Psychoanalysis and Literature, Mary's Character in Lessing's novel 'The Grass is Singing' as a Case Study"

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Abstract

The “Grass is Singing” is work that depicts many issues and communicates several themes. The issue of racism is mostly apparent that it deals with the subordination of the black people and their being exploited, abused and humiliated in their lands by British white people. As embodied through the character of the farmer, Dick Turner, the black servants are treated only as slaves and savages. More important in this novel is how the author deals with the psychic life of her characters. Particularly, the female character “Mary” who’s overlapping hurtful experiences and self-unconscious troubles causes her pain and sufferance in her relationship with the outer world. This paper will, therefore, approach the character of Mary from a psychoanalytic perspective and the variables that interrelate during Mary’s successive life stages to end up in her being murdered. That is, this paper is an attempt to apply psychoanalysis to literature. It will investigate how the accumulated experiences of socio-psychological past and present suffering led Mary to develop a psychological complex and act upon it. In other words, the study will analyze how the accumulated experiences of childhood, surfaced to the front and stressed upon by the occasional adulthood events, correlate to culminate in a tragic end in her life.

Keywords: Sexuality, Childhood, Interpretation, Transference, Psychoanalysis and Literature.

Introduction:

“The Grass is singing” is an English novel, open to many readings and interpretations. It had largely become popular and was rewritten several times, achieving great success along the world, especially in England. To focus on, “The Grass is singing” is a story of the murder of Mary, a British white woman who is killed by her black servant. After introducing how Mary Turner is killed by her houseboy, this novel describes the life of the main character, Mary, and how she undergoes several changes over her life. At the beginning, she is introduced as a young woman who is satisfied in her present life because she has a job. Meanwhile, she has faithful friends with whom she enjoys her daily life. That is why, she seems at first to have no desire for marriage and she prefers to stay unmarried with her friends whom she loves. Even if she endured some painful events in her childhood especially the cruelty of her father, she is not affected in her present life because she finds new friends, and she is very comfortable. However, this does not last forever because she is going to discover that her friends are not as honest as she thinks. As a reaction to this event, she gets married with a farmer, and she leaves her friends
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and job to live with him in the farm. This is how, she is going to develop some destructive psychological conflicts which affects her relationship with those people around her, and it eventually leads to her death at the end of the story.

Among the first motives that urge me to approach this novel from a psychoanalytic perspective is the desire of getting more acquainted with psychoanalysis theory, specifically, in how it is represented or manifested in literary works. Also, being acquainted with psychoanalysis helps understanding complex scopes of the human character. That is, their invisible human part, the psyche. This study is an attempt to reveal how the theory of psychoanalysis has been initially developed with Sigmund Freud and adopted by many modernist writers in their artistic works. These writers developed new literary techniques, including the stream of consciousness and symbolism which do not focus on the describing of the existing social and political issues in a realistic way, but they rather go deeply into the inner feelings and thoughts of characters in their daily interaction with the outside world. Moreover, the analysis of the psychic life of the main character “Mary” will help understanding in depth how women have always been subject to exploitation under the patriarchal white system in South-Africa even if they are part of this system. The depiction of this character shows the undergoing of many drastic changes which affected her life and led to her death at the end of the story. Thus, approaching this novel psychologically is very useful in the sense that it will help understanding the inner psychic life of Mary’ character as an individual whose daily interaction with other people causes her many destructive psychological problems.

In general, the study is divided into two major parts. The first contains the psychoanalysis foundation principles as a theoretical background; the second deals with the psychic life of Mary, her childhood and subsequent socio-cultural dimensions. The first part focuses on three points, organized in the form of sub-titles and sections. The first section is a quasi comprehensiveness of the psychoanalytic theory major terms, definition and some key concepts which will be useful in the analysis of the person “Mary”. The second section discusses psychoanalysis application to literary work in which we are going to see how psychoanalysis theory is adopted in the analysis of literary texts. The second part of this study is equally divided into two sections, considered as a critical analysis of the novel from a psychoanalytic perspective. The first section is an attempt to investigate how the childhood experiences of Mary could have had a negative influence on her adult life and her relationship with other individuals. The second section treats the issue of socio-individual conflict of “Mary” relying on some Freudian concepts like the structural theory.

I .Psychoanalysis Foundation:

1. Definition and Key Concepts:

Psychoanalysis started with Sigmund Freud, the modern late 19th and early 20th century thinker whose theory since then has been very influential and prevalent. He is the founder of modern psychology, inventing new psychological concepts, rules and techniques. Despite his death a century ago, Freud’s concepts are still widely pervasive in many areas including literature, human sciences, and many other fields of thought. Freud (1937) holds that the psychological theory is defined in terms of studying the unconscious determinants of one’s behavior and the influence of our early childhood experiences on the development of our personality (Freud, 1937). Before Freud’s account for hysterical illnesses, for at least 2,000 years of European history until the late 19th century, the term "Hystera" referred to as a medical condition thought to be particular to women and caused by disturbances of the uterus.

At first, Freud was interested in Zoology. Then, he turned to study human pathologies and mental disorders. When he was practicing medicine in the 20th century, most of the doctors assumed that hysteria was undergone only by women, and it was explained as an inherited disease. That is, hysteria was referred to by physical causes and factors. Despaired by such assumptions and being dissatisfied with such physical accounts for Hysteria, Freud immersed in investigating one’s past painful experiences to ascribe them the probability of Hysteria occurrences. That is, he attempted to find an effective treatment for his patients. Freud (as cited in Thurschwell, 2000) discovered that there were mental processes behind hysterical problems which were not conscious (Thurschwell, 2000). In other words, he attempted to listen to the past stories of his patients as a technique for understanding the root causes behind their psychological problems. Such investigation isn’t purely random but based on scientific techniques and methods. These techniques are centered on three main concepts which are key to
Freud’s psychoanalysis: sexuality, interpretation and personality.

1.1. Sexuality:

Sexuality and sexual energy is considered one major ground for the development of Freud’s psychoanalysis. For him, sexual development stages since early childhood are the source behind a person’s adult aberrations and perversions or normality. Freud divides this development into regular psychosexual progression phases to investigate and understand the nature and the variety of neurotic illnesses. He believes that there are a number of childhood stages during which the child seeks pleasure from some object. This particular theory shows how adult personality is determined by childhood experiences. In order for an individual to be healthy and normal, he must successfully complete these stages, and if any of these stages is not developed successfully, there eventually develops a kind of abnormal behaviors. Freud gives much importance to the sexual energy in human beings, believing that this sexual store or libido never ceases even if it experiences some periods of latency. In brief, Shaffer (2009) restate the five stages as follows:

The first is the oral stage. The latter lasts for the first two years of infancy. At this stage, the focus is put on the mouth, the lips and the tongue as the referential sexual scope. In this regard, sucking becomes the primary source of pleasure for the infant. This occurs partly, according to Freud, because the child’s first contact with the mother in feeding is via the mouth and that the child’s bond with the mother is therefore bound up with oral contact. Freud suggests that the youngest babies see their mothers as the extension of themselves. They imagine that the outside world will provide them with all what they need. At this stage, they don’t distinguish themselves as independent entities. Moreover, they hold their mothers as their ownership. When they realize that they cannot get everything they want, they start communicating so as to make the world know what is missing in their life. This social capacity precedes the way for the second phase (Shaffer, 2009).

Shaffer (2009) continues elaborating on these stages and moving to the anal phase after the oral. The anal phase is the second psychosexual phase following the oral. This lasts from two to four years. At this stage, the child starts developing the first signs of morality, manifested in his developed capacities of controlling and cleaning his excretion. The child becomes aware of himself as an independent being, starting the process of distinguishing between him and the others. With toilet habits, now pleasure is derived from expulsion and retention. That is, the psychic force-libido is turned towards oneself to form what is called self-love or narcissism (Shaffer, 2009, p.39-40).

Following this stage is the phallic or Oedipus period as Shaffer (2009) continues explaining. It mostly takes place between four to six years old, during which a boy discovers his sexual organs, the penis, and derives pleasure from contact with it. In other words, the child starts exploring his genitals through masturbation. It is also important to state that this stage refers to both girls and boys. At this moment, the boy identifies with his mother and takes her as a sexual reference. By chance or some event, he sees his mother or sister without a penis, which he thinks that they are castrated by his father. In reaction to this shock, the boy squelches his love for his mother in fear to be castrated by his father. It is important to note that the myth of Oedipus complex is related to this event. This is what Freud developed as the castration complex theory which is defined as the fear to lose the penis for boys and the recognition of the loss of the penis for girls. Besides, Freud suggests that while boys develop castration anxiety, girls develop a jealousy about not having a penis. That’s to say, when a girl realizes that she does not have the sexual organ as that of her opposite sex, she imagines that she has been already castrated. This is why she initially identifies herself with the father expecting that he can give her a baby as a substitute for the penis. However, this concept of penis envy has been taken by many feminist theorists as subject to objection and criticism (Shaffer, 2009, p.39-40).

Shaffer (2009) moves on to talk about the next stage. This is called the latent stage which turns up from the end of the phallic stage to puberty. During this time, there is an apparent renouncement in the sexual interest of the child. That is, an extinction or postponing of the libido. During this period, the child becomes interested socially in both parents. Narcissistic interests are being reduced. With the beginning of education, social values and standards as well as moral and intellectual growth predominate other interests (Shaffer, 2009, p.39-40).

Shaffer (2009) continues exploring the psychosexual developmental stages to end up with the last period that is called the genital stage. This lasts from puberty to maturity. The first phase of this stage is called homoerotic which is marked with the
libido concentration on children of the same sex. In other words, the child overlooks his heterosexual interests that society discourages at this early life. More than that, the child feels more comfortable with peer group of the same sex and is even afraid of the opposite sex. The homoerotic is followed by the period of hetero-sexuality. The narcissistic drive still persists and it is expressed in the early adolescent love affairs as this intends to demonstrate the ability to attract members of the other sex (Shaffer, 2009, p.39-40).

1.2. Interpretation:
Here we the focus is concerned with dream interpretation as well as mental disturbances and aberration behaviors interpretation. The interpretation of these problems is the mission of the psychoanalyst that was at first developed by Freud. Freud (1913) stresses that despite our attempts to hide or disguise our emotions or our feelings, our real feelings and thoughts can be revealed or brought up through our mistakes and are manifested in dreams (Freud, 1913). In other words, there is always a motive behind our dreams and mental disturbances, and it is the mission of both the patient and the analyst to unlock this motive and interpret it. Accordingly, when our emotional reactions are repressed into the unconscious, there appears immediately the hysterical symptom without comprehending it. This means that when a person experiences a repressed painful event, it can be revealed later on in the form of neurotic behaviors.

In order to understand and interpret these behaviors, Freud (1913) develops some techniques as key materials in his analysis. This is basically what is called “Free Association and Transference”. The importance of free association is that the patients spoke for themselves, rather than repeating the ideas of the analyst. They work through their own material, rather than parroting another's suggestions. This technique is one of the crucial rules for psychoanalytic practice (Freud, 1913, p.458). Clearly, during the analysis, the patient will say everything comes to his mind. For example, if he is retelling a dream, he freely associates about the experiences and events that this dream reminds him of. Through this process, all those thoughts and urges which lie behind can be understood and brought up into the surface content of the dream. Therefore, the process of free association helps the analyst to construct a better understanding of the dream, and to uncover those memories and thoughts to which it refers. Another important technique in Freud’s development of psychoanalytic method in the same regard is called “the transference technique”. Etchegoyen (1991) explains that in the course of analysis, the patient’s feelings of hatred or love towards others are transferred onto the doctor. Through this relationship and interaction between
the patient and the analyst. Freud suggests, all those childhood emotions and feelings can be easily acted out. Therefore, the motives behind the emotional reactions of the patients can be interpreted. Briefly speaking, in order to cure the patient and rid him of his psychological conflict, the analyst interprets everything about the patient (Etchegoyen, 1991).

2. Personality:

Reintroducing Freud’s explanation of the term Personality, Shaffer (2005) holds there are many other driving forces which play an important role in how we interact with the outside world. This psychoanalytic theory of personality displays that the human behavior is the result of the interaction between three symbolic parts of the mind: The Id, the Ego and the Superego (Shaffer, 2009, p.38-39). The terms of Id, Ego and Super-ego are the topographical concepts within our minds, and they do not correspond to the structures of the brain. In other words, they are imaginary and symbolic concepts about the mind, and they are important in the sense that they help us understand how these structures of the psyche are inter-related, and they work together. Accordingly, the dynamic interaction between these basic parts of the mind carry human beings through the five psychosexual stages of development mentioned previously which include oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital.

In addition, Freud (2000) stresses that the symbolic mental structure (the Id) is explained as an amorphous unorganized set of desires and whims. He confirms, (as cited in Goldbach, and Godley, 2006) “The Id contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth. It is laid down in the constitution above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate from the somatic organization, and which find a first psychical expression here in forms unknown to us” (Goldbach and Godley, 2006, p.4). In other words, the Id is inseparable from the unconscious. It is an unstructured part which does not care about reality, and it is interested only in the here and now. That’s to say, it knows no morals or values, and it does not make plans for the future. Therefore, the Id wants everything which is good at the moment with no consideration of time and other wishes.

The second part, the Ego, develops when the child starts interacting more and more with the outside world. Basler (1975) holds that in general, the Ego is defined as responsive tool to the demands of reality. Unlike the Id which acts according to the pleasure principle, the Ego acts according to the reality and socio-moral principles. It is considered as the organized part of the mind which tries to mediate between the Id and reality (Basler, 1975). In other words, it enables us to delay our desires and behave in a realistic way. Moreover, in order to control and lessen the Id’s conflict with reality, the Ego employs defense mechanisms which are developed by Freud (as cited in Plutchik, 1980) as the following: repression, denial, displacement, intellectualization, fantasy, compensation, projection, rationalization, regression, and sublimation. These ego defenses, for Freud, if are not effectively deployed, they can be destructive, and they can lead to problems in one’s life (Plutchik, 1980).

In symbolic correspondence to the Oedipus complex during the phallic stage, the super-ego develops as our moral stage. The Superego is defined as the self-critical aspect of the Ego. That’s to say, it serves as a judge on the conscious and the unconscious decisions of the Id and the Ego. Moreover, it includes the ego ideals which prohibit our drives and fantasies. If the Id wants only self gratification, the Super-ego, on the other hand, attempts to act in a socially appropriate way, and it helps us behave according to the norms existing in our society. Furthermore, Freud claims that the Superego is a symbolic internalization of the father figure and cultural regulations. Freud (as cited in Albert Ellis, Mike Abrams and Lidia Abrams, 2009) emphasizes, “The super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression, the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego over the ego later on in the form of conscience and perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt” (A. Ellis., 2009, p.93).

Accordingly, Freud (2000) scientific analysis comes up with the conclusion that the interaction among these structures [ID, Ego, Super Ego] often results in both normal and abnormal behaviors (Freud, 2000). For example, when the ego is controlled by the demands of the id and the superego, a person can develop some unacceptable or irrational behaviors which can weaken or rather collapse the ego strength, and it eventually results in the development of neurosis as a serious psychological conflict one can suffer from. From this psychoanalysis background, the shift will be about the link between psychoanalysis and Literature. That is, it will bind the psychoanalysis theory with the work at hand which is about Mary’s character.
2.1. Psychoanalysis Criticism and Literature:

Psychoanalysis criticism deals with a work of literature primarily as an expression, in fictional form, of the personality, state of mind, feelings and desires of the author. Since 1920s, a very widespread psychological approach to literature has come to be psychoanalytic criticism, whose premises and procedures were established by Freud (1856-1939).

Consequently, these forbidden, mainly sexual desires come into conflict with and are repressed by the censor into the unconscious realm of the artist’s mind, but are permitted by the censor to achieve fantasized satisfaction in distorted or disguised forms which serve to conceal their real nature and objects from the conscious ego. Freud (2005) holds that the chief mechanisms of such distortions are Condensation (The omission of parts of the unconscious material and the fusion of several unconscious elements into a single whole) and Displacement (The substitution for an unconscious object of desire by one that is socially acceptable). The disguised fantasies that are evident to consciousness constitute the manifest content of a dream or work of literature; the unconscious wishes and their objects which are expressed in this distorted form are the latent content (Freud, 2005). Moreover, Freud believes (as cited in Randall, 1989) that the unconscious also harbors stages of psychosexual development, from earliest infancy onward, which has been outgrown by the mature person, but remains as fixations in the unconscious. When activated by some later event, these fixations may achieve disguised expression in fantasy, whether in the mode of dreams, neurotic symptoms, or literature. The chief enterprise of psychoanalytic criticism, consonant with the enterprise of the psychoanalyst in his therapeutic function, is to reveal the true content, and also to explain the effect on the reader, of a literary work by translating its manifest elements back into their latent, unconscious determinants (Randall, 1989).

Based on Freud’s analysis, Sugg (1992) adds that the artist possesses abilities in addition to the universal human ability to fantasize and dream, and that these abilities serve to differentiate the artist radically from the patently neurotic personality. That is, the artistic person, for example, possesses to an especially high degree the power to sublimate. (Sugg, 1992). In other words, the artist or man of letters can shift the instinctual drives from their original sexual goals to higher goals, including the discipline of a particular art as well as he manages to elaborate fantasized wish-fulfillment in a way that conceals their personal or egoistic elements, and so makes them capable of satisfying people’s unconscious desires rather than the individual’s. Accordingly, the result is fantasized wish-fulfillment of a complex sort that not only allows the artist to overcome, at least, partially and temporarily, personal conflicts and repression, but also makes it possible for the artist’s audience to obtain solace and consolation from their unconscious sources of gratification which had become inaccessible to them. Literature and art, therefore, unlike dreams and neuroses, may serve the artist as a mode of fantasy that opens the way back to reality.

Although many critics see that the psychoanalytic approach to a work of art is limited, Freud holds (as cited in Lebau, 1989) that it could both explain the inner implications of aesthetic work and it helps us to understand the temperament of the artists. As a case in point, the Freudian interpretation of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” does not only uncover the mysterious character of Hamlet, but it also helps discovering the deeper workings of Shakespeare’s mind (Lebau, 1989). In a similar shape, the character “Mary” demonstrates strong signs for understanding the psychic life of the Author. Thus, the second part which is divided into two sections, tackles two main concepts that have to do with the socio-psychological dimensions of “Mary”. The first section will focus on some elements embodied in Lessing’s work which may be psychologically determinants of any one’s character. The first subtitle is the concept of childhood, a principal term in Freud’s analysis of any character, through which some past events in Mary’s childhood is revealed, and how she is still haunted with them in her present life. The second section subtitle is the socio-individual relationship which describes how this woman seems to suffer in her relationship with
others because she cannot focus on what she wants; and she is controlled by both the expectations of society and the memories of the past.

In the case of the present study, the psychological dimension of this novel is very obvious through how the character of Mary is created by the author. As it is depicted in the novel, Mary’s present behaviors and feelings are considered as a reaction against some painful experiences she goes through in her life. First of all, Mary as a child was not brought up in a healthy social environment because she was often affected by the violence that was exerted on her mother by her father. Therefore, this stays and accompanies her along her life subsequent stages. Moreover, in her relationship with the outside world as a mature woman, Mary is introduced as somebody who is unable to interact with others in a positive way. As it is mentioned previously, even if she seems to be extrovert while is still working in the town, her marriage is a changing point in her life. She is going to become isolated from others. That is to say, she does not communicate positively with her husband and her servants. Therefore, she becomes introvert, and she endures serious psychological conflicts which appear in the form of repression, transference, and many other psychoanalytic concepts which are useful in the analysis of this character.

II. The Psychic Life of Mary:

1. Childhood:

The influence of childhood upon one’s adult life is evident in psychoanalysis. Linking this approach to Mary’s present life, it could be deduced that her childhood had strong impact on her mature personality. Her conflicting relationship with the society and the contradictory feelings she manifests can be interpreted as the source of her oppressed suffering childhood. As Mary has undergone a painful infancy at the view of her mother sufferings, her adult life became shaped by those tragic experiences when they found the room to be surfaced. The appropriate room which allowed the recuperation of Mary’s past anguish on the scene was her marriage with Dick Turner. The latter was manifested for Mary as another husband, another oppressor version of her father that often reminds her of her childhood and her relationship with her parents; therefore, a ghost plunging her in doubts and maladies. Lessing (1950) stresses Mary’s fears at the remembrance of her childhood, “…when she thought of marriage, she remembered her father coming home red –eyed and fuddled; when she thought of children she saw her mother’s face at the funerals – anguished but as dry and as hard as a rock” (p.28).

Mary seems afraid of becoming like her mother throughout the whole novel. Her unfortunate marriage with Dick Turner takes her back into the past experiences that she has suppressed for a long time. On the other hand, Mary endures strict poverty and much disappointment in the life she is leading with her husband, the failure farmer. Here, it is saliently expressed that Mary often associates her relationship with Dick in the village to her past life which was characterized by poverty and the cruelty of her father. This is why, she becomes deeply depressed, and she sees her marriage as a serious mistake in her life because it leads to live in poverty and loneliness as she was during her childhood.

Also, the fact that she didn’t marry him out of love but out of society’s pressure further deepened her sorrows. This is implied in the novel, particularly when she develops her illusionary decision of returning back to the town where she thought she can live as happy as she was with her friends. But that didn’t continue as she wished. Because she was rejected by her old boss, Mary is obliged to accept her destiny, and she returns back with her husband to the countryside. In this regard, the image of her oppressing father, always dwelt her unconscious, was re-embodied and reinforced with the concrete presence of Dick Turner, another father. Her feeling of loneliness and isolation with Dick in the village takes her to the childhood memories. This is manifested in Lessing (1950) quote, “How the store smell made her remember the way she had stood, as a very small girl, looking fearfully up the rows of bottles on the shelves, wondering which of them her father would handle that night the way her mother had taken coins out of his pockets at night…”(p.115).

These social facts make her horrified of leading a life similar to that of her mother. As a consequence of the hard experiences she had conducted in her past life added to those of the present with her husband, Mary manifests aggressiveness towards the others. She exerts some sort of, psychologically speaking “Transference”. For example, Freud (as cited in Culler, 2001) believes the following on Transference, “…the patient sees in him[Psychoanalyst] the return, the reincarnation, of some important figure out of his childhood or past, and consequently transfers on to him feelings and reactions which undoubtedly applied to this prototype. This fact of transference soon proves to
be a factor of undreamt-of importance, on the one hand an instrument of irreplaceable value and on the other hand a source of serious dangers. This transference is ambivalent: it comprises positive (affectionate) as well as negative (hostile) attitudes towards the analyst, who as a rule is put in the place of one or other of the patient’s parents, his father or mother” (p.224).

As a psychological approach to Mary’s treatment of the black farmers, it could be said that she tries to transfer her oppression to those servants in a hostile manner. This practice can be considered as a sort of exteriorizing the monstrous repression inhabited in the self of Mary. While Dick is rarely cruel to the workers that work for them, Mary is quite cruel. She treats herself as their master, beats them and humiliates their human dignity as the author (1950) stresses “… she beat him down by two, feeling pleased with herself because of her victory over him” (Lessing, 1950, p.80). Moreover, she shows contempt for the natives and finds them disgusting and animal-like as the narrator (1950) contends “… she heard the complain that he had been working since five o’clock that morning with no food at all” (Lessing, 1950, p.94). Yet this form of hostility and repression towards the workers is not a form of racism only, but also a form of shifting her oppression to some people whenever there is an appropriate chance. Moreover, the fact that Mary fired all house servants till there was none to accept working at her house proved Mary’s pathologies and unstable mood. Based on the aforementioned psychoanalysis, this could lead us assume that Mary is a victim of childhood experiences and repressions which took place in the unconscious, and was exploded later in her adult life.

Mary further embodies her aggressiveness and vindictiveness when she collides with Moses and more when the latter was brought at home. Moreover, Moses was shaped for her as a version of another father, and later, a source of horror. The relationship of Mary with her black servant, Moses, awakens in her certain feelings towards her father. Lessing (1950) emphasizes, “She smelt the sickly odor of beer and through it she smelt too her head held down in the thick stuff of his trousers – the unwashed masculine smell she always associated with him” (Lessing, 1950, p.201). Thus, Mary was extremely influenced by her father’s behavior in the presence of Moses. Yet Mary is attracted by Moses despite the fact that she shows him hatred and disgust. He was going to present in her dreams, mixed with the image of her father. The dream runs as follows as the author (1950) stresses, “He approached slowly, obscene and powerful, and it was not only he, but her father who was threatening her. They advanced together, and she could smell not only the native smell, but the unwashed smell of her father. It filled the room; musty like animals… he came near and put his hand on her arm. It was the voice of the African she heard. He was comforting her because of Dick’s death, consoling her protectively, but at the same time it was her father menacing and horrible, who touched her in desire” (p.203).

Once again, we can refer to dream and how it is approached by psychoanalysis to understand the situation of Mary’s dream. For example, Mcleod (2003) believes that Dreams perform important functions for the unconscious mind and serve as valuable clues to how the unconscious mind operates (Mcleod, 2003). In this regard, we depend once again Freud’s theory of dream interpretation to illustrate Mary’s character. Freud considered dreams to be the royal road to the unconscious as it is in dreams that the ego’s defenses are lowered so that some of the repressed material comes through to awareness, albeit in distorted form.

In other words, the process whereby the underlying wish is translated into the manifest content is called dream-work. The purpose of dream work is to transform the forbidden wish into a non-threatening form, thus reducing anxiety and allowing us to continuing sleeping. Dream work involves the process of condensation, displacement, and secondary elaboration. The process of condensation is the joining of two or more ideas/images into one. For example, a dream about a man may be a dream about both one’s father and one’s lover. A dream about a house might be the condensation of worries about security as well as worries about one’s appearance to the rest of the world. According to Freud (as stated in Mcleod, 2003), Displacement takes place when we transform the person or object we are really concerned about to someone else. For example, one of Freud’s patients was extremely resentful of his sister-in-law and used to refer to her as a dog, dreamed of strangling a small white dog. Freud interpreted this as representing his wish to kill his sister-in-law. If the patient would have really dreamed of killing his sister-in-law, he would have felt guilty. The unconscious mind transformed her into a dog to protect him. Secondary elaboration occurs when the unconscious mind strings together wish-fulfilling images in a logical order of events,
further obscuring the latent content (Mcleod, 2003, p.88-89).

Based on the above psychoanalysis approach for the dreams, Mary’s character can be referred here as she also fuses two characters in her dreams, that of her father and that of Moses, the black servant. Through the novel, we know that Mary was trying to get close to her father when her mother was absent. Meanwhile, she hated him as always coming home drunk. Similarly, Mary seems to unite Moses with her father, especially when she dreams that her husband dies, and she remains under threat because of something mysterious. This mixture between her black servant whom she once hits in the farm and her father may clarify her hatred to her father and her childhood at large. This could be considered as a reason behind her being sexually rigid in her relations. That’s to say, her being treated negatively by her father in childhood could be seen as a determining factor for her fears and anxiety about sex, marriage, and motherhood at present because since the very beginning, she is introduced as a woman who is not interested in marriage and children at all, and even when she gets married with Dick Turner, she does not show any sexual attraction towards him. This is how Mary’s life seems to be based on hollowness, sterility, and dryness throughout the whole novel.

In addition to the hard experience of Mary’s childhood, her marriage to Dick turner can be considered as the determining factor behind the development of such feelings and emotions about her life. Her marriage transports her back to the painful moments she had to endure since very early. These childhood experiences have been buried in the unconscious for a long time because she has been preoccupied with her job, and she has been at the same time happy with her friends. But as psychology proves, these repressed experiences are going to be returned in the presence of Dick. After she gets married, that life of poverty she underwent in her childhood is going to be revealed in the form of dreams and her relationship with her husband. The problems Mary underwent will cause her psychological diseases, and she will manifest some sort of fraction of character. Based on this, in the coming point, we are going to look at how Doris Lessing depicts Mary as a woman who is ignorant of herself and unable to listen to her needs rather than conforming to the demands and the expectations of society. This is going to augment her suffering and psychological pathologies.

2. **Socio-individual conflict:**

In this novel, Lessing discusses also the weight of culture and tradition upon the life of the individual. Even though Mary had been repugnant to marriage because of what happened to her mother, culture forced her to marry against her will. When Mary heard the negative gossip about her staying unmarried, she advanced to satisfy the society and the culture. That is another element that determined the disturbed character of Mary as Lessing (1950) puts, “… during those few months before she married, people were discussing her in a way which would have sickened her, had she suspected it. It seems hard that Mary, whose charity towards other people's failures and scandals grew out of a genuine , rock-bottom aversion towards the personal things like love and passion, was doomed all her life to be the subject of gossip” (p.51).

In order to obey these rules and norms of the society, Mary decides to change herself through getting married with Dick Turner. Moving with him to the village where he works as a farmer, she is going to be tormented with loneliness, lack of communication and some depressive behaviors she develops as a result of her being haunted with the painful experiences underwent in the past. In fact, this individual-social conflict for Mary can be analyzed according to the Freudian structural theory which divides human personality into three parts: Id, Ego and Superego. As it is mentioned before, the interaction between these components can lead to the development of both normal and abnormal behaviors. In case of the protagonist, Mary, we can say that the super-ego appears through how her friends have a negative impact on her life. That is, it is the authority which judges her deeds and limits her individuality. As a reaction to this influence exerted by society, she starts to work as hard as she can in order to compromise between what she wants and what society expects her to do. Then, the Id as the third structure appears through Mary’s childish behaviors.

To start with, the friends of Mary and all those people around her represent the super-ego for Mary. Before getting married with Dick Turner, she seems to have no psychological problems because she is happy in her work, and she sees herself as a young and beautiful woman who is loved by all her friends. As the narrator (1950) says, “She was very happy: that was her only positive quality, for there was nothing else distinctive about her, though at twenty-five she was at her prettiest” (Lessing, 1950, p.33). This means that she had been very satisfied in her
life, and she had never expected the distressing psychological state she endures at present. Her first shock was when she hears her friends talking about her as it is described by the author (1950) when he says, “She was stunned and outraged; but most of all deeply wounded that her friends could discuss thus. She was so naive so unconscious in her relation to other people that it had never entered her head that people could discuss her behind her back” (p.39). This experience was going to change her life completely because she has never thought that her friends whom she loves can gossip about her in such a pejorative way. This is why, she is represented as ignorant of herself in relation with others because she is seen by her friends as a woman of thirties because of the way she dresses and behaves.

In order to change her life style, her friends suggest as the author (1950) keeps describing the accumulated experiences of Mary that will lead to her committing crime, “Why does not she marry? She must have had plenty of changes” (Lessing, 1950, p.38). This means for them that it is better for her to get married because most of women at her age have got married. In order to satisfy this social demand of her friends, she accepts to get married with Dick Turner whom she has never met before. This influence of the super-ego on Mary’s life also proves itself after she gets married.

As far as her ego is concerned, Mary is always trying to reach a kind of compromise between her intentions and the obligations of a society to which she belongs. When she is shocked by her friends’ gossip, she immediately gets married. Yet she feels that this is a good decision not because she chooses it, but only because she wants to conform to the obligations dictated over her by the society. This change leads her to suffer from a kind of psychological conflict, especially, in her relation with Dick Turner because they belong to different social backgrounds, and they have different dreams and life styles. For example, even though she is his wife, Mary is actually thinking to return back into the town where she has a job and she can talk with her friends on a daily basis. This is illustrated in the novel when the narrator (1950) states, “...and she began to think during those gray wastes of time, how it would be when Dick at last make some money and they could go and live in town again” (Lessing, 1950, p.107).

This is how Mary seems to be unable to adapt with the life of the village as a wife. On the other hand, Dick Turner seems to have different ways of thinking because he cannot even think of leaving his farm to live somewhere else. Therefore, this opposite way of thinking for Mary and Dick can be considered as a determining factor behind the absence of communication and understanding between them as a married couple. In addition, Mary is introduced as developing some childish behaviors throughout the novel, and this represents her Id part. As already shown, Mary sees herself before marriage as loved by all her friends, and she has never thought of getting married even if she is a mature woman. She also chooses her clothes according to her taste, and she does not care about the external world as it is expressed in the words of the author (1950), “And she still wore her hair-little girl fashion on her shoulders, and wore little frocks in pastel colors, and kept her shy, naive manner. If she had been left alone, she would have been gone on, in her own way, enjoying herself thoroughly, until people found one day that she had turned imperceptibly into one of those women who had become old without even having been middle-aged: a little withered, a little acid, hard as nails, sentimentally kindhearted and addicted to religion or small dogs” (P.45).

In fact, Mary is introduced as a naïve person while she is still working in the town. She generally does not care about her way of behaving. She has never defined herself as different from others which means she is indifferent to herself as an independent person. Yet when she discovers her real image as it is perceived by her friends, she is surprised, and she develops some feelings and behaviors which are going to be roughly influential on both her physical and psychological life. Society’s expectation is applied not only to Mary’s case of being obliged to choose marriage but also in what concerns the white-black relationship.

Clearly, a race-oriented thinking of the English white people created a very strict structure of the master-servant relationships. Anyone who did not fulfill the expectations of the society would be alienated from social life as it was in Mary’s case again upon forming a close relationship with Moses, the black young man. Lessing (1950) stresses, “But, in the interval, there would be a few brief moments when he would see the thing clearly, and understand that it was ‘white civilization’ fighting to defend itself that had been implicit in the attitude of Charlie Slatter and the Sergeant, ‘white civilization’ which 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” (P.30). Therefore, as the study has showed in Chapter III, Mary is doomed to be defeated in such a society. She cannot adapt to the strict rules of this racist world since she feels sexual attraction for Moses. Anyone in this world has no opportunity of survival unless he obeys the collective and treats the natives in a cruel way; otherwise, he cannot survive. Mary’s suffering increases during her marriage which failed. This failure opens the room for bringing about to the surface all her past abused experiences since infancy up to adult life.

3. The Failure of Marriage:

Mary eagerly searches for a husband who rather is a means to regain her earlier eroded confidence according to the societal expectations and judgments. She appears initially and entitles herself as a woman of value as Lessing (1950) confirms, “...a busy and popular woman with a secure place in the social life of the town” (Lessing, 1950, p.60). Nevertheless, people made her get married as she says, and this is what makes her unhappy in her current life. However, she is oblivious of the fact that her aversion towards the personal things like love and passion may destroy the success of any intimate relationship. In her desperation to mend her shattered and worn out self-esteem added to the society pressure as elaborated above, Mary marries Dick Turner, the first man she comes across. Mary chooses to leave the town and settle in the country with Dick who is a farm owner. Dick however, views marriage as a romantic voyage that is socially acknowledged and approved.

Endowed and characterized by their typical emotional flatness, Dick and Mary Turner are worlds apart. Initially, Dick appears to be a typical submissive husband as the author (1950) contends "...it had really been such an easy way to win mastery over him, the sort of trick women use to defeat their men” (Lessing, 1950, p.128). Dick Turner always ended up by apologizing, abasing himself, and she forgiving him even when they had trivial disagreements in spite of Dick being the provider and the man in charge of the farm. Mary’s initial superiority, however, does not last long as Lessing (1950) stresses, “She would have to sit like a queen bee in this house and force him to do what she wanted” (Lessing, 1950, p.149). Apparently, there is no real misunderstanding between them.

Over time, however, she discovers lack of strength in Dick’s personality and his aimlessness in life. This realization and pity towards Dick makes Mary hate him. This hatred is again directed often towards her own confused sense of self. Mary desires that Dick should work instead of assigning his constant failure on Luck. Had Dick been a stronger man, Mary would have loved him more because somewhere deep within her unconscious, Mary had expected Dick to be instrumental in covering up her inadequacy. She had expected Dick to be an agent who would bring back her sense of lost control in life. Mary’s constant attempt to reorganize the interior of their house can be understood symbolically as her futile desire to restructure and reorient her life so as to bring about a change in Dick’s personality and her helpless life situation.

Dick feels aggrieved when he perceives lack of satisfaction in their lives and in the relationship as Lessing (1950) confirms, “He stubbonly went his own way, feeling as if she had encouraged him to swim in deep waters beyond his strength, and then left him to his own devices” (Lessing, 1950, p.157). This turned Mary’s dream into despair. Mary’s reluctance towards physical relationship with Dick is revealed as the narrative advances slowly. She dislikes the physical intimacy with her husband because she dreads that it may produce feelings that she does not want to experience the feeling of love toward him. This ambivalence might be a manifestation of her repressed fear of relationships as she constantly perceives her marital discord as a reflection of her parents failed marriage. Somewhere, unconsciously, she discovers a resemblance of her mother’s life with hers as the author (1950) contends, "Mary, with the memory of her own mother recurring more and more frequently, like an older, sardonic double of herself walking beside her, followed the course her upbringing made inevitable" (Lessing, 1950, p.110). The narration continues, "She identified herself with her mother, clinging to her most passionately and pitingly after all these years, understanding now something of what she had really felt and suffered" (Lessing, 1950, p.110).

When Dick is sick, she takes charge of the farm until he gets well though she dislikes the farm as she believes that it is the farm that is refraining her from leading the life in the town. Mary’s sense of emptiness and impersonality are perhaps projected onto the African servants. She is infuriated by their object-like presence as the narrator (1950) goes on, “...as if he were not really there, only a black body ready to do her bidding” (Lessing, 1950,
p.83). She is shaken by any and every incident, like the heat, the primitive bathing facilities, the neighbors and Dick’s successive failures as a farmer which resulted in an increase in her level of her anxiety and feelings of alienation. She hates herself for hating Dick, and his desire to control everything in Mary’s life. Mary is constantly struggling to resolve the conflict arising from the strong demands of her morality and her uninhibited impulses, perhaps a struggle between her id and superego with her weak infantile ego mediating between the two.

Consequently, Mary becomes psychologically depressed because she isolates herself from others, and she develops such depressive feelings like pessimism, helplessness and hopelessness. What also deteriorates her psychological situation is her inability to face her problems with courage. She often tries to escape from her reality when she leaves her husband and escapes into the town expecting that she can live as happily as she was before, but this is in vein because she has to accept her reality as it is and becomes aware of herself. This manifests at large at the end of the novel when she admits her failure at the tongue of the author (1950), “I have always been ill, ever since I can remember. I am ill here’ she pointed to her chest” (Lessing, 1950, p.251). Nevertheless, this could be symbolic to her feeling of weakness as expecting to be killed by her black servant at any moment. This is how Doris Lessing describes the tragedy of a woman whose self-ignorance leads her to be doomed to madness and destruction at the end of the novel.

4. The Tragic End of Mary and Psychoanalysis:

Moses realizes that Mary’s unquestionable surrender to him is being threatened by Mary herself. Moreover, when he finds out that Dick and Mary are leaving the farm forever, he becomes desperate to regain his lost sense of power over Mary and yearns to take revenge on the submissive who has dared to be herself once more. He aches to inflict the ultimate form of punishment on her death. When she speaks with Tony, she reveals her psychic state and laments her inability to face her problems with awareness from her own life as the author (1950) confirms, "...as if there was nothing new in her death" (Lessing, 1950, p.248). Actually, Moses and her nearing death seem to her to be the only means of rescue. She passively chooses to accept the coming death. The elated feeling of being rescued suddenly changes into helplessness and Mary once again realizes that nothing and no person can save her. The author (1950) stresses, “Now it seemed as if the "night were closing in on her, and the little house was bending over her like a candle, melting in the heat. She could hear the crack, crack: the restless moving of the iron above it seemed as if the "night were closing in on her, and the little house was bending over her like a candle, melting in the heat. She could hear the crack, crack: the restless moving of the iron above and it seemed to her that a vast black body, like a human spider, was crawling over the roof, trying to get inside....She was shut in a small black box, the walls closing in on her, the roof pressing down" (p.252). Mary is helpless in front of Moses, helpless of his power and seeeth, awaiting her death. She realizes that she has dared to control man’s life being a woman and that this control will bring turmoil in her own life and destiny. She is horrified by Moses. Yet she has been waiting for him, waiting for her tragic death all the night long. Not a word does she utter, not a voice for rescue - she is terrified and she has been waiting this destiny since firing him.

In her desperate struggle to fight with complete submission and oblivion, Mary Turner is constantly seen to wage a war between the real and the unreal in the last part of the novel. Moses personifies the borderline between sanity and insanity. In her relentless struggle to regain her intense seclusion and suffering for long as she awaits her ultimate freedom-death calmly, confirmed by the narrator (1950), "The sky was luminous; but there was an undertone of cold grey; the stars were bright; but with a weak gleam” (Lessing, 1950, p.235). She feels overwhelmed for a short time and perceives as Lessing (1950) keeps enriching us on the final psychological effects of Mary’s long accumulated experiences, "The world was a miracle of color and all for her, all for her, she could have wept with release and light-hearted joy” (Lessing, 1950,p.238).

Finally, Mary recalls her mistakes in life and realizes her passivity, her being distant from life the footsteps of death approaching and encroaching upon her stealthily. She discovers her detachment from the trees, the surrounding though she had spent so many years amidst them. She experiences the ultimate indifference, her indifference towards her own life as the author (1950) confirms,"...as if there was nothing new in her death" (Lessing, 1950, p.248). Actually, Moses and her nearing death seem to her to be the only means of rescue. She passively chooses to accept the coming death. The elated feeling of being rescued suddenly changes into helplessness and Mary once again realizes that nothing and no person can save her. The author (1950) stresses, “Now it seemed as if the "night were closing in on her, and the little house was bending over her like a candle, melting in the heat. She could hear the crack, crack: the restless moving of the iron above and it seemed to her that a vast black body, like a human spider, was crawling over the roof, trying to get inside....She was shut in a small black box, the walls closing in on her, the roof pressing down" (p.252). Mary is helpless in front of Moses, helpless of his power and seeeth, awaiting her death. She realizes that she has dared to control man’s life being a woman and that this control will bring turmoil in her own life and destiny. She is horrified by Moses. Yet she has been waiting for him, waiting for her tragic death all the night long. Not a word does she utter, not a voice for rescue - she is terrified and she has been waiting this destiny since firing him.
entity and her lost sense of control over her own life, Mary Turner is undergoing severe turmoil where at some junctures she desires to submit to her fate. The author (1950) in this regard puts, "She ran outside: what was the use of sitting there, just waiting, waiting for the door to open and death to enter? She walked straight into the bush, thinking: I will come across him, and it will all be over” (Lessing, 1950, p.243). Mary is finally murdered, stressed by very expressive statement of the author (1950), "She opened her mouth to speak; and, as she did so, saw his hand, which held a long curving shape, lifted above his head; and she knew it would be too late. All her past slid away, and her mouth, opened in appeal, let out the beginning of a scream, which was stopped by a black hand inserted between her jaws. But the scream continued, in her stomach, choking her; and she lifted her hands, claw like, toward him off” (p. 254-255).

Moses kills his prey and awaits people to come and arrest him. Death represents her ultimate means of escape as the author (1950) stresses, "But then, what is madness, but a refuge, a retreating from the world? ” (Lessing, 1950, 232). Death here can be symbolically represented as Mary Turner’s ultimate psychic degeneration as she fades away in complete oblivion and passivity which signifies an absolute detachment from reality. Mary ceases into a state of complete non entity: “The aim of every life is to die”, Freud’s words seem to echo in Mary Turners fate.

Conclusion:

As a conclusion, Doris Lessing has succeeded in giving a psychological dimension for her work “The Grass is singing”, embodied through the character Mary. This capacity of writing allowed the reader to approach it from many perspectives and analyze it according to various disciplines, amongst which, psychoanalysis is strongly implied. Also, the novel is rich of many other themes and issues. Lessing was so conscious of psychology to have depicted the complex mind of a woman, Mary. Moreover, the author proved of sociological acquaintance in having described the society’s burden on the individuality whose victim is a certain member who wants to be himself. As seen before, the concept of Marriage is represented as a changing point in the life of Mary because it leads her to face her reality as a mature woman and it is also the determining factor behind all the psychological changes she has undergone in the village. In other words, after marriage, the repressed memories and feelings of Mary find the village as a suitable environment in which they are brought into the surface. Her husband, Dick seems to be always preoccupied with his work, and he does not have any time to communicate with his wife. Therefore, she becomes introvert because she is always left alone in the house, and she does not find any person to whom she can express her feelings and emotions. In fact, this loneliness and lack of communication for Mary take her back into her childhood when she endured several painful events in her relationship with her parents, particularly, her father whose negative way of behaving affected her life at an early age. This is revealed in her present life in the form of dreams, neurotic behaviors, and isolation which affects her relationship with the external world. Briefly, he accumulated suffering experiences of Mary since infancy and at the presence of a violent father stored a lot of sad memories in her unconscious mind. Such memories get exteriorized in her later life and manifest in neurotic forms and psychological troubles at the presence of her failure husband. These psychological pathologies push her to treat the black servants in a hostile manner and transfer into them her mental troubles which lead, in turn, to her tragic end, murdered by the black servant Moses.

Implications:

The experience of Mary can be a sign to how Doris Lessing investigates the deep psyche of the characters, believing in its importance of psychoanalysis application to literature. Also, this urges the reader to get more interested in such literary works, rather than pure fantasies or whims. Lessing motivated us to take in consideration psychoanalysis while treating the text. That is why we profoundly understand the character of Mary when we determine the reasons behind her psychological conflicts, which are referred to her childhood sufferings, on one hand and to her marriage on the other.

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