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POST-COLONIALISM: POLARITIES AND SIMILARITIES IN *THE LYING DAYS* AND *THE GRASS IS SINGING*

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Abstract:

As contemporary writers presenting pan-African insight, Nadine Gordimer and Doris Lessing enjoy international reputation. Their works detail power relationships of the colonizer in their encounter with the Third World, where they are an insider as well as an outsider and for whom the awe-inspiring dark continent of Conrad is but a myth and a reality. The academic quest here is concerned with the differences and similarities in the nature of their encounter and their fictionalisation of it and how it coloured their perspectives in the postcolonial scenario. A victim of colonization and Apartheid, the African continent has always been in a state of flux. It has been shifting from rural to urban conditions, from farming to industry, from communal values to individualism and from oral to written concepts of communication. These changes in social, economic and political scenario paved the way for the emergence of literary effusions containing universal as well as local interest contributing to the complexity of African fiction. The sheer multiplicity of approaches in the novels by Africans as well as non-African authors and the nuances of their experiences provide different perspectives. Out of the ever increasing number of novelists, the writings of Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer stand out as perceptive records of the allegory of the oppressed and the oppressor. African experiences silhouetted against the vast canvas of African history and political environment, the concrete firsthand knowledge of human drama, and the undercurrent of psychological and social impact on helpless human beings form the subject matter for these two writers.

Keywords: *Capitalism, Individualism, Socialism, Objectivism, Epistemology, Self-realization, etc.*

This research endeavour is an attempt to show how history is dramatized and fictionalized by a writer like Nadine Gordimer who is still in Africa and a writer who has already left but whose memories tie her down to Africa. An attempt is made to explore fictionalisation of reality from two different perspectives. The dichotomy of existence in the African context, the cultural shock sustained by the colonizer and the animosity of the colonizer who cannot respond positively to the African bush, the ironical acknowledgement that the ideal world of the prosperous farmer is supported by black labour, all these come under the purview of these novelists. An effort has been made in this paper to relate the works of both these writers to postcolonial theories in the light of the troubled historical past of South Africa.

In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Robert Young presents postcolonial theory as an extension of anticolonial movements in the third world. "Even though colonialism has become passé, repercussions of the passing era of colonialism has left behind tell tale imprints on the psyche of people subjected to such historical truth" (Young, 7-8). As Padmini Mongia says in the Introduction to *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*:

> The development of postcolonial theory needs to be understood in terms of new socio-historic pressures. The political concepts that have shaped modern history–democracy, the citizen, nationalism no longer seem adequate for coping with contemporary realities. . . . Profound changes such as decolonization the movements of people on a hitherto unmatched scale, and new distributions of global power, have led to instabilities which have revealed that the old narratives of progress and reason are inadequate for addressing contemporary realities and the numerous fractures that attend them. Postcolonial theory has been formed as a response to these pressures even as it offers a means of speaking of them (5).

The historical fact of European colonialism governs the understanding of specific, local circumstances with the result that all that came before become "pre-colonial" and everything after, "postcolonial." The progress narrative that postcolonial theory is interested in critiquing remains firmly in place as the history of the world is re-written in terms of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial stages. The term "Postcolonial" connotes writing and other forms of cultural production which display an oppositional and resistant attitude towards colonialism and which are more or less anti-colonial in orientation. These works have an overt political stance and often articulate the violence of a racist regime and all the duplicity, tensions and perversions of the normalcy of a totalitarian state. The works of Nadine Gordimer and Doris Lessing describe a continuum of experience in which colonialism is experienced as an agency of disturbance, unsettling notions of the settler culture.

Postcolonial echoes all the ambiguity and complexity of different cultural experiences and addresses all aspects of postcolonial process from the beginning of colonial contact. Independence has not provided any solution to neo-colonial domination. Postcolonialism is a continuous process of resistance and reconstruction in the sense that it has paved the way for the developments of new elites within independent societies. It has led to the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistics or religious discriminations, continuing the unequal treatment of indigenous people in settler / invader societies. As such postcolonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds—migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe. Settler colonies problematise the idea of resistance as a simple binarism articulating the ambivalent complex and processual nature of all imperial nations.

Ashcroft et. al. assert in *The Empire Writes back,* "Postcolonial culture is inevitably a hybridised phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the 'grafted' European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology with its impulse to create and recreate an independent local identity" (195). Nurtured on Eurocentric norms, the European responds to the other in terms of identity or difference. He judges "the other" according to his own cultural values but the genuine comprehension of otherness is possible only if the self can negate or put in parentheses, the values, assumptions and ideology of his culture.

The negation is what we can perceive in the works of Nadine Gardiner and Doris Lessing. JanMohamed asserts that while the surface of each colonialist text purports to represent specific encounters with specific varieties of racial other, the subtext valorizes the superiority of European cultures, of the collective process that has mediated that representation. According to Aijaz Ahmad, the term postcolonial "is simply a polite way of saying not-white, not Europe, or perhaps not Europe-but inside Europe" (Ahmad, 28).

But living within a fractured society, Gordimer does not seem to speak like an unprivileged subject nor is there a sense of patronising the other. Even for Doris Lessing who fled the uncomfortable South African realities, opting for a voluntary exile in the mother country, such colonial mentality was an anathema. Both the writers project a sympathizing self across the borders of race and colour. Using Lacan's distinction of Imaginary and Symbolic stages of development as a conceptual tool in analysis, Jan Mohamed emphasizes the self-contradictions of binary constructions:

> The colonialist literature is divisible into two broad categories 'The Imaginary and The Symbolic.'The first type represented by the novels like E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*,

> attempts to find syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition of the colonizer and colonized (Jan, 15).

The novels of Joseph Conrad and Nadine Gordimer according to Jan Mohamed come under the category of symbolic fiction in terms of inter subjectivity, heterogeneity and particularity:

> This adamant refusal to admit possibility of syncretism, of a rapprochement between self and other is the most important factor distinguishing the 'imaginary' from the 'symbolic' colonialist text. The symbolic text's openness towards the other is based on a greater awareness of potential identity and heightened sense of the concrete socio-politico-cultural differences between self and other. Although the 'symbolic' writer's understanding of the other proceeds through self understanding, he is free from the codes and motifs of the deeper, collective classification systems of his culture (Jan, 22).

In Maxwell's opinion wherever postcolonial writers originated they shared certain outstanding features, which set their work apart from the literary traditions of England.

> There are two broad categories. In the first, the writer brings his own language—English—to an alien environment and a fresh set of experiences: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. In the other, the writer brings an alien language—English—to his own social and cultural inheritance: India, West Africa. (Maxwell, 82-3)

Implicit in Maxwell's analysis of the postcolonial is a particular kind of "double vision." This vision is one in which identity is constituted by difference; bound up with love or hate with a metropolis which exercises its hegemony over the immediate world of the post colonial" (Maxwell,26). Maxwell did not include South Africa in his category of settler colonies. White South African literature has clear affinities with Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Through her African encounter, Gordimer meets the double obligation, to history, society and ideology on the one hand and to her own artistic vision through a transformation of experience.It is possible to identify three groups in South African society

a) Indigenous minority b) Immigration societies c) Nationalities in competition. "Belonging to a group" called ethnic identity, manifests itself in different ways in different social, political and economic circumstances (Adam et. al. 17).

Focusing on the experience of white South Africans, through her words Gordimer implies that the price one pays for living in a colour-bar society and accepting the dubious privilege of belonging to the "master-race" is high. The setting of most of the novels and short-stories is the golden city of Johannesburg. Hybridity, marginality and the diasporic become ever more seductive notions for describing contemporary constructions of conflict-ridden subjectivity and experiences of migration becomes emblematic of the fissured identities, sustained by colonized people.

With post-colonization and neo-colonization in the air Gordimer becomes ex-centric. As a white South African writer even while enjoying the centric position Gordimer could write about the imperatives to decentre and topple the power structures in society. This peculiar positioning beckons ambivalence. Ambivalence in turn engenders alienation.

"Anxiety about ambivalence stems from a deep-seated contradiction in the process by which the other is constructed, a basis of fundamental contradiction which opens colonial discourse to possibility of fracture from within" (Bhabha, 30). But Jan Mohamed argues that "ambivalence is itself a product of 'imperial duplicity' and that underneath it all, a Manichean dichotomy between colonizer and colonized in what really structures colonial relations" (Jan, 55). The early novels of Gordimer and Lessing namely *The Lying Days* and *The Grass is Singing* uncover the ways in which such oppositions work in colonialist representations.

In an interview Gordimer herself has admitted her guilt over the colonial legacy. Voicing her nagging sense of guilt she admits, "I have gone through the bit of falling over backwards and apologizing because I am white" (Cooper-Clark, 83). By empathizing with the marginalized blacks in a country where guilt by association was a fact, she took the bold step of making writing, an act in a

political sense. By articulating peoples struggle in a country where "Politics is character" she has imaginatively essayed the African encounter at a social, political and psychological level (Cooper-Clark, 84). As social and historical vignettes her novels maintain a close observation of the world in which she lives. This observation ranges from matters of minor details such as the language people use, their habits, of dress and behaviour to broader social and political themes such as the rise and demise of the movement of multiracialism in 1950 to major historical events such as the accession to power of the National party in 1948, or the Soweto Revolt of 1976. According to Stephen Clingman, the first level at which she relays to us a history from inside is through close observation of the present, its realities, its codes and its implications (Clingman, 07).

As an insider the perspective she employs is social and historical in nature. Key to this perspective is that social and private life is seen as integrally related. In this respect to some critics her novels approximate to critical realism.

With the publication of her first novel *The Lying Days* Gordimer stirred up a hornet's nest when she ventured to step down from her pedestal of a colonizer to comment on the monstrous divisions and injustices that constitute life in South Africa. The limitation of outlook as a colonizer is not there in her works. As she confesses in an interview, "despite the laws, despite everything that has kept us (blacks and whites) apart, there is a whole area of life where we know each other" (Cooper-Clark, 81).

It is this knowledge which she has made us of in the larger interest of her novels. Her fictional judgments, which made her a chronicler of her times, show that she does not take an elusive position, choosing not to be silent on sensitive issues. There are no blinkers on attitude in her novels despite her imperial status, as party to the colonizer. To quote Stephen Clingman, her novels are "fictional models surveying the present and the future attempting to assess their implication for the world with which they come to grips" (Clingman, 13).

Collating Gordimer's first novel *The Lying Days* with Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, we encounter multifarious post colonial dilemmas. The theme of The European in Africa is a recurrent one in both Gordimer and Lessing. Like many white African writers before them, the sense of loss under a white skin pronouncing the alienation of the European subject is hinted at in *The Lying Days* as well as in *The Grass is Singing*.

The Lying Days is a novel of self-exploration where the novelist tries to find her own small personal voice, and her South African identity. It delineates the colonial hierarchy governing the Mine Estate of Atherton. As Clingman remarks, "The fundamental historical concern of *The Lying Days* lies in its general encounter with local environment" (Clingman, 91) and as an intrinsic part of this encounter the novel undertakes veritable wealth of social observation of the world with which it engages. The observation seems to have been drawn from the details of Gordimer's own early youth. As such the novel is in autobiographical form and certain descriptions of Atherton correspond with Gordimer's description of Springs where she grew up. The novel expounds a kind of English ideology where the parental generation regards England as their home, as do the white settlers of Doris Lessing's Southern Rhodesia. "For many the word 'Home' spoken nostalgically meant England, although both her parents were South Africans and had never been to England" (*GIS*, 32).

In *The Lying Days* the Mine Estate where Helen grows up is shown as part of the surviving remnants of an English colonialism. The novel suggests the class stratification internal to the white world with which racism is interlocked. Throughout the novel there is foregrounding of diversity and cultural differences. A corollary to the novel's investigation of South African identity is its exploration of South African literary identity. In one part of the novel Helen remarks, "I had never read a book in which I myself was recognisable in which there was a girl like Anna who did the housework and cooking and called the mother and father Misses and Baas" (*LD*, 20).

The books Helen reads as a girl tell her nothing about her own environment. The novels Mrs. Shaw borrows from the library tend to be concerned with English gentility. So Helen Shaw is in for a surprise when disobeying the orders of her parents, she goes out of the gate in a mood to explore the world outside her home. She stops at a Jew store "She stood in that unfamiliar part of the world knowing and flatly accepting it as the real world because it was ugly and did not exist in books" (*LD*, 21).

For Helen Shaw as well as for the novelist this real African encounter "was the beginning of disillusion, it was also the beginning of colonialism, the identification of the unattainable distant with

the beautiful, the substitution of "overseas" for "fairy land," Helen Shaw "felt for the first time something of the tingling fascination of the gingerbread house before Hansel and Gretel, anonymous, nobody's children in the woods" (*LD,* 21).

The cultural melee of the concession stores come as revelation of South African ethnicity and instead of going home she goes to the tennis club where everything was decorous. As in a picture she sees suddenly "the white figures with turning pink faces" providing a foil to the native's dark brown faces "dark as teak and dark as mahagony shining with the warm grease of their own liveliness lighting up their skin" (*LD,* 24). The otherness of the world of the natives engenders a lost feeling among the colonizers, resulting in alienation of the self. "In colonial discourse blackness has been frequently evoked as the ultimate sign of the colonized's racial degeneracy" (Bhabha, 77).

But this perceived otherness only induces a thrilled sense of excitement in young Helen Shaw. "She wanted to giggle, to prevent herself from squealing with excitement; she nearly stuffs her hand in her mouth" (*LD,* 21). This was Helen's transition from being into knowing, and moving from one level of maturity to the next entails a lot of wisdom. The chapter ends with a shift in focus from the local environment to the sophistication of the Tennis club highlighting the divide. Helen's introspective comment about the European crowd that "she was quite one of them" (*LD* 25), clinches the inevitability of her superior position and traces the trajectory of historical consciousness, the discovery of African cultural identity and of the self. Hence "The colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an other and yet knowable and visible (Bhabha 70-1). The colonized as "the other" are outside western knowledge as is represented in *The Lying Days,* at the same time Helen Shaw's family from their colonizer position tries to domesticate them and the novelist tries to bring them inside western knowledge by constructing knowledge about them. So this split position of the other inside and outside western knowledge is of prime importance in Gordimer's novels. As a novel of exploration *The Lying Days* represents this ambivalence and polyvalence of the colonized subject and colonized world sliding between the polarities of similarity and difference:

> A little girl must not be left alone because there were native boys about. That was all. Native boys were harmless and familiar because they were servants, or delivery boys bringing the groceries or the fish by bicycle from town or Mine boys something to laugh at in their blankets and their clay-spiked hair, but at the same time they spoke and shouted in a language you didn't understand and dressed differently in any old thing, and so were mysterious. . . . (*LD,* 14).

Colonial representations in the Victorian period tended to traffic in iconic representations of white women as epitomising the West's perceived higher moral and civil standards. Vron Ware explains in her book *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History:* "one of the recurring themes in the history of colonial repression is the way in which the threat of real or imagined violence towards white women became a symbol of the most dangerous form of insubordination" (Ware, 38).

The opening chapter of *The Lying Days* testifies to this concept, "an unwritten law so sternly upheld and generally accepted that it would occur to no child to ask why: a little girl must not be left alone because there were native boys about. That was all" (*LD,* 14). Here again the text reinforces the "split contrary position" of colonialist representations of stereotypes as "domesticated, harmless, knowable; but also at the same time wild harmful and mysterious" (*LD,* 53).

In *The Lying Days* exploration of society and self-exploration of the central character run parallel. The first seven years of Helen Shaw's life, pass at ease with the values of the enclosed world of white community. Contrasts provided by the natives hired as domestic help, and the sybaritic paraphernalia of the rich white community emphasizes the dual nature of African encounter.

Relations between black and white people on the Mine are not detailed to any great degree except for an incident of the strike that Helen witnesses as a young girl. It coincides with the historic African Mine workers strike of 1946. But the strike fictionalized is only an ineffectual protest on the Compound Manager's lawn over the mealie pap they are given to eat, where as 1946 African Mine strike was the longest single stoppage in South African history. The divide between the center and the marginalised, the haves and have-nots is greatly contrasted by the fact that the strikers come to register their silent protest on a Sunday while the English were having "lovely tea" in "Mrs. Ockert's beautiful lounge." "The boys at the compound didn't like the food they were given, and so they all came

together to Mr. Ockert's house to complain" (*LD*, 39).

Hunger strike of the natives contrasted with Helen's own hunger appears ironic. "Hunger was whistling an empty passage right down my throat to my stomach—I twisted my hand out of my father's and ran on ahead, to bacon and egg put away for me in the oven" (LD, 39). Here objectified perception is directed to inner subjective experiences. Ethnicity arouses curiosity in young Helen:

> Standing before the one small window of the native medicine shop, I could no longer be bored before the idea of beckoning witch and the collection of pumpkins and lamps and mice that shot up into carriages and genii and coachmen or two headed dogs . . . I was interested in the native customers inside the medicine shop who were buying roots and charms, the way people buy aspirins (*LD*, 21-22).

An encounter in the nature of confrontation with the African bush and alien terrain is there in Lessing's maiden effort *The Grass is Singing*. The African bush and an environment to which the protagonist could not respond spiritually prepare the ground for a different mode of encounter where ultimately the bush avenges itself. *The Grass is Singing* like *The Lying Days* being a debutant work is full of the African milieu and lush green nature descriptions. The ambience created is such that the whites encounter with an unknown terrain and the awe of such cross-cultural confrontations gives away the sympathetic reaching out at contract zones. Except for their first creative efforts, pure nature descriptions are absent in the works of both writers. Descriptions of landscapes slowly fade away, giving way to mindscape. Bush, veld and sky evolve ethereal atmosphere: "The stars moving and flashing among tree boughs. The sky was luminous, but there was an undertone of cold grey. The stars were bright; but with a weak gleam" (*GIS*, 190).

The settler world is set in this beautiful background. The novel has as its protagonist, Mary Turner, a conventional woman who enters into a bad marriage because of the force of circumstances. The social context dissected in the novel is preoccupied by colour issues. The black servant Moses is looked down upon as "the other." A few reviewers have criticized Lessing's portrayal of the "boy" Moses as vague and shadowy. The portrayal is suggestive rather than vague, and he is a reflector of white responses; as colonial stereotype, he epitomizes animalistic and brutal strength. Certain references in the novel reinforce such stereotyped notions. For example, the novelist tells us that Moses "followed her like a dog" (67).

The otherness of the colour-hiatus is strongly pronounced throughout the text. Although with her husband Dick she seemed at ease, quiet, almost maternal, "with the natives she was a virago" (*GIS*, 69). She was very pernickety with the little they left undone and bullied them. Once when Dick fell ill she took on herself the business of controlling the natives. Noticing that one of the farm hands had stopped working she shouted at him to get back to work. At this he stopped still, looked at her squarely and said in his own dialect which she did not understand. He says:

> 'I want to drink.'
> The man then repeated in English 'I . . . want . . . water' sticking his finger down his throat.
> Most white people think that it is 'cheek' if a native speaks English. . . . Involuntarily she lifted her whip and brought it down across his face in a vicious swinging blow (*GIS* 119).

Here again through his "mimicry" of the European language, the colonizer in Mary Turner woke up to the "worrying threat of resemblance" between colonizer and colonized. As Albert Memmi states in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, "The mythical portrait of the colonized therefore includes an unbelievable laziness, and that of the colonizer a virtuous taste for action" (79).

The text cites many instances of the Nero complex which Memmi speaks of in the temperament of the colonizer.

> . . . when a white man in Africa by accident looks into the eyes of a native and sees the human being (which it is his chief preoccupation to avoid), his sense of guilt which he denies flames up in resentment and he brings down the whip (*GIS*, 144).

We see Moses, the native boy almost entirely through the eyes of Mary and other whites who "colour" him in accordance with their prejudices and apprehensions. He is a reflection of white responses as when he acts, to kill Mary, out of jealousy aroused by the coming of the new white assistant Marston. He sheds the African role of the colonized in which he had borne the blows of Mary passively and becomes vindictive, self-defining as his white masters. The xenophobia of the colonized victim, here acts as a catalyst to trigger him to violent action. The narrative voice wonders, ". . . what thoughts of regret or pity or perhaps even wounded human affection were compounded with the satisfaction of his completed revenge, it is impossible to say" (*GIS* 206). "The Conradian note of speculation upon the incomprehensible workings of the native mind" (14) drops the curtain on this human drama of neurotism and revenge. The Turners at the very outset are pictured as pathetic members of the master race. Making a distinction between a colonial, colonizer and the colonial Memmi says:

> A colonial is a European living in a colony but having no privileges, whose living conditions are not higher than those of a colonized person of equivalent economic and social status. By temperament or ethical conviction a colonial is a benevolent European who does not have the colonizer's attitude towards the colonized (Memmi, 10).

If so Dick can be termed a colonial. As is stated in *Doris Lessing's Africa* by Michael Thorpe, Dick is "the first of many fated dreamers in an uncompromising country that yields only to the fighter" (14).

Through the character of Dick, Lessing presents a romantic's encounter with Africa. Turner is the first character to embody how an intense love of Africa can exist with a callous indifference to its people. Dick loved the land and will not violate it like Charlie Slatter, the stereotype of the exploiting colonizer. But Mary Turner only. ". . . wanted him to be a success and make money so that they would have the power to do what they wanted, to leave the farm to live a civilized life again. The stinking poverty in which they lived was unbearable; it was destroying them" (*GIS*, 97).

African encounter as portrayed in *The Grass is Singing* is in the form of a fight for survival. Dick's point of view differs from that of his wife. He loved the soil and ". . . could not look at farm as she did. He loved it and was part of it. He liked the slow movement of the seasons, and the complicated rhythm of the 'little crops' that she kept describing with contempt as usual" (*GIS*, 123). Once Charlie Slatter, the successful farmer tries advising him:

> It was no pity for Dick that moved him. He was obeying the dictate of the first law of white South Africa. 'Thou shalt not let your fellow white sink lower then a certain point', because if you do the nigger will see he is as good as you are (*GIS*, 178).

As a colonizer Charlie tries to ward off the worrying threat of resemblance between colonizers and colonized. This threatens to collapse the colonizer's structure of knowledge in which such oppositional distinctions are made. The ambivalent position of the colonized in relation to the colonizer as "almost the same but not quite" is oft repeated in the novel.

Mary's hostile encounter with African bush is vividly portrayed towards the end of the novel. Her sense of displacement, alienation and neurotic frenzy come to the surface. Here in the novel eventually Moses becomes the avenging spirit of the bush. Like the biblical Moses striking the rocks of the desert to bring forth the waters of salvation, Mary seals her fate in the hand of the native boy Moses. As Michael Thorpe remarks, "Moses becomes an almost superstitiously conceived symbol of an abused African reality of which Mary approaches tragic understanding" (Thorpe, 16).

> For the white man (and woman) the black man is marked by his colour and his supposedly limitless sexuality. 'Negrophobia' turns on the fear and desire of rampant black sexuality. For the white subject, the black other is everything that lies outside the self. For the black subject however, the white other serves to define everything that is desirable, everything that the self desires. This desire is embedded within a power structure, therefore 'the white man is not only the other but also master, real or imaginary' (Loomba, 144).

The two great writers straddle the complex world of Africa and Europe in their romantic encounter with its reality. The awe inspiring beauty of African bush clothed in semiotic language heightens the climax in *The Grass is Singing* whereas the mine town, its complexities politics and the emotional entanglements of people connected with it colour the vision in Gordimer's fiction.

The marginal and the central as constructs have their grounding in alienation. The sense of alienation induces Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing* to waste away in the sylvan beauty of the African bush to which she could not respond.

A major feature of postcolonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. Critics such as D.E.S. Maxwell have made this the defining model of postcolonialism:

> A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation or voluntary removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English (Maxwell, 9).

In translating the colonial experience for the readers from an impartial point of view Lessing and Gordimer objectify and present colonial dilemmas and contradictions within the society suspended between an indigenous and exotic culture, the subject succumbs to displacement, alienation and various other physical and psychic dislocations.

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