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Cross-Cultural Interchange in Doris Lessing's *The Old Chief Mshlanga* and *The Second Hut*

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The most prolific of British writers and the recipient of more than twenty literary prizes and awards, Doris Lessing remains a prominent figure amongst literary critics and ordinary readers. There is a close connection between Lessing's perceptiveness about political and economic realities, which help her to formulate the Marxist ideas, and her psychological and spiritual insights which provide a stable form to her works. Lessing presents the land, Africa as a source of inspiration and as a source of exploitation in her works which is very visible in the African stories "Old Chief Mshlanga" and "The Second Hut". Though the development of a critical awareness of colonisation is facilitated in the British characters of these African stories, their interaction with the landscape helps them to solve this cultural conflict; but such self identification is missing in Lessing's novel *The Grass is Singing* where the protagonist Mary becomes the prisoner of the imperial commitment. Though Lessing exposes racism as a prominent theme in these two stories, the treatment is different as "Old Chief Mshlanga" shows the deep injustice towards the natives in Southern African society and "The Second Hut" presents the sensitivity and sensibility of a European since it can read as a pro European story. However both the stories demonstrate Lessing's disapproval of political prejudices and colonialism in the Southern African society. Yet, her strong belief in Marxism helps Lessing to think differently from the kind of homogeneous colonial attitude. By creating a link between the environment and the human beings the concept of cross-cultural interchange is fully explored in the African stories of Lessing.

Persian born English novelist, short story writer, essayist, dramatist, poet, nonfiction writer, journalist, and travel writer, Doris Lessing has begun her career in the early 1950s, writing fiction in the realist mode that focused on the theme of racial injustice. Dealing with a range of social and cultural issues, from women's rights and feminism to post-war and post-colonial identity, Lessing pictures the consciousness as shaped by society. In many of her stories she wanted to talk about and expose racism as a prominent theme. Africa, the landscape, its people – both black and white – are the subject matters of a major part of her writing. Lessing says in her introduction to *African Stories*:

I believe that the chief gift from Africa to writers, white and black, is the continent itself, its presence which for some people is like an old fever, latent

always in their blood; or like an old wound throbbing in the bones as the air changes. That is not a place to visit unless one chooses to be an exile ever afterwards from an inexplicable majestic silence lying just over the border of memory or thought. Africa gives you the knowledge that man is a small creature, among other creatures, in a large landscape. (6)

Doris Lessing's two volumes of African Stories, *This Was the Old Chiefs Country* and *The Sun Between Their Feet*, the novels, *The Grass is Singing*, and *The Children of Violence* series, reflect her childhood and adolescence in a district of Rhodesia in the colonial era and they give a vivid picture of the settler society and the African terrain. In *This Was the Old Chiefs Country*, Africa is perceived through the sensibility and sensitivity of an alien colonist. She writes that "while the cruelties of the white man towards the black man are among the heaviest counts in the indictment against humanity, color prejudice is not our original fault, but only one aspect of the atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun". (*This Was the Old Chiefs Country*, Preface 8).

Colonialism is based on the white men's spirit of venture for missionary and farm life through their settlement in the third world countries and harvesting their resources by establishing the imperial authority over the native people. The white men, by enslaving the native men on the lands they have in fact stolen from them. *The Grass is Singing* is a psychological portrayal of the female protagonist, Mary Turner, from her childhood to death, and as a political exposure of the futility and fragility of the colonial society. At the beginning of the story it is said that Mary Turner, the wife of a British farmer, has been killed by a native house boy, that the murderer is caught, and that he has admitted the crime. Lessing, by depicting her protagonist in a particular British colonial setting, suggests that her identity is constructed by the social and behavioral expectations and is developed through her racial role as a white woman colonizer. The novel presents various unwritten laws of colonial Africa which serve as convenient support for an arrogant kind of colonialist attitude. The laws regarding black-white contact like one could not put a black man close to a white woman, even though she was dead, and murdered by him (28). Thus the black becomes the constant, the invariable, the epitome of crime and violence (29); and the whites get special privileges as having behind them the police, the tribunals and the prisons. Even the black police men are not permitted to touch a white man in the pursuit of their duties (13). The whites are so certain about the necessity and rightness of their treatment of the blacks. Moses, stands as a representative of the blacks who even dares to touch her:

He put out his hand reluctantly, loathes to touch her, the sacrosanct white woman, and pushed her by shoulder; she felt her gently propelled across the room towards the bedroom. It was like a nightmare where one is powerless against horror: the touch of this black man's hand on her shoulder filled her with nausea; she had never, not once in her whole life, touched the flesh of a native. (186)

He considers Mary as a representative of the whites. The mistress and servant relationship, a prototype of domination and submission, is undermined by Moses' control of Mary. In the colonial discourse, the black natives, employed whether as domestic servants in feminine sphere or as impoverished agricultural workers, are usually represented as wild, violent, potential rapists, and threatening the white women who need the white men's protection against the natives. A woman who is privileged racially can simultaneously experience gender limitations and class difference within her own category, like in the case of Mary Turner. The novel reflects the author's disapproval of political prejudices and colonialism in the Southern African setting. Mary Turner is not able to grasp her own identity because her identity is compounded by the overpowering colonial narrative in which she is knit. The colonial ruling power dictates that she as an individual has to behave according to the terms imposed by her imperial identity. Though Mary fails in her journey of self-quest, the men and women in Lessing's certain short stories advance towards self-definition and thereby overcome their psychological and cultural obstacles. The girl in "The Old Chief Mshlanga" is such a self defined individual as Africa has given her an opportunity not only to chafe at but also to explore the possibilities for spiritual growth afforded by the perimeters of the social identity.

"The Old Chief Mshlanga" is from the collection *That was the Old Chief's Country*, which is a collection of African stories that reflects Lessing's early career as a writer and most of these stories are centered on her childhood, giving an insight into the life of the author. As Lessing incorporates her African experiences in this story, the reader obtains a detailed image of Africa. Although this story is written over fifty years ago, it can be applied to the everyday life of African people even today. "The Old Chief Mshlanga" depicts the story of the transformation of a little white girl in colonial Africa from innocence to experience. In the beginning of the story the protagonist, a fourteen-year-old girl whose name is not mentioned other than her African nickname Nkosikaas-- chieftainess, is presented as one who indiscretely accepts the racist attitudes conveyed by her parents. Walking over the large farm that had been taken over by whites from the black natives who once lived on it and pushing her way around green aisles, and opening her eyes curiously on a sun-suffused landscape she presumptuously accepts it as her own and tries to familiarise all the nature around her. This is the story that most clearly describes the Africa of the Africans, but at first the girl sees the country through the filter of her European readings. She is not familiar with the landscape in the African veld, because "her books held tales of alien fairies, her rivers ran slow and peaceful, and she knew the shape of the leaves of an ash or an oak" (14). In spite of her attempt to be in communion with the place, she fails to recognize a msasa tree or a thorn since her books bore the tales of alien fairies of England:

She knew the shape of the leaves of an ash or an oak, the names of the little creatures that lived in English streams, when the words 'the veld' meant strangeness, though she could remember nothing else.

Because of this, for many years, it was the veld that seemed unreal; the sun was a foreign sun, and the wind spoke a strange language. (13)

The story happens in a time when there was a gulf between the white people, the settlers and black people, the natives. It is evident that the feelings, emotions and ideas of an individual grow out of life's unique and shared experiences.

On the rare occasions when white children met together they could amuse themselves by hailing a passing native in order to make a buffoon of him; they could set the dogs on him and watch him run; they could tease a small black child as if he were a puppy- save that they would not throw stones and sticks at a dog without a sense of guilt.

Later still, certain questions presented themselves in the child's mind; and because the answers were not easy to accept, they were silenced by an even greater arrogance of manner.

It was even impossible to think of the black people who worked about the house as friends, for if she talked to one of them, her mother would come running anxiously: 'Come away; you mustn't talk to natives.'(15)

As proven by researches, it is through the senses of the parents that a young child perceives and understands the world and the first environment an infant explores is none other than his parent. The adults are necessary not only for the children's biological survival, but also for developing their sense of an objective place. As the girl's individuality in this story is already been shaped by the parents, she begins to look at the natives and the country with sheer indifference.

At the age of fourteen Nkosikaas has moved beyond the security of her childhood and stepped into an unknown world. When the land becomes too small to hold her curiosity, " she carried a gun in the crook of her arm and wandered miles a day, from vlei to vlei, from kopje to kopje, accompanied by two dogs: the dogs and the gun were an armour against fear. Because of them she never felt fear".(14). To her, the land is only a space rather than a place since place refers to how people are aware of or attracted to a certain specific space. When she is walking down the side of a field, a group of three Africans come into her sight and when they are not ready to move aside in respect for her passing, she becomes angry. She strongly believes in her parent's teachings: black people are only servants, who have to do anything she wants. At that time an old man who stops walking and asks:

"Morning, Nkosikaas," he said, using the customary greeting for any time of the day.

'Good morning,' I said. "Where are you going?" My voice was a little truculent.

The old man spoke in his own language, then one of the young men stepped forward politely and said in careful English: 'My Chief travels to see his brothers beyond the river.'

A Chief! I thought, understanding the pride that made the old man stand before me like an equal- more than an equal, for he showed courtesy, and I showed none.

The old man spoke again, wearing dignity like an inherited garment, still standing ten paces off, flanked by his entourage, not looking at me (that would have been rude) but directing his eyes somewhere over my head at the trees.(16)

This is her first encounter with the Chief Mshlanga which is described by the author in the first person point of view and so the reader can easily understand the changes taking place in the young girl by viewing the story through her eyes. The grace and courtesy of the old chief influences Nkosikaas' character. Her arrogance regarding that she is a white and has a power and high standard than black people is gone and a new realization dawns on her. The meeting of the girl with the old chief Mshlanga who so intrigues her that she even visits his kraal or village, changes her attitude towards the locals and later it grows into an easy friendliness that makes her become aware of the immense landscape of Africa. She starts loving the land as a place rather than mere a space. Not long after this incident, she gets an opportunity to read an old explorer's book which contains a phrase: "'Chief Mshlanga's Country'. It went like this: "Our destination was Chief Mshlanga's country, to the north of the river; and it was our desire to ask his permission to prospect for gold in his territory."(16). Later her sole purpose is just to meet the black people to show her greetings, exchange courtesies like a gentle girl. She discovers that the land which she believes it is owned by her father, really belongs to Mshlanga. Nkosikaas realizes that both black and white people can meet gently with tolerance and starts treating the blacks as fellow human beings.

This story portrays the sharp contrast between the respect which is shown by the villagers towards their land, their care for their homes and the whites' attitude towards the land which is dirty and poorly maintained by them. She understands certain facts relating to the land and its natives that highlight the significant cultural differences between her community and the native community of Africa:

When I saw a native approaching, we offered and took greetings; and slowly that other landscape in my mind faded, and my feet struck directly on the African soil, and I saw the shapes of tree and hill clearly, and the black people moved back, as it were, out of my life: it was as if I stood aside to watch a slow intimate dance of landscape and men, a very old dance, whose steps I could not learn.

But I thought: this is my heritage, too; I was bred here; it is my country as well as the black man's country; and there is plenty of room for all of us, without elbowing each other off the pavements and roads.(17).

She realizes that the land belongs to those who nurture it. In fact, for the chief's people, it was not about owning the land, but caring for it.

Only after a long time she comes to realise that the cook who works in her house is the son of the Chief and he will be the boss of the tribe when the old man dies. One day when he goes home, Nkosikaas follows him and arrives at his village the next day, where all the natives live, as if it is their own little town. In the journey, trekking a new path, she experiences the silence of nature which fills a strange fear in her as she is moving without the gun, but at the same time she begins to respect a new nature, a new Africa. She enjoys the beauty of the wide green valley where a small river sparkles and the sight of the water birds darting over rushes gives her a sense of warmth and happiness. But as she walks aimlessly, an unknown fear terrifies her:

It was extraordinary, even humiliating. It was a new fear. For all the years I had walked by myself over this country I had never known a moment's uneasiness; in the beginning because I had been supported by a gun and the dogs, then because I had learnt an easy friendliness for the Africans I might encounter.

I had read of this feeling, how the bigness and silence of Africa, under the ancient sun, grows dense and takes shape in the mind, till even the birds seem to call menacingly, and a deadly spirit comes out of the trees and the rocks. You

move warily, as if your very passing disturbs something old and evil, something dark and big and angry that might suddenly rear and strike from behind. You look at groves of entwined trees, and picture the animals that might be lurking there; you look at the river running slowly, dropping from level to level through the vlei, spreading into pools where at night the buck come to drink, and the crocodiles rise and drag them by their soft noses into underwater caves. Fear possessed me. I found I was turning round and round, because of that shapeless menace behind me that might reach out and take me; I kept glancing at the files of kopjes which, seen from a different angle, seemed to change with every step so that even known landmarks, like a big mountain that had sentinelled my world since I first became conscious of it, showed an unfamiliar sunlit valley among its foothills. I did not know where I was. I was lost. Panic seized me. I found I was spinning round and round, staring anxiously at this tree and that, peering up at the sun which appeared to have moved into an eastern slant, shedding the sad yellow light of sunset. Hours must have passed! I looked at my watch and found that this state of meaningless terror had lasted perhaps ten minutes.(19-20)

The fear that the girl bugs to mind the boy's fear in the story "The Sunrise on the Veld" when he sees the ants devouring the buck: 'as he drew in his breath and pity and terror seized him, the beast fell and the screaming stopped' (p.31). Fear is indeed part of the experience of wildness in many of Lessing's stories. Maria S. Suarez-Lafuente contends that 'The most frequent word in Lessing's African narratives is *fear*' ('The Effect of Nature in Doris Lessing's *African Stories*.'5). The girl's fear causes her to lose bearings. The protagonist is destabilized by changes in the natural surroundings and hence has to readjust her sense of being. This sensible experience with nature shakes her to the core and makes it impossible for her to have the same confidence as she had previously. The sense of alienation which she feels underlines her growing sense of the settler's presence as intrusion. Since place and identity are inextricably bound to one another, she encounters the problem of existence. But she continues the journey and moves towards the village with a quiet but divided mind as she thinks of what she should do when she enters the village and she realizes that a new sensation is also added to the fear, that is, loneliness.

When she gets an opportunity to meet the old chief once again and he welcomes her wholeheartedly. Soon after the second meeting with the Chief, she retraces her steps back to her farm with the hope to build up a homogenous society. "I went slowly homewards, with an empty heart; I had learned that if one cannot call a country to heel like a dog, neither one can dismiss the past with a smile in an easy gush of feeling, saying: I could not help it. I am also a victim."(23). The girl realizes that the white settlers will never be able to appreciate the natives as the inhabitants of the land though she wishes that both black and white people can meet gently with tolerance for one another.

The story ends with a conflict between the narrator's father and the old chief over the issue of twenty goats. Her father's land is trampled down by the goats of Chief Mshlanga's kraal and her father bans them by taking all the goats and sends a message to the Chief that if he wants the goats he must pay for the damage done to the land. The old Chief becomes angry because the goats are the livelihood of his people: "Twenty goats! My people cannot lose twenty goats! We are not rich, like the Nkosi Jordan, to lose twenty goats at once." (23). After a long conversation Nkosikass's father refuses to compromise and the old Chief declares "That means that my people will go hungry when the dry season comes."(24). The son of the old Chief Mshlanga who is his translator and has remained silent for the whole time, now offers his opinion: "My father says: "All this land, this land you call yours, is his land, and belongs to our people"(24). And having made this comment, he walks off into the bush following his father whom the narrator has not seen in her life again. Later it is known that Chief Mshlanga and his people are moved off of their lush and carefully cultivated land, and move towards a proper native place of about two hundreds of miles away. The story ends with the revelation of the girl that the village of the Old Chief has lost its vigour and vitality as there is no life there after their desertion.

Thus the story "The Old Chief Mshlanga" is about the deep injustice in South African society on various levels; personal, social, psychological, economic and legal. Set in Southern

Rhodesia during British rule, the story effectively demonstrates the two tiered system consisting of white dominated colonies and white minority colonies. Another story “The Second Hut” also shares the same theme though there is a slight difference between the attitude of the leading white characters of these two stories.

“The Second Hut” is a story from *This Was the Old Chief's Country* which is set in the fictional area of ‘Zambesia’, a white-settler society in Rhodesia. Major Carruthers, one of the main characters of the story leaves the job in the Arm Force, to quickly adopt the role of a farmer in an African land which he considers as the first test he faces in life as an individual. Though poverty and the wife’s illness disturb his heart, he learns to live a peaceful life. However, “It was an intolerable strain, running the farm and coming back to the neglected house and the problems of food and clothing, and a sick wife who would not get better until he could offer her hope.” (45). Sleeping little since his attention is needed for his wife in the night, he becomes a little bit afraid of his own health. Though his wife, who was a conventional pretty English girl in the past, has never imagined a life in an isolated African farm, she courageously takes life as it is. But, yet, when she is thrown into an alien land where she gets nothing but poverty, she suffers an unknown fear. Still, she starts loving her dark room which gives her solace. She displays her strong place identity through the desire to maintain a personal distinctiveness or uniqueness which helps her as having a specific type of relationship with the environment that is clearly distinct from any other type of relationships. Living in a convenient environment means that a person feels self-adjusted with respect to the daily functioning in that environment. That is, in this story, the lady believes that she is able to carry out her chosen activities in that environment.

The Afrikaner, Van Heerden is introduced in the story as the newly appointed assistant of the Major who is described as a young man with enormous strength. As the Major needs the service of Heerden, he makes every arrangement for the assistant to stay there. He says: “I know the salary is low and the living quarters are bad, even for a single man. I’ve had a patch of bad luck, and I can’t afford more. I’ll quite understand if you refuse” (47). After that Major points to a hut which is used by him as a store house. A detailed description of the place is given in the story:

The thatched hut stood in uncleared bush. Grass grew to the walls and reached up to meet the slanting thatch. Trees mingled their branches overhead. It was round, built of poles and mud and with a stamped dung floor. Inside there was a stale musty smell because of the ants and beetles that had been at the sacks of grain. The one window was boarded over, and it was quite dark. In the confusing shafts of light from the door, a thick sheet of felted spider web showed itself, like a curtain halving the interior, as full of small flies and insects as a butcher-bird’s cache.

Though the Major has arranged this hut to Heerden, he feels sad as he believes that he has not given him a satisfactory living place. If this assistant was not an African but an English man he

would definitely be given at least a corner of Major's home. Having the strongest sense of place, the Major undergoes a deep, unself-conscious immersion with his home and he is not ready to provide a single private place of his home to an African. This thought gains the attention of the readers as it is obvious that one becomes selective when the question of private place arises and who will never encourage strangers in their private places. Usually a stranger will not be allowed to disturb the feeling of 'existential insideness', a situation of and the experience most people know when they are at home in their own community and region.

It is only after a few months, Major finds that the small hut is occupied by Van Heerdan's entire family, wife and their nine children. Feeling angry towards Heerdan for not reporting the arrival of the family, Major begins to shout. Seeing the pathetic condition of the room which is heaped with stained and broken belongings of the family, he becomes quite upset.

Walking through the fields, where the maize was now waving over his head, pale gold with a froth of white, the sharp dead leaves scything crisply against the wind, he could see nothing but that black foetid hut and the pathetic futureless children. That was the lowest he could bring his own children to! He felt moorless, helpless, afraid: his sweat ran cold on him. And he did not hesitate in his mind: driven by fear and anger, he told himself to be hard.

He becomes restless because of the thought of the inconvenience of the room for the entire family. "You can't keep a wife and all those children in such conditions." (52). Major is angry that Van Heerden did not tell him that he is married and has nine children; at first he thinks of dismissing him, but his morals forbid this. Instead, he makes a fateful decision and makes his workers build a second hut for the Van Heerdens. "I must get that well built: and when that is done, I must do the drains, and then... He was thinking, too, that all these things must wait for the second hut" (55). While reading this story Lessing's comment on the role of buildings in shaping the behavior of the occupants is significant. In a 1980 interview, Lessing speculated about "the effects the proportions of buildings have on the people who live in them ... This is not a metaphorical thought at all. This is a practical thought, which I think about more and more." (Minda Bikman, *Doris Lessing: Conversations* 61). Lessing describes the planning and building of her family's house in great detail in her works *Going Home* and *Under My Skin*. In *Going Home* the instructions she gives for the construction of a typical bush house are so detailed that are almost an architect's guide, "To make such a house you choose a flat place, clear it of long grass and trees, and dig a trench two feet deep . . ." (*Going Home* 38). A detailed description of the construction of the hut is given in this story also and Lessing places Major as her representative. In describing the process of building construction in 'The Second Hut', she accentuates its organic qualities:

Long fleshy strips of fibre, rose-colored and apricot and yellow, lay tangled over the grass, and the wounded trees showed startling red gashes around the clearing. Swiftly the poles were laced together with this natural rope, so that when the

frame was complete it showed up against green trees and sky like a slender gleaming white cage, interwoven lightly with rosy-yellow. (59)

Although the native workers respect Major as their boss, they resent Van Heerden very much, as he treats them badly. When the workers are busy with their work Major stands there all day. Quarrels between Van Heerden and the native workers are quite common and Major behaves as a mediator as it is his deep desire to complete the work of the second hut as early as possible. Heerden expresses his gratitude towards Major for the successful completion of the work and on the last day of the work, a ceremonial atmosphere is created and expresses their happiness together. But on the same night, the Major is awakened by the voices from outside of the window:

Outside the backdoor stood his bassboy, holding a hurricane lamp which momentarily blinded Major Carruthers.

‘The hut is on fire.’

Blinking his eyes, he turned to look. Away in the darkness flames were lapping over the trees, outlining branches so that as a gust of wind lifted them patterns of black leaves showed clear and fine against the flowing red light of the fire. The veld was illuminated with a plunging glare. (61).

In addition to the destruction of the new building, Vaan Heerden has lost one of his children . Feeling depressed over these issues, Major returns home and he is suspicious of the bass boy as he has had a strong feeling of hatred towards Heerden:

When the man came Major Carruthers asked immediately: ‘Why did that hut burn?’

The bassboy looked at him straight and said: ‘How should I know?’ Then, after a pause, with guileful innocence: ‘It was the fault of the kitchen, too close to the thatch.’

Major Carruthers glared at him, trying to wear down the straight gaze with his own accusing eyes.

‘That hut must be rebuilt at once. It must be rebuilt today’.

The bassboy seemed to say that it was a matter of indifference to him whether it was rebuilt or not. ‘I’ll go and tell the others’, he said, moving off. (63)

Still, Major knows well that any one of the Africans whom Van Heerden has kicked or shouted at has fired the hut. Everyone including Van Heerden and his wife become normal except the Major. After having a conversation with Heerden, the Major takes a walk as if moving to a clear destination. Major recognizes that he cannot survive in Africa, and that he must admit defeat and return home. When he reaches home, he starts writing a letter in which each word appears as a nail in the coffin of his pride as a man. Soon, he goes to his wife’s room and informs that he has written an application for a job in England. The story ends like this: ‘He watched curiously as

her face crumpled and tears of thankfulness and release ran slowly down her cheeks and soaked the pillow.”(66). At several points she expresses the trace of a wish to return to the place where she can find her roots and acquire self knowledge. Through the characterization of Major and his wife, Lessing seems to suggest that their homeland is not just a location but it can be described as a location created by their own experiences. Unlike "The Old Chief Mshlanga" where she portrays the land in which every human interaction is affected by colonialism and the presence of a subjugated African people, this story "Second Hut" is marked as a pro-European story.

The girl in "The Old Chief Mshlanga" is presented as an innocent girl in the beginning of the story where her transformation from innocence to experience is the theme. Though Major in "Second Hut" seems quite an experienced man in the beginning, his realisation of the importance of his own native land makes him a true self defined individual in the last part of the story. Though Lessing has treated colonialism as a theme in two different ways in these stories, the Natives are not presented as criminals just as in is *The Grass is Singing* but portrayed as the individuals who are even capable of reclaiming their cultural heritage; and the whites are not even presented as neurotic in their treatment of blacks. Though in the beginning the young protagonist who is called as little Nkosikaas, has been presented as a white girl who is brought up without regard for the natives or the land, the girl's transforming attitude towards racism makes the story a different one. She gets a new revelation regarding her people and of the Africans who lived there long before the English came. Later her purpose is to meet more black people to show to them her greetings, exchange courtesies like a gentle girl. Unlike Mary in *The Grass is Singing* who cannot act according to her wish because she is still the prisoner of the cultural commitment as the false basis of white civilization, Nkosikaas, another white representative, realizes that both black and white people can meet gently with tolerance for each other. "The Second Hut" includes the dimensions of conflict between black colonized,(the natives) and white colonizers/colonized (the Dutch /the Boers or Afrikaners) and the white colonizer (the English). Even though the natives and the Africaner, Van Heerden treats badly with each other, both of them have a sensitive attachment towards their master. Though the development of a critical awareness of colonization is facilitated in the British characters of these African stories, their interaction with the African landscape helps them to solve this cultural conflict. The way in which an individual relates to the natural environment is often indicative of the manner that individual will relate to other human beings.

Courage and commitment with relation to Marxist ideology add characteristic flavour to Lessing fiction. She writes of Marxism, the political philosophy that she is deeply influenced by:

Marxism looks at things as a whole and in relation to each other-or tries to. A person who has been influenced by Marxism takes it for granted that an event in Siberia will affect one in Botswana...(Marxism) was the first attempt, for our time, outside the formal religions, at a world mind, a world ethic. It went wrong, could not prevent itself from dividing and sub-dividing, like all other religions,

into smaller and smaller chapels, sects and creeds. But it was an attempt (Preface, *The Golden Notebook*, 14-15)

Lessing's strong belief in Marxism helps her to think differently from the kind of homogeneous colonial attitude. Instead Lessing considers Africa as, "a country also belongs to those who feel at home in it. Perhaps it may be that the love of Africa the country will be strong enough to link people who hate each other now" (*Going Home* 10-11). Hence these stories can never read as the explicit indictment of racist colonial society. Thus it can be assumed that it is Marxism which makes Lessing think about the positivity of the cross- cultural interchange.

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