

THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL GRACES IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF DORIS LESSING

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Abstract: The desideratum of this study is to evaluate the effect of ethnicity, social deprivation, and gender on perceived. Being a *Free Women* is the disease of women in our time especially for those who attempt to live the kind of life women never lived before. But this is inseparable from the universal theme of the individual's isolation; in a world that supplies no dependable values. The relationship of Elia and Paul at the centre of "The Yellow Note Book" is tinged with women's magazine fantasy. Like many people she is scared of being alone in what she feels and fears emotion in a hostile world, but as an artist, driven to experience as many different things as possible, she has to face the question of responsibility. The Note Books punctuate instalments of a conventional novel entitled "Free Women", in which Anna herself a character, using experience in the Note Books selectively. If literature is analysed after the events and the Note Books are read first and then the novel, we could see how Anna, the unblocked writer of the Free Women is using her fragmented experience recorded in the Note Books compelling it into a positive whole with a control. The African material of the Black Note Book describes some of her most deeply felt experience which soon disappears. At the centre of Free Women is Richard Tommy and Marion Triangle and Anna appears excessively detached.

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OVERTURE

The rise of the novel in England in the 18th century has much to do with the emergence of a new audience as well as that of new medium and a new empiricism at work generally in the culture; by which the habit of reading may suddenly become the possession of a new class. In the English nineteenth Century the intelligentsia generally was heavily literary in orientation and was involved with society through a cultural point of view. This is to say that its aims were not directly political but rather educational, the situation of the writer in western liberal society is that it is in fact one of the most attractive careers available – creative, tolerantly regarded and prestigious. So, in this sort of society, there is no shortage of aspirants. As the art-schools produce more poets, novelists and dramatists. There are poetry magazines with more subscribing to them than readers and the coffee-bars, clubs and pubs, even the labor-exchanges are well stocked with writers, not all of them notably productive. It is easy to see why there is a long-standing association between literature and poverty.

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A sense of disintegration and division is a familiar enough feature of a response and modern writers are indeed, as Solomon Fisherman suggests, touched by modern consciousness among which are a sense of social disintegration, a cultural decadence and of the widening chasm between the individual and historical and material environment. (Solomon Fisherman, '*The Disinherited of Art*', 31).

The literature of the 20th century is committed to an idea of free creativity often coupled with an idea of 'alienation' or difficult separatism with wide result of the Post War period. As the heroine of Doris Lessing's '*The Golden Notebook*' (1963), Anna feels that she is incapable of writing the only kind of novel, which interests her, a book powered with an intellectual and moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life is incapable because the contemporary world is too fragmentary, too real to permit the performance of the task, which many of the earlier writers of the century had undertaken that of the fragmentation into a world of form.

Since the war, a new order in English society has grown into literature where there is a shift in the actual comparison of the literary profession, the degree to which it has been an attractive life-style and the way that the style has taken different forms and guises the nature of the social and financial rewards of being a writer change. It is true that the main source of serious literature in English society has been solid middle classes. Altogether the portrait of modern literature adds up to one in which the fact that the middle classes have made themselves particularly responsible for our literature has inhibited neither its growth or its range. Modern writing is not simply an activity of radical dissent with the nature of our culture and society. The writer emerging a stratum outside the middle and upper classes were no 1930's phenomenon. These writers with their greater awareness of social hardship and knowledge of proletarian life and conditions were blessed with an advantage denied to most of their middle-class colleagues. Walpole refers to a style of writing practiced only by some novelists in the modern period and certainly not by all his contemporaries. His letter described the appearance of such a specifically modern style, which seemed to Walpole a 'nonsense'. The modern technique doesn't arrange things and events in order. (Huge Walpole, A letter to Modern Novelists, 25).

In modern fiction Woolf complains that the enormous labor in proving the solidity, the likeness to life, is not merely a labor thrown away but labor misplaced. A modern novel is a visual experience. It can be taken as an 'acronym' standing for a box of organized knowledge. It is a hoc from which characters, events and waiting to emerge at the rising of the literature. A modern novel is judged in terms of its author's capacity for fulfilling the known expectations of the reader. So, a novel is primarily a presentation of human beings in action. The novelists whether

old or modern has the God like responsibility of creating human beings whom we accept as living creatures filled with complexities and armed with her free will. A good novel contrives to trace a “parabola”. It is not merely a slice of life, it is life dedicatedly moulded into shape.

The achievement of women writers of the British novel is a significant one and the major talents within this tradition have been recognized. The first two novelists in F. R. Leavis, “Great tradition” are women. During the period of 1960’s and especially the 1970’s there has been a dramatic change in the reception given to serious women novelists generally. They achieved much wider recognition both critically and popularly than at any other time in the history of British fiction. The reasons for this recognition are of course social as well as literary unlike the generation of women novelists such as Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, who began writing during the early half of this century. Women novelists of this period, and the male novelists too for that matter, are not brash experimentation in form or technique. Their achievements rest on other claims and the themes they have inaugurated grow out of new experiences.

Women novelists like this period, like Drabble, create an obviously wide range of experience from the world outside. The 1960’s and 1970’s have seen enormous changes in the ways in which some women, especially educated ones, have the opportunity to live their lives. Such opportunities have created a diversity and choice of women, but this new experience and awareness has obviously introduced new problems and frustrations. Because women are beginning to enter the social world in most of its aspects, the social effect on men is also a subject of importance. The feminine social world portrayed in Virginia Woolf’s novels. For example, with all its sophistication was not that much larger than that of Woolf’s immediate predecessors. The triumphs, the turmoil, the accommodations, the anguish of these new circumstances have become the subject matter of some of the most important novels written by women during the 1960’s and 1970’s. The themes of subjects and the character in these novels reflect a far larger world with its shape much less clearly defined.

Finding an appropriate topic for my journal turned out not to be a sinecure. After a few side steps, I finally chose a direction I knew would not disappoint me. I decided to write about women: their position in society, both as a woman and as an artist, as well as their creative contributions to society as an artist; or more specifically as a writer. Surely, in writing this journal, I have not been able to cover every aspect that deals with the woman writer. In the prolific maze of women’s writings, I was forced to make a selective approach and concentrate mainly on one writer, which eventually brought me to Doris Lessing and her novel *The Golden Notebook*. A somewhat obvious choice, considering the fact that she has won the Nobel Prize in Literature in December 2007.

Harold Bloom once accused Lessing of a crusade against male human beings' but she has always resisted the designation of feminist novelist on the grounds that she is as coolly unsentimental about women as she is about men and unafraid of political incorrectness. There will, no doubt, be some (enthusiasts of the great monotheistic religions, for instance, in which male primacy seems to be a pretty key ingredient) who will take a Bloom-like view of *The Cleft* as a kind of feminist tract. But, in reality, this is a novel that appears to have no political allegiance, beyond a statement that women came first. She suggests that the capacity for cruelty and self-defence has as much potential to take hold of women as it does men.

It is the conventional plot structure for the most of the 18th century narratives. But in the 19th century at the first sight looks, "rewarding with respect to Jane Austen and the Bronte Sisters, "love" and "quest" were still mutually exclusive in the narrative plot, the latter traditionally being suppressed in favour of the first". (*Blau Duplessis* 13)

One specific theme where tension between the designated role of a woman and a meaningful vocation is displayed, bears close resemblance to the theme in *The Golden Notebook*; the figure of the female artist, as represented in the *Künstlerroman*. The *Künstlerroman* is a subgenre of the Bildungsroman and covers the growth of an artist to maturity; it displays the struggle of a young person against the ideology of a bourgeois society of his or her time:

Using the female artist as literal motives dramatizes and heightens the already present contradiction in bourgeois ideology between the ideals of striving, improvement, and visible public works, and the feminine version of that formula: passivity, "accomplishments," and invisible private acts. (*Blau Duplessis* 84)

Elaine Showalter indicates that the female literary tradition, from the Brontë's onward to the present day, shows a development similar to any literary subculture. Women are embedded within the framework of a larger society "and have been unified by values, conventions, experiences, and behaviours impinging on each individual" (Showalter 11). Nevertheless, it is impossible to discern a "movement" because there is no indication of deliberate, conscious progress in their writing. Therefore, it is unmistakably important to view this literary tradition in relation to the wider evolution women's self-awareness and the struggle to conquer their place in a male-dominated world. Three stages can be discerned in the development of women's writing:

First, there is a prolonged phase of *imitation* of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, and *internalization* of its standards of art and its views on social roles second; there is a phase of *protest* against these standards and values and *advocacy* of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy. Finally,

there is a phase of *self-discovery*, a turning inward freed from some dependency of opposition, a search for identity. (*Showalter* 13)

An appropriate terminology is suggested: Feminine, from the 1840s the death of George Eliot; Feminist, from 1880 to 1920; Female from the 1920s onward until present day.

In deconstructing the conventional ideological and cultural gender institution in narratives, Doris Lessing is important female author who offers an oppositional narrative strategy. In this context, being a white South-African and a woman, Lessing can be said to display “double marginalization”: she came to England in 1949 to escape the troubles her own country, Rhodesia, was facing at the time”. (*Blau Duplesis* 89)

In trying to break free from the key tradition, the concept “anxiety of influence” as formulated by Gilbert and Gubar is indispensable. The explanation starts with Harold Bloom, one of the foremost researchers on the psychology of literary history. This is characterized by what Bloom coined “anxiety of influence”, “fear that the writer is not his own creator and the works of his predecessors, existing before and beyond him, assume essential priority over his own writings” (Gilbert and Gubar 47). Bloom’s “model of literary history” is essentially male, describing the tension between literary artists as relationship between father and son. Nevertheless, from a feminist point of view it still proves a useful model. As Western literary history is tremendously male, Bloom has investigated this very fact and “clarified the implications of the psychosexual and socio-sexual contexts by which every literary text is surrounded” (*Gilbert and Gubar* 47). Bloom’s model thus proves useful to define, firstly, the patriarchal context in which so much western literature was conceived and, secondly, it is a useful criterion to indicate the female authors’ fear from her male counterparts.

On a thematic level, although she does something object that term, writing *The Golden Notebook*, she was crowned a feminist icon by the Women’s Liberation Movement. The novel epitomizes Second Wave feminism, in which the formal characteristics “align feminist first person narratives with the political literature of other non-dominant groups” (Lauret 98). In brief, the personal is connected to the political. The protagonists are “Free Women” who embody the modernity of late fifties: they are divorced, take lovers and have a career. They want an independent life and obtain the same liberties men enjoy. This personal story is encompassed by their political engagement as communist and, as communism in the end altogether failed to engender social change, the upcoming women rights movement succeeded in altering society profoundly, by conflating the personal and the political.

The theme of the story stems from the male perception of women. Men too often think it is okay to objectify women. The whistling and yelling to the men

were complimentary to the woman. To the men, a woman should feel glad that the men find her sexually attractive.

Of course, most of the time, this is not the case. A woman wants to be accepted as a total person, not just for her outward persona. It has never been okay to stereotype a woman as a sexual object. Just as a man wants to be perceived as a total person, so does a woman. Kudos to this woman, who despite the challenges presented by the men for privacy, she ignores them and takes care of herself.

The survey of some 10,000 men and women between the ages of 16 and 59 in England and Wales was undertaken in 1995 as a specialised part of the 1996 British Crime Survey (BCS) using CASI, a computer aided entry system for respondents to answer questions about domestic violence.

Trends in Prevalence Rates Drawn from British Office Research

Between 1981 and 1995, estimated incidents of domestic violence in England and Wales showed an increase of 242%, in part reflecting a greater willingness to report. In the main 1996 BCS, 1.3% of women and 0.7% of men reported one or more incidents of domestic violence, i.e., about 1% of the population in total of England and Wales. Half had only experienced one assault, one fifth two, and the rest three or more.

<i>Sl No</i>	<i>Year & Place</i>	<i>% Women</i>	<i>% Men</i>
1.	1996 – England & Wales	1.3%	0.7%

Integral Part of the Women Novelist's domain

The male experience in the contemporary world is now an integral part of the women novelist's domain. The most intimate concerns of sexuality and relationships of males are frequently taken up directly and convincingly by contemporary women novelists and literary criticism has become aware of the enormous and aesthetic value of women novelists. Women novelists have always the uncanny ability to create a small world that is a true microcosm of the conflicts and relationships, both historical and personal affect society. This portrayal of the female in the novel of women have quite properly been the central focal point of critical discussion; but another important development in the advancement of women's fiction; and one that has received too little attention, has been depth of understanding and wide range of sensibility women novelists have shown in their creation of male characters and their willingness to deal with the consciousness of the male directly. The almost magical power of proximity to cultural stars is something scholars usually discuss in relation to mass-culture fans. It seems not coincidental that in this passage a similar construction of high cultural authority appears both in Sandra's reference to the trendiness of commonwealth literature and in Sarah Grace's remark about

Doris Lessing –“I am not a real Doris Lessing fan”. Although no one contested Sarah Grace’s feelings about Doris Lessing or the way she phrased them, this being a matter of individual taste.

PERORATION

Lessing perceived that the crisis in the society and the cultural differences will disappear as the people start understanding what exactly is wrong with them. She observed social issues with keenness. She felt strongly that if the society and the class is well organized, the mankind will be a well-knit unit without social cleavages. In her anxiety to change the class conscious society, the idea of communism appealed to her as her days witnessed the principle of equality gaining momentum.

More so, the principle of equality, the prime motive in her sets the tone in order and in motion with successfully finds a berth in the works of Lessing.

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