

Katherine Fishburn

*DORIS LESSING: LIFE, WORK, AND CRITICISM*

Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1987. Pp33. \$6.95

Reviewed by Amin Malak

Brief but thorough, *Doris Lessing: Life, Work, and Criticism* represents a lucid, informative introduction to the world of one of the prominent figures in contemporary British fiction. Given that Doris Lessing is a prolific and impressively inventive writer as well as being an articulate defender of the marginalized and the dispossessed, the diverse dimensions of her creative output have not as yet been fully analyzed. Happily, this lack of comprehensive evaluation is partly due to her never ceasing to surprise her readers as she experiments with genres, techniques, and motifs.

Following the format set probably by the editor of the series in which it appears, Katherine Fishburn's book has three major parts: a biography of Lessing, literary biography, and critical response; it also contains a useful chronological list of Lessing's works till *The Good Terrorist* (1985), as well as a selected, annotated bibliography of Lessing's criticism.

While Fishburn argues that Lessing is a socially and politically committed writer, she cautions against the reductive reading of her fiction as ideological pamphleteering. Emphasizing the metafictional innovation of *The Golden Notebook* as Lessing's magnum opus, Fishburn respectfully disagrees with those who regard it "as a kind of feminist casebook or bible" (20).

The book's most illuminating part is its "Critical Response" section, in which Fishburn assuredly and knowledgeably surveys the major critical approaches undertaken so far in studying Lessing's work. At times sketchy and cryptic, Fishburn's swift summaries of the critical and scholarly writings done on Lessing's fiction may nevertheless motivate the reader to seek the original works themselves. Fishburn perceptively concludes her book by charting the new territories that need to be developed in Lessing's criticism: more appreciation of her achievements as a writer of short stories; more analysis of the influences of African culture and Marxism (I might add Sufisim) on her work; and more "attention from poststructuralists, phenomenologists, and Lacanians" (23).

Chenjerai Hove

*BONES*

Harare: Baobab Books, 1988. Pp. 135

Reviewed by Charles Sarvan

Doris Lessing in "The Black Madonna" mocked the cultural aridity of white-ruled Rhodesia. If art requires leisure, then here was a society with plenty of it—since the black majority did the actual, physical work—and yet it neither