

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF ORIENTALISM IN DORIS LESSING'S *THE GRASS IS SINGING*

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Received : July 23, 2023

Revised : December 25, 2023

Accepted : December 29, 2023

Published : December 31, 2023

How to Cite (in APA Style):

Bilqis, B., Setiawan, I., Supiastutik. (2023). The Construction of Orientalism in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*. *Pioneer: Journal of Language and Literature*, 15(2), 322-338. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v15i2.3165>

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**Abstract:** This article studies the construction of Orientalism in the novel *The Grass is Singing* by Doris Lessing. Doris Lessing is a British writer born in Persia who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2007. As a white writer, Lessing is known as a writer who fights for the rights of the black community. Still, in this novel, she sharpens the negative image of the blacks as described in the theory of Orientalism. Orientalism focuses on the West's view of the East. In the novel, Orientalism was carried out by The West against The East, represented by Mary Turner as white people and Moses as the black. This study aims to dismantle the Orientalist discourse in the novel. The study applied the theory of Orientalism proposed by Edward Said (1979). The Orientalist discourse in *The Grass is Singing* is constructed in the form of stereotypes and oppression against the black people in Southern Rhodesia. Racism, colonialism, and the politics of Apartheid done by white people in the novel showcase the white superiority toward the inferior black.

**Keywords:** *inferior, oppression, orientalism discourse, stereotype, superior*

## INTRODUCTION

The existence of the West and the East forms the gap between them in social, cultural, economic, and political aspects. The West considers the East as an uncivilized world and easily deceived. According to Lary (2006), the West believes that the East is

inferior, childish, uncivilized, and has a backward culture that requires enlightenment from the West. East is also seen as alien, exotic, unreliable, dangerous, exhibited, and a threat to the West (Moosavinia, Niazi, & Ghaforian, 2011). This thought arises because the East has always been the object of colonialism carried out by the West. Not only Asia and the Middle East, but Africa was also the target of Western colonies. Rashid (2014) argues that colonialism is a form of exploitation and colonization of territory by people from other areas. Colonialism forms an unequal relationship between the colonial powers and the indigenous population.

Colonialism is the idea of domination which is closely related to the concept of power (Al-Hardan, 2022; Horvath, 1972). Colonialism was developed in the fifteenth century by Europeans in various parts of the world. This is evidenced by the discovery of South America by Europeans at the same time as the third voyage of Columbus in 1498. This discovery also became the beginning of the colonial period which lasted until the early nineteenth century (Knapp, 2007). Colonialism became a real Western practice to demonstrate their superiority. Historically, the West began its invasion of Eastern countries in the early twentieth century which was the beginning of European domination of the East. Imperialism begins with colonizing the farthest areas embodied in the 'conquest of Africa' (Cabi, 2019).

Colonialism breeds racism. Racist ideology was common in the West during the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries (Sa'di, 2020). The superiority shown by the West is not only carried out in the form of colonialism but also in racial politics, which is known as the apartheid system. The formation of the Apartheid system was influenced by the emergence of Afrikaners' nationalism, where they had a desire to take over large institutions in the economic, political, and educational fields. Mhlauli et al., (2015) contended that apartheid was not only a system of racial discrimination, but also imposed separation between the whites and the blacks in government, the labor market, and even residency.

*The Grass is Singing* written by Doris Lessing was published in 1950. *The Grass is Singing* is set in the 1940s, when there was racial politics between the whites and the blacks. Westerners feel that they are civilized people, this actively illustrates how they carry out the practice of colonialism under the pretext of spreading civilization and morals against the inferior nation. However, instead of improving the civilization of the

Africans, they carried out slavery, and colonialism and created an apartheid system for the black people. This is represented in the whole story related to the main character, Mary Turner.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this study, there are several previous studies related to the topic. One of which is an article written by Mirza (2017). This article discusses how *The Grass is Singing*, and describes social life related to racial politics between the whites and the blacks. This literary work shows a very complex mix of issues of race, gender, nation, and class. The main theme of this novel is about the wife of a white farmer who has an extramarital affair with the natives, but furthermore, *The Grass is Singing* highlights the atmosphere of oppression and exploitation of the natives. Lessing shows African life as she saw it when she lived there. Lessing was fully acquainted with how the racial exploitation of the white colonial government took place at that time. The relationship between the whites and the blacks is never far from misunderstandings and differentiating attitudes from one another, especially in the incident of the murder of the whites by the blacks.

Meem (2016) explored gender performance in the colonial era which is the background for *The Grass is Singing*. This article discusses the character of Mary Turner as a victim of the patriarchal society at that time which turned into the oppressor of the black people. As mentioned by Meem (2016) in his journal, “Mary tries to protest by torturing the black men while Antoinette tries to find shelter in the black people. Both of them are pushed to adopt violence as a form of rescue”. Mary’s oppression is a form of self-rebellion and proof that even though she is a woman, she also has the power to commit violence against the black people like the colonizers did. Meem (2016) said that “postcolonial feminism focuses on the struggle of non-western and colored women”. This is illustrated by how Mary tortured the black men who were her house servants as a form of her inability to directly rebel against the androcentric society at that time (the British colony). In a patriarchal society, both the black and the white women are under male dominance. Meem (2016) argues that “Mary Turner is colonized in her own country by the patriarchal society”. Mary’s act of violence against her black servant, Moses, is a form of woman’s weakness. She can’t accept the violence against herself that makes her turn into a cruel person. Mary could not show her anger

towards the patriarchy so she showed her anger towards the lowest class at that time, the blacks. In other words, Mary tries to be more masculine than feminine, however, patriarchal society does not accept women as masculine figures.

## **METHOD**

In this research, the author used a qualitative approach. Qualitative data can be taken from several books, documents, or other sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Then, the data can be supported with additional information from libraries or internet sources related to the topic discussed. The data source is a novel entitled *The Grass is Singing*, written by Doris Lessing and published by Penguins Books in 1950. The primary data contains empirical data in the form of dialogues, paragraphs, or narratives taken from *The Grass is Singing* novel related to the research topic. Data was collected by the close reading technique. The researcher analyzed the collected data by utilizing the theory of Orientalism proposed by Edward Said (1979).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Orientalism is a thought that distinguishes between the West and the East in both cultural and intellectual terms. Orientalism was later known as a hegemonic discourse as an ideological basis for Westerners, mainly the European colonization, to control the East (Veena & Ramanathan, 2013). Orientalism has broadly impacted the study of postcolonialism, including in postcolonial literature. The continuity of Orientalism can be found in literary works (Bhattacharya, 2019). One of them is the novel *The Grass is Singing* written by Doris Lessing. The novel tells about Mary Turner and Dick Turner, a pair of white farmers who live with their black servant named Moses in an African village. The narratives written in the novel showcases that the author of this novel reinforces many harmful stereotypes of the black characters and the white superiority.

### **Stereotyping of the Blacks as Inferior**

Said (1979:2) explains that orientalism is a form of expression and cultural and ideological representation of discourse related to scholarship, vocabulary, doctrine, and even colonialism style. As one of the crucial postcolonial studies, orientalism has become a subject of study in many European universities since the fifteenth century (Veena & Ramanathan, 2013). Colonialism will still leave a relationship between the

colonizer and the colonized, the West and the East. The East is not just an area bordering Europe, but more precisely East is the place of the largest, richest and oldest European colonies (Said, 1979:1). As part of the colonial discourse, the East as a nation that Europe once colonized has a tendency to permanently be alienated, marginalized, or even controlled by the West.

*The Grass is Singing* is one of Doris Lessing's best novels that focuses on the relationship between the whites and the blacks. *The Grass is Singing* which is very strong with postcolonial ideology has a background in southern Rhodesia where Mary Turner as the main character in the novel, is the white figure who dominates the blacks as inferior. Mary Turner is an African of white descent. Mary, who was born white, considered the difference in skin color to be proof of the relationship between the whites and the blacks, which was limited to the relationship between strong and weak, slaves and masters, colonized and colonizers. The blacks are always labeled with a negative image. The negative image of the blacks is clearly exposed at the beginning of the story.

People all over the country must have glanced at the paragraph with its sensational heading and felt a little spurt of anger mingled with what was almost satisfaction, as if some belief had been confirmed, as if something had happened which could only have been expected. When native steal, murder, or rape, that is the feeling white people have. (Lessing, 1950:3).

The story begins with the death of Mary Turner, which Moses, her black servant, committed. His death spread fast and made significant headlines in newspapers. Moses' actions stirred the emotions of the white minority in Southern Rhodesia. Moses as a black native, worked as a servant at Mary Turner's house. Whites speculated that Mary's death by Moses occurred because Moses wanted to steal his master's valuables. As we can see on the narration, the whites are not surprised when the blacks commit evil deeds. In other words, Whites believe in the stereotype that blacks are identical in negative things, one of which is killing. The East is represented as a dangerous wild creature. As Said (1979:54) explains that the East is described as a country full of barbarians, evil, and terrible, different from the West. On the other hand, the narration also confirms that the Whites are more educated and civilized.

Another negative image of the black people was described by Mary Turner's behaviour. She is the main character in *The Grass is Singing*. She is described as a character who has a tendency to discriminate against natives compared to the other

characters. His hatred has been ingrained in him since he was a child. Her parents taught Mary not to have a relationship with black people at that time. The following quotation shows how Mary's parents influenced her perspective on black people.

She had never come into contact with natives before, as an employer on her own account . . . She was afraid of them, of course. Every woman in South Africa is brought up to be. In her childhood she had been forbidden to walk out alone, and when she had asked why, 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 (Lessing, 1950:29-30).

Mary Turner is a white African born and raised in Africa. Mary's life is mostly covered by the issue of racism, which is quite strong. She grew up in a white family that hated blacks. Her parents taught Mary not to socialize with blacks. Since childhood, her mother taught Mary not to leave the house alone for fear of meeting black people. Her mother thought that blacks always did horrible things and even perverted things toward Mary. The negative stigma regarding blacks sticks with Mary until adulthood. She has never had anything to do with black people in her work or social life. In the quotation above confirmed that all women throughout South Africa, especially white women, grew up with the doctrine of fear of black people.

The stereotypes the whites have built about the blacks are associated with a negative stigma about black behavior and raise stereotypes regarding their physical appearance and attitude. We contended that the constant exposure to negative images of black characters in literature or other media will build international readers' perceptions that the image of the black community is as it is told in novels. Morin (2022) believes that racing stereotyping affects people adversely including influencing emotions, behaviour, creating self-stereotyping and also influencing decisions. Moreover, Brezina & Winder (2003) argued that negative stereotyping has even created economic disadvantage for blacks in America.

If she disliked native men, she loathed the women. She hated the exposed fleshiness of them, their soft brown bodies and soft bashful faces that were also insolent and inquisitive, and their chattering voices that held a brazen fleshy undertone ... Above all, she hated the way they suckled their babies, with their breasts hanging down for everyone to see; ... but rather of these black women, as strange; they were alien and primitive creatures with ugly desires she could not bear to think about (Lessing, 1950:49).

The quote above explains that Mary hates blacks without exception. The hatred that was embedded in Mary's heart towards black people was not only because of their

attitude, but everything related to black people. One of them is her dislike of their physical appearance. Mary saw black women as disgusting as black men. First, Mary hates black women for their physical appearance. In the quote mentioned above, black women have bodies full of fat. This shows that they have never taken care of themselves. Aside from the physical aspect, Mary also did not like their facial expressions or the way they spoke, which seemed disrespectful and immoral. One of the things that added to Mary's hatred of black women was the way they breastfed their babies. It is explained that black women breastfeed their children like animals. They let their breasts open and hang freely without embarrassment when feeding their child. These behaviors brought up the thought that black people were no different from animals and even Mary equated them to "aliens" because of their strange behavior and not showing civilized human behavior.

Besides the two forms of stereotypes described earlier, the author also found other forms of stereotypes, particularly regarding blacks' inappropriate use of English. As we know, Europe has long been known as an explorer nation from one continent to another. Colonization by Europe certainly had a significant impact on the development of its colonies. One of them is language. Various countries that incidentally speak English were formerly European colonies, including the African continent. In addition to using the local language, English is the second language used daily by African people. *The Grass is Singing* is a novel set in southern Rhodesia, otherwise known as Zimbabwe. This area was formerly a British colony. It is not surprising that many people can speak English. However, the way blacks speak English is a concern. The following quote explains the whites' reaction as native speakers to the use of English by black workers.

At this he stopped still, looked at her squarely, and said in his own dialect which she did not understand, 'I want to drink.'

'Don't talk that gibberish to me,' she snapped . . .

The man said, in a halting ludicrous manner, 'I ... want ... water.' He spoke in English . . . in the middle of their work; one of themselves speaking bad English

. . .

But most white people think it is 'cheek' if a native speaks English. She said, breathless with anger, 'Don't speak English to me,' and then stopped. (Lessing, 1950:61).

The narration above shows that one of the workers in the field asked permission to drink because he was very thirsty. The workers spoke to Mary in English in their own

dialect. This utterance sparked Mary's anger because she did not understand what the worker said. The black workers continued to speak English. Mary still got angry and told the black man to stop speaking English to her. The use of the English language by blacks was considered an insult to whites. In the narration, there is also the word "cheek", which refers to impudent. Whites thought it was impudence when blacks spoke the language of their ancestors. Black people, as a colonized ones, should not use English as their daily language because it is considered inappropriate.

Another form of stereotype that is found in the novel is the view of white people about the goods used by black people. In general, *The Grass is Singing* tells about the lives of Mary Turner and her husband, Dick Turner. Dick was known as a hard-working husband and had some business. One of the businesses is a shop selling goods blacks need around their residence. One day, Charlie Slatter visits Dick and Mary's house. But he was a little surprised to see the various kinds of furniture no longer suitable for use in a white place, as we can see in the narrative text below.

Charlie looked at Mary's ear-rings, and at the sofa-cover, which was of the material always sold to natives, and ugly patterned blue that has become a tradition in South Africa, so much associated with 'kaffir-truck' that it shocked Charlie to see it in a white man's house. (Lessing, 1950:92).

Charlie Slatter is one of the white characters in the novel. He is known as a person who is racist against blacks, as explained above when Charlie was visiting Dick's house. He was amazed by some of the furniture in that house. Dick and Mary used several items that were popular for blacks then. This is because the shop went bankrupt, so the goods were used personally. Because of that, Charlie felt strange seeing things that natives usually used but now in a white man's house. One of the forms of racism towards black people can be seen in the way Charlie values goods that are close to native blacks in white homes. The racist part is the way Charlie looks at these items, which are considered cheap and disgusting if white people use them. From a white perspective, the use of things with a native feel only further emphasizes the unflattering image of the natives. Charlie also said the use of blue patterns is a common tradition in South Africa. This thinking shows a level of difference between whites and blacks in the objects they use.



## **Oppression toward the Blacks as Inferior**

The West shows its superiority through various things. Stereotypes, oppression and racism are real forms of Western power to show that they are a developed and civilized nation. The real proof of oppression by the West is the practice of colonialism. Western colonialism originally appeared intending to spread civilization. However, the fact is that the West has suppressed the East. In the theory of Orientalism written by Said, the East in question is Asia and the Middle East such as Japan, China, Korea, Arabia and so on. However, Africa, which is not included in the eastern part referred to by Said also experiences what is called orientalism. Other evidence is the emergence of the Apartheid system which separates the interests of whites and blacks.

*The Grass is Singing* shows the oppression white people do as part of their way to show the power of the West. In this section, the racial actions of the white characters in *The Grass is Singing* will be discussed, especially verbal and non-verbal forms of oppression by Mary Turner and several white characters who have contributed to the oppression. What happens to the black character in *The Grass is Singing* aligns with what happens to Ensei Tankado in the novel *Digital Fortress*. Widjajati et al., (2022) argued that Ensei Tankado, an Asian computer programming expert, was marginalized and regarded as inferior by his white co-workers because he decided to resign from the company. He is also labelled as a traitor and eventually killed. Ensei Tankado, an Orient, is positioned as a Western-controlled figure.

Mary Turner's death, which was committed by Moses, was not without reason. From a young age, Mary thought blacks were dangerous creatures. Therefore, when she became Dick's wife and had to relate to her black workers, she treated them badly.

‘Yes, she treated him badly, I thought. Though on the other hand ...’

‘Nagged at him, eh? Oh well, women are pretty bad that way, in this country, very often ... They have no idea how to deal with niggers.’ (Lessing, 1950:10).

She treated him as it was natural to her to treat natives, and her voice grew sharp and irritated. (Lessing, 1950:74).

Mary's bad treatment of Moses is revealed when the police investigate the cause of her death. Sergeant Denham, one of the police officers on duty, asked several things about Mary's habits when she was alive. One of them is how Mary treats her black servant, Moses. Tony Marston, the assistant, said Mary mistreated Moses. One of the bad treatments was that he was nagging and liked to swear at Moses. Sergeant Denham

concluded that Mary's actions had dire consequences. Mary was considered not good at treating blacks, especially in Africa. Charlie added that in dealing with blacks, the boys were better than the girls. From the narrative text above, it can be seen how white people discriminate against black people. Blacks, as inferiors, could not put up a fight because they felt that they had no power. Moreover, Moses was just a servant in the story. Apart from that, we can see in one of the quotations above where the white characters use the N word to refer to the black people. The N-word or nigger was referring to black people who worked for whites as enslaved people at that time. The use of the word "nigger" by whites is a form of mockery of blacks.

As the main character, Mary Turner, is shown as a white person who is full of hatred for black people. In the novel, Mary always gives bad treatment to them. Mary often changed her servants for many reasons. One of which was because they could not stand Mary's lousy treatment. Some of Mary's bad treatment of her servants included not giving them some food. Besides, Mary did not allow her servant to rest even for a moment. The followings are excerpts from the novel that show the cruelty of white character towards the black.

She heard the boy complain that he had been working since five o'clock that morning with no food at all, because he was only in the compound a few moments before he had been summoned back by the gong. He could not work like that (Lessing, 1950:39).

When her new servant was done with his work, he excused himself to eat and would return afterwards. However, Mary forgot to prepare food for her servant. Mary made them work all day without giving them food. Mary assumed that the natives did not need food or sleep. Mary thought that blacks had a different way of life from them. Another quotation also found the exploitation that Mary was doing toward her black workers.

When one of the men paused for a moment in his work to rest, or to wipe the running sweat from his eyes, she waited one minute by her watch, and then called sharply to him to begin again . . . it seemed to her an insolence directed against her authority over them when they stopped, without permission, to straighten their backs and wipe off the sweat (Lessing, 1950:58).

As a boss, Mary did not tolerate her black workers. Mary imposed a strict system on her workers. Because of that, she was greatly feared because of her ruthless actions. In a narration like the one shown above it is explained how Mary does not tolerate even a bit of black action. Mary with her selfishness forced the blacks to

continue working without rest. Mary imposed a very minimal amount of time for rest, from one to three minutes per hour. Mary treated black people like machines that had to keep working. Mary tries to show her power as a white woman by showing that she can control her workers. A little rest was enough to prove that she only wanted to exploit black people in order to live up Mary's expectations. This cruel behavior showed Mary's inhumane attitude. She is selfish and only thinks about profit for herself without seeing the misery received by black people. This is seen in how the whites clearly show their power as superior.

Another kind of exploitation toward black natives is giving them low wages. In southern Rhodesia, the landowners were predominantly white people. The existence of the apartheid system at that time was the reason why many black people were made slaves under white rule. Mary as a landlord gained a kind of confidence because she could treat black people as she wanted. Whites need validation to demonstrate their strength. They can validate this by oppressing blacks whom they consider weak and easy to control. As we can see in the narration below,

The average wage was about fifteen shillings, for the month. There were sullen murmurings among the natives . . . he seemed, from his manner, to be telling them to accept an unalterable evil fate, not scolding them, as she would have liked to do, for their negligence and laziness . . . At last, he turned back to her, told her they were dissatisfied and demanded what was due . . . Suddenly angry, she added, without reflecting, that those who did not like it could leave. (Lessing, 1950:58).

The arbitrary behavior of whites is illustrated in the narrative above where Mary cheats against blacks. Mary paid her black workers a disproportionate wage. This certainly invites dissatisfaction among black workers. Black workers complained and demanded decent wages. Mary as the boss did not accept their complaints. Mary instead told these blacks to accept their fate as slaves who should be grateful for the wages they got. With wages that don't match their efforts, there are still wage deductions made by Mary for the small mistakes they make or is it just Mary's excuse for her dissatisfaction with the performance of the blacks? Even though they have complained, in reality, they are just slaves who have to accept whatever the white people decide as their master. This shows the attitude of the colonizers who tend to always marginalize and even exploit blacks as the colonized people.

Mary's oppression of black people was done verbally and also non-verbally. White farmers in Southern Rhodesia had their way of disciplining their workers. Sjambok is known as a tool that whites usually use to help them manage the performance of black workers. Some of the narratives below show Mary's cruelty to her black workers.

Involuntarily she lifted her whip and brought it down across his face in a vicious swinging blow . . . A thick weal pushed up along the dark skin of the cheek as she looked, and from it, a drop of bright blood gathered and trickled down and off his chin, and splashed to his chest. (Lessing, 1950:62).

The narrations above show some evidence of how white people torture black people as their slaves. One of them is shown by Mary's behaviour who always carries a sjambok when she goes to her farm. The whites used the sjambok to discipline the black workers. They do not hesitate to whip black people who work against the will of their masters. They would torture blacks as a form of punishment because they didn't do their jobs properly. Sjambok is not only a tool for disciplining blacks, on the other hand, it is a symbol of white authority in front of blacks. The sjambok is used to show white power in which black people had to submit and follow every wish of white people as their superiors.

As superior, white people do many arbitrary things even though they violate the norms of humanity for their own sake. In addition to exploitation and torture using a sjambok, whites also committed other forms of oppression against black people. One of them is selling the blacks to the white masters. As we can see in the quotation below.

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. (Lessing, 1950:59).

It is explained in the narrative above that black slaves experienced what is known as the practice of human trafficking. They were tricked by the whites by being promised decent jobs, but in reality, these black slaves were sold to white masters at a low price. As the superiors, the whites are free to mistreat the blacks. They, as the inferiors, have no right even to feel oppressed. Human trafficking is a form of

discrimination against the black race. As a nation with colonial ideology, the whites try to carry out various kinds of oppression for the sake of their interests and benefits.

Whatever Lessing's intention at the time of writing this fictional story, what the reader captures is the murder of a white man by an enslaved Black person. We argued that exposing the black character as a murderer emphasizes the barbarian nature of the black surface, and this image creates a dark picture of the black character in the reader's mind. Based on the opinion of Welborn, Hong, & Ratner (2020), exposure to negative stereotypes will impact many things, including one's well-being.

### **Ideological Position of Doris Lessing as *The Grass is Singing's* Author**

Doris May Taylor, also known as Doris Lessing, was born on October 22nd, 1919 in Iran and died on November 17th, 2013 in London. She is a British writer with lots of outstanding works. Swedish Academy awarded her the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2007. According to Luebering (2022), Lessing has produced many novels and short stories, most of which deal with the social and political upheavals of the twentieth century. Since birth, Lessing and her family have lived in Iran; however, when she was five years old, her family decided to move to Southern Rhodesia in 1925. In Rhodesia, she studied at a convent school and women's school but stopped when she was fourteen. Her life in Rhodesia was not going very well. She lived in a quiet agricultural area with poor road access. Lessing thought that was the worst part of her life between 1945 and 1949. Under the circumstances, Lessing planned to go to England. However, she postponed her wish due to a divorce from her husband, Gottfried. Finally, in 1949, Lessing managed to move to England. She felt her decision to stay in England was the right choice until finally she started her writing career.

*The Grass is Singing* is a semi-autobiographical novel which debuted in 1950 set in Rhodesia, where Lessing and her family lived when she was young. Lessing tells that the essence of *The Grass is Singing* is a representation of the white cunning behavior that is not explicitly spoken. *The Grass is Singing* was inspired by what Lessing experienced when she lived in Rhodesia. The choice of Rhodesia as the setting in her novel cannot be separated from the fact that Lessing has lived in Southern Rhodesia. *The Grass is Singing* tells about the time when Rhodesia was in the middle of oppression. Moreover, racial politics such as Apartheid was also very dominant in that country at that time. Orientalism is constructed in the novel in the form of stereotyped

narratives or showing the oppression of the West against the East. Doris Lessing can be said to be brave enough to write different points of view about the West and the East, about whites and blacks. In the novel, we can see two prominent sides, the oppression by white people and the suffering experienced by black people. *The Grass is Singing* tells of Lessing's personal experience when he lived in Rhodesia where she witnessed racism at that time. Of her many personal experiences, the topic of racism is the main attraction of the novel.

The narrative of stereotypes and oppression against the East, Lessing shows firmly through the behavior of white characters in the novel. An example of the behavior of Mary Turner, Charlie Slatter, and Tony Marston who considered blacks as "the other". As Said (1979:43) says that "the other" is everything alien and outside the West. "The other" as another designation for the East, the Orient, or "them". Most of the narration in the novel shows West superiority against black Africans. But on the other hand, Lessing also shows her tendency towards the West. Her tendency towards the West is constructed in a narrative that shows black behavior that has been attached to the stigma of as uncivilized, barbarian, and primitive nation. *The Grass is Singing* begins with news of the murder committed by Moses against his master, Mary Turner. The narration appears at the beginning of the novel as the opening. Lessing tried to create a bad impression in the East. In addition, no narration shows the reason behind the murder initiated by Moses, giving rise to various negative prejudices among whites about blacks. It is increasingly believed that crimes committed by the East are instinctive. It also shows that what the West believes about the East is the truth. In other words, the eastern crime portrayed in the character of Moses became a real manifestation of the stereotype that the West has built.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusions**

The discourse of Orientalism in *The Grass is Singing* is constructed into two forms. There are stereotypes and oppression against the East represented by black people in Southern Rhodesia. Doris Lessing shows the construction of the West through the characters, narrative events, settings and dialogues. The story focuses on Moses and Mary Turner. Moses was one of the black servants who worked for Mary Turner. Mary

Turner and Dick Turner were known as a white couple who owned large farms and employed blacks as their slaves.

Lessing showed the construction of Orientalism through the bad treatment verbally and non-verbally given by Mary Turner and other white characters to Moses and other black workers. Some evidence of stereotyping against blacks was shown when white people learned of the news of Mary Turner's death by her black servant, Moses. The narrative describes negative images of black people, that they are barbarians who cannot be separated from negative actions such as stealing, raping, and even killing. Other stereotypes are also shown in negative narratives regarding blacks' physical appearance, language used, and goods worn by blacks. In addition to stereotyped forms, the West, represented by Mary Turner and other white characters, also expresses oppression against blacks. Some of these forms of oppression include denouncing black people using racist words, torture using a Sjambok (a South African whip), exploitation of black workers, and the practice of human trafficking.

These stereotyped and oppressive narratives show the West superiority over the East. However, Lessing shows her tendency toward the West by writing a narration about killings committed by blacks against their white master. Indirectly, Lessing shows that she agrees with Western ideas about the East. Thus, *The Grass is Singing* becomes a form of the author's tendency toward orientalism.

### **Suggestions**

This analysis is suggested for researchers who are interested in how the concept of orientalism is constructed in a literary work, one of which is in the novel *The Grass is Singing*. It is hoped that in the future, this analysis will become an alternative topic and be considered for further analyzes in related fields of literary theory.

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