

Doris Lessing: "To Room Nineteen"

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*Biographical
Background*

- **Persia** (now Iran)
- 1924-1949: Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).
- 1928: Marries Frank Wisdom.
 - Divorced 1943
- 1945: Joins Communist party & marries Gottfried Lessing.
 - Divorced 1949
 - Quits Communist party 1956
- 1960s: becomes a **Sufi**
 - Lessing on **Idries Shah**
 - **Muraqba**.
- 1960s: Lessing studies existential psychology of R.D. Laing.
- 1995: Honorary degree from Harvard.
- 2007: Nobel Prize for literature.
 - Publishes *The Cleft*
- 2008: Publishes *Alfred and Emily*.
- **Bibliography**



Lessing wins Nobel Prize (2007)

R. D. Laing: The Divided Self (1960)

- **Mapping:** A person "maps" some accepted social definition of reality onto his / her experience, then acts as if that map reflects his / her experience. (Lessing 2544, 2545)
- The person feels terribly oppressed and unseen if the personal experience is very different from the "mapped" pseudo-experience.
 - Signifier fails to reflect the signified (2546, 2547)
- **Double-bind:** when faced with the dilemma of having an identity defined for you fundamentally different from who you experience yourself to be, your alternatives are to either give up the approval & caretaking you need to survive, or give up your own sense of identity & comply with these demands.
 - The "essential Susan" and the "unforeseen" (2548-2549)

The Garden

- Laing: "Faced with this dilemma [double-bind], most people choose to give up their own identities and adopt those handed to them by [authority] figures. Some people faced with this situation, 'go crazy.'"
 - Inability to translate feelings into "sensible" labels (2549, 2551)
 - Susan's demon (2550, 2552, 2553, 2554-2555)
- Muraqba and freedom (2558-2559)
 - Freeing one's self from spatio-temporal restrictions (2560, 2561-2562)
- A "sane response to an insane situation": Laing's comment about what "going crazy" involves. (2556-2557, 2563)
 - Only one way out... (2565)

Muraqba

- Sufi meditation is the name of an exercise, effort and angle of perception. Through it, anyone can enter the nocturnal senses while keeping the diurnal senses active as well.
- Every human being, from the time of birth to death spends life in two states: awakening & dreaming.
 - the realm of dream is free from the restrictions imposed by Time and Space.
- Freedom from outward senses happens in our daily life, both involuntarily and voluntarily.
- Our daily observation is that not all actions, motions, whims, thoughts, imaginations, and feelings are dependent on the body of bones and flesh.
- To enter the unseen world (*al-ghayb*) or to behold anything beyond Time and Space, we have to first free ourselves from the clutches of spatiotemporal restrictions.
