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**A THEMATIC STUDY OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IN NADINE GORDIMER'S *THE CONSERVATIONIST*****D.Gururaj<sup>1</sup>**Research Scholar  
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**Abstract:**

Nadine Gordimer is a prolific writer who addresses the issues of black people in South Africa. Moreover, South Africa was under an apartheid system for several decades in the twenty-first century. Great political leaders and some literary writers strongly objected to the exploitation of apartheid rule in that country. For instance, the great Nelson Mandela fought for the abolition of apartheid and was imprisoned for his protests. On the other hand, some writers, like Gordimer, fought for the end of apartheid rule through their writings. Her writings revolutionized black people to realize that the land is theirs and the Black is the land owner. So, this Black consciousness is seen in Nadine Gordimer's Novel *The Conservationist*. This novel exhibit so many incidents that reiterate that Black is superior and that Black people should dominate their nation. Hence, this paper analyses how the situation helped them realize their consciousness.

**Keywords:** Patriarchal, dominance, marginalization, oppression, significance, emasculating, masculine, portrayed.

The novel depicts the story of a young and wealthy industrialist White man, Mehring. Mehring himself solely narrates the story. The story is also portrayed by the third narrator, who elaborately explains the story. Mehring is an industrialist, a trader of Pig Iron. Mehring runs the business in the big industrial area, Johannesburg, in South Africa. Mehring, the White man, has a wife and son separated from him. Their son is seventeen years old. The boy named Terry wants to become a protester. In 1972, the apartheid in South Africa was in force, and the White had to stay in the army. Mehring's son wants to become a conscientious protestor and would have gone to jail. The boy is gay and does not want to go to the army.

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The White man feels happy and safe that he has escaped from his friends in the city. He is so proud of his possession than his Black servant, who is conscious and adjustable to life on the farm. The Black servants look after the farm. They care for the farm and look after its critical situation whenever he leaves the country. The White man acknowledges the Black for taking care of the farm. Mehring also thank the Black for being on a farm for a long time. They praise God for their durability and say their grandchildren will squat on the farm. The responsibility has been reversed because Blacks own the farm, and the White farmer is the administrator.

The Black ask for the farm for their own as they become the inheritors of the town and the earth. The Black has made the dead man his inheritance. The leader of the Black, Jacobus, is not responsible for the stranger's death and asks the children not to play in the place where he was buried. Later, the Blacks eradicate the White rule and behave like they own the farm. Very soon, the farm becomes it is own with nature's help. The farm is the dream of Mehring, whose development has been linked with the events that take place. The busiest month for Mehring is the dry winter where the farm, "On the farm it is the time for conservation—buildings to be repaired, fire-breaks cleared, he must go round all the fences with Jacobus . . . His energy rises in inverse proportion to winter slackness" (TC 68). pened down there" (TC 10-15). The rain came to the devastation caused by the fire, which was

The conservation must be done on the farm where the building has to be repaired, and the fire breaks have to be cleared. Mehring goes to the farm and rounds the fence along with Jacobus. His energy level rises in the reverse direction. He also sees the fire on his friend's farm and anguishes at the total loss. "It is all done. Smoking faintly. Quite cold. The whole farm stinks like a dirty ashtray". The smoke in the land spreads wide, leading to the destruction of the farm. After all the losses, Mehring now waits for the rain to make the land fertile for harvesting and shows that nothing happened, "it will be as if nothing ever hap destroyed. The rain lasts for three days which makes the situation worse.

The flood covers the village, and there is a massive loss to the White farmer. He becomes conscious and builds the farm to remain relaxed by staying away from the city. The novel predicts the unpredictable sufferings due to the flood. Hence, Mehring explains that prosperity cannot be controlled as it cannot be stopped because of nature. He is disturbed by the situation and then decides to abandon his farm and live with the Black stranger. He also goes to see the leftover Black people. But hundreds of the Blacks knock at the door as they come hearing that the land is for sale.

Mehring owns a farmhouse in the country. He visits the farmhouse at the weekends. Sometimes Mehring goes with his girlfriend to the farmhouse for physical intimacy. Mehring's lover is a young girl, and her name is Antonia. They have an age gap of fifteen years between them. She is a single woman since her husband is far away from her.

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Antonia usually hangs out with the revolutionary and asks for something to drink. Antonia is a White liberal from the fertile areas of Johannesburg. Her conversation with Mehring is essential and bold. Antonia is a White liberal who is against apartheid in South Africa. Mehring, the Whiteman, has a crush on a Portuguese girl who is seventeen years old. Mehring meets the Portuguese girl in the TAP plane traveling from Lisbon on a business work. Mehring also runs a business in Brazil. The old White man's behavior toward the Portuguese girl is the worst thing in his life as he thinks that it would put him in jail.

Antonia flees to London at the end of the story, like a White male in the army. Mehring, later on, becomes so psychotic. He imagines being an attractive girl in the woods. She is a gypsy in the woods, and her eyes show that she is a gypsy. Mehring and the girl are attacked by the police officers or the warriors, who think they will be killed. Mehring leaves the girl and runs away. The girl is left alone in her way. There is a flood in the village, and the Black buries a dead body that comes out due to the flood. Many readers assume that the dead body is Mehring, and he dies at the end. The workers on the farm call Mehring to make a coffin for the body they want to bury. Antonia had once told Mehring that his ownership in the farm is worthless, and she also said, "*The Blacks will tear up your bit of paper. No one will remember where you are Buried*". Of all the works of Nadine Gordimer, *The Conservationist* is different as it talks about more personnel than the public. The story narration shifts from one narrator to the other. The French model of the double dash is used in Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (Ogungbesan 4).

The *Conservationist's* language is compact and dense because she has written the novel with a pure mind, whatever came to her mind. The novel says that the transition between the ideas is missing. The novel has a great sense of characterization, which is the most crucial reason for the language to be very dense and compact. The language is so dense, and it makes poetic sense. The character Mehring is a racist White against Black. The White man in the novel is an older man with discrimination. He appoints the Blacks as servants on the farm. The discrimination is expressed in private but not in public. The protagonist in the novel is not a single man involved in the prejudices. The author's alter ego to date with White South Africans is a racist presupposition. Mehring thinks that racism is kept in higher priority in society.

The Afrikaners in the novel *The Conservationist* live as the White majority in town, in which the Afrikaners run the significant institutions. The country is dominated by White Afrikaners and is ruled by Congress. The Afrikaners induce apartheid in society. The protest against racism is demonstrated in the novel *The Conservationist*. The novel has prejudices about the Black in the novel. The character Mehring, a White liberal, appoints many Blacks on the farm and has a good relationship with them.

In this story, Mehring is worried about his seventeen-year-old son. The boy is not interested

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in the army. Mehring defends the apartheid army. The novel does not see South Africa as an apartheid state; instead, he imagines being a republic of South Africa. Mehring imagines that his son would be a better objector of the apartheid and a good lawyer who would not go to jail. In the novel, the author describes that the boy, Terry, is dependent on his mother. In Western literature, the mother-son relationship leads to destruction, but in African literature, the mother-son relationship is healthy.

Nevertheless, in South African society, the son of a liberal can be flown to other countries instead of fighting with the apartheid army. The boys who became protestors against apartheid were put in jail. *The Conservationist's* central theme is the bold approach towards the apartheid. Mehring is not a violent man, but he is a racist, and his behavior proves it. Mehring is a White person who feels superior because he belongs to the White community. Mehring believes that his relationship hierarchy with the Black and White relationship is natural. The people disagreed with the Conservationist's idea because South Africa became revolutionary at this stage.

The young youth Terry is a rebel and practices the rebels to be against the apartheid in South Africa. Mehring, the wealthiest man, spends money, and he is so privileged and thinks himself superior. The racism is apparent in the behavior of Mehring toward his Black workers on the farm. He commands a lot and never thanks them for being advanced, as he thinks he is far superior. Mehring, being a liberal White man, does not pay his workers. He realizes he has not given them enough, so he brings meat on Christmas Eve to feed the workers. However, the dog steals the meat, and nobody can get the meat from the dog. Mehring sees a Black man's dead body on his farm, and he informs the police regarding the issue. However, the police, instead of taking action, ask the people to bury the body on the farm itself. The attitude of the police force is evidence of racism.

*The Conservationist* is a story of an older man who fights to conserve nature and the apartheid in his country. Terry, a young boy, flees out of South Africa, which shocks Mehring as Terry does not want to serve in the army as a rebel. The conservationist betrays a son to become an army rebel. According to the novel, the people do not care about the feelings of others. This proves their isolation from nature, the relation between White and Black in hopelessness. The novel has a complex structure, and the language of the novel reveals that people find their identity. Mehring leaves the town and lives on the farm. Antonia removes herself from society and finds a new rebel activity. The White man is disturbed by the improper burial of the Black man who is buried improperly in the land (Mitras 4). The workers claim the body on the farm for a proper burial. This symbolizes that the Africans have owned the land for themselves. Mehring is disturbed by the attitude, which depicts the end of White power, and the Black body symbolizes the Black power in the land. The novel ends with the proper burial of the Black body by saying.

"He had no family, but their women wept a little for him. There was no child of his present, but their children were there to live after him. They had put him away to rest, at last. He had come

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back. He took possession of this earth, theirs, one of them." (Gordimer 252)

The words mentioned above represent Black unity when a Black dies. They say the Black man has no family, but the Black woman cries for him. He has no children, but the whole children will live after him. When they bury him, the land becomes their own. The raising of the Black symbolizes their rise to power and political dominance. The Black returns to power which brings deterioration to the White man. In *The Conservationist*, Gordimer depicts the dilemma of the main character, Mehring, feeling guilty and away from the land.

In *The Conservationist's* novel, Mehring feels guilty for improperly burying the Black man's dead body. Mehring thinks, "How long can we go on getting away scot-free? ... soon, in this generation or the next, it must be our turn to starve and suffer" (TC 46). The sentence predicts that Mehring thinks that when the particular day comes, the Whites will be free from blame. The novel's end describes the Black people preparing for the proper burial of the dead body (Gordimer 19). Land is the theme of the novel to strengthen power and construction. Colonialism is a symbol of power and the existence of suffering and resistance. The novel *The Conservationist* describes the power of Black people over the land. In a comment about Mehring, the farm leader Jacobus mentions that "*He certainly has a sense of attachment to the place*" (TC 145). The Blacks own the land and maintain it with all kinds of repairs in the absence of the master. The land symbolizes the reverse power of Black on White in the novel (Clingman 23).

The critic, Judi Newman, raises a question in the novel about who will come to South Africa. The novel focuses on the barrenness and motionlessness of the White people from the behavior of Mehring. Mehring, the White man, is a third descendant of the European settlers and has no ancestral lands. So, he claims the land to be his own. The Africans, however, become the temporary owners of the land where they were born. The bareness of the White settlers leads the Black to strengthen their existence in the land of power and descendants.

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