

Differences and Similarities of Style, Values, Challenges and Achievements between Doris Lessing and Virginia Woolf

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Abstract.

Doris Lessing is a renowned literature guru from the UK. She was born in Kermanshah, Persia (later Iran) on October 22, 1919, and grew up in Rhodesia (in the days of the Zimbabwean stoma). During her two marriages, she presented short fiction and poetry for publication. After moving to London in 1949, she published her first novel, *The Shepherd Is Singing*, in 1950. She is mainly known for her experimental 1954 Somerset Maugham Prize-winning novel, *The Golden Note Book*. Her other works include *This Was the State of the Old Chair*, *Children of Violence* series, *Canopus in Argos - archived series*, and *Alfred and Emily*. She has received many awards for her work, including the 2001 Prince of Asturias Prize in Literature, the David Cohen British Literature Prize, and the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature. She died on November 17, 2013 at the age of 94. Her literary works enjoy wide popularity around the world, and this has given her many positive impressions. For example, she was the winner of the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature in 2007. This was a remarkable achievement given her age. Her style epitomizes the unique literary approach used by influential British novelists. On the other hand, Virginia Woolf is regarded by many analysts as a literary intellect who laid the foundations of the modernist style throughout the literary world of her day. Similar to Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing, is a British novelist who died in 1941. Her literary work has been extremely influential during the 21st Century.

Based on these insights, this papaper compares Doris Lessing to Virginia Woolf. The comparison will assess the different challanges that these two women writers faced. The analysis will also examine Doris Lessing's beliefs, rights and achievements with those of Virginia Woolf. Consequently, the analysis will help to draw different lessons that can be learned about changes in the status of women.

Keywords: Challenges, Doris Lessing, feminist literature, similarities, Virginia Woolf

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Differences and Similarities of Style, Values, Beliefs, and Achievements between Doris Lessing and Virginia Woolf

Many analysts have attempted to analyze the similarities and differences between Doris Lessing and Virginia Woolf. Some critics have focused on comparing the achievements of the two writers, while others have focused on their values and beliefs. From the perspective of achievement, both writers have achieved remarkable leaps (Rubenstein 86). Regardless of the reach of these peaks, it is essential to note that Doris Lessing has received impressive reviews with more positive impressions than Virginia Woolf.

For example, Doris Lessing received the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature in 2007. This is a manifestation of the exemplary contribution given by Doris Lessing to the literary world. For her part, Virginia Woolf did not receive the same honorable award as the Nobel Prize in Literature. From an achievement perspective, it is essential to note that Doris Lessing produced over a hundred literary works. Although Virginia Woolf was a worthy writer, she did not produce as much literary work as Doris Lessing. However, this can be attributed to the early death that brought Woolf's career to a tragic end. Both women have been extremely influential in the world of literature. This is evident through the frequent norms through which their works have been critically evaluated and reviewed by various authors. For example, some of Virginia Woolf's work has been featured as a series of films. This is an essential aspect of creating the example of the influential cloak held by Virginia Woolf in the world of literature.

Similarly, Doris Lessing's influence on the world of literature has been enormous. For example, her literary works have influenced the literary works used by many authors. Consequently, achievement forms an excellent basis for comparing the two women. From another point of view, it is essential to note that Doris Lessing was influenced to some degree by Virginia Woolf. In some of her publications, Lessing acknowledges Virginia Woolf as a great writer who helped advance the role played by women in literature and more widely in society. These ratings are determinants of the high incentive Lessing had for Virginia Woolf. Despite these sentiments, Lessing does not shy away from criticizing some of the approaches Virginia Woolf has used in her publications. This is a classic approach used by many writers and novelists in the world of modern literature.

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Values and beliefs also form an exemplary platform for comparing both women writers. First, Virginia Woolf had strong convictions about incorporating modern features into literature. In this line of belief, it seems clear that Woolf laid the foundation for the modern literature initiative. In this type of literature, the authors base their arguments on aspects that relate to real-life situations. Similarly the works of Doris Lessing also exemplify these beliefs in her works. Lessing, for example, has not used conventional literary tactics in her publications.

This is underscored by the fact that Lessing advocated modernism in literature in a similar approach, to which Virginia Woolf was largely specialized in writing novels, while diversity is a distinguishing element of Lessing's works. In addition to writing novels, Doris also worked on many short stories, theatrical works, and poetry. This shows the extent to which Doris Lessing had advocated diversity in literature. From a fair perspective, both writers show their appreciation for life and death, respectively, in their publications. This perspective creates an eco for their beliefs towards the reality of life. Virginia Woolf, for example, expresses concern over the lack of memory about many events in her life. This highlights her beliefs about the reality of life (Rubenstein 26). In essence, realism is a distinguishing feature that is evidenced in the literary works of both writers. In the comparative context of the two women, it is extremely useful to examine their styles in relation to fiction. In their literary works, both writers have made extensive use of fiction by addressing various points and issues.

For her part, Lessing used fiction as a tactic for addressing issues affecting people in their daily lives. For example, it addresses the issue of love and romance using fictitious characters. This allows her to address existing issues of society in an authoritarian manner. This unique approach has contributed immensely to Doris Lessing's excellent influence in the world of literature. Although much of her work is fictitious, she forms an extraordinary rhyme with the actual circumstances of real life. In essence, this serves as a great platform for teaching people about different issues. Connecting fiction to truth is also an extraordinary feature that has been widely used by Virginia Woolf in her literary works. For example, most readers may link to its publications because they are a reflection of real-life scenarios. This approach has also been widely used by numerous authors in the literary world. It is also crucial to note that the literary works of both writers attract diverse audiences. This implies that women have an intrinsic capacity to communicate effectively with audiences of different kinds. In literature, these features are extremely unique. As a result, most authors try to communicate across a diverse audience.

Challenges

The comparison between Doris Lessing and Virginia Woolf can also be achieved by assessing the various challenges they have encountered. Some similarities and inequalities

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become apparent in the different obstacles these two women writers have experienced. While Virginia Woolf was perfecting her skills in literature, she found it extremely complex to convince some audiences. This was due to the simple fact that the world of literature was largely dominated by men. In the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, most of the academic fields were dominated by men. This made it extremely challenging for Virginia Woolf and other female writers to enter the world of literature. Consequently, the lack of gender balance was a tremendous challenge experienced by Woolf. The number of reputable women writers in the last half of the 19th century was very small. This made it difficult for Virginia to attract members of its target audience. However, Doris Lessing did not experience such a deadlock. At the time when Lessing was entering the world of literature, the gender equality framework was extremely efficient. This gave her more or less a level playing field comparable to male writers. In line with this perspective, gender was not an important obstacle experienced by Doris Lessing. Consequently, this helps emphasize the difference in challenges experienced by both writers. The second perspective to consider is resources. In order to get its publications up to date, Virginia Woolf first tried to raise the necessary financial resources. She managed to overcome these difficulties only after her appointment as a reputable English writer. In the 19th century, most writers would face challenges as they sought to publish their works. Woolf also faced this challenge.

In stark contrast, Doris Lessing did not experience the limitation of resource inadequacy. This was largely due to the excellent commercial value of its publications. In addition, Lessing could easily secure sponsors for its publications. Because of these perspectives, Doris Lessing experienced no resource constraints. Social perceptions towards literature also serve as a tremendous obstacle experienced by Virginia Woolf. Most people were largely negative about the importance of literature in society. Because of these perceptions, Virginia Woolf found it difficult to popularize her literary works. In contrast, Lessing did not encounter such challenges. This was largely due to the increasing popularity of literature during the second half of the 20th century and towards the 21st century. This was a massive contributor to the many positive reviews for Lessing's precious writings.

Most of the writing by Virginia Woolf was subject to widespread criticism by peer writers and the general public. This is mainly due to the mere fact that she was a female. These roadblocks were not experienced by Lessing as she stamped her authority through her many literary publications. All of these aspects highlight the difference in the nature of the obstacles encountered by the two women. In essence, the difference in these obstacles can be attributed to gender equality across the globe. These changes occurred within the 20th century and with the onset of the 21st century.

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Assessment of the different changes regarding the status of women

The comparison between the two writers forms an excellent platform for assessing the different changes regarding the status of women. Although Woolf and Lessing are two celebrated writers, they faced different kinds of difficulties. In addition, the two females belong to different generations. In line with these kinds of perspectives, it is consequently possible to assign many features about the changing role of women. This applies to the literary world and also to society at large (Rubenstein 10). The first lesson from the comparison is about changing social perceptions towards women. During her time, Virginia Woolf experienced many challenges because most people carried negative perceptions of women. It had become too complex for her to venture into a male-dominated field. However, the analysis shows that Doris Lessing did not experience such challenges. This is because society had already supported change. In line with such changes, women were treated in the same way as men. This is why gender did not act as a stumbling block for Doris Lessing. The comparison also shows that Doris Lessing had received more positive reviews than Woolf. This is an indication of the positive changes in modern society towards women. Although both women are influential, Doris Lessing managed to attract a wider global audience. This attribute highlights the remarkable changes around the world regarding the social level of women. The challenges faced by Lessing are different from those experienced by Woolf. This highlights the changing status of women.

The analysis includes a comparison between Doris Lessing and Virginia Woolf. From an achievement perspective, both writers have risen to immense heights. Despite reaching these heights, it is essential to note that Doris Lessing has received more positive reviews than Virginia Woolf. From a different perspective, it is essential to note that Doris Lessing has been influenced to some extent by Virginia Woolf. In some of her publications, Lessing acknowledges Virginia Woolf as a great writer who helped advance the role played by women in literature and more broadly in society. Such admissions are determinants of the high incentive Lessing had for Virginia Woolf. The number of esteemed female writers in the second part of the 19th century was very small. This made it difficult for Virginia to attract members to its targeted audience. However, Doris Lessing did not experience such a challenge.

The Golden Note Book

Many critics like Roberta Rubenstein, Magali Cornier Michael, and Clarie Sprague point out the many similarities that exist between Woolf and Lessing, and undoubtedly Lessing deliberately invokes Woolf into the Golden Note Book by naming her female artist Anna Wulf. However, what is considered to be the strongest and most interesting common point of reference between the two is their shared distrust, yet astonishing at the way memory works

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as well as building a personal sense of self, which develops as an amalgam of 'fact' and 'fiction', 'actuality' and a sense of personal 'truth'. Both writers use their 'self-representative' or 'autobiographical' texts as therapeutic ways of 'self-discovery', exorcising past discontents, 'fixing' the past, and creating important personal presentations and a sense of 'truth'.

Both Woolf and Lessing confront 'fact' with 'fiction' aiming to create a meaningful sense of 'self'. Alongside it, some of the implications of creating 'fictitious self' through self-representative writing for Woolf and Lessing need to be considered. This approach, which focuses on the unreliability of memory as perceived by Woolf and Lessing, necessarily involves a consideration of historiographical metaphysics.

Woolf's approach to autobiography, her concerns with herself and writing, and perhaps even her own 'madness', became Lessing's legitimacy. Obviously, Woolf's semantic and psychological echo exists in Lessing. By absorbing Woolf in her own work, for example through her fictitious 'self' Anna in the Golden Note Book, Lessing confirms to a certain extent Woolf's belief that we think again through our mothers if we are women. At certain times it seems as if Lessing provides us with a paraphrase of Woolf's words or at least her feelings. For example, in her autobiography *A Sketch of the Past*, Woolf describes her ideal memoirs and says. 'What I Write Today I Should Not Write After One Year' Correspondingly Lessing writes in *Under My Skin*: 'I am Trying to Write This Book Honestly. It is thus notable that, similar to Woolf, Lessing believes that memory is a 'careless and lazy organ' (*Under My Skin*, p. 13).

Just as everyone is acutely aware of the changing perspective and the truths, which for Lessing is 'like climbing a mountain as the landscape changes with every turn of the road' (UMS, 12), everyone also feels the wrong impressions and meanings. about memory selectivity and self-building from memory. Within their texts, they are in agony under the very real possibility of an equally valuable variety of 'truths' or 'themselves'. On her memoirs, for example, Woolf comments, but of course as the accountability of my life they are misleading, because the things one won't remember are just as important; perhaps even more important. Why have I forgotten so many things that must have been, as one might think, more memorable than what I remember? (Schulkind, 69)

Years later, the same refrain occurs along in *Under My Skin*:

As you start writing right away, the question begins to insist: Why do you remember this and not that? Why do you remember in every detail a whole week, month, more, a year ago, but then complete darkness, a void? (*Under My Skin*,12)

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Putting it out of context, Lessing's feelings can easily be falsely attributed to Woolf, and they are closely parallel to those of Anna Wulf in the Golden Note Book:

but I can't remember, it's all gone. And I get frustrated trying to remember - it's like beating another tenacious self who insists on his own kind of privacy. But everything in my brain only if I can get it. I am horrified at how many I have not noticed, living in the subjective haze of color. How do I know that what I 'remember' was what was important? The one I remember was chosen by Anna, twenty years ago. I don't know what this Anna will choose now. (Golden Notebook 139)

Consequently, both writers share a marked distrust of memory. According to Rubenstein, 'More than Woolf, Lessing consciously acknowledges that memory itself is a meaningless, fluid, and often undesirable constituent of consciousness, whose manifestations depend on the relationship between each present moment and an always-away past.' Roberta Rubenstein, (Fixing the Past: Yearning and Nostalgia in Woolf and Lessing 16). For example, in *Under My Skin* Lessing says 'and then - and maybe this is the worst trickster of all - we remake our past. You in fact you can see your mind doing this, taking a small snippet of facts and then spinning a tale of it' (13).

Similar to the character of Lessing Janna in *Jane Somers Diaries* who succumbs to her attempts to separate fact from fiction in the stories of an elderly woman named Maudie, Woolf and Lessing also manage to uphold personal memories and give them credibility 'stories' rather than choosing their outright rejection. For example, in *Under My Skin*, Lessing concludes 'that literal or factual approach leads to nothing but mistakes' (*Under My Skin* 138). On her novel *Martha's Adventure* she writes, 'I was a novelist and not a chronicler. But if the novel is not the correct truth, then it is true in the atmosphere, in a more 'real' sense than this recording, which is yes strives to be 'factual' (UMS, 162). Lessing deliberately confronts 'fiction' and 'truth', her self-representative writings, and her biography as required. offered by modernist theorist Linda Hutcheon Hutcheon defines historiographical metaphysics as a narrative 'offered as one of the other discourses through which we build our versions of reality', and argues that 'both the construction and the need for it are what they are. unrecorded in the post-modern novel. ' (4) In the light of its definitions, *Under My Skin* is very much like a postmodern text and an example of historiographical metaphysics, since, as Hutcheon puts it, she 'casts doubt on the very possibility of any guaranteed meaning, however studied in conversation '(56) *Under My Skin* Lessing insists that: 'clearly I had to fight to establish my own reality, against the institutionalized attitudes of adults that I had to accept their reality ... I am dedicating it. ' (UMS, 13-14)

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Recalling her trip to England through Moscow, for example, Lessing confronts what her mother reconstructs for her, as well as her own 'reality': 'History tells us that we were reading books, playing with plasticine, drawing with foam ... but what is still on my mind is the train rushing to another station ... messy kids, (42).

While Lessing's autobiographical style allows her to shred important events, memories, and sensations, the textual interruption takes place between the two narratives with no resemblance that of her mother and her own. Her awareness of the mismatch of memory on which to base her sense of 'self' brings a sense of alienation to the author. Lessing's 'self-representational' or 'autobiographical' works are therefore nostalgic, as they are for Woolf, as both writers seek to capture what can never be retrieved. Significantly, *African Laughter: The Four Visits to Zimbabwe* (1993) is a lament for both the past and the disorder of the past through storms of time. When she is near Banquet, the place of her childhood, she will and will not return. Lessing and her brother, having not seen each other for several years, are already trying to reach each other and communicate at a deeper level than the superficial and ordinary aspects, by passing through the mythical state that is already the farm of childhood and her life. Unfortunately they do not see this possible, since it is, in a disordered way, different for each of them, even though in childhood they were close to each other. Lessing and Harry promote their conversations through childish reminders, and each tries to force the other what he can.

It is possible for Lessing's self-representative texts to be seen, whether "fictitious" or "non-fictional," as textual tools that she creates and manipulates in order to re-enter the world of the past. However, in *African Laughter*, Lessing comments painfully about nostalgia.

When we see scenes remembered from the outside as observers, then we are drawn to a golden smoke towards sentimentality. And what we see as a more frequent memory is the external aspect of events: The sparks flying up to the bushes illuminated by the stars or the moon; a face leaning over the fire, not knowing that it was being watched and would be remembered. But what did I feel then? (*African Laughter* 72).

African Laughter, similar to Lessing's self-representative works, both 'fictitious' and 'autobiographical', is partly an attempt to gain recognition of our past self because it creates them. characters that, as an author, she tries to manipulate and analyze. I suggest that Lessing's self-representative texts are an attempt to 'fix' the past so that she is able to represent the 'truth' she perceives. But Lessing's 'truth', as with others, continues to change, so her novels and descriptions of the past evolve forever as she tries to capture this elusive and non-existent 'truth'. Schulkind similarly argues for Woolf that her memory operates 'as the means by which the individual constructs patterns of personal significance to convince him or her of life and secure it' (21).

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Woolf herself comments that 'I have come to realize that setting the scene is my natural way of marking the past. Always a scene has arranged itself: representative; consistent' (16).

Woolf draws from the structure of the memory and 'stories' of the past to describe the present and to create it. For example, in *The Waves* (1931) a character asks, "but what are the stories? The toys I twist, the bubbles blowing, one ring passing through another, sometimes I start to wonder if there is a story." (6) Similar to Anna Wulf in the *Golden Notebook* the character "created thousands of stories" (17). Moreover, she realizes that she has 'filled countless note books with phrases to use when I have found the story to which all these stages refer. But I have not yet found the story and begin to ask, 'Is there a story?' '(17). I discerning a desire for a sense of 'self' and a form of psychological unity.

Consequently, while Lessing and Woolf are also aware of the inaccuracy, vulnerability, and unreliability of memory, they each manipulate it according to their self-representative texts in order to achieve a sense of psychological completeness. Of course, the characters in *The Waves* use their writing to achieve this fulfillment. For example, Bernard, while pondering his poetry, says, 'what did I write last night if it wasn't good poetry? Am I too fast, too easy?

Sometimes I don't know myself, or how to measure, to name and count the crumbs which make me who I am?' (7) Each writer, aware of the many untold stories about their lives, women, and people in general, has managed to develop her own 'envelope' to give life to her past as well as her gift its. For example, on Woolf novels, Elizabeth Abel says that they are full of pasts by retelling pasts mainly through memory, Woolf diversifies it. Avoiding grasping for a unitary fiction analogous in her eyes to the tyranny of the ego, Woolf generates heterogeneity not only by shifting perspective in narrative but also by pluralizing history.

Many of Woolf and Lessing's characters are authorial 'fictitious selves', rich in layers of past, so that each contains a valuable personal 'truth' that applies at any given moment. Schulkind believes that Woolf is 'filtering the past through a series of present self' (13), and in a similar vein, Herta Newman regards the *Waves* as a 'psychological novel' to be subjected to and an image of itself, of radically rearranged (55). She notes that many critics have come to view the six figures in the *Waves* as 'prototypes, patterns of consciousness, aspects of a single, symbolic psyche' (55). Critic Alex Zwerdling who refers to Woolf as a 'proteus' would agree with such a view of Woolf. (9) Margaret Homans also provides an analysis of the six fictitious characters or 'self' of Woolf, which appear in *The Waves* and she believes that 'only Bernard realizes the inner harmony which all characters strive to achieve' (60).

It is perhaps important that Bernard, with his unified self, writes poetry as well as the way Anna Wulf is a writer who achieves the psychic integration and unity of her fictitious self, similar to Molly, Saul, Ella, and Michael. Claire Sprague points to Anna Wulf's multi-personal examples in *The Golden Note Book* and *Clarissa Dalloway* to Ms. Dalloway to argue

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that 'Like Woolf, Lessing has developed a unique multi-personal way, a new layer of time, a new way of interrupting the narrative view and the continuity of external events' (10)

In conclusion, both Lessing and Woolf write 'self-representative' or 'autobiographical' texts so that they avoid representing the single or unified 'truth'. As Woolf wrote, and as Lessing goes on to write, the past and consequently the past that rely on the past are pluralized and enriched. Finally, for each writer, that becomes her own 'truth' and 'her own story.'

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