A Journey From the Shipwreck to the Salvage in the Selected Stories of Nadine Gordimer

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Nadine Gordimer: A Rainbow Colour Nation

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The Paper Division

- Apartheid and It’s Aftermath
- Why Gordimer’s Jump and Other Stories?
- Applying Theory of Personality Development
- The ‘Shipwreck’ and the ‘Salvage’
- Coping Mechanism
- Once Upon A Time
- The Ultimate Safari
- Towards New Horizons
Gordimer’s Story World

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NADINE GORDIMER
Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature 1991
Why Jump and Other Stories?

- Collection of 16 Stories: ninth collection
- Microcosm of Life in Africa: Racial Inequality, political oppression, economic instability, human relationships
- Real Portrayal of Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa
- Intense, Painful and Fascinating political situations of our time
- Twist in the Tail
- Gordimer’s Vision of Rainbow Colour Nation
Humiliation of J. M. Coetzee in Youth

“"...He does not need to be reminded of South Africa. If a tidal wave were to sweep in from the Atlantic tomorrow and wash away the southern tip of the African continent, he will not shed a tear. He will be among the saved". (Coetzee 2003:62)
Evolution of a Human Being

- Development of human being:
- A savage to a salvager
- A juvenile to a mature being
- From the Shipwreck to the Salvage - a continuous and lifelong process
Post Apartheid: Phoenix Rising from the Ashes

Gordimer’s *My Son’s Story: Sonny’s reaction after seeing destruction of his home in petrol bombing:*

"We can't be burned out, he said, we're that bird you know, it’s called the phoenix, that always rises again from the ashes. Prison won't keep us out. Petrol bombs won't get rid of us. This street-this whole country is ours to live in. Fire won't stop me. And it won't stop you". (Gordimer 1990:274)
Developing a Personality: Sigmund Freud

- Cracks: Identity Crisis, Self Deception, Denial, Repression, Regression, Displacement etc.
- Defense Mechanism: Projection, Reaction, Formation, Intellectualization, Rationalization, Sublimation etc.
The term 'shipwreck' expresses mental agonies and 'ruin or wreckage’ to the personality which spoils hope and expectations of the sufferer.

The wreckage to the psyche is due to stigma of non-normal conditions at home and in the society.
Salvage: The Day of Enlightenment
‘Conquering the pitfalls’

A journey of an individual from the shipwreck to the salvage is a spiritual enlightenment that leads oneself to conquer pitfalls of one’s life like an emperor of his own life.
The Section of the Stories

Apartheid Erav Protagonists: Small Children

• Once Upon A Time: The Colonizer’s Way of Living
• The Ultimate Safari: The Colonized’s Way of Living
Once Upon A Time

Characters: Without Proper Names

- The White Family - a Husband, a Wife, a Son and a Grandmother called as ‘Wise Old Witch’
- The Servants - a Black Housemaid, a Gardener
- Pets - a cat and a dog
Treatment for the Natives
The Home with all Security Devices

- ‘… a car and caravan trailer for holidays, and a swimming-pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in the drown’
- ‘… inscribed in medical benefit with the licensed pet dog, the home insured against fire, flood damage and theft but not against the riots’
The Property of the Family
The Gate with Razor Wires

- The Gate: ‘YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED’ for a would-be intruder that is subscribed with the local neighborhood watch which supplies with a plaque
- … electronically controlled gates and the receiver that the son uses as his ‘walkie-talkie’
The Home of the Family: Spanish Villa Type

- ‘… a continuous coil of stiff and shining metal serrated into jagged blades’ to their wall. The aim behind it is that the one who dares to go near it will be getting ‘bloodier and bloodier, a deeper and sharper hooking and tearing of flesh’
Irony

- Once Upon a Time: Every Day Routine
- Were Lived Happily Ever After: Never Ever Lived Happily
- Wise Old Witch: Unwise about ‘Struggle for Survival’ and ‘Children Psychology’
- Security Devices: Life taker
- Black Maid: Pretends like a Colonizer

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The Son: Unhealthy Conditions

- No Social Life: The World of Toys and tales and Pets
- Very Safe and Secured Life but Completely Unaware of Social Reality
- Restricted Life: Security Devices
- A Gap: Imaginary World and Real World
- Relevance to Oscar Wilde’s *The Happy Prince*
Upbringing: The Parents

- Provide Comforts and Luxuries but No Quality Time
- Engaged in Parties and Gossips
- Warning to Intruders but No Warning to the Only child
- Absolute Absence of Informal Education
- Absence of Humanitarian Approach
- Unhealthy Social Practices
- Double Standard: the Black Intruders and the Maid
- Unaware of Poetic Justice
The Shipwreck to the Salvage

- Salvagers: The Grand Mother and Parents:
- Security: the Trap set for others may trap you as well
- The Old Witch: Life is more precious than the Compound Wall and Security Equipment
- Pets: Ultimate Winners - No man-made Walls of Binaries
- Message: Treat One - Another as Humans
The Ultimate Safari

by Nadine Gordimer

with original hand-printed lithographs by

Alecuk Mokutu, Asetah Manthosi and Dorah Ngumare

Published by The Artists’ Press, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2001

Number 35, in a limited edition of 100 books

(Original signature)

A Journey From the Shipwreck to the Salvage in the Selected Stories of Nadine Gordimer
The Ultimate Safari

Characters: Without Proper Names
- A Grand-mother, A Grand-father, Three Children- an Elder son, a middle daughter and a younger son
- First Person Narration: Nine Year Old Daughter
- Missing Members of the Family- A Father and a Mother
- No Pets
- No Servants
- Ultimate Journey of Life
The Home: During the War in Mozambique

- Life in a Remote Village and in a Refugee Tent
- Home: Some Pieces of Tin in the Village
- Refugee Tent: Mountain-shaped Hut
- Parents: Under the Threat of War
- Children: Without Parental Warmth
- Grand Parents: Magnificent Survivors
A Home/ Shelter of a Poor Black Family
The Bandits
Ultimate Journey: Ultimate Results

- The Ultimate Safari: The Journey towards Ultimate Final Destination
- Safari: Quest for Survival
- Man-made Tragedy: In the Pursuit of Happiness
- Ultimate: Defensive Steps towards Calamity
- Life under the Sky: Survival of the Fittest
- Journey through the Kruger Park: Nature is the Best Teacher
The Girl’s World of Imagination
Happenings in the Point of View of the Girl
Once Upon a Time
Place: Reef Town, South Africa
- Life Under the Fear of the Black Fellow Citizens
- Very Protected Life
- A Lonely Childhood with Pets and Servants as Companions
- Wine and Dine Culture
- Philosophy: Eat, Drink and Be Merry

The Ultimate Safari
Place: One of the Villages of Mozambique
- Life Under the Threat of Constant Attacks of the Bandits
  - Very insecure life
  - A hard childhood without Parents but with Siblings
  - Struggle for Daily bread and Butter
  - Philosophy: How to Keep Head above Water

The Way of Living of Both the Children: Compare and Contrast
Children from Both the Stories: Mental Agonies

Both of them:
- Basic Needs: Partially Fulfilled
- Unsafe and insecure by Fellow-Citizens
- Not in the Company of their Age-Group
- Without Social and Community Life
- Without Physical Activity and Sports
- Don’t Understand Adults’ World of Dirty Politics
Role of the Grand Mothers
Grandmas

Once Upon A Time
- Lives under the Future Tension
- Very Shrewd and Self-defensive
- Lives in Materialistic Comforts and Provides it to her Grand Son
- Not Gone through Passive Suffering
- Spanish Villa becomes a Graveyard
- Salvager: Life is more Important than any Villa
- Message: The trap you set for others may take you as well

The Ultimate Safari
- Lives in the Present
- Very Simple
- Stands for hard Work, Determination and perseverance
- Loses her Daughter, Son-in-law and Husband but never Looks Back
- Refugee Tent Transforms into ‘Home Sweet Home’
- Salvager: Making the Future of Grand-children is more important than the pain of deaths of her closed ones
- Message: Live and Let Live
Black Characters

Maid in *Once Upon*…
- Honest to her Master but Unfaithful and Cruel to her Race
- Insecure by her Own Race
- Self-Centered
- Smaller than Life

Leader of the Group in *The Ultimate*…
- Broad-Minded and Large Hearted
- Caretaker
- Killer’s Instinct
- Very Faithful to his People
- Leadership Qualities and Managerial Skills
- Larger than Life
The White Family:
- Life with Materialistic Pleasures but under the Lingering Fright of Unknown Killer/Attacker
- Psychological Pressure of Guilt of subjugating the natives
- Alienation and Isolation from the Largest Population
- Fear of Death

The Black Family:
- Life without Food and Shelter and the constant threat of bandits
- Psychological Stress of Homelessness and Placelessness
- Alienation and Isolation from the Parents and the Villagers
- Fear of ‘Survival’
Apartheid: Non-Normal Living Conditions

**The White Family**
- Securing Life with Safety Devices
- The World’s View from the Window of the House
- Pets: Reliable Companions of the Boy
- Leisurely Time pass in the Picnics, Parties etc.
- Life: Meaningless after the Death of the only child

**The Black Family**
- Securing Life by Leaving the Village
- The World’s View through a Terrific Journey from the Kruger Park
- Wild Animals: Teach ‘the Survival of the Fittest’
- Life with new aims and Aspirations but with New challenges in the Refugee Tent
Pre-Adolescent Mental Wellbeing

- feeling happy and positive about yourself and enjoying life
- healthy relationships with family and friends
- participation in physical activity and eating a healthy diet
- the ability to relax and to get a good night’s sleep
- community participation and belonging.
Promoting Good Mental Health: Pre-Adolescence

- Love, Affection and Care
- Praising them for Achievements and Views of life
- Spending Quality Time
- Showing Concern and interest
- Becoming Friends
- Believing and trusting etc.
Coping Mechanism: Once Upon…

- The Life would have been better if:
- Healthy Relations with the Fellow Citizens
- Exposure to Internal and External Realities
- Informal Education
- Cultural Initiation
- Social Reality instead of Fairy Tales
- Principles of Cooperation and Coordination
Post-Apartheid Dawn

Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther and Many Others: Holistic Approach

- The colour of brain is more appreciable than the colour of face.
- ‘Simple living and high thinking’
- ‘Give respect, get respect’
- ‘Forgive and forget’
- Live and Let Live
- Vasudhaiwakutumbakam
- Love Thy Neighbour
To Conclude

Bird
Come, I'll hold you cupped in my two hands
Stroke your smooth feathers Open the bars of my fingers and let you Go!
Through the spaces of the iron bars Fly!
Come, lover, comrade, friend, child, bird Come
I entice you with my crumbs, see-Dove
Spring of olive in its beak
Dashes in the swift through the bars, breaks its neck Against stone walls. (Gordimer 1990:277)
Questions??
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