

# Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and Other Stories:*

*"the alternate lives I invent"*

*International Conference*



**4-5 October 2018**

**ENS de Lyon**

**15 Parvis René Descartes,  
Site Buisson (building D8),  
Conference Room 1**

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**Nadine Gordimer,**  
***Jump and Other Stories:***  
***"the alternate lives I invent"***

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**Abstracts**  
**&**  
**Biographical presentations**

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# — PROGRAMME —

## Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and Other Stories*: "the alternate lives I invent"

ENS DE LYON - SITE BUISSON (BUILDING D8), CONFERENCE ROOM 1

**THURSDAY 4th OCTOBER 2018**

09.30 • Registration and coffee

09.50 • Welcome address by **Vanessa GUIGNERY** (ENS de Lyon) and **Christian GUTLEBEN** (University of Nice — Sophia Antipolis)

### MORNING SESSION

**Chair:** **Christian GUTLEBEN** (University of Nice — Sophia Antipolis)

10.00 • **Susan BARRETT** (Bordeaux-Montaigne University):  
"**He didn't know how to read the signs': Miscommunication in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

10.35 • **Nicolas Pierre BOILEAU** (LERMA, Aix-Marseille University):  
"**More important than anything we could ever have to say to each other when we're alone': The Politics of the Couple in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

11.10 • **Mathilde ROGEZ** (University of Toulouse): "**The Essential Narrative: Constructing Characters, Exploring Genres in Nadine Gordimer's transitional collection *Jump and Other Stories***"

11.45 • **Michal TAL** (Technion – Israel Institute of Technology): "**A Change of Clothes: Attempting to Break the Dress Code of Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

12.30-14.00 • LUNCH BREAK

### AFTERNOON SESSION

**Chair:** **Vanessa GUIGNERY** (ENS de Lyon)

14.00 • **Keynote speaker:** **Stephen CLINGMAN** (University of Massachusetts):  
"**Nadine Gordimer's Home**"

15.00 • COFFEE BREAK

15.30 • **Liliane LOUVEL** (University of Poitiers) : "**The Enigma of the Encounter': a World out of Joint in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

16.05 • **Hubert MALFRAY** (Lycée Claude-Fauriel Saint Etienne - IHRIM): "**Traces, Tracks and Trails: Hunting for Sense in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

16.40 • **Fiona McCANN** (University of Lille): "**A Poetics of Liminality: Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

20.00 • DINNER

**FRIDAY 5th OCTOBER 2018**

### MORNING SESSION

**Chair:** **Pascale TOLLANCE** (University Lyon 2)

09.30 • **Christian GUTLEBEN** (University of Nice — Sophia Antipolis):  
"**Metonymy Thwarted: When the Part is Segregated from the Whole in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

10.05 • **Françoise KRÁL** (University Paris Nanterre): "**A Symptomatology of an Unreconciled Nation: Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories***"

10.40 • COFFEE BREAK

**Chair:** **Vanessa GUIGNERY** (ENS de Lyon)

11.10 • **Keynote speaker:** **Rita BARNARD** (University of Pennsylvania):  
"**Nadine Gordimer's Transitions: Modernism, Realism, Rupture**"

12.15-14.00 • LUNCH BREAK

### AFTERNOON SESSION

**Chair:** **Christian GUTLEBEN** (University of Nice — Sophia Antipolis)

14.00 • **Emna BEDHIAFI** (University of Tunis and University of Manouba) :  
"**More than Just a Writer': the Challenges of Historical Discourse in *Jump and Other Stories***"

14.40 • Round table with **Rita BARNARD**, **Stephen CLINGMAN**, **Liliane LOUVEL** and **Fiona McCANN** (chaired by Vanessa Guignery and Christian Gutleben)

16.00 • END OF THE CONFERENCE

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Rita Barnard (University of Pennsylvania)

## Nadine Gordimer's Transitions: Modernism, Realism, Rupture

This presentation constructs a framework for a reconsideration of *Jump and Other Stories* by reading Gordimer's oeuvre in light of new critical discussions of the (ever-contested) relationship between realism and modernism (I pay attention in this regard to Jed Esty and Colleen Lye's introduction to *Peripheral Realisms* and to Jameson's *The Antinomies of Realism*). At stake in my reflections are questions of narrative temporality: questions that seem particularly pressing in South African literary studies today. As Leon de Kock has argued in his recent *Losing the Plot*, post-apartheid literature has remained preoccupied with the idea of "transition," problematic and unfixed as the term might seem.

This is certainly true of Gordimer's work. While she has been a key writer on South African spatial politics, she arguably has as much to say about temporality: the ways in which we imagine the relation between past, present, and future. This said, there might be a tension or contradiction between the way in which she holds the linear narratives of national emergence dear (we might call it the Lukacsian aspects of her work) and her interest in the experience and fictional techniques of rupture (we might call these the Benjaminian aspects of her work). I will try to illuminate, though not necessarily resolve this tension by way of close readings of key passages from *Jump*, as well as from an earlier text, *Something Out There*.

## Bio

Rita Barnard received her Ph.D. from Duke University and is currently Professor of English and Director of the Undergraduate Program in Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. She holds a secondary position as Extraordinary Professor at the University of the Western Cape and has been a Visiting Professor at Brown University and a Mellon Distinguished Lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her scholarly interests lie in modernism and global modernities, South African literature and cultural studies, modern American literature (especially the literature and cultural politics the 1930s), contemporary cinema, and the novel as genre.

She is the author of *The Great Depression and the Culture of Abundance* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) and *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* (Oxford University Press, 2006). She is the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and (along with Andrew van der Vlies) *South African Writing in Transition* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). She is working on two books, *South African Modernisms: Histories, Forms, Things* and *Postapartheid Cinema and Society*, as well as a film, *Imploding City*.

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Susan Barrett (Bordeaux-Montaigne University)

## **“He didn’t know how to read the signs”: Miscommunication in Nadine Gordimer’s *Jump and Other Stories***

During the Apartheid era, communication was severely restricted on many levels; the strict racial segregation meant that interaction between Whites and Blacks was largely limited to that of master and servant, listing and banning orders hampered the sharing of political ideas and the development of opposition movements, while censorship made the overt diffusion of documents that challenged apartheid ideology virtually impossible. In such a situation, language was no longer a simple means of communication, every day words became codes for forbidden topics and what was left unsaid could be just as important as what was said. *Jump and Other Stories* is replete with examples of failed communication, sometimes with tragic consequences. At times the miscommunication is deliberate – the narrator in “What Were You Dreaming?” tells the owners of the car who give him a lift what he thinks they want to hear rather than what is actually going on in his life; in “Some Are Born to Sweet Delight” Rad deliberately hides from Vera the fact that he is interested in her only because he can use her to carry out a terrorist attack. At other times the miscommunication is accidental: in “The Moment Before the Gun Went Off” Van der Vyver’s father never told him that the rifle in the cupboard was loaded; in “Once Upon a Time” the parents do not think to explain to their son that razor wire is dangerous. The stories contain numerous phrases indicating a failure to communicate clearly: “he was given to understand” (5), “he couldn’t tell his parents” (11), “What happened? I don’t know” (33),

“They live together with no more unsaid, between them than any other couple” (56), “He never told me, or I didn’t listen” (66). Almost paradoxically, although this draws the reader’s attention to the unsaid and the potential for misunderstanding, the stories themselves function on a narrative level by not giving the reader vital information until the very end. In “The Moment Before the Gun Went Off”, for example, it is only in the very last sentence that the reader discovers that the black man who dies “was not the farmer’s boy; he was his son” (117).

The first part of this paper will analyse the role of the unsaid in the plot development of the stories. The second part will consider to what extent the miscommunication in the collection is a reflection of life in Apartheid South Africa.

## **Bio**

**Susan Barrett** is a Senior Lecturer in the English Department of Bordeaux-Montaigne University. She wrote her doctoral thesis on white South African women novelists from 1883 to 1994. She currently works primarily on South African and Australian fiction, and is particularly interested in the representation of history, and the writing of all those who exist on the margins of the dominant society, including white women in the colonial period and Indigenous people in contemporary Australia.

She has published widely in both French and English-speaking journals. Previous articles on Nadine Gordimer were published in *Revue d’études anglophones: E-Rea* (2004), *Exils, Migrations, Créations*, edited by Michele Gibault (2008) and *Les Mères et l’Autorité : Mythes et réalités*, edited by Laurence Machet, Stéphanie Ravez and Pascale Sardin (2013).



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Emna Bedhiafi (University of Tunis and University of Manouba)

## “More than Just a Writer”: the Challenges of Historical Discourse in *Jump and Other Stories*

The post-apartheid new political, social, and cultural realities imposed on the South African writers a revisitation on a myriad of ideas about the system and society, and a reconsideration of some established discourses, media and truth included. In the light of the changing political trajectory in South Africa, Nadine Gordimer questions again race and social class stratification in her collection *Jump and Other Stories*, written simultaneously with—but on various occasions, with the gradual ending of—the apartheid regime. The new realities, and more often than not implications of the old political regime, make their poignant presence in Gordimer’s *Jump* anthology, thus asserting again the writer’s overt commitment to the plight of South Africa. The various historical revelations that reverberate within almost every story in the *Jump* collection echo Gordimer’s view that “the novel can present history as historians cannot.”<sup>1</sup> This paper therefore takes interest in exploring the historical moment of ending apartheid throughout *Jump and Other Stories*, as an attempt to display the various challenges of interpreting the historical discourse under the political, social and cultural changes.

Based on theoretical perspectives derived from the postcolonial framework, the study will discuss Gordimer’s ambivalent

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1 Stephen Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside*. London: Allen, 1986. 1.

idea of writing which is located in the midst of the desire to “just write well”<sup>1</sup> and the ethical obligation to be “more than just a writer.”<sup>2</sup>

The challenge of reading *Jump* as “history from the inside” is displayed in the exploration of memory, confession, and post-truth and the topoi of self- re/de bordering and leap. Innovation at the level of form, which attempts at subverting genres, multivocality and politicising space, will also be discussed.

## Bio

**Emna Bedhiafi** is an agrégée principale émérite at the university of Tunis and researcher at the University of Manouba. Graduated from École Normale Supérieure of Tunis, and University of Manouba, she is now preparing the project for her doctoral studies in the cultural studies field at the university of Manouba. Freelance journalist of culture and politics in two Tunisian electronic newspapers, notably Dromabuzz and Businessnews, Emna Bedhiafi has been active not only as a writer but also as a coordinating teacher at Amideast of Tunis and a member of several organising committees at l’Ecole Normale Supérieure of Tunis. Emna Bedhiafi is currently member of the organising committee of Truth and Misinformation international conference that will be held at the institute of Applied Studies in Humanities in Tunis, in 2019. Her activities have also included participation in conferences and different workshops.

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1 Mike Nicol, “Gordimer: More Than Just a Writer. Interview”, Supplement to *The Weekly Mail* 22-28 February 1991: 11.

2 *Ibid.*

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Nicolas Pierre Boileau (LERMA, Aix-Marseille University)

**'More important than anything we could ever have to say to each other when we're alone':  
The Politics of the Couple in Gordimer's  
*Jump and Other Stories***

*Jump and Other Stories* is marked by variations on the theme of incomprehension, both characters and readers facing a world presented as enigmatic through the simple, recurrent phrase, 'I don't know'. These stories stage unhappy couples, homes that are unsafe, and characters that remain oblivious to their desires and motivations. At the heart of all relationships, but perhaps more so in marriage, is the failure of language to bring people together. From a traditional point of view, the association of knowing and of coupling may offer an ironic, indirect route to the exploration of the symbolic function of the union in these stories. This resonates with the state of a Nation that was about to implement legal, if not actual, reunification. The couple is seen as a site of subjective danger (in 'Some are Born to Sweet Delight' or 'Safe Houses'), characterised by misunderstanding and lack of communication ('Home', 'Jump') – often hidden behind the veil of successful sexual intercourse and open discussions of bodily matters. Even for those involved in politics, the intimate experience of the couple leads to the notion of togetherness being questioned. The gift for language is precisely what precipitates the main character's (down)fall in 'Jump' – both in his public and private life. The 'Find' of Gordimer's tales might well be that 'they live together with no more unsaid...than any other couple.' If the black and white divide persists in these South African stories, the exploration of the couple offers a political reflection

of/on the different modalities by which 'contact' may be construed as 'the flash of fireflies', as Gordimer put it. This paper shall address the different ways in which the author explores repeatedly failed relationships, torn between knowing and not knowing, the said and the unsaid, falling in and out of love, home and the city, etc. This will help us address the random aspect of the interplay between the individual and the collective (as in 'Amnesty'), whereby Gordimer's so-called realism may be reappraised, as she suggests in 'Adam's Rib', as more concerned with the real than realities.

## Bio

**Nicolas P. Boileau** is Senior Lecturer in British Literature at the University of Aix-Marseille, France. He holds a Ph.D from the University of Rennes 2, entitled *Experiencing the Impossible: Autobiographical Writing in Virginia Woolf's Moments of Being, Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar and Janet Frame's An Autobiography* (2008). He has published papers on autobiography and Modernism in relation to psychoanalysis and the representation of madness. He translated Alex Sierz's *In Yer-Face Theatre* into French, published a scholarly edition of *Mrs Dalloway* and co-edited a collection of articles on Rachel Cusk (<http://erea.revues.org/2966>) with Clare Hanson (University of Southampton) and Maria Tang (University of Rennes 2).

His more recent work focuses on psychoanalysis and contemporary writers' appropriation of Modernism (Cusk, Hollinghurst and McGregor). He is currently working on a book on Autobiography and Psychoanalysis, the edition of a collection of essays on a reappraisal of Woolf's feminism, and is the head of a research group on Women's Resistance to Feminism (funded by A\*MIDEX), <https://wfw.hypotheses.org/>

## Nadine Gordimer's Home

The history of the home in South Africa has been a fraught and devastated one, from the beginnings of colonial settlement to the depredations of apartheid and beyond. Much of that history was in a sense about the home: who belonged; who belonged where; who had a right to belong; what the viability and inviolability of the home meant. It also concerned a dialectic between the home as the physical place of habitation and the country as home—the place of belonging (or unbelonging) for the people as a whole. As much if not more than any other South African writer, Nadine Gordimer has been drawn to the complexities and complicities of the home in both these narrow and wide respects. There is also a further dialectic in her work, between the broken and fragmented home of the present and the intimation of a more unified and just home of the future. In her own life Gordimer never lost her sense of South Africa as home; and the intricacies of home in all these guises has prompted a persistent set of motifs in her fiction.

My presentation will explore some of those motifs in her work in general, and in *Jump and Other Stories* in particular. Via Heidegger, Adorno and Levinas, it will also explore some of the philosophical dimensions of dwelling—yet a further dialectic between the closed and open dwelling, and what that means for the political, psychological, and existential nature of the home. All of this is part of Gordimer's fictional territory of the home—the home, as it were, of her writing.

## Bio

**Stephen Clingman** is Distinguished Professor of English and Director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Institute at the University of Massachusetts. He received his BA Hons. from the University of the Witwatersrand, and a DPhil from the University of Oxford. He has taught at the University of Massachusetts since 1989, and was Chair of the English Department from 1994-2000.

Stephen Clingman's work has ranged from South African literature and biography to postcolonial and transnational fiction. Books include *The Novels Of Nadine Gordimer: History From The Inside* (1986; 2nd ed. 1992), and an edited collection of essays by Nadine Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics And Places* (Jonathan Cape/Knopf, 1988), translated into a number of languages. He is also the author of *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary* and *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (Oxford University Press, 2009) which won the Alan Paton Award, South Africa's premier prize for non-fiction.

Stephen Clingman has published articles and interviews in a variety of journals such as *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Safundi*, *Salmagundi*, and *Transition*, and he has written reviews for the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*. His most recent book, a memoir entitled *Birthmark*, was published by Jacana Media in 2015.



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Christian Gutleben (University Nice Sofia-Antipolis)

## Metonymy Thwarted: When the Part is Segregated from the Whole in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories*

In Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories*, the sense of fragmentation and segregation is overwhelming. The very nature of the collection, with its sixteen very dissimilar stories, already foregrounds the idea of heterogeneity, but it is the structural and narratological organisation of the individual pieces that best illustrates the lack or impossibility of unity. Isolated as they are, either by free will or by political decree, the dwelling places of the various protagonists eloquently show how, in terms of spatial and hence political planning, the part is never included in the whole; in other words, they show how the principle of metonymy is systematically thwarted if not undermined. The fact that the stories are usually told in a mixed narrative and enunciative mode, the fact that they always comprise several speakers and the fact that these speakers do not generally speak the same language convey the same lack of wholeness.

The failure of metonymy is then what this collection of short stories mainly emphasises and regrets and this discontent extends to the ontological field with an eco-friendly demonstration of the unacknowledged continuity and contiguity between the various human and animal species. Even the extended metatextuality practised by Gordimer might be said to partake of such metonymic disjunction since her specular comments disrupt the sense of diegetic wholeness and create isolated pockets of meta-fictional remarks with a clear centrifugal force directed towards the extra-diegetic reader. If the principle of metonymy is then proven malfunctioning or even impracticable in the bulk of the collection,

the last story manifestly introduces the hope of metonymic inclusion and modifies then the collection's whole teleology, presenting metonymy as the final goal and promise.

## Bio

**Christian Gutleben** is Professor at the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis where he teaches British and Commonwealth literature and fulfills the function of chief editor of *Cycnos*, a biannual academic journal dealing with anglophone history and culture. He is co-editor (with Marie-Luise Kohlke) of Brill/Rodopi's Neo-Victorian Series in which five volumes have already been published and the sixth and last volume (on neo-Victorian biofiction) is due for the end of 2018.

In addition to numerous articles on postmodernism in British literature, he has published three monographs (one on the English campus novel, one on nostalgic postmodernism and one on Graham Greene). He is also the author of several articles on Commonwealth novelists such as Alan Duff, Anita Desai, Ben Okri or Caryl Phillips.

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Françoise Král (University Paris Nanterre)

## A Symptomatology of an Unreconciled Nation: Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories*

This paper proposes to reflect on the construction of anonymity in Nadine Gordimer's collection of short stories *Jump* through a focus on instances of delayed telling, belated unveiling and partial outlining of characters. I will discuss the blurring of the lines of personhood not only through the narratorial lens of the dynamics of characterization and the building up of dramatic intensity, which is characteristic of short stories as opposed to novels, but as part of a discussion of the dual polarity – individuation vs typification – which is underpinned by an ethical and political reflexion on the difficulty inherent in conceiving of a collective 'we' in a post-apartheid society. The systematic use of pronouns in *Jump and Other Stories* contrasts with the maimed, disfigured and dismembered bodies left to rot on the road (in 'Keeping Fit'), as though to numb the horrors of a society plagued by apartheid and apartheid-induced violence. This pronominal haziness carves out textual space for a façade of the collective 'we' to emerge – across gendered, racial and social lines of fragmentation. These convenient anonymities, sometimes disguised in sentences in the passive (in 'Jump') can be read as a symptom of an 'unagregated society', a juxtaposition of coexisting groups which fail to form a closely-knit social fabric and continue to resemble a quilted surface where the stitches are all too visible. 'We' – as the collective – requires another impetus, a surfeit of togetherness, a leap of faith which is yet to happen.

Looked at in this light the pronominal divides sketch a symptomatology of the unagregated social fabric which has yet to come together as an organic whole.

## Bio

**Françoise Král** is Professor of English and Postcolonial studies at the University Paris Nanterre. Her publications include two monographs in the field of diaspora studies, *Critical Identities in Contemporary Anglophone Diasporic Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and *Social Invisibility in Anglophone Diasporic Literature and Culture: The Fractal Gaze* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). She has co-edited two books *Re-presenting Otherness: Mapping the Colonial 'Self' / Mapping the indigenous 'other' in the literatures of Australia and New Zealand* (editor, 2004) and *Architecture and Philosophy: New Perspectives on the Work of Arakawa and Gins* (co-edited with Jean-Jacques Lecercle, Rodopi, 2011) and guest-edited an issue of *Commonwealth, Essays and Studies, Crossings* (37.1 autumn 2014). She is currently working on two collected volumes, including a special issue devoted to the papers presented in the Diasporic Trajectories series (IASH, University of Edinburgh) which she co-organized.

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Liliane Louvel (University of Poitiers)

***Jump and Other Stories* :**  
**“The Enigma of the Encounter”: a World out of Joint**

*Jump and Other Stories*, one of the many finely crafted collection of short stories Nadine Gordimer published, begins and ends with a potent image. First that of the mosaic of the hotel name LEBUVU and the reference to a film and its “series of dissolves” focusing on “a single figure, the hero, the criminal. Himself.” The last one is rendered through the eyes of a young expecting mother watching a rat of clouds eating at the sky, while waiting for the future.

Between those two images this fantastic collection of stories unrolls its kaleidoscopic-like world moving on towards a future after having taken its reader through the turmoils of a nation torn between its violent past and present and yet on the brink of change.

I will argue that in this kaleidoscopic collection former seminal stories surge up and are recaptured under another form and that the sense of place and time staging the (im)possible encounter between people separated by force of law for fifty years gives the collection a very tense rhythm tinged with irony, outrage, scepticism and wonder at the violence threatening the private lives of those living under a cruel racist rule, in a world dis-located and out of joint.

## Bio

**Liliane Louvel** is Emeritus Professor of British literature at the University of Poitiers and is the author of *Nadine Gordimer* (Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1994). She has published widely on the subject of word/image relations, including numerous articles, several collections of essays, and six books, *L'Œil du texte* (1998), *The Picture of Dorian Gray: Le double miroir de l'art* (2000), *Texte/image, images à lire et textes à voir* (2002), *Le tiers pictural* (2010), and *Poetics of the Iconotext* (2011). *The Pictorial Third, an Essay into Intermedial Studies*, is forthcoming in 2018.

She has also edited several journal issues on the relation between word and image in *Word/Image* and *EJES*, and collections of essays such as *Like Painting* (La Licorne, 1999), *The Proceedings of the Cerisy Conference: Texte/image: nouveaux problèmes* (with Henri Scepi, PUR, 2005), *Intermedial Arts, Disrupting, Remembering and Transforming Media* (with Leena Eilitta and Sabine Kim, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012), *Musing in the Museum* (with Laurence Petit and Karen Brown, Word /Image, Taylor and Francis, May 2015).

She is currently president of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE), elected in 2012, and president of IAWIS/IAERTI, the International Association for Word and Image Studies, elected in 2017.

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Hubert Malfray (Lycée Claude-Fauriel, IHRIM)

## Traces, Tracks and Trails: Hunting for Sense in Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories*

If Nadine Gordimer's 1991 collection of stories explores the last decade of Apartheid and its political implications, it is undoubtedly marked by the overarching presence of violence, oppression and aggressiveness – sometimes overt, sometimes subsumed. Her choice of the short story as a genre allows her to experience the multiple facets of a tension which keeps nagging at her characters and their trajectories. Dissimilar as the stories may appear, they very often stage characters who are launched in a form of hunting game, offering, as Judie Newman noted, "a script for predation" (in N. Yousaf, *Apartheid Narratives*).

Predation is not simply a recurring motif vaguely to be found in the looming presence of animality or bodily preoccupations; if lots of characters are indeed tracked down, experiencing fear, even anxiety at the idea of being caught by others – blending the political and the sexual – the seme of predation and hunting rather turns into a fully-fledged paradigm inviting the reader to consider the collection of short stories as a network of traces: the traces, first, left by characters who are on the run, enticing the reader to discover clues, scents and hints to reach the revelation of some epiphanic truth. But tracing the characters could also be a metaphorical means of tracing identity, which, in the complex cross-cultural context of South Africa, turns out to be a real challenge: the challenge of the self, of defining one's roots, of retrieving one's origins, all the more so as the latter recoil from the page.

It could also be a means to envisage short story writing as Gordimer's way of negotiating with the traces, marks and scars left by History, and more particularly by the history of literature, which the writer keeps putting to the test in order to try and hunt for a new type of literary form. Such literary experimentation would provide an artistic mirror to grasp the intricacies of an entangled period of time.

This analysis shall be guided, among others, by Carlo Ginzburg's formulations about the link between story-telling/narrating and hunting, an ancestral metaphor of cognition by means of clues, ranging the stories not far from tales of detection.

## Bio

**Hubert Malfray** received his Ph. D. from Paris-Sorbonne University in English literature. His work focuses mainly on the relation between literary genres, and more particularly minor genres, and their dialogue with canons. After having worked on Victorian popular literature and crime aesthetics, he has extended his field of study to the 20th century, including postcolonial issues.

He teaches literature in Hypokhâgne and Khâgne at the Lycée Claude-Fauriel in Saint-Etienne, and is also a literary translator. He is a member of the IHRIM research unit (UMR 5317) and of the agrégation jury.

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Fiona McCann (University of Lille)

## A Poetics of Liminality: Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories*

As Sorcha Gunne states in *Space, Place, and Gendered Violence in South African Writing* (Palgrave, 2014), "liminality is not a third space or a neat hybrid, but a state of transformation. It is the moment where, in the process of changing from one thing to another, both old and new states are experienced simultaneously" (32). It is not only the date of publication of Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories* (1990) that positions it as a text which can fruitfully be analysed through the prism of liminality. Although the collection was published in 1990, the year in which apartheid began to crumble and the transition began, all of the stories had been published prior to this in various literary journals and magazines. Indeed, Gordimer had clearly been interested in the politics of liminality at least from as early as 1982 when she delivered her lecture "Living in the Interregnum" at the New York Institute of the Humanities (later published in *The Essential Gesture* in 1988). Her evident affinity with the prison writings of Antonio Gramsci arguably led her to interrogate the dying days of apartheid long before the government was even aware of coming change. It will be my contention in this paper that Nadine Gordimer's 1990 collection of stories develops a poetics of liminality which is characterised not only by spatial and temporal in-betweenness, but by an aesthetics built, precariously, on a "place of shifting ground" ("Living in the Interregnum"). The stories in *Jump* deftly interweave elements of realism and postmodernism, extreme violence and tenderness, along with political critique and aesthetic liberties.

Sometimes heavy-handed, sometimes full of finesse, these stories present "liminal circumstances" which "provide a potential platform for social cohesiveness" (Gunne 36) even as they destabilise important signifiers such as "home". I will argue that the short story genre is particularly apt for this focus on the margins, that its brevity brings into relief the central question of transition and transformation, and that the collective dimension provides many facets of liminality.

## Bio

**Fiona McCann** is Professor of Postcolonial Literature at the Université de Lille SHS and a junior fellow at the Institut Universitaire de France. She is the author of numerous articles on contemporary South African, Zimbabwean, and Irish fiction and poetry and has edited or co-edited several issues of *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* and *Études irlandaises*. Her monograph *A Poetics of Dissensus: Confronting Violence in Contemporary Prose Writing in the North of Ireland* was published by Peter Lang in 2014. Her current research focuses on border politics/poetics and on the politics and aesthetics of writing by South African and Irish political prisoners. She is currently president of the French association of anglophone postcolonial studies (SEPC).



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Mathilde Rogez (University of Toulouse)

## The Essential Narrative: Constructing Characters, Exploring Genres in Na- dine Gordimer's Transitional Collection *Jump and Other Stories*

Re-reading the eponymous short story which opens Nade Gordimer's collection *Jump and Other Stories* after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission proves a rather eerie experience, as if the author had presciently crafted one of the many tales that the TRC would trigger years later.

This paper offers to reexamine "Jump", but also the rest of the collection, in the light of the categories Michiel Heyns later devised about this flow of narratives, dividing them between tales of – often spurious – heroism, confessional yet nostalgic fictions in which the subject berates him or herself to beg for absolution, and quasi autobiographical fictions which conversely refrain from such easy reconciliatory gestures.<sup>1</sup> At the start of the period of political transition, yet another variation on what Gordimer had earlier labelled an "interregnum", she indeed navigates various ways not only of "invent[ing]" "alternate lives", but also of exploring the modes in which these can be narrated. Alternating between narrative modes and points of view, within the collection as well as within several short stories themselves, Gordimer presents and investigates various modes of positioning oneself – in an almost Sartrean meaning of the word, albeit always tentatively –

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1 Michiel Heyns, "The Whole Country's Truth: Confession and Narrative in Recent White South African Writing", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46(1), 2000, 42-66.

in the then already unfolding national narrative of heroism and/or unbearable guilt, simultaneously reassessing various genres of writing – the fairy tale most notably, the epic (if only according to the Nobel Prize committee<sup>1</sup>), but also the genre of the short story itself and its specificities. Published in the year when she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for both her literary achievements and her unflinching political involvement, this collection thus allows to see how she skillfully combines a commitment to both politics and poetics – to "writing and being", to borrow the title of her Nobel Lecture.

## Bio

**Mathilde Rogez** is a Senior Lecturer at the Université de Toulouse (CAS – EA801) and was a Visiting Professor at the University of Texas, Austin, specializing in South African literature. She is the Commonwealth editor for *Miranda* and a member of the editorial board of *Études littéraires africaines*, and co-edited a special issue of *ELA* on South African literature in 2014.

She is currently co-editing four books, on contemporary South African theatre, on the representation of South African cities, on the suburbs in literature and the arts in the English-speaking world, and on commemorative politics in South Africa in the twenty-first century. Her research interests include the representation of landscape and cityscape through fiction and photography, and the relation between various art forms and genres, in particular the novel and the theatre, in contemporary South African fiction.

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1 [https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1991/](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1991/) and [https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1991/press.html](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1991/press.html)

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Michal Tal (Technion – Israel Institute of Technology)

## **A Change of Clothes: Attempting to Break the Dress Code of *Jump and Other Stories***

Owing to its highly political context, Nadine Gordimer's fiction has often been analyzed more at its content-related and ideological level, than at its poetic one. Thus, various commentators have called for a different reading of her work, focusing on its form and style as her poetic means of conveying this political content. This paper offers a close reading of several stories included in *Jump and Other Stories*, concentrating on the main imagery used by Gordimer to elucidate the movement taking place along the stories. In particular, it seeks to show how pieces of garment serve as metaphors for the paths chosen by the different protagonists and the cultural and social institutions whose conventions they practice. A focus will be placed on the various institutions referred to throughout these stories, e.g., marriage, prison, holiday, parenthood, home, religion, which are poetically hinted at by means of clothing items and accessories, ranging from trousers and a warm coat to an old *doek*. This use of imagery will be read bearing in mind Sandra Gilbert's notion that costume imagery used by modernist women writers tends to be "radically revisionary in a political as well as a literary sense".

My paper will suggest that the struggle for freedom, intimacy and identity, as well as the profoundly distinct journeys each protagonist goes on in stories such as "Amnesty", "My Father Leaves Home", "Some Are Born to Sweet Delight", and "Home", may be made clearer analyzing this rich world of imagery.

## **Bio**

Michal Tal is a teaching associate in the Department of Humanities and Arts, at the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology. She holds a PhD from Bar Ilan University, which explores the phenomenon of doublehood from psychoanalytic and philosophical perspectives in literary pieces focusing on the theme of the *doppelgänger*. Michal Tal's research interests include an interdisciplinary analysis of literary themes, particularly those related to questions of identity, the attainment of subjectivity and the struggle for a sense of individuality.

Her publications include "The Doublehood of the Protagonist as a Consequence of Failure in Separation-Individuation" in *Ma'arag – Israeli Journal for Psychoanalysis* (2016), and "The Encounter with the Identical Other: The Literary Double as a Manifestation of Failure in Self-Constitution" in *Humanities* (2018).

## Chairs

**Vanessa Guignery** is Professor of British Contemporary Literature and Postcolonial Literature at the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon. She is the author of several books and essays on the work of Julian Barnes, including *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), and *Conversations with Julian Barnes* (Mississippi Press, 2009), co-edited with Ryan Roberts. She has published articles on various British and postcolonial contemporary authors, as well as a monograph on B.S. Johnson (Sorbonne UP, 2009), *Seeing and Being: Ben Okri's The Famished Road* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2012) and *Jonathan Coe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

She edited several collections of essays on contemporary British and postcolonial literature (Janet Frame, Ben Okri, Alice Munro, among others), a special issue of the *Journal of American, British and Canadian Studies* on Julian Barnes (Sibiu, 2009) and a special issue of *Callaloo* on Ben Okri (Fall 2015). Her collection of interviews with eight contemporary writers, *Novelists in the New Millennium*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2013. Website: [www.vanessaguignery.com](http://www.vanessaguignery.com)

**Pascale Tollance** is Professor of English at Université Lumière-Lyon 2 (France). She has written extensively on British/Canadian author Malcolm Lowry, as well as on British contemporary authors such as Graham Swift, Julian Barnes, A.S. Byatt, Jeanette Winter-son, Kazuo Ishiguro, Angela Carter, and Rachel Seiffert. She is the author of a book on Graham Swift (*Graham Swift. La Scène de la voix*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2011) which focuses on the staging of voice in Swift's fiction. She also works on the relation between text and image and has published with Laurence Petit two collections of articles on punctuation (*Point, Dot, Period... The Dynamics of Punctuation in Text and Image and Photographic Text(ure): The Grain and the Dot*). She is on the editorial board of *L'Atelier*, has co-edited vol. 5.1 (Survivance) and 6.2. (La Transmission). Her interests include post-colonial literatures (with publications on Janet Frame, Alice Munro and J.M. Coetzee).

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## Organising committee

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*All papers will be peer-reviewed for publication in the scholarly journal **Cycnos**, a publication of the Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire Récits Cultures Et Sociétés of the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis.*



