



The Two Opposing Voices in Doris Lessing's

The Grass Is Singing

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Abstract

The Two Opposing Voices in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*

Doris Lessing, the winner of the Noble Prize, is honored as “an evergreen” in British literary history. Being her first fame-establishing novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, is both a chronicle of human disintegration and a beautifully understated social critique. Since its publication in 1950, it has received a worldwide attention from many critics and scholars. And so much ink has spilled on it with the ideas of racism, Marxism, colonialism, feminism, postcolonialism and psychological analysis. However, the previous studies have either overlooked the colonial consciousness of Lessing in this novel or generalized from several African novels without one novel being the focus and study these two coexistent consciousnesses systematically. This thesis, based on the previous studies and implemented by the postcolonial theory, aims to analyze systematically the coexistent anti-colonial consciousness and colonial consciousness in *The Grass Is Singing*.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this thesis can be divided into four parts:

Chapter one serves as a skimming up of previous studies on Lessing and her works. Following the critical reception of Lessing abroad and at home, there are distinctive comments on *The Grass Is Singing* from diverse perspective. However, the previous studies are still inadequate, for they either overlooked the colonial discourse embedded in the anti-colonial discourse, or have not studied this two coexistent consciousnesses systematically with one novel being the focus. Therefore, thesis is still in need, and fills up this gap.

Chapter two deals with the theoretical framework. It mainly introduces some basic concepts of postcolonial theory and its theoretical assumptions with Said as the central figure whose theory will be explained in detail in the hope of resulting in a deep and brand-new understanding of the author and her novel, *The Grass Is Singing*.

Chapter three narrates the anti-colonial consciousness of Doris Lessing in *The*

Grass Is Singing. Under the study of her life experience, social involvement and philosophical ideas on life and human existence, it can be concluded that Lessing is a person of humanism, who cares about human fate and existence. Indisputably and naturally, in this novel, Lessing has expressed her sympathy with the natives, and has given a thoroughgoing and biting criticism of the cruel and hypocritical white colonizers and their colonial system. With her positive characterization of Moses and negative portrait of the white colonizers, Lessing has reversed the colonial myth completely, which holds that the colonized are dirty, filthy, violent and savagery and the colonizers intelligent, civilized, capable of rescuing the colonized from degeneration and savage.

Chapter four discusses the colonial consciousness of the author revealed by her colonial discourse latent in her anti-colonial discourse. Enlightened by the knowledge of her born identity, cultural influence and the social matrix, it can be summed that Lessing is subconsciously an intellect of imperial ideology. This is illustrated fully with her disgusting and vomiting description of the African natives and their living condition, and the favored characterization of the white colonizers, which permeates everywhere in the novel. Additionally, the impending death of Moses, the forced silence of Tony and the madness of Dick prevent the true cause of Mary's death from being known, which is considered as a humiliation to the white community, and therefore threatens their self-assumed superiority over the natives. All these combined together have demonstrated Lessing's acquiescence of the imperialism. Finally, the mysterious and transcendental depiction for the African landscape revives the colonial myth which holds that the colonized environment is a place full of fatal disease, mystery and magical power far beyond human beings' understanding.

All in one word, Lessing has exposed the colonial consciousness under her anti-colonial consciousness in the novel. This thesis, based on the previous studies, takes this two opposing voices into exploration from the angle of Postcolonialism, aiming to fruit a brand new understanding of Lessing and her novel, *The Grass Is Singing*.

KEYWORDS: postcolonialism; anti-colonial consciousness; colonial consciousness

摘要

多丽丝·莱辛诺贝尔奖的获得者，被誉为英国文学史上一颗“常青树”。确立其名声的《野草在歌唱》不仅是一部人类崩溃的史诗，而且是一部委婉的社会批评。自其1950年发行以来，得到了世界范围内众多评论家和学者的青睐，关注的视角也多从种族主义、马克思主义、殖民主义、女性主义、后殖民主义和心理剖析。但是之前的研究不是忽视了作者在这部小说中所表现的殖民意识就是对她众多非洲作品进行综合研究而没有以某一具体文本来就这两种意识做一个系统的分析。本论文基于前人研究之上，从后殖民主义理论出发，旨在分析莱辛在《野草在歌唱》中所发出的两种相悖的声音，即反殖民意识和殖民意识。

除了引言和结论外，本论文可分为四章：

第一章是对作者及其作品的评论进行一个简单介绍。随着国内外对莱辛的关注，对其作品《野草在歌唱》也有很多述评。但之前的研究仍不足，因为不是忽略了作者在小说中的殖民意识就是没有对她的殖民意识和反殖民意识以某一具体文本为参照，并在后殖民理论的支撑下作系统的探究。因此，此论文仍有必要来填充这个空白。

第二章是理论框架。主要介绍后殖民理论的一些基本概念及其发展历史，理论构想和代表人物。在这些代表人物中，赛义德的《东方主义》及《文化与帝国主义》将是讨论的重点。最后是后殖民理论的研究策略。

第三章讲述作者在《野草在歌唱》的反殖民主义意识。从其生活经历，从事的社会活动和对于生活及人类的哲学思想来说，莱辛堪为以为关心人类命运及生存的人文主义者。无可置疑的在这部小说中，莱辛自然而然地流露出对土著人的同情，对殖民者及其殖民体系的残忍和虚伪进行了彻底辛、辣的批判。莱辛通过对黑人摩西的正面描述及对白人殖民者的反面刻画对殖民神话所宣扬的被殖民者肮脏、污秽、残暴、野蛮及殖民者聪慧、文明、能把被殖民者从堕落及野蛮中拯救出来来了个釜底抽薪。

第四章讨论作者隐含于反殖民话语中的殖民话语所显示的殖民意识。通过探讨作者的身份、文化影响及社会局势可以得出作者在潜意识里是一位具有帝国主义思想的知识分子。她对非洲土著人及其生活状况那令人厌恶、反感的描写充斥

小说的每一部分。另外摩西的死亡、托尼的被迫沉默及迪克的发疯都使玛丽的死亡真正原因无从知晓。因为它对白人来说是一个奇耻大辱，威胁到了他们自以为是的优越感。事实的掩盖也说明莱辛对帝国主义的默认。最后神秘而超验的非洲土地的描述复活了白人杜撰的殖民神话。在莱辛的笔下，非洲是一个疾病蔓延，人类无法理解的神秘，充满魔力的地方。

简言之，莱辛在其明显的反殖民意识下也暴露了其殖民意识。本论文在前人研究的基础上，从后殖民理论出发，来探讨这两种并存的相悖的声音，旨在使读者对莱辛及其作品《野草在歌唱》有一个崭新的认识。

关键词：后殖民主义；反殖民意识；殖民意识

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Introduction

Doris Lessing, honored as “an evergreen” is “indisputably a major figure in English literature of the twentieth century”(Oates 1972:38). There is no lack of study of her works to support that evaluation. Lessing, being the winner of Nobel Prize, enjoys international celebrity and is considered as one of the greatest female writers. In her Nobel Prize citation, it writes that she is “that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny”. Since her first novel *The Grass Is Singing*, Lessing is always ready to break new ground in avant-garde writing techniques and genres and presents a multifarious fictional world to the readers.

She was born Doris May Tayler in Persia (now Iran) on October 22, 1919, when half of Europe was a graveyard, and people were dying in millions all over the world. Her parents were both British: her father, who had been crippled in World War I, was a clerk in the Imperial Bank of Persia; her mother Emily McVeagh had been a nurse in the old Royal Free Hospital in East London. Suffering from both physical pain and psychological “shell shock” and feeling betrayed by the nation, her father chose to leave England with his wife and went to Kermanshah (now Persia) and it was there Lessing was born. Although Lessing did not experience the war personally, the shadow of his father’s injury and war-stricken Europe hung over the family as well. Lessing used to feel the grey cloud of the war hanging over her childhood, and because of this, that she, even from her childhood, “felt the struggling panicky need to escape” (*Under My Skin* 10).

In Lessing’s latest novella in 2008 *Alfred & Emily*, based on her parents’ archetypes, the heroine Emily turned an educator, thousands of people coming to her funeral, because Lessing believed that her mother was a fantastic woman as Emily. The war deprived her mother and countless fantastic people of the chances to make greater accomplishment and thus changed the fate of countless people. Had it not for the war, Doris Lessing might live peacefully and comfortably on the land of Britain, or she might not even have been born since her parents would not have met. The pessimistic mode penetrates throughout all of Lessing’s works.

In 1925, attracted by the promise of getting rich through maize farming, the family moved to the British colony in southern Rhodesia, when Lessing was about five years old. Her father made loans and lent 3000 acres of land to start farming. Doris's mother adapted to the rough life in the settlement, energetically trying to reproduce what was, in her view, a civilized life among savages; but her father did not, and the thousand-odd acres of bush he had bought failed to yield the promised wealth.

Doris and her family lived on an isolated farm on the edge of the veld where her father made a very meager living growing maize and tobacco and the farm never prospered (Whittaker 1988:1). The frontier situation that caused her parents so much distress, however, had compensations for the young Doris. The natural world, which she explored with her brother Harry, was a retreat from an otherwise miserable existence. This early freedom gave Doris Lessing lifelong independence of mind. The visionary elements in her writing, which shine through even the most realistic of her surfaces, owe much to her own solitary childhood experiences on the veld (Pickering 1990:2).

Lessing has described her childhood as an uneven mix of some pleasure and much pain. Her mother, obsessed with raising a proper daughter, enforced a rigid system of rules at home, then placed Doris in a convent school, where nuns terrified them with stories of hell and damnation. Lessing was later sent to an all-girls high school in the capital of Salisbury, from which she soon dropped out, partly because of the financial predicament the family was in, partly because she got a pine eye. She was thirteen; and it was the end of her formal education.

But like other women writers from southern Africa who did not graduate from high school, Lessing made herself a self-educated intellectual. She commented that unhappy childhood seems to produce fiction writers. "Yes, I think that is true. Though it wasn't apparent to me then. Of course, I wasn't thinking in terms of being a writer then--I was just thinking about how to escape, all the time." (Lessing 1975:19) The parcels of books ordered from London fed her imagination, laying out other worlds for her to escape into. Lessing's early reading included Dickens, Scott, Stevenson, and Kipling; later she discovered D. H. Lawrence, Stendhal, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. In

her early writings, Lessing was deeply influenced by their realistic narrative technique. Bedtime stories also nurtured her youth. Doris's early years were also spent absorbing her father's bitter memories of World War I.

The young Doris was fond of wandering in the wilderness with her dog and a gun. The hostile environment in South Africa shaped her strong personality while witnessing all the inhumanity and injustice in south Rhodesia, and to a large degree determined her unique observation and standpoint. As Lessing herself once concluded the life in South Africa, "writers brought up in Africa have many advantages---being at the center of a modern battlefield; part of a society in rapid, dramatic change. But in a long run it can also be a handicap: to wake up every morning with one's eyes on a fresh evidence of inhumanity; to be reminded twenty times a day of injustice, and always the same brand of it, can be limiting." (Lessing 1979: 6)

In flight from her mother, Lessing left home when she was fifteen and took job as a nursemaid. During that time she was indulged in elaborate romantic fantasies. She was also writing stories, and sold two to magazines in South Africa. In 1937 she moved to Salisbury, where she worked as a telephone operator for a year, later as a legal secretary, and then as a Hansard secretary in the Rhodesia parliament. It was a time shortly before the Second World War. Doris found herself in an ingrown, intensely race and class-conscious colonial society. At the age of nineteen, she married Frank Wisdom, and had two children. A few years later, feeling trapped in a fixed role that she feared would destroy her, she left her family, remaining in Salisbury. During the war Doris Lessing became increasingly interested in politics, and she joined a small Marxist group, in which there were no distinctions of race. Doris commented:

There was a time in my life when I was a member of a communist group which was pure----they had no contact with any kind of reality. It must have been blessed by Lenin from his grave, it was so pure...for a period of about three years, a group of enormously idealistic and mostly extremely intellectual people created a communist party in a vacuum which no existing communist party anywhere in the world would have recognized

as such (Thorpe 1978: 7).

Soon she was drawn to the like-minded members of the Left Book Club, a group of Communists, among which Gottfried Lessing was a central member, and shortly after she joined, they got married and had a son. The second marriage also ended up in divorce in 1949. After this, Doris has not remarried and has said: "I do not think marriage is one of my talents. I have been happier unmarried than married." (Whittaker 1988:12) The psychological, emotional and intellectual overload of the war years in Salisbury led Doris to think of emigration to England for, as she observed in 1957, "England seems to me the ideal country to live in because it is quiet and unstimulating and leaves you in peace" (Maschler 1957: 82). During the postwar years, Lessing became increasingly disillusioned with the Communist movement, which she left. In 1949 Doris Lessing left Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, for England, taking with her the completed manuscript of her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing* (1950), which was an immediate success after being published.

Establishing herself in London was a struggle at first. Doris brought with her the typescript of *The Grass Is Singing* and secured a publisher, who issued the work in 1950. Through this much celebrated first novel, Doris realized her long-desired vocation, as she told in 1964: "I wrote some bad novels in my teens. I always knew I would be a writer, but not until I was quite old----26 or 7----did I realize I'd better stop saying I was going to be one and get down to business" (Lessing 1975: 46). Doris burst upon the British literary scene with *The Grass Is Singing* and she has remained at the top ever since. During her following creative span, Doris has ever been active on the literary stage. She has established herself as a fiction writer, a poet, an essayist, a playwright, a critic and a journalist.

In the following decades, hailed as prolific, intellectual and versatile, she has published nearly 40 well-known books, including novels, short stories, autobiography, poetry, and drama, among which the most brilliant ones include: *Children of Violence - Series* (1952-1969), *The Golden Notebook*(1962),*African Stories*(1964),*The Summer before the Dark*(1973),*The Memoirs of A Survivor*(1975),and others. She has received many prizes for her excellent works: Somerset Maugham Award of the Society of

Authors for Five: *Short Novels*(1954),the Booker Prize for *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*(1971), French Prix Medicis for *The Notebook*(1976),Austrian State Prize for European Literature(1982),German Federal Republic Shakespeare Prize(1982),etc. She received Honorary Degree from Harvard University in 1995, and was appointed a Companion of Honor by Queen Elizabeth II. Lessing has begun to receive the extensive critical attention she deserves.

Basically a realist, most of her works are mainly concerned with the lives of women, their psychology, relationship with men and the surroundings, the conflicts between the realities and the expectations. In her first novel *The Grass Is Singing*, she depicts Mary a woman who is driven to the verge of madness and invites death by the external oppression and inner psychological concerns. In her five-volume semi-autobiographic Bildungsroman, *Children of Violence*, which includes *Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, *Landlocked*, *A Ripple from the Storm* and *The Four-gated City*, Lessing tells the story of Martha Quest, in Lamia Tayeb's words, "a female odyssey undertaken in search of roots and identity" (Xie 2008). In the fifth novel, the author predicts that Britain and the whole world would face a doom in the future. In her "extremely carefully constructed" *The Golden Notebook*, one of Lessing's most reclaimed novels, the woman writer Anna Wulf has troubled in facing the "everything-is-cracking-up" society. This novel is rendered as the "female Bible" by the feminists.

She took interest in writing in the mythic mode in the 1970s. During this period, Lessing had created novels such as *Briefing for A Descent into Hell*(1971), *The Summer before the Dark* (1973) and *The Memoirs of A Survivor*(1974) . Since 1979 she has produced a series of space fiction under the title *Canopus in Argos: Archives*, which are *Shikasta Re: Colonized Planet 5*, *The Marriage between Zones Three, Four, and Five Canopus in Argos*, *The Sirian Experiments Canopus in Argos: Archives*, *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8 Canopus in Argos* and *The Sentimental Agents in the Volyen Empire Canopus in Argos*. These novels are regarded as highly implicative to the political realities in the contemporary world but are not quite well responded. The veteran U. S. literary critic Harold Bloom even describes them as

“quite unreadable”, “fourth-rate science fiction” (Xie 2008).

After that, she reverted back to the realistic mode, though still exhibiting some traces of fantasy at times. In this decade, she has published *The Diary of A Good Neighbor* (1983) and *If the Old Could...*(1984) under the pseudonym of Jane Somers. The novel concentrates on the life of women and the aging problem as well. In them Lessing discusses matters such as human dignity and familial commitment. Similar themes are also reflected in her novel *Love, Again* (1996). In 1985 she published *The Good Terrorist*, describing the restless life of an angry young woman Alice and other young men, who tried to give vent to their anger to the world but failed in the end. Three years later, Lessing published a novel with gothic atmosphere *The Fifth Child*, depicting the crisis and trouble brought up in the family by the birth of an abnormal child, Ben. In 2000, Lessing wrote the sequel *Ben, in the World*, in which the miserable life of Ben continues till Ben’s committing suicide. Besides, Lessing had written a number of excellent short stories such as *African Stories*(1964), and *The Story of A Non-marrying Man*(1972) and *This Was the Old Chief’s Country*(1973). Most of them are based on her experiences in South Africa and have received considerable attention from the critics.

Doris Lessing’s themes are wide and varied: social problems, political concerns, racial questions, and feminist views on life and love relationships, but she focuses mostly on black-white relations and on the life of the woman in a male-oriented world. Her commitment to life and society is evident in all her fiction. The criticism on her, which began in the 1960s, begins to flood in the following decades in the western world. And in the 1990s, the scholars at home began to pay attention to her works. This thesis takes her maiden work into analysis from the perspective of postcolonialism in the hope of enriching the understanding of her first successful novel, *The Grass Is Singing*.

The Grass Is Singing was written before Lessing left Rhodesia. The novel is set on the colonized southern African land---Rhodesia. Such relations as the individual and the collective, black and white, men and women, the settlers and the land, role and identity, the Freudian “nightmare repetition” and the Jungian task of individuation are

related in the novel. The novel firstly reveals South Africa's present social situation under the racial discrimination and depicts the poor white immigrants' hard living without any concealment. But before it, Africa was only a piece of uncivilized dark continent, seldom had the tourists set foot in that field. What people knew is limited to the one-sided interpretation of the white writers who are racialists.

Mary, the heroine of the novel, spends her childhood in the underdeveloped town with her parents who always quarreled with each other. There she accepts the idea of hating "the poor negroes", but the unfortunate family life makes her expect a kind of happy and free life without poverty and oppression. Therefore, when she leaves the boarding school and takes a job in an office in the town, she feels satisfied though the job is boring. After her parents' death, she thinks she is released from the unhappy past, having no link with it at all. Mary instinctively resists marriage and men because of the everlasting family quarrel and her wretched father. She wishes to live a single free life. But when she is thirty, people look at her with curious eyes, which makes her frightened and upset. The secular prejudice forces her to realize that she has to find a husband. The idea no doubt pushes her into an unfortunate abyss. When she meets Dick Turner, she immediately agrees to marry him though she does not love him.

After their marriage, Mary goes to the farm with Dick. There she finds Dick is poverty-stricken. She tries to change the outlook of their home, but fails to change their poverty at the root. At last Mary wants to leave the farm and goes back to her former life; however she is deserted by it. She has no other choice but returns to the farm with Dick who comes to the town to find her, which hints that the destiny puts Mary in the kind of life that her mother lives. From then on, she becomes numb and loses her interest in everything until a native servant Moses appears in the house unexpectedly. They break the taboo of their living district and develop an intimate relationship.

It seems that Mary becomes an ordinary woman before Moses, while in fact it is rather dangerous because their ambiguous relation will destroy both of them, even Dick—the house master Dick, an honest and kind-hearted farmer, works hard on his farm, but lacks the knowledge of how to run a farm well. He always carries out his

unrealistic plans without considering the results, which only puts him into a much poorer and harder condition. On the contrary, the Whites like Charlie Slatter are the lucky dogs of the immigrant life. They become rich by force or trickery and control the social life of Rhodesia. Though Dick is also an immigrant, his economic conditions differ from Charlie's. What's more, Dick is even oppressed by Charlie who drools over Dick's farm for a long time. At last Charlie makes his dream come true, but he pretends to be kind to and pitiful of Dick, concealing his greedy nature under his hypocritical appearance.

Moses is the only native described as a human in the novel. When he first meets Mary, he is a hired laborer while Mary is a cold-blooded employer. But when he comes to the Turners, he finds that Mary lives in poverty and despair. So he forgives her for her excessive demands, and tries to comfort her. Gradually, their relationship changes into an intimate one. However, he later finds that the newcomer Tony Marston makes Mary desert him and shout at him to go away cruelly. He cannot bear any more and murders Mary because of humiliation and wrath. After the murder, Moses stands in the bush to wait for the police. Though Moses becomes a murderer, he still has the shining human nature of bravery, which has reversed the colonial discourse composed by the white.

Since the publication of *The Grass Is Singing*, many scholars at home and abroad have studied it from different angles, such as , racism, Marxism, colonialism, humanism, feminism and psychological analysis. The study in this thesis is supplemented by the theory of postcolonialism. In the previous studies, the anti-colonial consciousness of Doris Lessing has often been explored, but a systematical study of her colonial discourse is still a barren area. Though researches relating to this point have been done, it is still inadequate, for they either overlooked the colonial discourse embedded in the anti-colonial discourse, or have not studied the colonial consciousness systematically with one novel being the focus. Therefore this thesis is still in need, and fills up this gap. So with *The Grass Is Singing* being the focus, this paper aims to explore the anti-colonial and colonial consciousness of the author, Doris Lessing.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this thesis can be divided into four parts:

Chapter one serves as a skimming up of previous studies on Lessing and her works. Following the critical reception of Lessing abroad and at home, there are distinctive comments on *The Grass Is Singing* from diverse perspective. However, the previous studies are still inadequate, for they either overlooked the colonial discourse embedded in the anti-colonial discourse, or have not studied it systematically with one novel being the focus. Therefore, thesis is still in need, and fills up this gap.

Chapter two deals with the theoretical framework. It mainly introduces some basic concepts of postcolonial theory and its theoretical assumptions with Said as the central figure whose theory will be explained in detail in the hope of resulting in a deep and brand-new understanding of the author and her novel, *The Grass Is Singing*.

Chapter three narrates the anti-colonial consciousness of Doris Lessing in *The Grass Is Singing*. Under the study of her life experience, social involvement and philosophical ideas on life and human existence, it can be concluded that Lessing is a person of humanism, who cares about human fate and existence. Indisputably and naturally, in this novel, Lessing has expressed her sympathy with the natives, and has given a thoroughgoing and biting criticism of the cruel and hypocritical white colonizers and their colonial system. With her positive characterization of Moses and negative portrait of the white colonizers, Lessing has reversed the colonial myth completely, which holds that the colonized are dirty, filthy, violent and savagery and the colonizers intelligent, civilized, capable of rescuing the colonized from degeneration and savage.

Chapter four discusses the colonial consciousness of the author revealed by her colonial discourse latent in her anti-colonial discourse. Enlightened by the knowledge of her identity, cultural influence and the social matrix, it can be summed that Lessing is subconsciously an intellect of imperial ideology. This is illustrated fully with her disgusting and vomiting description of the African natives and their living condition, and the favorable characterization of the white colonizers, which permeates everywhere in the novel.

Additionally, the impending death of Moses, the forced silence of Tony and the madness of Dick prevent the true cause of Mary's death from being known, which is considered as a humiliation to the whole white community, and therefore threatens their self-assumed superiority over the natives. All these combined together have demonstrated Lessing's acquiescence of the imperialism. Finally, the mysterious and transcendental depiction for the African landscape revives the colonial myth which holds that the colonized environment is a place full of fatal disease, mysterious and magical power far beyond human beings' understanding.

All in one word, Lessing has exposed the colonial consciousness under her anti-colonial consciousness in the novel. This thesis, based on the previous studies, takes this two opposing voices into exploration from the angle of postcolonialism, aiming to fruit a brand-new understanding of Lessing and her novel, *The Grass Is Singing*. Since it is based on the previous studies, it is incisive to have a look at them.

Chapter One Literature Review

Lessing's constant experiment with different themes, genres, and techniques, and the shift from "realistic writing to fantasy writing or visionary writing"(Kaplan and Rose 1988: 1), to a certain degree, inspire "a body of comment and analysis that is broad in scope, multifaceted in approach, cooperative in nature, and continually evolving"(Ibid 10). After relatively undeserved negligence of Lessing in the 1960s, we have seen a proliferation of criticism on Doris Lessing since the 1970s, with the successive PLMA special sessions on her, the establishment of Doris Lessing Society, and the publication of *Doris Lessing Newsletters*, which started in 1976. *Contemporary Literature* (Autumn 1973), and *Modern Fiction Studies* (Spring 1980) published special issues devoted entirely to Lessing criticism. A veritable legion of scholars and common readers have produced numerous monographs, dissertations, and articles on her work.

Mona Knapp's *Doris Lessing* (1984) is "an intelligent and comprehensive general introduction to Lessing's fiction through Volume V of *Canopus in Argos*... It is particularly helpful in showing thematic and structural relationship among Lessing's many works," including her plays, poetry and nonfiction (Fishburn 1987: 26). Other general studies on Lessing include Lorna Sage's *Doris Lessing* (1983), Jeannette Kings's *Doris Lessing* (1989), Jean Pickering's *Understanding Doris Lessing* (1990), and Margaret Moan Rowe's *Doris Lessing* (Women Writers) (1994).

The 1990s relished a large production of book-length criticism on Doris Lessing. Anita Myles's *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility* (1991: vi) praises Lessing for "[leaving] behind the established ways and means of dealing with subjects of this kind and [having] changed the 'incipient clichés of the mid-century experience' by evolving a form that would express the major themes". It offers detailed discussion on "the thematic evolution of the novelist from microcosmic understanding to a sense of macrocosmic awareness," focusing on the four themes—"apartheid, love, view of life and the vision of history, "—which "constitute the fabric of her fictive universe"

(ibid. vi-vii).

Among the numerous criticisms arranging widely in the theoretical milieu, approaches such as feminist theory, Marxist perspective, psychoanalysis (Jungian and Freudian theory, and the existential theory of R. D. Laing), mystic perspective, colonial/postcolonial perspective, and critical focus on aesthetics and narrative techniques stand out as very productive, although Lessing herself, not pleased with these compartmental academic readings, observes, "The critics slap labels on you and then expect you to talk inside their terms."

The first fruitful approach to interpreting Lessing's work is feminism. Lessing is noted for her exploration of "philosophical questions through the medium of female experience" (Kaplan and Rose 1988: 3). Regarded as the equivalent of *The Second Sex* in English, *The Golden Notebook*, is placed on the pedestal as a creed of "female self-discovery and self-scrutiny" (Showalter 1977: 298). Roberta Rubenstein, an authoritative Lessing scholar, regards this masterpiece as "one of the most profound explorations of a woman's complex consciousness that exists in fiction" (Sprague 1987: 83). A magisterial reading in the feminist context is Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), in which an assumption is generated within feminist criticism that women writers consciously position themselves in a unitary tradition of writing (Taylor 1982: 213). Judith Kegan Gardiner's *Rhys, Stead, Lessing, and the politics of Empathy* (1989) analyses Lessing's empathetic engagement in her writing as a woman writer. Critical exploration of women's search for identity as a crucial theme in Lessing's work includes Catherine R. Stimpson's "Doris Lessing and the Parable of Growth," Patrica Meyer Spacks's "Free Women," and some insightful essays collected in *Doris Lessing: The Alchemy of Survival* (1988) and books such as Carol P. Christ's *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (1980), Roxanne J. Fand's *Reconstructing Subjectivity in Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood* (1999), and Inta Ezergailis's *The Divided Self: Analysis of Novels by Christa Wolf, Ingeborg Bachmann, Doris Lessing and Others* (1982). However, critical responses to Lessing in the feminist context are not monotonous. Ruth Whittaker's observation on the reception of *The Golden Notebook* serves as a proof:

The pendulum swings from the lack of feminist response to the novel on its publication in 1962 (since the climate for such a women's movement, and now to its rejection by feminists as an inadequate statement of their use. (1988: 9)

As to the change in the critical reception, Whittaker observes, "The truth is that [Lessing] has never been a feminist. She is a woman novelist whose antennae sensed the crucial issues of feminism and wrote about them long before they were common currency"(ibid. 9).

Feminist approach discloses Lessing's ambiguous stance in feminist issues. However, it has some limitations: (1) this reading only focuses on Lessing's feminist texts, neglecting a large portion of her corpus such as space fiction. It tends to dismiss the richness in Lessing's writing. Responding to the dominant feminist reading of her novel, Lessing remarks "The feminists claimed me for one of theirs, which made me very angry because I don't like this separation off into sheep and goats. And I've never written specially either for men or women" (Ingersoll 1996: 224). Therefore, in the 1971 Preface to *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing tried hard to divert readers' attention to one of the salient aspects of the novel: the form. (2)Feminist reading neglects the influence of Lessing's experience as an ex-colonial, failing to expose Lessing's Eurocentric stance in her description of females' quest for identity.

The second operative theoretical paradigm to understand Doris Lessing's works is Marxist criticism. Most critical production at the time lays stress on the relationship between the individual and the collective, which is regarded as a recurrent theme by Lessing herself, "this is a study of the individual conscience in its relation with the collective"(Schlueter 1977: 12). Lessing insists on her commitment to literature for the enhancement of the social consciousness of the masses and the betterment of the society. Some critics criticize her novels as explicitly socialist, replete with didactic messages. In *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes* (1962), James Gordin points out that "Lessing's kind of intensity is simultaneously her greatest distinction and her principal defect"(86). Essays collected in *Doris Lessing: The Alchemy of Survival* unravel the differences between critics with a Marxist approach

to Lessing. Frederick C. Stern argues that “the subject matter of her novels is, in large part, the politics of the periods through which her characters live” (Kaplan and Rose 1988: 43); Molly Hite remarks that Lessing “uses an essentially Marxist theoretical framework unself-consciously”(Ibid 14). Michele Zak argues, in “*The Grass Is Singing: A Little Novel about the Emotions*,” that “the emotions portrayed in this work are not purely personal emotions rooted in psychological conflict but the products of society” (Cederstrom 1990: 18) and that Lessing “portray[s] the dialectical relationship that Marxism insists always exists between the individual circumstances of one’s life and the material nature of the social and economic system with which one lives” (Pratt 1974: 64). Jean Pickering’s “Marxism and Madness: The Two Faces of Doris Lessing’s Myth” is an argumentation of “salvation through Marxism and salvation through madness,” “which are two manifestations of the underlying image that structures [Lessing’s] entire world view” (1990: 18).

However, if this criticism has some validity in analyzing Lessing’s early strongly socially-oriented works, it proves invalid when applied to the inner space novels, which dive deep into the psychic recesses of the characters. It fails to perceive the subtle psychological complexities that permeate Lessing’s later works such as *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, *The Summer Before the Dark*, *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, in which dreams become more salient as a vehicle of disclosing the meaning of the protagonists’ waking life and the ways to self-healing.

The third is Jungian/psychoanalysis perspective—Freudian and Jungian approaches and existential theory of R. D. Laing. Jung’s influence on Lessing has been convincingly assumed by some American critics (Sprague 1987: 3). Such a critical approach echoes Lessing’s assertion in the Epigraph to *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* that “there is never anywhere to go but in” (ibid.).

Rubenstein’s study in *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms of Consciousness* (1979) shows that “the center of Lessing’s fictional universe is the perceiving mind as it translates the phenomenal world through its own experience”(1979: 3). Critics note Lessing’s internalization of Jung’s concept of “individuation,” “the process by which an individual works towards ‘wholeness’

through acknowledgement and incorporation of the different aspects of personality”(Whittaker 1988:10). Lorelei Cederstrom’s book *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche: Jungian Patterns in the Novels of Doris Lessing* (1990) discusses Jungian archetypal patterns and symbols in Lessing’s works and analyzes “the significance of the individual in effecting social change, which is decidedly Jungian view” in Lessing’s work (1990: 5). In her essay “The Principal Archetypal Elements of *The Golden Notebook*,” Cederstrom reads the novel as “the depiction of an archetypal rite of passage”(ibid. 50). Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis’s nine-essay collection *Spiritual Exploration in the Works of Doris Lessing* (1999) is an enlightening entity of the exploration of Lessing’s spirituality. Carlo Christ adapts “the mythic paradigms of Jung, Campbell, and Frye” to “elucidate the particular dimensions of women’s spiritual quest.” Sydney Janet Kaplan identifies “an archetypal quest motif” in Lessing’s work (Kaplan and Rose 1988: 22).

Lessing’s writings are also influenced by Laing theory popular in the 1960s. Jean Pickering acknowledges philosophical contexts for *The Golden Notebook*, namely “socialist realism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, and antipsychiatry” in her article (1989: 43). Marjorie Lightfoot argues that Lessing has fictionalized the main concepts of Laing’s antipsychiatry in *The Golden Notebook* (60). Marion Vlastos argues in “Doris Lessing and R. D. Laing: Psychopolitics and Prophecy” that “revolutionizing the consciousness of man” is a way to attack a social problem (1989: 245).

As to the mystic perspective, the critical interest in Sufism in Lessing’s work was partially aroused by the popularity of Sufism in the 1960s, which was the spiritual refill in the spiritually vacuum of the post-war years, and partially invoked by Lessing’s persistent and enthusiastic announcement of mystical proclivities. Two important books are worthy of mentioning. Shadia S. Fahim’s *Doris Lessing: Sufi Equilibrium and the Form of the Novel* (1994) examines the rationale of Lessing’s development from the tradition of classical realism to mysticism and form of science fiction, which verges on myth and Oriental fables, and discusses the unifying motifs which provide a coherent shape to her artistic vision in her consistent search for equilibrium. Muge Galin’s book *Between East and West: Sufism in the Novels of*

Doris Lessing (1997) is a study on how Lessing's "exposure to a particular aspect of the classical sufi way has shaped her work," "pull[ing] these topics more mutually illuminating"(1994: xvii). In "The More Recent Writings: Sufism, Mysticism and Politics," Ann Scott regards Lessing's "use of religious symbolism" as "an attempt at transcending ordinary limitation in language by drawing on a variety of conceptual and written traditions and integrating facets of them in her fiction"(1982: 187). Ingrid Holmquist's published dissertation *From Society to Nature: A Study of Doris Lessing's Children of Violence* argues how social or sociological consciousness is shifted to another form of consciousness termed nature versus culture by exploring "the female perspective which informs the two modes of consciousness"(1980: 1).

Besides the four theoretical approaches, critical attention to the techniques and aesthetics of Lessing's work proves to be fructifying. The 1971 Preface to *The Golden Notebook* facilitates the new and fruitful examination directed at "the meaning of the novel's shape." Exploration of the dynamic relations between form and theme in Lessing's works becomes a new focus in criticism. Lessing's experiment with the form of novel is the direct result of her feel of "the poverty of language as an instrument" to explain things people experienced (Ingersoll 1996: 66). She admits that *The Memoirs of a Survivor* is the direct result of her "meditating about the inadequacy of language" (Ibid. 67). *The Golden Notebook*, generally thought to represent Lessing's furthest aesthetic reach, is acclaimed by critics as the perfect combination of form and theme. Katherine Fishburn observes that "as these divisions suggest, [*The Golden Notebook*] itself is about wholeness and fragmentation, the need to avoid labels" (1987: 17). Patricia Waugh's *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984) diverts critical attention to the metafictional clues scattered through Lessing's work and analyzes the self-reflectivity of her novel. In "Nostalgia and Irony: The Postmodern Order of *The Golden Notebook*," Betsy Draine argues that "the form of [*The Golden Notebook*] responds to and expresses the dynamic interplay of order and chaos" (1980: 31). Gayle Greene draws parallel between Martha's quest for "something new" and Lessing's probing of new narrative form in *Landlocked*, a departure from the realistic mode characteristic of the first

three novels in the *Children of Violence* series. She concludes that the twofold quest, spiritual and formal, leads to Lessing's insight into Sufism. Claire Sprague's *Rereading Doris Lessing: Narrative Patterns of Doubling and Repetition* (1987) is an argument that Lessing's "profoundly dialectical consciousness" is displayed in both her characters and narrative patterns. Linda E. Chown in *Narrative Authority and Homeostasis in the Novels of Doris Lessing and Carmen Martin Gaité* (1990), a comparative study in the perspective of narratology, argues that "successful narrative authority depends on maintaining artistic homeostasis: a balance of dark sense involvement and artistic control" (6).

Unfortunately, psychoanalysis theory, mystic theory, and the critical focus on Lessing's aesthetics and narrative techniques all neglect the important role her colonial experience plays in her writing. Although all these criticisms, to a certain degree, contribute to the present study, the theoretical approach, which is most closely related to the present study, is colonial/postcolonial perspective, which attaches great importance to Lessing's colonial experience.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

The publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 marked the beginning of postcolonial criticism and ushered in a new era, which has produced a large legion of criticism on literary works conducted from the perspective of colonial and postcolonial reading. In his work, Said deconstructs Western mainstream culture by pointing out the constructed essence of the dichotomy between the West and the East and that the European center is man-made. According to Said, nineteenth-century Europeans tried to justify their territorial conquests by propagating a manufactured belief called "Orientalism": the creation of non-European stereotypes that suggested so-called Orientals were indolent, thoughtless, sexually immoral, unreliable, and demented (Bressler 2007: 240). For Said, the West produced the Orient as its opposite, as its non-self. The West is masculine, democratic, rational, dynamic, progressive, and moral; while the East is feminine, sensual, voiceless, backward, and duplicitous.

Said's *Orientalism* constructs the long history Franco-British-American writings on the near eastern orient as a massive, systematic, disciplinary discourse engaged not merely in depicting but also in structuring and ruling over the Orient in a consistently racist, sexist, and imperialistic manner. Orientalism is an academic discipline or corporate institution, but basically it is the way the colonizer thinks about, talks about and represents the colonized, based on a division of two parts (West and East) in general terms (despotism/ democracy, sensuality/self-control, mystical/sensible, intrigue/straightforwardness, etc.). In Orientalism sporadic observations (typecasting) quickly become generalizations (types) and criteria for value judgments (stereotypes). Orientalism as power is not a lie that can be disproved. It creates the Orient for the imperialist political ambitions and administrations. Worse, the Orient unconsciously identify themselves with this self created by the Orientalists (朱 2008:287).

The European conquerors, Said notes, believed that they were accurately describing the inhabitants of their newly acquired lands in "the east." What they fail to realize, maintains Said, is that all human knowledge can be viewed only through

one's political, cultural, and ideological framework. No theory, either political or literary, can be totally objective. In effect, the colonizers were revealing their unconscious desires for power, wealth, and domination, not the nature of the colonized subjects (Bressler 2007: 240).

According to Said, Orientalism mainly involves three aspects. The first is that Orientalism, claiming to be an objective academic scholarship, is more associated with politics in that it provides assistance for European and American expansion and colonization. The second is that Orientalism has helped Europeans and Americans to establish their self-image. The construction of identity in every age and society, according to Said, involves the establishing of opposites and the "Other". The third is that Orientalism has distorted eastern culture because the westerners take an essentialized stance in their outlook. In other words, Orientalism regards Eastern culture as fixed and changeless, incapable of defining self. This stereotyped view establishes for the Westerners a sense of cultural and intellectual superiority.

In Western intellectual discourse, the Easterners are constructed as "Other", different from them, reduced to silence and demeaned as an image to be dominated and marginalized. The binary opposition between the Orient and Occident and the formation of the "Other" is a process of deduced representation. These operations all assume the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the East. This is the monologue of the West and the Orient itself is silent and voiceless. The Orientals can not represent themselves, they must be represented. Thus it is for the West to represent and speak for the Orient. This naming of the Orient by the west is partially political, partially religious and partially imaginative. This kind of representation is not objective but an image of decivilized and brutalized image of the East.

Said makes clear that Orientalism operates from a Eurocentric assumptive base, in which other cultures are perceived as inferior. Eurocentrism connotes a sustained discourse and worldview that makes (Western) Europe the center of the globe politically, economically, theoretically and therefore, racially. Eurocentrism is also a kind of ethnocentrism because it follows the same logic as that of ethnocentrism. The tendency of ethnocentrism is to view people unconsciously by using one's own group

and one's own customs as the standards for all judgments. It also has the tendency to see one's own group and one's own country as the best. Manifestations can be found in the stereotypes and prejudices frequently employed to reinforce its force.

Stereotypes are fixed types that are believed to represent a type of person or event while prejudices refer to the unfair feelings or opinions not based on reason or enough knowledge, but on their membership in some group. Both Eurocentrism and prejudices are used by the Orientalists to depict the Orientals as an inferior and depraved people. Through the overall process of history, Orientalism has endeavored to construct the inferiority of the Oriental people in several different ways. In *East isn't East*, Said comments: My way of doing this has been to show that the development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity for identity whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experience, is finally a construction that involves establishing oppositions and "Other" whose actuality is always subjected to the continuous interpretation of their differences from "us". From these remarks, we can see that the construction of the Orient is to confirm and prove the strength and greatness of the Occident. All the binary distinctions between the East and the West presuppose the former as the inferior and the latter as the superior. The west is organic, masculine, democratic and reasonable while the orient is silent, feminine, lascivious and backward etc.

The identity of a Sahib is the identity of British colonizers, most of whom are likely to adopt an Orientalist attitude toward the colonized. Edward Said argues in Orientalism that the cultural relationship between the East and the West is established on an invention of the Orient depicted by the Occident found in texts, such as history books, journal and literature works. This representation becomes a powerful discourse for "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient, which has more to do with the Western itself rather than with the real Orient". Said points out in "Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories" that such a representation buttresses "the authority of the observer, and of European geographical centrality...relegating and confining the non-European to a secondary racial, cultural, ontological status".

Homi K. Bhabha, another representative of the postcolonialism, argues that the objective of colonial discourse is to "construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction". On the basis of the Orientalist paradigm, the West invents a representation for the East in accordance with their own interests, values and imaginations, which either romanticizes or demonizes the East in order to make such a representation fit in the Western paradigm and to justify the Western colonial domination. Under the Orientalist pattern, the colonized is usually constructed as "degenerate" people and thus the West has a moral obligation to cultivate the colonized as well as to save them out from barbarism. It is claimed by K. M. Newton that the Orientalist paradigm is a "biased representation of the Orient...[who is regarded] as an inferior 'Other'".

Said's *Culture and Imperialism* published in 1993 surveys the western culture thoroughly, discussing the writer from Jane Austin of 18th century to Salman Rushdie, who is still in the controversy now, and from the modernist poet Yeats to the function of news media in the Gulf War, which possesses the postmodern feature in this work, he also analyzes from the perspective of postcolonialism the novel of British writers Kipling and Conrad, who share the postcolonial features apparently. As a scholar of comparative literature, he repels the limit of this subject in order to describe the history of imperialism's cultural aggression and colonies' resistance in a broader background.

He says that a substantial amount of scholarship in anthropology, history, and area studies has developed arguments I put forward in *Orientalism*, which was limited to the Middle East. So I, too, have tried here to expand the arguments of the earlier book to describe a more general pattern of relationships between the modern metropolitan west and its overseas territories (1995: 10).

In *Culture and Imperialism*, a work in which Said continues to develop his ideas, Said captures the basic thought behind colonization and imperialism: "They're not like us, and for that reason deserve to be ruled." The colonized became the Other, the "not me." Said argues that the established binary opposition of "the West"/ "the

Other” must be abolished along with its intricate web of racial and religious prejudices. What must be rejected, Said maintains, is the “vision” mentality of writers who want to describe the Orient from a panoramic view. This erroneous view of humanity creates a simplistic interpretation of human experience. It must be replaced by one based on “narrative,” a historical view that emphasizes the variety of human experiences in all cultures. The narrative view does not deny differences but presents them in an objective way. Scholarship, asserts Said, must be derived from first-hand experience of a particular region, giving voice to the critics who live and write in these regions, not scholarship from “afar” or second-hand representation.

In this book, the author refers to all the areas possessing postcoloniality in Asia, Africa and Australia, including the semicolonial and semifeudal country—China. Said defines in this book the two concepts frequently appearing---“culture” and “imperialism”:

As I use the word, “culture” means two things in particular. First of all it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure....Second, and almost imperceptibly, culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Mathew Arnold put it in the 1860s. (1994: 11)

Comparatively, the meaning of the other concept is as follows:

“Imperialism” means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; “colonialism”, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory.... In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.

However, the fights for resistance have never stopped in the colonized countries,

which make the imperialism have to realize that it is difficult to achieve their purpose merely through the armed aggression of large scale in the recent time. Therefore, they manage to change the method. They try to win over postcolonial natives "via cultural journals, trips, and seminars." As a result, in the postcolonial era, the open conflicts between East and West convert into the obscure communication and conversation, through which they achieve the permeation and influence of both sides.

Said's contribution to postcolonial studies lies in his critique of cultural hegemony of Western colonial discourse. It calls attention to "political and material effects of Western scholarship and academic institutions" by revealing the West's hegemony over the East in "producing the East discursively as the West's inferior Other and strengthens West's self-image of superiority". Analyzed in this way, many white writers' ambiguous and ambivalent stance can be seen, such as E. M. Forster, Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. And here, Doris Lessing makes no exception. A close examination of Lessing's work discloses that Lessing is trapped by the colonial cultural representation while exposing the evils of colonization. The present study attempts a critical reading of Lessing in the postcolonial context and demonstrates how Lessing unconsciously employs colonial discourses to map the political, geographical and imaginative space of Africa, its people, and the colonial encounter, how she moves from colonial periphery to the empire centre both physically and metaphorically in her work, and how she tries to reestablish an everlasting empire in her work after the actual wane of the British Empire in the 1950s with an anti-colonial consciousness on the surface.

Chapter3 Anti-colonial Consciousness in *The Grass Is Singing*

Lessing is a person of humanistic views due to her unique life experience, social involvement and the influence of philosophical ideas. Naturally, her humanistic side in *The Grass Is Singing* has found its expression in her biting criticism of the white colonizer's atrocious behavior and their colonial rules. And her sympathy with the African natives can also be fully discerned. All these combined together to indicate Lessing's ambition to reverse the long-held colonial myth, and exposed Lessing's hatred towards the racial inequality, injustice and the oppression and repression imposed on the natives.

3.1 Doris Lessing: a Person of Humanism

Since one's essential personality is largely determined by her growing up environment, it is necessary to have a look at Lessing's uncommon experience. Lessing, being reared up among the blacks, is especially familiar with the underlying rule that separates the whites and the blacks. As a witness and insider, she forms her own standpoint.

3.1.1 Unique Growing up Atmosphere

Doris Lessing grew up in Southern Rhodesia and shared the culture she describes. To a large degree, the hostile environment in South Africa shaped her strong personality, and determined her unique observation and standpoint. Lessing after witnessing all the inhumanity and injustice in south Rhodesia, to a large degree, sympathizes with the blacks and concerns about their destiny.

Lessing herself summarizes the importance of her African years in the preface to *African Stories*, "writers brought up in Africa have many advantages----being at the center of a modern battlefield; part of a society in rapid, dramatic change. But in a long run it can also be a handicap: to wake up every morning with one's eyes on a fresh evidence of inhumanity; to be reminded twenty times a day of injustice, and always the same brand of it, can be limiting"(1979: viii), "I believe that the chief gift from Africa to writers, white and black, is the continent itself.... This is not a place to

visit unless one chooses to be an exile ever afterwards from an inexplicable majestic silence lying just over the border of memory or of the thought, Africa gives you the knowledge that man is a small creature, among other creatures, in large landscape”(ibid. viii).

Living in such environment, it is inevitable for Lessing to develop her rebellious spirit and fight for the justice and human rights. Another decisive factor is the two world wars. The two world wars in the early twentieth century destroyed millions of people's lives. The war not only cause Lessing's father to have lost one leg and become a disabled man all his life, it also became an everlasting “great unmentionable” in her mind (1997: 230). We can find its traces in all her novels: the intense daughter-mother relationship, the ‘children of violence’, the murder, the films about the war, the killing of the doves in the newspaper clippings, etc..

It is the cruelty of the war that makes her see the fragility of human lives and frailties of human beings. Her wide reading acquaints her with the past history and the classics of great minds and opens her eyes to her responsibilities as a writer. She writes:

Once a writer has a feeling of responsibility, as a human being, for the other human beings he influences, it seems to me he must become a humanist, and must feel himself as an instrument of change for good or bad.... If a writer accepts this responsibility he must see himself...as architect of the soul. (1975: 8-9)

As a responsible writer, she is deeply concerned with the destinies of man in the future. And as an ‘architect of the soul’, she focuses on the ‘world of mind’.

3.1.2 Character-shaping Social Engagement

Lessing, also nicknamed “tiger” for her active temper and inexhaustible energy, has participated in many groups or schools of thought in her ceaseless search of identity: she used to be an active leftist, a member of the communist party, and now she has studied and practiced Sufism for decades of years. Lessing engaged herself in communism for its concentration on the importance of individual, while seldom discussing it in terms of class struggle or economic progress:

Communism...was a great, marvelous vision which was much bigger than merely eliminating poverty and redistributing wealth and that sort of thing. It was a vision of a society where every individual was immensely important, where there was no emphasis on color, class or creed, there was no hurting each other. Every person had a chance and the right to develop himself. This was the dream, and it's why people are socialists, why I was (Haas 1969: 5).

Because of Lessing's outspoken criticism of the South Africa's former apartheid system and efforts to fight for equal right for the natives, she was prohibited to land on southern Rhodesia and South Africa by the colony government between 1956 and 1995. However, her commitment to Communism emerged also in her autobiographical statements, her critical essays and interviews. In her autobiographical book, *Going Home*, she explained that she was attracted to the Rhodesian Communists not because of specific interest in their politics, but because they confirmed her version of faith in man and defied the color-bar (1957: 103, 311).

It is therefore clear that far from totally acquiring the communist position, Doris reworked and qualified its issues. It is important to note that her version of communism was from the very start qualified by her interest in the individual and his potential capacity for conscious development. She suggests that writers (she primarily means fiction writer), because of their habits of observation and examination, are more likely to be able to detach themselves to penetrate the reality. She maintains that the mightiest reality is human. And in order to counter the mass movements and emotions that threaten the survival of the species, the human race must learn to understand group behavior, to take a long view of its own evolution and development (Pickering 1990: 15). For Doris Lessing, the most concern cruising through her works is the interest in species survival.

3.1.3 The Influence of Philosophy

Being 'an architect of the soul', Lessing focuses on the 'world of mind'. It is this that leads her to think deeply and look for theoretical basis for her views of life. In the same way she views Marxism, Lessing finds in Sufism many ideas which can

improve the individual mind and which are in keeping with her love for life and man.

To understand the interest of Doris Lessing in Sufism and the influence of Sufism on her philosophy of life, we must, first, see what Sufism is. Actually it is very hard to give it a clear definition. According to Dr. Carl W. Ernst, the term Sufism was invented at the end of the 18th century when several British Orientalists discovered a surprising religious phenomenon associated with the followers of Muhammad, which they found had much in common with true Christianity, Greek philosophy and the mystical speculations of the Indian Vedanta.

Sir William The Jones described the fundamental tenets of Sufism are that nothing exists absolutely but God; that the human soul is an emanation from his essence, and, though divided for a time from its heavenly source, will be finally re-united with it; that the highest possible happiness will arise from its re-union, and that the chief good of mankind, in this transitory world, consists in as perfect an union with the eternal spirit as the encumbrances of a mortal frame will allow. And the Sufi objective is towards the perfectioning and completing of the human mind.

What is appealing to her in Sufism is just its concern about the general human nature, the universal understanding, 'the higher state of mind to be achieved'---a kind of inner understanding of life in the context of the world. Sufism also believes that 'the complete man...is both a real individual and also a total part of the essential unity' (Fahim 1994: 15). These Sufi ideas are in keeping with her own philosophy of life. She argues that an individual can't live outside of the social forces. So what is important for an individual, is to understand the society, his behavior and his culture and to achieve a kind of 'balance between his private and social selves'.

The other two philosophers worthy of mentioning are Dilthey and Bergson. In the theories of Dilthey and Bergson, she finds what she is looking for. Dilthey's study of human sciences, his historical and social perspectives and Bergson's *la duree*, etc. all inspired her. Actually, most of her ideas expressed in her novels are based on the views of these philosophers of life. And her views of life and her deep concern with man's life and future and interviews and novels published, all can find their roots in the theories of the philosophers of life, who consider it their responsibility to reveal

the nature and meaning of life.

According to the humanists, both man and world are hindered from infinite improvement only by external checks. Man could mould the world according to his desires, and attain happiness by removing all external checks by the exercise of human intellect. By emphasizing the dignity of human beings and the importance of the present life, humanists voiced their beliefs that man did not only have the right to enjoy the beauty of this life, but had the ability to perfect himself and to perform wonders (Ji 2003: 316). Reading Lessing's works, one can find that the main rhyme and rhythm running through every line is her concern about the human fate and survival. Just as in *The Grass Is Singing*, Lessing's concern for human existence resonates throughout the whole book.

3.2 Doris Lessing's Disclosure of the Colonizer's Hypocrisy

In order to maintain their control successfully, the white colonizers carries on their false masks to conceal their cruelty, greediness, and brutality towards not only the colonized but also the people of their kind for self-interest or else. The following attends to strip off this mask and expose the white colonizers' hidden selfish side at length. Thus in this way, their hypocrisy is laid bare.

3.2.1 The Pretending Marriage of the Tuners

From the very beginning, the marriage between Mary and Dick is a fake. When there is no true love, and the reason for their unity is ridiculous and absurd. There is no mutual compassion and attraction. Even, there is no passion, no feeling towards each other, they still get married and carry on this marital status quite as usual.

Mary, already in her mid-thirties, still remained a 16-year-old girl, locked away in a girls hostel, and she would "still wear her hair little-girl fashion on her shoulders, and wore little-girl frocks in pastel colors, and kept her shy, naïve manner" (P. 40). Though she had many men friends, she assiduously avoided sexual entanglements and her men friends "treated her just like a good pal, with none of this silly sex business" (P. 39). When Mary overheard some of her friends criticizing her clothes, laughing: "she just isn't like that, isn't like that at all. Something missing somewhere"(P. 42). She was shocked to find herself disapproved by the standards of the group. She

therefore quickly attempted to find another means to amend her image in the eyes of her society, and made the mistakes of marrying the first man she is offered.

Just as Fahim (1994: 27) states that the marriage is a frigid relationship from the beginning because it is based on self-delusion. Mary rushes into marriage in order to meet her own need to escape the other's rumors. However, as Rubenstein puts it that Dick yearns for marriage in a romantically idealized form as a way of fulfilling a set of socially created expectations of him. He chooses to fall in love with Mary "because it was essential for him to love somebody"(P. 49) and he expects a farm wife, a worker, and a mother. Driven by this illusion, Dick conjures up an image of a female that has little to do with actual Mary. Though identical in their emotional flatness, Dick and Mary are matched only through their needs, not their affections.

Their marriage is therefore doomed to failure. From the placidity of her office life, Mary moved into polarity with Dick Turner, where their total incompatibility shortly surfaced. Mary and Dick had two very different ways of seeing the world. Dick was a farmer who thrived on isolation and the physical labor and hardship of his chosen vocation, while Mary needed the stimulation of town life and the responsibility of a job. The farm that meant freedom for a white man---freedom from the life of a clerk, of an employee, freedom from the restrictions of suburban England or from the poverty of the working class---meant prison for his wife (Pickering 1990: 23). One was a dreamer, associated with countryside and the natural world, while the other was a regular, bound to city values and social expectations.

In addition, the sexual relationship between Mary and Dick was a disaster from the very outset because they failed to share any intimacy. While Dick unintentionally made her a sexual object by idealizing her, Mary could only accept him when he approached her submissively (Rubenstein 1979: 19). Then yielding to him in a martyr-like way, "expecting outrage and imposition, she was relieved to find she felt nothing. She was able maternally to bestow the gift of herself on this humble stranger and remain untouched."(P. 56)

Marriage, a serious and sacred event in one's life, is taken by Mary and Dick as a tool to meet their respective purpose. There is no love, no passion, even no sexual

intimacy between them. However, this dry relationship is maintained quite very well, since it is for self-interest. The white colonizer, used to take advantage of everything, can not let marriage alone. Here marriage becomes a game, no matter how hypocritical it is, it is of no importance, as long as the rules are abided by.

3.2.2 The Unscrupulous Sham of the Slatters

When talking about the Slatters, we should first know it refers to Charlie Slatter and his wife, Mrs. Slatter. Who is Charlie Slatter? It was he who, from the beginning of the tragedy to its end, personified society for the Turners. He touches the story at half a dozen points; without him things would not have happened quite as they did, though sooner or later, in one way or another, the Turners were bound to come to grief (P. 15). This is Lessing's introduction of Charlie Slatter, who is supposed to reflect the ruthless and mercenary characteristics of the settlers. It is he who not only oppresses the natives, but also exploits the whites. He is the typical representative of the whites' dominant power---rich, quick-witted, powerful and superior to all others. Seen from the novel, Slatter is the central character of the whites who are living on the farmland of Rhodesia.

As a successful and rich white settler, Charlie interferes and controls everything in the district. When the murder happens, it is Charlie Slatter the first man that the house boy goes to report. And even the sergeant Denham, after knowing the news, he goes straightly to Charlie. His omnipresent and omnipotent power is proved in the novel. When we open the book, and start to read, we first come across Charlie who is busy in managing the whole case, and put everything in its order. However, beneath this surface image, there lies his sham. All that he has done for the Turners, it is just to save the white man's face. He conspires with the sergeant to conceal the true cause of the murder, and threaten Tony into silence. Under their menacing power, the murder is reported as the native murderer wanting to steal his mistress's valuable things, which it is definitely not that simple.

Charlie's seemingly warm-heartedness in charge of the whole scene has his own purpose, not just that real kindness. On the one hand, as the spokesman of the whole community, he believes firmly in the principle of *esprit de corps*, the first rule of

South African society, that is "White civilization will never, never admit that a white person, and most particularly, a white woman, can have a human relationship, whether for good or for evil, with a black person. For once it admits that, it crashes, and nothing can save it." (P. 22) As a matter of fact, the intimacy between the white mistress and her black houseboy is taken as a humiliating affair for the white. Charlie, the protector of the colonizer's morale, spares no effort to stop this affair and rescue his nation's reputation.

Unable to accept the fact that his fellowman falls into the same level with the natives, Charlie begins to interfere. He lends money to Dick for the purpose that he would not see a man of his race being degraded to the life of a native even though he knows that Dick does not have the ability to pay the debt back at all. He orders Dick to fire the native and take Mary to a vocation, which triggers the murder to happen. What Charlie Slatter concerns most is the dignity of the white people. On the other hand, he expects Dick to go away, and is ready to provide money for their leaving. Another hidden aim for him is his long drool over Dick's rich and fertile grassland, because his soil is played out, and he wants more, so he needs Dick's farm badly and for years Charlie has been planning for when Dick will be bankrupt." Therefore, Charlie will not let this chance slip away, just seize it firmly and timely in order to take over Dick's farm. In order to achieve his aim, he takes the role of a warm-hearted neighbor who concerns about the Turners and tries his best to hold the self-assumed humiliating affair back, and gets his benefits.

Charlie's cunning sham side is also reflected in his wife Mrs. Slatter who appears at first to be kind, thoughtful, and friendly:

"Mrs. Slatter was a kindly soul, and sorry for Mary who had married a good-for-nothing " like dick. She looked at Mary with tenderness, remembering her own past, and was prepared to make friends." (P. 81)

This is the introduction of Mrs. Slatter, a white man's housewife. She attempts repeatedly to get Mary involved into their group in the hope of helping Mary out of her loneliness and emptiness with her warm kindness. However, after rejected so many times that Mrs. Slatter loses her patience and resents against the Turners. In

Lessing's words, "Mrs. Slatter would have had to be a most extraordinary woman to remain perfectly impartial and fair to Mary, after having been snubbed so many times. (P. 193)" But now, former friendliness completely disappears, contrarily turns into hatred, and starts to stigmatize the Turners as pig tartly. When others ask about the Turners, Mrs. Slatter, whose good humor and patience has at long last given out, is prepared to tell, and malignant gossip gets its way to spread.

In the colonial mythology, the white colonizer claims to be fair, just and kind not only towards their men but also the colonized. Here their kindness needs more doubt, for it puts on a veil. Since the veil is stripped down, their ugly face and distorted heart have been disclosed. People can not help questioning the white colonizer's moral criteria.

3.2.3 The Hypocrisy of the White Community

It seems that Mary's death is the fault of her extramarital affair with the black houseboy, and it serves her right. If explored further and deeper, one can find that her tragedy is, in fact, ignited and conspired by the whole white community. It seems to be unbelievable, because Mary is a white person and the white community should protect her. On the contrary, it is her people that contribute to her breakdown physically and psychologically step by step instead of offering help and kindness.

3.2.3.1 The White Community's Conspiracy

Her end is perceived and even expected by the white as a natural result rather than an accident, for Mary goes beyond the pale of their principle and has tasted the "forbidden fruit". What is interesting is not the murder case but the neighbor's attitudes to it. The Turners' failing at farming, living in poverty, and Mary's getting murdered seem somehow let the whole white side down. They feel that their solidarity, a quality favorably cherished in the colonial society, has severely threatened by the Turners' impoverished life-style and Mary's affair. So they isolate the Turners from themselves and leave the Turners alienated from both the white and the native. It is unavoidable that the Turners slip into desperation, madness and the final tragedy.

The novel opens with the collective voice---"or rather the silences"---of the white settler community' response to the murder of the individual Mary Turner. They

don not discuss the murder, that is the most extraordinary thing about it. Normally that murder would have been discussed for months; people would have been positively grateful for something to talk about. But now, there is, it seems, a tacit agreement that the Tuners case should not be given undue publicity by gossip. In order not to probe further into the case, they share a mutual consensus to save the whites' face and guard their superiority, their colonial privileges and "everyone behaved like a flock of birds who communicate---or so it seems---by means of a kind of telepathy." (P.2) Correspondingly, they think it is not necessary to have any sympathetic emotion wasted over the Turners.

In the colonial myth the white colonizer is born with the merits, such as, tolerable, just, righteous, candid and frank etc.. However, what they say and how they behave contradict all these glorious virtues. Their hypocrisy and vainglory is further demonstrated also by Mary's town friends.

3.2.3.2 The False Intimacy of Mary's Friends

Despite an unhappy childhood, Mary lives happily as an efficient secretary and a valued elder member of the club for unmarried girls where she lives. But her happy peaceful life comes to an end after she overhears her friends criticizing her little-girl clothes and laughing for sexuality seemed left out her makeup, "she just isn't like that, isn't like that. Something missing somewhere." (P. 38) This little incident destroys Mary's self-illusion completely, who has never thought that her friends could maliciously discuss her behind her back, and greets her as cordially as usual. What she heard has driven knives and needles into her heart and thrown her quite off balance. And she is even more disturbed and unhappy because her friends seem just as usual, treating her with their ordinary friendliness.

After this mental disturbance, she begins to suspect double meanings where none are intended, to find maliciousness in the glance of a person who feels nothing but affection for her. Mary plunges into the vast hollowness, "she was hollow inside, empty, and into this emptiness would sweep from nowhere a vast panic, as if there were nothing in the world she could grasp hold of ." (P. 42) So Mary's "happy" single life has to declare its end. And she rushes into a hasty marriage, then down deeper and

deeper in the whirlpool. Being friends, they defile Mary and tease her, beguiling them with Mary's innocence. The false intimacy and goodness of Mary's friends precipitates Mary's tragedy in an invisible power that dominating Mary's whole life and determining her death.

On the surface, Mary is murdered by the black boy with a concrete tool. Under the beneath, her death is speeded up by the falsehood of the whole white community. Thus, her death is, firstly, incited by her friends' vicious sham, and then conspired by the white community's hypocritical ethnocentrism. It is the white, the invisible murderers, who have destroyed Mary.

3.3 Doris Lessing's Revelation of the Colonizer's Cruelty

The colonizer comes to the continent for conquering the land, for exploiting the natives and mostly for making money. To achieve their purpose, they avail themselves of every possible means no matter how cruel and notorious they are. With Mary and Charlie being the representative, the colonizers spare no effort to suck the last drop of the blood of the colonized. There is no lack of evidence to prove this.

3.3.1 The Unbelievable Brutality of Mary

Mary Turner, the protagonist of the novel, seems to be a pathetic sufferer due to her unfortunate life experience. However, her merciless persecution of the natives shows her an absolute embodiment of the white hegemony over the natives. Presuming her superior status, Mary Turner, overwhelmed by hatred and antagonism towards the natives, shows no sympathy for the pathetic natives, but turns out to be a brutal oppressor. This expressed itself in her pervert fault-finding with the house boys and her unreasonable compulsion towards the farm laborers.

3.3.1.1 Fault-finding with the House Boys

In her childhood, Mary is forbidden to communicate with the natives:

Her mother's servants she had been forbidden to talk to; in the club she had been kind to the waiters; she was afraid of them, of course. Every woman in South Africa is brought up to be. In her childhood she had been told in the furtive, lowered, but matter-of-fact voice she associated with her mother, that they were nasty and might do horrible things to her. (P. 60)

What she has learned from daily life prevents her passing the racial boundary and regarding the natives as human beings. The colonial myth has described the natives as thieves, which makes her believe that the native would commit theft as long as they get the opportunity. This is why she always suspects her black house boy and supervises over them in case something might be stolen. And she thinks it necessary to remember, "She put out, carefully, so much meal, and so much sugar; and watched the left-overs... remembering every cold potato and every piece of bread, asking for them if they were missing." (P. 67) Her extraordinary capacity for remembrance serves as a concrete illustration of Mary's oversensitive alertness to keep watch on the natives, as stated in Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*:

Despite the enormous difference between the colonial enterprises of various nations, they seem to generate fairly similar stereotype of "outsiders".... Thus laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality are attributed by the English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese colonists to Turks, Africans, native Americans, Jews, Indians, the Irish and the others. (1989: 107)

As far as Mary is concerned, the natives are mischievous, cunning and capable of doing every unpleasant thing. She believes that as long as she turns her eyes away, the black servant "might be handling her clothes, looking through her personal things!" (P. 73) even though the servant searches his master's things, he will make them look untouched. Therefore, supervising her native house boy becomes the most serious thing in Mary's life. In addition to this, Mary always loses her patience and runs into rage as soon as she contacts with the black servant. Furthermore, it is taken for granted by Mary to force a native to work from eleven in the morning till half past three in the afternoon without a break, because "she never thought of natives as people who had to eat or sleep." (P.79) In Mary's mind, the natives are born to be discriminated and bullied by the whites, which is further illustrated by her maltreatment towards the farm laborers.

3.3.1.2 Ruthless Mistreatment towards the Farm Laborers

As a representative of European power in South Africa, Mary attempts to squeeze from the native as much as possible. For Mary, the natives should be punished if they disobey her will, for they are good for nothing, only inferior animals to be guided and ordered.

Mary forces the natives to work under the beating hot sun, and she will "call sharply to him to begin again", as long as she sees "one of them paused for a moment in his work to rest, or to wipe the running sweat from his eyes." (P.125) And Mary will arbitrarily deduct their wages which has already been very modest, if she is not content with their work. Supervising the natives' work, Mary always carries along thong of leather looped round her wrist. It gives her a feeling of authority and superiority. Even she has whipped one native with the thong in vicious swinging blow, and she thinks it quite right, for treating the natives as human beings never crosses her mind. She regards them as the conveyor belt, and keeps them working without a moment of rest until sundown:

As the long afternoon passed, she (Mary) watched, in a kind of alert stupor...The natives unload the dusty sacks from the wagon, holding them by the corners on their shoulders, bent double under the weight.

They were like a human conveyor belt. (P.132)

Aftermath, she will go back to her house "satisfied with herself, not even tired. She was exhilarated and light-limbed, and swung the sjambok jauntily on her wrist." (P.125)

To secure their central status, the colonizer vilifies the colonized to the effect that they enslave the colonized not only physically but also mentally. Being slandered as vile and violent, the natives, deserves to be oppressed and enslaved. For them, the only way to get out of their degenerate and degraded situation is to follow their master's direction and accept everything given by the master. In this aspect, Mary again acts as the best eloquent propagandist. Over the salary deduction, the natives grumbles, and Mary scolds and explains with admirable logic how they are in the wrong:

They would never be any good, she said until they learned to work

without supervision, for the love of it, to do as they were told, to do a job for its own sake, not thinking about the money they would be paid for it. ...because working without reward was that proved a man's worth. (P.128)

Being the highest in the hierarchical colonial system, the white colonizers enjoy the priority over the colonized, the lowest at the bottom. They over-exploits and oppresses them for the sake of making profit. All the democratic rights appreciated by the colonizers are refused to the colonized natives. Being deprived of everything, the natives do not have any chance to turn a new page in their life and lose any opportunity to have their subjectivity, their independence, freedom and their own fate and future. Mary's demonic maltreatment is just a mirror of the whole colonial society, in which the colonized are debased and denied the title of humans, and defined as simply absences of qualities----animals, not humans.

3.3.2 The Incredible Bloodiness of Charlie Slatter

Charlie Slatter, like a God, manipulates everything and everyone. Being the episteme of the colonial system, he makes himself a powerful dictator out of a London grocery assistant. There is only one aim for him to come to the South Africa, that is to make as much money as possible, no matter the means he has adopted how cruel and inhuman it is. In order to achieve his aim, he comes to oppress and repress the African native, and exploit their labor, their land without any mercy:

He farmed as if he were turning the handle of a machine which would produce pound notes at the other end. He was hard with...and above all he was hard with his farm laborers. They, the geese that laid the golden eggs, were still in that state where they did not know there were other ways of living besides producing gold for other people. (P.7)

Charlie, as a farmer, never considers his natives as his fellowmen, but the machine that makes profit for him. He may kill when he thinks the natives deserve it. The relationship between him and the natives finds its best interpretation in Aime Cesaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*:

No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn

the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production.(1972: 81)

Parallel with this, Charlie has his own way of running his farm and controlling his laborers. He believes in farming with the sjambok, and hung it over his front door, like a motto on a wall: "you shall not mind killing if it is necessary." and "he had once killed a native in a fit of temper, and fined thirty pounds(P.7). Contrasted with Charlie, Moses must die for killing Mary. Under the bond of the cruel colonial system, the natives have been made into "instrument of production" without any importance, totally an object and an "Other"; while the whites---like Charlie Slatter---undoubtedly "the blood sucker, the cruel dictator and the slave driver," a thorough subject and the "Self". Edward Said comments in his *Orientalism* (1995: 227) :

One of them is the culturally sanctioned habit of deploying large generalizations by which reality is divided into various collectives; languages, races, types, colors, mentalities, each category being not so much a neutral designation as an evaluative interpretation. Underlying these categories is the rigidly binominal opposition of "ours" and "theirs" with the former always encroaching upon the latter (even to point of making "their" exclusively a function of "ours").

Charlie Slatter has been entitled to those privileges as a central ruler; while the natives degraded to the subordinate of the whites.

The incredible bloodiness of Charlie Slatter is fully displayed in his treatment with the natives, who represents nothing but the gold laying geese. Being the most powerful, Charlie Slatter not only squeezes the natives out of their last drop of blood, but also manages to lay the negative labels on them.

3.3.3 The Merciless Hegemony of the Government

The root cause of Mary and Charlie's ruthless cruelty towards the natives is no doubt that they are supported and backed by their government. It is government that stipulates laws and makes policy in favor of the white colonizers to carry out their colonization smoothly and successfully. In *The Grass Is Singing*, Doris Lessing does

not overlook the portrait of a mighty colonial government that supports its people to tyrannize the African natives with its regulations and rules.

When a conflict between Mary and the natives arises because of the deduction of the salary, it is the government's policy that gives Mary the power to ignore the natives' resentment and stick to her decision unswervingly. Lessing, in this moment, explains how the white people get their laborers:

These had been recruited by what is the south African equivalent of the old press gang: white men who lie in wait for the migrating bands of natives on their way along the roads to look for work; gather them into large lorries, often against their will (sometimes chasing them through the bush for miles if they try to escape), lure them by fine promises of good employment and finally sell them to the white farmers at five pounds or more per head for a year's contract. (P. 127)

As in the above depiction, the colonizers sell the natives to the farmers at a low price to make money. The natives are forced or lured by false promises into the bondage of contraction. Once they become contracted, it is impossible for them to leave, even unjust treatment imposed upon them. Mary does not worry about losing labor, for she knows the contracted natives will be punished severely. From this, we can see the government permits the notorious business of slave trading, and allows things to go like this silently.

While the white people, being the executioner of the colonization, direct their unjust treatment obviously, together with the government in a sophisticated and subtle way. Although the law prohibits a white farmer from striking his natives, and decrees that the natives have the right to complain, the real fact goes on quite the opposite way. When a real incident comes up the police and the court will cope with it on behalf of the white. Being furious, Mary whips Moses across his face in a vicious swinging blow. She, at one moment, fears he might complain to the police, but very soon, she cheers herself up by the thought that "she had behind her the police, the courts, the jails; he, nothing but patience." (P. 135) To a white farmer, he has the natural right to treat his labor as he pleases.

Albert Memmi (149) writes in his *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965) that “Colonization is, above all, economic and political exploitation.” In order to accomplish this aim, the government plays its role as a chief plotter. More brutal than its people, the government oppresses and represses the colonized in an indirect way with its people carry directly in the front. Without the government’s secret support, the colonizer will not exploit and dehumanize the colonized willy-nilly. They conspire together to downtrodden the colonized without any humanistic concern despite its propaganda of freedom, equality, democracy and civilization.

3.4 The Reversion of Colonial Myth in *The Grass Is Singing*

When referring to the colonized, the colonizers always depict them as a people full of bad habits---lazy, nasty, smelly, and savage. All these negative labels composed by the whites are narrated by Albert Memmi in his *The Colonizer and the Colonized*:

...the colonizer establishes the colonized as being lazy. He decides that laziness is constitutional in the very nature of the colonized. It becomes obvious that the colonized, whatever he may undertake, whatever he may apply, could never be anything but lazy. (1965: 81)

However, all the characteristics appeared on Moses change the “other” image of the lazy and humble natives.

3.4.1 The Positive Portrait of Moses: a Man of Shining Human Nature

Moses, even being whipped by Mary, does not show any hatred and anger. On the contrary, he is obedient and warm-hearted, willing to sacrifice to the discriminating colonial society. He unselfishly offers his help to take care of sick Dick, and alleviate Mary’s exhaustion. He works hard without any complaint, and makes every piece of his work so perfect that even Mary, so mean and strict, cannot find any fault. When Mary points out there is “a trace of white fluff from the drying towel down one side,” Moses at once takes it to wash as being instructed : “ filled the sink with water, and whisked in soapsuds.” All these have been done so conscientious and so meticulous that Mary finds “there was nothing, absolutely nothing, that she could give him to do.”(P.165) Besides, Moses is as clean as the whites flaunting themselves to be. Even Dick insists “he is clean and willing. He’s one of the best boys

I have ever had". (P.164) "by ten in the morning...he would go off to the back behind the chicken-runs under a big tree, carrying a tin of hot water...sluicing himself...rubbing his thick neck with soap...". (P.162)

Moses's human nature is further displayed when Dick is ill. He acts as both a kind-hearted neighbor and friend, and voluntarily helps Mary to take charge of half delirious Dick. He persuades Mary to sleep after two nights awake and takes her place to stay with Dick. In addition to his diligence and kindness, Moses is also a native who is generous, tolerant and thoughtful. When Mary takes no lunch except tea, he answers "Madame ate no breakfast, she must eat." (P.175) These words give evidence that he, as a servant, knows better how to care his mistress healthily. Moreover, trying to kindle Mary's hope for life, he puts a bundle of bush flowers in a handleless cup, crude yellows and pinks on the table, and the flowers "thrust together clumsily, but making a strong burst of color on the old stained cloth." Disappointingly, no words of approval are delivered by his mistress. His endeavor and dedication only result in Mary's silence or rage. As Fanon puts, "wherever he goes, the negro remains a negro." (Bhabha 1994: 75) It implies that to get the whites' agreement is doomed to fail no matter how hard they try, they are always the "Other" and will continue to be the black man for the white man.

According to Said, Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident' (1995: 2). It facilitates the shaping of the image of the East as the West's inferior "Other" while in the meantime constructing the West's central image---the superior "Self"---in the society. Being predestined as "Other," the natives could not stand face to face with the whites to defend themselves against those unjust descriptions about their being lazy, barbarous and violent. All these negative marks are the unwarranted debasing descriptions of the natives that served as a foil to the whites' nobleness. However, the humane nature shining out of Moses tears these biased representation into piece, and the image of the natives in the colonial myth has henceforth been uprooted thoroughly.

— 3.4.2 The Successive Failure of Self-opinionated Dick

The colonial myth holds firmly to the belief of the East's inferior image as the "Other" to the West and the West's central image, the superior "Self". Therefore, the colonizers are the supreme ruler of the colonies, who come to the underdeveloped colonies to take their responsibility to be the Godly savior of their uncivilized native brothers, or they will be back to the primitive, barbaric and abject state. The image is thus depicted in Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* as:

...picturing the colonizer as a tall man, bronze by the sun, Wearing Wellington boots, proudly leaning on a shovel---as he rivets his gaze far away on the horizon of his land. When not engaged on battles against nature, we think of him laboring selflessly for mankind, attend the sick, and spreading culture to the nonliterate.(1965: 3)

The above quotation expresses the image of a colonizer appears as an elegant nobleman, bringing light and bliss to the ignorant, primitive areas.

Dick is a small farmer. Like many British who come to Africa to seek fortune, he cherishes great hope when he first comes here. Without realizing the smallness of his capacities and shortage of his competence, "...it was simply incompetence. Everywhere she found things begin and left unfinished.... There was not a single thing properly done on the whole place, nothing!"(P.131) It is inevitable that the failure comes one after another:

He was pursued by bad. The farmers about him, he knew, called him "Jonah". If there was a drought he seemed to get the brunt of it, and if it rained in swamps then his farm suffered most. If he decided to grow cotton for the first time, cotton slumped that year, and if there was a swarm of locusts, then he took it for granted, with a kind of angry but determined fatalism, that they make straight for his most promising parch of mealies.(P.46)

The above words describe Dick's unlucky experiences, and obviously violate the composed colonial myth. According to it, the white colonizer, being the selected children of the God, is always the winner and successor no matter what he do and always right no matter what decision he has made. However, Dick's constant

unsuccessful experiments on running turkeys, pigs, bees and kaffir store reflect his immature, idealized and impractical plan, and his shortage of farming knowledge. These unfortunate sufferings reduce the Turners to a very hard and miserable living condition, which is no better than the natives.

In the colonial myth, the whites living on the South African continent is a group of civilized, diligent and intelligent people, always very rich for their hard-working and good planning. Dick, a colonizer coming to South Africa to pursue his dream, is totally defeated in every facet of life, an absolutely loser.

3.4.3 The Resignation and Reconciliation of Tony

Tony Marston, a twenty-year-old Englishman, has had a good education in England and is not satisfied with the peaceful office life in his uncle's factory, and comes to Africa to realize his ambition. When readers come across him first, he tends to strike the readers as one of those ambitious youths with lofty ideas, who are resistant to the suffocating routine life in England. He has heard one of his remote cousins has made five thousand pounds a year out of tobacco plantation. Driven by the great expectation promised in the South Africa, he takes his adventure and determines to make a big fortune.

As far as he is concerned, Dick's on the verge of bankruptcy is viewed as a romantic symptom of "the growing capitalization of farming all over the world." (P.209) The idealistic young man comes to South Africa with a suitcase full of books, on the color issue, on Thodes and Kruger, on farming and mining. Tony's busy with the farm work subjects those books to be untouched and eaten by white ants.

Tony is supposed to be one of the progressive young men, but when he sees Moses dressing for Mary, he is astounded. He has sensed the underlying clues of the murder, but he is not brave enough to speak them out. Later on, he gives up his dream of farming, and drifts several places in the South Africa and ends in an office, consoling himself with pretense that "one should take things as they came. Life is not as one expects it to be." These words hint that the fact of the colonial life is not the same as the myth has constructed. Never changing according to people's willingness, the fact, regardless of one's expectation, speaks louder than words. Facing the

unchangeable reality, Tony has no way to choose but give in, and his aspiration crashes into pieces. Resigned to reconcile with the African world, he comes down to the earth accepting things as they are.

The colonial myth has been composed on the basis of the colonizer's imagination. The colonizers suppose that they are the rulers of all other peoples who they believe to be "lesser". However, the facts prove that their aspirations are defeated, having no foothold in the real world. Moses's shining human nature, Dick's impoverished life-style and successive failure in farming and Tony Marston's giving up of his cherished dream are combined together to prove that the real fact is concealed, Africa and its people they known are just the illusion, a myth imagined by the whites.

3.4.4 The Innermost Fear of Charlie and Mary

Since the colonizers have set foot on the African continent, they begin to set up their powerful imperial authority and carry out their high pressure policy on the colonized. In order to justify their oppression on the colonized and ensures their absolute superiority over the colonized, they compose a song of colonial myth which bards for the white man's burden to uplift the backward peoples from their dark, uncivilized abyss. The spirit of this song glorifies the colonizer as the savior, therefore, their colonization as a just cause. Conversely, in their heart, there lies fear, fear for what, for the revenge that will fall on them and their offspring sooner or later, because they know their committed unforgivable crime. And this fear is personified rightly in Charlie and Mary.

Charlie Slatter is the symbol of power and wealth in the novel. And at the end of the story, Dick becomes mad over the news of Mary's murder. Tony drifts away, the last winner seems to be Charlie, who will take over Dick's fertile grassland. But the point that we should not neglect, in face of Moses's glare, Charlie feels "uneasy, troubled", and "seem(s) to shake himself into self-command." (P. 9) And Mary, after whipping Moses in the face, "she saw him make a sudden movement, and recoiled, terrified; she thought he was going to attack her.... For a moment the man (Moses) looked at her with an expression that turned her stomach liquid with fear. She (Mary) was trembling with fright ...and because of the look she had seen in the man's

eyes."(P.134)

Both Charlie and Mary suffer psychological uneasiness, which testifies the unrighteousness of the white colonial activities. This chapter questions the colonial rule, and discusses Lessing's criticism on the white colonizer's hypocrisy and cruelty. And then through depicting Moses with shining human nature, the defeated and guilty-ridden white colonizers, the stereotyped image of the inferior black and the superior image of the white colonizers have reversed completely. All the unexpectedness and the disillusion of the whites' dream prove that the whites or colonizers on the African land are not fit for the land and the colonization is not as good as it has been hailed.

Chapter 4 Colonial Consciousness in *The Grass Is Singing*

Throughout the novel, we can feel Lessing's warm attitude towards the black. In her Nobel lecture, Lessing depicts the destitution there and calls the natives the "amiable multitude", from which Lessing's deep affection with Afrikaners is felt. However, the English identity exists in her from the very start and makes her hold a superior feeling over the primitive and savage conditions in Africa. Although she condemns the ruthless characteristics of some colonizers, Lessing more sympathizes with the hard conditions of the white and captures their desperate wish to distinct themselves from the natives. Unconsciously Lessing has exposed her colonial desire to maintain the colonial system, and there are her tinted perceptions about the natives and the African landscape. This chapter, based on the analysis of her imperialistic ideology, is devoted to depict Lessing's colonial consciousness through her characterization of both the natives and whites and her description of the African land.

4.1 Doris Lessing: an Intellect of Imperial Ideology

From the beginning, Lessing's life experience is introduced. Generally speaking, she is born in a British family and grows up in the South Rhodesia, and then leaves for London and settles there thereafter. This rich and unique life shapes Lessing to be a complex figure. In her life, she has heard the brutality of the war, and has witnessed the miserable living condition of the settlers and Afrikaners. During her educational period, Lessing is obsessed with the classics and modern post-modern literary works. So it is natural that Lessing is influenced by the ideology advocated in those novels and fond of the British life-style.

4.1.1 A Woman of British Identity

Lessing's national identity is probed by Louise Yelin in her *From the Margins of Empire Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer*. This book analyzes fictions published over the half century (1940-1990) by three white Anglophone,

politically-progressive, middle-class women writers 'from the margins' of the British empire. Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, and Nadine Gordimer demonstrate 'three strategies for negotiating between colonial or formerly colonial "peripheries" and metropolitan "centers", while their novels 'perform the cultural work of inventing or constituting identity'. Yelin opens her discussion of Doris Lessing in exile in pursuit of the English. Yelin shows that Lessing's satire of white working class characters situates her autobiographical middle-class white woman narrator in a privileged position. Without mentioning the conflicts over race, immigration, and citizenship in the British press at the time, Lessing's narrator establishes her superiority and consolidates her identity as British rather than as colonial in an England she collaborates in defining as a white, class-divided nation rather than as a multiracial society. Lessing, like her narrator, is 'in pursuit of the English' and attains English identity through her writing (Wang 2007: 17-19). Deep down Lessing's mind, she still longs for the British Empire. This longing can also be attributed to that cultural influence.

4.1.2 Western Educational Background and Cultural Influence

Lessing, in her childhood, is fond of the works from the writers, such as Dickens, Stevenson, Kipling and Lawrence, etc.. And it is through the reading of their works that Lessing has achieved her self-education. However, some critics claim that works from these writers all, in one aspect or another, send forth the ideology of imperialism. England has snatched colonies from other countries in order to strengthen itself, but now "new bees need new bee-hives", therefore England should continue to find new colonies. This again finds expression in literary texts of Victorian period, for example, in many Victorian novels, eg. Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, (1966.) *The Great Expectation*, Stevenson's *The Land of Treasure*, there are descriptions of the colonies as sources of wealth for the empire.

So in the Victorian period, especially the last two decades of the 19th century, there is in England a general imperialistic tendency resulted from the English military and colonial successes and the philosophies of the superman and heroes. Culturally speaking, these imperialistic trends are reflected in various forms of literature, travel

books, reports, songs, etc.. On the other hand these cultural demonstrations of the imperialistic concepts help strengthen the ideas in return. Besides, there is a general admiration and worship of the colonial heroes in England at that time. In a word, the Victorian age, especially the late Victorian age, is an age of imperialism.

Another influential figure is Rudyard Kipling, a controversial writer, the first English to win the Nobel Prize for literature. As “the bard of empire”, Kipling has always been identified with the British Empire. Rudyard Kipling, as the “Imperial Laureate”, is regarded as the most important and representative British writer of the age and no writer was more closely in touch with the energies that were making the age what it was.

In Kipling’s eyes, the English go to India not to expand and exploit, but to help the natives because they could not “stand alone”. With their virtue of devotion to work and sense of duty and responsibility, the English people bring order, discipline, and prosperity to the natives. Therefore the natives should be grateful at heart and respect the “sahibs”. Kipling clings to his lofty ideals, emphasizing the duty of the English to civilize, with hard work and self sacrifice when necessary, the peoples of the “lesser breeds”. Therefore in his works we often see the selfless colonial administrators working in loneliness and pain of diseases for the welfare of the natives; sometimes they work themselves to death; even women work themselves in the same way. These colonialists are so much idealized that even English people themselves find them hard to believe. “The White Man’s Burden”, a notorious poem Kipling wrote in 1899, actually expressed the same view:

Take up the white man’s burden---

Send forth the best ye breed---

Go bind your sons to exile

To serve your captives’ need;

To wait in heavy harness

On fluttered folk and wild---

Your new—caught, sullen peoples,

Half devil and half child.

Kipling writes many highly racist poems like "The White Man's Burden", "If", "The Ballad of East and West", "The English Flag", etc., and his stories are often filled with racist views. For example, the story "Beyond the Pale" begins with a racist statement: "a man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race, and breed. Let the white go to the white and the black to the black." (1986 :171) And in *The Jungle Book* the black panther Bagheera says to Mowgli: "Thou art a man's club, and even as I returned to my jungle, so thou must go back to men at last" (Kipling 1986: 15), reflecting the same racist view of Kipling, for "man" here refers to the white group.

Ruthlessness and fearlessness mean bravery and manliness, which are basic qualities of Kiplingesque clique and also of builders of the empire. In this aspect Kipling's applause of the ruthlessness and fearlessness is in agreement with the demands of imperialism. What Kipling advocates is perfectly what the colonial myth holds. Lessing, after reading these imperialistic works, is inevitable to absorb these ideologies, and in return expresses these beliefs in her own literary creation.

In *The Grass Is Singing*, Mary's admirable working logic---work without reward makes the value of a man--- fully demonstrates it. Unconsciously Lessing, rather than putting the Afrikaners on the same footing with her, would imagine herself playing the role of a savior to them. Chen Jingxia, in her dissertation, concludes the ambiguities of Lessing's works: she is sympathetic with plights of the victims of colonization and strives for their rights, but at the same time, she is defending her own folds with her compassionate portrait of the harsh lives of colonials(2006). And the portrait of the natives and their living condition are also disgusting and vomiting, which invokes readers' dislike at once when they read these words. The positive characterization of the whites and negative depiction of the natives fall into the category of the colonial myth wonderfully, which reveal Lessing's colonial consciousness embedded in her anti-colonial discourse.

4.2 Doris Lessing's Prejudicial Portrait of the Afrikaners

Growing up experience makes Lessing witness the cruelty of the colonization, and sympathize with the natives. However, her subconscious British identity and the

inherited imperialistic ideology make her identify with the colonizers. And therefore, her colonial inclination emerges in her writings, and comes up in her negative description of the natives and their living condition.

4.2.1 The Negative Characterization of the Natives

Just as described in the colonial myth, natives in the Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* is also depicted as ugly, dirty, filthy and savage. It seems that Moses is the only native that has been given the human quality. However, Lessing surprises the readers by attributing the negative images to Moses with the development of the plot. Thus Moses still can't avoid Lessing's biased description of the natives.

4.2.1.1 The Ugly and Dirty Natives

In the colonial myth, when it comes to the colonized, they are always depicted as a people full of bad habits---lazy, smelly, stingy, nasty and savage. To the colonizer, there is no difference among the colonized people, with no subjectivity and individuality. The necessity of their existence is just for the colonizer to make profit. All the qualities that make a man are negated by the colonizer. Therefore, the humanity of them becomes opaque. For the colonizers, the colonized are drunken, strong-limbed, simple-minded and savage.

When Mary goes to find Dick's laborers, she finds the head boy's eyes are inflamed which proves that he has been drinking. They are seen from Mary's eyes as the "human conveyor belt" (P.124) and "the patient motionless oxen"(P.132) and never know the weariness due to their "muscular and tough".(P.124) In addition, the natives are barbarous, like animals from the colonizers' perspective, "the naked brown backs bend, steady and straighten, the ropes of muscle sliding under the dusty skin. Most of them wore pieces of faded stuff as loincloths; some, khaki shorts; but nearly all were naked above the waist." (P. 124) It seems that the natives are only implements of work rather than human beings. There is no need for them to dress clothes against the burning sun.

Compared with men, the native women are also like primitive beings, there is no feeling of shyness about exposing their body. If Mary dislikes native men, she loathes women too, especially when she sees "their soft brown bodies and soft bashful-

faces". Above all, she hates the way they suckle their babies, "with their breasts hanging down for everyone to see." (P. 104) Here, Lessing chooses Mary as the narrator, and the natives are all seen through Mary, who is the representative of the white colonizers. The way they sit, the tone they talk, the look from their eyes are all described by Lessing with a negative impression.

What is worse, according to the hierarchical scale of The Great Chain of Being, the Europeans place the Africans at the bottom of the human family, next to the ape. This dehumanizing strategy gets its demonstration when Mary calls the natives as the "alien and primitive creatures with ugly desires she could not bear to think about." (P.104) And the natives' pot-bellied children hung to their mothers' backs are depicted "like moneys," What is unexpected is when the night comes at last, the natives "pick up...the corpse of some rat or veld creature they had caught while working and would cook for their evening meal." (P. 135) Being labeled as uncivilized and barbarous filthy savages (P. 123)", the natives are characterized as different from human beings. Therefore, they are deserved to be ruled and saved.

4.2.1.2 Moses' Inconsistency

In the novel, only one native seems to be described as different from the other black natives. That is Moses. His unselfish hard work and thoughtful care about Mary and Dick distinguish him as a kind and human figure. However, Moses still can not escape the stereotyped image. Although he has served as a mission boy in the Christian church, and educated to be literate, he is still treated as the same kind by the white colonizer. With a basic command of English, Moses speaks his mind out, "Did Jesus think it right that people should kill each other?" Mary is surprised at such profound questions, because she never thinks any black native could have his individual thought. Even endowed with this shining points, Moses's character can not exempt from the doubt due to his changeable attitudes that described by Lessing.

Even at the beginning, Moses is depicted as thoughtless and motionless through Mary's mind. In response to Mary's irritation, he does not answer back, and accepts her often unjust rebukes without even lifting his eyes off the ground. After work, he "remained quite still, leaning against the back wall in the sun, apparently thinking of

nothing, standing idly there, immobile and silent for hours, under the beating force of the sun which seemed not to affect him.”(P. 162) And as the plot of the novel progresses, Moses’ action is rendered as strange and incomprehensible. When Charlie comes to visit the Turners, he is surprised to see the house untidy and the house boy (Moses) insolent. When Tony shouts Moses away, Moses looks at Tony with wickedly malevolent glare and after a long, slow, evil look, he goes. His picked flowers and his easy, familiar, and good humored voice to Mary are exposed to please his mistress and intend to get her approval. All these tend to impress the readers with the image of Moses’s servile aspect. At last, Moses is revengeful and capable of violent behavior, this is evidenced by his killing of Mary.

The adjective words that Lessing chooses to describe Moses’s response and behavior is a mixture of positive and negative ones. This is due to her superior psychological complex. On one hand, she pities for the natives’ sufferings and wants to recognize them as human beings. On the other hand, she cannot help dehumanizing them as vile and violent and capable of murder. At the end, Moses makes no difference from other natives, no break from the stereotype in the colonial myth. Whenever the colonized are referred by the colonizers, they are always wicked, backward people with evil, thievish, somewhat sadistic instincts. The colonized are short of thoughts, ineptitude for comfort, science, progress, but familiar with poverty, and moreover wretched and ungrateful. Lessing, being the descendant of the white colonizer, makes no exception, and presents such a picture vividly in *The Grass Is Singing*.

4.2.2 The Disgusting Description of the Living Condition of the African Natives

Just like the description of the colonized, the depiction of their living condition is also full of derogatory images. When Mary comes to the natives’ compound to look for Dick’s farm laborers, she is scared to come nearer:

The huts were closely clustered over an acre or two of ground. They looked like natural growths from the ground, rather than man-made dwellings. It was as though a giant black hand had reached down from the sky, picked up a handful of sticks and grass, and dropped them

magically on the earth in the form of huts, they were grass-roofed, with pole walls plastered with mud, and single low doors, but no windows. Between the huts were irregular patches of ill-cultivated mealies, and pumpkin vines trailed everywhere through plants and bushes and up over the walls and roofs, with the big amber-colored pumpkins scattered among the leaves. Some of them were beginning to rot, subsiding into a sour festering ooze of pinky stuff, covered with flies. Flies were everywhere. (P. 121-122)

Such a picture tells that the natives are so lazy that they never keep their surroundings clean. They will let everything run its course. They don't have the ability to govern themselves, which is also echoed in Said's *Orientalism*:

...look through the whole history of the Orientals.... Conqueror has succeeded conqueror; one domination has followed another; but never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a western point of view, call self-government. That is the fact. (1995: 33)

In the colonizers' mind, the colonized lack of capacities for self-government in a proper way. And even the dogs in the natives' district are described as "Thin native mongrels, their bones ridging through their hides, bared their teeth and cringed." (P. 122) What Mary sees is just suitable for the descriptions of the colonial myth, and what Mary sees certainly confirm the natives' negated characters described by the colonizers.

4.2.3 The Voiceless and Nameless Natives

From the beginning to the end, the natives are designed by Lessing as voiceless and nameless, which reinforce the colonial myth that the natives are unspeakable animals or machines. They are given no chance of speaking their mind out and no identity, just as Edward Said advocates in his *Orientalism Reconsidered* that "The Orient was therefore not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent Other." (P. 14-27) It is through such a deliberate arrangement that the author has created a scene before the reader's eyes that the natives are so primitive that they are unable to speak and name

themselves.

As we all know, language is an effective way that distinguish human beings from animals, since the natives are deprived of language, they are naturally degraded to a group of silent creature. If they don't have language, there is no sense to make any grunt. But in fact, they have their own language, and can communicate effectively. It is the whites, represented by Mary, who force them not to speak. When a native first used his dialect to explain, the response he gets is "Don't told that gibberish to me"(P. 133). Then he tries to explain in English, and the answer is "Don't speak English to me"(P.133). Thus the native do not have any way to speak. Another case is the buying scene, the native women lost their voice, Lessing doesn't depict it hustling and bustling with noise and excitement; instead, she presented the readers a dull, drab, dismay and silent scene. The author does not arrange any communication or conversation between the whites and the natives, only summarizes their talk with "answering questions about price and quality briefly."(P. 105) It is optional for the author to make the natives speak or not, however, Lessing chooses the second, by which she creates an effect that the natives do not have the ability to express them clearly and logically, therefore, they are deserved to be ruled and governed and civilized.

Name is another conventional method to tell one different from the others. Unfortunately, the natives in the novel are nameless, except Samson and Moses. However, Samson and Moses only get their surnames, and there is no given name just as the whites in the novel. By designing the blacks nameless, Lessing leaves the readers an impression that all the black natives are the same, with the same kind of qualities, such as, lazy, dirty, filthy, uncivilized and savagery, just as the depiction in the colonial myth. The natives, having no identity at all, only have the fixed roles to play. In the imperialism-colored works, it's the same for the Orientalist to render the colonized as a cipher rather than a character whose personality can be understood. Take *Robinson Crusoe* for example, Defoe has named the servant Friday, who is so primitive that he needs to be taught everything by his master. Lessing, being familiar with those western perceptions since childhood, is assimilated unconsciously by this

take-it-for-granted western attitude towards the colonized. Thus, it is natural for her to inject this biased attitude in her novel, *The Grass Is Singing*.

4.3 Doris Lessing's Acquiescence of Colonialism

In the 20th century, colonialism has faced its challenges, decolonization takes its flight all over the world, and the British Empire has to admit its end is coming. Once claiming itself as the empire on which the sun never sets, now this ruling power is on a dwindling process. This tendency is felt keenly by the colonizers, so does Lessing. In order to maintain the imperial power in the colonies, the colonizers do their utmost and try their best to avoid their ultimate ending. Lessing, subconsciously identifies herself with the British Empire, also feels this undercurrent tendency, and can't help preserving the suzerain's imperial status in her literary creation. Therefore, Lessing in her novel weaves this desire into the texture.

4.3.1 The Impending Death of Moses

To save the whites' superiority over the black natives, the true cause of murder is covered. Person who knows this truth is either sentenced to death, or forced into silence, or becomes mad. Since the intimate relationship between Moses and Mary has threatened the whites' hegemony, for once it admits that, the whites' self-assumed civilization crashes, and nothing can save it. In order to ensure the fragile government of the whites, the murder must be preserved. And Lessing designs this texture carefully and strategically.

Moses, the murderer, at the end of the novel, stands out and waits for his final judgment. He doesn't have been given the chance to speak the truth out, nor does he have been described having the desire to defend for himself. Dick has long sensed the unusual affair between Moses and his wife, but he is not brave enough to point it out and face the reality. He intends to evade such matters. However, what he is afraid of finally breaks out. Being unable to face such a terrible shock, he breaks down at the news of the murder.

4.3.2 The Forced Silence of Tony

Tony Marston, the new comer of the continent, by chance discovers Mary's intimacy with the black house boy, fails to prevent it, and wants to find the real

motivation of the murder. But he is prohibited to speak out what he knows. Denham and Charlie guide Tony to say something about the murder in favor of the whites living on the African continent rather than the real condition of it. When the murder happens, he is aware of the fact that it is not proper to draw a hasty conclusion of it. Moses, out of revenge, has murdered Mary, which is the horrible truth the white community feels humiliating to face. Tony says "you know as well as I do this case is not something that can be explained straight off like that.... It's not something that can be said in black and white, straight off." (P. 18) Under the threat, "One had to understand the country. You have to get used to our ideas about the native. Learn our ideas, or otherwise get out, we don't want you", (P.11) Tony compromises to the white collective community.

4.3.3 The Truth-covering Madness of Dick

Dick is the last person who is possible to speak out the truth. But being unable to face all the whole matter, he becomes mad. As the story unfolds, we can see that Dick is a farmer who keens on the farming and loves his farm, his trees, his soil, and his black laborers in a sense. To some extent, he is not as cruel as the other white settlers. From him, a ray of humanistic side still can be found. Confronted with the murdering scene, he turns into mad. Together with this mad, what float away are all his failure in farming, all his fruitless efforts and all his unspeakable thoughts and bitterness.

As a result, the news about the murder in the newspaper is reported as the native murder wanting to steal his mistress's valuable things, thus it caters for the whole colonizers. Thus truth is concealed, the control and management of colonization in South Africa can continue with little attack. Lessing subconsciously silences those who know the truth, and therefore preserves the dignity of the whites, and has consolidated the colonial system.

4.4 The Revival of Colonial Myth in *The Grass Is Singing*

Lessing, in criticizing the cruelty and unscrupulousness of the white colonizers, has showed her sympathy for them. As the loyal protector of the colonial system, Mary and Charlie' maltreatment towards the natives is laid bare. But Lessing has also

endowed them the qualities of capability, competence and efficiency.

4.4.1 The Favored Description of the White Colonizers

Lessing's conservative attitude reflects more on the characterization of these white settlers. On them, the appreciative merits are endowed by the author. All this favored depiction of the white colonizers in one way or another has exposed the author's countrymen complex.

4.4.1.1 Competent Mary and Charlie and Progressive Tony

From the opening to the end of the novel, Charlie is responsible for everything, and puts every thing in its proper place. As a farmer, he is good at managing the natives, and running the farm. At the murder scene, he practically controls the handling of the case. In the description of his character, Lessing writes that "He was a crude, brutal, ruthless, yet kindhearted man." (P. 6) Here the word "kindhearted" fully expresses Lessing's approval of him. And Mary seems wiser than Dick in her planning for farming. Even Dick has to admit that Mary on the whole is quite right and knows her capacity:

She ran chickens on quite a big scale now, and made a few pounds every month from eggs and table birds; but all the work in connection with this seemed to be finished in a couple of hours. That regular monthly income had made all the difference to them. Nearly all day, he knew, she had nothing to do: yet other women who ran poultry on such a scale found it heavy work. (P.137)

Tony is attributed with approving qualities. Though he can't regard the natives as human beings, he still wants to defend for Moses. And he is described as an intellect coming with him a lot of books on farming and mining. No matter what his intention is, he is a man rendered by Lessing as progressive with high aspirations.

4.4.1.2 Fraternal Affection for Sick Dick and Nostalgia for Homeland

Although the white settlers are considered as profit-oriented, they hold brotherly affection towards the countrymen. They would never grudge in the case of help. Though Charlie does not like Dick, he respects Dick. When Dick is sick, Charlie drives miles to find a doctor for him. The doctor, in spite of his sarcastic tone, makes

allowance for the dignity of the Tuners and doesn't charge the Tuners. Besides, the colonizers are also described as a group of the exiled people who cherish for their homeland. Charlie, even after twenty years in the South Africa, still keeps his London accent, and is a proper cockney. Although living on the continent, the settlers still maintains the British life style. This is manifested by their house decoration, and their living habits. Distance cannot prevent their insistence upon the British culture for it is viewed as their root. For Mary, the word "Home" spoken nostalgically, means England, thou both she and her parents have never been to England.

4.4.1.3 Dick's Kindheartedness and Love for the African Land

Here comes Dick. When Mary is in conflict with the house boy, it is Dick who defends for them, and persuades Mary treating them mildly. He objects to Mary's fault-finding with the houseboy. And he is on good terms with his house servant Samson. Dick's humanity is especially demonstrated by his love for the African land. This is clearer when compared with Charlie. Charlie has squeezed a fortune out of the African soil, but never spends any penny fertilizing it. He cuts down trees to sell for money. The former rich soil, after years exploitation, is "played out"(P.195).

On the contrary, Dick never views farming as an end to it. Dick loves the farm and is part of it, "He liked the slow movement of the seasons and the complicated rhythm of the 'little crops'..." (P. 138). And Dick grows gums on the best ground of his farm, which annoys Charlie. Years before Dick buys his farm, a mining company has cut out every tree on the farm, leaving nothing "but coarse scrub and wastes of grass" (P. 94). He plants a hundred acres of good trees, and this turns to be his favorite place on the farm. Although the trees bring him no profit, they provide Dick with a consolation. Whenever he is worried particularly, or has quarreled with Mary, or wants to think clearly, he would stand and look at his trees; or strolls down the long aisles between light swaying branches that "glittered with small polished leaves like coins."(P. 95) While Charlie farms only for money; Dick loves the land. This contrast makes Dick a lovely man in the readers' mind.

After reading the novel, readers tend to have a mix feeling towards white colonizers. Though they are entitled to the negative images, such as cruel, hypocritical

and greedy, they are still given their credits. And the favorable characterization of these whites indicates Lessing's undercurrent identification with them in terms of their same British identity.

4.4.2 The Mysterious and Transcendental Depiction of the African Landscape

According to some critics' opinion, the vast African continent in the colonial literature is represented either as a dystopia where evil prevails or as a utopia where white settlers can escape from the yoke of modern civilization. In scholar Chen Jingxia's opinion, Africa in Doris Lessing's African stories, as the image of the Other, is also tainted by her colonial imagination, presenting two diametrically different types of images, for she either demonizes the environment or romanticizes the land and as "transcendental force that is missing in the civilized white"(2009). Lessing's frequent resort to the trope of mystery and wonder, a common code of cultural representation, practically strengthens the colonial system, thus weakening her criticism of colonial evils to a large extent.

Under Lessing's depiction, the African landscape in *The Grass Is Singing* is always described as dark and hostile which reminds people of horror. When Mary first comes to Dick's farm at a moonlit night, she is shivering with the unexpected strangeness:

The moon had gone behind a great luminous white cloud, and it was suddenly very dark---miles of darkness under a dimly starlit sky. All around were trees, the squat, flattened trees of the high veld, which seem as if pressure of sun has distorted them, looking now like vague dark presences standing about the small clearing where the car had stopped?
(P.52)

As the car approaches the farm, Mary increasingly feels the depressing atmosphere. Words such as, "silent, dark, stuffy" repeatedly emerge before readers' eyes, and the sense of deserting and desolation is strongly felt. It seems that this is a lonely place, forgotten by God, far away from civilization, full of terrible and evil forces. And the house seems to be overwhelmed and swallowed by the innumerable trees and strange creatures. Driving from a city to the farm, Mary feels she is snared

by a vast expanse of impenetrable darkness and is bewildered by the sight. Mary's first contact with the farm is enacted at a menacing night. The night gets denser as she is approaching the farm, foreshadowing the desperation and suffocation that characterize her marital life. "Dark" and "darkness" are used frequently to show this is a God forsaken place, backward, horrifying and sinister.

Under this environment, Mary strongly feels an absurd and unspeakable disturbance and anxiety. She is lonely and feels helpless, hopeless and meaningless. Her aversion to marriage is correspondingly turned into the hatred of this land, it is believed by her that "Anger, violence, death, seemed natural to this vast, harsh country." However, there is a moment that Mary shows her love for this land, for its singing birds, for its warm sunlight and the green trees:

She shaded her eyes and gazed across the vleis, finding it strange and lovely with the dull green foliage, the endless expanse of tawny grass shinning gold in the sun, and the vivid arching blue sky. And there was a chorus of birds, a shrilling and cascading of sound such as she had not heard before. (P. 59-60)

A beautiful exotic scene unfolds itself in the readers' mind eye, with its "green foliage, tawny grass and the arching blue sky." It seems like an Eden Garden in which the soul is purified. But this appreciation is transient, what companions it is a latent feeling of fear lurking in Mary's deep heart. With the disappearance of freshness, the feeling of love is very soon turned into a feeling of hatred, because of its dirty natives, evil forests and chaotic living areas. This hatred is accelerated by the ever-growing poverty of Mary's life. And the vicious aspect of the African land looms up when Mary comes to her end:

She stared, hardly blinking, into the aching sunlight. But what was the matter with the big land down there, which was always an expanse of dull red at this time of year! It was covered over with bushes and grass. Panic plucked at her; already, before she was even dead, the bush was conquering the farm, sending its outriders to cover the good red soil with plants and grass; the bush knew she was going to die! (P. 228)

Under Lessing's pen, Africa is a suffocating, gloomy place of hostility, and it smothers people's hope and imagination. Its bushes and trees thrust up from the earth, encroaches bit by bit the small cleared space, pushing aside brick and cement, so that there would be nothing left but heaps of rubble about the trunks of trees. Here, Lessing employs the fixed mode of colonial literature to express the viciousness and hostility of Africa, through depicting it as a place full of fatal disease, changeable climate and dangerous animals and plants. In this way, Africa described by Lessing reinforces further the colonial concept of binary opposition, which is in contradiction with her anti-colonial endeavor, and therefore undermines the critical force of her novel *The Grass Is Singing*.

4.4.3 The Unreliable Narrator

In the colonial myth, the colonized are believed thoughtless and emotionless, and therefore "They can't represent themselves, they must be represented." The Afrikaners are positioned to the periphery, and marginalized as the "Other". This obscure group is narrated mostly through the perspective of the civilized white, which inevitably leads to colored observation and unfair judgment. This is the case in *The Grass Is Singing*.

At the beginning of *The Grass Is Singing*, the news of the murder is reported in the local newspaper, distributed by an unknown special correspondent. As we carry on the reading, a hidden fact is going to found:

People all over the country must have glanced at the paragraph with its sensational heading and felt something had happened which could only have been expected. When natives steal, murder or rape, that is the feeling white people have. (P. 1)

According to Shadia S. Fahim's opinion, the story is told from a narrator who tells the story as a complete outsider in detached, indifferent attitude to it, which the critic names it "exclusively externalized view"(76). However, it is easy to discover "people all over the country" refers only to the white people not the natives. The narrator is supposed to be a white who unconsciously excludes the natives from "people". Then here the key problem shows up.: the narrator is unreliable.

In the colonial myth, the natives are always associated with negative image such as theft, murder and rape. Checking up in one's dictionary, one can find that the subtle difference between "murder" and "kill". The former means to kill a person illegally and intentionally; while the latter just a neutral word means to cause death. However, Mary is found murdered by Moses, and the native killed by Charlie. Furthermore, the affair between a native and a white woman is called "rape", while it seldom used to white men with a native women. The colonial discourse is found penetrating throughout *The Grass Is Singing*. As Chen Jingxia's conclusion, in spite of Lessing's anti-colonial consciousness, she is unconsciously in compliance with colonialism.

The colonizers, to ensure their superiority over the natives, put the colonial myth into practice, which reflects only the European colonists' wishes, rather than the myth. This chapter mainly discusses how the colonial myth is mirrored in and confirmed by Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*.

Conclusion

The Grass Is Singing, Doris Lessing's maiden work, has established her reputation in the British literary world. Set in South Africa under white rule, this book is both a riveting chronicle of human disintegration and a beautifully understated social critique. In this book, Lessing has powerfully exposed the despicable act of the whites in the process of colonization and bitterly revealed the miserable conditions of the natives as they take the identity of colonized. This dissertation analyzes it from the point of postcolonialism, which appears in 1970s, and flourishes in 1980s, and establishes its position in the critical field in 1990s. Aftermath, this theory becomes a theoretical framework which helps the critics to seek colonial discourse in the literary works and thus enriches the understanding of both the text and its author.

On one hand, Lessing, growing up in south Rhodesia, has witnessed the unbearable sufferings in her formative years, which increases her hatred of the colonial system. On the other hand, her family background, and cultural influence have shaped her to be an intellect of imperialistic ideology. Through reading so many English literary works that it is inevitable for her to inherit culturally such a collective consciousness, that is Eurocentrism, and the sense of superiority over the colonized. However, with the emergence of new ideas and philosophical ideas, our society has taken a course of ever-increasing civilization. Many writers begin to question the inhumanity of colonization, so does Lessing. Thus, Lessing, in criticizing colonization, has revealed her acquiescence with it unconsciously.

Since the beginning of colonization, the colonizers have created the colonial myth in favor of their own need rather than the truth. The myth depicts the colonizer as positive image and the colonized negative one. Such myth guarantees the absolute superiority of the colonizer over the colonized. In *The Grass Is Singing*, Lessing

shows that the white colonizers with Mary and Charlie as the spokesmen practice this myth perfectly well. Through the disclosure of the colonizer's cruelty and hypocrisy, Lessing sympathizes with the colonized and decries for them. In Lessing's mind, the natives are human beings, this is expressed in her depiction of Moses, a man with shining human nature, and in order to reverse the colonial myth, Lessing goes further to lay bare the fragility of the colonial myth. The positive images, the colonizer, such as masculine, unconquerable, indomitable and unselfish are found quite in opposition to Charlie's greedy nature, Dick's successive failure and Tony's final resignation. In this respect, Lessing's anti-colonial consciousness is fully expressed. However as the above mentioned, Lessing is, in an obscure way, in compliance with colonization.

Throughout the book, the story is narrated from the white's point of view rather than the native's. And the description of the natives and their living condition is in accordance with the colonial myth. The natives are relegated to the primitive state, dirty, filthy, and savagery; while the whites are competent, responsible and progressive. In the novel, the natives are designed with no voice and name, completely represented by the whites. And this is taken by the whites as a perfect excuse to carry on their exploitation and control, for the colonial myth says that the colonized are thoughtless and emotionless and incapable of governing themselves, thus, they must be saved by the whites in case of their further degeneration and bestiality. And the whites are described as capable, and kindhearted and friendly. In addition to it, the only seemingly different character Moses is also thoroughly negated by designing him capable of the violent murder, which has confirmed the barbarous image held in colonial myth. Furthermore, the African landscape is also described by Lessing as a place full of evil forces, and dangerous animals and plants. Here, Africa is either demonized by Lessing as a hell or romanticized as a heaven.

Taken as a whole, though she is liberal and sympathetic with the suffering land and people, Lessing doesn't challenge the "Africanist" conventions in her stories. She constructs a world of an unequal dichotomy in her work and stresses the unbridgeable gap between the Western and non-Western. Whether the African landscape is romanticized or demonized in Lessing's works, Africa and its people are positioned in

opposition to the West, serving as symbols and signifiers. The existence of the non-Western depends on its Western superiority, as Leela Gandhi suggests, "The third world becomes a stable metaphor for the 'minor' zone of nonculture and underdevelopment"(1998: 84). Africa and African people serve as a backdrop against which Lessing presents a panorama of white community. They fulfill various functions in her work: a marker to reinforce the patriarchal authority of the white; to emphasize the moral integrity of colonists; to provide a possible outlet for the trapped white; or to act as a safe valve on which the white project their fear and horror. Whatever functions they serve in colonial literature, natives and landscape cannot escape the fate of being marginalized, either demonized or romanticized as the other of the West.

Lessing's Africa and Africans are what European settlers envision them to be. Couching in a language of colonial othering, Lessing imagines and describes African landscape and its inhabitants in a paradigmatic mode, thus consolidating the binary opposition, or Manichean allegory. Therefore, her literary treatment of the African experiences is in constant conflict with her impulse to expose and critique the ideology of colonization. Analyzed in this way, it is not difficult to discern the two coexistent consciousness of Lessing in *The Grass Is Singing*. That is the anti-colonial consciousness and colonial consciousness, the European democratic consciousness advocating freedom, equality and egalitarianism and the racial prejudicial consciousness propagating Eurocentrism and the whites' superiority. Thus *The Grass Is Singing* has sent forth its two opposing voices.

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