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The centre and pathology: Postmodernist reading of madness in the oppressor in contemporary fiction

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Abstract: This study examines the pathological consequences of in-between identity on the members of the dominant group in polarized cosmopolitan settings in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950). The study is a postmodernist reading of postcolonial literature to interrogate the pathological consequences of the constant shifts of identity in migrant characters. Most postcolonial studies contend that marginalization occasioned by the dominant group result in neurotic conditions in members of the minority group. They maintain that severe cultural conditions introduced by the dominant group mostly affect the psyches of the members of the minority groups and clinical madness becomes prevalent. This study, however, interrogates this thesis and investigates the possibility of the dominant group sustaining pathological tendencies as they change their perspectives to coexist with members of the minority through hybridity. In some postcolonial works of fiction, there is a tendency of some members of the dominant group undergoing severe mental disintegration in spite of their claim to superiority in relation to the marginalized groups. Using Ato Quayson's calibrations, the study adopts postmodernist, postcolonial, and psychological models to interrogate possible causes and aspects of pathology in members of the dominant group with reference to Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. Although postmodernism is the umbrella theory, Quayson's calibrations enable interaction of scholars from different academic disciplines for effective exegesis of pathology in the dominant group. The major finding of the

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study is that marginalization does not just adversely affect the objectified but also the dominant group as well; and results in the collapse of their psyche. The ideas of Jacques Derrida and Albert Memmi will form a theoretical basis of interpretation.

Subjects: Post-Colonial Studies; Literary/Critical Theory

Keywords: doris Lessing; in-betweenness; otherness in the self; stream of consciousness literature; the grass is singing

1. Introduction

This study examines the pathological consequences of in-betweenness on the members of the dominant group in polarized cosmopolitan settings in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950). The study is a postmodernist reading of postcolonial literature to interrogate the neurotic effects of the constant shifts of identity in migrant characters. Although most postcolonial studies uphold the modernist view that othering conditions established by the dominant group contribute to pathological conditions in the minority group, some postcolonial works of fiction overturn this one-sided view and demonstrate that some members of the dominant group undergo severe mental disintegration in spite of their claim to superiority in relation to the other. Using Quayson's (2003) calibrations, the study adopts postmodernist, postcolonial, and psychological models to interrogate possible causes and aspects of pathology in members of the dominant group with reference to Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. Quayson's calibrations is a model for textual close-reading that incorporates different fields of knowledge—the literary, the social, the cultural, and the political to give literary criticism a wider berth (Quayson, 2003). This theory facilitates the impeccable interaction of theorists who occupy different academic disciplines to interrogate the nexus between hybridity and arbitrariness and mental health issues among migrant characters. Postmodernism as the umbrella theory employs Derrida's (1974/2016) arbitrariness of the sign to analyse the constant shift in identities on the identity continuum. Postcolonialism is invaluable in analysing othering conditions in the texts' settings, while psychological concepts such as Laing's the *unembodied self* and Kohut and Wolf (1978)'s *understimulated self* assist in the analysis of pathological conditions in characters.

Most postcolonial studies take a modernist trajectory that associates othering with pathological consequences on the members minority group because of the difficult social conditions induced by the dominant group. Fanon (1961) in his observations of the war of independence in Algeria witnesses French colonizers driving Algerians to madness through political marginalization and violence. Fanon's use of the word "other" reiterates Staszak (2008)'s definition of othering as stigmatization of difference by the dominant group. Othering, in his view is a poorly conceived precondition for marginalisation of persons or groups that is proceeded by deliberate alienation from the rest of the community. Whereas Staszak and Fanon (1961) echo Said (1977)'s concept of essentialism through institutionalizing of one group as the self and the out-group as the "other," Derrida (1974/2016) in his critique of modernist binaries uses the terms "centre" and "periphery." While Derrida appraises the shift of the dominant group towards the minority and vice versa, he does not point out any psychological consequences of this constant change on the identity continuum. In his view, there are no fixed essential groups as modernist thinking tends to stipulate to enhance divisions, polarity, and subsequent alienation in communities. In his work *Of Grammatology*, he emphasizes "diverse possibilities" or arbitrariness as a reliable way of coexistence between the marginalized and the dominant. This postulation suggests that in a cosmopolitan society, such as that comprised of the colonized (natives) and the colonizer (whites), existence (presence) has to involve constant shifts from black and white or in-between identification that he refers to as "diverse possibilities."

Although Fanon's modernist model postulates a fixed self that otherizes a fixed other to cause madness, other postcolonial voices contend that othering does not just result in pathological

consequences on the oppressor or colonizer, but the constant back-and-forth movements between the two essentialist groups are possible causes of insanity on either of them. This is why a postmodernist reading is essential to account for the arbitrariness. According to Bhabha (1994) some identities that strive to survive between two essentialist groups reject identification with either of the factions and oscillate from one side of the identity continuum to the other. He uses the phrase “in-between identities” to refer to the vacillating identities. He associates these identities with instability as they constantly shift from the salient attributes of the dominant group to those of the minority group. Bhabha suggests that immigrants who are alienated from their homelands and mother cultures cannot identify themselves with a single cultural group. In other words, if immigrants move from the West to Africa, they become so alienated from the West that they are not white or black, neither white nor black, and both White and Black. This alienation results in “instability” or constant changes that possibly affect their mental health.

Memmi (1974) expounds Bhabha’s proposition to show how colonialism results in the colonizer’s alienation that adversely affects them. He presents the colonizer’s attitude as resentful towards the colonized through the propensity to describe their customs as inferior such that its perpetual elevation alienates the colonizer. The colonizer cannot reckon belonging to the colonized’s community, and establishes a narrative that constitutes obdurate repudiation of their traditions and laws. However, the colonizers constant identification with their native country is illusionary because he or she is seldom there, and neither do they exhibit the democratic values fostered by the home country. Memmi concludes that because the colonizer rejects the colonized’s culture, and since they cannot fit in their native country, they occupy “the abstract space,” which is alienation. Memmi’s postulation forms an invaluable base for interrogation of pathology in members of the dominant group in Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing*.

The colonizer repudiates the new cultural environments which Derrida would describe as the Centre that, in contrast to his notion of arbitrariness of the sign, rejects the periphery because colonizers feel they are superior to the colonized. But in actual sense, the reader wonders where the Centre belongs in the above discussion. The White immigrant in the colony is neither this nor that– neither African nor European because he or she renounces African culture and the new ecological environment but cannot fit in Europe because they neither live nor fit in the values of freedom and democracy that they transgress in the colonies. This alienation or non-belongingness is the first stage towards in-betweenness. Memmi underscores the dependency of the white immigrant on the colonized in his exposition of the ambiguity of the colonizer-colonized relationship. He writes, “[h]e is fed up with his subject, who tortures his conscience and his life.” But the painful reality that the colonizer leaves with is that their life cannot make sense without the marginalized group they so much hold in contempt. The Centre’s hate is now forced into appreciation of the periphery, which brings in Derrida’s “arbitrariness of the sign” and Bhabha’s in-betweenness. One thing that is apparent in Memmi’s aforementioned notion is that alienation and in-betweenness adversely affect the behaviour of the White immigrant, and pathological consequences may not be an exception.

Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* is the story of Dick and Mary, white settlers in South Rhodesia whose attempt to succeed becomes an exercise in futility. As much as Mary points a finger of calumny at Dick’s incompetence, there exists a modernist suggestion that heredity determines one’s attainments and the couple fails because they both descend from poor families. One interesting thing to note is Mary’s struggle to coexist with African servants and workers on Dick’s farm. Having been brought up in a racist colonial Rhodesia, she has to uphold an inhuman racist philosophy, on the one hand, and treat the servants humanely to harness their labour, on the other hand. This ambivalent contradiction adversely affects Mary’s mental health such that she dies many days before her servant, Moses kills her.

The choice of text is justified because the action of the novel is set in Zimbabwe during the colonial period. The clash of European and African cultures makes the novel a suitable sample to interrogate the effect of alienation and in-betweenness on the colonizer.

1.1. The centre, the other, othering, and madness: defining and contextualizing terms

The terms “self,” “other,” “Centre,” and “periphery” have permeated postcolonial and postmodernist thought perhaps because the two fields critique modernist worldviews that underscore the politics of polarity. Derrida (1974/2016) contends that modernist thinking is characterized by dualism that infiltrates most spheres of modern life. Derrida expresses his intention to interrogate the binaries typical of modernism, which he refers to as “logocentric metaphysics.” He contends that this type of thinking reduces life to a binary opposition: interior/exterior; good/evil, outside/inside, speech/writing. At the end of the passage, he rejects the binaries arguing that the two factions do not exist autonomously. One is the exterior and interior of the other; hence, the choice of the phrase “outside is the inside.” The “inside” refers to that which is perceived as the most important or essential, in other words “the centre” while the “outside” refers to that which modernism considers non-essential or less important and relegated to the periphery. The notion that there is movement between “outside” and the “inside” constitutes the concept of “diverse possibilities.” In other words, the dominant group will change to accommodate the minority’s presence and vice versa, which is inconsistent to fixity postulated by modernism. Derrida refers to this constant change as “arbitrariness of a sign” which is quite similar to Bhabha’s in-betweenness.

While Derrida is a leading voice in postmodernism, Bhabha’s focus is postcolonialism, the contest between marginal and dominant cultures. Like Said (1977), Bhabha interrogates orientalist thinking that elevates fixity and “fetishism of identity.” Said contends that orientalist and modernist thinkers divided the world into two factions existing in a binary opposition. They build a perception that the West as sturdy, reasonable, sympathetic, and invincible as opposed to the East that is weak, brutal, unreasonable, and immoral. Said indicts Orientalist scholars for inventing an essentializing model that elevates Europe as omnipotent in a binary opposition to an Asia and Africa that are vanquished, objectified, dumb, and obsequious to a “life giving” superior in the West. While the West is all loving and caring, the East is obsessed with rudimentary emotions and is space to wary and resent. In Said’s perspective, the West is hence the self and the East, “the other” by reason of her inferiority to be viewed in derogatory and spiteful terms. While the West, the self, elevates reason to develop and improve the world, the East, the other, upholds emotion and irrationality which is dangerous. Reason in this context is associated with masculinity (that is superior), while irrationality is associated with femininity (which is inferior).

Said’s exegesis of orientalist thinking reiterates one of the major postcolonial concepts: Othering. According to postcolonial scholars such as Strauss (1992), humankind has a tendency to regard basic differences as an oddity. When humankind encounters something different from what they believe in, they stigmatize it using expletives such as “primitive,” “backward,” “mad,” or “savage.” The “other” is therefore a person that does not belong or is dissimilar to a social group by reason of racial, gender, religious, or political difference. Othering is therefore an act of stigmatizing basic differences, which suggests that there are different strands of it depending on the nature of the difference being stigmatized. For example, stigmatization based on race yields racial othering, gender, gender othering while ethnicity, ethnic othering. Given that othering entails spite and malevolence by the dominant group, the minority is on the receiving end.

As a consequence, the minority group or “the other” gets alienated from the dominant group, through deliberate victimization. Coping strategies are therefore necessary to coexist with the dominant group destitute of which their psyches collapse and pathological symptoms ensue. Islam (2016) for instance, points out stigmatization of women as the cause of Mary’s psychic collapse in Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing*. She contends that the woman’s inability to gain sexual identity constitutes the major cause of Mary’s neurosis in *The Grass is Singing*. Islam suggests that according to Mary’s society a woman is not like a man to fall in love with anyone she likes. She is the other and therefore barred from any romantic intimacy with Black people, which triggers her mental disintegration, the consequence of which is pathology. Similarly, Nagpal and Trambo (2020) refer to economic othering when they observe that Mary is destabilized when she loses

her economic freedom as a successful young woman after her marriage to Dick. She feels isolated because she cannot fit into the society of rich whites (the Slatters); hence becomes pathological.

Aspects of pathology comprise of two main strains: self-alienation and madness. According to Hegel (1967), self-alienation is a pathological condition in which the victim detests the condition of their life and disregards all their social relationships. For psychologists such as Laing (1960), this pathological condition is referred to as the unembodied self, a type of self-alienation that subjects the patient to desire for the abstract and “imagos” at the expense of reality and physical desires such as sex.

While self-alienation is pathological, it is just a gateway to insanity, the pinnacle of pathological conditions, which is utterly disabling. Scholars have defined madness in diverse ways: first as clinical condition that stems from cultural conditions such as othering (Fanon, 1961; Laing, 1960) or as a social construction where anyone who behaves contrary to societal conventions is labelled mad (Foucault, 1961). While for the first school of thought otherness causes madness, for Foucault, otherness is madness by itself. This study evades Foucault’s definition of madness and takes Laing and Fanon’s trajectory because the characters under investigation in Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* exhibit symptoms of clinical madness.

2. The centre at the periphery: madness in the oppressor in Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing*

The major cause of Mary’s breakdown is her inability to acknowledge her body. Mary has a tendency to repress her sexuality and sexual instincts right from the beginning of the novel. Pathak (2016)

Literary critics have had studies on Mary Turner’s madness in Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* and have singled out psychological factors such as childhood experiences and repression of her sexual feelings as the leading causes. Pathak (2016), in the above quote, avers that Mary’s tendency to repress her sexual desires after an odd experience with the father returns to haunt her later through mental disintegration. Indeed, the father’s mistakes in parenting expose Mary to self-alienation or what Laing refers to as the unembodied self. According to Laing, victims of self-alienation isolate themselves from meaningful social milestones, but just reserve the propensity to criticize things that healthy human beings love doing for example, sex, games, and dances. The patients also have the inclination for “imagos” or hallucinations and dreams at the expense of immediate realities of life. Mary, in *The Grass is Singing*, avoids Mrs Slatter’s company observes Dick’s activities from the house and criticizes him as incompetent, hates sex, and is vulnerable to vivid. While Pathak observes that Mary’s father makes mistakes out of personal weaknesses, this study views his alcoholism as a pathological condition (that according to Kohut and Wolf is *understimulated self*, which stems from colonizer’s guilt for the evils committed against the colonized (Memmi, 1974). Similarly, Horouach (2020) reads Mary’s pathological condition as a personality disorder that stems from her painful childhood. On the contrary, this study is a postmodernist and postcolonial reading of Mary’s condition as a consequence of the immigrant experiences such as alienation, in-betweenness, and Derrida’s arbitrariness of a sign.

As the novel begins, Lessing demonstrates how Mary has been brought up under the colonial cultural landscape that underscores the need to treat the white colonizer as the self or Centre and the colonized as the other or periphery referred in a derogatory manner as a “native.” The narrator suggests that Mary had always occupied a higher cultural ground because as a white woman, she had not before interacted with Africans; her mother did not even permit her to talk to black servants in the home. The racial marginalization in the Rhodesian community is rife and reiterates, Rorty (1993)’s assertion that in societies pervaded with othering, capability to reason is determined by membership of a moral community. In other words, Mary has been brought up to believe that one is human as long as they belong to the White race: the non-whites are either animals or mad people.

As a result, Mary mistreats black servants without an iota of mercy or feeling; when she maltreats the first servant, Samson, her husband Dick arranges his farewell at her displeasure. She thinks how Dick is sorry to see the end of the “this nigger’s” contract? She could not understand any white person feeling anything personal about a native”. The “native” or African is the other and therefore deserves no sympathy. When the next servant is employed, she maintains the same racist standards for instance, when he cannot follow her instructions to lay the table, she becomes so enraged that Dick disapproves it and advises that she handles the servants with humility and patience. She blurts that she cannot “let go my standards.” The “standards” in this episode are colonial attitudes that elevate essentializing traditions and White/Black binaries or what Derrida refers to as “logocentric” attitudes. The differences between the two races are exaggerated to devalue the colonized. Memmi gives an example of an elderly doctor who constantly dwelt on trivia but expounded in “a mixture of surliness and solemnity” that his friend was disheartened because the Africans in the colonies should learn how to breathe and walk. It is almost irrational to believe such a wild observation because what the doctor’s friend considers learned behaviour is in fact instincts that all human beings acquire as developmental milestones. Memmi avers that this stigmatization extends to petty things such as niggers smell, have smaller eyes, and their land is ugly. Mary therefore believes she knows how to walk, has more fragrant body odour than natives, and cannot be same as them. When the African labourers complain after she deducts their pay, the narrator mentions some of the things Memmi points out with regard to her thoughts. The narrator of the novel demonstrates how Mary hated Black natives as they spoke in their native languages, their fat black bodies; she hated the way they worked, which in her perspective is “mindless rhythm.” When they avoid eye contact (why is a colonial law that forbids Africans from maintaining eye contact with whites) she detests them for it. Worst of all she distasted their body odour that she associates with animal smell. In this episode, Mary does not just confirm Memmi’s tenets on foul “smell” from the African, but recaps Said and Derrida’s views about the Self and the centre, respectively. For Said (1977), the West or self is superior while the East is inferior. Mary, as the centre maintains a contemptuous or rather scornful attitude towards the periphery. It is no wonder the colonial code forbids the African as the other, maintaining eye contact with a White person, because the native is not a person. Ironically, when the Africans avoid eye contact, it irritates Mary.

Another standard held by colonialists is that the colonized is a thief; Memmi recounts the colonizer’s belief that the members of the marginal group in the colony are vile, ignorant brutes predisposed to theft and that is why when Dick takes Mary to the farm, she gets worried saying to herself that the African servant steals from the house as soon as she leaves him there. While on the farm with Dick, Mary cannot calm down; she is so worried and describes African servants as clever pigs. The mention of “swine” echoes Rorty (1993)’s attributes of othering in which the other is equated to nonhuman or the insane because they do not belong to the social group. When Dick sets up a store, he grapples with the kind of labour to run the business, but the store attendant cannot be a Black person because in his opinion he would rather kick than trust them. In other words, black people are only apt for objectification; being thieves, as Dick holds, black people are fit for assault; spite and murder rather than run a profitable enterprise.

Memmi singles out another colonial myth that otherizes the colonized as the “colonized laziness.” Indeed, while Dick is seeking Mary’s sympathy, he laments of spending his full days on the farm with lazy black workers that he has to quarrel every time to do something productive. One question that the reader asks themselves is whether Dick’s supposition is correct. If indeed whites are diligent, then why can’t Mary cook all the meals for the husband? According to Memmi, one thing that flatters the colonizer tremendously is the myth of his or her industry as opposed to the colonized’s indolence. When the African labourers protest against salary deductions, Mary lectures them about the dignity of work, as the prime tenet that distinguishes the white person from the black person—the tendency to work without expecting financial rewards. Mary admits that she had no conviction in these words because she had just heard them from her father. Having descended

from her father confirms Memmi's observations that diligent/lazy binary is a belief that formed the very foundation of colonialism.

Indeed, Mary did not work without financial rewards before her marriage to Dick— a job that enables her to interact with the well-to-do in Rhodesia must surely be lucrative. As earlier mentioned, Mary's mental disintegration later in the novel arises from losing of economic freedom as a successful young woman after marriage to Dick (Yahya & Lalbakhsh, 2010). Although this study views Mary's neurosis as a consequence of in-betweenness or constant shift on the identity continuum, Yahya and Lalbakhsh's conclusion reveals Mary's hypocrisy with regard to whites' attitude towards work. The narrator says, after work, she plays tennis or hockey or swim and spends the rest of the time upto midnight in parties. This is a high standard of living during the colonial period that is made possible by Mary's rewarding job. Later when Dick's poverty exposes her to misery, she runs back to the same employer because of the job's financial rewards. Why then does Mary expect Africans to work free of charge? Why does she make the working conditions very difficult?

This is still a ploy to bolster the othering conditions in the colony: she belongs to what Said and Derrida refer to as the self and centre, while the black labourers belong to the other and periphery. In this modernist setting, these differences have to be maintained, and according to Fanon, they have devastating pathological effects on the marginalized group. When Dick falls sick and she gets a chance to supervise the black labourers, Mary does not treat them as one would treat humans. She neither allows them to rest nor take water. When Moses asks for water, the narrator says his languid insolence infuriated her. The myth of the Black man's 'laziness' and savagery" is revisited yet it is Mary who exhibits the savagery when she uses a crude whip to hit Moses in blows that tear his nose, and the narrator demonstrates how the impact of the whip spatter Moses' blood on his face and body. The thought of Moses complaining infuriates her, thinking it would be a terrible embarrassment that "this Black animal had the right to complain" against her, a White woman. At this point, Mary reiterates Said's assertion about the superior West and inferior East.

In spite of these claims to superiority, the whites in the colonies cannot do without the Africans, and this does not only attest to the postmodernist rejection of binaries but also inverts pathological consequences to the oppressor. According to Memmi, the coexistence of the colonized and the colonizer are so intertwined such that the so called ignorant "nigger" is indispensable to the colonizer. Mary may insult, assault, and overwork servants, but they are indispensable to her survival on the farm. After she overworks Moses and he decides to leave, the same Mary who has for years abused and insulted Black servants calls him and, amid tears, urges him not to go. Most psychologists view the crying as a symptom of depression (pathological aspect) as a feels rejected and unloved (Zepenic, 2016). Aghazadeh (2011) describes Mary's sentimentality as symbolic of weak and brittle nature of the colonial society. Indeed Mary's tears demonstrate the brittleness that comes as a prelude to the collapse of degenerate colonial myths. In the last encounter between Mary and Moses, as a strict white mistress, the narrator shows the colonized's indispensability in the life of the colonizer. Mary stands before Moses, beaten— shaking and crying with no other source of help to do house chores. Ashamed of her previous acts of brutality, she is unable to say a word because her racial pride forbids her to apologize. Aware of this, Moses becomes the first one to create a rapport through eye contact. Mary then musters her courage to dissuade him not to leave, amidst tears. She pleads with Moses to stay. This episode marks the most paramount change in the story and Mary's life as it clearly demonstrates (as Derrida postulates) that there is no fixed centre and periphery. Moses examines Mary's tears as any father would study her daughter's face and sympathizes. He understands the challenges they are facing both financially and culturally and advises her to go and sleep. Indeed Mary concludes that Moses' voice is as kind as that of a father directing a daughter. She obeys and goes to sleep; better still, he had touched her shoulder. The episode marks Mary's transition from her previous fixed centre towards the periphery and back. For Derrida, this is arbitrariness as speech, which is always elevated as superior cannot do without writing so can the settlers, "instituted trace" do without

the black servants. From this point on, the madness that postcolonial studies (such as Fanon's) associate with the marginal groups starts affecting Mary, a member of the dominant group (the centre).

Mary starts confronting the reality of shifting her ground to take cognizance of the novelty that Moses and other black servants are human persons at the heart of her very survival. This arbitrary shift from one end of the binary to the other is a painful process that adversely affects Mary's mental health. For example, when she is moving across the compound and stumbles on Moses bathing, and their eyes meet, it replicates her guilt. The narrator expounds that when a White person in the colonies, even by mistake, maintains eye contact with the colonized African, there is a tendency to see them as human beings, which heightens the guilt that results in alienation. For Fromm (1956) the guilt such as Mary's is self-alienation or estrangement from oneself, which Horney (1946) associates it with being retarded and warped. The reference to retarded is mental impedance or disintegration that Mary confronts in the story. The act of eye contact signifies what Derrida describes as "liberty of variation" which is Mary's transition from the White centre to the Black periphery. This compels her to see Moses as a human being and sets off the guilt and resentment because she is used to the racist ideas of the dominant group. As earlier mentioned, the guilt and resentment are the alienation that Horney associates with being mentally stunted, which is pathology. Going by Memmi's postulation, Mary gets alienated because the Black/White and mistress/servant binaries collapse in the backdrop of the realities of life that transgress the superficial essentialism. This implies that the two binaries no longer exist between Mary and Moses because the centre and the periphery have to interact. Mary experiences alienation which according to Finkelstein (1965), is an internal conflict that adversely affects the self of the victim. She now has to confront a new self that perceives the native as a human person, and the more she denies it, the more she impoverishes herself or rather invites mental disintegration. Kapoori (2018) shares this perspective when he points out Dick and Mary's migration to the farm as the prime cause of her mental disintegration because migration entails shifts and turns on a new psychological plane. While Kapoor's thesis singles out the new culture and how it affects the psyche of female characters, this study's interrogates how the constant shift or in-betweenness affects Mary's self in the host nation.

Finkelstein's definition of alienation recapitulates Memmi's assertions with regard to the guilt of the colonizer in the presence of the colonized. Finkelstein postulation that the alienated individual points the finger of blame to others in spite of the problem arising from within is aptly brought out in Memmi's assertion that the colonizer, in spite of constant condemnation of the colonized, has permanent "guilt" that eat them because of the villainy committed against the colonized. The colonized's incessant boasts of their greater abilities and attainments is a façade that their true self does not accept; in fact it only augments the condemnation lodged deeply within. According to Memmi, all attempts to stifle the inner self come to naught possibly because of the colonized's refusal to admit blame and offer restitution. Mary and Moses in *The Grass is Singing* perfectly embody Finkelstein and Memmi's postulations on alienation. Hegel refers to it as self-alienation and enlists it under aspects of pathology.

Moses' presence in Mary's house and the fact that she has to acknowledge his humanity and indispensability elevates her guilt exactly as Memmi contends. Worse still Moses is the servant she bullied and assaulted until he shed blood. Like any human person, Mary remembers this unfortunate episode and has to continually suppress it. All her self-praise and exultation with regard to being White just serve to accentuate her psychopathy through what Memmi refers to as ultimate condemnation which every colonialist— Mary no exception— bears on the mind. Moses' presence and acts of love and kindness augment her internal conflict, and her mind disintegrates. His constant request for her compliments after work reminds her that he is as human as Whites since any compliments encourage him to work even better. She interprets these moves as aspects of humanity that bolster the human bond, on the one hand, but uphold her guilt, on the other. According to Laing, the "unembodied self" dreads participation in real life, but Moses has now

compelled Mary into contact and she has to be aware of him. For Derrida, the external is the internal and [my emphasis] the inside is outside. At this point, Mary cannot be compared to the other White settlers such as Charlie Slatter, because she relies on Moses for labour, love, and care. But as she gets steeped in association with the Black servant, her White self is estranged from the current self. She distastes her husband's company, isolates herself from the Slatters and the mind seeks White company through nightmares with the late father and mother. Jung (1967) asserts that dreams compensate imbalances of the dreamer's psyche (cited from Sayed 2011). Mary's dreams make her eligible to Laing's description of the unembodied self– vulnerability to imagos, at the expense of things that normal people like. But going by Bhabha's hybridity, Mary is at the hybrid space where the two essentialist groups meet.

Dick/labourers, Mary/Moses' relationships move to another level, which reiterates postmodernist belief that one essential group cannot do without the other (Derrida, 1974/2016). In other words, it is impossible to think of Dick, Mary, and colonizers (instituted trace) without reflecting on the essential role of African servants and labourers as the binaries interact and influence each other. Dick, for instance, has been so influenced by the Africans that the narrator describes him as growing into "a native" by adopting their behaviour. For instance, he would blow his nose on his fingers into a bush the way Blacks did. Dick's colour was not so different for he was burnt rich brown ... he also cracked jokes and laughed like they did. According to Bhabha (1994), characters such as Dick are at the third space, where something new begins to develop. Scholars such as Sulyman (2014) would categorize Dick as a shared sense hybrid because having come to Rhodesia as an adult; he has successfully integrated the two cultures. He is possibly 60% white and 40% black; "shared sense hybrids" have stable psychological health. Mary, in Portes and Rubiin (2005)'s categorization fits the in-between-hybrid identification due to constant change by social context—because they (victims) migrate to host nation before puberty and are vulnerable to neurosis.

Mary's relationship with Moses takes a new trajectory in which she absolutely depends on Moses. As Tony, a young English man watches on, Mary relies on Moses to dress up. As Tony watches, Moses Mary stretches out is arms and pulls her dress over her thin body. As she adjusts her hair, Moses buttons up her dress, and stares at her as she looks in the mirror. Mary's exposed parts of the body sexually appeal to Moses; the narrator describes his attitude as indulgent luxuriousness. While Wang reads this singular episode as Mary's therapeutic attempt to rid herself of colonial guilt, as an atonement for the evils of the white race, in this postmodernist study, the episode has two major implications: first, the collapse of binaries between the two essentialist groups, which confirms Derrida's arbitrariness of the sign. The periphery (Black servant) has become the most important centre in the house. Mary relies on Moses to do the most private act such as dressing, while Moses relies on her for payment and appreciation. The two need each other; when Tony asks her why she allows this, she replies that he has so little to do and should dress her up to earn his money. By now, Mary is so much inside the periphery that Tony's attempt to take her back to the centre is an exercise in futility. The character Mary fits in-between hybrid identification as the immigrants confront foreign cultures at young ages and become unstable; in Erikson (1968)'s perspective, immigrants such as Mary encounter conflicting social contexts and attempts to integrate the fragmented aspects of the self. Bhabha (1995) describes this state as unsteady element of association but does not point out that the changes on the identity continuum affect migrants' mental health. According to Wang (2009), Mary's closeness to Moses exacerbates her mental disintegration because; to exist outside the limitations of apartheid is to struggle for an emotional survival that can come only at the expense of sanity, or life itself. It is unimaginable in Mary's social context for a white woman to have a romantic affair or relationship with a black man, which accentuates her neurosis.

Kapoori refers to Mary's pathological condition as "psychoscape" because her psyche is torn between the homeland as embodied in the White race in Zimbabwe and the host nation in the Black African cultural environment, both of which cause an identity crisis. Writers such as Rhys (1967/1997, explore the psychological predicament of characters such as Antoinette who lose

sanity because of in-betweenness, the attempt to incorporate or accommodate conflicting cultural contexts. For example, at one point Antoinette blames the Blacks for burning their home and in another episode she defends them against Rochester's criticism. In Pollard (1994), Brenda undergoes psychological instability by joining a radical group as a result of her conflicting or ambivalent attitude for both Jamaica and the West. While, on the one hand, she thinks teachers in Jamaica are more committed to their work (for preparing students to excel in exams with little remuneration) than those in the United States of America, Brenda also describes Jamaica as disordered and jumbled compared to the West. Similarly, Mary's sudden change to treat "natives" as humans is a painful experience that alienates her. The pathological attributes of the act are evident in the extremities such as allowing Moses to dress her. Now Tony comes to the scene and she has to return to former racist values, the narrator says as soon she sees Tony, she is shocked and terrified. Her fear reiterates Islam (2016)'s observation that patriarchal culture forbids Mary from loving a man she wants. While Islam, points out patriarchal oppression as the major cause of Mary's neurosis, this article postulates that Mary is scared of returning to the centre, given that she is now an in-between identity. Tony's attempt to compel her into making a drastic change causes the neurosis. He reminds her the educated and rich Whites such as the Slatters she has always avoided.

When Tony interrogates her, she begins by wondering why he has come to interfere with their lives because she does not desire to return to the centre (White self). She even asks him why he has come to the home and bursts into tears, moaning, and saying, that Moses will not leave. The capitalization of "He" signifies the central role the African servant plays in her life at present. She does not understand why she should now be compelled to go back to the white, fixed identity at a moment when her existence relies on what Bhabha refers to as the "third" space. She has already suffered the trauma of major shifts of identity, and therefore any return would be absurd. At this point, Mary suffers what Fanon (2008) refers to as abandonment neurosis—a type of alienation that occurs among immigrants upon getting admittance in a new culture. Like Black immigrants who gain admittance and then rejected by whites, Mary feels that she is being forced to abandon black culture, after being encouraged to embrace it, and her condition deteriorates. Aghazadeh refers to Mary's situation as an effort towards individuality to preserve her true self, in this context the hybrid self, which becomes utter failure because of "political forces" that are embodied in Tony and colonizers.

She starts exhibiting symptoms of schizophrenia for example, *Alogia* a symptom in which the patient exhibits poverty of speech (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). The speech is either too brief or just vague and redundant with little information. Scientists such as Hart (1931) observe that tendencies towards schizophrenia stem from the patient's alienation as they feel they cannot fit in the normal human society. Stuck to the new in-between identity, Mary Tony's effort to take her back to fixed identities. Her mind degenerates; she tells Tony, "[t]hey say I was not like that, like that, like that" When she proceeds to tell Tony the story of her suffering, she just keeps repeating that she does not know why she came to Dick's home. There is not much information in it, but the subject of her conversation is regret for leaving a homogeneous town to a settler farm with cosmopolitan cultures that turn her into a psychopath. Mary's experience brings in focus Saleem (2014)'s summary with regard to alienation and the migrant experience when he associates migrant experience with uprootment from spiritual and transcendental roots that turns the victim's actions to futility and worthlessness. This futility in Mary's migrant life is evident in her pathological symptoms. She has lost all her connections with her father, mother, and their relatives and is destitute of any meaningful friendships around the farm. Tony observes that Mary lives in an eccentric world where other people's standards or conventions of society do not matter. Indeed, as Saleem suggests, religious and other cultural roots no longer count to Dick and herself because they do not attend church to interact with other members of society or seek spiritual assistance.

The last conflict involving Tony, Mary, and Moses demonstrates Mary's futile attempt to reclaim the lost centre. Taking advantage of Tony's presence, she makes a futile attempt to get rid of Moses, who at this point embodies African culture that has found its way into a great proportion of her mind. She adjures him to go away and Tony realizes that she is now trying to assert the old white self that has been lost in the face of the new African presence. Tony notices that Mary's white self has been reduced to the child self cannot resist Moses' Black dominance. The white centre has shifted to the inferior position as Tony has to come in to assist. Moses wants to know whether Mary wants him to leave because of Tony's presence? Tony orders Moses to leave Mary because she is a white woman. In this episode, Tony embodies the colonizer, a pillar on which Mary leans to reclaim the lost centre. Indeed for Tony, this is the "command" Mary had lost as her mind transitioned to what postmodernist describe as the periphery. Moses' mind has also transitioned to the centre, and he finds it difficult to return to the periphery. Mary temporarily restores the centre in Tony's presence and commands Moses to leave.

But after Moses' departure, her unstable mind, as is the case of in-between identities takes her back to the former space (periphery). She misses and yearns for Moses again, particularly when Dick tells her to dress. She remembers how Moses would have helped her dress, button the dress, do her hair, and assumed all responsibility as she idles. The bond between the centre and the periphery is now so strong that Tony and Dick cannot break it. What follows this is the guilt (typical of the colonizer as Memmi observes) that eats into her mind for having colluded with Tony to send away Moses, the very backbone of her life. She starts contemplating his revenge because he had been very caring to her. In fact, she would be lonely after Dick's departure to the farm now that Moses is gone.

Finally, as aforementioned, Mary's father suffers pathological symptoms because of the constant guilt and self-condemnation like the rest of colonizers who depend on the colonized for survival but live in denial (Memmi, 1974). It is interesting how he inculcates racist attitudes in Mary by denying her contact with black servants and teaching her to uphold the myth of white man's diligence and native's laziness. As a result of the guilt that Memmi describes as established self-censure, he becomes a victim of the understimulated self. According to Kohut and Wolf (1978), this is a disorder of the self that exposes the patient to sex perversions and alcoholism to stimulate themselves because they always feel cold and unloved. Indeed Mary's father is a wretched alcoholic such that it disturbs her mother and Mary. In one of her dreams, Mary recounts the two attributes of the *understimulated self*. In the dream, she remembers how her father forces her head between his legs and she perceives the stench of beer and feel his private parts. Whereas the alcohol odour points to alcoholism, the act of placing the girl's mouth on his penis is tantamount to a craving for oral sex with his daughter, which is sex perversion. This scandalous act prompts Mary to develop a dislike for sex, but it would not be accurate to point it out without the colonial context that has induced the guilt and self-condemnation.

3. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the psychological effect of hybridity and arbitrariness on the members of the dominant group in polarized cosmopolitan settings in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. The study was a postmodernist reading of postcolonial literature to interrogate the pathological consequences of the constant shifts of identity in migrant characters. Although most postcolonial studies uphold the modernist view that othering conditions established by the dominant group contribute to pathological conditions in the minority group, postmodernist theories ascertained that there is no fixed dominant group that otherizes a fixed minority group. Instead, characters keep shifting in an arbitrary manner from the self to the other and vice versa. Mary Turner, for instance, cannot survive without the Black servants, and the servants depend on her. She depends on Moses to the point of having an affair with him; Moses dominates her, but when Tony appears, she makes a futile attempt to return to her White centre. These constant changes from white to Black and vice versa results in her mental disintegration, and starts experiencing nightmares and alogia. As Dick awaits her to dress, she sits idly thinking about

Moses who appears and murders her. The black man, the so called “other” in a polarized colonial setting, becomes the self by dominating and killing a white woman. Arbitrariness and in-betweenness stand out as the major causes of Mary’s clinical madness. It is apparent that there are no fixed essentialized groups with one oppressing the other. There are constant shifts of identity by migrant characters that have pathological consequences on both the colonized and the colonizer.

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