

**The Shift of “Self” and “Other” Portrayed in the Novels of
Three South African Nobel Laureates: J.M. Coetzee, Doris
Lessing and Nadine Gordimer**



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April 2015

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South African Nobel Laureates: J.M. Coetzee, Doris Lessing and
Nadine Gordimer**

**A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of English and Humanities
of BRAC University**

By

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**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for The Degree of
Master of Arts in English**

April, 2015

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank Allah for enabling me to undertake this journey.

My earnest gratitude to Professor Firdous Azim, my mentor and supervisor, without whose guidance and patience this paper would not have been possible. My heartfelt gratitude to all my teachers for their continuous guidance and encouragements to think critically.

Then, I thank my mother who has stood beside me through all my hardship and lighten my burden in every possible way. Without her help and blessing, I would not have been able to come so far. I would like to thank my husband, Imtiaz who has always inspired me to believe in myself and appreciated my tiniest achievement with great generosity and outright partiality. I thank my family just for being there for me. My nephews- Zaber and Zareer, who are endowed with the power to take away all my worries with their innocent words and warm laughter, always kept me in line by reminding me to study and not to sleep too much. Lastly, I thank my friends who have made every possible excuse to avoid reading this long paper, nonetheless encouraged me to finish it anyway.

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Abstract

The post-colonial world is often seen as demarcated into binaries like colonizer-colonized, oppressor-oppressed, powerful-powerless and Self-Other. These binaries are often treated as fixed, definable, unchangeable and immune from all outward influence and psychological meddling. As a result, we limit our analysis of subjectivity, selfhood and nationality within these parameters. More than often, we tend to essentialize a post-colonial subject as Self or Other on the sole basis of their racial identity, evading other important issues like class, gender or sexuality. In our attempt to categorize all subjects according to their race, we completely ignore the change of power dynamics resulted from various combinations of ideological, racial, economical or sexual intersections. In this dissertation, I will analyze these issues of established binaries in the light of Homi K. Bhabha's post-colonial theories— their impact on society, their alteration through ambivalence, mimicry or hybridity, and finally, the disintegration of these binaries through the shift of power dynamics. As this disintegration of Self-Other is nowhere more visible than the dilemma of white women's positionality in post-colonial sites; I will try to unfold this issue through their lives.

“It is not speech that makes man man but the speech of others”.

-John Maxwell Coetzee

In the Heart of the Country

Introduction

There have been relentless discussions and fiery debates on the issues of identity or selfhood. Critics, politicians or rebels all alike tend to bifurcate the world into dichotomous categories. Especially in the post-colonial sphere these binaries like colonizer-colonized, oppressor-oppressed, settler-native, master-slave, us-them etc. gain emphasis. Every nation in their attempt to assert superiority and uniqueness indulges in alleging difference with other nations. In this process, identity is thought to be static, essential and pristine. Thus, we have the emergence of the concept of “Self” and “Other” in post-colonial discourse. “Self” becomes the universal parameter of modernity and benevolence, always in possession of power and authority. On the other hand, everything else that is not “Self” becomes the inferior and primitive “Other”, ignorant, barbarous and violent always in need of rigorous disciplining. But in reality do we always find these binaries definite and immobile? Or do they overlap each other and generate turmoil, disorder and anxiety in the post-colonial site? Are the colonizer always assured of their supremacy and authority? Or are they terrified and apprehensive of the animal-like Others who might take over authority from them? Is the “Self” always remains sovereign and essential? Or does it change over the time and remodel it into “Other”? Does the system acknowledge the white woman as the “Self”? Or they remain universally a gendered “Other” in the male-dominated discourse?

These issues like creation of binaries to bifurcate the society, loss of uniqueness and selfhood due to ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity, deconstruction and reconstruction of subjectivity in the third space and the fluidity of position due to the shift of power are very much relevant in post-colonial literature which deals with the relation between human condition and social factors in a colonial or postcolonial context. All these factors are splendidly reflected in

the novels of South Africa set in the time of colonization and apartheid. So, in this paper I will try to investigate the shift of “Self” and “Other” in the postcolonial onset through the analysis of three South African novels of the 20th century, *In the heart of the country* by J.M. Coetzee (1977), *The Grass is Singing* (1950) by Doris Lessing and *July’s people* (1981) by Nadine Gordimer. The settings of these novels take place in different regions of the racially segregated South Africa spanning from the end of the 19th century to the last quarter of 20th century. Set throughout a century, these novels trace the development and deterioration of the political, cultural and racial conditions in South Africa. This thesis intends to primarily study how these three novels bring out the racial and gender conflicts predominant in every aspect of the society and culture of the then South Africa. In the course of this analysis, it attempts to unveil the established dichotomous categories and the ways the colonized subverts the subordination. It exposes the unrest and anxiety arises from the colonial upheaval. Most importantly, it shows the vulnerability, fluidity and the fragile state of colonial identity by shifting the position of the ruler and the ruled. Additionally, this thesis probes into the feminist aspects of the three novels narrated mainly by the characters like Magda, Mary and Maureen. As the problematic of gender is intricately linked with race, it is neither possible nor appropriate to bypass the issue.

The analytical approach that has been used in this thesis is close reading of the texts. The text has been broken down into basic components to analyze the underlying meaning and come to an understanding of the novel a whole. These novels have been critically analyzed from various viewpoints (mainly the post-colonial and the feminist) by using theories and references of other writers. The main theory used here is the theory of Homi K. Bhabha. His arguments regarding identity, ambivalence, mimicry, third space of enunciation or in-betweenness and hybridity are used on these three novels to bring out the shift of self and other. Before beginning

the study, it is important to shed light into several terms and concepts to comprehend the analysis well.

Since the beginning of the colonial era in the 16th century, the West has been claiming to be superior to the east. At that time, West used to mean mainly Europe and the rest was defined as East. The Europeans were attributed as civilized, modern, peace loving, skillful, knowledgeable, kind, logical and fair. On the other hand, the non-Europeans were thought to be uncivilized, barbaric, violent, lascivious, prejudiced, ignorant, dirty and weak. As the supposedly inferior non-Europeans were believed to be lacking in skill and agency to live with propriety, the Europeans made it their mission to civilize them. It was the “white man’s burden” to look after the Black niggers of Africa, ignorant coolies of India, sensual Arabs of the Middle East or the superstitious natives of the Caribbean. The settlers started running errands for the natives, putting their valuables to a higher cause (which is for White man’s use), forming government to rein their indomitable desires, imposing rules and restrictions on their so called violent actions and disseminating Christian knowledge to refine their unpolished barbaric manners, rites, customs, etc. To legitimize their illegal invasion, they propagated a discourse that portrays the inferiority and blemishes of the non-European culture and community. This enables the colonizers full control to subjugate and rule the weak and flawed natives. These accusations have little or no concrete evidence. As Fanon says, “What is often called the black soul is a white man’s artifact”(16). Through the medium of history, literature, art, philosophy, politics etc. the colonizers created a sort of discursive reality where the natives were represented as homogenous, ferocious, unruly, lewd, bigotry stricken, disease infested mass of ignorant people with no sense of civilization and rationality. The process of creating this type of knowledge is termed as “Orientalism” by Edward Said. This colonial discourse bifurcates the world into various binaries

like civilized-uncivilized, educated-ignorant, centre-margin, liberal-prejudiced, Orient-Occident, Self-other, etc. These binaries are created on the basis of the made-up difference between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizers consider themselves as “Self” in possession of all the authority, knowledge and power of the world and cast the natives as the “Other” lacking everything that the Self has. The Colonizer or the Self believes itself to be the centre of everything and the natives are nothing but the marginal mob destined to be ruled and suppressed. They assign specific traits and features to different categories to accentuate their difference and unique cultural identity. This was more or less the scenario of the colonial enterprise illustrated by Said and other significant postcolonial critics. Many other post-colonial critics and fields of criticism also uphold the view of essential difference between nations, implying subjectivity as sovereign accentuating difference between the Self and the Other.

Another important literary critic Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak also speaks about the process of ‘othering’. This process creates the colonial Other which she renames as “subaltern”. She opined in her internationally acclaimed essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that the subaltern cannot speak. Subalterns are the people who remain outside the hegemonic discourse. They are the voiceless marginalized colonial subjects. They are often excluded from the elitist historiography. They lack the tools with which to subvert the colonial rule and oppression.

But Homi K. Bhabha argues against these views. Bhabha is an important contributor of post-colonial criticism. Although he is infamous for his impenetrable diction and puzzling ideas, his concepts are often quoted and rephrased to explore the complex relationship of the colonized and the colonizer. He has introduced many neologisms like ambivalence, stereotype, uncanny, mimicry, in-betweenness or the third space of enunciation etc. to post-colonial theory. In *Nation and Narration* (1990), Bhabha intervenes against the essentialization of the Third World nations

into a natural group by the virtue of their assumed similarities and innate cultures. But he points out that there is always ambivalence in any exchange between cultures. In *The Location of Culture* (1994) he elaborates his idea of identity formation in the in-between or liminal space. He thinks that cultures are never pre-given and through utterance or expression cultures can be re-defined and recognized. And this utterance or enunciation takes place in the liminal space that is termed as the ‘Third Space of Enunciation’ by him. He analyzes the subjectivity and the psychological aspects of the colonized and the colonizer, along with an analysis of the colonial discourse to comprehend the cause and effect of the colonial rule. His prime concern is to examine the post-colonial identity with its limitations, ambiguities and interactions.

Bhabha says that the subalterns or the other can speak. Even though they cannot directly protest against their oppression, they do possess the means or tools to subvert it. They revolt against the rule with the tools provided to them by the colonizers themselves. They gradually empower themselves by adopting and adapting the master’s culture, customs and language. It eradicating the basic difference between the master and slave. The master also unconsciously copies different ideals of the slaves. This process of mimicking or copying is termed as mimicry by Homi Bhabha. Mimicry upsets the claim of the colonizer to be different, superior and pristine. It creates a hybrid or mixed identity which is neither self nor the other. In hybridization process, the colonized or the colonizers partially shakes off their previous values and ideals and replace them with the adopted ones. But altering previous education, belief and subjectivity is difficult. But it is even more difficult to assume new ones. So this clash of ideals leads to anxiety and creates a gap or an interstice. It is the place where all the articulation takes place. It can be considered as a transitory intermediary space between the previous and the altered identity. This gap or liminal place is termed as the ‘Third Space of Enunciation’ or the ‘in-between’ by Homi

Bhabha. According to him, this 'in-between' or 'interstitial' place is the most important in articulating identities. But the outcome of this phase is often unpredictable and surprising. This transitory or liminal period may create totally altered subjects. Sometimes it totally changes the power dynamics of the colonial enterprise which might lead to the shift of roles between the colonized and the colonizer.

Bhabha also opposes to the notion of fixed cultural identity in a post-colonial system. He opines that when two or more cultures come together in a colonial setting and interact with each other, mimicry takes place. Mimicry is when the colonial subjects copy certain habits and rituals from each other. This imitation can be intentionally or unintentionally done. The product of mimicry is never a perfect copy, rather a crude customized version of the original. Mimicry gives rise to ambivalence and hybridity. Ambivalence is the mixture of conflicting and uncertain feelings. It refers to "the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized" (Ashcroft et al. 2000:12). Ambivalence is evident in all colonial subjects in variable amount. On a post-colonial framework, ideas and cultures of the colonizer and the colonized get fused with each other; the outcome being Hybridity or Hybridization. Hybridity is the process of creating these multi-cultural, ambivalent beings. Both the colonizer and the colonized give and take from each other's cultures and come up with something new. The new product never fully resembles any of the previous two, but contains something from both. Hybridity refers to "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft et al: 118). These hybrid entities suffer terribly to form their cultural identities. Losing their pristineness, they become acutely aware of the underlying sameness of the colonized and the colonizer. This recognition threatens to eradicate assertion of difference that the colonizer is superior to the colonized. As the domination of the

colonized depends on this assertion, this creates a psychological upheaval in the colonial subjects. Shattering of the former belief and ideology leads to anxiety, fluidity, fractured identity, etc. The tension between the illusion of difference and the reality of the sameness leads to anxiety. This anxiety opens a gap in colonial discourse- a gap that can be exploited by the colonized, the oppressed.

This gap or the interstitial space is also termed as the “Third Space”. This term is used in various fields of study to indicate several meanings and connotations. But in literature, it was first coined by Homi K. Bhabha to define the liminal place occupied by the colonial or post-colonial subjects (Rulers and the Ruled). To understand this term, we need to familiarize ourselves with terms like “Self” and “other”. These hybrid subjects gradually lose their own sense of belonging, wholeness of identity and cultural purity which can be defined as their first space. The second space can be defined as the place that is controlled by rules, regulations and strictures imposed on them by the colonial system. In this Second Space, the subjects cannot articulate their selfhood. This lack of self-identification and instability leads to utter frustration and apprehension. So they carve out an interstitial space to construct a new subjectivity as a means to battle the adversity. This place is termed as “The Third Space of Enunciation” by Homi K. Bhabha. It is not a geographical place; rather it is a psychological phase where the most significant work of identity construction takes place. It is also known as the “in-betweenness”. This is kind of a pathway that prepares the post-colonial subjects to ascend from one role/identity to another. According to Bhabha, “all cultural statements and systems are constructed” in “the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process” (Bhabha 1994:37). Bill Ashcroft also says that, ‘a Third Space of enunciation between the poles of cultural identity, a space within which cultural identities themselves are transformed’

(120). Bhabha says cultural identity is never fixed and complete; rather it is constructed in a continual process with constant slippage and shift. Most part of the identity is ambivalent and finds new expression in this Third Space. It is understood that cultural identity always emerges in this “contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation”; it becomes clear that “inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable” (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 37). So, it can be said that mutual construction of the subjectivities of the colonizer and the colonized also take place in the third space. It also shows the interdependent relationship of the colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha argues that due to mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity, the role of the “Self” and “Other” is never fixed in a colonial onset. It is subjected to continuous change and reconstruction. It is very unlikely that the “Self” or the colonizer will always be in superior position holding authority and the “Other” or the colonized will always be in subdued position carrying out commands. The roles can shift at any time. It is not always the white imperialists who hold the key to power; sometimes the servile native weaklings can also be in possession of the key.

In my first chapter, I will be analyzing the disintegration of binaries in *In the Heart of the Country* (1977). Here, the writer J.M. Coetzee reflects the picture of a colonized South Africa through the narrative of a half-crazed woman named Magda. The plot sets in an isolated sheep farm in the Cape desert at the beginning of 20th century (or the end of 19th century). Magda calls herself “a spinster with a locked diary”. Losing her mother at an early age, Magda lives with her misogynist father and several non-white servants. Victimized by constant negligence and lack of activity, she takes the matter in her hands to emancipate herself from the shadow of an oppressive father. She kills him for seducing Klein-Anna, the wife of a colored servant Hendrik and tries to start her life afresh. In the absence of her father, she tries to assume a role of mastery

over the servants Hendrik and his wife Klein-Anna. But due to the lack of money and her gender status she fails miserably to keep the authority. She has to submit physically and mentally to the colonized male Hendrik who abuses her and makes her his concubine. Submitting the power to Hendrik, Magda then tries to build an intimate relationship with the couple on equal terms and respect. She fails again and is thwarted into an even more pathetic situation. When Hendrik and Anna flee for fear of being accused in the crime they did not commit, Magda gradually descends into a decaying madness. She loses her ability to distinguish between reality and imagination and starts communicating with the makeshift 'skygods' in Spanish. In the end, she seems to take her own life to assert her agency to control her destiny. This is a sorrowful and frustrating story of a white woman in the quest of constructing her identity. Magda's "fight against becoming one of the forgotten ones of history" (Coetzee 3) mirrors construction of national identity of the white settlers in the country. Like the Afrikaners' struggled to find a national consciousness, Magda also struggles to discover her identity. The ambivalence shown in Magda's character that attracts and repulses her towards the colored servants, the mimicry and hybridization through which the servants mimic the master's culture, the anxiety in Magda arisen from the identity clash and the explicit power shift from master to slave or Self to Other that have been displayed in the novel in subtle garb, make this novel an ideal choice to prove my thesis argument.

In the second chapter, I will probe into *The Grass is Singing* (1950), the first novel of Doris Lessing. The plot is set in Southern Rhodesia, (part of the then Union of South Africa, now Zimbabwe) in the mid-20th century, around 1940s. Here, Lessing criticizes the oppressive white society with its policy of segregation and illusion of separate development as well as its debilitating impact on women. She shows how the destructive force of colonialism destroys people's identity and replaces sanity with madness, knowledge with ignorance, power with

helplessness and relief with fretfulness. “In fact, the novel is mainly about how colonial society traps its shareholders in a state of existence that is characterized by insecurity, paranoia, fear, defiance and ignorance” (Göktan 19). The protagonist Mary, a middle class South African woman, becomes a victim of many forms of social and psychological tumults like troubled childhood, loneliness, alienation, unhappy marriage, harsh weather etc. Her clash of ideals— the desire for instinctive human intimacy and the socially imposed racist ideas lead her to an inexplicable death. “Mary’s perceived powerlessness within patriarchy, and within the rigid patriarchal norms of colonialism, is of course exacerbated by her worsening ill-health” (Roberts 78). In in her thirties, Mary embarks on a loveless marriage in desperation to get rid of the unease caused by her friends’ criticism. She struggles, yet fails miserably to create an intimate relation with her husband, Dick. Loneliness, lack of activity, hopelessness, frustration, sexual repression and intolerable heat drive her to the verge of madness. She becomes acutely pessimistic, lethargic and lose all interest to live. In this fragile state of mind, Mary starts relying more and more on Moses, their native servant (houseboy). But the patriarchal society intervenes to change the arrangements. This results in Mary’s death in the hands of Moses. Such an ending— the black servant murdering the white mistress, “seems” to be “a fairly straightforward confirmation of colonial wisdom” asserting that any breach of apartheid will be destructive, so colonial preconceptions exist for a good reason. (Bertelsen 656) So, resigning to the role of a murderer Moses only confirmed the notion of colonial discourse which says that the “natives steal, murder or rape”. By conforming to the perspective of the colonial discourse, Lessing criticizes the invalidity of it in veiled irony. Here, she vividly portrays the fluidity of identity by turning the dichotomous relationship of master-slave upside down. Through the shift of “self” and ‘other’, she indicates at the complex procedure of identity formation.

In the third chapter, I will investigate Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* (1981), which distinctly shows how different power structures affect people's identity construction. Set in the apartheid era, it recounts the journey of a liberal white family from Johannesburg to a native village to avoid the fictional black revolt in South Africa. Bamford and Maureen Smales along with their family get helped by their native servant July. July takes them to his village resided mainly by his extended family and assumes the role of a provider for them. He has always been faithful, useful and submissive to the Smales. But with the change of events, he attains the position of authority and shakes off his servile attitude, inferiority complex and conforming tendencies. He starts making decision with his own judgment and stops being boss around. On the other hand, Maureen and Bam become wretchedly helpless in their new situation. They could not fit in the black community. However hard they try, they could not eliminate from their minds the barrier of color, race and language. Losing all the power and agency, they fetter in inaction and silence. They suffer from intense misgiving and insecurity at July's newfound authority. Especially Maureen could not tolerate the fact that their lot is controlled by July's decision. She asks July to return the key of the Bakkie, imposes the responsibility of finding Bam's missing gun on him, accuses him of pilfering things from her kitchen and even threatens to reveal his extramarital affair to his wife. But these could not cower July, on the contrary he tells Maureen to stay away from his personal affairs and be content with his loyal service. But this exposure to harsh reality, unmask the Smales of their sense of superiority. They come to recognize the fundamental sameness of all races. They also realize that although they opposed the apartheid policy, unconsciously they were extracting benefits from it. In *July's People* Gordimer unveils the harsh discrimination between the black majority and the white minority. By placing a white family in the midst of a native society and transferring the authority from whites to the natives,

she weaves the story in a complete unique way. The way the Smales children copy and adopt the manners, language and customs of the black natives illustrates a kind of reverse mimicry.

Ambivalence is predominant in almost all the characters. All the characters go through a drastic change and seem to trap in “the Third Space of Enunciation” to rediscover their selfhood and sense of belonging. And the force behind all mechanisms is shown to be nothing but the shift of power. This shift results in complete alteration of the identity of the ‘self’ and ‘other’.

All these novels deal with racial and gender discrimination presented mostly through the perspective of three white women in such a way that deconstruct the traditional stereotype of master-slave relationship. Using the history of South Africa as a backdrop, the novels probe into the psyche of the colonized and the colonizer, and analyze the situation from a whole new dimension. By uncovering the disguised meaning of these novels, one can fairly gain some insights into how the ideology and selfhood of the colonizer and the colonized take shapes by the colonial discourse. It illustrates how subjectivity alters and loses its pristineness over time as the subjects come together and interact with each other. After analyzing the novels with Bhabha’s theories, one becomes acutely aware of the slippery ground occupied by the colonized and the colonizer that can vacillate at any time, reversing the possession of power and position of the occupants. These novels also reflect women’s role in societies under colonization where gender and racial discrimination blend.

As I will look at colonial interactions between the colonized and the colonizer through the lenses of Bhabha’s theory within the limit of post-colonial criticisms, my analysis might evade other important issues like representation, history, cultural memory, resistance, masculinity, language, religion, class, economy, space and affect etc. I will only scrutinize a specific aspect of the novels from a narrow framework of post-colonial and feminist theories.

Chapter 1: *In the Heart of the Country*

In the Heart of the Country is the second novel of the South-African born Nobel laureate John Maxwell Coetzee. It is a poignant book woven around a very complex and unusual plot. The narrative is also quite complex, written in a unique way where stream of consciousness runs as an undercurrent. It is a long journal consisting of 266 entries written by Magda, a lonely spinster, born in a white family in South Africa. As all the incidents take place in Magda's head, it is unreasonable to expect a logical presentation of the events. In fact, her non-linear approach refutes the predictable landscape of a linear narrative. The colonial history is related through her personal narrative. Magda is highly unreliable as a narrator, as she appears to be delirious, self-absorbed, disorderly, forgetful, wistful and fanciful. Often she seems to skip between events or keep repeating the same event in different tones. She sometimes upsets the chronological order and frequently fails to distinguish between reality and fantasy.

Magda's is a struggle of constructing an identity and a home for herself. Her inability to understand whether she is the 'self' or the 'other' or someone 'in-between', shows the ambivalence of a white woman's positionality. The unusual and incongruous personal narrative of Magda recounts the struggle and complication of a white woman caught in the labyrinths of patriarchy and colonization. She frets under the burden of a colonial past and strives to create an identity beyond the colonizing power relation. She wants to stub out the colonizing past that imposes restrictions and boundaries on women, while not including them within the power structures that colonialism draws out. Her predicament has put her in a place where she has to forsake her role as a mistress and reconcile with the servants. She must gain recognition through the 'other'. Unfortunately she fails to do both. She can neither abandon the ideals and temperaments of the white society completely, nor can she form her individuality through the

acknowledgment of the colonized. As she fails to refashion herself in a new garb, she erases the boundaries of 'self' and 'other' and reaches an arena of liminality. She loses her sense of belonging and wholeness of self. Her fractured identity, disturbed mind and inaction lead her to initiate various disastrous acts which completely change her life. She, who wants to be a medium or a mediator, not a master or a slave, miserably fails to become either. She is unfit for all roles, unwanted in all societies and unworthy of all human needs.

The exact "temporal and geographical setting," of the plot is not stated in the novel, but according to Michela Canepari-Labib it might be assumed that the plot spanned from the end of 19th century till the mid-20th century. (172). After reading a few pages of the diary, it becomes quite clear to the readers that Magda is not a stable and rational person. She is psychologically disturbed, sexually repressed and physically inactive. Her life in the vast isolated Cape desert is forlorn, frustrating and uneventful. She frets to fill her days, even with violence and aggression. Magda grows up in the veldt of a quarantined South Africa amidst her authoritative and oppressive father and few non-white servants. She is disregarded and neglected by her dominating father and has hardly any interaction with the outside world. She is tired of her inertia and exasperated of nothing happening in her life. She wants to take control of her own life and earn respect for her own strength. She is afraid that she will not be remembered by anyone and totally be ignored in history. She struggles to change her predetermined fate as "one of the forgotten ones of history". (Coetzee 3)

I: Stereotype

Although Magda's account of the events is often ambiguous and vague, it at the same time demystifies the process of identity formation of the colonizer (Afrikaner) at that time. The Afrikaners in the isolated Karoo farm, far removed from the direct colonizing economy, fought

relentlessly to form a positive national identity. Being cast away in a vast, secluded, unfamiliar space, far away from their ancestral home, they were compelled to commence their quest to redefine their nationhood. While their preconceived notion of nationality was no longer workable, the new national identity was yet to take any proper shape. However, being white and equipped with power and knowledge, they aligned themselves with a position from where they could exercise authority over the non-white people. To legitimize their exploitative rule, they formed certain stereotypes about the non-whites. They took over a vast portion of the land and shoved the others to the margins or periphery. Their hierarchical position lent them the power to assign different roles to different races. So, while farmer Johannes, Magda's father by default acquired the stand of a master over the non-white Hendrik, Anna, Jacob and forced them to accept their servile positions. While his big house had numerous rooms and unnecessary commodities, the servants had very small quarters in the back which were isolated from the main building. In this white man's house "the servants go about their duties with hunched shoulder" and constantly recoil under the bad temper of the master. (7) The white extract cheap labour from them in a completely unethical manner. To the white Afrikaner, "the essence of servanthood is the servant's intimacy with his master's dirt" (14).

While Johannes, Magda's father evinces all the ideals of white supremacy, Magda could not readily encapsulate these ideals. She displays great discomfort and misgivings about the role that history had bequeathed on her and the male dominated society mandates her to follow.

As the representative colonizer, Magda *should* feel in control. She should feel she has power. She should know who she is and where she came from. In essence, she should feel that her established role completes her. Instead she feels empty and uneasy with her existence." (Buboltz 10)

She feels like “a hole, a hole with a body draped around it . . . a hole crying to be a whole” (Coetzee 41). In her attempt to fill the “zero, null, a vacuum” (2), in her life she decides to replace history with her own story, a “life story that will wash over tranquilly as it does for other women” (8). Although she tries to kill her colonizer’s identity, she unconsciously incorporates many of its values in herself as a result of being constantly under the shadow of her father. If she wants to have a harmonic relationship with Hendrik and Klein-Anna, she is hindered by her hierarchical position as a member of the white Afrikaner community.

I was born into a language of hierarchy, of distance and perspective. It was my father-tongue. I do not say it is the language my heart wants to speak, I feel too much the pathos of its distances, but it is all we have (97).

Albert Memmi says in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* that, an individual placed into the privileged colonizer’s group cannot simply extricate her/himself from the exploitative system whether s/he agrees with it or not. He says,

Colonial relations do not stem from individual good will or actions; they exist before his arrival or his birth, and whether he accepts or rejects them matters little (38).

Therefore, however hard Magda tries, she never succeeds in “killing the legacy of colonization that suffocates her identity. She tries many times but her father—the colonizer— always returns” (Buboltz 14). She is trapped into the colonial preconception of ‘us’ and ‘them’ or ‘self’ and ‘other’. She imagines a great distance lies between her and the servants - “we might as well be on separate planets, we on ours, they on theirs.” (28) While the servants keep their stations, she keeps her traditional distance. (24) She, consciously and unconsciously, tries to maintain the master-slave relationship with Hendrik according to the prescribed social standards. “We have our places, Hendrik and I, in an old old code. With fluid ease we move through the paces of our

dance.” (25) She fails to address Hendrik outside his identity as a servant and a coloured man. To her “Hendrik is a man who works on the farm. He is nothing but a tall, straight-shouldered brown man with high cheekbones and slanting eyes”(25). She often speaks of binary terms- “who is the most shamed, he or I, we or they?” (70). She herself admits that she is a conserver of the traditional norms. That is why she rages at her father’s sexual engagement with a lowly coloured servant, Klein-Anna, “a girl who yesterday scrubbed the floors and today ought to be cleaning the windows.” (43). She storms at her father’s violation of the old codes of racial segregation, and attempts to kill him. Magda also shows the usual anxiety of losing her privileged position to the ‘other’. She is appalled at the idea of Klein-Anna’s rise to hierarchy, as it must mean a demotion to the servant’s position for her. She harbours deep resentment and thinks that, “If she ceases to the servant who will be the servant but I”. (53)

Even though Magda is an heir of the colonial enterprise, her gender does not permit her entry into its dominant discourse. As colonialism and patriarchy go hand in hand, Magda, a female member of the colonizing group is thwarted from the centre of power to the periphery. As a white person, she enjoys certain privileges, but as a woman she suffers from the universal women’s agony of domination and confinement. She is required to remain subordinate to the white colonialist male, assume the gender roles that were prescribed by the society, act in a certain way that uphold the white supremacists ideals, remain indoors to look after the domestic tasks and most importantly maintain enough distance and cold authority over the native servants. She is cowered and has to carry the heavy weight of feminine values imposed on her by the male-centred South- African colonialist society. She rebels against the pre-determined gender role of the *Vrou en Moeder* (wife and mother) that the Afrikaner discourse promoted. This *Vrou en Moeder* ideal was enacted to perpetuate male dominance by disciplining women into abject

beings. Susan Gallagher indicates that Coetzee has probably used that concept to portray Magda as a rebel against the *Vrou en Moeder* ideology, as there was a vociferous discussion on this matter while he was writing this novel in 1970s. She further says that, during the 70s, the ideals of racial purity, fervent nationalism, devotion to patriarchy and extreme procreativity were the markers that defined the role of Afrikaner females. (Gallagher 90) Thus, the tolerant submissive wife and the sacrificing apologetic mother were the roles destined for woman. Another critic Caroline Rody analyses Coetzee's employment of a "mad white colonial daughter" as the protagonist to introduce to the "feminist critique in a subversive way into the heart of the colonial conundrum. . ." (Rody 162). Rody also asserts that Magda is simultaneously "a feminine aesthetic" and "a feminist voice" that stands for the universal struggle of women to acquire freedom and individuality

Magda, an abjected member of South African heterosexual hegemony . . . searches through a laundry list of single women's identities in order to find a more palatable subjectivity than that of dismissed daughter (Stone 215).

Although she resisted the patriarchal culture, she shows an insentient yearning to subscribe to it. She cannot help but hold her ugliness and spinsterhood responsible for her wretchedness. To find any respite from loneliness and rejection, she sulkily marvels at the prospect of beautification, love-making and housewifery. She contritely thinks that only if she were pretty, full-bodied, coy and adept in the sexual act, her life would have been different. She concedes that only if she could bring herself to carry out her feminine role, she had not needed to rot alone in this dreary farm. In her desperateness to find meaning in life, she resorts to the age-old cliché that dictates marriage is the remedy for every ailment. "[I]f only I had a good man to sleep at my side and

give me babies, all would be well” (Coetzee 41). To put an end to her relentless struggle and unhappy virginhood Magda even wishes,

“to commit herself body and soul to the first willing fellow to pass by, a pedlar even, or an itinerant teacher of Latin, and breed him six daughters, and bear his blows and curses with Christian fortitude, and live a decent obscure life” (22).

Therefore, she vacillates between her desire to be rid of the cultural feminine role and the desire to be one of those. Sheila Roberts thinks that Magda also suffers from M.A.D. syndrome, an acronym for Male Attention Desirous (25). In *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Mary Daly refers to M.A.D.ness as the women’s tendency to seek validation and confirmation from males in the society. Magda’s battle to prove her worth can be seen to spring from her desire to accomplish endorsement by her father, and later Hendrik. She tirelessly toils to be seen, heard and talked to as an individual. Alas! She only remains an object both to her father and to Hendrik. To them she is always an absence, a non-entity, a void.

II: Ambivalence

Magda epitomizes the extremity of colonial ambivalence. She keeps on bobbing between the roles of colonizer and the colonized. She is simultaneously a persecutor and a victim. Magda’s ambivalent attitude towards her servants reveals a complex mixture of attraction and repulsion, dominance and fear, aggression and narcissism, avowal and disavowal also points to the uncertainty regarding her position. When she is left with the responsibility to run the farm and the household after her father’s demise, she assumes the role of a master. Although she is not cruel or unfair to the servants, she tries to control them. She thinks herself to be “a good mistress, fair-minded, even-handed, kindly” (Coetzee 25). But she goes at them with a white master’s anger at the slightest discrepancy on their part. She threatens Hendrik by saying, “you sot, you

filthy sot, you're finished here, I swear it! (66) She also dominates Klein-Anna, calls her a whore and pesters her with unremitting questions. She could not come out of her stereotypical ideas about a non-white woman. She grapples with the idea that Klein-Anna's everyday worry is perhaps only about "soap and flour and milk" and the holes of her body waits "mindlessly for whatever enters them". Yet on other times, she feels an inexplicable attraction towards them and consequently, shakes off her master's mask and transgress the invisible racial boundary to gain recognition as one of them, an 'other'. She could even bring herself to appreciate Klein-Anna's beauty and sexuality after her disillusionment with colonial ideas. She is aware of Anna's great sex appeal and even intends to learn the secret art of love making from her. She admires Hendrik as a man, but recoils under his masculine presence. She reckons "Hendrik is not only essence but substance, not only servant but stranger." (14)The splitting and doubling of the colonized subjects to occupy two places at once is exemplified in Magda and Hendrik's characters. There was an increasing sexual tension between them. Magda fantasizes, "how can he ever wish to burrow his nose in my armpit, as I mine in his!" (86) Sometimes she even seems to be desirous of adopting their ways by forsaking her superior status. Her interior monologue indicates this desire: "I too will come to smell like that if I can change my ways." (86) In spite of her superior position in the relationship, she suffers from deep rooted fear and anxiety. She utters harsh words to keep her fear at bay. Still she thinks that the servants can smell the odour of fright floating from her. (86)She wants acceptance and acknowledgement by 'Other's'; yet she is also dubious and pessimistic about their reaction to it. She thinks that they may or may not include her in their circle; they may or may not overtake power and possession from her and dismiss her as a lowly being. This dilemma and misgivings never let her pledge herself in this project wholeheartedly.

Magda's duple entrapments come together here. She envisages an escape out of the patriarchal family and out of the impasse of colonialism, escapes that are doomed to failure and her battle to regain verticality and achieve womanliness, and to break the barrier between herself and the servants— miscarries because of her lack of commitment (Roberts 27).

Magda's relationship with Hendrik and Anna is marred by an unequal exchange and lack of trust. Magda tries to transgress the boundary between herself and the servants; but was unable to completely stamp out her sense of supremacy. She could not disentangle herself from the racist system of colonization which had moulded her attitudes, values and perspectives. She wants Hendrik and Klein Anna to recognize her as an individual outside her role as a colonizer. But does she do that herself? Does she recognize them as human beings outside their racial identity and their position in the power relation? Was she prepared to introduce equal reciprocity in their interaction? I do not think so. Her inability to treat them equally made it impossible for the 'other' to recognize her as a liberated subject— she still embodies the system of impartiality and tyranny.

This brings us to a set of complicated questions. Where does Magda stand? If she can neither identify with the master nor the servant, whom can she identify with? How will Magda's image look if she dared to draw it outside the narrow framework of the colonial system? How distorted would that image be? What could possibly be the reasons behind this distortion? Homi Bhabha talks about this distorted image of the colonizer in the essay *Interrogating identity*.

“[T]he image of the post-Enlightenment man tethered to, not confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline,

breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being.” (Bhabha 62)

So, Magda’s subjectivity seems to have grown in relation to others. Her very identity is fractured and warped by Hendrik and Anna, who eliminates her uniqueness and confidence by imitating her customs and cultures. Bhabha says that the colonized and colonizer’s identity construction depends on each other. Being put together, their identities keeps on getting moulded and shaped in a continuous process of cross-cultural exchange. While the colonized subject mimics the traits and culture of the colonizers to elevate themselves to the colonizers’ place, the colonizers can scarcely remain pristine. They consciously or unconsciously incorporate the others’ way in many aspects. As Magda was born and brought up in an isolated farm in the midst of non-white servants and had almost no interaction with the white colonizing society, she grows up to be a hybrid colonial subject severed between two cultures. She learns to identify as an ‘other’ even before her ‘self’-ness comes to the surface. In her words-

“I grew up with the servants’ children. I spoke like one of them before I learned to speak like this. I played their stick and stone games before I knew I could have doll’ house with Father and Mother and Peter and Jane. . . With the servant’ children I searched the veld for khamma-roots, fed cowmilk to the orphaned lambs, hung over the gate to watch the sheep dipped and the Christmas pig shot.” (Coetzee 6)

She seems very uncertain to decide where her loyalty lies. Although she never had the chance to connect socially with other white people, she could not renounce her white ancestry. She keeps on vacillating between two ideals. Klein-Anna and Hendrik are the only two people she is attached to, yet her position is constantly threatened by them. They are the Mimic men who follow the master’s traits from a distance. After staying with the white men for many years,

Hendrik comes to replicate the master's manners in every possible way. Wearing the black suit passed on to him by Magda's father with an old wide-brimmed felt hat and a shirt buttoned to the throat, Hendrik embodies the partial resemblance with Bass Johannes. (17) He has a blatant desire to dress like a white gentleman. That is why; he was willing to trade old attires of the Bass as a substitute for the money owed to him. Dressed in the master's clothes he even receives the partial essence of his authority. He takes a white cotton shirt without a collar, the best satin waistcoat, the twill trousers, even the good black boots as his wages and poses grotesquely like a white man, "putting his hands on his hips and thrusting his chest out." (97-98) Klein-Anna also comes to incorporate her master's ideas and behaviour in herself, though in a distorted form. With difficulty, she parades in her newly acquired clothes and shoes of a noble white woman and tries to imitate Western table manners while dining with Magda.

As mimicry threatens the supposed difference between the colonized and the colonizer, it unsettles the basis of power and discrimination. "Mimicry also produces disturbing effects on the colonial rule. With mimicry the authoritative discourse becomes displaced as the colonizer sees traces of himself in the colonized: as sameness slides into otherness." (Childs 130)"Mimicry is another ambivalent (re)assertion of similarity and difference and therefore it poses a challenge to normalized knowledge of colonized and colonizer". (Childs 131) This dilemma between old belief and new discovery creates unrest and apprehension. The subjects get thrown into a bewildering in-between state, the third space. Bhabha says,

"The ambivalent identification of the racist world— moving on two planes . . . turns on the idea of man as his alienated image; not Self and Other but the otherness of Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity." (Bhabha 62-3)

Magda longs to dwell in two places at once to enjoy the privileges of both. She is not yet ready to sever ties from one place to commit herself to the other. This dual existence alienates her from her old self. She becomes a liminal being who is neither Self nor the Other. Instead, she comes out as an Other avatar of herself. She seems to stand “on the road from no A to no B in the world” and “the road goes nowhere day after day week after week, season after season. . .” (63). She herself does not know her destiny or what will become of her or what she should do. Crammed between two ideals she confesses, “I seem to know nothing for sure, perhaps I am simply a ghost or a vapour floating at the intersection of a certain latitude and a certain longitude” (Coetzee 17). She cannot move forward for she is not well-equipped for life on the road, nor can she turn backward for fear of slippage and fall.

To contemplate her long-desired subjectivity free from all paradigmatic norms and values, Magda dared to transcend the racial segregation sanctioned by the white Afrikaner society. As she erases the threshold of separation, she descends into a position of Liminality or a gap. According to Bhabha, the colonial articulation of subject formation happens neither in the place of Self, nor of Other’s; rather “the colonial relation takes shape in the gaps between them” (Bhabha 59). “Bhabha sees the Third Space as a place of agency and intervention because it is here all the cultural meaning is constructed, and in that sense located” (Childs 142). He argues that: “by exploiting this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves” (Bhabha 39). We also perceive this longing in Magda’s struggle to redefine herself. She wants to forsake her identity as a white colonizer and strives to emerge as an ‘other’, someone who will not be judged by her ancestry or skin colour or by her status in the society. She says, “I am not simply one of the whites, I am I, I am I, not a people. Why have I to pay for other people’s sins?” (Coetzee 118). Magda’s struggle to redefine herself and reconfigure her

life, might be emblematic of a woman's quest for retrieving agency from the heterosexual misogynist hegemony. She refuses to a part of a system which treats women as a commodity or a male property. Although her racial identity lends her certain privileges and benefits over the so-called inferior races, she is, nonetheless, stripped of the minimal right to exercise her agency. She has to carry the double burden of being a colonialist woman and a woman. As a colonialist woman, she has to be confident, ruthless, selfish, opportunist, proud etc. She has to be able to maintain distance from the colonized and should be able to operate as a mistress with certain poise and authority. She, as an Afrikaner woman has to be able to retain the Afrikaner nationalist values and work as a bearer of culture. She is also required to stay away from the native males as supposedly they are nothing but sexual predators and awaiting the slightest chance to attack white women. She is also denied the companionship with the native women as it was feared that the lascivious and erotic native women would spoil the loyal and pure white women. And as a woman, she is expected to be soft, silent, submissive, docile, domesticated, beautiful and married. She needs to be sacrificial and apologetic in every possible way to all male members in the society. To be accepted in the patriarchal society, she needs to perform her feminine role endorsed by the patriarchy, or suffer rejection and censure. In the beginning, Magda plays the role assigned to her. She dedicates her time and energy to please her father. As a dutiful daughter, she prepares his bath, unlaces his boots, cut his nails, cooks the food— all sorts of menial tasks that are asked from the lady of the house. Yet, she achieves no favour from her misogynistic father who is only habituated in treating women as a 'sexual commodity'. He imposed heavy manacles on Magda without even acknowledging her existence. He has never tried to hide his disgust and disappointment for having a worthless frail daughter instead of a flamboyant macho son. Although her father is very cold, masochistic, distant, negligent, even

sometimes forgetful of her existence, Magda is very attentive to all his needs and caters him in all ways possible. In her childish longing to be noticed and be needed she circles him like a moon.

Magda's excessive daughterly devotion hints at a kind of a sexual attraction towards her father which can be regarded as part of an Electra complex. She is aware of his mental and spatial domination of her and holds him responsible for all her misery. She calls him her oppressor. But nonetheless, she cannot endure the fact that he is with another woman. Thinking that his demise will emancipate her from all subjugation and ensure her an opportunity of beginning a new life, she conjures up her father's death twice. The first time she thinks of him as dead was when she imagines him bringing home a new wife and the second when he was lying abed with his concubine. Through Magda's incoherent but poignant narrative, we get an idea of the prevalent discriminatory gender roles. . Magda, her mother and Klein-Anna all go through relentless torture and gloom and are portrayed as passive, incarcerated and beaten creatures. On the other hand, men on both sides of the colonial divide are shown as bossy, egotistic, misogynistic, aggressive etc. They carefully cultivate and maintain their masculinity by towering over and dominating women. Although, the colonized men are subordinated to the women of the colonizer society, they take every opportunity of harming them.

Magda, like her deceased mother, fails miserably in gratifying her demanding father. She too fails in assuming the gender roles assigned to her. Concomitantly, she was shunned and ridiculed by her own father and the Afrikaner society. They make fun of her, spread slanderous criticisms about her, call her insulting names like "the witch of Agterplass" and think of her as an incomplete woman. Magda suffers under the fetters the society and her father put on her. She could be identified as Judith Butler's 'abject being'. She has no liberty in her life at all. She is

always told what to do and what not to do, but never talked with. She is sad, lonely, helpless and ignored. Her mother died at childbirth when she was only a toddler. She may or may not have any siblings. She keeps on rambling many times that her siblings may have died in some epidemic or left home for the city. But even if she had any siblings, she has no memory of them. She grew up all by herself in a suffocating, claustrophobic, secluded and ghastly place. She craves for human intimacy and humane touch. She's hungry for experience, love and activities.

She wants to be looked at and talked to and to be given the right to express herself and exercise her agency. But in that patriarchal environment all her desires, demands, needs and thoughts are stifled and trampled upon. She is "the one who stays in her room reading or writing or fighting migraines" (Coetzee 1). She has "been too obstinate, too awkward, too lumpish, too stale, too tired, too frightened." She herself is aware of her status as "an angry spinster", "a ninety-pound spinster crazed with loneliness", "a miserable black virgin", "a mad hag", "prisoner of a stony desert", "a drudge-maiden", "a poor provincial black stocking", "an ignorant child", "a sinister old child", "the black flower that grows in the corner", "an infant black shark" etc. But she has an active, imaginative, ingenious, intricate, thoughtful and multi-faceted mind. In her lonesome mind she generates all sorts of plans, comments on all kinds of incidents and analyzes all phenomena happening around her. Portraying Magda as the stereotypical "mad woman in the attic" Coetzee probably criticizes the Victorian notion of woman as "angel of the house."

After her dismal performance in both roles as a colonizer and a woman, Magda stops disciplining herself altogether. Instead, she embarks on a journey of reconstructing her subjectivity and gaining new meaning in life. She wants to be treated as an individual, valued for

her own worth. She also yearns for a total rebirth, a chance to redeem her colonial past, liberation from man-made manacles, and an opportunity to rearticulate her personhood.

“Crush me, devour me, annihilate me before it is too late! Wipe me clean, wipe out this whispering watchers and this house in the middle of nowhere, and let me try again in a civilized setting!” (71)

III:Shift

Therefore, she trespasses the binaries of master-servant, white- non-whites, Self-Other. After her father’s demise, she attempts to remodel the relationship with Hendrik and Klein-Anna. She longs to do that not out of sympathy for them; she does it to procure a new identity for herself. It was essential for her to gain the Other’s approval to interrogate her Self-image. It might be the case that when Magda attempts to transform the mistress-servant relationship by upgrading Hendrik and Anna to her level [or at least from a level from where they can identify her real self with all its assumed superiority and concealed weakness by inviting them to her house. The subsequent confusion concerns both power relations and spatial identity.

In this process of modification, Magda, a colonizer is never confident of her possession of power; it has to be maintained by all means at all times. Her status as a woman makes it all the more complex to remain in control. Constantly, she is distressed and dismayed under the threatening masculine presence of Hendrik. Still, she tries to keep her authority with calm and poise. If she projects her inner dilemma in the open, she might run the risk of being totally or partially disempowered. Her socially constructed identity as a master or a member of the dominant class runs the risk of dismissal by the imminent reversal of power relation. If at times she is as certain of the supposed dehumanized and foolish nature of her servants, at other times she is stupefied at the unforeseen threat they pose for her. Magda’s incoherent rambling exhibits

a colonizer's narcissism. Her entire monologue is interspersed with the recurring 'I', as she cannot think beyond her own existence and interest. To her, except for her superior 'self', everything else is an 'other'. "What purgatory to live in this insentient universe where everything but me is merely itself!" (Coetzee 67)

Magda could not rein her tendency to dominate the 'Other' as she had inherited white supremacist ideals as a part and parcel of colonizing culture. "It comes of itself, one needs no lessons, only meek folks around one and a grudge against them for not speaking back" (74). Magda longs for a life of harmony and mutual bonding for the three of them, Hendrik, Klein-Anna and herself, a little peace between them. She wants to annihilate herself and "come forth a second time clean and new" (71). And she does change with the passing of time. Every perception she has as a colonizer gets revised and reviewed by the presence of the colonized. Bhabha says, "in the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid—neither one thing nor the other." (Bhabha 33) Hybridity shifts power, questions authority, and suggests that colonial authority is never wholly in the control of the colonizer. The authority can be reinflected, split, syncretized, and to an extent menaced by its confrontation with the other. (Childs 136) The shift of authority also changes between Magda and Hendrik. Coetzee disproved the binary by reversing the fixed position of the empowered and the powerless. Magda gradually surrenders her power and authority to Hendrik. Her freedom is threatened by her unusual mingling with the colonized. As she breaks the social code by upsetting the master-servant relationship, she gets cornered by forces beyond her control. In her desperate attempts to have a peaceful relationship with Hendrik and Anna, she compromises her control on the situation. As a result, Hendrik takes advantage of her weakness and takes away the authority from her. He takes it for granted that as she is alone and ridiculous, she must also be weak and afraid. (Coetzee 95)

Magda constantly suffers from anxiety and fear of losing her position to Hendrik and Klein-Anna and being reduced to a mere servant. She wonders pessimistically, “I shall stroke the fire, I shall serve them breakfast in bed and bless them when they revile me.”(70) As she grows weaker, Hendrik grows stronger. In Magda’s words,

He has learned to leave his hat on in my presence. He has learned to storm up and down while he talks, striking his fists into his palm. His gestures express anger, but also the confidence of a man free to show his anger. (117)

In her childish ignorance, Magda totally disregards the fact that theirs is a relationship of master-servant, where the master has to pay for the servants’ labour. She lashes out at Hendrik for asking that his salary be paid. Later, she tells him to wait till she finds her father’s monetary source and stops him from leaving. But when Magda’s endeavour to extract her father’s money from the post office failed, Hendrik becomes furious and rapes her with horrific force. Magda’s world and her vanity as a master crumble to pieces. She is stunned at the humiliation it causes her. Hendrik had the power to hurt her and he did it continuously and remorselessly. He does not let go of any opportunity to belittle her. She asks Hendrik,

“What more do you want? Must I weep? Must I kneel? Are you waiting for the white woman to kneel to you? Are you waiting for me to become your white slave? . . . Must the white woman lick your backside before you will give her a single smile?” (118)

Still she keeps on trying to untangle the mess and find solace by accepting her lot. Magda forsakes her sense of White superiority and drags herself to the level of slaves. She kneels before Hendrik like a white slave. In her quest of building a humane relationship with Hendrik and Anna, she attempts to deconstruct the hierarchical status of master and servant. Even when Hendrik violates her mentally and physically, she resigns to the sexual act even though she finds

no pleasure in it. Hit hard by the underlying sameness of master and slave, Magda's identity as a white master crushed. The identity that was built on the assertion of difference between White and non-whites loses its validity the moment she recognizes Hendrik as more powerful than her. She calls for her own downfall by breaking the established mandate that dictates "Beware of intimacy with the servants?"

Chapter 2: *The Grass is Singing*

The Grass is Singing (1950), the first novel of the Nobel laureate Doris Lessing, takes place in the setting of 1940s Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), part of the then Union of South Africa. It reflects some of the writer's own experience and dilemma while growing up as a white settler in an unfamiliar and remote Rhodesia far away from her ancestral land. The multi-layered plot exposes various problems regarding race, gender and class infested in the South African society, meticulously hidden beneath the orderly and peaceful façade. Through the depiction of the psychological and individual struggles of a female protagonist (Mary) to sustain herself in the face of dismal poverty and loneliness imposed by the male-dominated society, Lessing tries to uncover the brutal, inhuman, exploitative, tyrannical, unjust nature of colonial rule which victimizes both the colonizer and the colonized in one way or the other. According to Ruth Whittaker, this novel is "an extraordinary first novel in its assured treatment of its unusual subject matter... [that] questions the entire values of Rhodesian white colonial society" (Whittaker 28). It relates the fretful journey of a white woman from a traumatic and impoverished childhood towards an inexplicable death. The characters and events of the novel are so complex and contradictory that it upsets our entire preconceived notion of oppressor-oppressed, guilty-innocent, Self-Other, etc. We grapple to identify: Who is the victim? Who is the perpetrator? Who is the Self? Who is the Other? Who is responsible for Mary's tragic demise: is it Mary, the sexually repressed white woman with no power over her body, mind and economy, who has lived like a parasite on an unwelcoming site, in an oven-like dilapidated house, with an imbecile husband? Or, is it the black native, Moses, who with his missionary education should have known better than to transgress his assigned servant's position to help a woman to regain herself? Or, is it Dick, Mary's inept husband, who with his cursed luck as

“Jonah” and lack of skill in farming failed miserably in his masculine role as a provider? The readers simply cannot come up with any rational answer. Nobody knows what triggers the illicit relation between a snobbish white mistress and a lowly black houseboy. Is it Mary’s unfulfilled sexual desire that pushes her out of her marital boundary and compels her to break all moral and social codes, or is it Dick’s inability to keep his wife in her place or is it Moses’s animal like lust that made him commit a crime for which he knew he was “as good as hanged already?” (Lessing 14).

Shedding light into the dark recesses of the human psyche through the relationship between master/mistress and servant, Lessing shows the incomplete and incessant process of identity construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. She negates the futile claim of white superiority by disrobing the underlying sameness between all human beings regardless of their colour, culture and race. She points out the uncertainty of the assumed positions and the ambiguity in the roles of Self and Other, by shifting the power and authority between them. This article investigates the process of disintegration of Self and Other, the factors behind it, the path it takes and the outcome of it. With the aid of Homi Bhabha’s coined concepts like ambivalent colonial stereotypes, ambivalence of colonial subjects, mimicry, hybridity, Third Space of Enunciation or in-betweenness, I will attempt to show how the flawed and futile colonial stereotypes create ambivalent subjects who are neither Self nor Other and constantly vacillates in “in-between”, how the subjects try to battle rejection or subvert hegemony through mimicry and hybridity, which concomitantly shakes the established power dynamics by eliminating or lessening the claimed difference between Self and Other. I will also bring forth the intersectionality of class, gender and race by probing into the problematic positionality of a

western woman who, despite her hierarchal racial identity, is incarcerated and made powerless by patriarchy and colonial structure.

I: Stereotype:

In this novel, Lessing blends in the issues of racial conflict of the white ruled South Africa and the wretched, claustrophobic life of a helpless woman. Though the gender discrimination and class division were less discussed, “there was certainly a race division” (11), in the mid 20th century Rhodesian society that Lessing portrays. The novel poignantly brings out the injustice experienced by the non-whites of that time just by unveiling the construction of the bifurcated society inhabited by both white and black people. There is a gulf of difference between the lives lived by the colonizers and the colonized. To perpetuate the domination and exploitation, the white rulers demean the non-white population in various ways and create binaries like oppressor-oppressed, male-female, centre-margin and Self-Other on the basis of color, gender and power. To

“preserve their own position as masters in the center and the natives as “Others” in the margin” they spread slanderous tales about the native and “use race and gender, two inseparable qualifiers, to access their privilege of power in the imperial hierarchy and legitimize their actions” (Aghazadeh 111).

By assigning different traits and qualities, there is an effort to fix the role between the colonizer and the colonized in the bifurcated society. Bhabha says,

“The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.” (Bhabha 101)

The whites possess an avid sense of superiority and demand the total obedience and servility of the non-white races, whom they considered inferior and debased. They preside over other races in all aspects. They exploit the non-whites for their own profit and deprive them from all benefits. In the farms, “they saw only their own faces and the faces of their black servant for weeks on end.” (10) Yet, the black natives were never treated like human beings, worthy of companionship: “The black labourers, always so close to their lives but also so cut off” (Lessing 119). “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”(12). Rather, a “white person may look at a native, who is no better than a dog” and mark the natives as “lazy black savages”, “filthy savages”, “old swine” and “evil smelling creatures”. The colonizer’s discourse was populated with “terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy” (Bhabha 72). To perpetuate this hierarchy of superior and inferior race, the white masters propagate ideas about black men’s shifty, violent, sluggish, unfaithful and lascivious traits. Stereotypes like “the black man will . . . thief, rape, murder, if given half a chance” (Lessing 29) and the “black women” are strange, “alien and primitive creatures with ugly desires” (116) were prevalent in the society. Jan Mohamed remarks that, “the native is cast as no more than a recipient of the negative elements of the self that the European projects onto him” (85). The colonizer attribute “all of those qualities and characteristics which it most fears and hates within itself” on the natives with the sole purpose of constructing “a wholly negative cultural identity” (Walsh 7). By disseminating these ideas of the vicious nature of the natives, the colonial discourse attempts to arrest the “colonised as a social reality which is at once an “other” and yet entirely knowable and visible” (Bhabha 70-1). This contrary direction of stereotype makes it ambivalent. Stereotypes claim that the Others are “domesticated, harmless, knowable; but also at

the same time wild, harmful, mysterious”, therefore unconsciously representing that “the colonised is always in motion, sliding *ambivalently* between the polarities of similarity and difference” (McLeod 53). Thus, the project of arresting the “Other” in a static position fails. Hence, to terminate this slippery motion of the colonized subjects, stereotypes have to be repeated over and over again in urgent, terrifying and varied tones until they become embedded into the psyche of both “self” and “other” alike. Equipped with the colonial education, the white population assumes a superior role to control the inferior mass. Colonial justification of maltreatment was based on the perception that “they are nothing but savages after all” (Lessing 95). Thus, they tried to validate their oppression and discrimination over the native people and free themselves from moral liabilities.

Here, it is essential to analyze this situation from the gender perspective as well, as a woman Mary was deprived of agency and freedom. As she was not even allowed to think for herself, she never really took the trouble to interrogate into the racial matter. She was simply fed the colonial education in a golden platter. Since childhood, she had been taught to keep a distance from the dangerous and vile natives. Fear and abhorrence were instilled in her mindset from a very early age.

She was afraid of them, of course. Every woman in South Africa is brought up to be. In her childhood she had been forbidden to walk out alone, and when she had asked why, she has been told in the furtive, lowered, but matter-of-fact voice she associated with her mother, that they were nasty and might do horrible things to her (70).

Like every other white South African woman, Mary too is conversant in this racist ideology. Her participation in the imperial enterprise is not voluntary, it is mandatory, a pre-determined destiny for her. She also incorporates these colonial stereotypes in her thoughts, behaviour and values.

She proudly possessed the sense of superiority over the black natives and disregarded the human aspect of the race. Before her marriage to Dick Turner, she had very vague ideas about racial discrimination. To Mary, 'race' meant "the office boy in the firm where she worked, other women's servants, and the amorphous mass of natives in the streets whom she hardly noticed" (42), And "the 'native problem' meant for her other women's complaints of their servants at tea parties" (70). She never paused to think how their lives really were. "She had never come into contact with natives before, as an employer on her own account"(70). So, after coming into contact with the natives for the first time at the Farm, she felt like a person "in a submarine, someone who voluntarily descended into a strange and alien world"(72). "This was all too strange to her" (72). However, almost immediately after taking control over the management, the tendency to trample the native servants resurged in Mary. Facing the "business of struggling with natives", she assumed the role of colonial oppressor right away (70). She kept on treating her Boys in an unkind, cold, uncompromising and rigorous manner. She got involved in rows with them and curtailed portions from their scanty wages for their silly mistakes. She flew at them with "a frenzy of annoyance" for their, "shifty and dishonest nature". Her frustration and irritation always "found permissible outlet in this exasperating native" (94). She took all her wretchedness out on her boys. She loathed the native men and women, even their little children with pot bellies and without clothes. "She hated the exposed fleshiness of them, their soft brown bodies and soft bashful faces" (116). Her blood started to boil seeing "their calm satisfaction in maternity" (116). She hated "their sullenness, their averted eyes when they spoke to her, their veiled insolence . . . the heavy smell that came from them, a hot sour animal smell." "She hated them all, every one of them, from the head boy whose subservience irritated her to the smallest

child”; yet gradually she learnt to hide her hatred while talking to them, “but she did not attempt to hide it from herself” (141).

While Mary readily accepts the racial norms, she does not assent to the conventional gender norms that easily. Even when she does, she does it gloomily with regret. She is torn between her desire to be a free and active agent in life and her obligation to discipline herself into a meek and selfless subject. She resists the traditional normative role bestowed upon her by living on her own income, enjoying a healthy flamboyant life and retaining liberty while rejecting to marry anyone or involving in sexual relationship with a man. Her arid, traumatic childhood generates in her an avid aversion for marriage and sex. Her parents’ unhappy conjugal life and lack of emotional bond render in her a negative image of femininity. Her first model of gender role is: a passive plaintive petulant mother, helpless to take control of life and situation, and drunkard father stooped down by poverty, yet empowered by authority and agency. Living in “a little house that was like a small wooden box on slits” and witnessing her parents’ unrelenting fights over money or the scarcity of it, she begins to associate misery, servility and penury with marriage. Her accidental encounter with her parents’ lovemaking makes her identify the sexual act as vile and humiliating and leads her to repress her sexuality as a defense mechanism. Jean Pickering sheds light into the three issues of class, race and gender dominant in the South African colonial setting of the British settlers:

“Although the white settlers grew up in a class society...the class attitudes of the collective have simplified into consideration of us, the Whites, and them, the Blacks. But there is another value system that complicates the issue. In white settler society men outrank women even more than they do at “home” in middle-class England” (19).

Mary does succeed in subverting this ranked system at first. At the age of 16, she finds a secretarial job in town that liberates her from any dependency on other men and enables her to lead her life as she pleased. By severing all ties with her father after her mother's death, Mary intends "in some way to be avenging her mother's sufferings" (Gordimer 35). She even feels relieved for her parents' death as it means an end to the dreadful chapter concerning home with all its harrowing aspects where death of a child means less mouths to feed (Coetzee 40).

When Mary thought of 'home' she remembered a wooden box shaken by passing trains; when she thought of marriage she remembered her father coming home red-eyed and fuddled; when she thought of children she saw her mother's face at her children's funeral— anguished, but as dry and as hard as rock (46).

So, Mary's ideas about men, marriage, family, sexuality develops through the encounter with the social system manifested in family. All her life she carries these burdensome ideas with her. She seems not to "care for men" (45) and has "a profound distaste for sex" (46). Nonetheless, she could never shun men out of her life. In fact, it seems "her life was entirely dependent upon men" (45). She is "always with a man, one of those innumerable men . . . who had taken her out, or were taking her out, or who had married and now asked her to their homes" (45). But her male friends always treat her "just like a good pal, with none of this silly sex business" (p.40). It shows the banality of the male-oriented society where no woman could extricate her existence from the encroachment of men. Everything must revolve around men. It is a supreme doctrine to perpetuate male domination and to keep the system running. Although, "[S]he had the undistinguished, dead level appearance of South African white democracy" (43), "she was not playing her part, for she did not get married" (45). As marriage is "the sole justification of her [a woman's] existence" (Beauvoir), Mary is also charged with "that impalpable but steel-strong

pressure to get married” (Lessing 47). Therefore, Mary could not attain the role she wanted to carve out for herself, economically and emotionally free from male invasion and had to submit to the gender role assigned to her by the society. She finds it “impossible to fit together what she wanted for herself and what she was offered” (52). Overhearing a conversation of her so-called friends where they criticize Mary for her childlike clothing and declare that she is unlikely to marry because “she just isn’t like that, isn’t like that at all. Something is missing somewhere”(46). In her desperation to prove herself otherwise, Mary marries Dick Turner, but “it might have been anybody” (52). As Sima Aghazadeh aptly remarks,

Mary bases her new identity as a white landowner’s wife on collective expectations rather than on her own nature. Her marriage is what the patriarchal culture expects every woman to perform to preserve the patterns of male domination in family (109).

Dick also marries Mary to escape his loneliness, as he thinks it is “essential for him to love somebody” (56), to set up a family and procreate. He begins to fantasize about this not so attractive girl thinking her to be “a practical, adaptable, serene person who would need only a few weeks on the farm to become what he wanted her to be” (58). With his sex-economic patriarchal lesson, Dick unconsciously attributes the traditional adaptive, docile, submissive, uncomplaining, sacrificing female figure’s qualities on Mary. This marriage, with two very different persons and not based on love and mutual understanding, fails to provide joy and solace to both Mary and Dick. Mary gets married to prove herself not “a ridiculous creature whom no one wanted” (57) and Dick marries because “[h]e was lonely, he wanted a wife, and above all, children” (56). As there lies a great gap between what the individual aspires to be and what the society turns him into, the gender roles of male-female also render the subjects ambivalent and unhappy.

II: Ambivalence:

As ambivalent colonial stereotypes unintentionally proves that the position of the colonized is never fixed but always in motion, likewise, Bhabha says, the position of colonizer is also not fixed, rather fluid and changeable. Bhabha in *Nation and Narration* (1990) argues against the notion of fixed identity. He believes that the cultural meanings and positions of the colonizers and the colonized are open to transformation by interaction between them. He states that there is an element of negotiating cultural meanings when colonizer and colonized come together; thus, subjectivities and positionalities of both are constantly altered and reformed. As the colonial doctrine decides the position of the colonizer and the colonized and dictates their respective role, the subjects lose the balance between individuality and racial identity. The Self can never fully assume the colonizer's role, nor can he negate it properly. And in the attempt to be accepted in the system, they all alter themselves in one way or the other.

This is portrayed profoundly in the characters of the new settlers in South Africa. The “soft-faced, soft-voiced Englishmen” come to “this vast, harsh, dreary country” where “anger, violence, death seemed natural”. They come with the “vague ideas of equality”, notions of right and wrong and “abstract ideas about decency and goodwill” (Lessing 20-21). To fulfill the purpose of making money, they come to this mystic land; garbed with lofty ideas about promoting the equality between races and shared progress. They were even “prepared to treat them as human beings”. “They were shocked . . . at the way the natives were treated.” “They were revolted a hundred times a day” at the injustice cast upon the natives (20). Their “ideas of right were upset”(21). They were too powerless to resist the existing paradigm of the society and not liberal enough to defend the natives against this inhumanity. In their desperation to find a place in the white dominated society, these ambivalent colonial subjects became part of the

discriminating ideology. So, the new arrivals from England got into conflicts with their own notions of equality between the races and the established notions of racial differences in Rhodesian society. This conflict is clearly visible in the character of Tony Martson. “The two standards— the one he had brought with him and the one he was adopting— conflicted still” (21). Neither could they eliminate their previous ideologies, traits and habits that easily, nor could they reform them with new ones. They wavered between two ideologies, two positions. They could not make up their mind on where they belonged. This ambivalence of position gives rise to anxiety and creates a gap which can be seen as in-betweenness. The negotiation between two ideologies takes place in this in-between or interstitial “Third Space”. The process of mimicry and hybridization can be seen to be at work in this third space as well. The abnegation of the newcomers to conform to the new doctrines does not last long. For fear of rejection, they imitate the old settlers by getting used to their ideas about the natives (20). They learn to avert their eyes from the monstrous injustices as they do not want “act as judge and jury and compassionate God into the bargain!” (34). Soon they lose their old beliefs and adopt new manners with great readiness. In Lessing’s words-

“A few months, and these sensitive, decent young men had coarsened to suit the hard, arid, sun-drenched country where they had come to; they had grown a new manner to match their thickened sunburnt limbs and toughened bodies” (21)

This is ironical that, the colonizer always marks the natives very different from them on grounds of their alleged cannibalism, barbarism, mysteries, miseries and unending crimes. They draw a strict boundary between the ‘self’ with all its goodness and advanced skills, superior knowledge and progressive humanism; and the ‘other’ with all its vile acts, ignorance, vicious traits and sheer primitivism. But once they are given the authority to rule the natives or the

‘colonial Others’, they forsake all the traits of the Self and became more like the ‘other that they loathed and feared.

Another important character, Dick Turner also shows an excess of ambivalence. Even though Dick Turner handles his black labourers harshly, he is probably the only person in the novel who recognizes them as human beings. He neither has the vicious antipathy, nor an intense attraction towards his relationship with the native workers. There seems to be an unusual mutual understanding between him and his Negro workers. He spends the longer part of the day with his native workers and is not critical enough to not laugh with them at a good humoured joke. Sometimes Dick deals with them in such a human way that it irritates and bewilders Mary because that affected the stereotypical image imbued in her.

She was filled with wonder, and even repulsion. Dick was really sorry to see the end of this nigger! She could not understand any white person feeling anything personal about a native; it made Dick seem really horrible to her (68).

Sometimes “it seemed that he could not bear natives anymore”; yet he would not be able to spend a single day without them (172). “In spite of this perpetual angry undercurrent of hate,” he would “laugh with them, cracking some joke to keep them good humoured” (172).

There is a mental unrest and psychological gap between Dick’s understanding of the approved moral code and his desire to set free from these social dogmas. Thus, this conflict results in a displacement of anger, frustration, lethargy and hopelessness. He loses his sure footing in the colonial system and fails to embody the supreme masculine image of white authority. He seems to get caught in the ‘third space of enunciation’ and becomes very unsure of his positionality.

By continuously working side by side with the natives, he unconsciously adopts many qualities and traits of the blacks. Day by day, he seems “to be growing into a native himself” (172). He starts smoking native cigarettes, lives in a house that resembles a few natives’ houses, opens a kaffir shop to entertain his scheme of making money, etc. Sometimes he would even blow his nose on his fingers into a bush and whine like a nigger in his sickbed. He cracks jokes and laughs with the natives just to keep them good-humored. He seems to have gone beyond the colonial normative by indulging himself with the traits of the ‘Other’. Mary notices that, “He seemed standing beside them, to be one of them; even his colour was not so different, for he was burned a rich brown, and he seemed to hold himself the same way”. Thus, he somehow upsets the dichotomous colonial design of master-servant relationship or self-other position. Located in this unsettled position, Dick gradually loses his strong hold on himself and his surrounding, and propels him towards a bleak madness.

Unlike Tony and Dick, Mary seems to be very sure about her racial supremacy and the natives’ inferiority. She is the embodiment of a steadfast agent of colonial enterprise. But considering women’s confinement and their placement outside the dominant discourse, it is only to be expected of her. As she, a woman, is never allowed to analyze the matter for herself, she could not come up with her own theory on racism. The rules were simply there; she was born into it. Her lack of agency as a woman and “the course of her upbringing” (98) made it inevitable for her to fall into the vicious role of an oppressor. As Simi Aghazadeh, in her close analysis to the novel, says,

“Mary, being “other” in a male-dominant order of things, parallels what blacks experience in a white-dominant one, but she is not able to recognize this “other” in order to understand or define her “self” because her culture limits her path to self-knowledge” (114).

But Mary's unreasonable anger and fearful aggression should not be looked at as only the outcome of her lifelong colonial education. It was not triggered by a single cause. Rather, it could be seen as an outburst of accumulated frustration, isolation and depression in her life. Mary's unhappy marriage to Dick, their ramshackle house with no ceiling in the isolated dreary African veldt, the intolerable heat, lack of activity, her inability to take control of life and her frustration in Dick's terrible farming skills or the lack of it- all these factors play as reagent in her turning her into a despicable, unjust, ruthless mistress. Her misery sprouted from the prescribed gender role, made her adopt the colonizer role in the vilest form.

She is in a patriarchal society which dictates that she should be a sexual object, passive and dependent for a white man; and at the same time she is in a racist society which dictates that she should sustain a system of white supremacy (Aghazadeh 113).

The male-governed South Africa also decreed male to keep "in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of patriarchate they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the Other" (Beauvoir 171) Trapped between the roles of a woman and a colonizer, Mary has to sacrifice her own desire and selfhood. Her superior racial identity makes her "Self" but her inferior gender status marks her as the gendered "Other".

III: Shift:

However, afterwards Mary is put into a complex situation where she has to deal with the native servant Moses. She hovers between repulsion and attraction toward her new house boy, Moses. At first Mary begins her usual routine of instructing him with an irritated and cold voice. Then, slowly she becomes aware that "... there was a subtle difference in the way she spoke to him" (Lessing 175). Although "her voice grew sharp and irritated" as she found fault with

Moses, she felt fascinated towards “the powerful, broad-built body” (175). If the expression on his face fills her with anger, simultaneously the white lather frothing on his powerful thick black neck jerks her out of her apathy (177). If Mary dares to storm her irrational anger on him, she is at the same time, only too aware of her growing fear of his mere presence in the house. Her reaction to Moses’ notice of leaving is also highly ambivalent. Simultaneously, Mary “felt a sharp relief because the tensions . . . would be dissolved by his going,” and thoroughly weak and helpless at the consequence that would be brought by his departure (185). Even though it is below her station and dignity to request a black servant to continue his service, she submits to it as a last resort, and sobs and pleads with Moses in a shameful manner to stay. But after a few days, obliterating the ‘shameful collapse’ from her mind, she resumes her old habit of making sarcastic comments on Moses’ trivial flaws. “She felt the usual anger rise within her, at the tone he used to her; at the same time she was fascinated, and out of her depth; she did not know what to do with this personal relationship” (189). Her behavior becomes very contradictory and unpredictable. “She felt that she was too unsure of herself,” and had no idea what she wanted (206). This ambivalence led her to a ‘soft aching blank’ and finally made her surrender her sense of mastery.

Bhabha says ambivalence generates the seed of its own destruction. Ambivalence disrupts the authority of colonial domination and unsettles colonial dominance. By eliminating difference it refutes the colonizer’s claim of superiority and unmask the underlying sameness of the colonized and the colonizer. Thus, ambivalence creates a fracture in the identities which was constructed on the basis of difference. Coming face to face with the humanistic aspect of the colonized and recognizing the artificiality of the colonial system, the colonizer is left wallowing in an indeterminate locus. The uncertainty of position creates gaps in the colonial site. These

gaps or ‘Third spaces’ are like thresholds between the deconstruction of the previous identity and the reconstruction of the new/altered identity. These “in-between spaces provide the terrain of elaborating strategies for selfhood— singular or communal— that initiate new signs of identity” (Bhabha 1).

Due to ambivalence, Mary was also thrown into an ‘in-between’ or the ‘Third Space’. Her identity as a master disrupts by Moses’ intervention. By uncloaking the humanistic aspects of natives, Moses proves her notion of superiority to be invalid and irrational. As “he forced her now to treat him as a human being; it was impossible for her to thrust him out of her mind like something unclean, as she had done with all the others in the past” (192). Mary flounders between her new found knowledge of natives as companionable individuals and her past education of natives as filthy animal-like savages. Mary’s internal conflict between acceptance and negation between old and new ideas results in an incessant restlessness, passivity and anxiety. “She was restless, so restless she did not know what to do with herself”(75). She was not sure of anything anymore, not even of herself. “She was not thinking, only afraid, and of what she did not know” (187). “She was held, helpless”, and “she was held in balance, not knowing what this new tension was that she could not break down” (191). “She had lost all sense of time” and “her mind wandered incoherently . . .” (195). “She was fighting against something she did not understand” (206).

Brooks describes Mary’s restlessness as a result of long-buried sexual and emotional desire. He says, “Prey to violent emotions which she can neither understand nor control, stemming from deeply embedded psychological repression” (330). Michael Thorpe also remarks that Moses appears in Mary’s life “not as a mere symbol of color conflicts, but as the agent of a disruptive life force” and forces her out of her traditional gender role by reawakening her

repressed sexuality (12). Mary's unhappy conjugal life and her lethargic sexual encounters with her husband, Dick leaves her untouched, void and unfulfilled. To compartmentalize her sore childhood memories, she deliberately smothers her sexuality. But for some inexplicable reason, both the muffled memories and stifled sexuality resurface at the wrong time with the wrong man. Michael Thorpe notes that: "since 1903 in Rhodesia, it has been a criminal offence for a black man and a white woman to have sexual intercourse but no such law applies where a white man and a black woman are involved" (12). This hypocritical and discriminatory law enforces woman to remain within her racial and sexual boundary. Mary also tries to negate her sexual need and her growing attraction towards Moses. Although, Mary "would have died rather than acknowledge" this dark attraction (190), it developed involuntarily and inexorably.

Like Bhabha suggests the assumed roles of colonizer and the colonized are never fixed in a post-colonial site, the roles of Mary and Moses also alter in the course of their intimate interaction. Once Mary had struck Moses with sjambok; afterwards Moses returns the blow by taking over her authority and possessing her in his control. Although at first she has been blinded by her sense of superiority, eventually she is left with no choice but to surrender herself completely to Moses' mercy. Mary has always wanted "a stronger man than herself" in her life; finally she finds one in the person of Moses. Before she realizes that there was a "new human relationship between them" (193), Moses, in his masculine drive already consumes her self and sensibility completely and fatally. In a moment of weakness, Mary loses grip over herself and her life, and hands over the authority to Moses. But even when Mary regains her consciousness and temper, Moses declines to return it.

It was as though the act of weeping before him had been an act of resignation— resignation of her authority; and he had refused to hand it back (Lessing 190).

No matter how much she resists, she fails to free herself from Moses' authority. Mary, who has been the wielder of the whip suddenly, becomes its receiver. And Moses, who has submissively undergone all ill-treatment, bestows with the power to control her. "They were like two antagonists, silently sparring. Only he was powerful and sure of himself, and she was undermined with fear, by her terrible dream-filled nights, her obsession"(207).

Moses becomes her cause of downfall as he forces her to forsake set racial and gender values in the act of acknowledging his presence and surrendering herself to his mercy. "She felt helplessly in his power. Yet there was no reason why she should" (190). She is racially dominant, but psychologically and sexually subordinate to Moses. Moses embodies Mary's unfulfilled desire. She articulates her emotional tidings through her indefinable engagement with Moses. "She can acknowledge herself and her sexuality not through her marriage but through her sexual relationship with Moses which shows her true self" (Aghazadeh 119). Her unspeakable and unacknowledged relationship with a black man brings her out of her solitary shell, which her marriage to a white man had failed to do. Yet, she could not acquire individuation and autonomy of consciousness for she never learns to resist male authority. As she always constructs her image in relation to others and measures her worth from others' judgement, she begins to rely on Moses for her happiness. She feels "as if she were in a dark tunnel, nearing something final, something she could not visualize, but which waited for her inexorably, inescapably" (207). Soon, that "something final" arises in the form of madness. She simply retreats from the world and sinks into a state like drug-induced fever. Even though Mary could not regain complete cognizance, rationality and sovereign subjectivity, she emancipates herself from the patriarchal and colonial ideology in many ways. Subverting the paradigmatic norms, it seems "as if she lives

in a world of her own, where other people's standards don't count. She has forgotten what her own people are like" (187). As Aghazadeh remarks,

The natural relationship between a dominant man and a subordinate woman in a patriarchal system becomes problematic just because the man is black and the woman, white. This disturbs *spirit de corpse*, causing a tension in colonial culture by blurring the line between "us" and "them" (116).

By engaging with another man outside her marital boundary and outside the white communal order, Mary breaks two taboos- "colonial" and "sexual". As "[g]ender and race-sexism and racism- are components of this hierarchy by which the white settlers and interlopers attempt to establish their own rules and security in the alien land", Mary unintentionally and unconsciously upsets the established order (Aghazadeh 111). Therefore, Katherine Fishburn marks her as an "accidental rebel" (4), who inadvertently dissolves the boundary between "Self" and "Other" and exposes the horror of colonial rule which victimizes both the colonizer and the colonized alike.

July's People: Chapter 4

July's People (1981) is a significant novel of Nadine Gordimer, the Nobel Prize winning writer of 1991. It is considered a prophetic vision about the end of apartheid. "Written in a period of massive political transition . . . Gordimer consolidated her utter commitment to ending [sic] Apartheid" (Nicholls 1) The book was banned in South Africa for fear of fueling political anarchy. But in her defense Gordimer has said, "a writer has to reserve the right to tell the truth as he sees it, in his own words, without being accused of letting the side down." (*Essential Gesture* 107) The plot narrates the lives of a white and a black family in the setting of a fictional civil war of 1980's South Africa. The timeline of the incidents is never mentioned anywhere in the novel, but presumably the events take place in the late 80's or the early 90's around a decade before the official demise of apartheid in 1994 (Nicholls 1). In an interview in 1987 Gordimer clarifies the confusion regarding the timeline of the plot, "People always say that *July's People* is about what happens after revolution in South Africa. But it isn't. . . . it is during. . . .it's about a time of civil war" (Bazin, 294). Although, in 1961 South Africa became an independent republic, the rule of apartheid can be identified as another manifestation of colonization. As Waziyatawin has defined colonization as, "both the formal and informal methods (behaviours, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands and resources" ("Understanding Colonizer Status"), in this essay I will be using the terms colonizer and colonized in place of ruler and the ruled. The narrative of the novel is divided into untitled and unnumbered sections. The dialogues are often without parenthesis and the name of the speaker. So, the readers have to struggle to comprehend the storyline and form their own interpretations. The novel also presents stark contrast between city and country life and juxtaposes the lifestyle of whites with the lifestyle of the non-whites to show the racial inequalities during apartheid.

Gordimer reversed the situation and the roles of master-servant completely to interrogate the subjectivity of the characters in relation to the established power structure. Through this complex interrogation, she presents us with more questions than answers. Does the system regulate the thought and perception of the subjects? What is the position of the white liberals who are against the laws and ideologies of the apartheid regime, but nonetheless, enjoy its benefits and privileges? Is it possible to remain unaffected by the dominant paradigm which menacingly looms over their lives with or without their consent? More importantly, where does the claim of liberalism stand, if it just recognizes that form of discrimination and racism will persist in the system, but does nothing to eradicate it? Is it possible to rule another race with compassion, when the very term 'rule' unquestionably resonates with injustice? Is reconciliation possible between races, when systemic racism is still at large? The upheaval in the established order brings radical changes, in the lives and perspectives of both black and white people, and concomitantly, rearranges the mode of interaction and access to agency in many ways. *July's People* also brings forth the problematic issue of white woman's position in the nationalist discourse of the apartheid era. As apartheid, like colonialism and nationalism traffics primarily in male-centred treatise, women are carelessly tossed over into the periphery of white domination. Women on the both sides of the colonial/apartheid divide are incarcerated, subjugated, troubled and surveilled by the system. They are designated to different feminine roles endorsed by the societies they live in. Women are rejected individuality, agency and freedom. They are used as transmitters of culture and retainers of ethnic difference. Trapped between the struggle to conserve a unified racial identity and the battle to fulfill the parameters of the gendered society, women are submerged into oblivion. By interweaving issues of class, gender, ethnicity, power into this novel, Gordimer actually tries to expose the multilayered crisis of the apartheid regime that affects both the ruler and the ruled.

During the days of apartheid (the policy of racial segregation), the white minority used to rule over the non-white majority and deprived them of all social, economic, civil and political rights. The non-whites were shunned from the cities to the barren dingy areas called Bantustans. The whites enjoyed all the luxury of civilized life, whereas the non-whites were restricted from all agencies and facilities. So, the country was bifurcated into categories. The non-whites were not even allowed to protest. But Gordimer, an anti-apartheid supporter and activist, reckoned that the black revolts would rise to eliminate all racial injustice. She anticipated a civil riot in South Africa where the blacks would avenge the injuries inflicted on them by the white rulers by killing white families and sabotaging their property.

Amidst this fictional black uprising, a white family sets off on an unusual journey from Johannesburg to the dark interior of South Africa. Through the depiction of their struggle and suffering, the novel hints at the approach of new egalitarian era. As Eugene Goodheart says in his article, "The novel seems to embrace with an unflattering realism the coming powerlessness of white South Africa. As if suffering were preferable to the claustrophobia of life in apartheid" (*JP* 116) The family consisting of Bamford Smales, Maureen Smales, and their children Royce, Victor and Gina, had to leave their comfortable city life to save themselves from the angry murderous black mob. As the black rebels were setting all building resided by the whites on fire, the Smales had nowhere to go. They could not leave the country as the rebels had vandalized most of the airports and bombed numerous aircraft. In this time of dire crisis, their servant of 15 years, July comes to their aid. He takes them to his village to hide until the riot cools down. They all make their way to July's village in their Bakkie under July's direction. For three days and three nights, they cross six hundred kilometres to reach July's small secluded village. July gives the Smales a small circular cottage to live in which was previously occupied by his mother. The white family struggles with their radically changed life in a new place.

I: Stereotype & Ambivalence:

As the Smales think of themselves as liberal whites and are opposed to the apartheid policy, it seems a difficult task to trace stereotypes of colonization that Bhabha talks about. But looking carefully, we will be able to identify it ingrained in various layers of the society. The Smales struggle to subvert the discourse that “construes the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.” (Bhabha 101) They believe in equality of race and do not support the ideals they were born into. Ideologically and morally they oppose the tyranny and discrimination against the non-whites by their own race, yet find it difficult to extricate themselves from the system. Their frustration drives them into thinking that they are intruders in the other’s territory. Like “white pariah dogs in a black continent”, they feel rejected, scorned at, unaccepted by the land and its people. (Gordimer 8) They constantly plan to leave that unwelcoming place that had been ravished by people of their own race. Since they have no living memory of the homeland that their forefathers had left, they had no connection or loyalty to a notion of place of origin. . They reside in the ‘Borderland’ between two races, cultures and civilizations, but belong to neither of them. They know that “they and their children were not Americans, or Europeans” or Africans (126). They perform “the dance of the colonizer who refuses and continues to live in the colony.” (Memmi 45) They are robbed off a definite sense of belonging. They cannot identify as a colonizer in their attempt to disown the discriminatory laws and rules propagated by apartheid, neither can they identify as a colonized because their very essence of self-hood depends on the assertion of difference from the Other.

But they cannot escape the colonial hierarchies, which posit them in a superior position in the face of their colonized doubles or colonial Others. As Peter Childs says, “Only through the Other can the subject locate its desire for difference while constructing, and finding confirmation of, the fantasy of its

identity.” (Childs et al 125) This belief of difference is pronounced in the Smales household where there is an obvious boundary between them and their native servants. The servants were always being told what to do and always being watched over carefully. They were never considered as part of the white family and were left alone in their backyard quarters. This apartness reflected the apartheid ideology where the blacks were forced to live in the unproductive Bantustans that kept them apart and so were dependent on the wages that employment in the white dominated cities provided them.

Like ambivalent colonial subjects, Bam and Maureen hover between acceptance and rejection. They could not accept the pre-given ideals, nor could they carve out new working ideals for them. Both of them believe in the equality of human beings and strive to practice it in their lives. “They joined political parties and 'contact' groups in willingness to slough privilege it was supposed to be their white dog nature to guard with Mirages and tanks” (Gordimer, *JP* 8). They try to treat their servants July and Nora with compassion and provide them with facilities other white employers cannot even think of, thus, absolving themselves of guilt and self-condemnation.

But later on the novel, Gordimer unearths the deception in the Smales’ acts of liberalism. Relocated in July’s village away from their Johannesburg abode, the Smales are compelled to acknowledge the flaws in their liberal stand. They try to justify their liberal stance by renouncing the discourse of racism and by exercising justice in their own capacity. Unfortunately, they are unaware of the fact that the very right that enables them to practice equality and to criticize racism is extracted from their positionality as affluent educated whites and the servants’ positionality as poor illiterate blacks. They think that they treat other races in the best way possible, but the reality is they treat them as an ‘Other’, very different from the ‘Self’. They do not even acknowledge their servants with their real names. “Mwawate” becomes “July” and the Xhosa woman, their cook “Nomvula” becomes “Nora” for the Smales. They allot them certain facilities, but only according to the servants’ station. This is pointed

out when Maureen confronted July's anger as he vehemently disrobes her of the illusion of justice. Maureen could not understand until she came out of her blissfully systematic urban life that "the special consideration she had shown for his dignity as a man, while he was by definition a servant, would become his humiliation itself, the one thing there was to say between them that had any meaning.

Fifteen years

your boy

you satisfy" (98)

As the system affects the lives of different genders, races and classes very differently, naturally, their perspective will differ from each other. Thus, July's situation becomes incomprehensible for the Smales. Maureen says, "If I offended you, if I hurt your dignity, if what I thought was my friendliness. . . I know I don't know. I didn't know, and I should have known." (72) This is because Maureen imbues the "complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode" of colonial discourse that taught her to treat the colonized as an Other, yet a knowable object. (Bhabha 70) Her endeavour to define him from her limited knowledge about the Other, proved to be utterly futile.

The Smales take pride in their open-mindedness and generosity and even expect July to be grateful for this treatment. Code criticizes the Smales' liberal stance by saying,

"It is a liberal stance that enlists the polite terminology of tolerance, which too readily descends into indifference —especially epistemic indifference. It relies on a cluster of careless assumptions about 'them', in how they are and are not just like 'us'. Although the white folks know that they would not want to live as they require/allow July to, they assume it is fine for him, hence that they have treated him well." (Code 213).

The Smales and July access life in very different ways, from varied status and positions. It is beyond the capacity of the subjects to deconstruct the ideologies that were already preconceived for

them. It matters little whether they want to accept it or not. 20th century French (Tunisian) theorist and writer Albert Memmi offers an explanation regarding the colonizers who want to distinguish themselves from the terrors and injustices of colonization. He imagines two types of colonizers: self-accepting and self-rejecting. Self-accepting colonizers are those who consciously agree to exploit other lands and people without any moral stigma. But, the self-rejecting are those who recognize the immorality and brutality of it and intend to disentangle themselves from this vicious system. They float between the contradiction of returning to their ancestral land to relieve themselves of the guilt and staying in the colony fraught with guilt and frustration. Later Memmi goes on to say that sooner or later the leftist, self-rejecting colonizer “discovers that there is no connection between the liberation of the colonized and the application of a left-wing program. And that, in fact, he is perhaps aiding the birth of a social order in which there is no room for a leftist as such, at least in the near future.” (Memmi 34) Evidently, the Smales also find that there is no place for them in either the apartheid society ruled by the white minority, or the post-apartheid society ruled by the non-white majority. Thus, they reside indefinitely in the ‘interregnum’ of Antonio Gramsci that Gordimer used in *July’s People* epigraph. Their old ideology is dying “and the new cannot be born;” therefore, they fail to occupy the place of ‘Self’ or ‘Other’.

July’s position also becomes ambivalent with the reversal of the ‘host’ and ‘parasite’ relationship. He is never completely opposed to the Smales’ domination, nor does he completely comply with it. He disciplined himself in a way that perpetuates the master-slave hierarchy. Even when he is raised to an authoritative position and ceases his former servitude, July could not assume the role of the ruler. He still remains Smales’ servant and is considered inferior to them. He still bends before them and offers his services to ensure the white men’s comfort. July brings them tea; buys necessary things from the store, makes his women do their chores as if to continue their previous roles as master and servant. July’s subservience indicates the habitual servility of the blacks to the whites. He “bent at the doorway

and began that day for them as his kind has always done for their kind.” (1) Although Bam is a guest and a stranger to him, July still referred to him as his former employer. (JP 35)

Not only does the world of race collide in *July People*, but gender divisions make their presence felt as well. There were different sets of parameters for masculinity and femininity. Men and women were assigned different roles by the society. As Andre Brink aptly said, “In the South African context designated by the narrative, in the black community as emphatically as in the white, both these [gender] roles have been sanctioned, institutionalised and circumscribed by the "system" (Brink 161). Apartheid government endorsed the “interior colonisation” that Kate Millet talks about where males by birthright priority rule over the female (25). Women could find acceptance and recognition in the society only through their father or husbands. Simone de Beauvoir has also said the same thing, “Marriage is the only destiny traditionally offered to women by society” (415). So Maureen also felt obligated to get married leaving behind her dream of becoming a ballet instructor. Since then, she fell into the routine of gratifying a man’s – her husband’s - sexual needs and catering to his household. (Beauvoir 416) She is portrayed as the embodiment of modern, yet traditional Western woman. She is educated, sophisticated, submissive, conforming and content; all the qualities required for “the Happy Housewife Heroine” of Betty Friedan. Maureen hardly does any “work except housework and work to keep” her body “beautiful and to get and keep a man” (30). Like the 1950s American society that Friedan talks about in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), the South African conservative society also adopted the Nazis “*Kinder, Kuche, Kirche*” doctrine that limits women to “one passion, one role, one occupation?” (Ibid 32). Maureen’s feminine role also includes supervising the servants for household tasks. Thus, she engaged in the complex and uneasy relationship of “Madame” and “boy” with July.

On the other hand Bam is the emblematic “independent and complete individual” and soon find “self-fulfillment as husband and father”. (Beauvoir 416). He is the bread earner and decision maker of

the family. He is powerful, authoritative, righteous and active. On their journey to July's village, while Maureen takes household necessities and medicines for her family, Bam takes his radio and gun, a phallic symbol of masculinity. Bam is a consistent performer of patriarchy with his desperate attempt to continue his role as a provider for the family and the community. Even after their degradation to a state of penury and dependence in the native village, Bam maintains his role doing conventional masculine activities. He hunts warthogs for the villagers to supply meat for the families, builds water tank to make himself indispensable, share insipid drinks with the native men etc. He even feels obligated to suppress his inner misgiving and fear as it might mar his masculine image. In the meeting with the village chief, Bam keeps a bold masculine pretense, drives the Bakkie and speaks for his family. He poses as if again he is in charge of everything and everyone around him. But in the triumph of regaining authority, he evades the fact that July only endows him with this power only to conceal the distorted picture of his former employee from the chief and his men.

II: The Third Space:

The clash between old and new ideologies creates an 'interregnum' or an 'interstice'. The old colonialist supremacist paradigm and the current wave to demolish all unjust and unequal paradigms collided with each other to pave the way for a reformed egalitarian society. In this moment of liminality, almost all the characters went through a gripping anxiety being subjected to grappling transformation. They felt like someone "from delirium rise and sink, rise and sink, in and out of lucidity." (Gordimer 3) Trapped between two ideologies and different roles the characters undergo unrest, contradiction and apprehension. In this 'in-betweenness' or the 'Third space of Enunciation' the subjects articulate themselves in different ways. As they experience continuous changes, their identities also find new meaning and expressions. Here, the validity of the former identity and beliefs are questioned and heavily scrutinized with the dawning of the new awareness. The past becomes shrouded under the novelty of the

situation and its values can be seen to be almost fading away under the heavy burden of survival in the present. The past is overturned while the present is too disorienting and does not elicit any meaning. In this situation, people try their best to fit in and re-orient their principles. This deconstruction and reconstruction of identity finds beautiful expression in the following lines where Maureen fails to redefine herself-

She was not in possession of any part of her life. One or another could only be turned up, by hazard. The background had fallen away; since that morning she had become conscious in the hut, she had regained no established point of a continuing present from which to recognize her own sequence. (139)

To cope with this challenging situation, different members of the Smales family reorganize themselves in different ways. Sometimes they mimic the natives' way of survival, and at other times they resist it vehemently. Either way, they could not retain their old selfhood and sense of superiority. Through mimicry, hybridization or resistance, they all become altered beings. While Bam and Maureen try to resist the natives' lifestyle in many ways, the children gave themselves in completely and inexorably. Bam try to retain his white male authority over July, but fails miserably. In his effort to make himself useful, he builds water tank for the villagers, shoot wart-hogs to supply meat, share thin beer with the native men etc. But in the end, he becomes a resigned, reserved and failed man, unable to fit in. He loses his true self and becomes someone else.

Like Bam, Maureen also attempts to resist the transformation. She does not only struggle to repel the shift, but also tries to preserve her prior authority. However, she is forcibly brought face to face with the sameness between 'us' and 'them'. As the outward façade of the colonial world order dissolves Maureen declines into an unbelievable backwardness. For the first time she starts smelling bad between her legs, learns to use waddling rags during menstruation, let the hair grows on her calves etc. She could

hardly believe the odour secreted from her own body. Her exterior reduces to such shabbiness that other people find it difficult to believe that she was once a rich white woman. She definitely does not fulfill July's wife Martha's perception of a white woman. Along with outward appearance, she is shorn off her pride as a mistress and goes off to fetch greens with the native women. Her futile attempts to destroy her racial supremacy and a selfhood lead to inexorable restlessness and conflict. She is thrown into a war within herself without even knowing what was becoming of her individuation or of her surroundings.

“She was in another time, place, consciousness; it pressed in upon her and filled her as someone's breath fills a balloon's shape. She was already not what she was. No fiction could compete with what she was finding she did not know, could not have imagined or discovered through imagination.”(29)

The Smales' destitute and pathetic conditions bring them to the level of the natives. July says, “Here they haven't got anything- just like us.” (79) It also subdue them “into the awkward sense of disbelief” and an immediate salvation to be alive. (Ibid) They learn to appreciate life as it is. Slowly and inevitably they become more like the native ‘Other’. In some ways their deprived and dependent conditions are even more disgraceful than the natives. “In clean, un-ironed clothes they were shabbier than July and Daniel.” (103)

While the adults struggle to mingle with the black community and to win their trust, the children easily and abruptly blend into their new surroundings. They effortlessly adopt the mannerisms and the language of the black children. This adaptation or imitation can be identified as reverse mimicry. The mimicry of the young Smales worked as a re-agent to remove the hierarchical position between blacks and whites. Being quite young, their mindset and values have not been indelibly influenced by the norms of the white society. So, it was pretty easy for them to cross the racial barrier and treat the “others” as their own. Maureen was simultaneously worried and satisfied at their altered behavior. Victor, Royce

and Gina made friends with the natives very easily and “seemed to understand what the black children said” very well. (68) They started blowing their noses with their hands, wiping their backs with stones, roaming around barefoot, playing native games, etc. Even their coughs sounded similar to that of the black kids. (50) Most importantly, they learnt to take care of themselves without any elder’s aid and began to become independent... They also seemed to gain immunity from many diseases by being exposed to the sun and dirt.

We also perceive mimicry in July’s character. Through mimicking the traits and customs of the master’s, he challenges the bifurcation of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Unintentionally he captured “The servant’s formula, attuned to catch the echo of the master’s concern” (95). He becomes more accustomed in the modern ways of the ‘self’ that he could barely declare solidarity with the uncivilized ‘other’. He seems to “smartened-up. He can’t live like the others”(66). The ideals and habits he brought back from the town “separated him from the way other people lived around him” (66). Being with a white family for 15years, he adopted their ways and unconsciously accepted his subservience to them as normal. That is why even when he recovered his own selfhood and agency, he could not easily come out of his past ideology. The writer says- “he went in and out the hut with the bearing he had had for fifteen years in their home; of service, not servile, understanding their needs and likings, allying himself discreetly with their standards” (10). However, July eventually recognizes the injustice and impropriety of their previous arrangement. Any relation that is not based on equality cannot be impartial. With the possession of power, July started questioning the rightfulness of the Smales’ authority over him. Ultimately, he questions the legitimacy of the system that enables the whites to exercise power over the blacks and compels the non-whites who are allegedly unworthy of taking decisions for themselves to accept their subjection. Fortunately, the realization that he is capable of owning agency enables him to shift his position from ‘Other’ to ‘Self’.

The Smales become aware of their fraudulent liberal attitude towards their servants and acknowledge that they have unconsciously integrated apartheid ideologies in their lifestyle. As Aimér Césaire' points in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) that,

"no one colonizes innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either; that a nation which colonizes, that a civilization which justifies colonization—and therefore force—is already a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased, which irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment" (39).

Slowly, but inexorably Maureen and Bam also proceed towards destruction. However, they deny they cannot extricate themselves from its evil grip. Without any warning, their life changes drastically. Meager things like a bar of soap, batteries for the radio, toilet paper gain supreme significance in their life. At the same time, being cast to the simplest life possible, they learn to appreciate every object of life. They also shed their pride as self-proclaimed pacifists and liberals. They realize that even though they opposed the apartheid policy, they have been unconsciously extracting benefits from it. While they have not been physically or morally involved with it, they were not outside the oppressive discourse. With the downfall of the established order, the normative gender roles also take a new turn. Losing the symbols of authority and power- the key, Bakkie and the gun, Bam slowly descends into a stupor of inertia and helplessness. Stripped of his last possessions, he has to resign power to July. Similarly, Maureen also starts to resist her husband's authority in many ways. Although she continues with her domestic tasks, she stops worrying about her children, (125) and becomes less dependent physically and psychologically on Bam. Unfortunately, despite her relentless refusal "enter into a relation of subservience with him", she slowly embarks on relationship of reliance with July. (101)

III: Shift:

According to Antonio Gramsci, agency challenges hegemony. That is why the exercise of agency is of supreme importance in the face of oppression. As human agency is non-static and

incomplete, it can be constantly re-created and shifted from one party to another (Mayo 38). So, the interchange of agency in *July's people* shifts the sense of hegemony which has been unconsciously incorporated into the Smales' mindset. As a host, July discovers his power to control his own life and the lives of those around him. "Having lived with racial oppression and white hegemony his whole life, he is not, however, fully aware of having agency. From his perspective, his racial identity limits his access to agency" (Dis 6). The lack of agency had obliged him to obey the white rulers all these years. Slowly but eventually, July comes to his senses that his subordination by the Smales is nothing but a replication of the white exploitative design. He becomes aware that he has himself assisted them in his subjugation silently and unconsciously without complaints. Gordimer remarks that the Smales found it quite unusual that July "should have been the one to decide what they should do, that their helplessness, in their own house, should have made it clear to him that he must do this — the sheer unlikeness was the logic of their position" (11). But with the change in the power dynamics, July suddenly finds himself in a position of authority. "Now he chose what he wanted to know and not know. The present was his; he would arrange the past to suit it." (96) With the gradual shift of power from the whites to the blacks, the roles of the 'Self' and 'Other' begins to fluctuate too. The novelty of the situation made it impossible for both the Smales and July to handle the calamity with prior knowledge from conventional angle.

Maureen and Bam have always claimed that they have treated July humanely and equally. But their liberal attitude is put to test when they have to submit to July's authority. Although July continues his role as a paid servant to the Smales, he begins to attain more control of the situation, himself and the Smales. In the village, he holds the great power and control. Gradually he becomes emancipated from servitude in many ways. He stops being submissive, timid and respectful to the Smales. He takes possession of the Bakkie from the Smales and learns to drive in a few days. He decides what needs to be done with the Smales. He controls his household, his women and simultaneously, he controls the

Smales' destiny as well. July also subverts the authority of Maureen in many ways. Here he assumes the role of a host and the Smales become the parasite. This realization and their complete dependence toward July drive Bam and Maureen to unimaginable anxiety. They were fed by July's women; succoured by July's family and hidden by July. So, the Smales have become their creatures, like their cattle and pigs. (96)

Despite being written through the perspective of several characters, the tale gravitates around Maureen Smales. Her claim of treating July in the most egalitarian way begins to falter, once she is robbed of her sense of superiority. She could never really digest the fact that July is now the provider of the family and they are living solely at his mercy. Maureen tries really hard to adjust to July's newfound freedom and authority, but her egotistic voice seems to surface every now and then. It is she who shrewdly asks July to return the keys of the Bakkie. She is also the one who confronts July regarding the missing gun. She accuses July of stealing things from her house and breaking her trust. She also meddles into July's family matters by threatening to reveal July's town woman's story to his wife. In reply, July retaliates angrily that it is none of her business and she can only tell others that July has always been a loyal, useful and good servant to her. July says to Maureen- "You tell everybody you trust your good boy. You are good madam, you got good boy" (Gordimer 70). Maureen tries to fit in with other black women, but her lifetime colonial education would not let her attempt it full-heartedly. As she could not hold back her superior attitudes, she was not accepted among them. She always maintained a safe distance from the people and practices of the black society. The close proximity with the black people shatters her hitherto sense of superior cultural identity. The identity that was primarily based on the assertion of difference crumbles miserably at the revelation of the underlying sameness of different races. She begins to realize that they are not really essentially different from the black people. Her three encounters with July that determine the course of the power-play also resonate with unusual sexual

tension. Clingman has termed this context as almost a "radicalization of sexuality" (200). She is struck with the realization that July's "measure as a man" has not rely on her verdict, her image of him. Helpless to take hold of anything around her, Maureen is possessed by "a wild rush of need to destroy everything between them" (JP 152). This outburst can be regarded as channeling tension of buried sexual attraction between the former "madame" and "boy". The narration is also suggestive of a growing sensation between them: "The incredible tenderness of the evening surrounded them as if mistaking them for lovers" (153)." But the exploitative system renders them incapable of articulating anything more beyond their madame-boy relationship. Brink has marked these confrontations between Maureen and July as Maureen's progression "from "having" to "being," from the dying "old" towards the as yet unborn "new" (170). Her previous ideals begin to erode while the new ones are too slow to take form. This leads to an irrepressible anxiety in her. The abrupt shift of power leaves Maureen confused, fractured, ambivalent and fearful. "She had never been afraid of a man. Now comes fear . . . from this one, from *him*. It spread from him" (98)

The Smales realize that they have not only lost the key, Bakkie and the gun, but their pride, dignity and power too. Unable to keep in control, they are compelled to accept that they are "[l]ucky to be alive". (Gordimer *JP* 26) Though, they could never acknowledge their subservience to July, they finally learn to utter without hesitancy that they "owe him everything" (121). Gratitude stuffed them crop to choking point, for July's unconditional loyalty and selfless assistance (58). But neither Bam nor Maureen could fathom "what would come next; what to do next" (26). In this note of uncertainty the novel comes to an end— Maureen runs towards the unknown helicopter without concerning herself about anyone or anything. Bailey says,

What Maureen runs to is a return to the illusion of identity created by a world of privilege and possession. What she runs from is her failure to find any creative source for re-birth. (222)

Finally, she has come to the “discovery that she has no substance and no self” (Bailey 215). But I believe Maureen’s running towards the unknown can be regarded as emancipation from the normative roles to embrace a reincarnation. As Clingman says, "she is running from old structures and relationships . . . towards her revolutionary destiny" (203). Her crossing the river, leaving the familiar “landmark of the bank” behind for the “real fantasies of the bush” can be suggestive of an emergence of consciousness. (*JP* 160). Temple-Thurston has also suggested the crossing “in terms of rebirth and balance” (57). Maureen is finally “trusting herself with all the suppressed trust of a lifetime” to embrace liberty and selfhood and proceeding towards the unknown to discover her identity free from all outside influence. “The running takes her beyond all domestic, motherly, daughterly or wifely roles”. (Brink 175) Maureen refuses to “exists only for and through her husband and children.” (Friedan 41) She runs- like a solitary animal at the season when animals neither seek a mate nor take care of young, existing only for their lone survival, the enemy of all that would make claims of responsibility (*JP* 160).

This running signifies Maureen’s reclaiming of her lost individuality and reawakening her inner desire. She has always been defined in relation to others— a daughter, a wife, a mother, a mistress, a colonizer, not as Maureen, an individual. Now, she sets of in the journey of rediscovering her subjectivity. She could be blessed with an opportunity or could be annihilated silently as nobody knows whom she is running to- *friends or foe?*

Conclusion

Through the close analysis of the novels, I have tried to justify my view that the determinist binaries of post-colonial discourse often fail to provide us with proper explanations while dealing with individual post-colonial subjects. Only through the breakdown of these imposed labels like Self-Other, oppressor-oppressed, colonizer-colonizer, master-servant, we can come to comprehend the subjectivity and positionality of those subjects. Upholding Bhabha's assessment, I have come up with the understanding that these binaries are never fixed, rather fluid and changeable, recurrently commingling and conflicting. There can hardly be any sovereign subject free from outside influence and inner contradictions. In fact, articulation or 'Enunciation' of subjectivity takes place in the cultural "in-between" or the "Third Space" in the midst of ambivalence and disorder. Subjectivity is never static and complete; it is constantly deconstructed and reconstructed. Under the destructive, yet inevitable influence of colonization, both the colonizer and the colonized turn into "Others" doubles of themselves. In the course of transgressing "Self"-hood the possession of power undoubtedly plays an important part. The trajectory of colonial subjects to attain fulfillment or wholeness of self often disrupts power dynamics. It is not always the colonizers who are in possession of power and authority. *In the Heart of the Country*, *The Grass is Singing* and *July's People*-all three novels emblemize this issue of reversal of power. Coetzee, Lessing and Gordimer, three internationally acclaimed writers handle national issue of pre and post-apartheid racial conflict in different ways in their unique writings, and while doing so, they problematize pre-conceived notion of identity, Self-Other binary, inert model of power structure, etc.

All three novels explore the position of white women in the male-dominated post-colonial regime. Examining the major characters of these novels, I have attempted to expose the

dilemma of white women on the side of colonial authority, who are compelled to imbue the paradigmatic dogmas and values of their race, yet excluded completely to the periphery of power. Despite being part of the ruling class, they suffer incarceration, subordination, oppression and discrimination; they are never included in the dominant discourse, but only used as transmitters of culture and upholders of white supremacy. Magda, Mary and Maureen, all three of them are compelled to sacrifice their individuation, desire and liberty in their desperation to get acceptance from the system. They discipline themselves under the male gaze and suppress their own perspectives. They fail to attain self-actualization and acknowledgement for lack of agency and freedom. Their inferior gender status renders them helpless, wretched and empty. Although the system intends them to be passive and conforming, I do believe none of these women are. They do take the trouble to interrogate the handed-down racist ideals; they do question the exploitative patriarchal hegemony; and they try to transcend their racial and gender boundaries to reincarnate as individuals. Unfortunately, none of them could accomplish that completely as they were too puny and feeble to battle the system which gains its strength through exploitation and tyranny. Their transgressions are reciprocated with reprimand, rejection, torture, abasement, loneliness, rape and even murder. Even then, I believe, their protests dissolve the dichotomous order of Self and Other and foreshadow an alteration in the despotic system.

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