

ABSTRACT

This dissertation, positioned in contemporary debate on feminism and fiction, draws on a variety of feminist traditions including materialist feminism, poststructuralist feminism and postfeminism to highlight the process through which feminine subjectivity is created in Doris Lessing's fiction. Although it has been widely accepted that Lessing is a feminist writer who creates strong female protagonists in her fiction, the evolutionary process through which those characters are realized, however, remains to be explored in detail. The goal of this project is to provide readers with a theoretical explication of this process in Lessing's fiction. Firstly, the focus has been placed on the construction of sexual difference in the Symbolic order and how language acts as its essential part. Having established the historical creation of gendered identities, the possibility of self-realization of feminine subjectivity is studied in depth. Secondly, the importance of self-knowledge and sexuality has been observed as a first step towards the expression of the self. Thirdly, efforts have been made to elucidate the expression of feminine subjectivity to the society through feminine writing, a special feminine discourse that transcends the dominating hierarchical structure of language to express feminine identity. Lessing undermines the conventional concept of fixed identities. Her writing brings into focus the complex processes through which these identities are realized and keep shifting with time. The fluidity of identity makes it possible for a feminine subject to transform herself through self-realization. This dissertation explores in depth this aspect of Lessing's fiction to draw attention to the relevance of her fiction in the era of postfeminism.