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| Lessing, Doris (1919-2013) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Doris Lessing was one of the most diverse writers of the twentieth century, distinguishing herself for closely observed natural detail in *The Grass in Singing,* and for formalism and impressionism in early African stories such as ‘Sunrise on the Veld.’ She also excelled with a neo-gothic Frankenstein tale in *The Fifth Child,* with spiritual and psychological journeys in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *Memoirs of a Survivor*, and by shifting into science or space fiction in *The Canopus in Argos: Archives* series.  Few writers have experimented with as many genres and techniques, including the novel, stories, non-fiction, plays, poems, opera libretti, autobiography and even a graphic novel. She was concerned with a great number of issues that she variously examined in her work. They included: Communism; social criticism (*The Sweetist Dream, The Golden Notebook*); Sufism (Indries Shah); the psychology of R. D. Laing; mythology (*Memoirs of a Survivor, Briefing for a Descent into Hell*)*;* archetypes; gender roles(*The Golden Notebook*, *A Man and Two Women*)*;* fairy tales; global warming; andanti-colonialism evolving into postcolonialism (*Mara and Dann and General Dann*)*.* |
| Doris Lessing was one of the most diverse writers of the twentieth century, distinguishing herself for closely observed natural detail in *The Grass in Singing,* and for formalism and impressionism in early African stories such as ‘Sunrise on the Veld.’ She also excelled with a neo-gothic Frankenstein tale in *The Fifth Child,* with spiritual and psychological journeys in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *Memoirs of a Survivor*, and by shifting into science or space fiction in *The Canopus in Argos: Archives* series.  Few writers have experimented with as many genres and techniques, including the novel, stories, non-fiction, plays, poems, opera libretti, autobiography and even a graphic novel. She was concerned with a great number of issues that she variously examined in her work. They included: Communism; social criticism (*The Sweetist Dream, The Golden Notebook*); Sufism (Indries Shah); the psychology of R. D. Laing; mythology (*Memoirs of a Survivor, Briefing for a Descent into Hell*)*;* archetypes; gender roles(*The Golden Notebook*, *A Man and Two Women*)*;* fairy tales; global warming; andanti-colonialism evolving into postcolonialism (*Mara and Dann and General Dann*)*.*  Because Lessing’s sophisticated handling of irony, parody, and points of view is often misunderstood, she has been mistakenly viewed as a traditional rather than a modernist writer, sometimes relying on stereotypical characterisation in works such as *Martha Quest* and *The Cleft.* Her masterpiece, *The Golden Notebook,* displaying the self-reflexiveness, intertextuality, complex structure, parody, and irony associated with such international, anti-fiction postmodernists as Samuel Beckett, Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, John Fowles, Kurt Vonnegut, and Toni Morrison is now apparent as a postmodernist text which furthered the development of modernism. This meta-fictional work not only makes what the reader constructs as the main text into fictional works written by her characters, but opens the ending, as Du Plessis recognises: she writes beyond the ending.  In 2007 Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. She died in her home in 2013. List of Works:Novels *The Grass is Singing* (1950) ‘Children of Violence’ series *Martha Quest* (1952)  *A Proper Marriage* (1954)  *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958)  *The Golden Notebook* (1962; won the Prix Medici 1976)  *Landlocked* (1965)  *The Four-Gated City* (1969)  *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971)  *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973)  *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974)  *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983)  *If the Old Could. . .* (1984)  *The Diaries of Jane Somers* (1984)  *The Good Terrorist* (1985; won the WH Smith Award & the Modello Prize 1986)  *The Fifth Child* (1988)  *Love, Again* (1996)  *Mara and Dann* (1999)  *Ben, In the World* (2000)  *The Sweetest Dream* (2001)  *The Grandmothers* (novellas, 2003)  *The Story of General Dann and Mara’s Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog* (2005)  *The Cleft* (2007)  *Alfred and Emily* (2008) ‘Canopus in Argos: Archives’ series *Re: Colonized Planet 5, Shikasta* (1979)  *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five* (1980)  *The Sirian Experiments* (1981)  *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* (1982)  *Documents Relating to the Sentimental Agents in the Volyen Empire* (1983) Short Stories ‘Five’ (1953; won Somerset Maugham Award)  ‘The Habit of Loving’ (1957)  ‘A Man and Two Women’(1963)  ‘The Black Madonna’ (1966)  ‘Winter in July’(1966)  ‘The Story of a Non-Marrying Man’ (1972)  ‘The Story of a Non-Marrying Man’ (1972; published as *The Temptation of Jack Orkney and Other*  *Stories* in the US) Collected Stories *Collected African Stories* (1972-73)  - *Volume I: This Was the Old Chief’s Country*  - *Volume II The Sun Between Their Feet*  *Volume II The Temptation of Jack Orkney and Other Stories* (1972)  *Volume I To Room Nineteen* (1978)  *Through the Tunnel* (1990)  *The Real Thing: Stories and Sketches* (1992)  *London Observed* (1992)  *Spies I Have Known* (1995)  *The Pit* (1996) Cat tales *Particularly Cats* (1967)  *Particularly Cats. . .and Rufus the Survivor* (1991)  *The Old Age of El Magnifico* (2000)  *On Cats* (combination of above cat books, 2002) Opera (music by Philip Glass) *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* (1988)  *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five* (1997) Poetry *Fourteen Poems* (1959)  *Wolf People* (2002; INPOPA Anthology, also by Robert Twigger and T. H. E. Benson) Nonfiction *Going Home* (1957)  *In Pursuit of English* (1960)  *A Small Personal Voice* (1974)  *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* (1985)  *The Wind Blows Away Our Words* (1987)  *African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe* (1992)  *Under My Skin* (autobiography up to 1949, 1994)  *Walking in the Shade 1949-1962* (autobiography, 1997)  *Time Bites: Views and Reviews* (2004)  *The Doris Lessing Reader* (1989)  *Problems, Myths and Stories* (1999) Plays *Each His Own Wilderness* (Three Plays, 1958)  *Play with a Tiger* (1962)  *The Singing Door* (1973) Graphic novels *Playing the Game* (illustrated by Charlie Adlard, 1995) Film *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1981)  *Two Mothers* (2013) |
| Further reading:  (Drabble)  (DuPlessis)  (E. G. Ingersoll)  (Ingersoll)  (Perrakis, Raschke and Singer)  (Rubenstein)  (Watkins) |