

I. Lessing's African Themes

This research work studies British Nobel Prize-winning author Doris Lessing's first novel *The Grass is Singing* (1950) from the perspective of male and female sexuality. As women are projected as the "other" in social, cultural, political and educational field due to their bodily difference, this has led to the subjugation of women. In *The Grass is Singing* Lessing's protagonist, Mary Turner's desire for sex is met with disgust when she discovers that her husband, Dick lacks virility, by implication he possesses weaker body than herself. So, she gets attracted to her black servant Moses. Her attraction to Moses embodies the power of a virile masculinity, which has made women powerless. So, this thesis argues that Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* privileges the identification of power with heterosexual masculinity. Lessing shows this through the focus on male body because in the novel the dynamics of the triangular relationship among Mary, Dick and Moses is one that prioritizes gendered relations of power. In this relationship of power, Mary is powerless.

The novel *The Grass is Singing* takes place in Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe – in southern Africa, during the late 1940s and deals with the racial politics between whites and blacks in that country which was then a British Colony. Set in South Africa under white rule, this novel is both a riveting chronicle of human disintegration and a beautifully understated social critique. *The Grass is Singing* tells the story of a white woman and her unhappy marriage to Dick, a poor white farmer who proves an ineffectual, unsuccessful husband. But Mary Turner is a self-confident and independent young woman who becomes the depressed and frustrated wife. Her mental health deteriorates still further. She is filled with a profound hatred of her social situation. Little by little the ennui of years on the farm works their slow poison

and Mary's despair progresses until the fateful arrival of an enigmatic and virile black servant, Moses. Mary falls obsessively in love with her black houseboy, Moses.

Locked in anguish, Mary and Moses – master and slave – are trapped in a web of mounting attraction and repulsion. She begins to take this hatred out on Moses, the latest of a series of black house-boys. Her relationship with him is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, it is governed by her received ideas about class and colour; on the other, she becomes ever more dependent on him. These mixed dispositions cause confusion for both of them, and at last Moses, unable to stomach her humiliation of him, kills her. Their psychic tension explodes in an electrifying scene that ends this disturbing tale of racial strife in colonial South Africa as she also treats him cruelly, as she treats all black Africans. The novel blends Lessing's imaginative vision with her own vividly remembered early childhood to recreate the quiet horror of a woman's struggle against a ruthless fate. So, the story ends with Mary's madness and murder at the hand of Moses himself.

The Grass is Singing created a sensation when it was first published in 1950. It brought to public attention the terrible differences in relationships between black and white people in South Africa. Lessing did not do this in a crude and unsubtle way. Her portraits of Mary and Dick, the white couple in the story, are basically sympathetic. We cannot help feeling sorry for Mary. Her childhood was unhappy. When Dick asked her to marry him, she had no idea how hard life on his farm would be. She was simply unsuited to it, just as kind-hearted Dick was unsuited to running a farm. It is against this background that we place Mary's ill-treatment of black farm-workers and servants. Lessing does not excuse Mary, but we do see that the problem of black and white is not simply 'rich white, poor black'.

Lessing's fiction is commonly divided into three distinct phases: the novels with Marxist theme, which were written from 1944 to 1956, when she was writing radically on social issues. She returned to the psychological theme with the publication of *The Good Terrorist* (1985). Finally, she wrote on the Sufi theme – Islamic theme, which was explored in a science fiction setting in *The Canopus* series. She later converted to Sufi Islam, saying her life and Marxist worldview lacked a spiritual dimension.

Lessing's switch to science fiction was not popular among many critics. In this regard, for example, in *The New York Times* in 1982 John Leonard wrote in reference to *The Making of the Representative for Planet* that "One of the many sins for which the 20th century will be held accountable is that it has discouraged Mrs. Lessing . . . She now propagandizes on behalf of our insignificance in the cosmic razzmatazz" (3). Her breakthrough work, written in 1962, was *The Golden Notebook*. It is considered a feminist text by some scholars. Its theme of mental breakdowns as a means of healing and freeing one's self from illusions had been overlooked by critics. She also regretted that critics failed to appreciate the exceptional structure of the novel. In *Walking in the Shade* Lessing modeled Molly, to an extent, on her good friend Joan Rodker, the daughter of the author and publisher John Rodker. Lessing does not like the idea of being labeled as a feminist author. When asked why, she replies:

What the feminists want of me is something they haven't examined because it comes from religion. They want me to bear witness.

What they would really like me to say is, 'Ha, sisters, I stand with you side by side in your struggle toward the golden dawn where all those beastly men are no more.' Do they really want people to

make oversimplified statements about men and women? In fact, they do. I've come with great regret to this conclusion. (10)

Lessing's fictions are deeply autobiographical, much of them emerging out of her experiences in Africa. Drawing upon her childhood memories and her serious engagement with politics and social concerns, Lessing has written about the clash of cultures, the gross injustices of racial inequality, the struggle among opposing elements within an individual's own personality, and the conflict between the individual conscience and the collective good. Her stories and novellas set in Africa, published during the fifties and early sixties, decry the dispossession of African Americans by white colonizers, and expose the sterility of the white culture in southern Africa. In 1956, in response to Lessing's courageous outspokenness, she was declared a prohibited alien in both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.

Over the years, Lessing has attempted to accommodate what she admires in the novels of the nineteenth century – their “climate of ethical judgment” – to the demands of twentieth-century ideas about consciousness and time (Green 426). After writing the *Children of Violence Series* (1951-1959), formally conventional novels about education and the growth in consciousness of her heroine, Martha Quest in *Martha Quest* (1952), Lessing broke new ground with *The Golden Notebook* (1962), a daring narrative experiment, in which the multiple selves of a contemporary woman are rendered in astonishing depth and detail. This is about the relationship with each other and men. The major character Anna Wulf, like Lessing herself, strives for ruthless honesty as she aims to free herself from the chaos, emotional numbness, and hypocrisy afflicting her generation.

Attacked for being ‘unfeminine’ in her depiction of female anger and aggression, Lessing responded, “apparently what many women were thinking, feeling, experiencing came as a great surprise” (Taylor 427). As at least one early critic noticed, Anna Wulf “tries to live with the freedom of a man” – a point Lessing seems to confirm: “These attitudes in male writers were taken for granted, accepted as sound philosophical bases, as quite normal, certainly not as woman-hating, aggressive, or neurotic” (Taylor 427). So, in her writings, she explores feminist and cultural issues.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Lessing began to explore more fully the quasi-mystical insight that Anna Wulf seems to reach by the end of *The Golden Notebook*. Her “inner-space fiction” deals with cosmic fantasies. *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971) is a dreamscape, and other dimensions like in *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) and science fiction probe of higher planes of existence. She does the same in *Canopus in Argos: Archives* (1979-1983). These reflect Lessing's interest, since the 1960s, in Idries Shah, whose writings on Sufi mysticism stress the evolution of consciousness and the belief that individual liberation can come about only if people understand the link between their own fates and the fate of society.

Doris Lessing writes on a wide variety of themes including Rhodesia, women, communism, and global catastrophe. Distinguished for its energy and intelligence, her work is principally concerned with the lives of women – their psychology, sexuality, politics, work, relationship to men and to their children, and their change of vision as they age. In her later books she has mainly focused on efforts by individuals to resist society’s pressures toward marginalization and acculturation.

The Grass is Singing (1950) has been analyzed from various perspectives: Biographical, African, Marxist, Archetypal, Psychological, Political, and Realistic among the others. There are some critics who relate the novel with *July's People*. Sheila Roberts in the recent essay compares the *Grass is Singing* to Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*.

The novel reveals the culture where being rich provides superiority. Charley Slatter is an example of such success for the Turners. He uses his financial power to gain respect in the community and to take over the Turners' farm. On the other hand, the Turners' lack of money adds to the community's dislike of them. In this instance, their lack of money reduces them to the level of the natives, although to admit this would be unacceptable. For the sake of appearances, the community must pretend to support them.

Mary is financially poor. Her harsh childhood produced an insecure woman in herself, so she cannot form relationships and shuns sexuality in the present. Friends in the city assumed she would not marry, which pushed her into a doomed marriage and into a fascination with Moses. By the end, she is motivated by fear and obsession which leads to a breakdown and subsequent death.

Mary cannot stand Dick, who is not a successful farmer despite various attempts, which Mary comes to recognize as incompetence. This is a sharp contrast to Charley's wealth of ability to exploit land and workers. Dick's emotional failure is also apparent after Mary dies. He is described as "incurably mad" (19). He and Mary are tragic figures through their failure to address the difficulties in their lives, both emotional and practical.

The Grass is Singing exhibits and encodes indictments of racism and yet both, in my opinion, reinforce colonial fantasies of racial and sexual otherness. This novel presents the basic conflicts of white colonialism in African culture and the reader is prompted to question its values. Prejudice is not limited to the native Africans. There is a strong sense of necessary bonding between the white population, something which Mary and Dick are not part of. They live in very basic conditions and were despised by the rest of the community because "they did not recognize the need for esprit de corps" (24). This attitude was prevalent long before the murder.

Tony Marston is a character used by Lessing to accentuate these double standards. He is confused and conflicted by what he sees around him, notably during the murder investigation which seems nominal and involves a Sergeant who somehow seems complicit. In addition, In Tony Marston, we find a glimpse of who is in charge in the farming community and how the natives are treated.

By analyzing the text from realistic perspective Philip Dine acknowledges its failure to motivate anyone to change. Dine argues that the novels formal characteristic leads us to conclude that this is "classic realist text" in the Barthesian mode. According to Dine's elegant argument, because of "the in-built colonialism of the classic realistic text the power relationship enshrined in its form" (34). This novel may very well be remarkable illustration of the salvation of one conscience. But it cannot convincingly be regarded as a basis for action. By failing to formally break the bond of classic realism, the novel seems complicit with the very system Lessing has apparently set out to challenge.

Eileen Manion, who suggests: "Perhaps it is because Doris Lessing's portrayal of colonialism in her early stories and novels is so 'realistic,' as well as

so vivid and convincing, that careful analysis of it has never seemed necessary” (434). But Abdul R. Jan Mohamed would call a “Manichean allegory – an allegory that functions (however unintentionally in this case) to reinscribe the power and dominance of the white colonial ruling class” (2).

Similarly, Roberta Rubenstein has regarded Lessing’s work as diverse as her own diversity. Yet, perhaps because Lessing’s criticism has until fairly recently dominated by American critic, one underrepresented context is the African and colonial experience. Although Lessing left Rhodesia for England before publishing her first novel, *The Grass is Singing* (1950), Southern African obviously remained central to the subject matter and setting of much of her fiction for the next twenty years. Eve Bertelsen, a South African and the editor of this highly informative and diversified collection of essays and other pieces argues that Lessing:

has always been in combat with enclosed system which she regarded as the colonizers of the imaginative life. In special ways it is her Rhodesian experience that made her a perpetual outsider . . . her colonial experience appears to have cast her forever in a marginal role one could justify African background writes the whole Lessing oeuvre. (25)

This shows that Lessing has drawn on her experiences in colonial Africa for her stories and novels. Her books all deal with the same themes: the problem of racism and marginalization in British colonial Africa and the place of women in a male-dominated world and their escape from the social and sexual repression of that world.

Interpreting the text from the Marxist perspective Michele Wender Zak remarks the ideas of Marx and Engels that “life is determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (12). Commenting on Mary’s dream- memory of the sexual game her father played with her, Eve Hunter remarks: “the dream . . . reveal that she is unable to protect herself against pain and punishment because she has been taught that resistance is useless to be a woman is to be powerless, at least in relation to man” (148).

Mary Turner, the female protagonist of *The Grass is Singing*, suffers from schizophrenic impoverishment, but the novel itself keeps before us, in consistent and exacting detail, the nature of the world from which Mary is compelled to withdraw. In this regard, Michele Wender Zak views that Mary’s descent into madness and a self-willed death is as “complete a documentation of psychological disintegration as might occur in any modern novel of sensibility” (481). In this case, that regrettable disintegration also serves as a focus for a keen-edged analysis of the state and quality of women's lives in a colonial society.

From the above-mentioned criticism, it becomes clear that though the text has been analyzed from various perspectives, the gender study has not been applied yet. Moreover, this researcher seeks to examine gender role and power of masculinity in *The Grass is Singing*.

The study has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory outline of the work, a short introduction to Doris Lessing and a short critical response. Moreover, it gives a bird's eye view of the entire work. The second chapter briefly explains the theoretical modality that is applied in

this research work. It discusses an overview of masculinity, femininity and gender role with reference to Judith Butler.

On the basis of the theoretical framework established in the second chapter, the third chapter analyzes the text at a considerable length. It analyzes how Lessing explores the masculinity/femininity relationship. It sorts out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study – *The Grass is Singing* stresses on the power of heterosexual masculinity, which is manifested through the male body as in the relationship among Mary, Dick and Moses, Mary becomes powerless.

II. A Study of Sexuality: Masculinity and Femininity

Generally, the term “masculinity” refers to manly character, manliness or maleness. It specifically describes men and boys in traditional ways. A typical near-synonym of masculinity is virility and the usual complement is femininity. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines masculinity as having qualities or appearance considered to be typical of and appropriate for men. This concept reinforces the traditional concept of masculinity which relates masculinity to the qualities of maleness, action and power, not to the females as related to weakness, subordination and passivity. Sociologists Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett have employed a similar definition in their introductory chapter to *The Masculinities Reader* (2001). “Masculinities”, they write, “are those behaviors, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine” (15). Thus, femininity and masculinity or one’s gender identity refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman in society.

The concept of masculinity clearly comes under gender studies or gender relation as R.W. Connell says that masculinity “exists only in the context of a whole structure of gender relations” (243). The concept of gender is a constructed one as it explains masculinity as the representation of bravery, protective and decisive whereas feminine concept of representation is traditionally related to irrational, weak and submissive nature. In this scenario, the launching of different women’s liberation movements contributed to the introduction of feminine agendas into the masculine framework. This scenario reflects the unequal power relation between male and female.

By nature patriarchy is sexist as it promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men. This inborn inferiority of women is called biological essentialism because it is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women. Masculinity in this sense is presumed to arise from the biological structure or genetic programming of men. Hence traditional concept of masculinity is established biologically based on the ideology of patriarchy, which takes external genitalia into consideration.

Hegemonic masculinity is a powerful idea that has been usefully employed for about twenty five years in a wide variety of contexts and has now been subject to much critical review. Russell Luyt notes that the concept of hegemonic masculinity “provides a way of explaining that though a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own” (qtd. in Carrigan 113). Hegemonic masculinity serves to sustain male power both in relation to women and subordinate masculinities. All men therefore benefit within this gender order. Its successful application to a wide range of different cultures suggests that there may well be no known human societies in which some form of masculinity has not emerged as dominant, more socially central, more associated with power, in which a pattern of practices embodying the “currently most honoured way” of being male legitimates the subordination of men over women. Hegemonic masculinity is normative in a social formation. Not all men attempt to live it, and some oppose it by developing alternative (and subordinate) masculinities, but all men position themselves, in relation to it in situations where their choices may be quite restricted.

Masculinity is not simply biological, but a subjective gender order that is constituted by men’s involvement in the social relations. Gayle Rubin defines the

domain of the argument as he says, “the sex/gender system, a patterning of social relations connected with reproduction and gender division that is found in all societies, though in varying shapes” (234). This system is historical, in the fullest sense; its elements and relationships are constructed in history and are all subject to historical change. Two aspects of its organization have been the focus of research since the mid 1970s. These two aspects are the division of labour and the structure of power. In this sense, the social organization of sexuality and attraction which as the history of homosexuality demonstrates is fully as social as the structure of work and power.

The differentiation of masculinities is psychological as it bears on the kind of people that men are and become but it is not only psychological. In an equally important sense, it is institutional, as aspect of collective practice. We see social definitions of masculinity as being embedded in the dynamics of institutions, the mechanism of the state, of corporations, of unions, of families – quite as much as in the personality of individuals. In this regard, Judith Lorber says:

The concept of gender as constructed was explored by American feminists in the 1970s particularly Susan Kersler and Wendy Mekenna. It is only in the 1990s, that a full-fledged analysis of gender as wholly constructed, symbolically loaded and ideologically enforced is taking place of American feminism. (5)

When it is established that gender is socially defined or constructed then it can also be undefined or deconstructed in the sense that the social, cultural and political discourses and practices of gender lie at the root of women’s subordination.

Lorber further argues that gender is a social institution and when the society got its gendered structure it began to produce the gendered system of dominance and

power. This means that gender is defined in terms of binary opposition between masculinity and femininity and it operates as a means and as an end. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick also defines gender in terms of power differentials. She argues:

Compared to chromos sex, which is seen [. . .] as tending to be immutable, immanent in the individual, and biologically based, the meaning of gender is seen as culturally mutable and variable, highly relational (in the sense that each of the binary gender is defined primarily by its relation to the other), and inextricable from a history of power different between genders. (28)

Therefore, in the power relationship, what seems to be the case is that we are born sexed but not gendered, and taught to be masculine or feminine later. This is the process of gendering in which we create our cultural version of men and women. Supporting this concept of gender as a construct, Beauvoir says, “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, which is described as feminine” (qtd. in Abrams 89).

Drawing on psychoanalysis and Foucault’s writing, some critics have successfully contested the notion of gender in a radical way. They have pointed the interrelationship between gender and heterosexuality. Judith Butler also tries to link the discourse of gender with the discourse of heterosexuality in *Gender Trouble*. In the essay, “Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,” Butler says: “The heterosexuality of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and symmetrical oppositions between feminine and ‘masculine’ where these are understood as expressive attributes of male and female” (23).

These expressive attributes of gender require repetition in order to establish gender as an identity. According to Butler, gender ought not to be constructed and

need not be stable identity, or a locus of agency from which various acts follow, and argues that gender is a symbolic form of public action whose recurrence allows for our recognition as desiring and desirable subjects. She says that the effects of gender is produced through the “stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (179). According to Butler’s theoretical metaphor, gender is fragile, provisional, unstable, the sum total of its appearances rather than the expression of a unifying core. Masculinity and femininity come in many transient guises; all of them in some measure are unfinished or incomplete.

The works of post-structuralism especially the works of Derrida and Lacan and Foucault’s theoretical discourse on sexuality have brought a radical change in the discourse of sex and gender. These challenges are constantly supported by new theories of feminism, sociology and literary criticism. In this context, sex is understood more as continuum constructed of chromosomal sex, genital sex and hormonal sex all of which “work in the presence of under the influence of a set of environments” (qtd in Fausto 71).

It makes no sense therefore to assume that there is merely one set of traits that generally characterize men and define masculinity. Likewise, there is no one set of traits for women defining femininity. Such a unitary model of sexual character is a familiar part of the sexual ideology and serves to reify inequality between men and women in society.

Drawing the history of sex and sexuality, Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1978) links sex and sexuality in the realm of power and discourse. Foucault shows that prior understanding of sexuality has depended heavily on what he calls

repressive hypothesis. Repressive hypothesis says that our entire culture represses sexual desires by ignoring sex or by silencing sex through various discourse that conceal sexuality. According to repressive hypothesis, the history of sexuality could only be that of the negative relation between power and sex, the cycle of prohibition (82-85). Counter to repressive theory Foucault argue that modern societies created more discourse on sexuality. Responding to this paradox Foucault writes:

The multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more, and more , a determination of the part of agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak though explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated details. (198)

For Foucault, sexuality is the joint operation of knowledge and power in discourse. He suggests that sexuality is not simple the natural expression of some inner drive or desire as Freud assumed; rather, the discourse of sexuality concerns the operation of power in human relationship as much as they govern the production of personal identity (qtd. in Butler 435). By stressing the ways in which sexuality is written in or on the body and showing how the homosexual is forced into cultured in visibility, Foucault dismantles the notion that sexuality is a transparent fact of life.

Judith Butler argues most powerfully that identities figured as feminine or masculine do not axiomatically require the anatomical grounding which identities which has traditionally differentiated sex and gender identities. In *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter* Butler probes and question models of sexuality and identity which cohere around the assumed stability of heterosexuality. Her investigations also disclose similar indebtedness to work of Foucault and reveal the influence of post structuralism especially, in the works of Derrida and Lacan. What Butler interrogates

in gender trouble are “the seemingly inevitable contradictions between sameness and difference which mark identity format based around gender and sexuality” (Purvis 442).

Lesbian sex radicals who supported the more liberation, sexuality as pleasure, position associated with gay men’s politics began to mount an ejection of women’s liberationist thinking. In the context, Rubin adds:

They turned their back upon the notion of shared women centered approach of women liberationists. They denounced women centered model because it revolved around a perspective of the good women. Gay and lesbian sex radically deconstruct the concept of heterosexuality constructed by male dominated society and raise sexual variation upon the history of sexuality such as masturbation, sodomy, etc. (78)

Gay and lesbian imply a definable category- homosexuality- that is clearly opposite to another definable category: heterosexuality. Building on deconstruction’s insights into human subjectivity as fluid, fragmented. On the other hand, queer theory defines individual sexuality as a fluid, fragmented, dynamic collectivity of possible sexualities. Our sexuality may be different at different times over the course of a week because sexuality is a dynamic range of desire. Gay sexuality, lesbian sexuality bisexuality and heterosexuality are, for all of us, possibilities along a continuum of sexual possibilities.

Degradation of Masculinity

Masculinity becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle class body. Arguments about excessive masculinity tends to focus on the black bodies (male and female) Latino/ a bodies or working class bodies; and

insufficiently masculinity is all too often figured by Asian bodies or upper class bodies. These stereotypical constructions of variable masculinity mark the process by which masculinity becomes dominant in the sphere of white middle class maleness. But all too many studies that currently attempt to account for the power of white masculinity re-center this white male body by concentrating all their analytical efforts on detailing the forms and expression of white male feminism, men and marriage and domestications of maleness.

The range of human sexuality cannot be completely defined in terms of limited concepts as homosexual and heterosexual. Those concepts reduce sexuality to the biological sex of one's partner, or, in psychological terms, one's object choice. There is a host of other factors that make up human sexual desire. As Eve Sedgwick argues, "The intricacies of human sexuality could be understood just as well, or better, in terms of any number of paired opposites other than same; sex a different sex object choice" (335). Due to such sexual variation, the previous concept of heterosexual masculinity has been subverted and homosexual masculinity has been raised.

The concept of feminine power is nearer to female masculinity, and it came in the centre after the liberation movement of women with the deconstructive concept of Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In this regard, Judith Halberstam refutes the traditional concept of masculinity and femininity by demonstrating that women may claim the attributes of masculinity. He says:

Female masculinity is a particularly fruitful site of investigation because it has been vilified by heterosexist/feminist/womanist programs alike; unlike male femininity, which fulfills a kind of ritual function in male homosexual cultures, female masculinity is generally

received by hetero and homo normative cultures as pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment within a lesbian context, female masculinity has been situated as the place where patriarchy goes to work on the female psyche and reproduces misogyny within femaleness. (360)

Female masculinity is against the male masculinity, meaning, the domination of male no longer prevails. It is the female, who were having an active role in the house, and traditionally, sex was the weapon of male to prove his ultimate supremacy. However it is fast collapsing.

In an anthology, *Boys: Masculinities in Contemporary Culture* Paul Smith suggests: “Masculinity must always be thought of in the plural as masculinities defined and cut through by differences and contradictions of all sorts, regardless of sex identities” (32). Smith clearly notes that the male masculine is falling, and hence the feminine masculinity is on the rise. The plurality of masculinities for Smith encompasses a dominant white masculinity that is crisscrossed by others, gay, bisexual, black, Asian, and Latino masculinities. Smith suggests not falling into the trap of simply critiquing dominant masculinity or simply celebrating minority masculinities. He gives the following opinion:

And it may be the case, as some influential voices often tell us, that masculinity or masculinities are in some real sense not the exclusive property of biologically male subjects-it’s true that many female subjects lay claim to masculinity as their property. Yet in terms of cultural and political power, it still makes a difference when masculinity coincides with illogical maleness. (qtd in Halberstam 362)

Masculinity in his sense is related with active, strong rational qualities that can also be claimed by female as their property. It means masculinity is not only the property of men but also the property of female and others. However, the male acquiring female characteristics have been suppressed in various ways; in relation to norms and ethics, culture and tradition. The suppression of male femininity results in the decline of masculine characters possessed by the male. The traits of the traditional male to stand, unchallenged and liberated, becomes domineering in this process.

Sexuality as Masculine Power

Human sexuality is as much the socio-cultural construct as it is biological. It plays a major role in everyone's life. It is the way in which people experience and express themselves as sexual beings. There are many factors that help develop sexuality, arguably one of the most important, is our actual gender. Whether one is a male or female is likely to have a major influence on the development of individual sexuality. Thus, sexuality is an integral part of our personalities whether we are aware of it or not.

In the western cultures, man/woman dichotomy has been a significant issue since the time of Plato and Aristotle. They have associated man with soul and women with body, which is inferior to soul. They regarded man as perfect being and women as an incomplete man. This philosophical construction of human sexuality has helped to place females in inferior position. Even the natural historians since Aristotle gave preference to the study of male bodies. They considered women to be a “monstrous error of nature and a deviation from the male norm” (Schiebinger 24). So, David Morgan writes: “clearly, bodily differences are taken as major signifiers of differences between men and women, and these physical differences are often read, in complex

ways, as being the very source of essential differences between the masculine and the feminine” (70).

Males assume the dominant position in sexuality. They shape sexual behaviour to suit their own interests. Women are not respected as autonomous individuals but are treated as dehumanized sex objects, the mere sexual playthings of men. Ann Okley writes:

Female sexuality is supposed to lie in her perceptiveness and this is not just a matter of her open vagina: it extends to the whole structure of feminine personality as dependent and submissive. Female sexuality has been held to involve long arousal and slow satisfaction, inferior sex drive, susceptibility to field dependence and romantic idealism rather than lustful reality. Women are psychologically no less than anatomically incapable of rape. (Titley 164)

Sexuality has become a central political issue for feminists and also a source of division amongst them. Sexuality has been contested terrain amongst feminists since the nineteenth century. It has become the major issue within and many academic disciplines. The growth of interest in this area can be traced back to the beginning of ‘second wave’ feminism, and has its origin in the political aims of women’s liberation for freedom. In recent years feminist and gay scholars have taken the lead in putting sexuality on the academic agenda and in developing research, theory and teaching in the field. The new scholarship on sexuality differs radically from the older, sexological tradition.

Sexology treated sexuality as a biological and psychological phenomenon, often drawing the medical model, which regarded differences from the narrowly

defined heterosexual norms as pathological. More recent approaches have given far higher priority to the social and cultural shaping of human sexuality.

This new approach to sexuality lies at the heart of the historian Michel Foucault's work. He views sexuality as social construction. He tries to change the historical concept on sexuality, which has been defined in terms of repression and prohibition and he offers a way of thinking about sexuality in terms of mechanisms of power. He says, "Sexuality must not be seen as drive but as especially dense transfer point for relation of power" (qtd. in Jones and Coates 143). In the same way he takes a "constructivist" position toward sexuality, as opposed to an "essentialist" position, which sees sexuality as something fixed that, exists in us.

The essentialist view of sexuality as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have observed is that the "Sexuality is coextensive with existence" (qtd. in Beauvoir 43). It can mean that every experience of existence has sexual significance or that sexual phenomenon has existential import. It is taken as a natural phenomenon that is universal and unchanging. Something, that is a part of the biological make up of each individual. From this perspective, 'sexuality' is described basically as a fulfillment of heterosexual biological desire that is conceived as normal and natural.

Sexuality and sexual orientation are tremendously important considerations in analyzing the status of women in culture because almost all societies have defined women in terms of sex. Women are too often defined as sex objects, useful for their ability to satisfy male sexual desire ignoring their own desire and subjectivity. Women's sexuality has been defined in very narrow ways. Such definition ignores or rejects women who are not interested in pursuing exclusively heterosexual relationships, including women who are lesbian, bisexual, or celibate. Women who do not conform to the normative script for female sexuality are frequently stereotyped

and labeled as deviant. And in the same way if they are disabled, overweight, or otherwise “abnormal” they are not thought of as sexual at all. In this context, Lucinda Joy Peach points out: “Women who do not conform to the normative cultural standards of being “male identified” with respect to their sexual orientation are frequently called lesbians, regardless of the accuracy of the label” (61).

Sexuality has become the major feminist issue. Historically enormous efforts, from chastity belts to property laws, have been made to control female sexuality and to tie women to individual men through monogamous heterosexual relationship. The double standard of morality has entitled men to sexual freedoms denied to women. It has also divided women themselves into two categories: the respectable Madonna and the reparative whore. Women’s sexuality has been policed and regulated whereas men’s has not been subjugated to repression in the same way. It is the woman prostitute who is stigmatized and punished, not her male clients.

Psychoanalyst like Sigmund Freud has viewed female sexuality in term of ‘penis-envy’. He further brought to light a point the importance of which had not been fully appreciated namely that masculine eroticism is definitely located in the penis, whereas women have two kinds of orgasm-clitoral and vaginal. Clitoral orgasm in Freud’s view is less matured. He maintains that adult women should transfer their center of orgasm to the vagina, where male penetration makes their sexual response complete. Freud’s theory of double orgasm has no basis in fact. The center of female sexuality is the clitoris; female orgasm is achieved through the stimulation of the clitoris whether or not accompanied by vaginal penetration. The myth of double orgasm led women to believe that they were frigid and unable to produce a matured sexual response.

Freud never showed much concern with the destiny of woman but always concerns for male destiny. He admits that woman sexuality is evolved as fully as man's. So he writes, "The libido is constantly and regularly male in essence, whether it appears in man or in woman" (qtd. in Beauvoir 44). The concept that women need men to achieve a mature sexual response is related to the larger issue that women are dependent on men on their sexual, emotional, social and economic well being. This assumption only legitimates "compulsory heterosexuality" as an institution and fulfills every need of women.

To sum up, masculinity, inevitably "conjures up notations of power and legitimacy and privilege" (Halberstam 356); it often symbolically refers to the power to the state and to uneven distribution of wealth. Masculinity seems to extend outward into patriarchy and inward into the family; it represents the power of inheritance, and the promise of social privilege. But, obviously, many other lines of identifications traverse the terrain of masculinity, dividing its power into complicated differentials of class, race, sexuality and gender. If what we call "dominant masculinity" (Halberstam 356) appears to be a naturalized relation between maleness and power, then it makes little sense to examine men for the contours of that masculinity's social construction.

The following analysis of Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, while critiquing the concept of masculinity, confirms the masculine power as the female protagonist is rendered powerless in terms of sexuality.

III. Heterosexual Sex as Power

Lessing's protagonist, Mary Turner, lacks heterosexual desire as she shows a profound distaste for sex. The novel suggests that this lack could be overcome if Mary found "a man stronger than herself", one who had "taken the ascendancy over her" (47). However, her husband, Dick, is represented as crucially lacking such manliness. Mary comes to this realization in a passage that concentrates on Dick's body: "As he gripped the steering wheel, his lean hands, burnt coffee-coloured by the sun, shook perpetually. It seemed to her a sign of weakness, that trembling" (49). As their circumstances decline, Dick begins more and more to be associated with the Africans. Mary sees him as "growing into a native himself" (51) and this change is manifested in his body: for example, his skin colour.

Mary's perception of Dick reflects her racist assumptions, which involve disgust for the bodies of African men and women. Paradoxically, however, in her relationship with Moses, Mary's disgust is transformed into a transgressive desire. In contrast to Dick, Moses embodies a virile masculinity – he is described as 'magnificently built', and when Mary sees him washing, his body is also sexualised: "He was rubbing his thick neck with soap and the white lather was startlingly white against his dark skin" (25). This representation of Moses may be seen as symptomatic of racist projections about sexuality and the 'other'. Yet, the key, as the narrator makes clear, is Mary's identification with Moses as another human: "the formal pattern of black-and-white . . . had been broken by the personal relation" (35). Within the racial structures of southern African colonial society such a relationship was taboo and it is ended through Mary's murder. However, the dynamic of the triangular relationship involving Mary, Dick and Moses is one that prioritizes gendered relations of power – a relationship in which Mary is rendered powerless.

Mary's attempt to counter gendered oppressive patriarchy is derived from her intention to protect her self from some traumatic experiences. That is, she denies her sexuality for the purpose of forgetting something unpleasant. Tracing back to Mary's childhood, we can argue that her denial of sexuality and her distaste of sexual intimacy with men is closely related to the poor economic condition of her family and her father's sexual abuse. One of the epigraphs of the novel goes, "it is by the failures and misfits of a civilization that one can best judge its weakness" (11). Mary's personal problem is related to her social circumstances. In fact, it is the tyranny of her family which makes Mary so hateful to her sexuality.

Because of her serious financial problem, the relationship between her father and mother is antagonistic. She identifies more with her mother on account of the continual conflict at home. She has witnessed fighting as well. The narrator informs us that her mother "used to cry over her sewing while Mary comforted her miserably, longing to get away, but feeling important too, and hating her father" (30). The association between her father and other men, including her husband, Dick foreshadows the inevitable failure of her marriage and sexual life. Especially when she meets and marries Dick, a man without the center, she cannot help recalling her useless father. For example, when Mary first gets to the farm and listens to Dick talking about the history of each thing in the shabby house, she feels she comes back to her childhood, sitting with her mother and watching her endlessly contrive and mend. The shabby farmhouse means to her a misery as if her father has come out of his grave to make her life as miserable as her mother. All this makes her feel hatred to men. Hence she abhors heterosexuality.

The substitution of economic values for spiritual ones leads to the emptiness in both her parents' marriage and her relationship with Dick. Her parents quarrel over

petty things, which prevent her from developing awareness of the creative, vital connection possible between man and women. Marriage becomes only an economic contract for her rather than sexual relationship. The store where her father frequently bought his drinks from symbolically represents her childhood indicating her lack of sexual definition. Afterwards, it pushes her to the edge of helplessness when Dick, who forced her to run one, arouses the memories of the store. The store that Dick builds is a terrible thing for Mary, “an omen and a warning,” connected with “the ugly menacing store of her childhood” (103). So, she hates him more and feels more hopeless and wearied. Of course, a mature relationship between her and Dick becomes increasingly difficult and impossible.

Another thing which is related to Mary’s hatred to her sexuality concerns both the physical and emotional sexual abuses. They traumatize Mary and develop her distaste for sex. As a child of the poor parents, she has witnessed them making love violently in a narrow space. The narrator quotes, “she throughout her life feels a profound distaste for sex [. . .] there had been little privacy in her home and there were things she did not care to remember, she had taken care to forget them years ago” (38). What she wants to forget is the sexual scenes she saw when she was too young to bear. And this too exciting and painful experience repeatedly appears in her dream:

At the bedroom door she stopped, sickened. 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, expostulating. Her father bent over her mother, and at the sight, Mary ran away. (189)

Witnessing of her parents' sexual life provides Mary a negative impression of sex and arguments between her parents are "equated with sexual scenes and thus create a sadistic idea of sexuality" (67). Thus, linking sexuality to violence and savageness, Mary is fearful of sexual intimacy and develops contempt men and sex.

Besides, it is evident that her father has sexually abused Mary. And this painful experience is not only one of the things the narrator indicates "she did not care to remember" (38) but also the main reason for her distaste for sex. What Mary attempts to avoid is sexual experience in her childhood that her intolerable nightmare. The narrator describes the violent scene in her dream:

Her father caught her hand and held it in his lap with his small hairy hands, to cover up her eyes. Laughing and joking loudly about her mother hiding. She smelled the sickly odor of beer, and through it she smelled too – the unwashed masculine smell she always associated with him. She struggled to get her head free, for she was half-suffocating, and her father held it down, laughing at her panic. (190)

Drunken all the time, her father becomes violent and harmful since he is unable to control himself. The narrator does not depict the sexual abuse upon Mary directly, we can figure out that has happened to Mary through her dreams. The trauma caused by sexual abuse in her childhood is rooted in her mind, making her hate heterosexual desire.

For the reasons stated above, Mary develops some means of defense to repress those unwelcome, painful experiences and to contain her instinctual drives. What is worth probing here is in what ways her sexual hatred is represented. We can analyze this question from at least three perspectives: her sexual aversion to men, her aggression against the natives and her vicious relationship to the natural world. First,

we notice that Mary's early life in the town is a bit of sexually abnormal according to social norms. She unconsciously rejects her womanhood, leading a smooth and content single life as an efficient secretary. With a good job and many friends, she goes to the movie every evening and dresses herself like a childish-looking film star. And she chooses to live in a girl's club, being an impersonal maiden aunt whom one can tell troubles and consult. As for her male friends, she prefers to be treated "like a good pal [. . .] with none of this sex silly business" (36). So she has lots of male friends to go out with but most of them treat her like their sister. Nothing has changed until she is thirty. Her idea of herself is totally destroyed when she happens to overhear her friends judging her behind her back, criticizing her childish clothes and mocking at her lack of sexuality. Lessing writes, "She just isn't like that, isn't like that at all. Something missing somewhere" (39). On the one hand, those friends stand for a kind of social sex - economic standard that expects Mary to get married and to behave like a normal woman. On the other hand, those friends' gossips about her indicate her profound sexual repression and play an important role of breaking her unconsciously built image of herself. With a profound effect on Mary, their words blow away the whole myth she builds for herself and make her feel disoriented. Unable to recreate the picture of her self under the oppression of social confines, she becomes oversensitive and starts to search for a husband.

After she overhears her friends' gossiping about her, this tendency, the aversion to sex, increases along with her eagerness for change. Although she is struggling between her sexual distaste (her natural instinct) and social demands, she still fails to overcome her fears of personal intimacy. At first, she tries to date with "a widower of fifty-five" (41). Selecting a man much elder than her manifests her intention to avoid physical intimacy. Dating with man at her father's age to ignore his

sexuality, she feels safer and more comfortable. However, when the man wants to touch her, she cannot help screaming and running out of the house like a scared little girl. Without overcoming the terrible memory of her childhood, she cannot deal with men or any sexual relations. Later, out of desperate need for a husband, she quits her job and soon marries Dick Turner.

After marrying Dick, the situation doesn't become better. Dick's sensitive and submissive nature provides Mary a sufficient excuse to treat him maternally instead of having sexual relationship with him. As Dick treats her like brother, "Waiting for her to turn to him of her own accord" (65), Mary feels more relieved and rejects her womanhood more seriously. On her wedding night she approaches sex in a detached manner as usual, separating marriage from sexuality:

It was not so bad [. . .] She was able maternally to bestow the gift of herself on this humble stranger and remain untouched. Women have an extraordinary ability to withdraw from the sexual relationship to immunize themselves against it in such a way that their men can be left feeling let down and insulted [. . .] Mary did not have to learn this, because it was natural in her, and because she had expected nothing in the first place. (57)

Because Dick requests nothing of sexual relations from her, she can easily treat him like his mother rather than his wife by "holding his hand protectively, as she might have held a child's whom she had wounded" (58) at the first night of their marriage. And after so many financial frustrations, Mary is glad that she is left untouched because of Dick's weakness and his sense of guilt. The narrator tells the reader, "It was a pleasure to her (Mary) to put away bitterness and the against him, and to hold him in her mind as a mother might, protectively, considering his weaknesses and their

origins, for which he was not responsible” (187). Her relationship with Dick vividly represents her fears of intimate contact with men.

In addition, Dick’s weakness increases Mary's sexual aversion. His failure to be a successful farmer disappoints Mary and makes her eager to return to her girlhood. Marrying a man who cannot dominate over her really awakens Mary’s masculine side. Mary's strong will to influence Dick into making money actually reveals her denial of sexuality and womanhood. In other words, if Mary wants to genuinely face her “blood-consciousness” or sexual drives, she needs a man stronger than her, that is, a man who can overcome her will. She does try to create one out of Dick, but Dick fails to meet her expectation because of his lack of “the thing in the center” (158). Obviously, he lacks masculinity.

For example, when she first arrives at the farm, she successfully represses her instinctual demands by working as hard as she does as a secretary. She works restlessly until “there was nothing more to be done” around the whole house (64). Then she escapes from the farm to the town. Though frustrated by the unpleasant experience in the town, she never stops daydreaming about the beautiful lost time, about herself coming back to the town one day and leading the same life as usual. Therefore, she ambitiously helps Dick deal with the farm with a hope that she can make a lot of money and afford to move back to the town. It is apparent her dream must be thwarted sooner or later. The failure of growing tobacco number and tired her. Recognizing there is no future but emptiness, she gives up “her habitual fantasies about the old days, which she projected in to her future” (152). However, she does not accept her sexuality but repress it more after she fails to return to her girlhood. Her distaste for physical intimacy with men becomes stronger and stronger. Gradually, she cannot even stand the sight of the bed since it reminds her “of the hated contact in the

nights with Dick's weary muscular body, to which she had never been able to accustom herself" (169).

In such kinds of love-relations, the role of dominator is distorted. Suffering from a harmful sexual abuse in the childhood, a child usually unconsciously identifies himself with the abuser and becomes a sadist when he grows up. Mary acts as a representative of this abnormal and traumatic relation. She cannot obtain a normal sexual relationship before her puberty so that those experiences ought to operate in a traumatic fashion and to be reproduced in the form of violence. That is why Mary always treats her houseboy harshly. Her unconscious identification with the act of her father transforms her into a tyrant to the native laborers.

Another reason for her dislike of the natives is related to another sexual business -- a sexual connotation that white people impose on the natives for their embedded in the black with dark and strong body. Thus, she cannot help hating them and treating them badly. The narrator claims:

She hated their half-naked, thick- muscled black bodies stooping in the mindless rhythm of their work. She hated their sullenness, their averted eyes when they spoke to her, their veiled insolence; and she hated more than anything, with a violent physical repulsion, the heavy smell that came from them, a hot, sour animal smell. (130)

When she associates them with dogs or other sorts of animals, which have sexual implications, she feels intolerably uncomfortable with them. With such natural unknown forces the natives always arouse her anxiety and fear of sex.

In order to control her sexual drives, the African natives who always arouse her uneasiness for their sexual implications become the targets of her rage, which is one of her means of defense against the emergence of her natural sexual desires,

which she controls not to be subordinate to men. In this regard, Cileli analyzes her stages of rage, thinking, “the insatiable vegetative yearning produced by sexual inhibition and banned from natural gratification is accessible to muscular sadistic discharges” (70). This is why she treats all her houseboys badly, commanding them doing a hard work without concerning about their need for food and rest. Even when a boy doesn't see her eyes out of a native code of politeness, she loses her temper and feels “she would like to pick up a plate and throw it in his face as to make it human and expressive with pain” (Lessing 73). The same condition takes place on the farm where she is again out of temper with the natives. Forced by Dick's illness to supervise the native workers, the reminders of her sexual desires, she cannot help raging at them for trivial things. For example, she whips across Moses' face just for he asks for a glass of water. Her punishment upon Moses shows her efforts to hide her sexual demands, so she claims it as a victory of the “battle of wills” (136). She wins not only over the natives but also her returning sexual demands. The narrator says, “She felt as if she had won a battle, it was a victory over these natives, over herself and her repugnance of them over Dick and his slow foolishness” (137). In other words, she tries to assert her power by dominating over the back, a representative of masculine power and sexual attraction.

First, Mary's attraction and irritation of Moses illustrates her attraction to masculine power. Moses' appearance marks a turning point in her struggle in denial of sexuality. As has been mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Mary rages at Moses and whips him when he defies her at the farm. Later she feels both a fear and satisfaction. Her rage against the native represents “discharges of excitation which enable her to experience a feeling of victory and satisfaction but in turn brings an increase in the instinctual demands instead of diminishing them” (71). In other words,

the more rigid and aggressive Mary is against the native men, the more her sexual longings increase. Besides, the incident installs a fear in her mind. Therefore, when Moses is hired as her houseboy, she cannot treat him as she has done to the other boys. On the contrary, she is attracted to Moses “who represents the masculine power that could allow him to dominate her physically” (71). The narrator describes that she likes to “sit quite still, watching him work. The powerful, broad-built body fascinated her” (164). Gradually, Moses becomes invested with the masculine power even though he is a black man.

Afterwards, she accidentally sees him taking a bath. The narrator notes, “She was arrested by the sight of the native under the trees a few yards off. He was rubbing his thick-neck with soap, and the lather was strikingly white against the black skin” (165). Suddenly, she feels “as if she had put her hand on a snake” (166). The snake can be interpreted as phallus a symbolic thing for male power, to which Mary cannot help getting attracted. Regarding the native as a masculine power, Mary is indirectly forced to confront her truly inner self, her sexual desires. This makes her more charmed by Moses. She not only loses her self-control at the sight of his half-naked body also in retrospect to “that thick black neck with the lather frothing whitely on” and “the powerful back stooping over the bucket, “feeling it “like a goad to her” (166). We can assume she is actually fascinated by the masculinity and sex, appeal of Moses. And her attraction to the native can be taken as submitting herself to male power.

However, Mary still cannot truly face her own sexual urges with the influence of her childhood experiences. In this case, she denies admitting her sexual interest in the native and intends to repress her feelings. But it is hard to hide the sexual desires any longer. The desire takes forms of her irrational reactions toward the native, such

as unreasonable anger, slipping words and exhausting nightmares keep appearing in her life. For example, stirred by the sight of half-naked native, Mary translates her shame at having been attracted by Moses into resentment and a need to punish him, the agent of such unwelcome knowledge. The narrator tells us:

She was furious that perhaps he believed she was there on purpose; this though, of course, was not conscious; it would be too much presumption, such unspeakable cheek for him to imagine such a thing, that she would not allow it to enter her mind; but the attitude of his still body as he watched her across the bushes between them, the expression on his face, filled her with anger. She felt the impulse that had once made her bring down the lash across his face. (165)

Her sexual desire advances into her mind, driving her efforts to ignore Moses' sexual attraction to her into frenzy of emotion. She starts to lose her composure with him and unexpected words suddenly come out of her mouth. She orders, "Scrub this floor." She gets shocked when she hears her own voice, for she had not known she was going to speak. The narrator explains, "As one feels in social ordinary conversation, kept tranquil by banalities, some person makes a remark that strikes below the surface, and the shock sweeps one off one's balance, causing a nervous giggle or some stupid sentence that makes everyone present uncomfortable" (167). The more Mary makes efforts to repress the sexual implication of the encounter, the less she is able to control her own actions. Her attraction to masculine power makes her totally lose her balance. Afterwards, she cannot help feeling nervous and agitated at Moses' presence. The narrator tells us. "Every movement he made irritated her. She sat tensed, wound up, her hands clenched. When he went out, she relaxed a little, as if a pressure had been taken off her" (168). Mary also cannot think about anything but "the knowledge of

that man alone in the house with her” (171). Gradually, Moses’ presence becomes the burden upon her mind, which she needs Dick’s presence to fight against.

And the touch of the native on her shoulder further drives her to face her sexual urges and weakness. A few months after she saw Moses’ half-naked body, Moses tells Mary he wants to leave. Having relied on the work Moses does around the house and been afraid of Dick’s anger, she cries in front of the native and begs him not to leave. In order to comfort her, Moses puts his hand on her shoulder and asks her to lie down and drink water. At the moment of being touched, she feels she is living in a nightmare “where one is powerless against horror: the touch of this black man's hand on her shoulder filled her with nausea; she had never, not once in her whole life, touched the flesh of a native” (211). Her feelings of disgust and horror and be seen as a futile resistance to the emergence of her true desires. She is soon deeply fascinated with this personal relation though she does not know what to do with it. Disregarding the social ideology that prevents her to acknowledge and accept her desires for the native, she is overcome by Moses’ attraction and allows herself to engage in a new relationship.

It is worth mentioning that Mary’s denial of sexuality by means of projecting her sexual longings onto the native indeed assists the increase of her repressed instincts. By means of Mary’s projection and obsession with him, Moses is invested with increasing strength to assert himself. He is encouraged to command Mary fatherly and complain of her ill treatment. Moses’ assertion of himself not only offers Mary for the first time an opportunity to act out female role: to weep helplessly in front of him and depend on him completely but also makes her incapable of repressing her sexual longings to be dominated by a strong male. Drawn by a dark attraction into a complete resignation of her will, she feels “helplessly in his power”

(179). Besides, she is forced into contact with him and “never ceased to be aware of him” (179). When losing her dominance, a new relationship develops between them. And she senses that there is something dangerous in the relation between her and Moses, something she cannot define. The danger she feels is “the danger of pent-up sexual urges she had denied all her life” (72). In other words, this new relation marks the time her female sexual drives to burst. Moses successfully forces her to face her sexuality.

Afterwards, Mary's reason gives way to priority of sexual longings when the native and her father become one figure, joining “in one dream image of her simultaneous fear and attraction” (20). Lessing further writes:

He [Moses] approached slowly, obscene and powerful, and it was not only he, but her father who was threatening her. They advanced together, one person and she could smell, not the native smell, but the unwashed smell of her father. It filled the room, musty, like animals; and her knees went liquid as her nostrils distended to find clean air and her head became giddy. . . he was comforting her because of Dick's death, consoling her protectively, but at the same time it was her father menacing and horrible, who touched her in desire. (Lessing 192)

Both of her father and the servant are seen as one person because of the quality she denies in both, namely their signifying of dark instinctual power. Whether with the merging of her father, whose abuse leads to her sexual contempt, or the reappearing image of Moses, the representative of instinctual urges, her all dreams all emphasize her sexual desire.

Moreover, Mary becomes totally obsessed with Moses. In a visit to Turners, she is flirtatious and coquettish with Moses as well as she is with him. And Tony also

witnesses Moses dressing her up. These behaviors seem aberrant and shocking to white people because they disobey society's prescriptions. But they still show her suffering from mental cleavage and the facts that she tries to rebel against the social dominant ideology that makes her sexually reserved. Her friends' discussion about her abnormal sexuality has haunted her since she overhears it. Their comment that "she just isn't like that" has "stuck in her mind all these years, and still rankled" (108). That is why she repeats the phrase while Tony inquires why Moses dresses her up: "They said I was not like that, not like that, not like that" (221). Chang claims, "This gramophone-like repetition of 'not like that' reveals how incredibly her fiends' judgment has affected her, unveiling that through out all these years of marriage she has never forgotten this jeering description" (73). We can regard her obsession with this phrase that stands for her sexual abnormality represents her profoundly repressed sexuality. And her new relationship with the powerful native male or her madness symbolizes a release from the curse of her long sexual distaste since she is 'like that' with Moses. Forcing her to face her inner instinctual sexual demands, Moses also helps her to disapprove the judgment of her asexuality and to reach a sexual awakening.

At the end of the novel, Mary overcomes her sexual distaste and surrenders to male power as she finally has an epiphany and accepts her inner self. After she betrays Moses, she is tormented by fears and doubts. But on the day before she dies, her mind becomes clarified. She realizes an evil exists for a long time. "For the evil was a thing she could feel: had she not lived with it for many years. How many? Long before she had ever come to the farm! Even that girl had known it" (230). I'm inclined to interpret this evil as her sexual repression that step-by-leads to her predictable tragic end. Now she tries to recognize who she is as the narrator says, "The idea of

herself, standing above the house, somewhere on an invisible mountain peak, looking down like a judge, returned; but this time without a sense of release” (230). Seeing herself now as “an angular, ugly, pitiful woman,” she does not understand why she travels unknowingly to this end or what she had sinned (230). The narrator notes. “The conflict between her judgment on herself, and her feeling of innocence, of having being propelled by something she did not understand, cracked the wholeness of her vision” (230-231). Wondering what she has done, she is still expecting that the young man, Tony, can compensate for her weakness or for her fault of repressing her sexuality. Finally, devoured by the unknown dark forces she represses all her life, she realizes that “there was no salvation unless she would have to go through with it” (237). Her dependence upon the overseer is just a “weak reliance on a human being who should not be expected to take the responsibility for her” (238). Her salvation is achieved only through her recognition of male power.

She reaches an understanding of her mistake and weakness that she always transfers the responsibility of her own problem to others, relying on outside help to save her from her denial of sexuality. Searching through her past, she finds she has not only turned Dick to save her by marrying him but also depended on Moses to prove her sexuality. Even now, she believes that Tony can save her from Moses’ powerful dominance. This is why she tells Tony. “I’ve always been ill, ever since I can remember. I’m ill here. . . . Inside. Somewhere” (Lessing 24). Her illness is her inability to face her sexuality, the core of her existence, from her childhood to the end of her life journey. She has taken the wrong course and indulged in outward action at the expense of the force within herself. Understanding her mistake, Mary feels guilty toward Moses whom she makes use to awaken her consciousness but betrays. In addition, she realizes her hope of Tony's assistance must be frustrated since there is

nothing left to salvage. She must “walk out her road alone” (238) and accept her sexual desire to awake.

Finally, she reaches an epiphany along with the return and destruction of dark avenging forces. In the final pages of the novel, Moses, a symbol of vital instincts, becomes omnipresent. He seems to wait everywhere to take revenge. Making no effort to escape from Moses, Mary accepts her inevitable death as well as the return of the destructive sexual desires. Realizing that her sterility is derived from her denial of, she succumbs to Moses, to her sexuality and to the darkness. Witnessing him lifting “a long curving shape” above his head, Mary reaches an epiphany; “the bush avenged itself; that was her last thought” (243). Moses acts as an avenger sacrificing Mary for her denial of the vital connections between man, woman and cosmos. Mary’s death marks her complete surrender to male power. She is finally able to face her genuine self and natural instincts.

Through the whole novel, we can see Mary’s denial of her sexual drives indeed reflects her attempt to resist her temptation to heterosexuality. Due to this, she develops distaste for men, natives and nature. But her efforts are meant to fail. Her friends criticize her lack of sexuality. And their judgment seriously destroys her self-image. Her harshness with the natives increases her sexual longings for them. She cannot help feeling attracted to Moses who has a broadly-built body and symbolizes the vital instinctual urges. Facing the reminder of her sexuality, she is unable to act rationally and avoid the haunting of her traumatic childhood experience, her longings for a dark strong male and the fear of the revenge of the repressed. The history of Mary’s sexual repression is proved to come to an end. Her natural female desire is inevitable. In spite of endeavors to contain her instincts, they still keep coming back with different forms. They reappear in her dreams, making her lose her balance, reach

an epiphany and even end up her life. Finally, Mary ends up surrendering to masculine power. This shows that though Mary tries her level best to resist patriarchy by condemning heterosexuality, she eventually kneels down before it as she cannot negate her sexuality.

IV. Conclusion

Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* serves as her pioneering interpretation of the rebellious spirit of modern time. It deals with the weakness and evils of white capitalism and racial discrimination legitimated for the glory of god or the civilization of the savages. Drawing upon her commitment to African right and communism, the novel unveils white vicious distortion of black humanity and exploitation of the native's labor and land for the purpose of dominance and profits. However, the foremost goal of *The Grass is singing* is more than this. In addition to depicting injustice and oppression in the colony, she tries to arouse readers' consciousness of the problem of existing norms, intentional sexual contempt to resist masculine power and the inevitable female sexuality.

In *The Grass is Singing* Mary Turner, who has been exploited sexually, economically and ideologically by her father, expresses her strong hatred for heterosexuality to resist oppressive patriarchy. But as time passes and she grows older, she cannot maintain her same stand and thus yields to the power of masculinity. This is all reflected through her marriage to Dick who presumably lacks virility. That is why she hates him. In the days that follow, she gets attracted to her black servant Moses who possesses strong masculine power as the novel contains enough evidences.

In this way, we can see that the whole novel reflects Mary's denial of her sexual drives indeed, which reflects her attempt to resist her temptation to heterosexuality. Due to this, she develops distaste for men, natives and nature. But her efforts are meant to fail. Her friends criticize her lack of sexuality. And their judgment seriously destroys her self-image. Her harshness with the natives increases her sexual longings for them. She cannot help felling attracted to Moses who has broadly-built

body and symbolizes the vital instinctual urges. Facing the reminder of her sexuality, she is unable to act rationally and avoid the haunting of her traumatic childhood experience, her longings for a dark strong male and the fear of the revenge of the repressed. The history of Mary's sexual repression is proved to come to an end. Her natural female desire is inevitable. In spite of endeavors to contain her instincts, they still keep coming back with different forms. They reappear in her dreams, making her lose her balance, reach an epiphany and even end up her life. Finally, Mary ends up surrendering to masculine power. Thus, this shows that though Mary leaves no stone unturned to resist patriarchy by condemning heterosexuality, she ultimately yields to male power as she cannot negate her sexuality.

To sum up, this thesis arrives at the findings that it is through the healthy and cordial relationship between man and woman, human society moves ahead. All patriarchal values are socially constructed ones. Sexuality is central to human beings. It is the patriarchy which has represented male body as powerful and misrepresented female body as powerless. By negating it in the name of resisting to patriarchal oppression we cannot bring peace, harmony and prosperity. So we should not be too radical in our approach to social issues such as gender and the like.

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