

Presentations of White Supremacy and Racial Discrimination in *The Grass is Singing* by Doris Lessing

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Abstract

This study critically examines the presentations of white supremacy and racial discrimination in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, focusing on the psychological, social, and economic impacts of colonialism in Southern Rhodesia. Through a detailed analysis of the characters, particularly Mary Turner and Moses, the study explores how Lessing critiques the colonial system by illustrating the destructive effects of racial hierarchies on both the colonizers and the colonized. The study employs post-colonial theory to unpack the themes of exploitation, dehumanization, and moral decay that permeate the novel. It also highlights common concerns about colonialism's lasting legacy. The findings reveal that Lessing's use of symbolism, narrative structure, and character development provides a powerful critique of the colonial order, with themes that remain relevant in contemporary discussions on race and

systemic racism. The study contributes to the broader field of post-colonial literary criticism by offering new insights into the psychological and social dimensions of colonial oppression.

Keywords: White supremacy, Racial discrimination, Colonialism, Southern Rhodesia, Psychological trauma.

Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* is a seminal work that explores the interplay of race, power, and colonialism in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Set in the mid-20th century, the novel captures the oppressive atmosphere of British colonial rule, highlighting the deep racial divides and systemic exploitation that defined the era. In this period, "apartheid policies were entrenched, implementing a rigid racial hierarchy that positioned white settlers as superior and black Africans as subjugated" (Barnard, 2012, p 22). Lessing, through her intricate portrayal of characters and their personal struggles, "exposes how these racial dynamics influenced interpersonal relationships and contributed to the psychological degradation of both the oppressed and the oppressors" (Nixon, 2022,) p 117. Growing up in Southern Rhodesia herself, "Lessing observed these tensions firsthand, which gave her a unique perspective to critique the inherent injustice of the colonial system"(Greene, 1997, p 41). The relationship between Mary Turner, a white woman, and Moses, her black servant, reflects the societal constraints imposed by race and class. The novel serves as a microcosm of the broader racial tensions that plagued colonial Southern Africa. By examining this text, the study seeks to shed light on how "white supremacy and racial discrimination are depicted in colonial literature and their broader implications on contemporary discussions of race and power" (Ashcroft et al., 2010, p 2).

The problem of racial discrimination and the perpetuation of white supremacy in colonial societies has long been a subject of debate. In the case of Southern Rhodesia, "apartheid policies institutionalized racial hierarchies that had far-reaching effects on both the colonizers and the colonized" (Fanon, 2008, p 35). Despite the historical significance of these

issues, “there remains a gap in analyzing how colonial-era literature, particularly Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing*, portrays these dynamics and critiques the systemic racism of the time” (Chapman, 2008, p 91).

Many literary critics have focused on the broader themes of alienation and isolation in the novel, “but few have examined how Lessing specifically presents white supremacy and racial discrimination” (Cairnie, 2015, p 80). This research problem is significant because it addresses the lack of a focused analysis “on racial dynamics within the novel, providing insight into the literary representation of race and power in colonial Southern Rhodesia and its connection to present-day conversations about race and colonialism “(Said, 2012, p 24). The aim of this research is to critically assess the presentation of white supremacy and racial discrimination in Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing*, exploring how these themes are embedded within the socio-political context of colonial Southern Rhodesia. The study will also examine the novel’s portrayal of the psychological impact of racial discrimination on both the oppressors and the oppressed.

The literature review explores existing scholarly works that inform the critical analysis of Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing*. By examining themes of white supremacy, racial discrimination, and colonial power dynamics, this section connects theoretical frameworks and historical contexts to the narrative and character development in Lessing’s novel. Edward Said (2012, p 232) introduces the concept of “othering” as a foundational understanding of how colonial powers define themselves in opposition to the colonized. In *Culture and Imperialism*, he argues that this binary perception perpetuates the perceived inferiority of native populations, shaping societal norms and literature. Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* vividly embodies this dynamic through Mary Turner’s interactions with Moses, which illustrate how deeply ingrained prejudices sustain white dominance. While Said’s theory highlights systemic power imbalances, its application to the nuanced individual

psyches in Lessing's novel underscores a broader critique of colonialism's psychological impact, revealing gaps in Said's focus on structural binaries over individual complexities.

Fanon "explores the psychological effects of colonization, emphasizing how it distorts the identities of both the oppressor and the oppressed. His works, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, resonate deeply with the portrayal of Mary and Moses in Lessing's novel". (2008, p 32). His assertion that colonization erodes humanity on both sides of the power divide aligns with Moses' gradual resistance and Mary's psychological breakdown. While Fanon's insights are invaluable in dissecting *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing's depiction of Moses complicates Fanon's framework, as his portrayal oscillates between subjugation and nuanced resistance, challenging oversimplified binaries. Barnard (2012, p 65) "examines how racial segregation policies shaped colonial hierarchies and individual psyches. In *Apartheid and Beyond*, Barnard contextualizes the Turners' dependence on black labor, as seen in *The Grass is Singing*". Her analysis underscores the entwinement of economic exploitation with social control, illustrating how Lessing critiques the fragility of white settlers' perceived superiority. However, Barnard's focus on systemic mechanisms leaves room for further exploration of interpersonal dynamics, particularly how Mary's actions reflect the contradictions of sustaining colonial hierarchies. Rubenstein "delves into the psychological nuances of Mary Turner's character, highlighting her paranoia and deteriorating mental state as a critique of colonialism's impact on white settlers. In *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing*, Rubenstein argues "that Mary's racism serves as a veneer for her insecurities and isolation, making her both a perpetrator and a victim of the colonial system"(2019, p 91). This perspective complements the broader critique of colonialism but warrants further discussion on Moses' parallel psychological journey, which challenges Rubenstein's emphasis on Mary's internal conflicts alone. Coetzee & Msimang (2019, p 9)

frame the colonial landscape as a metaphor for moral and economic decay. In *White Writing*, he observes that the Turners' barren farm symbolizes the unsustainability of a system rooted in exploitation. Coetzee's insights into the narrative's symbolic depth align with Lessing's critique of colonialism but can be expanded to consider the psychological dimensions of this symbolism". For instance, Mary's isolation mirrors the farm's desolation, reinforcing themes of alienation that extend beyond Coetzee's focus on material decay.

Greene (1997, p113) emphasizes the narrative techniques Lessing employs to critique colonialism, particularly her use of circular structures and symbolism. In *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change*, Greene highlights the inevitability of Mary's downfall, intertwined with the colonial system's oppressive nature. Jones (2014, p 119) examines the economic underpinnings of colonialism, situating *The Grass is Singing* within a broader critique of material exploitation. She argues that the Turners' dependence on black labor exposes the contradictions of colonial economies, where economic reliance on the oppressed undermines the colonizers' moral authority. While Jones' work aptly highlights these systemic flaws, a deeper focus on Mary and Moses' personal interactions could further illuminate how economic exploitation translates into interpersonal tensions.

Ashcroft et al. (2010, p 5) situate "*The Grass is Singing* within the broader framework of post-colonial literature. In *The Empire Writes Back*, they analyze how colonial texts deconstruct power dynamics, complementing Lessing's narrative techniques, particularly her use of symbolism and character development to critique white supremacy". While their work provides a valuable theoretical backdrop, further integration of Lessing's psychological themes could enhance their exploration of colonial literature's multi-faceted critique. Mlambo (2014, p 114) "offers historical context for the racial hierarchies depicted in Lessing's novel. In *A History of Zimbabwe*, Mlambo's exploration of segregationist policies and their socio-economic impacts underscores the systemic nature of the oppression critiqued in *The Grass is*

Singing". However, a more focused analysis of individual characters' responses to these policies could bridge the gap between historical critique and literary interpretation, offering a richer understanding of Lessing's work.

While the reviewed literature provides significant insights into the racial and psychological dimensions of *The Grass is Singing*, certain gaps remain. First, while Said (2012), Fanon (2008, p250, 1963, p 32), and others provide critical frameworks for analyzing the colonial psyche, there is limited exploration of the intersection of gender and racial oppression in the novel. Mary Turner's role as a white woman in a patriarchal colonial society is underexplored, particularly in how her gendered position complicates her interactions with Moses. Second, although the economic critiques by Jones (2014, p 119) and Barnard (2012, p 65) highlight systemic exploitation; they do not delve deeply into how economic reliance on black labor shapes personal relationships within the colonial hierarchy. The dynamic between Mary and Moses, for example, offers a microcosm of broader systemic flaws that warrant further exploration.

The research also employs thematic analysis as a key method for identifying and analyzing recurring motifs, symbols, and narrative structures that highlight the racial tensions and power imbalances in the novel. "Themes such as isolation, oppression, and psychological degradation are examined to reveal how they contribute to the novel's critique of colonialism and racial discrimination "(Braun & Clarke, 2022, p 57).

One of the key themes identified in the novel is the dehumanization of black Africans, as symbolized through the character of Moses. "Lessing's depiction of Moses as a servant, subjected to Mary Turner's racist attitudes and economic exploitation, illustrates the ways in which colonialism stripped black Africans of their autonomy and humanity" (Cairnie, 2015, p 80). Another theme is the psychological deterioration of Mary Turner, whose internalized racial superiority and economic struggles lead to her eventual downfall. The analysis also

considers Lessing's use of narrative structure and symbolism, particularly in her depiction of the barren farm, which serves as a metaphor for the moral and psychological decay brought about by colonialism. "The cyclical nature of the narrative, beginning and ending with Mary's death, reinforces the inevitability of the destruction caused by the colonial system" (Nixon, 2022, p 117).

Post-colonial theory is central to this study's analysis of *The Grass is Singing*. As mentioned earlier, the theories of Edward Said and Frantz Fanon are particularly relevant. In the novel, Mary Turner's interactions with Moses reflect this "othering" process, as she simultaneously fears and desires control over him.

Fanon's insights into the psychological effects of colonization also inform the analysis, particularly in terms of how the characters in the novel internalize racial hierarchies. Fanon argues "that colonialism creates a sense of inferiority among the colonized, while instilling a false sense of superiority in the colonizers" (2008, p 33). This dynamic is evident in Mary Turner's relationship with Moses, as her racist attitudes ultimately contribute to her psychological breakdown.

The study also draws on Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence, which refers to the contradictory emotions that colonizers feel toward the colonized. In "*The Grass is Singing*, Mary Turner's ambivalent feelings toward Moses—her simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from him—illustrate the complexities of the colonial mindset" (Bhabha, 1994, p 66). This ambivalence contributes to the novel's critique of colonialism, as it highlights the ways in which racial discrimination is both reinforced and destabilized within the colonial system.

The analysis focuses on how Lessing uses her characters, narrative techniques, and symbolism to critique the racial power structures of colonial Southern Rhodesia. Through a detailed thematic analysis, this chapter unpacks the portrayal of white settler superiority and

black African inferiority, examining how these depictions reflect the socio-political realities of apartheid and colonialism. The analysis is anchored in post-colonial theory, particularly the concepts of “othering” and the psychological impact of racial oppression, as outlined by scholars such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon.

The study also explores the economic and social mechanisms that sustained these power structures, focusing on the use of fear, violence, and exploitation to maintain white dominance. By examining the psychological toll of these systems on both the oppressors and the oppressed, the analysis aligns closely with the research aims of understanding the dynamics of white supremacy and racial discrimination in colonial literature. The discussion addresses the research questions by providing insight into how Lessing’s narrative critiques the colonial mentality and how these themes continue to resonate in contemporary discussions on race and power. This chapter thereby fulfills the research objectives by drawing connections between the literary portrayal of race and broader historical and socio-political contexts.

Doris Lessing’s portrayal of Mary Turner embodies the colonial mentality of white superiority that was prevalent in Southern Rhodesia. Mary, as a white settler, regards herself as inherently superior to the black African population, a perception that manifests in her interactions with Moses, her black servant. Her attitude is “deeply ingrained with condescension and entitlement, which aligns with the broader societal norms that positioned white settlers at the pinnacle of the racial hierarchy”(Cairnie, 2015, p 82). This belief system allowed white settlers to justify their dominance over the colonized, often under the guise of bringing civilization to "lesser" people.

Mary reveals the fragile nature of this sense of superiority. Despite her self-perception as superior, her social and economic circumstances begin to crumble, exposing the inherent instability of the colonial system. Lessing depicts Mary as struggling to maintain her

authority over Moses, particularly as she faces growing isolation and economic insecurity. These insecurities manifest in her increasingly volatile behavior, as she attempts to assert her dominance through verbal abuse and hostility. This is “reflective of Fanon’s assertion that the colonizer's identity is dependent on maintaining control over the colonized” (Nixon, 2022, 117).

Lessing uses “Mary’s psychological deterioration as a critique of the colonial mentality. Her growing desperation and eventual breakdown are symbolic of the broader collapse of the white supremacist order”(Nixon, 2022, p 117). Her superiority, which is “portrayed as a central aspect of her identity, is revealed to be a fragile construct that collapses under the weight of social and economic pressures.” (Cairnie, 2015,79). In the words of Thorpe, “The fragility of this superiority is underscored by her growing dependence on Moses, the very person she seeks to control (1978, p 63). As Rubenstein notes, “Mary’s descent into madness are not just personal but represents the unraveling of the colonial order itself” (1979, p 91). White settler superiority is also evident in the portrayal of other characters in the novel, particularly Dick Turner. Brogan states, “While Dick is portrayed as less overtly racist than Mary, his participation in the colonial economy still reinforces white dominance” (1999, p 122). His reliance on black labor to sustain his failing farm exemplifies the economic exploitation that underpinned the colonial system. Lessing critiques this system. Thus, Lessing’s portrayal of white settler superiority in *The Grass is Singing* critiques both the psychological and economic underpinnings of colonial power. Mary’s deteriorating mental state, coupled with Dick’s economic dependence on black labor, reveals the inherent contradictions of white supremacy. Lessing suggests that the colonial system, while built on the myth of white superiority, is ultimately unsustainable because it relies on the dehumanization and exploitation of the colon

The character of Moses in *The Grass is Singing* is emblematic of the dehumanization of black Africans under the colonial regime. From the moment he is introduced, Moses is presented as a servant, bound to his role within the rigid racial hierarchies that define the colonial system. His interactions with Mary reflect the normalized subjugation of black Africans, who were viewed as inferior and treated as disposable labor. Lessing's depiction of Moses, however, goes beyond a mere representation of victimhood. While Moses is initially portrayed as compliant and submissive, his character evolves throughout the novel, culminating in a profound act of resistance. His growing awareness of his own oppression mirrors Fanon's concept of "colonial alienation, "where the colonized must come to terms with their dehumanization before they can reclaim their identity"(Fanon, 2008,p52). Moses' act of violence against Mary, while shocking, can be seen as a reclaiming of his dignity in the face of systemic oppression.

The dehumanization of Moses is most evident in the way he is treated by Mary. She oscillates between viewing him as a useful tool and a dangerous threat, reflecting the fear that underpinned white perceptions of black Africans during the colonial period. Mary's "racist attitudes are emblematic of the broader colonial mindset, which sought to justify the subjugation of black Africans by portraying them as inherently inferior" (Ashcroft et al., 2010, p 5). Moses' position as a servant reinforces the idea that black Africans were relegated to the lowest social strata, with no hope of upward mobility or personal agency.

At the same time, Lessing complicates this portrayal by giving Moses a sense of interiority and autonomy that defies the expectations placed upon him by the colonial order. His eventual resistance is not just a reaction to Mary's abuse but a broader critique of the entire colonial system. Moses' act of rebellion can be understood as a symbolic rejection of the inferiority imposed upon him by colonial society. Through Moses, Lessing critiques the psychological and social effects of colonialism on the colonized. His character illustrates the

internal struggle faced by many black Africans, who were forced to navigate a system that denied them basic human rights while simultaneously resisting the urge to reclaim their dignity. This duality is central to the novel's critique of colonialism, as it highlights the ways in which racial oppression strips individuals of their humanity while also planting the seeds of resistance.

In *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing demonstrates that colonial power structures in Southern Rhodesia were maintained through a combination of fear, violence, and economic exploitation. The novel vividly depicts how white settlers used these mechanisms to assert their dominance over the black population, ensuring the continuation of the racial hierarchy. Like Mary Turner many white settlers were frightened of the black people. Fear, in particular, is used as a tool of control in the novel. Mary's fear of Moses is not solely based on his physical presence but is emblematic of a larger fear among white settlers—the fear of rebellion and loss of power. This fear manifests in acts of violence, both overt and subtle, as a means of reinforcing racial boundaries. Mary's "violent outbursts toward Moses, particularly as her mental state deteriorates, can be seen as an attempt to reassert her dominance in the face of growing instability" (Rubenstein, 1979, p 92).

The use of physical violence is a recurring theme in the novel, highlighting the systemic nature of colonial oppression. The treatment of black workers on Dick Turner's farm, for example, reflects the normalized brutality that was used to keep the black population in a state of subservience. Lessing portrays this violence not as an isolated occurrence but as an integral part of the colonial system. The novel's depiction of this violence serves to critique the moral bankruptcy of a system that uses brutality to maintain control. Economic exploitation is another key aspect of the colonial power structures depicted in the novel. Dick Turner's dependence on cheap black labor highlights the economic underpinnings of white supremacy. The colonial economy was built on the exploitation of

black workers, who were paid meager wages and treated as disposable resources. This economic exploitation is related to racial discrimination. Lessing's critique of this system is evident in her portrayal of Dick's failing farm, which symbolizes the unsustainability of an economy built on exploitation.

Through the interplay of fear, violence, and economic exploitation, *The Grass is Singing* presents a scathing critique of the colonial power structures in Southern Rhodesia. Lessing reveals the inherent contradictions of a system that relies on the dehumanization of the black population to sustain white dominance, suggesting that such a system is ultimately doomed to collapse under the weight of its own moral failings.

In *The Grass is Singing*, Doris Lessing meticulously portrays the gradual psychological breakdown of Mary Turner, a character whose racism and isolation become the catalysts for her mental decline. Mary's story is not just one of personal tragedy but a reflection of the destructive psychological consequences of living within a colonial system predicated on racial discrimination. From the beginning, Mary exhibits signs of internalized racial superiority, a deeply ingrained belief in her own supremacy as a white woman over the black Africans around her.

Mary's racism becomes more pronounced as she becomes more isolated, both socially and emotionally. Living on the remote farm with little to no social contact outside her interactions with black servants, Mary's racial attitudes intensify. She projects her frustration and bitterness onto Moses, her black servant, whom she views as an embodiment of everything she loathes and fears. Her internalized belief in white superiority is not a source of strength, but rather a fragile construct that unravels as her circumstances worsen. This isolation is central to Mary's psychological decline. With no meaningful human connection, she becomes increasingly paranoid and irrational. Her interactions with Moses become a battleground where her need for control clashes with her growing fear of him. The power

dynamics between them reflect the broader colonial relationship between white settlers and black Africans, but they also expose Mary's psychological instability. Her racism, rather than bolstering her sense of identity, contributes to her unraveling.

Lessing critiques the colonial mindset through Mary's psychological deterioration. Mary's downfall illustrates how the colonial system, while designed to elevate white settlers, also imposes significant psychological costs on them. The racial superiority that Mary clings to is ultimately a source of her destruction, as it prevents her from seeing the humanity in others and leads to her alienation from herself. Her tragic end is not just the result of external circumstances, but the culmination of a life lived within a framework of racial oppression, where isolation and internalized superiority poison the mind.

While Mary Turner's psychological decline is central to *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing also focuses on the psychological impact of colonialism on Moses, the black African servant. Moses is a character whose psyche is shaped by the dual forces of submission and resistance, as he navigates a life of servitude under a colonial regime that dehumanizes him at every turn. His submission is a survival mechanism in a system that demands obedience from black Africans, but it comes at a significant psychological cost. Moses' relationship with Mary reflects the deeply ingrained power dynamics of the colonial system. His role as a servant places him in a position of constant deference, where he is expected to fulfill Mary's every command without question. Yet, even within this submissive role, Moses harbors a sense of resistance, a simmering awareness of the injustice of his situation. This internal conflict is central to Moses' psychological state. His resistance manifests in subtle ways throughout the novel, from his silent defiance to his eventual act of violence against Mary. His submission is not total; rather, it is a survival tactic that masks his growing sense of anger and resentment. This duality is emblematic of the psychological toll that colonialism takes on the colonized. Moses' servitude dehumanizes him, stripping him of his individuality and

reducing him to an object in the eyes of the white settlers. Yet, protests against the imposed dehumanization upon him.

The psychological consequences of servitude are evident in Moses' interactions with Mary. As her behavior becomes more erratic, Moses finds himself in a position of both power and vulnerability. He is acutely aware of the danger he faces as a black man in a white-dominated society, but he also recognizes the growing instability of his oppressor. Lessing uses this dynamic to highlight the psychological complexity of the colonized, who must navigate the constant tension between survival and resistance. Moses' eventual act of violence is not just a response to Mary's abuse but a broader rejection of the colonial system that has dehumanized him. It is an assertion of his identity, a reclaiming of his autonomy in a world that has sought to deny him both.

The Grass is Singing offers a nuanced portrayal of how racial hierarchies inflict psychological harm not only on the colonized but also on the colonizers. The rigid structures of white supremacy that govern Southern Rhodesia are not only oppressive to black Africans like Moses, but they also take a profound toll on white settlers like Mary. These hierarchies create a toxic environment where both the oppressor and the oppressed are trapped in a cycle of fear, hatred, and dehumanization.

For the colonizers, the need to maintain superiority over the colonized leads to a form of moral and psychological decay. Mary's downfall is a direct result of her participation in a system that requires her to dehumanize those beneath her. The psychological strain of upholding racial superiority leads to her increasing paranoia and isolation, as she becomes consumed by the fear of losing control over Moses.

For the colonized, the psychological harm is even more pronounced. Moses' character illustrates the internal conflict faced by those subjected to a life of servitude. The racial hierarchies that dictate his position in society strip him of his autonomy and force him into a

role of submission. Yet, Moses' resistance to this dehumanization reveals the underlying tension within the colonial system. Lessing's portrayal of this mutual harm is particularly evident in the interactions between Mary and Moses. Their relationship is a microcosm of the broader colonial system, where both parties are psychologically damaged by the roles they are forced to play. Mary's increasing instability and Moses' eventual act of violence are both products of the same system, one that dehumanizes both the oppressor and the oppressed.

Through this portrayal, Lessing critiques the colonial system as one that inflicts deep psychological wounds on both sides. The moral decay of the white settlers, exemplified by Mary's breakdown, is paralleled by the psychological toll on the black population, represented by Moses' internal conflict. The novel's exploration of these dynamics underscores the destructive nature of racial hierarchies, revealing the ways in which they perpetuate fear, violence, and dehumanization for all involved.

In *The Grass is Singing*, Doris Lessing masterfully uses the setting of the farm as a symbol of the broader colonial decay and the exploitation inherent in the colonial system. The farm, isolated and desolate, mirrors Mary Turner's own sense of isolation and powerlessness. It is a space where the power dynamics of colonialism are played out in miniature, with Mary and her husband, Dick Turner, struggling to maintain control over both the land and the black laborers who work it. The physical decay of the farm represents the moral and psychological decay of the colonial project itself. The farm also functions as a symbol of exploitation. It is a place where black labor is extracted for the benefit of the white settlers, reinforcing the economic basis of colonialism. Dick Turner's farm is a microcosm of the larger colonial economy, which relies on the exploitation of black Africans to sustain itself. The farm is constantly on the verge of collapse, much like the colonial system that it represents. Despite Dick's efforts, the farm never prospers, highlighting the futility of a system built on inequality and oppression.

Mary's isolation on the farm further emphasizes the alienation and psychological consequences of living within a colonial framework. Her physical separation from the white settler community exacerbates her feelings of powerlessness and leads to her increasing dependence on Moses, her black servant. This isolation symbolizes not only Mary's personal disintegration but also the broader disconnection between the colonizers and the realities of the colonial world they inhabit.

The farm's barren and unproductive landscape is a powerful metaphor for the failures of colonialism. It suggests that the land itself resists the imposition of the colonial order, refusing to yield to the Turners' attempts to cultivate it. This resistance can be seen as symbolic of the broader resistance of colonized peoples, who, like the land, are exploited but ultimately ungovernable. Lessing uses the farm as a space where the contradictions of colonialism are laid bare: the exploitation of both land and people leads not to prosperity but to decay and disillusionment. Narrative Techniques and Their Role in the Critique

Lessing's use of narrative structure in *The Grass is Singing* is central to her critique of colonialism. One of the most striking aspects of the novel's structure is its circularity: the novel begins with the revelation of Mary Turner's death and then traces the events leading up to this moment. This narrative technique creates a sense of inevitability, suggesting that Mary's fate is sealed from the beginning and that her downfall is the result of the colonial system in which she is trapped. By beginning with Mary's death, Lessing emphasizes the futility of the colonial project. The reader knows from the outset that Mary's life will end in tragedy, which casts a shadow over the entire narrative. This structure forces the reader to view the events of the novel through the lens of inevitability, highlighting the inescapability of colonial power dynamics.

Lessing also uses narrative techniques to explore the psychological consequences of colonialism. The novel's third-person omniscient narrator allows the reader to access the

inner thoughts and emotions of both Mary and Moses, providing insight into how the colonial system shapes their identities and actions. This narrative perspective creates a sense of distance between the characters and the reader, reinforcing the idea that they are trapped within a system that controls their lives. The novel's episodic structure, where key moments in Mary's life are presented as a series of disconnected events, mirrors the fragmentation of her psyche as she descends into madness. This disjointed narrative reflects the disintegration of her sense of self, as well as the broader disintegration of the colonial world around her.

This study has explored the presentation of white supremacy and racial discrimination in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, offering a comprehensive analysis of how the novel critiques the colonial system in Southern Rhodesia. Key findings demonstrate that Lessing uses the characters of Mary Turner and Moses to expose the psychological and social consequences of the colonial structure. Mary's gradual psychological deterioration is a direct result of her internalized racial superiority and isolation, while Moses' eventual act of violence symbolizes the resistance and anger brewing under decades of systemic oppression.

The study also highlighted how the farm serves as a symbolic representation of colonial exploitation and decay, illustrating the moral and economic degradation inherent in the colonial order. Lessing's narrative techniques, particularly her use of circular structure and free indirect discourse, further reinforce the themes of inevitability and the dehumanizing effects of colonial power dynamics. By comparing *The Grass is Singing* with other post-colonial texts, the study underscored the shared concerns in literature about colonialism's lasting impact on both colonizers and the colonized. Additionally, the analysis emphasized the novel's contemporary relevance, showing how its themes continue to resonate in current discussions about systemic racism and colonial legacies.

This study contributes to post-colonial literary criticism by providing a nuanced analysis of white supremacy and racial dynamics in *The Grass is Singing*. While much

scholarly work has focused on the psychological aspects of Lessing's characters, this dissertation explores how the novel critiques the socio-economic foundations of the colonial system, linking racial discrimination to material exploitation. The analysis of Mary Turner's and Moses' interactions within the colonial framework offers insights into how colonial hierarchies distort individual identities and relationships, thus enriching the existing scholarship on the psychological and emotional impact of colonialism.

Moreover, this study contributes to a greater understanding of how narrative structure and symbolism function as literary devices to critique colonialism. By examining how Lessing's use of a circular narrative structure reflects the cyclical nature of colonial violence and oppression, this study expands the conversation about the role of form in post-colonial literature.

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