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GENDER AND RACE-CODED SEXUALITY AND EMPIRE IN SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S "THE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE" AND DORIS LESSING'S THE *GRASS IS SINGING*

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the interrelationship between gender, race, sexuality and the British Empire as reflected in Somerset Maugham's short story "The Force of Circumstance" (1924) and Doris Lessing's The Grass Is Singing (1950) , narrating the colonial period. Both works are about inter-racial sex and its effects in terms of patriarchal gender roles, and their role in the making of British Empire. Therefore, the study analyzes the role of gender and race in the making of the Empire, which is a male environment where appropriate patriarchal gender roles control sexuality, particularly women's sexuality as the breeders of the white race and empire .

The study also analyzes the power of the colonized who mimic the colonizer and subvert colonial authority, thus decenter them as much as the fluidity of all stereotypical identities who are open to transformations because of their hybridity . In this respect, the works are analyzed mainly in the light of the postcolonial theories of Homi Bhabha, Robert Young, Rana Kabbani, Ronald Hyam, Ann Laura Stoler, Barbara Bush, Jenny Sharpe, Ania Loomba, Catherine Hall, Philippa Levine, Sara Mills and so on, particularly referring to the terms mimicry, ambivalance, colonial authority, imperial gaze, cultural hybridity, going native, "domestication and feminization" (of the empire) .

Key words: gender, race, sexuality, the Empire, hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry

1-Introduction

The aim of this study is to discuss the interrelationship between gender, culture, racism in the constitution of British Empire in the colonial era as reflected in Somerset Maugham's short story "The Force of Circumstance" (1924), and Doris Lessing's novel, The Grass Is Singing (1950), which are about inter-racial sex relationship between colonized and colonizer. Both works depicted how colonial policies intersected with domestic lives of colonizers and colonized and controlled the sexuality of both sides continuously, for colonial world, particularly British Empire, was a very masculine world, dominated by Western male, a white hero who had complete sexual control over both white and native women in a colony. However, the relationship between colonizer and colonized was never one-sided because it

was ambivalent as argued by Homi Bhabba, Robert Young, Ania Loomba, Catherine Hall. Based on racism and the idea of superior masculinity and femininity, colonial rule and culture always articulated superior white gender relations through marriages and family life and control of sexuality to impose colonial power and maintain the purity of colonizer's white race.

Catherine Hall, referring to Edward Said, writes that the certainty about the divisions between Europeans and their others as an "us" and "them", has been undermined as the focus has turned to the ambivalence of colonial 'discourse', a shift associated especially with the work of Homi Bhabha (*Introduction* 15) . Ambivalance, as Homi Bhabba and Robert Young explain in their well–known works, *the location of culture* (1994) and *Colonial Desire* (1995), describes the state of simultaneous attraction and repulsion, establishing the relationship between colonizer and colonized . Bhabba argues that colonial discourse, which produces colonizer and colonized, is hybridized because "other denied knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority" (114), producing ambivalent subjects who fluctate between compliance and resistance, and disrupt colonial authority (66-91) .Hence, culture is also hybrid in colonial spaces due to colonial encounters, constituting the "Third Space" in Bhabba's terms which is contradictory and ambivalent (38-9) .

Furthermore, according to Robert Young, colonial authority and discourse are characterized by their ambivalance and hybridity which reverse "the structures of domination in the colonial situation"(23) . Besides, culture, for Robert Young, always "operates antithetically" and is never "liable to fall into fixity, stasis or organic totalization" (53), producing the other through complex and often contradictory differences, inscribed within itself (54). Hence, it has always been racially constructed and racism is an integral part of culture (54; Hall 11). Similarly, for Bhabba, 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" (70) . Regarding racism, Kabbani also writes that for the European, other "races were his inferiors, lower down on the great scale of being (how low depending on how dark they were)", who "shared many qualities with animals, of which unbridled sexual ardour was one" (8) . Therefore, the stereotypes that represent colonized peoples are always narrated in various derogatory ways, associated with their race as Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Edward Said have argued, emphasizing only the dehumanising aspect of colonialism in their works .

However, Bhabba argues that colonial discourse which excludes the colonized as the other, essentially outside the western culture and civilization, also attempts to bring the other inside this culture through a process of training and education which is an ambivalent situation, never producing a perfect image of the original; it produces a "mimic man" who "is almost the same but not quite" as "a partial presence"(or representation / recognition) in Bhabba's words (86, 88) which opens up spaces for the colonized "to subvert the master discourse" (Loomba 89) . According to Ania Loomba, colonial discourse was "forged *relationally*" and "neither colonizer nor colonized is independent of the other" (178, emphasis original) . Loomba who seems to have a similar view with Bhabba states that "(o)ne

of the most striking contradictions about colonialism is that it both needs to 'civilize' its 'others' and to fix them into perpetual 'otherness' (173) . Hence, the streotypes of colonized peoples are frequently repeated through the discourse of colonialism simply to secure their status as the other. Yet, despite this fixity, the stereotype is also ambivalent, therefore productive and in process because of the ambivalence of colonial rule and discourse, which gives rise to a controversial proposition, disrupting the clearcut authority of colonial domination (Bhabba 66-84) . Consequently, colonial identities and their "others" are fluid, processive stereotypes, open to change usually through mimicry as depicted in Somerset Maugham's short story "The Force of Circumstance" (1924), and Doris Lessing's novel, The Grass Is Singing (1950) , which narrate the colonial period.

2-Race and Gender-based Values and The Empire:"The Force of The Circumstance"

Somerset Maugham's story is about the relationship between a newly-wed couple, Guy and Doris . Guy, an Englishman , born in Sembulu, part of Malaya, works for the Sultan as his father did before him. On leave in England he meets Doris, an English woman and marries her . When they arrive in Sembulu, Doris is at first very happy in this new place and new life, but eventually she comes to realize that her husband is the father of three children through a relation with a native woman . At the end of the story, Doris decides to return to England, and the Malay woman , with her three children, comes back in the bungalow where they used to live before Doris's arrival as Guy's wife.

The story is narrated through the selective omniscient, third- person narrator, reflecting Doris's and Guy's points of view. However, the Malay woman's presence is felt almost from the beginning to the end of the story although she never speaks English . In fact, the woman is never narrated as a full individual like Guy and Doris, but described as a list of some features about her physical appearance and attitude, associated with her race and body , which is one of the ways of othering a person or a people as Sara Mills argues in her *Discourses of Difference* (87-90). As Bhabba also argues, "[t]he construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference-racial and sexual"(67) . Regarding colonial fantasies, derived from cultural stereotypes which articulate "the links between sex and race", Robert Young writes that "blackness evokes an attractive, but dangerous sexuality, an apparently abundant, limitless, but threatening, fertility. And what does fantasy suggest if not desire?" (97) However, this desire was always regarded as masculine, implying sexual dominance and power, a key to maintain the white European man's superiority. As Robert Young also argues: "[r]ace was defined through the criterion of civilization, with the cultivated white Western European male at the top", indicating that "race was defined in terms of cultural, particularly gender, difference-carefully gradated and ranked" (94) .Hence, colonies were places of masculine enterprise where an idealized, white male figure was regarded as a colonial hero and British Empire was a very masculine empire, dominated by white men with a gendered perpective (Levine 1-8) "built on the notion of separate spheres for men and women"(Hall 46) . In short, gender strenghtens race and sex borders because it was integral to the articulation of whiteness and to categories of cultural and racial difference, defining

imperial identities, national belonging which continued even in the twentieth century (Bush *Gender and Empire* 77) .The duty of women in the Empire was to reproduce the race, to bear children and maintain their men and household whereas the white male colonizer was a hero whose work was to explore, discover, conquer or dominate (Hall 47) to fulfill their imperial mission of civilization.

However, after the First World War, "[w]artime experience had undermined the confident imperial masculinities associated with the nineteenth-century Empire. In the 1920s it became more difficult to recruit elite Colonial Officers" (Bush *Gender and Empire* 84). The post-war generation was selfish and materialistic, and was not satisfied with colonial service. Men no longer seem to fit for the imperial mission as narrated in the inter-war writings of Graham Greene, George Orwell and Somerset Maugham, in particular (84) . Barbara Bush, citing Robert Heussler's *British Rule In Malaya*, writes that Maugham's fictional colonial world depicts many anti-heroes who "lacked imperial masculine virtues and were simultaneously weak, pathetic, neurotic, insecure, and womanizing"(84) which applies to Guy in Maugham's "The Force of The Circumstance".

In the story, it is clearly observed that the Malay woman's presence disturbs, even annoys Guy although she is usually represented as a voice, even a "sibilant whisper" in most of the scenes in the story. Therefore, she is always dismissed by him. After her first appearance, the woman follows Doris and Guy almost like their shadows which arouses Doris's curiosity. When Doris mentions the halfcaste boys she saw, Guy's evasive answers about the parents of the boys do not satisfy her. Doris thinks that Guy's indifference seems "a little callous" when he says that a lot of fellows who have native wives, send them back to their village when they go back to England or marry an Englishwoman although he explains her that they will be properly provided for by their English fathers and recieve an education to get jobs as clerks in a Goverment Office. But, Doris, with "a frawn on her frank, open, pretty English face", cannot approve of a system as such as an Englishwoman even though Guy tells her that the Sultan encouraged the maintenance of this system, viz, "to keep house with native girls".

Throughout the story, "Englishness" is associated with Doris rather than Guy, and narrated, first through her physical description, and then through her attitude and thoughts . As for Guy's Englishness, despite the description of his little round body, "with a red face like the full moon, and blue eyes", and his pimples, it is not emphasized like that of Doris. On the contrary, his devotion to Sembulu is narrated even through his own voice, implying his cultural hybridity: "After all England's a foreign land to me, he told her "My home's Sembulu"" (160) . Since, hybrid identities, both cultural and racial, are never total and complete in themselves because of their hybridity, they are perpetually open to transformations, always in process because they are hybridized in a colonial context while they are in touch with other cultures . Hence, born and brought up in Sembulu, Guy is culturally a hybrid rather than English even though he marries an English woman . Unlike Guy, Doris, though, at first thinks that Sembulu is her home too, soon realizes that she does not belong to this country culturally and psychologically although she is not treated as the inferior other like the native woman who is always narrated in terms of her body and race in the story:

> They passed her. She was slight and small, with the large, dark, starry eyes of her face and a mass of raven hair. She did not stir as they went by but stared at them strangely. ... Her features were a trifle heavy and her skin was dark but she was very pretty. She held a small child in her arms. Doris smiled a little as she saw it, but no answering smile moved the woman's lips. Her face remained impassive (169-170) .

Ania Loomba writes that brown and black women are represented by Europeans as "victims, or as desirable or passive", yet "libidinally excessive and sexually uncontrolled" "deviant femininity" (154-55) and the Malay woman seems to be the embodiment of these ambivalent features, which depicts the ambivalence of colonial representations of natives. Since representation "is itself a process of giving concrete form to ideological concepts" (Ashcroft 104) , as it was claimed by poststructuralist thinkers, the native woman is also represented in terms of her racial features such as a pretty woman with dark skin, dark eyes and black "raven" hair, silent gaze, "shrill" and "vituperative voice", which imply her disruptive power even though she is "slight" and "small". She watches the couple going with "expressionless face", particularly looking at Doris rather than Guy, although he looks at her for a moment. She does not return Guy's, the colonizer's look as she is busy trying to attract Doris's attention in order to assert herself . Therefore, she does not even return Doris's friendly smile which indicates her hostile attitude towards Doris, the colonizer who has suddenly intruded and replaced her . In other words, the colonized woman tries to capture the white woman, the colonizer through her insistent gaze and "expressionless face", in a sense mimicing the colonizer who controls and captures the colonized . As Bhabba puts it : "[t]he look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined , where the observer becomes the observed" (89), which impliesthat domination is not total at all. The colonized such as the Malay woman is represented as an ambivalent figure who can be self-assertive and challenging even at the very moment she seems weak and helpless. When she is struck by the houseboy and the water-carrier to prevent her from coming in, she falls to the ground with her baby in her arms which profoundly disturbs Doris, the white mistress who cannot bear such a brutal treatment towards a woman, as she herself is the embodiment of racial and moral superiority of the ruling race .

In fact, Guy also tells Doris that neither he nor the native woman love each other, and he has no sense of his children belonging to him simply because they are not white (185). He also confesses that he has offered her money to go to another village which she refused and began to blackmail him. But, as soon as Doris leaves, that evening, the bare-footed Guy wears a loose native jacket and a sarong as he had been accustomed to wear before Doris came and accepts the woman's offer to come back . Despite his marriage, Guy's lapses from standard European behaviour, such as his adoption of local customs in terms of clothing and his inter-racial sex liaison, indicate his fluctuations between the two different cultures, displaying that the libidinal desire of the white, male colonizer is always ambivalent and racist. As RobertYoung puts it, "we find an ambivalent driving desire at the heart of racialism: a compulsive libidinal attraction disavowed by an equal insistence on repulsion" (149) which applies to Guy, the white, male colonizer as well . Similarly, Rana Kabbani also

writes that "Europe's feelings about Oriental women were always ambivalent ones. They fluctuate between desire, pity, contempt and outrage" (26) .

However, Guy's reversion to his former life which is a lapse from European culture after Doris leaves, implies the danger of "going native". The hot climate and the beautiful landscape with its birds, flowers, jungle, rain and river, described in details throughout the story, demostrating the seductive beauty of the area, is an implication that it can lead to moral and even physical degeneracy often associated with inter-racial sexual liasions which is also a widespread fear of the colonizers in many colonial societies who regard it as the contamination and degeneration of their civilized race[2], for "[the] colonized land seduces European men into madness" (Loomba 136) . In the story, both the beauty of the landscape and the Malay woman who is also part of this nature, were so seductive that even Doris was attracted by their beauty at first and "loved the country at once" . Her *"breath was taken away by the beauty*, ... of the scene. ... The gracious land seemed to offer her a smiling welcome" (166, emphasis added) .Hence, Doris never felt lonely although they were in Sembulu only for four months. However, in reality, Guy has to marry an Englishwoman like his friends did to maintain the racial purity of the colonizer's stock as well as the ethical and moral priciples of colonialism . He says: "I was fed up with it . I told her I was going to marry a white woman"(183) .

In fact, although concubinage with local women was no longer the fashion in India and the white Dominions at the beginning of the twntieth century, it was still in practice in certain parts of the Empire such as Burma, Malaya, Africa, particularly in the lonelier districts among the bachelors (Hyam *Understanding*, 418) . However, according to Barbara Bush, women's emancipation after 1918 "reconfigured British women's relationship to the Empire" (*Gender* 81) . Women contributed to the welfare of the Empire as virtuous and respectable wives and mothers, disseminating imperial values such as the maintenance of racial purity and a glorious, white Empire of civilization (77-97) . In other words, European women contributed to the decline of concubainage. Similarly, Ann Laura Stoler also writes about European women's contribution to the decline of concubainage in the early twentieth centrury. For her, "[m]any European women opposed concubainage but not because they were categorically jealous of and threatened by Asian women. More likely, it was because of the double standard concubainage condoned for European men" (Stoler 2002, 57) .Therefore, inter-racial sex was regarded as lack of self-control, a weakness of character for male colonizer, a consequence of the "domestication" and "feminization" of the Empire (90-94).

As Jenny Sharpe also argues, "domestic sphere is a space of racial purity that the colonial housewife guards against contamination from the outside" (92). Importantly,"British Women's Emigration Association, ... used marriage as one of its incentives to encourage women to emigrate", stressing that it is "an oppportunity to civilize the world and secure British values in the colonies" (Whitlock 352), which is the "domestication" and thus civilizing of the empire (Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* 132) . The white woman 's

[2] See R.Young 104-177; Loomba 136-37, 158-59; Mills *Gender and Colonial Space* 105 .

uterus was regarded as "the most important organ of the race" [3] (Whitlock 352) . In short, sexuality, particularly women sexuality, should be controlled continuously to maintain "the health and the wealth of the male imperial body politic" (McClintock 47) .

On the other hand, superior white masculinity in colonial discourse " was defined by rational thought, a sense of duty and 'gentlemanly values" (Bush, *Imperialism*131) . Hence, the white male colonizer is supposed to be a superior, imperial hero who can control the inferior colonized men forcing them into submission (131) . However, Ronald Hyam in his *Empire and Sexuality : The British Experience* (1990) argues that sexual relations with native women were necessary for the mental well-being of the lonely colonizer who seeks comfort with a native woman which is also a means to dominate and control natives as he acquires knowledge about their affairs and culture. Hence, for Hyam, the colonial sphere meant sexual freedom for British males as well as domination and exploitation, and sexuality had an integral part in the proper functioning of the empire. Conversely, Sara Mills argues that Hyam's work serves "a contrast to the stereotypical view of sexualized space, which centres on the need for protection of British women" (*Gender and Colonial Space* 36), particularly, to maintain the purity of the white race . She also adds that it also points out "the way in which hetereosexual and homosexual British males sexually exploited colonized males, females and children and presented their sexual activity as something for which they do not need to take responsibility"(37) just as Guy who does not care about his native family. For Guy, his relationship with the Malay woman is nothing but "the force of circumstance", viz, a consequence of the life conditions in a colony and the existing system, encouraged by the native ruler, the Sultan, albeit it was already abolished when Doris came to Sembulu . In this respect, Guy is a part of this system as a stereotypical male colonizer. The implications of the danger of "going native" such as his packing up what belongs to Doris and his being bare-footed in his loose native jacket and sarong soon after Doris's depature from Sembulu, disclose the fluidity of his colonial identity once again as a stereotypical male colonizer

Furthermore, Guy also discloses that the Malay woman does not love him either, because "(n)ative women never do really care for white men"(185) . Rana Kabbani, referring to the Victorian colonizer's texts, writes that, the native woman can be "compliant" and "seemingly complacent"; but "she hardly ever felt love for her keeper" (47) who "occupied her land, oppressed her people, and imposed his personal will upon her" (48) . For Kabbani, as a victim, her "emotional detachment was her only defence-feeble as it was-against total victimisation" . She further claims that the colonizer "had the power to enslave her, but he could not *make* her love him" (48, emphasis original) . Hence, the Malay woman comes back only to make Guy, the colonizer realize that she cannot be dismissed easily which displays her will-power and sense of self-defence. The Malay woman is represented both as a victim and a schemer like the stereotypical Oriental women who were usually represented as "erotic victims and scheming witches" (Kabbani 26) . In fact, her dependence on Guy for convenience under the existing circumstances turns her into an opportunist . Philippa Levine writes that native women certainly "learned to use their body as a commoditiy to improve

[3] See also McClintock 47.

their own situation" (143) which was a useful way to small priviliges or only a torment for most of them (144) . However, concubinage sometimes allowed women to rise in status and wealth (138) . Obviously, the Malay woman learned to use her body to improve her status as a white man's woman .

As for Doris, realizing her husband's callous irresponsibility as a representative of colonial authority and his failure to control the native woman as much as the woman's will-power to act and claim her rights in her own way, she is proufoundly disappointed and frightened . The look in her eyes puzzled Guy, for "he seemed to read in them a strange fear" (186) which implies that the woman, as her "other", is a threat to Doris' stable self, her sense of superiority and integrity as a member of dominant power. Therefore, her attitude immediately changes . She is no longer the kind and loving woman who pities a poor, native woman . Doris discloses her hatred almost like a racist colonizer which prevents her from coming to terms with the situation . Since, the stereotypical colonial housewife's duty is to protect the racial purity and maintain a seperation of races as the embodiment of racial and moral superiority (Sharpe, 93) , for a colonial housewife such as Doris, even "the touch of" Guy is "odious" now (195) . She cries :

> That wouldn't help. She'd be there always.You belong to them, you don't belong to me. It's stronger than I am. It's a physical thing. I can't help it, …I think of you holding those thin *black arms* of hers round you and it fills me with *a physical nausea* . I think of you holding those little *black babies in your arms* .
> *Oh, its loathsome* (195, emphasis added) .

In short, what Doris experiences under the circumstances, is un-homeliness as a sense of cultural displacement through the discovery of the hidden which reveals the traumatic ambivalence of colonial authority, recalling Bhabba's argument that culture is "heimlich" but "cultural authority is also unheimlich" because it is intertextual, interacial (136-37) , which indicates the duality of culture like colonial authority and discourse, always liable to fixity and stability as well as to changes and diversity. The sense of duality shatters Doris's integrity, her stable self and identity both as an Englishwoman and as the colonizer's wife which causes her estrangement from her husband .

3-Control of Sexuality: White Woman vs. Black Houseboy: *The Grass is Singing*

However, inter-racial sex relationships and 'going native' become much more dangerous and complicated when they take place between a white female colonizer and a black man as in the case of Mary Turner, the wife of an English farmer, Dick Turner, and her black servant, Moses in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* (1950) . The novel questions the vulnerability of the white colonial identities and myth through the downfall of the Turner family, particularly through Mary Turner who develops sexual desire for her black servant, Moses, as a white colonizer and suffers from a simultaneous fear of repulsion and attraction as she becomes obsessed with this ambivalent situation in the course of time. In fact, Mary's fascination with Moses' body is a consequence of her loneliness and displacement because of Dick's failures as a white farmer. He is not a white hero like his neighbour Charlie Slatter who is a successful, rich farmer. Therefore, Mary is ashamed of their poverty, which means

that they fail to preserve their status as white settlers in Africa. As Barbara Bush argues," [s]uperior white gender identities were linked to middle- or –upper class status. Lower class and poorer whites … as opposed to the elite agents of the British and other empires- also contributed to the culture of colonialism, but were regarded by the elite classes as a potential threat to the colonial order"(2006:132) . Bush also further argues that poorer whites or lower class whites "were more likely to engage in mixed-race relationships, posing a threat to the racial borders that sustained white prestige and power" (132). In this context, Mary's story seems to verify what Bush argues above. The myth of white superiority should be preserved no matter how hard it is, as articulated in the novel as well:

> And then it was that someone used the phrase 'poor whites'. It caused disquet. There was no money-cleavage in those days …, but there was certainly a race division. The small community of Afrikaners had their own lives, and the Britishers ignored them. 'Poor whites were Afrikaners, never British. But the person who said the Turners were whites stuck to it defiantly. What was the difference? What was a poor white? It was the way one lived, a question of standards. …
>
> Though the arguments were unanswerable, people would still not think of them as poor whites. To do that would be letting the side down. The Turners were British after all. (Lessing 10-11)

Hence, "the district handled the Turners in accordance with that *esprit de corps"* which is a group mentality and "the first rule in Africa", particularly, for the white community. (Lessing 11) . However, the roots of Mary's loneliness and dissapointment in her marriage go back to her childhood. She cannot marry till she is over thirty because of the bad influence of her childhood memories. The mariage of her parents was disastrous for her mother and Mary. Therefore, she ignores her womanhood even at her youth and develops a profound distaste for sex in the couse of time. Her sudden marriage to Dick is simply the consequence of social pressure upon her because she remains unmarried, behaving like a young shy girl, although she is over thirty. Therefore, she marries Dick without knowing him well and leaves the town life to live on Dick's farm which she is not used to. She thinks, "Yet what was Dick to her, really? Nothing. She hardly knew him. He was a spare, sunburnt, slow-voiced, deep-eyed young man who had come into her life like an accident, and that was all she could say about him"(Lessing 49). Therefore, Mary is very much relieved to escape a honeymoon because Dick could not afford it.

In the novel, Mary's relationship with Moses begins almost in the middle of the book through a quarrel between her and Moses. At first, Mary treats him with a rigid discipline and hatred as she has treated her former servants. For Mary, he is just one of those black servants, whom she loathes deeply, because they are "evil-smelling", animal-like, "alien and primitive creatures with ugly desires she could not bear to think about"(Lessing 95-96), in other words, they are "the other" and therefore, outside her orbit . Having been shaped by white cultural conduct, which taught her to reject the "other" long time ago in her childhood, Mary even strikes Moses on the face with her whip because he stops working to drink water and insists on it despite her orders. However, Moses answers her in English because he can communicate with Mary in English unlike Mary's former servants, which shows his

difference from other black men. Moses who speaks a kind of broken English, is 'a mission boy' who is taught how to read and write in English. But, this is not the only difference between him and other servants. His attractive black body which fascinates Mary is always articulated in the novel through his bodily features, associated with his race like the Malay woman in Maugham's story. Moses, even though speaks English and comes from a mission background, is reduced to a list of bodily features like all natives through the colonizer's ambivalent point of view which both admires his well-built, attractive black body, and yet reduces him to a list bodily features, almost to the level of animals as "the other". He is depicted as " a great powerful man", a "magnificantly built body" or "black as polished lineleum" who is usually silent and "expressionless" even "indifferent", yet, can stare back the colonizer as he stares back Charlie Slatter, Tony Marston and Mary, even with a malevelont glare, which disturbs them, because returning the colonizer's look is regarded as insolence and the violation of colonial authority.

The imperial gaze which observes the colonized, defines him as the stereotypical other and confirms his powerlessness. However, when the colonizer's look is returned, it implies the reversal of colonial authority as argued by Bhabha when "the observer becomes the observed". In this respect, Moses, with his mission background and his gaze through which he observes the colonizer, is a mimic man who both resembles and threatens colonial authority.

When Mary sees Moses half-naked, having his bath outside, "rubbing his thick neck with soap"(Lessing 143), she is disturbed, because Moses stares at her. The return of her look for Mary implies the end of black and white mistress-servant relationship by a personal relationship which depicts Moses as a human being (Lessing144) . Therefore, Mary watches him secretly while he is busy working, like "a panoptically positioned observer" who is supposed to be a masculine subject, an omnipotent eye that is positioned as invisible and can see without being seen" (Yeğenoğlu 109) . In this context, her gaze resembles the voyeurictic pleasure of a male colonizer :

> She used to sit quite still, watching him work. The powerful broad-built body fascinated her . Shad given him white shorts and shirts to wear in the house that had been used by her former servants. They were too small for him; as he swept and scrubbed or bent to the stove, his muscles bulged and filled out the thin material of the sleeves until it seemed they would split. He appeared even taller and broader than he was because of the littleness of the house. (Lessing 142)

However, in traditional patriarchal economy, the colonizer's gaze is always masculine and a means for mastery which is a "right" that cannot be exercised by white women "even into the twentieth century" despite their "privileged racial status" (L. Young 271), particularly when it evokes sexual pleasure as in the case of Mary. Therefore, Mary is annoyed very much when her look is returned by Moses because she has seen him half-naked outside, while having his bath. She tries hard to maintain her self-control and her authority unlike Guy for whom the inter-racial-relationhip with a Malay woman is nothing but " the force of circumstance" . Hence, Mary, whose life-conditions are quite different from Doris's in Maugham's story, cannot escape and withdraw from the scene like her. Trapped as she is

because of their poverty and the harsh conditions of farm life which are alien to her, she can neither create a new life for her nor revert to her former life as a working girl . Finally, Mary's complete domination by Moses is revealed through her wearing of "ear rings like boiled sweets", "the sofa-cover with an ugly ble patterned blue, sold to natives" in her house and her "flirtatious coyness" towards Moses which shocks Charlie Slatter and Tony Marston when he, by coincidence, sees Moses helping Mary, while she is dressing in her petticoat :

> When she saw him, she stopped dead, and stared at him with fear. Then her face, from being tormented, became slowly blan and indifferent. He could not understand this sudden change. But he said, in a jocular uncomfortable voice:'There was once an Empress of Russia who thought so little of her slaves, as human beings, that she used to undress naked in front of them.'
>
> 'Was there? She said doubtfully at last, looking puzzled. (Lessing 187)

Then Tony asks her some questions about Moses. But Mary's answers are short and evasive. Tony seems to sympathize with her. He tries to remind her the cultural code she has been brought up to follow, which is, meaningless for her now. It is obvious that Mary has lost her sense of belonging to her own white community as a culturally and psychhologically displaced person :

> 'Does that native always dress and undress you? He asked.
>
> Mary lifted her head sharply, and her eyes became cunnig.
>
> 'He has so little to do', she said, tossing her head.'He must earn his money.'
>
> 'It's not customary in this country, is it?' he asked slowly, out of the depths of his complete bewilderment. And he saw, as he spoke, that phrase 'this country', which is like a call to solidarity for most white people, meant nothing to her. … And he began to understand with a horrified pity, her utter indifference to Dick; she had shut out everything that conflicted with her actions, that would revive the code she had been brought up to follow. (Lessing 187)

Obviously, Mary does not remember how she used to hate all the natives. Despite her attraction towards Moses, the touch of his hand on her shoulders is intolerable for Mary. When Moses gives notice that he wants to leave at the end of the month, Mary refuses the notice furiously and hysterically, crying and weeping, almost begging him not to leave, which she would never do normally, but rather die instead than show any signs of yielding . In this scene, Moses puts Mary into the bed like a child and then leaves the room. But Mary cries, weeps helplessly, engulfed by "a terrible dark fear". The touch of Moses on her shoulders to push her towards the bed, is like the touch of "excrement" for her (Lessing 152) . In other words, Mary suffers from simultaneous attraction and repulsion as two opposing feelings which is not only an ambivalent state between the colonizer and the colonized , but also a very serious transgression for a white female colonizer. When she orders Moses to go away in front of Tony, it is her final self-assertion as a colonizer after her dangereous lapses from her own culture, which angers Moses and causes her murder by him who takes his revenge on the colonizer by murdering her. His "malevolent glare" and the "wickedly malevolent expression" on his face are the indication of his menacing power as the "other" for Mary and even for Tony who is also momentarily afraid (185). Obviously, he reverts to his native

traditions and customs by killing Mary, which is a challenge against the colonial authority as "the final moment of triumph"(206). The half-educated or "half-civilized" Moses as "a mission boy" is a mimic man, who is both inside and outside western civilization as a stereotype, because the mimic man is only partially represented or recognized in western civilization. As argued by Bhabha, mimicry is at once resemblance and menace to colonial authority which is an ambivalent situation (86-88) and the "mission boy" Moses, therefore, is a menace to colonial authority . Fluctuating between two cultures, a mimic man can revert to his own native culture any time, which is the case with Moses who is only half-educated or "half-civilized" as " a mission boy". [4]

The novel also touches upon the hypocrisy of the European men and their double-standard for white women who are supposed to be "guarded", for the duty of the colonial housewife is to preserve racial superiority through the separation of races (Sharpe 92) . As mentioned before, Europeanness was gender-coded. "A European man could live with or marry (a non-European) woman without necessarily losing rank, but this was never true of a European woman who might make a similar choice to marry a non-European" (Stoler, *Cultivating* 99) . As Jean Pickering quotes from Michael Thorpe who wrote in 1978 that "since 1903 in Rhodesia it has been a criminal offence for a black man and white woman to have sexual intercourse but no such law applies where white man and a black woman are involved" (20-21) .Obviously, this law "recognizes that the relationship between white woman and black man is a point of tension, a weakness in colonial culture" (Pickering 21). The novel depicts this issue through Tony Marston's thoughts:

> Tony sat down on a chair, ... For his thoughts were conflicting. He had been in the country long enough to be schocked; at the same time his 'progressiveness' was deliciously flattered by this evidence of ruling-class hypocrisy. For in a country where coloured children appear plentifully among the natives whenever a lonely white man is stationed, hypocrisy, as Tony defined it, was the first thing that struck him on his arrival. Bu then, he had read enough about psychology to understand the sexual aspect of the colur bar, one whose foundations is the jealousy of the white man for the superior sexual potency of the native; and he was surprised at one of the guarded, a white woman, so easily evading this barrier. (Lessing 185-186)

In fact, evading the colour bar through inter-racial sex relation has not been easy for Mary as a white female colonizer. Tony realizes that she suffers from a nervous breakdown as she cries and repeats continuously: "I don't know any thing. I don't understand . Why is all this happening? I didn't mean it to happen. But he won't go away, he won't go away" (Lessing 187) . Tony who witnessess what happens to Mary finally comes to realize "the sexual aspect of the colour bar" for the white woman which originates from "the jealousy of the white man for the superior sexual potency of the native" (Lessing 186) . For Ronald Hyam, many historians of race think that since all racism derives from fear of competition, the fear of black, male sexuality is the " ultimate basis of racial antagonism " (*Understanding* 403) .

[4] See also Gültekin ch.17 in *IDEA:Studies in English,* in which ambivalence and mimicry is discussed in *The Grass Is Singing* in details with reference to Homi Bhabha's views.

Therefore, "(a)ssumptions about an aggressive black sexuality were certainly deeply ingrained in Britain and throughout the American and colonial world" (Hyam 403) as narrated in this novel . However, colonial world is replete with many "houseboy" stories about white women who developed "an unusual intimacy with these 'boys' ... who washed and sewed their clothes, helped them dress and arranged their hair" (Bush, *Gender and Empire* 95) as Moses helps Mary in her pettycoat to dress which shocks Tony. This issue is also touched upon in the novel through Tony's thoughts as he remembers a ship doctor's "years of experiece in a country district, who had told him he would be surprised to know the number of white women who had relations with black men" (186) .

4-Conclusions

In sum, Maugham's and Lessing's novels revealed the fact that racism and gender equally played the indispensible role in the constitution of the British Empire, particularly, in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. As discussed above, in both works the control of sexuality was strictly associated with white women rather than the idealized imperial men who conquered and ruled. The Empire was precisely a male environment where sexuality, particularly women's sexuality, was controlled for the maintenance of white, racial purity and male superiority as narrated in these two works as well . Obviously, white women, like the colonized natives, irrespective of their sex, became subject to, and object of this male order. Maugham and Lessing narrated in these two works not only the sexual lapses of male and female colonizer which could be very problematic, particularly, for female colonizer, but also the power of the weaker, through the depiction of the Malay woman and Moses, namely, the natives as colonized "others" who could mimic the colonizer and subvert the colonial authority as claimed by Bhabha . In this context, the two works also depicted the fluidity of these stereotypical characters, both the colonizer and the colonized (except for Doris), which was a natural consequence of the hybridization of colonial culture and the ambivalance of colonial authority. To put differently, Maugham and Lessing depicted in their works what they observed and foresaw, viz, the subversion of colonial binary oppositions such as black/white, male/female, master/slave through cultural and racial hybridity. Both works mirrored the racial and gender-coded system, which contributed both to the rise and collapse of British colonial rule in the course of time.

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