

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA IN NADINE GORDIMER'S
MY SON'S STORY

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My Son's Story, the novel set in apartheid South Africa at a point time when black Africans and coloreds just begin to resist the cruel and unjust system. Gordimer exercises the technique of multivoiced discourse in My Son's Story. The novel opens with fifteen year old boy Will. He discovers the affair of his father, Sonny, a school teacher. After seeing his father with a white lady in a cinema hall, Will is psychologically disturbed. His thought scatters into pieces and is totally disturbed. But Sonny is quite normal and eases with his routines. Gordimer narrates the story in the point of view of Will. Will designs the events in Sonny's life. The novel deals with the private life of Will and how he understands the political struggle of Sonny.

Will gets suffered mentally that his father's betrayal of family and self-respect. Sonny has the affair with Hannah Plowman, a white agent of a human rights organisation, who visits him in prison often. Sonny, who figures as the central character is a humble schoolteacher whose political radicalization and reputation have been achieved from the beginning of the novel, which is told by Will. Right off, the major psychological themes of regret and betrayal are prominent.

The adolescent Will, telling a lie, meets his father in the same theater with his lover. Will deceives him by exploring his thoughts about his father's intimacy with a white into his writings.

Will, an adolescent belonging to a tight-knit family, stumbles into his father's secret life and is confused too. The political struggle in South Africa has disturbed Sonny's family. It bought an endless chain of deception and distress to Sonny's life. He transforms himself as a revolutionary leader and orator. He struggles against apartheid. At last he is abandoned by both his mistress and his wife and effectively marginalized in the political movement. His credibility as a husband and father is seriously undermined by his adultery and infidelity which makes him lie and cheat to his family.

My Son's Story is a novel set in apartheid South Africa at a point time when black Africans and coloureds just begin to resist the cruel and unjust system. Will smells the whereabouts of his father. It shows lack of privacy in South Africa. Will and the police of South Africa know the whereabouts of Sonny. Will is stunned by the casual, relaxed manner of his

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

father. Aila, his wife, a disciplined homemaker, is one of the members of guerrilla group. Baby, his daughter, joins a militant group and marries without the knowledge of her family. Everybody has their secret life connected with the apartheid society.

Will is the creator of his own actions: “I don’t think my father knows any of these things about himself. Only I know, only I” (MSS 95). The outside pressure makes him to state the incidents one by one. He is a puppet in the hands of fiction and reality. The son narrates a story of his own father, but in the absence of his father. The title may be “my family’s story”. In the last chapter Will himself unties the question of whose story is being told: “It’s an old story—ours. My father’s and mine. Love, love/hate are the most common and universal experiences. But no two are alike, each is a fingerprint of life. That’s the miracle that makes literature and links it with creation itself in the biological sense” (MSS 275). He is confused and cannot hate his father and at the same time he could not love him too. He stands somewhere in the middle.

Will becomes a writer by telling his painful relationship with his father; alternating his adolescent perspective with a more mature one that tries to understand or even justify: “What he did – my father – made me a writer. Do I have to thank him for that? Why couldn’t I have been something else? I am a writer and this is my first book – that I can never publish.” (MSS 277). These both characters echo the moral complexity, moral ambiguity and moral hypocrisy in their bond. At last Will states that he wrote the story for the betterment of understanding himself than expressing his views on his father. He gathers experience and knowledge through writing his story. The growth of Will into a writer is evident that both he was a witness and writer.

Gordimer has depicted the mind of a black person from an inner perspective that considers the South African problem from a personal as well as a political point of view. Through imagination Gordimer explains many complex aspects of human lives. Her novels torches on the particular consequences of the historical circumstances of life in South Africa. Her novels lead a reader towards reality, because of her specific representation of reality. Gordimer shows how public events affect and determine everyday life, and also how the interpretation of the same events can change depending on the characters in My Son’s Story. Nadine Gordimer’s use of a complex narrative perspective turns her novels into new recreations of history.

Source:

Gordimer, Nadine, “**My Son’s Story**”

References:

Chanda, Ishpita, “Speaking for Another: Nadine Gordimer’s **My Son’s Story**”

Sonza, Jorshinelle T. “My Turn Now: Debunking the Gordimer ‘Mystique’ in **My Son’s Story**.”
Research in African Literatures 25.4 (1994)