



A Critical Study on the Apartheid System and its Aftermath in Nadine Gordimer's The Lying Days

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, Nadine Gordimer's *The Lying Days* is a coming-of-age novel. It is where characters of Gordimer come to existence and find out the sector around them. The tale is told with many nuanced strokes, and every minute thought is picked over. All threads of emotions are freed to depart every negation clear. The unconventional does deliver out rather magnificently, Gordimer's impressive sensing into the remarkable moments of numerous human interactions. The entire novel is subtly political, where the novelist exposes the horrors of apartheid. It is visible that the racial superstructure presents a simple contradiction to the concept of liberalism. The apartheid nation becomes capable of keeping the Black population in its grip. The whole work concentrates on the effect of apartheid on the lives of all South Africans. The novelist intimately diagnoses the Black conflict even in her personal existence. Her writing unveils preconceptions, tensions, traces of lifestyles and vitriolic results of the existing apartheid system. Regardless of several flaws and ambiguities in its motive, the radical nonetheless come s out as a cultured and ideological declaration.

This article not only establishes Gordimer as a South African novelist, who delves deep into the politics of Black and White but how the novelist expresses her sense of belonging through personal exploration.

Keywords: Apartheid, Negation, Liberalism, Whites and Non-Whites, Racial Discrimination.

Gordimer's novel, *The Lying Days* is told with many nuanced strokes, and every minute thought is picked over. All threads of emotions are freed to depart every negation clear. The entire novel is subtly political, where the novelist exposes the horrors of apartheid. It is visible that the racial superstructure presents a simple contradiction to the concept of liberalism. The apartheid nation becomes capable of keeping the Black population in its grip. The whole work concentrates on the effect of apartheid on the lives of all South Africans.

Further the novelist intimately diagnoses the Black conflict even in her personal existence. Her writing unveils the preconceptions, the tensions, traces of lifestyles and vitriolic results of the apartheid system. Regardless of several flaws and ambiguities in its motive, the radical nonetheless comes out as a cultured and ideological declaration. It establishes Gordimer as a South African novelist, who delves deep into the politics of Black and White. She reveals her sense of belonging through personal exploration. It is also evident that she has real sympathy for her fatherland in the profound experience of the phrase. Her fictions effectively highlight the political maltreatment in the lives of average South Africans that she portrays in the mendacity days. Through this fiction, Gordimer urges all the young males and females to combat for their rights. It is responsible moral sense of the White man, the trend, and the trepidation of the Black man in a petrified land. Through this novel, she can present, "the state of the liberal consciousness at this early stage in the history of modern South Africa" (Pratt 36).

Nadine Gordimer is the most responsible and representative writer of the South African Society, depicting the reality of the socio-economic and socio-political of the country. In particular, her novels mainly portray the racial segregation in the nation. She is the actual eyewitness of the happenings in the South African society who raises her voice for liberalism to save the Black from the sufferings. She is also considered to be essential and the intermediate to eradicate apartheid and to save the Black from exploitation.

The novelist narrates the South African situation occurring in the current political, social privacy, and aggressive effects of racial isolation in South African society. In her fiction, she depicts the abuse of Black people and wickedness on the Black people due to the segregation of Black people in society. The most significant part lies in novels such as *The Lying Days*, *A World of Strangers*, *Occasion for Loving*, *The Late Bourgeois World*, *A Sport of Nature*, and *My Son's Story*. The distressing effects of life in South Africa show the discriminatory treatment of Black by White people and abusing policies of the government.

The novel *The Lying Days* has a firing effect such as violence against children and the development of the incomplete in an uncertain situation in the novel, which narrates the growing up days of Helen Shaw, the lead character of the story. The novel describes the character of Helen Shaw from her childhood days

acquiring the consciousness of racial discrimination. The story goes with Helen Shaw growing in the racially discriminated society among the White society in the native land of her surroundings.

It depicts the autobiographical upbringing of Gordimer by herself and the childhood days of her growth in the segregated society. In the year 1940, the present nurture of Helen, the lead character is the advancement of local South Africa and she is aware of the African life evolving around her. It makes her contact the young Black to get involved in personnel, political, and social relationship of the Black in the racially discriminated society. It portrays the childhood and memories of Helen in the close town of Johannesburg, in South Africa.

The story of Helen begins with the autobiographical element from a small town near Johannesburg in the university and city of Europe, and the context of the racial clash in the discriminated society. The increase in color consciousness in the racial apartheid society is the central theme of the novel. The theme of the novel is derived from the novel of W.B. Yeats, *The Coming of Wisdom with Time* (1910):

“Though the leaves are many, the root is one;
Through all the lying days of my youth;
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun
Now I may wither into the truth.” (76)

The above-mentioned lines represent that though there are many leaves, but they belong to one tree, the lying days the whole youth won over the flower in the sun, and the youth has gone and faded of truth. The quote in the poem depicts the growth of Helen in the novel and the divergence taking place in her life right from the root of South Africa's uniqueness and tradition. The branches, leaves, and stem denote the life of young heroine and the progress in her life (Clingman 5).

The novel further depicts the withering leaves of the truth in the public life in the segregated South African society between 1930 and 1940. The story starts with the intolerant situation that prevails in South Africa. The current situation in South Africa is divided into three kinds 'The Mine', 'The Sea', and 'The City.' In the novel 'The Mine' depicts the childhood experience and immaturity of Helen in the novel. The novel talks about her first love and independent thinking. The 'City' is the third part of the novel that depicts her educational background in the city and her understanding of the urban and racial differences in society. The sections of the novel continue until her twenty-four years of age. The childhood days, the love and the friendship and the election in 1948 are the series of important incidents in her life. The transition in the novel takes place after she returns from Europe, to South Africa.

The travelling experience of the young girl starts with her refusal to go with her parents to the court and the walk in the nearby concession stores. Her disapproval to go to an excursion with her White authorities describe the start of the journey of an immature girl to start a journey into governmental issues and the racial stubbornness. (History.com Editors, 2019).

The dramatic acts of the character, Helen, going away from the White society and getting into the dusty roadway are the depiction of her transformation from the adolescent stage. Helen lives outside the city away from White and lives with the Black which shows the typical life of Black in the South African society. She depicts the typical abundant life of the White and the middle-class suffering of the Black for its necessities. Helen gets broader view as she begins to understand the luxuries of the White and the exploitation of the Black by her people. She also describes the few happenings in the roads of the mine and frequent actions in the road. Helen's mother is possessive and so she has never been out of the mines. Her mother never leaves her alone because she is afraid of the Black in the state. Usually, only by her mother's permission, she goes out of the mines (Gordimer 33).

She is fond of the gardener in her garden who becomes close to her. Her mother is very close to him. She discusses how to bring up their children. While other White women use their gardener for the works, Mrs. Shaw treats him and praises him. Little Helen gives all the discarded games owned by her to him because Helen understands who the human is and she starts to mingle with her Black friends in the segregated society. She understands the injustice done to the Blacks and realizes that the Blacks are considered as slaves in society.

Helen grows up and understands the socio-economic status of the country that is divided by racial differences. The knowledge of the girl improves gradually and she understands African society better and the violent happenings in the city in which she lives. Further, she gets experience from her love and friendship which help her to become matured towards the socio-political activities. She is less exposed to the outer world. She knows only the domestic world of her mother and later, she experiences a new friendship with her new friends. "A time of special intimate gaiety and friendship with some vague companion" arrives soon (TLD 52). She is used to be alone and gradually, she gets a companion with whom she experiences beautiful friendship.

The novel depicts the understanding of Paul Clark with regard to Black life and this understanding provides her with a lifted world. She helps the Black to enhance their lives by teaching them to take care of their belongings, the land, farm, and the town in which they live. She is very clear to Paul Clark's observation of the Black makes it clear through her protest against the White. She is excited by the job of Paul Clark. She says, "The job that Paul did first interest then excited me" (7). The works of Paul attracts her and she confesses that she loves him for his excellent job towards the welfare of the Black.

She is attracted by the work of Paul and so she says, "Even a doctor working in a native hospital only touched the lives of his patients in one situation, that of hurt or illness. However, as a welfare officer-first, he had been a junior, now he was an assistant to the chief –Paul entered into the gamut of the Africans' lives" (TLD 240). The doctor touches the patients only during illness, but Paul has touched the lives of the Africans by his service of enhancing their lives. Later, she realizes the boundaries of Paul's work. The disappointment of his work gets revealed when his frustration towards his job is expressed. His insufficient liberal rules make him to get away from his darling quickly. Later, Helen meets Aron, who is accepted as a moral guide by

Helen. At the end of the novel, when she plans to travel to London, Aron advises her and controls her by saying that:

You always see yourself such a high standard, Helen. That is the trouble. You are such a snob when it comes to emotion. Only the loftiest, the purest, will do for you. Sometimes I have thought it is a kind of laziness. If you embrace something that seems to embody all this idealism, you fill you have achieved the loftiest, the purest, the most real. (TLD 361)

The novel is about Helen Shaw's London trip that gives a feeling of uncertainty. Her awareness converges to affirmation. The Lying Days depicts the prejudice of the Black in society. The novel portrays that Helen feels guilty for being White and involves in the apartheid. Racial segregation affects the notable characters in society, a severe agitation in the segregation of society. The apartheid is a strict rule in the South African society where the Whites are treated as masters and the Blacks as servants which does not suit her temperament. Helen Shaw is close with old Gardner and Anna, the servant. Helen longs to have a good friendship with the Black and White in the segregated society. She has a wrong approach towards the segregation of society towards her mother's approach in Black society.

Her discussion with Joel reveals the mother's attitude towards the natives because her mother was afraid of the Black people in the country "You do not like the way your mother speaks about natives. You told me only the other day that it 'made your blood boil' when you heard her describe someone's way of living as 'worse than a native.'" (TLD 119)

Even Helen's father is different towards Joel, Helen's friend, as she is from the segregated society and different background. Being guilty, she turns away from the White society in the mining town and changes her attitude towards the Black at the University of Johannesburg. In the university, she befriends and introduces Black Mary Seswayo to her mother to break her opinion which she has on the natives.

She convinces her mother to allow Mary in her house for a study session by saying:

Mother ...I was thinking, there's a young African girl in my group, she is a bright girl and it is so important for her to pass. She lives in this awful location place, with people milling around all the time. She was telling me; she does not get a chance to work at all.... couldn't she come home here for a while? (TLD 187)

Helen says that Mary is a young African intelligent girl who has no place to work, and she pleads her mother to permit her friend Mary to stay with her. Her mother observes the way Mary plays, sleeps, washes and talks to Helen's father. By taking some time, Helen's mother analyses and concludes that they should not have the Black girl in their house. She is disgusted by the view point made by her mother towards her father, so she leaves her home and stays in a separate home out of the mining city as she cannot leave the friendship of Mary.

The friendship with Mary breaks as her parents do not accept her in the house.

Well, Mary, I do not understand you. Either you think that because you are Black, you are not good enough to be a guest in my parents' house or you are distressed at the idea of my is agreeing with my mother. (TLD 203)

Helen says to Mary that she is distressed by her mother's way of approach to Black that prohibits her stay in the guest house. This may be because, her mother hates the Black and thinks they are not good. But Mary replies, the fact that I am good enough doesn't mean that she is got to want me. If I were a White girl, she could say no, if she felt like it. However, because I am Black, she is got to say yes. Don't you see if I am good enough, I am good enough not to go where I am not wanted? (TLD 203).

Mary says that Helen is good; she also emphasizes that if she had been a White, she would have accepted her in Helen's house. She insisted that she is good enough. Since Mary is Black, she undergoes racial discrimination and segregation in society. The White world is a group, and the next group is another Black represented by Anna, Paul, and Mary. Gordimer is a protester against the apartheid system, and it is evident from the very beginning of the literature.

The ethical values of Helen are enhanced in the novel when she feels guilty of being White; she has a great concern towards the Black in the society. Gordimer, through this novel, emphasizes her responsibility towards social and political values against the apartheid. Being guilty is the life-long phase of South African society. The people are guilty of being White due to the exploitation against the Black and the violence racism to the natives by the White people. The guilty White girl feels that Black is denied of basic needs. So Helen decides to live with the liberals, Marcues and Paul.

The end of the novel pictures the poor condition of the Black people due to political persecution, racial discrimination, and the policies that are enforced by the Malan rule during the time of apartheid. Paul describes the arrest of the interracial in bed as a stunning police torture.

Helen alone is not attacked in the violence which enhances her dilemma of the racial discrimination. Nadine Gordimer explains the White's inhuman activities against the Black in the apartheid era. She analyses the inhuman activities of the White society and the solution for the unethical behaviour of the White against the Black that lacks humanism, love, and sympathy. Helen insists on accepting her Black friend just like a human being. Helen's thought leads to the achievement of racial segregation in society. It does not mean that the protagonist has accepted the principle, which cannot be taken into account as a dominant in the apartheid context.

Helen overlooks the principle of acceptance in the apartheid system. The love affair with Paul Clark, and Aron has been divided by the fact of racial discrimination. The end of the novel describes her practical thinking of future happenings due to racial discrimination in South Africa.

I am not practicing any self-deception any longer. Moreover, I am not running away. Whatever it was I was running away from-the risk of love? The guilt of being White? The danger of putting ideas into practice? I am not running away from now because I am coming back here. (TLD 376)

She never does any self-practice, and she does not run away due to any fear. She runs away from love, and she feels guilty of being White. She is not going to run away from any kind of inhuman activities, and she will remain back as the liberal White against the apartheid. She has a strong determination over the racial

differences of the apartheid in the society as she accepts the reality and the responsibility in the Southern African state.

The novel *The Lying Days* depicts the story of a young lady towards the socio-economic and political development in the racially differentiated society. It vividly picturizes the progress of Helen from childhood to adulthood and the understanding of the racial differences, thereby feeling guilty of being White and analysing the reality in the society. The racial difference disturbs the well-being of the Africans in the society in which they live. She opposes the living way of Whites and Black in the apartheid; she also concludes that nothing has changed the White.

The novel depicts Gordimer's explanation on Helen's relationship with her mother, friends, folks, and relatives. The close relationship of Helen with everyone paves the way for understanding racial discrimination. The parents of Helen have a wrong opinion about Black people and it is also illustrated in the novel by proper understanding of Helen about the segregation and political issues. In her writings, Gordimer insists on the continuous domination of the White over the Black. She also opposes the injustice done to them.

To conclude, the novel depicts the White liberal feeling guilty for the situation in her town and her concern towards the wrongdoing of the government to the Blacks. The violence and exploitation against the Black make the young girl so guilty that she realizes that she has to do something to bring the Black to greater heights. Finally, she enhances the well-being of Black throughout the novel and she fights against the injustice done to her friend by vacating her own house to live in a far-off land in the mines.

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