

LILI WANG

A Study of Doris Lessing's Art and Philosophy



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多丽丝·莱辛的艺术和
哲学思想研究

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代 序

王丽丽，女，山西太原人。1978 年考入山东大学英文系，1982 年毕业留校。此后 20 年，她由学士而硕士，从助教而副教授到教授，一路教书进修，成为山大资深教师。2002 年，她又爱上层楼，考取郭继德老师的博士生。

2005 年 4 月，我在重庆参加英国文学会。会后那个晚上，200 余师生倾巢出动，乘船夜游嘉陵江。灯火阑珊中，丽丽和我谈起她行将答辩的博士论文。据介绍，她下力气写出一本《多丽丝·莱辛的艺术和哲学思想研究》（*A Study of Doris Lessing's Art and Philosophy*）。乍听之下，立意不俗，难度亦可观。船上不及细谈，我便嘱她将论文草稿给我一份，以便进一步推敲。

会后我读了论文，暗自为之叫好。何以如此？原来现代英国文学史上，多丽丝·莱辛高风亮节、风韵特异，是一位思想丰富、极难解读的大腕女作家。她身处二战后欧美文化思想变革时期，却能与时俱进，挑战潮流，始终不落俗套。从 20 世纪 50 年代至 70 年代，她相继创作出思想

深刻、风格多变的一系列试验小说，不但多次获得诺贝尔奖提名，而且蜚声国际文坛。多年来，关于莱辛小说，产生一批题材迥异的专著：有人描述女权特色，有人分析艺术手法，有人探查她与文坛大家之异同。诸多研究中，不乏大牌教授出手亮招。遗憾的是，很少见到有人试将莱辛的艺术特色与其哲学思想联系起来，加以综合探讨。

王丽丽论文于此别开生面：她锁定莱辛从伊朗、非洲到英国的成长经历，历数她一路受到的复杂思想影响：从马克思主义、弗洛伊德/荣格心理学，直到狄尔泰、柏格森的生命哲学，以及伊斯兰教义中的苏非主义。以此思想研究为背景，作者挑选莱辛的九部代表性小说，一一分析其艺术创作过程中的两大关键：哲学观念与艺术手段之交融。

如此文本分析，论证翔实，有理有节，堪称创新。于是2005年初夏，我接受郭继德老师之请，前往济南山大校园，为丽丽主持答辩。如今她的论文修订完毕，我再度欣然提笔，为之写序，以资勉励。

赵一凡

2006年7月5日于北京

Foreword

In the late 1990s, when I first read *The Golden Notebook* for an English novel class taught by Prof. Betsy Draine in the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the United States, I was awed both by the bulk of the book and the scope of the subject matter. Holding the clumsy 600-odd-page *The Golden Notebook* in my hand and skimming it very quickly, I decided that I did not like this Doris Lessing, but at the same time I had a very uncomfortable feeling about the failure to understand her, for she was ‘the greatest woman writer after Woolf’ according to Prof. Betsy Draine.

Returning to my country a year later, I began to work on a project concerning the history of 20th century British literature. Then I was forced to meet her again. This time I read *The Golden Notebook* very carefully. The variety of her styles and her tactful maneuvering of the structure struck me. Then I went on to read the seemingly ‘simple’ book *The Diaries of Jane Somers*. The more I read her, the more fascinated I became. After the

publication of my book, I decided to choose her as the subject of my dissertation. Due to the lack of reference books at home, I went to Hong Kong University, invited by the Dean of English Department Prof. Elaine Y. L. Ho for a short visit. There with her help, I was admitted into the university library and read a lot of reference books and materials concerning Lessing criticism abroad. I found that she is not only an internationally known British writer, but she has also been the focus of the world critical circle since the publication of her first novel *The Grass is Singing* in 1950. Her varied styles, profound thinking and her novel and insightful ideas are important reasons for her being nominated several times for Nobel Prize in Literature.

At present, most of the Doris Lessing criticism both at home and abroad focuses on her theme and style. Owing to the fact that she joined the Communist Party in her early years, also because of the complicated psychological analysis in her novels and her complimentary comments and articles on Sufism, many critiques are about the influences, on her creation, of Marxism, Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytical theories as well as Sufism. Some critics have noticed the relationship between the form and the themes. However, there is little work on the connection between the form of her novels and her philosophy and no one, so far, has discussed her works from the perspective of the philosophy of life, especially in terms of the theories of the

German philosopher W. Dilthey and French philosopher H. Bergson, not to say the relationship between her own philosophy of life and the forms of her novels. But her view of life is the basis of her creation, which is conveyed through her art. This shows her extraordinary ingenuity as a great literary talent, and also forms the focus of my dissertation, which attempts to offer a new orientation for the current Doris Lessing study both at home and abroad.

Most of Doris Lessing's ideas expressed in her novels are based on the views of the philosophers of life, especially W. Dilthey and H. Bergson. And her views of life and her deep concern with man's life and future and its meaning, which are expressed or implied in her essays, interviews and novels, all can find their roots in the theories of the philosophers of life, who consider it as their responsibility to reveal the nature and meaning of life. Furthermore, she tactfully weaves her own philosophical views of life into her carefully and exquisitely created fictional world and reveals them through the specific forms of her novels. Therefore, everything in her novels, whether it is the structure, time, characters or the arrangement of events, is carefully designed and tactfully considered. Everything has its source and everywhere there is stratagem. They have become part of her philosophical views.

After I took my Ph. D in English literature, I obtained a grant from the government of Shandong Province, so I went to

Cambridge University last year, invited by the English Faculty as a visiting scholar. There in the Faculty library and the university library, I read the most advanced studies concerning Doris Lessing criticism. When I came back, I revised my paper, according to the suggestions from several famous experts both abroad and at home and shaped it into the present book. I hope my work can be of a little help to the further understanding of one of the greatest writers of the last century and I not only fully agree with Prof. Betsy Draine in that Doris Lessing is the greatest woman writer after Woolf, but much more than that, she is one of the greatest writers both in Great Britain and the world.

Lili Wang

Jinan

June 30, 2006

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I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Elaine Y. L. Ho, Dean of English Department of Hong Kong University who offered me a lot of help so that I could have access to the

University Library when I visited Hong Kong University in 2003. Therefore I would like to extend my thanks to the Hong Kong University Library for allowing me to use all the reference resources there.

Cambridge University Library and The Library of English Faculty must also be mentioned as two of the major sources which confirmed me in some concepts and cleared me of some doubts during the formation of the present book.

I am also grateful to Prof. Junju Wang who helped me collect materials while I was in Hong Kong and Tianjuan Zhou who copied books for me in Beijing.

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This book is dedicated to my husband and my son whose love, encouragement and understanding all these years have provided me with a source of inspiration in all my efforts.

Abbreviations

GS	<i>The Grass is Singing</i>
MQ	<i>Martha Quest</i>
PM	<i>A Proper Marriage</i>
RS	<i>A Ripple From the Storm</i>
LL	<i>Landlocked</i>
FGC	<i>The Four-Gated City</i>
GN	<i>The Golden Notebook</i>
DJS	<i>The Diaries of Jane Somers</i>

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Introduction

Doris Lessing is an extraordinary writer. Firstly it is due to the great abundance of her voluminous works and essays. By 1997, she has written about 50 novels, essays and other works. Secondly Lessing's oeuvre encompasses an assortment of genres: science fiction, drama, essays, novels, bildungsroman, autobiography, short stories, and poetry. And she writes in a great variety of styles: realism, modernism, postmodernism, etc. and more often than not we can find all these elements in one book. Thirdly she deals with almost all subject matters of social concern: racial discrimination, war, love, sex, politics, and many other social issues. Fourthly she has a complex background: she was born in Persia and brought up in Africa and at about thirty, she went to England and has lived there ever since then. She is admittedly influenced by Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, R. D. Laing and Jungian theories, Sufism, etc. . So her perspectives are varied. Her extraordinariness earns her an international fame and she has been nominated for Nobel Prize for several years on end.

1. Doris Lessing Criticism

The criticism on her, which began in the 1960s, begins to flood in the following decades in the Western world. And in the 1990s, the scholars at home began to pay attention to her works. To make it a little clearer, I divide these critical studies in the West into several categories according to their focuses and put the Doris Lessing criticism at home at the end of this section.

General studies

The first pioneering book is Dorothy Brewster's *Doris Lessing* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1965). And in 1973, Paul Schlueter published *The Novels of Doris Lessing*, which is a comprehensive description of Lessing's career in terms of its key themes. These two books focus almost exclusively on plot and biographical summary. In 1973, Michael Thorpe published *Doris Lessing*, which is also a general review of Doris Lessing's life and works. In 1977, Mary Ann Singleton discussed the oeuvre in terms of myth, archetype and symbol in *City and the Veld: The Fiction of Doris Lessing* (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press), which enriches Lessing criticism with a study of the novelist's central themes, but Singleton's rather schematic definition of these themes oversimplify the complexity of

Lessing's fiction. In 1979, Roberta Rubenstein published *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms of Consciousness*. This book analyzes Lessing's fictional presentations of forms of consciousness and it is the first systematic analysis of Lessing's existing oeuvre. Rubenstein asserts that 'the common denominator in Lessing's fictional world is the mind: the mind discovering, interpreting, and ultimately shaping its own reality. That function cuts across and brings together all of the other possible entrances into her work'. (7) Mental process is central to Lessing's work, and Rubenstein admirably characterizes the varying representations of consciousness and the psychological frames informing them. Rubenstein's summery and application of Jungian theory provides a particularly useful gloss on the perceptions and relationships of Lessing's characters; her examinations of Sufi thought also offers guideposts for charting the unpredictable world of Lessing's later fiction. While Singleton initiates serious inquiry into Lessing's adaptation of Jung, and several critics have explored Lessing's response to Sufism, Rubenstein's analysis is more comprehensive. Her choice of a clear chronological format that divides her study into three major sections, 'Breaking Down, Breaking Out', 'Breaking Through', and 'Returning to the Center', has the additional merit of articulating Lessing's successive formulation of recurring themes. In 1981, Rotraut Spiegel published *Doris Lessing: The Problem of Alienation and the Form of the Novel*. In