

Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*: A Postmodern Text

by

Khadidiatou Diallo, Ph.D.
khadidiatou.diallo@ugb.edu.sn
Gaston Berger University, Senegal

Abstract

Through an exploration of narrative strategies in *The House Gun*, this work provides analysis via postmodernism as literary backdrop to interpret the representation of the socio-cultural condition in post-apartheid South Africa, where the reconsideration of meta-narratives of pre-conceived truths reflects not only the crisis of the individual, but also that of a whole nation. Thus, the postmodern aspect of Gordimer's style demonstrates that the author's representation of the 'troubled time' in post-apartheid South Africa is her own way of bringing her fellow citizens to face individual and collective guilt for violence, and advocate tolerance towards sexual and racial differences.

Key words: postmodernism, narrative, narrative voice, intertextuality, violence.

'It is from the moment when I shall no longer be more than a writer that I shall cease to write'. Albert Camus, *Carnets*

Introduction

South African writer Nadine Gordimer has been one of the most outstanding advocates of interracial and "inter-gender" tolerance and harmony. Like fellow writers André Brink, John Maxwell Coetzee, and Beyten Beytenbarch, she has been engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle and delved into the historical evolution of her country, in the hope of finding an explanation to violence, after apartheid days. Over more than forty years, Gordimer, through an acute and sustained observation of the society she inhabits, has provided us with, what Stephen Clingman called history from the inside – from inside the land and its people. She began to write "looking for explanations for life," (Gordimer qtd. in Bazin and Dallman 573-4) but more, through her prose writing and short stories, she looks for explanations for the bone-deep animosity in South Africa, "the politically charged atmosphere and milieu" where she happened to have lived. Although Gordimer declared in interviews that she was not a political person, politics hovers on the edge of her novels, from *The Lying Days*, *Burger's Daughter* to *July's People*. While her early-published novels explore the edgy and tensed relationships between individuals and society, society and history, her post-apartheid stories put on stage the hectic and violence-ridden South Africa, in the democratic phase.

The House Gun, more than other novels of the transition, gives an image, honed to perfection, of the legacy of apartheid. The novel harps back on burning issues as racism, homophobia and the redefinition of gender relationships. As the title rightly suggests, *The House Gun* is an allegory of domestic and political violence, so ingrained in South African culture, but also of anti-normative human relationships. Thus, reading *The House Gun* from the constellation of postmodern esthetics could help reflect, in the framework of our analysis, on the fraught relationships, on transgressive attitude of the youth towards socio-cultural “normality.” To better dig out the causes and manifestations of the socio-political and cultural crisis in post-apartheid South Africa, we’ll resort to the ground-breaking principles of postmodernism. More precisely, that approach will help decipher the environment of contradictions represented in the novel.

An attempt to grasp postmodern ideology is like defining the un-definable, for the term covers a variety of domains. Characterized by skepticism, subjectivism, and relativism, postmodernism distrusts any entity or agency that defines what people can or cannot do. Postmodernists thwart any attempt to fixate the meaning that something possesses, (or can ultimately possess), because meanings “are never fully “present” to the speaker or hearer but are endlessly “deferred.” (Duignan) This attitude of postmodernists goes against the ideas and beliefs of modernism, which are the division of society between low and high culture, the “view of humanity as an entity that is perpetually improving and progressing, among others.” (Matos) The movement is a broad reaction against the philosophical tenets and values of the modern period of Western history: the rejection of science and technology as ways to human progress, and of objective natural reality that would be independent of human beings, etc.

As “fictional philosophers”, writers, concerned with the violence and absurdity of life in the late 20th century era, resorted to postmodern postulates to debunk the modern vision of the world, which they considered as the root cause of a socio-political malaise. Through what was branded postmodern literature, or postmodern esthetics, writers conceived works which “simultaneously create and destabilize meaning and conventions in their ironic or critical use of the works from the past.” (Lewis qtd. in Sims 171) Postmodern literature is used “to describe certain characteristics of Post-World War II literature and a reaction against Enlightenment ideas implicit in modernist literature.” (Sharma and Chaudhary) The esthetic approach then gives the elusive impression to totally break up with the values and meanings from the past, and yet, use them as inspiration to create “new” value-code and references. While some analysts like Stuart Sims insist on “skepticism” and rejection of cultural progress, others pinpoint the idea that “postmodernists do not only reject grand narratives, but they also embody an “anti-authoritarian” position when approaching and analyzing the world and its cultural productions.” (Matos) This assumption could well account for the repulsive attitude of characters, in *The House Gun*, towards any form of cultural and social norms that stifle their quest of freedom. In postmodern literature, human experience is considered unstable, contradictory, ambiguous, and fragmented. Therefore, the world itself is taken as a succession of contradictions, uncertainties, and ambiguities. So, the writer in such a de-articulated era, creates “open” works in which the reader, strong with his own reading background, builds out alternative meanings, and produces his own unguided interpretation of the text, unlike modern authors whose works guide and even control the reader’s response.

In this respect, it can be easily understood that the hallmarks of postmodern style in literature be such narrative strategies as the crisis of the subject, irony, humor, temporal disorder, dialogism through intertextuality, magical realism, to reflect the fleeting nature of meaning, the evasive aspect of truth, both in real and fictional world. This approach to literature is a way of reacting against modernism that Lyotard labels “a totalizing narrative.” Also, it is an echo of the postulates of poststructuralism, from iconic figures as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes or even Julia Kristeva; postmodern writing is one essential way to rebut any authoritarian ideology and socio-political system.

In its reflection of a seemingly chaotic socio-political environment, pregnant with violence, contradictions and where values, so ingrained in the past, are being deconstructed by the youth in a society in transition, *The House Gun* can be analyzed within the framework of postmodern esthetics. Gordimer makes a shift, more in style than in the themes addressed, to depict the trouble with post-apartheid South Africa. Indeed, according to Gordimer, a writer is selected by his subject – his subject being the consciousness of his own era. In the post-apartheid period, where hope seems to fade away, where the traumas of the past make it back-breaking for communities to reconcile one another, Gordimer has certainly understood that choice could not have been more relevant to sway away from the Lukacsian realism and espouse the postmodern style, through a narrative that attempts “to retain aesthetic autonomy while still returning the text to the “world.” (Hutcheon 125) Though she is mainly preoccupied by the South African reality, Gordimer knows that her stories should be interconnected with others from the ‘grand narrative family’ (intertextuality), the world of discourse, the world of texts and intertexts, as Hutcheon holds it. She is aware that the most relevant way to explain the transformation in her society is to create a self-conscious art, “within the archive”, which is history and literature, to echo Foucault.

It is no wonder then the novel much aroused analyses and criticisms. Vincent Bucheler, in a comprehensive analysis, reflects on the novel and its representation of the “legacy of the old regime . . . violence, racism and homophobia” (2) to affirm that social turmoil leads to the break of moral values and show Gordimer’s alert against gender-based discrimination, “race and sexual preference and the necessary regulations of firearms” (12) that stunt democracy. Such an argumentation finds its echo in Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s (2014) exploration of *The House Gun*, which analyses the seeds of violence and self-destruction among whites living in South Africa as well as other societies with race or class separation. Gordimer has given a positive answer to the mutual question about the possibility of writing novels once the hot and hackneyed topic of apartheid is over. (Zulli 129) For the novelist, the reason for a continuous flow comes “out of a sense of the mystery of life.” (Gordimer 138) This quest of answers in the mysterious life brings her, in *The House Gun*, and in other narratives like *None to Accompany Me*, to present “a collection of characters who depart from the usual norm. They are heroes, not in the sense of outstanding human beings, but in that they are ordinary people who live in extraordinary times,” (Molina 3), an era in the history of a country in which separate worlds yoked together by violence (Cook qtd.in Molina 3). Gordimer’s latest fiction shows, consequently, “a welcome readiness to pursue new avenues and a new sense of the world,” (Coetzee) a new sense of the world the crypt signs of which she reads and interprets and that this paper seeks to decipher, in the light of the postulates of postmodernism.

The analysis puts into the limelight the narrative structure and the dialogic design of the story to demonstrate that these strategies are means through which she harps back on issues as the ubiquity of violence, the deviation from moral and social boundaries, and strained human relationships, inside and outside her society.

A Disconcerting Narrative: The Reflection of a Nation in Crisis

Gordimer, in many interviews, says that she has been writing her land and history from her personal experience of the “dry white season”, to talk like Brink. Through a puzzling narrative structure in *The House Gun*, she casts a caustic look at her society in post-apartheid era, to reflect upon the new maladies eroding the political and social growth.

The story in *The House Gun* is woven in such a confusing way that it disconcerts the reader who finds it hard to “de-puzzle” the different parts, to get the gist of them. Actually, in the novel, Gordimer’s tremendous act as a skilled author is to give the world “a reckoning of the terrible cost of racism in her country that goes beyond journalism can relate.” (Prescott qtd. in Devaki 7) In this way, she develops themes as the pervasiveness of violence, new family and interpersonal relationships through a more overt questioning of established truths, in what can be regarded as a de-articulated narrative structure. With the almost impossibility to identify the interlocked narrative voices, the text is like an image of the South African society in post-apartheid period, torn between qualms, and frustrations, stemming from the unsuccessful social/racial reintegration project, the fulfillment of which was so dreamt of. So, this society in crisis is symbolized by the image of a “narrative in crisis”, with the many voices coalescing in the text, and temporal distortions. Such an aspect of the text in *The House Gun* brings into mind the postmodern vision, born in the post-World War period. Stuart Sims reminds us that “Postmodernism sees human experience as unstable, internally contradictory, ambiguous, inconclusive, indeterminate, unfinished, fragmented, discontinuous, “jagged”, with no one specific reality possible. Therefore, it focuses on a vision of a contradictory fragmented, ambiguous, indeterminate, unfinished, “jagged” world.” (Sims) Thus, this conception of a world where there seems to be no more fixed or commonly accepted value system is represented in narrative works by writers like Gordimer who, at one crucial point in the evolution of their society, needed to represent the erratic nature of human experience in unstable socio-cultural environments. The unfolding of events in *The House Gun* demonstrates much of the determination of the author to portray, in a new style, the mutations of the nation. Her narrative can be qualified as postmodern, so much because it is disintegrated, jagged, with questionable narrators as conveyors of the torment of the Lindgards, whose son did a terrible thing, but also that of a whole society.

At the announcement of the murderous act of their son Duncan Lindgard, the couple, Harald and Claudia, are both shocked and cannot believe what they have just been told. The voice relates the reactions of the couple:

A kind of... Not Duncan, no, no! Someone's been shot. He's arrested.
Duncan.

They both stand up.

For God's sake – what are you talking about – what is all this – how arrested, arrested for what –

The messenger is attacked, he becomes almost sullen, unable to bear what he has to tell. The obscene word comes ashamedly from him. Murder. . . .

He/she. He strides over and switches off the television. And expels a violent breath. So long as nobody moved, nobody uttered, the word and the act within the word could not enter here. Now with the touch of a switch and the gush of a breath a new calendar is opened. The old Gregorian cannot register this day. It does not exist in that means of measure. . . .

He/she. She has marked the date on patients' prescriptions a dozen times since morning but she turns to find a question that will bring some kind of answer to that word pronounced by messenger. She cries out.

What day is it today?

Friday.

It was on Friday. (*House* 5-6)

The unorthodox inscription of dialogues in this part of the story, which is a blurred expression of the reactions of both parents to the fatal news of their son's arrest, not only suggests the shock they felt but also the difficulty to realize that their son is a murderer. The consternation they feel is structurally materialized by the topographical aspect of the phrase, "he/she." This is to impart that, in suffering, the parents are one being, one voice. The third narrative voice relates in a detached manner, reflected in the cut-off and dry sentences, their despair; the reader finds it hard to identify the subject in the non-signalled dialogue between the couple, "*What day is it today?* Friday." This facet of the narrative is further connoted in many other cases of exchanges. Actually, this is in line with the dramatic situation in the passage, the beginning of a long and traumatic experience that the parents of the murderer will have to undergo.

The distant causes of such trauma are, according to the story, to be found in the aggressive nature of the South African society, especially in the transition days, where a "great many South Africans sleep uneasily with nightmares of razor fences, ferocious dogs, rape, assault, and homicide. South Africa is a land of terrible beauty and of terrible crime..." (Scheper-Hughes) Gordimer, through her characters, looks from the inside of this terribly beautiful land, to try and figure out the difficulty of the racial groups to have more humane relationships, so sought-after by political leaders. The agony and fallouts of the heavy historical experience of institutionalized injustice have brought communities, both oppressors and victims, to such a point that reconciliation seems impossible. The unbridled violence is here described by the anonymous voice:

... ; in a region of the country where the political ambition of a leader had led to killings that had become vendettas, fomented by him, a daily tally of deaths was routine as a weather report; elsewhere, taxi drivers shot one another in rivalry over who would choose to ride with them, quarrels in discothèques were settled by the final curse-word of guns. State violence under the old, past regime had habituated its victims to it. People had forgotten there was another way. (*House* 49-50)

As a committed writer, devoted to the building of peace within the tessellation of interlocking races and cultures in her country, Gordimer has not staggered in her determination to expose the multifarious causes and forms of violence not only to alert communities at loggerheads but more, to make them aware that there is another way. Such a position has brought her to make a shift in her writing style and adopt the tenets of postmodernism in literature in order to change the perspective from which she has been hitherto diagnosing the profound malaise of individuals and the society. Like postmodern authors who have been alerting against conspiracy theories, Gordimer, in her post-apartheid fiction, transforms her experience of faded hopes, frustrations from the socio-political reality, into stories, through which wafted images of the serious problem of domestic and political violence. Like many of her fellow white writers, she was deeply conscious of the fact that her literature, her stories are the “unforeseen ‘essential gesture’ . . . in [her] social responsibility in a divided country.” (Gordimer 13)

That responsibility of her as a writer can explain the detailed representation, undertaken by narrative voices, of the new conceptions of human relationships and sexual orientation of the youth in her society. Indeed, *The House Gun* is, beside *None to Accompany Me*, the story which mostly deals with the progressive transformation of the value system and basic principles in the new South Africa. It's with much surprise that parents as the Lindgards discover that what they hitherto believed in terms of values and established truths seem to be no longer valid. Harald and Claudia are distressed to know that their son Duncan - whom they thought was “well educated” in a high culture, marked by faith in norms, they considered as a reference - is bisexual. The wind of political liberation that flew in the country seems to sweep away or to derange the socio-cultural standards determining human relationships. The consequence of this is a new perspective in racial and sexual orientation. Homosexuality and bisexuality are rather gaining ground in the post-apartheid/postmodern world of South Africa. Such a ‘deviation from norms’ can be read through the lens of postmodernist’s “anti-authoritarian alignment”, as Lyod Spencer calls it in his discussion on the ideology (qtd. in Matos). In other words, the confusion of times and the skepticism born from the sudden ending of apartheid, led to a confusion of lives, of values and codes of conduct, reflected in the confusing narrative instance. As the South Africans’ hopes turn into doubts and disillusion, the narrative design also gives the image of a total chaos. We have a deluge of examples of the new orientations and visions of life that are differently lived and appreciated by the fictional citizens of Gordimer. This passage is illustrative of the psychological impact that the sexual orientation of Duncan has on his parents:

He seems to have been besotted with her. Sexually there must have been something very strong between them ... even devastating, the way I suppose it can be if... That business with a man, before her. Wasn't it a matter of being fascinated by the set in that house? Fashion's that's been around for his generation, the idea that homosexuality is the real liberation, to suggest this as superiority beyond the ordinary humdrum. Why did he choose to live with those men? It turns out he didn't take the cottage because of the girl. Moved in with them on the property because their freedom claims to go beyond all the old trappings between men and women, marriages and divorces and crying babies. He didn't suffer any example of divorces and crying babies with us. Wanted to be one of the boys. Those boys. Emancipated. Superior. Free. (*House* 120)

In this exchange between the parents of Duncan, we have an expressive allusion of the pain they feel to grasp the motives behind the sexual identity of the son. The dialogue itself is disconcerted, with no topographical signs. The jagged sentences in the passage rebel against the dictates of the grammar, as Duncan and his friends defy the system. This fragmented aspect of the narrative is suggestive of the youth's blunt violation of norms and truths, in the name of freedom. The set of questions in the passage implies the agitation of the father, Harald, who finds it hard to understand the bisexuality of the son. The son, with his friends who are living in the house, freed from all social and cultural "trappings" and regulations, experience transgressive love relationships. The conclusion of Vincent Bucheler, in his diagnosis of the legacy of apartheid, enlightens more this aspect of the South African society, analysed by Gordimer:

From the perspective of Duncan's generation, "the real liberation" is the permeability of racial and sexual boundaries . . . It can therefore be alleged that the author, through her characters, provides 'a lens through which the parents and readers may reconceptualize differences and relationships,' . . . so as to test the reader's capacity to interpret beyond categories in gender and from heteronormativity (10)

In other words, Gordimer, through the representation of what seems to be a bone-deep crisis of a nation and its value-system in post-apartheid world, and notwithstanding her denunciation of the patriarchal and colonialist stances, moves from the modern/realistic style of her previous novels to the postmodern approach, and in doing so, she embraces skepticism, about what the South African culture stands for and strives for. Her narrative option in the portrayal of her country's hopes and doubts in the transition, is reminiscent of poststructuralist postulates about the elusive nature of human conception of truth and life, the Derridian concept of 'differance' of truth and pre-established ideas so characteristic of the modern era. Like Derrida and other deconstructionist theorists, Gordimer here rejects any metaphysical and hierarchical history, which goes with binary oppositions, based on modern logic (*logos*), and which have long defined human relationships.

Duncan and his homosexual friends in the house, are symbols of a progressive conception of freedom and the house itself, where the friends from multicultural origin, live unbound by any social or cultural norms, can be well taken as a microscopic image of the bubbling social atmosphere of a country, so suddenly freed from the shackles of oppression and so abruptly engaged on the road to *transraciality*. Duncan's bisexuality can be "associated with a 'total loss of control' and a 'personality conflict', which is reminiscent of patriarchal and colonialist views." (Bucheler 9)

This 'transformation' or rather the revelation of the true identity of Duncan to his parents is the reality that drives them to revisit the past of the son, to diagnose his childhood and sexual experience, with the hope of understanding his violation of moral and social boundaries. While the mother, Claudia, leans on Freud's psychology to dig out the hidden motives of the subject, the father, Harald, tries to find answers in religion: the parents are both bewildered by the discovery of the bisexuality of Duncan and go to the point of blaming themselves. The omniscient third narrative voice here describes their difficulty to understand and accept the criminal actions of Duncan:

Harald and Claudia have, each, within them, now a malignant resentment against their son that would seem impossible to exist in them as an ability to kill could exist in him. The resentment is shameful. What is shameful cannot be shared. What is shameful separates. But the way to deal with the resentment will come, must come, individually to both. The resentment is shameful: because what is it that they do to him? Is that where the answer – Why? Why? – is to be found? Harald is prompted by Jesuits, Claudia by Freud. (*House* 63)

The shameful act of killing and revealing to his parents as a bisexual is a rift that separates the couple, who are agitated and even traumatized by the events. Face to such a tragic experience, face to uncertainty, doubts born from the inability to no longer believe in the cultural and social principles they took for granted, it's no wonder that characters like the Lindgards turn each to themselves and try to find answers to unanswerable questions. Those questions that are bubbling in the mind are directly quoted in the passage, sentence structures that further highlight the dramatic situation. Their efforts "to re-conceive, re-gestate the son" (*The House* 63), to interrogate, to relativize all the old truths they thought were the guaranty of stable human and social relationships have brought them in the end to bluntly realize that times have changed enough; their society is a "vast multicultural cauldron . . . Confusion and turmoil characterize society and consequently affect moral values, and interpersonal relationships. . . . In particular, the traditional concept of the family gives way to episodes which are not set in ethically reassuring situations." (Zulli 134)

Therefore, this is an occasion for the author to highlight the new patterns of family and religious structures and to bring her readers and country to cast a new look at the alterations of the traditional structures of community life, and to take the change, not as forcibly a deviation or a transgression, but, rather as the need to “re-conceive, re-gestate” interpersonal relationships. Religious practices are no longer that supposedly conversation with an existing Almighty God, but, as Harald explains to Claudia, prayer is “a heightened means of communicating with one’s own resources in solution of guidance through fears, failures and sorrows.” (*House* 27) This new and detached conception of religion in the post-apartheid world is, actually, the stark expression of the profound change in well-established values, the respect of which has been so far taken as the way to social stability and salvation. Harald turns to French philosopher and feminist Simone Veil and her conception of prayer, in the hope of bringing her atheist wife to understand the importance of a certain way of practicing religion, in time of troubles; For Veil, “prayer is a heightened form of intelligent concentration.” (*House* 27) In the postmodern view, religion is not an absolute truth, but part of those “small narratives”, relative conceptions divorcing dogma. Through this new conception of truth and values, Gordimer spotlights the failures of traditional family and socio-cultural patterns, the sorrows it caused to individuals and communities but more, she calls for a re-gestation of our conception of the world and intercultural relationships. She further calls for the racial communities to hose down religious differences, because she has understood that the primal and most essential gesture of the writer in “state of siege” (Brink) is the transformation of experience. (Gordimer 17)

This narrative position of the author is foregrounded by the new attitude of the youth, which is pegged reactionary. This can be further interpreted in the framework of postmodern esthetics, through one of its basic tenets, the epistemic break from normative ideology, and ideas and ideals upheld by any conservative society (especially the apartheid ideology).

Such a break from normality is alluded to in the overall narrative architecture of the story in *The House Gun*. There is a recurrent use of isolated phrases, appended clauses and other instances of appositional phrases that punctuate the representation of a community’s “relapse into nightmares of interracial vulnerability” (Heffernan 89) and fall into what Gramsci takes as “the crisis of authority.” (qtd. in Heffernan 88) The intermittent narrative, reinforced by the multivocality in the narrative (cohabitation and collusion of many voices, mostly hardly detectable) ensure a heterogeneous text which can be analyzed as a symbol of the crisis in the South African society. The sentence anatomy in the coming passage hints at the consternation of the parents, once in the court meeting their son who’s about to be judged for the terrible thing that happened: “Over. But beginning. The parents approached the barrier between the gallery and the well of the court and were not presented from contact with the son. Each embraced him while he kept his head turned from their faces.” (*House* 8) It’s almost impossible to identify the narrative voices. The confusing socio-political situation wafts also from the interlocking voices, leading to evanescent points of view. *The House Gun* is a multi-layered text, with traces of third-person narration, psycho-narration, stream of consciousness combined with instances of I-narration.

This outer fragmentation in the depiction of the events of the story is an echo of the general disorder of the post-apartheid time, born from years of oppression and socio-political injustice. Fragmentation of the narrative is “one of the most prominent elements of postmodern texts . . . it refers to the breakdown of plot, character, theme, and setting . . .” (Matos) The many instances of nonlinear and a-chronological narrative fashion (as was the main trait of modern style) are sound images of the moral breakdown of individuals and communities. The quotation is evocative of the thoughts of Harald, stirred by the image of the girl, Natalie Nastasya, for the love of whom his son Duncan shot his friend, Jesperson:

Received by a father’s eyes as she came in she matched the young woman Duncan had brought to the townhouse once or twice. *This was she, all right. . . .* Perhaps, there was a place in memory, a cheap photo album of Duncan’s girls that existed though never opened. That was the impression of her: yellow-streaked dark eyes (*colours of the Tiger’s Eye paperweight on Motsamai’s desk*) . . . And these outer corners of the eyes turned down slightly, . . . the eyes were a statement to be read, depending on who *was receiving it: lazily, vulnerably appealing, or calculating, in warning.*

When Duncan brought girls – his women – to the townhouse it could not be thought of (really) as bringing them ‘home’, home was left behind where he grew up, was the house they had sold, abandoned as having become a burden no longer necessary. *Dropping in for a meal accompanied by a girl did not mean that he was presenting her to his parents as someone to whom he had a serious commitment, but it also did not mean that she was a passing fancy; (House 56)*

In this passage, we have a combination of third voice narration and the narrated monologue of Harald who just came to meet the girl. Hardly perceptible, the narrated monologue that Cohn defines as “the mental discourse of a character taken in charge by the narrative,” (29) is a way for the third voice to allow a direct representation of the impression the father has of the girl. The father becomes the focal point of the introduction of the girl to the reader. Such a narrative option to let free the thought of the character is not easily identifiable: indeed, as Cohn argues,

a typical narrated-monologue sentence stands grammatically between the two other forms, sharing with quoted monologue the expression of the principal clause, with psycho-narration, the tense system and the third person reference . . . in its meaning and functioning, as in its grammar, the narrated monologue holds a mid-position between quoted narration and psycho-narration, rendering the content of a figural mind more obliquely than the former, more directly than the latter. (29)

In the quotation, the narrated monologue of Harald is juxtaposed to the third voice's presentation of the office. Right from the outset, we feel that it's the third anonymous voice that relates the circumstances of the meeting between the couple and the girl, in the office of Duncan's lawyer, "Received by a father's . . . once or twice." But the strands of the passage that comes right after, stands grammatically apart and the isolated phrase "all right", signals a detachment of the narrator to let full expression of the mind of the character. Such an esthetic turn is relevant here as it allows the reader to have a direct access to the thoughts of Harald and imagine how depressed the father is. The narrator does not limit his inquisition of the father's psyche to this narrated monologue: he 'decides' to make transparent Harald's mind in his diagnosis of the physical (and psychological) state of the girl, through the use of a psycho-narration. Psycho-narrations are sustained descriptions of free indirect discourses, an expression of the overdrive of character's thoughts. In this part of the quotation - "Dropping in for a meal accompanied by a girl did not mean that he was presenting her to his parents as someone to whom he had a serious commitment, but it also did not mean that she was a passing fancy" - we have an imitation of the impression of Harald by the narrator, who does not alter at all the tense system and third person reference. In the representation of the mind of the character, words and thoughts "are not really reported to the reader, they are merely summed up by the narrator who is foregrounded." (Hughes and Patin 104) Therefore, by opening the doors of the mind of Harald to the reader, the blend of narrated monologue and psycho-narration is an effective technique to underpin the difficulty of the couple to cope with the reality, which is the murderous act of their son for such a seemingly unstable girl, reflected in the expression of her eyes, "*lazily, vulnerably appealing, or calculating, in warning.*"

The "polyvocality" (Mchale 284) of this excerpt of the story is a way for Gordimer to symbolize the multiplicity of ideological stances in the new South Africa, but more, it is a ciphered expression of the heterogeneity of her text, the image of the multiracial/*multi-positional* condition of her society.

Another indication that *The House Gun* in a postmodern text is the rejection of any conventions, in both the textual and extratextual framework, and the many voices colluding and coalescing in the story. In the passage below, we have a combination of the narration of the thoughts of Harald and Claudia, taken in charge by the omniscient voice, and narrated monologue; both parents are questioning and pondering over the validity and relevance of such questions as morality and faith and wonder what is or has been their utility in the upbringing of their son who has ended up 'transgressing the morally and socially acceptable':

All their lives they must have believed – defined – morality as the master of passions. *The controller*. Whether this unconscious acceptance came from the teachings of God’s word or from the principle of self-imposed restraint in rationalists. And it can continue unquestioned in any way until something happens at the extreme of transgression, rebellion: *the catastrophe that lies at the crashed limit of all morality, the unspeakable passion that takes life. . . .* But what is trivial at one, harmless, end of the scale – where does it stop. *No need to think about that, all their lives, either of them, because the mastery has never needed to be tested any further. My God (his God) no! Where do the taboos really begin? Where did their son follow on from their limits beyond anything they could never have envisaged him – their own – following. Oh they feel they own him now, as if he were again the small child they were forming by precept and example: by what they themselves were. Parents. . . .* separately, they have lost all interest in and concentration on their activities and are shackled together, each solitary, in their inescapable proximity that chafes them. (*House* 162)

These lines are another telling indication of what can be rightly called a crisis of the narration in *The House Gun*. We have a blend of isolated sentences, narrated monologues, and *narratorial* comments of the omniscient voice. Here are parents who are forced, by the tragic events, to ponder over the moral basis and system of values they have been so far abiding by. The psychological agitation they are subject to is represented by the polyphonic identity of the passage. The first sentence, uttered by the omniscient voice, is a way to put the importance of morality into the limelight; morality is for the couple, that consciousness that determines and guides their attitude and action towards themselves, the society, the importance of which is highlighted by the isolated sentence, “the controller.” But that morality, either upheld by religion or reason, becomes suddenly questioned through the shock provoked by unexpected transgression, “the catastrophe that lies at the crashed limit of all morality, the unspeakable passion that takes life.” The introspections of Harald and Claudia about the socio-political and cultural fabric of their country, carefully *re-told* by the omniscient voice, have brought them into a questioning of the validity of cultural standards, a questioning reflected in the passage by the interro-negative sentences, allied with the exclamation punctuation, and appended phrases (“Parents.”)

The narration of the thoughts of the couple is another way for the voice to further brings out the crisis undergone by them, the unfulfilled dreams of social stability for a whole nation, and youth’s violation of old established truths and code of conducts. Characters, as well as South Africans like Gordimer, ponder over the acute despair, with the hope of finding where they have failed, in the disconcerting socio-cultural environment in post-apartheid South Africa. Therefore, the presence of questionable or elusive narrators symbolizes the drama of life in Gordimer’s country.

Although the omniscient voice shows distance in the relation of events of the story, the taking up in charge of the thoughts and voices of characters in the passage, supra analysed, indicates a certain vulnerability to the emotional and ideological structure of the Lindgards. The esthetic effect of such a narrative anatomy is an open work, as favored by postmodern artists, “in which the reader must supply his own connections, work out alternative meanings, and provide his own (unguided) interpretation,” (Sims) amidst a vocal merging and mental hybridization that can be identified as a trait of Gordimer’s prose, not devoid of self-incriminating multivoicedness (Heffernan 89). Indeed, “the shift from one regime to another has ordained an inevitable condition of instability and a subsequent dispute on values and roles . . .” (Zulli 7) It’s an ingenious task for committed writers as Gordimer to represent the post-apartheid period, because they have to mediate between old rules and safely-kept ideologies on the one hand, and blurred signals stemming from the present on the other hand. The hybrid narrative in the novel is, actually, her own way of representing the trouble with South Africa, at a time when communities were longing for reconciliation. Indeed, “with the evanescence of a single, unifies subject, there is no longer the possibility to tell a coherent story” (Hutcheon 158)

As a committed writer, Gordimer is conscious that her “responsibility is what awaits outside the Eden of creativity. The creative act is not pure. History evidences it. Ideology demands it. Society exacts it.” (Gordimer 8) Her text in the post-apartheid writing, seems to be platonic, but, rather, is history-bound and ideologically-driven in the view to explaining (and curing) the root causes of discrimination based on gender, race and sexual preferences and violence. In this way, through the use of meta-fiction, (fictionalization of actual historical events or figures), temporal distortion – with a constant shift in the tense system and a circle-like structure of the story (the disruption of the past leading to the fragmentation of the present South Africa), Gordimer unveils a post-apartheid and postmodern South African society deeply marked by contradictions stemming essentially from the impossibility of conservative communities to cope with individual’s progressive moves from the mainstream culture. The narrative option to let loose the river of thoughts of a character, in the prism of doubts, agitation, by maintaining emotional distance, produces a seemingly incoherent narrative visage, much reminiscent of the abysmal socio-economic atmosphere in a divided country, the impacts of which are hardly borne by communities, as well as characters in *The House Gun*. This is particularly inferred in the interconnections between the novel and other “ancestor-texts,” thanks to the “Dialogic Imagination” of Gordimer.

Dialoging Discourses: The Postmodern Intertextuality of Gordimer’s Text

“Il y a plus affaire à interpréter les interprétations qu’à interpréter les choses, et plus de livres sur les livres que sur autre sujet: nous ne faisons que nous entregloser” Montaigne

In her unwavering commitment to weave a painstaking and enthralling image of the socio-political disorder in post-apartheid in *The House Gun*, Nadine Gordimer has revisited the literary and historical archives of the world, in the view to adding to the ground-breaking themes she is addressing with much accuracy: violence, individual and collective guilt, racial/cultural otherness, etc. As a writer much concerned with the hectic evolution of societies and much aware of the commitment of fellow writers, she has well understood the position of Bakhtin about literature as a timeless subject: "Literature is included in the social and cultural context of life and it gains value only if freed from the tie with the moment of its creation and introduced in a dilated time." (qtd. in Zulli 128) To this relevant explanation of the meanings of literature, Foucault adds that "the frontiers of a book are never clear-cut beyond the title, the first line, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network."

Gordimer's writing, especially *The House Gun*, is introduced in a dilated time because of the open or tacit hybrid references to other literary productions, enhancing thus the polyphonic or heterogeneous nature of the narrative. In a relevant analysis of Gordimer's use of intertextuality, J. U. Jacobs writes:

The scrupulousness with which Gordimer has presented her fictional characters as well as herself as subjects informed by the historical texts of this country, is matched by the candour with which she has from the beginning recognized also the literary texts to which she and her creations alike owe their being. Gordimer has regularly acknowledged her indebtedness to other writers, beginning with Maupassant, Chekhov, Maughan, Lawrence, Athen. (27)

Indeed, in the treatment of the feud relationships in her country and the listless social atmosphere caused by domestic and political violence, Gordimer is aware that putting the reader in the process is an accurate way of bringing them to a deeper awareness of the trauma of the time but also of the urgent need to make the essential gesture: to step over racial tensions and sparkle reconciliation. That is one of the main motives that have triggered the narrative option to sink into the historical and literary archives to showcase that traces of the South African reality in post-apartheid are found, under foreign skies, both in the bygone and postmodern period. This inspiration from the reservoir of literary history, the direct or indirect quotations from previous texts, generates a succession of patches of texts, coherently organized to give, in a final analysis, "a form of fiction adequate to contain the South African experience." (Greenstein qtd. in Molina 2) In other words, "the permanent tension between public and private, the duality between social and fictional events . . . are expressed through literary reformulation, construction and deconstruction of national experience filtered through the European and continental cultural heredity." (King qtd. in Zulli, 128)

Through intertextuality – Gordimer sets up a dialogue between the past and the present, between senior texts with others, mature or nascent, the objective of which is to put into the limelight the ghastly socio-political situation, not only in her country but also in the world, because conscious she is, with Waton, that “Every quotation is a metaphor which speaks of that which is absent, and which engages the reader in a speculative activity.” (qtd. in Jacobs 33)

In the postmodern attitude to literary texts, intertextuality bears principles somewhat a bit different from the two reductive approach to the intertext as “the impossibility of living outside the infinite text,” (Barthes 36) or as “a collective attack on the founding subject” (alias the humanist notion of the author) as the original and originating source of fixed and fetishised meaning in the text.” (Kristeva) Indeed, the postmodern perspective of intertextuality favours double edge parodies, re-conceptualized quotations, pastiches, so that “the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel status in parodic reworking of the textual past of both the “world” and literature.” (Hutcheon 124) The textual past they reject is actually modernism and its conception of the work of art as an autonomous, self-sufficient and detached from external reality. In other words, postmodern intertextuality rebuts formalists and structuralists’ principle of the text as “an object deriving its unity from the formal interrelations of its parts.” (124) Rather, “Postmodernism both asserts and then undercuts this view, in its characteristic attempt to retain aesthetic autonomy while still returning the text to the ‘world.’” (Hutcheon) *The House Gun* is one of Gordimer’s post-apartheid novels which marks a break in the narrative approach with the previous opuses in that the text bears an affirmed esthetic identity (with the multiple narrative voices and many temporal distortions) and yet is fully steeped in the South Africans’ experiences and (antagonistic) discourses, with a sound representation of the many discourses of antagonism and tensions but also of hope. The frontiers of the book are not clear-cut: beyond the paratextual elements, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, *The House Gun* is caught in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences, addressing the thorny issues of interpersonal violence, to such a point that Gordimer’s book becomes a node within a network. (Foucault)

The multilateral cooperation between *The House Gun* and other literary sources, takes different forms. First, we have epigraphs in the story. The epigraph in the novel under study “takes the form of a quotation, . . . determining and shaping readers’ expectations as they enter the text. It encloses clues that can lead to a full understanding of the story.” (Diallo 40) The “epigraphs, with their ironic and enigmatic relation to the text, foster a distrust of verbal surfaces and emphasize the power of context.” (Molina 3) At the threshold of the fictional world of *The House Gun*, the reader is welcomed by an *allographic epigraph*¹ borrowed from the novel *Fima*, of Israeli writer Amos Oz. Like Gordimer, Oz is an activist in the peace movement in Israel, and he has long called for the accommodation between Arab and Jew in the Middle East. Therefore, both writers, in a time of troubles, in troubled political and social zones, have portrayed separate worlds *yoked* together by violence and have undertaken the essential gesture of writing to denounce violence nourished by foul political motives.

As Fima, the eponymous character in Oz's novel, the Lindgards and the other narrative figures are haunted by a history of traumas and are afflicted by the adversity ruling over the two zones of tension: the Middle East and post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, the allographic epigraph, "The crime is the punishment," welcoming the reader in *The House Gun*, suggests that the cult of hate (the crime) in the modern and postmodern eras in the two social environments, is the aftermath (the punishment) of stereotypes, the negation of the *racial-other*, and race/culture-based coercion, in both countries, and beyond, in all parts of the world where injustice is the order of the day. The intertext, then, bears a semantic link with the story in *The House Gun*, and ". . . invite (s) the reader to interact with that historical reference, the voice that originally uttered it. Moreover, they establish a new relationship with the new text in which it is immersed, and the new context in which it is read." (Molina 12)

In her artful use of textual dialogism in the context of postmodernism, Gordimer makes explicit allusions and parodies, inspired by world literary archives. Gordimer is convinced, with Umberto Eco, that ". . . books always speaks of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told." (xxiv) *The House Gun* speaks to the reader, through references to other books, with which it creates the basis of a "doubled discourse," in the framework of postmodernist intertextuality.

The story hovers with allusions to Freud and his psychoanalysis, but also references to the Christian religion. Caught within the network of violence and the tragic events that so suddenly fall upon them, the Lindgards find it hard to decipher the reasons for moral depravation. In their individual meditations, but united in torment, Claudia, the doctor, calls to Freud, to diagnose and psycho-analyze the remote causes of the murderous act of her son through an inquisitive look into the past; she hopes to dig out the psychological elements that could explain Duncan's overnight use of violence. Harald, the father, turns to religion, especially the Jesuits², to express his rejection of the transformation of socio-cultural beliefs, but also to figure out individual and social disintegration. This part of the story, with a confusing identity of the voice, is a sound illustration of the confusion of times, the confusions of lives, in the South African society, after apartheid:

Harald and Claudia have, each, within them, now, a malignant resentment against their son that would seem as impossible to exist in them as an ability to kill could exist in him. The resentment is shameful. What is shameful cannot be shared. What is shameful, separates. But the way to deal with resentment will come, must come, individually to both. The resentment is shameful: because what is it that they did to him? Is that where the answer – Why? Why? – is to be found? Harald is prompted by the Jesuits, Claudia by Freud. (*House* 63)

The parents, in a paranoia-like attitude, (conveyed in the questioning, suggesting a distrust in their system of values and even distrust in themselves) have no other recourse but turning the pages of the past, with the view to finding out where they have eventually missed the point in the moral upbringing of their son. Here is one trait of the particularity of postmodernist intertextuality: it goes beyond paying tribute to old texts by creating texts “shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind” (Jacobs 33); the technique helps to disclose the past lives of the couple and Duncan, in the view to determining their responsibility in the deviation of the son, and, by extension, of the South African society as a whole.

If it’s a truism that “postmodernism at large is resolutely parodic,” and deliberately puts “distance between itself and its literary antecedents,” (Hutcheon 125) yet, Gordimer does not totally detach her text with the literary and even nonliterary archives. Indeed, conscious that a text “cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system”, (Worton and Still qtd. in Jacobs 33) and to better disclose the South African post-apartheid traumatic reality and show that this is not only a local problem, but a global one, she returns her work into the world of texts, through intertexts, parodying grand meta-narrative of truths and religions. The result of such an esthetic turn is a beautified representation of the ashen socio-cultural atmosphere, the opportunity for the author “to [nail] rather than [hail] the reconstruction and reconciliation involved in building a democratic new South Africa.” (Coetzee qtd. in Scheper-Hughes).

In this wise, apart from Freud and his relevant postulates about the intricacies of the human mind, the tensed and confused human relationships, her text makes use of other techniques of postmodernist intertextuality to showcase the complexity of life in a society, in the “time of transition from long eras of repression during which state brutality taught violence to ... people generations before the options of freedom in solving life’s problems were opened to them.” (*House* 271) Through a pastiche of texts from artists and other activists – French activist Simone Veil, American filmmaker Woody Allen, Russian writer Dostoyevsky in *The Idiot*, and many others – the technique of intertextuality is another way allowing Gordimer to hail the literary and artistic craft of her elder siblings, but mainly, to have a narrative world essentially made of pasting together multiple elements. In postmodernist literature, many postmodern authors mingled features of previous genres and styles of literature to create a new narrative voice, or to comment on the literary craft of their contemporaries.

Thus, the plucking of existing styles from the reservoir of literary history in *The House Gun* is not only a reflection of the particular use of intertextuality by postmodernist authors like Gordimer, but more it can be taken as a way for her to raid the past, both literary (rejection of modernist tenets) and historical (castigation of the cult of violence in her society), in order to set up a sense of dialogue between it and the present. In other words, the meaning of Gordimer’s use of intertextuality is to ensure a polyphonic text, with the many voices, and to try to understand the dramatic present through a call into history, to produce a narrative that go against the preconceived and accepted modes of thoughts inherent in the meta-narrative of apartheid.

This effort of the South African writer to diagnose a society and citizens in tribulations is also backed up by an agile use of irony, another main principle of postmodernist intertextuality. One of the major characteristics of Gordimer's style in *The House Gun* is the application of both a deriding and tragic form of irony to call attention to the condition of the Whites in the new South Africa. In their deconstruction of modernist conception of the world as inflexible and of the text as a closed unit with the unicity of meaning, postmodernist authors make use of scores of narrative strategies and techniques to deconstruct the universalizing theories and grand narratives. Like in other postmodernist texts, irony and humor "became the hallmarks of Gordimer's narrative approach. Not only is she frustrated by the tragic events in the 20th century, she has been particularly affected by the upsurge of violence in her society, at a moment when her fellow countrymen naively believe in a better future, with the end of apartheid. In her fiction, she tries, through evanescent narrative voices, to amalgamate her frustration from indirect way, through irony, playfulness and Black humor. (Sims)

Gordimer is reputed for consistently launching a diatribe against the white liberals in South Africa, those Whites like the Lindgards, who have always 'chosen' to stay aloof from the wrath and troubles during the "Lying Days" (apartheid). In ". . . many of her novels, essays, and interviews, Gordimer exposes the imbrication of white South Africans, including the liberals, with the racist policies of their nation-state. She is especially critical of South African liberals because she considers their opposition to apartheid to be ineffective." (Errithouni 70) The heterodiegetic voice tells us that

. . . the Lindgards were not racist, if racist means having revulsion against skin of a different colour, believing or wanting to believe that anyone who is not your own colour or religion or nationality is intellectually and morally inferior. . . . yet neither had joined movements, protested, marched in open display, spoken out in defences of these convictions. (*House* 86)

The Lindgards and all the white liberals in her country, opted for detachment, irresponsibility, face to the dehumanizing policies of oppression and repression inherent in the apartheid system. Gordimer, as a writer who accepted the necessity for being more than a writer, derides the tragi-comic condition of Whites in post-apartheid, members of the privilege who acknowledged "all the cruelty enacted in the name of that state they had lived on . . ." (*House* 127) and yet "None of it had nothing to do with them." (127) The tragi-comic is to be found in the fact that she creates white characters, afflicted by drama and despair, who had now no other choice but to rely on the ability and skills of a Black lawyer, Hamilton Motsamai, one of the oppressed community, who were forced to exile from "fatal beatings, mortal interrogations, . . . hanging taking place in Pretoria, state crime." The interest and relevance of irony as a narrative strategy that mostly enhances the postmodernist principle of the fleeting nature of established code systems and values, is to be interpreted in *The House Gun*.

It is a means for the author to make a caustic criticism of the hypocrite attitude of members of her community who, unlike her, did not find the necessity to oppose and withstand the evil that was eroding the nation. The pathetic situation of the Lindgards is connoted by this hybrid passage from the text, with an implicit juxtaposition of the heretodiegetic voice and the narrated monologue of the character:

Hamilton Motsamai had left them. . . . He was all there was between them and Death Penalty. Not only had he come from the Other Side; everything had come to them from the Other Side, the nakedness to the final disaster; powerlessness, helplessness, before the law. The queer sense Harald had had while he waited for Claudia in the secular cathedral of the court's foyer, of being one among the fathers of thieves and murderers was now confirmed. . . . The truth of all this was that he and his wife belonged, now, to the other side of privilege. Neither whiteness, nor observance of the teachings of Father and Son, nor the pious respectability of liberalism, nor money, that had kept them in safety – that other form of segregation) could change their status. In its way, that status was definitive as the forced removals of the old regime; no chance of remaining where they had been, surviving in themselves as they *were*. (*House* 27)

What can be taken as a Black irony, a subversive narrative strategy to represent the comic tragedy, through a subtle use of syntax and semantic, is here found in this large parcel from the story. The distant and mocking voice, after announcing the departure of the Black lawyer, slips away to give room to the thoughts of Harald. This is noted in the syntactic and semantic shift between the first sentence of the passage and what follows: the overall structure of the quotation above, made of long sentences with a deft use of the punctuation (semi-colon) to express, not only the tension of the character, but also the fatal evidence, the inescapable truth gnawing at those who were formerly the advantaged of the system, and who are now at the Other Side of their “truth.” Scheper-Hughes, in her informative analysis of the post-apartheid reality, argues that whites “. . . are now strangers in an uncharted land, living in constant fear of random acts of violence by intruders from the *de facto* segregated South African townships. They barricade themselves in gated communities and arm themselves with a gun in every room.”

The irony about the condition of the Whites in South Africa is shoehorned by the negative lexical structure, “the nakedness to the final disaster; powerlessness, helplessness, before the law”: the cognitive meaning is not only to indicate that power, truth, dignity is no longer the *thing* of the white community, that those who were thought to be naked non-entities, powerless, are now the ones who are in the position of provider for the Whites. Conscious that “social criticism begins with grammar and the re-establishment of meanings,” (Gordimer 14) the South African writer is once again imparting, through the narrative strategy, a most intimate conviction: the necessity to step over a culture in sterile decay (apartheid).

Through the use of ironic structures in the passage and in almost all her treatment of the social situation of Whites, she smothers the paranoia ingrained in agonizing “Enlightenment” ideas of a system that stifles human creativity; the authority and dominance of conventions which have it that one category of people, once race, and even one sexual genre has the right to impose a pre-conceived vision as the standard to be abided by. Gordimer discloses as well, to denounce it, the fragmentation of society and human life, born from “prejudices against blacks, Jews, Indians, Afrikaners, believers, non-believers, all the easy sins that presented themselves,” (*House*) in her country, through a splintered narrative, unfolding a myriad of themes.

In her choice to interlock many voices in the story, in her distrust of any totalizing regime, she is celebrating, like postmodern writers, tolerance and flexibility in beliefs and social norms, with the use of meta-fiction to undermine “univocation” (Sharma and Chaudhary) or primal voice in the fictional world and any single powerful political and cultural authority, in a nation in a state of siege. Thanks to the use of irony, she has successfully made readers and the world aware that there should be no clear-cut distinction between high and low culture, pure and impure race, and in such a bold attitude of her she and other writers in South African, “who accept a professional responsibility in the transformation of society are always seeking ways of doing so that their societies could not ever imagine, let alone demand . . . : bring out human beings into the occasional summer fount of naked joy.” (Gordimer 17)

Conclusion

In *The House Gun*, Gordimer has chiseled out a thematic and esthetic approach to represent the hot post-apartheid period, with the contradictions and discrepancies of a newly-established political system, which made it almost impossible to have a national reconciliation. As a writer conscious of her social responsibility in a country under siege, Gordimer has woven a thriller-like story to probe into the pervasiveness of violence, individual and collective guilt, and intolerance in interpersonal relationships, in order to reinvent a more human post-apartheid reality. In so doing, she highlights, through the help of a detached and puzzling narrative instance, the necessity to reconsider values and pre-established norms to not only accept but ‘understand’ the new post-apartheid/postmodern condition in her country. She calls for a more tolerant attitude towards the socially and sexually deviating youth, a situation that should be read less as a transgression from a certain normative ideology than the aftereffects of a socio-political history that has hampered the opportunity for communities to just *live*.

Through the image of afflicted and lost characters, a whole society’s moral disintegration is represented, in a world where grand religious, political and cultural narratives seem no longer valid. Gordimer has so understood the relativity of the postmodern era that she puts her text at the heart of the world literary archives, favoring thus an intertextual perspective, the basis of the polyphonic nature of the narrative in *The House Gun*.

That's where lies the interest in analyzing the text of Gordimer through the lens of postmodern tenets. Indeed, the exploration of the fiction of Gordimer has allowed to affirm that, in spite of the pessimism wafting from the representation of a violence-ridden society, *The House Gun* is a way for the author to vow her dogged conviction that if we hose down religious, and political discriminating discourses, if we accept that alterity is nothing else but another expression of the self, if we are convinced that *truths* spring from coalescing and colluding voices, only then can we expect to have the humane society, so dreamt of by writers, the social beings who are, as Gordimer says, eternally in search of entelechy in their relation to their society.

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Notes

¹ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Threshold of Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 151 ["The epigraph is most often allographic, that is [...] attributed to an author who is not the author of the text."]

² Especially in their counter-reformists approach to Christianity: "the primary purpose of the newly-created Jesuit Order was to serve as the Pope's deterrent to the Protestant Reformation. Their plan was to bring the entire world back to the Roman Catholic Church." (<http://www.end-times-prophecy.org/order-of-jesuits.htm>).