

CHAPTER - III
THE SUN BETWEEN THEIR FEET

This chapter deals with sixteen African Short-stories included in the second volume of Doris Lessing's Collected African Stories for analysis which are:

The Story of a Non-marrying Man

The Black Madonna

The Trinket Box

The Pig

Traitors

Lucy Grange

A Mild Attack of Locusts

Flavours of Exile

Getting off the Altitude

A Road to the Big City

Plants and Girls

Flight

The Sun Between Their Feet

The Story of Two Dogs

The New Man

A Letter from Home

In 'The Story of a Non-marrying Man,' Johnny Blakeworthy drifts back and forth between stifling white society and the native bush. He is an African Wandering Jew who will never fit into either realm. He carries with him various things like blanket, frying pan, a pound

of tea, some dried milk and change of clothing. Among these items is a corner of a sack full of maize-meal. Africans eat maize-meal porridge as their staple food which is cheap, easily obtainable, quickly cooked, nourishing; but white people do not eat it. For 'they did not wish to be put on the same level as Africans.'¹ Johnny carries this cheap food so he is called a 'gone native' — 'Going native' implies that a man will have a 'bush wife.' Johnny while wandering from one part of the country to another, always, marries a new woman. One of such women has a child from him. He is not marrying them formally; sometimes he produces false documents. He, once, marries formally a woman in the Church but later he gives divorce to her. He has a habit of writing a letter expressing gratitude for their kindness. It is a 'bread and butter' letter.

Johnny in his last years of life comes to the African village where people of a particular African tribe live. Johnny asks permission to live in the village, as an African, not as a white man. But the elders do not like it for:

The people of this tribe cherished their distance from the white man, and feared his influence. At least, the older ones did. While they had nothing against this white man as a man ... they did not want a white man in their life.²

But their traditions of hospitality are strong: 'Strangers, visitors, travellers, must be sheltered and fed.' They are against to throw a person out for a collective fault. Later the chief and the elders of the village choose for him a woman of middle age whose husband has died of the black-water fever, and who has no children. Johnny and his new tribal woman live 'together in kindness.' And there at last he finds a life that suited him, and a woman with whom he lives in kindness. Thus continuing cohabitation of European men with black women in more isolated areas is portrayed in 'The Story of a Non-marrying Man,' which caused much African bitterness in the inter-war period.³

The Colour-bar power structure finds its most resonant expression in 'The Black Madonna,' which Lessing describes in the preface as:

... full of the bile that is produced in me by the thought of 'white' society in Southern Rhodesia as I knew and hated it.⁴

The Italian painter called Michele is from the internment camp during the Second World War. The white officer treats him badly. The general plans to destroy a village by shell-fire, it is a military tattoo for the benefit of the civilian population. The Captain is told to summon the painter to build a village. The Captain shows the officer's the village which is made by the painter, how it springs up into being when lights at the end of the

parade-ground are switched on. The Captain tells them that Michele is his friend, then the Captain is taken to disciplinary purposes supposing that he must be ill; nothing else can account for such behaviour. He is put to bed in his own room with a nurse to watch him. At the time of a military tattoo when crosses on the church are seen they cannot shell the village but later they shell it.

The story modulates in its satirical vein the Captain into one of Lessing's most compassionate studies of a sensibility violated by an inhuman code of behaviour. The Captain's antagonist, the simple Italian artist Michele, exposes want of 'heart' which makes and keeps the country what it is. For Michele, it is a plain truth that the Madonna, he paints for the church, should be black, 'Black peasant Madonna for black country.'⁵ To the captain, this is an impossible heresy: 'You can't have a black Madonna,' he protests. There is no contradiction for him in the assumption that you can have a black mistress, his 'bushwife' Nadya — though only in one capacity. Sacred is white; profane Black. Under the skin the Captain senses the warping limitations of this, in human as in spiritual love, but must repress it to keep his universe in order. The picture of the village is to be blown up anyway as part of the model village the Army has erected for an artillery demonstration, but its very existence is the explosive seed that mines the too rigid structure

of the Captain's personality. At the end, as he lies in hospital convalescing after what his superiors see as one of those strange disintegrations white men suffer in these taxing climates, Michele comes offering what he naively supposes will be a more acceptable picture — of a halo-less black girl. The captain refuses it with indignation, but, after the white-haired Italian has left, turns his face to the wall and weeps:

There was a pain under his ribs. ...
 He realizes he was unhappy. Yes, a terrible unhappiness was filling him, slowly, slowly. He was unhappy because Michele had gone. Nothing had ever hurt the Captain in all his life as much as that mocking Yes, sir. Nothing. He turned his face to the wall and wept. But silently. Not a sound escaped him, for the fear the nurses might hear.⁶

In the course of the story, Lessing portrays an incident that Michele decorates a church built in the camp and it becomes a show-piece. He paints peasants gathering grapes for vintage, beautiful Italian girls dancing and plump dark-eyed children. Amid crowded scenes of Italian life appears the virgin and her child. Culture loving ladies like it and they leave half a crown for the artist. But some are indignant. They say:

He was a prisoner, after all, captured in the very act of fighting against injustice and democracy, and what right had he to protest? — for they felt these paintings

as a sort of protest. What was there in Italy that we did not have right here in Westonville ...?⁷

Thus ladies are also prejudiced about colour-bar. The English feeling of superiority over the Afrikaners is likewise expressed in terms of distancing or violation of distance.

'The Trinket Box' is a life story of a white woman called Aunt Maud. Her life is miserable but she lives it with good humour. She has not married so as to look after her father but when she is forty, her father marries again. After that she serves as a teacher in school. Thirty years ago she lived happily with good economic condition having a ford car. She pays debts of her brother. She does not want to be nuisance, so she moves from family to family and continent to continent as unpaid servant. When she leaves her relations, she sends parcel of presents for them. Thus she wants to show her gratitude by sending expensive presents. But when her relations come to know that she will not last long, they take interest in her. Innumerable neices and nephews and cousins start gathering near her bed. They think, they will get something. After her death they try to know what is there in the black trinket box. They think that they will find the diaries or the bundles of letters which will say something of what she refused to say; there must be an evidence of a consumed sorrow.

But when they open the black box, it is full of certain kinds of presents to everyone with bit of paper pinned to it; and on it is written to who that present belongs. They don't find diaries and letters. They want to cry but they cannot, for none of them wanted her. They think that she was like the box. They measure themselves against her honesty and pride. They think she might be angry. 'But against what?'

Aunt Maud might be angry against the hypocrisy of relations in particular and the settler society in general. Thus Lessing exposes excessive greed of the settler's community for material possession at the cost of human values like love, caring, and sharing through the relationship of Aunt Maud and her relations.

'The Pig' is about an African labourer who has two wives. An old wife has several children and a young one gives him a good deal of trouble. A young man visits his pretty young wife when he is away. Once he tries to beat her but he cannot, for he is old and the other man is young; and beating her cannot cure his heart-ache. His old wife mocks at him with her tongue; and his young wife mocks at him with her actions. When the farmer orders him to take a rifle and to guard the field, he ~~thinks~~ ^{thinks} all the time about the young man. His thoughts are aptly projected through the description of landscape:

All that week the lands lay unguarded, and if the wild animals were raiding the young plants, he did not care. He seemed to exist only in order to stand at night watching his hut. He did not allow himself to think of what was happening inside.⁸

The following Saturday, there is a beer drink. He waits for the young man with his rifle. The young man is going in his hut. As he thinks of the young man another picture comes into his mind again and again:

... a young waterbuck he had shot last year, ... so newly dead that he imagined he felt the blood still pulsing under the warm skin. ... Suddenly, as he stood there thinking of the blood, and the limp body of the buck, and the young man laughing with his wife, his mind grew clear and cool and the oppression on him lifted.⁹

When the young man returns, he follows him upto shooting platform and shoots him. He kicks him with his foot saying 'nothing but a pig' for having consumed the beauty of his young wife. Jonas takes revenge on the young man shooting him as if he has shooted the buck before. 'The Pig' evokes the emotions with which a jealous old man kills his young wife's lover with convincing insight and atmospheric evocation of the unnaturalness of the deed in 'a cold moony field' under 'the chilled, moon-green leaves.' Thus Lessing writes this story from a wholly black viewpoint where the African is also vastly

unscrupulous in gaining revenge.

In 'Traitors' we see the operations of both race and gender stereotypes. The children are shown to be unaware of their conditioning by racial stereotypes but conscious of the conflict between their parents views on the nature of life for men and women on an African farm. The 'two small girls,' sisters, who are central figures in this story have always known this conflict. The father opens his world to the girls and they use that space, revelling in it, challenged by it. The mother does not merely offer her world but tries to draw the children into it, largely to fortify herself, and they know that. The children are not committed to either world. They see themselves as able to hunt, 'tame' plants, and build. In their creation of a 'home' in the wilds on the sites of the burned out Thompson house, they play in both men's and women's roles. They speak with their mother's voice and they take turns being the drunken Mr. Thompson. Then all of this is undermined by the visit of the black woman, powerful in confidence of her sensuality and the place it had given her — something outside the children's experience.

It is illuminating to look, for instance, at the children's responses to the two women strangers, the black woman and Mrs. Thomspon: the black woman is described as 'old'; she speaks to them in a 'soft, wheedling

voice,¹⁰ but their responses is to shout at her that she is to go away. The white woman is not as old; she speaks 'with a voice like a goaway bird's ... horrible voice.'¹¹ Everybody wishes she would go away but nobody says so, let alone shouts at her to do so. Dislike of Mrs. Thompson is expressed, but deviously, carefully within the code of acceptable manners. There is a wholly different code for use with blacks, a code involving much less making by whites. In part the hostility towards the two strange women in this story stems from an underlying ambivalence that the settled white community feels in the face of undisguised or thinly disguised sexuality and sensuality in women. These aspects of being a woman are not encouraged in their daughters by any of the mothers.

Lucy Grange is very attractive. The farmers' wives consider her stylish. They appreciate her house and her habits, but her husband is reluctant to appreciate her. He is always indifferent to her. On the other hand the men suppose her as a smart and attractive. Once a city man who sells insurance comes there only to see her. He kisses her palm and talks with her of London. Then they go into bedroom, in his arm, she cries again and again. She expects him to meet her again and again for she is lonely and she needs somebody's company. Thus Lucy Grange falls in love with the salesman who fills up the blanks of her desire to dissolve her loneliness.

In 'Lucy Grange' the attempt to revitalise memories, in this case the effort to sustain a city-bred taste in music, books and pictures, is treated for its painful consequences. Although she can make the surfaces of her persona and her home charming and attractive, and although her poise seldom fails her, Lucy's holding to a remembered standards actually exposes her to a travelling salesman's lust:

He talked of London ... about the art galleries and the theaters.

She could not help warming, because of her hunger for this kind of talk. She could not help an apologetic note in this exile she must seem provincial. She liked him because he associated himself with her abdication from her standards by saying: 'Yes, yes, my dear, in a country like this we all learn to accept the second-rate.'¹²

Her case is evidently a familiar one, for her local reputation as 'different' is enough for him to see her vulnerability, alone on the farm with her alien standards. His professed appreciation of her refinement does not fool Lucy for long, but nevertheless she cannot resist the appeal of a proffered cultural kinship. Lucy Grange, thus, unable to fight against oppression and isolation learns to accept the second-rate and grasp at any shred of human contact with a travelling salesman. She seeks solace by entering an exploitative relationship which

further entrenches her role of feminine acquiescence.

In 'A Mild Attack of Locusts,' Lessing narrates an incident of the attack of locusts and how it affects Margaret's knowledge regarding the country. Margaret is living with her husband Richard, and Old Stephen who has been farming in Zambesia for the last forty years. This year the rains are good; crops are good, but there is going to be the attack of locusts. Margaret cannot understand how they do not go bankrupt nor they get very rich. She sometimes, cries helplessly thinking there is always something happening. When locusts attack their farm all of them try to save their farm from destruction but fail. They are not so much successful in Africa, but they don't imagine the idea of leaving the farm and working as office clerks. They try their hard to survive on the farm struggling against problems. Margaret who is not used to such situation, first, does not understand all this. Later she also comes to know that she has to live with them facing the problems on the farm. Now she is:

*... a proper farmer's wife, in sensible shoes and a solid skirt. She might even get to letting locusts settle on her ...*¹³

Thus Margaret in 'A Mild Attack of Locusts' contemplates the devastation wrought by the locusts, 'she felt like a survivor after war.' To her this was ruin. 'But the

men ate their supper with good appetites.¹⁴ They were planning the replanting and hoping for rain. This story highlights the colonisers' desire to survive in Africa against all odds:

... if it wasn't a bad season, it was locusts,
if it wasn't locusts, it was army-worm,
or veld fires. Always something.¹⁵

By replanning and replanting everything for the better future, it is hoped that it will guarantee the survival of colonialism in Africa.

In 'Favours of Exile,' the narrator is a twelve years old girl. The grown-ups — her mother, Mr. MacGregor and Mrs. MacGregor - are always indulged in nostalgia. Her mother does not like any African fruit or vegetables; she likes to be served fruits in the large China vegetable dishes brought from that old house in London. She thinks African garden as representation of a defeat. William and the girl like gooseberries, on the other hand, her mother says:

'Cape gooseberries!' ... 'They aren't
gooseberries at all. Oh, if I could let
you taste a pie made of real English
gooseberries.'¹⁶

When the mother brings gooseberries from the Greek stores and makes the pie, the grown-ups eat the pie with 'a truly religious emotion.' The something happens when she manages to grow half-a dozen spikes of brussel sprouts.

William pretends to have liked it much to please grown-ups. William tells the girl also to pretend.

One aspect of colonialism is the 'dislocation' of the coloniser who may be both assertively proprietary about the land and at the same time feel rooted elsewhere. In this story the parents feel rooted elsewhere and are, as a result, unable to appreciate what they have in Rhodesia. The children are not caught up in that kind of dislocation. The girl is impatient and dismissive of the nostalgia at first, but learns from William to conceal her attitude. She recalls the sharing of the first hard-worn crop of brussels sprouts with the neighbours:

They came from Glasgow, they came from Home, and they could share the language of nostalgia. At the table the four grown-ups ate the bitter little cabbages and agreed that the soil of Africa was unable to grow food that had any taste at all. I said scornfully that I couldn't see what all the fuss was about.¹⁷

Because the narrator, in the opening paragraphs of the story, takes us into the world of her delights, the bitter little cabbages, the tinned English gooseberries and cherries than mean so much to her mother have to be seen in contrast with all that grew in abundance in the vegetable garden. The daughter's vision of the sufficiency of the Rhodesian farm, so clearly established as first,

is temporarily impaired after she falls in love with William. She behaves then as if the soil of Africa is, metaphorically speaking, barren ground for the cultivation of romance. She invests the arid abandoned vegetable patch and its 'tough, obstinate-looking' pomegranate tree with symbolism and atmosphere which is exotic and thus, she imagines, more conducive to an encounter with a lover. She imagines William, the desired lover, coming to her amid the tinkle of camel bells and the sound of falling water. Both the mother's nostalgia and the exotic clothing of the girl's fantasy serve as part of an index of what they feel to be missing in their life in Rhodesia. The mother in 'Flavours of Exile' fills their inner space with fantasies of bringing genteel English style and friendship into their farms or of buying an inviolable security by their acceptance of confinement.

Molly Slatter of 'Getting off the Altitude' reacts to loneliness and hardship by observing a traditionally feminine role, complete with the womanly qualities of self-abnegation, vulnerability, and subservience. She submits, ladylike and helpless, to the bullying of a contemptuous husband. Even her boys also turn against her, and start behaving like their father does. Charlie Slatter has relations with Mrs. Pritt. They like each other. He goes to her house after supper and comes in the morning; and at weekend he helps

her in her farm. When an assistant, George Andrews, comes on the farm. Molly develops with him secret relations. Molly decides to go off the altitude in order to have rest but she decides either Mrs. Pritt or herself will live with Mr. Slatter; he cannot live with both of them. In the end, Andrews gets married, Mrs. Pritt dies with a cancer. Mr. Slatter is ill and Molly takes him down off the altitude leaving children. Mrs. Slatter becomes old and fat, as 'she wanted to be.'¹⁸

In such diseased atmosphere of human relationship, the narrator's growth into adolescence cannot remain unaffected. During a dance at the Slatters, she feels out of place on the veranda, for she considers herself too old for the younger boys, and the older boys consider her too young for them. She feels equally out of place in the living-room with the married people. She therefore seeks refuge in a bedroom. From this she discovers the relationship between Mrs. Slatter and the young assistant. With this she continues her growth out of childhood. A year later, in a similar scene she again seeks the refuge of isolation from groups she is not yet comfortable with, and this time sees the depth of Mrs. Slatter's frustration. Molly Slatter is helped into a relatively tranquil later life by recognising that she is not alone in her suffering and that her errant husband is to be pitied, for in his life he too has 'something terrible ... something awful' which he cannot expose but with which

he has to live.

Mr. Slatter represents one of the major aspects of colonialism through his unjust treatment to the natives. Once when the houseboy steals some soap, he ties him to a tree in the garden without food and water for a day, and then beats throughout night with his whip every time he goes past, until the boy confesses. And, when he has hit a farmboy; and the boy complains to the police, Mr Slatter ties the boy to his horse and rides it all a gallop to the police station twelve miles off and makes the boy run beside, and tells him if he complains to the police again he will kill him. Then he pays the ten-shilling fine and makes the boy run beside the horse all the way back. Thus, in Africa, the employers like Charlie Slatter behave like beasts and treat the natives like animals. Thus, this story deals with the diseased relationships amongst the settler community caused by isolation and loneliness of African landscape.

'A Road to the Big City' depicts the theme of prostitution as one of the evils of colonialism in Africa. The father of Lilla and Marie, the sisters, is a ganger in railway. They cannot earn their living in the best way. The girls get attracted towards the city life which appears more joyous and sweet. Lilla brings her own sister to the city to make her prostitute like her when Marie is only a eighteen. Though Jansen tries to tell

Marie about the grim reality of city life, she cannot understand what he says:

'This sort of life isn't as much fun as it looks'; ... 'Thousands of girls all over the world choose the easy way because they're stupid, and afterwards they're sorry.'¹⁹

He saw that she probably did not know what the word prostitution meant; that the things Lilla had told her meant only lessons in how to enjoy the delights of this city.²⁰

Marie supposes her mother, like Lilla, old-fashioned. She behaves according to her sister's views and believes that she will look after her faithfully. In the end, Jansen takes her to station where he buys her a ticket and leads her to compartment; but when he goes to catch his own train he finds Marie again on the platform struggling to get way from the crowd. Now she will go into joyous streets of the city and live as a prostitute. The story narrates a factual condition of colonial white society whose life is a failure; and as a result they take to prostitution ^{to} fulfil their dreams.

'Plants and Girls' is characterised by the effects of isolation and solitude on the minds of people living in Africa. Frederick is such a character in the story who is declared as abnormal by the physician. This abnormality of the boy is further intensified by the death of his mother. Consequently, he tries to fill up this emotional vacuum by loving the girls violently which results in the death of the girl because of throat-

bite. Frederick, a teenaged-boy who likes to be in the company of trees and plants is supposed to be 'not normal.' He is lonely and wanders in the garden. He does not play with other children so the children from the opposite house laugh at him and tease him. He likes his mother and lives with her. He embraces the trunk of tree as if he is in love with tree. Once the girl from opposite house takes him to see cinema; she expects him to marry her but he is not interested in marriage though he likes her company. He embraces the girl as if he has embraced the tree. When his mother falls ill, instead of going with her he lives with his mother taking care of everything. The girl calls him baby and leaves him. When his mother dies, he weeps and feels lonely. He does not believe that his mother is dead. He visits the grave of his mother where he finds a bougainvillaea planted on the grave. He breaks the branch of it and plants it in his house. But it dies soon. The big tree to which he used to embrace is cut down and instead new trees are planted. Authorities plant saplings of city plants which grow immediately. He goes to that tree and embraces it.

One day the sister of the other girl calls him. She loves him; and he does as she wants, and accompanies her to pictures. He takes her to the sapling and kisses her in the company of that tree. He embraces her violently; she is horrified but likes it. She decides not to see

him again but returns again. At night, he embraces her saying: 'your hair, your hair, your teeth, your bones' and puts his teeth on her neck. In the morning she finds herself bruised. One such night she faints again when his teeth are bared against her neck. She says she will not come back and goes away, and does not come for several days. One evening she again returns; and he grasps her; takes her to the lawn while she hesitates. He again embraces her saying: 'your hair, dear hair, bones, bones, bones.' And the bared teeth come down on her throat. In the morning people see him half-laying on her. Her body is marked by blood and by soil and he is murmuring: 'your hair, your leaves, your branches, your rivers.'²¹ She is dead. The girl dies because of his violent love-making. Thus Frederick's solitude gives rise to sexual attraction which takes extreme form.

'Flight' is the story of an old man living with his daughter, Lucy, her husband, and their children. The old man finds his grand-daughter, Alice in the arms of Steven, the post master's son. He does not like it. His daughter, Lucy does not find any wrong in their relations, but he feels that Alice is just eighteen and too young to marry. The old man has become unhappy everytime, when his daughter and other three grand-daughters married. He loves them much and when Lucy tells him that Alice and Steven are going to marry next month,

tears come in his eyes. The old man has the dovecote. Once Steven gives him a present — a pigeon — which he has brought for him. He likes it and keeps it in his dovecote. Then he takes out his favourite pigeon and it takes flight and he looks towards the boy and the girl. The birds fly up in the sky and he stands looking:

*The cloud of shining silver birds
flow up and up, with a shrill cleaving
of wings, over the dark ploughed land and
the darker belts of trees and the bright
folds of grass, until they floated high in
the sunlight, like a cloud of motes of dust.²²*

The old man associates his feelings regarding his grand-daughter, Alice with the pigeon. The pigeon returns to the shelter of night. Then he comes to know that there is no change; nothing could change and he feels convinced that Alice and Steven will be always with him. He smiles proudly looking at his grand-daughter; she does not smile and tears come off her face. Thus the old man feels unhappy first but when he assures himself that there will be no change after Alice's marriage, he relieves and smiles for the flight of his grand-daughter will not last long like his favourite pigeon for she will not forget him.

The power that Africa has to disturb even those not crippled by their position as exploiter is given in 'The Sun Between Their Feet.' Lessing gives an account

of watching two dung beetles attempt to push their ball of dung up an impassable rock. As the dung beetles roll their ball of dung a few inches up the slope of a rock and let it fall back again, their futile efforts seem like those of Sisyphus. The narrator intervenes and attempts to redirect them, but uselessly, for having once chosen their route the beetles seem unable to alter the decision. At sunset they have still achieved nothing. Their futile efforts are set against a biologist's apparently detached account of how the dung beetles work. Here Lessing seems to imply that the striving and the ending in nothing that was the fate of the Roman Catholic Mission in the middle of the Native Reserve.

A connection between the beetle allegory and the church is also implicit in the title of the story, 'The Sun Between Their Feet.' The beetles 'Cherish' between their feet their procreative effort, their 'Sun'— a pun alluding to the Christian 'son' of God. Lessing implies a contrast between the idealism of the Roman Catholic Mission and the reality of its futile striving on the Native Reserve by contrasting a textbook description of the procreation of dung beetles with a description of the ugly futility of the scene as it is related by narrator. According to the book:

'The dung-beetle ... lays its eggs in a ball of dung, then chooses a gentle slope, and compacts the pellet by pushing

it uphill backwards with its hind legs and allowing it to roll down, eventually reaching its place of deposit.'²³

The slope is chosen by a beautiful instinct so that the ball of dung comes to rest in a spot suitable for the hatching of the new generation of sacred insect. But the beetles 'mother' their 'symbol of the sun between their busy stupid feet.' Nor will they give up. When the 'rain army' attacks their ball of dung it falls apart. Yet the narrator allows that tomorrow 'they would again labour and heave a fresh ball of dung.'

To such end, Lessing seems to be saying, is the striving and the ending in nothing of the Roman Catholic Mission in the middle of a Native Reserve. Here where 'the underfaces of the great boulders were covered with Bushman paintings,' the remnants of the conflict between the Mashona and Matabele were still to be seen. Here the logic is that the inventions of civilization have been ineffectual in suppressing and replacing the intuitive native religion.²⁴

'The Story of Two Dogs' is story about dogs called Jock and Bill. The girl's family has already a dog called Jock. They decide to have another dog for Jock should not spend his time with dirty kaffir dogs in the compound. The girl decides to take the dog from the Barneses family. They suppose Bill as a bad-blood.

Bill does not behave properly, on the other hand Jock is everybody's favourite. They think that Bill will go wild. Bill and Jock go wild and they are out of house for number of days again and again. But at one instance Bill saves Jock by chewing a noose which almost strangled Jock. His teeth and gums become useless. He cannot eat properly and he has to rest on soft food. Bill visits neighbouring farm and eats eggs. Jock gives Bill lump of flesh for Bill's teeth are useless. One day when Bill goes again to neighbouring farm to eat eggs he is shot and Jock feels lonely for they has been team. Thus Bill once saves Jock's life and sacrifices himself for Jock's sake. Even though the family has biased attitude towards Bill, the bad-blood; in reality. Bill represents the wilderness of African nature and Jock the sophisticated culture of the settlers in Africa. Ironically it is Bill who saves Jock from strangling by a noose.

'The New Man' depicts unconventional sex relations between a middle aged farmer, Mr. Rooyen and a young girl. Mr. Rooyen buys the farm of the Rich Mitchells. When the Grants go into the station they give lift to him for he cannot afford a car. There is no sufficient room in the car so Mrs. Grant says that the girl can sit on Mr. Rooyen's knee. He squeezes her breasts in such a way that she feels restless. When they return, he kisses her. The girl does not like it; but later

she visits his house. He calls her to sit on his knees and squeezes her. Thus Mr. Rooyen and the girl develop sexual attraction. Later Mr. Rooyen marries a governess from England called Miss. Betty Blunt. Thus, Mr. Rooyen is the new man in the Manager's House; he is also 'the new man' for the girl who attracts her sexually towards him.

Lessing also shows Mr. Rooyen as a colonizer who is not a successful but manages anyhow in the country. He has not a penny of his own. He has bought the farm by borrowing a loan from the Land Bank and is working on an eight-hundred-pounds loan. He is struggling to manage his life working in the sun and his blue eyes are inflamed by the sun. He is described:

*This colour in a white man ... meant a desperate struggling poverty and it usually preceded going broke or getting very ill.*²⁵

He is a reddish brown coloured man. Mr. Grant helps him economically.

In 'A Letter from Home' Lessing writes about a young African poet who writes his poems in an African language. Johannes Potgieter, the poet gets an unofficial grace gift of a job at the University on the strength of his poems and after seven months he writes another book of poems. No one sees anything in it. He is surprised and resigns in frustration. Martin, his white friend

wants to print his poems in Onwards. But Johannes does not like it for he fears that the people will kill him if they read his poems. When Martin wants to read his poems he shuts all the doors and windows as he fears that someone will see it. He writes these poems in such way that Esther cannot understand them for her friend is a cook of the Predikant and her sister Mary works in the Mayor's kitchen. When the people come to know about Johannes, he leaves Blagspruit and goes North to the river without telling to Esther.

Johannes cannot become Laureate because he is an African and writes in an African language which cannot be translated. As Lessing says in her preface to the second volume of Collected Short Stories:

*... if a poet is born into one of the common languages he can be a world-poet; but if he is ... Afrikaans, he can be as great as any poet in the world but it would be hard for this fact to cross the language barriers.*²⁶

The African poet faces difficulties in becoming the great leading poet in the world because of his language which could neither be translated nor be understood by people all over the world.

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