

Doris Lessing at 100: The Writer's Quest



CONFERENCE | 12-14 SEP 2019 | JULIAN STUDY CENTRE



**LITERATURE,
DRAMA AND
CREATIVE WRITING**

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<http://dorislessing100.org>

Welcome from the Organisers

We are delighted to be hosting the Doris Lessing centenary conference here at the University of East Anglia. Lessing had a special connection with UEA: she appeared six times at our literary festival, and decided to leave her extensive collection of personal papers to the University after her death. These papers, now housed in the British Archive for Contemporary Writing (BACW), tell the story of Lessing's life in startling detail, providing extraordinary insights into her work and into the historical events she lived through. We hope that you will find time during your visit to look at the papers, and we are delighted to present some highlights of these in a centenary exhibition at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art, on campus.

It has been a real honour to read the proposals for papers and panels as they came in—a rich testament to the strength and diversity of Lessing studies across the world, but also a fascinating insight into the range of her fiction, which touches so many different debates and questions in literary studies and beyond. Our programme reflects this range, and we can't wait to hear about the new research that is being done, and to discuss this with you. We are thrilled to have Roberta Rubenstein and Nick Hubble here as our keynote speakers. Patrick French, Lessing's official biographer, has been supportive and encouraging, and we are sorry that he has unavoidably had to withdraw from the conference—we know that he was looking forward to it immensely. We are hugely grateful to Margaret Drabble and Roberta Rubenstein for stepping in to replace him in our Thursday evening 'in conversation' event, alongside Chris Bigsby.

We have been extremely lucky in the support that we have received from UEA and from colleagues and students and we would like to thank some of these here. Generous financial support came from the Modern and Contemporary Research Group in the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at UEA. Sophie Scott in the Humanities Events team and Justine Mann of the BACW have been integral to the event—we would be lost without these brilliant colleagues. Jos Smith, Academic Director of the BACW, has also been immensely helpful. Our team of student helpers has had an enormous input into the conference and the exhibition, and we are delighted that many of them will be around during the conference to help out, chair panels, and point delegates in the right direction. They are Justine Ashford, Paul Cooper, Andrew Kenrick, Jen McDerra, Jacob Rollinson and Georgina Rowley. Many of the PhD students were working on CHASE-funded placements in the British Archive of Contemporary Writing, and we thank CHASE for supporting this work.

We hope that you enjoy the conference and the exhibition. Please don't hesitate to come and find us, or one of the student helpers, if you have any questions.

Nonia Williams and Matthew Taunton

Programme in Outline

Unless otherwise specified, all events are located in the Julian Study Centre (JSC). A campus map can be found in your delegate packs.

Thursday 12th September

1-1.30pm Conference registration and welcome (JSC foyer)

1.30-3pm Parallel panels 1-2 (JSC 1.02/1.03)

3-3.30pm Refreshments provided in foyer

3.30-5pm Parallel panels 3-4 (JSC 1.02/1.03)

6-6.45pm Buffet provided in foyer

6.45pm Please make your way to the Modern Life Café. We ask that delegates wear the burgundy sticker provided in your conference pack for admittance to this evening's event.

7.45pm Margaret Drabble and Roberta Rubenstein in conversation with Chris Bigsby (Modern Life Café, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts)

Friday 13th September

9.30-10.30am Parallel panels 5-6 (JSC 1.02/1.03)

10.30-11am Refreshments provided in foyer

11am-12pm Keynote Lecture: Nick Hubble (Brunel University), "The Ordinarity of the Extraordinary?": The Proletarian Fantastic in Lessing's Fiction of Social Change' (Lecture Theatre JSC 3.02)

12-1pm Lunch provided in foyer

1-2.30pm Parallel panels 7-8 (JSC 1.02/1.03)

2.30-3pm Refreshments provided in foyer

3-4.30pm Parallel panels 9-10 (JSC 1.02/1.03)

4.30-5.30pm Keynote Lecture: Roberta Rubenstein (American University, Washington), 'Doris Lessing's Speculative Histories of Futures Past' (Lecture Theatre JSC 3.02)

5.45-7.15pm Drinks reception, introduction to the Doris Lessing centenary exhibition, and an opportunity to view the exhibits (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts)

7.15pm for 7.30pm Dinner in Modern Life Café (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts)

Saturday 14th September

9.30-11am Parallel panels 11-13 (JSC 1.02/1.03/2.02)

11-11.30am Refreshments provided in foyer

11.30am-1pm Parallel panels 14-15 (JSC 1.02/1.03)

1-2pm Lunch provided in foyer

2-3pm Plenary panel (Lecture Theatre JSC 3.02)

CONFERENCE ENDS

Programme in Full

Abstracts and speaker bios can be found at the end of this programme.

We would be delighted if panellists are happy to deposit their papers with the British Archive for Contemporary Writing at UEA. This would provide a record of the conference, to be archived as part of our Doris Lessing collection. Panellists would of course retain copyright for their work. Please do ask if you have any questions.

Thursday 12th September, 1-1.30pm and 3-3.30pm

Julian Study Centre Foyer

Conference registration

Thursday 12th September, 1.30-3pm

1. Writing Life

JSC 1.02

Chair: Andrew Kenrick (UEA)

Cristina Gamberi (Bologna), 'Doris Lessing's Life Narratives. A Gender and Postcolonial Reading'

Emma Parker (Leeds), 'Doris Lessing: Life Writing After Empire'

Linda Weinhouse (Community College of Baltimore County), 'The Curious Case of *Alfred and Emily* – A Revisionist Look at World War I Nursing'

2. The Planetary Perspective

JSC 1.03

Chair: Jos Smith (UEA)

Rosario Arias (Málaga), 'Re-orienting Doris Lessing towards the Anthropocene'

Matthew Martinez (Birkbeck), 'The Transformative Potential of Doris Lessing's Space Fiction'

Thursday 12th September, 3.30-5pm

3. From the Archives I

JSC 1.02

Chair: Pamela Thurschwell (Sussex)

James Arnett (Tennessee-Chattanooga), 'Doris Lessing and her African Archives'
Jacob Rollinson (UEA), 'Triviality, materiality and synchronicity in the Lessing Archive'
Paul Schlueter (Independent), 'My Fifty Years of Friendship with Lessing'

4. Mind & Voice

JSC 1.03

Chair: Alberto Lázaro (Alcalá)

Anne-Laure Brevet (Cambridge/Independent), 'The reflexive mind in Doris Lessing's
'Landlocked' poem (1946) and novel (1965)'

Md. Mahmudul Hasan (International Islamic University Malaysia), 'African and Islamic:
Lessing's Theory of Literature in "The Small Personal Voice"'

Mark Taylor (National Research University, Moscow), 'Ideas Flow Through Our Minds Like
Water: Doris Lessing and Telepathy'

Thursday 12th September

6-6.45pm

Buffet

JSC Foyer

6.45pm

Please make your way to the Modern Life Café in the Sainsbury Centre, where drinks can be purchased ahead of the 'In Conversation' event. We ask that delegates wear the burgundy sticker provided in your conference pack for admittance to this evening's event.

7.45-9pm

Margaret Drabble and Roberta Rubenstein in Conversation with Chris Bigsby

Modern Life Café, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Friday 13th September, 9.30-10.30am

5. Critical Reappraisals

JSC 1.02

Chair: TBD

Cornelius Collins (Fordham), 'Irony as an Ethical Stance in the Work of Doris Lessing'

Robin Visel (Furman), 'Lessing Criticism in North America: A Semisentennial Reappraisal'

6. The Long Life

JSC 1.03

Chair: Swaty Mitra (Barasat Government College, Kolkata)

Carmen García-Navarro (Almería), 'Exploring Ageing with Doris Lessing: an experience in Higher Education'

Nonia Williams (UEA), 'The Textures and Textualities of Ageing'

Friday 13th September, 11am-12pm

Keynote Lecture: Nick Hubble (Brunel), "The Ordinarity of the Extraordinary?": The Proletarian Fantastic in Lessing's Fiction of Social Change'

Lecture Theatre JSC 3.02

Friday 13th September, 12pm-1pm

Lunch

JSC Foyer

Friday 13th September, 1pm-2.30pm

7. From the Archives II

JSC 1.02

Chair: Jen McDerra (UEA)

Justine Mann (UEA), "'Oh academics": Lessing's resistance to categorisation in her letters at UEA'

Lisa Pulsifer (Harry Ransom Center), "'I can read this, can you?": The Doris Lessing Archive at the Harry Ransom Center'

Pamela Thurschwell (Sussex), 'Falling in Love with Everyone: Lessing's Letters to Smithie at the Keep, University of Sussex'

8. Communism, Politics and the Working Class

JSC 1.03

Chair: Nick Hubble (Brunel)

Matti Ron (UEA), 'Doris Lessing's Problem With Proletarians'

Henry Stead (St Andrews), 'Comrade Doris: Lessing's correspondence with the Foreign Commission of Soviet Writers in the 1950s'

Matthew Taunton (UEA), 'Doris Lessing and the Language of Communism'

Friday 13th September, 3-4.30pm

9. Sufi Encounters

JSC 1.02

Chair: Justine Mann (UEA)

Nile Green (UCLA), 'The Afghan from Shangri-La: Doris Lessing's Sufi Mentor'

Sun Hwa Park (Konkuk), 'Sufism and Lessing's Religious Vision in *The Memoirs of a Survivor*'

Robert Twigger (Independent), 'Doris Lessing and her teacher Idries Shah'

10. Intersections of Genre and Gender

JSC 1.03

Chair: TBD

Daria Forlenza (Independent), 'Doris Lessing's work between fiction and journalism: the case of *The Grass is Singing*'

Swaty Mitra (Barasat Government College, Kolkata), 'Morphed Stories: A Re-reading of *The Diaries of Jane Somers* and *Love, Again*'

Selcuk Senturk (Leicester), 'Rebalancing the Human Relationships in Lessing's Fiction: From Independent Women to Dependent Men'

Friday 13th September, 4.30-5.30pm

Keynote Lecture: Roberta Rubenstein (American University, Washington), 'Doris Lessing's Speculative Histories of Futures Past'

Lecture Theatre JSC 3.02

Friday 13th September

5.45-7.15pm

Drinks reception and curatorial tour of the Doris Lessing at 100 exhibition

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

7.15 for 7.30pm

Dinner

Modern Life Café, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Saturday 14th September, 9.30-11am

11. Lessing in the World

JSC 1.02

Chair: Cornelius Collins (Fordham)

Duncan Large (UEA), 'Lessing in Translation: Towards an International Reception History'

Alberto Lázaro (Alcalá), 'The Reception in Spain of Doris Lessing's Views on the Female Experience'

Emma-Louise Jay (La Colegiatura Colombiana), 'Mistresses and Servants: Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* from an acculturated Colombian perspective'

12. Terrorism and the Home

JSC 1.03

Chair: Robin Visel (Furman)

Kanae Sekino (Leeds), 'Home-making and Women's Work in Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*'

Fiona Tolan (Liverpool John Moores), 'The Politics of Cleaning in Doris Lessing's Fiction: *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* and *The Good Terrorist*'

13. The Golden Notebook

JSC 2.02

Chair: Nonia Williams (UEA)

Arwa Al-Mubaddel (Cardiff), 'Metamodern Oscillation in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*'

Tamara Sampey-Jawad (Independent), 'Writing the road to freedom: a Marxist feminist analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*'

Sandra Singer (Guelph), 'A Look into Lessing's Legacy: Comparing *The Golden Notebook* and Sarah Henstra's *The Red Word*'

Saturday 14th September, 11.30am-1pm

14. Lessing and Post-Humanism

JSC 1.02

Chair: Matt Taunton (UEA)

Claire Hanson (Southampton), 'Lessing, Whitehead and the Posthuman: Canopus in Argos'

Alice Ridout (Algoma), 'Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark*: Eco-anxiety, Solastalgia, and Wellness in the End Times'

Susan Watkins (Leeds Beckett), 'The Chthulucene, the Posthuman and Apocalyptic Time in Doris Lessing's "Ifrik" Novels'

15. Colonialism and Beyond

JSC 1.03

Chair: Duncan Large (UEA)

Elizabeth Jackson (West Indies), 'Doris Lessing and Cosmopolitanism'

Pat Louw (Zululand), 'Layered Colonialism: the Afrikaner in Doris Lessing's African Stories'

Josna Rege (Worcester State), 'Corrective Exile: Mapping Migration and Displacement in Doris Lessing's Oeuvre'

Saturday 14th September, 1-2pm

Lunch

JSC Foyer

Saturday 14th September, 2-3pm

Plenary Discussion

Lecture Theatre JSC 3.02

Chair: Matt Taunton (UEA)

Cornelius Collins (Fordham), Nick Hubble (Brunel), Josna Rege (Worcester State), Alice Ridout (Algoma), Robin Visel (Furman) and Susan Watkins (Leeds Beckett).

CONFERENCE ENDS

Abstracts and Biographies

Arwa Al-Mubbadel (Cardiff University)

Metamodern Oscillation in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (Panel 13)

This paper discusses Jacques Derrida's concept of aporia in relation to attempts at constructing a transcendental female subjectivity in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) through the novel's fragmented and unreliable narration and transgressive storyworlds. The aporias, or moments of self-contradiction, resulting in tensions and paradoxes within the female narrative, ultimately create a series of ontological metalepses in which narrators are given a lower first-level diegetic part in story-telling, confined to the basic frame of the story, or a higher second-level metadiegetic narrative level, which engulfs the basic frame, ultimately leading to a crossing of ontological boundaries. Drawing on Gerard Genette's narrative model of ontological metalepses and Bel and Alber's modification of it, I argue that these ontological crossings involve disruptions in the narrative which supposedly violate the principles of the non-contradiction of ontological domains, yet eventually bolster a collective feminist subjectivity that expands beyond the fictional world and correlates with the women's movement 2nd wave feminism in the United Kingdom during the 1960s. I further argue for a correlation between these aporias in the text and the epiphany culminating in the creation of the golden notebook, which grants feminist agency to the character of Anna Wulf.

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Rosario Arias (University of Málaga, Spain)

Re-orienting Doris Lessing towards the Anthropocene (Panel 2)

Ever since the publication of *The Four-Gated City* (1969), the concluding novel in Doris Lessing's five-novel sequence *Children of Violence*, Lessing manifested a special interest in ecology, environmentalism, and the impact of humanity upon the Earth. Some of her novels portrayed near-future societies and cities which had suffered from an ecological disaster, or were on the brink of collapsing some way or another, in a dystopian fashion, such as *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), *Mara and Dann* (1999), and its sequel, *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog* (2005). Following the lead of David Sergeant and Clare Hanson, in this paper I would like to discuss Lessing's vision of the Anthropocene and to explore its features in her fiction, particularly her treatment of space, which figured prominently decades before the concept solidified at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this, as in many other aspects, Lessing also anticipated pressing issues of today's fiction and culture.

Rosario Arias is Professor of English Literature at the University of Málaga (Spain). She is currently a Board member of the Spanish Association for Anglo-American Studies (AEDEAN) and an active member of Academia Europaea since 2016. Professor Arias has written on the work of contemporary writers (Doris Lessing, Sarah Waters, Hilary Mantel,

Margaret Atwood, Kazuo Ishiguro, Kate Atkinson, among others), and has published a number of articles and book chapters on trauma, haunting and spectrality, and memory in contemporary fiction. She is Principal Investigator of one funded research project, and head of one research group.

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James Arnett (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga)

Doris Lessing and her African Archives (Panel 3)

This paper will present an overview of the various archival locations and objects related to Lessing's long career writing and thinking about Africa. While a respectable amount of her African work has appeared in print, and read voraciously for its anticolonial politics and autocritique, she produced far more work on Africa – and in Africa – than has appeared in discourse. Accordingly, this talk brings to light the range of unpublished African materials situated in her archives at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas-Austin, as well as her donated library and archive at the Harare City Library in Zimbabwe (as ways to flesh out the availability of Lessing's materials everywhere but at UEA!). Both of these locations and holdings will be read against theorizations of African intellectual production from thinkers like Sunstrum, Zeleza, Mbembe, Mignolo and Walsh, and others that allow us to situate Lessing's work, autocritique, and donations in a decolonizing political framework.

James Arnett is a UC Foundation Assistant Professor of English at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. He recently completed a Fulbright in Zimbabwe, where he did on-the-ground research into Lessing's literature and archives (AY 2017-2018) before returning to a Mellon Fellowship at the UT-Austin Harry Ransom Center Archive (Summer 2018) to work on uncovering and contextualizing Doris Lessing's unpublished African materials. Some of this initial research has appeared in *Doris Lessing Studies*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, and *Journal of Screenwriting*. He is at work, at present, on a monograph reconsidering Lessing's complex African politics.

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Anne-Laure Brevet (University of Cambridge/Independent)

The reflexive mind in Doris Lessing's 'Landlocked' poem (1946) and novel (1965) (Panel 4)

Published in 1946 in the daily newspaper New Rhodesia, 'Landlocked' the poem might have been interpreted as merely praising the South African coast-line ("our coasts of colour") of the Southern Rhodesian veld, where the author was "bred of heat...of skies of brass.../ Wanting no other than these." Her "treacherous unease" underlies an suppressed longing for escape ("Making an exile of me") crystallized in the eponymous novel some twenty years later, the fourth volume of *The Children of Violence*. Based on the theoretical framework provided by Bruce F. Kavin in *The Mind of the Novel* I will show that the poem's imagery

echoed in the novel is reflexive inasmuch as “reflexive fiction strives to imitate the structure of the human mind and its territory – to become a limited whole” (Kawin 13). Indeed, through poetic descriptions of nature in Southern Rhodesia, *Martha Quest’s* focalizing consciousness reveals both her physical limitations and moral imprisonment in colonial society. However, her attempts at expanding her point of view with reverse images initiated in the poem through the metaphor of “sea flowers” and the vision of the sky “transmuted” into the sea, not only create an artistic mindscape transcending the character’s landlocked predicament but also provide the template for Lessing’s novelistic technique of mirroring the underside of reality.

Previously teaching at the English Department of the University of West Brittany, Dr Anne-Laure Brevet is currently working for the French Section at the University of Cambridge as an affiliated lecturer, while independently continuing research on Doris Lessing. She wrote the preface and notes to the “Livre de Poche” anthology on Doris Lessing (2011) and is the author of academic articles in French and in English (“The Shadow of the Fifth: Patterns of Exclusion in *The Fifth Child*”). Her current project is a publication based on her doctoral thesis, *Le Sujet et ses reflets dans l’oeuvre romanesque de Doris Lessing*.

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Cornelius Collins (Fordham University)

Irony as an Ethical Stance in the Work of Doris Lessing (Panel 5)

In this paper, I examine the role of dreams and other experimental narrative forms that Doris Lessing employs in *The Golden Notebook* to imagine life after communism and, in a less conscious way, to begin to envision world geopolitics after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I situate the author in the context of a postwar British left in search of a replacement for the lost “dreamworld” of socialist transformation, and I suggest that even at this apocalyptic stage of her thinking, Lessing is able to glimpse the more disordered, violent world of economic globalization that would follow the end of the Cold War.

Cornelius Collins is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the English Department at Fordham University in the Bronx, NY. He received his Ph.D. from Rutgers University and is at work on a manuscript titled *The Fiction of Apocalypse: Globalization Narratives of Collapse and Survival after the Cold War*.

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Daria Forlenza (Independent)

Doris Lessing's work between fiction and journalism: the case of *The Grass Is Singing* (Panel I0)

The research paper I propose here, studies the intersection between literary journalism and fiction in Lessing's work. It is possible to recognise a thin line between reality and verisimilitude in *The Grass Is Singing*, a mixture of reality and fiction which has led the way to "non-creative" fiction which is called literary journalism. In *The Grass Is Singing*, fictionalizing the facts was a very useful way to describe the colonial system. Lessing lived the historical facts that provide the background to her story, and then she created a story around those facts to express her personal perceptions of the world. While she wrote about the racial discrimination in the colonial South Africa, she was a storyteller of her feeling, sharing her memoir regarding real facts in a factionary way. Lessing was engaged in reporting the "real" degree of oppression felt by every character, including the white woman and the black servant, who are both part of the colonial system; thus, she wrote what she had seen as many journalists do. It is possible to conclude that Lessing's work should be evaluated as an extensive and rich conveyor of historical information capable to displace the meaning of fiction; her books are keepers of memory and truth and they explore the complexity of the social system as the journalism does.

Daria Forlenza grew up in Naples, Italy, where she graduated in Political science from the University of Naples "Federico II". She spent three years working on her PhD in Rome, where she currently lives. She carried out her research experience with utmost curiosity, spending part of her PhD in London at the SOAS where she developed the research project on "the ethnic press in the city of Rome and London". Currently, she work both as a high school teacher of law and Italian teacher for foreigners. She is keen on writing and journalism and she has been working as independent scholar.

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Cristina Gamberi (University of Bologna)

Doris Lessing's Life Narratives: A Gender and Postcolonial Reading (Panel I)

Drawing on recent debates on women's autobiographies from a gender and post-colonial perspective, this paper aims to investigate the way in which autobiographical texts of the Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing are able to cast new light on motherhood. By analysing the memoir "Impertinent Daughters" (1984), the first official autobiographical volume *Under My Skin: Volume One to 1949* (1994), and *Alfred and Emily* (2008), this paper aims to consider some of the implications and contradictions that mark these works: how the autobiographical metaphor of the 'impertinent daughter' is used by Lessing to represent herself and explore the mother-daughter relationship; how Lessing brings to the fore maternity in its complicity with colonialism, unveiling how motherhood can be implicated in power relations not only within the family, but also in wider social and political contexts; and how this metaphor unveils the more hidden, and surely more controversial, figure of the 'neglectful mother'. The paper pays particular attention to *Alfred and Emily*, her last book and an experimental life narrative, that despite having received comparatively little

critical attention, marks one of Lessing's most explicit intervention in the genre of life writing. Her return to African childhood memories, the story of her family in the colony of Southern Rhodesia and her recollections of the impact of the British Empire shed new light on the overlapping of genre, gender, class and geo-cultural location: showing how colonialism can impact the very possibility for self-definition where subjectivity is produced, imagined, scripted and resisted through external gendered dominant discourses. While it is indeed true that Lessing's autobiographical accounts inscribe her life within a wider cultural narrative in which she restored the contested past of her country, the hypothesis informing this presentation is that her life accounts succeed in confronting the trauma of the First World War and the impact of colonisation and Empire in Africa through its narrative inquiry into the relationship between mother and daughter.

Cristina Gamberi (PhD Gender Studies and English Literature, University of Naples, IT) is currently working at the University of Bologna within GEMMA, the European Master programme and PhD in Women's and Gender Studies, where she teaches Feminist Theory and Women's Writing. Her research fields include women's literature, memory, and autobiography; fairy tale and its contemporary rewritings; women's poetry; feminist theory and gender studies. Together with essays, articles in international journals and edited collections, her publications in the area of contemporary English literature include: "Impertinent Daughters in Imperial Genealogies: Doris Lessing's Autobiographical Writings" (Cambridge Scholars, 2019); "Colonialism and Resistance: Problems of Perspectives in Doris Lessing's Autobiographical Writings" (University of Trento UP, 2019); Doris Lessing, Il giorno che morì Stalin, (ETS, 2014), "Riflessioni sulle scritture dell'io fra studi di genere e post-coloniali" (La Sapienza UP, 2017). She is the author and translator of *Anne Sexton. La Zavorra dell'eterno* (Crocetti, 2016). She also edited books on gender studies and education *Educare al genere* (Carocci, 2010) and *Retoriche della violenza. Il femminicidio raccontato nei media italiani* (2017).

Carmen García Navarro (University of Almería, Spain)

Exploring Ageing with Doris Lessing: An Experience in Higher Education (Panel 6)

Social and civic competence in Higher Education lies in a critical reflection on knowledge in order to achieve greater levels of equality and social justice. As a lecturer in the Master's degree in English Studies, Professional Prospects and Intercultural Communication (University of Almería, Spain), I set out to use Doris Lessing's literature to offer students a broad vision of a complex social reality. This is the case of the phenomenon of population ageing in developed regions (Lamb, 2014). While the students in this Master's degree cover an extensive curriculum, contemporary world challenges demand constant updating of knowledge frameworks in the different Human and Social Sciences to include voices and contents that have traditionally been absent from academic institutions. Is it possible to build teaching and learning experiences, and to promote critical thinking in the light of Lessing's texts about elderly female characters? The aim is twofold: to increase students' understanding of English contemporary fiction by studying Lessing's writings; and to foster students' greater capacity for analysis and their knowledge of a writer who was strongly committed to the social perception of ageing, and who was a witness (Maslen, 2018) to the events of the 20th century and the early 21st century. By relying on the works by Lamb

(2014), Noffke (2005) and Sperlinger (2017), among others, and taking *The Diaries of Jane Somers* and *Love, Again*, my purpose was to render this relevant social issue more visible, to contribute to the development of critical thinking and to integrate these texts into the canon of contemporary cultural memory.

Carmen García Navarro (PhD Granada, 2001) is a lecturer at the University of Almería, Spain. She teaches English Literature courses to undergraduate and post-graduate students. Her research focuses primarily on contemporary fiction in English by women, trauma, resilience and education.

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Nile Green (UCLA)

The Afghan from Shangri-La: Doris Lessing's Sufi Mentor (Panel 9)

The counterculture of the 1960s saw many Indian gurus rise to prominence, most of them promoting some version of Hindu religiosity. In the crowded spiritual marketplace that quickly developed, one mystical tradition was notably absent: Sufism. With the 1964 publication of the book entitled simply *The Sufis*, Idries Shah filled this gap in the market. Yet in the years before he turned his pen to the topic of Sufism, Shah had served something of a sorcerer's apprenticeship, studying (and writing about) the occult, magic, and even witchcraft. But from the early 1960s, he presented himself as the heir to an ancient lineage of Afghan Sufis. His subsequent books depicted Sufism in universalist and psychological terms, playing down its Islamic foundations to echo the period's preoccupations with 'self-realization' and individualistic spiritual eclecticism. This paper traces Shah's career from late colonial India, where he was born, through his biracial Home Counties childhood and the occult byways of the '50s before his rise to prominence through Lessing and her editor, Tom Maschler. Via multiple pseudonyms and pseudepigraphica, the biographical trail leads to the 1980s, when the Afghan Shangri-La evoked in Shah's many books became embroiled in an anti-Soviet jihad, into whose entangled politics both he and Lessing found themselves drawn. The literary results were Shah's war novel *Kara Kush* and Lessing's book of reportage, *The Wind Blows Away Our Words*.

Nile Green is Professor of History and Ibn Khaldun Endowed Chair in World History at UCLA. A specialist on the Muslims of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and the Indian Ocean, he is the author of around 90 articles and sixteen monographs and edited books, including *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean* (winner of the Middle East Studies Association's Albert Hourani Prize and the Association for Asian Studies' Ananda K. Coomaraswamy book award) and *Sufism: A Global History*. A Guggenheim Fellow, he is currently writing *A Very Short Introduction to Global Islam* and a biography of Idries Shah.

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Clare Hanson (University of Southampton)

Lessing, Whitehead and the Posthuman: Canopus in Argos (Panel 14)

This paper explores the connections between Lessing's critique of scientific materialism in the Canopus in Argos sequence and the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead, which is currently experiencing something of a revival. For Whitehead, modern scientific thought is grounded in the 'bifurcation of nature', that is, the division of the world into two sets of things, one composed of the fundamental constituents of the universe, which are invisible but known to science, and the other being composed of what we are aware of in perception. In this conceptual scheme, the qualities attributed to an underlying physical reality are thought to be primary, while those that are referred to the mind are thought to be secondary, as we cannot be certain that they exist independently of the mind. Like Whitehead, Lessing not only challenges the exclusion of human perception from the category of nature but moves towards a controversial pan-psychism which argues that sentience inheres in all that exists. Drawing on Steven Shaviro's reading of Whitehead, this paper traces the lines of affiliation between Lessing, Whitehead, and aspects of contemporary posthumanism.

Clare Hanson is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Southampton. She is the author and editor of eleven books, including *A Cultural History of Pregnancy* (2004) and *Eugenics, Literature and Culture in Post-war Britain* (2013). Lessing's work is a focal point in her forthcoming *The Secret of Life: Genetics and the Literary Imagination* (2020).

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Md. Mahmudul Hasan (International Islamic University Malaysia)

African and Islamic: Lessing's Theory of Literature in "The Small Personal Voice" (Panel 4)

In "The Small Personal Voice" (1957), Doris Lessing celebrates novels that are based on nineteenth-century realism and writerly committedness and laments its absence in literary production. She adheres to a theory of literature that emanates from an understanding of good and evil and has an instructive function. In this respect, she admires nineteenth-century realist novelists and commends their efforts to document the social abuses of the period and thus to right the wrongs committed by exploitative elements in society. Despite the debate whether or not later in her works Lessing held true to the position detailed so powerfully in "The Small Personal Voice", the essay is often considered her manifesto and synonymous with her name. Paraphrasing Wordsworth that "the novelist talks, as an individual to individuals, in a small personal voice" (Lessing 25), and given the urgency of morally and socially edifying literary texts, she vaticinates that readers will "feel again a need for the small personal voice." Based on this background, my paper will elaborate on Lessing's theory of literature as a counter to the overarching philosophy of the "art for art's sake" movement and will establish resonances of her theory with those of African and Islamic views of literature.

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from the University of Portsmouth (2007) and had a postdoctoral stint at the University of Heidelberg (2009-10). He has edited (with Mohammad A. Quayum) *A Feminist Foremother: Critical Essays on Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* (2017) and (with Raudah Yunus) *Displaced & Forgotten: Memoirs of Refugees* (2017). He has published with Brill, IIIT, IIUM, Routledge, SAGE, Orient BlackSwan and other presses. One of his latest published works is “Intimate revelations: Conversations among ‘evil’ women in Rokeya’s Padmarag” (2019).

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Elizabeth Jackson (University of the West Indies – Trinidad campus)

Doris Lessing and Cosmopolitanism (Panel 15)

Understanding cosmopolitanism as a flexible approach to identity which reflects the attitudes and lived experiences of an increasing number of people in a world characterized by mass migration and mobility, this paper examines Doris Lessing’s relationship to cosmopolitanism from several perspectives. The first and most obvious consideration is the ways in which Lessing’s personal background challenges conventional notions of identity, belonging and citizenship. However, I argue that Lessing’s cosmopolitanism goes well beyond such obvious considerations as the settings of her fictional works. Crucially, Lessing’s cosmopolitan vision pervades all of her work, and it is explicitly articulated in many of her nonfictional and quasi-fictional writings. For instance, in *In Pursuit of the English* (1960), she reveals a deep understanding of the unstable and invented nature of national identity at least two decades before Benedict Anderson famously described the nation as an “imagined community”. In *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* (1987) she writes about the ways in which group identities have been manipulated for political ends, and in other writings she indicates a simultaneous commitment to local particularities and to a global conception of humanity. In these respects, as in so many others, Lessing was ahead of her time. Particularly in this era of resurgent nationalisms in many parts of the world, Lessing’s consistent emphasis on the flexible nature and global interconnectedness of all cultural identities remains highly relevant.

Elizabeth Jackson is a Senior Lecturer in Literatures in English at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. Having earned her PhD from Goldsmiths (University of London) in 2007, she is the author of *Feminism and Contemporary Indian Women’s Writing* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010) and *Muslim Indian Women Writing in English: Class Privilege, Gender Disadvantage, Minority Status* (Peter Lang, 2017). Most of her journal articles have focused on issues of gender and cultural identity, particularly in the literatures of South Asia and its diaspora. Her latest research project is on representations of cosmopolitan identities in literary fiction.

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Emma-Louise Jay (La Colegiatura Colombiana, Colombia)

Mistresses and Servants: Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* from an acculturated Colombian perspective (Panel I I)

This paper explores how Lessing's novel *The Grass is Singing* (1950) might be received and read from a Colombian immigrant's perspective. Lessing's novel seeks to offer an explanation to the question posed by a Southern Rhodesian investigative journalist 'why was white farmer's wife Mary Turner found murdered on her verandah apparently by her male black domestic servant despite "no motive {having} been discovered"'. An assumption is made by the journalist that "he was in search of valuables", however Lessing's narrative attempts to provide an alternative, and ultimately politically and culturally deeper answer as to the reasons which culminate in the death of lead character Mary. Reader responses to *The Grass is Singing* have tended to focus on the themes presented by Lessing as particularly, if not specifically products of British colonial political strategy in (southern) Africa and the individual nation states within it. This has perhaps resulted in Lessing's work receiving insufficient attention in Latin America and indeed in Colombia, where I live.

To fully understand the struggle for sustainable peace in a post-colonial country such as Colombia, we must understand the lives and relationships between landowners and domestic workers / laborers in those societies. These relationships represent a kind of relationship introduced and established in colonial times and one which has barely changed despite decolonization and the freeing of enslaved people(s). Reflecting on the Reception Theory of Jamaican cultural theorist Stuart Hall and my lived-experience as a white female immigrant to Colombia, I consider the psychological tensions played out in these relationships. My paper seeks to explore the similarities and differences between servant: mistress relationships in present-day Colombia and those presented by Lessing in *The Grass is Singing*, by considering the way(s) nationality, ethnicity, gender and traditional roles are negotiated by individuals in both colonial Southern Rhodesia, and post-colonial Colombia. How did newcomers to colonial societies negotiate their role? Has this changed in post-colonial societies? How are colonial gender and race-based roles repeated and transmitted between persons in post-colonial societies such as Colombia? The implications of these relationships are wide-ranging in terms of gender and ethnicity-based inequalities in employment, land rights, healthcare, and access to social justice, and indeed underpin complex conscious and unconscious emotional sentiments which may lead to fragile security situations and eventually social change and even revolution.

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Duncan Large (University of East Anglia)

Lessing in Translation: Towards an International Reception History (Panel I I)

After Lessing's death, UEA acquired not only the correspondence and other papers that now form a key part of the British Archive for Contemporary Writing, but also a large number of translations of her works, housed in the British Centre for Literary Translation. Drawing on the Doris Lessing Translation Archive at BCLT (which comprises 878 volumes,

translated into 34 languages), this paper will address some aspects of the history of Lessing's international reception. It will consider the speed with which her reputation spread in different directions, and the relative popularity of different works in different language regions. By way of a case study the paper will focus on the translation history of Lessing's first novel, *The Grass is Singing* (1950). Already by 1953 the novel was available in French, German, Italian and Dutch, but its first translations (the first book-length translations of any of Lessing's works) were into a clutch of Scandinavian languages: Swedish, Norwegian (both 1951) and Danish (1952) – indeed, in this context it is illuminating to consider the Nobel Prize award as an aspect of Lessing's lengthy Scandinavian reception history. Since the Nobel award the number of translations has, understandably, grown further, and by now *The Grass is Singing* has been translated into no fewer than 27 languages, but by 2007 the book was already available in 19 of them. The paper will conclude by considering the extent to which this translation history is typical of Lessing's work.

Duncan Large is Professor of European Literature and Translation at UEA, and Academic Director of the British Centre for Literary Translation. He researches widely in modern German literature and thought (especially the work of Friedrich Nietzsche), in comparative literature and translation studies. A member of the Executive Committee of the UK Translators Association, Duncan chairs the PETRA-E Network of European institutions dedicated to the education and training of literary translators.

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Alberto Lázaro (University of Alcalá)

The Reception in Spain of Doris Lessing's Views on the Female Experience (Panel II)

While Doris Lessing openly dismissed the label of feminist, critics have seen her as a feminist icon whose work often speaks of independent women's sexuality and questions contemporary accepted views about their relationships with men. Announcing the Nobel award, the Swedish Academy described her as "that epicist of the female experience [...]". Indeed, one of her most celebrated novels was *The Golden Notebook* (1962), a convincing portrait of a strong woman, Anna Wulf, leading an independent life and searching for her personal, political and professional identity. This groundbreaking novel soon attracted the attention of some foreign publishing houses and translators. In 1964, Italian and Swedish translations came out. However, the French and the German versions had to wait for a few years; they did not appear until 1976 and 1978 respectively. One wonders how this book fared in Spain, where a strict censorship system was enforced until the end of Franco's regime in 1975. A look at the Spanish library catalogue shows that the first Spanish translation of *The Golden Notebook* did not appear until 1978. Did this controversial novel clash with the traditional patriarchal views of censors from a totalitarian regime that supported the traditional values of the Catholic Church? Was there a feminist movement in Spain that welcomed Lessing's novel? This paper describes the information found in censorship office files and library catalogues to discuss the reception of *The Golden Notebook* in Spain, both during and after Franco's regime.

Alberto Lázaro is Professor of English Literature at the University of Alcalá, Spain, where he has been teaching English literature since 1987. He has done extensive research on British fiction, devoting particular attention to censorship and translation. Over the last few years, he published *H. G. Wells en España* (2004), *Censorship across Borders* (2011, coedited with Catherine O’Leary) and edited the Spanish translation of Claude Cockburn’s *Reporter in Spain* (2012). He is also the author of many articles and essays on censorship and the reception of British authors in Spain, among them the essays on Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and H. G. Wells in three volumes of “The Reception of British Authors in Europe” series, published by Continuum.

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Pat Louw (University of Zululand)

Layered Colonialism: the Afrikaner in Doris Lessing’s African Stories (Panel 15)

Doris Lessing’s African Stories are set in the 1930s in Colonial Rhodesia. Historically, this follows about thirty years after the Anglo-Boer War, or South African war, when the Afrikaners in the two South African Republics, were defeated by the British Imperialist forces. Some Afrikaners who lost their farms during that war were then landless, and moved to Rhodesia in search of land or employment. This put them into a somewhat ambivalent position with regard to the British settlers and the indigenous population, being in a sense both colonised and potentially the coloniser. I will be exploring Lessing’s attitude to these Afrikaners as a subgroup of settler society in three of her African Stories, bringing out the different social forces which bring the two groups together and yet keep them apart. Although Lessing is writing about a colonial period in history, she uses a sharply critical postcolonial focus in her writing to undermine some of the values of settler society, and her portrayal of the Afrikaner plays a role in this as it brings out the complexities of the colonial situation.

Pat Louw taught English at the University of Zululand and did her Masters degree on Doris Lessing’s African Stories. She has attended Doris Lessing conferences in New Orleans and Leeds. She has a chapter in *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings*, and another in *Doris Lessing, Interrogating the Times*. Her later research has taken the direction of Ecocriticism, Place-based Literary criticism and Animal Studies. Her most recent publication is “Wildness and colonialism in “The Story of Two Dogs” by Doris Lessing. Pat is a Research Associate of the University of Zululand and lives in Scarborough in the Western Cape.

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Justine Mann (British Archive for Contemporary Writing, University of East Anglia)

“Oh academics”: Lessing's resistance to categorisation in her letters at UEA (Panel 7)

Lessing fiercely resisted interpretation and categorisation by some academics and yet she chose to bequeath her vast archive of personal diaries and correspondence to an academic institution: the University of East Anglia (UEA). This paper will introduce the significant archive holdings at UEA's British Archive for Contemporary Writing including highlights of Lessing's exchanges with academics. Lessing also battled with journalists, publishers and a biographer. The paper will question the origins of this resistance. It will examine the challenges inherent in selecting and interpreting material for the centenary exhibition, *Doris Lessing 100*, and how these were compounded when imagining her likely response.

Justine Mann is Archivist for the British Archive for Contemporary Writing. She is a graduate of English Literature (St. Martin's College, Lancaster) and holds a Masters in Information Science (City University, London) and a further Masters in Creative Writing, Prose Fiction (University of East Anglia). She has worked in libraries and archives across a thirty-year career.

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Matthew Martinez (Birkbeck, University of London)

The Transformative Potential of Doris Lessing's Space Fiction (Panel 2)

From the publication of *The Grass is Singing* in 1950 through the turn of the 21st century, Doris Lessing has been a profoundly influential, though at times, controversial, writer. Her tendency to experiment with form and a refusal to adhere to tradition are fundamental facets of Lessing's writings, articulated in myriad ways throughout her oeuvre. Taken together, these are components that engender her writing as a powerful and cutting critique. In this talk, I am particularly interested in exploring how Lessing's work might be understood to break with conventions through imaginative and experimental writing that is always attempting to invite the reader to break down boundaries of thought and disturb the status quo. Based on a close reading of two key texts – *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* and *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* – I discuss how I understand the disruptive and resistant aspects of Lessing's writing to embody fiction's capacity to inspire alternative ways of writing and thinking. By engaging with her “space fiction”, I trace her turn to extra-terrestrial settings – as a ‘novelist from Mars’ – to understand how this otherworldly perspective enables Lessing to provide incisive critiques of institutionalised systems and accepted ways of viewing the world. Specifically, I focus on Lessing's experimentation with form as well as the operation of her metaphorical and allegorical writing as a ‘wordless statement’ addressing the limitations to that which can be written. Thus, I argue for the potential of such writing to offer a novel perspective to, or transform, the reader's perception in some way.

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Swaty Mitra (Barasat Government College, Kolkata)

Morphed Stories: A Re-reading of *The Diaries of Jane Somers* and *Love, Again* (Panel 10)

Doris Lessing's experiments with the novel all through her career resulted in her inventing new forms, transforming existing ones and foregrounding the marginalised, undervalued forms. In two of her later novels *The Diaries of Jane Somers* and *Love, Again*, she counters the linear and the conventional by constantly shifting between the diary and the romance, complicating both the forms in the process. Lessing demonstrates how the linear may be replaced, not only with a breakdown, as demonstrated in *The Golden Notebook*, but through other more fascinating narrative strategies. In these two texts, she makes use of the hypertextual and the palimpsestuous, methods which gain predominance in later and more contemporary times of computer narratives. Through these methods, Lessing challenges both the spatial and temporal axes of the reading process. The reader has to negotiate the continuous change of form, character and narrator, and the reading process becomes akin to negotiating morphing images. This paper draws attention to Lessing's pioneering use of multivalent narrative methods which challenge conventional notions of narrator, narratee, character and form and re-establishes the novel upon variable axes.

Swaty Mitra has been working on Doris Lessing's novels since 1999 for both her M.Phil and Ph.D degrees and has been impressed by Lessing's critical view of her world. Swaty has been particularly drawn to Lessing's surreptitious experiments with the novel form, as she is hugely interested in multivalent narrative texts and forms. She is also very interested in cinema and the intersection of the literary and the cinematic. Swaty is currently teaching English Literature to undergraduate students in Barasat Government College, situated in the fringes of Kolkata. This is the fourth college in Swaty's twenty-one years of teaching. She is a member of the Doris Lessing Society, which supported her through her long struggle with the PhD.

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Sun Hwa Park (Konkuk University, South Korea)

Sufism and Lessing's Religious Vision in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (Panel 9)

This paper aims to examine Doris Lessing's religious vision of Sufism in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* by focusing on the possibility of saving our life and the improvement of our civilization Lessing imagines. In *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, the narrator, who survives the catastrophe of the world, comes and goes through the dissolving wall through which she sees other scenes, that is, personal and impersonal aspects of our lives. With her experiences of the two different scenes, the narrator first shows various aspects of our innate cruelty: for instance, a group of gangs tries to kill animals without any proper reasons and, more surprisingly, a four-year-old boy attempts to kill a neighbour for food. Later, the narrator seeks for the balance between the two scenes through building up her capacity for meditation. This message is based on the Sufi motto of 'Love each other,' which is embodied in the last scene when the narrator embraces and carries all the people, whether good or bad, into a new world after encountering "the One" (213) in *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. Here, I argue the new world introduced by the narrator implies that Lessing believes there

is a place to which we could travel consciously or unconsciously. The world behind the wall is a metaphor of the narrator's inner life where the narrator goes through her self-discovery or self-realization. So, it is noteworthy to understand Lessing's Sufi idea that we can make use of our potential to help improve the place where we are living.

Sun Hwa Park is Associate Professor of Liberal Arts College at Konkuk University in South Korea. She has worked and written extensively on Doris Lessing who the Nobel Prize in Literature 2007 was awarded to; these days she has been interested in Man-Booker Prize winning novels. She is the author of a variety of papers, including "Recollection of Memory and Stupidity of Love in Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*" (2019), "The (Man)Booker Prize and Popularization of English Fiction: A. S. Byatt's *Possession*" (2018), "The Moral Agent and the Moral Patient in Doris Lessing's *The Old Woman and Her Cat*" (2017), "Prehistoric and Roman View of Women in *The Cleft: Male Historian's Rewriting the History of Female Community*" (2016), "(Man)Booker Prize and Popularization of Fiction by Film Adaptation: Focusing on *Life of Pi*" (2016), and "A Hiatus in Doris Lessing's Memory of Her Father" (2015).

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Emma Parker (University of Leeds)

Doris Lessing: Life Writing After Empire (Panel I)

In this paper I discuss Doris Lessing's autobiographical non-fiction as 'life writing after empire', examining how several of her memoirs and autobiographies—*Going Home* (1957), *Under My Skin* (1994) and *Alfred and Emily* (2008)—reflect a series of complex entanglements with the colonial past. Despite her critical stance towards white settler communities, which she repeatedly compared to a 'mass disease', Lessing's life writing seems compelled to return, many times over, to the Rhodesian veld of her childhood. There is a tense, contradictory relationship between Lessing's subject position(s) within these texts; created by a 'myth country' to which she was unable to return, she nevertheless remains fiercely critical of the white Rhodesian society in which she was raised. In the latest of Lessing's literary afterlives, Lara Feigel's *Free Woman* (2018), Feigel also explores the relationship between Lessing and her homeland; by undergoing her own pilgrimage to Zimbabwe Feigel further highlights, through her dual role as critic and life writer, the vital connections between Lessing and her childhood home. Building upon recent scholarship at the intersection of postcolonial and life writing studies (Moore-Gilbert 2009, Whitlock 2015) I suggest that the legacies of empire are manifest in both the content and the form of Lessing's experimental life-writing. By first tracing the descriptions of South Rhodesia in *Going Home* and *Under My Skin* I outline how, in her final semi-fictionalised memoir *Alfred and Emily*, Lessing developed a practice that I term 'speculative life writing'. In so doing she pursues a counterfactual life narrative which returns to, rather than escapes from, the African landscape of her childhood. My readings of these individual texts views them as a networked constellation which all examine, and are inescapably bound to, Lessing's early life in Southern Rhodesia. My reading of Lessing's 'life writing after empire' therefore interrogates both the post-imperial nature of her non-fiction and examines the particular strategies through which her memoirs and autobiographies remain in pursuit of the colonial past.

Emma Parker is a PhD candidate at the University of Leeds, whose research focusses on colonial and postcolonial life writing. She has published articles and reviews in *Auto/Biography Studies*, *Doris Lessing Studies*, *Wasafiri*, *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writing*, and is a contributor to the forthcoming edited collection *Documenting Trauma in Comics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). In December 2018 she co-organised the international conference *After Empire: The Contested Histories of Migration, Race and Decolonisation in Modern Britain* at the University of Leeds. She was research assistant on the AHRC project 'Mobilising Multidirectional Memory in South Africa' (2017/18), where she organised symposia and workshops on life writing at the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, South Africa. Her doctoral research is funded by the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities (AHRC).

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Lisa Pulsifer (Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas)

“I can read this, can you?”: The Doris Lessing Archive at the Harry Ransom Center (Panel 7)

Over 78 boxes of Doris Lessing materials await researchers when they visit the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, TX. The collections illuminate both personal and professional activities of the author and document her life through artwork, clippings, correspondence, proofs, manuscripts, notes, photographs, scripts, screenplays, and sound recordings. Lisa Pulsifer, Head of Public Programs and Education, will discuss the strengths of the collections at the Ransom Center and bring light to events and exhibitions that are working to keep Lessing in the public eye.

Lisa Pulsifer joined the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas in 2007 and currently serves as Head of Public Programs and Education. She oversees educational programming for public, university, and K-12 audiences, manages public events and gallery activities, and provides support for visitor engagement. Lisa received a Master of Arts degree with a focus in Museum Education from the University of Texas, and her research interests include 19th century museology and inclusive gallery practices. Her work in programming emphasizes the use of primary sources to encourage deeper engagement and richer discussions of works from the Ransom Center collections.

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Josna Rege (Worcester State University)

“Corrective Exile”: Mapping Migration and Displacement in Doris Lessing’s Oeuvre

At the peaceful, post-apocalyptic close of *Shikasta*, at the end of "the century of destruction," survivors are living in makeshift tents in the mountains, “washed by a soft, singing wind” and building a new town to an ancient design. At the end of *The Marriages of Zones Three, Four, and Five*, Queen Al•lth of Zone Three is unable to return home to her

deadeningly comfortable realm because she has changed so much as to disrupt the settled order there. She must leave behind everything she knows and journey on alone into the rarefied air of Zone Two. *The Sirian Experiments* ends with the bureaucrat Ambien II having been placed in “corrective exile” after a shift in perspective has led her to produce a highly unconventional account of her hitherto exemplary government service on the planet Rohanda (*Shikasta*). The past century of destruction has been marked by displacement, unprecedented human migrations driven by war, colonialism, ethnic cleansing, economic collapse, and climate crisis. Displacement, migration, and exile have been persistent themes for Doris Lessing, a child of migrants and a migrant herself, throughout the six decades between her first and last-published work. *Children of Violence*, five volumes published between 1952 and 1968, culminating in the expansive, visionary novel, *The Four-Gated City* (1969), followed Martha Quest and her generation, born in the aftermath of a world war and coming of age in the throes of another. A decade later *Canopus in Argos: Archives*, five novels published in quick succession between 1979 and 1983, beginning with her tour de force, *Shikasta* (1979), take on nothing less than the story of human development on this planet. Migration and exile are also central to a pair of novels published around the turn of the 21st Century that chart the travels of two siblings as climate refugees: *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999), and *The Story of General Dann and Mara’s Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog* (2005). In my paper, focusing on the cornerstone novels of her two quintets but drawing selectively from the late works, I propose to map Lessing’s perspectives on migration and displacement over time, asking when they shuttle between a national and a transnational framework and when they push through to a different formulation altogether. In either case, by challenging settled perspectives, they continually place the reader in corrective exile.

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Alice Ridout (Algoma University)

Doris Lessing’s *The Summer Before the Dark*: Eco-anxiety, Solastalgia, and Wellness in the End Times (Panel 14)

To read Doris Lessing’s *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), the story of a depressed housewife, Kate Brown, coming to terms with her grown up family “[w]ho no longer need me, and who find me intolerable” (99) in its historical context would, of course, involve referring to Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and identifying Kate Brown’s situation as the “problem that has no name.” To read *The Summer Before the Dark* at this conference marking the centenary of Lessing’s birth is an invitation to read this novel in a longer view from our contemporary moment here in 2019. This paper will argue that, while Friedan’s work and Lessing’s personal horror at the potential restrictions of marriage provide helpful historical contexts for *The Summer Before the Dark*, the novel is useful and relevant to us now through the ways in which it looks forward to what have been recently termed “eco-anxiety” (Dickinson 2008; Albrecht 2011), “solastalgia” (Albrecht 2006), and “the wellness syndrome” (Cederström and Spicer 2015). That Kate feels she is living in end times is evident immediately at the start of the novel from the fact that she is waiting for a kettle to boil over a camp fire due to a power cut. Lessing informs us that Kate is about to

experience a summer that will be a “shortened, heightened, concentrated time” and will turn out to be the summer “she grew old” (11). *The Summer Before the Dark* follows Kate negotiating and resisting what Cederström and Spicer have identified as the “wellness imperative,” through a strange illness, two unusual relationships—a failed love affair with a younger man and a friendship with a young female roommate—until she returns home with every possibility that her solastagia will continue. The home she returns to has an “over-exposed, a bit limp” garden suffering from drought because the tenants did not water it (145) and her maternal role in it is being competently carried out by her daughter, Eileen. The reader is left wondering if a return home will ever be fully possible for Kate and whether her wellness strategies are adequate to her eco- and maternal anxiety.

Alice Ridout is Associate Professor of English at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada. She is the author of *Contemporary Women Writers Look Back: From Irony to Nostalgia* (Continuum, 2011) and co-editor of *Doris Lessing’s The Golden Notebook After Fifty* (Palgrave, 2015) and *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings* (Continuum, 2009). She is Past President of the Doris Lessing Society (2012-15) and Project Lead for the community-outreach initiative, Algoma Reads.

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Jacob Rollinson (University of East Anglia)

Triviality, materiality and synchronicity in the Lessing Archive (Panel 3)

While cataloguing and describing the correspondence of Doris Lessing for the BACW, I have nurtured the idea of a second, imaginary archive reserved for those items whose triviality seemingly disqualifies them from scholarly use, but which stand out as examples of the ephemerality of lived experience, or offer the illusion of some occult organising principle operating within the minutiae of the traces we leave behind. I present the items from Lessing’s legacy that I would place inside this archive of trivial synchronicities.

Matti Ron (University of East Anglia)

Doris Lessing’s Problem With Proletarians (Panel 8)

Much has been written on the arc of Doris Lessing’s political development: from her relationship to Communism and women’s liberation to how her politics would be shaped by psychoanalytic and Sufist influences. Less discussed, however, is Doris Lessing’s relationship to class and, more specifically, the way in which working-class people are imagined and engaged with in her novels. Though inarguably one of the most prolific and accomplished authors of the twentieth century, Lessing’s engagement with class in her post-Communist phase—the novels *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) and *Re: Colonised Planet 5, Shikasta* (1979), in particular—can often be somewhat awkward, relying on alternating strategies of infantilisation and nostalgia, at times veering between an overtly patronising disdain for or essentialised exaltation of working-class individuals not to mention their anxious suppression as a collective subject altogether. While Lessing’s problematic approach to class can neither be reduced to nor entirely disconnected from her post-1956

break with the Communist Party, it must also be understood alongside another facet of postwar British society, which it both predated yet nonetheless fed into: namely, the increasingly diffuse sense of British declinism, itself informed in significant part in response to an increasingly assertive working class whose demands had begun to rupture the limits of the postwar political consensus. Lessing's problem with proletarians, like those of British declinism more generally, can thus be construed as the manifestation of anxieties around a less deferential working class upsetting formerly rigid social hierarchies.

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Tamara Sampey-Jawad (Independent)

Writing the road to freedom: a Marxist feminist analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (Panel 13)

Focusing primarily on female exploitation under capitalism, this paper shall be arguing that Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* serves as an exemplary text from which to rethink identity. The novel's emphasis on fragmentation and alienation as manifested through the various notebooks highlights the multifaceted nature of identity – Anna Wulf's identity as a woman, a child of empire and, crucially, a writer. Using Rosemary Hennessy's delineation of outlawed needs in capitalism, I will be positing writing as an outlawed need based on the exploitation of reproductive work. How does the unique form of *The Golden Notebook* help to highlight the myriad ways in which oppression functions? How can writing be used as a tool for emancipation? And how do we unite a group, such as women, to liberate themselves when the category itself is fraught with instability? Focusing on the works of Hennessy and Linda Zerilli, I shall be arguing that it is this very instability that should be harnessed in the bid for emancipation. Taking Hannah Arendt's notion of freedom as non-sovereignty, I will argue that writing allows for identities to be forged in new and unforeseeable directions – a project that is uniquely evinced in *The Golden Notebook*.

Tamara Sampey-Jawad is the associate publisher of Fitzcarraldo Editions, an independent press based in London. She read English Literature at the University of Sussex, where she also earned a Masters in Critical Theory, focusing on the work of the poet Denise Riley.

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Paul Schlueter (Independent)

My 50 Years of Friendship with Doris Lessing (Panel 2)

My comments provide a sketch of my 50 years of friendship with Doris Lessing. We began our relationship with a single letter, written when I was a 30-year-old doctoral candidate at Southern Illinois University and she a 44-year-old writer about to be overwhelmed by the reception of what has proven to be her best-loved novel, *The Golden Notebook*. We were epistolary friends for 10 years, until 1973, when we met in person at a London tea shop—and where she asked me to partner with her in the publication of *A Small Personal Voice*. Numerous visits followed, in public venues where she was speaking, in Bloomsbury lunch spots, and in her home in West Hampstead. We shared the pleasure of her winning the

Nobel Prize, and we shared the sadness of her diminishing health. Especially poignant was our last meeting before her death in 2013, when she mused about how she would be remembered. Needless to say, I felt privileged to have shared so much with Doris, whose writing became an ongoing emphasis in my own academic career. Though much of our time together was pre-cell phone cameras, I did take a few early pictures and several late-life ones as well, which I will be presenting in a slideshow here.

Paul Schlueter (PhD, Southern Illinois University) was one of the first to write about Doris Lessing's work. After reading *The Golden Notebook* in 1963, he wrote Lessing about the unusual typeface for the "Free Women" sections. Lessing replied that this was intended for thematic contrast. The exchange led to 50+ years of correspondence and visits and the focus of his academic career. After meeting in London in 1973, their epistolary relationship deepened into friendship. Lessing spoke with Schlueter by phone hours after receiving the Nobel Prize, and she frequently welcomed him into her home, even in her final years.

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Kanae Sekino (University of Leeds)

Home-making and Women's Work in Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*

Studies published around 2000 have shown a revival of the concept of everyday life. Particularly, Rita Felski has revisited its relationship with women in *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (2000). Referring to 'anti-home' characteristics of modern discourses including feminism, Felski redefines the concept of 'home' (87). This new definition enables us to recognise 'home' not merely as a symbol of everyday familiarity or dullness, but as a dynamic realm which is under influences of social changes and power struggles among its inhabitants. In her 1986 novel, *The Good Terrorist*, Doris Lessing depicts a female communist's everyday affairs. Alice's careful management of the household is directed to making a 'home' for squatters. The house, number forty-three Old Mill Road, is a good example of Felski's definition of 'home' and becomes the place where micro-politics of small communist group and macro-politics of 1980s England converge and collide. By reading the novel with the keywords of efficiency, women, and productive and reproductive labour, this paper will argue that women's work in the novel poses a question to the way in which this mode of labour inevitably existing our everyday life is treated both in micro-and macro-politics.

Selcuk Senturk (University of Leicester)

Rebalancing the Human Relationships in Lessing's Fiction: From Independent Women to Dependent Men (Panel 10)

The independent woman is a well-known figure in Lessing's fiction, especially in relation to her Children of Violence Series (1952-1969), and *The Golden Notebook* (1962), with their respective protagonists, Martha Quest and Anna Wulf. Dependent women seeking their independence from family ideology and social conservatism has also been a recurring theme with examples of Kate Brown in *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), and Harriet Lovatt in

The Fifth Child (1988). However, the status of men either independent or dependent has not yet been explored in Lessing's fiction. In her critique of established gender roles, Lessing is careful not to simply invert the hierarchy, making men subordinate to women. This is evident in her 1993 interview with Earl G. Ingerson, where she comments: 'The danger is in confusing liberation of one with the submission of another. I have a couple of liberated friends who have simply intervened roles and have husbands as servants'. This balance is reflected in her late novel, *The Cleft* which details mutual forms of dependency between men and women without positioning one as superior to the other. In 2018, the Doris Lessing panel at the annual MLA conference invited new readings of Lessing's 'portrayal of non-biological families, non-normative modes of affiliation and dependence, and unconventional households and genealogies'. In line with this call, this paper focuses on the image of dependent men in Lessing's fiction to trace her subversive reconfiguration of the traditional relationship between men and women. Lessing's representation of 'dependent men' does not mean that women come to oppress men. However, the possibility that men can also become dependent like women challenges the inherited ideology of patriarchy that perpetuates traditional families and male supremacy. This paper will trace Lessing's quest to rebalance the relationship between men and women through the image of dependent men. It will then examine how this image can suggest the ways in which non-normative human relationships can be constructed.

Selcuk Senturk is a PhD researcher in the School of English at University of Leicester. He is currently at the final stage of his Ph.D. project titled 'Representation of Family in Doris Lessing's Fiction.' His research interests lie in issues relating to gender, race, postcolonial ecofeminist criticism, Sufi mysticism, and Marxist theory. He is specifically interested in the construction of non-normative and non-biological families in Doris Lessing's fiction. Senturk has been selected to represent University of Leicester in a HeForShe campaign against gender-based violence on campus. His ideas about how to prevent violence on campus have been presented to the United Nations by University of Leicester.

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Sandra Singer (University of Guelph)

A Look into Lessing's Legacy: Comparing *The Golden Notebook* and Sarah Henstra's *The Red Word* (Panel 13)

Sarah Henstra is a known Lessing scholar. In her reading of 20th-century British fiction, she interprets *The Golden Notebook's* narrative experimentation as a response to Cold War nuclear fear and approaches mourning as an opportunity for social critique. Henstra won the Canadian Governor General's award for fiction in 2018 for her novel, *The Red Word* that reframes narrative arcs, themes, components and tropes of *The Golden Notebook*. Lessing's protagonist Anna Wulf struggles toward self-fulfillment in relationships, politics and her writing in London, 1957, while Henstra's Karen Huls is an on-spot commercial photographer in Toronto, 2010. Both texts use a frame structure to revisit the women's experiences of loss and have a bias toward ironic realism in relationship to feminism. Karen revisits her experience in 1995 of campus gender politics when she lived on an US eastern seaboard campus in a student (third-wave) "feminist" house that the novel contrasts with

events in a frat house in which Karen was sexually assaulted; against a backdrop of nuclear nihilism, Lessing's Anna anguishes over what she sees as her failed writing and the agonizing end of her relationship with Michael. My paper starts with Henstra's influential essay on Lessing's mourning an event that has not yet happened through ironic writing; then looks specifically at consistencies and differences between these novels concerning feminism that pivot respectively on debates within second-wave and third-wave feminist theory. Both fictions identify constraints on the creative response for changing entrenched lived experience.

Sandra Singer is associate professor in the School of English and Theatre Studies, University of Guelph, Canada. A Doris Lessing scholar, she co-edited *Doris Lessing Studies* and two essay collections: *Doris Lessing: Interrogating the Times* (2010) and *Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook After Fifty* (2015). In the field of post-Holocaust writing, in 2017 she published *J.J. Steinfeld: Essays on His Works*. Her book on terrorism, *Stock Characters in 9/11 Fiction: Homosociality and Nihilist Performance*, was published this year.

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Henry Stead (University of St Andrews)

'Comrade Doris': Lessing's correspondence with the Foreign Commission of Soviet Writers in the 1950s (Panel 8)

Growing up in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia, Doris Lessing was a communist from an early age. She joined the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1952 only to leave it dispirited in 1957 following the Soviet intervention in the Hungarian Uprising of 1956. By the late 1980s she had become a vociferous anti-communist calling the Soviet State 'the most brutal, cynical regime of its time'. But in the 1950s she fought hard to defend the Soviet Union against the constant attacks made by the capitalist press, and she did so in the name of World Peace and as an active member of the Author's World Peace Appeal. In 1998 Lessing reflected on her earlier pro-Soviet politics by explaining that she had then believed that even if the leadership of the Soviet Union had become corrupt, 'waiting everywhere in the communist world were the good communists, keeping their counsel, and they would at the right time take power, and then communism would resume its march to the just society, the perfect society. There was just one little thing: I didn't realize Uncle Joe had murdered them all.' In typically pithy terms, here Lessing presents her younger self as having had the wool pulled over her eyes. It tells a familiar tale of innocence betrayed. But correspondence between 'Comrade Doris' and various members of the Foreign Commission of Soviet Writers, including Soviet hero-of-letters Boris Polevoy, Oksana Krugerskaya and Mikhail Apletin, discovered in the 'Archive of the Muses' in Moscow, reveals a friendly, passionate and critical exchange of views. These Soviet writers, who became Lessing's friends, seem to have been (by any measure) both 'good communists' and not dead. This paper sifts through the unpublished correspondence, puts faces to names, and asks how it might affect the current critical consensus of her relationship with communism and the Soviet Union.

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Matthew Taunton (University of East Anglia)

Doris Lessing and the Language of Communism (Panel 8)

In Lessing's early fiction and in her letters from the 1940s, she vigorously interrogated the nature of Communist language: 'phrases like capitalist hyenas, social democratic treachery, running dogs of fascism, lackeys of the ruling class, and so on' (as she wrote later in her autobiography). These linguistic and attitudinal clichés appear across Lessing's work as a 'structure of repetition' (Koselleck), persisting for generations, but Lessing is fascinated by their emergence in moments of historical rupture (like the Russian Revolution), before they became part of a habit or routine. This paper uses Lessing's work—predominantly the *Children of Violence* series—as well as her unpublished letters to investigate what Hannah Arendt called the 'condensation of happenings into concepts'.

Matthew Taunton is a Senior Lecturer in Literature at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Fictions of the City: Class, Culture and Mass Housing in London and Paris* (Palgrave, 2009), and *Red Britain: The Russian Revolution in English Literature* (OUP, 2019), in the Oxford Mid-Century Series. He co-edited *A History of 1930s British Literature* (CUP, 2019) with Benjamin Kohlmann, and is deputy editor of *Critical Quarterly*. He is currently working on two articles about Lessing's politics, drawing on archives held at UEA and Sussex.

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Mark Taylor (National Research University, Moscow)

“Ideas Flow Through Our Minds Like Water”: Doris Lessing and Telepathy (Panel 4)

Introducing *Shikasta* (1979), the first novel in her space fiction sequence, Canopus in Argos, Doris Lessing in part justifies her transition to the genre by suggesting that not everything which appears fantastic is impossible. She offers a collective consciousness as exemplar. Lessing explains that she believes it possible “to ‘plug in’ to an overmind” and that this “accounts for a great many improbabilities and ‘coincidences.’” Lessing's conviction has not always been taken seriously. Interviewing her in 1980, for example, Christopher Bigsby presses Lessing as to whether her evocation of the subconscious and paranormal is metaphorical, or literal. Lessing reaffirms that her faith is sincere, asserting that she has herself “experienced telepathy,” and that “ideas flows through our minds like water.” This paper considers telepathy in *Shikasta* and *The Sirian Experiments* (1980) through the filter of Lessing's assertions, considering what it means to take the “sensitizing currents” and “mental flow” these novels offer as more than metaphor. While neither novel is hard science fiction, and neither asks to be judged on the mechanical feasibility of its ideas, internal logic can be found in this aspect. In particular, this paper links Lessing's overmind to ideas of Edward T. Hall, for whom the mind transcends the individual, although our mechanisms for interpreting reality obscure this. The paper will conclude that *Shikasta's* suggestion that to “identify with ourselves as individuals” is “degenerative” represents less a plea for collectivism than an appeal to esteem ideas over either the individuals or groups who voice them.

Mark Taylor is an Assistant Professor in English Literature with the National Research University – Higher School of Economics in Moscow. His research addresses literary responses to evolutionary theory, and in particular to theories of evolution in the human psyche. D.H. Lawrence, Olaf Stapledon and Doris Lessing are particular interests in this regard. He is currently preparing a monograph on notions of telepathy and the collective unconscious in twentieth century literature.

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Pamela Thurschwell (University of Sussex)

Falling in Love with Everyone: Lessing's Letters to Smithie at the Keep, University of Sussex (Panel 7)

In 1944, Leonard Smith, a 19 year old cadet pilot in the Royal Air Force, posted to Salisbury (now Harare), Southern Rhodesia, crossed paths with the 24 year-old Doris Lessing. Lessing was then married to the German political activist and lawyer, Gottfried Lessing, involved in Communist Party and local left politics, and in the midst of experimenting with her first novel (which would eventually become *The Grass is Singing*). Along with two other close friends from this time period, Coll (Coll MacDonald) and John (John R.M. Whitehorn), Smithie became an important interlocutor for Lessing—a combination confidante, lover, gay best friend—part of a kind of communal identity. This group would later be fictionalized in the early sections of *The Golden Notebook*, as three young Air Force pilots, Paul, Jimmy and Ted. This paper dives into the rich archive at the Keep at Sussex to excavate Lessing's early voice and relationships, and to revel in her epistolary playfulness, anger, and honesty.

Pamela Thurschwell is a Reader in English at the University of Sussex and the author of *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880–1920* (2001) and *Sigmund Freud* (2009). She has recently published articles on Henry James and Oscar Wilde in *The Henry James Review*, and on Joni Mitchell and Margaret Atwood's irritable feminism in *Joni Mitchell: New Critical Readings* (2019). She is completing a book on adolescence and time, and also writes on music and contemporary literature.

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Fiona Tolan (Liverpool John Moores University)

The Politics of Cleaning in Doris Lessing's Fiction: *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) and *The Good Terrorist* (1985) (Panel 12)

My paper examines the use of cleaning as a trope in two of Lessing's works from the 1980s. Epitomising women's labour as domestic, peripheral, undervalued and frequently invisible, cleaning became an emblem of female oppression for second-wave feminists, who campaigned for 'Wages for Housework' and declared: 'Housework is Work'. Second-wave feminism attempted to draw cleaning into the nexus of labour relations and capital. It sought to theorise and politicise women's domestic labour and produced studies such as Ann

Oakley's *The Sociology of Housework* (1974) and Ellen Malos's *The Politics of Housework* (1980). Cleaning, however, proved to be a stubbornly intractable problem; the theme fell out of favour with feminism and the focus of feminist discourse shifted elsewhere. In *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) and *The Good Terrorist* (1985), Lessing pursues an idiosyncratic examination of the function of cleaning. Her novels place cleaning at the heart of interconnected relations between femininity, maternalism, materiality, social responsibility and an ethics of care. In very different ways, I argue, both texts respond to some of the complexities and contradictions thrown up by second-wave feminism's attempt to address the connections between women's liberation and 'women's work'. By focusing on these 1980s novels and their engagement with the seemingly banal yet deeply, insidiously political theme of cleaning, I look to examine Lessing's sometimes combative response to second-wave feminism.

Dr Fiona Tolan is a Senior Lecturer in English at Liverpool John Moores University. She is the author of *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (2007) and has published widely on contemporary fiction. She is currently writing a monograph on *The Politics of Cleaning in Post-War Women's Writing*.

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Robin Visel (Furman University)

Lessing Criticism in North America: A Semi-centenary Reappraisal

This paper evaluates the almost fifty-year history of Lessing scholarship in the North American academy, through the lens of the articles in the *Doris Lessing Newsletter*, founded in 1977, which became *Doris Lessing Studies*. *DLS* has closely tracked Lessing criticism from its inception in the 1970s, when academic feminism embraced Lessing and her heroines as personal exemplars, through the literary theories and critical currents of the past fifty years. Lessing critics aimed, in Annis Pratt's words, "to sift through our subjective responses and arrive at objective criticism that does justice to its structures and complexity." *DLS* reflects the scholarly interest in Lessing as a boundary-breaking, sui generis figure. Each subsequent book was read mainly in relation to the developing Lessing canon rather than the context of other authors. This subjective, single-author approach has not always done justice to Lessing's connections to important groups and movements of the 20th century, such as anticolonial intellectuals in Southern Africa of the 1940s, Communist writers in the UK and Europe in the 1950s, creative colleagues and spiritual explorers in 1960s and 70s London, etc. In her fiction, Lessing's autobiographical characters are enmeshed in creative communities and social movements. These are insufficiently chronicled in the pages of *DLS*. On the other hand, the *DLS* experts' personal stake in reading and re-reading their chosen author's prolific oeuvre has created a rich palimpsest of interpretative knowledge for current and future scholars.

Dr. Robin Visel is Professor Emerita, Furman University, where she taught contemporary British and postcolonial literature. Her graduate degrees are from the University of British

Columbia. She has presented and published extensively on Doris Lessing and co-edited *Doris Lessing Studies* from 2014 to 2018.

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Susan Watkins (Leeds Beckett University)

The Chthulucene, the Posthuman and Apocalyptic Time in Doris Lessing's "Ifrik" Novels (Panel 14)

Doris Lessing's post-apocalyptic 'Ifrik' novels are notable for the way they intervene in narrative and historical time. To some extent, all apocalyptic fictions inevitably exist in a state of suspension, self-consumption or unfinished process. This curious position in relation to time and narrative has been discussed by a number of critics and theorists of the apocalyptic mode, including Frank Kermode (1967), Jean-Pierre Dupuy (2009), Steven Connor (1996) and James Berger (1999). Caroline Edwards has characterised twenty-first-century fiction in terms of its creation of 'metachronous times' (2012). However, in *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway has refused the apocalyptic narrative and version of time it generates, asking: 'How can we think in terms of urgencies without the self-indulgent and self-fulfilling myths of apocalypse, when every fiber of our being is interlaced, even complicit, in the webs of processes that must somehow be engaged and repatterned?' (2016, 35). Haraway sees our attraction to the apocalyptic narrative as part of the disturbing appeal of the terms Anthropocene and posthumanism as tragic characterisations of our present moment and relationship with the Earth. She proposes the 'Chthulucene' as an alternative, as a way to 'cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge (100). This paper will examine how Doris Lessing's 'Ifrik' novels make contortions or conundrums in time central. Particularly, the paper will focus on Lessing's play with the sequel as a deliberately paradoxical device that, in Haraway's terms, revises the apocalyptic narrative by transforming it in order to generate refuge. The paper will argue that Lessing uses the device of the sequel to proliferate multiple timespaces, timespaces that exist to rework and challenge the conventional sequencing and narration of apocalyptic narrative.

Susan Watkins is Professor of Women's Writing at Leeds Beckett University. She is the author of *Twentieth-Century Women Novelists: Feminist Theory into Practice* (Palgrave 2001) and *Doris Lessing* (Manchester University Press 2010) and co-editor of *Scandalous Fictions: The Twentieth-Century Novel in the Public Sphere* (Palgrave 2006) and *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings* (Continuum 2009). She was Chair of the Contemporary Women's Writing Association from 2010-2014 and co-editor of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* from 2010-2015. Her new book, *Contemporary Women's Post-Apocalyptic Fiction*, is in press with Palgrave Macmillan.

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Linda Weinhouse (Community College of Baltimore County)

The Curious Case of *Alfred and Emily* - A Revisionist Look at World War I Nursing (Panel 1)

Lessing claims that *Alfred and Emily* is her final attempt to break out of “the monstrous legacy” of her parents whose lives, maimed and distorted by the Great War, rendered them incapable of being anything but traumatized, inadequate parents. In this curious book, Lessing first creates an idealized, but false history for the people who grew up to marry and became her parents, in which there is no war and they marry different people. In the second half of the book, using memory and photographs, she once again tells the real story of her father’s war wound and, not only her mother’s lifelong disappointment, but her mother’s lifelong nursing. It is understandable that in part one she imagines her father became the farmer he always wanted to be and that she prevents her parents from a marriage she perceived to be unhappy, but it is difficult to understand why she prevents her mother from pursuing the nursing career she pursues so avidly both in the fiction and in life. It may be that in this decision, Lessing provides a new contextualized understanding of her mother and a revisionist reading of the role of nursing in the Great War.

This paper considers Lessing’s autobiographical considerations of her mother’s experiences alongside some World War I women’s nursing memoirs. It relies on several memoirs in the collection of nurse writers of the Great War by Christine E. Hallett and on parts the great memoirs of Vera Brittain and Mary Borden. As I will show, many nurses perpetuated the heroic myths of the war, some unconsciously challenged them, and some actively attacked them. Some championed the emergent roles for women, and some decried the return to domesticity at the end of the war. But, I concentrate on the ways in which nursing, ambivalently constructed as an extension both the womanly functions of caring and as a feminist pathway to autonomy and agency, left Lessing’s mother both deluded, broken and stranded in a lifetime role of service and frustration that distorted her relationship with her husband and daughter. Christine Hallett presents a number of nursing memoirs, which like that of Lessing’s mother were not written by the nurses themselves, but by family members, often daughters, though none may be as an excruciatingly undertaken in an attempt to understand her mother as Lessing’s autobiographical reflections on her mother’s life in *Under My Skin* and other earlier autobiographical essays in which she attempts to understand her mother’s unusual choice of nursing, her life as a nurse during the war, and her eventual abandonment of that career for marriage. The final argument that Lessing perceived nursing as the pivot that determined the appalling progression of her mother’s life is the fact that in *Alfred and Emily* in which she writes and re-writes her parents’ life, she absolutely eschews nursing as a career for her mother.

Nonia Williams (University of East Anglia)

The Textures and Textualities of Ageing (Panel 6)

With 1990s and 2000s correspondence between Doris Lessing and Muriel Spark (held at the British Archive of Contemporary Writing, UEA and The National Library of Scotland), and Lessing’s novels *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) and *Love, Again* (1995) as its focus, this paper asks: what are some of the

chronologies, forms, structures and narrative perspectives of Lessing's writing of ageing and old age?; how does the writing of age in Lessing's correspondence complicate and add to our appreciation of the writing of age in her fiction? The letters and faxes between Lessing and Spark express a lively and forthright defence of their identities as ageing women and as writers, and this paper reads between archival and literary materials to consider differences and overlaps between the writing of age and ageing in Lessing's correspondence and in her fiction. Building on critical discussions of Lessing's writing of age, I show how in these texts techniques such as narrative perspective and dialogic form are used to express an ambivalence that resists and complicates cultural narratives of ageing.

Nonia Williams is a Lecturer in Literature at UEA. Her recent publications include *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s* (EUP, 2019), which seeks to intervene in the resurgence of interest in this literary period. She has also written on madness, formal experiment, and cliché in the writing of Ann Quin (*Textual Practice*, 2018). Her research is particularly interested in experimental aesthetics and forms, representations of madness and ageing, and issues of archival and recovery research. Nonia is the academic curator of the Doris Lessing archive, held in the British Archive of Contemporary Writing at UEA, and is currently researching correspondence between Doris Lessing and Muriel Spark.

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