

Yesterday Dawns Today

Molly Odegard Nikolic

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The mid-twentieth century was a period of turmoil for women as they confronted the constraints of domestic tradition, torn between independence and dependence. These particular decades provide the perfect setting for Molly Odegard Nikolic's *Yesterday Dawns Today*. This exploration of the past is really a journey into the future. Jenny Singleton, a native of Windsor, England, living in America, gets pregnant and never discloses her condition to her married lover, Regs Snow.

Injured in a car accident when their vehicles collide, Jenny meets Regs under life-changing circumstances in Madison, Wisconsin. Regs is unhappy with his spouse, and Jenny brings joy into his world. Lured back into his marriage by a manipulative wife, Regs terminates his contact with Jenny long after the two have bonded. In the following scene, Jenny reacts to the end of their affair: "Right then she wanted to get away from this awful moment. In a blind raging flurry she opened the door, running out and down the street into the chill of the early evening twilight."

This is where the novel takes off. Rather than confining the story to a specific time frame, the author races through decades. The book has a promising start, but veers off course into Jenny's friendship with a wealthy, older woman named Margy. As she steps into the spotlight, this noble soul overwhelms the novel. The older woman's own romance dominates the narrative, and though an interesting addition, this supporting character controls the plot from the moment she enters and reroutes the action to London. The result is frustrating for a reader expecting to learn more about Jenny.

Margy is the emerging protagonist, as is evident in a significant decision made by Jenny: "She was delighted to give up her job and come to work as Margy's companion. Jenny felt, for the first time in years, secure, safe and lucky, as though providence was shining down on her, giving a reason for her existence."

When yet another romance enters the story, this time for Jenny's daughter, Annie, the story's original desired focus is lost. Nikolic's saga, condensed in one short novel, gallops through the years and provides snapshots of significant events without allowing a natural progression to occur. Disclosing details that should be left for the reader to discover is the book's ultimate downfall, along with inadequate copy editing and a back cover blurb that reads like a synopsis. The black-and-white cover has a grainy appearance, which is likely done for effect, but the author's name is barely legible against such a lackluster and unappealing image.

Yesterday Dawns Today is the first novel by Molly Odegard Nikolic, who holds a bachelor's degree in history from Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (February 20, 2012)

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