

## CITATION

### 2016 THOMAS PRINGLE AWARD FOR BEST EDUCATIONAL ARTICLE

#### Winning article:

*Moribund whiteness in Nadine Gordimer's 'A Guest of Honour' and 'Get a Life'.* (In) *English Academy Review*, 32(2): 8-21 by **Michael Titlestad**.

The English Academy of Southern Africa announces with great pleasure that the Thomas Pringle Award for Best Literary Article is awarded to **Michael Titlestad** for his article on moribund whiteness in the work of Nadine Gordimer. The article is remarkable for its insight into the complexities of race, depth of scholarship, intellectual coherence and its conceptualisation of whiteness in a post-apartheid context. Titlestad expounds the critique on Nadine Gordimer's fiction in the 1980s, which was dominated by 'symptomatic historicist readings', in a lucid and incisive way. Titlestad uses Stephen Clingman's scholarship as a point of departure to extrapolate how commentary on Gordimer's work has been compromised. He further argues that Gordimer's dual commitment to Marxist teleology and high-cultural modernism influenced how she imagined the future for white South Africans in a postcolonial context. This is examined through an analysis of two of her novels, *A Guest of Honour* (1971) and *Get a Life* (2005), published 32 years apart.

The article focuses on the complexity of commenting on intricate post-apartheid realities from a white perspective, as is expressed in Gordimer's work. The relevance of the article lies in the analysis of the political 'unconsciousness' experienced in South Africa, which is the inevitable consequence of apartheid, as experienced even by a prolific writer such as Gordimer, whose whiteness and class impacted on her ability to enter into and fully grasp the experiences and reality of the 'other'. Titlestad argues that there is more at stake than an 'intellectual and ideological confusion'; African whiteness embodies the contrast between the 'political theology' of Marxism and the realities of subjectivity. He continues to explain that these two works, published thirty-four years apart, present contradicting versions of moribund whiteness; illustrating two ways of dying after the struggle against colonialism has succeeded. In their different expressions of a 'sense of an ending', neither novel is able to construct a version of hope for their white protagonists. Titlestad points to the elusiveness of a sense of white futurity, which has an elaborate history in South African fiction and continues in dystopian post-apartheid fiction. He points out that Gordimer gathers together

sentences and narratives, but does not perform the defamiliarization necessary for a reader's engagement and concludes that white South Africans' ethical and existential choices are simply a matter of 'choosing an existing social script'.

This article is relevant and applicable in the current political climate where South Africans are confronted by the need for 'decolonisation' of most of all, the mind of the oppressor. His scrupulous identification of the complexities of 'whiteness', and the insightful way in which he critiques Gordimer and Clingman, bring new perspectives to the discussion. We commend both his scholarship and his craftsmanship as author.

We would, however, like to make special mention of two more excellent and insightful articles; Irikidzayi Manase's article on '*Lawrence Hoba's depiction of the post-2000 Zimbabwean land invasions in The Trek and Other Stories*', as well as the article on '*Organic Intellectuals in Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness*' by Pravina Pillay and Catherine Addison.

**Panel of Adjudicators:**

**Dr Hanlie Dippenaar, Dr Lizette de Jager, Dr Zelda Barends, Dr Vincent Bosman**