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Thesis Subject: Doris Lessing: In Pursuit of Identity and Love

Thesis Date: October 2009

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF DISILLUSIONMENTS IN DORIS LESSING' S HER OWN LIFE AND THE CHARACTERS OF HER NOVELS, MARTHA QUEST IN *MARTHA QUEST, A PROPER MARRIAGE, LANDLOCKED* AND MARY TURNER IN *THE GRASS IS SINGING*

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M.A. Programme in English Language and Literature

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Visam Mansur

October 2009, 93 pages

This thesis analyses the disillusionments of Mrs. Lessing and Martha Quest in *Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage* and *Landlocked* and Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing* in the lights of Historical and Biographical Criticism. The aim of the study is to examine how the female protagonists are the striking reflections of Doris Lessing's own life in different dimensions.

The causes of their disillusionments are the relationship between their parents, the society where they live in and their gender roles assigned by society. These disappointments lead the protagonists and Mrs. Lessing to have problematic relations with their children and their husbands in their marital life, too. While these factors are examined the thesis is going to ask this question: what is Mrs. Lessing's aim to create these characters lead lives in parallel to her own? And what is the role of an individual in society where she lives in?

Keywords: Doris Lessing, Martha Quest, Mary Turner, disillusionment, inner conflict, external conflict, prejudices

ÖZ

DORIS LESSING'İN HAYATINDAKİ VE MARTHA QUEST, A PROPER MARRIAGE, LANDLOCKED İLE THE GRASS IS SINGING ROMANLARINDAKİ KARAKTERLERİNİN YAŞADIĞI HAYAL KIRIKLIKLARININ ÇÖZÜMLEMESİ

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Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Visam Mansur

Ekim 2009, 93 sayfa

Bu çalışma, Mrs. Lessing'in ve *Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage, Landlocked* romanlarının kahramanı Martha Quest ve *The Grass is Singing* romanının kahramanı Mary Turner'ın hayal kırıklıklarını Tarihsel ve Biyografisel Eleştiri ışığında çözümlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Bayan Lessing'in hayatının kadın kahramanları kullanarak çeşitli boyutlardan yansıtılmasının incelenmesidir.

Hayal kırıklıklarının nedeni ebeveynleriyle olan ilişkileri, içinde yaşadıkları toplum ve toplumun kendilerine biçtiği cinsiyet rolleri olarak açıklanmaktadır. Hayal kırıklıklarının, ana karakterlerin ve Bayan Lessing'in daha sonraki evrelerde çocuklarıyla ve eşleriyle ilişkilerine negatif olarak yansıdığı gözlenmiştir. Bu çalışma, karakterleri hayal kırıklığına uğratan nedenleri irdelerken şu soruyu da sormaktadır;

Bayan Lessing neden kendi hayatıyla benzerlikler taşıyan bu karakterleri yaratmıştır? Ve bireyin içinde yaşadığı toplumdaki rolü nedir?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Doris Lessing, Martha Quest, Mary Turner, hayal kırıklığı, içsel çatışma, dışsal çatışma, önyargı

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Visam Mansur for his invaluable and patient guidance in the preparation of this thesis. Without his guidance and help, this thesis would not have been possible. I would like to thank my colleagues, especially my director Ebru Kaya for their motivation and tolerance to complete my thesis. My special thanks go to my beloved parents, Kayhan Yaman and Nuray Yaman and my second family Füsün Çelik and Aydın Çelik, and especially to my husband Ahmet Burak Çelik for their support and lifting my spirit in difficult times.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As Lessing states in *A Small Personal Voice*, Martha Quest, the protagonist of *Children of Violence* series is portrayed as the depiction of “the individual conscience in its relations with the collective” (19). As Rowe points out, individuals has to take some roles upon themselves as the source of individuality in society and “try on a variety of clothes and roles – daughter, typist, lover, wife, mother, political activist, etc. – in her attempt to answer the question and in an attempt to place herself in a community” (26).

Although individuals are formed by social norms and they feel trapped by the oppression of conventions, in *Prison We Choose to Live Inside*, Lessing is hopeful about individual’s influence to affect society:

Looking back, I see what a great influence an individual may have, even an apparently obscure person, living in a small, quiet life. It is individuals who change societies, give birth to ideas, who, standing out against tides of opinion, and change them. This is as true in open societies as it is in oppressive societies, but of course the casualty rate in the closed societies is higher. Everything that has ever happened to me has taught me to value the individual, the person who cultivates and preserves her own his ways of thinking, who stands out against group thinking, group pressures: Or who, conforming no more than is necessary to group pressures, quietly preserves individual thinking and development (73-4).

In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Lessing emphasizes that the hardest thing for people is being involved in a group and “to stand out against one’s group, a group of

one's peers" (49). Again, Lessing points out that Western people emerge with "an idea about themselves that goes something like this: I am a citizen of a free society, and that means I am an individual, making individual choices. My mind is my own, my opinions are chosen by me, I am free to do as I will, and at the worst the pressures on me are economic, that is to say I may be too poor to do as I want" (47).

The Grass is Singing, is Lessing's her first novel which was published in 1950 and *Children of Violence* was formed as series of five books, *Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, *A Ripple From the Storm*, *Landlocked* and *The Four-Gated City* completed in 17 years.

For the thesis, *The Grass is Singing* and three novels of *Children of Violence* except *A Ripple from the Storm* and *The Four-Gated City* are studied because there are a few details relevant to the study of thesis.

Lessing portrays her protagonist Martha Quest as an adolescent and Mary Turner as an adult by giving flashback scenes from her adolescence because Lessing wants to make the development of protagonists become clear and effective to the readers. At this point, Norman Kiell, in *The Adolescent Through Fiction*, supports that the novels of adolescence are a reflection and reminiscence of "the adult reader's need to recapture memories of a lost past, memories which he has repressed of his –largely–unhappy adolescent years (13).

Lessing's protagonists are depicted as the characters who try to find a place in society and to become an individual who stand on their feet.

Lessing through their developmental process, places a great value upon their disillusionments to become independent individuals who are not bound to society. According to Cederstrom, Lessing portrays Martha "as a vulnerable adolescent adrift

in a sea of collective pressures disguised as social relationships” (35) and “as a revolting character against the society since her adolescence, through various experiences and associations with persons of different categories, in search of a free status for herself” (41) as Anita Myles states in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*.

Cederstrom also states Martha and Mary’s “fragile individuality is being tried by all the powers of social conformity” (35) and Martha and Mary are depicted as “rebellious to assert their individuality” (35).

The aim of this study is to embody the process of childhood, adolescence and adulthood of Lessing in her novels through her characters, Martha and Mary.

The thesis argues that the causes of Martha and Mary’s disillusionments are the relationship with their parents, for Martha especially with her mother, and social conditions such as lives led under the shadow of World War I and World War II, and upbringing in a colonial town in Southern Rhodesia. Martha and Mary undergo disillusionment because of these reasons and their escape from unhappiness leads them to find themselves in another unhappiness and entrapment of conventions. So this thesis argues how effective and destructive powers norms have upon individuals and how forced individuals are to conform to norms assigned by society.

In the second chapter, biographical information of Lessing will be given and a summary of dominant themes in her works will be mentioned. In the third chapter, the writers’ responsibilities and the relationship between her works and her personal experiences will be discussed; her writing style will be studied. In the fourth chapter, the sources of the writer’s own disillusionments and disillusionments of Martha and Mary discussed and will be drawn parallels between the writer’s personal life and

her novels. In the fifth chapter, the consequences of disillusionments and their unhappiness will be studied. The conclusion will be a small summary of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2

Mrs. Lessing's Biography

Doris Lessing was born in Persia (now Iran) in 1919 and her family moved to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) with the attraction of her father to farm. Doris and Harry, her younger brother, were brought up on an isolated farm where their father led a scarce life growing maize and tobacco. She spent most of her childhood on this large and isolated farm there. Doris finished her formal education at a very early age but kept developing her vision and herself by reading. During her stay in Zimbabwe, she learnt her lesson observing and experiencing colonial Africa. She married to Frank Wisdom in 1939 and they had two sons, but they got divorced in 1943. Two years later, she married to a half-Jewish German man named Gottfried Lessing and she gave birth to a baby boy, Peter but her marriage ended in divorce twice. It took a long time Lessing to realize that marriage was not proper for her. Although she seems not to be affected by her unsuccessful marriages, we will observe their reflections in her novels and questioning her marriages through her characters. In her early years it was unbearable to sleep alone but as time passed, she learnt how to be self-sufficient. Lessing comments upon her marriages in her interview with Roy Newquist in *A Small Personal Voice*:

I married in my teens, when I was far too young, and had two children. That marriage was a failure and I married again. Let's put it this way: I do not think that marriage is one of my talents. I've been much happier unmarried than married. I can't blame the people I've been married to – by and large I've been at fault (50).

In her childhood, at times when her mother is not looking after her but her ill husband, she enjoyed her freedom and saw the white and black relationship from a different perspective. She had a lonely childhood but she spent her time with natives. She behaves them sincerely and friendly unlike the other white children. As a child, she realized that she was kept under pressure about racism. She did not like being brought up with the feeling of racism but she found herself in the very middle of this. Every moment passing with this issue made her uneasy so racism has been one of her dominant themes in her novels and Lessing reflects it in most of her novels. Those of Doris Lessing's novels and stories deal with the people and ways of life of Southern Rhodesia before, during, And after World War II and these novels have acquired something of the significance of social and political history and show the readers how past shapes the present and future critically.

Natives' exploitation by white people made her unhappy and in the following years as she expresses in *A Small Personal Voice*, she looked for a solution in Communism "which had an enormous effect on politics because it ignored the colour bar. In the Communist Party, Lessing worked with whites and blacks together on the basis of equality" (79). As time passed, the Communist Party did not meet her needs and left the party with disappointment and lack of confidence and she explains this in Schlueter's book, *A Small Personal Voice*:

There was a time in my life when I was a member of a communist group which was pure – they had no contact with any kind of reality. It must have been blessed by Lenin from his grave, it was so pure. The thing was, if we had been in any other part of the world, where in fact there was a Communist Party, the beautiful purity of the ideas that we were trying to

operate couldn't have worked. I found this when I came to England and had a short association with the British Communist Party (85).

It can be clearly seen that Lessing writes her novels in the light of an ideology. She worked for a socialist movement so she is aware of and wants to write about politics but she does not find the strength to embody her political vision in a novel. She wants to study Chinese peasants and the Algerians but she does not want to represent them in an incorrect manner. In Schlueter's book, according to Lessing, "the writer is obliged to dramatize the political conflicts of his time in his fiction" (74). Lessing who undergoes social and political frustrations tried to seek peace, happiness and perfection in various philosophies. As Anita Myles states; "she became inclined towards Sufism with a view to having a comforting spiritual alternative in it without damaging her own Christian beliefs" (2).

As Lorna Sage states in *Doris Lessing*, Doris Lessing is unquestionably one of the most important novelists "who has involved herself in a wide world of issues, from colonial oppression in southern Africa, where she grew up, to the recurrent threat of nuclear war" (9). And, she reflects her experiences, one way or another, in her novels. Annis Pratt in *Doris Lessing*, states that "Doris Lessing's life is the source of her fiction. . . .Lessing speaks directly of that life, of her own early indoctrination into racist values, her views of the third world liberation struggles, of the class-bound life of her own London neighborhood" (3).

As Sage mentions, her novels included the themes of poverty, colonialism, class conflict and "sexual politics which means that her men were as damaged as her women by the outworn roles they played" (10). For example, her upbringing with the idea of racism shapes most of her novels, in fact. To a certain point, most of her

novels can be seen as a protest against slavery. The white men's confrontation with other cultures and slavery as a cruel phenomenon are in focus in her fiction. The concept of colonialism is very important to Doris Lessing she was brought up in an environment where racial prejudices were dominant. She witnesses how natives were forced to work hard under very heavy conditions for the sake of a little money, trifle things, or hope for shelter and she explains in *Under My Skin*:

The white population of Salisbury was then 10.000, but the black population was believed to be 100.000, and it seemed that the ambition of every one of the 100,000 was to work in a white house. At the least, it meant you had a legal place in the city, with its delights, you were fed, you had a legal place to sleep, and you had a little money (380).

In most of her novels, she draws readers' attention to the unfair attitudes natives has to be exposed to. People never talk to black people, only as servants. White people see the black ones as the other and despise them. They even see them as potential dangers. Witnessing with these realities make Lessing unhappy and disappointed and she reflects all these details in her novels in a very effective manner. White and black relationship has become the most dominant theme of her novels. The other point she wants to emphasize through her fiction is the ironical side of white imperialism. There is ambivalence according to Lessing and there is hypocrisy of Europeans to question slavery; Christianity is against slavery but they do need a slave which means an inner conflict. They call themselves Christians but they do not have virtue and morality in them. On one hand, slavery is a sinful practice; on the other hand, it is essential for colonial purposes. She criticizes white superiority to natives by writing their ironic justification of slavery. They dare not command the slaves that

work in their colonies. They embrace the slaves with all friendly affection in the world. The natives are primitive and innocent so they do not know the value of what they are giving to white people. White people are exploiting, using them for their own purposes. In *Under My Skin*, their relation with these innocent people is based on their self-interest:

What can one say about a people who have stolen all the black's land and then talked about uplifting and civilizing them? How can one describe a country where 100,000 white people use I million blacks as servants and cheap labour, refuse them education and training, all the time in the name of Christianity? But what really made them such a pain was, they were so pleased with themselves. 'Why on earth are they so conceit?' (251).

CHAPTER 3

Works in the Light of Lessing's own Life

Doris Lessing's background has been a powerful influence on her fiction. What we have in *Children of Violence* and *The Grass is Singing* is the effect of her personal experiences; her racial upbringing, her conflicts with her parents especially her mother, her relations with her husbands marriages ended in divorce, her quest for the self, years in Africa in poverty. The similarities between a writer's private life and his fictions bring us to the question of the relationship between autobiography and fiction.

To begin with, for intensive reading and understanding the works of Lessing, the readers' analysis should be based upon the characteristics of historical and biographical criticism. Biographical and historical criticism enables the reader to find alternative meanings in a work of literature. The idea of "biographical" has stemmed from the stress on the author whereas "historical" has come from the emphasis on the characteristics of the age that the author lived. Examining the age that the author lived in or studying her background enables the reader to enrich her imagination in analyzing the work of literature. According to this idea, the literary work is a reflection of the author's life and literary work should be handled by focusing upon its relationship with its author's life for the enriched meaning and appreciation.

In this study, the readers should analyze Doris Lessing's works of literature by placing great value upon her background and the characteristics of the age in which she has been living in the lights of historical and biographical criticism. Otherwise, analyzing her characters' quest for identity, their exposing to racial prejudices or

their depression under the shadow of war would be superficial and shallow because as Lorna Sage states in *Doris Lessing*, Doris Lessing is unquestionably one of the most important novelists “who has involved herself in a wide world of issues, from colonial oppression in southern Africa, where she grew up, to the recurrent threat of nuclear war” (9). And, she reflects her experiences, one way or another, in her novels.

For example, her upbringing with the idea of racism shapes most of her novels, in fact. To a certain point, most of her novels can be seen as a protest against slavery. The white men’s confrontation with other cultures and slavery as a cruel phenomenon are in focus in her fiction. The concept of colonialism is very important to Doris Lessing she was brought up in an environment where racial prejudices were dominant. For this reason, each line of works is to read and studied as the source of her personal experiences and her time. Thus, the reader can place great and deserved value upon her works as not ordinary fiction and source of imagination but real works of literature. While analyzing Doris Lessing in this study, historical setting of the work, values and beliefs of that time and the examination of her life by using autobiographies, letters and interviews as the requirement of historical and biographical criticism are very important elements for the interpretation of the work as Steven Lynn indicates in *Texts and Contexts*:

Biographical criticism is the natural ally of historical criticism. We can hardly understand one person’s life without some sense of the time and place in which he or she lived, and we can hardly understand human history without trying to think about the individual humans who made it. Historical criticism considers how military, social, cultural, economic,

scientific, intellectual, literary, and (potentially) every other kind of history might help us to understand the author and work (123).

The ability to understand the social structure or lifestyle of a certain time that a work of literature belongs gives the reader a great consciousness in order to make conclusions and understand better.

To give an example, in Renaissance, “the otherworldliness” of Middle Ages replaced with “worldliness” which created ‘carpe-diem motif’ meaning ‘catching the day and enjoying life’. Worldliness brought the centralization of human being in universe with it and this attachment to human values meant “secularism”. Secularism was reflected in Andrew Marvell’s *To His Coy Mistress*, as one of the characteristics of that period in these lines, “Worms shall try/ That long-preserv’d virginity, / And your quaint honour turn to dust, / And into ashes all my lust.

Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter are undoubtedly the fathers of absurd drama in the 20th century and in order to understand and analyze their works deeply, the reader should be equipped with the characteristics of the age that direct them to write pessimistic plays like *Waiting for Godot* or *The Room*. As the characteristics of age in which Beckett and Pinter lived, there is disappointment in people’s lives after the World War II, futility and meaningless of life is on focus and minimalism is observed in their works. People started to question themselves, “Why am I? Who am I? What am I doing?” In the light of these details, the reason of one of the characters is blind and the other has problems becomes apparent because as the characteristics of the age, people lost their hopes and the feeling of security in life and they became alienated from society.

Human nature is problematic and paradoxical; it is neither fixed nor definite. Most importantly, human beings are alone and universe is indifferent to human beings' expectations and this awareness evokes depression and anxiety in Hamm and Clove. That's why the setting is bare and the whole play is about waiting and to prevent death, the characters talk continuously because time is ambiguous, there is uncertainty in the play. Their waiting for Godot is the representation of the criticism of sarcastic outlook and God's creation of Beckett and the embodiment of his idea that there is no perfection at all in God's creation as the characteristics of his age after war.

Similarly, in *The Room*, Pinter deals with futility and meaninglessness of life and questions the purpose of life and deals with menace. He is questioning whether threat is coming from outside or inside. All the characters are in a room and they are unwilling to go outside because it is dangerous and home is their sacred place and gives a feeling of safety. Most importantly, as the characteristics of the age, individualism is in focus and they are interested in their own problems and there is a lack of communication.

For one who does not have adequate information about the characteristics of the age, plays would be dull, barren, plain and nonsense without regular dialogues and full of repetition. Without enough information, the reader would be bored and would not place the value upon the works.

Moreover, Thomas Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush* is one of the most striking examples that reflect the characteristics of 20th Century Poetry. Frustration and depression were at the peak in English society after the World War I because something destructive was happening out of their control and this uncontrollable

action led to disillusionment and meaninglessness in people. The war and everything which it brings with it shaped the way of thinking and living in the 20th century. The poem is a kind of reflection of Hardy's pessimistic and gloomy point of view for the world and the doubt which people had about their futures because the Victorian period was completed and the Modern era was on the point of beginning. The pessimistic and gloomy atmosphere is in the poem in focus; the words "Frost, specter gray, desolate, shrunken, corpse, cloudy" make the poem away from being optimistic.

Likewise, Edward Thomas's *Rain* enabled the readers to realize how terrifying the war was in fact. The lines expressing the experiences that he had in the rain were heavy and black for him. He not only saw the dead soldiers but also separated arms or legs of soldiers in the war. This poem presents that in order to live; one has to kill which is a brutal way of survival.

To give another example, by using historical and biographical criticism the ability to understand the work deeply and analyze it intensively is required even in poems. For example, in analyzing John Milton's *When I Consider How My Light is Spent*, the importance of knowing something about the author is emphasized. If the reader studies the poem without knowing the fact that Milton lost his eyesight in 1651, he could attribute some other meanings to "how my light is spent", "dark world", "light denied" on the way to find an alternative explanation. Moreover knowing about Milton's life enables the reader to appreciate the work in a different manner and prevent him from evaluating the work just as a fiction and assuming the speaker as a source of imagination as Lynn points out in *Texts and Contexts*:

Knowing about Milton's life may also help us to appreciate the poem's significance: the speaker of the poem is not, it may seem, merely a fiction, an assumed character, contemplating some hypothesis; rather, the speaker has some connection to a real man, a writer, contemplating the horrors of his own blindness (122).

Or Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is the reflection of his own personal life. Without the fact that Kafka led an unhappy life in an unhappy family, the reader could not accept Gregor's transformation into a bug metaphorically but literally only. Similarly, William Golding, influenced by the World War II, wrote *Lord of the Flies* in order to reflect the evil sides of the human beings. The war caused many changes in society. The social portrayal of the period was so segmented and disconnected that the complexity and hopelessness draw people to chaos and despair. Low standards of living, uncertainty about the future, despair and frustration shaped people's point of view. What had a decisive effect on Golding's views was World War II in which he served for five years. It forced him to question the scientific, rationalistic and ultimately optimistic picture of the world his father had offered him. The war made him understand that "man produces evil as a bee produces honey".

Furthermore, Lessing sees herself as an instrument to change people for good or bad. By using some details from her private life, she creates new characters like Martha Quest. To a certain level, the relation between Martha's parents reflects Lessing's own problems with her parents in Lorna Sage's *Doris Lessing*:

They recall Mr. and Mrs. Quest, and, beyond them, Lessing's images of her own parents. They are 'characters', and they manufacture a character—a rebellious, guilty girl, self-repressed in her mother's image (75).

Ruth Whittaker asserts in *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*, “One of the problems that Doris Lessing’s work presents is her great personal commitment to the issues she writes about. This means that, for example, her pessimism about the fate of this planet and her belief in the capacity of the human race to develop paranormal powers are not simply imaginative literary themes, but deeply held beliefs (15).

It is doubtless that *Children of Violence* is mostly autobiographical and *The Grass is Singing* has some important similarities in itself in the lights of her interviews and autobiographical works such as *Under My Skin* and *Walking in the Shade* but Lessing does not approve of writing her experiences and the characters reflecting herself; writers are unable to write their own experiences in their works because every memory, happiness, unhappiness, disillusionment and hope should be special to the writer himself. As Anita Myles announces in *Doris Lessing: a Novelist with Organic Sensibility*:

Loud arguments were based on the extreme similarity between the life of the novelist and that of the female protagonist, Martha Quest. Indeed the author’s life is manifested in Martha Quest: her birth, her parents who were deeply affected by war, her two marriages—one to a civil servant and the other to a European refugee, Martha’s divorces, and finally her departure to England. It is strange that, in spite of extremely close links between her personal life and experiences and the description of various female protagonists of her novels, Mrs. Lessing has not approved of the idea of such biographical identification (16).

As Myles cites, in the “Preface” to *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing resolves this controversy:

Writing about oneself, one is writing about others, since your problems, pains, pleasures, emotions—and your extraordinary and remarkable ideas—can't be yours alone. The way to deal with the problem of 'subjectivity', that shocking business of being preoccupied with the tiny individual who is at the same time caught up in such an explosion of terrible and marvelous possibilities, is to see him as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general, as indeed life always does, transforming a private experience into something much larger (16).

According to Whittaker, Lessing refuses to claim the uniqueness of experience and insight and "it is not necessary for the reader to consider the events in Lessing's personal experiences parallel to the experiences in her fiction" (36). He has to lead a perfect and completely different life from other people. However, Lessing knows that every man on earth has similar experiences, hopes and ideals which make writers and their works ordinary as Green Gayle articulates in *Efforts of Imagination*, *The Children of Violence* "entered the culture with the force of a new myth: as Jenny Taylor says, Martha's quest became "the epic, archetypal story of our times" (18) and Lessing explains in an interview with Christopher Bigsby "What any writer should do is to write as truthfully as possible about himself or herself as an individual because we are not unique and remarkable people" (76) and as Karen Schneider agrees this view in her article *A Different War Story: Doris Lessing's Great Escape*, "Like her creator, the series' heroine Martha Quest feels locked into the meaning – making narratives that emplot and constrain not only her life's stories

but the whole history of mankind” (109) and Alan Sinfield states in *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain*:

Stories are lived. They are not just outside ourselves, something we hear or read about. They make sense for us – of us – because we have been and are in them. They are already proceeding when we arrive in the world, and we come to consciousness in their terms.... They become common sense (24-5).

Similarly, Norman Kiell, in *The Adolescent through Fiction*, states; “Literature is one way of projecting life. In it we look for trends, problems, attempts at solutions and struggles with which we are familiar or want to become more familiar” (14). So, Lessing thinks that works should be an instrument and bridge between the writer and the readers. Whittaker assumes in her work that Martha Quest and Mary Turner have reflections not only from Lessing’s life and also readers’ lives in themselves:

I get impatient with this thing about ‘autobiographical’. You can’t write about anything you haven’t experienced or imagined – it has to be your experience, your imagination. The point is that the very moment you start writing about something that has happened, it’s no longer yours – all the other things come in and change it; you remember something like it, or somebody who looked like that. It’s impossible to write autobiographically... it’s impossible to have an experience that other people haven’t had, or aren’t having (36).

Art creates an atmosphere in which life is perceived an effective way and this is why the reader says “I have found my self in X’s novel.” because the work reflects human existence through various experiences. When a work of literature reflects the

existence in an influential way, it attracts the reader's attention. The work should mirror readers' experiences; it should give messages to them in a striking way and they should assume that the author mentions about themselves in the work. That's to say; readers should catch a glimpse of their own lives through characters. David Albertson, in Stanford Presidential Lectures in the Humanities and Arts, cites some lines from Wolfgang Iser; "The study of literature tells us perhaps more about ourselves than about the books we read. In reading we discover not only alternate visions to explore, but also our own human thirst for freedom of action, ultimate understanding, and unity of experience" (1).

The promised world in the work should become realistic to the reader and familiarity is the source of appreciating the work. The reader loves things that comes familiar to him and definitely understands what it means. Otherwise, he will become indifferent to the text if it is not related with him as Anita Myles points out in *Doris Lessing: a Novelist with Organic Sensibility*:

Almost every literary writer is a historian in the sense that he represents the contemporary experiences. Literature mirrors life, which is history; but the writer's interpretation of the observations is devoid of any prejudices or coercive ideologies. A writer may be said to have true historic sense when unlike professional historians, he keeps himself abreast with the emotional ups and downs of the contemporary generation without the possibility of developing any loyalty to parties, to institutions, and to ideologies. Thus a writer with historical consciousness gives a new orientation to the society while analyzing the facts, by reinterpreting the existing situation in terms of the everlasting clash of good and evil (79).

Works of literature should reflect the changes in historical and social world and they have become the witnesses of this alteration. This alteration is not only in historical or social terms but also includes changes in one's inner world because this efficient reflection of literature is chiefly seen in works of literature and their creators.

Mrs. Lessing, in *Prisons We Choose To Live Inside*, supports the idea that the writer has the responsibility to reflect social occurrences in her works so that her works will provide readers to learn their lessons and shape their present lives and future in the light of historical knowledge and she assumes; "I think writers are by nature more easily able to achieve this detachment from mass emotions and social conditions. People who are continually examining and observing become critics of what they examine and observe. Look at all those utopias written through the centuries. More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *City of the Sun*, Morris' *News from Nowhere*, Butler's *Erewhon* (which is "nowhere" backwards), all the many different blueprints for possible futures produced by science and space fiction writers who, I think, are in the same tradition. These of course are all criticisms of current societies, for you can't write a utopia in a vacuum. I think novelists perform many useful tasks for their fellow citizens, but one of the most valuable is this: to enable us to see ourselves as others see us" (7) and as Anita Myles expresses in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*; "Mrs. Lessing feels that a writer is not a historiographer dealing only with bare facts. On the other hand, he should reflect his impressions of life in the larger context of human destiny. Thus, while interpreting history, the novelist plays the positive role of a prophet, draws strength from the past, rejuvenates it with the observations of the present, and then postulates the possibility of a happy future" (79).

Similarly, in an interview with Schlueter, Doris Lessing has called *The Children of Violence* “a study of the individual conscience in relation to the collective” because it is doubtless that most of the people have problems with their parents, the community they live in shapes their way of life or they try to place themselves in society as Martha undergoes (18). As Green Gayle articulates in *Efforts of Imagination, the Children of Violence* “entered the culture with the force of a new myth: as Jenny Taylor says, Martha’s quest became “the epic, archetypal story of our times” (18).

CHAPTER 4

CAUSES OF DISILLUSIONMENTS IN LIFE

4.1. The poor relationship with the parents

As Jason W. Brunk in *Child and Adolescent Development* states, the socialization of a child begins in the family. “The family’s subculture, its social status, its economic status, the parents’ occupations, their education, their child-rearing practices, their energy, their motivation and other relatives living at home” influences a child (136) and as Tony Humphreys in *The Family- Love it and Leave it* states, the poor relationship between parents and their uncontrolled behaviours are the source of the self-esteem and self-confidence problems; “Couple conflict damages the children’s self-esteem and their feeling of security” (26) and Norman Kiell states:

The adolescent’s conflicts, insecurities and uncertainties stem from the conflicts between generations in a changing society, sexual frustrations arising out of physical maturation and societal restrictions, difficulties in emancipation from parents, inconsistencies in authority relationships, and discontinuities in socialization patterns (17).

In *The Grass is Singing*, Mary Turner did not have a happy childhood. She was brought up under difficult conditions. Marriage of her parents was not a kind of her hope. When she was sent to a boarding school, her life changed and she tastes freedom and happiness away from “her fuddled father and bitter mother” (34). She hated her father and all males. As a result of this hatred, she felt a kind of fear about men. Her childhood experiences are full of unhappiness and her dirty moments with

her father play an important role in her attitudes towards males especially black men. She always hates to remember her childhood and wants to escape from it forever. Her hatred for her father is very strong like Martha's hatred towards her mother. When her father died the last link that bound her to her unhappy childhood has been removed. Now Mary is free and she will enjoy her freedom and "being alone in the world had no terrors for her at all, she liked it" (35).

In the chapter of *Children of Violence*, as Lorelei Cederstrom explains, Martha is described "as a vulnerable adolescent adrift in a sea of collective pressures disguised as social relationships. Lessing analyzes the basis of the family, friendship, love, and marriage in collective attitudes as Martha asserts her shaky individuality against these conventional structures. Martha's adolescent emotions are the primary means by which she knows herself and she expresses herself in reactions rather than actions. . . .In the first chapter of the novel, Lessing defines many of the fundamental forces against which Martha is rebelling, as well as the means by which Martha will attempt to assert her individuality" (35).

From the beginning of the novel, opposition becomes apparent between Martha and her mother. Her mother and her neighbor are sitting in the shade while Martha is sitting in full sunshine and her mother is always warning her; she wants her to be careful or she would get sunstroke. There seems to be a clear separation between Martha and them. While she is always receiving warnings from her mother, she shows a sign of protest by pretending as if she was reading a book about sexuality. In *Martha Quest*, in a way, she wants to take revenge but when Mrs. Quest says it is not harmful, Martha feels her weapon to drive her crazy "had gone

limp and useless in her hands” (13). Again, when she was warned about sunshine, she feels ashamed and bent stubbornly to her book, with out moving, and her eyes filled with tears (14). She looks at them with irritation and contempt because her uncooperativeness comes to the surface not to do what she is told to do. As Jean Pickering states in *Understanding Doris Lessing*:

On the threshold of adult collective life, Martha tries to define herself by rejecting various prescribed roles, particularly her mother’s plans and her mother’s example. She resists Mrs. Quest’s desire to make her into a nice young English girl, pre-First World War model. Disturbed by her daughter’s budding sexuality, Mrs. Quest wants to keep Martha a child. With unerring instinct Martha flaunts her copy of “Havelock Ellis on sex,” the best known sex manual of the 30s. She resents the expectation that she will “play the part of ‘young girl’” (43).

As an adolescent, Martha encounters a difficulty to find a place in the restrictive society of colonial Africa to discover herself individually and politically. The books she has read about economics and socialism are inadequate when compared to her real experiences in daily life and “Martha’s books, her associations, her kind of perception, have all helped to make her very different from her mother, the representative of conventional colonial society” (12) as James Gindin, in *Doris Lessing’s Intense Commitment*, points out.

Martha’s resentment of these women can easily be seen at the very beginning of the novel. They are gossiping but she is reading. Martha is different from them. She does not like their way of life which concerns are children, servants and

cooking. She does not want to be one of them but wants to show her difference and no longer is she a child.

Norman Kiell states in *The Adolescent through Fiction*, “Feminine authors, depicting the female adolescent seem to be gentler in their treatment than their male author counterpart. The female author, seemingly more sensitive, tends to idealize the girl adolescent. Perhaps it is the authors’ way of telling their mothers what they would have liked to have happened to them” (18). Kiell shows the reader the experiences of an adolescent are universal and one can observe at anywhere and any time. The protagonists vary but readers’ experiences do not change from individual to individual.

Ruth Whittaker in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change* states; “For us all, the primary relationship that is doomed to some kind of failure is that between parent and child. The theme of misunderstanding between mother and child lies like a dark, cold vacuum at the heart of Doris Lessing’s work, and what is interesting is her recurrent re-working of the relationship throughout her fiction: May and Martha Quest, and Martha and Caroline in *Children of Violence*. . . .From varying viewpoints both parents and children see each other as monsters: demanding, repressive, rapacious” (3).

In the very first chapter, Lessing captures the attention of readers by creating this scene which is “adolescent rebellion against her parents” as stated in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change* (3) and gives the readers the clues of clash between Martha and her mother. Lessing’s mother is a Victorian woman full of confidence. Emily was ruled by her father and was brought up without love. In

Under My Skin, Lessing describes her mother's home "as tall, narrow, cold, dark, and depressing and her grandfather as disciplinarian, strict, frightening, always ready with moral exhortations" (2). As she explains in *A Small Personal Voice*, Doris never heard her mother speak of her father with warmth and affection (103). When she wanted to be a nurse, her father did not want her to say even a word and Maude never forgives her father because he was very ambitious for her.

Her childhood and her adolescence were spent being good at everything so as to please her ambitious and stern father. This pessimistic childhood memories have made Maude Lessing a dominant and obsessive mother towards Doris as Norman Kiell in *The Adolescent Through Fiction* agrees upon this convention; "Most adults are so removed from their own adolescence and have so repressed from conscious memory their painful experiences of this period, that they can neither identify with nor understand the adolescent who comes into their purview" (13-4). Lessing's mother also has a breakdown because of the difficulties of making a choice between her career and marriage. She worked hard during the war and she also witnessed the other side of war full violence and terror.

According to Lessing as explained in *Under My Skin*, all a child needs is love and "child should be governed by love and she explains her mother had not known love as a child, and was making sure we would not be similarly deprived" (25). What Lessing remembers is her voice over and over again that she had not wanted a girl, she wanted a boy. She knew from the beginning she loved her brother unrequitedly but not her. In her childhood she witnessed her mother complaining about children and mentioning about them as burden all the time. Her mother admits

how unfulfilled and unappreciated she is by her children and her husband as Margaret Rowe states in *Women Writers: Doris Lessing*:

Lessing presents the father as a dreamer, the mother as a regulator; the father associated with countryside and the natural world, the mother bound to city values and social expectations; the father able to detach himself from the mundane to gaze at stars, the mother clutching domestic objects; the father talking about the universe, the mother complaining about school grades. Lessing's fiction resonates with this parental division (6).

Most importantly, she is complaining about children in front of them again and this hurt Doris' heart and feelings. The feeling of being unwanted becomes unbearable for Martha and it leads her to increase anger and frustration in herself revealing in *Under My Skin*. It hurts her feelings to hear how a little girl can turn her mother's life into a misery. She turns into "cold flame of hatred for her mother" and she thinks of killing her at once (30). She does not believe that however strong and self-confident a child is, it is impossible to remain unaffected to face with this kind of harsh reality while the source of his existence is attacking on his existence. Similarly, as Mrs. Quest felt unwanted in her childhood, she shows the same behaviour in her relation with Martha and this creates a gap between mother and daughter. As a consequence of lacking the feeling of being lovable among parents and the sense of self sufficiency, she does not have the feeling of self-esteem and she does not have strong ties with her family as Tony Humphreys states in *Self-Esteem The Key to Your Child's Education*:

Over control indicators of dependence refer to behaviours that 'hold in' the hidden conflicts arising from self-esteem, the need for approval from parents, the unrealistic expectations of parents, conditional or neglectful parenting and fears of life. Under control indicators spring from the same sources but the vulnerability is manifested in this case through behaviours that 'let out' the rage and frustration within (196-197).

Similar to Humphreys, Jason W. Brunk, in *Child and Adolescent Development* examines the sources of lacking self-worth and self-esteem and comes to a conclusion that attitudes of parents towards their children play a very important role in developing self-esteem and the feeling of self-worth in children; "One of the most basic of all needs is the need for love, and parents are logical persons to provide it. The need for esteem is as important to children as it is to adults. It is imperative that children grow up with good concepts of themselves. They must have the feeling that they are valuable, that they are good, that they can do things. Without these feelings of self-worth and self-adequacy their development will suffer. When we treat children as second-class citizens who should be seen and not heard, who can be interrupted but who cannot interrupt, who are given chores but not responsibility, whose contributions we accept condescendingly, we do not foster positive self-images. If we want youngsters to grow up being capable, independent, and dignified people, we must treat them as such while they are learning who they are (139). Indifferent and strict father made May's life dissatisfied and full of disillusionment and her unpleasant relations with her family have affected her relations with her daughter negatively. Martha's mother is described as an idealistic woman who has

ambitious plans for her children and wants her children to have a good education. She has plans for them and talks about university and scholarship for months. In *Martha Quest*, on her meetings with her neighbors, Mrs. Quest used the word ‘career’ not in terms of something that Martha can possibly do but as a kind of stick to beat the world with, as if she were saying, ‘My daughter will be somebody, whereas yours will only be married’(12). Similarly, Maude is also ambitious about her children’s education. She collects the catalogues of the Army & Navy for her son and is trying to teach them everything she knows under very difficult conditions as explained in *Under My Skin*:

Correspondence courses still arrived by every post, but she wondered what she was paying money for when she could do better herself. She taught us geography by sloshing water into our sand pit and making continents, isthmuses, estuaries, islands. Being taught to see land masses and oceans like this repeats that stage of human knowledge when the world was flat. . . .And then she abolished this system of cosmic order with an impatient wave of her hand (68).

Martha and Doris have mature, possessive and ambitious mothers who want to keep people under their control. As Ruth Quiney states, “They cannot dismiss dominant constructions of their own maternal body” (29). Both mothers do not want to see them as young girls. They are seeing their daughters as children and it makes Martha and Doris angry because their mothers treat them as if they were small children. They have been portrayed as domineering characters. Likewise, Carole

Klein states the similarity between Maude Lessing and May Quest in *Doris Lessing: a Biography*:

invariably used love as a form of pressure. But no matter how much Doris heard the word, she knew her mother felt no such emotion for her. Not that Maude would ever admit such a horrifying thought. Mothers and daughters love each other. Any other possibility was blasphemy, and not allowed into her consciousness (21).

They are trying to teach them how to be a proper girl and they are trying to draw a role model for Martha and Doris because their upbringing was based upon strict Victorian rules and they want their daughter to become proper individuals. In Victorian period, there was a sexual inequality in terms of politics, economic life and education. For example, women were not allowed to vote until 1918. Working class women worked like slaves in factories under very difficult conditions. Their standards of life were very low. There were educational restrictions of women. Middle and upper class women received education at home such as Latin and Classics because it was believed that they did not have the intellectual capacity to understand such serious matters. Such subjects were considered to be suitable areas of study for men. Similarly, male dominated, patriarchal societies support Aristotle's assertion that the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities. They think that all women are simply imperfect men.

At this point, Simone de Beauvoir deals with similar things about women's place in society in *Second Sex*:

Women? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female- this word is sufficient to define her. In the mouth of a man the epithet female has the sound of an insult, yet he is not ashamed of his animal nature; on the contrary, he is proud if someone says of him: "He is a male" (3).

Beauvoir claims that man is the dominant one in society. She believes women have been made inferior because of social values of society but men think that women are inferior by nature. She expresses that women do not have a separate history:

History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchy they have thought best to keep women in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the Other (139).

History belongs to men. Social values make women inferior. Women are called "the other". Their existence is determined by male authority because manhood is meaningful in society and it means to be human and a subject who defines meaning but the womanhood means nothing. It means being an object whose existence is determined by the male. Beauvoir says that equality is mentioned but demands for real equality are always restricted and there is a resistance against real equality. Also, in *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett says patriarchy is the cause of women's oppression because patriarchy subordinates the female to the male. Power is always exerted either directly or indirectly upon women in civil or domestic life. Female sex roles and characteristics are culturally defined and learned. In brief, the main points which Beauvoir and Millett emphasize that women are oppressed in male

dominated societies. Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* claims that there is a difference between man and woman and this difference makes her feel sorry and angry:

In the government of the physical world it is observable that the female in point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male.

This is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended
Abrogated in favor of woman (167).

Wollstonecraft considers that the difference is the result of two things; nature created this difference or civilization is very partial. Man has become advantageous. It is not because of nature but because of social norms, civilization and culture. In general, culture is created by men and women are made inferior. Men are physically superior but they want more superiority. They are not satisfied with their dominance. Society imposes some certain sex roles to both men and women because of this restriction; women cannot develop their minds as men do:

Men have submitted to superior strength to enjoy with impunity the pleasure of the moment. It is not a moral agent that woman is essentially inferior to man because she has always been subjugated (185).

The Victorians placed great value upon morality and the sacredness of home life. It was a duty of a woman to create a place peace in her domestic sphere. A woman was expected to be aware of her domestic responsibility. These ideas led to the creation of an image of “the idealized woman” who was presented as a role model for women.

The idealized woman was expected to be non aggressive, submissive, self-sacrificing, childish and sexually pure and she was expected to be remain within the

domestic sphere and perform some domestic duties. Women's only duty was to please man. In order to please them, they were expected to remain childishly ignorant and simple-minded. They were expected to be delicate creatures and they were believed to belong to home. They were excluded from active and practical life. Women belonged to domestic sphere. This kind of woman was called "The Angel in the House".

Women, during the Victorian Age, were not allowed to have an active part in social life and they were not encouraged to develop their own intellectual capacities. According to the Victorian point of view, women were expected to be passive, silent, isolated, and distanced from worldly matters. Obedience, passivity and chastity were the reinforcement of "the concept of the idealized woman". According to the conventional mothers, Martha and Doris should become a symbol of perfect motherhood and a representative of moral and familial values. However, Martha and Doris do not want to be 'idealized women' like their mothers as Maslen cites in *Doris Lessing*:

a sequence of events, unalterable, behind her, and stretching unalterably into the future. She saw her mother, a prim-faced Edwardian schoolgirl, confronting, in this case, the Victorian father, the patriarchal father, with rebellion. She saw herself sitting where her mother now sat, a woman horribly metamorphosed, entirely dependent on her children for any interest in life, resented by them, and resenting them; opposite her, a young woman of whom she could distinguish nothing clearly but a set, obstinate face; and beside these women, a series of shadowy dependent

men, broken-willed and sick with compelled diseases. This is the nightmare, this the nightmare of a class and generation: repetition (8).

Martha and Doris do not want to become a part of this pattern. They cannot find their role models in their mothers and they both are in search for their identities. Similar to Maslen, Pickering indicates in *Understanding Doris Lessing*, “Martha foresees for herself the kind of repetition that overtook the unaware Mary Turner. In her mother Martha sees precisely the person she does not want to become” (53). In addition to these writers, Gayle Greene, in *Efforts of Imagination*, defends the idea of repetition of mother’s destiny; “Where Martha reenacts the life of her mother in an unwanted pregnancy and unhappy marriage, circular forms symbolize “the nightmare repetition” (25). Similarly, Claire Sprague in *Mother and Daughters/ Aging and Dying*, states “The complex circularity of daughters fighting mothers and then becoming mothers themselves both repeats and advances Lessing’s themes and patterns” (173).

Mothers do not see their daughters as grownups and they do not make an effort to understand them. They expect their daughters to behave like a proper little girl. Their domineering attitudes are reflected even on what they are going to wear. In regards to this conflict between mother and daughter, Ruth Whittaker in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change*; “Mrs. Quest cannot cope with her daughter’s growing up. She looks with alarm at the mature appearance of her daughter’s breasts and hips. She glanced at her husband, then came quickly across the room, and laid her hands on either side of the girl’s waist, as if trying to press her back into girlhood” (4).

Dorothy Corkille Briggs, in *Your Child's Self-Esteem: The Key to Life*, points out "With adolescence, bodies change shape, generalized sexual feelings become specific, and there is an attraction to the opposite sex and new social relationships. At the same time, parents seem less heroic, their shortcomings glaringly obvious, and brothers and sisters are particularly annoying" (154). In *Martha Quest*, Martha looks at the mirror and she is examining her growing up. She is aware of changes in her body and she does not want to wear childish clothes anymore. She finds them ugly and clumsy and one day she cuts her dress because she is determined not to wear them anymore with "her usual sullen defiance" (29). Similarly, Doris and her mother had a quarrel about dresses as Carole Klein states, "Doris's blossoming sexuality prompted a new set of battles" (55). In *Under My Skin*, when her mother shut her in the cabin and told her to be good, she "wanted to be where the fun was not to be in the cabin and she found nail scissors and cut holes in an evening dress" (48). Martha's protest against her mother is not only physical but sometimes psychological. As an ambitious mother, she expects Martha to pass the matric but she did not take the examination because she gets pink eye, a kind of affliction.

It is again a reaction to her mother because her mother wants to send her to the school to take an education. She is psychologically reacting against her mother's insistence. She is a clever girl and she has the potential to pass the exam but not taking the examination means she is still on the farm. If she would have taken the examination, she would have got a simple passport to the outside world. Lessing's parents did not like displays of emotion. As Ruth Whittaker indicates in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change*; "She tries to thwart her parents' academic

expectations of her by a variety of psychosomatic illnesses, and she rejoices in her emergent sexuality” (4).

In *Under My Skin*, Lessing admits that if her mother’s daughter had been like her, everything would have gone well. She describes herself as “oversensitive, always observant, judging, battling, impressionable and hungry for love child” (26). Their domineering attitudes go on when they become adults and get married. Before marriage, they are making organizations for daughters’ wedding ceremonies. Martha’s mother gets puzzled because everything has happened very quickly and it is now her responsibility to provide and arrange everything for their ceremony in *Martha Quest*:

Mrs. Quest waited anxiously immediately behind Martha’s left shoulder, and at the crucial moment when the ring must be put on she grasped Martha’s elbow and pushed forward her arm, so that everyone was able to see how Martha turned around and said in a loud, angry whisper, ‘Who’s getting married, me or you?’ (331)

In *A Proper Marriage*, Lessing continues to draw a controlling mother figure for Martha’s mother and Martha’s marriage becomes the source of her enthusiasm because she thinks that her daughter gives up being a non-conformist adolescent and becomes a proper girl by entering into marriage institution as Ruth Whittaker reflects in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change*; “Her marriage is, however, a relief to Mrs. Quest, and her pregnancy is greeted with malicious triumph as if it heralded the death of Martha’s attempts at individuality” (4). Lessing reflects the mother’s unbelievable relief at the end of *Martha Quest*; “It’s such a relief when you get your

daughter properly married!” (332). However, unlike her mother’s enthusiasm, Martha’s attempt to become an individual by marriage is prevented by her mother as a harsh reality of convention “You won’t have time for all your ideas when the baby is born, believe me!” (168).

Moreover, as Ruth Whittaker states in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change*, her visits are “awkward, with unsuccessful attempts by Martha to persuade her mother to accept her as she is” (5) and her mother organizes everything in her house in the city before marriage and her attitude goes on when she marries. She does not let Martha lead her own life in *A Proper Marriage*:

Her mother was following the ritual that she had already gone through here, in this room. The flowers had been removed from their vases and rearranged, the chairs set differently, books put into place. Mrs. Quest had reassured herself by touching and arranging everything in the living room, and was now doing the same in the bedroom (124).

Also, as stated in *Landlocked*, the dominant mother tells Martha’s servants what to do giving orders with her harsh voice because “she was already far away from Africa, in a village full of sensible people where she would never see a black face again”. Her tea was cold and said it very severely and “the servant went back in silence to his kitchen” (85). She reflects her domineering attitudes in baby care. Mrs. Quest has taken the whole responsibility to look after her granddaughter. She does not let Martha look after her child. She sees her maternity inadequate. They both have a conflict about surrounding baby with white satin. However, in *A Proper Marriage*, Martha finds this application “quite absurd and impracticable” (146).

As Elizabeth Maslen asserts that “*A Proper Marriage*, like *The Grass is Singing*, explores the social pressures on a woman both to marry and to maintain a certain role within marriage, only this time from the point of view of the highly intelligent Martha, who can hear and analyze the difference between society’s powerfully persuasive discourse and her own small questioning inner voice, and who is capable of sustaining, albeit painfully, a dialogue between the two” (9).

Mrs. Quest emphasizes her maternity and her dominant protective instincts and she wants Martha to have same qualities to care of her child with the great satisfaction and she should “sacrifice herself to the children as she had done” to her children in *A Proper Marriage* (168). Even nurses are inadequate to take care of the baby for Mrs. Quest. According to her, they did “not have an idea how to treat a new baby” and Martha supports nurses and she says they know what they have to do (194). At the end of one of their arguments, this is the first time Martha has revealed her real emotions reflecting her feelings in an effective manner and says to her mother she brought up her the way she wanted and asks her that did not she think Martha should be allowed to do the same with her children. After revealing her feelings, she saw a kind of “admission of weakness” in Mrs. Quest in *A Proper Marriage* (339).

4.2 Fathers under the Shadow of War

As emphasized in *Under My Skin*, while Doris's mother was exemplary Victorian as the pattern of a modern young woman, her father enjoying a country childhood, for he spent every minute out of school... with the farmers' children around Colchester (6) and as Margaret Rowe stresses in *Women Writers: Doris Lessing*:

Lessing presents the father as a dreamer, the mother as a regulator; the father associated with countryside and the natural world, the mother bound to city values and social expectations; the father able to detach himself from the mundane to gaze at stars, the mother clutching domestic objects; the father talking about the universe, the mother complaining about school grades. Lessing's fiction resonates with this parental division (6).

Her father lived in poverty and being a farmer was his dream but after leaving school, he put a distance between himself and his family and began to work in a bank unwillingly. Mrs. Lessing spends her childhood and adolescence under the shadow of war. She is so deeply affected by the harsh and bitter reality of the war; she reflects her painful experiences on the characters. By creating characters affected by the war negatively, in a way, she criticizes the social values that assign some gender roles to individuals by giving quotations from Thomas Jefferson in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure" (13) and other

sayings about war, “Only through blood can we be reborn!”, “The way to a glorious future lies through blood”, “The blood of our martyrs shall be our inspiration: never shall we forget the blood that has been shed for us all” (13). Although society thinks war as heroic and an act of chivalry and makes men heroes who sacrifice their lives for their country, in reality, there is much more behind than the appearance as Mrs. Lessing asserts in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*:

Now that war has gone away into the past, and has become formalized in sets of words, images of heroism. The young people will probably have a small unconscious hankering after what they hear in their parents’ voices as they talk about it... The great war of liberation, the glorious war, which did do much psychological damage to the country, and to its people, damage which, after a war, we simply do not want to look at. This heroic and glorious war was quite unnecessary in the first place and could easily have been avoided by the use of only a minimum amount of common sense on the part of the whites. They were, however, in the grip of all kinds of primitive emotions (12).

Similarly, Rupert Brooke’s famous poem, *The Soldier*, is a nationalistic poem and the soldier in the poem is proud of being English and he appreciates his country. It is about the blissful state of a soldier and he tells about how he joyfully fights for his country. In this poem one cannot read anything about hatred or anger for the enemy or a threat of death; “If I should die, think only this of me:/ That there’s some corner of a foreign field/ that is forever England. There shall be/ In that rich earth a richer dust concealed; / A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,/ Gave, once, her

flowers to love, her ways to roam,/ A body of England's, breathing English air,/ Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home" (ll.1-10).

In both Doris and Martha's lives we see the reflection of World War I through their fathers as she explains in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*:

I was born as a result of the First World War, which shadowed my childhood. It was a war during which national emotions were primitive, vile and so stupid that now young people can be heard enquiring: "But *how could they have believed that? Why did they fight?* (43).

Frustration and depression were at the peak in English society after the World War I because something destructive was happening out of their control and this uncontrollable action led to disillusionment and meaninglessness in people and had left many dead soldiers who died at a very young age. The war is a certain kind of reality which people have to face and people are in the middle of this harsh reality. In this war, people realize that they are so monstrous and they do not hesitate even a moment to kill each other. The war and everything which it brings with it shape the way of thinking and living in the 20th century.

Similar to Mrs. Lessing's father, her protagonist Martha's father is one of the numerous victims of the war. He was very ill because he lost his leg and he is suffering from shell shock. He is in depression and he feels "in a room cold and dark with no way out" (7). They spent most of their times talking about war experiences. They are both obsessed with war and their health. They seem to be different to the

outside world. They do not have sincere relationships with their daughters. Doris and Martha want their fathers to be interested in them.

However, they are both young men suffering from mental problems because of war experiences. At this point, their suffering from shell shock reminds the readers of Septimus Warren in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. In a similar way, he volunteered to become a soldier and he joined the army but he witnessed terror and violence at war. Doris and Martha think that these men are not their fathers any more; the war has changed them a lot. They were isolated from society. They feel themselves useless and they have a futile existence. They both become men without feelings. They lost their emotions because their friends died nearby them. Their fathers are the embodiment of the negative effects of the war upon individuals and families. Lessing was born on the 22nd October 1919 and her mother had a bad time during her pregnancy. Her birth is so forceps that her face remains purple for days.

She questions herself and asks questions about her birth conditions because she was born while millions of people were killed. She comments upon her characteristics and she thinks of her stubborn and difficult character coming from her birth circumstances, in hard times and in the very middle of war. She also describes war as "a trip in old darkness of dread and anguish" (10) and she wonders "how many children were brought up in families crippled by war had the same poison running in their veins" (10). They are now young husbands and fathers with their mental problems. As Mrs. Lessing states in *Under My Skin*, they always "remembered and spoke often about the soldiers who, 'shell shocked' or unable to

get themselves out of their mud holes to face the enemy, might be shot for cowardice” (7).

Lessing captures the attention of readers to criticize patriarchal values in society. It is criticized in terms of roles assigned to men by society. A man becomes a volunteer in the war and he is expected to do so as a young man. He wants to show that he is a brave man who fights for his country. However, at the end of the war, he has to give up his ideals because he is a ruined man any more.

Unlike the optimistic picture of Rupert Brooke, Thomas Hardy draws a pessimistic and more realistic picture in his poetry. In Hardy’s poem, “The Darkling Thrush”, the speaker says to the reader, “The land’s sharp features seemed to be/ The Century’s corpse outleant, / His crypt the cloudy canopy, / the wind his death-lament.” (ll.9-10-11-12) These lines encapsulate the major theme of the poem, the characteristic of the Modern Age, that loss of hope makes the world meaningless, unbearable and corrupting. Also, desolation and hopelessness are intensively emphasized in these lines by the speaker.

The feeling of meaninglessness and corruption is the result of social expectation of society. They become a victim of war with their masculine qualities. As young men, they have to be volunteers unlike they will be criticized and condemned. Life is meaningless for both fathers. They are frustrated in life. They have not achieved their goal of life. They go on their lives but like a dead.

Lessing portrays in *Martha Quest*, Martha’s father quite ineffective towards his wife and children and calls him “as a peace-loving man” and describes him who “has an unconscious look of understanding” (32). When Martha cuts her dress, she attempts to slap across her mother’s face because of her mother’s attitude as if she

was trying to press her back into girlhood but dropped her hand and when she looked at her father to ask for his help, he “quickly turned away and measured medicine into a glass” (30). She is angry with her inefficient father because he wants to be ill and he has an excuse for being a failure (31). Whenever a conflict happens a between mother and daughter he groans and goes out of the room. He stays silent for hours in his absent minded way if they do not interrupt his calm moments in *Martha Quest*;

When his wife came to him secretly, talking insistently until he had to hear her, he shouted in exasperation, ‘Well, if the child wants to make herself ridiculous, then let her, don’t waste your time arguing.’ ...he said, ‘Oh, Lord, do leave me alone...’ (33).

There is passivity in Martha’s father and he is not willing to participate in life outside, he does not want to be a part of outside world. As his memories are full of war experiences, he does not have self-confidence and that’s why he never interferes in the conflict between his wife and daughter so Martha is unable to receive the emotional support which she lacks from her father. The father does not take the responsibility of raising children and he prefers to be impartial. Moreover because of his disillusionment in life, he has the inability to show care and affection. His behaviour leads Mrs. Quest to take all the responsibility from his shoulders and take care of children herself and unfortunately to turn into an embodiment of dominance and discipline.

Racial Upbringing: A Sense of Separateness

As James Gindin states in *Doris Lessing's Intense Commitment*,

Miss Lessing's commitment to a sense of social responsibility and to a pursuit of those oppressed by society also infuses her fiction about colonial Africa, where she spent most of her first thirty years. In Africa the pursuit centers on the color bar, and, in all, Miss Lessing's fiction dealing with Africa – the division between white and black is central (19).

The only reason that makes Martha, Doris and Mary lead unhappy lives is not just quarrels with their mothers. Importantly enough, bringing up in a racial environment affects them and perspectives to life negatively as Schlueter mentions in *The Novels of Doris Lessing*, “We are introduced to what remains a pervasive theme. Mrs. Lessing has repeatedly expressed her feelings regarding her African upbringing and the feelings of racial injustice saturating both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, nations that have subsequently placed her on their lists of “prohibited aliens” (8) and similar to Schlueter, Anita Myles states in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility* “Unlike the other White children in Africa, who were put under the fear of apartheid, she moved around freely among the natives. She was able to know their condition personally very well and could give a vivid picture of them in her short stories and early novels successfully” (1) and “Lessing was nurtured in an atmosphere pervaded with racial conflict. She moved among the Blacks and closely studied their way of life. Sometimes she was painfully surprised to see their strange

behaviour and, later, attributed it to their deep sense of inferiority. She witnessed how hard the Blacks had to work under White masters and how little did they receive in return; it was just enough for them to survive. They were treated like slaves with practically no freedom to assert their own will” (19).

In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Mrs. Lessing conveys the situation; “I was brought up in a country where a small white minority dominated the black majority. In old Southern Rhodesia the white attitudes towards the blacks were extreme: prejudiced, ugly, ignorant” (17). Their realization of the inequality between the blacks and whites in their environment has become a harsh reality of merciless life they have to face with. They all had an isolated life on the farm among colourful people who are alienated and excluded from the society. Lessing was brought up in Central Africa, and she describes herself in an interview with Schlauter in *A Small Personal Voice* as a member of the “white minority pitted against a black majority that was abominably treated” (61).

Her upbringing in a colonial place enables her works to have had its marks on them and even her uneasy memories belonging to childhood. In her childhood, Africa was called “a place of savages who might even be cannibals” as she mentions in *Under My Skin* (45) and “white people condemned the blacks who lived all around them for being primitive, backward, pagan, and so forth” in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* (2).

In Lessing’s life, the words ‘munts’ and ‘kaffirs’ are very important because they are used by white people in order to despise blacks. When Doris wants to walk alone on fields, her mother does not allow her to go outside alone because she sees

the black people as savages and primitive and Carole Klein remarks it in a very striking manner, “That Doris loved everything about Africa Maude despised deepened the child’s estrangement from her mother” (31). Again, according to Maude, a white girl should not be risking rape by a kaffir (143). Moreover, she witnesses her mother’s calling her servants with the scolding, insistent and nagging voice full of dislike (157).

Lessing’s racial upbringing and the problem of apartheid has been intensively examined and are embodied in her first novel *The Grass is Singing*. As Anita Myles states in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, “As a White settler in Africa, she herself realized sadly that only a handful of Whites were aware of the wrong being done to the Blacks. Some also felt that the Blacks as human beings were in no way inferior to them. Yet they could not own these facts publicly. They had created around themselves the intricate and protective mesh of racial superiority” (19) and Lessing deals with the life of the Whites and the Blacks in Africa and Lessing showed great sympathy for the Blacks who were much oppressed” (1) and “Mrs. Lessing, while raising her voice against racial prejudices, shifts the blame from the individual failure to the collective fall which she calls the trend of human civilization, and thus elevates her critical tone” (22).

However, Lessing introduces Mary as a victim of racial prejudices which she brings them with her from her childhood. Her racist attitudes lead her to be killed by a native at the end of the novel. As Lorelei Cederstrom, in *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche – Jungian Patterns in the Novels of Doris Lessing*, points out:

It is now clear that Mary's hatred and desire to impose her will upon the workers is the outgrowth of her resentment of her husband's weakness and represents the completion of her negative animus. Ultimately, her resentment of the native men is based on her denial of the masculine in her husband, just as her hatred of the women is founded upon her own inadequate feminine spirit (25).

Similarly, Elizabeth Maslen, in *Doris Lessing*, agrees on her frustrations because of her racial prejudices and points out "Disastrously, she marries Dick Turner, a poor and stubborn farmer, and, in the frustrations of a life mirroring her own mother's, gradually deteriorates into breakdown, and in so doing crosses a taboo line: from despising and hating 'natives' in the way conventional within her own cultural context, she comes to rely physically and emotionally on her black servant, Moses" (4). And Maslen continues supporting her idea about dominance of society over individuals in the light of Michel Foucault; "Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, shows how a society establishes discourses of power, discourses which have ways of compelling us to subscribe to their priorities, spoken or unspoken. Doris Lessing is very alert to such discourses, as has already been demonstrated by Mary's passive conformity to the conventions of town life and by the way in which she transfers her need for a strong man, born of that conformity, first and fatally to Moses" (6) and as Anita Myles points out; "The colour barrier had the power even to stop the powerful drift of the emotion of love" (22).

As Myles states in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, Mary Turner, the main character of the novel, is the effective representation and

embodiment of people who have prejudices against people different from themselves and *The Grass is Singing* “registers Lessing’s final emotional response to the monster of racial discrimination” (21) and “the novelist, through several examples, shows how cruelly the Blacks were treated by their White masters” (21).

Mary was brought up with racial doctrines assigned by her parents. She was not allowed her to play with her Greek friend and she is told that natives are dangerous and primitive. So she learns and develops the notion of the other as Mrs. Lessing assumes in *The Grass is Singing*:

Mary, with the memory of her own mother recurring more and more frequently, like an older, sardonic double of herself walking beside her, followed the course her upbringing made her inevitable (90).

The environment which Mary lives in has strict rules about natives. They are not allowed to communicate with natives, except in the master-slave relationship (18). If blacks kill one of the whites, it gives them relief because their prejudices on natives come true. When her husband becomes malaria, she has to do all the things and she becomes the boss. Although they do not like a woman to give orders, she enjoys demonstrating her power and authority over them. Ruling over eighty workers gives her a kind of satisfaction and develops her self-confidence. Based on her background full of racial prejudices, they are not human beings and she does not show any pity towards her servants. She dismisses one of her servants and sacks him without payment. She is such a governing character that she wants them to obey her rules if they do not obey; she wipes the natives as she does it to a native who will kill her later.

In regards to her being killed by her native servant, Moses, as Anita Myles, in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, cites from James Gindin; “The conflict within Mary is the alternating love and hate towards the Negro, the frightening awareness that she possesses the one emotion her society most violently condemns, leads to her murder. She is destroyed by her inability to reconcile human emotion with her own deep commitment to the rigid line her society maintains between White and Black” (22).

They do not have a harmonious relationship between them and it is based on hatred. It is a sign of mistreatment of blacks and her injustice towards blacks. She does not need to keep her actions towards natives under the control because she thinks she is right and they deserve this cruelty. Even when blacks break the rule and speak in English, this is interpreted as an unrespectable and unacceptable thing. She has never come into contact with her natives before and she was forbidden to talk to her mother’s servants at home in her childhood. Similar to Martha and Doris, Mary was not allowed her to walk out alone. The blacks were nasty and dangerous and could do horrible things to her. But now, she has to face with coping with natives. She is consumed with hatred. Her husband, Dick, has a calmer character and warns her no to behave aggressively towards the natives as if she gets herself into a state over her boys, she is finished (68).

As Anita Myles states in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*; “The problem of apartheid as discussed by Mrs. Lessing is not limited to the Blacks. It involves the Jews and other races who stand apart from the White race” (25). In regards to the problem of apartheid; Lessing portrays Martha as a lonely child

because all her friends belonged to other nationalities and she is taught not to keep in touch in friendly terms with them. Mrs. Quest does not let Martha play with Cohen Boys who are Jewish and warns her not to go outside alone to protect her daughter from black people. Mrs. Quest is a woman who has racial prejudices and she teaches some racial values to her daughter Martha. In *Martha Quest*, the relationship between Martha and Jewish shopkeepers makes her mother uneasy and she warns her daughter not “to know Jewish shopkeepers” (20). She feels fear against natives and she is “filled with horrid visions of what might happen to Martha if she encountered an evil native” (56). Although she spends her childhood in a colonial farm, and she is taught to see the blacks as evil, she finds this prejudice unbearable and she wants to erase the words ‘black’ ,’white’, ‘nation’, ‘race’ exhausted her from her memory (68). While her father is complaining about the international ring of Jews and keeping the world under their control and her mother accuses all the kaffirs of being “dirty and lazy and inherently stupid”, she defends them against her parents (41).

4.4 A Light of Hope in Poverty

The issue of poverty has become an important reason of the characters' disillusionment in their lives. As Jeannette King explains in *The Grass is Singing*, Mary's disappointments are aroused by her husband's inefficiency in farming and Mary's childhood impoverishment; "*The Grass is Singing* gives prominence to these economic factors in the deterministic presentation both of the poor whites, Dick and Mary, and of those who are more successful. Mary's hostility to men and her loathing of the African bush can be attributed to a childhood impoverished by her father's drinking and embittered by her mother's struggles for economic survival" (8). Similar to King's ideas, Myles, in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, points out, "Lessing is surprised to conclude that persons like Dick Turner, who have been complete failures in the English society, try to salvage their prestige by choosing to settle down in White colonies. The Whiteman's code is known to extend moral support even to such Whites so that their image continues to remain superior to that of the Blacks. They overlook their own faults and condemn the Blacks as if they were mere lifeless, marketable material" (22). In addition, Lorelei Cederstrom, in *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche – Jungian Patterns in the Novels of Doris Lessing*, points out that "They lack freedom due to the oppressions of the economic system, but their real lack of freedom is based upon the fact that in the core of their beings they lack spiritual values and have vainly attempted to fill the gap with economic ones" (19).

Similar to King and Myles, Dick as a white man draws a different picture about whites in the eyes of blacks as James Gindin tells in *Doris Lessing's Intense*

Commitment; “In many of the stories the white settler’s assertion of his inherited culture is, in this new land, his means of establishing his difference from the black men all around him. Some of the white settlers, like Dick Turner in *The Grass is Singing*, have been failures in English society and have come to Africa in order to reestablish themselves” (19). And Gindin thinks Turners and the other white people similar to them are “interlopers, and white aliens in a black world” (20) and takes some example sentences in order to support his idea from *The Grass is Singing*; “He was obeying the dictate of the first law of white South Africa, which is : ‘Thou shalt not let your fellow whites sink lower than a certain point; because if you do, the nigger will see he is as good as you are’” (20).

Most importantly, Lessing does not portray a promising and identical world of white men. Lessing recognizes “the black’s simplicity and value” and this means “the admission of the white settler’s failure to civilize Africa. Not all the white settlers are identical in Miss Lessing’s fiction. As in her work dealing with the English, her fiction about Africa frequently relies on a conflict of attitudes between different generations” (21-2). To the reader, this difference between generations finds its place in *Going Home*:

It seems to me that this story of the man who preferred to die alone rather than return to the cities of his own people expresses what is best in the older type of white men who have come to Africa. He did not come to take what he could get from the country. This man loved Africa for its own sake, and for what is best in it: its emptiness, its promise. It is still uncreated (10).

In *The Grass is Singing*, Mary and Dick get married and move to a farm in Africa as Dorothy Brewster states in *Doris Lessing*, “She went to live on the farm in a miserable little box of a house, which Dick was always going to add to or improve, but never had the money even to roof properly to protect them from the blistering heat” (34). A poor life has waited for them. From the beginning to the end of the novel, they lead a life in poverty:

He looked up at the bare crackling tin of the roof, that was warped with sun, at the faded gimcrack furniture, at the dusty brick floors covered with ragged animal skins, and wondered how those two, Mary and Dick Turner, could have borne to live in such a place, year in and year out, for so long. Why, even the little thatched hut where he lived at the back was better than this! Why did they go on without even so much as putting in ceilings? It was enough to drive anyone mad, the heat in this place (28).

As time passes, Mary seems to be accustomed to living on this farm. With her own money, she decides to decorate her house to make sure something will change. She is trying to create a beautiful place to live buying some flowers and materials and covering cushions and making curtains (61). Similarly, Lessing’s mother in poverty had to face with snakes and wild animals and make bush fires and learn to cook bread in antheaps or cakes in petrol tins over open fires. In *Under My Skin*, she emphasizes that she hated every second spending here (58) and she despises everything related with Africa as Victoria Rosner states in *Home Fires: Doris Lessing, Colonial Architecture, and the Reproduction of Mothering*:

If Lessing loved the house for its connections to the bush, her mother's view of the house was the opposite. Lessing's love of the bush enabled her to thrive in it, but she recognized that her mother's feelings were closer to the typical white female settler's story of depression and eventual nervous breakdown (71).

She is not satisfied with her life on an African farm. She is in poverty and her neighbors are not from the English middle class. Coming to Africa, Mrs. Lessing has dreams about future. As Lessing states in *Under My Skin*, she brings her clothes to welcome visitors, gloves, scarves, hats and feather fans. She hopes to go back to England and she will go on her life as she has left. However, she realized that "nothing is going to happen as she expects to happen" (58). On the floor, there were Persian rugs as the symbol of the respectable life which she believed that she deserved to have, "silver tea trays, English watercolours, and the classics in their red leather editions" (64). But in spite of her realization, she does not give up and she is fulfilled with hope to return England one day while she is writing to a friend in England and she is accusing herself not knowing the value of their conversations "in front of a good fire, eating chocolate or chestnuts roasted in the embers" (79). As time passes, furniture transforms from being the symbol of respectability into shabbiness. Now all those invaluable "things seemed to belong to another house and another world" (130).

In *Martha Quest*, in Quests' home, "everything had shrunk for her. The house showed as if an unkind light had been shone on it. It was not only shabby, it was sordid. Everything decayed and declined, and leaned inwards" (38). In *Going Home*, Lessing's depiction of her house is "echoed in descriptions of Martha Quest's house

in Zambesia” as Ruth Whittaker states in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change* (2):

A pole-and-dagga house is built to stand for two, three, four years at most; but the circumstances and character of our family kept ours standing for nearly two decades. It did very well, for it had been built with affection. But under the storms and the beating rains of the wet seasons, the grass of the roof flattened like old flesh into the hollows and bumps of the poles under it: and sometimes parts of the roof-received a new layer of grass. A house like this is a living thing, responsive to every mood of the weather; and during the time I was growing up it had already begun to sink back into the forms of the bush. I remember it as a rather old, shaggy animal standing still among the trees, lifting its head to look out over the vleis and valleys to the mountains (33).

Lessing’s depiction of home in Zambesia reminds the reader that her memories of Africa has remained fresh in her mind and she still describes it as if she still belonged to this home. Her description gives the sincerity and warmth to the readers and she visits her old home after years, for the first time she feels at home. In *Going Home*, Lessing assumes “I worked out recently that I have lived in over sixty houses, flats and rented rooms during the last twenty years and not in one of them have I felt at home. . . . The fact is, I don’t live anywhere; I never have since I left that first house on the kopje” (29-30).

4.5 Social Prejudices: Facing with the Bitter Reality of Socialization

In *The Grass is Singing*, Mary lives in town and has started to work. She has ambitious plans for her life and while she is working, she wants to have a promotion in her career and she wants to socialize with girls around her as Mrs. Lessing conveys in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*;

The fact is that we all live our lives in groups– the family, work groups, social, religious and political groups. Very few people indeed are happy as solitaries, and they tend to be seen by their neighbours as peculiar or selfish or worse. Most people cannot stand being alone for long. They are always seeking groups to belong to, and if one group dissolves, they look for another (48).

Similarly, Morris Rosenberg, in *Conceiving the Self*, supports Lessing's idea and continues; "Friendship is the purest illustration of picking one's propaganda, for it is characteristic of a friend that not only do we like him but he likes us. To some extent, at least, it is probable that we like him because he likes us. People confirm their self-concepts by selectively associating with those who see them as they are themselves" (261).

As a result, she joins in a girl's club and she enjoys her freedom and she "feels sufficient and capable; with her friends, whom she relied on; with her life at the Club" as explained in *The Grass is Singing* (40). She thinks she has found a different kind of life "which was as pleasant and gregarious as being in a giant twittering aviary, where there was always the excitement of other people's engagements and weddings" that she has never seen before (40). She imagines her

dreams come true but some time later, she faces with the harsh reality and she feels trapped by her “treacherous friends” a symbol of social pressure (41). She comes to realization that her friends are insincere and unfriendly because they always gossip about her appearance and most importantly her age. As a social role, girls are expected to marry when they reach at a certain age as Lessing reflects in one of girls’ conversations in *The Grass is Singing*:

‘She is not fifteen any longer: it is ridiculous! Someone should tell her about her clothes’. ‘How old is she?’ ‘Must be well over thirty. She has been going strong for years. She was working long before I began working, and that was a good twelve years ago’. ‘Why does not she marry? She must have had plenty of chances’. ‘I don’t think so. My husband was keen on her himself once, but he thinks she will never marry. She just isn’t like that, isn’t like that at all. Something missing somewhere’ (40).

When she realizes their gossiping about her, she feels disappointed and her pride is hurt by girls and her attempts to socialize result in destruction and disillusionment because she is “so naïve, so unconscious of herself in relation to other people, it had never entered her head that people could discuss her behind her back” (41). She has difficulty to get accustomed to living with her new image created by society and she cannot “recognize herself in the picture they had made of her!” (41). After facing with the bitter reality, she is trying to find ways to restore herself because she knows that she means nothing if she has not become a social being so she immediately “takes the ribbon out of her hair, though with regret and buys herself tailor-made clothes” and then looks for a man to marry

(41) as Elizabeth Maslen states in *Doris Lessing*, “she feels pushed by her friends into seeking a husband” (4).

As Lessing states in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Mary has taken an important step into the victimization of convention by efforts to get rid of childish outlook and searching for someone to marry:

When we're in a group, we tend to think as that group does: we may even have joined the group to find “like-minded” people. But we also find our thinking changing because we belong to a group. It is the hardest thing in the world to maintain an individual dissident opinion, as a member of a group (48).

As a result of social pressure upon her, she marries Dick, an inefficient farmer, and finds herself in desolation and disappointed. So her marriage has become a marriage of convention but not a marriage of love. Similar to Mary, Martha moves to the town to work and to establish a life for her. In *Martha Quest*, Martha's enthusiasm can be easily seen because she is the head secretary in the office and like Mary; she is ambitious and wants to raise a higher position.

As Jeannette King states in *Doris Lessing*, Martha sees socialization as a way to escape from routine of life but by joining the Sports Club which “is peopled by characters whose lives are governed by rigid, through unwritten and unspoken, codes of behaviour, constructed to deter the expression of either personal experience or unpalatable social and political realities” (15).

However, her life and plans for the future turn into a disaster; while she wants to be an efficient secretary, she is now ignoring her plans and responsibilities because she gets home at a very late hour, she cannot sleep

properly and she does not have healthy and proper eating habits. As soon as she joins the Sports Club, she begins to meet some people and make friends like Donovan. Martha expects to have a nice relationship with Donovan and she makes effort to make herself accepted in the eyes of Donovan.

However, she is rather disappointed on her first date because he looks at her critically by narrowing his eyes. He walks around and examines her. He does not like her hair style and changes the arrangement of her hair. She does not like his possessive and dominant attitude. He tries to change everything by his own desire and Martha thinks that she is an object in the hands of Donovan. At this point, Elizabeth Maslen points out “Martha is aggressively manipulated by the men she meets: the wolves of the Sports Club with their endless sterile sexual teasing; Donovan with his dressing and shaping of her so as to make her literally conform to his idea of what her image should be” (10).

His will to dominate her makes Martha uneasy and make her feel under pressure to become socialized as she points out in *Martha Quest*:

Let your shoulders forward a little – you should learn to stand with your bottom tucked in, and your hips forward, and your shoulders slightly curved, but held so that your breasts stand out. . . . His frowning eyes met her antagonistic ones, and he dropped his hands, and his handsome face. . . . ‘Now you will lie down and sleep, because you look really awful. I will come and dress you at six. You must have a bath at five, but don’t touch your hair, I’ll do it’ (199).

The way of life she leads is a kind of free-care life style which does not require discipline and productivity. Martha's real concern is to "crave group acceptance even more than he did during the middle years" as Briggs points out in *Your Child's Self-Esteem: The Key to Life* (155). She wants to be one of them and being "frowned on by crowd" and "the young teen-ager needs large transfusions of confirmation from friends" (155). However, ironically, while she rejects and wants to escape from traditional values of society and her parents, she, in her new world, has to "construct a world even more firmly entrenched in the prevailing ideology" (15) as Jeannette King states in *Doris Lessing*.

4.6 Collapse of Communistic Ideals

As Anita Myles indicates in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, “Much concerned about the racist issues and deeply pained at the Blacks’ ill-treatment by the Whites, she sought a kind of relief in Communism” (1) and “After having fully realized the problem of apartheid Mrs. Lessing sets herself out to explore a solution. Her initial endeavor turns out to be merely groping in darkness. She turns towards Communism for a possible alternative. Communism, according to her, could inculcate among the dwellers the feelings of equality and social justice” (20) and as a consequence of her confrontation with the Black-White agony, she “developed and diverted to belief in the Communistic view of life” (55).

In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Lessing states that “I must be prepared to fight for what I believe in and kill if necessary. You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs and one day we will have a perfect, good, noble, free world, but only we – I and my new family and the people who believe in us – can create it” (37). Lessing and Martha have seen Communism as a way to heal their experiences full of memories of inequality as Pratt expresses in *Doris Lessing*, “They’re a symptom of the fact that in England we had a class system allied with a feeling of England as top man. We ruled the world and everyone else were damn niggers or foreigners. And we just can’t get on with the fact that we’re just human like they are. And they’ve got equal rights” (4). In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Lessing explains that “the system in which we live is evil, the capitalists and businessmen are wicked” (26).

The reason lying under their interest in Communism is their racial upbringing which requires them to face with painful moments of injustice. According to them,

Communism is “a lunacy of immense strength” and “a revolution that will demand blood and sacrifice” (27) because in the first place, Martha and Doris justify their ideals by saying “You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs” (27) and they are interested in Communism because they are opposed to repression and unjust society in “old white-dominated Africa” (27). They both begin to carry out their ideals in a naïve way without showing any sign of violence because they were “more lively, energetic, and well-read than most (28). Their ideal is to create peace and harmony for everybody and see everybody has the equal rights in life. As time passes, as Lessing states in *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*, Communism spreads over Russia and “murdered and destroyed. Yet for a while the violent partisan passions of that revolution spread everywhere, and made it impossible to think straight” (43) and they understand that it is impossible for them to make this dream true because Communism does not meet her needs and left the party with disappointment and lack of confidence and she explains this in Schlueter’s book, *A Small Personal Voice*:

There was a time in my life when I was a member of a communist group which was pure-they had no contact with any kind of reality. It must have been blessed by Lenin from his grave, it was so pure. The thing was, if we had been in any other part of the world, where in fact there was a Communist Party, the beautiful purity of the ideas that we were trying to operate couldn’t have worked. I found this when I came to England and had a short association with the British Communist Party (85).

However, Maslen states that Lessing “never regrets her affiliations with the Communists” (15). Eleven years after writing *Going Home*, she has added a section called ‘Eleven Years Later’ and written about how important Communism had been:

The trouble is, being an ‘ex-Communist’ is just as much of a false position as being a Communist. But I’ve long since understood that what it was like being a Communist in a certain time and place can be understood by no one who was not. Which is why I am so glad I was one, had the experience. And I’m grateful to the Communists for what they taught me: particularly about power, the realities of political power. It is no accident that the only group of people who knew that Federation was dangerous nonsense, that Partnership was a bad joke, were Socialists of various kinds (247). Looking back, I say to myself that ideally I would like to have been a communist for let’s say two years, because of what I learned about the nature of power, power-lovers, fanatics, the dynamics of groups and how they form and split, about one’s own capacity for self-delusion. Of course this is impossible. I am wondering if there is some psychological law that dictates the length of time it takes to recover from the effects of a submission away from commonsense, to a faith, whether political or religious. There must be stages of this, like an illness; a slow recovery from absolutism, through degrees of agnosticism (253-4).

CHAPTER 5

CONSEQUENCES OF DISILLUSIONMENTS IN LIFE

5.1 Her relation with her daughter

Roszika Parker suggests, “The experience and stresses of birth and childrearing cause a woman to re-experience her own early splitting of the nurturing/ persecuting parent, and to see both herself and her infant in these bipolar terms” (qtd. in Quiney 24). In the series, Maslen states that Lessing emphasizes the social values and roles assigned to individuals by society and addresses “the plight of women and how it is shaped and maintained by society’s discourses” (10).

It can be clearly stated that Martha does not lead a happy childhood. She has a domineering mother: she always wants to control Martha’s life and she does not let her grow up and behave like a grown up. At this point, Martha and her mother do not have good relations because their relationship is based upon hatred, rebellion, suppression and authority. As Whittaker explains in *Doris Lessing and the Means of Change*; they see each other “demanding, repressive, rapacious” (3). As Mrs. Quest is an unwanted child by her parents, she cannot behave Martha in a very sincere way but in a domineering manner.

In the same way, Lessing cannot be stated that she has spent a very happy childhood and she reflects this unhappiness in *Under My Skin* over and over again as a girl who “makes her mother’s life a total misery” (30) and can be stated that she does not see her mother as a role model for her and does not want to be like her. Consequently, Lessing has always been aware of the bitter reality of marriage and

motherhood as Anita Myles puts forward in *Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*:

Mrs. Lessing has been all along conscious of this negative aspect of motherhood. The reason for this recurrent exasperation may be traced back to her own unhappy childhood and adolescence under the pressure of a dominant mother and a cynical father (11).

Although Lessing has had three sons, she converts her first baby boy into a daughter, Caroline in *Children of Violence* series because as Sprague points out in *Rereading Doris Lessing: Narrative Patterns of Doubling and Repetition*; “By altering the sex of her first child from male to female, Lessing highlights and intensifies the mother-daughter antagonism that runs throughout the quintet (64).

Martha is described as a non-conformist teenager who does not want to be a part of convention but marriage makes feel her trapped and a victim of conventions. Marriage brings her another responsibility that society expects women have sooner or later; motherhood. As Martha herself does not have a happy childhood and have strong ties with her mother, she feels insufficient to become a nurturant mother in fact she does not really feel herself as a mother as Margaret Rowe states:

Motherhood only intensifies Martha’s estrangement. Caroline, Martha’s daughter, plays the role of double and rival to her mother. On the one hand, Caroline secures the love and acceptance from Mrs. Quest that Martha never realizes in her relationship with her mother. On the other hand, Caroline embodies the potential which Martha at 21 feels she has squandered in marriage. Indeed, the hours alone with Caroline provide a strange stimulus to Martha’s imagination as she

begins to break through her own vagueness to an understanding of her situation (33).

Similar to Rowe's views, Anita Myles draws the attention of readers to the same direction in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility* and emphasizes that "Martha stands as the symbol of archetypal motherhood. She has failed as a mother, a wife, and a mistress. The cause of the failure is that she had tried to fulfill each of these roles individually, which she should not have done" (9). Moreover, Pickering agrees with Myles on the pregnancy brings unhappiness to Martha and points out, "Her entire pregnancy illustrates both the loss of individuality in the workings of biological forces and the exhilaration that can come from submitting to them" (50).

Martha was not willing to get married but she saw it as an escape from her unhappy childhood memories and she was reluctant to taste the feeling of motherhood as the second ring of the cycle. In *A Proper Marriage*, learning her pregnancy does not make her happy and she is not accustomed to lead a life as pregnant. She thinks her independence "so lately won from her mother's furtive questioning, was being threatened by an impertinent stranger" (43).

She cannot understand the fast alteration in her body and she finds herself "formless, graceless, and unpredictable, a mere lump of clay" (13) and Lessing embodies her deteriorating psychology because of pregnancy; "In Martha's mind was the picture of how she had indubitably been, not more than three months ago, that picture which had been described, not only by herself but by others, as a slim blonde. Looking incredulously towards her reflection, she saw that fat girl, and shut her eyes in despair" (11). She does not look beautiful and her friend Stella advises her, "You

should take yourself in hand, that's all it is. That hair style doesn't suit you – if you can call it a hair style. If you had it cut properly, it might curl (10-11). Now Martha loses her “shell of confidence” (15). Martha sometimes talks to her daughter Caroline and tell her that she is going to leave her to a nursery school and she tries to justify herself by expressing that she does not want to get involved in mother-daughter antagonism as a vicious cycle. As Ruth Whittaker states in *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*; “Her new role is that of a mother, and when Douglas is called up to fight in the Second World War, she is left to manage alone. She engages in a domestic battle of wills with her baby daughter Caroline, who refuses to eat without coercion, and Martha endures the boredom of being in a small flat with a baby, day after day. She sees their troubled relationship as inevitable: ‘you and I are just victims, my poor child, you can't help it, I can't help it, my mother couldn't help it, and her mother. Her belief that parents invariably cause their children irreparable harm stems from her appalling relationship with her own mother, and it enables her to leave Caroline when she separates from Douglas” (45).

In *A Proper Marriage*, when Caroline does not want to eat anything, Martha learns “to put Caroline's food in front of her and then go out of the room” and some time later Caroline has learned to receive and eat her food so that she “succeeded in defeating the demon of antagonism” (267). Still there is an ambiguity in Martha's mind and she does not understand her role in her new position and warns her daughter against convention in *A Proper Marriage*:

Two years ago, I was as free as air. I could have done anything, been anything. Because the essence of the daydreams of every girl who isn't married is just that: it's the only time they are more free than men. Men

have to be something, but you'll find when you grow up, my poor child, that you'll find yourself as a ballet dancer, or a business executive, or the wife of a Prime Minister, or the mistress of somebody important, or even at extreme moments a nun or a missionary. You'll imagine yourself doing all sorts of things in all sorts of countries; the point is, you will be your limit. Anything'll be possible. But you will not see yourself sitting in a small room bound for twenty-four hours of the day-with years of it in front of you-to a small child. For God's Sake, Caroline, don't marry young. I'll stop you marrying young if I have to lock you up (267-8).

As Lessing writes in *A Proper Marriage*, Martha has experienced to carry this difficult burden and she does not want her daughter to live similar painful experiences and she promises to protect Caroline from any wrong decision that she is going to take but then she remembers her mother's pressure upon her and thinks this pressure as "unforgivable sin" (268) because Martha is aware of the fact that how strictly she rejects her mother's conventions, she sees her mother when looking at the mirror and she knows that Caroline will have the same destiny and become a victim of convention as Maslen states in *Doris Lessing*, "Martha looks at her mother and sees, with a prophetic insight a vision that she learns to combat" (8) in the light of the quotation cited from *A Proper Marriage*:

She saw herself sitting where her mother now sat, a woman horribly metamorphosed, entirely dependent on her children for any interest in life, resented by them, and resenting them; opposite her, a young woman of whom she could distinguish nothing clearly but a set, obstinate face; and beside these women, a series of shadowy dependent men, broken-

willed and sick with compelled diseases. This the nightmare, this is the nightmare of a class and generation: repetition (126).

Martha is sure that Caroline will “grow up to be like these women about her, a dull housewife with no purpose in life but to continue the cycle of procreation” (199). Ironically, Jean Pickering comments on this ironical situation that Martha experiences in *Understanding Doris Lessing*, “Martha foresees for herself the kind of repetition that overtook the unaware Mary Turner. In her mother Martha sees precisely the person she does not want to become” (53) and indicates “Martha’s last words to Caroline are that she is setting her free – free from the tyranny of repetition” (56). In addition to Pickering, Claire Sprague remarks this ironical vicious cycle in *In Pursuit of Doris Lessing*:

The mother-daughter tie is never dissociated from the process of growing and aging. Mothers. . . forever function as mirrors for their daughters. The complex circularity of daughters fighting mothers and then becoming mothers themselves both repeats and advances Lessing’s themes and patterns (110).

In *Landlocked*, Martha thinks her parents are the grandparents of her daughter, Caroline and they have the right to look after her so she sometimes leaves her at her parents. On her return, Martha realizes a different kind of look in the eyes of Caroline “There was knowledge in it, a sharp almost cynical knowledge. . . .a sharp knowledgeable quality in the little face” (292). At this point, Martha is in full awareness and she does not hesitate that “There is no escaping it, she’ll hate me” (347).

Martha leaves her little daughter to her mother for a while and feels this decision will make her far away from herself as Lessing reflects in lines in *Landlocked*:

It's nice for Caroline to get to know her grandfather while she can. But underneath there was such horror that . . . if a young woman commits the crime of leaving a child, without the wailing, the weeping, the wringing of the hands that make it, almost, an act within nature . . . Martha 'behaving sensibly', as it was her nature to do, must run into a pretty little girl of three, four, five, six years old at her mother's house and hear 'there's Auntie Matty!' (289).

Martha, in *Landlocked* after some time, visits her parents' house and in the garden she hopes to find a little girl playing; "Now the room was empty, the house was empty, and the garden was particularly and unbelievably empty, and Martha kept looking for a pink-frocked small girl who might be playing there with a white dog" (308).

5.2 Her relations with her lovers and husbands

As Dina Siddiqi puts it:

Marriage constitutes a primary rite of passage into social adulthood for men and women, and the desire to marry is, arguably, universal and rarely contested. Familial pressures to marry tend to be expressed in idioms of love, duty and filial obligation. Consequently, the lines between cultural compulsion, social realities and individual desires can be blurred (qtd. in Griffin 10).

Through several characters, Lessing “brings out how the “children of violence” find it difficult to have a blissful married life” (38) as Myles indicates in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*:

Theirs are broken families where women suffer from neurosis and men are products of a dehumanized modern society. Lack of peace and harmony between the husband and wife leads to the suffering of children. They become imbalanced personalities bringing about greater confusion, violence and misery (38).

Moreover, Lessing has shown how love, care and affection have practically vanished from the modern world and marriages are “managed more out of mere selfish motives rather than out of true love” as Myles mentions, like Martha’s destructive escapist attitude to get rid of conventions of society and her parents because Martha sees her marriage as a source of freedom, individualism and a romantic love rather than conventional ties of it and when she realizes marriage is more than being a source of freedom, she becomes frustrated in her marriage to Douglas.

As Jean Pickering, in *Understanding Doris Lessing*, points out; “Love has in collusion with the sex drive brought Martha, at the age of nineteen, to “lie beside” Douglas Knowell regardless of her determination not to marry; as the opening chapter makes clear, she is already pregnant in spite of her resolution never to become a mother” (49). At the end of *Martha Quest*, Martha marries to Douglas but this marriage makes her unhappy because she does not see herself as a married woman and marriage means imprisonment to Martha but she knows that she has to marry as a responsibility to meet social values but this marriage is not a marriage of love but a marriage of convention.

In *A Proper Marriage*, she struggles against the obligations of being in a domestic sphere and being a conventional housewife, however, as Whittaker says in *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*; “Her newly won privacy from her parents is lost again to her husband” (43). Similar to Whittaker, Pickering comments on this ironical situation that Martha experiences and describes her experiences as the activation of her deepest terrors, “if she had remained in the colony when she wanted to leave it, got married when she wanted to be free and adventurous, always did the contrary to what she wanted most (53). In addition to Whittaker and Pickering, Maslen, in *Doris Lessing*, has similar views on Martha and Mary’s marriages and points out that because of social norms, her attempts to become an individual results in destruction; “Mary’s move from the single status she happily enjoys into a disastrous marriage is caused by the good-humoured malice of overheard women’s talk, while Martha’s adolescence and marriage are a continual battle against her mother’s expectation of her and crude invasions of her private space” (10).

Moreover, Margaret Rowe agrees with Whittaker and Pickering's ideas on Martha's ironical experiences and comments on the issue in *Women Writers: Doris Lessing*:

Martha Quest, like Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing*, thinks she can escape her parents' life and the entrapment of marriage. She desperately wants to resist her mother's choices so she escapes to the city and the life of an independent, modern woman. The world lies before her or so she thinks. Martha carries her mother's values with her and soon enough marriage makes its claim. Ironically, Martha's initial attraction to Douglas Knowell results from a misperception: 'he was so different from the Sports Club men!' (30).

While Martha is unwilling to sign for eternal desolation, her mother feels happy Martha to fulfill her social role as a female assigned by society as Lessing expresses in *Martha Quest*, "That evening, when Martha went to her bedroom, she sat on the edge of her bed, and pointed out to herself that not only had her parents accepted the marriage, but she could expect her mother to take full control of the thing. In fact, she already felt as if it concerned her mother more than herself" (317) and "Martha is shaped by a recognisable social pressure to marry ('she was being dragged toward it') as Margaret Rowe states in *Women Writers: Doris Lessing* (31).

In *Martha Quest*, until the last moment of her marriage to Douglas, she has conflicts and she does not know what to do; "She said to herself that now she could free herself, she need not marry him; at the same time, she knew quite well she would marry him; she could not help it; she was being dragged towards it, whether she liked it or not. She also heard a voice remarking calmly within her that she would not stay married to him; but this voice had no time to make itself heard before he turned to her,

and asked again, this time quietly and pleasantly, for his anger had subsided, whether she wanted to change her mind. She replied that she did not (328). As soon as she marries to Douglas, she wants to get divorced because she immediately faces with the responsibilities of being a wife like her duty to look nice to her husband not herself.

A Proper Marriage opens with the pregnancy of Martha because of their sexual intercourse out of marriage and Martha wants to have abortion because she does not feel a passionate love for her husband and she does not feel ready to carry this burden. As Lessing states in *A Proper Marriage*, Martha “didn’t like any of the things she had become obliged to like by the fact of marrying” (12). Furthermore, Margaret Rowe writes in *Women Writers – Doris Lessing, A Proper Marriage* is “Lessing’s most lacerating portrait of a marriage. She elaborately explores Martha’s attitudes towards and dramatic rejection of the conventional woman’s mission, the role of wife and mother. The rejection is so complete, replete with the scenes of domestic violence, that I read the novel as the work in which Lessing, as Woolf earlier, kills ‘The Angel of the House’” (31).

As a prospective mother, she wants to have her right to decide whether she is going to have it or not. There is a huge gap in Martha’s marriage. It lacks care, affection and passion. In *A Proper Marriage*, most of the time, she questions herself about whether she loves him or not; “She was thinking with rueful humour that now she was undeniably longing for Douglas to come so that he might reassure her; whereas for most of the week she had been struggling with waves of powerful dislike of him that she was too well educated in matters of psychological not to know were natural to a newly married woman” (36). As a victim of conventions, Martha decides to get divorced but as Jean Pickering states in *Understanding Doris Lessing*, she

“discovers that no one believes her intention to leave Douglas comes from political conviction. Older women urge her to stay with him because Caroline needs her biological mother, because men can’t help the way they are, or because they themselves sacrificed to keep their families together (56).

After some questioning herself, she realizes that this marriage is a foolish mistake as Ruth Whittaker assumes in *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*:

The state of marriage is an end in itself. Martha’s choice of marriage is her escape route from the life she has been leading in the town, just as the town life was an escape from the farm. Ironically, in fleeing from her parents and their values, she ends up in a marriage as claustrophobic as theirs (41).

In *A Proper Marriage*, Douglas has an aggressive character and he does not show Martha care and affection that she needs; “There stirred a small thought of Martha; he let it die again, and a pang of fondness for her went with it. What he felt for Martha was nothing, nothing at all compared with his year among soldiers. Rage filled him. He was filled with a need to tear, to destroy . . . (291-2).

For Martha, love is the key for happiness and harmony in a marriage. In her childhood, she always thought herself as an unwanted child by her parents because she wanted to feel more love from her mother and father. Now her lack of love is reflected in her marriage. In *Landlocked*, Martha describes love as “the key to every good; love lay like a mirage through the golden gates of sex. If this was not true, then nothing was true, and the beliefs of a whole generation were illusory” (40). Similarly, Anita Myles, in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, points out that “Mrs. Lessing’s attitude to love reveals it as a noble human emotion and a universal

process of life. Mrs. Lessing's position has been quite explosive as a writer treating love, because love in the West is no more accepted as an emotional process. Sex and physical gratification have become predominant factors in determining the success or the failure of marital life. Mrs. Lessing found the futility of such a type of love in her own life and has shown this pattern through her female protagonists. Finally, she advocates the positive and the healthy aspect of love which is unselfish and real by dint of its creativity. Such a love not only extends peace and harmony to others, but it also can cure the "selfish and barbaric" lovers of their destructive roles" (36).

Lessing comes to a realization that men like dominating women and want women to keep under their control in their relationships and Lessing reflects this realization through Martha's experience as an adolescent and an adult of two marriages. In *Martha Quest*, Lessing portrays Martha as a girl who is at the threshold of adolescence and is trying to escape from conventional upbringing of her parents. As a result of this attempt, she meets some men and she undergoes intimate experiences with them but none of her relationships gives her happiness physically and emotionally. All her men want is to dominate Martha and they want to see her as a shy, good mother figure or a woman of convention. All Martha wants from her men is dignity, care and affection. However, as Ruth Whittaker states in *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing* that Lessing describes Martha's relationships with her men and shows readers how "her aspirations towards energetic independence are blocked by her feminine passivity" (40).

In *A Proper Marriage*, Lessing creates an unhappy Martha in marriage because in order to fulfill the necessities of convention, she has to behave her husband nicely and create peace and harmony at home for him. She is loyal to love and she does not want

to be opposed to this feeling so she “pretends that she was not disappointed” (40). However, this time, she sacrifices herself for her husband and deceives herself and “kisses him before he left if she was not to feel guilty and lacking as a woman” (345). After her divorce from Douglas, Martha’s growing consciousness as a woman is reflected in an effective manner in *A Ripple from the Storm*:

There is a type of woman who can never be, as they are likely to put it ‘themselves’, with anyone but the man to whom they have permanently or not given their hearts. If the man goes away there is left an empty space filled with shadows. She mourns for the temporarily extinct person she can only be with a man she loves; she mourns him who brought her ‘self’ to life. She lives with the empty space at her side, peopled with the images of her own potentialities until the next man walks into the space, absorbs the shadows into himself, creating her, allowing her to be her ‘self’ – but a new self, since it is his conception which forms her (54-55).

Her second marriage is based upon personal interests and they do not have a deep relationship between them. In *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*, Whittaker comments this marriage “Martha’s relationship with Anton again is determined by her passivity” (50). They do not lead a happy marriage. To Martha, Anton is a successful sexual partner and he always mentions Martha about his dead wife. She realizes that she has to pretend to be charmed by Anton and she decides the marriage to end in divorce. This marriage is also a failure of Martha and her marriage is lack of genuine love, care and affection. As mentioned in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, Myles examines Martha’s marriage to Anton and comes to a conclusion that Martha’s having unhappy memories as an offspring is the source of the failure in her marriages:

Martha realizes the gap in her marriage and feels the necessity of eliminating it for the sake of safe and sound existence. She resorts to sex in desperation but this is an utter failure due to Anton's sexual incompatibility. Martha was constantly troubled with questions: Why was her marriage a failure? What did it lack? Did it lack the strong foundation of love? Martha could not use the word love "for she did not know what it meant". She was the offspring of unhappy parents. She never experienced the emotion of love to have existed between her mother and father. So how could her upbringing help in nurturing the plant of love in her own life (39).

Among her lovers and husbands, Martha excludes Thomas from others. While she is with him, she knots her emotions tight and forgets about Anton, her husband in the process of divorce. The issue of love is examined in *Landlocked*; Martha realizes that sex alone does not bring happiness and dignity to marriage, if it is not accompanied by true love and mutual understanding. In her marriage to Anton, she carries out her domestic responsibilities at home but in the bedroom, she is not there, the presence of Anton disappears and the sight of Thomas becomes apparent as a consequence of the absence of emotional unity. As Myles indicates:

Mrs. Lessing has examined love as basically a male-female relationship—physical or emotional. Her treatment has mostly been concerned with female protagonists. She does show the negative and harmful side of dominating "motherhood" too; but her statements suggest a typical twentieth century European attitude to love and marriage in which sex

dominates and emotions are superficial. Sex has its limitations and is more destructive for women leading them to nervous breakdown (50).

Martin Green, in *The English Novel in the Twentieth Century*, points out that Martha criticizes her marriages and describes them as “terrible crimes” (182) and expresses the strange relationship between love and marriage in *Landlocked*:

How strange it was – marriage and love; one would think, the way newspapers, films, literature, the people who are supposed to express us talk, that we believe marriage, love, to be the desperate important deep experiences they say they are. But of course they don’t believe any such thing. Hardly anyone believes it. We want them to believe it. We want to believe it. Perhaps people will believe it again” (193).

In *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing portrays a similar picture for Mary and Dick’s marriage. Dick, as an insufficient farmer, and Mary, as a town girl, get married and move to the farm. They have different tastes from each other for example, Mary loves cinema but Dick hates. Dick is a man who belongs to the farm. She is not deeply in love with Dick and she does not feel any desire for him but she is married to him as a sign of obedience to convention. The only reason of her marriage is to get rid of social pressure upon her as Lessing reflects in *The Grass is Singing*:

But she was not playing her part, for she did not get married. The years went past; her friends got married; she had been bridesmaid a dozen times; other people’s children were growing up; but she went on as companionable, as adaptable, as aloof as heart-whole as ever, working as hard enjoying herself as she ever did in the office, and never for one moment alone, except when she was asleep” (38).

She does not have happy memories belonging to her childhood because of her ill-mannered father so she develops a kind of resistance against men and develops distaste against sexuality and she always escapes not to establish strong relations. Her unhappy childhood shapes her life and especially her marriage to Dick as Cederstrom assumes in *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psych: Jungian Patterns in the Novels of Doris Lessing*:

Because of her parents, Mary lacks awareness of the creative, vital connection possible between a man and a woman. She sees marriage primarily as an economic contract, wedlock rather than a hierogamy, and in her later life, as a self-supporting young woman, feels no need for such an arrangement (21).

In addition to Cederstrom, Tony Humphreys shares similar ideas with her and points out this vicious cycle, history repeat itself, in *Myself, My Partner*:

When two individuals form an intimate relationship, each carries into that relationship either the maturity or the emotional baggage from previous significant relationships in their lives. The ones that are the most influential are those with their parents and those between parents (8).

Lessing draws a picture in *The Grass is Singing*, the problem of their marriage that Mary cannot find manliness and strength in Dick and when she questions herself, she expresses that she sees Dick “weak, goal-less, and pitiful” (127) and she feels hatred for him because she needs “a man stronger than herself” and she tries to “create one out of Dick” (127). In addition, Lorelei Cederstrom, in *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche: Jungian Patterns in the Novels of Doris Lessing*, points out:

Instead of vital, blood-connection, each remains isolate; the archetypal feminine in Mary is arrested at the level of the maternal as she rejects Dick's adult masculinity. The lack of a mature relationship between them gives added impetus to their trivial complaints about each other; Dick's irritation focuses on her inability to manage the servants, Mary's on his inability to put the farm on a sound financial basis (22). Dick's "O.K. boss" is an ironic acknowledgement of Mary's dominance; his own masculinity is no match for the power of her negative animus. This acknowledgement of the negative and destructive relationship between them is the climax of the novel. Once their relationship has been established on the basis of this negative principle, any hope of creative masculine and feminine interaction is lost, and the Turners move slowly toward mutual destruction in an atmosphere best described as one of animosity (23).

Similarly, as Myles explains in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, Mary "is expecting a lot out of Dick Turner as her husband. Her childhood had been miserable and there was obviously dire lack of affection and care. The first few months of their married life went off well till acute poverty could no longer hide itself. Worry and anxiety led to constant depression. Love had practically lost its importance in their lives" (37).

At this point, Mary begins to feel sexual attraction to her slave, Moses. He is a big man and he has a masculine body. Now, she undergoes a conflict because she questions herself, 'How can a white woman has a sexual attraction towards the black?' Although she has prejudices about natives and their primitiveness and it is

unacceptable that a white begs a black, she wants him near her, she cries, and she begs him not to leave the house.

Most importantly, Moses fulfills Mary's strong male figure in her life. In *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*, Myles explains the inner conflict of Mary has; "Their intimacies developed into a strange love-hate relationship. Mary knew this emotion and wanted to get rid of Moses but it was impossible. Her frustration in life due to poverty and inner conflict led to sexual diversion towards a tabooed man and only expedited the process of her mental disintegration (37). However, she does not violate the white' rules and she tries to explain she has made a mistake by showing him a glimpse of sincerity and hope but Moses thinks he has been deceived and despised by a white and takes his hurt manly pride's revenge on her by killing his master. Jeannette King, in *Doris Lessing* emphasizes Mary's regret for showing pity and sexual attraction towards Moses; "At the end of her life she still sees herself as an uncomprehending victim, but is aware of another self judging and condemning her relationship with Moses. She is split into two selves, the one who feels totally without power, and the other whose power is 'borrowed' from the system which enforces her own oppression" (12).

In the end, in an interview with Roy Newquist, Lessing makes a self criticism and she admits that she has faults in marriages and her marriages have been failed; "That marriage was a failure and I married again. Let's put it this way: I don't think that marriage is one of my talents. I've been much happier unmarried than married. I can't blame the people I've been married to – by and large I've been at fault" (50). Lessing reflects her ideas on marriage and maybe her unsuccessful marital experiences in *A Proper Marriage* in an effective way:

Do you suppose they didn't tell the truth, the novelists? In the books, the young and idealistic girl gets married, has a baby – she at once turns into something quite different; and she is perfectly happy to spend her whole life bringing up children with a tedious husband. Natasha, for instance (in *War and Peace*): she was content to be an old hen, fussing and dull; but supposing all the time she saw a picture of herself as she had been, and saw herself as what she had become and was miserable – what then? Because either that's the truth or there is a completely new kind of woman in the world, and surely that isn't possible . . . (268).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study aims at drawing parallels between Lessing and her works, *Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, *Landlocked* and *The Grass is Singing* and through the characters evoking awareness in individuals in the world as Paul Schlueter states in *The Novels of Doris Lessing*:

The pressures of our time frequently force upon sensitive people a greater awareness not only of the era itself but also of the individual in that era. In particular, such awareness frequently takes the form of an analysis either of the complicated and bewildered individual in the world, or of the manner in which that individual relates to other human beings (1).

As stated earlier, a writer leaves some traces belonging to his personal life and readers feel the coziness and sincerity that the writer gives to the reader and these novels has reflections of Doris Lessing's own life from different dimensions. This thesis supports the idea about the relationship between the work and its author; in order to understand Lessing's messages she tries to give to the reader, her background information places great value upon observation and evaluation of characters and events. That is why the reader is strikingly introduced with the dominant themes like quest for the self, poverty and intensively racism in Lessing's novels, mostly.

Lessing draws a picture of an individual and this portrayal shows how a society puts a pressure upon individuals and their identities. Lessing as states in *Under My Skin* and *Walking in the Shade* is a victim of conventions herself. Although she thinks marriage prevents individuals from searching for their identities and enjoying their

freedom and most importantly as a source of frustration, she cannot resist the social norms and as a natural cycle of convention, she gets married twice but her marriages are not based on deep and passionate love but fulfillment of conventions which dominates individuals' lives. In her works, society is based upon conventions and individuals are expected to confirm some norms assigned by society. Otherwise individuals become outsiders of society and they are damned to isolation and desolation.

We, as readers, are drawn into the world of conventions in Lessing's novels as she experiences in her personal life as she points out in *A Small Personal Voice*; "You have to live in such a way that your writing emerges from it" (53). Although Lessing, to some extent, accepts her works carry the traces of her life, she denies that they are categorized as "autobiographical" because as Whittaker states in *Doris Lessing*, Lessing thinks:

It is impossible to write autobiographically . . . it's impossible to have an experience that other people haven't had, or aren't having (36).

According to Pickering, this is why Lessing describes *Children of Violence* as "a tension between the individual and society, pointing out that it is "a study of the individual conscience in its relations with the collective" (38) and as Anita Myles states in *Doris Lessing: A Novelist with Organic Sensibility*; "Her fictive career establishes her organic sensibility; she has not only analysed the individual conscience artistically but has also successfully established its relationship to the collective conscience. These novels also help us to understand the evolution of Mrs. Lessing as a novelist of cosmic concern and universal benevolence" (18).

In her works “The Grass is Singing” and in the series, protagonists, Mary and Martha undergo some experiences from their childhood to their adulthood. So these works can be dealt with as Bildungsroman which enables the readers to witness the development of protagonists’ mind and character through various experiences. In addition, Lessing’s works are social novels because social circumstances, setting and influences of social conditions on shaping characters are emphasized in these novels.

Most importantly, her works include a quest for identity, a quest for love and a quest for freedom. In the series, Martha’s conflicts with her mother, her realization of the inequality between the blacks and whites in that setting, her encounter with leftist ideas through Cohen Boys, her involvement in the Sports Club and its way of life, and lastly her marriages to Douglas and Anton. As Paul Schlueter indicates in *The Novels of Doris Lessing*:

Mrs. Lessing has something exceedingly significant to say about themes which have concerned many less talented writers of our day: the appeal of communism to the liberals of the late 1930s and early 1940s; the black-white situation in British colonial Africa; the role of the “ free” woman in an essentially masculine world, and the manifestations, particularly sexual, of that woman’s keen self-analysis; and the function of writing as a means of achieving therapeutic identity, even equilibrium, in a chaotic universe. . . . since Mrs. Lessing’s heroines, whatever their names or circumstances, seem to share certain basic traits; but she does make such ideas as the inefficacy of communism or the struggle for racial justice vivid enough so that they become the dominant concern in the discussions of the various novels (6).

In *The Grass is Singing*, Mary's experiences started with her childhood, her complaining mother, difference of colours as white and black, her life in town and marriage life on the farm, her disillusionments in her, her relationship with her servant Moses and her tragic end.

For Mary and Martha, leaving home is the source of their disillusionments they experience because they are portrayed as repressed by their dominant and overprotective parents. They want to assert their individuality against the social values. As Lessing reflects in *Under the Skin* and *Martha Quest*, Martha does not see her mother as a role model for herself and does not want to be an ordinary woman who talks about her husband, children or domestic deeds. At the very beginning of *Martha Quest*, Lessing gives the clues about Martha's rebellious character. As a Victorian female, her mother wants to raise her daughter properly according to the norms society expects people to obey. Martha does not want to be a part of this cycle and become like her mother. She does not want to be a woman that is not encouraged to develop her own intellectual abilities so she always reads to express herself in an efficient way.

Martha does not fit into standards of being an "Angel in the House" as her mother expects her to become because she questions herself, her body and she is interested in everything happens around her. Like her mother, she does not want to remain silent and distanced from worldly matters. She does not want to remain at her domestic sphere as a social expectation. She does not want to remain childish, ignorant and simple minded. She feels confined and limited at home by her mother's conventionality. Ironically, however, at the very end of *Martha Quest*, Martha gets married with a sudden decision and again becomes a victim of convention while she is

trying to escape from being conventional by her mother's domineering attitudes like Mary, in *The Grass is Singing*, who tries to escape from conventions and by marriage finds herself in the very middle of another convention, marital life as Ruth Whittaker assumes in *Modern Novelists: Doris Lessing*:

The state of marriage is an end in itself. Martha's choice of marriage is her escape route from the life she has been leading in the town, just as the town life was an escape from the farm. Ironically, in fleeing from her parents and their values, she ends up in a marriage as claustrophobic as theirs (41).

Now she has to face with feminine responsibilities like becoming childishly ignorant, pleasing her husband, being a delicate creature, belonging to home and being excluded from public sphere and most importantly take a child's responsibility to her shoulders as a mother although she does not feel sufficient and willing to carry these responsibilities as Rowe states:

Motherhood only intensifies Martha's estrangement. Caroline, Martha's daughter, plays the role of double and rival to her mother. On the one hand, Caroline secures the love and acceptance from Mrs. Quest that Martha never realizes in her relationship with her mother. On the other hand, Caroline embodies the potential which Martha at 21 feels she has squandered in marriage. Indeed, the hours alone with Caroline provide a strange stimulus to Martha's imagination as she begins to break through her own vagueness to an understanding of her situation" (33).

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