

A Study of Feminine Identity and Ecriture Feminine in Selected Novels of Doris Lessing

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Abstract

Building upon Helene Cixous' theory of Ecriture Feminine this thesis studies Doris Lessing's novels, *The Fifth Child*, and *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter* to demonstrate that both novels are examples of Ecriture Feminine where female body and unconscious are employed to create a kind of writing that could be considered feminine and compatible with Cixous' Feminine Ecriture. While *The Fifth Child* is a presentation of female body, *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter* is a dystopian novel which tries to display the female unconscious. *The Fifth Child* is a portrayal of maternity and femininity where by focusing on Harriet's physical and psychological problems during her last pregnancy and her relation to Ben, Lessing brings to the light a less unprecedented image of femininity. Lessing's description of Harriet's body during her pregnancy is what Cixous calls for through inviting female authors to put their body in their writings. In *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter* Lessing demonstrates that the female unconscious is free and apparently not caught in a womb like world. Lessing's dystopian world in this novel is an ice and water covered place in which people cannot see the horizons because water seems to be unlimited. Dann as the agent of patriarchy works to bring back the reason to the primitive world of the novel but

he fails. Some examples of Dann's attempt like finding a library or trying to learn new languages are considered as the patriarchal system's various strategies to gain power. This primitive world, however, is what I understand as a narrative display of Lessing's female mind and thus a female writing. Accordingly, Lessing creates two worlds in her novels that give us enough room and space to come close to the real physical and psychological experiences women might have in their lives.

Key Words: Doris Lessing, Helene Cixous, Ecriture Feminine, The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter; The Fifth Child

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