



## READING THE SUBALTERN WOMAN IN DORIS LESSING'S *THE GRASS IS SINGING*

MD SHAMS TABREZ

Research Scholar, University Department of English, Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University

Bhagalpur, Bihar, India

E-mail: [shamstabrez20@gmail.com](mailto:shamstabrez20@gmail.com)



MD SHAMS TABREZ

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### Abstract

This paper mirrors its creator's dissatisfaction with regards to sexual and political biases and expansionism in the Southern African setting in the work of Doris Lessing *The Grass is Singing* (1950). This paper interprets a study of a frustrated woman Mary Turner, a white landowner's better half, and her lethal relationship with their local worker Moses. By all accounts, it appears to be an individual and mental depiction of a female protagonist from youth to death however observed in general, it is the political introduction of the pointlessness and delicacy of the man centric and colonial society whereupon the manliness of dominion has supported itself. This paper can be viewed as Mary's battle towards individuation to safeguard her legitimacy and ability to be self-aware however it comes up short as a result of the mental and political powers which outfit her little knowledge into her condition and take steps to crush her.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Subaltern, Sexual Politics, Female Individuation

Mary is divided between two conflicting states: from one perspective she yearns to be a subject of her life, to live in a way she wants, and then again she unwittingly plays out a function as an object of the white severe structure of a white society which concentrates significance of her own self and forces its qualities, compelling the person to respect the benefits of the system. Mary's subjectivity and her personal conduct standards are molded by the cross-incubated convergence of sex, class, and race through the activity of the sexual and political expansionism with regards to government.

Mary's youth is molded affected by an abusive dad who squanders his cash on drink while his family is living in wretchedness and neediness. Her mom, "a tall gaunt lady with furious undesirable splendid eyes" who "made a confidante of Mary early . . . and used to cry over

her sewing, while Mary comforted her miserably," (Lessing 39) is her first model of gender role: a uninvolved and defenseless woman, overwhelmed by the mind-boggling manly examples, in any case the going along survivor of neediness. Other than sharing the torments of neediness and living in "a little house that was like a small wooden box on slits" (40) what's more, the 12-month quarrel of her folks over cash, Mary has been the observer of their sexuality and her mom's body in the possession of a man who was basically not present for her. For her entire life, Mary attempts to overlook these recollections yet in certainty she has quite recently smothered them with the dread of sexuality which comes up later horrendously in her fantasies. By considering her to be as a female victim of a hopeless marriage, she disguises a negative picture of gentility as sexual constraint, acquiring her mom's arid feminism. By dropping her father, she

seems "in some way to be avenging her mother's sufferings" (41) also, to cut herself from before. Her last help comes after her dad's passing that nothing stays to interface her with the past. Attempting to overlook her awful recollections, she stays a girl.

Mary's sexuality or absence of it is created through her experiences with the social arrangement of her family when the two guardians do the socially forced parts on their youngsters. Mary needs to overlook the weight of her past by disregarding her sexual orientation function as a lady needing an ensuring spouse yet very soon, Mary is carried eye to eye with "that impalpable but steel-strong pressure to get married" (47) which her way of life forces on all ladies.

She cannot rise above her gendered subjectivity. Under the infective impact of her own dad, she denies sexuality however the social dad (male centric society) requests her to work in any case. Mary is picked as an object of Dick's gaze, however a bogus one, and dependent on his manly desire for her to be whatever he wants which reviews the old story of the sex-monetary guidelines of man centric culture at work which sort out womanliness as a variation to men's world: "women have an extraordinary ability to withdraw from the sexual relationship, to immune themselves against it, in such a way that their men can be left feeling let down and insulted without having anything tangible to complain of. Mary did not have to learn this, because it was natural to her." (66) (Sexual Political and Failure of Individuality)

Her life gives her only two restricting choices since her group childhood and sexual orientation roles do not permit her to see past these deterministic limitations. In white pioneer society, men outclass ladies considerably more than they do at "home" in working class England. White ladies are typified as out of reach property of white men through generalizing the local men as vicious, savage and explicitly undermining. These twofold procedures both take the uniqueness from white ladies and colonize them as sexual object consistently in harm's way and needing the brave security of their white men, and help the white

men beat their dread and envy for the prevalent sexual intensity of the of the black men.

The male centric fantasy of white lady as white man's property and image of his capacity and the "forbidden fruit" for dark man removes ladies from abstract parts by forcing on them the view that they cannot deal with the dark workers. Subsequently the white ladies are persuaded that they cannot impart capacity to the white men particularly in the ranch life which is the current setting of manliness—extreme work, activity, challenge past home life. So they are bound in the homegrown circle and thought about lazy. Charlie Slatter, the best and incredible rancher of the locale in this novel, makes a joke of it: "Needs a man to deal with niggers. Niggers don't understand women giving them orders. They keep their own women in their right places." (27)

Mary's fixation to oversee the locals as "Other" individuals is a sort of pay for her feeling of being a ladylike and frail "other" for the manly "self" of the white man and the realm, which make her unfit to employ control over her own predetermination. The private and public are interlocked for Mary's situation since her mistaking of self, servility and its projection in denying acknowledgment of "others" are portions of a frontier discourse prevailing in her way of life. Her self-misrecognition has suggestions past the individual circle; it is shaped by her way of life which extends its own apprehensions and biases on the colonized "other" under the white veil of progress and strength. Her self-loathing and curbed want is reflected as disdain for "other" local men and especially ladies to "not think of her, but rather of these black women, as strange; they were alien and primitive creatures with ugly desires she could not bear to think about." (116) Mary, being "other" in a male predominant request of things, matches what blacks involvement with a white-prevailing one, however she cannot perceive this "other" so as to comprehend or characterize her "self" since her way of life restricts her way to self-information.

As Michael Thorpe notes, Moses interferes "not as a simple image of shading clashes, but rather as the specialist of a troublesome life power"

and triggers Mary's for some time curbed feelings to showcase her conventional female job. Michael Thorpe further comments: "since 1903 in Rhodesia, it has been a criminal offence for a black man and a white woman to have sexual intercourse but no such law applies where a white man and a black woman are involved." (Thorpe 12) The storyteller uncovered a comparative separating point by making the reader look at Charlie Slatter who once "was fined thirty pounds" for slaughtering a local "in an attack of temper" and Moses who is "as good as hanged already" (15) for killing his mistress. The common connection between a predominant man and a subordinate lady in a man centric framework becomes hazardous in light of the fact that the man is dark and the lady, white. This upsets soul de carcass, causing a pressure in provincial culture by obscuring the line among "us" and "them."

Mary's acknowledgment of her sterile circumstance is past the point of no return and has no other cure except for death. Her acknowledgment is in her demise. On the most recent day before their excursion from the homestead and furthermore the most recent day of her life, she strolls off the ways into the hedge unexpectedly since she has been living in the district. Unexpectedly she gets mindful of the magnificence of nature that morning, "with a psyche as clear as the sky" she remains there "viewing the dawn, as though the world were being made over again for her, feeling this great established satisfaction" and she feels herself "inside a bubble of fresh light and colour, of brilliant sound and birdsong." (238) Her mentality towards nature, seeing the peaceful magnificence and imperativeness of the wild shrubbery without precedent for her life, can be the indication of her sexual awareness, recognizing the essential "other" inside and "out there" in the bramble. Remaining among the shrub, she realizes that some place among the braid, Moses is sitting tight for her. She considers herself to be "a rakish, monstrous, pathetic lady, with nothing left of the life" that can never really front of the "fatal night." (240) She considers herself to be "that silly young lady venturing out unwittingly to this end" who is holding up "for the night to come that would

complete her," at that point she strolls straight into the shrub "thinking: 'I will come across him and it will all be over.'" (243)

Mary Turner's demise appears to be the main conceivable goal of her clashing driving forces and furthermore that of the white colonialists to satisfy their missions and become legends, and here it becomes evident why the white community attempts to keep quiet because of Mary's passing. The story, which has opened the novel with a paper remove, reporting the homicide puzzle of Mary Turner by her dark servant looking for assets and afterward looked far back to the individual and ordered record of Mary's life until the day she is killed, returns round trip to open the privileged secrets.

Mary is lost in the hole between what others read in paper about her homicide and what the fact of the matter is about this misfortune. Hence the reader gets the intense attention to the lie of the news which uncovers the tangled philosophy that underlies British colonialism which utilizes its most exceedingly terrible overabundances to legitimize itself. What others know or claim to know is the thing that white man controlled society and dominion develops to run the electrical cables. It demonstrates that even the truth is built by belief system, especially in the event that it worries with ladies and their sexuality. Indeed, even her end is a gendered one; being educated to be benevolent, she feels remorseful in her endeavor to locate her actual sexual self and does not see the ability to finish herself, so her pursuit closes in self annihilation: "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 a man." (Hunter 148) Her gender role makes her demonstration the function of a conciliatory casualty by allowing "the shrub"— Africa or Moses—to vindicate the entire imperialism on her. Her availability for generosity implies her generalization sexual orientation role. Her life and passing show that she has been detained in her way of life's picture of lady reliant, defenseless, a sacrificial colonized. Mary's subjectivity is an "oppressed being" who "submits to the authority of

the social formation represented in ideology" (Belsey 49) which for her situation is the philosophy of colonialism. She cannot act since she is as yet the detainee of the social responsibility as the bogus premise of white progress, as the second epigraph of the novel shows: "It is by the failures and misfits of a civilization that one can best judge its weaknesses." (7) Consequently, Mary's disappointment of individuation is close to home which is profoundly political.

### Conclusion

Mary Turner is not able to grasp her own identity because her identity is compounded by the overpowering colonial and gender narratives in which she is knit. The colonial ruling power dictates that she as an individual has to behave according to the terms imposed by her imperial identity. Indeed, even her crumbling must be hushed in light of the fact that it undermines the entire authority of the predominant classification. Mary comes up short in her excursion of self-journey however she is the champion of this novel since she inverts the social, racial and social requests of her general public however unknowingly. As in Katherine Fishburn's words, she is as an "accidental rebel" who in any event breaks up the dichotomous requests and thusly uncovers for the reader the dread and misrepresentation of the white progress whose prosecution is the division between advantaged white and the confiscated dark. By her passing, Mary makes ready for the local (Africa/Moses) to make an abstract move. She cannot promise her own personality since she does not have any cure to forlornness, neediness and sexual orientation restrictions; however she hints an adjustment in majestic mentalities. *The Grass is Singing*, through its roundabout portrayal from an aggregate point of view of Mary's homicide to an individual record of her own life, finishes a prosecution of its focal character's life in the focal point of a shut white pilgrim society in southern Africa in which the connected talks of race, class, and sexual orientation bring her into prohibition, confinement, breakdown, lastly to death. Mary's disappointment of individuation is the disappointment of man controlled society and provincial culture to fulfill its

female part to discover satisfaction inside this business as usual.

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