Chapter V

The Capitalist Structure
Chapter V

*The Memoirs of a Survivor, (1974)*

*The Good Terrorist (1985)*

The foregoing chapters talked about Doris Lessing’s committed engagement with the oppressive structures of power like imperialism, patriarchy, and the position of centre and margin, involving the mentally and physically challenged, wherein, she depicted the shameful mistreatment meted out to the dispossessed black natives of Africa, in the colonial structure in Southern Rhodesia. She also talked about the plight of the white woman, who led a stifling life on the vast African farm, for want of money and human company. Lessing also depicted the plight of the failed farmer, from the settler community, who came to central Africa to make a profitable living. It is love and empathy embedded in the philosophy of Sufism, which is discerned as the solution to the problem of marginalization. She talks about the plight of the women in the male-oriented society. Lessing, who fights for the justice for women, does not believe in the isolation of sexes. As a humanist, she prescribes heterosexuality as a solution to the battle of sexes. Love and empathy between the sexes is discerned as the panacea to the man woman relationship. She talks about the plight of the mentally and physically challenged, in the western civilized world, which either exploits the victim or consigns him to the institution to perish. Lessing fiercely opposes the option of institutionalization of the abnormal or the different. She wants the society to take up responsibility; she believes that the “different” should be looked after with love and empathy. Women are entrusted with the job of looking after the “different,” in Lessing’s fiction.

The present chapter deals with the class structure. Lessing’s encounter with the oppressive capitalist structure of power is coincident with her stay in Southern Rhodesia, where she lived as a member of the white settler community from 1923-1949, watching the British hierarchical system replicated in the colonial structure. Commenting on the contemporary British society in Africa, Margaret Mown Rowe comments:
The British society that dominated the colony had turned it into the Far Counties and attempted to mirror the experiences of home. Settlers imported class differences from home and intensified those class differences by wedding them to violent racial prejudices... the hierarchies in Southern Rhodesia existed in the form of the Africans, on the native reserves- the real exiles in the narrative of colonization- were virtually invisible to the settlers... other non- Christian, non- white or the non-Northern European populations – the Jews, Indians, and Greeks in particular – were tolerated as necessary evils – only as shopkeepers. (Rowe, 1994, 2)

In Martha Quest, she talks about a tenuous link among the Irish, the Scots, the Welsh and the English, formed out of necessity in the colonial society. Lessing describes it as follows.

On mail days there were cars of every degree of wealth, from the enormous American cars of the tobacco farmers down to eccentric creation like the Quests’, but the owners of the car met together without the consciousness of degree, English and Scotch, Welsh and Irish, rich and poor, it was all backslapping and Christian names, a happy family atmosphere which had a touch of hysterical necessity in it, since the mail days, gymkhanas and dances were false tokens of community- for what is community if not people who share their experiences? (Lessing: 1952, 44)

Lessing grew up watching the plight of her parents, Alfred and Emily Taylor, the victims of the World War I. Her father had lost his leg, and her mother had lost her fiancé. Both had suffered a nervous breakdown, her mother had to sacrifice her promising career as the matron in a teaching hospital, in London. Lessing comments in her autobiography, Under My Skin, (1991) that World War I, loomed large on her life and she felt that a bomb had exploded through her. The post-colonial critic, Aimé Césaire, calls the savagery of war a fall out of European capitalism, and Lenin discerns imperialism as “stagnant capitalism.” (Ashcroft, Ahluwalia: 1999,76) Aimé Césaire comments on the war and imperialism as a consequence of capitalism, in Discourse on Colonialism:

First we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism; and we must show that each time a head is cut off or an eye put out in Vietnam and in France they accept the fact, each time a little girl is raped and in France they accept the fact, each time a Madagascan is tortured and in France they accept the fact, civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a center of infection begins to spread; and that at the end of all these treaties that have been violated, all these lies that have been propagated, all these punitive expeditions that have been tolerated, all these prisoners who have been tied up and interrogated, all these patriots who have been tortured, at the end of all the racial pride that has been encouraged, all
the boastfulness that has been displayed, a poison has been instilled into the veins of Europe and, slowly but surely, the continent proceeds toward savagery. (Cesaire: 1972, 2,3)

Lessing’s father came to Southern Rhodesia, after the World War I, in quest of a free life, a life free from the British “social constraints” (Rowe, 4) and competition. Lessing empathizes with her father who believed in the dignity of man, but hated her mother, who was fanatically class and race conscious. In Martha Quest, the protagonist of the novel, Martha Quest, an adolescent with radical views, in colonial Africa engages in a psychological battle against her oppressive and racist mother, Mrs. Quest, who not only hates the black natives of Africa, calling them criminals and rapists, but also is prejudiced against the Jews and the Afrikaners. She treats them as the “other.” Martha quits the African farm as a gesture of rebellion and goes to the city of Salisbury, takes up a job and joins the left Book Club, in quest of a solution to the issue of racial domination and oppression of women in colonial Africa. In the novel, The Grass is Singing (1950) the protagonist of the novel, Mary Turner and her sensitive and kind-hearted husband, Dick Turner are victimized by the capitalist, Charlie Slatter, the affluent and avaricious farmer from the neighbourhood, in colonial Africa. Dick Turner, who respects and loves Nature, plants hundred acres of gum trees instead of cultivating tobacco, which would fetch him profit. Dick has always been in debt as farmer. Under the pretext of bailing him out of financial crisis, Charlie Slatter, callously tries to evict him from his land. The empathetic relationship between, Mary Turner and her black servant, Moses, which develops in her state of madness, is perceived with a biased view. Jeannette King comments, that the class becomes race in the colonial, Southern Rhodesia. King says:

…to those readers who wish to understand life in Southern Africa, Doris Lessing recommends novels like Anna Karenina, on the grounds that they illustrate economic divisions similar to those separating the Blacks from the Whites… she argues that color feeling is basically a money feeling, in spite of all rationales of racialism. ((King: 1989, 8)

Mary’s murder, by the black native is looked down upon as social opprobrium. The unsuccessful Turners, and the poor whites, in the colonial set up, served as a source of embarrassment, for they failed to meet the expectations of the profit oriented, capitalist society. In the novel, A Ripple from the Storm, (1957) the protagonist of the novel, Martha, joins the com-
munist party to fight against the unequal society, under the influence of the soldiers of the Royal Air Force, who came to Southern Rhodesia, to be trained as pilots during the Second World War. In the novel, *Landlocked*, (1965), Martha, the protagonist of the novel, is inspired by her Jewish lover, Thomas Sterne, to set up an ideal society, free from racial, religious, and class malaise. Lessing came to London in 1949. In Colonial Africa, she had never seen the white man slog like the black native. When her boat made a landfall at the mouth of the Thames, she witnessed the white working class do the hard manual labour. She was shocked. Lessing narrates her experience in the second volume of her autobiography, *Walking in the Shade*, as follows:

I was having those thoughts- perhaps better say feelings- that disturb every arrival from Southern Africa, who had not before seen white men unloading a ship, doing heavy manual labour, for this is what the black people did. A lot of White people, seeing the whites work like the blacks, had felt uneasy and threatened. Here they were the working class… (Lessing, 1993, 4)

In Lessing’s non-fictional work, *In Pursuit of the English*, she talks about the war affected resilient working class and the self-satisfied middle class in the post-war period in London, in a witty style. In the novel, *The Four-Gated City*, (1969) Lessing talks about the two distinctly different worlds, the smug, British middle class, represented by the Mark Coldridge’s residence, with the Persian rugs on the floor, and the resilient but poor working class discerned in the image of Iris, the owner of the grimy restaurant, Fish ‘N’ Chips, that catered to the working class in London, close to the riverside, in the post-war period. Martha, who comes from the colonial Rhodesia, remains an outsider to both the worlds; she probes the so-called socialist Britain, a “classless society” (King: 1989, 26) which is terribly “class conscious.”(26)

Lessing’s magnum opus, *The Golden Notebook*, (1962) critiques the class structure at length. In the Black Notebook, a section of *The Golden Notebook*, written by the woman protagonist, Anna Wulf, she depicts the divisiveness of the class structure, deeply embedded in the mindset of the British Youth, who came to Southern Rhodesia to be trained as pilot during the Second World War. Lessing, very deftly, brings out the irony involved in the power dynamics of the race and class structure. The British youth, Paul Blakenhurst, the so-called progressive comrade, who speaks sardonically about the shameful mistreatment meted out to the black na-
atives of Africa, is ironically, insensitive to the oppression of the white woman, Mrs. Boothby, who is overworked and overlooked by her capitalist husband, the owner of the, plush hotel in Mashopi, in colonial Africa. Paul is cruel towards the African Nature. He ruthlessly kills a host of pigeons, in the African wilderness, and at the same time, treats his fellow pilot, Jimmy, who comes from the working class from Britain as a dog. In the Yellow notebook, yet another section from the novel, *The Golden Notebook*, the woman protagonist, Ella, critiques the insulting class structure in Britain. She desires the demeaning working class colonies to be wiped out, implying the extermination of the class structure. The description of the demeaning housing colonies in the downtown London, recalls, the hateful “Coke town” in Charles Dickens’ novel *Hard Times*, (1854) and Elizabeth Gaskell’s, description of the gloomy and grimy Industrial North, in her novel, *North and South*, (1855) in the nineteenth century. It also recalls D.H Lawrence’s description of the poor housing locality of the coal miners, in *Sons and Lovers*, and the destruction of nature, due to industrialization in *The Rainbow*, and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. The hatred of industrialization, which engendered the class structure, witnessed in the aforesaid novels, is tantamount to the hatred spewed out against the class structure by the woman protagonist, Ella. Her lover, Paul Tanner, a doctor, coming from the working class, talks about the unimaginative middle class doctors, with bitterness, and calls the entire class system a “snake pit.” In the novel, *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, (1971) the professor, Charles Watkins, the protagonist of the novel, who becomes insane, is the victim of competition, which is an inevitable feature of the capitalist system. The novel, *The Fifth Child*(1988) talks about the treatment of the misfit, in a utilitarian world; where the unproductive and unutilizable is dumped into the institution, to perish. *Ben in the world*,(2000) talks about the ruthless exploitation of the mentally and physically different, in the consumerist society, in Britain, in the decade of the nineties.

As a committed writer and a humanist, Lessing does not merely pose the problem but she tries to suggest a solution to the problem. To fight the evils of the capitalist society in Southern Rhodesia, Lessing turned to the ideology of Marxism. In the novel, *Martha Quest*, the woman protagonist with the radical views, who wants the colonial society to be just and equal, creates the vision of the “four gated city” an ideal city which stands for the man-made order, where black
and white children would play together, the ideal city envisaged by Martha, is in keeping with Karl Marx’s dream of a “classless society.” To justify the dream, Martha joins the left book club and the progressive group, In Southern Rhodesia. In the novel, *A Ripple from the Storm*, Martha fights for the rights of the black natives of Africa and the rights of white women who were suppressed under the patriarchal structure. Fredrick Engels, in the *Origin of the Family*, blames the capitalist structure, catalyzed by the industrial mode of production, for the subordination of women. Engels comments upon the distinct role of men and women in the pre-industrial society as follows:

Division of labour was a pure and simple outgrowth of nature; it existed only between the two sexes. The men went to war, hunted, fished, and provided the raw material for food and tools necessary for these pursuits. The women cared for the house and prepared food and clothing, they cooked weaved and sewed. Each was a master in his or her own field of activity, man in the forest and woman in the house... the household was communistic, comprising several and many families. Whatever was produced, used in common was common property. (Marx, Engels: 1972, 377)

As a political activist, Lessing turned to the ideology of Marxism, like her persona, Martha Quest, due to the “Zeitgeist,” the spirit of the time. In Britain, in the post war period, Lessing once again turned to communism for she felt that, it was the philosophy of Marxism, which had the sense of “wholeness and moral energy” (Lessing: 1973, 8) in it. It was through her realist fiction written from 1950 to 1969 that Lessing fought for the rights of the marginalized. Anand Prakash, in his critique on Marxism, comments that realist fiction is “another name for the Marxist literature writers. They are respected for their humanism and their relentless fight for the cause of justice.” (Prakash: 2008, 162)

After “Hungary” and the “Twentieth Congress,” of the communist party in Soviet Union, that exposed the “rottenness” and failure of communism as a viable solution to human misery, Lessing turned to the genre of inner space fiction, under the influence of R.D Laing the “unorthodox psychiatrist and cultural theoretician.” (Vlastos, 254) Like Laing, Lessing believed that the sickness of the individual is the cause and the symptom of a sick society. It is the sick society which is responsible for the individual’s loss of sanity. Like Laing, Lessing believed that the insane mind had the “potential for enlightenment.” Her inner space fiction, *Briefing for a Descent into the Hell*, (1971) *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, (1974) and *Summer before the Dark*, (1975) manifests Lessing’s quest for the inner cure. In the early sixties, Lessing turned to the philoso-
physiology of Sufism, under the influence of the Sufi Guru, Idries Shah. Lessing, as a committed writer and a humanist doesn’t mind exploring mysticism and religion, as a solution to the malady of the society. Lessing’s quest for the solution to human misery took her to explore the genre of science fiction. It is in her science fiction or what Lessing chooses to call, “Space Fiction,” she takes a new look at the phenomena of colonization. In her Science Fiction, Canopus in Argos: Archives, (1979 – 1983) Lessing revisits the theme of colonization, which has remained her central concern. With the novel, The Good Terrorist, (1985), Lessing as a humanist, who wants to be the “instrument of change,” comes back to the realist fiction.


A “meta-fictional work,” The Memoirs of a Survivor (1974), talks about the marginalization of the entire humanity, which is caught in the thick of a catastrophe, in an unnamed city, in the North. The crisis, which appears as an “enemy,” is called as “it.”(129) The “it,” according to the author, Doris Lessing, can be interpreted as war, pestilence, an alteration of climate etc.

It is the Survivor, a middle aged woman, from the middle class, who has had a traumatic life, and who develops a schizophrenic self, with a potential for mystical evolution, in the wake of the disaster, who takes up the responsibility of a pre-pubescent girl, Emily Cartwright, a victim of the institution of family and the patriarchal structure, along with her strange pet, who resembles a cat as well as a dog, during the hard times.

The Survivor not only rescues Emily, the pre-adolescent girl, but also her lover, Gerald. It is Gerald, the youth from the pavement, who suffers the unease and anxiety of the critical times,
who takes up the responsibility of the abandoned children as well as the responsibility of the frightening children, called “the poor kids,” who evince the atavistic tendencies, and are treated as enemy, by the people living in flats, constructed during affluent times, in the pre-crisis period, and the council authorities and the police.

When the life in the disaster stricken city becomes unbearable, for want of pure and fresh air, water and the supply of food, culminating into a complete social dislocation; when the city is deserted by all the inhabitants, it is the Survivor, endowed with mystical powers, who transports all the marginalized members to the new world, full of promise, beyond the mysterious Wall.

At the margin of the social structure of power is the entire humanity, which is lashed by a catastrophe, and which is addressed as “it” by the unnamed Survivor of the crisis, the protagonist of the novel, The Memoirs of a survivor. The Survivor, the mouth piece of the author, Doris Lessing, suggests a sense of ending, in calm and a composed tone of voice, it can be the voice of a mystic, a sage, a stoic, to use Margaret Drabbles’ parlance, the voice of “a prophet.” (Drabble: 1972, 50) The ‘It’ is described as follows:

‘It’ is a force, a power, taking the form of an earthquake, a visiting comet, whose balefulness hangs closer night by night, distorting all thought by fear. ‘It’ can be pestilence, a war; the alteration of climate, a tyranny that twists men’s mind, the savagery of religion…it in short is a word for helpless ignorance, or a helpless awareness. It is a word for man’s inadequacy. ‘It’ perhaps- on this occasion in history- was above all, a consciousness of something ending. (129)

The sense of the ending, or the “death of the city” (Sage: 1983, 73) suggested by the novel, in an “illusionary and “teasing manner” (73) is the end of the old world, the world of inequities, scarred by capitalism, imperialism, and the destructive, the First and the Second World War, manifested in Lessing’s fiction, beginning with The Grass is Singing,( 1950) that depicts the evils of racial discrimination in Southern Rhodesia, and the first four novels from the “roman fleuve” The Children of Violence, located in central Africa. The breakdown experienced by the protagonist of the post-war novel, in London, The Golden Notebook,(1962) and the annihilation of Britain, which is very explicitly talked about in the later part of the novel, The Four Gated City,(1969) in which, the protagonist of the novel, Martha Quest, goes to an unnamed island off Scotland to rescue the victims of the nuclear disaster, which opens up the new possibility, in the
form of a mutant, Joseph, amply gifted with wisdom, who symbolizes the future of mankind. The beginning of “the consciousness of ending” (Lessing, 129) does not begin with the novel, *The Memoirs of the Survivor*; it begins with the very first work, *The Grass is Singing*, where the death of the white civilization is suggested, through the violent death of the white woman Mary Turner and her weak and defeated husband Dick Turner. The sense of the ending is explicitly talked about, in her novel, *The Four-gated City*, where the western world is destroyed due to nuclear war. One agrees with Lorna Sage, a perceptive critic of Doris Lessing, that the novel, *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, which is called an autobiography, by Lessing is a short but a “stock taking novel.” (Sage, 73)

Lessing had witnessed the plight of her parents, the victims of First World War. Her father had lost his leg and he suffered a shell shock, Lessing’s mother suffered a nervous breakdown for she had lost her fiancé. Lessing says, “a bomb exploded through my mind and the cloud of war loomed large on my head.” She talks about her childhood scarred by the war, in her autobiography, *Under my Skin* (1991) Lessing says:

> we are all of us made by war, twisted and warped by war, but we seem to forget it...I used to feel that there was something like a dark grey cloud, like a poison gas over my early childhood. I wonder now, how many of the children brought up in the families crippled by war had the same poison running in their veins from before they could even speak. (Lessing, 1991, 10)

Lessing looks upon war as the direct fall out of the capitalist system. Aime Césaire argues that it is European bourgeoisie, which is responsible for violence and the armed conflict. In his critical work, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire comments:

> People are surprised, they become indignant. They say, “How strange! But never mind-it's Nazism, it will. pass!” And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, but the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.(p3)
In Southern Rhodesia, where she grew up as the member of the white settler community, she witnessed the plight of the dispossessed black natives, under the callous and oppressive imperialist system. Imperialism is a product of capitalism; it is basically a commercial venture. Aimé Césaire, the post-colonial critic probes the phenomena of colonization as follows:

What, fundamentally, is colonization? To agree on what it is not: neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law. To admit once for all, without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies. (2, 3)

She also witnessed the sufferings of the white women in Africa, who led a stifling life under the Victorian ideals. Patriarchy is seen as an offshoot of capitalism. When the Survivor says, “it is the consciousness about the ending” it is the end of the British Empire. The researcher agrees with the critic Martin Green, who, in his critical essay, The Doom of the Empire comments that the breakdown and the “ending” is the end of the doomed British Empire that stood for the annihilation of two thirds of the colonized world.

In The Memoirs of a Survivor… instead of a sense of beginning, one can see a sense of ending; instead of technology and economy being built up before our eyes, we have them being broken down we have a broken social machinery, half empty, about to become a ruin… instead of the beginnings of the British Empire and the modern world system and the new technology, we have their endings. The Memoirs of the Survivor is the doom of the Empire… The Survivor speaks for all who bore the “white man’s burden” in the colonies and in Britain. (Green, 1982, 6, 7, 10)

It is the Survivor, who is the victim of the period of anxiety, tension, and unease engendered by the crisis, full of hardships, for want of food, water, air, supply of electricity and gas, who witnesses the tribes of migrants occupying the pavement in front of her building, resorting to cannibalism. The tower of flats, Survivor’s residence which is a strong building, meant for the middle classes in the pre-crisis period, is now occupied by squatters, Indians and the other poor folks who could push themselves into it. During the phase of anxiety, the Survivor experiences a pathological state, and she uncannily acquires and an extra-sensory perception of looking
beyond the life through the mysterious wall of her living room. The life beyond the wall suggests the mystical experience of the voyager, the male protagonist of the novel, *Briefing for the descent into the Hell*. Michael Thorpe, comments in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, that the madness or the pathological state has “the potential for evolution” (Ravenscraft, Walsh, 1972, 132) in Lessing’s inner space fiction. The life beyond the wall is divided into two separate parts. One part talks about the “personal” bringing to life the painful existence of rejected middle class girl child, who suffers for the family shows a preference to the male child. The other part of the life beyond the wall, offers “a promise.” It talks about the spiritual experience of the “Presence” (87) and the “Wholeness” (87) of all mankind. It talks about the layers and layers of gardens full of prosperity and hope. Some scenes in the impersonal section also talk about the vandalized rooms which need to be mended, it serves as a premonition of the responsibility that the Survivor is expected to take up in the midst of the crisis. Lessing like R.D Laing the unorthodox psychiatrist believes that the crack in the mind, the psychic divide serves as an opportunity for enlightenment. R.D Laing in his critical work, *The Divided Self* writes, “I am aware that the man who is said to be deluded may be in his delusion telling me the truth, and this is no equivocal or metaphorical sense, but quite literally, and that the cracked mind of the schizophrenic may let in light which does not enter the intact minds.” (Laing, 1965: 28)

It is through the life beyond the wall that the Survivor learns about her duty of taking up the responsibility of the abandoned pre-pubescent girl, Emily Cartwright, the victim of the institution of family, and the male dominated society, who is dropped at the Survivor’s doorstep by a stranger in the strange times, without any preamble. The Survivor looked upon the event as an administrative fault, but feels responsible for the helpless child, who arrives at her doorstep without any official intimation accompanied by her unusual animal, cat like dog, Hugo. The Survivor realizes the pain of loneliness suffered by the precocious girl and makes all the efforts to put the girl at ease. The Survivor offers her sumptuous food, when she realizes that the girl hasn’t eaten anything since morning. The girl wants the Survivor to show her “her room” (18) a shelter that the girl is desperately in need of. Though the flat is small, the Survivor offers her a small, independent room which she can call her own. Emily, the pre-pubescent girl assures her that she would not be a “tick,” (19) and maintain cleanliness. She also offers to cook for the
Survivor, which is gracefully accepted by the Survivor for she doesn’t want Emily to feel an outsider. The Survivor says:

And then she began about breakfast, how she would adore to cook it, and so she and I would go into the kitchen, the beast padding behind us, and I and Hugo sat watching the preparations. And she was indeed competent and nifty… then she offered to wash up. She washed up and tidied the kitchen. (89)

The Survivor does not ask any embarrassing questions about her background. It is through the mysterious wall that the Survivor learns about Emily being tortured by her oppressive mother, who shows a preference for her baby brother.

The baby was laughing. The mother wanted to take the baby from the nurse, but the nurse held tight in her hands and said oh! No, no this one is my baby… Emily is your child madam. At which the mother smiled, a smile different from the other, and not understood by the little girl, except that it led to her being pulled up roughly on the mother’s hand.(41)

Emily is made to feel guilty for being a demanding child, which is seen by the Survivor and she comments that guilt had left an indelible scar on her mind, which left her with a permanent sense of deformity.

The hard accusing voice went on and on, would always go on and on, nothing could stop it, could stop these emotions, this pain, this guilt at ever having been born at all, born to cause such pain and annoyance and difficulty. The voice would nag on there, forever…I watched Emily…the bright attractive girl, who always had people around her… and yet she was isolated… it was the intensity of herself awareness that made her alone; it did not leave her… it was as if she had an invisible deformity, a hump on her back, perhaps, visible only to herself…and to me…(63)

It is through the wall that the Survivor glimpses at the girl being subject to sexual abuse by the father, which serves as a comment on the atrocities, inflicted on the weaker sex, in the patriarchal society. In yet another scene beyond the wall reveals the girl being labeled as dirty highlights Emily’s deprivation. Lessing says, “Emily, absorbed, oblivious. She was eating – chocolate. No, excrement… she had smeared it on sheets and blankets… over her face and into her
hair, there she sat, a little monkey, thoughtfully tasting and digesting...you are a ... disgusting, filthy, dirty, dirty, dirty, a dirty girl Emily. (123,124)

The Survivor deeply empathizes with the abandoned girl. At one point, the Survivor admits that Emily’s life is her story as well. In Lessing’s autobiography, Under my Skin, she talks about the novel The Memoirs of a Survivor as her attempt at writing autobiography. Emily’s story is the story of the Survivor as well as the story of Doris Lessing, she says:

When I wrote The Memoirs of a Survivor, I called it, an attempt at an autobiography,... I used the nursery in Tehran, and the characters of my parents, I have used that part of my mother, which she described as, I sacrificed myself for my children... she was a frustrated and a complaining woman, she went on saying- how the little girl in particular made her life a total misery... how could she diminish, demean and betray me? ...And then the moment, when Daddy captures his little daughter...his great hands go to work on my ribs. My screams, helpless, hysterical, desperate. Then tears. But we were being taught how to be good sports. For being a good sport was necessary for the middle class life. To put up with ragging and with being hurt, with being defeated in games, being tickled until you wept, was a necessary preparation.(28)

Lessing is critical of the institution of family. In A Small Personal Voice, Lessing recalls the discriminatory treatment received by her, with in the family, at the hands of her oppressive mother, who showed an obvious preference for her brother. In Martha Quest, the rebellious Martha, who is in quest of her identity, fights a psychological battle against her mother, who wants her daughter to follow the Edwardian standards of dressing up. In The novel The Good Terrorist, the woman protagonist, Alice Mellings, suffers exclusion in the middle class family in Britain. In The Fifth Child, the mentally and physically “different” child, Ben Lovatt, is treated as the “other” within the family.

When Survivor talks to Emily, casually and tells her that very soon she will have to leave the place as the city is fast emptying, for want of the basic necessities, Emily suddenly feels excluded, and she asks her where exactly, the Survivor would leave for. Realizing the lapse on her part, the Survivor talks about a farming family in the north, who could house them for some time, she tries to include her in her world through the creation of a “utopia”(16)of plenty.

The Survivor not only looks after the girl with empathy but also her dog- cat animal Hugo. She goes round the city looking for the food for the pets. As the girl outgrows her clothes, the Survi-
vor offers her money to buy the new or the second hand stuff; the suggestion is overlooked by Emily. The Survivor understands that the girl has yet not become conscious of herself as a woman. The Survivor acts as a provider, a guardian and a good parent who observes from a distance, without offending the child.

The Survivor, who tries to provide for her food, clothing and shelter and empathizes with her emotions, also suggests that if she wanted she could go to a school. The idea of joining the school in the phase of breakdown is seen as redundant by Emily. The Survivor comments that the schools for ordinary children had turned oppressive. They became an extension of army. Though, there were separate schools for the privileged classes, which functioned in the normal fashion for the middle class children, the children of “administrators and overseers.” Janet White, the adolescent daughter of the professor, Mr. White, who stayed in the flat upstairs, went to the school for the privileged children. Emily, who gets acquainted with Janet, tries to make Janet her pal; they talk and plan about their trip around the city looking for dress material. But, Janet is forbidden to talk with the abandoned girl, Emily, by her class conscious parents. Rejected by Janet, Emily experiences a loss of identity and she sits at the window, parodying the passersby and especially the middle class woman, to find a way out of her exclusion. The Survivor writes:

‘Look how she walks,’ Emily would say, ‘look at that fat old woman,’ (the woman was about forty five and fifty, she might even be thirty!) “When she was young, people said she had a sexy walk- “oh what a sexy little wriggle you have there, ooh, you sexy thing you”! And her parody was horrible because of her accuracy: the woman, the wife of a former stock broker who had become a junk dealer, and who lived on the floor above, was given to a hundred little winsome tricks of mouth, and eyes and hips; this is what Emily saw of her and it was what everybody must see of her. It was impossible not to hear Emily without feeling one’s whole being, one’s sense of oneself lowered, and drained. (30)

Subsequently, she starts mingling with the gangs of the migrant boys and girls who occupy the pavement temporarily and leave for a new destination. The Survivor feels worried about Emily, who is a pubescent girl, of getting pregnant, Emily says with irony, virginity is no longer important. The Survivor fills her with a sense of hope and assures her that virginity is important. In her state of loneliness, when Emily spends a lot of time on the pavement, it is the life beyond
the wall which offers, the Survivor, a sense of plenty, in the garden scenes. Lessing describes the scene as follows:

The gardener was bending over the stone runnel where it came into the garden from outside through a low opening that was green and soft with moss. Around every bed was a stream of clear water, the garden was a network of water channels...I looked at the food the earth was making, which would keep the next winter safe for us, for the world’s people. Garden beneath the gardens, gardens above the gardens: the food—giving surfaces of the earth doubled, trebled, endless—the plenty of it, the richness, the generosity... (136)

In the process of growing up, the survivor realizes, Emily trying out the old but beautiful outfits that belonged to the Survivor she feels warmed at the thought of the adolescent feeling at home in the Survivor’s house. The Survivor feels that Emily is psychologically included, in her fold. Expressing her joy, the Survivor says, “Emily took the sheepskins and made a dramatic tunic. This she had belted with some scarlet chiffon, and wore it over an old shirt taken from my cupboard. Without asking. I cannot say how delighted I was when she did this it showed she felt she had some rights with me, at last.” (53)

When Emily, very imaginatively, prepares a dish out of the withered onions and potatoes, in the absence of any fresh edible stuff, the Survivor feels delighted for Emily’s desire for survival by resorting to ingenuity. Lessing desires human civilization to be resourceful and imaginative, in addressing the problem of marginalization.

In one of her visits to the pavement, Emily meets Gerald, the leader of a gang of boys, who feels responsible for them. Emily falls in love with Gerald. Probing the reason for Emily’s love for Gerald, in the strange times, the survivor comments, “He was at any rate, the natural guardian of the younger ones, the distressed, and the forlorn. He was known for this, teased for this, sometimes criticized... perhaps this was why, he appealed to Emily. (73) Lessing’s heroines fall in love with men who take responsibility. Martha loves Anton Hesse in the novel, A Ripple in the Storm; Anna loves Willi, in The Golden Notebook. It is her American lover, Saul Green who tells Anna to take up responsibility. As a committed writer, Lessing expects her protagonists to take up responsibility. Alice Mellings, the protagonist of the novel, The Good Terrorist, is depicted as a committed woman, who takes up responsibility of the marginalized in the society.
Emily, who is an abandoned girl, helps Gerald in bringing up the abandoned children, whose parents were either dead or absconding. While nurturing the children, on the pavement, Emily loses her individuality. She becomes a part of the entire humanity. It is the communal life on the pavement, which brings a sense of wholeness. One can observe in Lessing’s fiction, a movement from individual to communal or collective, and a journey from “I” to “we.” In *Martha Quest*, one observes an individual conscience fighting against the collective, in Southern Rhodesia. In *Briefing for a descent into the Hell*, the voyager relinquishes the “I” of the individuality, in favour of the collective “We.” Anna learns the “logic of war,” in the egocentrism of the society. Unlike Ian Rand, Lessing stands for the collective consciousness. Collectivism can be seen as a solution to the problem of marginalization. Lessing comments:

But these young people’s lives were communal, and mating was far from being the focus or pivot of relationship when they chose each other. No, any individual consummations were nothing beside this act of mingling constantly with others, as if some giant rite of eating were taking place, everyone tasting and licking and regurgitating everyone else, making themselves known to others and others known to them in this tasting and sampling – eyeing each other, rubbing shoulders and bodies, talking, exchanging emanations. (74)

Though, Emily spends most of her time looking after the children in the commune, she visits the Survivor’s flat to reassure Hugo and her motherly figure, the Survivor. It is with lot of love and empathy, that the Survivor prepares food for her. In her absence, she looks after Hugo with a lot of care. It is the Survivor’s flat which becomes the second home or a place of refuge for the children of the commune. The Survivor acts as a provider for them as well. When one of the inmates from the commune, June, falls ill, Emily brings her home. Though June had been one of Gerald’s girls, June and Emily live in mutual peace and cooperation. From June’s unsophisticated language and accent, Emily learns that the girl comes from the pre-crisis, working class; she warms up towards her even more, and when she leaves with the contingent of women, for she feels attracted to the powerful woman leader, Emily is filled with a deep sense of loss. It is the Survivor who consoles her in her state of bereavement.

Just as Emily looked after June during her illness, with the help of the Survivor, she helps Gerald set up a home for the abandoned children. According to the position taken up by the public, the abandoned children were to be killed or chased away; but Gerald supported by Emily put
them up in an erstwhile old age home, with an ample open space around. In the midst of a breakdown, when food was a rare commodity, Gerald bought or sometimes “purloined” food. He set up a vegetable garden with the help of children, wherein all sorts of vegetables were cultivated alongside rearing rabbits and pigs. Emily looked after the community kitchen. When she realizes that children are afraid of her for they feel her disposition, “bossy.” Emily is overcome with tears and confiding in the Survivor, she tells her that Gerald and she never wanted any hierarchy, or pecking order to develop in the newly formed organization. She apologizes to the children for being rude. In the moment of crisis, when all values are breaking down, it is Gerald and Emily, who try to maintain human dignity. Emily looks after their hygiene; she makes sure that their heads are free from nits and lice. She makes sure that they eat well, even in the state of want. She wants them to develop resourcefulness to cope with the scarcity. While looking after the children, Emily and Gerald create a family for themselves. Emily was deprived of the warmth and bonhomie in the family of her own parents, but in her adopted family she creates natural warmth. Though, Lessing is critical of the institution of family as oppressive, she strongly advocates an adopted family, based on warmth and equality. In the novel, A Ripple from the Storm, (1957), Martha relinquishes her conventional family, and lives among the communist party members, which serves as her adopted family. In the novel, The Golden Notebook, (1962), Anna comments that her daughter Janet never got the love of her grandparents, in the conventional family, but her friend Molly and her son serve as an adopted family. Alice Mellings, the protagonist of the novel, The Good Terrorist (1985) creates a warm atmosphere in the squat, by showing a genuine concern for all the inmates. Emily tries to bring dignity to the abandoned children with the creation of the family life full of security and warmth.

The Survivor talks about the general condition of breakdown and degeneration which compelled people to fall back on the primitive way of living. Lessing comments:

Miles of people, all growing their potatoes and onions and carrots and cabbages and setting guard on them day and night, raising chickens and ducks, making their sewage into compost, buying or selling water, using empty rooms or an empty house to breed rabbits or even a pig - people no longer in neat little families, but huddled together in groups and clans whose structure evolved under the pressures of necessity. At night such an area withdrew itself into a dangerous obscurity where no one dared go, with its spare or absent street lighting, its potholed pavements and rutted streets, the windows showing the minuscule flickering of candles or the shallow glow
of some improvised light on a wall or a ceiling. Even in the daytime, to walk there seeing wary faces half visible behind shutters, knowing that bows and arrows, catapults, or even guns were held trained for use on you if you transgressed—such an expedition was like a foray into enemy territory, or into the past of the human race. (90)

But at the same time, there was a certain class, the class of officials and bureaucrats, who turned a blind eye to the sufferings of the people. The Survivor comments:

Yet even at that late stage, there was a level of our society which managed to live as if nothing much was happening—nothing irreparable. The ruling class—but that was a dead phrase, so they said; very well then, the kind of person who ran things, administered, sat on councils and committees, and made decisions. **Talked.** The bureaucracy. An international bureaucracy. But when has it not been true?—that the section of a society which gets the most out of it maintains in itself, and for as long as it can in others, an illusion of security, permanence, order. (91)

Highlighting the state of breakdown, the survivor recalls “The Ryans;” the large, undisciplined, unorganized, anarchic family that very seldom worked, and therefore was very poor, but never felt much about poverty. In the pre-crisis period, the Ryans were classified as the working class or the people who were thrown out of the pale of the society, and there were pockets of the Ryan clan. But, in the present state of social breakdown, very ironically, the Ryans got assimilated into the mainstream of the dislocated society. When the entire community became almost like the Ryans it was difficult to tell them apart. Through the episode of the Ryans, Lessing emphasizes the state of breakdown.

It is during the period of intense crisis that people are attacked by the four and five year old wild children who evince atavistic tendencies. They are called as the gang of poor kids, who are seen as enemies by the people, who refuse to let them live a in the human community. The people are of the opinion that the children should be smoked out by the police. It is Gerald and Emily, together, who rescue the wild children by educating them in the ways of the civilization. It is Gerald, who treats the children with love and empathy. Lessing describes the children as follows:

They were living in the underground, coming up in forays for food and supplies...nothing new in that a lot of people had taken to subterranean existence, for they could be actively wanted by the police, or criminal in some way, feeling, the underground to be safer...the kids were living like moles or rats in the earth...they were very young...they seemed never to have
had parents… never to have known the softening of family… some had been born in the under-
ground and abandoned… nobody knew how they survived, they stole what they needed to live on…they were not a pack either, but an assortment of individuals together for the protection of number only… they had no loyalty to each other, or, if so, a fitful and an unpredictable loyalty. They would be hunting in a group in one hour and murdering one of their numbers the next. (148)

Since the children are looked upon as nuisance, a public meeting is organized by the people to take a decision on the future of the kids, and everybody is of the opinion that they should be handed over to the police, who could smoke them out of existence. It is Gerald who stands firm on his position and suggests that each child should be adopted by a family and imparted training into civilized behavior for the children are very small, “the poor kids.” Though the children pelt stones at him and fracture Emily’s hand, they persist in their efforts relentlessly in bringing the kids into the mainstream of life. It is with tremendous patience, using non-violent methods, Gerald looks after the kids. When it becomes difficult to breathe pure air, he takes the wild children, along with the domesticated animals to the upper floors of the tower of flats, where the Survivor lived, for it was easier to get some fresh air and to manufacture fresh air with the help of the windmill, set up by Gerald on the top floor, and with the help of the gadgets made out of electrical equipment, which are rendered useless in the absence of electricity. Gerald uses his imagination to cope with the scarcity of air. Lessing wants civilization to be more imaginative in dealing with the issue of marginalization. In the preface to the 1964 collection of the short stories, *This was the Old Chief’s Country*, Lessing comments:

And while the cruelties of the white man towards the black man are among the heaviest counts in the indictment against humanity, colour prejudice is not our original fault, but only one aspect of the atrophy of imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun. (Lessing, 1973, 6)

In Mulk Raj Anand’s novel, *Untouchable*, it is the “flush system” which is seen as a means of coping with the problem of hauling human excreta on one’s head, the demeaning system which dehumanizes the protagonist. It is human resourcefulness and imagination, which catalyzes technological development and relieves mankind from the embarrassing situation. In *Memoirs of a Survivor*, Gerald uses his ingenuity to bring relief to the children.
Gerald not only supplies children with the fresh air but also, takes control of the river water from the authorities and fetches a few buckets of water for the Survivor, the children and his animals. Even in the most adverse circumstances, Gerald’s empathy for the children does not diminish, nor does his fervor to civilize them. One can observe that the marginalized help the marginalized in the hard times.

In the course of time, the survivor realizes that the city is almost dead, it has emptied, and everybody has left or is on the verge of leaving. It is difficult to survive for want of the basic necessities of life. It is the Survivor, who realizes that the time is ripe for departure to a new land. With her uncanny power she spots a yellow stain on the wall and through the wall, Emily, Gerald, Hugo the strange animal, the poor kids escape into a new land of promise. It is Survivor, the cosmic mother, endowed with love and empathy, facilitates the survival of the marginalized in the moment of complete breakdown. It is the motherly Alice Mellings, the protagonist of the novel, *The Good Terrorist*, who like the Survivor takes up responsibility of the victims of the class structure. It is love and empathy embedded in the philosophy of Sufism, which serves as a technique of coping with marginalization.

The realist novel, *The Good Terrorist*, (1985) talks about the plight of the different categories of the marginalized people, in the capitalist social structure, in Britain, in the decade of the eighties, who are treated as the “other” by the callous and oppressive class system.

*The Good Terrorist*, talks about the helplessness of the black youth, Jim, who is forced to be a criminal, in the absence of employment, and who lives concealing himself, in fear of the administration and the police, in the class ridden British society. It also talks about the “colonized” (Fanon, 1967, 8) status of the weakling, Philip, who is underpaid by his profit-oriented employers, who live off his brawn, but squeeze him to death, without any qualms. The novel portrays the plight of a destitute, working class mother, Monica, who fails to offer her child the basic necessities of life, as much as the home cooked food. It also talks about the “marginalization” of homosexuals and lesbians, who live in constant fear of the Police. The novel touches upon the pain of loneliness, suffered by the geriatric woman, in the western capitalist society, where the unproductive and misfits are thrown out of the mainstream of life.
The putridity of the social structure is emphasized through the image of an abandoned, dysfunctional and smelly squat in London, which is made uninhabitable by the callous and profit-oriented authorities of the Council.

It is Alice Mellings, the practical, determined and kind-hearted revolutionary, the protagonist of the novel, who stands up to the tyrannical officialdom and the oppressive police force; with her authoritative disposition, and middle class grooming, Alice restores order to the uninhabitable squat in London, in literal sense and figuratively restores order to the capitalist Britain. She brings dignity to the victims by addressing to their emotional and material needs. The novel, The Good Terrorist, is a painful critique of the callous capitalist structure.

At the margin of the social structure of power are the different categories of the marginalized people, who are exploited by the consumerist, capitalist system, and are treated as “Excrement,” (Boschman,88) in Britain, in the decade of eighties, under the rule of the conservative party, headed by Mrs. Margaret Thatcher.

It is the black, unemployed youth, Jim, who is about twenty years of age, who is forced to live the life of an “invisible man,” concealing himself in holes and squats, for his “bound over” status, that subjects him to constant harassment by the council and the police. Jim is not only treated as a congenital criminal, by the oppressive officialdom, but also by the bourgeoisie revolutionaries, who overlook his existence, in the squat.

Philip is a skilled craftsman, a builder and a decorator, who is a “weakling,” who is ruthlessly exploited by his employers, who hire and fire him, and underpay him, at their whim and fancy.

Monica is a destitute mother, who fails to provide her infant child with the basic necessities of life, like hot water in the harsh winter in London and well cooked meals.

The old woman, Mrs. Jackson, who is over eighty years of age, who lives a neglected life in the rented flat in Joan Robbins’ house all alone.
There are homosexuals and lesbians, who, too, live in hiding, for they are looked upon as “unbearable” embarrassment, and, therefore, are persecuted by the police.

The marginalization of the unwanted and the “unloved” people is emphasized through the image of the capacious, beautiful but “unloved” house, which is deliberately neglected, and made uninhabitable by the London council by blocking the lavatory bowls with concrete. The electric cables in the house, recorded as squat – 43 by the council, are ripped off, and the taps are cemented to block the water supply. The house is full of stench. The image of the large but desecrated house represents the dirt or the “shit” created by the oppressive capitalist system in Britain, which treats the marginalized as “shit.”

*In The Good Terrorist*, it is Alice Mellings, a committed activist, who uses her middle class background to stand up to the devious and recalcitrant officialdom, and restores order and dignity to the wounded house. Alice not only rescues the squat from being demolished, but also tries to bring dignity to the marginalized members.

Alice Mellings is a thirty six year old woman, who is sexually repressed, and who felt “excluded” as a child as a member of the middle class family, who hates the profit oriented, consumerist, and egocentric, middle class that speaks through, the callous officialdom and its oppressive abettor, the police. Alice deeply empathizes with the marginalized and nurtures a strong desire to overthrow the unjust capitalist system, which is debunked as fascist imperialism, responsible for the destruction of nature, oppression of the have-nots in Britain and colonization of Northern Ireland.

Alice though has had a comfortable middle class life always felt “excluded” as a child, when her parents, Dorothy and Cedric Mellings threw glamorous parties, in their large London flat, inviting hundreds of guests; Alice would be asked by her mother to go and sleep in her friends’ house; she felt excluded, and if her parents allowed her to sleep in their room, she felt excluded on account of their sexual intimacy. It is the middle class life, which marginalized Alice. Sexual repression can be discerned as the cause of Alice’s anger against authority and class domination. Jeannette King comments:
Alice recalls, amongst her strongest memories, being sent to sleep elsewhere, when her parents held parties, so that she felt she had no place in her home. This insecurity generates Alice’s most compelling desires, personal and political… but this sense of exclusion is most intensified by her awareness of her parents’ sexual intimacy. (1989: 94)

Sexual repression in Alice recalls Mary Turner’s repression owing to her parent’s sexual intimacy, in the novel, *The Grass is Singing*, which destroys her married life. In *The Good Terrorist*, Alice refuses to enter into a sexual relationship and feels comfortable living with her homosexual friend, Jasper, though he exploits her financially. Her non-sexual relationship of sixteen years with Jasper is a source of embarrassment to Alice’s middle class parents and relations.

Yet another reason for Alice’s empathy for the have-nots is her parents’ social background. Alice is proud of her mother for she came from a family “just one generation away from the working class,” (274) from her grandfather’s side, and her father who has a Scottish origin and had to struggle very hard in his life. Alice is proud of her parentage that involved hard work and struggle. But her parents’ financial success is hated by Alice. Alice hates the profit-oriented lifestyle of her father and she hates her mother, when she tells her to make a career for herself. Though Alice is a graduate, she refuses to take up a job and live a selfish life. She is a revolutionary, who has been living in the squats for the past sixteen years challenging the establishment, fighting for social and environmental causes. Alice has no qualms squeezing the middle class to serve the poor. For the past four years she lived with her mother, along with Jasper, with a motive to squeeze the last drop of blood from the middle class. It is only when Alice and Jasper are thrown out by Dorothy, for her inability to support them after her divorce from Cedric that Alice comes to the large London squat and rescues it, taking up cudgels against the oppressive system. In Alice Mellings one can trace the virtues of Sufism, especially the element of love and empathy, and a strong desire to stand up to the Authority, and to voice opinion against the Establishment. Lessing came under the influence of the Sufi Guru, Idries Shah, in early sixties. In her non-fictional work, *A Small Personal Voice*, Lessing has spoken at length about the philosophy of Sufism. Lessing comments on the spirit of questioning among the Sufis as follows:

Most of the Sufis were the literary men, and all were marked by their inability to accept the dogmas of their current Establishments. Often the struggle between the Sufis and the establish-
ments looks unpleasanly like what happened when the Nazis took a stand against something. (Lessing, 1957:193,194)

In her autobiography, *Walking in the Shade*, Lessing talks about her turning to the philosophy of Sufism in quest of a solution to the human misery.

Alice expresses her anger at the sight of the forsaken London squat, for its uncared for and “unloved” state. Lessing describes the demeaning condition of the capacious house as follows:

A large house. Solid...1910, thick walls, a capacious, beautiful unloved house... electric wires ripped out of the walls...and dangling, raw ended... the cooker pulled out and lying on the floor... the broken windows had admitted rain water which lay in puddles everywhere...it stank...the smell on this floor was strong, it came from upstairs...she flung open a door on to a scene of plastic buckets, topped with shit... but this room had been deemed sufficiently filled, and the one next to it had been started... (1-9)

The house was made “uninhabitable” by the council, by blocking the lavatories with concrete and by cementing the taps with an obvious intention to sell off the property and make “profit.” (2) Alice who had been living in the squats for the past sixteen years and had rescued several squats in different sections of London and its suburbs, is filled with sorrow and helplessness, at the sight of the beautiful house being left uncared for to earn profit. The house filled with human excreta, “the shit”(3) figuratively stands for Britain which is turned into a cesspool, by the divisive, oppressive and tyrannical capitalist system. Lessing speaks through Jim, the marginalized black boy, he says, “How much shit we all make in our lives... it all goes into the sewers...they say our sewers are all old and rotten. Suppose they just explode with sewer -gas ... we just go on living in this city, we just go on living... he was bitter, angry and fearful. (72)

Alice not only rescues the squat and restore order to it, but also brings dignity to the marginalized members. Alice comes to the squat with her homosexual companion, Jasper, whom she empathizes with and loves deeply, after being thrown out of her mother’s flat, to join the other members of communist centre union, the new party formed by Jasper, Alice and some of their friends, who desire to pledge support to IRA, to mark solidarity with Northern Ireland protesting the “Fascist, Imperialist’ policy of the British government, during Mrs. Thatcher’s rule, under the conservative party during the eighties. As soon as Alice and Jasper arrive in the
“wounded” squat, Alice learns that the inmates would be evicted from the squat, by the police, for the house is scheduled to be demolished for being unsafe and “uninhabitable.” (7) Alice is familiar with the devious and corrupt mindset of the council officials who deliberately made the houses uninhabitable to earn profit by constructing the towers of flats that could be sold to the rich, depriving the squatters of the basic amenities like shelter, water and electricity. Alice approaches the council official and tries to convince them that the squat is in a good condition and can be made habitable, and therefore should not be demolished. Alice uses her middle class grooming, her confidence and accent, “BBC perfect” and makes the officials see the reason in her argument. When Bob Hood, the chief official, who is in-charge of the old houses, opposes Alice in a curt voice, she uses an equally authoritative, peremptory and dismissive tone to drive home the rationale of her argument. Alice threatens him that corrupt official will be exposed and fired. Lessing describes the incident as follows:

‘Bob Hood an official disturbed in his important work, said curtly that the matter of squat 43 and 45 had been put off until tomorrow.

Said Alice, it’s alright, then, is it?

No, it certainly is not,’ said Bob Hood. ‘It has not been agreed that you or anyone else can occupy those premises.’

Alice said in a voice as peremptory and dismissive as his, ‘You ought to come and see this place. It is a disgrace that it could ever be considered as suitable for demolition. Somebody’s head should roll for this. I am sure heads would roll (93)

Alice obtains the document stating that the squat would be put on agenda at a later date, implying the squat could be occupied for a couple of months, which is seen as a victory of the have-nots in confronting the recalcitrant officials. Alice gets the lavatories usable. It is Philip, the skilled workman, who is a weakling, and therefore, is constantly cheated by his employers, helps Alice in removing the concrete from the lavatory bowls. The cement from the taps, too, is removed, which ensures a steady supply of water. Alice pays Philip adequately, and brings him justice. In almost twenty four hours of her arrival, Alice succeeds in making the squat livable. Alice further negotiates with the dustman, Allan and his fellow workers to pick up the garbage stacked in the black plastic bags, after Alice has dug a pit in the garden to bury the buckets of
excreta, with the help of the black unemployed youth, Jim, who had been living in the squat, before the arrival of the other inmates of the Squat, concealing himself from the administration and in fear of the police, for his “bound over” status. Jim is not only harassed by the police and the council, but also, is despised by the “bourgeois revolutionaries” who tell him to quit the squat, under the pretext that he is not a member of the political party, CCU, that they have been working for. It is Alice who not only rescues the squat but also offers shelter to both Philip and Jim, through her warmth and money, embezzled from her father’s office. Alice has no qualms to rob Peter to pay Paul. She steals money from her father’s house, to pay the little additional money to Philip, the physically challenged workman. Alice uses the money to rehabilitate the marginalized workman and ensure safety to Jim. Alice further restores electric supply to the house with Philip’s help and by negotiating with the Electricity department. When Alice, very thoughtfully digs the pit in the garden, to get rid of the dirt, the “shit” from the rooms upstairs for fear of the old sewers getting blocked, she is accosted by the police, past midnight. Five policemen menacingly storm the house with a “hunting look.” (73) Alice deals with the police very adroitly. Alice knows that the young policeman is eyeing lewdly at the young beautiful girl Pat, who is a fellow squatter. She keeps an eye on the policeman and at the same time speaks with absolute confidence with the sergeant and shows him the document obtained from the council. Alice prays that the two lesbian girls Faye and Roberta, should not return from the “picketing.”(73) Alice protects Philip with her authoritative voice and confident look, for she knows that “the wrong sort of policeman would find that childish appeal irresistible.”(73) Lessing talks about Alice’s experience with the police, who harassed the weak, the homosexuals and lesbians, whom they find queer, and “unbearable” as follows:

The Police. Her mind raced: Jasper? If he was in the house would he keep out of sight? Old Bill has only to take one look at Jasper and they were at him. He and she had joked often enough that if the police saw Jasper a hundred yards off and in the dark, they would close in on the kill; they felt something about him they could not bear. And Roberta and Faye…the police would have to take one look at them, too, to be set off. (73)

Talking about the plight of the differently gendered in the British society, Andrew Rosen, in his critical study of the British social history from 1950 to 2000, comments:
Ten years later, the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 decriminalized male homosexual acts conducted by adults over 21 in private in England and Wales. Prejudice against the homosexuals did not however, suddenly disappear. Majority of the people were of the opinion that homosexuals should not be allowed to be teachers and doctors. By 1987, 74% of respondents to a British Social Attitudes survey believed that homosexual relationship was mostly wrong. (2003:112)

Alice convinces the police with the documentary evidence that the house will be an agreed squat and they are legally permitted to occupy the same and also throws a searchlight on the corrupt practice followed by the council of blocking the lavatories and ripping off electric cables, blocking the supply of water. Alice complaints about the council and justifies the action of digging the pit in the garden. Alice says, “The council workman had filled the lavatories with cement, so there were buckets upstairs. We had to get rid of them. We dug a pit.” (74) Subsequently, when Alice obtains the documents stating the Squat a “legal Squat” for one year, and, that that status could be extended further, she approaches the police and warns them that they must not raid the squat, or it would be treated as overstepping the law. Lessing is critical of Authority and Institutions. She is anti-establishment.

Having dealt with the police successfully, Alice is appreciated by the members of the squat, which creates a warm atmosphere. Alice uses the warm atmosphere to create bonhomie among the members. Alice looks upon the squatters as her adopted family. Though Lessing is critical of the conventional institution of family as oppressive, she approves of the adopted family. In Martha Quest, and A Proper Marriage, Lessing is critical of the conventional institution of family. In Memoirs of a survivor, and The Golden Notebook, Lessing talks about the creation of an adopted family, which is full of warmth and bonhomie. Lessing talks about the warm atmosphere created in the squat, where Jim and Philip, the two outcasts, whom she looks upon as her responsibility and “family,” (96) are brought in the mainstream, amidst the bourgeois revolutionaries. Lessing writes:

Down she ran to the kitchen, where there were voices. What she saw made her eyes fill with tears. They were sitting round the table, Bert, and Pat, these two close together; Jasper, Jim smiling and happy, and Philip, already working on the cooker, bending over behind it, a cup of coffee on top. Bert had gone to his friend Philip’s girlfriend, Felicity, the thermos had been filled, and he had brought croissants and butter and jam… (90)
Alice not only feels empathetic towards the members of the squat, but also for the old woman, who feels neglected and lonely, Mrs. Jackson, who lives in the neighborhood. Mrs. Jackson was a widow, who had been living, next to the squat- 43, occupied by Alice and the other amateur revolutionaries and the victims of capitalism; she was a tenant who lived by herself, for several years, but when she grows old, she becomes dependent on Joan Robbins, the owner of the house. Joan finds it difficult to cope with the helplessness of old Mrs. Jackson, who needs a lot of attention. The old woman complains about her loneliness and about her being neglected. She says, “They don’t care, nobody cares.” (117) Alice convinces the old lady that Joan is warm and caring and brings her a hot cup of coffee, when Joan complains of the old woman’s expectations, Alice advises her to fetch the help of the services available for the old, “meals on wheels, social worker to advise and take responsibility.” (154) Joan is warmed towards Alice, she feels relieved and expresses her gratitude to Alice for offering a good advice, at the same time she is convinced that the squat is occupied by decent people. As Alice is trying to restore order to the house, she realizes that Philip, the weak and fragile workman needs to be supported not only in terms of money but also physically. Philip talked about his plight of being cheated and exploited by the callous employers frequently. Lessing writes:

Philip had been promised jobs and not given them; had not been paid for work he had done; and this was told her in her hot aggrieved voice of one who had suffered inexplicable and indeed malevolent bad luck, where as the reason for it all- that he was as fragile as a puppet- was not mentioned. (118)

Philip talks about being encumbered with disproportionate work. Philip says:

Do you know Alice, he said to me ‘you be here next Monday, I’ll have a job for you’ – do you know what that job was? He wanted me to load great case of paint and stuff on to vans… I am a builder and decorator… I did it for four days and my back went out. I was in hospital for two weeks, and then in physio for a month. When I went to him, he said I was one who was in the wrong… (149)

Alice attributes the injustice and callousness to the capitalist social structure. Alice says, “It was capitalism that was so hard and hurtful and did not care about the pain of its victims.”(118) Alice is convinced of his fragile position and says, “He’s an employee; he can never make a boss, he can’t work without somebody holding his hand.” (149) Philip leads a “colonized” life as much
as the black natives of Africa lived under the imperialist structure. Alice expects Jim, the black unemployed youth to help Philip. Jim helps Philip, off and on.

Jim, the unemployed youth, who was forced to be a part of the underworld, was moody by nature. Though Alice tried to bring him in the mainstream of the squat life she realized his pain of being unemployed. It was the agony of a person who wanted to work, unlike her and many other amateur revolutionaries, living in the squat, who volunteered to be unemployed. Alice learns that Jim has had a training in printing, but isn’t abreast of the new changes in technology. Alice strongly recommends Jim for job in her father’s, Cedric Mellings’ printing firm. While writing the letter of recommendation for Jim, when Alice learns that Jim’s surname is Mackenzie, he tells him that one of her cousins is a Mackenzie. Jim warms up to Alice and he is convinced of her sincerity. Jim gets the job, which makes him “alert” and “competent.” In the absence of Alice’s lover, Jasper and his fellow CCU member, Bert, the two Squat members who are on a trip to Ireland to probe the possibility of joining IRA, Jim’s success in getting the job is celebrated by Alice, Philip, Pat, and Jim. Jim feels included and brought in the mainstream of life.

Alice tries to help Monica, the working class, young mother, who comes to the squat, as Alice is returning from the police station, where she went to warn them that squat – 43 is a legal tenancy, and no further raids should be made. Monica along with her husband and small baby is crammed into a hotel, run by some foreigner, with some five hundred families, with no basic amenities of life. Monica tells Alice that she hasn’t been able to feed the child home-cooked meals; he is to be fed from the packets. There hasn’t been hot water for the baby to bathe in. Alice is about to let Monica inside the squat out of absolute compassion, but Faye, lesbian girl, who has had a “battered childhood,” breaks into a hysterical fit which thwarts Alice from sheltering Monica in the Squat. Alice gives her the address of her mother and assures her that her mother will help her for she is fond of kids. Monica comes back crying bitterly and accusing Alice of cheating her for nobody lived in the flat, instead, the house was put “on sale.” Though Alice is shaken up from within for the loss of her house, where her mother lived, all the same, to put Monica at ease, Alice tells her to look for a squat, since she is not alone and has a husband, and further assures her that she would ask the official, working in the housing department to legalize the squat.
In her attempt, to put the squat in order, Alice realizes that some additional money is required buy the secondhand boiler, which meant that she must pay Philip, who has yet not been paid for fixing the cooker. Alice steals the money from her father’s firm where Jim is employed, to offer a square deal to the weak workman, Philip. When a whooping sum of thousand pounds is found missing from the coffers, it is Jim the black youth who is obviously suspected of stealing and consequently, he is sacked from the job. Jim, forlorn and forsaken by the system, comes back home wailing bitterly. Alice approaches her father and admits that it is not Jim but Alice herself, who has stolen the cash and tells him in an authoritative voice that Jim should be reinstated in his job. Jim is re-inducted in the printing firm. Alice returns to the squat to break the news to Jim, but realizes that Jim has abandoned the squat along with his family of drums. Whenever Jim felt lonely, he chose to be in the company of his musical instruments, which proved to be balmy to his bruised mind. Music appears as a technique of coping with marginality. In the novel, *The Golden Notebook*, the woman protagonist, Anna Wulf’s, American lover Saul Green plays the Jazz to soothe Anna, in her state of mental breakdown. Jim’s departure dents Alice’s mind. Alice breaks down with grief and guilt. Jim, suspected of thieving which results in his self-imposed expulsion speaks about the cruelty of the capitalist system. Since, he is a black, he is looked upon as a criminal, in keeping with the social prejudices, where black is synonymous with crime. Frantz Fanon, in his critical work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, writes that the colonized are treated as enemies and criminals. It is the “colonized” mindset of Jim, which compels him to live in fear of the colonizer. It is his assumption that the oppressive system will never offer him a fair deal. Jim’s departure is a testimony to the cruelty of the capitalist structure.

Alice realizes that Jim’s departure has enfeebled Philip. During the same time Jasper and Bert return from Ireland in a disappointed state, for being rejected by the IRA cadre. The IRA explicitly stated that, they could help the cause by creating the favorable atmosphere by distributing brochures and pamphlets. Alice, in an endeavor to bolster up the spirit in the squat, organizes a meeting of the CCU members, wherein, issues engendered by the British capitalism are discussed at length, and policy of the party to deal with the same is formulated, with a focus on nuclear disarmament, environment conservation, and sexism, through demonstrations and picketing. Alice feels let down, when Jasper talks about his plan to visit the Soviet Union to seek
its support to overthrow the British capitalist structure. When Jasper and Bert leave for the Soviet Union, Alice plans to quit the squat in utter disappointment for Alice is averse to the idea of seeking any aid from the foreign power and therefore Alice opposes the Russian-Irish comrade, Andrew Conners, residing in the squat – 45, when he admires her for dealing with the police and the council, but tells her to get into the system, lead a comfortable life of a computer operator, and help overthrow the social structure. Alice is aware of the explosives smuggled in to the squat 45, but warns Andrews not to speak about it. When Alice is about to leave the squat, Roberta, the poor woman over forty, from the slums of the industrial North, who has been living with Faye, the hysterical girl from the working class of the East of Britain, who spoke cockney and who has had a battered childhood, requests Alice to look after Faye, for some time, since Roberta’s mother is in the hospital, suffering from cancer. Alice knew that it was only Roberta, who could cope with Faye’s tantrums. Alice knew that Faye could “commit suicide” in Roberta’s absence. She tries to treat Faye as normal as possible. Philip, the working class craftsman empathizes with Faye’s psychopathological state, helps Alice in keeping the normal conversations on. Faye, who fails to bear Roberta’s absence, slits her wrist and falls unconscious. Philip wants Alice to send her to the hospital. Alice knows if Faye is sent to the hospital, she would be caught by the police, who would treat her as a criminal, which meant another kind of death. She refuses to send her to the hospital, but tries to stop the bleeding using a tape, which is used in plumbing, and by feeding her water mixed with salt and sugar, in the absence of glucose. Alice uses her resourcefulness and imagination to cope with the problem. Lessing wrote in the preface to the collection of short stories, that civilization will have to be imaginative in dealing with the issue of colonization or in other words, marginalization. Faye regains her consciousness. In the meantime, Alice calls up the hospital, and leaves a message for Roberta from, the neighbor’s, Joan Robin’s telephone and seeks the help of Samaritan to resuscitate Faye. It is Philip, the marginalized workman, who helps Faye, in the moment of crisis, he holds her in her arms, as Alice tries to feed her the salt and sugar syrup. In Lessing’s fiction, it is the marginalized, who empathize with the other marginalized. In Memoirs of the Survivor, it is the whole set of marginalized people who rescue the other marginalized. Alice empathizes with both, Faye and Philip, as victims of the system which could easily crush them. Alice saved Faye from dying and from the hands of the callous authorities. Alice felt terribly exhausted and as
soon as Roberta came back, she handed over Faye to her and expressed her determination to leave the squat for she felt that she needed a respite. No sooner does she talk about her short sabbatical; Philip speaks with bitterness about her being selfish, for Philip is harassed by his new employer, and Mr. Greek who accuses him of tricking him. Philip had taken up an assignment of renovating a restaurant, and he is unable to complete the work in time. The deadline is already over, and the employer threatens him that he would not pay him. Philip expresses his ire of the capitalist world, which lives off his brawn. When Philip talks about the microcosmic world of the squat, of being a parasite, where Philip slogs interminably, Lessing comments on the capitalist system, which lives off the hard labour, the brawn of the wretched of the earth. Philip complains, “All you people, he yelled, never lift a finger, never do any work, parasites, while people like me keep everything going… they talk about all these unemployed everywhere, people wanting work, but where are they”? (293)

It is Alice who accompanies Philip to the workplace and works overnight to complete the assignment. When Greek complains and expresses dissatisfaction with the quality of work, Alice knows that he does it deliberately to avoid payment as per contract. Alice realizes that he needs to be bullied and she fights him tooth and nail, to bring justice to Philip. Greek, the owner of the hotel, who would never have paid a penny, pays two thirds of the agreed amount.

After Faye’s suicide attempt, which sapped Alice’s energy and after working overnight with Philip on his painting project at the Greeks, Alice feels her spirit sag. She is keen to take a break. No sooner does she talk about the break, than, Philip, who wanted Alice to become a partner in his commercial venture, leaves the house in anger. For want of physical strength, he is unable to handle any work independently. Philip meets with an accident, and Felicity, his onetime girlfriend approaches Alice and tells her to take upon herself the responsibility of Philip, who is hospitalized. Since Philip has no one in the town, it is Alice who is mentioned as the next of kin by the hospital administration. Alice reaches the hospital to see Philip reduced to bones. His sparrow like thin body is reduced to pieces. Alice realizes that it is not now that Philip has lost hold on life, he lost hold long ago. Lessing comments, “it was not a question of Philips having lost hold, he had never grasped hold.” (298) Alice mulls over the destiny of the people, who are at the margin. Lessing writes, “She was thinking, this is what happens to the
marginal people, people clinging on. But only just, they just made one slip… they lost their hold and fell.” (297) Lessing had witnessed the anguish of the black natives of Africa, the victims of imperialism, in Southern Rhodesia, where she grew up, as a member of the settler community, which is seen as the direct fall out of capitalism. Lessing had witnessed the plight of the war victims, who had lost the organs of their body. She had seen the plight of the women who suffered under patriarchy. Lessing had also witnessed the impact of the capitalist war and its aftermath, which turned people schizophrenic. Philip is seen as the symbol of capitalist oppression, where the weak gets “not according to his need but according to his ability.” (Morelly) As a committed writer, Lessing ventilates the pain suffered by the have-nots, in the capitalist society. Alice tries to bring dignity to the marginalized Jim, Philip, Monica, the working class mother; she looks after them with love and empathy. She fights with the establishment to bring them justice, but each one of them fails to survive with dignity on account of the callousness of the system. So long as they are together, and are looked after by the responsible and committed person like Alice, they live with dignity. Alone they experience dehumanization. Lessing emphasizes the importance of love and empathy, the principles embedded in Sufism, as the technique of coping with marginality. Lessing makes a strong plea for commitment and responsibility.

In her battle to bring justice to the marginalized, in the capitalist system, Alice does not support violent means that cause damage and destruction of population. As a humanist, she preserves the humaneness. Alice is angry with the capitalist system, but she does not expect the interference of the foreign powers, in dealing with the British capitalist system, using explosives to overthrow the callous system. At one point, Alice is divided in her mind. She says it doesn’t matter who brings justice, whether it is Cuba or Russia, but when she learns about, explosives smuggled in the country, from across the channel, through, the Russian comrade Andrews, and she strongly disapproves of it. When, Gordon ‘O’ Leary, the Russian spy tells Alice not to refuse the cache of explosive delivered at the squat-43, for she has accepted the payment of five hundred pounds from Muriel, the girl from the squat 45. Alice uses her authoritative voice and speaks curtly, to the Gordon O Leary, squat 43 cannot be used as a “collection centre.” And she also tells him that money was just handed over, without stipulating any condition for it. She also warns him that “no country should instruct us.”
When Jocelin, the frightening girl, who came from the squat to the squat occupied by Alice and the other comrades, indulges in making the handmade bomb, using the explosive “purloined” from the “material” brought in by the dubious comrades, who delivered two cartons of explosives in the squat, Alice does not like it. Though, the other squat members are excited about the same. When Jocelin asks Alice, where should they have the “practice run?” Alice suggests the hateful cement pillars that smacked of capitalist oppression, but all the same, Alice suggests that there should not be any damage done to the people. Lessing, like Alice, wants the obsolete, the outdated class structure, to be blown up. In *Memoirs of a Survivor*, the “consciousness of ending” suggested through the death of the city is the vindication of Lessing view of annihilation of the oppressive class structure. This recalls a well-known Marathi poem *Tutari* by the poet Keshavsut, who pleads for the death of the obsolete social practices as follows:

let the obsolete be consigned to death,
let the putrid past not pileup.
listen to the call of future,
let equality find its place. (Keshavsut, Tutari)

In Tagore’s *Gitanjali*, he too suggests in his poem, *Where the Mind is without Fear* that the old and rotten ideologies should be done away with.

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee, into an ever widening thought and action. (Tagore, 1912)

In the Yellow Notebook, a section from the novel, *The Golden Notebook*, the protagonist of the short novel, *The Shadow of the Third*, Ella, while talking to her working class lover, Paul Tanner, expresses her rage against the class structure and wants the working class houses, the ugly sight, to be wiped out, implying the wiping out of the obsolete class structure in Britain. Robert Boschman in his critique on the novel, *The Good Terrorist* comments, “Modern Britain is con-
demned by Alice and her co-conspirators as a wasteland worthy only of destruction.” (Boschman, 99)

After the obsolete structure is blown up, the squat 43 is stormed by the policemen, who humiliate the squatters as “shit” by throwing a bag full of human excreta on the squat dwellers. The police while throwing the dirty bag at the squatters distort the piety of the biblical expression, “dust to dust” (Genesis, 3:19) by desecrating it as “shit to shit.” It is Alice, who cleans up the carpet, washes it, puts it in the sun for drying, and then disposes it off, instead of throwing the dirty carpet as it is. Alice cleans up the shit created by the oppressive class structure and maintains the dignity of the squat, figuratively, she tries to bring dignity to Britain.

When the group, consisting of the amateur revolutionaries, from the squat 43 plan to explode the bomb, in the highly populated place, Alice calls up the “Samaritans” about the explosion, to avert the disaster. The explosion claims several lives, including the life of the victim of capitalism, the lesbian girl, Faye, who has had a battered childhood. Alice grieves over the loss of several innocent lives. When the amateur revolutionaries leave the squat, Alice lives there with all determination thinking about dealing with the next challenge of meeting the MI 5 Peter Cecil. Alice looks at the house, which is made “habitable” which she tried to save with love and care, and hopes that it would be loved one day. It is the image of the large beautiful house, cleansed of the abominable, foul cultural politics, created by the hierarchical and oppressive class structure, in Britain, which treats the weaklings as the colonized, which depicts determination, and commitment of the protagonist, Alice Mellings to annihilate the class structure. The image of the rose bud that appears in the garden of the squat 43 is a potent image of peace and beauty been restored to Britain. Alice expresses her feelings about the house and figuratively about Britain cured of capitalist sickness, as follows:

She sat on quietly, there by herself, in the silent house. In the betrayed house… she allowed her mind to move from room to room in it, praising her achievements, as if someone else had accomplished all that, but the work had not been properly acknowledged and therefore she was doing it as something due to justice. The house may have been a wounded animal whose many hurts she had one by one cleaned and bandaged, and now it was well and whole… she felt that she could pull the walls of this house, her house around her like a blanket, where she could snuggle, where she could feel safe. (392)
To sum up, one can say that, in both the novels, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* and *The Good Terrorist*, the protagonists, the Survivor and Alice Mellings try to find a way out of the oppressive class structure through love and empathy. Alice’s sense of commitment in dealing with the oppressive capitalism, in Britain in the decade of eighties can be compared with Martha’s commitment in fighting for justice for the black natives of Africa in the novel, *A Ripple in the Storm*, and *Landlocked*, under the oppressive imperialism, during the Second World War. Alice can also be compared with Anna, the protagonist of the novel, *The Golden Notebook*, (1962) who remains loyal to the mission of social commitment and joins the labour party in Britain in 1957, having lost faith in communism. Alice takes up the responsibility for the whole range of marginalized people in Britain just as the Survivor takes up responsibility for the entire suffering humanity, in the post-nuclear imaginary land, in the North. As a humanist Lessing wants to be the “instrument of social change.”(Lessing, 1957: 10) Margaret Drabble comments, “Lessing is the kind of a writer who changes peoples’ lives.”(1972:50)

The sense of commitment, portrayed by Lessing’s protagonists is in keeping with her own vision of literature, which in her opinion must express and “strengthen a vision of good, which may defeat the evil.” Talking about the role of the author, she comments in her critical work, *A Small Personal Voice,* ” once a writer has a feeling of responsibility, as a human being towards other human beings he influences, it seems to me he must become a humanist, and must feel himself an instrument of change, for good or for bad.” (p10)It is the vision of warmth, compassion and humanity that illuminates Lessing’s writings like the realist fiction of the nineteenth century writers, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Stendhal, whom she admires.

As a humanist and a committed writer Lessing’s verdict on the capitalist structure is amply evident in the image of “the dying city” which perishes due to a catastrophe as well as through the image of the destruction of the ugly and the obsolete bollard, in the novel *The Good Terrorist*. She wants it to be wiped out.