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A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE IN DORIS LESSING'S *THE GRASS IS SINGING*: THE ELOQUENCE OF THINGS

Abstract: *The main purpose of this article is to analyze the Victorian as well as the Modernist characteristics in Doris Lessing's novel* The Grass Is Singing *(1950). Parallels are drawn between Lessing's work and the literary techniques employed by notable figures such as T. S. Eliot and Robert Browning, emphasizing the intertextual connections and thematic resonances. The critique probes deeply into the symbolism and motifs within Lessing's narrative, highlighting the significance of objects, language, and silence in the portrayal of the characters, especially Mary Turner. Moreover, the present analysis underscores how the narrative transcends mere storytelling and functions as a commentary on social structures and power dynamics prevalent during the time of the story's setting.*

Keywords: *Doris Lessing, T. S. Eliot, Robert Browning, Cultural Representation, Nuanced Viewpoints, Inner Workings of Characters, Literary Traditions, Narrative Connection, Empathetic Understanding.*

The present investigation examines how Doris Lessing reinterprets the Victorian and Modernist literary traditions in *The Grass Is Singing*[1]. My analysis proposes that Lessing's reimagining of these influences opens up new perspectives on contemporary art. This implies that by drawing from and reshaping these literary traditions, Lessing brings a fresh and relevant perspective to her novel, contributing to the evolution of contemporary artistic expressions.

The present article discusses Doris Lessing's literary techniques, particularly her use of the dramatic monologue and avoidance of direct personal identification in the narrative. Drawing a parallel with T. S. Eliot, I suggest that these techniques create a space for a more nuanced and independent exploration of characters and their experiences. The absence of direct personal identification may allow for a broader exploration of human complexities.

[1] Doris Lessing, *The Grass Is Singing*, London-Ibadan-Nairobi, Heinemann, 1981. All quotations from the novel are taken from this edition.

As is known, the limitations of language, the challenges of representation, and the interdisciplinary aspects of aestheticism had an impact on T. S. Eliot. In his early works, T. S. Eliot, in his quest for beauty, recognized the need for a new vocabulary, emphasizing the transformation of verbal language into visual forms. This highlights an acknowledgment of the shortcomings of conventional linguistic tools and an appreciation for the potential of visual elements in artistic expression. Lessing examines T. S. Eliot's technique, named the "objective correlative"[2], in the context of the dramatic monologue featuring the character, Mary Turner. The unfolding of Mary's thoughts and emotions is effectively conveyed using this literary device, providing the audience with a unique and immersive perspective.

I have already discussed Lessing's elaboration on the characteristics of dramatic monologues as used by Robert Browning. The key points of my past investigation may be summarized as follows: Browning and Lessing displayed a profound engagement with complex psychological and social themes in their works, albeit in different literary forms. The employment of dramatic monologues in their writing allows for a deep exploration of the inner workings of various characters, providing readers with intimate access to their thoughts, emotions, and motivations. This technique encourages readers to empathize with the characters and fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of truth, as perceived from different perspectives. By delving into the intricacies of characters' minds through the dramatic monologue, readers are presented with a more nuanced and empathetic view of the narrative, enabling a more profound connection with the story and its themes. This approach can foster a greater appreciation for the complexities of human nature and the diversity of experiences that contribute to the broader understanding of truth within the context of the narrative.

Although Lessing's and Browning's soliloquizers are not known historical figures, as in the instances of Mary Turner or the unnamed monk in his Spanish cloister, they are provided with a rich physical context through carefully chosen details, references, and subjects. This careful construction of context serves to ground the characters in a specific setting, giving them a sense of tangibility and realism. Furthermore, each speaking voice is granted a unique and individual articulation, characterized by specific phrases and idiomatic expressions that serve to distinguish one character from another. These characteristics help to establish the identity and personality of the speakers, allowing readers to engage more deeply with the nuances of their individual perspectives and experiences. Dramatic monologues involve a solitary speaker addressing a silent, often unnamed listener. Unlike soliloquies, dramatic monologues maintain a direct engagement with the

[2] The functioning of the objective correlative was explained for the first time by T. S. Eliot in 1919 in the essay *Hamlet and his problems* in *The Sacred Wood*: *Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1920), in which the author speaks of a situation, a chain of events or a series of objects that have the function of evoking a particular emotion.

audience, providing glimpses into the complexities of the speakers' personalities. Browning's and Lessing's characters in their dramatic monologues are depicted as cunning, intelligent, and capable of engaging in argumentation. They are complex individuals who may resort to omitting details in their narratives and capable of withholding information or even lying, contributing to the depth and complexity of their portrayal within the narrative. This complexity adds depth and intrigue to the characters and their stories[3].

Understanding the complexities of the characters and their psychologies in literary works requires careful attention to various elements such as word choice, logical progression, the use of figures of speech, metaphors, analogies, and the settings within the stories. For example, in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" (*Dramatic Lyrics* [1842] 1898, p. 143), the speaker implicitly confesses to the murder of his wife, even though he never directly acknowledges his guilt. Similarly, in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (*Dramatic Lyrics*, [1842] 1898, p. 16), the speaker's madness is revealed through his confused references to Latin prayers and his vehement expression of hatred towards a fellow friar. Likewise, in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*, Mary Turner's rebellion against the societal norms of her time is depicted in the confined and restricted space that she occupies, reminiscent of the portrayal of confinement in T. S. Eliot's *Portrait of a Lady*[4]. The use of these literary techniques enables T. S. Eliot as well as Doris Lessing to convey the psychological complexities and inner workings of their characters, allowing readers to delve deeper into the narrative and understand the underlying themes and messages of the works.

As already said in the opening section of my article, T. S. Eliot's awareness of the limitations of language, the challenges of representation, and the interdisciplinary aspects of aestheticism influenced his pursuit of beauty in his early works. Recognizing the need for a fresh vocabulary, he sought to translate the verbal into the visual. This emphasis on stylistic and formal innovation illustrates Eliot's consistent effort to distance himself from realist and naturalist conventions. Instead, he aimed to forge new forms and revolutionary voices within the realm of modernist aesthetics. In his attempts to convey a psychological state, Eliot introduced the concept of the "objective correlative", which, in his own words, is a means of representing a particular emotion or sensation through a set of objects, a situation, or a series of events that evoke that specific feeling. To express

[3] Mary Turner's struggle to find a fitting role highlights the complexity of her character. Simultaneously, she embodies the traits of a sporty girl, a reliable and efficient secretary who values the quiet impersonality of her work, and a housewife with a disintegrated conscience. She is also portrayed as a white virago equipped with a whip and toughened by the African sun, as well as a hysterical woman grappling with nerve pains.

[4] T. S. Eliot's *Portrait of a Lady* was first published in September 1915 in *Others: A Magazine of the New Verse.* It was published again in March 1916 in *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse,* in February 1917 (without the epigraph) in *The New Poetry: An Anthology,* and finally in his 1917 collection of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations*.

ideas and sensations, Lessing uses T. S. Eliot's specific technique defined as the "objective correlative". It consists in representing a certain sensation or emotion on the page through some concrete objects that should arouse in the reader what the artist feels. Lessing recovers the symbolic function of the objective correlative, using it mainly in *The Grass Is Singing*, in which Lessing's existential restlessness takes shape and is expressed through sensitive and material data. This is the space of the interior, the space of the bourgeois and of their relationship of crisis, and of dependence, with the object, with the objective correlative of their moods.

For both T. S. Eliot and Lessing this technique is used both to obtain greater detachment from sensitivity and to order, better control the world and therefore be more lucid. On the other hand, the world is absurd, it is dominated by nonsense and the subject no longer exists, but in its place, there is a multiplicity of subpersonalities. The crisis of the ego, as expounded by both Nietzsche and Freud, has undoubtedly unfolded its intricate layers, leaving a profound impact on the philosophical and psychological landscape. T. S. Eliot and Lessing, keen observers of the human condition, find themselves compelled to grapple with the repercussions of this transformative phenomenon. In the wake of this crisis, a paradigm shift emerges wherein the external world ascends to a position of paramount importance, overshadowing the once-dominant realm of the internal self.

T. S. Eliot and Lessing, through their respective works, navigate this shifting terrain with a discerning eye. The internal landscape of thoughts, emotions, and individual subjectivity, once the focal point of human experience, is now relegated to the shadows. The ego, once a stalwart entity asserting its significance, now faces a subtle subjugation as the external world and tangible objects assume precedence.

This shift prompts a reevaluation of the very essence of existence. T. S. Eliot, known for his reflective and introspective poetry, captures the palpable tension between the individual and the external forces shaping their reality. Lessing, in her literary explorations, grapples with the dichotomy of inner self and external reality, recognizing the necessity of concealing certain aspects of the self in the face of societal expectations.

The prioritization of the external world over the internal introduces a nuanced interplay between subject and object. The subjective experience, once the sovereign ruler of consciousness, is now compelled to wear a cloak of concealment, overshadowed by the prominence of tangible, external entities. This nuanced turn between the inner and outer realms weaves a complex tapestry, where the self finds itself negotiating its identity within the context of an ever-shifting reality.

In essence, T. S. Eliot, and Lessing, conscious of the aftermath of the ego crisis, grapple with the redefined dynamics between subject and object, where the external world takes precedence, and the once-dominant ego is compelled to adapt to a more concealed role within the intricate fabric of human experience. Through their literary endeavors, they invite readers to contemplate the evolving

nature of selfhood and the intricate turn between the internal and external forces that shape our understanding of reality.

The poetic expressions of T. S. Eliot and Lessing are simply the consequences of these contemporary understandings of the self and the world. Both writers effectively utilize the objective correlative to formalize and structure all poetic images. This poetic technique fundamentally suggests that human language is a complex code, capable of conveying intricate and layered meanings beyond mere surface interpretations.

Mary Turner's language is presented as a unique register characterized by concrete objects, highly accessible to comprehension, and amenable to representation, rather than symbols and grammar. Objects themselves convey their own meaning outside of human verbal conceptualization. The "objective correlative" serves to formalize and structure all poetic images, indicating that human language is a complex code. Mary Turner's fragmented perception of reality is reflected in the house she inhabits, an ever-shifting epistemological environment where she periodically imposes a new order. Mary's adaptation to the new rhythm of life and her initial surge of energy and determination in dealing with unusual habits, along with the absolute freedom from office hours, are evident in the renewed atmosphere of her house. It has shed „its air of bleak poverty, and put on an inexpensive prettiness, with bright hangings and some pictures [and] dazzling blue-white [walls]" (Lessing, 1981, pp. 73–75). Furthermore, in the final section of the novel, Mary's psycho-physical decay is eloquently expressed through images of tattered curtains, broken glass, cracks in the walls, and faded fabrics on cracked cups.

Lessing explores the dynamic nature of lived-in spaces, emphasizing that they are not static arrangements but rather sites of contingent relations–a reflection of human life. Lessing's investigation draws parallels with the works of other writers, such as Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, who also explored the significance of domestic spaces as metaphors for internal, psychological spaces. It also hints at Carl Jung's idea that buildings and art objects can produce tangible atmospheres or physical fields, contributing not only to visual aesthetics but also to the sensory atmosphere within spaces[5].

[5] In *The Urban Uncanny. A Collection of Interdisciplinary Studies*, (London, Routledge, 2016, pp. 1–16, p. 7) Lucy Huskinson focuses on Carl Jung's emphasis on the psychological implications of architectural locales. In a famous dream, Jung explored a range of places within a building, from the attic to the basement. This dream is described as shedding light on consciousness and unconsciousness, using the architectural layout as a symbolic representation of different layers of the psyche. Jung's exploration of places within the dream, from the attic to the basement, implies a vertical movement that symbolizes a journey through different levels of the mind. The architectural locales in the dream serve as a kind of plan, providing insights into the intricacies of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the human psyche.

Mary's place, a hut, as well as providing a dystopian version of one of the dearest images of English literature, precisely that of the house[6], delimit the place as an inversion in which character is dominated by things. The home of the Turners, far from being liminal space, which, in Homi Bhabha's definition, assigns "narrative's authority for marginal voices or minority discourse"[7], or rather than over-determining the personality of those who live there[8], provides for replacing them. The objects within Mary's home take on a hypertrophic semantic value, becoming ornaments and symbols of subjectivity. The novel highlights Mary's adaptation to a new way of life, initially marked by bursts of energy and determination, as evidenced by the transformation of her house. On the other hand, the final section of the novel vividly conveys Mary's psycho-physical decay through images of dilapidation and degradation within her home.

In a subsequent novel entitled *To Room Nineteen* (1978), Lessing highlights how a room, in this case, can have multifaceted meanings. For the main character, Susan, room nineteen serves as a sanctuary, a place of love, visionary experiences, and a mystical journey, but also as a refuge against societal expectations related to traditional roles of wifehood and motherhood. The room becomes a symbolic shield, allowing the character to escape oppressive norms. As an alternative, the hut Mary inhabits in *The Grass is Singing* is emblematic of death, akin to Bachelard's concept of the *Koimeterion*[9], signifying the house as a cemetery. This metaphor emphasizes the bleak and somber nature of Mary's living space, highlighting themes of despair and confinement within the narrative. The tensions in considering space delve into deep psychological realms. To simplify, one perspective aligns with Bachelard's phenomenological reveries of felicitous space[10] drawing on nostalgia to assess the foundational meaning of a space for its inhabitants.

[6] Think of the Penshurst country estate that Ben Jonson makes frozen as a symbol of nature's generosity or Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, a relatively small world that stands for the English nation. On the contrary, as Louise Yelin notes in her analysis of *In Pursuit of the English*, "[I]n Lessing's text […] the marginal voices and minority discourses in the boarding house that stands for England do not achieve narrative authority. Rather they are subordinated to the satirical eye and ironic voice of the narrator and to the authority of the would-be English writer, Doris Lessing". Self-according to the scholar, Lessing's use of the image of the house, is functional to inscribe "her text in a literary tradition in which, historically, English national identity has been debated; thus, she presents herself as an English writer" (Louise Yelin, *From the Margins of Empire. Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1998, pp. 63–64).

[7] Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" in *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 150.

[8] Gilbert Durand, *Le strutture antropologiche dell'immaginario. Introduzione all'archetipologia generale,* Bari, Dedalo, 1995, p. 244 [Original title: *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire. Introduction à l'archétypologie générale*, Paris, 1960].

[9] Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace* [1957], Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1961.

[10] Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de la rêverie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1960., p. 162.

This contrasts with Foucault's "heterotopia"[11], shifting from intimate spaces to spatial discourses entwined with power dynamics and institutional histories–a psychosocial perspective, in essence.

Set in a racially tense and oppressive social environment, *The Grass Is Singing'*s narrative surpasses mere storytelling, operating as a commentary on the prevailing social structures and power dynamics during the setting of the story. In the novel's second epigraph, an Author Unknown instructs the reader to recognize that "by the failures and misfits of a civilization, one can best judge its weaknesses". *The Grass Is Singing* is a novel that poignantly captures the tragic trajectory of Mary Turner, whose life is marked by an ongoing struggle for acceptance and recognition within a society that fails to embrace her uniqueness. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that Mary's experiences are emblematic of larger societal issues, with her actions and fate serving as a stark critique of the hierarchical and oppressive structures of colonialism. Lessing's depiction of Mary's deteriorating body directly reflects and satirizes the Rhodesian social body. Mary's physical form undergoes metamorphosis, tearing itself apart and rebelling against the world, suggesting a process of deterioration that challenges conventional literary portrayals. In her protest against the constraints imposed by society and culture, Lessing deepens the exploration of individual experiences within the broader context of the chaotic world already depicted by the Modernists.

In an era marked by a perceived lack of order the modernist artists, including Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Joyce, responded to a world that seemed to be immersed in chaos and entropy. Instead of succumbing to the apparent disorder, these artists engaged in an intuitive exploration. They sought to discern an underlying order that existed either behind, within, or above the chaotic tapestry of modern experiences. The artists employed metaphor and myth as primary avenues to articulate and understand this hidden order. For instance, Yeats' concept of gyres, T. S. Eliot's adherence to Classicism, and Joyce's intricate system of allusion and cyclical history are presented as manifestations of this underlying order. These concepts are not necessarily direct representations but rather artistic expressions that reveal the artists' attempts to make sense of the perceived chaos in the modern world. The artists utilized masks, personae, or other forms of impersonality as a means to express these ideas, allowing them to uncover and grapple with the semblance of order that they believed existed beneath the surface of the tumultuous modern world.

Lessing's adherence to modernist literary conventions is underscored by her choice of the dramatic monologue, a form commonly associated with poets like Robert Browning and Lord Tennyson, and widely employed during the modernist

[11] The enigmatic term «heterotopia» popularized by Michel Foucault in his text, *The Order of Things* (London, Routledge [1966], 2005), describes sites that seem familiar, as they are subsumed within a society's conventional ordering system that links them to other sites, yet they are unfamiliar in that they simultaneously contradict the premises by which these relationships are sustained.

era. This narrative technique allows for a more intimate and immediate connection with the character's internal world. by employing the "objective correlative" in Mary Turner's dramatic monologue, Lessing aligns herself with the experimental and introspective tendencies of modernist literature. This choice allows her to present Mary's narrative in a way that transcends traditional storytelling methods, offering readers a more profound and immediate connection with the character's internal world. The effectiveness of this literary device serves as evidence of Lessing's commitment to modernist conventions and her skillful use of innovative techniques to convey the complexities of human experience.

The "objective correlative", as a literary device, showcases its role as a powerful means of expression that offers a unique and immersive perspective into Mary's inner thoughts and emotions. The "objective correlative" enables the audience to delve deeply into Mary's psyche. By using this device, Lessing goes beyond a mere external description of events; instead, she provides readers with a direct, firsthand experience of Mary's inner thoughts and emotions. This immersive perspective is crucial in modernist literature, where there is often a focus on subjective experiences and the exploration of characters' consciousness.

As the "objective correlative" unfolds, it becomes a literary conduit, providing a direct channel for the audience to experience Mary's narrative. The carefully chosen words and vivid imagery associated with this technique bring Mary's character to life, creating a dynamic and engaging portrayal. The audience is not merely an observer but is intricately woven into the fabric of Mary's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Through the lens of the "objective correlative", the monologue gains depth and nuance. It goes beyond the surface, delving into the complexities of Mary's psyche and revealing layers of her character that might remain hidden in a more conventional form of expression. This technique allows for a profound exploration of Mary's motivations, fears, and desires, presenting a more holistic and authentic portrayal of her character.

Furthermore, the "objective correlative" adds a layer of immediacy and intimacy to her monologue. It creates a sense of proximity between the audience and Mary, as if they are sharing a private moment with her. This closeness enhances the emotional impact of the monologue, making Mary's journey and self-discovery resonate more profoundly with the audience.

Doris Lessing's commitment to modernist literary conventions is also evident in her innovative portrayal of time in the novel. The portrayal presents time as a fluid and malleable entity with spatial attributes, existing within an ahistorical temporality. This approach allows for a nuanced examination of the interplay between past, present, and future, providing readers with profound insights into the cyclical rhythms that shape characters' lives. The convergence of time and space in *The Grass Is Singing* ("And time taking on the attributes of space"

(Lessing, 1981, p. 241), highlights a unique narrative device that underscores the novel's exploration of historical and societal complexities. The blurring of boundaries between temporal and spatial dimensions in the novel may be defined as an intricate weaving of a narrative that transcends conventional notions of linear progression. By doing so, Lessing offers readers a deeper understanding of the cyclical nature of history and the human experience. This suggests that the novel goes beyond a straightforward chronological narrative, delving into the interconnectedness of time and space to provide a richer exploration of the complexities inherent in historical and societal contexts.

In traditional narratives, such as Shakespeare's plays, time often acts as a healing agent. However, in Lessing's novel, time undergoes a transformation into a spatial entity, deviating from the concept of linear healing or resolution. This departure suggests that Lessing's novel presents a unique perspective on time, one where it is not just a linear progression but takes on spatial attributes. This shift highlights the cyclical and complex nature of the characters' journeys, emphasising the intricacies of their psychological and emotional landscapes. By transforming time into a spatial entity, the novel challenges conventional notions of healing and resolution, offering a more nuanced exploration of the characters' experiences and the unfolding of their stories.

By inviting readers to reconsider their understanding of time and space, Lessing challenges traditional realist literary conventions and prompts a deeper exploration of the interconnections between historical contexts and individual experiences. This innovative narrative approach serves as a testament to the author's profound insight into the complexities of human existence and the enduring impact of historical and societal forces on individual lives. Mary Turner's tragic fate arises from her exceptional nature, an inherent difference that no societal or organizational force can ever mitigate or fully embrace, except through her death[12]. Mary comes to recognize the distortion of reality imposed by rigid order and the consequent loss of direct connection with both people and the world. Confronted with a world growing increasingly self-absorbed, she is compelled to reexamine what is genuine, natural, and unstructured.

Like a fictional protagonist undergoing a transformative journey, Mary is inexorably driven to either conquer or dismantle the society that rejects her attempts to claim an identity not bestowed upon her. She embodies the archetype of an outcast burdened with the responsibility to redeem a sense of shame. Moreover, the reader's moral judgment regarding Mary's actions is rooted in a sentiment

[12] In this regard, see Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990 pp. 37–38: "[I] n high tragedy [the hero's mortality] is a social and moral fact. The tragic hero has to be of a properly heroic size, but his fall is involved both with a sense of his relation to society and with a sense of the supremacy of natural law […] The exposed position is usually the place of leadership, in which a character is exceptional and isolated at the same time, giving us that curious blend of the inevitable and the incongruous which is peculiar to tragedy".

that Frye defines as "mixed", situated midway between "pity" and "fear"[13], oscillating between compassion for her tragic personal narrative and apprehension regarding the consequences of her racial prejudice. It is pertinent to recall Mary's indignation towards "sentimentalists and theoreticians [...] – the law-makers and the Civil Service – who interfered with the natural right of a white farmer to treat His labor as he pleased" (Lessing, 1981, p. 148).

Moreover, while the rational discourse of the novel fosters 'understanding'– detailing the tribulations of Mary's childhood and her marital challenges such as poverty, oppressive heat, lack of meaningful work, bothersome dogs, and the despised and feared servants – there exists, at some irrational or pre-rational level, a profound rejection of the character to the extent of terminating her existence. The reader may experience horror at the nature of Mary's death, yet also perceive the supposed worthlessness of this woman who 'gives in' (unlike Mrs. Quest's daughter Martha and unlike Lessing herself), thereby endorsing the purging that transpires. It is not solely Mary whose 'vision' is divided between 'judgment' and 'feeling'; the author, too, rejects her character to the point of orchestrating her demise.

The Grass Is Singing indeed presents a world characterized by its haunting and somber undertones, evoking a vivid portrayal of a deeply troubled existence. Within this narrative, the boundaries between the self and the external world appear to blur, creating an atmosphere that transcends conventional notions of space and time. This dissolution of boundaries emphasizes the profound metaphysical significance of the characters' experiences, contributing to narrative rich with intricate emotional depth and psychological exploration. Throughout the novel, the reader is confronted with a vivid portrayal of Mary's tumultuous inner world, one characterized by a relentless pursuit of identity and agency amidst the constraints imposed by an unforgiving social order. This poignant struggle is further underscored by the novel's unsettling conclusion, which serves as a powerful commentary on the devastating consequences of societal failures and prejudices.

The dramatic monologue delivered by Lessing's character Mary Turner is skillfully conveyed using the "objective correlative". This narrative technique is instrumental in illustrating the emotional resonance of Mary's personal experiences, as the transformation of objects within her immediate environment becomes a poignant reflection of her inner turmoil.

[13] *Ibid*, p. 38: "In high mimetic tragedy pity and fear become, respectively, favorable and adverse moral judgment […] We pity Desdemona and fear Iago, but the central tragic figure is Othello, and our feelings about him are mixed. The particular thing called tragedy that happens to the tragic hero does not depend upon his moral status. If it is causally related to something he has done, as it generally is, the tragedy is in the *inevitability* of the consequences of the act, not in its moral significance as an act. Hence the paradox that in tragedy pity and fear are raised and cast out".

Lessing intricately weaves together the threads of Mary's emotional and physical worlds, highlighting the profound connection between her material surroundings and her ever-shifting emotional state. The portrayal of Mary's home as a metaphorical extension of her body serves to emphasize the embodiment of her alienation. This metaphorical link between her dwelling and her being goes beyond a mere physical setting; it delves into the affective, sensory, and emotional dimensions of Mary's relationship with the objects that populate her immediate surroundings.

The narrative underscores the intricate turn between Mary's psyche and the inanimate objects that surround her. By metaphorically intertwining her home with her body, the story illuminates the profound impact of this relationship on Mary's sense of self. Her perception of her body as a confining space unfolds, revealing a deep-seated emotional claustrophobia that contributes to a sense of behavioral inertia and motor paralysis. Mary's world becomes a canvas where the tangible and intangible elements blend seamlessly, creating a complex emotional landscape.

A compelling aspect of the narrative lies in the juxtaposition between Mary's active mental processes and the seemingly oppressive animation of her house. This stark contrast serves to underscore the overwhelming pressure she feels within her environment. The tension between her internal world and the external forces acting upon her home amplifies the emotional intensity of the narrative, portraying Mary's struggle against the constraints imposed by her surroundings.

In essence, Lessing crafts a multi-dimensional portrayal of Mary Turner, skillfully utilizing the "objective correlative" to weave together the intricate tapestry of her emotions and environment. This narrative technique elevates the dramatic monologue, allowing the reader to delve into the depths of Mary's consciousness and experience the palpable tension between the self and the world that surrounds her.

The transformation of objects within Mary's environment serves to illustrate the emotional resonance of her personal experiences. Lessing's depiction of the connection between Mary's material surroundings and her emotional state emphasizes the embodiment of her alienation. By metaphorically representing the home as an extension of Mary's body, the narrative underscores the affective, sensory, and physical relationship between Mary and the objects around her. This portrayal reveals Mary's perception of her body as a confining space, leading to a sense of behavioral inertia and motor paralysis. The juxtaposition of her mental activity and the oppressive animation of the house underscores the overwhelming pressure she feels within her environment.

> Now it seemed as if the night were closing in on her, and the little house was bending over her like a candle, melting in the heat. She heard the crack crack; the restless moving of the iron above, and it seemed to her that a vast black body, like a human spider, was crawling over the roof, trying to get inside. She was alone. She was de-

> fenceless. She was shut in a small box, the walls closing in on her, the roof pressing down. She was in a trap, cornered and helpless (Lessing, 1981, p. 252)[14].

Considering the nuanced meanings of lived-in spaces, particularly focusing on the significance of rooms in literature and their representation of internal psychological spaces and societal conditions, Mary's endeavors to uphold a semblance of order within her domestic space, combined with her unfulfilled yearning for motherhood, depict a poignant resistance to pre-established social norms and expectations that often confine and absorb deviations. The novel transcends a mere cautionary tale; it evolves into a form of punishment for its protagonist. Even the note of gravity in Mary's death bears a dual significance, involving the glorification of an act of (female) self-sacrifice that, ultimately, brings no benefits to anyone.

The narrative's climactic vision preceding the conclusion offers a meticulous naturalistic depiction where the inevitable outcome is evocative: mice, beetles, and worms consume the temporary intrusion of the house into the boundless expanse of the veld, leaving behind only „a mound of reddish mud, swathed with rotting thatch like the hair of a dead person" (Lessing, 1981 p. 243). This tragic ending serves as the novel's most profound condemnation of hierarchies and violence, particularly as embodied by British colonialism and the failures of its methods. In this manner, *The Grass Is Singing* offers a prescient warning that remains relevant as society faces contemporary environmental, medical, and political crises. This insight underscores the enduring significance of literature and its capacity to shed light on present-day challenges. In essence, Lessing's use of the "objective correlative" in Mary Turner's dramatic monologue elevates the narrative, offering a rich and immersive experience for the audience. Through this technique, Mary's character becomes not just a figure in a story, but a complex, relatable individual whose inner world is laid bare, inviting the audience to connect on a deeply empathetic level.

By emphasizing the empathetic aspect of this technique, one can note how it encourages readers to understand and relate to the characters on a deeper level. The exploration of different perspectives through the dramatic monologue

[14] In this regard, a statement by Eva Hunter appears significant, according to which, in Lessing's literary productions "the house often represents the body itself". Mary Turner's imprisonment inside the dilapidated cottage and her physical body then function as two images in metaphorical exchange. Not surprisingly, as in the "Children of Violence" series, the house will collapse after the protagonist's death (Eva Hunter, "Marriage as Death: A Reading of Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*", in *Women and Writing in South Africa*, ed. Cherry Clayton, Marshalltown, Heineman Southern Africa, 1989, p. 156). Also Sheila Roberts focuses on function of the "gothic devices" contained within *The Grass Is Singing* and *July's People* by Nadine Gordimer. We read that "the dwellings the protagonists are forced to inhabit become extensions of themselves and thereby configurations of the uncanny" (Sheila Roberts, "Sites of Paranoia and Taboo: Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* and Gordimer's *July's People*, *Research in African Literatures*, Bloomington, 1993, 24, 3, p. 79).

contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of truth within the narrative, highlighting the multifaceted nature of reality as seen through various lenses. Contemporary writers, such as Doris Lessing, find inspiration in their literary predecessors, thereby underscoring the enduring influence of the past on the exploration of current issues and the continued relevance of literary forms like the dramatic monologue.

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Мирјам Сете

ДРАМСКИ МОНОЛОГ У ДЕЛУ ДОРИС ЛЕСИНГ, *THE GRASS IS SINGING* (*ТРАВА ПЕВА*): ЕЛОКВЕНЦИЈА СТВАРИ

(Резиме)

Основна сврха овог чланка је анализа викторијанских, али и модернистичких особина романа Дорис Лесинг, *The Grass Is Singing* (*Трава пева*, 1950). Повлаче се паралеле између дела Дорис Лесинг и књижевних техника које користе значајне личности као што су Т. С. Елиот и Роберт Браунинг, наглашавајући интертекстуалне везе и тематске резонанције. Критика дубоко истражује симболику и мотиве у наративу Дорис Лесинг, наглашавајући значај предмета, језика и тишине у портретисању ликова, посебно Мери Тарнер. Штавише, ова анализа подвлачи како наратив превазилази пуко приповедање и функционише као коментар друштвених структура и динамике моћи која је преовладавала током времена радње приче.

Кључне речи: Дорис Лесинг, Т. С. Елиот, Роберт Браунинг, културно представљање, нијансирана гледишта, унутрашње деловање ликова, књижевне традиције, повезивање наратива, емпатично разумевање.

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