

= Burger 's Daughter =

Burger 's Daughter is a political and historical novel by the South African Nobel Prize in Literature @-@ winner Nadine Gordimer , first published in the United Kingdom in June 1979 by Jonathan Cape . The book was expected to be banned in South Africa , and a month after publication in London the import and sale of the book in South Africa was prohibited by the Publications Control Board . Three months later , the Publications Appeal Board overturned the banning and the restrictions were lifted .

Burger 's Daughter details a group of white anti @-@ apartheid activists in South Africa seeking to overthrow the South African government . It is set in the mid @-@ 1970s , and follows the life of Rosa , the title character , as she comes to terms with her father Lionel Burger 's legacy as an activist in the South African Communist Party (SACP) . The perspective shifts between Rosa 's internal monologue (often directed towards her father or her lover Conrad) , and the omniscient narrator . The novel is rooted in the history of the anti @-@ apartheid struggle and references to actual events and people from that period , including Nelson Mandela and the 1976 Soweto uprising .

Gordimer herself was involved in South African struggle politics , and she knew many of the activists , including Bram Fischer , Mandela 's treason trial defence lawyer . She modelled the Burger family in the novel loosely on Fischer 's family , and described Burger 's Daughter as " a coded homage " to Fischer . While banned in South Africa , a copy of the book was smuggled into Mandela 's prison cell on Robben Island , and he reported that he " thought well of it " .

The novel was generally well @-@ received by critics . A reviewer for The New York Times said that Burger 's Daughter is Gordimer 's " most political and most moving novel " , and a review in The New York Review of Books described the style of writing as " elegant " , " fastidious " and belonging to a " cultivated upper class " . A critic in The Hudson Review had mixed feelings about the book , saying that it " gives scarcely any pleasure in the reading but which one is pleased to have read nonetheless " . Burger 's Daughter won the Central News Agency Literary Award in 1980 .

= = Plot summary = =

The novel begins in Johannesburg , South Africa in 1974 during apartheid . Rosa is 26 , and her father , Lionel Burger , a white Afrikaner anti @-@ apartheid activist , has died in prison after serving three years of a life sentence for treason . When she was 14 , her mother , Cathy Burger , also died in prison . Rosa had grown up in a family that actively supported the overthrow of the apartheid government , and the house they lived in opened its doors to anyone supporting the struggle , regardless of colour . Living with them was " Baasie " (little boss) , a black boy Rosa 's age the Burgers had " adopted " when his father had died in prison . Baasie and Rosa grew up as brother and sister . Rosa 's parents were members of the outlawed South African Communist Party (SACP) , and had been arrested several times when she was a child . When Rosa was nine , she was sent to stay with her father 's family ; Baasie was sent elsewhere , and she lost contact with him .

With the Burger 's house now empty , Rosa sells it and moves in with Conrad , a student who had befriended her during her father 's trial . Conrad questions her about her role in the Burger family and asks why she always did what she was told . Later Rosa leaves Conrad and moves into a flat on her own and works as a physiotherapist . In 1975 Rosa attends a party of a friend in Soweto , and it is there that she hears a black university student dismissing all whites ' help as irrelevant , saying that whites cannot know what blacks want , and that blacks will liberate themselves . Despite being labelled a Communist and under surveillance by the authorities , Rosa manages to get a passport , and flies to Nice in France to spend several months with Katya , her father 's first wife . There she meets Bernard Chaballier , a visiting academic from Paris . They become lovers and he persuades her to return with him to Paris .

Before joining Bernard in Paris , Rosa stays in a flat in London for several weeks . Now that she has no intention of honouring the agreement of her passport , which was to return to South Africa within a year , she openly introduces herself as Burger 's daughter . This attracts the attention of the media

and she attends several political events . At one such event , Rosa sees Baasie , but when she tries to talk to him , he starts criticising her for not knowing his real name (Zwelinzima Vulindlela) . He says that there is nothing special about her father having died in prison as many black fathers have also died there , and adds that he does not need her help . Rosa is devastated by her childhood friend 's hurtful remarks , and overcome with guilt , she abandons her plans of going into exile in France and returns to South Africa .

Back home she resumes her job as a physiotherapist in Soweto . Then in June 1976 Soweto school children start protesting about their inferior education and being taught in Afrikaans . They go on a rampage , which includes killing white welfare workers . The police brutally put down the uprising , resulting in hundreds of deaths . In October 1977 , many organisations and people critical of the white government are banned , and in November 1977 Rosa Burger is detained . Her lawyer , who also represented her father , expects charges to be brought against her of furthering the aims of the banned SACP and African National Congress (ANC) , and of aiding and abetting the students ' revolt .

= = Background = =

In a 1980 interview , Gordimer stated that she was fascinated by the role of " white hard @-@ core Leftists " in South Africa , and that she had long envisaged the idea for Burger 's Daughter . Inspired by the work of Bram Fischer , she published an essay about him in 1961 entitled " Why Did Bram Fischer Choose to Go to Jail ? " Fischer was the Afrikaner advocate and Communist who was Nelson Mandela 's defence lawyer during his 1956 Treason Trial and his 1965 Rivonia Trial . As a friend of many of the activist families , including Fischer 's , Gordimer knew these families ' children were " politically groomed " for the struggle , and were taught that " the struggle came first " and they came second . She modelled the Burger family in the novel loosely on Fischer 's family , and Lionel Burger on Fischer himself . While Gordimer never said the book was about Fischer , she did describe it as " a coded homage " to him . Before submitting the manuscript to her publisher , Gordimer gave it to Fischer 's daughter , Ilse Wilson (née Fischer) to read , saying that , because of connections people might make to her family , she wanted her to see it first . When Wilson returned the manuscript to Gordimer , she told the writer , " You have captured the life that was ours . " After Gordimer 's death in July 2014 , Wilson wrote that Gordimer " had the extraordinary ability to describe a situation and capture the lives of people she was not necessarily a part of . "

Gordimer 's homage to Fischer extends to using excerpts from his writings and public statements in the book . Lionel Burger 's treason trial speech from the dock is taken from the speech Fischer gave at his own trial in 1966 . Fischer was the leader of the banned SACP who was given a life sentence for furthering the aims of communism and conspiracy to overthrow the government . Quoting people like Fischer was not permitted in South Africa . All Gordimer 's quotes from banned sources in Burger 's Daughter are unattributed , and also include writings of Joe Slovo , a member of the SACP and the outlawed ANC , and a pamphlet written and distributed by the Soweto Students Representative Council during the Soweto uprising .

Gordimer herself became involved in South African struggle politics after the arrest of a friend , Bettie du Toit , in 1960 for trade unionist activities and being a member of the SACP . Just as Rosa Burger in the novel visits family in prison , so Gordimer visited her friend . Later in 1986 , Gordimer gave evidence at the Delmas Treason Trial in support of 22 ANC members accused of treason . She was a member of the ANC while it was still an illegal organization in South Africa , and hid several ANC leaders in her own home to help them evade arrest by the security forces .

The inspiration for Burger 's Daughter came when Gordimer was waiting to visit a political detainee in prison , and amongst the other visitors she saw a school girl , the daughter of an activist she knew . She wondered what this child was thinking and what family obligations were making her stand there . The novel opens with the same scene : a 14 @-@ year @-@ old Rosa Burger waiting outside a prison to visit her detained mother . Gordimer said that children like these , whose activist parents were frequently arrested and detained , periodically had to manage entire households on their own , and it must have changed their lives completely . She stated that it was these children

who encouraged her to write the book .

Burger 's Daughter took Gordimer four years to write , starting from a handful of what she called " very scrappy notes " , " half sentences " and " little snatches of dialogue " . Once she got going , she said , the writing became an " organic process " . The Soweto riots in 1976 happened while she was working on the book , and she changed the plot to incorporate the uprising . Gordimer explained that " Rosa would have come back to South Africa ; that was inevitable " , but " [t] here would have been a different ending " . During those four years she also wrote two non @-@ fiction articles to take breaks from working on the novel .

Gordimer remarked that , more than just a story about white communists in South Africa , Burger 's Daughter is about " commitment " and what she as a writer does to " make sense of life " . After Mandela and Fischer were sentenced in the mid @-@ 1960s , Gordimer considered going into exile , but she changed her mind and later recalled " I wouldn 't be accepted as I was here , even in the worst times and even though I 'm white " . Just as Rosa struggles to find her place as a white in the anti @-@ apartheid liberation movement , so did Gordimer . In an interview in 1980 , she said that " when we have got beyond the apartheid situation ? there 's a tremendous problem for whites , unless whites are allowed in by blacks , and unless we can make out a case for our being accepted and we can forge a common culture together , whites are going to be marginal " .

= = Publication and banning = =

Gordimer knew that Burger 's Daughter would be banned in South Africa . After the book was published in London by Jonathan Cape in June 1979 , copies were dispatched to South Africa , and on 5 July 1979 the book was banned from import and sale in South Africa . The reasons given by the Publications Control Board included " propagating Communist opinions " , " creating a psychosis of revolution and rebellion " , and " making several unbridled attacks against the authority entrusted with the maintenance of law and order and the safety of the state " .

In October 1979 the Publications Appeal Board , on the recommendation of a panel of literary experts and a state security specialist , overruled the banning of Burger 's Daughter . The state security specialist reported the book posed no threat to the security of South Africa , and the literary experts had accused the censorship board " of bias , prejudice , and literary incompetence " , and that " [i] t has not read accurately , it has severely distorted by quoting extensively out of context , it has not considered the work as a literary work deserves to be considered , and it has directly , and by implication , smeared the authoress [sic] . " Notwithstanding the unbanning , the chairman of the Appeal Board told a press reporter , " Don 't buy [the book] ? it is not worth buying . Very badly written ... This is also why we eventually passed it . " The Appeal Board described the book as " one @-@ sided " in its attack on whites and the South African Government , and concluded , " As a result ... the effect of the book will be counterproductive rather than subversive . "

Gordimer 's response to the novel 's unbanning was , " I was indifferent to the opinions of the original censorship committee who neither read nor understood the book properly in the first place , and to those of the committee of literary experts who made this discovery , since both are part of the censorship system . " She attributed the unbanning to her international stature and the " serious attention " the book had received abroad . A number of prominent authors and literary organisations had protested the banning , including Iris Murdoch , Heinrich Böll , Paul Theroux , John Fowles , Frank Kermode , The Association of American Publishers and International PEN . Gordimer objected to the unbanning of the book because she felt the government was trying placate her with " special treatment " , and said that the same thing would not have happened had she been black . But she did describe the action as " something of a precedent for other writers " because in the book she had published a copy of an actual pamphlet written and distributed by students in the 1976 Soweto uprising , which the authorities had banned . She said that similar " transgressions " in the future would be difficult for the censors to clamp down on .

While Burger 's Daughter was still banned in South Africa , a copy was smuggled into Nelson Mandela 's prison cell on Robben Island , and later a message was sent out saying that he had " thought well of it " . Gordimer said , " That means more to me than any other opinion it could have

gained . " Mandela also requested a meeting with her , and she applied several times to visit him on the Island , but was declined each time . She was , however , at the prison gates waiting for him when he was released in 1990 , and she was amongst the first he wanted to talk to . In 2007 Gordimer sent Mandela an inscribed copy of Burger 's Daughter to " replace the ' imprisoned ' copy " , and in it she thanked him for his opinion of the book , and for " untiringly leading the struggle " .

= = = What Happened to Burger 's Daughter = = =

To voice her disapproval of the banning and unbanning of the book , Gordimer published What Happened to Burger 's Daughter or How South African Censorship Works , a book of essays written by her and others . It was published in Johannesburg in 1980 by Taurus , a small underground publishing house established in the late @-@ 1970s to print anti @-@ apartheid literature and other material South African publishers would avoid for fear of censorship . Its publications were generally distributed privately or sent to bookshops to be given to customers free to avoid attracting the attention of the South African authorities .

What Happened to Burger 's Daughter has two essays by Gordimer and one by University of the Witwatersrand law professor John Dugard . Gordimer 's essays document the publication history and fate of Burger 's Daughter , and respond to the Publications Control Board 's reasons for banning the book . Dugard 's essay examines censorship in South Africa within the country 's legal framework . Also included in the book is the Director of Publications 's communiqué stating its reasons for banning the book , and the reasons for lifting the ban three months later by the Publications Appeal Board .

= = Publication history = =

Burger 's Daughter was first published in the United Kingdom , in hardcover , in June 1979 by Jonathan Cape , and October that year in the United States , also in hardcover , by Viking Press . The first paperback edition was published in the United Kingdom in November 1980 by Penguin Books . A unabridged 12 @-@ hour @-@ 51 @-@ minute audio cassette edition , narrated by Nadia May , was released in the United States in July 1993 by Blackstone Audio .

Burger 's Daughter has been translated into several other languages since its first publication in English in 1979 :

= = Style = =

The narrative mode of Burger 's Daughter alternates between Rosa Burger 's internal monologues and the anonymous narrator , whom Gordimer calls " Rosa 's conscious analysis , her reasoning approach to her life and to this country , and ... my exploration as a writer of what she doesn 't know even when she thinks she 's finding out " . Abdul R. JanMohamed , professor of English and African American Literature at Emory University , calls this change of perspective a " stylistic bifurcation " , which allows the reader to see Rosa from different points of view , rendering her a complex character who is full of contradictions . The two narratives , the subjective and the objective viewpoints , complement each other . JanMohamed explains that while the objective , third @-@ person narrative is factual and neutral , the subjective first @-@ person narrative , Rosa 's voice , is intense and personal . Rosa 's monologues are directed towards Conrad , her lover , in the first part of the story , her father 's former wife , Katya , while Rosa is in France , and her father after she returns to South Africa . Because her imagined audience is always sympathetic and never questions her , Rosa 's confessions are honest and open .

According to academic Robin Ellen Visel , Rosa is a complicated person , with roles thrust on her by her parents , which suppresses her own goals and desires . Gordimer explained how she constructed the book 's narrative structure to convey this struggle and explain Rosa : " [T] he idea came to me of Rosa questioning herself as others see her and whether what they see is what she really is . And that developed into another stylistic question ? if you 're going to tell the book in the

first person , to whom are you talking ? " This led to Gordimer creating Conrad and Katya for Rosa to use as sounding boards to question and explain herself .

Irene Kacandes , professor of German Studies and Comparative Literature at Dartmouth College , calls Rosa 's internal monologues apostrophes , or " intrapsychic witnessing " , in which " a character witnesses to the self about the character 's own experience " . Kacandes points out that Rosa believes she would not be able to internalise anything if she knew someone was listening . In an apostrophe addressed to Conrad , Rosa remarks , " If you knew I was talking to you I wouldn 't be able to talk " . But because Rosa is not vocalising her monologues , no one can hear her , and she is able to proceed with her self @-@ analysis unhindered . Kacandes says " Rosa imagines an interlocutor and then occupies that place herself . "

Gordimer uses quotation dashes to punctuate her dialogue in Burger 's Daughter instead of traditional quotation marks . She told an interviewer in 1980 that readers have complained that this sometimes makes it difficult to identify the speaker , but she added " I don 't care . I simply cannot stand he @-@ said / she @-@ said anymore . And if I can 't make readers know who ? s speaking from the tone of voice , the turns of phrase , well , then I 've failed . "

Visel says that the use of dashes for dialogue " conveys the sense of conversation set within the flow of memory " and " is congruent with the sense of Rosa speaking essentially to herself , speakers and listeners in her conversations being dead or unreachable . "

= = Genre = =

Some commentators have classified Burger 's Daughter as a political and historical novel . In their book *Socialist Cultures East and West : A Post @-@ Cold War Reassessment* , M. Keith Booker and Dubravka Juraga call Gordimer 's work one of the " representative examples of African historical novels " , saying that it is an " intense engagement with the history of apartheid in South Africa " . Academic Robert Boyers calls it " one of the best political novels of our period " , and an historical novel because of its " retrospective homage to generations past " . Gordimer herself described Burger 's Daughter as " an historical critique " , and a political novel , which she defines as a work that " explicates the effects of politics on human lives and , unlike a political tract , does not propagate an ideology " .

Visel calls the novel " fictionalised history " that shadows the history of anti @-@ apartheid activism in South Africa , from 1946 and the African Mine Workers ' Strike (Lionel and Cathy 's marriage) , to 1977 and the clampdown on dissidents (Rosa 's detention) . Other notable events include the coming to power of the National Party in 1948 (Rosa 's year of birth) , the Treason Trial of Nelson Mandela and others in 1956 , the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 , and the Soweto uprising in 1976 (Rosa 's return to South Africa) . Dominic Head writes in his book *Nadine Gordimer* that in Burger 's Daughter " the life of ... Rosa ... runs in parallel with the history of modern South Africa " .

Several critics have called Burger 's Daughter a Bildungsroman , or coming @-@ of @-@ age story , although not the traditional ones which , according to Susan Gardner in her essay " Still Waiting for the Great Feminist Novel " , are dominated by male protagonists . While Gordimer was not a feminist author and Burger 's Daughter is not a feminist novel , Gardner suggests that the book has " a discernible woman @-@ concerned subtext " , making it " impossible for feminists to dismiss or ignore " . She says it has " a potential feminist awareness " that is " obscured by more conventional patriarchal writing codes " . Yelin writes that after the death of Rosa 's mother , the statement " Already she had taken on her mother 's role in the household , giving loving support to her father " illustrates " the continuing hegemony of bourgeois @-@ patriarchal ideology " in the novel . Yelin suggests that this inconsistency is responsible for Rosa 's struggle , the " contradiction between feminism (Rosa 's liberation as a woman) and the struggle for justice in South Africa " .

= = Themes = =

Gordimer says Rosa 's role in society is imprinted on her from a young age by her activist parents , and she grows up in the shadow of her father 's political legacy . Scholar Carol P. Marsh @-@

Lockett writes that everyone sees Rosa as Lionel Burger 's daughter with duties and responsibilities to her father , and not Rosa the individual . In fulfilling these expectations , she denies herself an identity of her own . JanMohamed says it is only when Conrad encourages her to look beyond her self @-@ sacrifices that Rosa starts examining the conflicts in her life , namely her commitment to help others versus her desire for a private life . In an attempt to resolve these conflicts , Rosa contemplates turning to blacks , but she is wary of this because , according to the book 's anonymous narrator , white South Africans tend to use blacks as a way " of perceiving sensual redemption , as romantics do , or of perceiving fears , as racialists do " . JanMohamed notes that Rosa 's father was a romantic who established genuine friendships with blacks to overcome his " sensual redemption " , but she is unsure of where she stands . Visel says that Rosa 's only way to free herself from these commitments to her family and the revolution is to " defect " and go to France . John Cooke , in his essay " Leaving the Mother 's House " , notes that " By putting her defection in such stark terms , Gordimer makes her strongest statement of the need , whatever the consequence , of a child to claim a life of her own " .

Many of Gordimer 's works have explored the impact of apartheid on individuals in South Africa . Journalist and novelist George Packer writes that , as in several of her novels , a theme in Burger 's Daughter is of racially divided societies in which well @-@ meaning whites unexpectedly encounter a side of black life they did not know about . Literary critic Carolyn Turgeon says that while Lionel was able to work with black activists in the ANC , Rosa discovers that with the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement , many young blacks tend to view white liberals as irrelevant in their struggle for liberation . Rosa witnesses this first hand listening to the black university student in Soweto (Duma Dhladhla) and , later , in London , her childhood friend " Baasie " (Zwelinzima Vulindlela) , who both dismiss her father as unimportant .

Author and academic Louise Yelin says that Gordimer 's novels often feature white South Africans opposed to apartheid and racism who try to find their place in a multiracial society . Gordimer suggested options for whites in a 1959 essay " Where Do Whites Fit In ? " , but the rise of Black Consciousness in the 1970s questioned whites ' involvement in the liberation struggle . Stephen Clingman has suggested in *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer : History from the Inside* that Burger 's Daughter is Gordimer 's response to the Black Consciousness Movement and an investigation into a " role for whites in the context of Soweto and after " .

Gordimer wrote in an essay in *What Happened to Burger 's Daughter* that " The theme of my novel is human conflict between the desire to live a personal , private life , and the rival claim of social responsibility to one 's fellow men " . Dominic Head says that Gordimer 's novels often experiment with the relation of " public and private realms " , and that Burger 's Daughter " represents one of the peaks in this experimentation " . Boyers notes that the theme of " public and private " , and the relation between them , is balanced in the book " so as to privilege neither one not the other " .

According to Packer , another common theme in Gordimer 's novels is the choices ordinary people who live in oppressive regimes are forced to make . Literary critics Turgeon and Carli Coetzee explain that when she realises that whites are not always welcome in the anti @-@ apartheid liberation movements , Rosa repudiates her father 's struggle and leaves the country . Marsh @-@ Lockett says that part of Rosa 's struggle is forging her own identity , and this decision to rebel against her dead father is a bold step , although she does return later to South Africa to become a committed activist and ultimately a political prisoner . But , according to Coetzee , what Rosa achieves is what her father never could : to have a life of her own while still remaining politically committed .

= = Reception = =

Burger 's Daughter was generally well @-@ received by critics . Anthony Sampson , a British writer , journalist and former editor of *Drum* , a magazine in Johannesburg in the 1950s , wrote in *The New York Times* that this is Gordimer 's " most political and most moving novel " . He said that its " political authenticity " set in the " historical background of real people " makes it " harshly realistic " , and added that the blending of people , landscapes and politics remind one of the great Russian pre

@-@ revolutionary novels . In The New York Review of Books , Irish politician , writer and historian Conor Cruise O'Brien compared Gordimer 's writing to that of Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev , and described Burger 's Daughter as " elegant " and " fastidious " and belonging to a " cultivated upper class " . He said this style is not at odds with the subject matter of the story because Rosa Burger , daughter of a revolutionary , believes herself to be an " aristocrat of the revolution " .

Tess Lemmon writing in the New Internationalist magazine called Burger 's Daughter " arguably [Gordimer 's] best novel " , and complimented her on her characterisation , attention to detail , and ability to blend " the personal and the political " . Lemmon noted that the book 's " subtle , lyrical writing " brings the reader into the characters ' minds , which " is an enlivening but uncomfortable place to be " . In an essay published in The New York Times Book Review , American novelist and critic A. G. Mojtabai stated that despite the troubled times Gordimer was living through at the time , in Burger 's Daughter she remains " subdued " and " sober " , and even though she " scarcely raises her voice " , it still " reverberates over a full range of emotion " .

In a review of the book in World Literature Today , Sheila Roberts said that Gordimer 's mixture of first- and third @-@ person narrative is " an interesting device " which is " superbly handled " by the author . She commented that it allows the reader to get inside Rosa , and then step back and observe her from a distance . Roberts described Gordimer 's handling of Rosa 's predicament , continuing the role her father had given her versus abandoning the struggle and finding herself , as " extremely moving and memorable " . In The Sewanee Review Bruce King wrote that Burger 's Daughter is a " large , richly complex , densely textured novel " . He said that it " fill [s] with unresolvable ironies and complications " as Gordimer explores the dilemmas faced by her characters in the South African political landscape .

American writer Joseph Epstein had mixed feelings about the book . He wrote in The Hudson Review that it is a novel that " gives scarcely any pleasure in the reading but which one is pleased to have read nonetheless " . Epstein complained about it being " a mighty slow read " with " off the mark " descriptions and " stylistic infelicities " . He felt that big subjects sometimes " relieve a novelist of the burdens of nicety of style " . Epstein said that reading the book is like " looking at a mosaic very close up , tile by tile " , and that the big picture only emerges near the end . But he complimented Gordimer on the way in which she unravels Rosa 's fate , saying that it is " a tribute to her art " .

= = Honours and awards = =

Despite being banned in South Africa , Burger 's Daughter won the 1980 Central News Agency (CNA) Literary Award , a prominent literary award in that country . In 1991 Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for her works of " intense immediacy " and " extremely complicated personal and social relationships in her environment " . During the award ceremony speech by Sture Allén , Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy , Burger 's Daughter was cited as one of Gordimer 's novels in which " artistry and morality fuse " .

In 2001 the novel was named one of South Africa 's top 10 books in The Guardian in the United Kingdom by author Gillian Slovo , daughter of South African anti @-@ apartheid activists Joe Slovo and Ruth First . Following Gordimer 's death in 2014 , The Guardian and Time magazine put Burger 's Daughter in their list of the top five Gordimer books . Indian writer Neel Mukherjee included Burger 's Daughter in his 2015 " top 10 books about revolutionaries " , also published in The Guardian .