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Herbert Marcuse

Saul Bellow

Arthur Miller

Tennessee Williams

Amita Kanekar

Michel Foucault

Toni Morrison

Jonah Raskin

Special Section:

Doris Lessing

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Re-Markings, a biannual journal of English Letters aims at providing a healthy forum for scholarly and authoritative views on broad socio-political and cultural issues of human import as evidenced in literature, art, television, cinema and journalism with special emphasis on New Literatures in English including translations and creative excursions

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EDITORIAL

A year ago, when I thought of including a Special Section on Doris Lessing in the March 2008 issue of *Re-Markings*, I did not have even the faintest idea of the shape of things to come. When a close friend casually asked what would be the rationale for such a venture, I pondered for a moment and said, "some people obtain fame, others deserve it." I was somehow convinced that we needed no apology to record our deep appreciation for a writer who, having known what it means to be intelligent and frustrated and female in an essentially male-dominated world, could endorse through her own life and work how "Any human anywhere will blossom in a hundred unexpected talents and capacities simply by being given the opportunity to do so."

Also, notwithstanding the politics of literary prizes, I was intrigued by the fact that she had been eluded by the coveted Nobel Prize although she was in the reckoning for nearly a half-century now. With these thoughts in mind, I approached Jonah Raskin - an esteemed member of our advisory board whom I had the pleasure of meeting in 2004 at his home in Santa Rosa, California - and asked him whether he would be willing to guest-edit the proposed special section in view of his life-long friendship with Doris Lessing. Thanks to information technology, I had to wait for just a few minutes when pat came his reassuring consent on the electronic mail. He followed his consent by setting October 10, 2007 as the deadline for receiving contributions. Imagine how thrilled we both were to learn, a month after the deadline, that the Nobel Prize had ultimately come to Lessing as her 88th birthday gift from the Swedish Academy. The rest is history.

I am extremely beholden to Jonah Raskin for his invaluable cooperation in enriching this volume not only by soliciting essays from scholars and friends of Lessing in Europe and America but also in providing the guest-editorial input through his meticulous guidance and encouragement. I am no less grateful to scholar friends in India who have significantly contributed in making this section so very special. What can be a more perfect illustration of globalization and multiculturalism than this collaborative venture wherein avid lovers of Lessing from three continents, separated by cultures and vast geographical space, have come together to offer such a grand tribute to the Persian-born, Rhodesian-raised and London-residing novelist who has taught the world to value the inner lives of those who live life

on the margins. Let us all, therefore, celebrate and sing in unison: "Heartiest Congratulations, dear Doris Lessing!"

The present issue of *Re-Markings* also offers - through critiques of Herbert Marcuse, Saul Bellow, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Anita Kanekar, Michel Focault and Toni Morrison - revealing insights into diverse concerns ranging from the anxiety of influence that controls the fate of the one-dimensional man to the conspiracy of silence that keeps the wretched of the earth at bay.

As we enter into our seventh year of publication with the current issue, I deem it a privilege and pleasure to record my immense gratitude to each one of our dedicated members who have contributed so meaningfully to the onward march of this glorious enterprize.

Before closing this editorial, I wish to share with the *Re-Markings* fraternity the dolorous news of the demise of Dr. S.S. Sharma, Professor of English at IGNOU, New Delhi. His sudden departure from our midst brings home the impact of Dante's words: "There is no greater sorrow than to recall in misery the times when we were happy." I distinctly remember how excited he was when we started the journal in March 2002 and how, just a few weeks before he embarked on his eternal journey, he displayed his eagerness to send the article he had recently presented at an International seminar in London for publication in *Re-Markings*. As we mourn the irreparable loss brought about by the undue haste displayed by the dreadful cancerous ailment, I can firmly believe that with his innate capacity to laugh at adversities, he continues to engage himself in spreading hope and cheer in a timeless world untouched by human frailties.

Nibir K. Ghosh

Chief Editor

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HERBERT MARCUSE'S *ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN*: A STUDY IN CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Dharnidhar Sahu

When asked about the condition of cinema in contemporary society during his visit to India, Krzystof Zanussi, the famous Polish filmmaker, ruled out the possibility of making a great film in a mass society such as ours. There is no filmmaker who is breaking new grounds, he lamented:

Today, we live in a mass society. This is the opposite of a Europe that was elitist. It sounds ugly when you think of the exclusivist side of elitism, but not when you think of the more aware, conscious and dynamic side of it. In an elitist society, one group is always ahead of the others. In mass societies, it is the opposite. Mass society says: Stay where you are; don't read if it's difficult; don't watch a movie if you don't understand it; don't listen to music, if you're not excited. People are not making an effort to grow; they're not dynamic…There is a feeling of spiritual stagnation today. Globalization has thrown up new challenges. Aggressive consumerism is creating a confusion of values – which finds its resonance in India too – since the market-oriented society tempts people with solutions that are immoral…To please the audience, we indulge them; we play the fool for them. There is no demand for serious reflection because you cannot sell it" (The Times of India, 24 October, 2003).

As a conscious citizen of contemporary European society, Zanussi sums up the condition of life, art and literature in a mass society. The apprehensions expressed by Ortega y Gasset in the Thirties and Herbert Marcuse in the Sixties seem to have been corroborated by Zanussi, who even uses the same term "mass society," a term immortalized by these two earlier thinkers. Both Gasset and Marcuse had predicted about the type and nature of a society that would inevitably come into being unless the policy-makers in particular and people in general tried to arrest the drift towards a one-dimensional mass culture.

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HUMANISM IN SAUL BELLOW'S *THE DEAN'S DECEMBER*

S.S. Gill

The clash of cultures, science versus humanism, the search for self-knowledge in a foreign land and coming to terms with death are the issues on which Bellow has focused his creative imagination in the novel *The De*an's *December*. For this reason Gilbert Porter calls Bellow a "new transcendentalist"[1] as his "principal area of enquiry is the phenomenology of selfhood."[2] In this novel, Bellow embarks upon the territory of social description and prescription so largely abandoned by novelists during this century. Bellow has always been showing this profound concern for human values. At the same time, Bellow depicts the problem of human differences in this novel, because this issue is closely connected with human relations and responsibility since meaningful relationships can only be possible if one is willing to accept the differences between human beings. All his heroes suffer from 'humanities' yet they do not merely suffer, they act or rather they speak. Through Herzog, Bellow communicates that the novelist can show the strength of a man's virtue or spiritual capacity measured by his ordinary life. This paper deals with the measures that exhorts Bellow to reject "Wasteland pessimism" and set his heroes on this journey where they need to know what it is to be human.

The Dean's December provides conclusive insights into the American dilemma. First and foremost it concentrates on the mental, sensual and spiritual processes instrumental in procuring such insights. The novel deals with philosophical ideas, haphazard violence, corruption of language, deceptive appearance and even death. The novel ranges form philosophical speculations to probings of apparently random violence and depictions of the intimacy of family life. Bellow demonstrates the role of the individual self in a mass politicized society. When Dean Corde argues that the Hegelian spirit of the time is in us by nature, he makes an important point that Corde belongs like others to the collective life of the country. However, some persons simply accept the prevailing chaotic conditions, refusing to view them with detected objectivity.

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EMANCIPATED WOMEN IN ARTHUR MILLER'S *AFTER THE FALL*

Silima Nanda

My paper is devoted to the study of emancipated women in Arthur Miller's play, *After the Fall* and in this category the three women Louise, Maggie and Holga can be grouped. These three women, all single, talented and champions of liberty achieve different levels of emancipation, though the true height is achieved only by Holga.

Here a clarification of the concept of emancipation becomes essential. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (6th ed, 2000) provides a literary rendering of the term as "One who has freed herself from the conventions or restrictions of the community to which she belongs." This meaning is self-limiting in its scope. Conceptually, the term can be analysed from two perspectives – one, socio-political and the other moral. The former interprets emancipation as a movement, a political wave which views women as individuals in their personal as well as their professional lives. Emancipation was heralded by rapid industrialization and suffrage movement and this made women self-assured, sexually free and socially unconstrained. Women broke loose from tradition. The ideology of independence becomes commonly prevalent with these women. Ruth Sidel refers to these women as the new American Dreamers, the prototype of today's young women: confident, outgoing, knowledgeable, involved (1991:15). The fight for liberty achieved by such women was more a result of the emerging feminism of the early 1920s. In the name of being emancipated, these women just wanted to be "wonderfully pretty, independent, candid, spontaneous, willful, spoiled and nice"(Banta 1987:48). The other angle of interpretation is in moral, ethical terms. Emancipation, here, refers to a state of existence when one accepts the reality gracefully and grows beyond all limitations. It does not mean conscious breaking of images of female sexuality, rather it is the creation of new female energy born out of the crucible of suffering. Emancipation is a state of sublimation of sexual and other feminine instincts. It is a pursuit of truth where women understand the essence of love and goodness and successfully absorb the reality into their being.

- **Dr. Silima Nanda** is Deputy Director, International Division, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi.

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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' *SUMMER AND SMOKE*: A STUDY IN ALIENATION

Vinod Kumar Maheshwari

Tennessee Williams' play, *Summer and Smoke,* offers great scope for the study of alienation. It is derivable from the growth-in-life study of two children: Alma (to be known as Alma Winemiller in grown-up stage), and John (John Buchanan, Jr, later on). In childhood, the girl Alma and the boy John did not know that they would grow up so differently. Set in a small Southern town in the days before World War I, *Summer and Smoke* dramatizes the sexual awakening of Alma, a repressed young woman whose inner conflict between flesh and spirit is resolved with surprising consequences. Daughter of a minister, Alma since childhood has felt an affinity with the statue of an angel which stands in the town square as a drinking fountain, "brooding over the course of the play." The angle's cold stone and the life-giving water that springs from her hands symbolize the two opposing sides of Alma, whose name in Spanish means 'soul' and although she appears icy, there is also "flame, mistaken for ice, as John, the man she loves, is to recognize too late."[1]

The conflict of body and spirit in Alma determines the growth and movement of the drama. If Alma is predisposed towards the things of spirit and angel, John is drawn towards bodily compulsions. Precisely, the anatomy chart displayed in John's office has as much a symbolic significance as is the statue of the Angel of Eternity at the town square. It means that the angel's statue served as the main for Alma; and the anatomy chart became the guiding principle of life for John. To make it more explicit, Alma's attachment for the angel-statue means her dominating inclination is towards the reality of ethereal spirit; and in the same way, John's displaying the anatomy chart implies that his first attachment in life is to understand the human body and the corporeal reality.

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WOMEN AND THE IN/VISIBLE VIOLENCE IN AMITA KANEKAR'S *A SPOKE IN THE WHEEL*

Shikha

Novelty, in postmodern times, is associated with new versions of the past rather than with visions of the future (Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*). This is probably a major reason for the appeal of Amita Kanekar's first literary endeavour, *A Spoke in the Wheel*. Critics have appreciated Kanekar's efforts to dismantle the legends associated with the Buddha's birth and his subsequent renunciation. They have, however, not paid attention to the significance, for our society, of Kanekar's contemporary treatment of a historical period with reference to the violence perpetrated against the minority communities as well as women. The novel, through Upali's narrative, studies the devastating effects that Emperor Ashoka's imperial order had on the communities of people living in the forests in particular. The callous and insidious attempts of Ashoka to urbanize and subsequently control the culturally different communities as shown in the novel prefigure similar treatment meted out to the minority castes and communities in various parts of the world, including India today.

Another very significant aspect of this novel is Kanekar's delineation of women. These women have received little or no mention in the traditional accounts of the Buddha's life. They have not been afforded much space in Kanekar's fictional-historical double narrative. The author has only provided snippets of the lives of a few women living at the time of the Buddha and during the reign of Ashoka. The destinies of Maya, Tara, Yashodhara, Sutanuka, Nagamunda, Vassabha and Mala along with other nameless women in the novel, however, bear testimony to the oppressed status of women in ancient India. The violence perpetrated on these women is closely related to their class and/or community. The peasant women, the female slaves in royal palaces, the devadasis or temple slaves and even women of the aristocracy lead lives that are marked by violence in different ways. The present paper is intended to examine the manner in which Kanekar's novel lays bare the violence that targets women of different strata of society.

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MICHEL FOUCAULT AND THE DISCOURSE OF POWER

Sudhir V. Nikam

Most of the traditional ideas of power originated with Francis Bacon. It was Bacon who said "Knowledge is Power." On the contrary, Michel Foucault asserts a new model of the relations of power and knowledge. He calls it "power/knowledge." Michel Foucault has demystified power. Foucault's analysis states that power is situated among a cacophony of social practices and situations. The discourse within these social formations are manifested in an economy of discourse. He states: "...in a society such as ours...there are manifold relations of power that permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (Foucault 1980, p. 96)

For Foucault, then, power is directly tied into the economy of discourse itself. Foucault states that human understanding exists in discourse, in an economy of discourse. The discourse identified within the social structures brings power to existence in social relations and gives credibility to the ideology that the exercise of power is created by these means. The discourse also can be a hindrance for those who 'have' power. In the following quote, Foucault also underscores the structure of power in discourse:

> *Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the concept's complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it* (Foucault 1980, p. 98).

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QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN THE FICTION OF TONI MORRISON

Y. Somalatha

Toni Morrison's first three novels, *The Bluest Eye, Sula,* and *Song of Solomon* singularly dramatize the increasing levels of moral, spiritual and cultural dysfunction between individual and society. In these three novels, the protagonists namely Pecola, Sula and Milkman are invariably alienated from their cultural moorings. It may be held that the individual in each of the three novels appears to be lost in a world of depressing moral and cultural loneliness. Their quest begins in loneliness, both physical and intellectual, and leads to a sense of fulfillment, particularly in the case of Milkman, while in the case of Pecola and Sula, it leads to insanity and death. Their insanity is a quest for 'meaning' in our incoherent world of dubious certainties. The character of Milkman in *Song of Solomon* delineates racial significance.

Pecola is an embodiment of innocence. She cherishes innocent dreams. She is the only daughter of the Breedloves, a typical black family after the Great Depression. If her mother Pauline is positively disinterested in the cultural complexities of a developing black milieu, her father Cholly Breedlove is a true black father always keeping himself 'out-of-doors'. Pecola's dreams of the bluest eyes symbolize the cultural metaphor of the achievement of equality of the black psyche with the white mind. However, this impossible dream deepens her alienation from her social and cultural environments. Socially she is an oppressed girl. But her intellectual curiosity is astoundingly unmistakable. She is a silent yet keen observer of life's processes. Her innocence does not come in the way of her adequate comprehension of social and cultural backwardness. She keeps herself ahead of the Mac Teer girls Claudia and Frieda. There is a certain clarity of mind and aspiration in Pecola. There are at least two impressionable incidents in *The Bluest Eye* that reinforce Pecola's intrinsic desire for the bluest eyes. For her, Shirley Temple is a quintessentially 'living' example of her dreams for the bluest eyes. It may be inanimate, but it has its own inspiration for Pecola.

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SPECIAL SECTION
Doris Lessing

GUEST EDITOR: Jonah Raskin

Introduction

I have been reading, thinking and writing about Doris Lessing forever, it seems, but the idea to gather together individual essays about her and her work did not originate with me. In fact, the idea belongs entirely to Nibir K. Ghosh, the chief editor of *Re-Markings*. I want to thank him for suggesting it, for asking me to solicit work from Lessing scholars, and for making this volume a reality. Fortunately, I attended the 2nd annual international Doris Lessing Conference in Leeds, England in July 2007, where I met a great many extraordinary teachers and students of Lessing's work, from all over the world, including Paul Schlueter, who included an interview I did with her in *A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews, Interviews,* which he edited and that was published in 1974. I am delighted that Paul, who has known Doris well and corresponded with her for decades, has contributed an essay about his relationship with her. A great many authors have written about Lessing, and many more will in the future, especially since she has won the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature, which Paul and I and so many others in India and America, have long wanted her to win. The other essays I solicited are by Eva Masilamony, Linda Seidel and Dennis Walder, all of whom I am delighted to have met in Leeds in July 2007. I want to thank them and to thank the organizers of the Leeds conference, especially Mary Eagleton and Susan Watkins, whose ability to bring us all together I applauded, and whose thought-provoking work I greatly respect.

The special section also includes five distinguished essays by Indian scholars: Sudha Rai, Neena Arora, Madan Mohan Beura, Anupama Kaushal and Smita Jha. The Lessing section is enhanced by two memorable poems, one by Shanta Acharya, "Going Home (For Doris Lessing)" and the other by Jose Varghese, "Glued to the Golden Notebook," the title of which made me want to read it immediately. My own essay here is, as far as I know, one of the most up-to-date, in-depth portraits of Doris Lessing at the age of 88.

We hope that you enjoy reading the work here, by writers from around the world, and that it will encourage you to go back to Lessing's work, to read books of hers you have not yet read, and to introduce students

to *The Grass is Singing, The Golden Notebook, Martha Quest, Going Home, African Stories, Briefing for a Descent into Hell, Mara and Dann, On Cats, African Laughter, Under My Skin, The Sweetest Dream, Play with a Tiger, Time Bites* – and many more.

And thank you, Doris Lessing, for giving so much of yourself to all of us, your readers, fans, critics – the children and grandchildren of your books.

--Jonah Raskin

- ***Prof Jonah Raskin*** *is the author of six major books: The Mythology of Imperialism: Joyce Cary, E. M. Forster, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, D.H. Lawrence (1971); Out of the Whale: Growing Up in the American Left (1973); Underground (1978); My Search for B. Traven (1980); For the Hell of It: The Life and Times of Abbie Hoffman (1996) and American Scream: Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' and The Making of the Beat Generation(2004). He is now writing a memoir about his life in California and a literary biography of Jack London. A publisher poet, he performs his work in cafes, bookstores and libraries. At Sonoma State University,USA, he teaches journalism, media law and the theory of communication.*

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DORIS LESSING IN LONDON, 2007

Jonah Raskin

I.

The award of the 2007 Nobel Prize for literature to Doris Lessing closes a chapter on her life and on her voluminous body of work. It also opens a new chapter, inviting readers from around the world to discover, or rediscover as the case may be, her novels, stories, autobiographies and plays, too. That the announcement arrived shortly before her 88th birthday – she's the oldest author ever to receive the award – surely made it all the more sweet. Just a day after the news was broadcast around the world on television and on radio, I phoned her in London to congratulate her. The reality had already sunk in. She was no longer stunned or shocked, and in a sense she ought not to have been. In fact, she took it in stride, and saw it less as a tribute to her own individual success and glory, than a recognition of the tribe of writers and readers to which she belongs.

"I'm very happy, indeed," she said, sounding as clear as could be, from thousands of miles and many time zones away. "I have had calls from friends to say how delighted they are, and at the Frankurt Book Festival that's on just now they toasted me last night. It's a real honor." Clearly, Doris Lessing deserved the Nobel Prize for Literature, and deserved it for a very long time indeed, perhaps as early as the 1960s. That she didn't receive it year after year appalled me, even outraged me, and when Harold Pinter was awarded the prize in 2005, I thought that Doris's opportunity had come and gone, and that the selection committee had blundered again - though I never complained to Doris herself, and while I've complained to her about almost everything else, from war to the weather over in the years. In fact, though we have spoken the unspoken for much of the nearly 40 years that we have known one another, neither of us had ever spoken the words "Nobel Prize" – as far as I can remember.

Still, they always seemed to me to be a kind of subtext to our on-going conversations that began in 1969, then threaded their way through the years, and the decades and that culminated, in a way, last summer when I visited Doris in London, on my way to the Second International Lessing Conference in Leeds, England – a hotbed, as I was surprised to learn, of Lessing scholars and fans.

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DORIS LESSING'S 'AFRICAN' NOSTALGIA

Dennis Walder

The trajectory of Lessing's life from colonial backwater to metropolitan London and an international reputation as both chronicler and prophet of our times is well enough known; what is perhaps not so well appreciated is the extent to which what she calls her 'myth country' remains colonial Southern Africa, where the profound inadequacies of white settler culture led her to develop a sense of the inadequacies of the dominant civilisations of the world, and a consequent search for alternatives influenced by memories of her past, and indeed a nostalgia for idealised versions of it.

On the individual level, we think we know what nostalgia is: a yearning for the past prompted by life transitions, like leaving parents, home or country. But it is also a more general phenomenon, that becomes prominent at certain critical periods of human history – such as ours, when mass migration and exile has prompted writers to figure the present as a place marked by a trail of survivors, searching nostalgically for home. Fredric Jameson's denunciation of nostalgia as a cultural trend that encourages a de-historicizing of the present (1991, 20) is well-known; but in many colonial and post-colonial writers there is a dialectic between different forms of nostalgia that avoids the bad faith and essentialism implicit in his critique, producing a more creatively reflexive relation with the past, with many pasts.

The centrality of a nostalgically recalled Africa for Doris Lessing's imagination was signalled in the 1964 Preface to her *African Stories*. "I believe," she wrote, "that the chief gift from Africa to writers, white and black, is the continent itself, its presence which for some people is like an old fever, latent always in their blood; or like an old wound throbbing in the bones as the air changes. That is not a place to visit unless one chooses to be an exile ever afterwards from an inexplicable majestic silence lying just over the border of memory or of thought" (2003, 8).

- **Dr. Dennis Walder** is Professor of Literature at the Open University (UK) and the author of numerous books and articles on 19th and 20th century literature.

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LEAVING CAROLINE: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERHOOD IN *A PROPER MARRIAGE*

Linda Seidel

Introduction

A Proper Marriage (1954), the second volume of Doris Lessing's "Children of Violence" series, is the unromantic, largely autobiographical account of a young woman, Martha Quest, in the fictional African colony of Zambesia at the time of the Second World War. Although the novel precedes the work of Nancy Chodorow and Ann Oakley by two decades, their theories about the social construction of motherhood may illuminate the protagonist's responses to motherhood and her ultimate rejection of the form it takes among the white middle classes of her country. *A Proper Marriage* anticipates the feminist social theory which argues, as Oakley puts it, that "the theoretical foundations of patriarchy lie in the manipulation of women's biology to constitute their social inferiority"(13). Chodorow's claim that "[f]or children of both genders, mothers represent regression and lack of autonomy"(181) can be used to explain not only why Martha rejects the interference of her own mother into her affairs but also why she believes she must leave her daughter Caroline in order to set her free. Of course, Chodorow is careful to point out that the sort of mothering which produces this reaction results from particular social arrangements that need not be perpetuated. Nonetheless, as long as Martha remains married, her role as bourgeois mother, disciplined by a patriarchal medical regime, remains fixed.

Part 2: "The nightmare of repetition"

Nancy Chodorow's feminist reinterpretation of psychoanalytic theory in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) can be used to understand the mechanism by which women have been socialized to equate adult femininity with motherhood. According to Chodorow, because women mother (nurture) the children produced by the Western nuclear family, the mother is the first love object for all children and a role model for the female child (173-180).

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DORIS LESSING'S *THE CLEFT* : HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION AND PREHISTORY

Sudha Rai

At the crest of a literary career marked by sustained engagement with political and religious ideologies such as Communism, Feminism, and Sufism, and the brilliant achievement in experimental form of *The Golden Notebook*, Doris Lessing's latest novel *The Cleft*, has been received with disappointment by reviewers and critics. The lack of descriptive detail, a narrator who doesn't quite come alive and a novel that rides a hypothesis of female primacy in the human species too explicitly, are some of the aspects of the work that have been viewed negatively.

However, Lessing's treatment of Roman prehistory with its core issue of the birth of the gender divide in the earliest communities in ancient Rome is constructed, as a layered postmodernist text of historiography and this is where the text outpaces its critics. Clearly written as a subversive rejoinder to the centralist homogenized and canonized claims of 'truth' and 'reality,'(fundamentalist assertions that bedevil our times) the novel negotiates many issues of knowledge such as the creation of 'man', the absence of God as the Creator, and issues pertaining to the writing of recorded histories, the sanctity of oral narratives in decentring discourses of power, and the uncertainty of memory and experience.

The Roman historian in Lessing's *Cleft* is involved in the challenging task of compiling a history of the Clefts and the Squirts (symbolic names for females and males), out of a mass of neglected and shelved fragments of stories based on orality. The stories testify to the emergence of the male and the evolution of heterosexual procreation, from the unwritten truths of women's initial prerogative as independent procreators. Mythologies of the moon, large fishes and the large Roman eagles are Lessing's approach to filling out the interweaving of life in the universe with human lives, in the prehistory of the Roman peoples.

- **Dr. Sudha Rai** is Professor, Department of English, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (India).

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DEFYING THE MALE GAZE: LESSING'S *THE SUMMER BEFORE THE DARK*

Anupama Kaushal

> *"Kate was now grimacing into the handglass, trying on different expressions, like an actress – there were hundreds she had never thought of using! She had been limiting herself to a frightfully small range, most of them, of course, creditable to her and pleasing or non- abrasive to other(males)."* -- Doris Lessing (p.156)

The weightage given by a woman to the male viewpoint becomes a dominant influence in the construction of her personality though it proves to be a great obstruction in the establishment of her identify. In *Female Desire*, Rosalind Coward views that in sexual relations 'looking' has a great part to play for it is the gaze through which domination and subordination are expressed. The correct sexual behaviour for man and woman in a relationship has been set by the established code. In performing this role appropriately, a woman gets tied in a 'narcissistic preoccupation' with her own image. In the attempt at being at the focus of the gaze she derives a narcissistic pleasure out of it. The male look exerts such a pressure on her personality that it literally controls her behaviour. In other words, to achieve this pleasure she pays dearly as far as her identity is concerned. Doris Lessing in her novel *The Summer Before The Dark* critiques the extent to which a woman's identity and her non-real social reality are affected by the male gaze.

Through the character of Kate Brown in *The Summer Before The Dark*, Doris Lessing depicts the various images and different identities of a woman, who on the verge of growing old, sets off on her journey of self-discovery. This journey includes shedding off certain roles, masks, images and customs, which she had been practicing in order to lay bare the crucial issues of feminism. She has given more than twenty years of her life to her marriage and children, catering to their needs and wishes, forgoing completely her real self and talents.

- **Dr. Anupama Kaushal** is Lecturer in English at Government P.G. College, Tonk (Rajasthan).

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DORIS LESSING: AN OVERVIEW

Smita Jha

It is absolutely no surprise that Doris Lessing has been awarded the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature by the Swedish Academy. She is the oldest woman to have received this award for literature in more than a hundred years history of the Nobel Prize. There are quite a few things which one has to understand and appreciate very clearly and thoroughly before trying to evaluate the worth of her writings. Lessing is a writer who has confronted life in all its manifestations and perhaps at all possible levels. The first important quality that compels our attention towards her is her great and continuing interest in the problems of human life for the last sixty years. She does not believe in art for art's sake, although on all counts she is a competent artist; her literary creed is art for life's sake, and that is why, she has always tried to embrace both life and art as a sort of unified vision. The second notable aspect of her writing is her concern for the female community of the world. Although she rejects the viewpoint that she has been a feminist writer, there are plenty of traces in her writings to support the claim that she has been against the very phenomenon of male domination in society. She draws sustenance from her personal experience but then she transforms actuality into something universal and permanent. Lastly, at this point we may as well refer to her powerful prose style which adds both beauty and strength to her writing.

It will only be fair and proper to determine if at all Lessing was influenced by any writer or writers. As we go through her books, we immediately realize that here is a writer, self conscious and alert, who might have been influenced by such eminent thinkers and authors as Virginia Woolf, Dostoyevsky, D. H. Lawrence, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Idries Shah. In her turn, it appears that she too has influenced a large number of creative writers including Toni Morrison and Margaret Atwood. It was during her stay in Africa that Doris Lessing experienced and felt the cruelty and barbaric behaviour of the white rulers towards the black slave.

- **Dr. Smita Jha** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at IIT, Roorkee (Uttaranchal).

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DORIS LESSING: AN APPRECIATION

Neena Arora

When Doris Lessing received the news of winning the Nobel Prize she told reporters: "I've won all the prizes in Europe, every bloody one. I'm delighted to win them all, the whole lot…It's a royal flush." True, Lessing already has many feathers to her cap. The 88 years old Lessing is the 11th female writer to win the Nobel Prize.

A writer with a vision, Lessing explores multiple themes whereby she examines some of the problems which beset humanity in present times. In her fiction Lessing finds entire humanity disintegrated. She scans the horizon of human behaviour and finds brutality, selfishness and violence that have driven people blindly and feverishly to prepare for a holocaust. Lessing has closely seen the times of the Second World War. Hence, the outcome of the brutal war, the violence and destruction, the decline of the civilization, the fragmentation of society are some of the recurrent themes in her novels. She examines the apartheid and the slow awakening among the black natives in the African colonies from the grass-root level. Her hatred of "White Supremacy" is well brought out in her works. Lessing's fiction is remarkable for its encyclopedic range and complexity. Lessing has equally well handled complex subjects like the "Writer's block" and "schizophrenia," and in her recent novel she deals with "inner space." In some of her works she talks of 'Sufism' – the strengthening of a belief in the mind, above and beyond material conditions. She trenchantly depicts the alienation of man in a world imperiled by violence, and in her characters there is always a quest for some kind of wholeness and connectedness in life. Lessing never forgets Rhodesia and its landscapes where she spent her childhood and from where she came out finally to settle down in London. Her evocation of the atmosphere and the landscapes in Africa, the vegetation, animal life, forests with all the smells and hues, is brilliant and vivid.

The word "autobiographical" is often applied to her works by way of adverse criticism. Among others, Florence Howe says: "Doris Lessing's life is the source of her fiction."[1]

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THE GRASS IS SINGING: SAGA OF A WOMAN'S TRAGEDY

Madan Mohan Beura

Doris Lessing justifies through her presentation of the relentless suffering of Mary, the protagonist of her first novel, *The Grass is Singing*, the oft heard saying that a woman is best understood by a woman, not a man. If Martha, the heroine of Lessing's *A Proper Marriage,* feels suffocated in the domestic ambience of conjugal life, Mary feels imprisoned in a life of poverty after becoming the wife of Dick, an utterly failed farmer. Of course, Mary is not unfamiliar with poverty, as much of her childhood was spent in poverty owing to the artificial indigence imposed on the family by her father who squandered a lion's share of his salary on liquor. Poverty in the home of her husband becomes growingly unbearable for Mary because of its terrible contrast to the fifteen years of free and relatively affluent life she had led in the town as a spinster and a typist: "She was leading the comfortable carefree existence of a single woman in South Africa…was living in much the same way as the daughters of the wealthiest in South Africa and could do as she pleased"(Lessing 35).

The peculiarity of young Mary in not being sexually attracted to any man becomes the cause for her inability to find a husband who is rich and can give her an affluent, urban life. The novel describes how "innumerable men took her out, treating her like a sister…Mary was such a good pal! Just as she seemed to have a hundred women friends, but no particular friend, so she had (it seemed) a hundred men; she seemed not to care for men; she was a most rare phenomenon without love troubles"(Lessing 37-38). Mary held on to a single or unmarried life for long as it was a happy existence for her in comparison to the years of acrimony between her parents on account of poverty and unhappiness in the family when she was a child. But ultimately she is compelled to choose the farmer, Dick, as her husband, though she is frankly aware of his not-too-good financial condition.

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TWO POEMS

GOING HOME
(For Doris Lessing)

Shanta Acharya

*"*Look after her, she is your responsibility*…"*
You hear a stranger's voice – small, personal, urgent –
before vanishing; and you watch over a child
miraculously brought into your care.

Life mere briefing for a descent into hell;
all are part of a larger rhythm you can tell.

The sun lies at our feet in this four-gated city.
The wind blows away our words,
not the prisons we choose to live in.

Assume nothing, consider all sides;
things could easily have turned out differently.

Was it like this for you, too*? she enquires*
recounting her childhood experiences.

Growing up is a place where everything's cracked up
nothing's permanent; no foundations solid.

You look at things from different angles,
lying in the grass singing, summer before the dark...

Every survivor needs a memoir, a golden notebook;
writing a habit of loving, like breathing.

All of us are shaped by war, twisted and warped,
our inner battles spilling out from under our skin;

Our body, the old chief's country, landlocked –
like a proper marriage, a ripple from the storm.

Having known many homes, many dreams

you learn finally to live with the freedom of a spirit,
heart like a prairie field, open –

Not the dispossession of one shut behind a door,
holding it ajar only to be greeted by desperate,
in the air, inaudible screams.

- ***Shanta Acharya*** *is Executive Director, Initiative on Foundation and Endowment Asset Management at London Business School. Born and educated in Orissa, India, she is Founder Director of "Poetry in the House" at Lauderdale House, Highgate in London, where she has been hosting monthly international poetry events since 1996. Her four books of poetry are Shringara, Looking In, Looking Out, Numbering Our Days' Illusions and Not This, Not That.*

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GLUED TO THE *GOLDEN NOTEBOOK*

Jose Varghese

> *If one believes with Gramsci that an intellectual vocation is socially possible as well as desirable, then it is an inadmissible contradiction at the same time to build analyses of historical experience around exclusions, exclusions that stipulate, for instance, that only women can understand feminine experience, only Jews can understand Jewish suffering, only formerly colonial subjects can understand colonial experience.* – Edward Said

Perhaps I shouldn't worry
that I am not a woman,
that I didn't grow up
among the maize fields of Rhodesia,
that I hadn't embraced British Communism and
got promptly disenchanted of it
in the fragmentary experiences
of the Wars and warlike terrains
you traveled through…

I should better try to deal with
the way in which I need to
ward off unwelcome readers
with a quote from a theorist they abhor,
and come to grips with the
brooding, boring ones who
read past the lines
that betray my ploy and throw
impolite adjectives at them…

I was just curious of your notebooks
and their colour symbols.
Didn't really need to get deep
to the inner spaces,
but you caught me unawares,
led me to the many breakdowns.
Can I be in one piece now, after
the Golden Notebook?

Can I go back now to my
simple poems on life, love and nature
(and perhaps a few on death,
to surprise myself and to
show off my thematic range)?
I grew up among paddy fields,
there were sugar canes and
bamboo shoots too…

I heard them singing.
But not enough similarities,
not enough to connect.
My childhood dreams weren't infested
with racial memories.
Only my father's fears
seeped through my nightmares.
My mother was worried about
nothing but me.

You took me through my unknown pasts,
of fallen hopes and deep involvements.
Revealed my future, of playing
the role of an ineffective good man to
passionless women
who saw through my idiocy.

I revisit you, nose-deep in your words,
trying hard to help students explain the
theoretical significance
of all these pages that they fear.
My world disintegrates in front of my eyes,
my colleagues mumble the big-sounding
words and try to hide behind Derrida

I am not in one piece any more,
but I don't mind it, as long as you don't fail
to drive home some of your points
across the world of differences
that we inhabit.

- ***Jose Varghese*** *has been teaching for a while and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. on "Post-Independence Indian Zeitgeist: A Post-Colonial Reading of the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor" from the University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram. He has interviewed on video celebrities like Bill Ashcroft, Anand (P. Sachidananadan) and others.*

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DORIS LESSING'S MORAL VISION IN THE *CANOPUS IN ARGOS* SERIES

Evashisha Masilamony

Doris Lessing's *Canopus in Argos* series is composed of five volumes in which the author creates a fantasy world that allows her to diagnose the malaise of our society, to observe phenomena that cause disharmony, and to suggest alternatives whereby wholesome living becomes possible. Her point of focus is always the personal, the subjective but the implications have political and spiritual dimensions of the widest possible scope.

In a perceptive review of the series, Robert Alter points out that *The Canopus in Argos* series deploy morality with zestful inventiveness and make us aware of the possible shifts in perception(1). He believes that this series belongs to what Northrop Frye calls an "anatomy;" that is "a combination of fantasy and morality"(1) which "presents a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern"(24). But some critics assert that it is difficult to associate Lessing's work with the idea of spirituality for "spirituality implies a division, a dichotomy" (Hunter and McIntosh 110) while Lessing's work is inclusive and dissolves boundaries. To further complicate matters, Lessing has refused to "define or delineate her philosophy"(Hunter and McIntosh 110). She abhors labels but her "affinity and use of Sufi thought has been well documented"(Webber 73). She has expressed in essays her admiration for a modern day Sufi teacher, Idries Shah. So in a sense we can say that Lessing is following the Sufi tradition of teaching Sufi ideas through literature but without being militant about it. For Sufis, consciousness must be developed and perhaps that is what she is doing in this series. Lessing is opening up new perceptions and truths of unity - with each other, with nature and with the divine.

The novels in the series portray various galactic empires as they evolve and learn and their subjects who are also going through the same process. The three main empires are: Canopus, the good empire; Sirius the bureaucratic empire (a close parallel to advanced western countries); and Shammat the evil empire.

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DORIS LESSING: A PERSONAL MEMOIR

Paul Schlueter

I've had the privilege of knowing Doris Lessing, recipient of the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature, for some 43 years now. When I first had occasion to be in touch with her, she was already known as a writer, but she was hardly a household name or even a semi-famous literary figure. Our relationship began as a matter of mutual convenience. I sought material about her life and career for an essay I was preparing, and, after an exchange of letters, she used me to fend off other eager young literary scholars. At first, I was one of those young scholars myself: like the others, I was interested in her writing, but as a graduate student at Southern Illinois University I also had an assignment that prompted my initial contact with her. But first some background.

In the early 1960s, after receiving my master's degree, I was choosing a university for my doctorate. For a variety of reasons, including the advantage of inexpensive in-state tuition, I was drawn to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, close to where my family came from. My interest in SIU grew when I discovered that Harry T. Moore (1908-81) was about to join the Faculty there. Best known as a biographer of D.H. Lawrence but also renowned for his many other scholarly writings and for his amazing personal library, reputedly the largest personal collection in Illinois, Harry Moore was widely respected in the literary world, and he knew almost everyone in that world. I later learned that Harry had read some of the book reviews I regularly published in various newspapers, so one might say we were acquainted professionally. I enrolled in SIU's doctoral program and signed up for Harry's classes.

(In retrospect, it's hard not to be impressed with what SIU was attempting to do back in the 1960s, namely, to grow, within a decade, from a sleepy state teachers college to a major research university. Besides scholars of the reputation of Harry Moore, I had the opportunity to study Chaucer under the famed Kemp Malone and Shakespeare under T. W. Baldwin.

Paul Schlueter *lives at Easton, PA, USA. His books include The Novels of Doris Lessing (1973), A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews and Interviews by Doris Lessing (1974) among others.*

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Our society is

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to think.

George Mikes
(1912-1987)
Hungarian born English Humorist

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