



Violence in Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*

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Abstract: One of the major themes in Post-apartheid South African literature has been the proliferation of violence: a widespread phenomenon. A lot of writers such as André Brink, J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer wrote during and after the Apartheid about violence, inherent to the racist system. This study aims at shedding light on some aspects of violence and its impact on a post-Apartheid South African society through an analysis of the fictional work of Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*. This paper especially focuses on consequences of violence during the post-Apartheid period marked by a high level of crime.

Key words: brutality, crime, fire arm, post-apartheid, South Africa, violence

Résumé : L'un des sujets majeurs traités dans la littérature sud-africaine a porté sur la prolifération de la violence : un phénomène quotidien. La plupart des écrivains, entre autres, André Brink, J.M Coetzee et Nadine Gordimer, ont axé leurs productions littéraires dérivant de l'apartheid pendant et après, à propos des faits de violence comme conséquence inhérente au système ségrégationniste. Cette étude vise à mettre en exergue des aspects de la violence et son impact sur l'Afrique du Sud post-Apartheid à travers une analyse de l'œuvre de fiction *The House Gun* de Nadine Gordimer. La réflexion s'articule essentiellement autour des conséquences subséquentes de la violence depuis l'époque de l'apartheid témoignant ainsi les taux élevés de crime en période post-apartheid.

Mots-clés: Afrique du Sud, arme à feu, brutalisation, crime, post-Apartheid, violence.

Introduction

South Africa is one of the countries with the highest rates of crime in the world. Our preliminary readings of *apartheidian* fictional works by Andre Brink, J. M. Coetzee, Alex La Guma, Nadine Gordimer, to quote just a few, have revealed that the Apartheid has had a major role in this criminal and violent environment. Gordimer's *The House Gun* tackles the suffering and oppression of people because of an insecure society and the high risk of being accused of crime or violent behaviour at any moment. Violence is the action or the structural arrangement that results in physical or non-physical harm to one or more persons. The nature or mode of violence may be physical, sexual, or psychological, or it may involve deprivation and neglect. Given the difficulties of measuring deprivation and neglect, this study concentrates on the social, historical, and personal background of the *The House Gun* as a literary creation in order to investigate the manifestations and aspects of direct and indirect

causes and consequences behind the spread of violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa depicted by Nadine Gordimer.

Due to the segregation laws of the Apartheid system, increasing violence becomes an inherent consequence of Apartheid era in South Africa. Our analysis raises three fundamental questions: Why does South Africa suffer such exceptionally high rates of violence? What are the different manifestations of violence in *The House Gun*? To what extent does Nadine Gordimer succeed in representing the reality of the South African society in the fictional work?

This paper discusses the aspects of violence that appeared in the Post-Apartheid society to answer the question why Nadine Gordimer chooses particular aspects of violence and shows the influence of the Apartheid system on the South African community through the examples from *The House Gun*. Through a descriptive and analytical method focusing on the content especially plot, action, and dialogue representing the widespread violence in South Africa, we intend to examine post-Apartheid violence and explore the direct and indirect motives behind this phenomenon in South Africa.

1- Firearms Legitimation: Brutalisation and the Culture of Violence.

Nadine Gordimer's fictional work under consideration responds to the proliferation or legitimisation of firearms to the extent that white South African culture legitimised the ownership of personal firearms. Firearms were easily available to white South Africans who saw them as a personal safety measure. Intensifying violent conflict during the 1980s and 1990s was also associated with an increasing proliferation of firearms with many guns being imported from conflict areas in neighbouring countries and distributed both by the liberation movements and by the Apartheid government as part of an agenda of arming their allies in African communities. After democratisation, firearms proliferation further increased, through legally sanctioned and illegal means. Though the role of firearms in violent crime appears to be decreasing (CSV, 2009:7) the availability of firearms nevertheless played a central role in the rapid growth of violent crime in South Africa.

This is Gordimer's fictional work background that exposes a "criminal universe" much inclined to guns possession and use. She intends to inform readers on weak criminal justice in a state known as a "gun house." In this context, Harold was claiming that the criminal justice



at that time was weak because they were making the same thing and spreading violence by releasing the criminals: “‘good behaviour’ in prison releases criminals to kill again: only a life for life is protection, is justice” (141). Thus, Harold was opposed to releasing criminals from the prison for just being obedient for a while for him was not enough to be a punishment; he was claiming that any criminal who killed someone should be killed instead.

Some explanations for the high rate of violent crime refer to South Africa’s political history, suggesting that families suffered from ‘institutional violence’ for decades through the disruption of their lives by mass removals and migrant labour policies of apartheid. Political violence compounded this disruption of family life. The resultant weakening of the family unit and thus parental control over children may prompt criminal behaviour among the youth. ‘Culture of violence’ theories similarly argue that the effects of Apartheid coupled with years of political violence and the continued exposure to violence in the home and in the neighbourhood have produced a destructive culture which manifests itself in what Mark Shaw calls ‘murderous intolerance’(2002:63).

One way in which South Africa is unique is in the violence context, which includes poverty, the legacy of Apartheid seeds in the country and a continuing problem of unstable, weakened and crumbled state. South Africa has been distinguished by high levels of violence for most of the last century. For instance, Gary Kynoch has compared written reports on African cities over the last century and indicated that from as early as the 1920s South Africa (Johannesburg) appeared to have been affected by a serious problem of violent crimes. He argues that:

This comparison of colonial cities suggests that we need to expand this definition of South African exceptionalism to include the extraordinary levels of urban violence. At the heart of a massive migrant labour nexus, the Witwatersrand industrialised earlier, to a greater extent and more rapidly than any other urban centre in colonial Africa. Successive South African governments devoted significant resources to limiting and regulating the urban African population. These developments require that we move beyond the labour question to consider the ways in which African migrants shaped and adapted to a volatile, and frequently brutalising, mining environment and how mineworkers influenced patterns of violence in the urban locations. We have to take account of state policies that exposed millions of boys and men to humiliating police harassment and a violent prison system. Finally, state sponsorship of township violence further undermined the rule of law. These conditions, unique to South Africa, nurtured a culture of violence that has reproduced itself ever since. (2006:32)



While glancing more at direct aspects of violence, Nadine Gordimer puts an eye on the factors that lead to violence in indirect ways that may people do not know about its result and the government will not find solution since it is not obvious or clear.

In *The House Gun*, the major character of the story, Duncan is a child, and he does not talk to his parents in all his 27 years but rarely: “Not spoken of at the time, in the child, the adolescent, the adult man” (121). Gordimer observes that Duncan is in some stages of his life in need of his family close to him. While his parents are far, busy and hiding behind a security gate. She is blaming the parents that they are the first reason of constructing this criminal personality because he is raised between his friends, grownup without parent’s control and advice, they do not share his dreams with him or know what he wants to be.

Duncan the only son of the Lindgards, lives alone far from his parents. Liberal parents gave their own son his freedom. He lives in a cottage with his friends and his girlfriend. Nevertheless, all his life is guided and raised only in schools or with friends. Duncan struggles to impose his personality as a moneyed young man. He believes that his family comfort could not leave him come down from his pedestal and hang with the riffraff. All the same, Duncan offends his friend – resulting from a presumption of jealousy – because the latter courts his girlfriend and takes her from him. Visibly, Duncan is snubbed and he cannot live with such an affront and kills his friend.

In this respect, Martin Schönreich and Antoinette Louw’s survey on *Crime in South Africa: A Country and Cities Profile*, articulate that the Apartheid system resulted in weakening of the family unit, and thus the loosening of parental control over children may prompt criminal behaviour among the youth. Then, it could be observed that the way children grow up, they build their personality. It is not about security but it is about parents love and affection. They are the first cause why their own child becomes an offender and commits crimes. It is about them in the sense that “Revulsion was their crime, committed against their own child and they were in it together. The seals of silence had been between them were broken; they shut themselves up in the townhouse” (Schönreich, M. & Louw, A., 2001:12).

The complexity of life in the post-Apartheid South African society is one of the vestiges of the Apartheid era. Any writer needs to apprehend his/her community’s mentality and way of living, which is the case with Nadine Gordimer who examines violence in South Africa through crimes as a subtitle of violence. Through her main characters we can see the community and people’s mentality during the post-Apartheid period.

Nadine Gordimer's view is that violence is not from the outside but it is in houses since there is a house gun, a dangerous tool, violence will not end. As well as, Duncan needs his parents to guide and to show him the right from the wrong, he needs them to listen to him but they are afraid and worry all the time and busy in their jobs trying to fix the society state while their child matures to become a criminal. In the townhouse, Duncan is far from their own child, he is afraid from the outside world, with no connection, living in silent with a liberal thinking behind many security tools. Gordimer claims that the white couple should be blamed for the crime.

Gordimer proclaims the fact that children are the base of the community if they grown up in a good, peaceful environment the society will develop but if the generation face the worst years of the colonial's abusive laws they will grow criminal and violent youth. Young children develop their thinking abilities by interacting with other children, adults and the physical world. From the social constructivist viewpoint, it is thus important to take into account the background and culture of the learner throughout the learning process, as this background also helps to shape the knowledge and truth that the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process (Wertsch, J.V., 1997:5-6).

According to Nadine Gordimer, violence is something with different dimensions. Anything could lead to violence. Even Duncan, the only child, of the Lindgard family is raised turned bad. Harold says: "My wife and I, parents and son, as three independent adults, we're close but we don't expect to be privy to everything in his life" (21).

Claudia and Harold invite Julian Verster, Duncan's friend who was the messenger, to ask him about Duncan's attitude, personality, attitudes, friends, and his relationship with his girlfriend. As long as the Lindgards decide to allow their only son to live alone and do what he wants, parents are so far from their own child. However, this way of living affects Duncan's personality in a negative way so that he becomes an offender [criminal]. This is the result of living under the Apartheid system with negative aspects which still affect people of South Africa even after its collapse.

Due to the fact that South Africa was living state of insecurity and racism issues the Lindgards were securing their house with alarm and cameras. Moreover, they sent their only child in a liberal school where he did not mix with the other race. As a result, he committed a crime because of their liberal propensity. The way Duncan was raised had a bad influence on his personality. He could fulfil all his needs [everything] except his parents' affection and



love. Gordimer's narrative puts it: "The charm the small boy had used to dominate his friends – all the games had to be his games, chosen and imposed by him" (121).

Duncan used to have anything he wanted, good education, freedom, job, and friends. Anything he asks he gets, his parents are liberal, they want him to stay away from violent people, far from the blacks. However, Duncan's parents have never asked him what he wants to be in the future. They just give him money with no listen to his dreams or even know how his mentality is. That is why they called his friend to ask him. As a result, he did what is unexpected, he is charged with murder, and he became a criminal. What Gordimer tries to show is that even if children had everything, they need parents' control to show them the right way. Unlikely, Duncan used to have everything which led him to kill his friend from whom he used to have his own games no one can take his own games. "Duncan takes on other people. Forces can't leave them alone. The more he fails, the worse he gets" (58). It was seen that Natalie, Duncan's girlfriend, was talking to Motsamai about Duncan's personality in his office, in front of his parent's that Duncan has a bad attitude, that he likes to have his own stuff no matter what happens, he owned her the moment he rescued her from the beach. He used to have her like an object and when she resisted he severely mistreated her. The reason was that Duncan was raised in society of violence and segregation, away from his parents his personality constructed. Children that grew up in this 'universe' during the Apartheid control were offenders and violent people and because of families, they had weak personality and mental illness. The youths were affected by the Apartheid system resulting in the increase of the high rates on violence in South Africa. Singh in her book of *Policing and Crime Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa* articulated that: South Africa's transition from Apartheid ruled to liberal democracy has been marked by a type of (not unreasonable) national anxiety about violence (2008: 1).

In the last chapters of the first part of *The House Gun*, Gordimer focused of the issues of the political transition which encompassed a weak criminal justice. She clarifies this point in writing:

The application has been made jointly by lawyers representing them, and associations called Lawyers for Human Rights, the Society for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, and even the Government itself; a government challenging the laws of the country – a paradox arising out of the hangover of statutes from the old regime. (136)

The old regime, the political system was that of the Apartheid era each criminal should be died by shoot, poison or hanging but the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the



government lived in a paradox, the laws said thing the public refused. People were in conflict with the government and the criminals were living free and killing again. As example, there are two black men who killed four persons, whom they are going to be represented to the court by lawyers from the human rights to give amnesty for them. Harold was attending their trial and he was judging the vulnerability of the country that realises in each time new criminals after giving them amnesty, and he expected that criminal should be killed (137).

The South African transition brought about a restructuring of the criminal justice system, the abolition of a number of laws and the promulgation of new ones. As a result, many criminal justice functions have been operationally weakened. Which Gordimer sees it also as a paradox and she cogently puts: “The abolitionists abhor the right to repeat the crime by killing the killer; neither conceives they themselves could commit murder” (138). The responsible for the death penalty, Gordimer sees them as killers because they kill others with the system. The South Africa was in paradox of following the old regime to kill the killers, which were a crime itself. Harold here said that killing the killers was a crime because he knew that his son would also be killed if he did not have amnesty from the law.

2- Direct Aspects of Violence: A Common Phenomenon

There are different types of violence: hijacking, kidnapping, beating and murder repeated each time because the criminals are released. As well as Nadine Gordimer focuses on direct aspects of violence, the most common and obvious facts in the South African society she demonstrates is that the apartheid system resulted in what the country has been faced since its abolition. We intend to discuss types of violence in families such as violence against children and women that were the famous common themes in South African post-Apartheid literature.

Nadine Gordimer in *The House Gun* represents violence as a part of daily life in South Africa. In post-apartheid, era black people are stealing, mugging and break-in houses of the white in the different neighbourhoods rich or middle classes. The segregation system then was abusive where the natives lost their lands and jobs for the whites, they suffered from hunger, and unemployment, what led most of them to steal only to live [if not survive]. Martin Schönteich and Antoinette Louw in their review about *Crime Trends in South Africa 1985-1998* especially in townhouses articulated that violence increased between 1985 to 1998 due to many reasons: one of it was *violence street* such as mugging, robbery, and car hijacking. The parents are used to hear about night streets’ crimes in their daily life (1999: 8).



In the narration Gordimer accounts for readers that the white couple Claudia and Harold were in shock expecting the messenger, Duncan's friend, who tell them about their son's crime to tell them about some accident or facts of random violence in street as they used to hear about, that is what they translated from his face. However, he said that Duncan is arrested for committing a murder. She says: "The random violence of night streets they had expected to read in the stranger's face of the messenger" (11). Implicitly, Gordimer is mentioning the direct aspects of violence that the white couple sees every day in the complex city from the street violence to the newspapers headlines. The writer attempts to express the most common phenomena that this white couple used to see in this complex city "violent city."

The fact of violence in South Africa was high in the post-Apartheid era due to many complex issues concerning politics, economy and properties. The country had a weak criminal justice system resulting in risk of victimisation. The police were in conflict with the natives because of the apartheid system and they were under the National Party control. As well as the example of the violence street as car crash, mugging and break-in houses were facts of violence as: "A car crash, street mugging in violent break-in..." (5). Claudia and Harold used to see in newspapers or outside what led them to expect from Julian, the messenger that Duncan sent, to tell them about his arrest. Also, in the example below, Gordimer explains the same situation with Claudia in the clinic, portraying the life in the violent city, she puts: "...in this violent city she has watched those nuggets delved ... there is no element in the human body that can withstand, even a dent, a bullet" (13). This could be taken to mean that Gordimer chooses Claudia as the character who shows us the real victims of the segregation system in the post-apartheid era. It could be observed that what Gordimer views through Claudia's eyes in this example was sadness and anger about the country's state of violence. Claudia realises that every organ in human body is shot by a bullet. Bullets everywhere and any one came to clinic, most of them were victims of different kinds of weapons especially guns. People of South Africa, in each house, they had guns for protection [self-defence] and even in streets, in shops, thieves steal with guns, and even in schools.

David Medalie in his review *'The Context of the Awful Event: Nadine Gordimer's The House Gun* said that from the title of the novel we can understand that violence remains insidiously habitual in South Africa and that the gun was available in the house of the friends where the crime took a place. Besides that, the gun as a *crime tool* was a domestic item since it was needed in any house (1999:638).



Generally, Nadine Gordimer's writings are about the Apartheid system consequences surrounding violence and organised crime. In *The House Gun*, she is particularly concerned with (organised) crime as one aspect of a random violence. As a part of the South African life context, Gordimer's job consists in portraying that society and explaining inherent motivations to violence as in this example about the gun of the house "...the gun kept in the house as mutual protection against burglars" (16). The police during the investigation of Duncan's crime they found a gun in the garden of the house where he committed the crime. One of his friends recognized that it was the gun of the house that they kept as a protection tool from any break-in. Now Gordimer wants to show the fact that keeping a gun in houses is something random because of the possible burglars who might come at any moment in this violent city and because of the state of insecurity in the community. However this security tool killed a human-being though it was supposed to secure him from being killed. That is another paradox in life context Nadine Gordimer identifies as "...danger does not come from outside but it is even in walls, in your bedroom, especially with a gun in the house".

Violence has been [and is still] a major theme in South African literature. While it is increasing everywhere, the same is in literature. Writers and authors were discussing the theme of violence in better way that could nearly describe the victim's psychological and physical state. Moving from the Apartheid era to the democratic period was a big jump to the South Africans whom were under the violent system and the *crime scene*. However, the country in the post-Apartheid era was in state of insecurity. The government was trying to control the crime in the country owing to different means of selling firearms and weapons between people in legal, and illegal way was the principle cause behind the crime and violence increase.

Singh in her book about *Policing and Crime Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2008) claimed that Crime was not, and still is not, merely a background feature of daily existence in post-apartheid South Africa, but It became – and it remains – a central object, it was clear that Gordimer tackled violence in her everyday motions as she focused on the crime as the major event in *The House Gun*: "He had a bullet wound in the head. He was lying half-on, half-off the sofa, as if (interpretation) he had been taken by surprise when shot and had tried to rise" (15).

Duncan killed his friend Carl Jespersen and the police was making an investigation about the crime that was with a gun. The South African society and the American also are famous for the house gun. Because of the thieves but it is also a reason for the high rates of crime what



led Gordimer to shed light on this phenomenon that violence is not from the other as the white called the black, but it is with a gun in the house. This could be interpreted as meaning that she was proclaiming the danger of the gun in the house that even a child can get it, no matter was the reason the gun means danger.

Consequently, we could note that what the apartheid system left was the feeling of insecurity. The native South Africans were victimised by the state security forces while standing up for their rights. The state security forces aimed to commit crime and killed them as an excuse. From the analysis of *The House Gun*, it is suggested that Gordimer focuses on the increase of these violent crimes when Harold says: “The court sat, read every day of the robberies, rapes, hijacks – murders – that would bring more and more names to such petitions – imprisonment doesn’t deter, life sentences are always commuted; ‘good behaviour’ in prison releases criminals to kill again: only a life for life is protection, is justice” (141).

In attempt to clarify violent crimes, Harold claims that the criminal system was weak because the aspects of violence reside in robberies, rape, hijacks, and murders increasing every day since the prison releases them when they behave good, as a result they kill again. He says that they should make death penalty to decrease committed crimes and violence in South Africa.

Also the couple recognises that they are now from the society of the inferior class. The class of violence and complexity, which they were hiding from since years. Stejskalová Tereza in her paper about “Journey Towards otherness. Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup*” wrote that:

Most often demonstrated via Gordimer’s representation of white consciousness, the whites in her novels are often conscious liberals who feel responsible for the ones oppressed, eager to do good as a form of recompense. At the same time, they are conscious of their situation as privileged minority, living outside the sufferings of black majority. They experience a kind of fortress mentality, being imprisoned in their own world. (Stejskalová, T., 2008:6)

Claudia says that: “Other people! Other people! These awful things happen to other people.” She was in moment of recognition, a moment of shock, she realised that the ‘things’ she was afraid from happened then, and her son’s crime was one of it. The white couple were living in a house full of security tool, afraid from the other and trying not to be part of the violent society with helping the poor and the victims of the violence in this town. Claudia, the one who was angry and annoyed from the people that their victims came to her in the clinic and lost their body organ for their actions. For a moment, she had a flashback about the victims then suddenly saw that her son was a criminal and for any mother she was in shock.



From the study of Nadine Gordimer's themes, the "Other" is one of her major concerns because she is focusing on the black people as victims of the segregation system besides the racist mentality after the end of the system's laws. Therein, David Abrahams articulated in the review about *A synopsis of urban violence in South Africa* that with the black control that period witnessed state of insecurity and the government secured the white minority besides many areas in South Africa became ungovernable, owing to lack of effort by the police. They were not effective enough to combat gangsters and prevent crime because they were more reactive than proactive (2010:11). In other hand, as a result, the signs of security used to express people's feeling of insecurity in the South African society and especially in the big cities and townhouses such as "Intercom buzzer" (3) that was a security tool, Harold and Claudia put in their front door when any want came he/she pushes the button of it. In *The House Gun*, when heard the intercom buzzer each them stood hearing it again, they were afraid of coming, the fact of living in townhouse was scaring them because the townhouses witnessed high rates of crime, violence, kidnapping and thieves.

Moreover, that was the first reason of having that security tool, the fear of the outside. That device has a screen to see the coming's face called: "Security monitored" (3). Since the country was in problems race and state of insecurity, Harold and Claudia were hiding in their house and they had security tools that keep them safe from the other or what Nadine Gordimer's calls: the strangers. They had an intercom buzzer with a monitor to see the visitor's face if he/she were thief, criminal or anyone who is unknown they will translate his face through that screen. When Julian the messenger, Duncan's friend, came they saw him in the screen. They kept him in the front door trying to translate his face because they were afraid from the bad news he will inform. The voltage of alarm: "Both at the same instant were touched by a live voltage of alarm" (4). When Claudia and Harold saw the stranger's they unconsciously touch the alarm voltage because they were always ready to turn it on in danger. It was observed that Gordimer was showing the state of the South African in this period of insecurity. Where in any moment they were ready and have all kinds of protection, if the town were safe the white couple would not use the monitor or the voltage alarm, this is how South African live in post-Apartheid era. Besides that there is an electronic gadget: "He presses the electronic gadget" (35). Electronic tools used in their gate to help them to open or close it without coming closer in case the street was not safe. In *The House Gun*, Harold realises that something wrong happened to his own son. He opens the gate for Duncan's friend to tell them what's wrong because they saw his face in the screen and he was worried and in shock.



The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) published that from 1994 to 1999 about 20 per cent car hijacking was increased – what led Harold to have locking device against thieves. In townhouse and during the Apartheid era people were in strikes and manifestations and streets were in mess. It was studied that what led the white and the foreigners to make their houses as secure as possible in case the blacks were striking in streets. They knew that that system was abusive for the native and they will move against it and they will kill the responsible for that including the ones whom took their lands and jobs. From that time, [white] people secured everything even their car because there was car hijacking all the time, as a result Harold had a locking device that he always use it for thieves: “In the car he released the locking device which secured it against thieves” (118). When Harold was going to the court with Claudia he released the locking device in car to get in. He could not let the car without security due to the fact of car hijacking in townhouses was in high rates, because of the unemployment and indigent persons were stealing cars and shops from the rich neighbourhoods so as they could live [survive]. It was something daily to hear that someone’s car was stolen that is why he could not let his car without security.

Domestic violence encompasses women who were the most affected sex in violent crimes in South Africa. According to the Institute for Security Studies, domestic violence including violence against women recorded high rates about 10 per cent of women experienced intimate partner assault about 1996 to 1999 which Nadine Gordimer demonstrates the victims as a daily image of violence. She writes in this regard: “To assume the body would represent a woman, the most common form of the act, crime passion from the sensational pages of the Sunday papers, was to accept the possibility that it was committed, entered at all into a life’s context”(10-11).

Harold and Claudia went out the court talking about the random violence in public place. Harold wondered why the victim was a man because it is usually woman, because woman is weaker than man and man most of the time who commit crimes out of jealousy or betrayal. In the Sunday newspapers, the vent of a died as common fact, and news also as part of life context, people see it in every sensational papers a woman get killed because of jealousy, her partner has a mental illness or love of possession. Gordimer shows her audience that not the crime passion was an imaginary fictional work from her but common issues that is truly clear in Sunday papers.

The way the child grows, he/she is raised with negative/positive personality and abnormal/normal attitudes. Beating, assaulting, and not listening to *children* more than



learning them positive thinking and love build fear and lie. Besides living away from family, makes the child feel alienated and engage in self-destructive behaviours (Halimi, 2013:24). As the examples of treating children in *The House Gun*: “A child is burned by an overturned pot of boiling water, or a knife is thrust” (13). Claudia in the clinic expresses the violence in the city by these facts of a burned child of boiling water or thrust knife. Since the society was suffering and in state of mess, people were struggling, families separate, and all kinds of problems: poverty and hunger. Parents were fighting in front of their children and the children were the victims of the parent’s anger, children were living in shelters and parents are drunk, the state of instability in families makes the children the only victims. Since they were born in these circumstances, as a result Claudia found a bullet and a knife with a child. This is what Nadine Gordimer is saying about the inherent consequence of the apartheid system in South Africa. Daily events of violence are echoed in newspapers. A photograph of a child who sees his mother died in front of him: “They [Harold and Claudia] passed pages of the newspaper... For him, the photograph of a child clinging to the body of its dead mother” (28). Harold and Claudia get up early and read the newspaper as usual reading the violence aspects of the town but nothing was compared with their son’s crime for them his crime was a “private disaster” a turning point in their peaceful life.

Ordinarily, children born from separated families behave repulsively. These families raise their children in such a way they grow with rude and mad attitude leading to criminal minds. Gordimer accounts for a willing crime, sad to say, because the childhood could be affected in so far as a mother kills her children: [Now] – here was that woman who strapped her two small children into their safety seats in her car and got out and let it run off a wharf into the water, drowning them. (78)

Also in newspapers Claudia and Harold were reading the headlines of common issues of South Africa when Claudia sees a mother kills her children by drowning them in water as if they were a trash bags. Suddenly she remembered their state and said that things happen to the other but why us, she was so sad that these awful things happen to them. The author here from this example was trying to show the mentality of people, illness, pressure that led this people to do so or because of poverty and hunger. Blacks were living in poor neighbourhoods, suffering from hunger, violence and crime. Because of the Apartheid laws, indigent blacks lived in predicaments no one of them would have chosen. This state may lead people to kill each other for food, and act violently as a result child’s treatment could lead to be a violent or a criminal person.

3- Indirect Aspects of Violence: Racism and its Prejudices

In *The House Gun* Gordimer mentions some aspects that indirectly lead to violence. Diala I. in her review of *Nadine Gordimer, J.M .Coetzee, and Andre Brink: Guilt, Expiation, and the Reconciliation Process in Post- Apartheid South Africa* clarifies: “Present violence as an ancient, transcultural and even rather mysterious human experience. Thus, the background, upbringing, and circumstances of the protagonist, Duncan, are set in relief as a contrast to the conceivable profile of a probable murderer” (Diala, I., 2001-2002:53).

In examining indirect aspects that lead in a way or other to result in violence, we shall include issues such as racism and its prejudices in post-apartheid South Africa. Racism is at the core of South African literature as a whole. Therein, Nadine Gordimer mentions examples of indirect aspects of violence that affect the major character’s personality. Besides, it could be questioned how family affection would build the personality of the generations in a society that was ruined by the segregation system – destroyed by the political system and led the South Africans to live in instability?

For Crankshaw Owen in his book about *Race, Class and the Changing Division of Labour under Apartheid* articulates that:

Africans are moving into traditionally white jobs at the bottom of the skill and income hierarchy, for example the concentration of employment in school teaching and nursing is not unique to Africans as a result the black African had less payment unlike the white according to their educational level (1997:23).

Motsamai is a black educated person and a successful lawyer who wins the attention of a white family that was suspecting his competence of gaining their son’s case. The black’s ability is sometimes questioned because he could not pay for good school owing to the country’s state of poverty. Even with the post-apartheid [the end of the colonial years] people of both races still hang on the traditional thinking about the classes: the position in social space. In a survey Garofalo James asserts that “Part of this position in social space is captured in the term lifestyle: routine daily activities, both vocational activities (work, school, keeping house, etc.) and leisure activities” (1982:241). All the same, Garofalo’s view on “Information about crime and images of crime” discussed in *The Fear of Crime: Causes and Consequences*, reveals that:

Position in social space has a temporal aspect, extending into the past to incorporate a person’s learning experiences and into the future to incorporate a person’s life chances... Position in social space strongly influences the amount and nature of information about crime to which the person is



exposed. The model shows three major sources of information about crime: direct experience (as a victim or a witness), interpersonal communication about the direct or indirect experience of others, and the mass media. This information, mediated by other factors, provides the individual with a somewhat nebulous image of crime. (1981: 842-844)

Garafolo's paper is an explicit attempt to link fear of crime to the broader conceptual framework of quality of life. In *The House Gun*, Gordimer emphasises characters' behaviour and position influenced by their social space. She chooses Claudia and Harold to represent the educated and middle class white couple with the racist background against the blacks. To demonstrate the reality, their views and doubts about the blacks' competence in both work and life. It was like a shock to ask help from black persons, hearing the name of blacks and touching their skin was on the list of their racial prejudice as in: "His father took courage: Is he really a competent lawyer?"(9). Duncan took a black lawyer because he knew her ability and competence and he was not racist but Harold his father was suspecting in Hamilton's competence because he is black. They used to see them as the last class in the society with the lowest educational level, and all what he was sure about it was that black people were violent and poor.

From this, it means that the historical background is still maintaining in post-apartheid era where the black people do not see or meet the whites in any place, not in facilities, not in institutions, not in streets. In the apartheid system, the blacks were not allowed to mix or to be in the same place with the whites. Because they see Blacks as slaves and not even human-beings. Even with the coming of the new generations, South Africa still suffers from the past of the apartheid system that brought hatred generations from parents who were victims of this system from both races. Blacks experienced hatred, fear, anxiety and denigration as part of racial prejudices, albeit direct aspects of violence in post-apartheid South Africa are something common when the Lindgards said "What is there to fear"(4). A tone of fear, a thing they saw before and they knew it might happen. "Both stood at the door, confronting these, confronting the footsteps they heard "(4).

This does not deny that, for some segments of the population, fear of crime is a very salient force in people's lives-and often with good reason. For those people, individual responses to the fear of crime are made daily and become an integral part of their lives. The problem is that these same people are concentrated among the poor and powerless; thus, the options available to them do not permit them to make the types of responses (e.g., moving to a safer



neighbourhood, living in an apartment building with private security guards) that would effectively insulate or protect them from fear-producing situations. Bonnie S. Fisher's description of the plight of the public housing residents that he studied sums up the problem for the poor in high-crime areas: "They live in an environment where the threat of crime is already present. The awareness of crime ... brings the emotion of the fear of crime into the foreground of their consciousness. There is little they can do to reduce their fear. It must be suffered in silence as part and parcel of their underclass status." (1990:364).

Actual fear of crime is probably experienced chronically by a relatively small number of people and intermittently – in very delimited situations – by most. Adequate measurement of the fear of crime requires that we try to determine not only the types of situations in which people say they would experience fear, but also how often they find themselves in such situations and how strongly they have reacted to such situations in the past (Garofalo, J., 1981:841).

Nonetheless, asking for help from a black person in a situation of hopelessness draws attention to the ways in which white South Africans, even those who considered themselves liberal benefitted from the apartheid system and allowed for a spatial separation between the white suburbs: "...its beatings and interrogations, maimings and assassinations" (142), of which the Lindgards claim, none of it had anything to do with them: "They had heard it at once, in the chock of the name; the choice of a black man. She's not one of those doctors who touch black skin indiscriminately along with white, in their work, but retain liberal prejudices against the intellectual capacities of blacks" (33).

We could herein grasp that Claudia has a liberal thinking, from the expression used "black" and "not touch black skin" in her clinic she could not touch the black skin and the name Hamilton Motsamai, the competent black lawyer that their son chose, shocked the white liberal couple. They have racial apprehensions about the blacks, and they think that they are better than them.

Duncan sent a letter to his friend describing his first shock when he was child: "A terrible thing happens." Isidore Diala in her reviews about *The House Gun* argued that the enigmatic nature of murder (drawn attention to also in the inexplicable *suicide* of Duncan's school mate). Which makes it a timeless human mystery, accounts partly for the mode of Gordimer's treatment of Duncan (2001-2002:53). The story begins with the expression of Duncan when for the first time in his life sees someone hanged: "A terrible thing happened"... "He saw



someone hanging from the beam where the punch bag is ... He was hanging by the neck” (68). Duncan’s lawyer asked the Lindgards to search in Duncan’s past for any evidence that may help him in Duncan’s case. His father was curious for the first time to search in his son’s private things, when he suddenly found a letter from his son’s adolescence talking about a suicide of his mate but the second page was lost, Duncan was a kid in junior school playing football when one of his school mate hanged himself in the punch bag.

Duncan’s letter supposed to be sent to his parents but they did not receive it because they were giving him a freedom to live his life alone far from them, and that may be the reason he did not send it. The lawyer was suspecting this event in Duncan’s childhood, what made a kind of shock and he did not talk about it again. Also no one had to correct his ideas or to guide him since he was far from his parents, he built a wrong base that led him to offend and murder his friend.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to review and scrutinise the different manifestations of violence in South Africa in post-Apartheid era through the analysis of Nadine Gordimer’s fictional work *The House Gun*. By describing the direct aspects of violence, daily life in post-apartheid South Africa is accounted with the purpose to call for the reduction of crime and violence. We have viewed some aspects of violence – direct or indirect – which encompass effects of crime and fear upon both individuals and communities in a ‘criminal universe.’ Deductively, violence is related to an individual’s sense of vulnerability which may be related in turn to such factors as gender, age and social class. Vulnerability affects the ability to cope at psychological, physical and economic levels. Excessive levels of violence entail fear of crime that could have adverse consequences upon the quality of life in a neighbourhood. Violence, fear and crime which produce a fortress mentality run the risk of further reducing informal social control and surveillance and hence, paradoxically, may lead to an increased risk of crime victimisation as we have viewed through Gordimer’s literary production.

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