



An Anthology of Research Articles on Contemporary British Fiction

EMERGING GENRES IN BRITISH FICTION

Edited by

Dr. Mursalin Jahan
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**SUFFICIENTLY DECAYED: AGING WOMEN IN DORRIS
LESSINGS'S *SUMMER BEFORE THE DARK AND LOVE, AGAIN***

Vanya Srivastava

Abstract

The new narratives of midlife and older women's 'journey to age' have resulted in new critical responses by age theorists, psychologists, and literary critics in the form of feminist gerontology. This paper looks upon two such narratives by Doris Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* and *Love, Again*, where the protagonists embark on their internal journeys as they face, confront, and accept their 'old age.' Barbara Waxman names these narratives as 'Reifungsroman' or the 'novel of ripening' which is defined as a genre of female fiction that 'rejects the negative cultural stereotypes of the old woman and ageing, seeking to change the society that created the stereotypes. The psychic journey that these protagonists undertake also brings forward the conflict between the 'mind' and 'body' ageing. Lessing's fiction is deeply autobiographical, much of it emerging out of her experiences in Africa. Drawing upon her childhood memories and her serious engagement with politics and social concerns, Lessing has written about the clash of cultures, the gross injustices of racial inequality, the struggle among opposing elements within an individual's own personality, and the conflict between the individual conscience and the collective good. Her stories and novellas are set in Africa, and published during the fifties and early sixties, decrying the dispossession of Blacks by White Colonials, and exposing the sterility of the White Culture in southern.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender, Gerontology, Literary, Performativity, Postmodern Reifungroman.

Feminist gerontology is grounded in feminist theory and critical gerontology and focuses on power relations and intersecting oppressions across the life course. Analyses that incorporate a feminist perspective broaden our understanding of ageing, moving beyond a singular focus on gender to a broader focus on multiple aspects of