

A Critical Analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*.

تحليل نقدي لرواية دوريس ليسينج " العشب يغني " .

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Thesis Authorization

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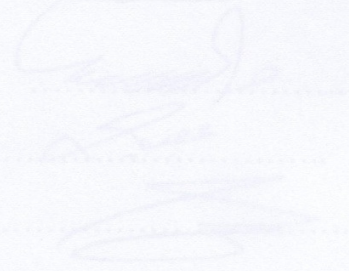
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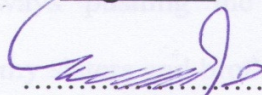
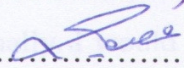
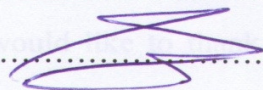
Thesis Committee Decision

This thesis (A Critical Analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*) was discussed and certified on, June, 5, 2011.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, my siblings: Abed El-Rahman, Fathia, Haitham, Basha`aer and my husband Mohamed. I especially would like to dedicate this work to my sister Enas' soul because she was always the motive which encouraged me to pursue my academic progress. I also want to dedicate it to my grandmother Rosa and to the souls of my grandparents Abed El-Rhaman and Hussein and to my grandmother Fathia. I would like to dedicate it as well to my nephews Fawzi and Ibrahim and my niece Rania because they are the symbol of hope. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to every teacher who taught me because they are distinguished teachers in their specialities.

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Abstract:

This study presents Doris Lessing as a writer who prefers shedding light upon the cruelty of the real world instead of creating something imaginary which cannot be felt by people around the world. One can perceive this fact through analysing her first work *The Grass is Singing* (1950). This study analyzes this work from four viewpoints: psychoanalytical, feministic, racial and autobiographical. Through these viewpoints, one can glean the fact that this novel is a multi-thematic one. Moreover, this study can be used in order to make readers familiar with Doris Lessing as a writer who does not belong to a univocal culture or mentality. She addresses issues which concern all people around the world; therefore, this study can be an example of a work which focuses on the achievements of any creative writer irrespective of his/her background.

تحليل نقدي لرواية دوريس ليسينج " العشب يغني " .

اعداد

علياء يوسف بحلق

اشراف

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ملخص الدراسة:

تقوم هذه الدراسة بتقديم دوريس ليسينج ككاتبة واقعية تفضل ان تقوم بتسليط الضوء على حقيقة المجتمع الفعلي بدلا من خلق عالم مختلف لا يمكن ان يتفاعل معه الناس في ارجاء المعمورة. يمكن التوصل لحقيقة كون دوريس ليسينج كاتبة واقعية من خلال تحليل روايتها الاولى " العشب يغني" الصادره عام (1950). لقد تم تحليل هذه الرواية من خلال تطبيق مبادئ علم النفس و مبادئ الحركة النسوية ومن خلال منظور التعصب العنصري و المنظور الشخصي للحياة الواقعية للكاتبة. ويمكن التوصل من خلال وجهات النظر هذه الى ان هذه الرواية متعددة المواضيع. بالاضافة الى ذلك فانه بالامكان استخدام هذه الدراسة لتعريف القراء على دوريس ليسينج بوصفها كاتبة لا تنتسب الى عقلية او ثقافة احادية الاتجاه. فهي تعالج مواضيع تثير اهتمام الناس حول العالم. ومن هذا المنطلق فان هذه الدراسه تعد انموذجا لعمل يركز على انجازات اي كاتب مبدع بصرف النظر عن ارضيته الفكري.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

Doris Lessing is a British writer who was born in 1919 in Kermanshah, Iran. She published her first novel *The Grass is Singing* in England in 1950. The title of this novel was taken from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. This title is included in these lines:

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, *the grass is singing*
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one (Lessing 1950, p. ii)

Given the context in which these words are used, it is obvious that Doris Lessing will show in her first novel the juxtaposition between the romantic connotations of the title and the dreary sense it is made to carry. Indeed the very choice of such a title gives an insight into the thematic implications of the novel which the present study seeks to unravel.

Her novel had a great success in England. In her autobiographical book, she stated that she rewrote *The Grass is Singing* several times. Her first draft of the novel was too long and it was originally telling the story of a British man, Tony, who arrived in southern Rhodesia. This man has to acclimatize himself to white people's ideas and ways of treating black people. He has treated them the same way; otherwise, he will be rejected by the white majority who see blacks as inferior to them. Lessing decided to change this plot because she felt she will not be sincere about what may happen because she has not lived this situation. Then, she rewrote it in order to describe black people's and women's suffering in Southern Rhodesia where they had to obey the male power; otherwise, they would be severely punished.

The Grass is Singing can have many readings which is a sign of Lessing's ability to write a comprehensive work covering the situation of woman, the

contribution of the psychic analysis in the understanding of what is going on, reflecting the problem of racism in southern Rhodesia, and finally integrating the events from her real life into a fictive construct. At the same time she succeeds to be neutral in reflecting her life by adopting a point of view opposite to the one she has adopted in her actual life which rejects the cruel treatment toward blacks.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Doris Lessing is capable of presenting several interpretations depending on the perspective adopted. These interpretations are related to different approaches, such as autobiographical, psychoanalytical, feministic and racial viewpoints. The diversity of implications is the major characteristic of this novel. It is hoped that the researcher will disclose elements in the novel which support this hypothesis.

1.3 Study Questions

1. What distinguishes Doris Lessing from other writers?
2. Under what literary school can we classify Doris Lessing?
3. What are the thematic and technical aspects of her fiction?

4. Does the novel reflect the class which the author supports?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

This study aims at discussing four issues related to Lessing's novel *The Grass is Singing*. These aims are:

1. Finding some similarities and differences between the events in the novel and Lessing's real life.
2. Analyzing Mary's psychic life in order to show the factors that contributed to her psychological decline.
3. Examining Mary as a female who is sometimes the victim and at others the oppressor.
4. Investigating the natives' situation in the Rhodesian racist society where they were treated roughly.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in showing the uniqueness of Doris Lessing as a realist. She is a bold writer who prefers to reflect the cruelty of the real world rather than creating fanciful things. She tackles issues that are important to people around the world. For instance, she tackles two important issues: women's place in life and black people's suffering. She breaks the silence of her society which was filled with these images of cruelty. Through *The Grass is Singing*, she tries to demonstrate the effect of this treatment on both women and black people.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

Time of the study will be limited to Doris Lessing's life from her childhood to 1950, the year of the publication of the novel.

Place of the study will be limited to Doris Lessing's life in Rhodesia known as Zimbabwe and Zambia now.

Results of the study are limited to one particular novel and therefore cannot be generalized to cover all Lessing's fiction.

1.7 The Author's Biography

Doris Lessing is a British writer who was born in 1919 in Kermanshah, Iran. Her parents moved to Southern Rhodesia when she was five years old but she has been living in England since 1949. Her parents moved to southern Rhodesia in order to get wealth because the European people believed that they will become rich once they go to Africa and work in farming. Her parents did not succeed in achieving their goal since her father's health condition got worse. Moreover, she attended the convent where she learnt sewing, cooking and taking care of animals. She did not complete her education because she left school at the age of 14 to find a job. She got married twice and got two children from her first marriage and a child from the second. She met her second husband Gottfried Lessing when she was a member in the communist party. She was working hard to achieve social justice for the black Rhodesian people who were suffering from poverty and cruel treatment of their white masters.

Since her childhood, she has been fond of reading books difficult for children to understand. Reading books was the motive behind her wish to be a writer because reading books helps with widening the imagination of the writer. According to Doris Lessing (1994), reading has two benefits:

I had begun, in short, to colour in the map of the world with the hues and tints of literature. Which does two things (a least). One is to refine your knowledge of your fellow human beings. The other is to tell you about society, countries, classes, ways of living (p. 88).

From this quotation, it is clear that the first benefit of reading is that reading helps people to purify their thoughts and ideas about other human beings in the world. The second one is that reading sheds light upon how the classes, societies and countries are constructed and how people live. Furthermore, one of her favorite writers is Stendhal who wrote about being trapped in the provinces as she felt; therefore, she always longed for living either in Paris or London. She says in her book, *Under My Skin* (1994):

Stendhal- the Stendhal of *The Red and the Black*- was my friend and ally. He is the author for anyone feeling trapped in the sticks.

In the provinces... so he may begin a deadly dose of hatred for mediocrity, and I would mentally add to his list, full of the relish of contempt (p. 234).

Throughout her life, she witnessed wars between different countries, such as World War 1 and World War 11. It is noticeable that war always leaves its effect upon people. For example, her father lost his leg and her mother saw lots of war cruelties upon soldiers since she worked as a nurse. The war also affected her life where she joined the communist party in order to provide equality between colonized and colonizer. She was always against the inhumane treatment that the white masters treat their black servants. For example, white people believe that education would ruin black people since it may make them know that all human beings are equal as Lessing cited in her book (1994). She says:” **education would spoil them**”. Moreover, her family was criticized for paying to their servants more money than others do since they believe that black people have to serve white people since they are the superior race. Another aspect of racism of her society is that their masters change the names of their servants which are considered as their identity. White people also were afraid that black people would slaughter them since they see the latter as inhuman objects.

Her imagination as a writer developed since childhood when she used to tell her brother stories from her own imagination. She also wrote poems and her mother published them in Rhodesia Herald. In addition, she said, about her writing process, that she first listens to what is going on, then, she selects the events that

she would write about and finally she recognizes the aspects and aims behind these events (Lessing, 1994, p. 228). In *Under My Skin* (1994), she contends:

I was able to be freer than most because I am a writer, with the psychological make-up of a writer that sets you at a distance from what you are writing about. The whole process of writing is a setting at a distance. That is the value of it- to the writer, and to the people who read the results of this process, which takes the raw, the individual, the uncriticized, the unexamined, into the realm of the general (p. 397)

In her opinion, writing made her much freer than other people in Rhodesia because she was able to express her views and thoughts through writing. She also said that writing sets the writer and the reader away from the individualities to the realm of general. Speaking of her writing process Per Wastberg says that: **“she often begins by observing her characters from within and then moving outside them, to strip them of their illusions from an objective distance”** (Nobel Foundation, 2007). Given this view, it is clear that she was interested in the psychology and inner thoughts of her characters rather than their physical presence in society. Moreover, through her novel *The Grass is Singing*, she supports the class she loathes, not the class she stands for in her real life. In actuality, she stands beside the Rhodesian people who

suffer from poverty and inequality while in the novel she stands with the white master instead of the weak black servants.

Furthermore, her multicultural backgrounds make her unique as a writer, in terms of themes, techniques and style. She discusses different issues through her work. These themes are related to women's position in life, colonialism and its impact upon the colonizer, the color-bar in Africa and the social life of people in certain areas, such as London in *London Observed: Stories and Sketches* and Africa in *The Grass is Singing*. In *The Grass is Singing*, she uses an omniscient narrator who knows all the insights and thoughts of each character which helps in clarifying the sequence of events in the novel. Another technique she used in the novel is flashback or retrospect where she starts from the end of the story so the reader will not focus on the crime but he\she will focus on the characters' development through their harsh life. Another technique she stresses is symbolism of the character's dreams which helps in the analysis of the psychic life of her characters. Moreover, Doris Lessing was the Noble Prize winner in Literature in 2007. In the award ceremony speech, the writer Per Wastberg said that Lessing: **“she has given voice to the silent and the refugees and homeless of our century- from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe”** (Nobel Foundation 2007) This shows that she was interested in the classes which suffer in reality in order to open the eyes of

people upon their problem, not only to sympathize with them but also to try to do something in order to solve their problems.

This brief idea about Doris Lessing's life and experiences is helpful and illuminating for the proper reading of *The Grass is Singing*. This is because the novel is the first one she has written. Accordingly, there is a huge amount of biographical information which can be found in this novel, such as the landscape and some characteristics of Mary's character, the heroine. Many of these are modeled on herself and the people she knew.

Finally, it is apt to emphasize that Doris Lessing is not the only writer who seek to portray her biographical experiences in fiction. It is worthwhile to remember Dickens, the Brontes, Maugham, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Lawrence, and Durrell...etc. All these and many others made fiction the medium of expressing their innermost experiences in life and art.

1.8Psychoanalysis Theory

The Austrian neurologist and psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) established psychoanalysis in 1885. He was concerned with analyzing the psychology of human beings into its components. These components are the Id, ego and superego (Weiten 2010). Then, he studied the role being played by each part and the effect of their disorder upon people's lives. Freud defined

psychoanalysis as **“it is an insight therapy that emphasizes the recovery of unconscious conflicts, motives, and defenses through techniques such as free association and transference”** (Weiten 2010, p. 626). This argument clearly shows that the aim of psychoanalysis is to diagnose and cure the psychological disorders which leave a negative impact upon the psychic life of human beings. This definition also includes key terms in psychoanalysis, such as unconscious, defense, free association and transference.

One of the most famous theories of Freud is the structure of personality. Freud divided the personality into three components: Id, ego and superego. The Id is the desires and wishes existing in the unconscious or libido. The ego is the referee between the wishes and desires of the Id and the constraints of society. The superego represents the big brother censorship which controls the wishes and desires of the Id according to the rules and regulations of the society. This idea is best represented in Smith’s book (1999).

The unconscious is the place where all the painful experiences, emotions, fears, unresolved conflicts, wishes and unacceptable desires are buried. Freud calls this the Id or libido, the hidden and suppressed desires and wishes. These feelings in the unconscious may cause psychological problems if they come out to the surface, the conscious; therefore, there are certain techniques of defense which prevent these feelings from emerging to the conscious. Given this fact, we can

define the defense technique as the process of keeping the contents of the unconscious where they are. In addition, there are different defense techniques, such as selective perception, selective memory, denial, avoidance, displacement, projection and fear of intimacy. All these defenses are included in Smith's book (1999). First, selective perception means choosing what we hear and see according to our ability to handle it. Second, selective memory is what we choose to remember and what we choose to forget. For example, every human being wants to remember happy experiences and to forget painful ones. Third, denial is the consideration that the painful experience does not exist. Fourth, avoidance is to go away from people, places and situations that may make one remember a painful experience. Fifth, displacement is to transfer one's anger from a powerful person toward someone who is inferior. Sixth, Projection is to ascribe one's forbidden desires, wishes and acts to someone else. Finally, fear of intimacy is the fear of emotional involvement with other human beings.

The other important key terms in Freud's definition of psychoanalysis are free association and transference. While free association is the expression of thoughts and feelings as they are without the presence of the censorship, transference is the projection of feelings and desires from childhood memories toward a new object. The explanation of these two terms can be found in Weiten's book (2010).

Psychoanalysis also provides a definition of character and its types. According to Akhtar (2009), character is **“the reasonable and enduring predictable pattern of an individual’s psychological functioning. It is the person’s usual mode of reconciling intra-psychic wishes, developmental needs, moral prohibitions, and demands of external reality”** (p. 45). The manifestations of character are classified as sublimation and reactive type. Sublimation is to repress the lower feelings, such as sexual desire and replace it with higher or more elevated feeling, such as the love of nature. Conversely, the reactive means avoiding the inferior feelings and trying to repress these feelings causing anxiety which will finally lead to psychological relief.

Freud was interested in the significance of dreams in the analysis of human psychology. He defines dream as **“the (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed, repressed) wish”** (Gay 1988, p. 109). He divided dreams into manifest and latent dreams. Manifest dream is the one that does not carry psychological significance. It is considered as a remembrance of certain events through the day and the dreamer will not remember it clearly when he/she is awake. Latent dream is the one that carries a coded meaning which has to be interpreted. This type of dreams carries a psychological significance since the dream is the response to the wishes and desires being repressed.

Another dominant figure in psychoanalysis is the French psychologist and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan (1901-1981). He was not only interested in the theoretical section of psychoanalysis but also in the practical one. He was interested in the application of these theories upon real patients who suffer from psychological disorders. One of his most known theories is 'the mirror stage' which was formulated in 1963. In his theory, he explains what happens to children from eight to sixteen months when they see their reflection in the mirror. He stated that the child recognizes himself/herself from the beginning. After recognizing themselves, they form their ego which will associate the image in the mirror with others images which can be of parents or siblings and even non-human objects; therefore, the identity of oneself is formulated by the characteristics of others. Bruce Fink clarified lacan's mirror stage in his book (1997). After a period of time, the child starts to discover his/her own identity which leads to the conflict between what they consider to be their identity and their real identity. After this realization, they start to see themselves as

Imperfect creatures; therefore, they start to hate themselves which may lead to psychological problems. Furthermore, he discusses the difference between the need and desire. He believes that humans can fulfill their need but the wishes may not be fulfilled and therefore they will be repressed in the unconscious. He

indicates that the desires could not be fulfilled if they are not accepted by society's values and traditions. Of course he is Freudian here.

Many of these Freudian considerations can be felt in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* since the heroine represents particular aspects of these psychological phenomena, a point to be considered in detail in the following chapters. However, what is relevant to the purposes of the present study is that the heroine in Doris Lessing's novel has her desires which she cannot fulfill in her actual life; therefore, she projects them in the form of her ill treatment toward her servants and workers. No doubt the theories of these prominent figures are very useful in highlighting the motives and drives of the main female character in *The Grass is Singing*.

1.9Feminism

Feminism is a movement which was established in the 19th century call for women's equality. It is divided into three waves as Tandon states in his book *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift*(2008).The first wave was limited to the period between 19th and 20th centuries and it called for ending women's suffering in their lives since they had to be submissive to men and had to do what they were being told. The second wave appeared in 1960s and 1980s which fought the inequality of women in front of law and official power in the country where men have the power because the legislation gave them their rights and ignored women's rights of equal

treatment in front of the law. The third wave was established in 1990 and still going on. It is a reaction against the second wave's failure since it could not bring equality to women.

Since women are living in a patriarchal society which believes in men empowerment in all aspects of life, feminists start to work in order to eliminate all aspects of discrimination between the two genders. Feminists called for women's liberation, freedom of getting abortion, freedom of choice, equal jobs and payments, empowerment of women to bring an end to the oppression they suffer from. According to Tandon, (2008, p. 26) feminism is " **a theory of the political, economic and social equalities of the sexes**". From this definition, it is clear that feminists called for women's equality from different angles: their economic situation, the right to hold a position in the political scene and the equality in the social treatment between males and females.

In addition, literary criticism inspects the ways literature reinforces, or undermines the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women. One of the scholars who were interested in studying the feminist approach in literature is Judith Fetterley. In her book *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, she analyzes eight literary works of American literature from a feminist viewpoint. She calls for ending the immasculation of women by men. According to Bowlby (1997, p.29) immasculation is "**the process**

whereby traditionally women have been brought to read culture like men, accepting male attitudes and understanding their own". From this definition, it is clear that women called for changing the male perspective of their lives since men have been brought up with this negative perspective toward women in the patriarchal society. In her examination of the literary texts, she asks the reader to resist the common perspective toward women even in the way women are represented in a literary work. She asks them to avoid the male view which also exists in literary works where women are portrayed as the catalyst behind the brutal treatment inflicted on them. For example, a woman maybe killed or tortured but the readers may justify this cruel act by saying that they were treated like this because of their attitudes or ideas. This is best clarified in Austin's book (1990).

To conclude this section, it is clear that feminists play an important role in changing the patriarchal society's beliefs toward women's rights which include social, economic, and political justice regarding the biological and personal differences between people. This is best clarified in Kirst-Ashman & Hull's definition of feminism (2006): "**it is the philosophy of equality between women and men that involves both attitudes and actions. Feminists call for equality by appreciating the existence of individual differences and personal accomplishments regardless of gender.**" (P: 448).

The researcher intends to use these feminists' ideas about the inequality between women and men in order to examine women's status in the patriarchy of Rhodesia in 1950s. Doris Lessing reveals this injustice toward women in her novel *The Grass is Singing*, the subject of my study. Moreover, since the emergence of the feminist movement, many people have been afraid of the negative impact upon males' rights. In this study, the novel can be interpreted from both sides, feminist and anti-feminists since it sometimes shows that one gender controls the other; therefore, the reader may sometimes be antipathetic to one gender and in the following scenes he/she may consider him/her the victim. In some incidents and situations the suppressed could become the suppressor which eventually destroys the stereotyped image of men as being the invariable suppressors.

1.10 Racism

Racism has been one of the most widespread problems around the world since the beginning of creation. In fact, it is very difficult to trace the history of racism around the world. Many scholars and dictionaries have sought to define racism and all definitions have elements in common. Racism, according to Fredrickson (2002), is **“the hostile and negative feelings of ethnic group or people toward another and the action resulting from such attitudes”** (p.3). Racism is” **a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and**

capacities and the racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race” (*Webster dictionary* 2011). While *Oxford English Dictionary* (2010) defines racism as “ the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races”. From these definitions, there are key elements that clarify the roots of racism. First, the inequality between people is determined by the race they belong to. Second, each race has specific traits and characteristics which lead either to consider him/her a superior or inferior. Therefore, people classify the individual as a master who deserves to be served or a servant who has to serve others without any objection. Moreover, the most known type of racism is the racism of the colonizer toward the colonized. The discrimination between white and black people in South Africa has started since the white’s occupying the land of indigenous people so that they were left homeless. Other aspects of racism are that white people get better education, jobs, power positions and even the legal legislations are in favor of white people.

There are some writers who were interested in racism: Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, Ralph Ellison, Jean Rhys and Toni Morrison. First, Conrad is an English novelist (1857-1927) who is considered, as Sarkar (2008) states, a racist by some critics because of the language and images he used in his work

to describe African people. An example of this is his famous novella *The Heart of Darkness* (1902) where he portrayed the European as the civilized species that gave themselves the right to loot and plunder the Africans. Throughout his novella, he describes Africans as brutes who should be exterminated. It is full of racist words, especially the word 'nigger' and actions; therefore, critics considered him a racist, especially the African writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Second, E.M. Forster is an English writer (1879-1970) who was interested, as Sarkar (2008) states, in showing the cruel treatment of the ruler or colonizer toward the colonized in their own homeland. In his novel *A Passage to India*, he shows different types of discrimination between the British and Indian people. For example, there are certain places in India where Indians are prohibited from entering since it is the place where the British colonizers meet each other, such as the club. The majority of the British in India believe that it is normal for an Indian man to commit a crime because they are considered as savages because of their race. For example, in this novel, the Indian Dr. Aziz is being accused of raping a British woman, although he did not commit this crime. All people have defended the British female; therefore, the stereotype about the other races is always there in different places around the world.

Toni Morrison is an American writer who was born in 1931. She addresses, as Bloom (2005) states, issues of racism through her works especially the consequences of racism upon the race being discriminated against. According to Bloom (2005), Morrison's works shed light upon four issues. First, she focuses on the impact of racist practices upon black people. Second, she talks about the feelings of Africans about being different from other races. Third, she describes black people's suffering as being considered inferior to other races. Fourth, she recaptures some humiliating and inhumane experiences that black people suffer from. Her famous novels that discuss these issues are *The Bluest Eyes* and *Beloved*. In her novel *Beloved*, the protagonist still has the marks of whipping upon her back. To conclude, each one of these writers discusses racism from a different perspective. Conrad adopts the perspective of a racist man who believes that there are superior and inferior races. In contrast, Forster adopts the perspective of people who are being discriminated against which shows the cruelty of the colonizer. Morrison is interested in the impact of racist acts upon Afro-Americans and how they feel about this discrimination and about their own identity.

The present study of *The Grass is Singing* will analyze some of the racist attitudes toward Rhodesian people adopted by their masters, the men and women, because they are considered inferior to their white masters. This is

further evidence that racism cannot be limited to a specific time or place. The present study will show the manifestations of racism in the acts and attitudes of the protagonists in the present novel.

Chapter Two

Review of Related literature

2.1 Introduction

This section is the raw material underlying the present analysis of *The Grass is Singing*. The writers of these books included in this section are the catalysts that help readers to understand and grasp the reasons and justifications behind the composition of any literary text. Moreover, it will be the cornerstone that supports the present analysis of the novel. Therefore, the researcher will cite these critics about the novel, the author, fields of knowledge, such as psychoanalysis and social

and political movements like feminism and racism which called for equality between human beings.

2.1 Brief Survey of the Books and Articles

Sanford's book *Self and Society: Social Change and Individual Development* (1966) focuses on the effect of social environment on the individual's decisions in his/her life. It explores Freud's psychological theory where he discusses the Id, Ego and Superego. He means by Id the desires and wishes that human beings keep in the unconscious until they can be fulfilled or kept repressed. The Ego is the referee that determines which wishes and desires of the Id can be accepted by the Superego. The Superego or society determines which of the wishes and desires in the Id can be fulfilled if they are appropriate to the social environment where the individuals live. Sanford said about Freud's model:

Another way to arrive at elements is to start with a conception of the whole personality and then divide it according to its structural articulation. This was the procedure of Freud when he divided the psyche into the three major systems of Id, ego and superego then propounded theory according to which the nature of the whole was expressed in the interactions among these systems (p. 73).

Weinrich (1979) aims at investigating the impact of the social and economic situation upon women since these factors determine women's ways of living. Since women are part of the Rhodesian society, the writer depicts their role in society in the novel in question and in the future. It depicts women's role in society in the future since all societies change at a certain point in their history. The writer conducts a survey which includes the whole country where he focuses on the major ethnic groups within the Rhodesian society. Weinrich said:

Another factor which greatly differentiates the various ethnic groups is that of the authority of the husband in the home. Some 12 per cent of all Shona regarded it as very important for a harmonious family life that wives obey their husbands, but only 6 per cent of all Ndebele gave this answer (p. 67).

As a result, this book deals with women's situation in the Rhodesian society in the 1970s. It is very helpful since it depicts women's role in the society under colonization which has led leads to unequal treatment between genders and races as reflected in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*.

Freund (1987) discusses a new way of criticism which depends on the reader's background, culture, age and gender. This school of criticism is called reader-response criticism. This book includes the works of some of the prominent figures in the New Criticism. Two of these figures are Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser.

These scholars are the practitioners of the reader-response criticism. One of Iser's insights mentioned in this book is that: **“the text represents a potential effect that is realized in the reading process”** (p.135). Iser believes that the text cannot be completed until it is read. On the other hand, Fish believes that there are no previous assumptions of the text the reader brings while reading, but the meaning comes completely from the reader (p. 149). Finally, this book is very helpful since it simplifies the core of this criticism. So many readers who want to use this discipline can use this book as a reference to understand how this criticism works.

Gay (1988) provides a comprehensive account of Freud's life and theories. The writer presents biographical information about Freud's life since Gay believes that the life and the works of the researcher are closely integrated. This idea is also part of Freud's ideas about how the personal life and writings of any kind may reveal facts about his life; therefore, Freud destroys all of his writings because he is afraid of being exposed to other people. The other section of this book is interested in Freud's theories in psychoanalysis with some explanation. In order to complete this book, Gay gives a comprehensive account of Freud's theories, then, he explains them. Thus, it becomes easy for the reader to understand. Consequently, this book is considered a very important work which contributes to the explanation and understanding Freud's theories.

Greene in his book *Changing the Story: Feminist Fiction and the Tradition*(1991) explores the attitudes of the American, British, Canadian and French scholars about feminist fiction and literary theory because novelists believe that literature can change our beliefs. Through *Greene's* examination of feminism, one notices his concentration on *Lessing* as an example of a feminist writer who lives in Rhodesia where the society treats women in a way that curbs their capabilities. He states that he has chosen *Lessing* and other female writers because their fiction: **"explores women's efforts at liberation in relation to problems of narrative forms, fiction that destabilizes the conventions of realism in a project of psychic and social transformation"** (p. 1).

Iser (1993) is one of the scholars who have contributed to the reader-response theory. In his book *Prospecting: from reader response to literary anthropology*, he provides his ideas about this theory especially his idea of making the reader the performer of the text. *Iser* believes that the reader is responsible for creating his/her own assumptions about any literary text. Moreover, he believes not only in forming theory but also in applying his theories in criticizing literary texts. He provides a comprehensive representation of the reader- response accomplishments. He revalues highly appreciated literary works which has lead to new discoveries about these valued literary works. Consequently, this book is a good reference for

the researchers who want to use this method of criticism to evaluate a literary work.

Lessing's *Under My Skin* (1994) engages a special place and great interest for the current study. It is a first-hand account of the author's experiences and memories which form the essence of her fiction. It discusses her life from childhood until 1949, the year she left Zimbabwe to England. She talks about her life in detail which emphasizes her identity as a writer. Then he\she makes use of these details as the raw material for his\her work. She also talks about her addiction to reading because she believes that reading is very important for the development of minds and personalities which finally leads to the development of countries. Then, she talks about her first novel *which* was published in 1950 as a work that attracted the attention of readers and critics to Doris Lessing's achievement. Lessing's own comments on her own novel are very helpful and illuminating and will be quoted at length in the following chapters.

Greene (1997) examines one of the most dominant figures of the 20th century. He investigates Lessing's works and life. He explores different works from different angles in order to familiarize the reader with her themes and style. One of the works being examined here is *The Grass is Singing* which clarifies the themes of this novel. This book is very helpful since it provides a survey of some of Lessing's works associated with explanation and analysis. In this book, Greene

states that Lessing encounters issues that were not common in the 1950s, such as sex, race and class. These issues were prohibited from being discussed since her society is very reserved about these problems.

Basely (1999) differentiates between various forms of feminism. This book includes an outline of these types in connection with other disciplines, such as Marxism, racism and psychoanalysis. By explaining terms related to this field, readers become acquainted with these forms which enable him\her to recognize them in their societies. Recently, feminism has become more complicated and diversified; therefore, Basely tries to clarify it so that many readers can understand this concept and its principles. Basely's contribution is very helpful as it clarifies the different stages and manifestations of this movement in its theories and its applications.

Smith (1999) aims at providing a comprehensive survey of Freud's theories and other theorists who have contributed to this field of knowledge, psychoanalysis. This book explains these theories so that the beginners in this field will easily understand the theories. In order to achieve the goal of this book, Smith provides biographical information about some of these theorists. It also clarifies some of the misinterpretations of some psychic theories. So, the reader will benefit tremendously from this clarification and correction of these theories. Thus, this book is very helpful for both professional readers and students who are being

exposed to this field for the first time. Both readers benefit from this book because it includes the most important theories in psychoanalysis but at the same time the language used is accessible to all readers.

Hamilton (2001) discusses history of racism in three countries: Brazil, South Africa and the United States. Then he explains how racism is constructed in these three countries. The present focus will be on South Africa since the subject of the study *The Grass is Singing*, takes place in Rhodesia. The writer talks about apartheid in South Africa through illuminating the tense relationship between black and white people. This book gives some examples of the cruel treatment that certain people face because of their race. One of the examples of inequality presented in the book is the inequality between black and white people in front of the law. Hamilton indicates that people from different races were not equally treated by the legislative rules.

Fredrickson (2002) states in his book *Racism: A short history* the history of racism in Europe and the forms of racism that racists conducted against other races. It covers the history of racism from its emergence in the Middle Ages down to the present day. It also discusses African slave trade which was an important part of the trade system in Europe. This book is a brief account of the rise and decline of racist issues around the world, such as apartheid in South Africa. This book depends on two factors to present racism. These factors are the history of

racism and the geographical distribution of racist ideologies. For example, the writer chose South Africa as the place where such practices were conducted by racists people in the era of colonization.

Janik's article **“Doris Lessing 1919” (2002)** discusses Doris Lessing as a writer who belongs to the former Empire or Commonwealth. This article includes information about Lessing's background and an analysis of her work. It also includes assessment of her achievements and an analysis of her novel. Moreover, this article tackles other critics' opinions of Doris Lessing as an artist and a woman. The critic Jermy Brook describes her as follows: **“she is the best woman novelist we have” (p.203)**. He also says that she is one of the most serious intelligent and honest writers of the whole post-war generation (p.203). This description is valid and justifiable as will be clarified in the remaining chapters of the present study.

Bloom's book *Doris Lessing (2003)* is a study of Doris Lessing's works which are selected by many critics, such as Paul Schlueter, Betsey Draine, Sheila Roberts and Claire Sprague. Each critic focuses on a specific work and analyzes it from a specific angle, such as Sufism, War stories and Paranoia and Taboo. For instance, the critic, Sheila Roberts focuses on paranoia and taboo in the actions of the characters in Lessing's fiction. For example, in *The Grass is Singing*, Mary is being paranoid from the black people who work in the field where she kept

imaging that they may hurt her. This book also includes a short biography of Doris Lessing and a chronology of her life.

Martinson (2003) discusses the writers of diaries who include some aspects of their lives, conflicts, and traits in their works. The diary writers usually deny any connectivity between their works and their personal lives since that may enable others to intrude into their lives. Furthermore, Martinson provides some diaries and works of some writers in order to support her examination of literary texts. One of Doris Lessing's works which is included in this book is *The Golden Notebook*. The researcher will make use of this book because it provides useful information about Lessing as a realist. Martinson says: "**Anna, like Lessing, declines a simple autobiographical or fictional reading of her text**" (p. 123). Consequently, Martinson clarifies that the books being examined here are not diaries per se since their authors know that other people will read them.

Reilly, Kaufman and Bodino (2003) discuss one of the widespread problems, i.e., racism. These writers provide various definitions in order to clarify the meaning racism. Since racism is a multifaceted issue, the writers of this book try to provide these phases not only in their homeland but also around the world. Moreover, they discuss this issue through articles which are classified into three types: academic essays, original documents and journal articles. In this book, the articles are not restricted to one country or people. On the contrary, it provides

examples from different places in the world, such as India, Japan and the Middle East. This book is a sample of the suffering and cruelty of the human beings since they treat others according to colour or race. For example, the caste system in India is a clear example of racism that exists in one society.

Amoia and Knapp (2004) explore writers who have lived in a different culture from their own, such as Lessing's exposure to the culture of South Africa, Rhodesia, rather than the culture of her parents which is the European culture. This experience affects Lessing's life and thoughts since she lived in Rhodesia when she was three years old until 1949. According to these writers, there are two reasons for writers to live in a different culture. The first reason is that the writer chooses voluntarily to leave his\ her homeland to live in another country. For example, Lessing's parents decided to leave England in order to make some money in South Africa. The second reason is that the writer is forced to interact with other cultures. For instance, if a writer left his home land because of war, this would force him/her to interact with other cultures. In addition, the method being used in this book provides examples of how writers have been exposed to other cultures. The works of these writers are subjected to analysis in order to show and explain the multicultural themes in these works. As a result, these works show the role which different cultures play in shaping the skills and works of a writer and make

people appreciate the difference between cultures as being clarified in Lessing's life and works.

Myles's article *The paradigm of progressive conscience in Doris Lessing's fiction* in **Ray's** and **Kundu's** book (2004) explores some of the female writers who are considered as part of the literary canon. Lessing is considered one of these female writers. Myles examines Lessing's work through clarifying how she has succeeded in projecting her awareness of the issues in her fiction. For example, her works discuss issues related to economy, politics and society where she has done a great job in conveying these problems to her readers. For example, she portrays the economic issues in the Rhodesian society in the 1950s in her *The Grass is Singing*.

O'Neil (2004) provides information about the most prominent writers of the 20th century. He lists 93 writers whom he considers the dominant figures of the 20th century. One of these writers is Doris Lessing. The procedure he follows in this book is that he gives information about the writer's life, work, political and social events he/she has faced in his/her life. Moreover, it provides information about what inspires the writer in his/her life. As a result, the issues and events that helped in the shaping of such great writers are examined and analyzed.

Lyer's article "**The Unexplored Universe of Doris Lessing**" (2005) discusses Doris Lessing from different perspectives. First, she focuses on Doris Lessing as a realist whose main concern is to make change in society because she believes that the main goal of art is to make change in societies to make the world a better place to live in. Lyer stated that: "**Lessing implied that it was realism that held the key to effect the social change she hoped to bring through her writings**"(p. 66).

Lyer also discusses Lessing as a science fiction writer who combines the bizarre with the familiar where she uses the bizarre to shed light on the familiar. She also talks about Lessing's idea that the 20th century is the age of ideologies such as religion and politics. She shows that Lessing focuses mainly on politics because it is the most influential one controlling other ideologies. Lyer says that: "**politics, it is suggested, is the most powerful and most dangerous of ideologies because it is inherently divisive: political thought is marked by its` crippling partiality**" (pp.70-71).

Awwad's thesis *Female identity in Doris Lessing's "Children of Violence"* (2007) discusses how Lessing portrays the female protagonists in her five- novel series *Children of Violence*. She is mainly interested in shedding light upon women's lives under different circumstances. She describes how women live in suffocating environments which restrict women's freedom. Moreover, it describes

men as the norm in society while women are the 'other' that is being derived from the norm. As a result, it is clear that this oppression against women is part of her identity since it has been there since times immemorial.

Das's article "Interrogating Culture: Sexuality, Madness, and Marxism in the London Novels of Doris Lessing" (2007) focuses on *The Golden Notebook* from three angles: sexuality, madness and Marxism. This novel belongs to a literary genre called bildungsroman which depicts the life of growing writers who try to succeed in a society dominated by men or as the feminists call it the patriarchal society. This article is helpful with the understanding of Doris Lessing's new way of writing. It also helps the researcher to be familiar with Lessing's views about the women writers' struggle in order to achieve their dreams and goals about writing. Das says that `` **in *The Golden Notebook*, sexuality is 'the prime impetus for the protagonist's struggle to establish meaning, dignity and pleasure in her existence' (p. 21).** Although the article does not concentrate on this novel, the general orientation helps with highlighting Lessing's artistic and thematic assumptions.

Buyu's thesis *A Freudian Study of The Grass is Singing, Aylak Adam and The white Hotel* (2007) aims at demonstrating the relationship between psychology and literature. She fulfills this objective through defining psychology in order to make it easier for the readers to understand her approach to analyze

three novels from a psychological viewpoint. Then, she provides some of Freudian's theories in psychoanalysis which are used to analyze the psychological lives of the characters in these three novels. For example she says:

The following chapters treat the novels according to the theories of Freud such as “the Oedipus Complex, death and life instincts, unconscious, id, ego and superego”, and therefore the thesis primarily focuses on the hidden feelings of the protagonists as well as their struggle in the twentieth century world (p. IV).

In her analysis, she focuses on Mary Turner's psychological life especially in her conflict with herself and the society which eventually leads to her insanity. Furthermore, she finds out that her study affirms that Freud's theories are universal ones which can be applicable to different works in different cultures. She says: **“through the analyses of the protagonists, the study asserts that Freud has been influential on the works of different authors in different cultures, which reinforces the idea of the universality of his psychoanalytical theories” (p. IV).**

Mukattash in her thesis *A Psychoanalytic Feminist Approach to Jean Rhys and Doris Lessing* (2007) analyzes two novels written by female writers using feminist approach. She analyzes Mary Turner's character from a psychological point of view. In order to achieve this study, the researcher has made use of different schools in psychoanalysis in order to help the reader understand Mary's

behavior comprehensively. The researcher also makes a connection between feminism and psychoanalysis by showing that the reader will understand the female identity by analyzing her psychic life. In addition, she finds out that the authors of the two novels illustrate that the survival of their female characters is achieved through their death.

Tandon's book *Feminism: A Paradigm Shift* (2008) discusses the term 'feminism' and its different implications throughout history. This book provides the history of feminism, and includes relevant feminist theories, such as psychoanalysis and cultural and liberal theories. It also sheds light on some of the famous feminists who had major contributions in this field. At the end, the author discusses some books on feminism written by the same author and discusses some issues related to it.

Weiten (2008) provides a survey of psychology which fulfils various aims. First, it shows the resemblance between psychological theories and at the same time the points of difference. This clarifies the uniqueness of each theory and the common elements between these theories. Second, it explains the process that each scholar follows to reach these theories. Then, it gives some applications of these theories drawn from actual situations. Third, it clarifies these theories which the ordinary readers cannot understand. So it has many benefits for the researchers who are interested in this field of study. The present research is not an exception

since it capitalizes on some of these findings. As a result, this book constructs some explanations of psychological theories which enable the reader to understand these theories.

Burt's book *The literary 100: a ranking of the most influential novelists, playwrights, and poets of all time (2009)* aims at defining those who are the great novelists, playwrights and poets and the different criteria used in order to measure this greatness. The writer examines many influential writers who have contributed to the creative writing. He provides a profile to each writer which includes the life and the achievements of the great writer. For example, he introduces Lessing as one of the great writers since she matches the criteria being used in the measurement of the great writer. He sees that Lessing's ability in reflecting her childhood memories upon her fiction as a sign of her greatness. As a result, he explains the core of the great writer's career and the advantages of his\her writings. No doubt such contributions are of great interest and help for future researchers dealing with Lessing's fictional world. Burt sees another aspect of Lessing's greatness through her multi- themes she dealt with in her fiction. Commenting on these themes, Burt claims:

In her long and varied literary career, she had produced everything from realistic works set in Africa and England that primarily focus on colonial culture, the relationship between men and women, the inner

lives of women, and women's place in modern society to a daring multivolume science fiction epic set in another galaxy(pp. 463,464).

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this section of this thesis, the researcher clarifies the methods she has followed in conducting this study. First, the researcher sheds some light on reader-response criticism which is used in the analysis of *The Grass is Singing*. Then, the researcher provides an explanation of the analytical approach which has been used in this study. Third, the researcher explains the descriptive approach used in the analysis of a literary text. Fourth, the researcher explains some of Freud's theories in psychoanalysis in order to make it easier for other scholars to understand my

approach to The Grass is Singing. Moreover, the second half of this chapter provides information about the procedures that the researcher has followed throughout her work.

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 Reader Response

Reader-response theory in criticism is the cornerstone in the methodology used here. It is a new way of criticism which was established in the 1960s. Three of its famous scholars are Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss and Stanley Fish. Iser is a German scholar who was born in 1921 and died in 1971. Iser has the following to say about reader response “**we uncover the unformulated part of a literary work and what we uncover represents its intention**” (Tompkins 1988, p: xv). He explains that the text comes alive only when it is read because he believes that the reader uses his\her imagination, experience, feelings and knowledge in order to extract the meaning which is close to the intention of the text. The text can carry different interpretations from one person to another and from one age to another

since we see things differently as we grow old. Still, the interpretations of a text are not completely limitless because the text, does, after all, carry specific meanings and the reader has to pay attention to the text's intention while reading. Each meaning of a text should have evidence from the text; otherwise the meaning will not be plausible.

According to Iser (Freund 1987, pp: 141,142), the reading process is divided into three stages. First, the texts have fixed intention and at the same time an implied meaning. Second, the reader has to proceed in analyzing the text. The analysis should provide evidence from the text; otherwise, the analysis will be rejected or at least seems inadequate. Third, Iser says that there are certain conditions that govern the text-reader interaction, such as the background knowledge of the reader, his\her experience and the intention of the text. These elements play the major role in the analysis of the text since they govern the reader's understanding of the text.

Hans Robert Jauss is a German scholar who was born in 1921 and died in 1997. He is one of the pioneering researchers who contributed to reader-response theory. In his reception theory in the 1960s, he indicated that a literary text is the result of the interaction between the text and receiver of the text (Selden & Widdowson 1993). In his theory, he suggests a new concept which is the horizon of expectations. Selden and Widdowson illustrated Jauss's explanation of his new

concept, “horizon of expectations” in their book *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary literary Theory* (1993). According to them, Jauss illuminates that a literary text, when it was published for the first time, has been limited to specific interpretations according to the place, time and cultural backgrounds of readers. Here, Jauss tells the reader that he\she should not limit himself\herself to the previous interpretations since they can come up with a new meaning which is related to the text. Moreover, Jauss believes that in the criticism of any literary text, there are certain criteria which are related to specific time and place; therefore, the text may have different interpretations in different times and places since the criteria of criticism are different from the former criteria.

Stanley Fish is an American scholar who was born in 1938. He is one of the scholars who are interested in the reader- response theory. He believes that the meaning is the product of the interaction between the reader and the text; therefore, he classifies reader-response criticism into three schools according to the reader’s process of analyzing the text as cited in Freund’s book *The Return of the Reader: Reader Response Criticism* (1987). These schools are: individual reader’s experience, reader’s psychological experience and uniform response by all readers. The first school is the individual reader’s experience which focuses on the subjective view of analysis depending on the individual’s experiences and life; therefore, the interpretation of a text will differ from one reader to another. The

second school is the reader's psychological experience which depends entirely on the psychic aspect of human personality, including the wishes, desires, needs and memories of the reader. The third school is the one which uniform response by all readers. In other words, all readers will deduce the same meaning from the text since they belong to the same social background.

3.1.2 Analytical Approach

In this approach, the examination of a literary text focuses on how the creative work is built. This examination is fulfilled through breaking the text down into its basic components, such as characters, events and setting which make it easier for the reader to understand the text as a whole. Since the components of the text are studied separately, the text becomes clearer. Then, the researcher studies the relationship between these components. For instance, the researcher studies the effect of the surrounded environment upon the character's feelings, actions and attitude. Moreover, this approach helps the reader to find out the writer's way of conveying his\her themes and ideas as well as the message she\he have in mind. After analyzing the components of a literary text, the reader has to give his\her opinion whether the writer has succeeded in this task or not.

3.1.3 Descriptive approach

The descriptive approach depends on collecting data from the novel, such as events, characters and setting. The researcher describes the text as it is in order to show, for example, the characters at the present time and how they were or how the events were and how they are in the immediate situation. This method depends entirely on describing how the characters built, what their characteristics. It also describes the setting, time and place, because it is a key role in the events of the novel. Moreover, this method asks the question ‘what’ in order to be familiar with the events and incidents in the novel. For instance, why this incident occurred to a certain character instead of another? To conclude, one can see the importance of this method in the analysis of any literary text in the previous explanation about this method.

3.1.4 Freud’s Psychoanalysis Theories

Freud’s theories in psychoanalysis were used to help people suffering from psychological disorders. Recently, these theories have been used in the analysis of a literary text. One side of the analysis inside a literary text is the analysis of the author’s psychic life through the examination of his\her texts. They are also used in the analysis of the psychic lives of the characters in a literary text in order to cover all aspects of the character. This is very helpful for understanding the message

behind the literary text. By means of the analysis of the characters' psychic life, the characters' thoughts, actions and attitudes will be clarified and this enables the reader to fully understand the literary text.

3.2 Procedures

The researcher follows certain procedures in order to analyze Lessing's novel *The Grass is Singing*. These procedures are essential for the analysis of a literary text which identifies the writer's way of delivering its themes and techniques. The first procedure is choosing one of Lessing's novels, *The Grass is Singing* from her enormous creative and famous literary works. The second one lies in extensive reading books about feminism, racism, psychoanalysis and Doris Lessing's autobiographical books. After reading these books, the researcher applies them to the literary text which enables the researcher to classify the text under more than one particular literary school. Moreover, reading the critics' opinions and judgments about Doris Lessing and her texts especially *The Grass is Singing* would shed some light on the importance of Doris Lessing as a writer from England and South Africa who dealt with universal issues concerning all people

around the world. The third procedure is to raise some questions related to the study and then investigates these questions. The fourth procedure is to choose the methodology the researcher wants to follow in order to analyze Lessing's work. Here, the researcher has chosen to analyze the text by using reader-response criticism, analytical and descriptive approaches and Freud's theories in psychoanalysis. The fifth procedure is that the researcher comes out with certain conclusions about the novel from her own analysis of the novel from the perspectives she adopts. Finally, the researcher includes the reference list of the books, articles and theses that she made use of in her study.

Chapter Four

4.0 Introduction

Modern literary theory has shown that the analysis of literature is connected to other disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, feminism, linguistics, new historicism, semiotics and the biography of the author or artist. The present study has connected these disciplines in the final analysis of *The Grass is Singing*. This chapter has been divided into four sections and each section deals with the analysis of the text from a specific discipline. The first section will show the similarities and differences between the characters and events in the novel and their counterparts in Doris Lessing's actual life. The second section focuses on the analysis of the text in relation to Freud's and lacan's theories in psychoanalysis in order to analyze the psychic life of Mary Turner. The third section deals with the

analysis of the text in relation to the principles of feminism in order to clarify the relationship between men and women and its different manifestations. The fourth section deals with aspects of racism in this novel as it used to be practiced in the Rhodesian society.

4.1 The Biographical interpretation of the novel

Since *The Grass is Singing* is Doris Lessing's first novel, it is expected to include some issues and ideas from Lessing's real life. It is known that the first work of any writer is influenced by his\her real life. On the other hand, if a writer wants to gain success, he\she should also use his\her imagination to create the artistic essence of the literary work. This study shows how Lessing has included elements from her life and at the same time she has presented the attitudes and opinions she criticizes in her real life. This fact adds to her uniqueness as a writer. The following paragraphs illustrate Lessing's successful combination between incidents from her life and opposing ideas since they help in conveying her message to the readers. The critic Janik (2002) assesses Lessing's writing as:

How enthusiastic a reader or critic may be about any one of Lessing's novel may have to do with her or his preference for these

realistic, modernist, or visionary modes, for the personal and social issues they address come out of the same humanistic sensibility (p.203).

From this quotation one can see that, at the beginning of her writing career, Lessing can be considered a realist who discusses issues related to human beings. Lessing reflects human beings' experiences in their real life. She depends heavily on situations and events from her real life since she intends to use them in order to present how people in the Rhodesian society act since she is a member of that society. O'Neil (2004) says: **"The histories of several characters, especially in early works, draw in Lessing's own experience of growing up in Africa" (p.790).** I agree with this critic since anyone who reads Lessing's first novel *The Grass is Singing* and her autobiographical book *Under My Skin* will find some common elements between them. The researcher will provide some of these shared elements in the following pages.

Lessing has used her work, especially *The Grass is Singing*, to address issues which were common in the Rhodesian society she lived in. She tries to project these issues through her work in order to make people aware of these problems in their societies. Moreover, one of the issues she has addressed in her work is woman's situation in the Rhodesian patriarchal society. In her real life, Lessing focuses on the traditional gender roles and their implications. Lessing says that

women in her age have been working at home and never thought of getting financially independent by having their own jobs. Conversely, she has represented Mary as a working woman who loves to work since she started at a very early stage in her life. The narrator says that: **“At sixteen she left school and took a job in an office in town” (p. 31)**. Furthermore, after her marriage, she has tried to restore her previous work but her boss has declined. One can deduce that her boss has refused to take her back because is old and not beautiful anymore. This is a typical attitude from male employers toward hiring females according to the women’s physical appearance and fitness. This view which restricts women’s abilities to their physical appearances has been criticized by Lessing and feminists in general. The narrator describes this situation in the following quotation:

The man opposite to her was staring at her, looking closely at her face. Then he glanced at her shoes, which were still red with dust, because she had forgotten to wipe them. Looking grieved, but at the same time shocked, even scandalized, he said that the job had been filled already, and that he was sorry. She felt, again, outraged; for all that time she had worked here, it had been part of herself, this office, and how he would not take her back. “I am sorry, Mary,” he said avoiding her eyes; and she saw that the job had not filled and that he was putting her off (p.111).

Another issue that Lessing has discussed which is related to women's situation in Rhodesia is how Mary wants to escape her marriage. In her actual life, Lessing wanted to end her first marriage because she was not satisfied with her life. Lessing got divorced from her first husband and then got married again. In the novel, there are similar corresponding lines between the heroine and the author herself. From the beginning of her marriage, Mary wants to escape from her marriage and she actually has run away. She has gone to the town. Then, she gets back to the farm because her life in the town does not exist anymore. She has gone to her boss but he has refused her request. Although she has succeeded in her physical escape, she is forced to get her former life back because in town she has lost both her friends and job. The narrator describes Mary's feelings about her life in the town in the following quotation:

After they had eaten, in a restaurant that Mary chose because it looked too out of the way for any of her old friends to see her there, they went back to the farm, as if everything were quite normal, and her running away a little thing, and one that could be easily forgotten (p. 113).

Throughout her life in Rhodesia, Lessing has never been abused by men as she used to do what she wanted. In this regard, she points out in her book *Under My Skin* (1994): **"In all my life I have never been hit, slapped, or in any way at all**

physically maltreated by a man” (p.31). She was able to do what she wanted; therefore, she gets divorced in that restricted society which sees divorce as an inappropriate act. On the other hand, Mary is controlled by men in her life. She has been controlled by her husband Dick and her servant Moses. Her husband used to tell her to do things against her will, such as running the store. Moreover, at some points in her life, Moses has controlled her through her fear from him because she is sure that he will kill her. Although Moses’ control is not direct and clear, her fear from him has controlled her actions. This is shown through the way he talks to her or how she wants to fire him but she fears his unpredictable reaction. The narrator describes Moses’ speculations about killing Mary which shows the consequences of disobeying males’ authority in society or trying to question the role of male figures in society. The authorial description is very expressive and betrays the tense man-woman relation in Rhodesian society going on then:

First he dropped the weapon sharply on the floor, as if in fear; then he checked himself and picked it up. He held it over the veranda wall under the now drenching downpour, and in a few moments withdrew it. Now he hesitated, looking about him. He thrust the metal in his belt, held his hands under the rain, and, cleansed, prepared to walk off through the rain to his hut in the compound, ready to protest his innocence. This purpose, too, passed. He pulled out the weapon, looked at it, and simply

tossed it down beside Mary, suddenly indifferent, for a new need passed him (p. 237).

Another problem Lessing has raised in *The Grass is Singing* is racism. White people around Lessing have criticized her for treating her servants humanely in that racist society. Lessing says in her book (1994) that: “ **White housewives arrived reproachfully or ferociously to say we were spoiling the natives**” (p.242). Throughout her life in Africa, Lessing has called for equality between people from different races. Lessing states the truth that she left her children from her first marriage in order to make them live in a better place free from racism because this racial discrimination was occupying her mind; therefore, she wanted to do something about it so her children will not live in such society which is full of hatred. Lessing (1994) says that:

I explained to them [her children] that they would understand later why I had left. I was going to change this ugly world, they would live in a beautiful and perfect world where there would be no race hatred, injustice, and so forth (p. 262).

In this novel, Lessing presents Charlie, land owner, standing for these people who call for treating servants badly and never gives them their rights. He believes that if they take their rights, masters would lose power over them. Here, Lessing shows

the attitudes of the racist people in order to encourage people to call for the natives' rights. In Ray's and Kundu's book (2005) Iyer comments on this problem when he states that: “ **Lessing implied that it was realism that held the key to effect the social change she hoped to bring through her writings**” (p.66). From this quotation one can deduce that Lessing is a realist who uses her works in order to challenge or at least question false worldwide conceptions and attitudes. In the novel, Mary talks to Moses in a less authoritarian voice which has made Charlie very angry because he believes that the servants should be treated cruelly; otherwise, they will not do their jobs appropriately. The narrator describes Charlie's reaction toward Mary's way of talking to Moses in the following quotation: “ **At the same time they held a gleam of secret satisfaction that sent the blood to Charlie's head. “ Why don't you get rid of him? Why do you let him speak to you like that?”**” (p. 204). It is evident that the problem of race is rooted in the social construction and cannot be separated from Lessing's own personal life and experiences, a point the novel seeks to assert.

Furthermore, some of the Rhodesian people believe that natives should not be educated because that would make them aware of their rights which leads to drastic consequences. This awareness leads to the disturbance in society because natives will not listen or obey their masters. In *The Grass is Singing*, Mary is annoyed at

the discovery of Moses' knowledge of some English words. She is annoyed by his knowledge because she believes that now she has to treat him in a better way. The narrator portrays white people's opinion of natives' education in the following quotation:

“Mission boy,” he replied. “The only decent one I’ve ever had”. Like most Africans, Dick did not like mission boys, they “Knew too much.” And in any case they should not be taught to read and write: they should be taught the dignity of labor and general usefulness to the white man (p. 177).

This master-slave relationship has to be maintained as many white people used to believe. It is this particular point that *The Grass is Singing* aims to subvert because it is part and parcel of Lessing's own experiences as woman and artist.

In addition, Lessing and her husband used to treat their servants in a good way by feeding them and making clothes for them. On the other hand, Mary and Dick mistreat their servants physically and emotionally. They make servants work hard and they address them in a racist way by using the word 'nigger'. Although Dick seems to be sorry for firing his servant, still he uses the word “nigger” which is used to underestimate the native. The narrator states this situation in the following quotation: **“Dick was really sorry to see the end of this nigger!” (p.68).** One can see how Lessing provides examples of the racist people and of their

attitudes toward the natives in order to make people reject these acts toward the natives. The racist example mentioned before will encourage people to do something in order to change these racist acts. Moreover, Mary appears more racist than Dick especially at the beginning of her life in the farm. The narrator provides an example of her racist acts through the following quotation: **“Then came a native to the back door, asking for work. He wanted seventeen shillings a month. She beat him down by two, feeling pleased with herself because of her victory over him”** (p.70). From this quotation, one can notice how she abuses her servant by giving him money less than he deserves.

One of the pre-conceptions that people in Rhodesia believe in about natives is that they would slaughter their throats anytime since they see natives as monsters. Lessing says in her book *Under My Skin* that British people have been afraid of natives' behaviors since white people believe that natives are capable of committing crimes without any fear of being punished because the servants are accustomed to the fact that they will be punished no matter where they go. The narrator clarifies the servants' attitudes toward getting punished in the following quotation: **“‘I have done wrong, and I know it,’ he might say, ‘therefore let me be punished.’ Well, it was the tradition to face punishment, and really there was something rather fine about it”** (p.6). In *The Grass is Singing*, white people believe that natives are also competent of committing crimes. For instance, when

people heard that Moses has killed Mary, they see it as a normal thing since this act is predictable from the natives against their masters. Lessing presents this preconception about the natives to show how whites see natives; therefore, they are cautious in their way of treating their servants. Lessing aims at presenting this negative idea about the natives in order to clarify how some preconceptions are dangerous since that may make natives commit crimes in line with what others think of them. All these conceptions, views and judgments are virtually borrowed from Lessing's own life and experiences. The narrator clarifies people's reaction to Mary's death where they see it normal for natives to commit these crimes through the following quotation:

People all over the country must have glanced at the paragraph with it sensational heading and felt a little spurt of anger mingled with what was almost satisfaction, as if some belief had been confirmed, as if something had happened which could only have been expected. When natives steal, murder or rape, that is the feeling white people have (p.1).

One of the parallel elements between Lessing's life and her novel is the setting of the novel which is the farm. Lessing has lived in the farm with her parents who have come to Rhodesia to be rich. People have come from England to be wealthy since farming is the source of money in Rhodesia. Lessing presents this idea of getting wealthy through Tony's character that has come to Rhodesia to

make money like other British people. His dream of becoming wealthy has failed just like Lessing's father's dream. The narrator represents Tony's dream in the following quotation: **“and he had chosen South Africa as his home because a remote cousin of his had made five thousand pounds the year before out of tobacco. He intended to do the same, and better if he could”** (p.209). Here, one can see how Lessing has shown the false conception of becoming wealthy through Tony's unfulfilled dream. Moreover, she represents a successful example which is being represented by Charlie's success in owning farms and money. Lessing has represented both possibilities of gaining money through farming in order to make people aware of these two possibilities so that they will not be shocked if that project fails.

Although her parents have not become wealthy, they have lived in the farm where her mother, the sociable person, communicated with other people. On the other hand, Mary is an image of a sociable woman who has been transformed into a non-sociable one because she is not satisfied with her life. Therefore, she decides to isolate herself from the society. Lessing represents the idea that if a person is not satisfied with his\her life, he\she will isolate himself\herself from others. The narrator describes how Mary isolates herself from the society around her through turning down Charlie's wife invitation to the party in the following quotation:

Dick was really reluctant to go, because he had got out of the way of organized jollification; he was ill at ease in crowds. But he wanted to accept for Mary's sake. She, however, refused to go. She wrote a formal note of thanks, saying she regretted, etc (p.87).

The gradual developments and transmutations in the heroine's character from a sociable woman to an isolated one could explain some aspects of Lessing's own life style and matrimonial views.

Showalter has commented on Drabble's calling Doris Lessing as '**Cassandra in a world under siege**' by saying that:

Like Cassandra, Lessing seems to be a lonely and embattled figure on the contemporary scene. She has an extraordinary barometric sensitivity to the social climate, but she anticipates trends rather than capping them with a novel (p.307).

From Showalter's comment, one can notice that Lessing is a writer who lives in her own world but at the same time she is occupied with the social atmosphere around her. She has the ability to detect the social situations which occur around her not only to include them in her works but also to be familiar with all the possibilities and events that may happen in her social environment. This idea is apparent through her novel *The Grass is Singing* where she projects some of the social issues that occurred in Rhodesian society upon this novel. One can notice

that she is not only interested in reflecting these issues in her artistic works but also in her attempts to make some changes in the Rhodesian society by calling for natives' and women's rights.

To conclude, Lessing has succeeded in managing to mingle her memories with her imagination in order to construct this artistic work. She has presented her own opinion about certain issues, such as women and natives. One of her critics, Burt (2009) states that:

In her long and varied literary career, she has produced everything from realistic works set in Africa and England that primarily focus on colonial culture, the relationships between men and women, and women's place in modern society, to a daring multivolume science-fiction epic set in another galaxy (p.463).

This quotation provides a conclusion or a summary of Lessing's writing career. At the beginning of her career, she has been classified as a realist portraying issues which happened to her or people around her in Africa and England. Here, one can notice the diversity between these places and Lessing illustrates the different lives in different places since people around the world share some problems which should be solved. These problems are woman's suffering in the patriarchal society and the natives' problems in the racist society.

In *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing has adopted the side which runs counter to her real life because it helps in clarifying how people think or act toward women and natives. For example, she presents the viewpoint of the oppressor which is represented through Mary's character while in her life she tries to rule out all aspects of inequality toward the natives. Moreover, she presents a female figure, Mary, with concepts and attitudes different from Lessing's own life. Finally, one can see the fine artistic work which she has constructed out of actual events and situations she has been the eyewitness of. However, in writing her novel, Lessing allows her imagination to modify some of the details so that the final work is factual and fictive, personal and impersonal, local and universal. Herein lies the uniqueness and distinction of *The Grass is Singing* and its author.

4.2 The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of *The Grass is Singing*

Mary Turner's psychic life is very rich in psychological problems which have accompanied her until her death. At the beginning of the novel, Mary did not have any psychological problems since she was living happily. The narrators say: **"Till she was twenty-five nothing happened to break the smooth and comfortable life she led"** (p.33). The narrator also says: **"She was very happy: that was perhaps her only positive quality, for there was nothing else distinctive about her, though at twenty-five she was at her prettiest"** (p.33). But this peace of mind

is over when she hears her friends talk about her. She experiences her first shock when she knows the truth about herself from people she considers close to her. The narrator states that:

She was alone; and heard people talking in low voices, and caught her own name. She rose to go inside and declare herself: it was typical of her that her first thought was, how unpleasant it would be for her friends to know she had overheard (p. 38).

The narrator describes her shock in the following quotation:

She was stunned and outraged; but most of all deeply wounded that her friends could discuss her thus. She was so naïve, so unconscious of herself in relation to other people, that it had never entered her head that people could discuss her behind her back (p.39).

She thinks that her life goes as she wishes and hopes since she is young, beautiful and her friends like her. This idea is better represented in these lines: **“She was friend to half the town. And in the evening she always went to sundowner parties that prolonged themselves till midnight, or danced, or went to the pictures” (p.35).** Freud deals with this issue through his structural theory where he has divided the personality into three parts: superego, ego and Id. Myles states in her article (2004) that:

At the same time agglomerating around abnormal consciousness, fragmentation, self division, breakdown and subjective distortions of perception and the implicit questions about the external perspective of events (p.25).

This critical opinion will be supported by the present analysis of *The Grass is Singing* because this study deals with Lessing's construction of this novel as perceived by these perspectives.

Her friends and people around her who have the major effect upon her psychic life represent the superego. When she hears them talking about her clothes and age, she realizes that the image she sees herself in differs from that of reality. According to her friends, she is a woman who is coming close to her thirties; therefore, she should change her way of dressing and her hairstyle to that of an adult woman.

This was the conversation she listened to, while her face burned and her hands went clammy.

“She’s not fifteen any longer: it is ridiculous! Someone should tell her about her clothes”.

“How old is she? “.

“Must be well over thirty. She has been going strong for years. She was working long before I began working, and that was a good twelve years ago”.

“Why doesn’t she marry? She must have had plenty of chances” (p. 38).

The most important thing they believe that Mary should do is to get married because women in her age should get married. The superego is better represented here in the previous conversation between Mary’s friends which discusses her life. Greene’s view (1997) runs in this direction when he states that: **“Lessing’s focus on the individual in its relation with the collective” (p.76)**. This critical opinion shows how Lessing discusses the relation between the individual’s life and the obligations of the society, between the subject and objective plans of experience and their psychological impact on the character.

The second part of Freud’s theory is the ego where Mary starts to work hard in order to compromise between what she wishes and what the society dictates; therefore, she starts to make changes in her life in order to obey the society obligations for a woman in her age. This, she thinks, would make her get back her life because she feels shocked and frustrated to hear them talking in that way already shown. These changes include small things, such as her clothes and hairstyle which do not leave any great impact on her psychological life. There are also radical changes, such as looking for a husband to get married before it is too late. This change actually triggers her psychological problems because it creates two types of conflicts: internal and external. The external conflict is clear through her conflict with her husband, Dick, as they have feuds with each other, a situation

which eventually leads to the failure of this marriage. One of the conflicts between Mary and her husband is how to treat each other:

Mary began to question him closely as to why he was needed; but Dick touched her arm warningly and shook his head.

“Why shouldn’t I ask him?” she demanded. “He’s lying, isn’t he?”

“Of course he’s lying,” said Dick irritably. “Of course. That is not the point. You can’t keep him against his will.”

“Why should I accept a lie?” said Mary. “Why should I? Why can’t he say straight out that he doesn’t like working for me, instead of lying about his kraal?” (pp. 67, 68).

They have different lifestyles, futures and dreams. Even their views about children and servants are different. Their opinions about the servant are clarified in this conversation between Dick and Mary:

Mary was quite stupefied with rage. How dare he take the native’s part against her! When Dick returned she was standing on the veranda with her hands clenched and her face set.

“How dare you!” she said, her voice stifled.

“If you must do these things, then you must take the consequences,” said Dick wearily. “He’s a human being, isn’t he? He’s got to eat. Why must that bath be done all at once? It can be done over several days, if it means all that to you.”

“It’s my house,” said Mary. “He’s my boy, not yours. Don’t interfere.”

“Listen to me,” said Dick curtly. “I work hard enough, don’t I? All day I am down on the lands with these lazy black savages, fighting them to get some work out of them (p. 84).

They both live and love different places. Mary lived in the town all her life where she enjoyed her life with her friends and at her work while Dick spent his life at the farm where he sees it as the only place he could live in. This divergence between the place she wants to live in and the farm she cannot stand aggravates her psychological status, because she imagines her life in so different a way that she cannot fulfill. BÜYÜ states in her thesis (2007): **“Likewise, *The Grass is Singing* displays the suffering of an individual in a world which she finds hard to fit in” (p. 22).** This is clear through the contradiction between the life she wants and her actual one or the one imposed on her.

Moreover, they associate their futures to these places. Mary sees her future in the town because she never becomes acquainted with the life of the farm. The narrator states that: **“And she began to think, during those gray wastes of time, how it would be when Dick at last made some money and they could go and live in town again” (p. 107).** Dick cannot imagine his life outside the farm because it is his own property and does not have to ask anyone’s help. Another difference between Mary and Dick is that they have different dreams that the other does not accept. For example, Mary always dreams of leaving the farm in order to live in the town where she can work. This feeling is better represented in the following quotation:

it was during those two hours of half-conscious that she allowed herself to dream about that beautiful lost time when she worked in an office and lived as she pleased, before “ people made her get married.” That was how she put it to herself (pp. 106,107).

Conversely, Dick sees his life or rather his very existence to be deeply rooted in the farm. These contradictory dreams lead to many conflicts between Mary and Dick that finally leave a great impact upon the psychic life of both. Mary's psychic has been destroyed gradually and Dick at the end of the novel gets completely mad. These conflicts between Mary and Dick cause many psychological problems since both of them are dissatisfied with their everyday life. This eventually leads to much pressure in their lives. Lessing clarifies the negative impact of marriage upon Mary since she never puts in her mind the necessity of getting married. The following quotation reinforces this idea:

But all women became conscious, sooner or later, of that impalpable, but steel-strong pressure to get married, and Mary, who was not at all susceptible to atmosphere, or the things people imply, was brought face to face with it suddenly, and most unpleasantly (p. 38).

In this stage of her life, the society starts to be an abstraction in her life when she realizes that she has to live in a way society accepts. Critic Greene sees that the relationship between the individual and the society is sympathetic as he says

(1991): **“It has often been said that the relation between individual and society in English fiction tends to be one of support rather than conflict”** (p.23). This contradicts what Doris Lessing portrays in her book where she sees the social intrusion in one’s life as an abstraction: **“It is terrible to destroy a person’s picture of himself in the interests of truth or some other abstractions”** (p. 42). The individual-society relationship is a key factor in determining man’s chances of joy or misery. If it occurs, one expects the great psychic conflicts inflict him/her.

The third part of Freud’s theory is the Id where she sees herself as a young girl, likable by men. Her friends also appreciate her life which is clarified through this quotation:

And always with a man, one of those innumerable men who “took her out,” treating her likes a sister: Mary was such a good pale! Just as she seemed to have a hundred women friends, but no particular friend, so she had (it seemed) as hundred men, who had taken her out , or were taking, or who married and now asked her to their homes (p. 35).

She also wants to choose her clothes according to her taste and the most important thing is to stay single since she never thinks of getting married. This conflict between what she wants and what society accepts is the factor that ignites her miserable life. This conflict has harmful effect upon her miserable life. This is so because she lives a life opposite to what she wishes and dreams. The following

quotation clarifies how she has been before listening to their talk and how she would be if she did not listen to them:

And she still wore her hair little-girl fashion on her shoulders, and wore little frocks in pastel colors, and kept her shy, naïve manner. If she had been left alone she would have gone on, in her own way, enjoying herself thoroughly, until people found one day that she had turned imperceptibly into one of those women who have become old without ever having been middle-aged: a little withered, a little acid, hard as nails, sentimentally kindhearted, and addicted to religion or small dogs (p.36).

Through her few years of marriage, Mary passes through many changes which have great effect upon her psychic life. These psychological problems stem from the fact that she is not ready to change or modify her life. For instance, before marriage she used to read a lot, lately she appears reluctant even to hold a book. Other evidence of her change is how she turns from an extrovert person to an introvert, self-centered who is not willing to communicate with anyone, even her husband. Because she isolates herself from others, she cannot express her feelings to anyone; therefore, she represses these feelings which will subvert her psychic life. Furthermore, her unsuccessful marriage and isolation from society make her very pessimistic about her life. She loses hope in the future and the possibility of regaining her former mode of life which eventually makes her surrender to her

dark future. This brings gloomy and dark perceptions and judgments of the future.

The narrator indicates that:

For even daydreams need an element of hope to give satisfaction to the dreamer. She would stop herself in the middle of one of her habitual fantasies about the old days, which she projected into her future, saying dully to herself that there would be no future. There was nothing. Nil. Emptiness (p.150).

Her pessimism if not nihilism eventually leads to her depression where she stops talking because she knows nothing will change in her miserable life. There are many factors behind her depression. The most influential factor is the continuous clash between her and her husband. The conflict between Mary and her husband makes her very exhausted which is obvious through this conversation between Dick and Mary:

Dick saw that her thin, sun-crinkled hand was shaking. He said again, after a silence, his voice ugly with hostility: "I can't stand any more changing of servants. I've had enough. I'm warning you, Mary." And again she did not reply; she was weak with the tears and anger of the morning, and afraid that if she opened her mouth she might weep anew. (p.167).

For instance, at the beginning of her marriage, she keeps asking him to change the servants according to her wishes but before her death she could not ask him to

change one of them even though that servant is the greater cause of her depression.

In the following quotation, the narrator points out this serious situation:

The thought of Dick's exasperation, and his warning that he could stand no more changes of servants, a challenge which she had not the vitality to face, caused her to hold herself like a taut-drawn thread, stretched between two immovable weights: that was how she felt, as if she were poised, a battleground for two contending forces (p. 169).

These external and internal conflicts she undergoes are the outcomes of her surrender to the obligations of society. From the very beginning of the novel, her psychological decline starts gradually. The following examples show some of symptoms of her psychological disorders. For example, her mind is preoccupied with many thoughts the whole time; therefore, she sometimes cannot finish a sentence which is clarified in this quotation:

Her mind, nine-tenths of the time, was a soft aching blank. She would begin a sentence and forget to finish it. Dick became accustomed to the way she would say three words, and then, her face becoming suddenly null and empty, lapse into silence (pp. 169,170).

In some incidents, she starts to talk to herself loudly and is afraid that her servant may listen to her. The narrator says: **"once she was roused by a noise, and realized it was herself, talking out loud in the living room in a low angry voice"** (p.

170). She even loses her sense of time. Her isolation makes her terrified and scared to see her servant since she does not treat him well and consequently she is afraid of being hurt. In some incidents, she starts to muddle between reality and dreams and never cares about what happens around her which is a sign of depression. The narrator says: **“she doesn’t seem to care. She doesn’t care about anything. She simply sits and does nothing”** (p. 200). Her brooding and inertia are indicative of her psychological condition.

One of the most important events that reveal her psychological problem is the incident of the dress. Tony sees the servant helping Mary in her dress, a situation which makes him very annoyed. Mary is terrified from Moses before taking Tony as her shield to protect her against Moses’ cruelty. She is anxious; she even cannot sleep because she believes that Moses will kill her during the night. This incident leads to her breakdown when she fires Moses as the narrator describes:

Mary sobbed her head on her arms. “He’s gone”, she cried, “he’s gone, he’s gone!” Her voice was hysterical with relief. And then she suddenly pushed him away, stood in front of him like a mad woman, and hissed, “You sent him away! He’ll never come back! It was all right till you came!” and she collapsed in a storm of tears (p. 217).

All of the incidents mentioned above are the consequences of the conflict between the Id and the Superego which forces people to do things that they do not

even consider appropriate or even incompatible with their own wishes and desires. The ego is the referee between the obligation of the society and Mary's wishes. This makes the ego sink in many psychological problems which finally lead to her breakdown. The people around her notice her breakdown especially Dick and Tony. Dick notices how she becomes nervy and he is afraid of her psychic status. Moreover, Tony also tells Dick that Mary needs to see a psychiatrist. The narrator clarifies Tony's opinion about Mary's state: **"As for Mary, while he was sorry for her, what could be said about a woman who simply wasn't there? " A case for a psychologist," he said again, trying to reassure himself" (p. 212).** This shows how severe her psychological state is and how worry-inspiring are its effects on those surrounding her.

Another major work of Freud that may be applicable to this novel is his mechanism of defense which has been clarified by Smith (1999). According to this view, there are several mechanisms of defense which work under the pressure of censorship. First mechanism is selective prescription where Mary chooses what she wants to see and hear because she does not want to be harmed. For example, she is not aware of people's opinions about her life and appearance. She always thinks that people around her like her and her lifestyle as the narrator clarifies in this quotation:

and access to all knowledge of her time (only she read nothing but bad novels) knew so little about herself that she was thrown completely off her balance because some gossiping women had said she ought to get married (p. 43).

However, she is shocked when she hears their actual opinions. She protects herself from their opinions since she chooses what she wants to hear and see.

The second mechanism is the selective memory where the person chooses what to forget and what to keep in mind. This mechanism especially works when a person wants to forget specific people or situations associated with harmful experiences. Mary keeps forgetting things because of her depression and her inability to cope with these things. This point is shown in the following quotation: **“For a moment she could not remember what had happened; but when she did the fear engulfed her again, a terrible dark fear. She thought of herself weeping helplessly, unable to stop (p.173).**

The third mechanism is avoidance where Mary keeps avoiding certain places and people since they remind her of her past. She lived a happy life and is aware that she cannot lead that life again. She avoids her friends, the Slatter’s Family and her town because that may produce an internal conflict between how she imagines her life and her actual one. The narrator says: **“it was impossible to fit together what she wanted for herself, and what she was offered” (p.43).** Once again this is

an evidence of how the interests of the individual and society run in opposite directions.

The fourth mechanism is denial which is one of mechanisms that Lessing used to construct Mary's character. From the beginning of the novel, Mary lives in denial, beginning from her denial of her age down to her girlish clothes and hairstyles. She also keeps denying the servant's control of her life by keep ordering him to show her authority over him. The narrator says: **"The sensation of being boss over perhaps eighty black workers gave her new confidence; it was a good feeling, keeping them under her will, making them do as she wanted"** (p. 125). The master-slave relationship raised here underlies a profound psychological problem in revealing the master's sense of self-assertion and superiority compared to others. The fifth mechanism is displacement which is clear through Mary's control over her servants' lives because she cannot take the lead over her own life. The sixth mechanism is fear from intimacy which is obvious through Mary's life with her husband. She dislikes the physical relationship with her husband because it may produce feelings that she does not want to experience, such as the feeling of love toward him.

According to Freud, there are two concepts that should be used in the analysis of any personality. These concepts are 'free association' and 'transference' which are applicable to the analysis of Mary's psychic life. The first concept is free

association which Mary has never used because she always keeps repressing what she wants and feels in favor of what the society wants. The second one is transference which is applicable to her psychic condition because she transfers or reflects her parent's relation to her relationship with Dick. She sees that her life resembles her mother's: **"Mary, with the memory of her own mother recurring more and more frequently, like an older, sardonic double of herself walking beside her, followed the course her upbringing made inevitable"** (p. 98). The narrator also indicates that: **"She identified herself with her mother, clinging to her most passionately and pityingly after all these years, understanding now something of what she had really felt and suffered"** (p. 153). Another example of transference is how she associates her father's image with that of the servant as the narrator indicates: **"They advanced together, one person, and she could smell, but the unwashed smell of her father"** (p. 188).

According to the two types of character already mentioned, one can subsume her under both types. In the sublimation character, she replaces her feelings of distaste toward her life at the farm with higher feelings. When Dick is sick, she takes the lead on the farm until he gets well despite her dislike of the farm because she believes that the farm is the abstraction preventing her from living in the town. The narrator states that:

she said nothing of how she disliked the natives, of how the hostility that she could feel as something palpable coming from them against her, affected her; she knew he could be in bed for days yet, and that she would have to do it whether she liked it or not (p. 125).

This shows how she replaces these feelings of hate with the feeling of responsibility since the farm should not be left unattended. In the reactive type, she represses her feelings of hate toward Dick, the farm and her life. She does all that to keep such feelings away from society and her friends because she does not want them to see her failure. Here, the ego works and reacts to the conditions around it in order to enable Mary to get acclimatized to her life.

One of Lacan's influential views is shown in his 'mirror stage theory' which has been clarified by Fink (1997). It can be associated with Mary's character. First, the baby sees his/her image in the mirror and identifies it as his/her own and here Mary identifies herself with the image of a little girl who is admired by people around her. Second, in reality, she is a mature woman, in her thirties, who has to get married and her friends see her real image. Third, her friends and the people around her begin to perceive her real image but when they recognize that she is greatly shocked. This makes her react to this fact without thinking of the grave consequences. This leads to many psychological problems because she is now

face to face with the true self which she has never recognized before. It is a rare moment of awe and fear. This is best represented in this quotation:

She appeared horrified. The thought of meeting people, and most particularly those people who had known her when she was young and happy, made her feel as if she were raw all over, her nerves exposed on shrinking surface (p. 150).

According to Freud, dreams can also reveal some problems and secrets about the individual's life. Her dreams can be classified under the term 'latent dreams' since they carry psychological significance. Janik, one of the critics who discusses this side of the novel, says:

Mary feels a loss of her "proper" control as a white person and discomfort at her growing awareness of a sexual attraction to Moses, which is manifested in nightmares and in daytime bouts of anxiety and disorientation" (2002, p. 198).

It is obvious here that her inner psychic state has its own life, away from the character's own conscious thoughts and inhibitions.

For example, she dreams twice that the native touches her, a thing which horrifies her. The narrator says: **"He approached slowly, obscene and powerful, and it was not only he, but her father who was threatening her" (p. 188).** This incident is based on fear of being touched by a black man. He touches her once

when he helps her to take some rest when Dick is sick. After this incident, she dreams of him touching her. This has great impact upon her psychological state. The narrator presents her dream as follows:

Twice she dreamed directly of native and on each occasion she woke in terror as he touched her. on each occasion in her dream he had stood over her, powerful and commanding, yet kind, but forcing her into a position where she had to touch him (p. 178).

Another dream that reflects her emotions and opinions in the real world shows her fear of intimacy because of her father. This fear is reflected upon her relationship with Dick. BÜYÜ has the following to say in her thesis (2007): **“It is only in dreams where Mary can fully unite the past with the present, which supplies significant clues for the reader as to the suppressed feelings and experiences of Mary (p. 33).** This analysis is relevant to Mary’s dreams because they reflect her real life. In the dream, she plays with her siblings, then her father comes and holds her mother in his arms so that Mary runs away. The narrator states this dream in this quotation:

There was her father, the little man with the plump juicy stomach, beer-smelling and jocular, whom she hated, holding her mother in his arms as they stood by the window. Her mother was struggling in mock protest, playfully expostulating. Her father bent over her mother, and at the sight, Mary ran away (p. 186).

This shows the essence of her fear of getting involved in an intimate relation with Dick. Moreover, one of the dreams that causes her to become scared of being left alone is the dream when she imagines Dick's death and her isolation from the servant. In this dream, she appears happy at his death and at the same time she has a sense of guilt for indulging in such a sort of happiness. The narrator describes her dream as follows: **"In her dream the conviction grew that Dick was dead-that Dick was dead, and that the black man was waiting next door for her coming"** (p.186). The presence of two contradictory feelings at the same time is a sign of psychological imbalance since one cannot distinguish one's true feelings. In this dream, the native is the one who supports her in Dick's death. This also shows another contradictory feeling toward the native where sometimes she is horrified with his presence. Then she sees him as the one who is taking care of her.

To conclude this section, Doris Lessing is a writer who is interested in the psychological probing of her characters which is obvious through her creation of Mary's character. She believes that any character should have a psychological dimension since our psychic life is the stimulus that moves us to do and react in a certain way. In *The Grass is Singing*, she succeeds in depicting Mary's psychological life and relating her feelings and reactions minutely. As already pointed out, this reading of Mary's psychological life is justified as the book highlights her psychic conflicts, repressed desires and wish-fulfillment. Using

Freud's and Lacan's psychological postulates is helpful and illuminating in recognizing this important side of the novel's strained character, Mary.

4.3 The Feminist Interpretation of the Novel

The feminist movement, as shown in the first chapter, is concerned with equality between males and females to end women's suffering in the patriarchal society. In this section, the present study is concerned with showing who is the victim, male or female and how the victim sometimes becomes the oppressor enjoying the act of repressing weak people. This shows how feminism sometimes goes to the opposite side by shifting from supporting woman's rights to the other opposing side. This idea will be presented through illustrating the relationship between Mary and Dick and between Mary and her servants. According to Myles (2004), the situation in *The Grass is Singing* hinges on the man-woman struggle: **“The novel unfolds Lessing's anxiety about social, economic and political structures, the problem of women existing in a male-dominated world” (p.25).** This critical opinion shows how Lessing is interested in portraying women's suffering especially in a world where women are being repressed.

Mary believes that a woman would normally suffer from the male power in society, even though she admits that she herself does not face this oppression. Mary sees her mother's suffering as a woman by the male power which is

represented by her father. Conversely, she confesses that she never felt this oppression in the traditional Rhodesian society since she has been living freely until she got married to Dick. The narrator states this situation about the male authority and female suffering or living freely through the following quotation:

It had never occurred to her that her father, too, might have suffered. “ about what?” she would have retorted, had anyone suggested it. “ He’s a man, isn’t he? He can do as he likes.” She had inherited from her mother an arid feminism, which had no meaning in her own life at all, for she was leading the comfortable carefree existence of a single woman in South Africa, and she did not know how fortunate she was. How could she know? She understood nothing of conditions in other countries, had no measuring rod to assess herself with (p.32).

Moreover, since she is living in a patriarchal society, she is obliged to get married. In any society, the presence of any woman is associated with the presence of a man in her life. This is an obvious example of the sexism of the societies where unmarried women are criticized for being single and they are accused of being ugly or undesired by men. In contrast, it is normal for males in a society to be single because they can marry at any age while women should marry while they are young and beautiful. The narrator says: **“South Africa is a wonderful place: for the unmarried white woman. But she was not playing her part, for she did not get married” (p.35).**

Here, the society which is governed by the male authority affects her females' opinions about Mary's marriage. Her relatives and friends acted like male by criticizing her for being a single woman. At the same time, she depends on her male friends, a thing which shows her contradictory feelings. She feels that she should live her life the way she wants and at the same time she depends on her male friends. The narrator states this through this quotation:

She seemed not to care for men. She would say to her girls, "Men! They get all the fun." Yet outside the office and the club her life was entirely dependent upon men, though she would have most indignantly repudiated the accusation (pp: 35, 36).

Another aspect being criticized by feminists is the traditional gender role. According to this view, each gender is associated with certain roles which should be fulfilled; otherwise, the society will criticize or even condemn the one who does not fulfill his\he role. Furthermore, women have to stay at home and take care of their husbands, children and homes while men have to fulfill their family's needs by working outside. Lessing illustrates women's traditional role through the basis on which Dick has chosen Mary. The narrator clarifies Mary's traditional role through this quotation:

He knew perfectly well what he wanted: a pleasant companion, a mother for his children and someone to run his house for him. He found Mary good

company, and she was kind to children. Nothing, really, could have been more suitable: since apparently she had to get married, this was the kind of marriage to suit her best (p.40).

Mary, at the beginning of her marriage, wants to run the house the way she wants. Dick's feelings of weakness and guilt of getting married make him surrender to her by avoiding their arguments because he sees he has no right to do so. This is an example of how the victim becomes the oppressor if he\she has the chance. The narrator describes Dick's feelings: **"Understanding himself beyond the curtain he felt again a bitter pang of guilt. He had no right to marry, no right, no right. He said it under his breath, torturing himself with the repetition"** (p. 56).

In this regard, one of Lessing's scholars, O'Neil, (2004) comments:

Lessing's characters, many of them women, are in the process of change and development. Describing the world intricately from their point of view enables the reader to understand how and why change occurs in women's attitudes and opinions (p. 790).

From O'Neil's opinion one should pay attention to the change that Mary passes through and her attitude about married women before and after getting married. Furthermore, before getting married, she has been thinking that the married women conduct their own life as married women have been telling her. This is one of the

rights that feminists have called for which is to govern their own lives since this should be the norm. The narrator describes Mary's belief about how married women control their own lives in the following statement:

Still, she would be her own mistress: that was marriage, what her friends had married for-to have homes of their own and no one telling them what to do. She felt vaguely that she had been right to marry-everyone had been right (p.52).

Another example of the male's control over woman is how men tell women what to do with the money and the objects around them. Dick is of this kind of men who controls woman's way of dealing with the objects around her. Dick controls her usage of water because the water costs him money. The way he controls small things in Mary's life shows how women do not have many choices in life and should follow what they are being told to do. The narrator says:

"What are you using it [water] for?" asked dick. She told him. His face darkened, and he looked at her in incredulous horror, as if she had committed a crime.

"What, wasting it like that?"

"I am not wasting it," she said coldly. "I am so hot I can't stand it. I want to cool myself." (p. 75).

Her reaction toward his control over her usage of money and objects inside the house is an example of women's sense of secondariness suffering around the world. This idea is better represented in the following quotation:

It was taken direct from her mother, when she had had those scenes over money with her father. It was not the voice of Mary, the individual(who after all really did not care so much about the bath or whether the native stayed or went), but the voice of the suffering female, who wanted to show her husband she just would not be treated like that(p. 85).

It is obvious that women should be submissive and above all should have no independent decisions concerning daily life and common interests. This shows that women's suffering is inherited from previous generations since women have often been considered as the weakest gender that should follow the orders of the powerful represented by the male figure in society.

Dick and Mary appear to be victimizing each other by ignoring each other's need for having a child. At the beginning of her marriage, Mary tells Dick that she does not want a child because she is not happy in her marriage. He obeys her because of his feelings of guilt of his inability to fulfill her needs. Later, Mary asks Dick if they can have a child but he refuses. He pays no attention to her need to have a child since she is getting old and her chances of having a baby become

fewer as time passes. The narrator demonstrates their need for a child through this quotation:

Until one day she came to him with a new look on her face, a desperate, driven look, that he had never seen before, and asked if they might have a child. He still dreamed that one day, “when things were better,” they could have children. And then his face became dull and troubled, and he said, “Mary, how can we have children?”

“Other people have them, when they are poor.”

“But, Mary, you don’t know how poor we are.”

Of course I know. But I can’t go on like this. I must have something. I haven’t anything to do” (pp.151, 152).

They both impose their opinions on each other; therefore, sometimes Mary is the victim and in other incidents she is the oppressor. Mary sees that her right is to determine when they can have a child and Dick also believes that this is his own right. The situation of woman and Dick (wife and husband) as represented here is in line with Homi Bhabha’s argument about the dialogic relation or ‘hybridity’ (Bhabha, p.22).

Another situation which shows how an oppressed man could turn into a monster especially if he is the victim of a woman is Moses’ revenge of Mary.

Moses decides to take revenge from Mary because she humiliates him and takes his male pride by controlling his life. He decides to kill her without fearing the consequences of his act; therefore, he turns himself in when he has killed her. This situation shows how a man would act if he loses his sense of authority since he used to it from the beginning of his life. The narrator describes such feelings in this statement:

Though what thoughts of regret, or pity, or perhaps even wounded human affection were compound with the satisfaction of his completed revenge, it is impossible to say. For, when he had gone perhaps a couple of hundred yards through the soaking bush he stopped, turned aside, and leaned against a tree on an ant heap. And there he would remain, until his pursuers, in their turn, came to find him (p.238).

On the other side of this incident, Mary stands helpless in front of Moses waiting for her death. As a woman, she knows what it means to control man's life and how this control will have its impact upon her own life and destiny. Her fear of Moses is noticeable; rather she has been waiting her tragic death all the night long. When he has come to kill her, she stands helpless in front of his power and rage. She could not even shout to get help because she is terrified and she has been waiting this destiny since firing him. The narrator describes the killing scene which is full of terror:

She opened her mouth to speak; and, as she did so, saw his hand, which held a long curving shape, lifted above his head; and she knew it would be too late. All her past slid away, and her mouth, opened in appeal, let out the beginning of a scream, which was stopped by a black wedge of hand inserted between her jaws. But the scream continued, in her stomach, choking her; and she lifted her hands, clawlike, to ward him off (p. 236).

In order to depict male authority in deciding woman's life, Dick forces Mary to work at the store. Although Mary hates to run the store, he does not pay attention to her reaction. Here, one can see men conducting women's lives because men are the supreme power in the society. The narrator clarifies how Dick runs Mary's life through this quotation:

He said that that he had taken it for granted that she would run the store; she hadn't anything to do in any case. He made this last remark in the harsh resentful voice that was, at this time, his usual way of addressing her.

Mary replied sharply that she would rather die than set foot inside it. Nothing would make her, nothing.

"It wouldn't hurt you," said Dick. "Are you too good to stand behind a counter, then?" (p. 103).

Sometimes when a victim holds a powerful position he\she becomes the oppressor to assert his/her power over other inferior people. Mary, as figure of female suffering, becomes the oppressor when she becomes the boss of the farm during Dick's sickness. According to Greene (1991): “ **From the start, Lessing's feminism was linked to an understanding of racism gained from her years in Africa and to an understanding of class related to Marxism (p.25) .** This critical opinion clarifies how Lessing in her work links issues related to people's suffering, such as sexism with racial discrimination. Moreover, Mary loves the taste of power she feels when she has been controlling the servants in the farm. She treats them harshly and she does not allow them to have rest and if anyone stops working she offends him. In order to manifest her power, she wipes a servant for taking a rest for more than one minute. The narrator describes her attitude when she has been controlling these servants: “**The sensation of being boss over perhaps eighty black workers gave her new confidence; it was a good feeling, keeping them under her well, making them do as she wanted**” (p. 125). The narrator's description of this situation is expressive and crystal-clear:

When one of the men paused for a moment in his work to rest, or to wipe the running sweat from his eyes, she waited one minute by her watch, and then called sharply to him to begin again. He would look slowly round at her, then bend back to the mealies, slowly, as if in protest (p. 125).

This situation provides a piece of evidence how men underestimate women's ability to hold a leading position. This is clear through the servants' responses to Mary's orders where they 'protest' her commands.

The male authority in society is rooted in times immemorial since the leading position is associated with the male figure. Mary admits that she has absorbed her leadership ability from her father through observing him treat his servants. This shows that it is the norm for man to hold the leading position while it is not so for women to do that. The narrator states Mary's inheritance of aspects of leadership from her father:

The phrases of this little lecture came naturally to her lips: she did not have to look for them in her mind. She had heard them so often from her father, when he was lecturing his native servants, that they welled up from the part of her brain that held her earliest memories (p. 128).

Mary and Dick always confront each other in any subject they discuss about their life. For instance, they discuss what they should plant in the farm to gain more profits. Dick wants to plant mealies, while Mary wants to plant tobacco because they can gain more money. Although her idea could have brought to them more money, he opposes her and starts making fun of her. The reason is that he

believes she knows nothing about farming. The narrator clarifies Dick's attitude toward Mary's opinion:

But it was no good, with Mary sitting opposite him, forcing him to do as she willed. At last he looked up, smiled a twisted unhappy smile, and said, "Well, boss, can I think it over for a few days?" but his voice was strained with humiliation. And when she said irritably, "I do wish you wouldn't call me boss!" he did not answer, though the silence between them said eloquently what they were afraid to say (p.142).

In addition, because Dick is more powerful than Mary, he accuses and blames her for losing the servants in the farm because of cruel treatment toward them. He says that the workers do not come back and other workers will not work in the farm because Dick gains a bad reputation because of the bad treatment the natives have faced. Bloom (2002) says that: **"In their foregrounding of female physical ugliness, perpetuate values of gender inequality and the necessary punishment of women"** (p. 141). One can see that Dick punishes Mary through abusing her verbally through the tone he uses while he is talking to her. The narrator illustrates Dick's tone and attitude when he is talking to Mary:

You lost me twenty of my best boys, and they'll never come back. They are out somewhere else giving my farm a bad name, at this moment, because of your damned temper. They are just not coming to me now

as they used. No, they all go into the towns where they loaf about doing nothing (p.157).

In some incidents, Dick transforms from a peaceful man into one who forces Mary to do things she does not like because the love of controlling others lives is something inherent in the male personalities. For example, he forces her to keep the servant although his presence has a great impact upon her life and finally leads to her death at the hands of this servant. The narrator's account is as follows: **"He said again, after a silence, his voice ugly with hostility: "I can't stand any more changing of servants. I've had enough. I'm warning you, Mary."** He also says: **"Mary," he said, like a superior to a subordinate, "Did you hear what I said? "Yes," she said at last sullenly, with difficulty" (p. 167).**

There are many assumptions that men hold about women. One of these assumptions is that women do not know how to deal with the natives. Charlie, the owner of the farm in Rhodesia, believes that women cannot deal with natives. As he puts it, **"No woman knows how to handle niggers" (p.200).** This clarifies how men see women as unable to treat their servants appropriately since they are women after all.

To conclude, Lessing succeeds in defending and criticizing feminist principles at the same time since this movement calls for women's right. In fact feminists exceed the limits and go too far in their calling for women's support. Lessing

clarifies how some repressed people or classes, once they are given authority, may persecute people under their power because of the oppression they have faced throughout their lives. In *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing provides an example of this situation through illustrating the relationship between Mary and her servants.

According to Judith Fetterley's idea of immascultation (Bowlby, 1997), some readers may see that Mary deserves her death because of her attitude toward Moses. This idea is also clarified through people's reactions toward the newspaper's extract about her death. They say that Mary deserves this end because of her way of life and her way of treating her servant.

4.4 Racial Discrimination Perspective of *The Grass is Singing*

Racial discrimination is a very crucial problem which appeared since the presence of different races at the same place. The essence of this problem lies in the belief that there are superior races, usually the whites, which should be obeyed and served by the other races which are considered inferior. Any society that consists of people from different races faces this problem. This often leads to clashes between them which have many serious consequences, such as inequality between these races with all its manifestations. Crimes are often committed by both races in the form of acts and counter acts. Myles (2004) shows the major themes that Lessing deals with in her novel:

The novel unfolds Lessing's anxiety about social, economic and political structures, the problem of women existing in a male dominated world, and also the crucial relationship existing between the white masters and the black African servants (p.25).

Doris Lessing, from the beginning of the novel, has shown that the Rhodesian society is a multi-racial one which consists of white races and the Afrikaners. Bloom says that Lessing is concerned with racism in the African society: **"they reinforce the social world of South African racism to a certain extent"** (p.141). She shows how the white people take no notice of the black race because they believe that the white race is the important race and other races are nothing in front of the white race. The narrator shows how the Rhodesian has been classified on the base of the citizens' race: **"but there was certainly a race division. The small community of Afrikaners had their own lives, and the Britishers ignored them"** (p.3).

Since this society has been classified according to the race, whites believe that they should not have any normal relationship with other races since white people consider the other races as less human. They believe that the only relationship they can have between people from different races is the master-servant relationship where the Afrikaners have to serve them. The Afrikaners have to serve the white without complaining of the work or the treatment they receive from their masters.

The Afrikaners have no right to protest or complain. The narrator utters this fact through this quotation: **“when it came to the point, one never had contact with natives, except in the master-servant relationship. One never knew them in their own lives, as human beings”** (p. 12).

Moreover, anyone who treats his\her servants humanely will be rejected from the entire society; therefore, the new arrivals who have come from England are in conflict with the new movements which call for equality between races and his\her future in the new society where he\she has to adopt the society’s belief in order to achieve his\her plans to make money. Tony, one of the young men who have come to Rhodesia to make money, faces this conflict but he finally has surrendered to the obligations of the society. Reilly, Kaufman and Bodino has included in their book Vincent Sarich definition of race as follow: **“ Race refers to geographically separated portions of species that are distinguishable by inherited characteristics”** (p.8). From this definition of race one can be familiar with the conflict Tony is under since he has come to Rhodesia where he meets people who belong to a different geographical place Tony comes from; therefore, Tony and Rhodesian people have different characteristics. Finally, He has come with the idea that he should treat the natives in the same way he treats people from his race since all races are equal. The narrator describes his conflict through this quotation:

When old settlers say “One had to understand the country”, what they mean is, “you have to get used to our ideas about the native.” They are saying, in effect, “Learn our ideas, or otherwise get out: we don’t want you.” Most of these young men were brought up with vague ideas about equality. They were shocked, for the first week or so, by the way natives were treated (p.11).

Moreover, whites are not allowed to treat their servants humanely, otherwise they will be criticized from other people in society. Sometimes Dick is talking to his servants in a good way which makes Mary unsatisfied with his way of treating them. Since Afrikaners are forced to work for whites, people do not see that it is necessary to deal with them as human beings. This situation is presented in the following rumination:

She was filled with wonder, and even repulsion. Dick was really sorry to see the end of this nigger! She could not understand any white person feeling anything personal about a native; it made Dick seem really horrible to her (p. 68).

In addition, if the master wants to treat his/her servants in a good way, other people will disapprove of this because that would affect their stereotyped image in society. Since one is a member in a racist society, he/she will be rejected and criticized if he/she treat the servants humanely by breaching the common norm or practice. For instance, Charlie, a land owner, has protested the way Moses speaks

to Mary and the tone Mary has used while speaking to him. His objection is that she is to Moses as a white man which makes him equal to Charlie. The servant also does not obey his masters since Moses has a close relationship with Mary. The narrator illuminates this situation in the following quotation:

It was the tone of Mary's voice when she spoke to the native that jarred on him: she was speaking to him with exactly the same flirtatious coyness with which she had spoken to himself.

The native replied, with a rough offhand rudeness: "oranges finished."

"Oranges finished," he repeated, in that tone of surly indifference, but with a note of self-satisfaction, of conscious power that took Charlie's breath away (p.203).

Whites believe that blacks are monsters who can lie, steal and even kill. Because of this conviction, whites treat their servants badly since they can commit these crimes. Bloom (2003) states this fear of African in this quotation: **"the books contextualize colonial fear of the unpredictability and unreliability of black Africans"** (p.141). They see their servants as criminals who are used to commit these crimes without fearing the punishment since they do not fear anything. Mary used to treat her servants in an inhumane way because she is totally sure that they

will commit these crimes. Mary believes that her servants are used to lying to get some of their rights or even to take some rest. The narrator says:

Samson [a servant] gave notice that evening, on the grounds that he was needed in his Kraal. Mary began to question him closely as to why he was needed; but Dick touched her arm warningly and shook his head.

“Why shouldn’t I ask him?” she demanded. “He’s lying, isn’t he?”

“Of course he’s lying,” said Dick irritably. “Of course.”

That is not the point. You can’t keep him against his will.”

“Why should I accept a lie?” said Mary. “Why should I? Why can’t he say straight out that he doesn’t like working for me, instead of lying about his kraal?” (pp. 67, 68).

Mary, in many incidents, accuses her servants of stealing stuff or food from the house. She starts to monitor their moves and stuff at the house to prevent them from stealing anything. She even used to lock the cupboards and follow her servants inside the house which makes the servants feel of humiliation because of the terrible treatment they get. The narrator states that: **“ and she wore the store keys tied to her belt” (p.63)** and the narrator also adds: **“ She took the keys off the hook in the wardrobe(they were put there so the native servant should not know where they were and take himself to the store to steal when she was not**

looking)” (p.105). One of the convictions associated with the black is that they can kill anyone with cold blood without fearing the consequences. People in the town see that when Moses killed Mary is something normal because it is expected from their race. Because of these beliefs about the blacks, women in Africa are brought up to fear the servants and never trust them. The narrator describes this fear in the following quotation:

She was afraid of them, of course. Every woman in South Africa is brought up to be. In her childhood she had been forbidden to walk out alone, and when she had asked why, she has been told in the furtive, lowered, but matter-of-fact voice she associated with her mother, that they were nasty and might do horrible things to her (p.60).

Another aspect of how Masters treat their servants in an inhumane way is the hours of work that they should do every day. The servants work too much even without taking any rest because they are considered not human. Moreover, their wages do not meet the hard work they do and sometimes their masters cut their wages for trivial reasons, such as the loss of something or the workers leaving early. The narrator indicates that:

She knew there had been enough raisins put out for the pudding, but when they came to eat it, there were hardly any. And the boy denied stealing them...

“Good heavens,” said Dick, amused, “I thought there was something really wrong.”

“But I know he took them,” sobbed Mary.

“He probably did, but he’s a good old swine on the whole.”

“I am going to take it out of his wages.” (p. 67).

The bad treatment that the natives receive from their masters is the physical abuse which has many forms. One of these forms is the long hours they have to do without taking any rest. For example, Mary has made Moses work for long hours to finish the cleaning of the bathroom. She does not even make him take some rest or to have his lunch. The narrator describes how Mary feels about the natives: **“She never thought of natives as people who had to eat or sleep: they were either there, or they were not, and what their lives were when they were out of her sight she had never paused to think” (pp.78,79).** Furthermore, Mary mistreats one of her servants physically by whipping him for taking a rest while she has been leading the farm during Dick’s sickness. The physical abuse that servants face shows the whites opinions about the servants. They see the servants as non-human creatures that do not have feelings; therefore, they will not be affected by the whipping. The narrator states:

“I hope you are being careful with them,” he said anxiously. “You have to go slow with them these days, you know. They are all spoiled.”

“I don’t believe in treating them soft,” she said scornfully.

“If I had my way, I’d keep them in order with the whip.” (p.130).

The narrator shows how the masters hurt their servants unconsciously since it is normal for them to treat them badly. The narrator says: **“Involuntarily she lifted her whip and brought it down across his face in a vicious swinging blow” (p.134)**. Another form of the abuse that the servants receive from their masters is the verbal one. The masters used to address their servants in a humiliating way or describing them by using words which underestimate and hurt them. The narrator indicates that: **“she had got far more work out of these savages than he ever had” (p.136)**. Here, Mary describes the servants as savages or niggers because masters believe that they are not human; therefore, they justify the brutal way in treating their servants. Moreover, Dick says about his servant ‘old swine’, (pig) is a word used to undervalue a person since he believes that the servants are used to this kind of a language. The narrator says that: **“Dick laughed, saying, “he’ll look after you: he is not a bad old swine” (p.59)**. It obvious that the whites see the natives equal to animals as the narrator indicates: **“a white person may look at a native, who is no better than a dog” (p. 163)**.

Furthermore, the feelings of hate toward the natives could transcend to their personalities and attitudes. These feelings of hate and abuse include hating the physical appearance of the males, females and even babies. These feelings show how the masters cannot withstand natives’ presence even if they do not speak or act or communicate with their masters. Whites have feelings of hostility toward

their servants which are apparent through Mary's feeling toward them. Mary hates their bodies, voices and she even hates them with the way they sit carelessly. The narrator expresses Mary's feelings toward the natives:

If she disliked native men, she loathed the women. She hated the exposed fleshiness of them, their soft brown bodies and soft bashful faces that were also insolent and inquisitive, and their chattering voices that held a brazen fleshy undertone. She could not bear to see them sitting there on the grass, their legs tucked under them in that traditional timeless pose (p.104).

The actions of the masters exceed the limits to include the feelings of disgust toward the normal relationship between a mother and a child. Mary even describes this relation as if it were between an animal and its child because they identify the natives with animals. The narrator states that: **"The children hung to their mothers' backs (like monkeys, Mary thought) or clutched their skirts, staring at the white-skinned Mary, clusters of flies in the corners of their eyes (p.105).**

Since the genesis of the racial discrimination problem, people in authority have started to legislate laws to stop aspects of discrimination against the blacks. Hamilton (2001) has included in his book a law from the constitution of South Africa which declares that: **" Everyone is equal before the law" and that "the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one**

or more grounds, including race” (p.32). This move toward equality has been rejected by the white masters because that loosens their grip over their servants. Masters are afraid of being disobeyed by their servants since the law tilts their side. The natives start to be aware of their rights after having some education from the missionaries who taught them the English language which made them able to communicate easily with their masters. Their ability to communicate with their masters is not accepted because that puts the servant on equal footing with their master; therefore, the masters do not like to see their servants speak English. The narrator manifests this through Mary’s reaction to Moses’ way of addressing her with the word Madame:

But there was nothing disrespectful in it: it was only what he had been taught by some missionary with foolish ideas. And there was nothing in his attitude towards her she could take hold of it. But although he was never disrespectful, he forced her now to treat him as a human being; it was impossible for her to thrust him out of her mind like something unclean, as she had done with all the others in the past (p.177).

Moreover, people in authority have given the natives some of their rights through giving them the right to oppose to the police if their masters abuse them physically. Masters oppose this law since that weakens their control over their servants. Janik

(2002) highlights this idea through this quotation: **“Mary feels a loss of her “proper” control as a white person” (p.198).** The main cause for rejecting this law is that white people have to treat their servants humanely. If a servant complains to the police, his master will be angry rather than afraid of being punished because this is dangerous for their power in society. The narrator describes how Mary feels about this law through this quotation:

She thought: he will complain to the police that I struck him? This did not frighten her, it made her angry. The biggest grievance of the white farmer is that he is not allowed to strike his natives, and that if he does, they may-but seldom do- complain to the police. It made her furious to think that this black animal had the right to complain against her, against the behavior of a white woman (pp. 134, 135).

The narrator shows Mary’s opinion about people who call for the natives’ rights and how Mary accuses them of sabotaging the norm of life in the Rhodesian society as follows:

Yet she was maddened by the thought he had even the right to appeal; her greatest anger was directed against the sentimentalists and theoreticians, whom she thought of as “They”-the lawmakers and the civil service- who interfered with the natural right of a white farmer to treat his labor as he pleased (p.135).

Moreover, the white people resist any change in the relationship between them and their servants. The masters believe that any change in this relationship would make them feel closer to the servants which will make the masters see them as human beings; therefore, they are obliged to treat them in a good way. The narrator describes Mary's reaction to her relationship with Moses:

It had come to this: that she watched her actions from one point of view only; would they allow Moses to strengthen that new human relationship between them; in a way she could not counter, and which she could only try to avoid (pp. 178,179).

If the master wants to establish a relationship with his/her servants, they will be forced to treat them well and give them their rights to live in a more appropriate environment to any human being; therefore, Mary works hard to avoid establishing of this relationship with Moses. The narrator explains this through the following quotation: **"And she avoided the native; she felt that she was too unsure of herself, had not the strength to face him" (p.190).** Mary also justifies the reason she does not want to be close to her servant by saying that she will lose her power and he will gain control over her. Since she becomes closer to Moses due to the incidents they pass through, such as the whipping, Dick's sickness and Mary's physical and psychological deterioration, Moses becomes the powerful person and

she becomes submissive to him. The narrator describes this shift in the relationship between them through this quotation:

And in the attitude of Moses, in the way he moved or spoke, with that easy, confident, bullying insolence, she could see he was waiting too. They were like two antagonists, silently sparring. Only he was powerful and sure of himself, and she was undermined with fear, by her terrible dream-filled nights, her obsession (p191).

To conclude, it is obvious that racism is a problem which cannot be solved since there are people who believe that they are better than people from other races. Lessing has succeeded in representing this problem in an artistic way with other dimensions, such as women's rights. Lessing has represented the cruel people who do not believe in equality between races, although Lessing all of her life has taken care of the natives to provide them with their rights. Moreover, she has joined many movements which call for the natives' rights. She also has treated her servants in a good way by giving the servants salaries which suits their works although people around Lessing criticized her for her attitudes toward her servants. Lessing says in her book *Under my Skin* (1994): **“ Again we paid them much more than the pitiful customary wage, and again white housewives arrived reproachfully or ferociously to say we were spoiling the natives”** (pp.241,242). Finally, the novel in this level of reading suggests that one should work hard to

illuminate all aspects of inequality between people because no one should be treated as animals as or less than humans.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

At the beginning of their writing career, many writers make use of their own life and experiences in creating their artistic works. Since *The Grass is Singing* is Doris Lessing's first novel, many critics would consider it as autobiographical one; therefore, she is considered a realist writer. Moreover, one can notice that Lessing has succeeded in dispersing the preconception of the first work of the writer as simply a biographical one. *The Grass is Singing* is built, as we have seen, in such a way as to tackle different levels of experience simultaneously. Among these levels is the artistic representation of her actual life and experiences. She does not only include elements from her real life in her first work but also in her later works,

such as *London Observed: Stories and Sketches* (1993). In addition, her ability to mingle what is real with what is factual makes her deserve the Noble Prize she received in 2007. Because Doris Lessing wants to be appreciated through her own creative works, not through her immense reputation, she has decided to publish some of her works under a pseudonym, Jane Somer. This fact shows that Lessing wants to be appreciated for her artistic achievements away from the glittering lights of fame.

Doris Lessing has brought four threads in order to build her multi-thematic novel *The Grass is Singing* in an artistic way. The four themes that she has combined are universal ones which concern any human being who calls for bringing equality between people from different races and genders. Lessing is greatly involved in these issues since she, in some of her works, has addressed these issues in a wider form. In *The Grass is Singing* and *The Golden Notebook*, she mainly focuses on a female character that searches for women's freedom in the patriarchal society. Many feminists have considered Lessing as a feminist since she is interested in women's freedom and women's dream of gaining equality with the males in their societies. Her messages make people understand women's need to act and feel freely without fearing the patriarchal society they live in.

Lessing is deeply concerned in the psychic life of her characters since the understanding of the character depends heavily on his/her psychic life. For

instance, one cannot understand some of Mary Turner's actions and feelings without analyzing her psychic life and its complexities. In many incidents and attitudes, her character would be misunderstood if was left only to the analysis of her actions. If one views Mary's reaction toward her life in the farm away from her psychological state, one will see her attitude is not justifiable. Since Lessing is one of the writers who made use of the new human sciences like psychology or feminism, this adds to her distinguishing as a creative writer.

Lessing was a witness of the conflict between the natives and their masters in Rhodesia since she spent her childhood there; therefore, she has the ability to reflect this conflict through her work which will be reliable since she virtually lived through this conflict. This always reminds her of the inhumane treatment natives have received. She has addressed this issue in many of her works especially her first novel *The Grass is Singing* through depicting the relationship between Mary and her servants, especially Moses. She also has published many stories which take place in South Africa and has discussed the topic of racism in that society. She has collected these stories in one book entitled *African Stories* (1964). She does not only focus on conveying her view about this problem but she also uses her artistic taste which makes her reader accept what she says. Since Lessing has addressed this issue which concerns people around the world, many people suffering from maltreatment in terms of race appreciate her works much. Lessing

is their spokeswoman who makes people aware of this issue and at the same time she makes people under this oppression speak up without any fear since they appear or should be equal to other people from other races. Moreover, one can consider Lessing a brave writer because she published her earlier works that raise such hot issues on racism, given the date of publication of her novel. She is a pioneer in this type of fiction.

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