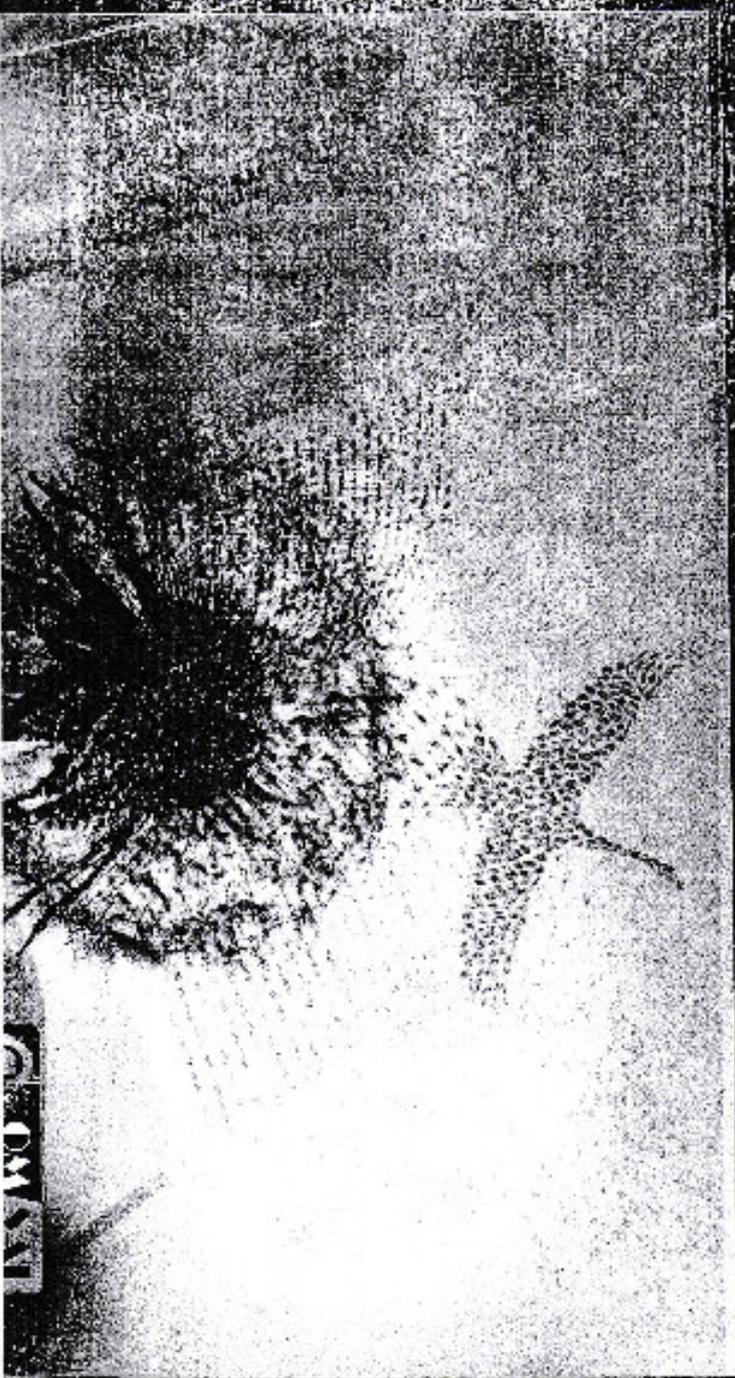


# Diasporic Literature

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## THE THEME OF ALIENATION IN DORIS LESSING'S THE GRASS IS SINGING

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### Abstract

The Grass Is Singing is one of the greatest novel by the British, Nobel Prize winner novelist, Doris Lessing. This paper throws light on the theme of alienation. Doris Lessing is considered an exceptionally innovative radical and outstanding woman writer. The present study attempts to make a full described comprehensive critical interpretation on the theme of alienation in Doris Lessing's The Grass Is Singing. Alienation is a universal existential difficult situation which has been a central and indispensable fact of all human beings. Alienation, in other words, is a mental or emotional detachment. Mary Turner, in this novel can be pointed out as showing the seeds of alienation. Alienation has an adverse effect on her life. This novel depicts the relationship between man and woman. Since Lessing has addressed 'Alienation' which concerns the people around the world.

**Key Words** Alienation, Isolation, Emotional involvement, Pessimism, Hollowness

### Introduction

Doris Lessing is commonly recognised as one of English's leading authors since the battle. She was born on 22 October 1919 in Iran. From 1924 to 1949, she lived on a farm in Southern Rhodesia. She has also authored several books, short stories and essays. All of these works reflected on a broad spectrum of topics and questions from racial policy - from the early novels she wrote in Africa - to gender policy, which led her to the embrace, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, of the feminist Revolution, the position of families and individuals in society. Doris Lessing received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2007 and it seems that at least the greatest literary award was provided to a woman who enriched and measured humanity like no other author in the second



half of the 20th century. She is an ardent writer and does not fear to utter unpalatable facts. English fiction's audacious authors have defied reality and enjoyed unsettling us and having us function. Doris Lessing is a leading force in post-war English literature, carrying an iconoclastic, outspoken critique of culture and politics, with a wise elegance as a master of diversity and the extent of her work. She reflects on feminist issues and the societal isolation of the day, becoming a playwright and storcy writer. She has been the leading writer with a serious ability and a curiosity in social and feminist styles.

### Meaning of Alienation

The sense of isolation suggests that you have no bond or that you are not in a party like the people around you. Alienation as a fundamental existential condition is a central and indispensable reality for all people. Alienation, in other terms, is an emotional or mental separation; a vital detachment in which, without emotional intervention, Bertolt Brecht, the spectator and performers must see the performance, action and dialogue and ideas (Anderson, 2005). "Alienation is the state of being disconnected or alienated from something or someone; it is a disease of mind" is a dictionary of literary words. Finkelstein (1965) describes alienation as "a psychological condition, an internal struggle, an animosity to something apparently beyond oneself, a barrier that was formed, not defending but impoverishing oneself. Any intellectual discourse has caught the interest of this broad definition of 'alienation.' Alienated may be considered a fictitious state of mind. This topic was discussed at multiple stages from different viewpoints. Alienation is, according to the Oxford Dictionary, "the action of estranging or estrangement of emotion or affection." The term "outsourcing" is attached to the notion of alienation which mainly has a detrimental significance. As Rosenstock and Kutner describes, "is a negative form of involvement in a social system: an individual is present within, cognizant of, or somehow implicated by the system, although he perceives that it cannot fulfill his goals or provides the outcomes he values".

Alienation generally defines "a condition in which someone distinguishes from something" (Fischer 38). This 'else' is a position where the particular view diverges from the core idea. Peter L. Berger believes that "the root of all alienation is the imposition on the created universe of mankind of a hypothetical inexorability," from which "choices become fate." It is not only strongly linked to the universal understanding of alienation with humanistic disciplines like anthropology, psychology and sociology. Alienation is a condition in which an individual cannot retain a sense of identity that causes his



...this disease.

The most frequent representation of alienation in literature is the social detachment of an individual from culture or group. Shakespeare's Hamlet is represented as the "Supreme Literary" portrait of alienness in a volume of literary words from Bloom, although others may argue for Achilles in Iliad. So the Lessing characters 'Ben Lovatt' in *Ben in The World* can be pointed out as the seeds of separation as 'Mary Turner' is singing in *The Grass*, 'Anna Wulf' in *The Golden Notebook*, 'Martha' and *Search*, and in *A Proper Marriage*, among others. The characters of Lessing's women are intelligent, involved and responsible and are not worthless and vulnerable to the common image of women. She argues that the sexism of patriarchal culture and conventions does not provide women with the basis to secure the highest standards of turning their position into fully equivalent. Her quest for a world of both sexes' virtues, demand and status is appreciated in equal measure and men and women are complementary pieces of each other. She's the spokesperson that makes people conscious in solitude.

#### **The Theme of Alienation in the novel:**

*The Grass is Singing* is set in 1940's Rhodesia, a southern African country now known as Zimbabwe. The novel centers on the murder of a white farmer's wife by her black houseboy, a crime driven by the ingrained racism that pervades 1940s Rhodesia. This novel begins with the assassination of Mary and shows the way local people respond to her, and then segues into a long recollection to point out the reasons and situations which points out the reasons of crime. The beginning of the novel points out with the article published in the newspaper about the killing of Mary Turner, wife of a poor farmer called Richard Turner. The proper white community is surprised, but not much concerned. The life of Mary Turner is very rich in the social loneliness that followed her until her passing. At the beginning of this book, Mary has no psychological issues since she was leading a comfortable life. The Turner never did inspire through the heart, with Richard as a result going to be mad. Tony Marston, who is appointed as an assistant points out in detail how he found the body and might be known the exact reason for killing of Mary. She was murdered by Moses, a houseboy. In her view, she decides to marry practically the first available farmer to arrive in the city for supplies. Charlie Slatter, who is the neighbor of Turner's, Sargent Denham knows nothing about this, might think that Marston, a fresh transplant from England, does not really understand how life in Africa is like. Mary never thought of getting married. This



alienation has an adverse effect on her life. She never thought to change her life. Her unsuccessful married life filled with pessimism. She isolates herself from many things, and she cannot express her feelings to anyone. Because of pessimism, she could not speak to anybody. The most important reason behind her isolation is her regular clash with her husband. The conflict leaves her tired, as the conversations between Dick and Mary show quite clearly.

In this novel, Mary Turner is having no confidence at all. After her marriage with Dick, she possesses some demands, but it's not fulfilled and hence inner conflicts get increased. Hence, she was not in a position to share her feelings with anybody with the society around her. Later on there is a death of Dick, his death is just like a coward. Then she is married with Moses, who is her life partner. Both of them were not in good terms with each other. Just for a petty reason, he kills her. She has little peace of mind and happiness and is thus utterly disconnected from her existence. She doesn't care of social life. She experienced the tensions and loneliness of her parents before her marriage. Her mother was alienated, she suffered and suffered every day, but she could not counter it because of societal pressures. Mary didn't want her mother's agonised existence. She's an unfortunate gal. She must tolerate a bitter experience from her birth to death; only death prevents her from loneliness.

Mary Turner is a very willing, courageous and extraordinarily feminist woman who resents living according to the conditions of everyone else. However, Mary's life's greatest cause of controversy is her abuse of indigenous people. They are never made completely transparent for motives. Her bigotry, particularly for a white South African, is unusually sadistic. She emerges from a great deal of nervous breakdowns throughout her novel and is seriously psychologically disabled in the last part. Despite this, she predicts precisely that Moses is going to kill her. She is a survivor of several things, since she was never liberated, unlike the other protagonists in Lessing. Isolation, mental and economic sterility and emotional emptiness consume her whole existence. Her engagement was totally insignificant. It may be assumed that it was a marriage that was inappropriate. The company pushed her to embrace the lovely union she saw in her parent's life. When she grew up in a dysfunctional home, loneliness and non-engagement fully subjugated her.

Mary's inability to be in close contact with Dick is seen as the storey progresses painfully. She disliked her husband's physical closeness always because she fears she never likes her husband's emotions of affection and passion. This ambivalence will reveal her tortured fear of marriages, as she



inevitable". The narration continues, "She identified herself with her mother, clinging to her most passionately and pityingly after all these years understanding now something of what....". "She said nothing of how she disliked the natives, of how the hostility that she could feel as something palpable coming from them against her; she knew he could be in bed for days yet, and that she would have to do it whether she liked it or not". The African servants can be projected to Mary's sense of hollowness and impersonality. She's angry with their objects such as 'as if he weren't, only the black body ready to bid her.' She is shocked by all incidents, such as the sun, the primitive bathing facilities, the neighbours and Dick's successive shortcomings as a farmer. Their fear and their feelings of isolation have increased.

She cannot deal with an emotional touch day by day with the native homeless, who appear too foreign to her, and with the arrival of the narcissistic Moses, her near invited death is inexorably caused by many psychological pressures. Mary and all the white society were guilty, but the black Moses is going to be hung. The shortcomings of Mary are often a product of her incomprehension. She has never looked at societal and political realities and has nobody to address their challenges and struggles in everyday life.

### Conclusion

One of the founder mothers of feminism, Doris Lessing made her debut as a novelist with *The Grass Is Singing* (1950) This is one of the most reputed novel, which examines the relationship between Mary Turner-a white farmer's wife and her black servant. This novel is commonly referred to as one of the greatest publications of its particular period. All the characters in this novel maintain complex and ambivalent relationships to one another. Lessing's exploration of gender mostly centers around Mary, and the way in which femininity becomes a source of conflict in the world of novel. Mary Turner, the survivor of all of these oppressions, is different from Lessing's protagonists, who have never had rights. Her life was full of loneliness, mental and economic sterility, and emotional emptiness all overshadowed her whole life. When she grew up in a dysfunctional home, she was fully subjugated by loneliness.

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