

**WHITE SUPREMACY AND RACISM IN DORIS LESSING'S
*THE GRASS IS SINGING***

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Abstrak

Rasisme adalah masalah yang sering terjadi dalam negara multikultural. Masalah ini muncul dikarenakan adanya ketimpangan jumlah penduduk yang mengarah pada penindasan oleh mayoritas terhadap minoritas. Isu ini kemudian banyak dibawa kedalam berbagai karya sastra oleh para penulis terkenal salah satunya adalah pemenang *Noble* yang bernama Doris Lessing. Tesis ini menyajikan supremasi kulit putih dan rasisme yang lazim terjadi dalam hubungan antara ras kulit hitam dan kulit putih juga tindakan rasial ofensif yang dilakukan oleh karakter dalam novel *The Grass is Singing* karya Doris Lessing. Supremasi kulit putih dan rasisme adalah teori-teori yang digunakan untuk mengungkap permasalahan rasial dalam *The Grass is Singing*. Analisis ini difokuskan pada teori dan konsepsi tentang supremasi kulit putih dan rasisme yang dikemukakan oleh Frederickson. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap supremasi kulit putih dalam hubungan antara penduduk asli berkulit hitam dengan bangsa kulit putih yang mengacu tindakan penghinaan pada ras yang jelas tergambar dalam novel. Temuan dalam tesis ini mengandung supremasi kulit putih yang mengontrol dan membentuk perilaku, ideologi, dan kebijakan yang diterapkan oleh Mary Turner, Dick Turner, Charlie Slatter, dan Tony pada penduduk asli berkulit hitam. Ada pula beberapa bentuk tindakan diskriminatif pada ras yang diungkapkan oleh orang-orang kulit putih yaitu; penggunaan kata-kata rasial yang menyinggung, tuduhan tanpa dasar, komentar-komentar yang menyakitkan, dan pelabelan terhadap barang yang dihubungkan dengan ras tertentu.

Kata Kunci: rasisme, supremasi kulit putih, diskriminasi, jurnal, *the grass is singing*.

Abstract

Racial discrimination is a common issue occurred in multiracial country. The problem exists because there is different number of people in societies that leads to oppression by the majority towards the minority. The conflict, then, is brought to several literary works by authors and one of them is Noble Prized Winner Doris Lessing. This thesis presents white supremacy and racial discrimination which is prevalent in the relationship between black and white people also the racial discriminative acts of the characters within Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. White supremacy and racism are theories used to unravel the issue in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. The analysis focused on the theory and conception of white supremacy and racism by Frederickson. The aim of this study is to reveal white supremacy in the relationship between the black natives and the white people which leads to racial insulting acts that are apparent in the story. The thesis findings show that the relationship between black and white people contains white supremacy that controls and forms the society's behavior, ideology, and policy that is applied by the white people in this case Mary Turner, Dick Turner, Charlie Slatter, and Tony towards the black natives. There are also several forms of racial discriminative acts that are expressed by the white people namely; the use of racial offensive words, blind accusations, hurtful comments, excessive domineering acts, and labeling things to be associated with certain race.

Keywords: racism, white supremacy, discrimination, journal, *the grass is singing*.

INTRODUCTION

“When it came to the point, one never had contact with natives, except in the master-servant relationship. One never knew them in their own lives, as human beings”
(p.12)

The quotation above is taken from a novel called *The Grass is Singing* by Doris Lessing. The novel mainly talks about racial discrimination in relationship of black natives and white people who lives in Southern Rhodesia. Racial discrimination in this novel is very apparent. It is can be seen from the quotation above which came from the white masters' perspective that they do not want to acknowledge the black natives' presence as human beings just like them. This quotation also reflects the whites' behavior in dealing with the black natives' existence. This case can be categorized as a practice of white supremacy where it refers to the behavior of the whites as a form of segregation that leads to domination. It is also can be classified as racism where the whites only regard them as a servant with a black skin color, not as a person with feelings for they are aware of the differences and try to justify and validate it.

The main reason why the novel is chosen to be analyzed is because the author of the novel is a 2007 Noble Prize winner in Literature category, Doris Lessing. In the award ceremony speech, the writer Per Wastberg said that “she (Doris Lessing) has given voice to the silent and the refugees and homeless of our century-from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe” (Noble Foundation 2007) This shows that she was interested in understanding the suffering life in order to open people's eyes upon their problem, not only to sympathize but also try her best to solve their problem. Lessing is also known for her daring personality and acts in criticizing the society, even her own race, and put it into several of her literary works and one of them is *The Grass is Singing*. The novel is released as Lessing's first ever novel which titled *The Grass is Singing* in England in 1950. According to Doris Lessing's (1994) autobiography book, she stated that she rewrote *The Grass is Singing's* plot several times because she thought that she will not be sincere enough in writing with the original plot because she had not lived the whole situation as a white woman herself. The first plot is about a man who backstabbed his race in order to befriend the white people. Then, in her latest plot she transformed it into a story about black people and especially women who were suffering in Rhodesia where they had to obey the white people power, otherwise they would be punished.

The second reason on why the researcher chooses to analyze this novel is because, first, Doris Lessing is brave enough to write the cruelty of the world instead of sugarcoated stories about Rhodesia's society. Instead of writing the pleasant stories she might experienced as a white people who lived in Southern Rhodesia, she tries to pour out her inner feeling about the issue and conflict

of the society she once lived in into a work of literature. Lessing puts two prominent issues in this novel namely where the place of the women in life and the suffering experienced by the black people. In *The Grass is Singing* novel, Lessing uses omniscient narrator who knows all the insight and thoughts of each character. This novel has a flashback plot where she starts from the end of the story hence the reader will not focus on the crime but will more focus on the characters' development through their harsh life. This novel also tells Lessing's personal experience when she lived in Rhodesia where she witnessed the racism that is existed at that time. From the fact that there are lots of Lessing's personal experiences portrayed in the novel, it was considered as a boost of the attraction of this novel for it makes the reader feel closer to the author because they can experience a little of the author's life through this novel.

The last reason which draws the researcher to analyze the novel is because it talks about racial discrimination. This issue appeals the researcher because first, its occurrence constantly happens in the society the researcher live in where there are a number of racial acts which are performed by Indonesian natives, especially those with Javanese ethnicity, toward the Chinese-Indonesian ones. It is also caused by several novels that are read by the researcher, such as Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, have racism as the main theme of the novel. Even though racial discrimination is frequently mentioned in some literary works, they either talk about the issue which is targeted towards the African-American blacks or colored people. Meanwhile, the racial discrimination in *The Grass is Singing* is solely aimed to the black African natives who live in colonized land, Rhodesia.

The novel is analyzed using white supremacy by Frederickson to reveal the behaviour, ideology, and policy which refers to the domination of the white people in the relationship between two races namely black people and the white people. Racism is also used to mention and unravel the racial acts which performed by the white masters toward the black natives as the outcome of white supremacy which is practiced in the story's setting.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section the researcher tries to describe the research method that is used by the researcher which includes research design, data source, and data collection technique. In research design, the researcher explains how research problems will be interpreted. Whereas data source and data collection will be elaborated to see what kind of source which is used as the data and how they are collected properly which must be appropriate as it is related to the focus of this study. In the end, step by step of the analysis is presented in data analysis to reveal how the data are interpreted.

Research Design

The textual analysis method is used to gather the data from the data source which is a novel called *The Grass is Singing*. A media theorist McKee (2003:1) stated that textual analysis is a way to gather information on how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology—a data gathering process—for the researcher who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make some sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world they live in.

Data Source

The data which are used by the researcher in this study is from a novel by a Noble Prize Winner author Doris Lessing which is titled as *The Grass is Singing*. The novel supports 256 pages in a fine green cover with a picture of thatch that is blown by the wind.

The Grass is Singing is a novel that provides of what being studied in this research, which is white supremacy and racial discrimination or racism. The novel begins with news about a white woman. Mary Turner, who is killed by her black servant named Moses for money. The news apparently works like a bad sign for the other white people living in the area. After the news is discovered, people act as if the murder was very much expected. The plot of the novel then morphs into a flashback towards Mary Turner's life up to her murder at Moses' hand. This data is suitable for the study, since from this data the researcher will be able to focus on racial offensive acts which is being portrayed by the characters of *The Grass is Singing*. Furthermore, novel *The Grass is Singing* provides several numbers of opportunities for the researcher to include the question of finding the relation of the racial acts with their bond as different races which live in the same territory.

The Grass is Singing novel has been adapted into a drama film *Killing Heat* in (1981) which is directed by Michael Reburn. However, the researcher prefers to use the original novel as the data of this thesis. The first reason is because it is a really famous novel by a Noble Prized Winner Doris Lessing, therefore there will be larger recognition about this work in Literature society. The second is because the novel covers a bigger portrayal of the situation than the movie and the pace of the story is not rushed just like in the movie. Third is because this is Lessing's first novel that brings a lot of interests on her literature works. The last is because there are a lot of detailed narrative descriptions about the whole racial behavior and acts which is absent in the movie. Hence, people will have more knowledge and imagination about the racism in *The Grass is Singing* because the novel carries whole lot information than the movie.

In order to analyze the research problems, the researcher has to find it through narrative descriptions and dialogues, therefore the researcher has to be focused solely on the text. Several times of reading properly is needed to catch the meaning of the story as well as find out the data that is considered suitable to be analyzed.

Data Collection Technique

The research strategy that is used by the researcher is analytical and descriptive approaches which are done by reading thorough the novel to analyze any racism phenomena that is apparent in the novel *The Grass is Singing*. The collective data are retrieved from the text of *The Grass is Singing*.

In collecting the data, the researcher takes several steps to gain them. First, the researcher reads *The Grass is Singing* and tries to break the text down into its basic elements which characters, event and setting which make it easier to understand the text as a whole. After that the elements are able to be studied separately and it will be become clearer to analyze the relationship between each elements. For instance, the researcher will be preserved to study the things that affect the characters' feelings, acts, and attitude. Moreover, this approach helps the researcher to find out Lessing's way of conveying the themes and ideas as well as the message so it will be easy to decide what the theme that is need to be analyzed.

The researcher also uses the descriptive approach where the researcher describes the text as it is. This technique depends solely on how the characters are built, what their characteristics. It is also describes the setting which is the key in every events in the novel. Later on, after the approaches have been done the researcher will give signs and notes to several dialogues and narrative descriptive texts in the novel titled *The Grass is Singing* which contains a strong feeling of racism and discrimination. Next, the researcher re-reads and selects some of the data that will be analyzed. Last, the data is ready to be analyzed.

Data Selecting

The data which are selected is in a form of narrative descriptive texts and dialogues in *The Grass is Singing*, a novel written by Doris Lessing.

Data Analyzing

After the data have been collected, the researcher starts to analyze the data further. The researcher gives elaboration of each datum that has been noted in detailed description to interpret the text. After the data have been elaborated, the researcher then analyze each datum by applying racial discrimination and white supremacy theory to find the representation of the racism that is apparent on the text. After that, the researcher selects the data which contain racial discrimination in the narration, act, and verbal expression from the narrative descriptive and dialogues based on qualities that will be explained in the related theories. The researcher then will make an explanation of the analysis in specified manner. Furthermore, the researcher also selects the data that represent the relation between white supremacy and the act as the outcome of white hegemony that perceptible in the movie.

Data Summarizing

The most crucial step for the researcher is to make sure the analysis and the theory have been relevant. The step is also a way to make sure and verify that all of the problems of the study have been answered properly in the analysis. Consequently, after verifying them, the researcher then gives a conclusion about the analysis discussion and result of this study concisely.

DISCUSSION

In Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, the story tells about the time when Rhodesia is still in the middle of oppression, moreover apartheid is also very dominant in the politic and regulation of the country. Hence, the racism is very apparent in the novel. In this analysis of the thesis, the white supremacy and racism are studied from the relationship between black and white people and the characters' acts towards the oppressed party. The issue will be studied thoroughly through the analysis below.

The depiction of black and white people's relationship in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*

This part of thesis mainly focuses on how the way some individuals from a majority group sees another minority group which places the lowest in the society, in this case white people and black natives. The analysis also tries to unravel the relationship to see if it is possessed by white supremacy practices. Hence, this thesis will apply the white supremacy theory aside of racism theory to analyze the sense of superiority. Frederickson (1981: 3) said about White Supremacy which refers to the behaviors, ideology, and policies which related to the domination or power of European white people ancestor that overpower the other race in term of number. Thus, the analysis aims on the relationship between both race to reveal the white supremacy from the character's behaviour toward the natives, the difference of ideology, and the policies which exist.

In this section, narrative descriptions are what the researcher will mostly analyze due to the fact that there will be a lot of descriptions about how the black and white community relationship is being depicted. The analysis revolves around relationship between the main characters' which are Mary Turner, Dick Turner, Charlie Slatter, and Tony the newcomers with the black natives especially Moses. The further discussion will be analyzed in the sub-sections bellow.

Mary Turner and the black natives

Mary Turner is the main character in *The Grass is Singing*. The novel talks about her overall behavior and relationship with the black servants around her before her death. She is described as the one who has the most racial discrimination tendencies towards the natives aside from the other characters. The relationship between Mary and the natives is also portrayed clearly in the novel with various occasions and occurrences of racism which are worth to be studied. She is depicted to have the most

intimate relationship with most of the servants, especially a black servant named Moses. The bond started when Mary meets him at the farm and from there onwards, Moses is always around her throughout the progress of the story.

As a white woman, Mary holds a basic belief that the whites' society is the one who has every right to control the world. Since Mary spends her time alone in the town, she is always known as a strong woman who leads her life freely. When she moves to the Turner's small house after her marriage with Dick Turner she becomes more and more addicted to control, especially over the servants. It is due to the fact that there is a limit in things to do while she lives there, hence she begins to feel controlled from the situation. The whites' belief in their superiority gets the best out of her and it drives her vaguely domineering towards the servants. The whites in Rhodesia assume that the natives have been planning on doing terrible things to them. When Mary is being laugh at by the natives, she is confused and even more scared because she thinks they do not regard her as the one with higher rank than most of them. The natives' act makes her feel like she is being put down and the situation is upside down where they would basically tear her apart the next time she gets on their nerves. As the results, Mary becomes more and more ruthless to the servants especially the ones who work as her maid at the house. This ruthless **behavior** is the form of white supremacy where she tries to control and dominate the black natives. For instance, when she thought that the maid is not good enough in cleaning her house she would yell at him and cut out their wage at least ten percent per mistake. The maids in return, ask for leave because they are not really fond of how Mary treats them.

Another form of Mary's relationship with the black servants requires horrible working condition with how she always pays them less. Mary will order them to work overtime everyday with a little amount of recess and they will be paid under their expectation. With the wage that does not paid their hard work there are still the wage cuts over the small mistakes they do. Even if sometimes it is not their mistake. It is just that the masters have a bad day and decided to put their anger into cutting the servants' wages. The natives are not able to protest at the unfair treatment that is given by Mary because after all, she is the master. It is a basic courtesy to respect what the masters said and decided. In spite of the fact that usually even a slave may retorts back if they were being cornered and treated poorly, in this situation they are black people with no rights to reason. Black people do not have any privileges to express their disappointment towards the masters, they are even prohibited to talk back. They have to keep it to themselves for they have no rights to even feel oppressed.

The bad working condition that the black servants receive and have to put up with from Mary does not only stop at the wage cuts. With the minimal amount of recess, from one up to three minutes per hour, is what something that can be said inhumane. The natives, despite they have a black complexion, are also human beings that need a time to rest. Even animals take rest

when they feel like their feet are ready to give away. There are lots of times when Mary even forget that the slaves need time to catch their breath, recover from the weariness, and maybe eat something to bring their energy back. But apparently, Mary thinks that black people completely have different way of living from them. They assume that native people do not need any food to run in their system. For instance, when Mary is busy ordering her former maid, Samson, around to clean the house and she does not even give him a second to breathe air into his old man lungs. She even goes as far as cutting his recess time when she happened to catch him slacking off. For the record, Samson's day goes on with him doing the chores while skipping meals. The illustration is described as follows;

"She had forgotten completely about his need to eat; in fact she had never thought of natives as needing to eat at all." (p.53)

The quotation above gives information that Mary does not give a proper working condition for the slaves. This is a form of white supremacy practice which exists in Mary's **behavior** towards the black natives. Mary tries to dominate the black servant and tries to prove that the control she has over the servant is still relevant. The little amount of recess and wage cut is enough to assume that she despises the slaves even though they work as hard as they could to meet Mary's expectation. According to John W. Cell (1982) Mary's act is considered as racism because she performs the re-imposition of slavery;

"Yet racism would account for a wide range of conceivable alternatives – extermination, the re-imposition of slavery, deportation – that were not in fact undertaken." (p.4)

Although the fact that black people are unable to talk for themselves, they try several times to ask for permission but alas the masters always turn their requests down. The fear they have for their masters is always misinterpreted as a way to disrespect the whites. To stand up for themselves seems to be an act of rudeness that they have never been thinking of. When they are being treated badly, they do not do anything to defend themselves, let alone to fight back. It is like they gradually try to accept the messed up regulation and harsh treatment. To fight back only means they try to argue and confront the white society and it will only leave them the ruin for they do not have a decent amount of confidence in retorting the whites back. This case is the outcome of the **behavior** of white supremacy which leads to the absence of the black rights for it is already taken by the whites with the way they treat the black natives.

Dick Turner and the black natives

Dick Turner is Mary's spouse and a white master who is dedicated to take care of his farm. Although they are married, their behavior towards the natives is in a complete opposite. While Mary tends to be harsh to the

servants, Dick on the other hand is calmer when he is around his native slaves. He believes that treating the servants properly prevents them from leaving their job as his workers in the farm for it is hard to find the new one if he had a bad reputation. The Turner's servants also appears to be a very loyal ones from the fact that they have yet leave the Turner's farm even if they know that Dick is tight on money to pay their wage. It is perhaps because Dick is very considerate towards the slaves and it makes them feel secure when they are around him. The situation is illustrated in the quotation below;

"Between Samson and Dick there was a perfect understanding: Dick locked everything, but always put out more food than was needed for any meal. This extra food was then used by Samson."(p.43)

The illustration shows that Dick tries to take care of his worker even if they are from a race which is loathed by his own. However, it is cannot be denied that Dick tries to keep his limit on their master and servant relationship by locking the cupboard for the sake of master pride. As a white, he fears what other people, especially fellow whites, think of him when they see that he does not put some efforts in controlling his servants when deep inside he is very much aware that what he does is rather unnecessary. The act is caused by the segregation and domination regulation of apartheid which exists in Southern Rhodesia as **ideology** where the black natives have to submit completely to the white people known as masters. The land that supposed to be owned by the natives is secured by the masters. As the outcome, the black natives have to work minding the white's farms which allegedly on the black's property. When they speak, they also have to stare downwards and in a tone full of respects or else they will be accused as rude. In accordance, the white masters also have to speak to their servants or any black people with a harsh tone and with the least intimacy in order to avoid any speculation that leads to unwanted attention from the neighbors.

Charlie Slatter and the black natives

Charlie Slatter in this story is depicted almost the same as Mary Turner. He is a white master whose obsession in authority consuming his well being as a human. Instead of being seen as a racist master, he is described as the one who constantly reminds the other fellow whites to show their capability of controlling the black natives. Charlie appears to be really strict on applying the apartheid as the **ideology** around the area. It can be seen that the way white masters, in this case Slatter, see and behave towards the black servants is also triggered by their sense of superiority. White people are known to be so full of themselves in light of the fact that they have clear white skin color. Charlie often make sure to remind the whites that they are the superior race which is above all the other races. This sense of superiority is a form of white supremacy where the white race often tends to look down at the other races that they consider as disgusting,

especially those with black skin color. It is supported by John W. Cell (1982) in his book regarding white supremacy that;

“The association of blackness with all things evil, ugly, and satanic and of whiteness with all things pure, beautiful, and godly was fundamental to their psychology, to the way medieval and early—modern Europeans (Especially northern Europeans) perceived and organized the world. In the conditions of southern Africa and northern America this color syndrome acquired immediacy and relevance.” (p. 4)

From the narrative description quoted above, it shows that they do not want to be associated with the servants in any way. It is because the fact that white people always think high of themselves and they can only bear the idea of having a mere master and servant relationship with the black community, nothing more. The thought of addressing their servants with anything higher than slave is apparently cannot be accepted by the white people. They always try to remind themselves that the blacks are merely slaves and are not human just like the whites. White people construct a perspective where the black color on their skin is filth that dirties their status as a person and as human being. Being born with black skin apparently is a disgrace and catastrophe that put their lives in an unending hardship. Whereas being white gives them instant audacity to judge other races and dominate them if they are considered nauseating and any less human. It is in line with what Frederickson (1981) said about White Supremacy that;

“White supremacy refers to the behaviors, ideology, and policies which related to the domination or power of European white people ancestor that overpower the other race in term of number. This White Supremacy leads to a hatred and stereotype over physical characteristics and ancestry.”(p.3)

It is believed that little number of black people who live in Southern Rhodesia is also a factor why white supremacy is going strong there. It gives the whites an easy access of privileges to do domination over the natives because the minority is regarded as weakness and sign of surrender. It is why white community has a really high confidence in ruling the place and the natives. With the big majority of the people being white, they feel the need to put down the minority to make sure that the black natives are still around their hands. This ruthless way of thinking put them into an even severe **behavior** in treating black people, particularly the ones they call as servants.

Even though it can be seen from the fact that the place and people are poorly treated, there is a regulation applied for the society the majority of the time, in order to make sure that everything will not cross the line. Except, the regulation does not give any advantages

towards the black society as it is made by the whites and solely for the whites' benefits, they only serve as a devastation for the blacks. Sure there are rules that are made to protect the blacks but it lacks of any thoughts on equality. The regulation, if anything, is biased to the whites. The commandments which exist in order to make sure if the black are well treated are basically long gone. This act is considered as racism is described by Frederickson (2002) where the inequality is also brought to several fractions of life;

“But racism as I conceive it is not merely an attitude or set of beliefs, it also expresses itself in the practices, institution, and structures that a sense of differences justifies or validates.” (p.6)

The conception of how racism is spread in every aspects of life is also supported by John W. Cell (1982) in his book *The Highest stage of White Supremacy* where he stated that;

“Unconscious associations could be projected upon groups of people who were at the same time different, exploitable, and dangerously competitive. It was in the settler's interest to attack and dominate them. In these circumstances color prejudice was transformed into racism, which permeated thought, mores, institutions, and social relations.”(p.4)

The case is completely poles apart when a native servant, Moses, appears to be the one who murder Mary Turner. The cops directly escort him to the jail without questioning what happened and if Mary is really killed by her servant. The black slave is deemed to not say anything even if the sin he has done is triggered by something committed by the master. Despite the fact that Moses is being shut out by the society and its parameter, Charlie Slatter have his life saved by having white skin color. Both are the same wrongdoing committed by two human beings and yet their fates are being based on something they have no power upon, which is born with certain skin colors. The white supremacy is apparent for the different of **policy** that Rhodesia's have. The policy is made to control and dominate the black natives by giving a different consequences for both races to the same crime.

Tony and the black natives

A young British man named Tony comes to Rhodesia to help the farmer there and make some money for himself. He lived in a small hut behind the Turners house so he will have an easy access in the Turner's farm. From the time he puts his feet on the Turner's property, he has noticed how the things were between the servants and the Turners, especially the relationship between a slave named Moses and the master, Mary. Subsequently he has some ideas on what probably is the main reason why Moses kills Mary. But Tony is frustrated with how the

cops investigated him. It is like the cops do not really want to know if Tony has any idea about the whole mishaps. They even appear to be avoiding in any way to ask Tony the real thing. Being the man of his act Tony tries to confront the cops about it and only gets retorted by Charlie Slatter. From the way he acts, Slatter believes that it is best for the young man to keep his mouth shut. He obviously does not want to reveal the real reason on why Mary is murdered but he is sure himself that it has something to do with how Mary behaves around the slave. But from the way he tries to hide it, Slatter simply wants the blame to be put onto the black slave, Moses. The author portrays Charlie Slatter's struggle in keeping his white society name clean through this quotation;

"But it was too hot, and those two men had warned him - not by words but by looks. What were they warning him about? He thought he understood now. The anger he had seen in Charlie Slatter's face was 'white society' fighting to defend itself. And that 'white society' could never, ever admit that a white person, and particularly a white woman, can have a human relationship, good or evil, with a black person. For as soon as it admits that, it falls." (p.20)

Being a newcomer, Tony decided that it is best to not getting into the white society's nerve. He either gives into the people's demand or he gets his dream, to earn money and managing the farm, to be crushed. The power of white community in Rhodesia is just too immense that they can manhandle the black society easily. Being the majority really has it perks in controlling the society that has no power at all. Forcing their **ideology** to people who try to change thing is not a big of problem to face. The white supremacy which is applied to the ideology and policy cannot be broken up even by the white people. This shows that the majority of the community and its government support the segregation and domination movement for they do not have an ounce of willingness to end the inequality.

Racial acts performed by the characters in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*

From the previous discussion about white and black people relationship, it can be seen that there are three forms of white supremacy which is exist in behavior, ideology, and policy inside both societies. These forms of white supremacy require the blacks submit to them completely and serve them what they want. The act however, reveals to be filled with harsh treatment and comments that targeted to the natives. There is apparently a common custom not to treat the black native humanely, or else the white who do will face some consequences. One of the consequences is being an outcast and treated the same as the natives. Anyone who comes to the Rhodesia has to follow the belief and regards it as a rule. Hence, in order to survive in Rhodesia's society, one should always obey the rule and ignore humanity side that left in them, if there is any. If

they cannot keep up with the act, they automatically will be the one who are being treated the way the never imagine to do for themselves.

In this particular part, racial acts of the characters in *The Grass is Singing* novel will be mentioned. The acts will be focused mainly on the racist comments that are uttered by Mary Turner and Charlie Slatter as the ones who constantly perform the racial acts. Hence, majority of the quotations will be in a form of conversation that is related with these two characters inside the novel.

The use of racial offensive words

The first act of racism that is performed is the use of racial offensive words which is uttered by Charlie Slatter and Mary Turner that is aimed to the black servants. On the day when Mary is found being dead, Charlie Slatter who has a close relationship with the Turners is on their house to take care of the mess. As a white, he automatically blames Moses. However, the question he asks the moment he steps inside their house is somehow degrading the black society as a whole. He utters a word that at that time is commonly used by the whites to refer the black as their slave and is full of slavery connotation. Moreover, Charlie says it with the presence of the black cops who are not even work for him as his personal slaves.

" 'Look,' said Charlie directly, 'have you any idea why this nigger murdered Mrs Turner?' " (p.12)

The word 'nigger' or known as 'nigga' is a word which holds so many offensive tendencies in it. It is used loosely in colonial era to refer to the blacks who work for the whites as slaves. The word is used to emphasize their race and place in the society which implies to black slaves who are in the very bottom rank of the social order. The 'N' word in this novel is frequently used to call the black servants when the whites order them around and also when they scold them for some trivial things that considered as unsettling by the masters. The word is assumed to be the replacement of their name because the whites despise it when they refer them with actual names. The original names have never been used for it will give the blacks their identity and the whites do not want it. They keep on calling the servants with the 'N' word so they will not have any identity sticks to themselves. Their identities only have to be a mere slave. Aside for a substitute to the blacks' names, the word is also used to remind the blacks where they place in the society are. The word apparently gives the whites more confidence when they have to handle the servants. It shows them how much they have the slaves under the whites' control. It is a form of possessiveness as well because it gives them a power to know that they have slaves to submit to them. This case can be identified as racism where someone insists to get rid other's true identity in order to hold and support the racial hierarchy. It is can be found in Frederickson (2002) statement about racism in racial order;

“Racism, therefore, is more than theorizing about human differences or thinking badly of a group over which one has no control. It either directly sustains or propose to establish a racial order, a permanent group of hierarchy that is believed to reflect the laws of nature or the decrees of God.” (p.6)

The second racial offensive word is voiced by Mary Turner. She is always known to be obsessed with dominating the black natives on how she always tries to take control over everything, including the workers on their farm.

“She was filled with a feeling of victory. 'Dirty kaffirs!' she said to Dick. 'How they smell!'” (81)

The use of racial offensive word by the character is also illustrated on the conversation between Mary and Dick Turner. Mary loosely include the word ‘kaffir’ that is considered as a very conservative racist word in her comments about the worker on the farm. The word is known to be used by the openly racist individuals in the apartheid era. Hence, that makes a pretty obvious evidence that Mary is one of those openly racist individuals. The word ‘kaffir’ is derived from Arabic term *kafir* which means disbeliever that refers to the ones without religion. However, the word is considered as a racist term rather than discriminative towards religion. It is because in Rhodesia, the word is adopted to refer to black non-muslim people when they are involved with the Arab slave trade on the Swahili coast. Several variations of the word then used in English, Dutch, and finally Africa. Over the country, the word later on is used to refer the whole black slaves which lives in Southern Africa but it is commonly spelled as *kaffer*. In South Africa, especially in this era, the word is considered as an extremely offensive racist term. It has the same level of racial offensive tendency with the ‘N’ word. Rather than using the word in secretly, the word is often uttered by the openly racist individual in the apartheid era, in this case Mary Turner. The use of ‘Kaffir’ is already done since around 1976 in South Africa court.

Blind Accusations

The second form of racial act which is performed by the characters in the novel is how they always accuse the blacks for doing something that they are not even doing. The common accusation that is aimed to the servants is that they are all thieves hiding in the oppressed faces. The expression of fear and surrender does not really affect the whites to move their heart and bring out their empathy. If anything, the whites only rolls they eyes for they regards it as a façade to hide their guilt from pilfering. The issue is mentioned in the novel as well. For instance, Mary always blames the maids for stealing something in the house even when nothing is missing. She always posses a bad thought about them that if she

does not have her eyes fully on the maid, they will take anything from the house and hide it under their clothes. That is why Mary feels restless most of the time because she has been straining her energy to do unnecessary things such as spying on the maids. The act though, makes the maid uncomfortable because their master doubts their presence. They feel like will never be able to make their master trust them fully with everything the do, even if they swear for their lives that they are not doing the things the master accuses them doing. The issue is perfectly illustrated in the conversation between Mary and Dick below;

“She knew there have been enough raisins put out for the pudding, but when they came to eat it, there were hardly any. And they boy denied stealing them...”

‘Good heavens,’ said Dick, amused, ‘I thought there was something really wrong.’

‘But I know he took them,’ sobbed Mary.

‘He probably did, but he’s a good old swine on the whole.’

‘I am going to take it out of his wage.’ (p.67)

It can be seen from the conversation that Mary accuses the maid for stealing the food because some of them have been missing. She then starts to lock all of cupboards in the house. She simply believes that they will take anything in their peripheral when they know no one is looking. As a type of prevention, she begins to take extra times minding what the blacks are doing. Dick, on the other hand, does not really put it in mind because he kind of have to keep the maid in a good relationship, for it is hard to find ones if they in the end decided to leave. Thus, he often makes sure if Mary does not do anything stupid to them resulting to the departure of the maids. The servants, if anything, feel humiliated by the way Mary acts around them. It is like Mary constantly keeps her radar on the supposed criminals that lives in her house. For the bad treatment they received from Mary, lots of them decided to leave their work one by one due to the unfair treatment and baseless accusation they have been receiving.

Another terrible treatment that is based on Mary’s blind accusations for the maids is how she always cut their wage over some trivial things. For example there are times when she cut their wage because she is unsatisfied with the maid’s work. Mary is basically abusing her position as the one who holds the power to treat and decide anything without the maids’ concern. It is a form of bad work condition when she give them very little wage that does not meet their hard work, and for some reason the wage is also cut over something they do not even do. She does it when she feels unsettled with the maids’ work or if she simply feels like it. From the novel it can be understood that Mary continues to make an

unreasonable blame even if the black maids decided to leave their job.

Hurtful Comments

The third racial act which is performed by the characters is how the whites often voiced out their racist comments on the natives regarding their physical appearances. It is obvious that Mary not only expresses her racial degrading acts to her own slaves, she is bitter towards the other natives as well. There is an occasion where Mary is described as if she is in a fuming state when she saw the native women hanging around the Turners' shop. They are there because Dick opens a small store beside their house for the nearby natives to shop on. But apparently Mary is not really happy with the idea. She really despises it to have the black natives in a close proximity with her. Mary starts to have bad thoughts about the native women and the thoughts basically degrading the black people's physical appearance. By what the story informed, it is believed that Mary also does generalization towards a society based on her presumption on one single person. The author portrays Mary's inner feeling in the narrative description below;

"If she disliked the 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. She could not bear to see them sitting there on the grass, their legs tucked under them in that traditional timeless pose." (p. 69)

The act that Mary carries out is can be regarded as degrading the black society as a whole by doing a generalization. Even though the natives cannot make out what is on Mary's mind, it is being described that way to have the reader understand what Mary's true feeling for the natives, especially the woman. Mary hates the idea of being in the same place or on the same status with them is sufficient to be a proof that she is racist because she unconsciously does segregation and discrimination towards the natives. It is in accordance of what Frederickson (2002) stated about racism;

"But the segregation, discrimination, and violence that were visited upon the ex-slaves in areas where slavery had been abolished, or where large-scale manumission had occurred, conveyed the clear message that being the wrong color was an insuperable obstacle—in and of itself—to membership of nation."(p.80)

Mary for the record has so many racial discriminative thoughts about the blacks. It is not only about their biological appearance that she has time to hate on. Every of the natives' moves seem to be illogically irks her to no end. The uncontrollable hate that Mary has leads her to be a racist person inside and

outside her head. The power she usually has to control the blacks makes her thinking that she can decide what is allowed and what is not for the natives to act upon. It is considered as her abusing the natives' right to do the things they want to do. If anything, the racist mind she has leads her to many acts that turn her into a full of hatred person even more.

Excessive domineering acts

The next form of racist act is how the whites have the high tendencies to dominate the black natives. In Rhodesia the racial degradation is not only expressed through comments and acts, it is also applied in the unspoken rule of the society to support domination over the slaves. The rule appears to be really vital for the whites because it is what that reminds them everyday to stand on their ground and keep their power at the utmost condition. It is made to give the whites a reminder where their place in the society is and as an encouragement to control the slaves they have. Thus, this case will just lead to the establishment of racial order. It is evidently illustrated in the narrative description below where the main character's husband, Dick Turner, gone mad upon realizing that his wife is murdered and how the blacks cannot even make sure that he is okay physically is just explain how the racial order is the major dilemma in Rhodesia;

"Although he looked mad, he was a white man; black men, even policemen, do not lay hands on white skin." (p.6)

From the quotation above, it can be identified that from the law that exists, they forbid the blacks to touch white people in any situation. Even when a white really needs a help, waiting for another white to help is the best choice rather than showing their empathy to help other unconditionally. The unreasonable disgust that they have for the blacks seems reaching to the point where kindness is being side-eyed and taken for granted. Although the hate for the black minority at that moment is unnecessary, they have to put up with the regulation to evade the punishment and fine that will cost some fortune. This case is also sort of white supremacy, because the white people and their supreme arrogance despise the other race to god-forbid touch them even in manner full of respect. This act, will most likely results in degradation of the blacks self esteem considering how they are treated and how they will see themselves afterwards. It is true that the servants are expected to mind their own business. But the problem is laid where even a black cop is not able to do their job to reach out a helping hand for those whites that are urgently in need. The fact that there are whites who are considered as 'soft' towards the slaves, just like Dick Turner, makes some of those with self-indulgent over the power they have furious. They see the act of being kind to the natives as a weak move. On the other hand, they really are irritated with any form of weakness, let alone posses them. It is also what Charlie Slatter feels about Dick and his attitude towards his workers on the farm. Even

though Charlie is not really sincere with their friendship, he hates to see Dick effortlessly gets along with the natives without any hard feelings. He is sure himself that they should at least have a tiny bit of hatred for the slaves.

“He was obeying a law of the whites in Southern Africa: ‘You must not let any whites sink below a certain point, because if you do the niggers will think they are just as good,’” (p.129)

From the law that is mentioned in the novel, it informs that every white people have to hold on to their arrogance selves. A power should always has it presence in every master and servant relationships. It is needed to make the slaves know where they place should have been and nothing can change the fact that they are in the lowest rank of the social order. If any white ever consider losing their control over the servants even a little, it will only make the natives lost their respect. The epiphany that they are no longer in a hard pressure caused by the whites, will gradually make them to think that they are in the same position with the whites. They will have an idea that they are just as good as the superior. While the natives will most likely rejoice because of it, the whites on the other hand will feel bitter about it. That is probably the prominent factor on why the white society feel the need to create and apply such absurd law that it presence only points out the society’s inner insecurity they encompass.

Labeling things to be associated with certain race

There is a certain racial discrimination case that is mentioned in the novel. It is how some whites view several items to be closely associated to the black natives. The racist part is in the way they do not want to use or wear the items because it reminds them of the slaves and they do not want to be seen as one. The ‘native’ items are seen as cheap and obnoxious things that if they wear it, it will only make them looking horrible just like how they see the blacks. It is previously seen as normal items but the natives seem to love it and they are popular in the blacks’ society. While the natives rally love the items, the whites on the other hand sickened of it. According to the whites, the items seem to be only emphasizing the natives’ unflattering image even more. The perspective is narrated by the author from Charlie Slatter’s point of view when he sees Mary Turner sports an itm that have a strong native feels to them.

“She was wearing a red cotton dress and long brightly coloured earrings of the kind the natives liked so much.” (p.125)

From the quotation above, it tells how Charlie Slatter is shocked to see Mary when he comes over to see how the Turners are doing. She tries to pull off a ‘native’ item which is a pair of brightly colored earrings. It is further described to the way Charlie responds to the sight before him. He is undoubtedly sickened when he sees her

for she only appears to be more and more native-like. The view disgusts him even more after the incident where he witnessed the way Mary talk to Moses with a voice basically drenched in flirtatious tones and the servant’s response for the appalling act. To associate something to a certain group that makes the thing have a degraded value. It is also affecting the ones who have any interest to them for it will create an idea that they are the ones bringing disgrace to such basic items. Although it is true that the natives are the one who, in a sense, decrease the items value but it is unnecessary to make the formerly oblivious people aware of how their presence and appearance only make everything they possibly think as pretty to be rather obnoxious for the other group to see. To openly express the disgust for the items seem to hurt the natives’ pride that some of them are even unwilling to wear them after what they are perceived.

CLOSING

Conclusion

This thesis studies white supremacy within black and white people relationship in Rhodesia along with their racial acts which is led by the white supremacy from a famous novel by Doris Lessing which is titled *The Grass is Singing*. The theories that are used to analyze this novel are White Supremacy and Racism. The White Supremacy theory is a major help to point out and learn how the unfair treatment as well as the racism is being depicted in the novel’s narrative description. While the Racism theory, facilitates the basic understanding of the racial offensive acts which mainly exist in the conversations of the novel.

In the chapter above, it can be seen that the author tries to address the racism issue through white supremacy in the relationship between the black Afrikaans and the white masters. The relationship is majorly focused on Mary Turner, Dick Turner, Charlie Slatter and Tony as a white people and black natives, especially the one called Moses. It also portrays how the white masters behave around the native slaves and vice versa. The relationship is analyzed using White Supremacy theory to prove that there are three practices of white supremacy which are apparent in the relationship namely; domination behavior that majorly found in Mary and the black natives relationship, different ideology which can be found mainly in Dick Turner, Charlie Slatter, and Tony’s relationship with the black natives, and biased policy which can be found in Charlie Slatter and Tony’s relationship with the black natives. From these white supremacy practices, then, the racial discriminative actions can be mentioned and unraveled.

The racial acts in the novel are also vividly shown in most of the conversations with or regarding the black natives. The acts are cannot be denied to be the outcomes of white supremacy in the relationship between the two races. There is also several examples of the unfair regulation that is pointed out to be contained with racial order in this particular part of discussion. The racial offensive acts in this novel are studied with Racism theory to provide the evidence of the said unpleasant

behavior. More than a few of racial acts is found within the novel in the form of; the use of racial offensive words, blind accusations, hurtful comments on physical appearances, excessive domineering acts, and labeling things to be associated with certain race.

All in all, this thesis tries to give some ideas about the relationship of black natives and white people and how the bond controls and forms the society's behavior, ideology, and policy that are filled with racism towards those who are oppressed. It is also a decent material to understand what is going on inside the novel and help the reader to comprehend the issue easier.

Suggestion

Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* is a famous novel which is worth to be read and analyze. The novel is not only talk about racial discrimination but it is filled with other issue mentioned. Aside from racism, the major issue which can be studied is the feminism represented by the main character, Mary Turner. Psychological study also has a high possibility to be applied to analyze this novel for it is quite prominent in the story. These issues are expected to be analyzed for the next study for those who want to use Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* as the data source of the thesis.

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