



# Books

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## LITERARY HORIZONS

### Wife, Mother, and Rebel

A COUPLE of years ago I reviewed with enthusiasm a novel by Doris Lessing called *The Golden Notebook* (SR, June 30, 1962). It is a highly complex novel, using an uncommon form to reveal the character and present the experiences of a woman named Anna Wulf, whom it shows as a young woman growing up in Africa, as a radical, as a novelist, and as a seeker after love. An ambitious novel, it was not, I felt, a complete success; but it was what I called "an impressive try." "Few persons," I wrote, "could bring to the job greater resources than Mrs. Lessing: a really imposing intelligence, a fine sensibility, and literary skill of a high order."

In an interview in October 1963 with Roy Newquist (whose collection of interviews, *Counterpoint*, I reviewed in SR, Oct. 31) Mrs. Lessing, when asked what she was working on, said:

I'm writing volumes four and five of a series I'm calling *Children of Violence*. I planned this out twelve years ago, and I've finished the first three. The idea is to write about people like myself, people my age who are born out of wars and who have lived through them, the framework of lives in conflict. I think the title explains what I essentially want to say. I want to explain what it is like to be a human being in a century when you open your eyes on war and on human beings disliking other human beings. I was brought up in Central Africa, which means that I was a member of the white minority pitted against a black majority that was abominably treated and still is.

The first two novels of the series, *Martha Quest* and *A Proper Marriage*, which were published separately in England in the early Fifties, have now been brought together for American publication in a single volume, which uses the general title *Children of Violence* (Simon & Schuster, \$7.50). The other three novels, at least one of which has appeared in England, will, I take it, be gathered in a companion volume.

*The Golden Notebook* and *Children of Violence* have certain things in common: the two heroines, Anna Wulf and Martha Quest, are the same age; both have spent formative years in Africa; both are attracted to Communism. In all these respects they are like Mrs. Lessing. On the other hand, there are striking differences in the author's approach to the material. Anna, as a mature woman, describes and discusses various phases of her life. Martha is portrayed objectively from adolescence to her early twenties. Although she permits herself to adopt any point of view she wants to, Mrs. Lessing usually takes the position Henry James recommended: looking over the heroine's shoulder. She shows us what Martha sees, but she also enters into Martha's consciousness and tells what she thinks and how she feels.

*Martha Quest* is the story of a rebel, of a girl breaking away from her parents, her indolent, self-protective father and her bossy and conventional mother. Her first step is to leave her parents' home in the country and get a job in a nearby city. The radical movement immediately attracts her—the time is the middle Thirties—but before she becomes more than superficially acquainted with it, she has fallen in with the local fast set and learned how to get along with lots of liquor and very little sleep. After a certain amount of experimentation, she marries one of her crowd, Douglas Knowell.

The second novel, ironically called *A Proper Marriage*, records the story of Martha's brief and unhappy marital adventure. She has a daughter, Caroline, but postpones having another child which her husband wants. World War II begins, and Douglas enlists in the army, but is discharged because he has an ulcer. By then Martha has been drawn close to the Communist Party, and is romantically involved with one of her comrades. Returned to his civilian job, Douglas buys a big house and hires the four or five Negro servants appropri-

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ate to his station in life. This is one more barrier between husband and wife, and at last Martha leaves.

Martha is a most intense young woman, and it is Mrs. Lessing's effective rendering of this intensity that makes the book so impressive. It is easy, for instance, for a writer to take adolescent rebelliousness for granted, but Mrs. Lessing knows how poignant an experience it may be for the adolescent in question. Martha is not one for moderation, whether she is drinking brandy or choosing a political party. The mild distaste she at first feels for her husband soon becomes a passionate rejection. Mrs. Lessing makes no attempt to conceal Martha's faults: she is impulsive, arbitrary, difficult. But she is also honest, resolute, and brave, and quite incapable of conforming to the standards that her mother, her husband, and her husband's mother try to impose upon her.

Mrs. Lessing succeeds in rendering

the variety of Martha's experiences. For a time she is swept into the supposedly gay life of the Sports Club: "No one was particularly hungry. But an inertia had settled on them, they could not bear to go to bed, and all around the stalls were ranks of cars filled with people similarly afflicted. It was four in the morning, neither day nor night; the lights of the stalls glimmered weakly; the black waiters stood yawning over their trays, or beside the stoves; and half the youth of the town ate and drank, watching the sky for that first spear of red light which would release them, so that they might go to bed, saying they had been up all night." Martha is not deceived by this ritualistic gaiety even while she briefly feels its spell: "She was thinking that at any moment during the last evening, had she been asked, she would have replied that she was bored; yet, as she looked back on it, her nerves responded with a twinge of excitement. She knew that the coming evening would be as barren, and yet she could not think of it without pleasure."

Such contradictions, as one might expect, are frequent in Martha, and Mrs. Lessing does not ignore or obscure them. She deals quite magnificently with Martha's joys and sorrows in pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. Quick to embrace an unpopular political cause, Martha is also quick to see the weaknesses in her position. As in *The Golden Notebook*, Mrs. Lessing is portraying a modern woman in all her complexity. In these two novels taken by themselves she has not quite reached the heights she reached in *Notebook*, but I shall not be surprised if, when the series is completed, it seems the more powerful achievement. —GRANVILLE HICKS.

**FRAZER YOUNG'S  
LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1110**

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1110 will be found in the next issue.

U GHKZ NFGDPVUM ZBY NVAOK

VAY UPP - KBHEEPPYO, ZUPP U

BVCY V SFFO BVMO.

KXUEZ

**Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1109**

Everybody wants to be somebody:  
nobody wants to grow. —GOETHE.

## Destruction in a Little Black Book



—Seymour Linden.

**John Henry Faulk—he believed in the Bill of Rights.**

*Fear on Trial*, by John Henry Faulk (Simon & Schuster. 398 pp. \$6.50), recounts one man's ordeal in the fight against the "political blackmail" of blacklisting in radio and television. Gilbert Selles was formerly radio and TV columnist for SR.

By GILBERT SELDES

A PROGRAM dated April 25, 1946, named 'John Faulk' as a scheduled entertainer (with identified Communist Earl Robinson and two non-Communists) under the auspices of the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions (officially designated a Communist front, and predecessor of the Progressive Citizens of America)."

This is one of seven items about Mr. Faulk circulated ten years later to executives in various fields of entertainment. A short time after, Mr. Faulk lost his job as a broadcaster for CBS.

The man responsible for the wording of this item was Paul Milton, and in the suit which Faulk brought against AWARE, Inc., which sent it out, Milton testified under oath that as chairman of AWARE's information committee, he

knew when he wrote (or rewrote) these words that:

The occasion was a salute to the United Nations on its first anniversary.

Among the sponsors were the American Association for the United Nations, the American Association of University Women, the American Bar Association, the Young Men's Christian Association.

The event was carried by CBS.

The Progressive Citizens of America was a liberal, not a Communist-front organization, and the phrase "officially designated Communist front" was meaningless since no such official designation existed.

The "two non-Communists" on the program were Edward Stettinius, then Secretary of State, and Trygve Lie.

Milton also testified that he had "deliberately and purposefully omitted" what he had known and that his aim was to attack and damage Faulk because, in collaboration with other distinguished members of his union, AFTRA, Faulk had condemned the practice of blacklisting performers. This anti-Communist group had denounced *Red Channels* and the AWARE bulletins and had, indeed, organized the campaign that eventually brought in Charles Collingwood as president, Orson Bean as first vice-president, and Faulk as second vice-president of the union's New York local.

*Fear on Trial* is Faulk's account of something more than his own ordeal. It brings back a time when the networks in all their might, the advertising agencies with all their jugglery of public sentiment, hundreds of star entertainers, and some of our most powerful industries were all intimidated by the operator of a few supermarkets in upstate New York who threatened to boycott manufacturers if actors listed in the AWARE bulletins were not dropped from the programs they sponsored.

FAULK was not the best-known of the victims and certainly was not the richest—he didn't have and couldn't raise enough money to pay Louis Nizer's pretrial expenses (but Edward R. Murrow heard of this and instantly supplied what was needed). But he was, one gathers, a reasonably liberal-minded man who didn't like political blackmail of any kind and seemed to believe that the Bill of Rights means exactly what it says. On that moderate basis he did what the others had not done: he went to court. Reading his report, I got the impression that he