANC may have biased her representations, casting the apartheid saga and its protagonists in a particular light.

"Just as Africanists within the ANC, and advocates of the Black Consciousness that emerged from the late 1960s, felt it patronizing for liberal whites to represent (speak on behalf of) blacks politically, so it was felt by many that it was inappropriate, even exploitative, for white writers to represent (portray) black characters. At the same time, failing to engage with black politics or excluding black characters was arguably complicit with apartheid. Gordimer thus found herself in an invidious double-bind familiar to white South African liberal activists and writers alike. In her political nonfiction, this is acutely reflected in a statement—which Clingman justly describes as one of “extraordinary vulnerability and toughness”—towards the end of her 1979 address on “Relevance and Commitment”: Although I am white and fully aware that my consciousness inevitably has the same tint as my face, when I have spoken of white attitudes and opinions I have not taken it upon myself to speak for whites, but have quoted attitudes and opinions expressed by whites themselves, or manifest (in my opinion) in their work. When I have spoken of black attitudes and opinions, I have not taken it upon myself to speak for blacks but have quoted attitudes and opinions expressed by blacks themselves or (in my opinion) manifest in their work.”¹³

Conversely, some view her involvement as a testament to her more profound commitment to justice and equality. Either way, these discussions spotlight the intricate balance writers must maintain at the confluence of artistic expression, political engagement, and ethical

¹³ Clingman, Stephen. “History from the Inside: The Novels of Nadine Gordimer.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (1981): 165–93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2636377>.

advocacy, prompting vital inquiries into impartiality, narrative authenticity, and the artist's duties to their community.

Ultimately, Gordimer's literature becomes a space for readers to navigate the complex moral landscapes and ethical quandaries tied to fighting oppression. Her works, richly woven with literary depth and rooted in life's realities, provide a comprehensive look at the human experience within a tumultuous period. They prompt a deep dive into the myriad of potential opposition forces—be they political, social, religious, or deeply personal—which mold an individual's destinies and decisions. Gordimer chronicles the horrors of apartheid as she champions literature as a dynamic agent of change, capable of questioning injustices and imagining new pathways for legal systems, societal structures, and the essence of the human condition. Her body of work is a testament to the profound ability of stories to cast light on one's personal action and society's shadowed corners, as it bridges human divides with empathy, and sketches a vision of a future founded on justice and respect for all.

Some modern scholars have gone so far as to argue that Gordimer, as a white South African writer, occupied a complex position in representing the experiences of black South Africans under apartheid. Questions about her authenticity, authority, and appropriation have been raised in academic circles. At the same time, some have examined whether her portrayal of black characters and their struggles fully captured the nuances and realities of their lives. Stephen Clingman is a prominent literary scholar specializing in South African literature. His research often delves into the political and social dimensions of literature, focusing on apartheid-era South Africa. While exploring their political significance, Clingman's analyses of Nadine Gordimer's works emphasize their literary qualities, thematic depth, and narrative techniques. He has written extensively on Gordimer, offering nuanced readings of her work that include

criticism and praise. Clingman and others analyze and explore Gordimer's narrative techniques, thematic explorations, and stylistic choices from a consistent literary point of view.¹⁴

In her own words, Gordimer explains, "In the most basic terms, my use of the term "literary language" refers to the narrative language used to produce fiction."¹⁵ Gordimer suggests that a specific description of literary language is difficult, if not impossible, to produce, given that literary language is ephemeral and necessarily contains a "transforming imaginative dimension." Gordimer distinguished between literary language and testimonial language, the latter of which might create a practical record with historical and legal gravity. In distinguishing between the two, she suggested there is a sense in which literary language is subjective, always subject to interpretation, while legal language is, in some capacities, fixed and objective.¹⁶

In the face of current global injustices and conflicts, Gordimer's story and achievements illuminate the significant impact of art in capturing truths, inciting critical thought, and imagining new realities. Her legacy urges writers and readers alike to see storytelling not just as a passive reflection but as an influential tool in sculpting our reality. Gordimer's lasting impact serves both as a provocation and an inspiration, urging us to consider how literature can contribute to our shared endeavor for comprehension, justice, and social progress.

It has been said in hindsight that her contribution to the anti-apartheid movement was noticed and appreciated by Nelson Mandela. Mandela's method of learning during his time in prison acknowledged the diversity of his reading material, which included works by Nadine Gordimer, Shakespeare, and G.A. Henty, as well as various other texts ranging from magazines

¹⁴ Clingman, Stephen. *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1986. —. "Introduction." Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture* 1-15

¹⁵ Gordimer, Nadine. "The Art of Fiction No. 77." Interviewed by Jannika Hurwitz. *The Paris Review*, 1983. <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/3060/the-art-of-fiction-no-77-nadine-gordimer>.

¹⁶ Gordimer, Nadine, *Writing and Being*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

to legal studies. Through this eclectic study, Mandela cultivated a unique ability to understand and empathize with both allies and adversaries alike.

For Gordimer, being part of this influential mix was a significant achievement, bringing her a sense of fulfillment from having supported a figure of Mandela's stature. "A model for this process lay in how he approached his inevitably heterogeneous, not to say ill-sorted, prison curriculum. Reading Nadine Gordimer, Shakespeare and G.A. Henty alongside Huisgenoot, Denys Reitz and property law, reflecting constantly on difference and miscellany, Mandela slowly but surely honed his capacity to think from the perspective of both his neighbor and his opponent."¹⁷

In the *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* publication, it is stated: "Gordimer never gave up on the notion that new modes of justice for racial violence are linked inextricably to literary production..." and believed Gordimer uses fiction to reveal the possibility for a literary "force of law."¹⁸ This is not to say that Gordimer did not find power in the law. In fact, in addition to asking Bizos to prepare the legal language in her fiction, she often was preoccupied with its legitimacy, noting in manuscript edits, for example, "as this is a quote from a law it must be accurate".¹⁹ Gordimer's concern with the credibility of legal language in her fiction underscores how she sought to wield the power of law within literature.²⁰

Her profound contemplation and relentless pursuit of crafting literary works aimed at shifting societal attitudes, both during and after the apartheid era, underscore her dedication far

¹⁷ Elleke Boehmer, "Mandela and Beyond: Thinking New Possibility in the 21st Century," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 45, no. 6 (2019): 1173–1181, doi:10.1080/03057070.2019.1697923.

¹⁸ "Nadine Gordimer De-Linking, Interrupting, Severing." **Commonwealth Essays and Studies** 41, no. 2 (2019). Accessed September 21, 2021. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4000/ces.413>.

¹⁹ Gordimer, Nadine. "After Apartheid: Black and White in a New South Africa." Draft of Address to the Oslo Conference, August 1990. The Nadine Gordimer Papers. Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

²⁰ Brennan, Timothy. Review of The Novels of Nadine Gordimer, by Stephen Clingman. *Modern Fiction Studies* 34.4 (1988): 756-7.

beyond her immediate literary achievements. While her extensive and distinguished body of work remains a perpetual source for critical analysis and essay writing, and despite our ability to quantify the legislative transformations influenced by her work, or what she had hoped or envisioned. Gordimer's legacy is not only in her literary accomplishments but in her ambitious endeavor to leverage her writing and her notoriety as a catalyst for societal transformation, a vision that should continue to inspire and provoke thought to this day. As we continue to navigate the challenges of our times, Gordimer's legacy serves as both a beacon and a testament to the enduring power of literature to illuminate the darkest corners of society, inspire change, and make sense of the human experience.

Nadine Gordimer's extensive literary career, which spanned several decades, includes fifteen novels, volumes of short stories, non-fiction works, and numerous essays is impressive by any measurement. Her publications are evidence of her extraordinary talent and her steadfast dedication to chronicling societal changes and the human psychology and experience during a pivotal.²¹ But Nadine Gordimer's collective work much more impressive than just the sheer volume of it, or its stance against the apartheid systems in South Africa as a white writer. Most importantly was how she became an author/activist who influenced change in the minds of those who pleaded for change but did not have the platform to be heard. She wrote and published despite the fear of what the oppressive apartheid government might do to her and her citizenship. They did eventually ban some of her writings, but that did not silence her voice, and eventually

²¹ 09 Nadine Gordimer – Biography Published." University of Johannesburg. Accessed March 23, 2024. <https://www.uj.ac.za/library/information-resources/special-collections/online-exhibitions/nadine-gordimer/09-nadine-gordimer-biography-published/>.

and ironically these bans brought even more notoriety to Gordimer's message.²² There have been critics of her work, which is common for all accomplished artists. However, historically, what truly stands out is how her writings coupled with her role as an activist displayed her exceptional desire to do good, her refusal to be silent, and how she made a difference to many who needed her to speak. Which is to say, the good she accomplished through her art and activism not only made the world a better place while she lived, but it will continue to do so in perpetuity. That is the legacy of the South African, Nadine Gordimer.

²² Nixon, Rob. "Gordimer, Nadine (1923-)." *British Writers, Supplement 2*, edited by George Stade, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992, pp. 225-245. Gale eBooks, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX1383900022/GVRL?u=byuprovo&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=5ade11f4. Accessed 1 Apr. 2024.

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