

made in Washington, and MacArthur had neither responsibility nor authority for the actions outside his area that determined in the overall strategic sense what he could do within his area. In Korea all of this was changed, at least in MacArthur's eyes. He was in command of the entire theatre and of all forces in it, army, navy, and air, and he was in command not only of a theatre of war but of an entire war itself. What had not changed in his view, except for the scope of the task, was the classic mission of the commander: destruction of the enemy forces, whoever they might be. What also had not changed for him were the factors that would achieve that mission, determined and aggressive troops, well led and fully supported. And with a lifetime of training behind him, Douglas MacArthur could hardly have doubted that as theatre commander it was his personal mission and duty to furnish or do all in his power to furnish that leadership and support.

But many things had changed in warfare, weapons, and nations, and from his words we must question whether Douglas MacArthur ever recognized that at the Yalu River he was confronted by much more than the armies of Communist China.

From the Veld

ELIZABETH STILLE

AFRICAN STORIES, by Doris Lessing.
Simon and Schuster. \$7.95.

"All these stories have in common that they are set in Africa, but that is all they have in common," Doris Lessing notes in her preface. That is "all"—but the country and its people color every story nonetheless. Even the disintegration of a ménage à trois, a long-standing accommodation between two brothers and the wife of one, seems harsher and more impersonal because we feel so keenly the remoteness of the *trois* from the rest of their kind or from any other frame of reference. In *Colette*, the best of writers at catching the looks, the words, the gestures, and the accidents that alter an emotional alliance, he, he, and



Urgent: Won't you help Eugenia?

EUGENIA VENTURANZA D. FERRER, FILIPINA, AGE 8. One of five children. Father dead. Malaria. Mother predisposed to TB. Eugenia helps peddle vegetables when not in school. Mother walks many miles each working day from 4:30 A.M. to late at night. Earns less than 33¢ a day. Not enough to feed family regularly. Miss many meals. Only coffee for breakfast. Children in rags. Live in shack. Floor bamboo. Roof woven grass. Mother sick with despair for children she cannot feed and clothe adequately. Help to Eugenia means help to whole family.

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she come together out of a lively city—friends, work, distractions. In Doris Lessing's "Winter in July" there's nothing but the three of them, the endless veld, and the silent blacks all around. Yet this lovely, lucid story displays one of the author's many strengths: she is tough-minded and subtle about what goes on between he and she. And much of her London-based writing deals with its variations.

As for the injustices in her home country, Rhodesia, now so insistently in the news, Mrs. Lessing writes: "If people had been prepared to listen, two decades earlier, to the small, but shrill-enough, voices crying out for the world's attention, perhaps the present suffering in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia could have been prevented. Britain, who is responsible, became conscious of her responsibility too late; and now the tragedy must play itself slowly out."

DORIS LESSING's own voice was one of the clearest. Yet she rarely tackles the problem straight on, and when she does, as in the long story "Hunger," the result, as she concedes, is not happy. She does not know in her bones what it's like to be a kraal boy who makes his way to the big city. The Rhodesians she does know intimately (or knew in her Rhodesian childhood) are the white settlers, particularly the farmers. These seem to have the virtues and vices one associates with the men who settled the American West: they are tough, self-reliant, and obsessed by their will to tame a harsh land and make it flourish. The job requires backbreaking labor, and in their single-minded concentration on it they are unable to consider the natives in other than utilitarian terms.

Doris Lessing sees the "cruelties of the white man towards the black man" as "only one aspect of the atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun." This terrible limitedness is what all but a few of her stories convey, usually only implicitly and incidentally. But in one faintly Maughamish and melodramatic story, "Leopard' George," it is the whole thing. A hard-driving estate owner maintains with his workers

through their headman, old Smoke, a feudal relationship that works with apparent smoothness so long as its rules are carefully observed. George has no wife, to the consternation of his white neighbors. It is only after years of mystification that his black mistress makes them suddenly aware of her existence. George sends her away immediately. But when a successor presents herself, is accepted, and turns out to be Smoke's dissatisfied young wife, George's smooth-running establishment falls apart.

"LEOPARD' GEORGE" represents whatever tribute can still be paid to the hardy Old Settler—a crude fellow, but with the virtues of his defects. More contemporary, more like the rest of us, and therefore more fit for our sympathy and our contempt, are the young civil-service couple in "A Home for the Highland Cattle" who have emigrated from England searching for Lebensraum and a good life, bringing along their firm but untested notions of progress and justice. Their dreams of spacious, gracious living are reduced to a squalid two-room sublet in a warren of apartments filled with tenants who are obsessed with not being taken advantage of by overworked black servants. The wife's attempts to intervene on behalf of a fifteen-year-old slavey who has been made pregnant by her own "boy" win her the hostility of her neighbors, and her generosity to the "boy" himself only results in his arrest. But by that time she has moved away and doesn't even know what her good intentions have come to.

"A Home for the Highland Cattle" is clearly one of the latest of these thirty undated stories. Its many-sidedness proclaims that it was written years after Doris Lessing had left Rhodesia, acquired a knowledge of the world, and learned to dig deeper and deeper into herself to turn knowledge into understanding. What are surely earlier stories are crude by comparison—uncut stones that have not been made to catch the light. But there are no fake stones here. Doris Lessing is intelligent and sternly honest with herself. She has character as well as talent. And growing up in Rhodesia, despite the difficulties, has contributed to both.

Unoriginal Sin

ANATOLE BROYARD

THE NIGHTCLERK, by Stephen Schneck. Grove. \$4.95.

Emerging from a brothel, Balzac is said to have exclaimed, "I've lost a book!" "No, man, no," Stephen Schneck would say. "Write it down! Write it down!" He has done so in *Nightclerk*, the latest brickbat flung by the Free Speech Movement.

For all its pop modernity, *Nightclerk* reminds me of the boxing broadcasts of my childhood: "A left, a right, another smashing left," etc., when you know they're just waltzing around in a clinch. In this "adjectival insistence on the inexpressible," as F. R. Leavis put it, the syntactic orgy usually outstrips the sexual, and the prose breathes even harder than the protagonists.

"Man, you don't understand!" I can hear the hip critics expostulating. "Like this isn't pornography, man—it's *parody*! Dig?" But I don't dig. Since most pornography is already parody—of sex, people, literature—how can you parody it again? Are two negatives supposed to add up to a positive? If there is a difference, it is only that pornographic parodies, as opposed to the other kind, have literary pretensions. Kafka, Beckett, Genêt, and Joyce are supposed to be watching the action through the one-way mirror on the wall. Schneck's central character is a nightclerk named Blight, who weighs 617 pounds. (He's a nightclerk, see: he deals in room-service dreams; and the hotel, like the hotel is the universe, like in that other tremendous parody, *Grand Hotel*.) Blight rents out his wife, Katy, whom he discovered in a mental hospital (a hip novel without a mental hospital is like a martini without an olive), and she methodically acts out the fantasies of her customers, who all require a full-scale production of their perversions. And that's about it, because plot and stuff like that are strictly for hacks.

At least you can say this much in extenuation of Schneck: none of his sins is original. *Nightclerk's* fashionably schizy structure is right out of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*.