

On the death of Nadine Gordimer.

To the Editor

With all who know her work, I mourn the passing of our South African Nobel laureate, author Nadine Gordimer on 13 July 2014.

Nadine entered my life in unusual circumstances. I read her book 'A Guest of Honour' during the latter part of my incarceration as a detainee under South Africa's Terrorism Act in Pretoria Maximum Security Prison in 1975. After the Security Police had lost interest in my case and I was no longer hauled to the interrogation rooms at Compol each day, the warders brought me whatever book they grabbed in the prison library. (I was detained on suspicion that Breyten Breytenbach had recruited me into his supposed underground organisation. In fact all he confessed was that he *intended* to recruit me)

I could not believe my eyes when Nadine's novel was chucked into my cell. I thought: I need to thank the long-term and life political prisoners like Bram Fischer and Denis Goldberg for the stock of good books in the prison library. Most of Nadine's books had been banned. If the warders knew this or knew the contents of this book they would have destroyed it.

I was delighted to read the fictional story of an English colonial administrator, Bray, who is expelled from a central African nation for siding with its Black Nationalist leaders. He is invited back ten years later to join in the country's independence celebrations. As he witnesses factionalism and violence erupt and revolutionary ideals being subverted by ambition and greed, Bray is once again forced to choose sides, a choice that becomes both his triumph and his undoing.

Nadine was ahead of her time. Her unhappy predictions manifest themselves around us today. She wrote this book in 1970.

Horst Kleinschmidt