COLOUR EQUATIONS FROM THE OTHER SIDE:

A STUDY OF NADINE GORDIMER'S *THE LYING DAYS* AND

BURGER'S DAUGHTER

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Submitted

In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

DECLARATION

Mizoram University

December, 2013.

I, Lalhruaitluangi, hereby declare that the subject manner of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other University or Institute.

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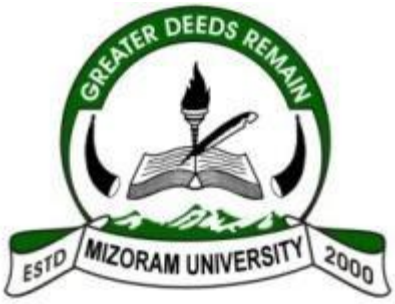

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that "Colour Equations From the Other Side: A Study of Nadine Gordimer's *The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter*" written by Lalhruaitluangi has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.

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(LALHRUAITLUANGI)

CONTENTS **PAGE**

South Africa has a largely diverse culture with different languages, and the nation's varied ethnic constituents have not yet been unified even after its attainment of independence from the British colony in 1910. The tension arising from the unequal relations between blacks and whites is the subject of much South African literature. Focusing on the writings in English, Olive Schreiner, was the first to produce a noteworthy novel, *The Story of an African Farm* in 1883. Though Schreiner has a number of white successors, some of the most popular writings are produced by black writers who emerged in the later decades. Some of these writers are Peter Abrahams, Alex La Guma, Lewis Nkosi, Es'kia Mphahlele and Athol Fugard. The works of these black writers, among others, are autobiographical depictions of the "frustrations and deprivation" experienced by young black intellectuals in South African society.(Cornwell 20) However, alongside this black depiction, white writers have built on Schreiner's foundation to produce works written from their point of view as well. Both these depictions create equations in the literature, consisting of colour delineation with the black perspective on one hand, and that of the white on the other.

Nadine Gordimer is one author who has, through her novels, portrayed white characters struggling to find an identity amidst the political turmoil caused by racial friction. This study is an attempt to examine the white people's condition in South Africa as depicted in two of her selected novels. As one of the most famous writers of South Africa, Gordimer has proven herself to be a relentless critic of Apartheid. Her fictions are distilled by her own close experience of it. Her novels especially, are a continuous depiction of the politics of colour struggle both before and after Apartheid. This way, a chronological study of her works may give one a certain picture of Apartheid in South

Africa through decades. Her nine novels, more than two hundred short stories, and numerous essays of political and literary commentary thus offer a "unique record" of the "high era of Apartheid".(Nixon 88) The depth and authenticity of this record relies on Gordimer's acute sensitivity to the history of her times. Her ability to integrate the shifting political moods of her society into her fiction makes her works an interesting material for research.

As a white South African, Gordimer has endured challenges from many quarters. During the peak of black consciousness in the 1970's, many black authors dismissed all white writing as a "luxurious irrelevance", and in the midst of this, several of Gordimer's novels got banned, with the most famous and "notorious" one being *Burger's Daughter*.(Gardner 169) Like other white writers of her country, Doris Lessing and Isak Dinesen to name two, Gordimer appear to suffer from a mental deportation from the blacks solely due to the constructed superiority of her skin. Her struggle is ironic in that she belongs to the power group she challenges. This way, her struggle against Apartheid is different from those of the blacks because she becomes merely an outsider who 'sympathizes'. This double identity is perhaps the cause of mental conflict that her protagonists suffer in most of her novels. For a detailed study of this white conflict, this study would look into the white narrative aspect of her two novels, *The Lying Days* (1953) and *Burger's Daughter* (1979).

Gordimer was born on 20 November 1923 in Springs, a gold-mining town at the east of Johannesburg. Her Jewish parents diverged widely in background and demeanor. At thirteen, her father fled a Lithuanian village where czarist anti-Semitism barred him from attending high school. In the town of Springs, he learned watch making and opened a

jeweller's shop. Gordimer portrays him as a man of arrested emotional development who, despite childhood immersion in poverty, educational deprivation, and bigotry, disappointed her deeply with his stubborn racism toward black South Africans. The more profound influence seems to be Gordimer's English-born mother, a woman whose ample creativity had been denied adequate professional outlets. Gordimer speaks of her as the dominant member of the household and a sincere do-gooder who founded a day-care center in a nearby black township. When she learned that her daughter had an enlarged thyroid, a common ailment, she barred her from all outdoor activity and withdrew her, aged eleven, permanently from school. Thereafter, Gordimer suffered an education of erratic tutoring and never gained a high school diploma. These circumstances gave Gordimer a damaged, friendless childhood, in which the company of books became an attractive alternative to the company of small-town adults. Her mother's insistence that she be tutored within the confines of home meant that Gordimer lacked the qualifications for admission to a university. Commuting from Springs, she audited courses for one year at the University of Witwatersrand, an institution in whose intellectual life she would later feature prominently. Despite her limited formal education, however, Gordimer had been publishing stories since the age of fifteen. But it was not until 1949, the year of both her first marriage and her permanent move to Johannesburg, that she broke through in the literature world. In that benchmark year she had a story appear in *The New Yorker* for the first time, which became the beginning of a long association with the magazine and the first hint of her international standing. She had her first book in print in 1949, a collection entitled *Face to Face: Short Stories.* In 1991, Gordimer became the first South African and the first woman in twenty-five years to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. (Nixon 25-50)

South Africa today still finds itself disturbed by the legacy of Apartheid. It only shows that in order to destroy an entire political, cultural, social and economic system like that of Apartheid, a mere change in government does not necessarily guarantee positive results. The last few years have seen South Africa go through an interesting dilemma and debate with regards to its race relations. Race differences still exist even in seemingly improbable institutions like the church. Whites in South Africa have always struggled to define themselves as a coherent entity. As the ruling minority, some whites believe it necessary to maintain an appearance of solidarity. Due to this crisis of fragmented identity, the ones who favored the continuation of a white-dominated regime were forced to create and define a hierarchy based on imagined principles of race. It is this idea which was eventually displayed in the National Party's policy of 'apartheid'. Apartheid's unstated goals of black subordination and its need to maintain a fantasy of white unity led to a kind of imagined fraternity among whites that instigated the imagination of a whites-only egalitarian community. The result was a continual redefinition of whiteness through imagination and external inputs. Throughout the Apartheid era, whites developed characterizations that underlined their differences with native Africans and immigrants from other (non-white) parts of the world. However, the collapse of Apartheid in 1994 put South Africans without extreme racist tendencies in a difficult position. As whiteness is no longer a signifier for power, but rather oppression, it has become an increasingly less desirable characteristic, even though whites still enjoy vast economic advantage over the black population. (Parker 114)

In all these, Gordimer takes on the role of a witness to both worlds, not really belonging to either. She writes: "Whether it is the old question about what the Whites are

going to do about the Blacks, or the new question of what the Blacks are going to do about the Whites. Or the hopeful question of how to set about letting the whole thing go and living together."(Boyers 28) Though idealistic to a certain extent, and sometimes radical in her staunch support of the blacks, she also sympathizes with her race. This sympathy stems from an awareness of the conflict that her race is generally subjected to. She says: “We whites have been brought up on so many lies; we've been led up the garden path, or sold down the river by our ancestors in South Africa. In other words, whites have developed a totally unreal idea of how they ought to live, of their right to go on living in that country.”(Gordimer, The Word)

This complex identity of belonging to the race of the ‘oppressor’, the guilt it evokes, and the psychological repercussion of politically siding with the oppressed, is a subject that Gordimer has amply dealt with in her works. This study attempts to bring out details of this development, conflict and formation of the white South African identity through a close reading of the two selected novels.

The Lying Days is a semi-autobiographical novel which follows the life of Helen Shaw, a white girl brought up by conventional middle-class Protestant parents in a mining suburb of Johannesburg. It is a coming of age story where we see changes of growth in both the central character Helen and apartheid South Africa. The child Helen in the first parts of the novel is a protected child who has not been exposed to life other than the mine she lives on. But she gradually began to realize later that she cannot connect with the fairy tales in her English story books which are worlds apart from her mine town, and that there are other worlds beyond the white employees of the mine, where the ‘natives’ live. As Helen matures through the story, so do her liberal convictions. The social commentary is

artfully injected within the narration to remind the reader of the racial inequality that prevails in South Africa during the 30's and 40's as a result of rapid industrialization and the National Party's ascent to power. The story divulges the guilt of the white man, along with the fear and the fury of the black. This exploration of the contradictory structures of dependency and revolt is a subject that Gordimer pursues further in *Burger's Daughter*.

Gordimer has insisted that only *Burger's Daughter*, from among her novels, embodies "a purposeful political intent."(Attwell et al. 201) The story is about white anti-apartheid activists in South Africa seeking to overthrow the South African government. Written in the wake of the 1976 Soweto uprising, it follows the life of Rosa, the title character, as she comes to terms with her father Lionel's legacy as an activist in the South African Communist Party (SACP) over the course of thirty years. The novel is routed in the history of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa with references to actual events and people from that period. In Burger's Daughter the heroine solves the contradiction in her identity by deciding to take part in the black struggle. This development from *The Lying Days* to *Burger's Daughter*, which are more than two decades apart, would be examined as part of the study, among other aspects.

To further explain the history of South African literature, and the role of white narratives, it is necessary to look back at the early fictional works. Colonial writers were the first to produce fictional works from South Africa. In these books, their attitude towards indigenous South Africans was ambivalent and sometimes directly hostile. This is especially seen in adventure stories, in which the writers romanticised the colonizers as hero figures and the role of native South Africans was reduced to that of enemy or servant. As mentioned before, Olive Schreiner's novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) is

generally considered to be the founding text of South African literature. Schreiner was born on a mission station and worked as a governess on isolated Karoo farms, an experience that is illustrated in the novel. Drawn from the post-romantic sensibility of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, the novel is still considered to be a key text in the formation of a truly South African voice. However, it has been criticised for its silence regarding the black African presence in South Africa.

Douglas Blackburn, a maverick British journalist who came to South Africa when the Transvaal was still a Boer republic, had something in common with Schreiner. In several newspapers, he denounced British colonial attitudes as well as satirising Boer corruption. He wrote two novels set in this world, *Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp* (1899) and *A Burgher Quixote* (1903), capturing with a great deal of sly humour the personality and situation of the Boer at the time. His later novel *Leaven* (1908) is a moving denunciation of what is called "blackbirding". The term refers to the recruitment of people through trickery and kidnappings to work on farms and other wicked labour practices, which is common. Blackburn's other novel, *Love Muti* (1915) also attacks British colonial attitudes.

Literature by black South Africans emerged in the 20th century. The first generation of African writers mostly sought to restore dignity to Africans by invoking and reconstructing a heroic African past. The first novel as such was *Mhudi* (completed in 1920 but only published in 1930), by Solomon (Sol) Thekiso Plaatje. This epic story follows the trajectory of the Tswana people during and after their military encounter with the Zulus under Shaka, the Zulu conqueror of the 19th century, and encompasses their earliest encounters with the white people moving into the interior.

A further flourishing of the literature by the blacks is seen in the 1940s with writers like HIE Dhlomo preaching through work, a "return to the source" (Couzens 24) which refers to the wisdom of finding traditional ways of dealing with modern problems. His work includes several plays and the long poem ‘The Valley of a Thousand Hills’ (1941).

Apart from these writers, Peter Abrahams, a writer of mixed race descent, published his first novel *Mine Boy* in 1946, the same year a large miners' strike was violently suppressed by Smuts' government. *Mine Boy* depicts life in black urban areas of the time, and dramatises the problems of rural people in a depressed urban environment - a theme that was referred to as the ‘Jim comes to Jo'burg’ phenomenon in South African literature. To explain this phenomenon in brief, ‘Jim Comes to Jo’burg’ is a sequence of feature films set in the city of Johannesburg which appeared in the late 1940s and early 1950s. They commenced with ‘Jim Comes to Jo'burg (1949) by Eric Rutherford in which the protagonist departs from his home in rural kwaZulu/Natal and arrives by train in search of fame and fortune. Despite becoming a victim of a mugging, Jim progresses from a gardener to a ‘house boy’, and later to a waiter in a nightclub where his singing talents are recognized. According to the film's byline, Jim Comes to Jo’burg purported to be "a true reflection of the African Native in a Modern City". Notwithstanding the claim to realism, the film was a standard rag-to-riches narrative played out in the city. (Gray 27)

The prevailing discourses in the South African context in the late 1940s and 1950s included the survival of a pastoral idyll, of an attachment to the land despite the country's extensive urbanisation and suburbanisation. This attachment was particularly strong amongst Afrikaners and Africans, but less important for white English-speaking South Africans whose identity was based in the city. White Afrikaner consciousness had been

nurtured on a narrative of the city as a place of evil and decadence. This found expression in the binary opposition between the country and the city, of rural versus the urban, which are common tropes in fiction and non-fiction literature. The function which this narrative served was complemented by an official discourse which articulated the view that the black man's place was in the countryside and that he was only a sojourner in the 'white man's city'. Known as ‘Stallardism', this discourse derived its name from the Chairman of the Transvaal Local Government Commission of 1921 which recommended that:

> The native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart there from when he ceases so to minister. (Davenport 95)

The 1950s also saw a new generation of black writers talking about the conditions of their lives in their own voices. These voices have a distinctive stamp and style. The popular Drum magazine in the 1950s was their forum, and encouraged their emergence. It depicted a vibrant urban black culture for the first time - a world of jazz, shebeens (illegal drinking dens), and flamboyant gangsters (tsotsis).(Attwell et al 25-26)

It is at this same time when the Drum generation was creating the first urban black voice, that Nadine Gordimer was beginning her distinguished career to become one of South Africa's most important white writers. Gordimer published her first short stories in the early 1950s and decades later she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991. Between these two dates, her many novels and short stories articulated key issues for white South Africans. Though she is always sympathetic to the plight of disenfranchised blacks,

Gordimer provides the outside world a devastating picture of what it was like to live under apartheid, both for the two colour equations, blacks and whites.

To mention her more famous works in brief, her first published novel *The Lying Days* (1953), charts the growing political awareness of a young white woman, Helen, towards small-town life and South African racial division. Her second novel, *A World of Strangers* (1958), shows the first fruitful but often frightening encounters between white and black people in the heady days of Sophia town. By the time of *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), Gordimer deals directly with the effects of the black liberation movement on white South Africans. This particular work is important regarding the depiction of the white plight because it presents the divided soul of the white liberal in a morally ambivalent situation. Her next work, *The Conservationist* (1974) pits Afrikaner land hunger against the indigenous population in an often surrealistic narrative. Her most political novel, *Burger's Daughter* (1979) depicts the involvement of radical white activists in the liberation struggle. *July's People* (1981), considered one of Gordimer's most powerful novels, projects into the future the final collapse of white supremacy and what that might mean for white and black people on an intimate level. Her other works including her short stories, which many regarded as among her finest work, deal with issues such as love across the colour line and, more recently, the emergence of South Africa into a democracy after the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990.(Nixon 88-90)

As seen through all the important novels of the continent, South Africa’s literary culture is extraordinarily diverse in histories, voices and traditions. The source of the diversity is the country’s social range and multilingualism. Since the disposition of the languages is fundamental to what follows, it would be necessary to give a brief description

of it. South Africa may not have as many languages as other postcolonial societies like India or, to restrict it to the African continent, Nigeria, but what is perhaps unusual as compared to other countries, is the granting of official status to the eleven most commonly spoken languages in the country. This is inscribed in the post apartheid Constitution, with an indirect response to the situation prior to 1994, when only English and Afrikaans enjoyed this status.(Attwell et al. 55) However, English is still given a hegemonic status. This position of the colonial language is sure to hinder the egalitarian vision behind the constitutional provision for the indigenous African languages, resulting in a slow result for its practice. Despite this, the legal position shared by the predominant languages reflects the current political aspirations towards a native cultural revival. In a "numerical descending order" based on the number of speakers, the official languages of South Africa are isiZulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sepedi, Setswana, English, Sesotho, Xitsonga, siSwati,TshivendaandisiNdebele. (Attridgeet al. 12)

While English is not used as a first language by many of its speakers, it is currently dominant in education, commerce and government. Since each of the languages has a literature, the country's literary range is so extensive that it places the idea of a national literature in question. In this respect, South Africa's literature is an extension of its national culture.

The challenge of producing a collective description of South Africa's literary past has given rise to a series of attempts over the past three decades. Among these attempts is Stephen Grey who, in the late 1970s, took the lead in offering both an organised and functional descriptions which remain useful points of reference.

Another important feature of South African literature is the shared history which produces politicized discourses that are commonly understood. South Africa might be radically heterogeneous in linguistic and cultural terms, but a common history has been imposed on it. This common history is the product of the nation's violent absorption into the modern world system. However, colonialism and its subsequent product, apartheid, do not define all of South Africa's history, and certainly not its cultural origins. But it is evident that the European expansions from the 17th to the 19th centuries prepare the processes that would lead to the development of the nation state. In many postcolonial societies, particularly in Africa, national cultures are unevenly mapped onto nation states. Nevertheless, in South Africa's case the somewhat aggressive form of modernity that was imposed on the region, particularly racial capitalism assisted by the state in successive forms, has had the effect to creating an inclusive ethnic forms of association in the fields of labour, economy, political life and cultural expression.

Evidently, as mentioned, South Africa has a rich literature. What makes Nadine Gordimer a key player in the realm is her tenacious ability to bring to the world's notice 'racism' in all its human complexities and equations. She has been an important figure in the countering of apartheid and its related movements across South Africa. Her work reflects an in depth atmosphere within that country, such as the path from passivity and blindness to resistance and struggle, the forbidden friendships, identity crisis and the underground networks. She has outlined for the outsider the experience of what life beyond apartheid might be like. Despite the challenges that such a task might entail, the biggest one being censorship, she has created characters from whose lives we see the major currents of contemporary South African history. She accomplished this by creating

individuals who struggle with moral choices behind private doors and in the public sphere. She has painted a social background which provides an insight into the roots of the struggle and the mechanisms of change.

In order to study the whiteness aspect of race in Gordimer's characters, as proposed, it is important to understand the meaning of 'Whiteness Studies'. The concept of whiteness is a relatively new field of study since the previous focus of race studies was generally engaged in 'otherness'. It has held interest both internationally and in South Africa. In the past, whiteness was assumed to be the norm, which according to Sarah Nuttall, a prominent researcher of whiteness in South Africa, is '… an unchanging and unproblematic location, a position from which all other identities come to be marked by their difference …' (Nuttall 137). Recently there has been a shift in theoretical thinking, which includes whiteness as a subject of study in order to dislodge it from its perceived position as the standard. In shifting the focus, and introducing whiteness as a subject, its assumed position is challenged and, consequently, the ideas that create whiteness become possible to be deconstructed. A new idea that the study bring out is that whiteness is not a fixed constant, but is a social concept based on an association of meanings. In short, it is now understood as a process that can be contested as well as deconstructed. (Ware et al. 25).

There are a number of prolific scholars who have introduced 'Whiteness Studies'. Some noteworthy ones are Nelson M. Rodriguez, David R. Roediger, Matthew Frye Jacobson and Toni Morrison.

However, the study of whiteness as a social construction takes its starting point from Du Bois, a prolific author whose collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk*, was a seminal work in African-American literature. His later work *Black Reconstruction in America* published in 1935 challenged the prevailing orthodoxy that blacks were responsible for the failures of the Reconstruction era. He wrote the first scientific treatise in the field of sociology; and he published three autobiographies, each of which contains insightful essays on sociology, politics and history. Du Bois was far ahead of the curve in the study of whiteness. Early in his career he wrote about white privilege in his 1920 essay collection *Darkwater*. It is around his works that the whiteness scholarship that emerged in the 1990s took growth. Such work drew on Du Bois's insights to induce white people to understand their privilege and listen to the wisdom of those people that whiteness has often silenced. In the spirit of Du Bois, whiteness scholars asked whites to see themselves as the oppressed have historically viewed them, in order to gain a new frame of reference on power and oppression in the society. (Kincheloe 62)

David R. Roediger's book *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991) is one of the earliest among the historical whiteness works. It focuses on how white workers in the antebellum United States came to identify as white. Roediger's essential starting point is that because the white working class in the United States emerged in a slaveholding republic, its members came to define themselves by what they were not, slaves and blacks. Roediger pays particular attention to the efforts of Irish immigrants who faced extreme prejudice and who try to differentiate themselves from black slaves, establish their own whiteness, and thereby prove their 'Americanness'. (Engles)

Toni Morrison's '*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the American Literary Imagination'*, which was published in 1992, has been cited by scholars in many disciplines as a key precursor to the sudden increase of critical whiteness studies that occurred a few years later. Perhaps because Morrison's powerful critique took the form of literary criticism, subsequent literary studies on whiteness has surpassed the attempts of many other disciplines. Morrison observes the pervasive silence that surrounds race in nineteenth-century canonical literature. Observing the ways in which the 'Africanist' African-American presence pervades this literature, Morrison has called for an investigation of the ways in which whiteness operates in American canonical literature. (Engles 27)

Nonetheless, most scholarly studies of literary whiteness appeared after *Playing in the Dark*, and most of these responded in one way or another to Morrison's call for a scholarly exploration of an "Africanist" presence in American literature, and to understand the ironic system of dependency that white identity has on representations of minority people.(Engles 28)

Nelson M. Rodriguez wrote 'Emptying the Content of Whiteness: Toward an Understanding of the Relation between Whiteness and Pedagogy' which calls for the creation of 'pedagogies of whiteness' as a counter-hegemonic act proposed on the need to redefine whiteness in anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-sexist ways. (Rodriguez 33)

Matthew Frye Jacobson's *Whiteness of a Different Color* (1998). Jacobson's overall subject is the same as Roediger's, which focus on how people came to "be"

white. However, Jacobson uses as his subjects European immigrants in the United States during the period between 1790 and 1965, and his focus is on how other Americans perceived those immigrants, not on their self-perception. Jacobson's broad scope enables him to depart from a binary view of race, which is black/white, and to explore the close and often problematic relationship among race, ethnicity, and nationality. (Kolchin 155)

Scholarship on literary whiteness has been widely interdisciplinary, with references to related work in anthropology, history, sociology, film studies, education, philosophy and other fields. It focuses not only on America's literature, but also that of England, South Africa, Canada, Australia, and other places where white hegemony has imposed itself. These scholars frequently use literature as a way to reveal or illuminate realities of actual racial formations, but they often acknowledge as well that literature itself can constitute a penetrating critique of whiteness. (Baines 18)

In South Africa the creation of whiteness becomes even more complex because of the nation's historically artificial construction of race, the history of apartheid and its subsequent collapse. The change in South Africa's political economy has provided an essential change in the way in which race is inscribed within the political sphere. Despite this shift in state policy, the boundaries that contain the construction of whiteness as a position of power have not been broken down. According to Nuttall, it becomes important to separate the construction of whiteness from racism, as they are not interchangeable. The emphasis, in other words, has been more racism than on race, and this has tended to prevent a complex investigation into how race works. (Nuttall 118 -19)

There are two opposing themes with regards to whiteness and its future in international debates. The first debate conceptualises a society without racial boundaries. This refers to a society in which race has no influence on the construction of the self and is not considered a marker of identity. This debate is problematic as Toni Morrison states: 'The world does not become raceless or will not become unracialized by assertion. The act of enforcing racelessness in literary discourse is itself a racial act.' (1992:46). The concept of race does not form in isolation and is not static, but constitutes a multitude of ideologies that are continually shifting in order to keep up with social realities. The second debate postulates that whiteness needs to be shifted from its position of power since race will always be a part of an identity. According to this debate, the challenge is to change the way in which society understands race in order to erase the associated positions of power and privilege. (Kolchin 161)

Within a South African context the study of whiteness takes on added complications because of the nation's diverse and violent history. With the advent of democracy the notion of whiteness shifts, as there is a perceived social change.

Since literature reflects the reality and history of the surrounding world, it allows writers to create, inform and mirror society. Because writers are able to explore aspects of their social surroundings through the literary imagination, many white writers confessed that their motivation stems partly from a recognition that their "whiteness" ties them historically into a system of race privilege from which it is hard to escape. By providing a critique of whiteness, they begin to 'situate themselves' outside that system. (Ware et al. 29) As Morrison explains, whiteness and identity are premised in language, and writers are able to 'transform aspects of their social grounding into aspects of language.'(Morrison 4)

The change in society which results out of the transition of the apartheid state into a democracy is reflected in the literature of South Africa. New subjects and themes have emerged and post-apartheid literature is inclined to manifest the sense of unease and displacement within a new South Africa. Through the medium of literature themes like 'whiteness' are questioned. As Ashcroft states: 'In effect, all writing in South Africa is by definition a form of protest or acquiescence … since all writing in South Africa has obvious and immediate political consequences.' (83-84).

Identity and culture, which have become a major socio-political issue occupying centre stage in political, social, and even economic discourses, have been taken up by literature as well. Cultural identity is a rapidly expanding field of study and research devoted primarily to the examination of how identity is created within and maintained by given cultural contexts. In South Africa, a nation characterised by diversity of languages and cultures, questions of identity and culture have become eminent. Given the country's history of racial tension, political discontent and social inequalities, it is still trying to articulate its identity and define its role both within the context of the African continent and within global society at large. A present issue is the relationship between identity and culture within the social reality of South Africa. (Nuttal:2004) In this study, focus will be given on the issue of white identity and how identity is articulated in the two novels of Nadine Gordimer. For this, an introduction on Gordimer's role in the canon of South African literature is important.

Though South African literature in English is of recent formation, tracing its origins in the sketches of Thomas Pringle in the middle of the last century, it has with the passage of time become the most dominant mode. It has monopolized and totalized within its

parameters the literary imagination of the South African experience. South Africa's fraught political history, with its continual inroads into the lives of ordinary people, has given rise to remarkable literary achievements. The establishment of a democratic system of government and the ending of state-sponsored racism make it possible to offer a survey of the entire history of South African literature from a vantage point that was formerly unavailable. Though the present South Africa is still far from a picture of serenity, the challenges that face the reborn nation remain considerable, and its writers continue to explore the difficulties and dangers of 21st Century life, both at home and at the global level.

The most common themes of Nadine Gordimer's are love and politics. Behind the human relations in her novel, there is the same search for an identity, a self-confirmation, and a wish to belong and exist. For Gordimer, the novel and the short story are instruments to penetrate a society that defends itself against scrutiny, and hides in censorship and hypocrisy. She enters the most intimate regions to show how private life is violated by race issues. She writes from within the personal sphere and make it public. Her characters live in the shadow of violence, threatened by unpredictable danger. Through her stories we see the problems of races and classes, conventions and codes and a counterweight to these.

Today, Nadine Gordimer lives and writes in a half-formed society in which blacks and whites have agreed to bring about a multiracial democracy. But the apartheid past is still unforgotten, and hate crimes against whites are common. (Nixon 101)

A key paragraph in Gordimer's book of Harvard lectures, *Writing and Being* (1994) is this:

> Only through a writer's explorations could I have begun to discover the human dynamism of the place I was born to and the time it was to be enacted. Only in the prescient dimension of the imagination could I bring together what had been deliberately broken and fragmented; fit together the shapes of living experience, my own and that of others, without which a whole consciousness is not attainable. I had to be part of the transformation of my place in order for it to know me." (130)

This echoes what have been mentioned earlier of the scope of literature and Gordimer's approach to writing. In the two selected novels, *The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter*, she paints a subtle political social background , yet she is able to provide an insight into the roots of the country's struggle and the mechanisms of change like a historian. She provides realistic portrayals of forbidden friendships, personal conflicts, and political networks. She not only shows life under apartheid, but even beyond it to the extent of risking herself of censorship. In her characters we see the effect of contemporary South African history. In this way, the historical background becomes a key factor in understanding her novels.

The Lying Days was written at the very beginning of the era of institutionalised racism in South Africa. It is based on the era of 1950s which saw a rapid enactment of a programme of apartheid legislation by the newly elected National Party government. Although this provoked the Defiance Campaign of the early 50's, the forces which at that time opposed apartheid had not yet been developed into a sustained civil disobedience. Autobiographical to a great extent, *The Lying Days* preceded the big events of the 1950s, including the Defiance Campaign itself and the Treason Trial of 1956. The novel begins with a transgression by the protagonist, which becomes a sort of anticipation of what to

expect in the character's growth. Young Helen quarrels with her mother and as a result ventures out of her safe white community into the turbulent and colourful atmosphere of a nearby township. This first voyage into a place she should not be is a profound experience for her, both frightening and exciting. This experience serves as a template for the rest of the novel where we see phases of Helen's transition into adulthood. Throughout the narration, the reader is made aware of the fact that apartheid was a shaping force in the psychology of Helen Shaw's growth to young womanhood.

The most explicit and sustained historical reference of *The Lying Days* is to the victory of the National Party in the general election of 1948. Remarking on the rise to power of what she calls the 'Fascist Nationalists', the novel's narrator, Helen Shaw, notes its effect on the people around her: the moral climate of guilt and fear and oppression, almost as if the real climate of the elements had changed, bringing about actual personality changes that affected even the most intimate conduct of their lives. Indeed, in following her fortunes from the colonial strictures of a small Transvaal mining town, to a romantic interlude at the sea in Natal, to the experiences of university, love, and politics in Johannesburg, the novel is concerned to encounter not only the moment of 1948, but the problems of South African identity, and South African literary identity, in general.

By the 1970s Gordimer had moved out of the mainstream liberalism of most South African whites' opposition to apartheid, and had begun moving toward a more radical literary formulation. The wide scope of her next novel, *Burger's Daughter* (1979), set in France and England as well as South Africa, reflects a desire to put to the international stage many of the political issues in South Africa, which were not simply about race but

also of class and class conflict. The novel is Gordimer's first extended portrayal of white revolutionaries in South Africa. The story and growth of its protagonist, Rosa, takes place in the context of the rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa. Perhaps as much as it was a threat to official white supremacy, Black Consciousness was a challenge to the identity of white radicalism. With this as the challenge, *Burger's Daughter* becomes a historical project to work out the appropriate historical response, and Rosa is made to engage with it in a most direct and powerful way. In the novel, Rosa comes across Baasie in London, who, as a small child had been like a brother to her. Brought into the Burger household because of his own father's political involvement, he and Rosa for a time grew up together like siblings. As an adult, however, he bitterly rejects both that brotherhood and privilege which both set him aside from the rest of his people while at the same time, he feels, belittled him. Most of all he rejects the heritage of Lionel Burger because there are hundreds of black men, including his own father, who have also died in jail, yet whose names are forgotten along with their untold heroism. And Rosa in her situation, he suggests, is no different from all the other whites. And this is where the further historical engagement of the novel is apparent, when Rosa returns to South Africa in the midst of the Soweto revolt of 1976. At this time, Rosa faced the challenge of practicing her radicalism to fight against her own race, the whites. She became detained under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. Her confinement is solitary in more than one respect. In the aftermath of Black Consciousness and Soweto there is no special glory which attaches to her situation, and in contrast to Lionel, whose role had been pre-eminent, hers can at most be secondary and supportive. And therefore her solitude becomes far greater than her father's.

Unlike many white English-speaking writers from Southern Africa, who chose or were forced to emigrate to Britain, and unlike most black South African writers, who have been censored, imprisoned, exiled or killed, Nadine Gordimer has been able to continue to live and write in her own country, and thus to chronicle for her readers both the mundane details and high tragedy of life in South Africa. However, she wisely does not purport to speak for the nonwhite majority in her country. Her fiction centers on the place she inhabits, most of her central characters are white, English- speaking, middle-class professionals, predominantly but not exclusively female, from whose point of view she interprets the larger society, and the experience of being white in a racially charged South Africa.

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The Lying Days, published in 1953, is the first novel by Nadine Gordimer. It was written at the very beginning of the era of institutionalised racism in South Africa. It charts the growing political awareness of a young white woman, Helen, towards small-town life and South African racial division. In order to understand the story in its entire context, the historical background is important for emphasis. The most precise historical reference is to the victory of the National Party in the general election of 1948, a turning point in the country's history. The importance of this event is marked in the novel by its impact on the growth of Helen as a character. In this election, the ruling United Party was ousted by the National Party which was led by Daniel Francois Malan. Due to legislation relating to franchise requirements, very few people of Coloured and Asian descent were able to vote in this election. Africans had been banned altogether since the late 1930s. Taking this opportunity, The National Party preyed on the deep rooted fear of White South Africans for black political aspirations, and they promised to implement a policy of strict racial segregation in all spheres of living if victorious. The Nationalists labeled this new system of government 'apartheid'. In *The Lying Days* the narrator Helen calls the National Party the 'Fascist Nationalists'. Helen's personal struggle to hold onto her identity is juxtaposed with the struggle of a South Africa divided by race.

The story opens with a quarrel between the narrator, Helen Shaw, and her mother. In this scene, Helen refuses to join her parents on an outing, a social gathering of the middle-class families of white officials on a South African gold mine. Instead, Helen, who is eight or nine, wanders off into the native township outside the Mine compound, and gets her first glimpse of the lives of black South Africans. In the end, though, Helen wanders

back to her parents. This chapter is highly metaphorical to the themes of defiance and identity quest of the story. One passage reads:

> Even when I was smaller, fairy tales had never interested me much. To me, brought up into the life of a South African mine, stories of children living the ordinary domestic adventures of the upper-middle-class English family-which was the only one that existed for children's books published in England in the thirties- were weird and exotic enough. Nannies in uniform, governesses and ponies, nurseries and playrooms and snow fights-all these common places of European childhood were as unknown and therefore as immediately enviable as the life of princesses in legendary castles to the English children for whom the books were written. I had never read a book in which I myself was recognizable; in which there was a "girl" like Anna who did the housework and the cooking and called the mother and father Missus and Baas; in which the children ate and lived closely with their parents and played in the lounge and went to the bioscope. So it did not need the bounds of credulity to be stretched to princes who changed into frogs or houses that could be eaten like gingerbread to transport me to an unattainable world of the imagination. The sedate walk of two genteel infant Tories through an English park was other world enough for me. (The Lying Days 11)

The above passage is the first instance where we see a glimpse of identity crisis in the protagonist Helen. As seen above, she expresses her inability to identify with the story of white Europeans that she reads about, the race she is supposed to belong to. Young as

she is, she already begins to question her existence, and she does not need fairy tales to transport her to a world of imagined fantasies because ordinary English life was different enough from her own. In the next few pages, we sense a curiosity in her to explore life, she says:

> I went along, looking, looking. But I felt my eyes were not quick enough, and darted here and there at once, fluttering over everything, unable to see anything singly and long enough. (10)

She is both charmed and repelled by the vivid bazaar with its strange-smelling food, mysterious medicines, and crush of sweating humanity. It is a stimulating, sensuous world in which her imagination and body come alive in a new way. But in her exploration here her parents' influence can still be very much observed, and so by her parents' admonitions, she saw the black mine boys as sinister, "filthy," and "disgusting." Shocked and stirred by the sight of a man urinating, she retreats to her parents' world, the protected white world of tea, lavender water, and freshly ironed tennis clothes.

When Helen turns seventeen, the dull pattern of her life in the mine is fatally disturbed by her trip to the coast. Here she finds love, and a world and a frame of reference with which to abhor the little world her parents are so careful to be part of. She undergoes an abrupt sexual awakening that is also emotional and intellectual. She enters a secret, forbidden area of experience which disturbs the smooth surface of her life and createsa rift between herself and her parents. In her narration, she says:

> For the first time since I had left home, I felt lonely. But it was not for my mother and father or anything. I felt that I had left, but rather for something that I had not yet had, but that I believed was to come: a time of special intimate gaiety and friendship with some vague companion composed purely of an imaginative ideal of youth-an ideal that I would never formulate now, and that only later, when it had gone, would recognize as having existed all the time unnoticed in myself, because it was nothing concrete, but just the dreams, the uncertainty, the aspiration itself. (52)

Through Helen's contemplation from the above, we see a growing awareness of something she misses by her secluded existence in the mine. She questions herself further through the opinions of her lover Ludi, who made her realize the narrowness of life in the mine. Of Ludi himself she says she "could not fit him into the inherited categories of [her] child's experience",(45) and this makes her anxious for the unfamiliar. Yet she was highly affected by his comment that the Mine, her childhood existence "is the narrowest, most mechanical, unrewarding existence you could think of in any nightmare."(49) The sense of discontentment she has always felt as a child, and which confounded her, is crystalised by Ludi who shows her the futility of mechanical existence. He triggers her introspection when he says:

> You drink in the pubs together and you play tennis on Saturdays together and you go to dances organized by the ladies. You live by courtesy of the Mine, for the Mine, in the Mine. (49)

Now bent on understanding what she believes to be a “real flow of life," she returns to study English literature at the university. Yet the literature that she studies only exposes the paucity of white South African culture, which is neither European nor African. As Helen complains:

> But in nothing that I read could I find anything that approximated to my own life; to our life on a gold mine in South Africa. Our life was not regulated by the seasons and the elements of weather and emotion, like the life of peasants; nor was it expressed through movements in art, through music heard, through the exchange of ideas, like the life of Europeans shaped by great and ancient cities, so that they were Parisians or Londoners as identifiably as they were Pierre or James. Nor was it even any- thing like the life of Africa, the continent, as described in books about Africa; perhaps further from this than from any. What did the great rivers, the savage tribes, the jungles and the hunt for huge palm-eared elephants have to do with the sixty miles of Witwatersrand veld that was our Africa? (91)

The note of estrangement is a theme that runs throughout the book. Imagination fails against the hard realities of adult life. Thus, the title and epigraph of *The Lying Days*, which clearly announce its theme of growth and disillusionment, are taken from Yeats:

> Though 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. (Yeats 33)

As suggested in the alluded poem, the autobiographical pattern of the growth and education of an intellectual heroine make an explicit theme of identity crisis and alienation. The significant subject is then the heroine's predicament as a white girl and woman who rejects her given place in colonial society. And in her rebellion against her limited role as model daughter of the mine, she identifies with the mass of dislocated and oppressed black Africans. Of course, her empathy with the blacks is problematic because by virtue of her white skin she is an alien, and “a destroyer" (121) in Africa. In this way, Helen is exiled in some way both from home and from the blacks purely because of her race. It is only in the later novel, *Burger's Daughter*, that the heroine solves the contradictions of her existence and returns to South Africa to take up a role in the black struggle, as will be observed.

Except in *The Lying Days* and a few of her stories Gordimer has not been concerned much with Jewishness. However, being Jewish must have set her apart as a child, and thus must have helped to give her the partial outsider's view of white South African society. This is evident in *The Lying Days* when Helen expresses a profound envy of her Jewish friend, Joel Aaron. Towards the end of the novel, we see a formulation of Helen’s feeling:

> I envy you. A new country. Oh. I know it's poor, hard, but a beginning. Here there's only the chaos of a disintegration. And where do people like us belong. Not with the whites screaming to hang onto white supremacy. Not with the blacks-they don't want us. So where? To land up like Paul with a leg and an arrn nailed to each side? Oh, I envy you, Joel. And I envy you your Jewishness.

> At this he made a little noise of astonishment. "Why that, for God's sake?"
>
> Because now I'm homeless and you're not. The wandering Jew role's reversed. South Africa's a battleground; you can't belong on a battleground. So the accident of your Jewish birth gives you the excuse of belonging somewhere else. (359)

What the above passage also shows is the deep longing to belong to a particular group she can identify with. Within the context of South Africa's diversity, the question of identity has always been problematic. Central to the problematic of identity is whether, in the context of South Africa's history of racial polarisation, political intolerance, social inequality, and ideological divisions, the binary opposition of black and white adequately defines the concept. The crisis for Helen reaches its climax during the general strike when she is caught in the midst of a riot in a black township. What appalls her most is her own lack of involvement, her inability to act in any way as she watches numbly from behind the rolled-up windows of a car. Another issue is the manner in which identity articulates itself in relation to the other. Helen at university tries to find a place to belong, and mixes with a group of liberal students, including Joel Aaron, who introduces her to the pleasures of live music, paintings and sculptures. But it was only after she befriended a black student named Mary Seswayo, that Helen began to realize the concept of white privilege, and her own individuality as someone who is guilty of it. She describes their first meeting:

> And as I came through I saw on the other side of the washbasins an African girl drying her hands. She stood there in her nurse-girl's beret and little dark

> dress looking at me quietly, half as if she expected a challenge of her right to be there, for the University was the one place in all Johannesburg and one of the few places in all South Africa where a black girl could wash her hands in the same place as a white girl, and this fact, so much more tellingly than the pronouncement that there was no color bar, took some getting used to for both the African students and the white.(99-100)

The glimpse of the black world which both frightened and attracted Helen as a girl, becomes a reality which she discovers through her friendship with Mary. It is only then that Helen realizes the things she has taken for granted are out of reach for her friend, and she begins to realize the privilege of her whiteness, and the guilt that comes along with such a realization. At one point she says: “I made a little noise of impatient dismissal; conscious at the same time that this in itself was a luxury only a white person could afford.” (185)

The autobiographical aspect of Helen’s experiences during her time at university is significant, because it is what shapes Gordimer as a writer. Like Helen, books guided Gordimer’s critical perception of her surroundings. She has described how she "expropriated" British literature to serve her own setting and situation, how George Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, and E.M. Forster, freed from "the dead weight" of their tradition, guided her intellectual quest. (Interpreters 15) She found *A Passage to India*, with its emphasis on the complex personal relations between "the hollowness of the Haves and the strength-without power- of the Have-nots" the best novel about colonialism, while the heroine of Middlemarch, Dorothea Brooke, was her favorite female character. Lawrence encouraged

her to look beyond the "genteely-hypocritical" provincialism of white South Africa, and to seek the truth through her senses. (Interpreters 19) Not surprisingly, Gordimer was influenced by many of the same books as Helen. *The Lying Days* shows Gordimer's early interest in D.H. Lawrence, who she believes is a model for aspiring artists trying to break free of middle-class taboos. She says:

> "The whole existential aspect of life was never discussed. I, of course, approached it through books, thought about it on my own. It was as secret as it would have been to discuss my parents' sex life. It as something so private because I felt that there was nobody with whom I could talk about these things, just nobody. (Hurwitt 92-93).

Just like Helen, a year at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg introduced her to the society of intellectuals, artists and left-wing political activity. In *The Lying Days*, Helen at first easily embraces her parents' values and only gradually, almost involuntarily, turns against them. She is not dramatically self-destructive, and quite malleable in the hands of people, especially her lover Paul, and easily influenced by events. However, Gordimer uses Helen's impressionable personality to portray the influence of the social climate upon character. Many of her characters are such barometers of specific conditions and attitudes, observers rather than actors. They do not pit themselves heroically against obstacles and injustice, rather they find themselves compelled to act in particular ways by their situation. Only after spending time with Mary, did Helen realizes the real plight of the blacks, which is a convenient way for the author to bring to the reader's notice the condition of apartheid's blacks. Helen says of Mary:

> Because I was white I continually forgot that Mary was not allowed here, could not use that entrance, must not sit on this bench. Like all urban Africans she had learned to walk warily between taboos as a child keeping on the squares and off the lines of paving. But everywhere had been mine to walk in, and out of sheer habit of freedom, I found it difficult to restrict my steps to hers. I remember once going into town with her to buy some textbooks, and when I wanted to go to a cloakroom, realizing for the first time in my life that because she was black she couldn't even go to the lavatory if she wanted to. There simply was no public cloakroom for native men or women in the whole shopping center of Johannesburg. (167)

As mentioned before, considering what she sees later as the story progresses, Helen's first foray into blackness as a small girl becomes just a small picture of the huge canvas of the living condition of blacks in South Africa. After her exciting foray into the streets, and her eventual return to her parents' tennis group, she moves obediently through childhood and early adolescence. A precocious and dutiful only child, she becomes "quite one of" her parents' adult set. Except for that moment of exploration as a child, she further notices little outside the confines of the world defined by white Atherton. But even then, a trace of her rebellious nature, which as an adult makes her refuse to wear a hat because it is what "the bourgeoise women" do can be seen at one point, where she narrates:

> Between the two men talking above my head I heard the word "strike"; "- But it wasn't a strike, was it?" I said quickly. My father smiled down at me. "Well, yes, it was, really. They didn't refuse to work, but they wouldn't eat; that's a

> strike, too." He had told me often about the 1922 strike of white miners, when there were shots in the streets of Atherton, and my grandmother, his mother, had stayed shut up in her little house for days, until the commando of burghers came riding in to restore order. To me the word "strike" carried with it visions of excitement and danger; something for which, alas, I had been born too late. (30)

Because of this conviction, she lives a mundane existence, and a black miners' strike which occurs later becomes merely an occasion for her to eat buttered scones at the manager's house. World War II passes, unremarked upon, except for a fundraising dance which provides her an opportunity to get her first long dress. At this stage, Helen exemplifies Simone de Beauvoir's theory of the conflicts of girlhood, in which the young girl, torn between her desire to be an active subject and the rewards of being a passive object, is offered powerful "inducements to complicity." (Beauvoir 42) Beauvoir contrasts the roles offered to girls and blacks because of their relatively disadvantaged status vis-a-vis white males, both groups have incentives to question and rebel, to set themselves against the established order. But white girls, unlike blacks, are offered a privileged place, albeit that of a passive object, within the hierarchy, which tempts them to collude in their own exploitation. De Beauvoir's comments highlight the conflicts inherent in the white girls' and women's identification with blacks.

Part of Helen’s conflict is the challenge she faces of developing an Afro-centred consciousness different from that of her mother, who is trapped in a colonial mentality. This is where indirect discourse comes in. When her mother insists that the gentle novels of English family life are the materials a girl should grow up not knowing what life is like

(32), Helen is bemused. Brought up into the life of a South African mine, she finds these stories of children enjoying upper-middle-class English family domesticity weird and exotic as well as alienating, primarily because she cannot read a book in which she herself was recognizable. There are no fiction in which she finds a “girl” like Anna, the African servant, “who did the housework and the cooking and called the mother and father Missus and Baas.” (11) The real world, for Helen, lies outside the isolation of her white estate, to the unfamiliar part of her town, which constitutes a world that did not exist in books. In these observations, the intrusive adult persona in the narration explains that “if this was the beginning of disillusion, it was also the beginning of Colonialism,”(11) which is, “the identification of the unattainable distant with the beautiful”(11) as well as the substitution of overseas for fairyland. What Helen does not state directly makes the reader interrogate what she misses.

At the end of the novel, Helen's loss of innocence and the knowledge of her own passive complicity in evil, forces her to leave Africa for Europe. But before embarking upon her exile the bewildered and disillusioned Helen re-encounters Joel Aaron, who is en route to the new country of Israel in search of his destiny. In the voluptuous setting of the seaside resort, they confess their love: " I talked to him as I have never talked to any living being: as I have talked to this pen _ and this paper. Joel took away from me the burden of my ego.” (357). In the last image of the novel, a phoenix rises from the ashes, while black children sing in the night; Helen vows to return to Africa as her connection to South Africa is symbolically renewed. She says:

> Whatever it was I was running away from--the risk of love? The guilt of being white? The danger of putting ideals into practice?--I'm not running away from now because I know I'm coming back here. (367)

The contrived ending does not resolve the issues Gordimer has raised for her heroine. The central problem is summed up in a metaphor that resonates throughout the story. The image is of white South Africa as having "a picnic in a beautiful graveyard where the people are buried alive under your feet" (358). The image of a buried black body, the theme of a white South Africa haunted by the black, is at the heart of *The Lying Days*. At this symbolic level Helen's quest is to resolve her psychic apartheid, to integrate the buried "black" aspect of herself. For Helen, blackness is connected to what she calls the "real flow of life" (12) which is underneath the surface of the white Mine compound and the white city. From the start the image of blackness is connected to the imagery of water, and to sex, knowledge and growth. Joel, who is a Jew, and who grew up at the Native Stores, and therefore not quite as 'white' as Helen, helps Helen make contact with blackness. That he is male gives him the freedom of movement, the autonomy, that Helen does not feel she can claim for herself. It is only after Joel points out the struggle of the black students, does she only begin to notice herself. Joel's observation is poignant:

> It's bloody difficult with these natives. Bloody difficult for them. No matter how clever they are, there's just that lack of common background knowledge- you know, there's nothing to back up what they've learned out of books. So some white fellow who messes around half the time playing poker has a better chance of bluffing his way through than the poor devil of a native…" (360)

Later in the story, again through the vehicle of a man, this time her lover Paul, she makes symbolic emotional and sexual contact with blacks. However, when the apartheid laws become more strict in the years following the 1948 election, Helen and Paul's love affair is gradually destroyed. When the prohibition on sex between people of different races is enforced, Helen and Paul feel that their own privacy has been invaded, and they can no longer make love.

Thus Helen's private, internal movement toward integration is set against the public, external movement toward the hardening of segregation. Just as Helen begins to overcome her psychic apartheid, in practical terms she is increasingly barred from contact with the black world. This leads to her increasing alienation, not only from her parents, the university and Paul, but also from part of herself. She moves from an innocent acceptance of the established order of white supremacy to an intuitive understanding of apartheid. Just when her inner barrier starts to crumble, the public barriers go up in the form of the Afrikaner Nationalist government's consolidation of apartheid. By the end of the novel she is shut off, divided from the buried black part of herself. However in the last pages of the novel is a turning point, which opens a path for Helen and for Gordimer's subsequent characters. Helen finds Joel Aaron again, and what is buried begins to rise to the surface. The sea, symbol of self-knowledge for Helen, is reinvoked. Gordimer uses the metaphor of the shifting seabed, its rocks turning over to reveal new worlds, connected to the chilling simile of South Africa as a white picnic ground over a black graveyard. At the end of the novel, Gordimer attempts to heal Helen's alienation by resolving the conflict between the themes of integration and segregation. But it is an apparent unrealistic ending that reflects

the intangible problematic nature of connection for Helen and it seems, for Gordimer as a writer at this point.

Questions often arise around the persistent opposition between black and white African identity and European identity. From this flows the logical question of what might constitute a truly South African national identity, a question that has sparked intense debate within various social, political and literary communities in South Africa. The debate is largely based on the perceived need to construct a functional definition of nationhood. The opposition occurs within a colonialist discursive construct where European identity is considered superior and the quintessence of excellence, while African identity is viewed as epitomising inferiority, ineptitude and decline. At the end of the *The Lying Days*, the depth of conflict in identity for the misfits of this established order is shown in the speech of Joel, who says:

> Sooner or later, everyone gets the feeling he wants to come back. I don't know why it should be, for people like us, really: no roots in the real Africa-you can't belong to the commercial crust thrown up by the gold mines. If you look at it honestly, my roots in the land must be away somewhere in a place never seen or known, where my parents come from. In Latvia. Or somewhere else, even further back. That's where they must be… though I can't say I feel them. I was home here, right. But on the surface, on the superimposed Africa, this rickety thing, everybody's makeshift Europe. (143)

What is apparent here is that, like other colonized countries, colonialism caused many distortions in the history of the South African society that the contemporary society

cannot divest themselves of foundations of inequality by attempting to avoid the unpalatable past. Colonialism, which works primarily on the process of a constructed 'Other' to differentiate its victims, that is, through a process of differentiation and thus identification. In the 'makeshift' Europe, whites children like Helen question their inherited identity as the coloniser, and sees themselves as some form of 'other'. She states:

> And we white children had grown up innocently accepting and perpetuating this until now, when slowly we began to turn on ourselves, slowly we began to unravel what was tightly knit in us, to change the capacity of our hearts, the cast of our sense of humor, the limits of our respect. It was as painful and confusing as the attempt to change what has grown up with the flesh always is. (160)

In the novel, the narrator describes that all over South Africa the ever-patient "vultures" (301) are hovering every year, every month a little closer to the parched veld, to the people in the cities, to the complacent and rich and the petrified poor. There is a vivid description in the narration:

> There is poverty in every city in the world, and in most of them there is that thing known as charity. But "in South Africa there is one difference, a difference so great that the whole conception of charity must be changed. The people among whom Paul worked were not the normal human wastage of a big industrial city but the entire black-skinned population on whose labor the city rested ; too poor to maintain themselves decently because no matter what their

> energy, their skill, their labor was not allowed value above subsistence level.' (301)

In comparison to Gordimer's other works, this novel is a very gentle swipe at the political and social system of the time. Though there can be a lot more damning of the excesses and naivety of the white well to do classes, it is merely acknowledged in *The Lying Days*. And in *Burger's Daughter*, she takes full attack on the evil system by following the aftermath of a destroyed communist activist family.

The significance of the title is seen by the end of the story, where everyone, in the eyes of Helen, seems to be living a lie. Her boyfriend Paul, who is first seen as a hero figure, turns out to be someone who both supports and fights the system. Other examples are her family and the mine town, which staunchly adhere to white supremacy, and her liberal university friends with their lofty communist ideals. It seems that only the natives are true to their existence. Already she has acknowledged that white South Africans must be born and die with guilt, yet even after acknowledging all these, Helen never seems to decide to take drastic action to confront her inner conflict. She only admits that in her desperate attempt to avoid a life of lying, avoiding the mine town for instance, she had been living a lie more than anyone. And though her friendship with Mary pushes a number of race boundaries, she agrees with Joel that a mere contact with the blacks would not solve the main issues. Joel sums this up when he says:

> It isn't the hypocrisy of considering that something has been done to right wrongs because you yourself act as if they have been righted. The color bar isn't down because you've invited an Indian to dinner…(161)

Apart from other things, what the novel shows on the outset is that South Africa is a whites-only annex of European society, with middle-class suburbs, Sunday outings, and a blindness about anything lurking below the surface. The vast black population is regarded as if it was there only to serve whites in industry and at home. Therefore, the shifting significance of imagery associated with physical closeness, especially touching and holding, provides an in depth picture of the affects of intimacy on the whites. One example is Helen's physical closeness with Mary, which affects her deeply, as she remarks:

> It must have been fifteen years since I had been in such close contact with an African; not since that other breast, longer ago than I could remember, the breast of my native nanny had I casually felt human warmth, life, coming to me from a black body. (126)

Another imagery of physical connection is the lover's embrace that produces in Helen a "marvellously full consciousness of being alive" (211). Touching or grasping is thus depicted in the novel as a sort of invisible bridge, where hands span the gap between the isolated individual and some attractive force outside the self. In Gordimer's later work, however, imagery of contact takes on negative connotations. In *Burger's Daughter* touching is for Conrad, a young drifter and perhaps police informer, the key act in the violently self-destructive vision of his finger stuck into a light socket. However, the white

liberal's conviction that in a reformed South Africa whites and nonwhites will touch in a condition of equality and fellowship may be fanciful, and acknowledged in the novel by Joel when he says:

> The thing we're all piously rolling our eyes to heaven for-a contact between a white and a black simply as human beings-nothing else… Simply, nothing- it's simply the Trusted Black Mammy situation, that's all. And you know how much good that sort of good will has done for race relations. (120)

The novel's resonant metaphor of white South Africa as "a picnic in a beautiful graveyard where the people are buried alive under your feet" (358) is a profound imagery which showcase white South Africa as a false paradise built on the suffering and destruction of the blacks. It is a paradise of death whose horrors Helen uncovers as she digs beneath the lying surface of her country. She fails in her quest to resolve her psychic apartheid, to integrate the buried black aspect of herself which is linked to the real flow of life underneath the surface of the white mine compound and the white city. Helen's private, internal movement toward integration is set against the public, external hardening of segregation. Just as her inner barriers start to come down, the public barriers go up in the form of the Afrikaner Nationalist government's consolidation of apartheid. By the end of the novel she is shut off, divided from “the buried black part of herself.” (Visel 120-121)

A remarkable aspect of the novel is that Gordimer manages to keep Helen's story so firmly grounded in her personal relationships, with her parents, her friends and her lover, that it never becomes a simple statement of protest against the regime of apartheid. It remains a rich personal narrative about the growth of a white girl amidst black hostility,

about youthful rebellion, the difficulty of holding onto ideals and finding one's identity. The subject of guilt resonates throughout Helen's identity development, and the struggle of that development is neatly summed up by her friend Isa when she says: " I'm all alone and you know this is no country for a white woman'" (166)

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In *Burger's Daughter*, published in 1979, Gordimer returns to the subject of her first novel, written more than two decades earlier, which is a coming of age story. The plot of the two novels is similar in that aspect. As seen in the previous chapter, *The Lying Days* chronicles Helen Shaw's journey in search of her true 'self' and identity. This journey is triggered by the coming to power of the Afrikaner Nationalists which results in both a personal and political disillusionment which force her to examine her life. In *Burger's Daughter*, the central character Rosa Burger comes of age during the treason trials and suppression of communism in the 50's and 60's. Like Helen, Rosa rebels against her parents, explores new ways of living, and leaves for Europe. However, *Burger's Daughter* is a striking transition from the first novel, showing the fragile sophistication and lushness of a cosmopolitan life through the eyes of a white Revolutionary's daughter.

For the narration, Gordimer employs an interior monologue to show the workings of the white mind in connection to the South African experience, and how race is a main factor in both identity conflict and formation. Rosa speaks essentially to herself, as if other speakers and listeners in her conversations are dead or unreachable. Judie Newman fittingly describes Rosa as the buried body whom the reader "unburies through the narration of the text." (Newman 2003:56) Rosa herself is the other in the mirror when she says, "I saw — see — that profile in a hand-held mirror directed towards another mirror... " (14) and "When they saw me outside the prison, what did they see?" (13) .

As the novel progresses, Rosa later falls in love with a French teacher, and finds a new dimension in her love affair that seems to put politics in a neat theoretical pigeonhole in her mind. Yet throughout the story, we see a sense of responsibility, and a need for identity which remains in her despite her vast experiences. In her father Lionel Burger's

house, which opened its doors to anyone supporting the struggle, regardless of colour, people discover their own kind of individualism, with the liberation that comes from belonging. Nevertheless, there is a political tension that comes from the inside, which Rosa termed a “human conspiracy, above all other kinds." (62) She sees clearly enough the limitations of that conspiracy, the exploitation, the psychological blackmail and the ultimate cost of being Burger's daughter to her individuality.

To describe it in brief, Gordimer’s *Burger's Daughter* is a historical novel. Though published in the United Kingdom in 1979 for the first time, its publication was banned in South Africa due to its historical content. Gordimer, in this novel, laid more emphasis on handling of anti-apartheid activism in South Africa. It is a novel about white anti-apartheid activists in South Africa seeking to overthrow the South African government. In telling the story of Rosa, the daughter of Lionel Burger, who is an activist, Gordimer portrayed the impingement of political developments on personal lives of people in a transitional society. In a 1980 interview, Gordimer stated that she was fascinated by the role of "white hard-core Leftists" in South Africa, and it is through them that she had conceived the idea for *Burger's Daughter*. (Gardner 169) The story is inspired by the work of Bram Fischer, an Afrikaner advocate and Communist who was Nelson Mandela's defence lawyer during his 1956 Treason Trial and his 1965 Rivonia Trial. (Steele NP) As a friend of many of the activist families, including Fischer's, Gordimer has a firsthand knowledge of the children of white activists, and how they were politically groomed for the struggle. While Gordimer never said the book was about Fischer, she did describe it in one of her interviews as "a coded homage" to him. So close is Gordimer’s portrayal to reality that Fischer's daughter

has said that she recognised their lives 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. (Harwitt 83)

For the inspiration for the novel, Gordimer has said that it came to her when she 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. (Cape 172) A similar scene is portrayed in the opening of the novel where we see a 14-year-old Rosa Burger waiting outside a prison to visit her detained mother. Thus, Rosa's struggle for life is well delineated in the novel, and the guilt of being white that we see in Helen in *The Lying Days* sees its completion in Rosa as she eventually takes part in the struggle.

Radha Rao, in her book has said: "It is a remarkable aspect of Gordimer's writing that in her yearning for a multi-racial South Africa, she is courageous starched attitudes would promptly and peremptorily discuss. Also, she is fulfilling her cultural task of showing that resistance to white domination comes not only from blacks but from whites as well. Both are finding ways of working beyond separatism to renewed vision of a culture unfragmented by apartheid." (Relocating102)

There are two voices and three levels of narration in *Burger's Daughter*. From the opening itself, the narrator presents three perspectives outside the prison. First, in an objective third person voice, Rosa describes herself at the prison gates, in her school uniform, with unwashed hair and prominent ears. She then describes herself through the eyes of one of her parents' comrades as a brave young heroine dedicated to the struggle. Rosa then switches to the more subjective first person:

> When they saw me outside the prison, what did they see? I shall never know. It's all concocted. I saw--see- that profile in a hand-held mirror directed towards another mirror… It's impossible to filter free of what I have learnt, felt, thought, the subjective presence of the schoolgirl. She's a stranger about whom some intimate facts are known to me, that's all. (13-14)

Though an event is narrated from the limited point of view of a third person, Rosa retells it in the first person, and finally she confesses the deeper truth of that same event. So there are levels of interpretation where Rosa's actions are interpreted differently from the limited points of view of her friends and the police surveillance. Furthermore, there are other layers of pretense, as in Rosa's pretended love for Noel de Witt, which, she confesses, was in fact real love. Rosa's first person description is certainly symbolic: the great studded door, the banal note with a hidden meaning, her grandmother's quilt, and the menstrual cramps are like ritualistic elements in an initiation ceremony, in which with one hand Rosa assumes her parents' activist mantle, while clutching in the other hand the talisman of her Afrikaner tribal roots.

In her interview with Stephen Gray, Gordimer describes her technique in *Burger's Daughter* as an extension of realism dictated by the subject:

> It's to get increasingly at what is really there. I suppose it comes about through finding that if you are drilling straight ahead, so to speak, you are constantly slipping and glancing off what is in the person, off the true center of their motivation and the conglomeration of circumstances and inherited attitudes that make up the inner personality. (Gray 265).

Rosa is presented as a conglomeration of circumstances and inherited attitudes. She recounts what has occurred around her in an attempt to answer the question, "Who am I?" Gordimer explains her use of voice and point of view in the novel as an attempt to describe the life of a political activist hidden under layers of protective colouring, and divided into compartments. She states:

> Rosa, who is herself a girl like any other girl…has roles imposed upon her by her mother and father; underneath those roles there's her own… So there are three roles somehow to be conveyed by the same character. It came to me, when I was pondering the book, since she was someone who had so much imposed upon her from the outside; since these were people who lived with layers of protective colouring in order to carry out what they thought was their purpose in life; since it has been my own experience, knowing people like that that there are infinite gradations of intimacy… Life lived in compartments, well, how do you approach somebody like that? And so the idea came to me of Rosa questioning her self 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 a book in the first person, to whom are you talking? (Gardner 161).

Thus she invented the characters of Conrad and Katya as representatives of completely different modes of living, against whom Rosa tests, questions, explains and justifies her own, finally coming at the end of the book to address her father, Lionel. Judie Newman suggests that the theme of the buried body in Gordimer's other novel, *The Conversationist*, is carried into Burger's Daughter in the character of Rosa, whose

personality we unbury as we read through the layers of interpretation surrounding her, and as she discovers herself. (Newman 98)

The book begins with a third-person description of 14 year old Rosa Burger with others waiting at the doors of the prison where her mother is detained, and ends fourteen years later with a description of some of the same people waiting at the doors of the same prison where Rosa Burger is now detained. Dates of arrests are given, which are historically significant, as are the month and year in which Rosa was born. Rosa's dates, anniversaries and festivals are those of the strikes, arrests and trials of the South African Communist Party, of which her parents were leading members and later celebrated martyrs. Lionel, a doctor, and Cathy, a union organizer, were married the week of a great miners strike on the Witwatersrand. And so the family history continues, through the Mineworkers' Union strike trial, her father's acquittal and re-arrest, the legal dissolution of the Communist Party in 1950, the Treason Trial of 1957, and the underground operations of the 1960's, during which period her father was arrested again, to die in the third year of his life sentence. As mentioned before, while the main characters are fictional, the public events are historical and are chronicled at length, and even checked by Lionel Burger's biographer. The novel is a history of the South African political opposition from 1946, the year of the Burgers' marriage, to 1977, when Rosa was imprisoned. The main events of the characters' lives are marked by historical milestones from the 1946 miner's strike, the coming to power of the Afrikaner Nationalists in 1948 which is also when Rosa was born, the Treason Trial of 1957, the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, to the Soweto riots in 1976, which coincide with Rosa's return to South Africa.

From the shape of the novel which begins and ends at the prison, it seems to be a memoir or confession spoken in the prison cell where Rosa has chosen to embrace her fate as Burger's daughter. As she says at the end of Part One, which is addressed to Conrad, "I may have been talking to a dead man, only to myself…" (210). Within this circular shape, Gordimer tells a story of rebellion, self-doubt, mixed allegiances and escape, which stands *Burger's Daughter* in a similar relation to *The Lying Days*.

Rosa, like Helen Shaw, rebels against her parents and the order they represent, but only after their deaths. For her as for Helen sexual love is subversive in undermining her allegiance, in this case, to the cause. Like Helen, Rosa dreams of going abroad to find her freedom, and she succeeds for a time. But this plot of the heroine seeking self-fulfillment beyond the narrow round of an oppressive colonial society is somewhat inverted in *Burger's Daughter*. Whereas Helen's personal struggles stem from guilt, Rosa is trapped by her inherited commitment to the politics of revolution. So in order to find herself, she starts by first abandoning that commitment. Instead of turning outward to the blacks or looking for solidarity with other women, Rosa turns inward to try to find the self that has been subordinated to her family and the cause.

Gordimer has recounted her fascination with the children and grandchildren of South African communists, who, instead of revolting against their parents' beliefs and way of life, "simply took up the torch" in "a relay race of generations" (Gardner 162). Rosa too, though burdened with her inheritance, comes back to take part in the struggle.

The story further explores the limits of this commitment by making Rosa "defect" from her family. 'Defect' is Rosa's word which points out the dilemma of her quest for

liberation, that she can only become free through betrayal and flight. As John Cooke observes, "By putting Rosa's defection in such stark terms, Gordimer makes her strongest statement of the need, whatever the consequences, of a child to claim a life of her own." (The Novels 144) When the burden of being Burger's daughter is lifted after her father's death in prison, Rosa becomes a private person, hiding and cutting her ties with the comrades. She retreats to her hippy friend Conrad's cottage, which, hidden on an overgrown estate scheduled for demolition, does not officially exist. There she undergoes a kind of psychoanalytical conflict and she both accuses and justifies the secrets of the Burger house. She tells Conrad:

> I was struggling with a monstrous resentment against the claim…not of the Communist Party!--of blood, shared genes, the semen from which I had issued and the body in which I had grown. I stand outside the prison with an eiderdown and hidden messages for my mother…Two hundred and seventeen days…while the witnesses came in and out the dock condemning my father. My mother is dead and there is only me, there, for him. Only me. My studies, my work, my love affairs must fit in with the twice-monthly visits to the prison, for life, as long as he lives…if he had lived… I have no passport, because I am my father's daughter. People who associate with me must be prepared to be suspect because I am my father's daughter. And now he is dead!...and I knew I must have wished him to die; that to exult and to sorrow were the same thing for me. (62-63)

Her first attempt to defect, Rosa tells the absent Conrad, was out of love for Noel de Witt, a political prisoner with whom, ironically, she had been made to act the role of

fiancee in order to pass messages from her father. It was her secret anguish at having to hide her real feelings under a politically motivated lie that began to alienate her from her parents. When the young man went into exile abroad, Rosa secretly tried to obtain a passport to follow him. She was unsuccessful, because of course she was Burger's daughter, and she was left to nurse her resentful love.

In total, Rosa has three love affairs, plus an essentially platonic friendship with Conrad. As Rosa tells Conrad, "And you know we had stopped making love together months before I left, aware that it had become incest" (70). Conrad is therefore her pretend brother, who helps her defect from the Burger house. In contrast, Baasie, the black foster brother of her childhood, is the voice from home who effects her return. Rosa's affair with Bernard Chabalier in France is physically and emotionally liberating for her. But she decides that to remain there and take up the role of his mistress would be to lose her freedom.

With this, the novel becomes an exploration of the meaning of freedom. At first Rosa finds freedom in the release from her family, the freedom to be private and self-concerned. But she is also free to understand how much she has lost by being Burger's daughter.

Emerging from the fervid intimacy of Conrad's cottage to seek the greater freedom of anonymity, she rents a faceless flat, takes a job in the office of an investment banker, and witnesses what she thinks is a free and non-political death of a white tramp on a park bench. This event, like her later encounter with a mad old woman in France, reminds Rosa

that nowhere is one free from suffering. She says, "To be free is to become almost a stranger to oneself.” (81).

Throughout the novel there is a countering between ‘freedom’ and ‘prison.’ Rosa returns to the image of herself as a child outside her mother's prison, to her farcical prison love affair with Noel de Witt, and to the memory of her father in prison. It is in Rosa's memory of Lionel's last public speech in court before he was sentenced that the refrains of ‘prison’ and ‘freedom’ come together, are presented not as opposites but as complements. Lionel Burger, about to be condemned to a life sentence, holds the courtroom spellbound for two hours as he exercises his last right to free, public speech; he justifies the aims and means of the communist Party and the African National Congress, ending with an attack on the state's concept of guilt and innocence. He says: "I would be guilty only if I were innocent of working to destroy racism in my country" (27). Thus the condemned man pronounces moral judgement on those who condemned him. After the sentence is pronounced, we see the statement:

> "There was a split second when everything stopped; no breath, no heartbeat, no saliva, no flow of blood except her father's... He alone... gave off the heat of life" (28).

This shows that, Lionel Burger is paradoxically powerful, vital and free despite his condemnation to life in prison.

When Rosa applies for a passport to live abroad, she says: "I don't know how to live in Lionel's country" she cries (210). She is torn between her father's ideals of freedom and her own need to be free of him. She is tempted by the "warm breast" of Mrs.

Terblanche, to which, "one can come home again and… go to prison" (114). She is tempted even more by the proud and gorgeous Winnie Mandela figure, Marisa Kgosana, for whom, like Lionel, freedom and prison are not a dichotomy. Rosa meets her in a department store: "I'm just back from the Island [Robben Island Prison]... How splendidly she made the trip... She doesn't have to find a solemn face, acknowledge the distance between the prison and the cosmetic counter." (136) Marisa Kgosana, like Lionel Burger that day in court, is vital and free, to which Rosa responds to as a revelation:

> To touch in women's token embrace against the live, night cheek of Marisa, seeing huge for a second the lake-flash of her eye, the lilac-pink of her inner lip against the translucent-edged teeth, to enter for a moment the invisible magnetic field of the body of a beautiful creature and receive on oneself its imprint... this was to immerse oneself in another mode of perception. As near as a woman can get to the transformation of the world a man seeks in the beauty of a woman. Marisa is black; near, then, as well, to the white way of using blackness as a way of perceiving a sensual redemption, as romantics do, or of perceiving fears, as racialists do. In my father's house the one was seen as the obverse of the other two sides of false consciousness... But even in that house of blackness was a sensuous-redemptive means of perception. Through blackness is revealed the way to the future... I felt it in Marisa's presence, after so long... (134-35).

This passage is the strongest evocation of the meaning of blackness for the white characters in the novels. Rosa connects with Africa through her romantic vision of Marisa. And by extension she connects with a deeper and more authentic part of herself, which, as

she notes, is the inspiration for her political commitment to her parents' and Marisa's vision of the future.

If Marisa presents the essence of blackness to Rosa, the opposite is in Brandt Vermeulen, who represents the essence of ‘whiteness’ in the South Africa of the novel. Vermeulen is cold and hypocritical, yet clever and powerful. What is apparent from the two characters is that, while Gordimer's descriptions of black characters are invariably sympathetic and often admiring, the white characters, except for the Burgers, are found wanting in various ways, ranging from being weak and unattractive to evil. As an example, Vermeulen, who is supposedly the "enlightened Afrikaner,"(179) is a wholly sinister character, made more villainous by his engaging manner and cultured taste. In crossing his threshold Rosa enters for the first time the world of power and privilege which her father disowned. She knowingly consorts with the enemy, turning to her own advantage his need to justify apartheid. As were previous characters, Vermeulen is characterized by his surroundings. His house is described in more detail than the others. These details, together with extensive quotations from his political philosophy are recorded in the third person with little authorial comment or response from Rosa. The descriptions are incriminating in itself:

> On one of the walls of this house an oil of heroic proportions: the visitor's eye matched to it a number of others in the room. All were composed radically from figures which seemed flung down in the centre of the canvas from a height, spread like a suicide on a pavement, or backed up against a wall, seen from the sights of the firing squad. Brandt Vermeulen was evidently a patron of the painter (181).

When Rosa recounts her visits to Vermeulen in the first person, her distaste for and horror of the man are more clearly expressed:

> He gave me an informal luncheon-type address on the honourable evolution of Dialogue, beginning with Plato... and culminating in 'the Vorster initiative,' the dialogue of peoples and nations. With me he was self-engaged in that responsibility on the human scale; for him his afternoons with Rosa were 'Dialogue' in practice. Others, less fastidious-minded than he, pursue the human scale in the rooms supplied with only the basic furnishing of interrogation, winning over enemies brought out of solitary confinement to stand on their feet until they drop, kicked, beaten, doused and terrorized into submission. (194)

It is significant that Vermeulen examines her as a connoisseur of beautiful things, idly noting the "painterly contrast" between her "coolie-pink" dress and the "greeny-bronze" lights of her skin. (181). As she puts it, "There I was, final proof of his eclecticism--sitting, at last--in his house beside the torso with the transverse vagina ,another of his grotesque works of art..." (193)

The images of violence that characterize Vermeulen culminate in a final horrifying, almost surreal vision of pain and cruelty. A blackman is beating a donkey:

I didn't see the whip…I saw agony... Not seeing the whip, I saw the infliction of pain broken away from the will that creates it, broken loose, a force existing of itself... gone beyond the control of the humans who have spent thousands of years devising it (208).

In the elemental torture of the donkey by its desperate, brutalized master she sees what she calls "the sum of suffering" in her country, which she, caught between pity for the

donkey and for the man, is helpless to stop. It is then that she admits, "I don't know how to live in Lionel's country."(209)

Part Two of the novel takes place in "Katya's country," the French Riviera. Katya is Lionel's first wife, and Rosa address this part of her memoir to her. Gordimer's evocation of the South of France, like the Sea section of *The Lying Days*, is of light, sensuality and openness. Even the architecture displays for Rosa the "innocence and security of being open to all lives around... "(224) This scenic freedom is all put in contrast to the secrecy and insecurity of her life in South Africa. Freed from the burden of being Burger's daughter, Rosa boldly dedicates herself to pleasure, and comes into full awareness of her physical being. Gordimer's France is a place in which, in contrast to South Africa, people are in harmony with their beautiful surroundings, with the living history of their architecture.

However, she is later struck by the mixture of triviality and desperation in the lives of Katya and her aging friends. As a woman, she fears their fate, to be an abandoned mistress whose life, once she is no longer young and pretty, will be a collection of mementoes. As Gordimer said about this part of the book, "Katya, running away from political suffering, has simply postponed what is coming." (Gardner 168).

So Rosa in her love affair with France remains an outsider, a tourist, just as she is cast in the tangential role of ‘the other woman’ in her affair with a married professor.

Thus Rosa, like Helen, is drawn back to South Africa, to the prison that is her home. Rosa, committed by birth to the opposition, decides that no one can defect. In this way, her sojourn in France is portrayed as a dream, full of delight, but insubstantial. Yet

she is greatly tempted to assume the identity offered her in France, which would fit her for ordinary happiness. As she tells Katya: "Bernard Chabalier's mistress isn't Lionel Burger's daughter; she's certainly not accountable to the Future..."(304). But Rosa cannot separate her individual destiny from the Future which from the beginning has cast a shadow over the pages of the story.

After her return to South Africa, and the Soweto uprising of 1976, Rosa is arrested in a sweep of political activists. It is then that the story of Rosa as an individual ends with her return. After this, the author presents third-person descriptions of Rosa's known activities from the points of view of both the security police and her friends. In this part of the book we see Rosa attending a treason trial, and later having a conversation with a Soweto parent. There is also a description of a prison visit with Rosa which echoes the first prison scene in the book. And finally a letter from Rosa to Katya:

> It bore the stamp of the Prisons Department in Pretoria, but this aroused no interest in the handsome postman who stopped in for a pernod when he delivered the mail, because he could not read English and did not know where Pretoria was... there was a reference to a watermark of light that came into the cell at sundown every evening... something Lionel Burger once mentioned. But the line had been deleted by the prison censor. Katya was never able to make it out. (361)

This is the last narration from Rosa, and she becomes removed from the main narration by her arrest and the political crisis of 1976-77. With her arrest, she finally submits to her inherited role as the revolutionary Lional Burger’s daughter.

Gordimer has said about *Burger's Daughter*: "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 man- human advancement." (What Happened 260) The documentary aspect of Burger's Daughter, together with Gordimer's frequent and mostly unattributed quotation from banned sources, are a way of smuggling the forbidden discourse of the communist Party, ANC, Black Consciousness Movement and black students' organizations into a novel.

The political element of *Burger's Daughter* deepened when during the writing of the novel Gordimer was overtaken by real events. She has said that:

> "...you must remember that Soweto overtook me while writing that book… This is what I think is so interesting about writing--how closely connected you are, not in a journalistic way, but inescapably connected with events... Rosa would have come back to South Africa; that was inevitable. There would have been a different ending, though, without the Soweto riots. But that shows how there is a logical pattern to what is happening here. (Gray et al. 169)

Gordimer's statement shows how she consciously transforms history into fiction, how she works within the parameters of real and recent events which might have been too soon to be objectively interpreted by historians.

Because of the novel's fidelity to history it ran into trouble with the South African censors. Gordimer in turn, uses the postscript to the publishing history of the book to publicize the absurdities and inequities of the censorship regulations, which, she argues,

selectively free the work of some white writers while suppressing the work of most black writers in an attempt to divide the literary community.

A last aspect of the novel to consider, like *The Lying Days*, is the autobiographical element, though *Burger's Daughter* is not as closely related to Gordimer's life as the previous novel. However, through the theme of the allure of defection versus commitment, Gordimer seems to be making a personal statement. She may not be in imminent danger of imprisonment, like the communists she portrays, but with her fiction and essays and speeches, she puts herself open to the danger of being silenced. *Burger's Daughter* is on one level her own statement of commitment to remain in South Africa, with all the sacrifices, conflicts and danger that decision entails.

Gordimer writes from the heterogeneous perspective of modern Johannesburg. This is seen in her urban settings where the differences among whites are negligible compared to their shared situation as whites under apartheid. In her narration, she refuses to be limited to women's issues. In the 1975 Introduction to her *Selected Stories*, she writes that she never felt disadvantaged or isolated because of her sex, and that in any case, "all writers are androgynous beings" (11). In several interviews, she has gone so far as to dissociate herself from the feminist movement, which she criticizes as irrelevant both to her personally and to the present South African situation. In 1974 she stated that, "In South Africa Women's Liberation scarcely exists... the basic issue for people concerned with liberation is the liberation of black people, male and female" (M. Fradkin 79) In a 1981 interview she said that if the real battle for human rights is won the kingdom of feminine liberation will follow. (Gardner 163) Gordimer pursues her critique of the women's liberation movement in *Burger's Daughter*, in which the white middle-class feminists are

shown to be out of touch with the problems facing non-white women, their goal of sisterhood is depicted as absurd in a society in which all black people lack basic human rights.

In Helen we find a quest to find her individuality away from the mine. In comparison, Rosa seeks to become a separate, fulfilled individual after growing up in the shadow her father, a dedicated and so charismatic man. Rosa's quest, as it unfolds, tells us not only about South Africa but about the whole nature of commitment. As critics suggest, many of Gordimer's characters discover that the political situation in South Africa is one that demands continual commitment and choices, a situation that renders the idea of a sacred private life, separate from the problems of the country. Rosa struggles to come to terms with her charismatic father's conviction that the real definition of loneliness is to "live without social responsibility." (101) Lionel Burger was the kind of South African Communist who was drawn to the party by his humanity and determination to share the cause of the blacks. In his house blacks and whites came together with a sense of common hope and faith in the future, defying the apartheid surrounding them.

South Africa's recent history is routinely referred to as pre- or post-1976. This dividing event, the uprising led by Soweto schoolchildren, occurs only toward the end of *Burger's Daughter*, but the novel takes its bearings from that historical event, which, to a significant extent, was infused by black consciousness. Gordimer make use of the Soweto conflict, which Rosa calls "the revolt of the children" (347), by recognizing the layered possibilities for a novel that explores generational conflict in psychological and political terms.

> Our children and our children's children. The sins of the fathers: at last the children avenge on the fathers the sins of the fathers. Their children and children's children; that was the Future, father, in hands not foreseen (348).

These last sentences are a reference to the Soweto children, who, ignoring the directives of their elders, including the ANC and the Communist Party, took the revolution into their own hands. By asserting the power of the children over the fathers, Rosa is claiming her own independence from her elders. In her own way, she has paradoxically found freedom in prison. In this way, prison is the main recurring image, the setting for puberty, love, death, and finally for freedom. Evidently Rosa finds herself, ends her quest, at the end of the novel, where for the first time she is described as girlish, as looking like a fourteen-year-old, which is her age at the beginning of the novel. Rosa's girlish look could imply that she has surrendered her adult will to her parents' cause. She paints scenes of France from memory, which implies regret for the life she could have led there. On the other hand, she might have reclaimed her childhood by acting, like the Soweto children, of her own volition, by returning to Lionel's and Cathy's prison on her own terms. Although the ending is ambiguous, the reader is asked to concede the possibility that Rosa has found contentment in what appears to be a perverse renunciation of ordinary happiness. As Gordimer has said about Rosa, "she returns to South Africa because that is where she believes she is most fully alive." (What Happened 20)

Gordimer’s response to the Soweto uprising entailed, above all, that she conceive the formal possibilities of the novel. As Stephen Clingman has observed, the “design” of *Burger’s Daughter* is “profoundly dialectical.” (172) In the first phase, Rosa’s identity is fused to her father’s revolutionary legacy. In the book’s second movement, Rosa

withdraws from the family and its stifling political expectations, ventures overseas, and affirms an autonomous identity. While in Europe, Rosa grows intimate with her father's sexually liberated first wife, Katya, who helps demystify and sanction Rosa's romantic and sexual defection from familial responsibility. Finally, after a devastating exchange with 'Baasie' or Zwelinzima, the adopted "half-brother" of her childhood in London, Rosa reassesses her position and returns to South Africa to forge her own form of political commitment, which ultimately delivers her, like Lionel, into jail. The novel's closing synthesis reconnects Rosa with the family's ideological heritage, but Gordimer is emphatic that, given Rosa's personal maturation and the intervention of black consciousness, her activism does not simply recapitulate her father's politics.

The novel thus poses the paradox of the antiauthoritarian father who, from the daughter's perspective, remains a representative of authority. The second aspect of the narrative stages the child's counterrevolution. The psychological necessity of a rebellious child may be familiar, but what Gordimer shows in this novel is that, in a South African context, there are sound political reasons for the child's rebellion. Rosa's rejection of her legacy is cathartic because it replaces the organizing principle of inheritance with all its baggage of birthrights, natural allegiances and successions on which white supremacy is founded, with a liberating principle of individual choice. In Rosa's words: "I was struggling with a monstrous resentment against the claim... of blood, shared genes, the semen from which I had issued and the body in which I had grown" (62). Once this revolt has succeeded, it remains, in the final episodes, for Rosa as an individual to recover her sense of social purpose.

Burger's Daughter positions itself at the intersection where the personal and the political cross. Thus Rosa's remark concerning her father: "I wanted to know how to defect from him" (284) resonates in both realms. This crossover is explicit in the novel's sustained effort to ring the changes on the concept of freedom. For Lionel Burger, freedom is an awaited collective condition, not a present or individual possibility. At the other extreme stands Rosa's vaguely liberal lover, Conrad, for whom freedom exists within "the closed circuit of the self". (86) In France, the culmination of Rosa's revolt against her parents occurs when she explores life in a condition of anonymity, liberated from responsibility: "Bernard Chabalier's mistress isn't Lionel Burger's daughter; she's certainly not accountable to the Future..." (304). However, having been seduced by the notion of freedom as a life of maximum individual choice unburdened by commitment, she discovers that such a conception of personal liberty is merely ideological. The reason behind this altered attitude is Zwelinzima or 'Baasie', the man she once knew as her adopted black brother. On almost the same track as Rosa, Baasie too, has had to free himself from the long shadow of white paternalism, symbolized by the mock-respectful name given to him in childhood, Baasie, meaning "little boss." In his irate, sardonic attack on white meddling in the liberation struggle, Baasie reintroduces into the novel a notion of freedom as entangled in obligation. Resenting the manner in which his dead father has vanished from public memory while Lionel Burger is celebrated as a hero, Baasie declares: "Whatever you whites touch, it's a take-over.... Even when we get free they'll want us to remember to thank Lionel Burger." (321) It is after her hostile exchange with Baasie that Rosa decides to return to South Africa and pursue a vision of freedom that entails commitment. The novel's closing conception of freedom is a bond between an individual

and an unavoidable course of action. As such, the novel reaffirms, by analogy, Gordimer's own formulation of the writer's freedom. For Gordimer, as for Rosa, the challenge is to set a course between stifling orthodoxy and the false idea of liberty.

The analogy between the predicaments of Gordimer and her protagonist can further be seen in the scene where Baasie confronts Rosa:

> Everyone in the world must be told what a great hero he was and how much he suffered for the blacks. Everyone must cry over him and show his life on television and write in the papers. Listen, there are dozens of our fathers sick and dying like dogs, kicked out of the locations when they can't work any more. Getting old and dying in prison. Killed in prison. It's nothing. I know plenty blacks like Burger. It's nothing, it's us, we must be used to it, it's not going to show on English television. He would have been the first to say what you're saying. He didn't think there was anything special about a white being a political prisoner. (320)

Although Rosa defends her father and proceeds to find a sort of relevance, Baasie's accusation remains so powerful that it can be read as anticipating the very terms of her rejection as her father's daughter. Faced with the charge of white irrelevance, she staged the kind of reception that her novel could anticipate from black consciousness quarters.

The novel's epigraph is from Claude Levi-Strauss:"I am the place in which something has occurred," (Newman 44) which again emphasizes the indirect explanation of Rosa's character. It is the combination of political authenticity with sensuous awareness.

Its account of black movements, against the historical background of real people, is harshly realistic with sharp details of documentary.

In *Burger's Daughter* we see detailed descriptions of the vigour as well as the misery of Soweto. The political moments are always illuminated by the intense observation of people and places, with tiny details precisely described to bring every incident to life. Gordimer has stated: "Nothing I say in essays and articles will be as true as my fiction." (Boyers18). And because fiction is a disguise, it can "encompass all the things that go unsaid among other people and in yourself... There is always, subconsciously, some kind of self-censorship in nonfiction." (Boyers18) She added that, in a certain sense, a writer is selected by her subject, which is the consciousness of her own era. And *Burger's Daughter* is a narrative which reflects that consciousness.

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Nadine Gordimer once remarked that “whites of former South Africa will have to redefine themselves in a new collective life within new structures”. (Essential Gesture 264) As a white South African committed to remaining in the country, and as a public figure with the opportunity to speak out, she has expressed her sense of responsiblity to take part in public life in the hope that it might help bring about changes. At a time when many whites express openly about their anxieties under black rule, Gordimer offers a striking counterpoint. (Kakutani)

The biographical sketches of Gordimer show that growing up in South Africa where only 5.6 million people are white out of a population of 37.9 million, she became increasingly conscious of her whiteness'. The colour of her skin instantly signalled 'oppressor' to black South Africans. Her whiteness imposed upon her a social and political identity that she rejected, yet, it was like a face she could not wash off, a mask she could not take off. As she said in a 1978 interview, “In South Africa one wears one's skin like a uniform. White equals guilt.” (Bazin 194) She often sought to separate her personal identity from that of her racial group in order to be welcomed rather than be shut out by those for whom whiteness signified 'enemy'. On whether she must go into exile, or eventually feel 'at home' in her native country, writing seem to help to clarify her thinking on these matters. Because in her fiction she could imagine a variety of probable scenarios in which an array of fictional selves could act out possibilities.

Through each of her books and across the trajectory of her days, she has wrestled with her political surroundings, chronicling for outsiders the personal echoes of life in a racist society. Even after the end of apartheid, the enduring subject of her works are still

about the consequences of apartheid on the daily lives of men and women, and the distortions it produces in relationships among both blacks and whites.

Though not all of her stories document a tale of a white supporter of the struggle being betrayed by black allies, there is a common sense of estrangement and betrayal that haunts the characters in her fiction as they find reality continually impinging on their dreams of safety. The difficulties of being an imaginative writer in a society in crisis are evidently tremendous. Apart from the problems of governmental censorship, which has banned some of Gordimer's books in the past, there is the danger that the demands of social activism will distract a writer from her art, a criticism that Gordimer has often faced. Despite these challenges, she has minutely charted changes in the social climate of South Africa over the last four decades. While her early stories dealt with subjects like a white girl's fear of being assaulted by a black man, later ones have delineated such matters as the difficulties of interracial love affairs and the ending of a revolutionary movement in compromise and betrayal. At the same time, her work has also reflected the author's own evolving political consciousness and maturation as an artist. Not only has she grown more radical in her choice of subject matter, but an early lyricism has given way to an increased preoccupation with ideas and social issues.

Gordimer’s narratives blur the boundaries of history and fiction, and created debate on the issue of the values of the past, national culture and political situations. She is considered by many as an interpreter of South African reality, and many read her fiction primarily for its vivid record of life in a controversial country. (Magarey 21) Clingman affirms that Gordimer gives an extraordinarily unique insight into historical experience in the period in which she has been writing: "If we are searching for an inner pathway to

guide us through South African history over the past forty or so years, there are few better places to look for it than in her novels." (History 244) What is apparent in the two selected novels is that it explore answers to the question she posed in a 1959 essay entitled, 'Where Do Whites Fit In?' (Essential Gesture 98- 102)

As mentioned in the previous chapter *Burger's Daughter* too has autobiographical elements although she acknowledges only *The Lying Days* as autobiographical. Therefore, apart from the appearance of social realism, Nadine Gordimer's novels are psychologically revealing. Survival is a very personal and powerful incentive for her exploration of the self, through autobiographical fantasies on how to 'fit in'. Not only do the two novels reveal details of her life or facets of her personality, the focus is mainly on the survival of a white woman, and the ways in which she tackles the challenges she faces in a black-majority nation. Gordimer has often expressed an inability to 'fit in' even at home because she could not identify politically with the majority of whites, who supported apartheid. As a radical in support of black-majority rule, she was an outsider even to liberal whites. In short, she rarely enjoyed a sense of belonging, though she had always longed to be accepted.

Accusing Gordimer of providing a "primarily subjective" and "necessarily partial" vision of South Africa, Kathrin M. Wagner asserts that Gordimer bases the "sub-text" of her novels in an "internal paradox" between her "open message against apartheid", her prejudices as a white writer with particular fears, and a "subconscious discourse" that opposes the challenge to change in South Africa. She accuses Gordimer of using stereotypes, clichés, simplifications, and idealizations that distort history, giving finally a particular ideological reading of history rather than a representation of it. Finally she

concludes that Gordimer's work must not be read as a reflection of South Africa but as her own personal drama. (Wagner 105).

Despite these criticisms, Gordimer's remarkable development from *The Lying Days* to *Burger's Daughter* is undeniable in terms of its reflection of the historical progress and change which took place between the two decades. As Alan Lomberg notes, in her first novel, *The Lying Days*, Nadine Gordimer established a pattern which all the other novels were to follow. The narration signifies a process inherent in her overall vision of life, and is reinforced by her style, which embraces both principles of particularising and generalising. She shows a remarkable capacity for microscopic observations of human behaviour. However, early critics largely ignored *The Lying Days* as a South African novel because they believed it had "far too little of South Africa and far too much of the coming-of-age of an adolescent," as Nathan Rothman observed in the 3 October 1953 issue of the *Saturday Review*.(Heywood 22) But it is important to note that Gordimer was writing with little precedent to fall back on, with the exception of the settler tradition set by Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* published way back in 1883.

John Cooke has rightly observed: "At the start of her career Gordimer was most concerned with the limitations inherent in the position of the colonial writer, the most obvious of which was the minimal body of literature on which she could build". (The Novels 101)

What has often been overlooked by many critics about this work, however, is how it deliberately seeks to distance itself from traditional English literature from which it emerged and how it employs indirect discourse to represent what the narrator lacks access to, but which the reader can deduce from the text. To begin with, *The Lying Days* questions

rather than affiliates itself with the mainstream European literary tradition. This deliberate attempt to align with Africa, rather than Europe, is an important step for Helen, the novel's protagonist and narrator, and Gordimer as well. Helen can only effectively engage with her native South Africa after "emerg[ing] from the trappings of colour consciousness that were as 'natural'" to the white South Africans "as the walls of home and school" (Interpreters 110).

It is also worth noting that at this stage of her career, Gordimer, as a white South African, found herself writing against colonisation and its effects within the white settler and their social codes. Indeed, as a white writer, Gordimer found herself in an awkward position where she had to attack the colonial attitudes with which black Africans would otherwise identify her. As she digs deeper beneath the white surface of her country toward the buried body of black culture, her writing reflects her deepening engagement by becoming less alienated, even though alienation is still its major subject. In terms of reality, *The Lying Days* therefore is marred by an ending that seems false and contrived. Gordimer tells the reader that Helen had grown up by using the metaphor of the construction of a building, that she has discovered her true love in Joel, who suddenly appears, and that she has made a commitment to the black cause and a decision to return home. However, despite the idealistic ending, there is a profound message that underlines it, in the form of Helen's statement:

> Whatever it was I was running away from-the risk of love? The guilt of being white? the dangers of putting ideals into practice?—I'm not running away from now because I know I'm coming back here. (376)

This statement sets the stage for the themes that Gordimer deals with in her later works, a culmination of which is seen in *Burger's Daughter*. Like Helen, Gordimer on the personal front has refused to exile like many of her contemporaries, and in *Burger's Daughter*, the questions which come with the quest to belong, which were not solved in *The Lying Days*, are answered by Rosa's submission to her father's legacy as a revolutionary.

In the other selected novel, *Burger's Daughter*, postmodernist strategies are more evident as compared to *The Lying Days*. Many perspectives are presented, along with intertexts from real documents. and these create a mixing of the real with the imaginary, the subjective with the objective, and parallels to actual events and lives that show the multicultural history of South Africa. It is an elaborate and formal structure "in which, despite the focus on Rosa Burger's story, other stories, perspectives, voices and historical events intrude to disrupt and impinge on the narrative." (King 7).

Sex is subversively linked with blackness in *Burger's Daughter* as in *The Lying Days*. Rosa like Helen is sensually attracted to black people and their culture. Like other Gordimer characters she has a black alter ego. However, the parameters of *Burger's Daughter* are different. For one thing, Rosa is the daughter of a prominent communist, her rebellion against her parents and their kind, her reason for leaving South Africa, her attraction and commitment to black people are much more complex than those of Helen's in *The Lying Days*. Not surprisingly *Burger's Daughter*, which is ideologically and thematically more sophisticated, is also more formally complex than Gordirner's first novel. Helen's straightforward first-person narration of *The Lying Days* reflects the limits of her perception. As an intelligent, sensitive, middle-class girl, she is born into sheltered "normality" and her stages of growth follow a somewhat predictable pattern. The political

crisis for liberal English-speaking South Africans intervenes and crystallizes her personality, and sets the pattern of her future. In *Burger's Daughter*, the determining public and political events are filtered through private interpretation: the focus is on the inner experience of the protagonist. But in this novel, Gordimer uses her most complex time scheme and narrative structure, which reflect both Rosa's superior political understanding and her more complicated circumstances. Gordimer has said about *Burger's Daughter* that "style really grew out of content" (Gardner 109). It is written in precise prose, less discursive than the style of *The Lying Days* which is more concentrated and allusive.

What is also strikingly evident in comparison between the two novels is the historical scenario. The most explicit and sustained historical reference of *The Lying Days* is to the victory of the National Party in the general election of 1948.
The parliamentary election in South Africa on 26 May 1948 represented a turning point in the country's history. The United Party, which had led the government since its foundation in 1933 and its leader, incumbent Prime Minister Jan Smuts was ousted by the Reunited National Party which was led by Daniel Francois Malan, a Dutch Reformed cleric. During the election battle, both the United Party and the National Party formed coalitions with smaller parties. Due to legislation relating to franchise requirements, very few people of Coloured and Asian descent were able to vote in this election. Africans had been banned altogether since the late 1930s. The National Party, realizing that many White South Africans felt threatened by black political aspirations, preyed on the opportunity and pledged to implement a policy of strict racial segregation in all spheres of living if victorious. The Nationalists labelled this new system of government 'apartheid', the name by which it became universally known. In *The Lying Days* the narrator Helen remarked on

this rise to power of what she calls the 'Fascist Nationalists'. She notes its effect on the people around her, the moral climate of guilt and fear and oppression bringing about actual personality changes that affected even the most intimate conduct of their lives.

In contrast to this, the background of *Burger's Daughter* is the rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa. The Black Consciousness Movement was a grassroots anti-Apartheid activist movement that emerged in South Africa in the mid-1960s out of the political vacuum created by the jailing and banning of the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress leadership after the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960. It represented a social movement for political consciousness. Steve Biko, an advocate of the Black Consciousness philosophy, together with other literate Africans residing in the major urban centres, developed into a highly respected intellectual in the 1960s. Biko began his search for self-identity, and hoped to build up the pride of Black culture, a culture that was scornfully viewed by the settler regime. Biko and his student colleagues had been receptive to the political ideas expressed by many Black intellectuals, and learned to use the emotional power of the message of Black Consciousness. As a result, the ideas and slogans of the Movement filtered down to a much broader group of socially underprivileged people, who were angry and impatient for meaningful action. The Movement eventually sparked a confrontation on 16 June 1976 in what is called in history as the Soweto uprising, when at least 200 people were killed by the South African Security Forces, as students marched to protest the use of the Afrikaans language in African schools. In the story of *Burger's Daughter*, Rosa faces challenges from both opposing quarters during the Movement. First, she is labelled a Communist and is under surveillance. Yet later in the novel, while attending a party in Soweto, 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 without their help. Rejected on both sides, Rosa decides to flee the country and flies to France. What Rosa shows apart from other issues is that, as much as it was a threat to white supremacy, Black Consciousness was a challenge to the identity of white radicalism because it classed the paternalism that is found with white supremacy itself.

In both the novels, the protagonists suffer from a deep rooted guilt which affects their actions in the quest for an identity. However, the aspects of guilt are quite different. In the case of Helen, the guilt stems from being a witness to the atrocities that the blacks are subjected to, and the burden of being white which prevents her from taking an action against it. In Rosa's case, it stems from a realization of her selfishness. As an outcast Rosa attempts to flee her country and her father's legacy. Having thought of herself as a sympathizer of the blacks, she feels betrayed by their rejection, but later realizes that she is bound by her whiteness. When her black friend Baasie confronts her for not knowing his real name, and informs her that her father was just among many leaders who have died in prison, her guilt makes her abandon her plans for exile.

Aside from the historical significance, both the novels go beyond history to explore deeper issues. The life of Helen Shaw in *The Lying Days*, which starts from the colonial strictures of a small Transvaal mining town, to a romantic interlude at the sea in Natal, to the experiences of university, love, and politics in Johannesburg, shows that the novel is concerned to encounter not only the moment of 1948, but the problems of South African identity, and South African literary identity, in general. The social and cultural project this implies is not without its own significance, for it has undoubtedly

marked for many a distinct path along which the more fundamental needs of a South African identity have come into view.

In turn, the challenge beyond the historical project of *Burger's Daughter* is to bring out its effect on identity, and Rosa is made to engage with it in a most direct and powerful way. The incident in London where she comes across Baasie, the young black man who, as a child had been her virtual brother, made her realize the selfishness of her exile. And this is where the further historical engagement of the novel is apparent, because Rosa returns to South Africa in the midst of the Soweto revolt of 1976. If Black Consciousness was the challenge to white radicalism in theory, Soweto was that challenge in practice. Rosa is detained under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. Her confinement is solitary in more than one respect because in the aftermath of Black Consciousness and Soweto there is no special glory which attaches to her situation as compared to her father.

Regarding the white plight in South Africa, Gordimer has said:

> "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, because we will be outside the central entities of life here. To a large extent we are now. But there's still that area of conflict which is from an artistic point of view fruitful. But when that is gone, if we are not integrated, if we have not cut loose from the colonial culture…." (Gardner 106).

South Africa's history is complex and unique therefore it is essential to consider how emerging debates regarding whiteness in first world countries, such the UK and the US, are translated into a South African context. Although international debates in the

construction of whiteness have become common, it requires adaptation for it to be translated into a South African context. Like the UK and the US, whiteness in South Africa is equated historically with privilege, but, unlike these countries, white people living in South Africa are in the minority. Therefore the majority of the literature from the USA and UK focuses on contexts in which 'whiteness' is a majority position, whereas South African literature, including Nadine Gordimer portrays whites as a minority. (Salusbury 93).

Spatially, apartheid provided physical boundaries in which races were actively separated. As Richard Ballard points out, racism was useful to white people in various ways, allowing for economic gain, control and power. A less developed theme is that racism helped white people to shore up their identity as 'white'. The physical separation of races enabled white South Africans to create what Ballard describes as a 'comfort zone' (Ballard 54).

It is important to establish the reason behind the study of whiteness. Historically it is those races that are not white that are considered to be racialised subjects and are, therefore, the focus of study. Whiteness, on the other hand, is situated as the silently normative dominant identity position (Steyn 6). This assumption gives the category whiteness its power as it occupies a central position from which all 'otherness' is read.

Richard Dyer in his paper, 'A Matter of Whiteness,' explains that whiteness is not an absence of colour, and 'until we see whiteness, see its power, its particularity and limitedness, put it in its place and end its rule, it will always be part of a power structure.' (541) Therefore in studying whiteness, by 'making it strange' one can perhaps move away from the ideas that associate whiteness with power and privilege. By reversing the gaze

and placing whiteness under scrutiny, its overarching position as the standard from which all 'otherness' is considered can be firmly reassessed. It is from this position that the social concepts that maintain whiteness as the privileged race can be renegotiated. The problem with centering a study on whiteness lies in the danger of reproducing an unhealthy dualism that does little to 'challenge the fundamental principle of race' (Ware et al.19)

As mentioned in the first chapter, any basic whiteness studies emerge from a variety of disciplines. To mention a few, Theodore Allen (1994) and David Roediger (1991) were among the first to study whiteness from a historical perspective. David Ignatiev (1995) wrote an important historical account on the treatment of the Irish in the USA. Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) conceptualisations were ground breaking for whiteness studies, while Toni Morrison (1992) introduced the study of whiteness into the field of literature studies. Black feminist critique has been involved via the works of bell hooks (2000), while George Lipsitz (1998) has written studies on the economic advantage of being white; and Anne McClintock (1995) has looked at colonial history and whiteness.

South African Melissa Steyn further defines whiteness as 'a social positionality' occupied by people of European descent as a consequence of the 'racial ideologies of European colonialism and imperialism.' In the present social science debate this narrative has been named "Master Narrative of whiteness", which Steyn defines as "the colonial narrative, which had come to dominate other possible explanations for the differences between Europe and its Others". (Steyn 200)

Despite having been born and bred in South Africa, English-speaking South Africans associate with a generalised and idealised European identity; despite being over

10000 km away, and for many white South Africans, displaced by more than two generations. Sarah Nuttall attributes this identification to the white settlers of South Africa's history, 'It is most often in terms of the "settler" that white identity in postcolonial African contexts has been given content and meaning' (117). Because the settler was 'marked as "coming from elsewhere" rather than "being of the place"' there is a sense of displacement that is never resolved.(118) This European identification is based on a very rigid set of ideas that pertain to the modern, civilised and enlightened.

Through imagination Gordimer explains many complex aspects of human lives. Her novels shed light on the specific consequences of the historical circumstances of life in South Africa. This is why the perspective from which the story is told is essential to the meaning and richness of the message of the novel. How those circumstances have affected specific individuals and families is ultimately a discussion of Gordimer's discourse with reality.

Nadine Gordimer's use of a complex narrative perspective does not turn her novels into historical novels, but into new recreations of history from the reimagining of personal conflict and dramas. Each shift of consciousness in Nadine Gordimer's fiction is made in response to external developments and to the way in which these clarify the weaknesses of earlier positions. Each therefore bears some significant relationship to South African historical development as a whole. This relationship is mediated at each point by the determinations of her social and ideological position, and in that the response of each novel emanates from such a position, the 'historical consciousness' each manifests may be used as 'representative of the class of people to whose understanding, options, and choices it corresponds, at each particular juncture.' (Clingman 169) Nadine Gordimer's work has

grown into a profoundly psychological and social chronicle of half a century in South Africa.

The idea that the white liberal could play a part in the struggle for a liberated South Africa was first proposed by Olive Schreiner in her novel *The Story of an African Farm*, but by the time it is explored by Gordimer decades later, new forms of anxiety had coalesced around it. Yet, Gordimer defies popular beliefs and invests a white liberal with a central role in the effort to tackle the problems facing the government. In so doing, she proposes a solution that is radically opposed to the dominant ideas in her society.

As she expressed in 1980, Nadine Gordimer harbored some suspicions about the liberal inclination:

> "The white man who wants to fit in the new Africa must learn a number of hard things … giving up the impulse to advise and interfere and offer to resume responsibility may not be easy as we whites think. Even those of us who don't want to be boss (or rather baas) have become used to being bossy. We've been used to assuming leadership, at least tutorship, even if it's only been in the liberal campaigns to rescue the rights of the Africans to vote and speak for themselves. Out of our very concern to see Africans make a go of the new Africa, we may indeed, I know we should, be tempted to offer guidance even when we haven't been consulted. The facts that we are well-meaning and that the advice may be good and badly needed do not count … what counts is the need of Africa to acquire confidence through experience of picking itself up, dusting itself down, and starting all over again." (What Happened 259)

A sense of the difficulty in doing what one preaches can definitely be gained from the fact that Gordimer herself cannot resist the urge to give advice. The importance of this experience is that it is what presents the tragic situational irony that Gordimer explores using complex narrative strategies.

Gordimer's apartheid discourse cannot be extricated from South Africa's socio-political context. Susan Pearsall is of the same view when she observes that Gordimer's novels 'render accounts of the intrusions of the political into the everyday.'(Where the Banalities 32) The manifestations of this intrusion are apparent in the inter-racial and cross-cultural intercourse and discourses of *The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter*. Gordimer uses the problematical and often limited cross-cultural exchange to both expose the draining effects of divisive politics and force the reader to interrogate those same issues in order to seek an outline for interpreting the novel. In her apartheid-era fiction, Gordimer generally presents characters from across the racial divide facing difficulties in having meaningful cross-cultural exchange despite being well-intentioned. Her narration then creates contexts in which the reader can consider the less severe circumstances. This is true of Helen, the protagonist in *The Lying Days*, and Mary Seswayo, a black character she befriends. Through these two characters, we see the issue of 'Otherness' prevalent in South Africa.

Regarding the dilemma Gordimer's characters faces, genuine and thorough comprehension of 'otherness' is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of one's culture. As Nadine Gordimer's writings show that this entails in practice the almost impossible task of negating one's very being, precisely because one's culture is what formed that being.

Moreover, the colonizer's invariable assumption about his moral superiority means that he will rarely question the validity of either his own or his society's formation and that he will not be inclined to expend any energy in understanding the worthless alterity of the colonized.

Gordimer was aware of this limitation when she noted:

> "The one thing a white man cannot experience is blackness, with all that implies in South Africa just as it is conversely true for a black man because each is largely outside the other's experience-potential… identification of class with colour means that breaching class barriers is breaking the law, and limiting the writer's intimate knowledge of his society." (Bazin 122)

Gordimer would later explain that the cultural isolation of whites who left their Europe coupled with the cultural upheaval of blacks under conquest has resulted in a compartmentalization of society that condemns the white writer to a life in which she remains buried in his segregated cemetery, and cut off by enforced privilege from the greater part of society in which he lives. This enforced separateness makes Helen only visualise black women's moods from one's experience of Europeans since there is no way of knowing (Lying Days186). She has grown up, all her life among strangers, the black Africans, whose language had been in her ears "like the barking of dogs" or "cries of birds" (Bazin 200)

The aim of the archival study was to uncover discursive topics that were connected to the construction of the 'white' category. In the South African debate it is often correctly emphasised that the people of colour were oppressed and deprived during the era of

segregation which was 1910-1948 and the era of apartheid, 1948-1994. Less well known are the details of how racial segregation and its effects affected the white population, apart from the obvious accumulation of wealth. In the field of cultural studies a new interest in studying South African whites emerged at the end of the millennium in the wake of the US-originating whiteness studies. During the past years, discussions on whiteness have become very popular in the intellectual circles of the United States. The topic has been embraced by literary and film critics, historians, sociologists and anthropologists. It has been seen as a new way to criticize the discourses of race and to eradicate racial inequality in the United States as well as elsewhere in the world. Ruth Frankenberg defines whiteness as a place, a social construction from which white people look at their social relations. Therefore 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices of race privilege and dominance that is usually normatively and structurally invisible, containing material and discursive dimensions. The colonial discourses clearly show the invisibility of whiteness and its 'unproblematic nature in the eyes of white/Western people.' (White Women 88)

The study of whiteness means a shift of focus from the ways in which the centre of power determines racial margins to the ways in which that centre formulates itself. In other words, the emphasis is turned from the 'Other' to the 'Self'. Thereafter it is possible to perceive how the dominant group simultaneously constructs and reproduces its centre of power and its disempowered margins - such as the poor whites. In the United States the main emphasis of the whiteness studies has been on making visible the invisible power position of whiteness by pointing out how the whites 'benefit from their social position', which they perceive as 'normal and natural.'(Kolchin 164)

In South Africa, the power position of whites has never been invisible. That makes it easier to study them, but it also makes it easy to stereotype and oversimplify the white experience. The shades of white seem to disappear where they should most be looked at. Also, while studying South African whites, scholars have found it easy to fall into pitfalls in the discourse of whiteness, and of the complexity of the whole concept of being White. Frankenberg notes that since whiteness has had many different phases and forms over time and space, it is a complexly constructed product of local, regional and global relations, past and present. Whiteness is a constantly changing category constructed together with class, gender and many other racial and cultural categories. (Frankenberg 99)

While both the United States and South Africa were melting pots of whites of 'all colours', whiteness in both countries differs demographically and historically. Thus, the study of South African whites means a transferring of North American discourse which requires significant critique of a South African context to be practicable. (Kolchin 169) Undoubtedly parts of this US-originating discourse on whiteness, such as the interest in hybridity in whiteness, the studies that demonstrate the 'othering' of lower class whites, and discussions on the representations of 'Self' and the 'Other' within whiteness, are relevant when studying South African whites.

Discourses and signifiers of whiteness have varied in twentieth century South Africa. In South African society, and particularly in Cape Town and its surroundings where the racial purity of people was often questioned, inclusion in and exclusion from the white race were based on physical features, language and social and economic status. Since it was difficult to tell whites and coloureds apart purely from physical difference, other things became important. Being White in South Africa meant, and still means for many

people, living and acting according to certain embodied standards and ideals. The essence of whiteness was about what you were, but equally importantly, how you were. (Steyn 123)

To focus on literature alone, the gulf between black and white South African literature is evidence of the power of apartheid to create what are for the most part separate cultures. Black South African writers have often employed the genres of autobiography, the short story and poetry to express urgent, angry tale of oppression and resistance. They have had little access to main- stream publishers, not to mention the educational system or the cultural establishment. During the tensed political climate they rely increasingly on oral performance. Because of their potential mass audience within the country they are perceived by the authorities as more dangerous than white liberal writers in English, who have a much smaller and less politically explosive readership. Serious black writers, therefore, have usually been suppressed, censored, imprisoned, exiled or killed, and several have taken their own lives. There is, then, no counterpart in black South African literature to the leisurely, introspective novels of the privileged and isolated white minority. And the post-independence literature of black Africa in general has a different agenda, different models, styles and preoccupations than that of white colonial Africa. To take one example, the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Homecoming* emphasized on the gulf between his African experience and vision of his country and Isak Dinesen's exiled, colonial vision, while he criticized her racist attitudes. (Attwell 144)

Though Gordimer has mostly concentrated on white protagonists, the black characters in her novels are portrayed as quite attractive. They are usually described as beautiful in physical appearance, and possessed of confidence, strength and humor which

are the envy of the white protagonists. In Gordimer, as in Dinesen and the other writers, the non-white characters remain secondary, however their symbolic role as double or alter ego becomes increasingly important as one moves chronologically through her fiction.

Gordimer, can be considered as one of the most rooted of writers. She has said, "To go into exile is to lose your place in the world."(Kakutani) Therefore, in her writing she has not shown the elements of exile that haunt other South African writers like Schreiner, Dinesen, and Lessing. But ironically, as a white writer she is exiled from the black majority in her country, who Clingman claims are her true public. She is published and read mostly abroad, in London, New York, and Paris, far from the people she writes of, and perhaps even indirectly to. Although she has lived all her life in South Africa, it is in one sense not her country, there are areas of life there that are alien to her, and people who perceive her as alien to them. Her fiction is acutely aware of these issues.

Her writer's imagination seems to stretch its limits in order to fully draw and define as deeply as possible the arenas where white meets black amidst revolutionary politics. That arena is often unacknowledged by the participants as forbidden, as in relationships, or hidden, as in underground politics.

The image of a black body buried in a white-ruled land, or in the white unconscious, is a powerful pattern in Gordimer's works. Gordimer, who is personally most "at home" in Africa, engages most deeply in the problems of white female identity. And in her narration, she gives an honest expression about the ways in which she and her characters cannot be at home in a black land.

A thoughtful reading of the two novels, therefore, shows that from the beginning Gordimer has treated her country's racial politics as the determining factor in her characters' lives. Her work is a study of the white psyche in its relation to black Africa, a portrait of a ruling class gradually losing its grip, wracked by self doubt and guilt, presented with opportunities for altruism and even heroism, and finally, faced with its own gradual extinction.

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In his memoir, *Out of Africa*, Isak Dinesen wrote: "The relation between the white and black races in Africa in many ways resembles the relation between the two sexes." (Frankenberg 98) As seen in the preceding chapters, the perpetual conflict of race in South Africa echoes this statement, which is a power struggle where both opposing forces find it difficult to meet at a level of equality, yet have come to realize that one cannot exist without the other.

In a profound essay published in 'The New York Times', Gordimer echoes this sentiment of conflicted mutual existence where she wrote:

> The white writer, perforce, belongs to an Èlite, and, from the day he is born baas to the day he is buried in his segregated cemetery, cannot share the potential of experience of the fifteen million on the other side of the color bar. How deeply, how widely into the life around him does South African society let a writer go? The writer himself cannot experience everything he writes about; yet he cannot write meaningfully about what is shut off from his own potential experience. White writer and black in South Africa live in the same society, but it is compartmentalized in such a way that for each the potential of experience in that society is strictly limited. There are things that can happen to a black man that can't ever happen to a white man. And there are things that can happen to a white man that can't ever happen to a black man." (The Word)

The question of whiteness within a South African context is a non-linear and unpredictable process. This process parallels Raymond Williams' 'epochal analysis' that considers a dominant society to be the result of both resistance and negotiation. While

Williams' theory cannot be translated into every situation, it is a useful way of understanding the negotiation and transformation of whiteness in society. All cultures, according to Williams, are in a dominant phase whereby a 'cultural process is seized as a cultural system.'(Analysis of Culture 58) South Africa's post-apartheid state is currently the dominant. This dominant stage is dynamic as it is at any one time influenced by the both residual and the emergent. The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. The question of belonging becomes more apparent in the transitional stages of South Africa's history as the place and function of whiteness within the space of a new South Africa is questioned. The fears experienced by some 'whites' today are similar to those of the past; the main difference is that the State no longer shares them, and now organises against them. The result, then, is a degree of alienation and displacement, which prompts the avoidance of areas where 'whites' feel they lack control and they attempt to find spaces within which control can be adequately maintained. (Ballard 58)

Over the past forty years, Nadine Gordimer has emerged as the most resourceful writer to have created fiction from the experience of apartheid. Her international literary eminence is complemented by her role within South Africa as an activist in the culture of resistance, and an articulate opponent of censorship. What increased Gordimer's importance is the parallel between the beginnings of her career and the rise to power of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party, which has ruled South Africa uninterrupted since 1948. Gordimer has built her considerable body of work out of circumstances that

combined privilege and conflict. This situation required of her an uncommon imaginative resilience.

In *The Lying Days* the social commentary and the constant reminder of the racial inequality that the South Africa of then depends on, is injected intermittently to the drama of the story. As Helen matures through the story, so do her liberal convictions, which allow more liberal commentary to be interjected through the text. Helen chooses heroes but never ventures to be very heroic herself. The title is significant because by the end of the story, it seems everyone is living a lie, her hero boyfriend becomes someone who both supports and fights the system, her family and the mine town and her liberal friends with their lofty communist ideals. She has acknowledged that white South Africans must be born and die with guilt, a thought which has become a common discourse about race in contemporary South Africa.

It is several decades later that Gordimer gave fictional body to selected aspects of this outline. According to critics, *Burger's Daughter* stands as Gordimer's response to a painful challenge to her political relevance and imaginative authority in South Africa. The ascent of black consciousness in the seventies and the decline of non-racialism caused many anti-apartheid whites, of both liberal and radical persuasion, to feel remaindered by history. The warning of Steve Biko, "Black Man you are on your own," coined for the South African Student's Organisation (SASO), resonated through the structures of political and cultural organizations that refused white participation. Through Rosa, who barely knows her father, and sets the stage for the child's revolt against the system. Thus Gordimer's novel economically probes the psychology underlying the forms of conflict distinctively acute under apartheid, between personal and public responsibility.

The colonial women's vision embodied in the fiction of Nadine Gordimer has its closest parallel in English literature in fiction by white women set in such colonial or post colonial outposts as British India and the Caribbean. Two notable examples are Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975) and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir theorizes about the conflicts of girlhood, in which the young girl, torn between her desire to be an active subject and the rewards of being a passive object, is offered powerful "inducements to complicity".(The Second Sex 55-56) Beauvoir contrasts the roles offered to girls and to blacks: because of their relatively disadvantaged status vis-a-vis white males, both groups have incentives to question and rebel, to set themselves against the established order. But white girls, unlike blacks, are offered a privileged place within the hierarchy which tempts them to collude in their own exploitation.

Beauvoir's suggestions highlight the conflict between sex and race for the white colonial woman, for whom it is easy to submit to standards. As a white woman she is placed on the pedestal of innocence and purity, she is a vessel for the virtues of "white civilization" in the "heart of darkness." (72) As clearly marked in *The Lying Days*, she is taught to hate and fear the black man, to whom, nonetheless, she has a secret, guilty attraction which mostly stems from curiosity. The colonial woman is pulled in one direction by her sex, another by her colour. This conflict of identity and allegiance is exemplified in both of Gordimer's portrayals of the white African woman who is intellectually and emotionally alienated from white colonial society and at the same time physically barred from black Africa. Through her rebellion against the patriarchal order as she struggles to define herself in a hostile environment, the heroine uncovers the

connections between patriarchy and racism under colonialism. She begins to identify with the black Africans in their oppression and their struggle for autonomy, but she cannot shed her inheritance of privilege and guilt. Ultimately she is shut out from the vibrant life of black people, which seems to her to be rich with pain and possibility.

Therefore, to a certain extent, Nadine Gordimer's common subject, as seen in both the selected novels, is a young woman who ventures forth from the white enclave, who breaks out of the relationship between white mistress and black servant, and identifies her own quest for an independent identity with the blacks' cultural, political and, finally, military quest for freedom. Her heroine's embrace of blackness leads her to become a revolutionary in increasingly concrete terms. However, as the heroine's at first tentative, mostly imaginative participation in the black revolution becomes more active, more realistic, she is caught in the collision of sex and race. As a woman she identifies with the black liberation struggle, but as a white she bears a legacy of privilege which her good intentions cannot cancel out. Gordimer's public comments on feminism reflect this problem. She has said several times that the women's liberation movement is irrelevant in South Africa, where political freedom for black men and women must take precedence over improvements in the position of white bourgeois women.(Harwitt 116) In Gordimer's view, women’s movement is an oversimplification of the South African situation, which she treats with much more complexity in her fiction. Her heroines draw the strength to think and act independently from their very position of weakness in the power structure. Gordimer's white South African women are in a sense outside the brutal pact between the male colonizer and the male colonized. She is not allowed to claim innocence but nevertheless, she is increasingly prevented by the social and political conditions of

apartheid from acting upon her responsibility. Furthermore, she is increasingly cut off from blackness, both by government decree and the rising hostility of the blacks. In both her novels, then, the ambiguous, self-divided figure of the white girl becomes a site for the fraught alignment of white and black. She is the site of connection, while she is made to realize the impossibility of connection. As Gordimer has said, "there's still that area of conflict which is from an artistic point of view fruitful". (Harwitt 117) Her female characters are both internal battlegrounds in which the conflicts of South African society are played out, and where illicit relationships between the races develop. This is echoed in Rosa Burger's epigraph which reads: "I am the place where something has occurred".

In Gordimer's fiction, the black other cannot be 'selfed' by the white subject any more than the female other can be 'selfed' by the male subject. However, the white self can be 'othered', which is, blackness found within. As shown by Gordimer, the white colonial female character can 'other' her 'self' less destructively and more creatively, because of her identification as a female, with blackness. In *The Lying Days*, the black character Mary Seswayo can be seen as Helen's 'self' reflected in her black 'other' when the two meet through a mirror, but they are blocked by a wall of racial difference. Helen's central discovery is then the defamiliarization of seeing herself as a white stranger or other in black South Africa.

It appears Gordimer has consciously downplayed and at times even denied the feminist aspect of her fiction. Yet her subjects, themes, characters and imagery are to a large extent gender-based. The problems of development faced by her heroines are specific to their identity as colonial daughters, reluctant or rebellious inheritors who cannot easily disown their pioneer fathers and homeward-looking mothers.

For Gordimer, the characteristic inward movement of the female Bildungsroman is explicitly linked to a corresponding outward movement from the constricting white enclave into the larger world of blackness. By exploring and coming to identify with the ancient world of the Africans, the heroine's perception of herself and her own culture is deepened and conflicted at the same time. In this way, the African setting in these texts not only serves as a background, but also becomes a key element of the heroine's development.

Gordimer's white main characters long and strain for sorority or fraternity; they are not merely blocked by the politics of South Africa, but also by their mental and emotional limitations. In their search for the female self, they discover the violent history of their countries. These identity quests are not only stories of the self, but it also shows stories of national and geographical identity as suggested by the titles. In linguistic terms, the Dutch word burger means 'citizen' or 'town dweller', and is cognate with the French and English word 'bourgeois'. Therefore, the title 'Burger's Daughter', which evidently means the daughter of Lionel Burger, can also mean the daughter of the burger, the citizen, which indicates Gordimer's concern with the larger inheritance of the white African girl-child.

As Stephen Gray suggests, contemporary white South African writers like Gordimer, in the liberal tradition portray the white failure to 'connect with black Africans and to take root in African soil.'(Gray 90) The attempt to break down apartheid in white fiction of the nineteen-seventies and eighties has occurred at a time when the physical and ideological gulf between the races has increased because of political and military repression on the part of the government, and movements toward autonomy within the black community, such as Black Consciousness. Thus while progressive white South African writers like Gordimer may be far ahead of the government in envisioning the shift

of power from white minority to black majority, they can do no more than follow behind the black community. It is impossible for white writers to speak for or guide their countrymen as they remain impassioned and endangered observers. In his work on Gordimer, Stephen Clingman has chronicled her attempt to overcome the growing barriers between the races by means of 'increasingly radical imaginative strategies.' (171)

However the theme which she cannot fully overcome is the impossibility of transcending racial identity. Among her contemporaries, Gordimer may be closest to breaking through the barriers of literary apartheid, but she cannot fully escape her alienated status as a white South African. Influenced by black writers and theorists, such as Chinua Achebe and Frantz Fanon, she continues to attempt to bridge the gap between white colonial and African literature, as Schreiner, Dinesen, Lessing have bridged the gap between colonial and metropolitan literature by bringing African colonial experience into the mainstream of English fiction.

Despite her criticism of bourgeois feminism in South Africa, which is mentioned above in brief, Gordimer is not anti-feminist; the female characters in her fiction learn to define themselves independently of men, partly through their commitment to the black liberation struggle. Thus when they find themselves, they become liberated in the feminist sense, through commitment to what Gordimer sees as the larger cause. Her heroines, as versions of herself, are primarily witnesses and recorders, and finally, survivors. They must survive to finish their stories. Both of the selected works explore the lines between private and public, personal and political, by untangling the various threads of one woman's life, revealing both what is unique and what is historically typical in her personality and decisions.

Helen Shaw of *The Lying Days* faces the classic colonial dilemma pondered by writers as diverse as Olive Schreiner , V. S. Naipaul , Patrick White , and Katherine Mansfield. Those around Helen point overseas to "home," while nothing in her imported European reading can ratify the reality of her immediate life. Apartheid worsens Helens intimations of artificiality and she awakes to horror upon witnessing the police shoot a black protestor, but she remains estranged from the possibility of taking action. Her gender, too, conspires to keep her a spectator in a world in which authority is the prerogative of men. *The Lying Days* discloses Gordimer's intuitive sense of the turbulence South Africa underwent in the 30's and 40's as a result of rapid industrialization and the National Party's ascent to power.

In one section from *Burger's Daughter*, Rosa pinpoints the cross purposes of black and white women staging a tea group for the promotion of mutual understanding:

> I skirted Flora's assembly and sat down at the back. ... Everyone, I began to see them properly, bunched together in the middle and back seats, the black women out of old habit of finding themselves allotted secondary status and the white ones out of anxiety not to assume first place. ... Dressed in their best, one after another, black women in wigs and two-piece dresses pleaded, were complaining, opportuning for the creches, orphans, blind, crippled or aged of their "place." They asked for "old" cots, "old" school primers, "old" toys and furniture, "old" braille typewriters, "old" building material. They had come through the front door but the logic was still of the back door. They didn't believe they'd get anything but what was cast-off; they didn't, any of them,

> believe there was anything else to be had from white women, it was all they were good for. (202-203)

This scene echoes what is mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter, the challenge of bridging the gap between the two racial equations which is deeply marked by decades of internalized prejudice. Although written in different decades, the novels are a clear documentation of self-exploration of consciousness of white South African women. Of her nine published novels, *The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter* represent a good mix of range of characters Nadine Gordimer is known to brilliantly create. The female characters in these novels do differ in relation to their respective time periods. Yet, the similarities between these women enforce the idea that the difference of a century has not eased the struggle of white South African women to come to terms with their image of self or their options in life. Historically, as mentioned in the earlier, South Africa's past was riddled with violence and oppression by the elevation of one race above another, and this left a common resentment and anger towards white people. By virtue of their physical whiteness, they symbolise years of oppression and control and without the State's assurance white people believed they were vulnerable. The history that created racialised identities cannot be forgotten or discarded in the face of this new nation. Politically the new government did not encourage resentment or violence, but, instead, offered a new blanketing term the 'Rainbow Nation'.(Croucher 87) This term is coined by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe post-apartheid South Africa, after South Africa's first fully democratic election in 1994. The phrase was elaborated upon by the elected president, Nelson Mandela in his first month of office, when he proclaimed: "Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of

the bushveld - a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."(Mandela- Opening Address) The term was intended to encapsulate the unity of multi-culturalism and the coming-together of people of many different nations, in a country once identified with the strict division of white and black. In a series of televised appearances, Tutu spoke of the 'Rainbow People of God'. As a cleric, this metaphor drew upon the Old Testament story of Noah's Flood, and its ensuing rainbow of peace. Within South African indigenous cultures, the rainbow is associated with hope and a bright future. (Baines 55)

The notion of the country as a 'Rainbow' that arises from its multi-culturalism was supposed to encourage cultural diversity. But, the past is still very influential, and while white South Africans have to come to grips with a shifting understanding of what is means to be white without legislation that enforces separation, they still have protection of the State as well as the economic power and privilege that is associated with whiteness.

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APPENDICES

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DEPARTMENT : **English**

TITLE OF DISSERTATION : **Colour Equations From the Other Side: A Study of Nadine Gordimer's *The Lying Days* and *Burger's Daughter*.**

DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION : **01.08.2012**

(Commencement of First Semester)

COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEMESTER/ DISSERTATION : **1.1.2013**

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1. **BOS** : **26.04.2013**
2. **SCHOOL BOARD** : **07.05.2013**
3. **REGISTRATION NO. & DATE** : **MZU/M.Phil/136 of 07.05.2013**
4. **DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION** : **30.06.2014**
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iii) Attended and participated in a national seminar entitled, "Narrativizing Trauma in North Eastern India and Beyond," organized by the Department of English, Mizoram University on 5th and 6th November, 2012.

iv) Awarded the UGC-MZU Fellowship for the tenure of eighteen months from the date of admission on 31st July 2012.

COLOUR EQUATIONS FROM THE OTHER SIDE:

A STUDY OF NADINE GORDIMER *THE LYING DAYS* AND

BURGER'S DAUGHTER

ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED BY:

LALHRUAITLUANGI

Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Master of Philosophy
in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

In this study, focus is given on the issue of white identity and how the conflict is articulated in two novels of Nadine Gordimer, namely *The Lying Days* (1953) and *Burger's Daughter*(1979). The depth of Gordimer's understanding and consequent portrayal of the white conflict stems from her own experience as a white South African, and due to this authenticity and international recognition, her role in the canon of South African literature is important.

Gordimer was born on 20 November 1923 in Springs, a gold-mining town at the east of Johannesburg. Her Jewish parents diverged widely in background and demeanor. At thirteen, her father fled a Lithuanian village where czarist anti-Semitism barred him from attending high school. In the town of Springs, he learned watch making and opened a jeweler's shop. Gordimer portrays him as a man of arrested emotional development who, despite childhood immersion in poverty, educational deprivation, and bigotry, disappointed her deeply with his stubborn racism toward black South Africans. The more profound influence seems to be Gordimer's English-born mother, a woman whose ample creativity had been denied adequate professional outlets. Gordimer speaks of her as the dominant member of the household and a sincere do-gooder who founded a day-care center in a nearby black township. When she learned that her daughter had an enlarged thyroid, a common ailment, she barred her from all outdoor activity and withdrew her, aged eleven, permanently from school. Thereafter, Gordimer suffered an education of erratic tutoring and never gained a high school diploma. These circumstances gave Gordimer a damaged, friendless childhood, in which the company of books became an attractive alternative to the company of small-town adults. Her mother's insistence that she be tutored within the confines of home meant that Gordimer lacked the qualifications for admission to a university. Commuting from Springs, she audited courses for one year at the University of

Witwatersrand, an institution in whose intellectual life she would later feature prominently. Despite her limited formal education, however, Gordimer had been publishing stories since the age of fifteen. But it was not until 1949, the year of both her first marriage and her permanent move to Johannesburg, that she broke through in the literature world. In that benchmark year she had a story appear in *The New Yorker* for the first time, which became the beginning of a long association with the magazine and the first hint of her international standing. She had her first book in print in 1949, a collection entitled *Face to Face: Short Stories.*In 1991, Gordimer became the first South African and the first woman in twenty-five years to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. (Nixon 88)

Gordimer has been an important figure in the countering of apartheid and its related movements across South Africa. Her works reflect an in depth atmosphere within that country, such as the path from passivity and blindness to resistance and struggle, the forbidden friendships, identity crisis and the underground networks. She has outlined for the outsider the experience of what life beyond apartheid might be like. Despite the challenges that such a task might entail, the biggest one being censorship, she has created characters from whose lives we see the major currents of contemporary South African history. She accomplished this by creating individuals who struggle with moral choices behind private doors and in the public sphere. She has painted a social background which provides an insight into the roots of the struggle and the mechanisms of change.

From the outset, South Africa's history has been marked by division and conflict along racial and ethnic lines. This division was formalized in 1948 by the ruling Africaner Nationalist Party which made ‘apartheid’ or separateness an official policy, thereby hardening the divisions between racial groups. Racial prejudices and

persecution of people because of the colour of their skin became a central part of the law of the land. Because apartheid permeated on every aspect of private and public life, South African literature shows a certain preoccupation with the politics of race. Inevitably, with the country's largely diverse culture and different languages, the nation's varied ethnic constituents have not yet been unified even after its attainment of independence. Nadine Gordimer is one author who has, through her novels, portrayed white characters struggling to find an identity amidst the political turmoil caused by this racial friction. Over the past decades, she has emerged as one of the most resourceful writers to have created fiction from the experience of apartheid. Her international literary eminence is complemented by her role within South Africa as an activist in the culture of resistance, and an articulate opponent of censorship. What increased Gordimer's importance is the parallel between the beginnings of her career and the rise to power of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party, which has ruled South Africa uninterrupted since 1948. Gordimer has built her considerable body of work out of circumstances, which involves a combination of privilege and conflict, that arises from this racially charged history.

The concept of whiteness is a relatively new field of study since the previous focus of race studies was generally engaged in 'otherness'. In recent years, the study of 'whiteness' has emerged as an influential and effective tool for analyzing and interpreting the workings of power and privilege in numerous societies. Theories like Postmodernism and New Historicism have proposed the concept of racial superiority as socially constructed in order to justify discrimination against non-whites. In South Africa's past, like other white dominated countries, whiteness was assumed to be the norm. Whiteness in South Africa has been described by Sarah Nuttall, a prominent researcher of whiteness in South Africa, as '… an unchanging and unproblematic

location, a position from which all other identities come to be marked by their difference …' (Nuttall137). Historically, 'whiteness' is a fairly new category of identification, only coming to have meaning within the context of European imperialism/colonialism within the past 500 years. Historically, in South Africa, whiteness is both visible and changing. The manufacturing of whiteness was particularly salient at the beginning of the twentieth century, as poor whites were allowed into the circle of privilege to prevent them from "affiliating with blacks who shared their class interests." (Steyn12)

In academic circles, a significantshift in theoretical thinking includes whiteness as a subject of study in order to dislodge it from its perceived position as the standard. In shifting the focus, and introducing whiteness as a subject, its assumed position is challenged and, consequently, the ideas that create whiteness become possible to be deconstructed. A new idea that whiteness studies bring out is that whiteness as an identification of race is not a fixed constant, and in fact it is a social concept based on an association of meanings. In short, it is now understood as a "process" that can be "contested as well as deconstructed." (Ware et al. 25). In the South African context, the debate in the construction of whiteness requires adaptation. Like the UK and the US, whiteness in South Africa is equated historically with privilege, but, unlike these countries, white people living in South Africa are in the minority. Therefore the majority of the literature from the USA and UK focuses on "contexts" in which 'whiteness' is "a majority position," whereas South African literature, including Nadine Gordimer portrays whites as a minority. (Salusbury93).

The change in society which results out of the transition of the apartheid state into a democracy is reflected in the literature of South Africa. New subjects and themes have emerged and post-apartheid literature is inclined to manifest the sense of

unease and displacement within a new South Africa. Through the medium of literature themes like ‘whiteness’ are questioned.

Within the canon of South African literature, the works of the black writers, among others, are autobiographical depictions of the frustrations and deprivation experienced by young black intellectuals in South African society. And it is this depiction which commonly represents the race condition of South Africa in contemporary times.However, alongside this black depiction, white writers have produced works written from their point of view as well. The foundation for the white writers was started by Olive Schreiner in 1883 with her novel,*The Story of an African Farm*.

Both these depictions from black and white writers create equations in the literature, consisting of colour delineation with the black perspective on one hand, and that of the white on the other. Nadine Gordimer is one of these white writers who have, through the years, portrayed white characters struggling to find an identity amidst the political turmoil caused by racial friction.

In Nadine Gordimer’s novel *The Lying Days,* the social commentary and the constant reminder of the racial inequality that the South Africa of then depends on, is injected intermittently to the drama of the story. The protagonistHelen acknowledges that white South Africans must be born and die with guilt, a thought which has become a common discourse about race in contemporary South Africa.

Therefore, to a certain extent, Nadine Gordimer'scommon subject, as seen in both the selected novels, is a young woman who ventures forth from the white enclave, who breaks out of the relationship between white mistress and black servant, and

identifies her own quest for an independent identity with the blacks' cultural, political and, finally, military quest for freedom.

The Lying Days is a semi-autobiographical novel which follows the life of Helen Shaw, a white girl brought up by conventional middle-class Protestant parents in a mining suburb of Johannesburg. In the story, the central character Helen comes of age and so does Apartheid South Africa. Helen grows protected in the mine, with no considerable exposure beyond the Mine that she was born into, only to realize later that the fairy tales in her English story books have no place in her mine town, and that there are other worlds beyond the white employees of the mine, where the 'natives' live. As Helen matures through the story, so do her liberal convictions. The social commentary is artfully injected within the narration to remind the reader of the racial inequality that prevails in the South Africa of that time. The novel discloses Gordimer's intuitive sense of the turbulence that South Africa underwent in the thirties and forties as a result of rapid industrialization and the National Party's ascent to power. The story divulges the guilt of the white man, the fear and the fury of the black. This exploration of the contradictory structures of dependency and revolt is a subject that Gordimer pursues further in *Burger's Daughter.*Gordimer has insisted that only *Burger's Daughter*, from among her novels, embodies an expressly political intent. The story is about white anti-apartheid activists in South Africa seeking to overthrow the South African government. Written in the wake of the 1976 Soweto uprising, it follows the life of Rosa, the title character, as she comes to terms with her father Lionel's legacy as an activist in the South African Communist Party (SACP) over the course of thirty years. The novel is routed in the history of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa with references to actual events and people from that period. In *Burger's Daughter* the heroine solves the contradiction in her identity by eventually deciding to take part in the black struggle.

This development from *The Lying Days* to *Burger's Daughter*, which are more than two decades apart, are closely examined as part of this study, among other aspects.

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter introduces the literature of South Africa and the role of white narratives within its development. It focuses on the part played by Nadine Gordimer in generating the white perspective and identity negotiation in the midst of apartheid. This is brought out by a detailed explanation of the history of South African literature starting from the early fictional works. The historical background of the two selected novels are also given in this chapter mainly because it is a key factor in understanding Gordimer's novels since her characters display the effect of contemporary South African history. The most explicit and sustained historical reference of *The Lying Days* is to the victory of the National Party in the general election of 1948. Likewise, in *Burger's Daughter*, the story and growth of its protagonist, Rosa, takes place in the context of the rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa. *Burger's Daughter* is Gordimer's first extended portrayal of white revolutionaries in South Africa.

Chapter II: Identity and Guilt in *The Lying Days*

The white struggle is studied in this chapter in terms of identity and moral guilt. This is attempted by situating the novel within its time period, that is the decade of the 30's and 40's in South Africa during which racial inequality predominates as a result of rapid industrialization and the National Party's ascent to power. Part of Helen's conflict is the challenge she faces of developing an Afro-centred consciousness different from that of her mother, who is trapped in a colonial mentality. The glimpse of the black world which both frightened and attracted Helen as a girl, becomes a reality which she discovers through her friendship with a black girl at the university. It is only then that

Helen realizes the things she has taken for granted are out of reach for her friend, and she begins to realize the privilege of her whiteness, and the guilt that comes along with such a realization. At the end of the novel, Helen's loss of innocence and the knowledge of her own passive complicity in evil, forces her to leave Africa for Europe. Basically, what this chapter points out is that in the 'makeshift' Europe of Soth Africa, white children like Helen question their inherited identity as the coloniser, and sees themselves as some form of 'other'. Helen's private, internal movement toward integration is set against the public, external hardening of segregation.

Chapter III: *Burger's Daughter* as a narrative process

This chapter analyses the narrative progress of Gordimer since the production of *The Lying Days.* While studying the novel within the historical background on which it is written, emphasis is laid on the transition from the first novel. *The Lying Days* shows life in the Mine, but in *Burger's Daughter* cosmopolitan life is portrayed through the eyes of a white Revolutionary's daughter. Like Helen, Rosa rebels against her parents, explores new ways of living, and leaves for Europe. However, *Burger's Daughter* poses the paradox of the anti-authoritarian father who, from the daughter's perspective, remains a representative of authority. Rosa's struggle for freedom is doubly conflicted in *Burger's Daughter* because she is torn between her father's ideals of freedom and her own need to be free of him. Throughout the story, we see a sense of responsibility, and a need for identity which remains in her despite her vast experiences. And she resolved this conflict by finally giving in to her inherited role and taking part in the black struggle.

Chapter IV: Equations and Negotiations - Apartheid and Beyond

In this chapter, the differences and similarities between the two novels are examined and analyzed in detail. For this, focus is given on the historical progress and change during the two decades between which the novels are written. The historical reference in *The Lying Days* is to the victory of the National Party in the general election of 1948.In contrast to this, the background of *Burger's Daughter* is the rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa. This chapter also focuses on Nadine Gordimer as a writer. Emphasis is given on the difficulties of being an imaginative writer in a crisis ridden society. Despite many challenges, Gordimer has minutely charted changes in the social climate of South Africa over the last four decades. While her early stories dealt with subjects like a white girl's fear of being assaulted by a black man, later ones have delineated such matters as the difficulties of interracial love affairs and the ending of a revolutionary movement in compromise and betrayal. Apart from these subject matters, her work has also reflected her own evolving political consciousness and maturation as an artist. As a radical in support of black-majority rule, she was an outsider even to liberal whites. In short, she rarely enjoyed a sense of belonging, yet she had always longed to be accepted. The various criticisms that Gordimer has faced as a writer are also mentioned in this chapter. A common accusation is that Gordimer as a writer is too subjective and thus her vision of South Africa is too partial. Despite such criticisms, Gordimer's remarkable development from *The Lying Days* to *Burger's Daughter* is undeniable in terms of its reflection of the historical progress and change which took place between the two decades. Her novels seek to distance itself from traditional English literature from which it emerged and employ indirect discourse to represent what the narrator lacks access to, but which the reader can deduce from the text. What is most evident in both the selected novels is that Gordimer, as a white South African, is conscious that her approach stands against colonisation and its effects within the

white settler and their social codes. Lastly, this chapter also analyzes the whiteness debate and how whiteness studies is incorporated into a South African context. Emphasis is given on the importance of establishing a reason behind the study of whiteness. Historically it is those races that are not white that are considered to be racialised subjects and are, therefore, the focus of study. Whiteness, on the other hand, is situated as the silently normative dominant identity position. This assumption gives the category whiteness its power as it occupies a central position from which all 'otherness' is read. It is from this position that the social concepts that maintain whiteness as the privileged race can be renegotiated. In the South African debate it is often correctly emphasised that the people of colour were oppressed and deprived during the era of segregation which was 1910-1948 and the era of apartheid, 1948-1994. Less well known are the details of how racial segregation and its effects affected the white population, apart from the obvious accumulation of wealth. Parts of the US-originating discourse on whiteness, such as the interest in hybridity in whiteness, the studies that demonstrate the 'othering' of lower class whites, and discussions on the representations of 'Self' and the 'Other' within whiteness, becomes relevant when studying South African whites. To focus on the two novels alone, a thoughtful reading, therefore, shows that from the beginning Gordimer has treated her country's racial politics as the determining factor in her characters' lives.

Chapter V:Conclusion

This chapter sums up the whole research, mainly addressing the arguments related to white narratives and Gordimer's approach to it. Focus is given on the challenge of bridging the gap between the two racial equations which is deeply marked by decades of internalized prejudice. Although written in different decades, the novels are a clear documentation of self-exploration of consciousness of white South African

women. The female characters in these novels do differ in relation to their respective time periods. Yet, the similarities between these women enforce the idea that the difference of a century has not eased the struggle of white South African women to come to terms with their image of self or their options in life. Historically, as mentioned earlier, South Africa's past was riddled with violence and oppression by the elevation of one race above another, and this left a common resentment and anger towards white people. By virtue of their physical whiteness, they symbolise years of oppression and control and without the State's assurance white people believed they were vulnerable. Politically the new government did not encourage resentment or violence, but, instead, offered a new blanketing term the 'Rainbow Nation'.(Croucher87) This term is coined by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe post-apartheid South Africa, after South Africa's first fully democratic election in 1994. The phrase was elaborated upon by the elected president, Nelson Mandela in his first month of office, when he proclaimed: "Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld - a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."(President's Budget Debate) The term was intended to encapsulate the unity of multi-culturalism and the coming-together of people of many different nations, in a country once identified with the strict division of white and black. In a series of televised appearances, Tutu spoke of the 'Rainbow People of God'. As a cleric, this metaphor drew upon the Old Testament story of Noah's Flood, and its ensuing rainbow of peace. Within South African indigenous cultures, the rainbow is associated with hope and a bright future. (Baines 55)

The notion of the country as a 'Rainbow' that arises from its multi-culturalism was supposed to encourage cultural diversity. But, the past is still very influential, and

the history that created racialised identities cannot be forgotten or discarded in the face of this new nation.

A brief clarification is also given in this chapter on the reasons Gordimer has rejected the feminist ideals. It appears that Gordimer has consciously downplayed and at times even denied the feminist aspect of her fiction. She has said several times that the women's liberation movement is irrelevant in South Africa, where political freedom for black men and women must take precedence over improvements in the position of white bourgeois women. (Harwitt 116) In Gordimer's view, women's movement is an oversimplification of the South African situation. But despite her criticism of bourgeois feminism in South Africa, Gordimer cannot be labeled as anti-feminist. The female characters in her fiction learn to define themselves independently of men, partly through their commitment to the black liberation struggle. Thus when they find themselves, they become liberated in the feminist sense, through commitment to what Gordimer sees as the larger cause. Her heroines, as versions of herself, are primarily witnesses and recorders, and finally, survivors. Both of the selected works therefore explore the lines between private and public, personal and political, by untangling the various threads of a white woman's life, revealing both what is unique and what is historically typical in her personality and decisions as a white skinned South African.

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