

## **Mind, Imagination and Realism As Reflections of Feminist's Selfhood in Doris Lessing's Speculative Writings**

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### **Abstract**

Doris Lessing's speculative writings especially in her novel *The Memoirs of a Survivor* are the best examples for the feminist's different incarnations on the cultures of the others in postcolonial writings. Lessing addresses her writings on wide issues such as the discriminations of the colonial west on race, class and species. The rise of women's counter culture movement during the sixties enhances and highlights this examination for additional forms of the others inside Lessing's novels. However, Lessing's later novels lend the feminist's speculations an inclusion of the new scientific form for analyzing the original narratives. The web of the scientific writing is the key word which Lessing establishes by her opinions on politics, religion and law. Lessing's speculative writings echo the word "ecology" inside her Marxist's writings and criticism. Lessing's imagination has greater emphasis on feminist's character and this incarnation gives the plot a new breath of life, scenarios and allows the novel to show how the world of women will look like tomorrow when women question the new ideals of the society. To be precise, Doris Lessing has been recognized as an intensely a feminist political novelist who invests the dimensions of the increasing technology.

## Introduction

The major role of the novel which is adapted by Doris Lessing interrogates issues which are communicated within the scientist's natural resources, managers, regulators, lawyers, legislators, women-like men, etc.. Such wry issues contribute to the improvements of the environment to the conservations of the natural resources as well as the higher quality of the human life (Glover; 2007: 13). Therefore, it is essential to attribute a contextual criticism to Lessing's human nature paradox and to attribute the naïve context of humanity.

For Lessing Humanism finds itself interrupted by either its otherness or by its belongings. Within such counter context the effect has its focal points within Lessing's novels. Terry Eagleton indicates that nature is not just the other of culture but it is also a kind of inert weight within it by opening up an inner fracture which runs all the way through the human subject (qtd. in Glover; 2007: 25).

## Mind , Imagination and Realism As Reflections of Feminist's Selfhood in Doris Lessing's Speculative Writings

Doris Lessing or Doris May Taylor was born in Persia in 1919 of British parents; of a father who was crippled in World War 1<sup>st</sup> and who was a clerk in the Imperial Bank of Persia and of a mother who was a nurse. Doris Lessing reflects in her writings, particularly in her earlier period, many themes like her orthodox communism, irrationalism, Sufism, Feminism and British colonial writings on her life in southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) as well as Lessing's antipsychiatry. The first era in her life which was the communist era was the most interesting era in her life where she employed her personal difficulties, the sterile lives of the British colonists as well as the plights of those indigenous inhabitants who live in the British colony in southern Rhodesia. The structure of her novel *The Memoirs of a Survivor* which involves such a complex and unsettling play with space and time

and therefore sums up those difficulties as the novel takes place in three spaces from inside as 'a comfortable if shabby flat':

where the personal lives of the characters are played out: outside, on the street where the narrator observes 'the public outer life (p. 18), the life of the collective; and behind the wall, which represents the inner life, an inner reality in touch with a 'collective of different sort from the social the collective consciousness of the race or universal oversoul (pp. 144-145) ... The choice of a city as setting for *Memoirs* may be very conscious choice made by Lessing ... an actual city in decay which enhances the notion of a dystopian novel, as dystopias normally take place in cities but in line with Cederstrom's psychological interpretation (Arnsten, 2008: 58).

However, Doris Lessing's actual personal difficulties took place in 1952 where her mother was obliged to live the life of a Victorian woman in a savage land in southern Rhodesia. Lessing as a child was occupied to live by those radical difficulties which describe her as an immigrant girl. Lessing mixes her personal difficulties with the other women who live in Zimbabwe with special reference to the agony of wrenching accounts of the black women as well as with the tyranny of the political correctness.

Lessing's novel *The Memoirs of a Survivor* is wavered inside the utopian imagination which seems to have a conversational alternative and a prerequisite for any signified political action.

To be precise, Lessing advocates this skepticism, this fire and visionary power which subject such a divided civilization into speculative and formal scrutiny. This context grew up in colonial cultures which is a explicit or implicit critical to both literal and secondary metaphysical colonialism. And during the fifties she removed herself from religious beliefs but she found herself drawn again into another religion as she became a Sufi girl. In her comment on the pretensions, the privileges which are

contrasted with the lives of the blacks in Lessing's novel *The Memoirs of the Survivor* Arnsten adds:

incidents and observations made by the narrator in the different spaces and behind the wall that we learn how to interpret the narrator ... so what obvious traits make the novel autobiographical? First of all, Lessing has chosen the name of her mother as the name of the young girl in *Memoirs*. Second of all, in *Under My Skin* it becomes clear that Lessing in fact describes several incidents from her own childhood when the narrator in *Memoirs* visits the space behind the wall and Lessing explains her intentions in part one of her conventional autobiography...This idea of dream autobiography became the world behind the wall in *Memoirs of a Survivor*. "I used the nursery in Tehran and the character of my parents both exaggerated and enlarged because this is appropriate for the world of dreams (qtd. in Arnsten: 21).

We watch the survivor in *The Memoirs* at this stage which is capable of surveying both her present thoughts and her past behavior , as well as her self –conscious observation of her mind and her feelings as imaged in part through her watching various avatars of her younger self, they are brought to life via the stages that her world , Emily , rapidly passes through while her ability to conjure up is buried , out of the unconscious feeling and as it is captured by looking through the wall of her apartment .

The survivor's growing ability to accept both past self and past evolutionary stages of civilization through accepting the self and the others is the point that characterizes the new world .

These facets of her doxa bring Lessing close to the :

- radical feminism in highlighting the inbuilt of political Linguistic gender in equalities and in putting an alternative imaginary over hegemonic imaginary .
- post - colonialism

in trying to lay bare the transactions of the colonized subjectivity with the colonizer's ideology and at creating an agency for the disposed and the unprivileged .

- post – structuralism in denying any fixed meaning and in affirming the mediation of reality through linguistic representations .

Initially Anna Wolf in Lessing's collection *The Golden Netbook* in 1962 is also Lessing herself who strives for ruthless honesty and who aims at freeing herself from the emotional numbness and hypocrisy which affect Lessing's generation. Yet, this inner space fiction and other anti-psychiatry dimensions probe a higher plane of existence in Lessing's later novels. The target which is found in her novel *Canopus in Argos: Archives* in 1979 exposes Lessing's interest since 1960's with the Sufi mysticism of Indries Shah where the evolution of consciousness and the individual liberation may come about only if people understand the link between their own fates and the fate of the society they live in. (Glover, 2007: 95)

As a matter of fact, Lessing's feminist formal speculations, Victorian feminism and fantasies are submerged from a critical point of view inside the melodramas of Jane Austin, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Wolf, Tolstoy and Bulgakov. But her personal interest and admiration are laid on Christina Stead, George Meredith and Muriel Spark. But in most of her later fiction like *Cleft* Lessing has also interests in the Sanskrit folktale cycle, in the fables of Bidpa, and in the process of the autobiography of Casanova and Cellini. She also admires the Stone Age civilization of Knossos, Catal Hoyuk as well as other cults like Cromwell, the Red Guards, the Ecclesiastes and the Thundering magnificence of King James version. (Op. cit: 64). During 1979 A. S. Byatte in her comments on contemporary British fiction finds out that women like Doris Lessing, Irish Murdoch and Angus Wilson speculate their fictional awareness when it is related to a strong set of a habitable imagined world of

value. Initially, Doris Lessing admires the fugitive moments of the first men who do not know where their thoughts are to end and when the consciousness about the savages begins. She rightly puts that in a better way when she thinks within the prehistoric planes of memory, myth, madness and genetic mutation. She elaborates those issues as they are directly contacted with Frye's definition of the Anatomy fiction which according to the latter means a combination of fantasy and morality. Yet, Lessing depends on this feminist critical account of a gender and she is but fuelled by Kristeva's concept of abjection in her book *Powers of Horror* (1980).

But, Lessing's planes are also in contrast with Jonathan Swift's fantasies in *Gulliver's Travels* which is considered as an elaborated game of perspectives which magnify the pettiness, the savagery, the silliness and the brutality of the civilized man. Therefore, what is more emphatic in Lessing's experience is the inflation of negative theologies as characteristics for the whole system of the defilement. Lessing's experience expresses an indissoluble complicity which seems to have been formed from the time immemorial. This system is found in her protagonist Martha Quest who expresses Lessing's alter ego and doubly-gender where the mystical passages in the book are poetic and are of a spiritual journey which moves toward enlightenment, detachment and amazement of the utopian ideals.

To be precise, most of female societies were located by women during the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in which the authors found a space to express the utopian ideals of women. What is obvious of those female societies is that they reveal a serious questioning of the existed basis of male-female relationship or any refusal to the values of male dominated society. Yet, Jenny Wolmark points toward the Kristevan three tiered models of feminist struggle which we find appropriate to Lessing's experience. They are

considered as the entry points which refer to the feminist politics in the text. Wolmark adds:

'The first stage of this model consists of a feminism which is centred on the liberal struggle for equal rights for women; the second stage is a separatist feminism of difference which asserts that women are of value in themselves as women rather in terms of a patriarchal order which excludes them; the third stage is one in which all binary oppositions are deconstructed.' (qtd. in Arnesten: 53).

Spacing out images are likely to be free and responsible for Doris Lessing who struggles to come to terms with one's self about her life and her politics. Lessing's artistic sensibility is equated with the sensibility of the educated and she feels that the personality is very much of what is remembered. She puts that memory to different characters who have got so and so in common for balancing their fates. These space out images are deciphered and the reader is acquainted with the mystical life of Doris Lessing's character which is but like the detective stories or the nucleic acids which are to follow a formula. They describe Lessing's personality as a women who reaches London via the personality of Anna's disintegration in *Golden Netbook*, a woman who is tempered by the dream of Mark Coleridge in 'The Four Gated City' as well as by the ancient metropolis.

Even in naming Lessing as a Persian born, Rhodesian raised and London residing novelist it is difficult to fact , Lessing has joined the communist party in Africa but she has repudiated Marxism during the Hungarian crisis of 1956. Although she has been avowed as an early heroine of feminism she has later disavowed that she herself was a feminist. Lessing has resisted categorization but her persistent impulse is to cross the borders of all kinds in her work and life .

Initially, Lessing is expressing a spiritual journey of an author who is pursued by priesthood and by the emancipating mutants and dark side of R. D. Laing with Charles Watkins in her novel *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*. But R. D. Laing knows himself as a *Buildungsroman* and to be a fragment of the consciousness of superior beings who are sent down from Venus to save our garden. Yet, Lessing is the truth of that space and the grace of Clancy Sigal in the book *The Golden Notebook*. Lessing seems in her trip in the process of junking while the details of her feeling of an 'I' is capable to substitute all moral economy of the cosmos and states. The impressions are laid upon those undeveloped beings and Lessing is beside and inside those spaces while machinery appears to be free about reflecting the evolution of people, agriculture, matriarchy, myth, war slavery, decadence, human sacrifice and whales.

As a matter of fact, Doris Lessing in her debates is but like other utopian feminists Ursula Le Guine, Margaret Atwood, Wolmark and Mo; who estimate the potentialities of their debates on an anti male sentiment. Glover adds:

All female utopias ... and those who advocate an androgynous vision of human nature, maintaining that sex roles and characteristics conventionally associated with gender identity are learned rather than innate traits. (Glover, 2007: 75)

Doris Lessing's novels are read in the same context of Ursula Le Guin's novels. Both novelists draw their experience extensively on women's inner private experiences and their departure from the unsatisfactory reality of life in an alienated and alienating society. Since 1971 Ursula Le Guin reshapes the American west coast by natural and human disasters like pollution, wars, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (Davis; 2005: xi). In her novel *The Lathe of Heaven* in 1971 and in her novella *The New Atlantis* in 1975 Ursula remains true at setting

her plots on such sciences as psychology, anthropology, physics, geology and political sciences. The novels are all utopias or dystopias which are tackled to question the nature of reality and the belief of living in a world of mental activities like intuition, imagination and dreaming. (ibid) The parameters of Le Guin's experiments include a self destructive society and of a man who has the ability to change the reality by woman's dreams. Doris Lessing weaves the same mental activity toward the explicit passionate social and political order where the policy of disavowal is found to seize the opportunity to shape a better world. (Glover, 2007: 252)

These crossings are essential to Lessing's life and Lessing finds herself as a child of the first World War and the semi - autobiographical novel *Children of Violence* reflects her literal border crossing .

In her eighties Lessing gave the novel *The Sweetest Dream* which referred to the fables of two continents and three generations. The first step is to bring to culture a new formulation which drives the reader to Aids-Struck Africa, to Wilhelmina Germany and to a delineated north land milieu of good intent and mental illness. But the book is the saddest and a savage cartography of a nose fondly imagines land by a narrator who was there. (Op. cit: 69). Yet this milieu is but about a passion which is recollected inside the diseased mind of Lessing's protagonist comrade Johnny Lennox who is compounded by Marxist delusion and bourgeois self hatred. He loves humanity but he gives to himself the license to behave abominably toward the individuals. Even when he recollects the old faith, the psychology which affirms his experience is also undiminished in its capacity to delude. It is important to refer to Lessing's latest fiction which is inclusive, spiritual and intricately woven. Most readers follow her progress in the last three decades from the orthodox communism towards feminism, irrationalism, Sufism, anti-psychiatry and most recently the cosmic mysticism.

She is considered to be the architect of the soul and Margaret Drabble considers her a writer who changes tense, tone, place and a woman who skips decades and moves from the past to the future.

In this novel Lessing adheres that there is no political or social solution for personal problems but there is an intimate connection between the personal and the political which is mostly proclaimed in our times by radical feminists . yet , the book refers to Lessing's journey for distancing herself from the left convictions and form all radical Utopian beliefs . The novel is but about England during the sixties where Lessing spans half a century from World War II until the late 1990s . To be precise , Lessing attempts to manage to recapture the spirit life of the sixties and she conveys the justifiable Irritation with the (British) campaign for nuclear disarmament which reflects the hysterical , noisy and the irrationality of this campaign as it embodies the unquestionable beliefs and altitudes of England during that period .

Mary Turner in Lessing's early novel *The Grass is Singing* in 1950 is the central character whose reactions and the psychological state of the mind complete the mental and the spiritual deterioration of death. In addition, Lessing is not only delineating the typical racial relationship between the white and their native workers but also she continues to address how and why the white continued to oppress the native workers and allowed variances in the unequal balance of power. The first chapter begins with a clipping from a local news which announce the murder of Mary Turner. The people all over the country feel that anger which is mingled with what is almost satisfaction as if some belief is confirmed when natives steal, murder or rape and that feeling is what white people have. But in the old society everyone knew what they could or could not do if someone achieved an unforgivable thing like touching one of the king's women he would submit fatalistically to punishment, and by

looking back over the last few days in South Africa, Marston sees that something like this is bound to happen or some kind of violence or ugliness will occur.

However, the heroine Mary Turner is the archetypal figure because she represents a certain set of consistent characteristics of a certain group of people who are highly individualized, specially from the belief that whites are in every way superior to blacks because they have the right to do so.

Another famous novel which is perceived as a feminist novel in Doris Lessing's writing is *Cleft*. The feminist protagonist is a combination of fantasy and prehistory which seems closer to Ursula Le Guin's novel *Dispossessed*; an Ambiguous Utopia which explores the origin of people and the power that makes us what we are today. The woman in *Cleft* links her life in caves, canyons and clefts. But the reader learns how people or the clefts are dwelled above the sea while the feminist tract seems much more visible. Clefts are intended to explore what primitive people and how all female world might have been like. But the clefts are inhabited by lazy communal porpoise-like creatures and by the chaos that ensues to give birth to boys.

Initially, girl babies are only born by the clefts. And without warning the clefts produce what they think of as a monster without lumps and protuberances where a cleft should be like. This baby without lumps is left to die on a rock. At the same time more male babies are born by the clefts but they too are left to die while many of these babies are rescued by eagles and are taken to a nearby valley where they survive and suckle by a doe.

The rest of the novel shows up how communities of the babies are developed; one on the valley messy and inarticulate and adventurous while in the second community they are in caves above the sea placid, dreamy and elemental. Women realize that they can no longer bear babies alone and their growing exasperation with men reflects that of their incompleteness. Men want to go off exploring risking the lives of

their children on expeditions that seems to be largely about escaping the responsibility of fatherhood. Lessing wants to explore how cruelty and self defense have as much potentials to take hold of women as they do for men. But Harold Bloom accuses Lessing of finding out a crusade against men and human beings and that the novel is a kind of a feminist tract.

The other major novel of Lessing is *General Dann and Mara's Daughter* which is set to explore a future of the Earth millennia from the present as the planet heats up again followed by a nice age. Lessing is not only interested in the physical effects of climate but also by the uses of the recent speculative global climate change. But Lessing's speculations are reminiscent to Piercy in *He, She and It*. Piercy imagines the technological future followed by the collapse of the world's ecosystems.

Initially, the northern Hemisphere in Lessing's latest novel *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* is covered with ice and the south Americans are called South Imrik and are completely out of contact with Africa which is divasted by drought and war. Lessing exposes a bleakness that suggests everything we understand on civilization. Civilization defies the analysis in the face of violent global change and that all kinds of technological solutions which try to solve the violent global climate change are unable to redeem us from the effects of complete ecological collapse. To be precise, the environmental apocalypse has become an increasingly popular form of disaster in Lessing's narrative like the problem of global warming which has gained the increasing currency in the world media.

As a matter of fact, readers throughout the world follow Lessing's progress and her future novels in the last three decades are inclusive and spiritual, they display a spacious panoply of themes specific to late twentieth century consciousness. Her basic themes are connected with race, the conflict of the generations, the psychological dimensions of male-female relationships, women and women's experiences, politics,

philosophical inquires about life, nature and the planes of reality, the labyrinths of the human mind, the exploration of madness and the mystical forms and modes of consciousness, ...etc.

Rula Quawas in her comments on Lessing's inner space in her novel *Elsewhere* has rightly put it:

Lessing pushes the boundaries of realistic fiction beyond its limits and allows us to see that indeed there is no Other but rather a subject-as-other perceived and defined simply as Other ... Lessing stands as a Cassandra of women's experience that was everywhere silenced, concealed and denied ... Lessing is author who has pent her life writing about the subject of women and their inner voyage into the self and psyche ... It can be said that identity- the process of its construction and deconstruction, the roles of others in its definition, the necessity of growth through continual redefinition its enabling and crippling properties – and the inscription of female subjectivity are certainly the most central and urgent themes .. (Quawas, 2007: 110).

## Conclusion

Instead of employing the sentimental tropes for a better race or resurrection for a better social balance during World War II Lessing tackles a new experience and a new therapeutic nostalgia for common people. Lessing conveys through her narrative standards of honesty, constancy, kindness and patience for understanding feminism. Lessing's novels signify that the individual is not only free to choose his own essence but also to change it by the good existentialist premises. The most primitive literary responses are the individual's new learning experience.

المستخلص:

ان كتابات دوريس لسينغ التأملية و بصورة خاصة في روايتها ( ذكريات الناجي ) هي من افضل الامثلة للتجسيد المتنوع للأنوثة التي تتناول ثقافات الاخرين في

الكتابات ما بعد الكولونية و تخاطب لسينغ في كتاباتها مواضيع شاملة مثل تميزات الغرب الاستعماري حول الجنس ، الطبقة و الاجناس. ان بزوغ حركة الثقافة الحوارية للمرأة خلال الستينات ثري و تسلط الضوء على هذا الاختبار لإضافة اشكال جديدة من الآخرين داخل ثقافة لسينغ. و بأية حال ان روايات لسينغ المتأخرة قد اضافت الى تأملات الانوثة اشياء" اخرى لتشمل الشكل العلمي الخاضع للتحليل داخل السرد الاصيل. ان شبكة الكتابة العلمية هي المفتاح الذي رسخته لسينغ في افكارها حول السياسة و الدين و القانون. ان كتابات لسينغ التأملية تعكس كلمة (اصول الاشياء) داخل كتاباتها النقدية الماركسية. كان في خيال لسينغ تشديد حول شخصية المرأة و تجسيدات التي تعطي نفسا جديدا للحياة و سيناريوهات و تسمح بذلك للرواية لان تعرض كيف ان عالم المرأة ينظر اليه في المستقبل عندما تستجوب المرأة عن المثل الجديدة داخل المجتمع. و بشكل موجز تم الاعتراف بأن دوريس لسينغ هي روائية سياسية نسوية التي تستثمر ابعاد التكنولوجيا المتزايدة.

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