

**Gender and Race in Doris Lessing's  
*The Grass is Singing***

*Project submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of*

**Bachelor of Arts**

**in**

**English and History**

**by**

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**CCASADER08**



**March 2021**

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## **Declaration**

I, **Preciousborn William**, hereby declare that this project entitled **Gender and Race in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing***, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History, is a research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of, **Miss. Nahna Kamarudeen V** Assistant Professor, Department of English & History, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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## Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled **Gender and Race in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing***, a record of research work carried out by Mrs. **Preciousborn William** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History submitted to the University of Calicut.

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## **Acknowledgement**

I owe my gratitude to God for his endless blessings and intervention in helping me complete my project without any hassles and on time. I am indebted to my supervising teacher, **Miss. Nahna Kamarudeen V**, Assistant Professor, Department of English & History, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, for guiding me throughout the project and for the countless hours and efforts she put in to help complete my project. I thank Mr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of B.A. English & History, for the timely help and generous encouragement. I am eternally grateful to Rev Fr. Jolly Andrews, the Principal, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda for the congenial research he has always tried to foster. I owe my thanks to my parents, my teachers, my friends and all those who have helped me indirectly and indirectly, in the successful completion of the project work.

**Preciousborn William**

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## Introduction

Literature is a body of written words. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. The value judgement definition of literature considers it to cover exclusively those writings that possess high quality or distinction. The formalist definition is that literature foregrounds poetic effects. Jim Mayer considers this a useful characteristic in explaining the use of the term to mean published material in a particular field. Literature, the term derived from its Latin root “literature/litteratura” (derived itself from littera:letter or handwriting) was used to refer to all written accounts. There are different types of literatures based on demography like American, French, Russian, Latin American and African Literature.

African literature is the body of traditional and written literature.

Traditionally, Africans do not radically separate art from teaching. Rather than write or sing for beauty in itself, African writers, taking their cue from oral literature, use beauty to help communicate important truths and information to society. Indeed, an object is considered beautiful because of the truths it reveals and the communities it helps to build. Traditional written literature, which is limited to a smaller geographic area than is oral literature, is most characteristic of those Sub-Saharan cultures that have participated in the cultures of the Mediterranean. In particular, there are written literatures in both Hausa and Arabic, created by the scholars of what is now Northern Nigeria, and the Somali people have produced a traditional written literature. There are also works written in Ge’ez (Ethiopic) and Amharic, two of the languages of Ethiopia. Some of the prominent African

contemporary writers include; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ayi Kwei Armah, Aminatta Foma, Nadine Gordimer, Ben Okri and Doris Lessing.

Doris May Lessing (22 Oct 1919-17 Nov 2013) was a British Zimbabwean (Rhodesian) novelist. She was born to British parents in Iran, where she lived until 1925. Her family then moved to southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where she remained until moving in 1949 to London, England. She is famous as short story writer, dramatist, poet and novelist. Lessing was awarded the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature. In awarding the prize, the Swedish Academy described her as “that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a civilization to scrutiny”. Her body of work comprises around 50 books and spans several genres. Her writing is characterized by penetrating studies of living conditions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, behavioral patterns, and historical developments. Some of Doris Lessing’s books reach into the future. Among other things, she portrays our civilization’s final hour from the perspective of an extraterrestrial observer. Lessing was the oldest person ever to receive the Nobel Prize in literature. Her sequence of five novels collectively is called *children of violence* (1952-1969). Other novels include *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *Martha Quest* (1952), *The Good Terrorist* (1985) and *The Grass is Singing* (1950).

Doris Lessing was brought up in the atmosphere pervaded with racial conflict. She remained among the Blacks and loosely scrutinized their way of life. She witnessed the subservience of blacks under White masters and how little they were paid back in return which was not enough for their survival. They were treated like slaves and consequently Blacks did not have any freedom to assert their own will.

The novel *The Grass is Singing* (1950) by Doris Lessing is a fascinating work

of art, which exemplifies the complexity of Black and White correlation especially, suffering of White female under the colonial power in relation to modern community. They are trapped in the patriarchal system and the norms of racial subjugation to which they ought to adhere. The gruesome racial legacies traumatize the 'subhuman' (Black natives as considered by imperialists) of Africa and female (Other) of colonial power.

*The grass is singing* is a tale of subjection of a woman who was defeated and thwarted by the bullying of race, gender and other social discriminations. Mary Turner, the victim of such oppression, is unlike the other characters of Lessing, as she was never been given any freedom. Isolation, mental and economic sterility and emotional troubles she suffered from laxity and meaninglessness of ill-matched marriage. She was forced by the society to accept loveless marriage that she also saw in her parent's life. As she grew up in a broken family, alienation and non-involvement subjugated her absolutely. Her life was tossed and turned by the wave of social insecurity, sexual dissatisfaction and vacuum. Her struggle in the turbulent wave was intensified when the clutches of race and patriarchy grab her. She was murdered by the black slave not because she was white, but she was the weaker sex.

At the heart of *The Grass is singing* is the whirlwind of race, the struggle that the female psyche of Mary Turner faces in accepting the blacks as human-not as equals, but merely as human. To this end various unwritten laws of colonial Africa that are frequently mentioned in the novel serve as convenient support for an arrogant kind of exclusivism. Roberta Rubenstein rightly observes that *The Grass is Singing* "concerns about social economic and political structures, with being female in a conventional man's world" (Rubenstein 17). Thus, in the colonial era, rise of



White Imperialism not only hindered the sustenance of Black people of Africa but also ostracized the life of White women.

The project is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the introductory part of the project. The second chapter discusses the themes explored in the project. The third chapter traces the applications of the themes race and gender in the book *The Grass is Singing*. The fourth chapter is the overall summing up of the arguments portrayed in the previous chapter.

## Chapter 1

### Race and Gender

Racism is the belief in the superiority of one race over other. It may also mean prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against other people they are of a different race or ethnicity. Modern variants of racism are often based in social perceptions of biological differences between people. These views can take the form of social actions, practices or beliefs, or political systems in which different races are ranked as inherently superior or inferior to each other, based on presumed shared inheritable traits, abilities, or qualities. In terms of political systems (e.g., apartheid) that support the expression of prejudice or aversion in discriminatory practices or laws, racist ideology may include associated social aspect such as nativism, xenophobia, otherness, segregation, hierarchical ranking and supremacism. Racism is a problem that has plagued our whole world for centuries.

Historically, racism was a major driving force behind the Atlantic slave trade. It was also a major force behind racial segregation especially in the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and south Africa under apartheid; 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century racism in western culture is particularly well documented and constitutes a reference point in studies and discourses about racism. Racism has played a role in genocide such as the Holocaust, and the Armenian genocide, and colonial projects like the European colonization of the American, Africa, and Asia. Indigenous peoples have been are often subject to racist attitudes. There are different kinds of racism. Whether racism is hereditary or acquired is only of academic importance because whatever its source, its

influence on human behavior is just as powerful and compelling, as once ingrained it is difficult for individuals and groups to eradicate this poison from their mind.

In the early development of the child, the family place a fundamental part in laying the foundation of attitude which serve the purpose of helping the child to behave appropriately to situations which may be threat to him; one such attitude is racism. On the one hand racism builds a strong bond among individuals of the same race, but on the other hand it can put strong barriers between people belonging to different races. The prejudice against other racial groups usually lurks under the surface in the human mind, but certain factors may cause this to explode into deep hatred and violence. In this project, the psychological causes of prejudice and their effects are discussed. There are different typed of racism in the world. Individual racism, interpersonal racism, institutional racism, cultural racism, structural racism and so on.

Individual racism, also called personal racism, is the type of racism that most people think of when they think of “racism”. Individual racism occurs when a person’s beliefs, attitudes and actions are based on biases, stereotypes, or prejudices against another race. A belief that Whites are biologically superior to people of color is an example of individual racism. In reality, racism can be conscious or unconscious. Unconscious racism-also known as implicit bias- can be a difficult concept to understand. Researches at Harvard explains implicit bias as follows: because our unconscious brain must work very quickly to make decisions, they look for shortcuts. Grouping people based on their appearance is one such shortcut. Generally, these mental shortcuts are not a problem. However, because American history, media, an institution have consistently produced negative images of people of color, Americans have been exposed to harmful ideas about people of color for

generations. Over time, exposure to this image corrupts the unconscious brain so thoroughly that it becomes trained to connect people of color with negative traits.

Interpersonal racism is racism between individuals. It is a component of an individual level racism and has been defined as “directly perceived discriminatory interactions between individuals’ whether in their institutional roles or as public and private individual”. In other words, it is when a White person actively or passively employs their personal racism against a person of color. Interpersonal racism can occur in a wide variety of venues and can be communicated through a range of attitudes and actions. A few decades ago, interpersonal racism was much more overt. Before the civil Rights movement, Whites often used racial slurs and engaged in physical violence against people of color. Today, such actions- known as overt racism-are less tolerated as acceptable in society, but still prevalent. While name-calling and physical threats are frowned upon today, Interpersonal racism can still take a variety of forms. Now, racism is more covert. The ideas remain the same but today they are expressed differently. A person who would not dare use a racial slur might still engage in any number of acts that demonstrate a preference for Whiteness and White people.

In America most conversations about racism focus on the actions of individuals. Sadly, this limited thinking prevents discussion of one of the most important types of racism. When racism occurs in organizations, it can be much harder to combat. Institutions often have more history, money, power and prestige than individuals. So, while we certainly want individuals to be free of bias, if institutions are biased, a few unbiased individuals will not be enough to overcome the bias. Institutional racism refers to an institution making choices that intentionally single out or harm people of color. Jim Crow segregation laws are

good examples of institutional racism. While explicit institutional racism is rare today, it still exists. To return to our example, after Jo calls the police, the officer arrives. Police department policy directs officers to young Blacks and Latino males. This policy is institutional racism.

Cultural racism has several meanings. In the larger sense, it is the authority to create and define culture in a society. In America, the standards of art, beauty and other forms of culture have historically been decided by straight, White Christian men. As a result, the dominant American culture often reflects the needs of that group while excluding or devaluing the contributions of people of color. Therefore, in America, the holidays we celebrate, the statues in our parks, the stories in our history books and other markers of culture generally honor White men to the exclusion of other groups. Cultural racism also uses “culture” as the explanation for policies generated by racism and White supremacy. As overt racism declined, cultural racism took its place. According to a cultural racist, African Americans lack wealth because “their culture” doesn’t value education, marriage, hard work or thrift. This “explanation” overlooks the fact that African Americans endured hundreds of years of unpaid slavery, many generations of segregation, and could not vote in many areas until 1965.

Rather than exploring some of the actual causes of the current situation, cultural racists claim, “That’s just the way they are”. Structural racism, also known as systemic racism, is perhaps the most harmful and least discussed form of racism. Structural racism codifies individual, cultural and other types of racism in perpetual systems. Like institutional racism, structural racism focuses on organizations rather than people. But while institutional racism may purposefully try to single out a particular group, structural racism is neutral on its face. This

neutrality makes structural racism difficult to measure and even more difficult to end. For example, an organization may establish an early career pipeline program to recruit new, diverse professionals. Despite this commitment to diversity, the program's requirements may limit the number of diverse applicants. The program may require college degree and letters of recommendation from faculty members. Moreover, historical and present structural practices such as predatory lending make it more difficult for people of color to afford college.

Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics may include biological sex (i.e., the state of being male, female, or an intersex variation), sex-based social structures (i.e., gender roles), or gender identity. Most cultures use a gender binary, having two genders (boys/men and girls/women). Studies of gender differences in orientations towards others have found that women are more strongly concerned than men with effective processes and are more likely to be other-focused, while men tend to be more instrumental and more self-oriented. Recent research has extended this finding to include gender differences in racial attitudes, and reports that women are also more favorable than men in their racial outlooks.

While race is one reason for inequality and gender is another, they are not mutually exclusive forms of discrimination. We find that gender differences in racial attitudes are small, inconsistent, and limited mostly to attitudes on racial policy. Our findings are consistent with the views that White women's and White men's racial attitudes are racial policy. Our findings are consistent with the views that White women's and White men's racial attitude are rooted in their shared of group position, and the gender differentiated value socialization plays only a small

role in racial attitude formation. Gendered racism is seen through society's stereotypical portrayals of men and women of color. For example, African American men may be seen as criminals and absent fathers. Latino women may be seen as feisty and exotic, ancient women may be viewed as submissive and docile and African American women may be portrayed as Mammy figures, promiscuous and emasculating. These stereotypes coined with the images that are pervasive in the media, which influences public opinions on people of color. For African American women, gendered racism has manifested in multiple ways and continuous to do so. Their challenges include prejudice, mistreatment and economic disadvantage.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle who, in his discussion of slavery stated that while Greeks are free by nature, "barbarian's" (non-Greeks are slaves by nature, in that it is in their nature to be more willing to submit to a despotic government. Though Aristotle does not specify any particular races, he argues that people from nations from outside Greeks are more prone to the burden of slavery than those from Greece. While Aristotle makes remark about the most natural slaves being with strong bodies and slave souls (unfit for rule, unintelligent) which would seem to imply a physical basis for discrimination, He also explicitly states that the right kind of source and bodies don't always go together, implying that the greatest determinate for inferiority and natural slaves versus natural masters is the soul, not the body. This proto racism is seen as the important precursor to modern racism.

Bernard Lewis, a Historian has sighted historians and geographers of the Middle East and North Africa region, including Al- Muqaddasi, Al-jahiz, Al-masudi, Abu-rayhan-biruni, Nazir- al-din, Al-tusi and Ibn Qutaybah. Though the Qur'an express no racial prejudice, Lewis argues that ethnocentric prejudice later developed among Arabs, for a variety of reasons: their extensive conquests and

slave trade; the influence of Aristotelian ideas regarding slavery, which some Muslim philosophers directed towards Zanj and Turkic peoples; and the influence of Judeo-Christian ideas regarding divisions among humankind. The Afro-Arab author Al-Jahiz, himself having a Zanj grandfather, wrote a book entitled *Superiority of the Blacks to the Whites*, and explained why the Zanj were black in terms of environmental determinism in the “On the Zanj” chapter of the *Essays*. By the 14th century, a significant number of slaves came from sub-Saharan Africa; Lewis argues that this leads to the Egyptian historian Al-Abshibi (1388-1446) writing that “It is said that when the (Black) slave is selected, he fornicates, when he is hungry, he steals. Since the Second World War, Racism has been conceptualized as an irrational prejudice according to which other groups are considered inferior on the basis of Biological-Racial characteristics. Racism, however, is not a personality disorder or Irrational prejudice- Although prejudice is an important underlying attitude but a Political, social and Institutional phenomenon that is brought about and expressed in both the public and private spheres of life.

Racism is a historically specific ideological construction. It changes the time and with the economic political and sociocultural conditions in which it functions. Consequently, it has to be studied in its specific historical and social context. In the book, Miles (1989) points to the complexity of the process by which racism is ideologically reproduced. Ideologies are not uncritically reproduced; people construct and reconstruct them. According to their material and cultural condition in order to better understand these conditions. Racism is “practically adequate”, Miles argues. This aspect of racism means that the content of racism varies according to class positions. It is obviously the same aspect that determines



differences between the manifestations of racism found in different European countries and in historical timeframes.

International scientists broadly agree that racism is a historically specific phenomenon that varies according to place and time. Racism is everywhere a deeply anti-human and social practice, that therefore it is everywhere the same- either in its forms, its relations to other structures and processes, or its effects. “Hall even believes that the differences between British colonial racism and contemporary racism in the UK are greater than the similarities. Thus, racism is not a uniform, static, trans-historical phenomenon, but a complex, contradictory, multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon that adapts itself to the conditions in which it function.

## Chapter 2

### Relevance of the Novel

*The Grass is Singing* is the first novel, published in 1950, by British Nobel Prize-winning author Doris Lessing. It takes place in Southern Rhodesia, in southern Africa, during the 1940's and deals with the racial politics between Whites and Blacks in that country. Doris Lessing, born of British parents in Persia (now Iran). In 1990 who spent her childhood in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) since she was five and went to England in 1949. Published in 1950 it is her first novel which gave outstanding success in Britain, America and other European countries in which resulted in her international reputation.

This novel opens with a very brief newspaper account of the murder of a White lady, Mary Turner, wife of Richard Dick Turner, a farmer in southern Rhodesia. It states that the black house boy has been arrested and he has confessed to the crime. The newspaper holds that the boy was in search of valuables. Then the novel moves to describe the inquiry into the murder by the neighbors and the colonial officials. The rest of the novel concerns the story of Mary's childhood, her life in town, her ambivalence towards marriage and sexual affair, her marriage with Dick Turner and unhappy conjugal life, her strict behavior with Dick Turner and unhappy conjugal life, her strict behavior with the native workers, her relation with the black houseboy Moses, the Slatters, Tony Marston and her murder by her own houseboy.

The novel gives a realistic sense of slavery in South Africa during the Apartheid period. There is a lot of tension and division between the Blacks and Whites. There is a very intense distaste towards the Black in the time, as they were not even thought of a

human beings and were oppressed with the British rule. This happened in many places, including in India before we got our independence. The fact that the book is written by a British author is also a bit controversial as it is coming through the eyes of a White author, sympathizing towards the Blacks slavery. There are many instances in the book which is left to readers and is abstract, for example when Mary dies and Moses kills her. It is very abstract and confusing for the reader. It depicts the Black/White romance and bridging the gap between races as it seems that Mary is attracted to Moses.

This is a story about hate, humiliation and revenge, a story about lost hopes and frustration, set in southern Rhodesia houseboy, now known as Zimbabwe. It centers around the murder of a White farmer's wife by her Black houseboy, a crime fueled by the institutional racism that pervades 1940s Rhodesia. The novel has a unique structure in which the first chapter deals with the murder and local reaction to it, then slips into an extended flashback in order to explain the circumstance behind the crime. Mary Turner is a self-confident, independent young woman who becomes the depressed, frustrated wife of an enigmatic and virile Black servant. It ends as a disturbing tale of racial strife in colonial South Africa.

The title is taken from a poem called "The Wasteland" written by T.S. Eliot (1922) quoted after the novel's dedication to a Mrs. Gladys Masdorp "of Southern Rhodesia for whom I feel the greatest affection and admiration". Found on both lines 354 and 3386 of part V: what the thunder said, it is one of the more jubilant and reviving images used in that section, despite its theme of destructions power over growth. Lessing also quotes an anonymous author: "it is by the failures and misfits of a

civilization that one can best judge it's weakness." When *The Grass is Singing* it means that it is hot and then the cicadas (krekels) make a lot of noise. Mary Turner hates hot weather and hates the noise it indicates way of her life. The life which she never expected.

Doris Lessing wrote her novels with strong themes such as disillusionment, more specifically, political disillusionment is a recurring theme in the stories of Lessing and even more so, in her novel. The gap between political idealism and actual practice creates a psychic dislocation for many Lessing's characters that inexorably leads to disillusionment. Time and again in Lessing's short stories, the best intentions of characters are hampered by what is typically an obstacle in most fiction, but an obstacle which is destined to be overcome: romance. The novel *The Grass is Singing* is from the third person omniscient point of view, albeit with some-what limited perspective. To be specific, the narration focuses with almost complete exclusivity on the thoughts, feelings and motivation of its White characters. The Black characters, who are admitted secondary in narrative importance, receive little or no attention in the narration for their thoughts and feelings.

## Chapter 3

### Analyzing the Theme Race and Gender in the Novel

*The Grass is Singing* is the first novel, published in 1950, by British Nobel prize-winning author Doris Lessing. It takes place in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in Southern Africa, during the late 1940s and deals with the racial politics between Whites and Blacks in that country which was then a British colony. The novel created a sensation when it was first published and became an instant success in Europe and United States. The novel is set in South Africa, which at the time the action unfolds was populated and governed according to the rules of apartheid, institutionalized racism in which the White minority was socially, legally and politically dominant over the Black majority. The book is perhaps the most interesting when the author describes the ideology of White colonists in Africa. In particular the idea that extreme racism develops out a need to justify economic exploitation is poignantly posed. It is not that White oppress Blacks because they hate them, rather they hate them because they have to oppress them and deny their human worth to maintain their standard of living. Thus, new comers from Britain must be taught how to deal with a feel about the natives, and poor Whites are despised because they seem to blur the color lines.

“People all over the country...felt a little spurt of anger mingled with what was almost satisfaction as if some beliefs have been confirmed...when natives steals, murder or rape, that is the feeling White people have (pp.1). “ the native police man did not have to search for the murderer. After walking through the house, looking briefly at the body, and dispersing down the front of the little hill

the house stood on, they saw Moses himself rise out of a tangled anti-heap in front of them. He walked up to them and said: 'Here I am' (pp.6). they snapped the handcuffs on him and went back to the house to wait for the police cars to come. People did ask curiously, why the murderer had given himself up? There was not much chance of escape, but he did have a sporting chance. He could have run to the hills and hidden for a while. Or he could have slipped over the borders to the Portuguese territory. Then the district native commissioner, at a sundowner party, said it was perfectly understandable. If one know anything about the history of the country, or had read any of the memories or letters of the old missionaries and explorers, one would have come across the account of the society Lobengula ruled. It was tradition to face the punishments, and really there was something rather fine about it. The laws were strict:

In the old society everyone knew what they could or could not do. If someone did an unforgiveable thing, like touching one of the king's women, he would submit fatalistically. No punishment, which was likely to be impalement over an ant heap on a stake, or something equally unpleasant. I have done wrong and I knew it; he might sit there for let me be punished (pp.6).

Mary, like most Rhodesian women, is overtly racist, believing that Whites should be masters over the native Blacks. Dick and Mary both often complain about the lack of work ethic among the natives that work on their farm. While Dick is rarely cruel to the workers that work for them, Mary is quit cruel. She treats herself as their master and superior. She shows contempt for the natives, and finds them disgusting and animal-like; Mary's cross, queenly, and overtly hostile to the many house servants that she has over the years. When Mary oversees the farm labor, she is much more repressive than Dick had ever been. She makes them

harder, reduces their break time and arbitrarily takes money from their pay. Her hatred of natives results in whipping the face of a worker because he spoke to her in English, asking her for water.

This worker, named Moses comes to be a very important person in Mary's life, when he is taken to be a servant for the house. Mary does not feel fear of her servant Moses but rather the great deal of disgust, repugnance and avoidance. After many years living on the farm together, Dick and Mary are seen in a condition of the deterioration. Mary often goes through spells of depression, during which she is exhausted of energy and motivation. As Mary becomes weaker, she finds herself feeling endearment towards Moses. On a rare visit from her neighbor, Slatter, Mary is seen being carelessly, thoughtlessly kind to Moses this enrages Slatter. Slatter demands that Mary should not live with that worker as a house servant. Slatter sees himself as defending the values and integrity of white community. Slatter uses his charisma and influence to convince Dick to give up ownership of his farm and go on a vacation with this wife. Dick spends his last month on his farm with Tony, who have been hired by Slatter to take over the running of the farm. Tony has good intentions and is very superficially cultured, but he find himself having to adapt to the racism of the white community. One day Tony sees Moses' dressing Mary and is surprised, somewhat amazed by Mary's breaking of the 'color war.'

*The Grass is Singing* is self-conscious novel that deconstructs the two storied edifices of apartheid and domestic bliss. It is not significant to Lessing's purpose here that the heroine is destroyed by a combination of racial mythologies and domestic fictions. For both, to one degree or another, dehumanize their participants by forcing them to function less an individuals than an ideas. Thus, it

is central to the twisted mythology of apartheid that blacks are racially and incorrigibly to whites, and assumption that inspires all sorts of neurotic vigilance among the whites who must constantly monitor one another to maintain the myth of their own superiority. It is central to the feminine mystic that women find happiness and identity only in marriage, where they subordinate themselves to their husband. As a classic example of metafiction, Lessing's text simultaneously invokes and deconstructs these two social myths that bring her heroine not the status they promise but only grief and pain.

While Lessing describes neuroticism of both sexes' contemporary society, she shows women failing more massively than men, their failure being rooted in a self-limiting need for romantic love. In order to feel loved the women must see herself as "Feminine or passive and male as masculine or dominant. This attitude is illustrated in *The Grass is Singing*, in which Lessing portrays a young wife, Mary Turner deliberately refusing whital participation, joint work effort, as "she needed a man stronger than herself, and she was trying to create one out of Dick. If he had genuinely...taken the ascendancy over her, she would have loved him and no longer hated herself for becoming tied to a failure." (pp. 45)

This is a recurrent theme, and a primary source of failure, in Lessing's work – women's need to learn, her need for the illusion of having a real man, a protector acting as buffer between her and reality. Lessing's female protagonist is refusal of economic responsibility for herself is perhaps the source of other refusal, emotional and moral, even the responsibility for an identity. Once he is back, her psychological problems become severe that she no longer acts as a white person is "supposed" to act in racist south Africa. At this point her society's defense mechanism automatically clicks in to place, leaving her lost and



vulnerable. Under the circumstances, the person left for her to turn to his Moses, her black house servant, with whom he develops a forbidden, Latently, sexual relationship. Bizarre as the relationship becomes, it does involve some expression of simple human kindness. But because fiction of apartheid is nothing if not over perverse, Mary is not allowed to seek comfort from her black servant- even after all the Whites have deserted her.

Having broken the rule, she must be punished. And the punishment is death at her servant's hand. Although it is true that Mary suffers from severe mental disorders and Moses motives are never spelled out, her death is a direct result of their forbidden friendship. In short Mary is acceptable to her society for as long as she working she is willing to inhabit political fictions apartheid and maintain the appearance of marital happiness. When she rejects this fictions by preferring the company of her black house boy to that of her husband, Mary sentences herself to death. Her murder, therefore, serves the double purpose of vindicating her societies fear of black violence and silencing a dangerous non-conformist. As far as Mary is concerned, the victory of her white society is unconditional, sealed by her death. But as far as Lessing's readers are concerned, it is an empty victory. Although all of Mary's neighbor's, near and far, rally round in their common fears, we as readers do not share their condemnation of the poor women. We joined Lessing in condemning Mary's society. In so doing we joined her in the constructing the institution of apartheid and the midst that would sustain it.

Lessing has exposed the absolute corruption central to the fiction of apartheid by using the Black servant to enforce the white code. The bitter irony in the Lessing's story is just this: Mary goes insane and is murdered precisely because she abided by social conventions. It is true, of course, that she does break her

racist culture's code of behavior of White. For this she can be expected to be punished and is murdered finally. But because breaking the code means treating the Black person both for honoring and breaking illusion. She cannot win. Thus *The Grass is Singing* reveals itself as metafiction, reminding us of the punishment it store for those who violates society's fondest fictions of racial superiority. And in its tragic conclusion, when Moses murders Mary, the book effectively lays bare the illusion of marital happiness and that the fictions that would maintain it. For it is as clear as anything that Mary welcomes this release from bondage.

*The Grass is Singing* is to some degree autobiographical. Doris Lessing grew up in southern Rhodesia and there can be no doubt that this novel's characters and this character mindsets first found life not in Miss Lessing's world, but in Lessing's compatriots and classmates. It is clear she has known these people, for she still knows not just what they think, but how they think. Her narrative very sardonically, very accurately conveys the racist outlook of her characters. The novel is intensely humane in its attentiveness to the minutest details of mental life of this Central character: her small mindedness and her ambitions, her silent rage at her comprehending husband, her longing for the life of small town where she had worked as a secretary before her marriage. As her mind goes and her husband becomes more and more distant, she begins a sexual dalliance - its true scope only hinted at never quite clear - with Moses. And when, near the end, caught in a moment of intimacy with him by a white neighbor, she dismisses, this black man disrespectfully, we understand - we know it is not our business to forgive this betrayal of the only human meaning in the withered landscape of her existence.

White women are objectified as unattainable property of white men through stereotyping the native men as violent, savage and sexually threatening. These

double strategies both take the individuality from white women and colonize them as sexual objects always in danger and in need of the heroic protection of their white men, and help the white men overcome their fear and jealousy for the superior sexual potency of the black men. The patriarchal myth of white woman as white man's property and symbol of his power and the "forbidden fruits" for black man expels woman from subjective roles by imposing upon them the view that they are unable to handle the black laborer. Therefore, the white women are convinced that they cannot share power with the white men.

Mary's realization of her sterile situation is too late and has no other remedy but death. Her recognition is in her death. She sees herself as an angular, ugly, pitiful woman, with nothing left of the life that can do nothing in front of the "fatal night" Even her end is a gendered one; being taught to be selfless, she feels guilty in her attempt to find her true sexual self and does not see the power to complete herself, so her search ends in self-annihilation. She is unable to protest herself against pain and punishment because she has been taught that resistance is useless-to be a woman is to be powerless, at least in relation to a man". Her gender role makes her act the role of a sacrificial victim by permitting the bush Africa or Moses - to revenge the whole colonialism on her. Her readiness for self-sacrifice signifies her stereotype gender role. Her life and death show that she has been imprisoned in her culture's image of woman - dependent, helpless, a sacrificial colonized. At the beginning of the novel, she wanted to save herself by means marriage but it did not work either: "Yes: long, long ago, she had turned towards another young man, a young man from a farm, when she was in trouble and had not known what to do. It had seemed to her that she would be saved from herself by marrying him". Now the situation is different but her feelings are similar: "There was nothing new even in her death. The most important

thought. explaining her failure, is revealed only a few moments before she dies: “She would walk out her road alone, she thought. That was the lesson she had to learn. If she had learned it, long ago, she would not be standing here now, having been betrayed for the second time by her weak reliance on a human being who should not be expected to take the responsibility for her”. (pp.212)

It would have been better if she had stayed in the town as an unmarried woman and had lived her life on her own independently of others. Eventually, she regrets everything and feels "defenseless She regrets the fact that she had depended so much on other people and thus could not free herself. On the other hand, she finds out that it is impossible to be alienated from others She feels the irrational need to become a part of a certain community and to be able to act as an individual at the same time. The novel thus records Mary's total failure to survive on the levels of the self, society and race. Moses however can be said to enjoy in a very special sense, borderline success in surviving.

## Conclusion

*The Grass is Singing* is a novel by the Nobel Prize-winning British author Doris Lessing. It centers around the murder of a white farmer's wife by her black houseboy, a crime fueled by the institutionalized racism that pervades 1940s Rhodesia. The novel reflects its author's disapproval of sexual and political prejudices and colonialism. On the surface, it seems a personal and psychological portrayal of a female protagonist from childhood to death but seen as a whole, it is the political exposure of the futility and fragility of the patriarchal and colonial society upon which the masculinity of imperialism has sustained itself. The whole novel can be seen as Mary's struggle towards individuation to preserve her authenticity and sense of self but it fails because of the psychological and political forces which furnish her little insight into her condition and threaten to crush her.

Oxford English dictionary termed racism a synonym of racialism: "belief in the superiority of a particular race". By the end of World War II, racism had acquired the same supremacist connotations formerly associated with racialism: racism now implied racial discrimination, racial supremacism, and a harmful intent. Today, most biologists, anthropologists, and sociologists reject a taxonomy of races in favor of more specific and/or empirically verifiable criteria, such as geography, ethnicity, or a history of endogamy.

The first chapter deals with the summary of the novel. It begins with a newspaper article describing the murder of Mary Turner, wife of Richard, by her

black servant, Moses. The novel then flashes back to Mary Turner's unhappy early life. Burdened with emotionally absent, combative parents, Mary leaves early for boarding school, then secretarial work. She begins searching for a husband and finds Dick Turner, a struggling farmer. The early years of their marriage are awkward. Dick engages in an ill-fated venture to run a bee farm, and Mary begins to suspect that he is not nearly as good of a farmer as he lets on. He then decides to open a kaffir store. Mary is repulsed by her customers and the store does poorly. Mary becomes depressed, especially after Dick tells her they can't afford to have a child. She sees Moses, the worker she struck in the face, intrigued at his muscular body, and revulsion over his race. She is particularly critical of Moses, but he accepts her harsh words without complaint. She begins dreaming of Moses' body. Slatter tells Dick to take Mary on a vacation.

Dick agrees, though his pain is evident. Slatter hires Marston to run the farm in Dick's absence. Marston is shocked when he sees Moses helping Mary with her dress, an intimate act considered taboo in a place like Rhodesia, Marston orders Moses to leave, which sends Mary into a fit. The Turners are to leave for vacation the day after next. Mary awakes the next day and goes about her chores in a kind of trance, feeling that Moses is somewhere on the farm, waiting. She goes onto the veranda and sees Moses approaching. She wonders if she'll be able to explain herself. Moses stabs her to death. In this novel, it discusses the racial and gender concerns and employs the discrimination between the white and blacks and also the difference between the

In the third chapter, it discusses in full length that how Lessing portrays Mary's subjectivity as shaped and entangled within the ideological triangle of class, gender and

race; and how the same sexual and ideological factors, rooted in family and culture, causes failure in Mary's achieving her own sense of self and dooms her to death. Mary is fragmented between two contradictory status: on the one hand she longs to be a subject of her life, to live in a way she desires, and on the other hand she unconsciously performs a role as an object of the white oppressive structure of a colonial society which extracts meaning of her personal self and imposes its values, forcing the individual to yield to the good of the collective. Mary's subjectivity and her behavioral patterns are shaped by the cross-hatched intersection of gender, class, and race through the operation of the sexual and political colonialism in the context of imperialism. This anxiety is more political than economic based on the opposition of white/black. In this way, another complex clash of value system, besides gender and class, is added to the narrative structure of the novel and that is the matter of race

The binary of white/black reminds us of race difference which itself is linked and dependent on other differences, more importantly gender. White women are objectified as unattainable property of white men through stereotyping the native men as violent, savage and sexually threatening. These double strategies both take the individuality from white women and colonize them as sexual objects always in danger and in need of the heroic protection of their white men, and help the white men overcome their fear and jealousy for the superior sexual potency of the black men. The patriarchal myth of white woman as white man's property and symbol of his power and the "forbidden fruit" for black man expels women from subjective roles by imposing on them the view that they are unable to handle the black laborers.

In the sexual politics of the colonial myth, white women are victims as the native subjects are in the racial politics. A woman who is privileged racially can simultaneously experience gender limitations and class difference within her own category, like in the

case of Mary Turner. Mary fails to preserve her individuality because she is not able to resist the strong master narratives of the false colonial and patriarchal myth of superiority of her culture through the discourse of gender and race which places her firmly in a predetermined position. This project thus attempts to prove the presence of themes of race and gender in the novel *The Grass is Singing* by Doris Lessing.



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