

Mateusz Marecki

University of Wrocław

## Humanity Scripts in Doris Lessing's *The Marriages between Zones Three, Four, and Five* and *The Cleft*

**Abstract:** Despite a span of thirty-seven years stretching the dates of their publication, Lessing's *The Marriages between Zones Three, Four, and Five* (1980) and *The Cleft* (2007) share a common theme and genre (space fiction). Set in an unspecified past in imaginary universes, they both chronicle how two geographically separate and culturally divergent communities join forces in a collective struggle to subvert the effects of an inscrutable power enveloping their respective lands. This paper argues that, through their foregrounding of utopian longing, *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* present a coherent vision of humanity and thus can be seen as instruments to "cultivate humanity" (Nussbaum 1997). Employing the cognitive tools of *schemas* and *scripts* (Schank and Abelson 1977), the paper explores the ways Lessing enforces her social project and, simultaneously, attempts to modify the reader's cognitive schema of HUMANITY through cognitive scripting. It arrives at two main conclusions. First, Lessing's five-component HUMANITY script not only closely corresponds to M. Scott Peck's (1987) well-established model of community building, but it outweighs the latter in its scope. Second, in her formulation of the concept of ideal society, Lessing, rather than resorting to radical approaches and ideologies, opts for "reforming society in movement and change" (Greene 1994: 188).

**Keywords:** Doris Lessing, *The Marriages*, *The Cleft*, humanity scripts, cognitive schema, social criticism

Doris Lessing's portfolio includes a myriad of books, ranging from autobiographical and quasi-autobiographical novels to psychological narratives deploying the theme of otherness to space fiction stories. This diverse oeuvre defies any critical attempts at simple categorization. In a number of interviews, Lessing has vigorously denied her alleged affiliations to Marxism, feminism or mysticism. Indeed, rather than in a specific ideology, Lessing's principal interest lies in "the nature of change itself" (Whittaker 1988: 4). This concern with change, however vague, goes a long way beyond the cliché. Lessing underscores the need for heightened political awareness and for "the quest for identity" as a "path to spiritual rebirth"

(Brevet 2005: 27). Simultaneously, she re-examines the idea of “home” and aims to reach the “ideal space of the collective” (Brevet 2005: 26–29). All this cumulatively accounts for her steadfast determination to campaign, through the medium of literature, for a more unified vision of humanity, or, to use Lessing’s phraseology, the so-called *four-gated*<sup>1</sup> city. Lessing, then, is absorbed in social criticism — and *The Marriages between Zones Three, Four, and Five* (1980), the second installment of the five-book visionary series *Canopus in Argos: Archives*, and *The Cleft* (2007) clearly represent such writing.

Despite a span of thirty-seven years stretching the dates of their publication, the two novels are united by a common theme and genre. Set in an unspecified past in imaginary, yet suspiciously familiar universes, they both chronicle how in light of a decrease in the fertility rate, two geographically separate and culturally divergent communities engage in a collective struggle to subvert the effects of an inscrutable power enveloping their respective lands. In their concerted efforts to escape stagnation, the communities gradually become driven by one prevalent thought: to achieve a unified humanity. Clearly, *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* resonate with utopianism, which is in part due to their generic affinity. Both novels should be classified as *space fiction*, a genre Lessing has extolled as it not only “enables outrageous theories to be put forward in a format which renders them harmless” (Whittaker 1988: 15), but it also offers “parables for our self-improvement” (King 1989: 70).

While to date *The Marriages* has generated considerable critical interest (mostly clustered around the novel’s consanguinity with the *Canopus* series), *The Cleft* has so far been reviewed solely in newspapers.<sup>2</sup> Within the scholarship that exists on *The Marriages*, there can be distinguished two main types of approaches: reading the fable with the aid of psychoanalytic tools (Perrakis 1990; Brevet 2005; Waterman 2006) and viewing it in the context of feminist criticism (Gardiner 1984; Rowe 1994; Maslen 1994; Glover 2008). While the former tendency comprises insights into Lessing’s discussion of the individual/collective dichotomy, the latter concentrates on another tension that recurs in Lessing’s works — that of the *maternal* and the *paternal*.

Drawing on these two strands of research, this paper employs the cognitive notions of *schema* and *script* to demonstrate how the reader makes sense of the social message carried in *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* by rendering the novels as a cognitive script. It seeks to view the two works as a coherent vision of humanity, which transpires to be Lessing’s substantial contribution to the timeless debate on the concept of ideal society. Seen thus, the novels serve as instruments to, as Martha Nussbaum (1997) puts it, “cultivate humanity.” Nussbaum’s approach to perceiving literature as what Veronica Vasterling (2007: 82, 90) has astutely

<sup>1</sup> Much as Lessing refuses to acknowledge C.G. Jung’s impact on her writing, her *four-gated city* explicitly refers to Jung’s idea of wholeness.

<sup>2</sup> Remarkably, one of the reviews is that of Ursula K. Le Guin, a committed feminist, whose scathing commentaries on *The Cleft* are quoted in the paper’s concluding remarks.

dubbed “an ethics lab” — or an offline way to “extend one’s viewpoint and frame of reference, . . . clarify, adjust, and nuance cognitions, beliefs, and convictions one already possesses” — convincingly points to the transformative role of narratives. Arguably, Lessing’s space fiction novels in particular show enormous potential as ethical laboratories. As Gayle Greene (1994: 29) points out, “students see the world differently after reading Doris Lessing: reading her helps them develop critical and analytical tools, to discover their authority against the weight of tradition.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* aim at shaking the foundations of the reader’s existing knowledge. From the viewpoint of cognitive criticism, such an effect would be construed, in the words of Liberty Kohn (2008: 129), as “the ability to remodel people’s cognitive schema” and put new schemas in their place. Thus, it can be assumed that any narrative, and Lessing’s space fiction novels make no exception, stimulates readers’ experiential repertoires. First, it does so by modifying the central components of schemas, or, in John Stephens’ understanding (2011: 13–15), “aspects of memory, . . . knowledge structures, or patterns, which provide the framework for understanding concepts.” Alongside schema modification, it re-configures the story scripts,<sup>4</sup> or dynamic memory elements enabling “readers to anticipate how events will unfold,” into which schemas are drawn. As Joanna Gavins (2007: 22) further clarifies it, “this experiential knowledge helps us to negotiate our ways through all kinds of novel occurrences on a daily basis, expanding and adjusting our personal knowledge stores as we go.” Granted that through their foregrounding of utopian longing *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* evoke in the reader the HUMANITY schema, this paper explores the ways Lessing enforces her social project and, simultaneously, attempts to transform the reader’s cognitive schema of HUMANITY by means of cognitive scripting.

The paper suggests that in *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* the creation of humanity is portrayed as a gradual process which may be divided into five stages. These stages, as I will seek to demonstrate, stand for five script components which together represent a sequence of events that could be regarded as Lessing’s HUMANITY schema. First, in order to establish a ground to re-conceptualize the schema, Lessing portrays two contrasting communities. They exist side by side and vary from each other in terms of geographical and cultural aspects. Not until both communities unexpectedly fall into fertility stagnation are they pressed to put an end to their mutual ignorance and join forces in the face of a common problem. Their first encounter, or the second component of the script, leads to a fierce clash of cultures, which means a ritual rape and, as such, exemplifies an anguished struggle

<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in her study, Greene (1994: 30) specifies that “Lessing teaches people how to think not because she indoctrinates them with a particular philosophy, but because she teaches them to stand outside their culture and to realize that since culture is a set of conventional arrangements, it may be changed.”

<sup>4</sup> Noteworthy, *scripts* have recently proven to provide fertile ground for literary studies, especially the fields of ideology and children’s literature. See, for example, Stephens (2011) or Trites (2012).

for dominance of one group over the other. Following this traumatic initiatory experience, the communities — either represented by individuals (Al·Ith and Ben Ata in *The Marriages*) or acting as whole units (*The Cleft*) — engage in mutual explorations. At this point — the third component of the HUMANITY script emerges. Only when the process of discovering each other nears completion, can Lessing’s designed humanity be achieved (component four) and preserved (component five), chiefly by way of art. The fourth phase of the underlying script — the creation of humanity — thus emerges as the novels’ predominant theme. Further, through certain perceived regularities, the script embedded in *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* evolves into a fully-blown parable about humanity.

Drawing on Lessing’s five-component script of the HUMANITY schema, this paper considers two principal questions. To what extent does Lessing’s script correspond to M. Scott Peck’s well-established four-stage model<sup>5</sup> of community building? How does Lessing develop her vision of humanity stage by stage?

## 1. Two separate communities

The conceptual basis for Lessing’s project in *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* is provided through the juxtaposition of two contrasting communities. On the one hand, Lessing features a matriarchal, eco-friendly, organized society of females (Zone Three in *The Marriages*; the Clefts in *The Cleft*). On the other, she depicts its exact opposite — a masculine civilization of patriarchy, barbarity and chaos (Zone Four; the Monsters). According to Helen Merrick (2003: 249), such a tendency — to “critique and explore gender through . . . worlds which split men and women into separate societies” — is characteristic of science fiction of the 1980s. If that does not sound sufficiently stereotypical, Lessing goes a step further. She deliberately exploits the sharp division into the superior (Zone Three and the Clefts) and the inferior (Zone Four and the Monsters) through emblematic spatial organization. The female dominated worlds, nestled among picturesque mountainous settings,<sup>6</sup> which bear a resemblance to uto-

<sup>5</sup> In his 1987 book entitled *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, psychiatrist M. Scott Peck postulates that community formation goes through four main phases: “pseudocommunity, chaos, emptiness and community.” With its set of unspoken conventions and deliberate avoidance of potential conflicts and antagonisms, pseudocommunity feels “polite, inauthentic, boring, sterile, and unproductive.” It is followed by two transitory phases: chaos and emptiness. While the stage of chaos is “the natural result of lifting the group façade of civility and discovering genuine differences,” the stage of emptiness is defined as “a time when the members work to empty themselves of everything that stands between them and community.” Only when groups learn to respect individual and group differences, and communicate authentically, can community be formed. All the quotations in this footnote have been taken from <http://evelynrodriguez.typepad.com/footnotes/2010/11/stages-of-community-building-by-m-scott-peck.html>.

<sup>6</sup> While the Clefts live in “warm, sandy and dry” caves “high in the rocks” (*Cleft*, 8), the Zone Three realm stretches over a “central plateau where so many towns are situated” (*Marriages*, 23).

pian paradises, epitomize the conceptual metaphor PROSPERITY IS UP. By contrast, the male dominated worlds — the Monsters' village dotted with huts made of "reed that grew thick in the marshes" (*Cleft*, 51) and Zone Four's medieval state "crowded with forts and encampments" (*Marriages*, 22), both of them located in lower, barren lands — embody the metaphor POVERTY IS DOWN. In addition to being spatially disconnected, the two communities are separated by invisible borders which the inhabitants of respective realms instinctively do not dare do cross, either for fear of the unknown (*The Cleft*) or for fear of being infected by polluted air hovering over the border (*The Marriages*): "the inhabitants of Zone Three, straying near the frontier, or approaching, found themselves afflicted with repugnance, or at least by an antipathy" (*Marriages*, 4). At this stage it is apparent that, rather than blindly recreating Peck's pseudocommunity, Lessing chooses to first inspect closely how and if the female and male dominated worlds could exist on their own.

With restricted access to each other, the two gender groups naturally develop two independent cultures. The Clefts and Zone Three (ZT) showcase egalitarian societies, although they bear some marks of hierarchization: ZT is ruled by queen Al-Ith, and the top echelons of the Clefts' society are occupied by the Old Shes, authoritative, somnolent females. Equality promoted within both communities means that every citizen has a different role to perform: depending on their abilities, citizens work as "the Cleft Watcher, the Fish Catcher or the Net Maker" (in *The Cleft*) and "the Chronicler, the song-maker or the story-teller" in Zone Three. The Clefts appear to have two contradictory natures: if initially they come across as passive and "unused to fighting or even aggression" creatures who "only lazed, yawned and swam a little and shook their long hair out over their shoulders to dry" (*Cleft*, 22, 44), then at the moment the first Monster is born into their community, they turn into cruel mothers who resort to murder. In contrast, Al-Ith's androgynous society remains almost intact in the course of the novel. The realm of Zone Three could humorously be likened to the Hippie subculture of the 1960s: it is made up of eco-friendly, peace-loving inhabitants who consume "lumpy fruits sheathed in paper leaves" (*Marriages*, 14), communicate with animals, routinely swap sexual partners, don simple clothes and are all on first name terms. What, however, spoils this idyllic image is an air of aloofness and emotional coolness that permeates the land: "as individuals we do not expect to weep, wail, suffer. Sorrow at bereavement, at personal loss, has become formalized, ritualized" (*Marriages*, 5).

As opposed to the egalitarian worlds of matriarchy, Zone Four and the Monsters' community evoke in the reader's mind the images of atavistic features. Dependent on the bigoted King Ben Ata, "large, blond, muscular from continuing campaigning" (*Marriages*, 28), and the social stratification that privileges a large and useless army of male chauvinists enslaved by the ideology of militarism, Zone Four bears a striking resemblance to the feudal society of medieval Europe. Militarism pervades all dimensions of life in the realm. It not only reduces women to sexual objects and housewives taking care of their dilapidated households while their husbands remain

in a constant state of combat readiness but it also affects the language in the realm (limited to commands and curses) and severely curtails freedom through enforcement of absurd laws: for instance, those who “gather clouds,” that is, look up at glorious Zone Three, are punished by “putting weights on their heads” (*Marriages*, 43).

Unlike Zone Four, the organization of the Monsters’ village bears no signs of hierarchy until the leadership of Horsa; nor does it pursue any strict policies. Every Monster, or Squirt, carries out one of the two functions: raising newborn babies or providing food and accommodation. Having been rescued from the Clefts by eagles, and fed by deer, “the children of the Eagle and the deer” (*Cleft*, 36–37), as they tend to call themselves, simplistically categorize their world into allies (animals) and mortal enemies (the Clefts). In contrast to the slobbering Clefts, they are portrayed as an ingenious and adventurous community which invents new tools and wanders “long distances into forests” (*Cleft*, 41).

## 2. First encounters

Lessing outlines the first component of the HUMANITY script by demarcating clear-cut boundaries between the matriarchal and patriarchal worlds. Now that both gender groups have to grapple with a decline in the birth rate, the artificial barriers between them are to be removed. Apparently, as David Waterman (2006) has it, “the problem of fertility does not respect borders.” In *The Marriages*, Al·Ith and Ben Ata receive an order from the mysterious Providers to unite in a marriage as the remedy for the falling “birth rate among humans and animals and a sense of sadness and stagnation enveloping” (Waterman 2006) Zones Three and Four. In *The Cleft*, the first encounter of the Clefts and the Monsters, or the second component of Lessing’s script, is prompted by more natural circumstances: it results from human curiosity and the instinct of reproduction. Coincidentally, in both novels stage two of the script exhibits observable regularities. It follows a three-step scenario: (1) kidnapping or military escort; (2) sexual assault; (3) expression of remorse.

In *The Cleft*, the phase of kidnapping is portrayed as abrupt and particularly savage, with a “taller. . . , much larger, but not stronger” Cleft left at the mercy of “four tough, well-muscled” (*Cleft*, 45), sexually aroused Monsters. In *The Marriages*, it proceeds in a slightly more civilized manner. Al·Ith, under the escort of ill-mannered troops of Zone Four, comes to realize that “she is not so much going to meet the king as being brought to meet the king, which serves to reinforce her disgust with Zone Four” (Waterman 2006). Meeting the tough, macho type Ben Ata only fuels her fear further. In a similar vein, Al·Ith, clad in sombre dark clothes and a veil emphasizing her spiritual mourning, “is not at all what Ben Ata expected as the figure of a queen” (Waterman 2006). Prejudiced and hostile, the two protagonists are left alone within the confines of a pavilion which serves as a space to reconcile differences and consummate marriage. Of these “two prisoners who had

nothing in common but their incarceration" (*Marriages*, 29), Ben Ata is the one who feels obliged to obey one of Zone Four's chauvinistic rules: to hunt and take possession of his *prey*. Having first initiated a psychological chase, he makes sure the taming of the extravagant Al·Ith is brutish and short: "Then he turned, teeth gritted, strode across to her, picked her up, and threw her on the couch. . . thrust himself into her, and accomplished his task in half a dozen swift movements" (*Marriages*, 33). This ritual rape, as Jayne A. Glover (2008: 131) affirms, exemplifies "a need for power and dominance" and "illustrates the prevailing social structure." It seems doubtful, however, that such a post-structuralist reading could apply to the mass rape scene in *The Cleft*. The kidnapped Cleft, surrounded by a large group of Monsters "of all sizes . . . all of them naked and with their squirts pointed at her" (*Cleft*, 46–47), faces the inevitable: "And now instincts that had ranged free and untrammelled. . . spoke all at once. . . and one of the captors threw down this soft, squirming female, and in a moment had his squirt inside her. . . The mass rape went on." Rather than representing a mere struggle for dominance, this passage illuminates both the Monsters' desperate attempt to challenge the Clefts' unwritten hegemony and, more importantly, an emotional outlet of their carnal needs.

Even though the first encounters between the two separate worlds in *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* end in a casual rape, in the first place they mark turning points in women-men relations, as evidenced in phase three of the second component of the script, which I tentatively call "a regretful phase." The Monsters — as they gradually become aware of having committed the cold-blooded murder — instinctively feel shame and avoid looking at their victim "lying there on the grass by the river — dirty, smeared, smelling bad of their excretions" (*Cleft*, 48). Although they erase the infamous event from historical records, it will ever haunt them and become a crucial lesson to learn. Similarly, while Al·Ith, confused and amazed, seems to be "interested in a totally unsuspected phenomenon," the perpetrator Ben Ata unexpectedly, and contrary to his socially constructed self, becomes stricken with remorse. He is depicted as embarrassed and distressed, feelings which manifest themselves in an unusual gentleness with which Ben Ata "twitched her dress down again and removed his hand from her mouth" (*Marriages*, 33).

### 3. Reconciling differences

By rendering the first unsuccessful encounters as ritual rapes, Lessing intimates that the process of mutual exploration, that is, the third component of the HUMANITY script, in *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* will be neither pleasant nor short-lasting. Indeed, as Maslen (1994: 35) notes, "Lessing portrays evolution as painful."

At first glance, numerous disparities that exist between the Clefts and the Monsters create impassable barriers. If differences in appearance and language (the Monsters use a limited, technically oriented vocabulary; the Clefts employ high-concept

words) ultimately allow the two communities to complement each other, then their mutually exclusive mentalities bring about the opposite effect. Evidently, the recurring accusations leveled by the females against the males — such as “How few we are, how easily we die,” “Don’t you care about us?,” “You want to kill them, you want to kill our children” or “Look at us. There is not a filled womb in any of us” — show two conflicting approaches to life. The overbearing Clefts are mostly concerned about a “continuation of race” (*Cleft*, 212), whereas the Monsters exhibit utter selfishness and carelessness, and “think of anything but their squirts” (*Cleft*, 156) and new expeditions. Driven by contradictory impulses, the two groups, nevertheless, become possessed by one prevalent thought: to establish a vibrant community which demonstrates solidarity in view of catastrophic events (such as the *Noise* wind), holds common celebrations and, above all, is founded on mutual affection.

While *The Cleft* uncovers a sequence of spaces of negotiation involving whole communities, *The Marriages* features two principal actors, Al·Ith and Ben Ata, who initiate a dialogue between Zone Three and Zone Four. Confined to the pavilion of Zone Four’s palace, their physical room for negotiation, the protagonists take part in a “compulsory experiment” (Waterman 2006). Throughout phase three of the HUMANITY script, they have to play several different roles. Initially, as prisoners, lovers and debaters, Al·Ith and Ben Ata form one team. Once Al·Ith has to return to Zone Three and abandon her spouse she has grown to love, the protagonists, either as philosophers, outcasts or mediators, are expected to act on their own.

As lovers, Ben Ata and Al·Ith explore each other’s body and sexuality. The queen, formerly the embodiment of “refining sensitivity” (*Marriages*, 34, 96) and gender equality, discovers the “ecstasies of submission” and “sinks into passion and carnality.” On the contrary, Ben Ata, before Al·Ith’s arrival treating women as objects, turns into a tender lover. Representing different cultural backgrounds, the protagonists at first prove incapable of creating a common ideological ground for discussion. Essentially, it is Al·Ith, an envoy from the technologically and socially superior land, who prevails in the debate. Nonetheless, even she ultimately renounces some of her personal beliefs (e.g., in accordance with Zone Four’s convention, she “puts her hair into matronly braids,” *Marriages*, 92) and re-configures her hitherto perception of reality (paradoxically, Zone Three is too prosperous). Likewise, Ben Ata discerns “the deprivation of his people clearly” (*Marriages*, 157) and, for example, becomes sympathetic towards animals, which cues his radical internal transformation.

Until their moment of parting, Ben Ata and Al·Ith had worked towards oneness through concerted efforts; now they must act as individuals. As such, they are initially portrayed as philosophers deliberating in solitude. Under the queen’s influence, the savage king confronts his inglorious past: he “falls into melancholy” and “marvels at . . . his dead life” imbued with “the feel of the captured girls” (*Marriages*, 95, 124). Al·Ith’s philosophical reflections go beyond the personal. Pondering the significance of hazy and inscrutable Zone Two, she arrives at two main conclusions. First, she becomes aware of inter-zone dependence:

“what goes on in one zone affects the others” (*Marriages*, 142). This observation, in turn, prompts her to invent an idea of home as a place that “integrates diverse elements into a whole” (Waterman 2006), that espouses oneness over differences. At this stage, as Waterman (2006) notices, the central characters “can be described as schizophrenic” outcasts. Suspended between zones, they face alienation and experience identity crises. Consider Al·Ith, who, for all gained insight, at the same time “loses a great deal of her sense of belonging” (Waterman 2006). As a new-comer from the androgynous Zone Three, she feels out of place in Zone Four. On the other hand, in her own realm she receives a frosty welcome of an undesired exile. Socially excluded but spiritually enriched, Ben Ata and Al·Ith finally come to the point on their path of self-discovery at which they realize that “the future of humanity depends on their ability to make a whole of their respective zones” (Waterman 2006). As a mediator, “Al·Ith must break down in order to break through — she must descend to Zone Four before she can ascend to Zone Two” (Greene 1994: 26). As soon as her mission to enlighten and guide Ben Ata comes to an end, the responsibility to unite zones is handed over to the king who receives the order to marry Vashsi, the queen of Zone Five, and rejuvenate her impoverished land.

This dynamic evolution, from selfish lovers to selfless mediators, or from the animalistic to the therapeutic, marks a gradual transition period during which Al·Ith and Ben Ata strive to instill harmony between their respective zones. The third component of the HUMANITY script in *The Marriages*, and by extension — in *The Cleft*, can thus be seen as the in-between phase, as a blend of Peck's three stages — pseudocommunity, chaos and emptiness — preceding the establishment of community. Pseudocommunity in Lessing's rendition entails the creation of a seemingly peaceful space to confront and reconcile differences. The phases that follow — chaos and emptiness — are best reflected in *The Marriages* by the example of the protagonists' internal conflicts, their initial cognitive dissonance, reciprocal influences and their ultimate abandonment of a self-centred ego at the expense of, as Brevet (2005: 35) puts it, “the universal experience of ego-less ‘we’.”

#### 4. Toward achieving and preserving humanity

If the third stage — mutual explorations — demonstrates how the feminine and masculine communities negotiate a peaceful coexistence in a shared physical space, the fourth stage, or the fourth component of Lessing's HUMANITY script, illustrates the way the two groups — free from deep-seated prejudices — create a more unified humanity out of formerly scattered elements. Indisputably, rather than reinforcing the “us” versus “them” framework, Lessing “insists there is only us” (Waterman 2006).

In *The Marriages*, Arusi, Ben Ata and Al·Ith's son (with his father's body and his mother's eyes), is the most tangible symbol of "the union between Zone Three and Four" (Glover 2008). Both realms, and Zone Four in particular, remake their identities. Enlightened Ben Ata introduces "new spirits" (*Marriages*, 218) in his kingdom: he eradicates militarism, puts a halt to sex segregation and repeals absurd laws (e.g., the ban on gathering clouds). From the perspective of Zone Three, whose identity was previously built on "smugness, complacency, provinciality" (Greene 1994: 179), a continuous movement of people from one zone to another allows Zone Three to ripple with new possibilities and results in its spiritual growth. Another sign of the newly established order is a transformation of the women of Zone Four from a despised minority "imitating the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition" (Showalter 1986: 13) into the group with a strong identity, or, in Showalter's terms, "the female." Finally, the emergence of Zone Five at the end of the novel ensures a continuation of the mission undertaken by Al·Ith. Inevitably, the achievement of humanity also leads to the sting of otherness by some individuals<sup>7</sup> (Al·Ith, her sister and Jarnti, Ben Ata's general).

In *The Cleft*, the creation of a more unified humanity from the very outset involves whole communities and results from revolutionary and evolutionary changes. First of all, an ideological rift between the young Clefts and the despotic Old Shes leads to a bloody battle between the two camps, which frees the Clefts from the narrow confines of the Old She order and, more importantly, enables them to renew ties with the Monsters. Following the birth of the First One, a genetic cross between the Clefts and the Monsters, this process of integration gradually embraces increasingly larger social entities: there is mention of couples, families and, finally, "the leaders of different communities" (*Cleft*, 172). Nonetheless, it is doubtless that the sudden eruption of the Cleft, "a deep well or pit, full of bones," full of "powdered bones of so many generations" (*Cleft*, 234, 253), a reminder of the Clefts' infamous past, that provides the considerable momentum needed to reunify the two communities and, above all, marks a new beginning for both groups. Indeed, as the novel closes, the reader learns that "the explosion of the Cleft is both the end of a tale and the beginning of the next" (*Cleft*, 260).

Clearly, the fourth component of the HUMANITY script in *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* corresponds to Peck's "authentic community." However, where Peck (1987) argues that a sustaining community "requires the developmental maturity of the individuals" (<http://evelynrodriguez.typepad.com/footnotes/2010/11/stages-of-community-building-by-m-scott-peck.html>), Lessing avoids such sweeping conclusions by proposing to preserve humanity through art (memory) and, thus, introducing the fifth component of her script. Even if "art falsifies" (Whittaker 1988: 105), it has the ability to maintain, through visual (paintings) and verbal

<sup>7</sup> As Whittaker (1988: 12) argues, in Lessing "breakdown and madness can be seen as states of great potential."

(records, songs) modes of expressions cumulatively making a myth, the growth of humanity. As one of the characters in *The Marriages* eloquently puts it, “describing, we become” (*Marriages*, 198).

## Conclusion

When put together, *The Marriages* and *The Cleft* present a coherent vision of humanity, which is built on a five-component cognitive script drawn into the HUMANITY schema. Of the five phases therein embraced, it is only the third (reconciling differences) and fourth (achieving humanity) that draw a close parallel to Peck's model. Lessing's script, then, not only seems to have a far greater scope, but it also helps the reader to gain a deeper appreciation of the dynamicity behind the process of community formation. In her quest for the *four-gated city*, Lessing both incorporates her own innovative ideas and refers to some prevailing theories, most notably “the oneness of each with all found in Sufism” (Greene 1994: 21), “Marxism with its unifying vision” (Whittaker 1988: 5, 10) and Jung's concept of individuation. Lessing feels no affinity with approaches espousing radical social changes. Instead, she opts for “re-forming society in movement and change” (Greene 1994: 188). Firstly, by juxtaposing two contrasting worlds — a feminine utopia and a masculine dystopia — she creates a basis for reconceptualization. Interestingly, in a review published in *The Guardian*, Ursula K. Le Guin (2007) discredits this preliminary framework on the grounds that it is based on reductive principles. As she remarks, in *The Cleft* and other Lessing's space fiction stories, “anatomy is destiny, gender is an absolute binary, men achieve, women nag; and free will is not an option” (Le Guin 2007). Nonetheless, far from perpetuating such stereotypes, Lessing's intention is to treat clear-cut boundaries between the sexes allegorically<sup>8</sup> in order to both investigate the roots of gender role differentiation and contest the embodied dominant GENDER schema.<sup>9</sup> In an attempt to achieve the latter goal, she invites the reader to deconstruct the patriarchy of Zone Four (in *The Marriages*) and the matriarchy of the Clefts (in *The Cleft*), which indicates that, although, with the passing of time, the author's attitude to gender may have changed, her social commitment goes a long way beyond the question of gender binaries. Invariably, Lessing firmly believes in “the breaking of forms and transgressing boundaries” (Greene 1994: 178) as a way to gain a more universal view of the world, a process which could be described as a shift from the socially constructed self to selfhood favouring a trans-social standpoint. All in all, she underscores the need to create a new identity for achieved humanity, an identity which would “value connectedness and autonomy” (Greene 1994: 22).

<sup>8</sup> Roberta Rubenstein (2008: 6), on her part, suggests to look at *The Cleft* as “parody.”

<sup>9</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing that out.

## References

- Brevet, A.-L. 2005. "Flights of memory: Digression and allusion in Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*." *Etudes Britanniques Contemporaines* 29. 25–40.
- Gardiner, J.K. 1984. "Gender, values, and Lessing's cats." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 3. 1/2. 111–124.
- Gavins, J. 2007. *Text World Theory: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Glover, J.A. 2008. "A Complex and Delicate Web." <http://eprints.ru.ac.za/1001/01/Glover-PhD-2008.pdf>. 20 October 2012.
- Greene, G. 1994. *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- King, J. 1989. *Doris Lessing*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Kohn, L. 2008. "Objects and literary emotion: Memory and phenomena in cognitive poetics." *Neohelicon* 1. 121–133.
- Le Guin, U.K. 2007. "Saved by a Squirt." <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/feb/10/fiction.dorislessing>. 6 November 2012.
- Lessing, D. 1980. *The Marriages between Zones Three, Four, and Five*. London: Granada.
- Lessing, D. 2007. *The Cleft*. London: Fourth Estate/Harper Collins.
- Maslen, E. 1994. *Doris Lessing*. London: Northcote Press.
- Merrick, H. 2003. "Gender in Science Fiction." In: James, E. and F. Mendlesohn (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 241–252.
- Nussbaum, M. 1997. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Peck, M.S. 1987. *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Peck, M.S. 2010. "Stages of Community Building by M. Scott Peck." <http://evelynrodriguez.ty-pepad.com/footnotes/2010/11/stages-of-community-building-by-m-scott-peck.html>. 15 October 2012.
- Perrakis, P.S. 1990. "The marriage of inner and outer space in Doris Lessing's *Shikasta*." *Science Fiction Studies* 17.2. 221–238.
- Rowe, M.M. 1994. *Dreaming Fathers, Practical Mothers, and Lessing's Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Rubenstein, R. 2008. "The Cleft by Doris Lessing." *The Women's Review of Books* 25.2. 5–6.
- Schank, R.C. and R. Abelson. 1977. *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Showalter, E. 1986. "A Literature of Their Own." In: Eagleton, M. (ed.) *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 11–15.
- Stephens, J. 2011. "Schemas and Scripts: Cognitive Instruments and the Representation of Cultural Diversity in Children's Literature." In: Mallan, K. and C. Bradford (eds.) *Contemporary Children's Literature and Film*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 12–35.
- Trites, R.S. 2012. "Growth in adolescent literature: Metaphors, scripts, and cognitive narratology." *International Research in Children's Literature* 5.1. 64–80.
- Vasterling, V. 2007. "Cognitive theory and phenomenology in Arendt's and Nussbaum's work on narrative." *Human Studies* 30.2. 79–95.
- Waterman, D. 2006. "The Space of Belonging: Alienation in Doris Lessing's *The Marriages between Zones Three, Four, and Five*." <http://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/waterman.htm>. 1 November 2012.
- Whittaker, R. 1988. *Doris Lessing*. London: Macmillan.