

## Treatment of Violence in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*: A Psychoanalytic Reading

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### Abstract

This paper explores the complicated mind and the psychoanalytic perspective of the concept of violence of a conflicted young white lady, Mary Turner, a white farmer's wife, in Doris Lessing's masterpiece *The Grass is Singing*. This paper examines the portrayal of an individual's suffering in a challenging world, referring to Doris Lessing's exploration of the harsh realities of life. The study has successfully portrayed the character of Mary as a puzzled and violent individual who shows her wild detestation towards her black servant, Moses. The novelist has tried to juxtapose the individual against society and pictured the conflicts of the individual struggling to survive in the hostile world. Through a qualitative study, this study investigates the novelist's deep concern with her insightful psychological analysis of the violence of Mary Turner, whose repressed feelings change her into a feeble-hearted, sometimes desperate, and violent mistress. As the study traces the reasons for her violence, like her unhappy marriage, harsh environment, repressed desires, a failed career, racial hostility, and strong sense of dominance over servants, the protagonist Mary Turner is discovered as a broken-hearted lady depending on her black servant and disintegrates in the long run to her sufferings. The textual analysis of *The Grass is Singing* provides the theoretical perspective of psychoanalysis of a white colonizer's violence and portrays her struggle to survive among utmost conflicts.

**Key Words:** Psychoanalytic, conflicted individual, violence, repressed feelings, psychoanalysis

### Introduction

*The Grass is Singing* (1950) is the debut novel of Doris Lessing (1919-2003) and is widely regarded as a classic of African Literature. The novel focuses on her life experience in Rhodesia (present Zimbabwe) in Africa in the setting of colonization. Lessing won the Nobel Prize in 2007 for Literature because of such a fantastic novel. Though Lessing was born in Persia (Iran), she had to spend her youth in Southern Rhodesia because of her parentage, so she had the opportunity to witness the exploitation of the black natives of the country. Her *The Grass is Singing* depicts the protagonist, Mary Turner, as a multifaceted character characterized by contradictory feelings and intense resentment towards her African servant, Moses. Through the literary device of juxtaposition to contrast Mary's challenges with the norms of society and the vindictive environment, Lessing portrays the forefront weather, the veld, the white society, and above all, the struggle of a poor farmer to achieve success and financial stability in a near-impossible situation.

The coming of the houseboy Moses into Mary's life is the story's turning point. He is different from the previous other houseboys. He is educated and knows good English. Mary's character is examined in context with her acceptance and relationship with the native Africans working in her home. In Mary's mind, the presence of the natives was seen as a threat to her way of living. Dick's relationship with the native is diagonally opposite to Mary's. The paper also highlights the difference between Mary and Dick in conceptualizing the reality of their poverty and day-to-day living.

Lessing highlights Mary's act of violence with the black boy due to the decline of psychological decline. The psychological deterioration of the protagonist is shown based on her unhappy childhood and repressed feelings. From her childhood, Mary was taught to stay away from the black people. This detachment built up hatred in her toward them. Her detestation of the blacks leads to violent behavior, an ultimate breakdown of sanity, and murder by a black servant. The novel focuses on the impact of the death of a white woman by a black houseboy in the white community of Southern Rhodesia. The story flashes back to Mary's childhood and life with her parents, life after her mother's death, her marriage to a poor white farmer, and her death. Doris Lessing studies Mary psychologically and shows her upbringing and marriage experience as a member of a white community in the backdrop of a black neighborhood.

So the novel's focus is the psychological insight into a white Caucasian girl, unhappy in childhood and unhappy in marriage and her failure to cope with life, and finally, her violent death at the hands of a black servant within the Caucasian society of Southern Rhodesia. In addition, Lessing conducts a psychological assessment of Mary's violence, scrutinizing her upbringing and marital experience as a member of the white community residing in a predominantly black locality. Thus, the novel explores the inner turmoil of an unhappy white woman, struggling to cope with the crises of her life and ultimately meeting a violent end due to her contradictory feelings and desires (Rowe, 1994).

### **Review of Literature**

The discipline of psychoanalysis has transformed from its original emphasis on the analysis of the human psyche as the advent of clinical practice has broadened its purview. According to psychoanalytic theory, human behavior is influenced by irrational and unconscious forces and early experiences, which are believed to have a deterministic effect. Many psychologists agree that violence or aggression is an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to rage and fury that might lead to aggressive behavior. So aggression is considered a way of expressing Anger. Aggression is defined as the behavior intended to harm (physical or nonphysical) another individual (Abeles et al., 1975). Harry Mills (2005) states that Anger is a basic human emotion by all people. Typically triggered by an emotional hurt, Anger is usually experienced as an unpleasant feeling that occurs when we think we have been injured, mistreated, opposed in our long-held views, or when we are faced with obstacles that keep us from attaining personal goals" (Mills, 2005). Furthermore, according to Yakeley and Melory's (2012) claims, bodily enactments and functioning are crucial in informing actual violence. Additionally, these bodily manifestations offer valuable insights into how our mental processes are grounded in the physical body.

The psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud gives several interpretations of violence and aggression. He initially believed that all human behaviors were motivated by libido (sexual energy and instinctive drives), and the repression of libidinal urges was displayed as aggression. Then Freud observes that some 'ego instincts' are non-libidinal urges whose general aim is self-preservation. Buss (1961) asserts the depiction of Freud: "Indeed, it may be asserted that the true prototypes of hate relation are derived not from sexual life, but from the struggle of the ego for self-presentation and self-maintenance" (Buss, 1961, p.184). Freud claims a link between frustration and violence. "The occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression" (Buss, 1961, p.27). Later this

theory was reformed by Leonard Berkowitz (1962) stated that when "a person displays violently hostile actions upon being frustrated, may do this because he is in an intense emotional state, i.e., his anger level is very high" (Berkowitz, 1962, p.35). Additionally, according to the developmental psychologist W. Schwartz (2013), an individual's capacity to manage incoherence, anxiety, conflict, trauma, urge, fantasy, and memory is restricted throughout each stage of development. Experiences characterized by deprivation, competition, and trauma can result in dissociation, repression, avoidance, and a disinclination to introspection.

### **Definition of Psychoanalysis**

Though the first and simple meaning of psychoanalysis relates to the analysis of the human psyche, with the emergence of its distinct clinical practice, the scope of psychoanalysis has been enlarged. The psychoanalytic theory says that irrational and unconscious forces govern human behavior, and the importance of childhood experiences plays a deterministic role in a man's life. The Oxford Dictionary has defined psychoanalysis as a therapeutic method, originated by Sigmund Freud, for treating mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the patient's mind and bringing repressed fears and conflicts into the conscious mind.

Understanding human psychology and behavior is essential to comprehend the implications of behavior in a social context. The present study explores the psychological makeup of the protagonist, Mary Turner, and the social context of a diasporic community inhabiting the remote regions of Rhodesia, presently known as Zimbabwe. The study investigates the impact of childhood abuse and deprivation on the psyche of Mary and how it becomes complicated and dangerous in her later life.

### **Definition of Violence**

As per the World Report on Violence and Health (WRVH) in 2002, the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA), which is a network of the World Health Organization (WHO), has defined violence as the deliberate utilization of physical force or power, whether threatened or actual, that leads to psychological harm, injury, death, or deprivation. Modifiable factors such as concentrated poverty, income inequality, gender inequality, harmful alcohol use, and a deficiency of secure, stable, and nurturing relationships between children and parents have been found to impact the prevalence of violence. Glasser (1978) distinguishes between aggression and violence, with the latter referring to physical action. The present study defines violence as a bodily action that leads to harm, wherein the boundary of the physical self is transgressed (Yakeley & Meloy, 2012). This study shows the social context of violence and how it affects the people around it. As Yakeley (2012), "Freud saw aggression as a response to internal and external threats" (Yakeley, 2012, p.12).

### **Historical Approach to Violence**

According to Yakeley and Meloy (2012), Freud initially viewed aggression as a part of the sexual instinct but later saw it as a response to internal and external threats. Klein (1946) posited that aggression is an innate and predominantly harmful phenomenon, whereas Menninger (1963) claimed that violence might be a protective measure against psychotic breakdown. Yakeley and Meloy (2012) have noted that violence can manifest in various forms, and specific acts may not necessarily be motivated by effect or anxiety. Individuals exhibiting psychopathic tendencies

tend to establish relationships with others based on power dynamics, specifically through the expression of dominance and submission rather than through emotional connections. According to Fonagy (1991), it is proposed that instances of early traumatic experiences and disrupted attachments, marked by physical and emotional abuse, may manifest aggression and violence. The contribution of unconscious phantasy to the genesis of violence is noteworthy, as it may cause distressing violent fantasies in individuals with obsession neurosis.

### **Methodology**

This paper involves a qualitative study that employs a psychoanalytic theory to explore the protagonist's complex psyche. The study closely reads and interprets the novel to identify the psychological variables behind Mary Turner's violent behavior. Most of the study's data came from the book. Quotes and sections were examined to understand Mary's psyche. An in-depth study of the protagonist, Mary, and her feelings, like fear, desire, and repression, was analyzed from the psychoanalytic perspective. The analysis considers her childhood events, repressed impulses, and other conscious and unconscious components of her psychology. To conduct the research, the researcher reads the novel multiple times, taking detailed notes and highlighting relevant passages. Subsequently, the analysts employ a psychoanalytical framework to the text, discerning recurring motifs and themes in Mary's conduct while delving into the fundamental psychological determinants. The research methodology utilized a deductive approach, wherein the theoretical framework was used to direct the textual data's analysis and interpretation. The study's findings are presented through a detailed exploration of Mary's psyche and the factors contributing to her violent behavior. The research emphasizes the influence of repression and fear on Mary's conduct and the consequences of her early life encounters and suppressed yearnings. The scholar additionally considers the social and cultural milieu surrounding the novel, delving into the impact of Mary's identity as a Caucasian female in colonial Zimbabwe on her feelings of detachment and estrangement.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study of human psychology and behavior is crucial for understanding the implications of behavior in a social context. This paper focuses on the protagonist's mind and analyses its social and psychological impact on a diasporic population living in the outback of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The paper also details the effect of a childhood of abuse and deprivation and how the mind of Mary, the protagonist, becomes complicated and dangerous in later life. Violence is often the outcome of abuse and deprivation. Later life sees violence as a mode of behavior in a social context. Mary is presented descriptively to understand how her life progresses from poverty to economic freedom and finally to denying life and living due to dejected acceptance of an unlivable situation.

Doris Lessing has shown how land and space have become oppressive to Mary. She narrates the story of Mary as a member of the English people struggling to eke out a good living in the unyielding veld. The veld shows how nature may not always be kind to humans wanting to adapt to extreme situations. The paper also traces how an individual's upbringing may make her uncompromising and aggressive. The paper can be a reference source for the study of preludes to violence and psychoanalysis of behavior.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Much of the narrative describes Mary's unfortunate and unhappy childhood, which is not a smooth life. *The Grass is Singing* is an autobiographical novel where Doris Lessing gives her stature to Mary Turner, who has not had a happy childhood. Mary became isolated both physically and emotionally throughout her life. This isolation led to her alienation from the society in which she lived. The relationship between her parents had a crushing impact on her life. She saw her father wasting away precious money on drinks, assaulting her mother, and the extreme hardship they faced. Her mother is "a tall, scrawny woman with angry unhealthy brilliant eyes" (Lessing, 1950. p. 39) who "made a confidante of Mary early. She used to cry over her sewing while Mary comforted her miserably, longing to get away, but feeling important too, and hating her father" (Lessing, 1950.p.39). Mary saw her mother as a helpless victim of an oppressive and dominating man. Besides sharing the pains of poverty, Mary observed a 12-month quarrel with her parents over money. Lessing says about Mary's parents, "Her father and mother fought over these bills twelve times a year. They never quarreled over anything but money: sometimes, in fact, her mother remarked drily that she might have done worse:" (Lessing, 1950. p. 39-40). Even Mary witnessed their loveless and repulsive sexual relationship. As a result of all these bitter experiences, she suppressed her childhood memories and developed a fear of sexuality which haunted her in her later married life. Long before her marriage, the bitterness of her childhood encroached emotionally on her attitude to men, which led to her ruin later in life.

Mary deeply detested her father, who was a failed man to bring up three children and his family. Working as a pump man on the railway, he spent all the money to drink wine. Mary's childhood was so close to the poverty line that she was almost relieved when two elder siblings died from dysentery. It brought some goodness to their family to reduce the mouths to feed on her father's meager earnings. Finally, Mary was cut off from her parents because of her settling in a boarding school. She had no interest in spending her vacation with her parents. She always dreaded going home, even during holidays, to "her fuddled father, her bitter mother, and the fly-away little house that was like a small wooden box on stilts" (Lessing, 1950. p. 40).

In her youth, Mary had to discontinue her education after her mother's death. At sixteen, she took up the typewriter job and became her employer's secretary. Her job gave her the financial freedom she so desperately needed. Mary turned into a reasonably attractive person. At age twenty, her mother died, and her father was transferred to a distant station. This broke all the links she had with her family. She never kept any further relationship with her father after this. She was a self-contained, happy, and free woman at age twenty-five. She blossomed as a young woman, and men started to notice her. But her relationship with men was distant and formal, more like a sister. Lessing comments about her, "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" (Lessing, 1950. p. 42).

She is a confidante in her circle of male and female friends. She tries to forget her traumatic memories of her past life and likes to live a girl's life wearing childlike clothing and hairstyle. All this immaturity in front of others defends her against her sexuality as she remembers being a victim of a miserable childhood marriage. Her mother gave her a dry feminism, and she wasn't interested in sex seems to be repression to her. "She had inherited from her mother an arid

feminism" (Lessing, 1950. p.41). Sex is something she is just not interested in, as all her male friends treat her as a pal. All her male friends treated her like friends. She did sports and other things with them, but there was never anything more than friendship--- "she played tennis or hockey or swam. And always with a man, one of those innumerable men who 'took her out,' treating her like a sister: Mary was such a good pal!" (Lessing,1950. p. 44). She has no sexual attachment with anyone; it seems she is afraid of sex and becomes different from other typical ladies. The novelist declares, "She was a rarest phenomenon: a woman of thirty without love troubles, headaches, backaches, sleeplessness or neurosis. She did not know how rare she was" (Lessing, 1950.p. 45). Mary's repression of her sexuality and wrong ideas about being a woman ultimately make her suffer. She behaves like an abnormal being, becoming violent towards the servant Moses only due to her repressive desires and perverse mentality.

Mary has been frightened of the social ideology of marriage since her childhood. The childhood memories around Mary's parents' married life make her frustrated and frightened to make a relationship with males through marriage bondage. She becomes violent and desperate seeing her mother's oppression at her father's hand. She liked to be aloof and free from any subservience to somebody. She lost her interest in marriage. Doris comments, "She felt sentimental at weddings, but she had a profound distaste for sex" (Lessing, 1950. p. 46). Despite her active and fulfilling professional life, her existence remained passive. But things changed when Mary overheard her friends talking about her age and whether or not she was married. Their harsh comments about her dress, age, and not being married scared her. People said about her that "something was missing somewhere" (Lessing, 1950. p. 48) because she wasn't married yet at the age of 29. Mary was thrown entirely off-balance, and despite her intense aversion to marriage, she became hysterical and began searching for a husband to fit in with societal expectations. In a last-ditch effort to get away from her friends' meanness, Mary agreed on the spot to marry Dick Turner, a hard-working but ambitious farmer in the Ngesi bush who had only sought her out to make himself feel less lonely. Mary was in a loveless marriage because she rushed into getting married. Her desperate acceptance of marriage hastens her unhappy marriage with Dick Turner, an ambitious and struggling farmer in the Ngesi bush, who also needs her solely to fight his loneliness. Mary has decided whimsically to get married to be safe from the malicious comments made by her friends who regard marriage as "the sole justification of her (a woman's) existence" (de Beauvoir 1952, p.446). In Mary's case, this mismatching marriage is solely responsible for her tragedy. Because of them, Mary and Dick differ entirely in backgrounds, tastes, ambitions, attitudes, and experiences. The novelist estimates Mary, "Her own attitude towards him was fundamentally one of contempt, but only as a man; as a man she paid no attention to him, she left him out of account altogether" (Lessing, 1950. p. 103). However, their marital life, along with the sexual gratification, is not going smoothly since the beginning of their wedding. While Dick unintentionally makes Mary a "sexual object by idealizing her, Mary can only accept him when he approaches her passively. Then falling back to him in a victim-like way expecting abuse and intrusion, she was comforted to find she felt nothing" (Rubenstein, 1979. p. 19). So their sex does not even create any attraction to each other rather, it makes them separated. Such type of lovelessness leads Mary to frustration and disillusionment. To get relief from the situation, Mary desires to have a child to be happy with Dick. But Because of their poverty, her expectation is cruelly rejected. This is nothing but Dick's failures and stubbornness. At one point, she tries to get back her job, but because of her blunted appearance and unsophisticated behavior, she is

refused and takes shelter in the cave of disappointments. Therefore she becomes cynical and desperate even with the black boy, Moses.

Mary, mixed with racism and feminism, always exploits enslaved Black people. Lessing comments regarding Mary's attitude to black natives observed by Dick "Dick saw all this with increasing foreboding. What was the matter with her? With him she seemed at ease, quiet, almost maternal. With the natives she was a virago" (Lessing,1950. p. 83). The entry of Moses has become a turning point in the protagonist's life. Her situation degrades with the arrival of Moses, the black working boy Mary hit on the farm cruelly for a silly reason. Because of her extreme detestation towards the black natives and her failure, she becomes violent and cruel to all other black servants in the house. She always wants them to do whatever she wishes. She is irritated at Dick's benign manners toward the black natives, who are, to him, unlike machines. But Mary always treats them as beasts who their white masters should oppress. Keeler (2011) comments, "Describing white colonial society in Anglo-Africa, the novel displays a society based on a hierarchical structure and oppression of non-whites and women. The novel suggests that because of her gender, the protagonist Mary Turner is presented with limited options, forcing her into a life of subjection to given conditions" ( Keeler 21). Mary becomes disgusted by observing Dick's extra care of Moses and Samson.

The novelist Lessing explains, "She was filled with wonder and repulsion. Dick was 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 horrible to her" (Lessing,1950. p.78). Her feeling towards the black natives is full of awe and revulsion. In her work from 1989, Simone de Beauvoir argues about women and the defense of ideology. This shows more about Mary's extreme prejudice. According to de Beauvoir(1989, p.601), women were "the most belligerently agitated" because they tried to make up for their passivity by being very emotional. She also talks about how men are condescending and bossy when women are passionate about using their ideas. Throughout the novel, Mary's Anger at the black natives aligns with how upset she is. She thinks the natives are not as good as they are because she doesn't know much about them. Dick often gets mad at Mary for being so stubborn about the natives. Dick says, "Mary, listen to me for a moment. If you get yourself into a state over your boys, then you are finished. You will have to let go your standards a little. You must go easy" (Lessing, 1950. p. 81).

Mary's mental disintegration starts as she depends on Moses though she hates him. Mary's extreme hatred towards black natives creates an eternal struggle for power of dominance. Such hatred is irrational that it borders on psychosis. Her hatred towards the native surpasses the hatred of other extreme racists and makes her repulsive in the colonial context. For this reason, she becomes imbalanced and confused about her desire. Mary's failure to understand her psychology makes her violent and ultimately disintegrates her. The entry of Moses into the Turner household comes when Mary is perfectly at her last turning point. This black servant enters her life when she is almost broken, listless, and indifferent. She lost her complete interest in various projects on the farm of chickens, a tobacco crop, a store, and so on. She has become completely lost, and motherhood does not mean anything to her. She has tried but failed to return to her old job and life in town. And gradually, her situation is so disintegrated that she starts to fear Moses, a mission boy, and a decent Negro. Perhaps the reason is her hitting him brutally though she is not interested in racism. She is horrified to see the white farmers treating the native

laborers as little more than beasts. Her hatred towards Moses and all the black Africans turn into a deep fear that puts her into a submissive position and tames her feminine side. She may be the leader of her race, but Moses is the leader of her mind and body. Her worry that her role as a colonizer is getting worse and that a lifetime of being poorly treated drive her crazy.

Lessing also explains the position of frightened Mary because of Moses and their relations in the dream, significantly exposing the inner state of the character's unconscious. Mary dreams, "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" (Lessing,1950.p.207). The relationship between Moses and Mary becomes mysterious and turns into a new track, that is, fatal. She starts to fear him and is finally fascinated by his physical fitness. Even though she thinks they are all "cheeky-faced," she can't help but be interested in Moses' manly body. But Mary is afraid of him and feels like he is a threat when he is in the house. Seeing the scar on Moses' face, she worries and feels threatened that Moses will get back at her for being so mean to him and take revenge upon her for her violent deed. Even though she feels uneasy, Mary is fascinated by how he works, and her desire to be with him grows stronger daily. Moses' powerful, broad-built body fascinates her and raises Mary's carnal desire, which is the outcome of her long repression, which is increasing daily. She feels her sexual fascination towards Moses' gesture and physical attraction. Lessing observes, "She had given him white shorts and shirts to wear in the house that her former servants had used. They were too small for him; as he swept or scrubbed or bent to the stove, his muscles bulged and filled out the thin material of the sleeves until it seemed they would split" (Lessing,1950.p.175 ). Mary is rude towards the black natives at home while she fears their physical power to abuse her. Pickering (1990) observed that Mary's frustration over Dick's job failure makes her a challenge against the native at home.

As the novel progresses, Mary's complex and contradictory feelings toward Moses significantly complicate her mental breakdown. Her emotions swing between a sense of superiority and fearful submission. Gradually, the conflict in her mind accelerates Mary's disintegration, which is seen later in the novel. Her feelings fluctuate between a sense of superiority and that of fearful submission. On one side, she wants to oppress him as a superior master and tries to keep herself away from the black servant. On the other side, her common instinct and desire want to be close to Moses. Mary is entirely disappointed to reconcile with society because of her repressed unconscious desires. Finally, she is being dragged into her catastrophe. She is entrapped between her superego, which dictates social norms and values, and her id, which drives her sexual impulses. In one scene, Mary tries to get her off how she feels about Moses by acting as if a white person would work toward a black person. But she realized that her relationship with Moses has already broken the formal black-white, mistress, and servant pattern. She has lost control over herself. After the whipping incident, Mary's sense of guilt makes her closer to Moses. Gradually, as Bahlaq ( 2011) observes that Moses has become an influential figure as Mary submits herself to him being deteriorated both physically and psychologically (Bahlaq,2011,p.8).



### **Psychoanalysis of Violence**

In *The Grass is Singing*, Mary Turner grows up as a child in a violent atmosphere. The broken relationship between her parents and the abject poverty makes her, as a child, into a psychotic person. She inherits her mother's revulsion to sex. She keeps herself aloof from all kinds of attachments to a man. "Trauma plays a significant role in the psychogenesis of violence." (Johnson et al., 1990) Mary's nightmares and daydreaming infer psychological traumas. Peter Fonagy (2003), the Freud Memorial Professor of Psychoanalysis, says in his thesis, *The Psychoanalysis of Violence*, that severely abused children develop a way of understanding their reality called "psychic equivalence"(Fonagy,2003). Mary's dreams seem to be made up of memories from her childhood. As seen in Mary's relationships with men and how she dresses and lives, abused children may also act like they are someone else. Lastly, these people may find it hard to think about their mental states and those of their objects. This can be seen as Mary tries to get used to living with her new husband, Dick Turner.

According to Fonagy (2003), violent people frequently lack a solid sense of self. Mary's case is similar, as she attempts to escape her oppressive life and return to her former self, only to suffer from an identity crisis. "Internal fantasies and external facts become confused" (Perelberg, 1999, p.45). However, she cannot return to her former life and instead experiences increased mental disassociation. Mary even forgets many details of her childhood, as forgetting is a form of repression. Freud believed childhood experiences heavily determine development (Hoffman, 1957). Repressed childhood experiences can surface as neurosis, depression, anxiety, and other psychological issues if they conflict with one's conscious mind (Fromm, 1992). Mary's mental crisis has made her violent, as violence becomes a means to eliminate intolerable psychic experiences (Perelberg, 1999).

### **Mary's Violence**

Mary Turner's childhood trauma and unhappy marriage are primarily responsible for her aggressive attitude towards the native blacks. With her detestations of her social and financial standing, Mary views her life on Dick's farm as a sort of banishment from her former life of freedom and happiness. She wants to be happy both economically and in their marital relationship. Her prompt decision of hasty marriage expects her to overcome the situation and to be happy with her husband and family. But she fails to fulfill her expectations. According to Berkowitz(1969), "inability to fulfill the anticipations is a frustration" (Berkowitz,1969.p.16). Mary does not try to accept her condition on the farm for a moment. Her different projects to increase end in failure. Each failure causes Mary to grow more distant from her role as a farmer's wife. Her desired goal is blocked, for which her frustration comes, and she becomes violent. Her dreams and fantasies drive her towards a sense of dominance and submission. It seems that she has no other choice except to depend on him. Her final submission to Moses is her final fantasy. The murder of Mary at the hand of Moses means the defeat of her psyche, dominating the psyche of the house boy.

### **Portrayal of Land and Space**

In *The Grass is Singing*, the enmity of the land can be seen when the protagonist, Mary, feels trapped by it. The image of the land, the veld, is, to an extent, responsible for the violence of Mary's behavior towards her servant. When Dick is sick, Mary takes up the unpleasant task of running the farm. This is when she meets Moses. She whips him across the face for his perceived idleness. Moses later becomes her houseboy. Mary is afraid, fearful that he might take revenge.

The overwhelming presence of the land, the space, the heat, and the lack of release or relief oppress Mary, and she loses her individuality. The perpetual fight with nature reminds one of Thomas Hardy's Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*. In this novel, Eustacia feels the same revulsion towards the Egdon Heath as Mary felt towards the veld. In both novels, the protagonists lose in their fight against nature and ultimately die. Both the protagonists feel trapped and victimized on the small, poor farm, where the house isn't well-equipped, and the heat makes breathing hard. The cottage, Dick's house, is the central place for all actions. The cottage is the symbol of colonialism. It represents the colonizer's defeat in the surrounding landscape's hands (Gyuris 2012).

Mary's appearance and body also represent the surrounding landscape. "Mary Turner's body greatly resembles the presentation of the African space: she is dry and frigid, truly reduced to the status of a simple body" (Gyuris 2012). The permanent torment of heat and unbearable circumstances bring about a corporal reduction. Lessing says, "Then followed a time of dull misery: not the sharp bouts of unhappiness that were what had attacked her earlier. Now she felt as if she were going soft inside at the core as if a soft rottenness was attacking her bones." (Lessing, 1950. p. 163) Over the years, Mary deteriorates into a feeble and sickly woman instead of coming to terms with her life and surroundings, which also affects her mental health. (Gyuris 2012 ) The land, the veld, can be seen as the root of her violent and unexplainable behavior toward her servants. "The source of violent actions is most frequently fear." ( Gyuris 2012) In *The Grass is Singing*, the veld is the ultimate winner. A person from the veld commits violence towards Mary. Thus the colonizer is subjugated.

### **Recommendations**

The paper may be generalized to stories where isolation leads to death, such as *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy. Deprivation, isolation, and failure to adopt are the central themes in Doris Lessing's and Thomas Hardy's novels. This paper is, therefore, limited to the aspect of individual reactions to the themes mentioned above. Nature in Doris Lessing's veld and Thomas Hardy's Egdon Heath is uncompromising and diabolical. A person, especially a woman, who struggles to survive in such circumstances forces them to reject nature. The end is, therefore, violent. The paper is a message to accept and use nature to one's advantage.

### **Conclusion**

The study of the treatment of violence in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* using a psychoanalytic framework contributes to understanding the novel's themes of race, gender, and violence. Through analyzing the character of Mary Turner, the study investigates the root causes of violence and the societal pressures that contribute to its perpetuation. By exploring Mary's personal problems and childhood traumas, the findings shed light on the psychological mechanisms that result in the cycle of violence, emphasizing the importance of understanding the psychological causes of violence to break the cycle. The research highlights the significance of psychoanalytic approaches in understanding and analyzing literary works. Applying psychoanalytic theories to *The Grass is Singing* provides a new and insightful interpretation of the novel that enhances the reader's understanding of the text's themes and characters. The contribution to literary studies lies in using a psychoanalytic framework to reveal the underlying psychological factors that drive violent behavior in the novel's characters. The research also

contributes to the broader conversation on violence, emphasizing the importance of addressing psychological issues to prevent and break the cycle of violence in society.

In conclusion, the research study on the treatment of violence in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* using a psychoanalytic framework is a valuable contribution to literary studies. The analysis of the novel's themes of race, gender, and violence, and the application of psychoanalytic theories to the character of Mary Turner, provide a new and insightful interpretation of the novel. By emphasizing the psychological mechanisms that contribute to the perpetuation of violence, the study highlights the importance of addressing the underlying psychological causes of violence to break the cycle and promote a more peaceful society.

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