



Sexual Identity of White heroines in Black South Africa: Nadine Gordimer's take on the Apartheid struggle

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ABSTRACT: In Nadine Gordimer's novels, female sexuality and search for identity significantly overlap and intertwine with racial politics and restricted racial laws. The most private emotions and intimate man woman relationships get influenced, molded and fashioned by the "social determination of racial laws." Female sexuality plays a pivotal role in her novels. To understand these complex phenomenon of race and sexual identity the paper attempts to analyse two significant novels mainly, *Burger's Daughter* and *A Sport of Nature*. The treatment of sexuality and its impact on the lives of white heroines Rosa and Hillela are distinctly different. For Rosa, sexuality, personal identity and her cry for individuality is a constant struggle, a conflict and negotiation with the sociopolitical system of the Apartheid. For Hillela however, her sexuality and individual identity merge, fuse and amalgamate with the ongoing political struggle against the Apartheid. *Burger's Daughter* is an attempt to negotiate or compromise between political struggle on one hand and sexual identity on the other. The contracting conflicting ideas of gender, race and identity intrigues the readers and furthers the struggle for freedom.

Keywords: Race, gender, sexuality, Anti-apartheid struggle, white female protagonists, racism, struggle, freedom

I. INTRODUCTION

"There is no country in the western world where creative imagination, whatever it seizes upon, finds the focus of even the most private event set in the social determination of racial laws."

Nadine Gordimer (*The Novel and the Nation*)

To understand the complex nuances of female sexuality, let us first understand Gordon Allport's (*The Nature of Prejudice*) theory on sexual repression. According to him, 'Racism' can be viewed as a product of sexual repression. To the white, the "negro" appears to be dark, distant, enigmatic yet exotic, warm and interesting. Similarly in every society sexuality is mysterious, desirable yet something forbidden and instills a sense of guilt when not in accordance to the normative values of society. So racism he says emerges from non-normative sexual desire and its repression, where 'sex' and the 'negro' are both ambivalent social ideas, attractive and repugnant at the same time. Now applying this idea in the novels we may argue as sex and race are dominated, controlled and subjugated by the white state machinery, both can fuse and become one when fighting the domination of the state. Assertion of non-normative sexuality and fighting racism would mean challenging white supremacy and state power. Gordimer makes use of this particular concept again and again by depicting interracial sexual relations and combined anti-racial struggle.

However, in *Burger's Daughter* we do not find female sexuality fusing with anti-racial tussle. In fact the protagonist Rosa Burger is required to completely give up her individuality and sensual life to become a prominent Anti-Apartheid activist. Yet in the end we see, the struggle continues and fails to find a resolution. Perhaps one reason why it remains unsuccessful is because sexuality does not merge with anti-racial motivation. *A Sport of Nature* reflects a complete merging of female sexuality, identity and Anti-Apartheid struggle. The combination of the two brings success and a visionary, utopian nonracial Azania is founded in the end.

Rosa Burger is completely desexualized and infantilized as a fourteen year old daughter of a Communist hero, a mere extension and reflection of her father. As a communist leader's daughter she must project herself in a way that satisfies mass expectations. Simone de Beauvoir's claims, "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman,"⁽³⁾ signifies that the female body and mind is considered an active process of assimilating and embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities. This is exactly what is expected of Rosa by her family. In the opening pages we hear about Rosa but do not meet her. From a passerby to the

headmistress, Rosa is reported as "little Rosa Burger", (12) a "school girl" (9), an "example to us all" (10), yet completely trapped in a gallery of mirrors, an object in the eyes of others to speculate and judge, whose internal emotional realities remain unknown. She confirms this in the very next page "I saw-see- that profile in a hand held mirror directed towards another mirror..." (14). She is deliberately desexualized and must continue to be the torch bearer of a prominent family. Her political activism and struggle against Apartheid cannot coexist with her sensual desires or her autonomy, identity and assertion of sexuality. From the very start we see how she takes up "her mother's role in the household, giving loving support to her father..." (12) and again the novel ends with Flora describing Rosa as "a little girl... about fourteen", when she has "progressed" back to childhood (335) drawing "clumsy still lives and naïve imaginary landscapes" (335). The opening and the ending show Rosa as an Anti-Apartheid enthusiast and deliberately infantilized to continue the legacy of her communist father. It is impossible to remain an individual; transgressing expected social norms of sexuality and at the same time continuing her political activism. Rosa must give up one for the other or compromise either aspect to incorporate the other in her life and career. She indulges in incest with her so called adopted black brother Bassie without the knowledge of her parents and later regrets the intimacy. Later her brief affair with Conrad ends abruptly and she gets intelligently used by the reporter who comes to take down details about Lionel Burger. Though she indulges in sexual encounters, none of these are emotionally fulfilling or long-lasting. It is only when she leaves for the South of France giving up her political pursuit completely, to resolve her identity crisis, she finds the man with whom she has a satisfying relationship both physical and emotional. Even though the relationship turns out to be flawed Rosa accepts Bernerd is the only man she had loved genuinely "You are the only man I've loved that I made love with" (63)

Simone de Beauvoir's idea of the woman being made by social, familial and cultural agencies is completely deconstructed in Gordimer's characterization of Hillela. She is a woman who is never influenced, motivated or shaped by individual, familial or cultural concerns. She epitomizes Gordimer's idea of 'bridging' with the other side of the 'color bar' through unprejudiced sexual encounters. Unlike Rosa, Hillela is never desexualized. Even when she becomes elderly and a fulltime Anti-Apartheid activist, she embraces sheer celebration of sexuality beyond social or moral concerns. Gordimer had stated that 'sexuality' is a way of communion with people of other ethnicity and culture and a form of combined protest against normative white social systems. The autobiographical angle is deciphered when she says

My only genuine and innocent connection with the social life of the town was through my femaleness. As an adolescent, at least I felt and followed sexual attraction in common with others; that was the form of communion I could share. Rapunzel's hair is the right metaphor for this femininity: by means of it, I was able to let myself out and live in the body and mind with others. (Bazin 21)

Like Rosa, Hillela too indulges in childhood incest with cousin Sasha but unlike Rosa there is never an ounce of guilt or self-questioning about transgressing the social, moral code of conduct. Her identity is attuned beautifully with her sexuality. She does have a fixed identity or lineage as some one's daughter, sister or wife. Therefore she molds her life, character and personality as she moves on in life and the numerous sexual liaisons she encounters. With the colored boy she drops her name Kim and becomes Hillela, with Whaila she assumes the identity of Mrs. Kgomani and finally with Ruel she is Chimeka the first lady of the newly founded Azania. She affirms and symbolizes Gordimer's twofold idea of gaining acceptance and supporting the cause of revolution firstly through "radical political actions" and secondly through "sexual liaisons with black activists." (Mohammed 76). While Rosa chooses the first, Hillela makes her body a weapon of use to achieve the former with the later.

The female body becomes supremely important as Gordimer sates

I think there is a particular connection between sexuality, sensuality and politics inside South Africa. After all what is Apartheid all about? It is about the body, about physical differences, black skin and woolly hair instead of straight blonde hair. The whole legal system is based on the physical, so that the body becomes something supremely important. (Peterson 12)

So women like Hillela trusts nothing but the body because the "bed after all does not lie. You feel pain you feel sexual pleasure." (87). Hillela is able to assert her sexuality, adopt multiple identities as and when required and at the same time uses her physicality to further the Anti-Apartheid cause.

Rosa gets her menstruation on the very day of her prison visit as a fourteen year old Burger's daughter: "Can anyone describe the peculiar fierce concentration of the body's forces in the menstruation of early puberty?" (15) This symbolically indicates that the internal pain is the realization of the self and her puberty reflects the birth of the individual, the birth of the woman, Rosa. Gordimer narrates it as the "...monthly crisis of destruction, the purging, tearing, draining of my own structure. I am my womb, and a year ago I wasn't aware-physically-I had one." (15) This 'purging', 'tearing' also implies the painful destruction of childhood and stepping into the adult world to assert individuality and explore sexual identity. Yet Rosa continues to "stoically play the charade pretending to be someone she would in fact like to be but afraid that the expression of the real desire would be detrimental to the functional value of the role." (Mohammed 34)

For Hillela the transformation from a teenager to adulthood is without conflict or contrasting internal emotions. She drifts as a "light weight feather" from one man to another challenging the normative values of white society. When she attains puberty she celebrates sexual exuberance with men of different color and creed and later learns to use it in a way that would benefit her ulterior motive of achieving freedom for South Africa. Her casual, comfortable, amoral attitude is living with flesh on plate and life on skin: "She leapt up, breasts jumping, wrapped the giraffe- printed bedcover and went out...He lay in the smell of her body..."(286).

Rosa's search for identity and the importance of the self is influenced, overshadowed and eclipsed by her parents and their political motives. This is important because parents, family and lineage play a pivotal role in development of personality, identity and character in the formative years of growing up. In Gordimer, relationships between parents and children are often complicated and unsatisfactory. She questions the fact as to how important is the cause of freedom to individuals dedicating their lives to it. Though personally she remains non-judgmental we often see eminent political activists ending up neglecting or manipulating family life for the larger good. In *The Late Bourgeoisie World*, Max is too busy with his political career to spend time with his son Bobo, in *My Son's Story* little Baby plans to commit suicide to get her father's attention. In the Burger household personal relationships and individuals were always relegated to a secondary position and the primary concern of the family was Communist activism to eradicate Apartheid in South Africa; "In that house, we children had few exclusive rights with our parents...for them intimate personal relations being subordinate to the struggle."(84).As a child Rosa gains her father's approval to pose as a fiancée of Noel de Witt, the detained hero of the revolution. She is trained and encouraged by her mother to continue this role playing, a significant device to enable him receive visits in the prison and communicate important messages to the outside world. Rosa was given firsthand experience to serve the struggle and learn the intricacies of prison communication

I always remembered exactly what had been said in the prison visiting-room dialogue between Noel and me...I remembered word by word, his exact turn of phrase, his cadence...decoding his meanings, glancing from one another for conformation of information...I could also be relied upon that I had found the way to convey to him the messages I was entrusted with."(35)

She would then assume a sensuous role for a brief period of time to convince the prison guards, which her parents would carelessly ignore

On the night before the day itself finally arrived I washed my hair; before leaving for the prison I trickled perfume between my breasts and cupped some to rub on my belly and thighs. I chose a dress that showed my legs, or trousers and a shirt that emphasized my femaleness with their sexual ambiguity. Scent me out sniff my flesh.(66)

Rosa is clearly the sexual object here but is again desexualized as the little girl of the house once back home. She returns to the welcoming expression of her mother's "my little baby" and her father's "caress" (68).Her parents continue to remain blind to the fact that during the course of role playing she is actually in love with Noel. It is but natural for a young girl to get emotionally attached while playacting romantic love scenes: "why could not Noel de Witt and I have gone away to farm, to breed babies from me that would look like him...". (68)There is a strong sense of rejection and anguish in Rosa against her parents who were happy to cast her in the surrogate sexual role, denying their daughter the reality of emotions or feelings. Her identity crisis starts to haunt her from this particular instance when she desperately wants to live as Rosa and not Rosa Burger the daughter of Lionel Burger, which requires a compromise and negotiation in the personal front. Rosa is embittered for having prostituted herself for a political cause or rather a political necessity while she was actually in love with her imprisoned comrade. Yet she soon realizes that in the Burger house prostitutes were not "despised" but seen as "victims of necessity" and objects of economic compulsion.(68) So here comes the conflict of a communist leader's daughter when she needs to make a choice between personal life and a political cause. As a "part of a family , class or political group: she becomes the object of various categories that do great injustice to her particular subjectivity...the major drawback of such a life is that it has robbed her of personally valid experience and distinct identity."(Mohamed same essay).

Hillela comes from a dysfunctional family and therefore there is minimal or rather no influence of parents, family or lineage in her life. Abandoned by her mother, who ran off with her Portugese lover, little Hillela spent her young days at a Convent school while her father remarried in Rhodesia. Later when she is expelled from school for being seen with a colored boy she comes to Aunt Olga's house. Although Olga spends lavishly on trivial things like an expensive haircut, yet she never really sits down with her to discuss matters. So Hillela's childhood days were full of insecurities where there was no one, whom she could trust. No one ever counseled her about right or wrong therefore she learnt to trust only her spontaneous physical instincts and the demands of the body. We see how Hillela's story is sometimes told by an unobtrusive speaker and sometimes narrated as a documentary by a fictional biographer of a new prominent woman who was "always moving...towards liberation." Yet despite childhood anxieties, bereft of familial securities Hillela learns to accept things and emerge as a stronger personality. Hillela and Rosa are on the two extreme ends of a spectrum, for Rosa family was a baggage which constantly dictated the progress of her life and Hillela had no family to

support or guide her at all. People who came in contact with Hillela repeatedly spoke about her ability to emerge intact from every difficult encounter in life be it relationships or displacement from one place to another. These remarks multiply following the final encounter with the severe tragedy of Whaila's death: "You are too clever...for anything to happen to you, Hillela (239)" and after this people no longer asked how she is but rather "where she was". So Hillela's identity shifts from one to another and she readily accepts it and the writer too befittingly calls her the "natural mistress" and "not a wife". She never suffers from any kind of insecurity or identity crisis but evolves with every encounter.

Rosa however, realizing she can no longer sustain the self-sacrifice, anguish and distress entailed by her predicament in South Africa, leaves to join Katya her father's first wife. Gordimer too had faced the same kind of dilemma about which she had spoken candidly to the media:

I myself fluctuate between the desires to be gone- to find a society where my white identity will have no bearing on my place in the community- and a terrible desire to stay. I feel the one desire with my head and the other with my guts. I know that there must be many others who feel as I do. Reasonable logical desire is to leave while gut feeling, which is bound with everything emotionally and politically, connects her/him to stay.(Bazin, 12)

Rosa deserts her self-imposed rigors of the communist party and the political struggle in order to live a blissful life on the Mediterranean coast, in the south of France. Yet it turns out to be "an illusionary charade" as she realizes a sensual life devoid of purpose will not restore her individuality or help her grow as a person in life. Relieving herself of her father's lineage and being traitorous to "the semen from which" she "was issued and the body in which" she "had grown", (62) Rosa decides to discover her real self in the South of France. In fact by the time of her father's death Rosa was already contemplating breaking away from family ties and the 'Burger' bondage. Therefore Conrad her lover was not entirely wrong when he said "now you are free Rosa..." to which she agreed "I know I must have wished him to die" (63) She desperately wanted her own identity, therefore she could boldly cry out "I don't give a fuck about what's 'useful'. The will is my own. The emotion is my own...when I feel there's no we only 'I'"(52)

Hillela did not voluntarily leave Aunt Paula's house but her displacement was obvious after she was caught having sex with Sasha her brother. She is once again displaced and ends up deserted in a beach by Andrew Rey and then moves to USA after Whaila's death. For Rosa, France was a momentary erotic escapism but Hillela had gone to America with a purpose. It was a premeditated decision to learn about the workings of bureaucracy and deliver lectures in American Universities about the Apartheid condition of South Africa. The experience that Rosa gains in France helps her find her real identity and eventually aids her to sort what she actually wanted in life. Hillela's displacement leads her to once again adopt another identity. She comes back to South Africa from USA as Reul's wife Chimeka.

South of France was as an "enchanted land of fantasy", a land of "silk tenant of morning sea", "tiny islands", "roadside tapestry flowers grown", where "people were dreamily letting the cars pass across their eyes...". (219) Rosa's discernment gets dazed as if she is entering a dream world drowned in sensuality. Katya was having such a sensual, joyful, corporeal life deliberately choosing to avoid the struggles of life. Her dining room was "swimming colors, fronds blobbing out of focus and a sea horizon undulating in even panes of glass." (220). Her life was of vodkas, parties, sexual affairs and it was as if Rosa was dissolving completely in the pleasures of love, French wine, sounds, sights, taste and smell.(222) The room that was prepared for Rosa at the top of the house was full of "...feminine bric a brac- lilacs, dim mirrors, bottles and brushes a long cane chair to read poetry and elegant magazine, a large low bed to bring cover to face tended at mirrors, mind dreamily averted, body seeking pleasure. Rosa Burger entered, going forward into possession by that image."(229-30).

Rosa therefore lives to her full satisfaction the life of an indulgent, rich girl absorbed in her feminine world of sensuality and beauty. She molds herself into Katya's creation, dissolving her life into beauty and pleasures of the body without compromise or negotiating with the state machinery or popular expectation of her father's followers. In this unreal, sensual country she completely ceases to be Lionel Burger's daughter and becomes instead the mistress of Professor Bernard Chabaliere. She tries to establish and assert her identity as Rosa the individual and not her father's daughter.

However her sexual, sensual, erotic life does not help her attain individual identity. It is in fact an eye opener and realization that a life of material, corporeal pleasures is not something which can define the real Rosa Burger. To understand Rosa, Gordimer uses the concept of 'historical time' and 'historical identity'. The huge chasm and gulf between African life of day to day struggle and European life of the finer sensibilities make Rosa realize that she can never deny her roots and though European in ethnicity she is born ,bred and part of the African mass. This idea can be explained through Gordimer's reference to Bonnard's paintings and tapestries. The first shock and realization comes when Bernard comments "In Africa one goes to see the people. In Europe its paintings." (286). It is shocking yet true that the two worlds her poles apart and can never reconcile differences if justice and basic human facilities were denied to the natives. The whites go to Africa to

witness the exotic people who appear to be amusing and entertaining creatures to them. In Europe, art offers the substitute to reality and life.

Bernard points out how Bonnard's paintings, his subject, style has never changed all these years. His mimosa painting of 1945 during the world war and his painting of a woman figure in 1984 have similar appearance. In the fifty years between the two paintings there has been so many socio political, historical changes. So many different things have happened around the world in the interim from the growth of Fascist Nazi regimes, two terrible world wars, the rise of America as the world's super power but for Bonnard it was as if nothing ever influenced his work. Bernard comments that the woman's flesh and the leaves around her are of equal significance. He analyses it as "...because she hasn't any existence any more than the leaves have... Your forest girl and the vase of Mimosa- C'est un paradis invente."(287) With Bernard in South of France, Rosa was in habiting in a similar kind of paradise, a complete world of the senses, blissful yet unreal. This world was annulled from the real world of historical actions, cut off and negated completely from both past and future into a world where Rosa was a timeless individual engrossed and dissolved into a solipsistic existence. So the South of France does not really help Rosa find her identity and assert individuality it denies her a historical existence. Life with Bernard was moving her away from "historical destiny"(281) to place outside time where she would enjoy endless erotic fantasy and indulge in the finer sensibilities of art and life. Therefore Gordimer also chooses to describe the tapestries completely in 'present' tense which Newman calls "timeless participial present which creates an impression of enchanted stillness-The lion and the unicorn listening to music...The lady weaving...the lady taking sweets from the dish" They give a feeling of sensuality, floating like a lady on "azure islands of a thousand flowers" (340), hearing nightingales sing, savoring in the taste of French food and wine, relishing the touch of a lover. But Gordimer also mentions, their world of beauty was created and the tapestries were executed in the "age of thumbscrew and dungeons."(341). Bernard also wanted to take away Rosa from a similar world of pain, imprisonment, suffering and injustice (South Africa) to an isolated, secluded world of art and senses-" to love you by letting you to discover what I love."(341)

But Rosa does not achieve what she had come for. In South Africa she had only one identity of that being Lionel Burger's daughter Rosa Burger. She comes to France in search of identity but through continuous willful eroticism she acquires "a false identity imposed on her by others" She was seeing the world through a passive gaze and a mere reflection of Bernard, Rosa the individual had never come out in the forefront. Her life was channelized in the way Katya had arranged things for her or Bernard had decided how she should be spending her days. At home she was desexualized Rosa Burger and again in France she is a highly sexualized, desirable Rosa. In either cases she exists as projections and reflection of others, conforming perfectly to world view-"there she sits gazing...this creature that has never been"(341)

The last tapestry that she sees is of seminal importance .It is the one in which the lady is also gazing into a handheld mirror. She is looking at the reflection of a unicorn, which is a mythical creature having no existence in the outside world except in the imaginations of the human mind. Metaphorically Rosa could also possibly become like that unreal lady having no real existence but living life according to the imaginings and projections of others. She has merely become an object to be erotically desired and displayed. Perusing the sensual, erotic course she conveniently wears this mask which men have fastened on women and readily accepted this passive role of being under someone's "gaze". So Newman rightly remarks that whether desexualized or erotically defined "these are correcting errors of her own internal eye."(Newman 21)

Hillela on the contrary undertakes her journey to USA and political campaigns as part of larger motive of emancipating South Africa. There is no "illusion" but a calculative mind behind the journey. So when she dumps her American lover Brad and indulges in sexual liaison with Ruel she does it with a purpose. There is no hint of love or emotions but her body becomes a tool because she realizes, Ruel is a powerful black leader with a similarity of temperament and this affair would help the cause she was fighting for. Ruel was the man who led the army coup in African countries and he chooses her because he finds in her someone like him who is capable of "moving on".(362) For Hillela her personal freedom was of supreme importance. She never tied down anybody in a relationship neither did she ever compromise with her own freedom. When Hillela eventually marries Reul she is one of the several wives and it is not the "idyll of first marriage" but he allows her a special importance and takes her everywhere. It is therefore "characteristic qualities developed by a mistress that she should be unlike a wife, someone who can be taken everywhere."(294)In the end she has remained the same, even though she achieves prominence and importance she remains free to travel and act independently. For her it is not a compromise between sexual liberty and political activism but the two fuse and amalgamate exactly the way Gordimer wanted to. Clingman remarks "...she uses her wit, her nascent political consciousness, but most importantly her sexuality is part of the narrative mechanism that pulls the plot and the struggle forward...yet this woman never gives up the 'individual' she..."(Clingman 9)

Burger's Daughter is an attempt at defining the "self", the novel is a journey of Rosa. It is an evaluation and reexamination of personal priorities, values, desires and identity during the Apartheid regime in South Africa. This is followed by a brief touring of Bourgeoisie Europe and returning back to the

compassionate, genuine political ideals inherited from her communist father. She decided to return after realizing there was no significant growth in her individuality but rather a purposeless existence amidst erotic adventure and sensuous life. Her decision to return is after contemplating on the last tapestry is what Judie Newman says "indicate that Rosa's decision to abandon the luxuriant sensual joy of life with her lover is an act of free will and renunciation of the fantasy of eroticism of projection, mirror images and magic islands."(Newman 32). Till now her sexuality was confined to hideouts, incest, temporary casual affairs which was translated into overwhelming, unconstrained, sexual indulgence. But this kind of sensual life beyond a sense of history, past, present and future becomes some kind of decadence. So to do away with this kind of stagnancy Rosa decided to return back to a life of social purpose and political responsibility. "I go blindfold in darkness of sensations I have just experienced, deaf to everything but a long dialectic of body and mind that continues within Bernard Chabalier and even when we are not together."(300). But this erotic and sensual is both loved (celebrated) and evaded (distanced) because just the erotic devoid of social responsibility become empty, futile, meaningless and void to Rosa. So sexuality becomes the basis of exploring the contradictions and paradoxes, tensions between her "existential quest for subjective self and the political imperatives imposed upon her."(Sakamoto 12).In France she was "out of place" because attempting to free herself, she ironically finds herself like "someone in prison" where everything couldn't function and is "locked"(222). Hillela on the contrary finds "home even in exile".(66) When being dumped on the beach of Der er Salaam by her then boyfriend Rey she adapts to the new situation without remorse or guilt. This tremendous ability to maneuver, adapt and integrate whatever situation required gives her the exact flexibility needed by a leader in such challenging situations. But Rosa's letter to Katya reveal her real dilemma-"There's nothing more private and personal than the life of a mistress, is there?...Bernard Chabalier's mistress is not Lionel Burger's daughter ; she is certainly not accountable to the Future...what about the Future then?"(304)Rosa also realizes that it is impossible for her to completely give up her school girl image, her identity as burger's daughter when she decides to come back to South Africa- " it is impossible to filter free of what I have learnt, felt, thought, the subjective presence of a school girl. She is a stranger about whom some intimate facts are known to me."(14) Sakamoto remarks,

Rosa's body becomes the locus where Gordimer explores female subjectivity in terms of sexual, political, private, public being. Her body is the site where she experiences both internal and external realities of South African politics and it is where Gordimer deals with the formation of female subjectivity by creating a conflictual and dialogic process of exploring the protagonist's complex identity. (Sakamoto 16)

In this section let us compare sexuality and identity of three women within the same Apartheid trajectory, Clare a fellow Communist comrade of Rosa, Hillela and Rosa herself. Clare appears in Rosa's house as a shadow "which has no identity"(118), when glimpsed through the glass panel. Rosa conjectures that Clare still appears as a childish playmate, sturdy as a teddy suffering from eczema and a knock knee that has been neglected by parents for whom her physical defects were not important enough to be taken care of. Her body too is completely desexualized and Clare is happy to ignore and dump her physicality as she has willingly accepted her sole role as a political activist fighting Apartheid. But Rosa's body on the contrary is "assurance of embraces" which "men would recognize at a glance" but Clare is sincerely faithful to the ideals of revolution "with a body that had no signals."(123). When Rosa shows Clare around the vacant apartment, Clare finds out a "used sanitary towel" in the cupboard. When they leave the apartment she throws the proscribed object in the "carton" left abandoned by the previous tenant. The event symbolically suggests that Clare had "buried her burden...as if she had successfully disposed of a body"(129). Disposing the body means moving away from the realities and desires of the body. She has willingly dumped her sexuality and the desires of the body. But Rosa's refusal to live in that apartment or help the cause suggests that she acknowledges the self, and realities of the body which has not merged, assimilated or sucked into the struggle. Newman "In South Africa there appears to be no possible mediation between the desexualized image and the erotic intimacy." (Newman 21)

But this very quote of Newman can be challenged when we analyze Hillela. Hillela amalgamates sexuality with the cause. The event which finally triggers Hillela's decision to spend the rest of her life striving to achieve freedom for South Africa is the death of her husband Whaila. Rosa had found real love with Bernard when she had let go of her political concerns, image and baggage as the Burger's daughter. But Hillela finds love only when her life gets enveloped and enmeshed into the revolution along with Whaila. In fact she decides to never compromise or dump the desires of the body after this incident. Henceforth, she channelizes her sexual passion in the direction of achieving her political interests. She befriends Brad in the US because she believes he would teach her the intricacies of bureaucracy. When she finds out Reul is more powerful and together they would help the cause gain impetus, she dumps Brad and seduces Reul, engages into an amorous relationship and gives the revolution its final shape. She is like a much needed "blotting paper" and the final architectural pattern of Reul's seat reveal it. It is a reflection of nineteenth century European colonialism and artifact together with African history and aesthetics with carved leopards that guard the front entrance. Hillela too has "unalloyed identity with a center that no one resents because no one has known it".(235) She is truly a spontaneous

manifestation of A Sport of Nature because she is instinctive with an immense ease of adaptation, deriving overwhelming delight in the power of the body.

Feminist readings have often criticized the characterization of Hillela for her hedonistic escapism and providing the masculine dream of endless undemanding sexual availability. She is portrayed as a sexually charged woman who is always ready and never disappointing. *Burger's Daughter* contrastingly shows the woman as someone giving up erotic pursuits for a better cause. But what Gordimer tries to depict through characters like Hillela and Rosa is dissociation from that which is conventional and dead. Rejuvenating and reinventing a new woman fit to attune herself to the liberal egalitarian modern South Africa. One strand of argument suggests inter racial sexuality and Anti-Apartheid struggle can never go hand in hand, the personal or the self must let go of individual identity and conform solely to the political expectations of the period. On the contrary, *A Sport of Nature* not only fuses political struggle with sexual identity and individuality, Hillela's sexuality becomes a tool for manipulating and furthering the cause and the politics.

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