

# Configuration of Alternative Spaces in Doris Lessing's "The De Wets Come to Kloof Grange"\*

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## Abstract

Doris Lessing's story "The De Wets Come to Kloof Grange" from her collection *This Was the Old Chief's Country* recounts the story of white settlers, Major and Mrs Gale, whose routinized farm life in Rhodesia acquires a new dimension with the arrival of an Afrikaner couple, Mr and Mrs De Wet, to assist the Gales. Within the framework of recent theories of Thirdspace / Third Space by Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha, which are then related to Rosi Braidotti's theory on nomadism, this study aims to show how hybridisation can only happen on the material level of space and how space, including the house, the garden and natural environment, can be configured and transformed from restrictive conceptualisation with boundaries to alternative ones where the female characters can escape to.

*Key Words:* Doris Lessing, Thirdspace (Alternative Space), Hybridisation, Nomadic Female

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Doris Lessing'in "The De Wets Come to Kloof Grange"  
Adlı Öyküsünde Alternatif Mekanların Yapılandırılması

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## Özet

Doris Lessing'in *This Was the Old Chief's Country* başlıklı kısa öykü kitabından alınan "The De Wets Come to Kloof Grange" adlı öykü, binbaşı Gale ve eşinin Rodezya'daki tek düze çiftlik hayatlarının beyaz Afrikalı yeni yardımcıları De Wet'lerin gelmesiyle nasıl değiştiğini anlatmaktadır. Bu çalışma iki kültür arasındaki hibritleşmenin yalnızca fiziksel mekan boyutunda gerçekleşebildiğini ve kadın karakterlerin ev, bahçe ve doğal çevre gibi alanları nasıl sınırları olan kısıtlayıcı mekan anlayışından alternatif mekanlara dönüştürdüklerini, Edward Soja ve Homi Bhabha'nın Thirdspace / Third Space ve Rosi Braidotti'nin gezgin kuramları kapsamında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Doris Lessing, Thirdspace (Alternatif Mekan), Hibritleşme, Gezgin Kadın

## 1. Introduction

Studies in the novels of Doris Lessing appear to overshadow those on her short stories collected in five books, namely two collections on African stories, two on England and a collection of sketches titled *London Observed*. This study aims to bring an insight into Lessing's "The De Wets Come to Kloof Grange" in her first volume of *Collected African Stories* with respect to the complicated relationship between space and gender. The story takes place on a farm in Rhodesia, where the British settlers, Major and Mrs Gale have lived with their African servants for thirty years. Despite these long years away from their home country, they are still attached to English customs in terms of the way they appropriate their house and experience daily habits. They are portrayed as a couple who have lost their emotional ties and drifted away from each other in time. While Major

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Gale, a former colonialist military, is dedicated to his farm work, Mrs Gale learns to love her isolation and keeps up a connection with a childhood friend Betty, who is a doctor in England, though they have changed a lot. Their routinized farm life acquires a new dimension with the arrival of a newly married Afrikaner couple, the De Wets<sup>1</sup> – reflected in the title – to assist Major Gale in cultivating the land. The efforts of the female characters of this story – Mrs Gale as the owner of the farm and Mrs De Wet as the newcomer – to reconstruct private space, namely their home and its surrounding, as well as their relation to the natural environment can be interpreted in terms of creating alternative spatial possibilities within the framework of recent theories of Thirdspace/Third space by Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha. Soja's conceptualisation of Thirdspace could be related to the questioning and destabilisation of fixed notions of gender. In this theoretical framework, although space is not explicitly articulated by Rosi Braidotti, her fluid gender identity and nomadic female which blurs boundaries and subverts stable definitions play an important role in materialising Mrs Gale's acts within the boundaries of space. Therefore, whether she is able to appropriate or produce space through nomadic acts is also under investigation in the analysis of this story.

## 2. Theoretical Background

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the theory of space not only in the fields of architecture and urban studies but also in social sciences and geography. Space is no longer treated “as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile” (Foucault, p. 70) but it is acknowledged as a product of social relations and experiences embracing heterogeneity. By building on Henri Lefebvre's three dialectically interconnected dimensions of space, namely the physical (perceived), the mental (conceived) and the social (lived), Edward Soja underlines the significance of “the inherent *spatiality of human life*” (1996, p.1). He names Lefebvre's physical space as firstspace which deals with the “real material world” and his mental space as secondspace “that interprets this reality through ‘imagined’ representations of spatiality” (1996, p. 6). Like Lefebvre, Soja emphasises the fact that “the organisation and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience” (1989, pp. 79-80). Thus, he defines the thirdspace where all binarisms or oppositions confront with another/other alternative(s), and encourages people to have an open mind for different views because

[thirdspace] is instead an efficient invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be ex-

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<sup>1</sup> The family surname “De Wet” originated in Holland and was introduced to Africa as “an occupational name, reflecting the trade or profession practised by the initial bearer or father”, and thus it sheds light on the Afrikaner background of the De Wets in this story. Cited from <http://thedewets.com>.

panded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other (1996, p. 5)

The physical space with its material objects and their various interpretations by individuals from distinct social backgrounds are all comprehended as social constructions. Moreover, their cultural and political views about that space are continuously reconstructed. Soja's spatial thinking shows how these dimensions of space cannot be thought in isolation.

The discussion on Thirdspace also requires an elaboration on the concept of hybridity. There are several theoreticians in postcolonial studies, who have contributed to the discussions on hybridisation, yet, as Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998) states, "it is Homi Bhabha's usage of the concept that has been the most influential and controversial within recent post-colonial studies. Bhabha goes back to Fanon to suggest that liminality and hybridity are necessary attributes of 'the' colonial condition" (p. 176). Bhabha considers the colonial interaction between two cultures, namely the coloniser and the colonised, as an enhancing acculturation leading to new formations rather than corruption of the original. As he puts it in "Signs Taken for Wonders",

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal .... Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power (Ashcroft et al. p. 42).

Bhabha is against any kind of binarisms or oppositions between the self and the Other, the centre and the margin, the civilised and the uncivilised etc., which are merely the Western representations of other cultures. Instead, he argues for multiple and ongoing interaction between the cultures in terms of social, cultural, political, economic, linguistic aspects, which will bring about the development of societies. For Bhabha, hybridisation in colonial and post-colonial contexts paves the way not only for the enunciation of colonial power but also of the counter colonial resistance, which is possible in the "Third Space of Enunciation" (2004, p. 37). It is the space in which hybridity emerges at the point of intersection of two cultures. What happens at the moment of interaction in the Third Space between the two genders, races or classes in terms of enunciation, for instance, is the exchange of knowledge, sometimes in the form of conflict and tension leading to resistance, sometimes of acceptance and submission. From this point of view, Bhabha's conception of hybridity will enable me to unveil the interventions in the flow of the Gales's life in Rhodesia, and to show how an essential stability of finiteness in terms of differences cannot be realized.

### 3. Textual Analysis of the Story

Major and Mrs Gale's veranda where the story starts frames the context to display how the concepts Third Space and hybridity are dealt with on various occasions. In the first scene, they are sitting on the veranda "side by side trimly in deck chairs, their sundowners on small tables at their elbows, critically watching, like connoisseurs, the pageant presented for them" (Lessing, p. 75). The resemblance of the veranda to "a box in the theatre" (Lessing, p. 75) and the couple to spectators shows how they perceive life in Rhodesia, as if they are watching a spectacle or performance in their private compartment of a theatre. Moreover, "connoisseur", which echoes Homi Bhabha's criticism of Western connoisseurship<sup>2</sup>, namely their colonialist attitude towards the African culture and land brings about a two-sided discussion of the issue. Bhabha, in an interview published in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, claims "Western connoisseurship is the capacity to understand and locate cultures in a universal time-frame that acknowledges their various historical and social contexts only eventually to transcend them and render them transparent .... This is what I mean by a *creation* of cultural diversity and a *containment* of cultural difference" (1990, p. 208). In this sense, he argues that the Western view fixing differences into a universalist framework of its own choosing is limiting as it creates a form of control and manipulation on the observed, just like the appreciation of art objects displayed in a museum. On the other hand, he focuses on the cultural differences which cannot be framed within universal standards stereotyping them in terms of dualistic thinking. Instead of being stable, a culture's difference should rather be ambivalent and changing, and thus, is open to new interpretations. Therefore, there is a constant play between universalising and limiting. Accordingly, what the Gales perceive out there – the bright sunset view and the crystal moon "presented for them" (Lessing, p. 75) like a pageant – exemplifies a fixed image of Africa, and points to the idea of the Gales's distant observant position. Similar to the pageant's implication of a theatre stage, "the dusk [drawing] veils across sky and garden" (p. 75), seems to evoke the closing of the curtain after a performance. The garden below the veranda is full of "flowering shrubs, and creepers whose shiny leaves, like sequins, reflected light from a sky stained scarlet and purple and apple-green" (p. 75). Moreover, the comparison of the bright leaves to sequins and the changing colour of the sky are evocative of the decor on the theatre stage. Sitting neatly ("trimly") rather than relaxed on deck chairs tacitly fosters the idea that they do not exactly fit into the African life and stay aloof from their immediate surroundings<sup>3</sup>. It may also suggest their well-organised and civilised traits in contrast to their sided-opinion about the Africans as savages. Not only their view of the sunset but also of their posture and distant

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<sup>2</sup> For more discussion on the differences between cultural diversity and cultural difference, see *The Location of Culture* (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Pat Louw in her article "Landscape and the Anti-Pastoral Critique in Doris Lessing's African Stories" (2010), resembles their flimsy deck-chairs to "the settler's version of a throne" (p. 40), which also shows "the typical imperial 'prospect picture' where the colonials view their land from an elevated position" (p. 40).

position seem to demonstrate the Western universalist structure which incarcerates the African nature and culture into their own frame of mind.

Major and Mrs Gale's watching the sunset and the moonrise from the veranda constitute not only their materialised space but also their socially produced and empirical space which is, in Soja's terms, "directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description" (1996, p. 66). Soja's firstspace deals with the relations between human beings and the material world including the built-environment and nature. Thus, the description of the physical elements in the firstspace is based on the empirical determination of human beings. Hereby, the firstspace is often thought of as "real" space characterised by its physical descriptions, perceptions of the viewers and their daily life. Each of the couple establishes individual bonds with what they observe in the act of watching. While Major Gale appreciates the sunset view, Mrs Gale does not get in touch with the material reality in front of her eyes. Instead, she prefers to remember her childhood, where she finds happiness. Unlike her husband's interest in the present condition of the landscape, Mrs Gale is nostalgic for her past life in England "when she had been Caroline Morgan, living near a small country town, a country squire's daughter. That was how she liked best to think of herself" (Lessing, p. 79). Nostalgia is a complexly intertwined concept with a variety of meanings and associations related to trauma, memory, utopia, future etc., but the word derives from the Greek "nostos" or homecoming, and "algia", pain or grief (OED). What characterises Mrs Gale's authentic sense of home is paradoxically not an everyday feeling of home in Rhodesia, even though she has been living there for the last thirty years, but a spatial longing for her home in England before she got married. As John McLeod notes, "conventional ideas of 'home' and 'belonging' depend upon clearly defined, static notions of being 'in place', firmly rooted in a community or a particular geographical location" (2000, p. 214). Unlike its conventional meaning, as Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling put it in *Home* (2006), "home is multi-scalar" (p. 27), which encompasses a discussion of different scales such as house/dwelling, city, nation, body etc. It can act as a valuable means of positioning, location and placement by providing a sense of place in the world. Nevertheless, they base the idea of home on both material and imaginative elements. "Home is neither the dwelling nor the feeling, but the relation between the two" (p. 22). Similarly, Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1969), emphasises the feelings attributed to the concept of home and the material condition of home as a place. Viewed from this perspective, the disjunction between Mrs Gale's past and present, between England and Rhodesia, makes the idea of home not a fixed notion but ambivalent in time and space, and it can only be sensed through an act of the imagination. This could also be explained with reference to Rosemary Marangoly George, who analyses the dimensions of home in *The Politics of Home*, and suggests that "the basic organising principle around which the notion of the 'home' is built is a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions" (p. 2). Home-countries, for instance, are exclusive because as George puts it, the mention of the home-country indicates that "the speaker is away from home" (p. 2), which might relate to Mrs Gale's distant location from England as her home-country. Homes are inclusive that are grounded on a sense of sharing the same class, race, or gender. Mrs Gale seems to be in a search for the location in which she feels at home in terms of inclusion. However, she understands that it

is not about reducing the notion of home to a geographic place where her own kind live together or the representation of home as the domestic sphere. Actually, for Mrs Gale, home becomes a mental construct built from her memories that survive from the past and exists in a fractured and intermittent relationship with the present.

Since Mrs Gale cannot adjust herself to the white settler life in Rhodesia, she creates an alternative space that would not fall between the dual categories of the real (perceived) and imagined (conceived) places. Through the constitution of space in her imagination by simply dreaming about the past, Mrs Gale tries to remain intact in life. She has not been to England for a long time and may not be able to return, which might imply her detachment. However, through writing letters to Betty, Mrs Gale keeps her connection to her home country and an old friend, whose present situation she has no access to. When Mrs Gale reads the letter from Betty, which is “about people she had never met and was not likely ever to meet – about the weather, about English politics” (Lessing, p. 76), she allows her memory to take her to “half a century to her childhood” (Lessing, p. 77). The act of writing and reading letters is merely an imagined connection to her past within the dimensions of space and time because the two friends write to each other in “a sense of duty” (Lessing, p. 76) rather than by heart. Mrs Gale makes use of Betty as a medium to reconnect to her personal history, and by doing so, she escapes into an imagined home. In a Braidottian sense, Mrs Gale is a nomad because of her “lines of flight” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 7); she travels to England, to her childhood years at least in her imagination to overcome her loneliness in Rhodesia. As Braidotti puts it, nomadism does not necessitate “the literal act of travelling” (2011, p. 26). Thus, Mrs Gale’s being in constant mental movement from Rhodesia to England, from the present to the past indicates her potential for nomadic becoming. Like a nomad, Mrs Gale “has no passport or has too many of them” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 64). It is the distance between the two worlds for Mrs Gale that constitutes her liminal position as a nomadic figure belonging nowhere, which also contributes to her construction of a thirdspace<sup>4</sup>. She does not confine herself to the dualistic understanding of space defined by the senses (what she perceives on the veranda, for instance) and the dominant social structures (how she is supposed to stay within the limits of the house, not only because of women’s spatial segregation by patriarchy but also of the colonialist view of the African nature as savage and uncivilised). Rather, she creates a thirdspace in her imagination based on her memories, which seem to replace her experiences on the veranda and assuage her longing for the homeland. Her mental recreation of the homeland might show that places are not only fixed geographical locations but lived spaces.

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<sup>4</sup> This thirdspace perspective shifts the established conceptualisation of space based on binary oppositions: mental/material, imagined/real etc. to a conceptual triad consisting of three interdependent levels defined by the senses, the dominant social structures and the individual experience, none of which is separable from the others. For broad-ranging studies of the conceptualisation of space in social, cultural and political contexts, see Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1991).

Another reason why the veranda reflects characteristics of a thirdspace is – whether it refers to Soja’s spatial dimension or Bhabha’s dialogical space – because it is imbued with new meanings as a site of resistance, offering possibilities to challenge the repressive views that socially and spatially entrap women at home. It is the indeterminate in-between space on the veranda where the positions of gender represented by the two women and their husbands are blurred and the interactive dialogue among them (except Major Gale) disrupts the hegemonic patriarchal and colonial ideologies. As Bhabha puts it in his essay titled “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences”, “it is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew” (1995, p. 157). Building upon his emphasis on the performatively produced meaning of culture, I would argue that the contradictory dialogue between the women and Mr De Wet about gender roles can be interpreted as the representation of gendered differences and the interruptions at the time of speaking can be considered as intervention where essentially based identities are problematised. The conversation between the two men about farming on the veranda is interrupted by Mrs Gale when she questions how a newly married young woman passes time alone on the farm “with not enough to do” (Lessing, p. 95). To Mr De Wet’s suggestion of having a baby as a solution for his wife’s loneliness, Mrs Gale claims that “there’s more to women than having children” (Lessing, p. 96). She also reveals the young woman’s visits to the river in the mornings and warns him about the possible dangers like contracting a disease (bilharzia) and being attacked by wild animals. By bringing such issues into question, Mrs Gale criticises male indifference, which she also has been suffering from for so long. Taking courage from Mrs Gale, the young woman starts questioning her husband’s instructions to go home by saying “Is that an order?” (Lessing, p. 97). However, the women’s attempt to show their reaction to their husbands, Mr De Wet’s lack of understanding about Mrs Gale, his “brutal” (Lessing, p. 96) responses and even worse Major Gale’s not being “aware of any interruption” (Lessing, p. 95) might suggest that like cultures, gender roles and gender identities can be problematised through confrontation in the Third Space of enunciation. As can be seen, the veranda is characterised by the two women’s resistance against the dominant social structure that segregates them not only from male business but also disregards and ignores them as men’s equivalent. The women’s, particularly Mrs Gale’s intrusions upon the seemingly accepted gender values lead to arguments between the genders. The dialectic between them works with opposition but ends with the resolution of this argument. Their confrontation – though without understanding each other – unsettles the binary structures of patriarchal representation of gender because it generates a multiplication of different viewpoints. They reach a wider understanding of gender differences although they still disagree. Such interruptive arguments blur the boundaries between genders and the dissolution of the codes of difference established by the dominant ideologies.

Unlike this clash between genders, the veranda serves as a place of intimacy for women. Mrs De Wet tries to seek solace from Mrs Gale, which can be understood from her “weeping” (Lessing, p. 91) in Mrs Gale’s stomach. Their shared loneliness and boredom on the farm is what brings

them together, and the veranda serves as the medium of this intimacy. Such interaction brings about new meanings for them, embracing each other's differences emanated from nationality, class, age and personality rather than rejecting them<sup>5</sup>. Prior to this incident, the veranda was merely a place constitutive of uneasy moments due to their inability to communicate and forced situation to become friends. With respect to their distinct social and cultural values, they have nothing in common to talk about and share. While Mrs Gale considers Mrs De Wet's mind as "a dark continent, which she had no inclination to explore" (Lessing, p. 90), Mrs De Wet regards Mrs Gale as "nuts" (p. 90) because she sends an invitation note to the house which is only five minutes away. The metaphorical identification of Mrs De Wet's mind as the dark continent because of her Afrikaner origin, in fact, evokes its association with the savage and uncivilised Africa in need of light, namely civilisation, brought by the enlightened and civilised English scientists, missionaries and explorers. The term was first used by Henry M. Stanley, who wrote about his journeys to Africa and collected them in two books, titled *Darkest Africa* and *Through the Dark Continent* in 1878. From then on, Africa has been depicted as the dark continent, and as the 'Other' of the Western civilisation to be tamed from the imperialist viewpoint. Although there are multiple arguments about the evolvment and reasons of such labelling for Africa in recent theories, in Roland Barthes's terms, the dark continent functions as a myth which universalises and naturalises the otherness of the country. This is what Barthes names as, "*depoliticized speech*" (p. 142). As he puts it in *Mythologies*, "Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact" (p. 143). In this sense, the metaphor or myth of the dark continent used for Africa becomes a naturally accepted fact which is shaped by the political, economic, cultural and social impositions of the West.

In addition to the phrase "dark continent", which has strong colonial implications, Mrs Gale's mention of Afrikaners as having "a tribe of children" never less than twelve "running wild over the beautiful garden and teasing her goldfish" (Lessing, p. 81) also suggests her prejudiced feelings and ideas. The use of the word "tribe" rather than family or community and its association with uncivilised people can be read as the racial attitude of the British towards the Afrikaners (British-Dutch racism). In Mrs Gale's imagination, they are depicted as a tribe interrupting her peace and tamed artificial garden, but later she warns herself about not "jump[ing] to conclusions" and not being

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<sup>5</sup> Mrs Gale is a middle-aged English lady with four grown-up children, who has also lost intimate connections and sexual relationship with her husband. She is "as thin and dry as a stalk of maize in September" (Lessing, p. 78), which might suggest her aging and tiredness. Mrs De Wet, on the other hand, is an Afrikaan, coming from a family of thirteen. She is a newly-wedded, "half-grown girl" (p. 85) who might be eighteen "with delicate brown legs and arms, a brush of dancing black curls, and large excited black eyes" (p. 85), which is an implication for the freshness of youth. Her husband's desire to go home early to "catch it hot" (p. 89) is an evidence for being sexually active. Unlike Mrs Gale who is formal in her manner, clothings and speech, Mrs De Wet, in her shabby clothes, acts "with an extraordinary mixture of effrontery and shyness" (p. 85).



“unfair” (Lessing, p. 81). Mrs Gale is so habituated to her solitary life that she has concerns about sharing it with another woman. At one moment, she judges Mrs De Wet to be uncivilised, at another, she tends to “make atonement for her short fit of pettiness” (Lessing, p. 81). Like her liminal sense of home, Mrs Gale’s imagination is filled with ambivalency, going back and forward between two ideas about the new woman.

Although the veranda evokes the idea of a thirdspace in Soja’s terms, becoming a place of imagination, resistance and intimacy, in Homi Bhabha’s terms, hybridity of cultures in the Third Space of enunciation cannot be achieved because negotiation between cultures in this place cannot be realized. Before moving onto the analysis of an instance in the text, it is necessary to elaborate on the concept of Third Space. Although Third Space, among Bhabha’s other concepts, is the least elaborated one, it is introduced as the “precondition for the articulation of cultural meaning” (1994, p. 38). Even, Bhabha regards Third Space as the same as hybridity, which he states in an interview, saying “hybridity is the Third Space which enables other positions to emerge” (p. 211). What he means refers to the need for a spatial dimension or an in-between space where hybrid formations can take place. Thus, the two concepts seem to be the equivalent of or interdependent to each other. Bhabha’s Third Space may not have an inherently spatial meaning like that of Soja’s Thirdspace, yet in the preface of the book *Communicating in the Third Space* (2009), he states that “It is a place and a time that exists in-between the violent and the violated, the accused and the accuser, allegation and admission” (p. x). Viewed from Bhabha’s perspective, Third Space seems to be an undefinable or unrepresentable one since it is a space of confrontation, articulation, contestation where the relations between two cultures are extended and hence, become more complicated. When the native steps onto the veranda with a sack of letters and raw meat, for instance, the veranda may be read as a location of differences where the English and the native confront each other, yet without any sense of communication. Since they do not interact mutually, there is no possibility for a hybrid formation between the cultures. Nevertheless, in terms of interruption on the concentration of the Gales’s reading letters, the veranda might be considered as a hybridity or Third Space. The fact that letters are marked or stained by the colour of blood because of the raw meat in the same sack is significant to understand how the Gales’s so-called preserved and bordered life on the homestead is unguarded against the potential interruptions from the African environment and its people. Since the letters are a means of connection to the outside, perhaps to England, to family, to friends, to business and public life, this communication is interrupted immediately, loses its unique experience due to the blood from the meat, which is suggestive of a recently hunted animal and wild life in Africa. In the description of the native coming through “a bush filled with unnameable phantoms, ghosts of ancestors, wraiths of tree and beast” (Lessing, p. 75) to bring letters, there is a reference to the native’s cultural context and connection to “dark continents” (Lessing, p. 90). Similar to the previous discussion, the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised as well as the master and the slave is evident in the simile used for the native “put[ting] on a pantomime of fear . . . like an ape, to amuse his master” (Lessing, p. 75), which might be connected to staging in a theatre as well.

In addition to the veranda, Major and Mrs Gale's living room is likewise an important place since its description exemplifies material and social production of firstspace:

It was more than the ordinary farm living-room. There were koodoo horns branching out over the fireplace, and a bundle of knobkerries hanging on a nail, but on the floor were fine rugs, and the furniture was two hundred years old. The table was a pool of softly-reflected lights; it was polished by Mrs Gale herself every day before she set on it an earthenware crock filled with thorny red flowers. Africa and the English eighteenth century mingled in this room and were at peace (Lessing, p. 76).

On the surface, the combination of African and English objects and furniture in this room stands for the Gales's physical appropriation of space. The antelope horns and knobkerries suggestive of Africa seem to represent the hunter and prey relationship, which can be associated with masculinity. The fine rugs and old English furniture, on the other hand, reveal an attachment to home country, to create, in Bachelard's terms "a nest for dreaming, a shelter for imagining" (p. viii). The second sentence in the quotation that refers to furniture from both cultures is combined with the conjunction "but" to underline the contrast between the African objects of wild nature and the English furniture of "fine" quality. The terminology used to describe these objects in both languages – Afrikaans and English – might suggest another colonial combination between the two cultures. Moreover, the two hundred-year old English furniture could evoke the historical memory of colonialism. Nevertheless, Mrs Gale appropriates the place setting on the table "an earthenware crock filled with thorny red flowers" (Lessing, p. 76), which are a part of the African wild nature. In relation to the idea of home mentioned earlier, the living room, then, not only reflects her attempt to convert the house into a home but also a contrasting combination of the two cultures, which can be explained with Bhabha's notion of hybridity. Thus, unlike the impossibility of hybridity between the natives and the Gales on the veranda, the living room represents the material coexistence of culturally specific things but this is a conflictive coexistence beyond a simple mingling or merging. The split between the house and the outside as well as between the old English furniture and African objects represent a form of hybridisation at least on the material level in the living room. Mrs Gale's appropriation of the living room with old English furniture as well as her outdated physical appearance - dressed "in a shapeless, old-fashioned blue silk dress, with a gold locket" (Lessing, p. 86) depicted by the De Wets in their first meeting - can be explained with reference to Susan Stanford Friedman's explanation of the settler life in *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*. As she puts it, such mannerism and style "tend to be transferred or preserved almost as historical artefacts in their consciousness, so that sometimes the behaviours in the settler society have become rather out-of-date versions of what is happening in the original homeland" (p. 62).

The material constitution of the living-room shifts to an inquiry into how space is socially produced. Apart from such appropriation of the room, for instance, Major Gale and his wife's routine of reading letters is the main aspect of the social and lived experience. The letters for Mrs Gale are

from her oldest friend Betty and those for Major Gale are about business. Similar to their spatial practices on the veranda, while Mrs Gale remembers her childhood in England and is disconnected from the farm life in Africa, Major Gale engages in farming. As mentioned at the outset, hybridity is not a fixed concept based on neatly defined characteristics. It is not a simple mingling of two cultures as well but can be a series of interruptions where one “reality” intrudes on another. Thus, at the moment of reading letters, the Gales become involved in different realities – while Major Gale stays in the present, Mrs Gale establishes a contact with the past – without any interaction between them. The monotonous atmosphere is foregrounded through the mosquitoes<sup>6</sup> dropping “one by one, plop, plop, plop to the table among the letters” (Lessing, p. 76), and their concentration on reading is broken by “a continuous soft hissing noise” (p. 76). Hence, their routinized life as is seen in the act of reading, watching the sunset and eating dinner is constantly interrupted by flies, which are symbols of disturbing African nature. On the one hand, the repetition of such imagery throughout the story may perhaps demonstrate the dull and unchanging life of the Gales. On the other, it could also be an implication for dangerous and hostile African wilderness, which Mrs Gale fears. Even in the only private space created in her imagination, Mrs Gale cannot escape from the present reality disrupting her emotional bond with the past. This interruption creates a kind of hybridity in the sense that she is left in a ‘neither/nor’ and ‘either/or’ situation. Although Mrs Gale prefers to connect to the homeland in her imagination, she neither detaches herself from the present reality nor engages in the past, which results in her going in between the two worlds.

The hybridity of different cultures obvious in the description of the living room could be linked to the incident when Mrs Gale immediately changes “the name of the farm from Kloof<sup>7</sup> Nek<sup>8</sup> to Kloof Grange<sup>9</sup>, making a link with home” (Lessing, p. 80). This act of replacing “Nek” with “Grange” shows her effort to feature an English characteristic of home to the place. Hence, “Kloof Grange” represents a mingling of the African and British cultures with the former word in Afrikaan while the latter in English. A contrast between the former and the latter conditions of the house underlines the shift in the material construction of the farm. It was owned by two South African brothers and “separated by a stretch of untouched bush with not so much as a fence or a road between them” (Lessing, p. 79). As natives of the land, they did not put a border between the house and the wild nature, and lived “in this state of guarded independence” (Lessing, p. 79). However, because of a sense of insecurity caused by the wild surrounding, the Gales divide the African veld from the house with a fence, a boundary that separates their place from the natural environment, which will be discussed in the analysis of garden, too. The characteristics of Kloof Grange (fenced and

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<sup>6</sup> “Certain kinds of mosquito are the agents by which the germs of malaria are introduced into the human body” (OED 1 a).

<sup>7</sup> Kloof is “a deeply narrow valley; a ravine or gorge between mountains” in South Africa (OED).

<sup>8</sup> Nek is an African origin word meaning “a neck or saddle between two hills” (OED).

<sup>9</sup> Grange is “a country house with farm buildings attached, usually the residence of a gentleman-farmer” (OED 2 a).

protected) respond not only to local environmental conditions such as the dangerous empty veld and the potential wild animals but also to cultural traditions and the social organisation of the Gales.

Unlike the Gales's own place, the location of the other house represents the position of Afrikaners outside the borders of the homestead, situated as the place of the inferior, the place of the assistant, whatever it is named. The other house below the valley, which is allocated for the De Wets, is not a home for the Gales as it is "denuded of furniture and used as a storage space. It was a square, bare box of a place, stuck in the middle of the bare veld, and its shut windows flashed back light to the sun" (Lessing, p. 80). The repetition of the word "bare" to modify the house as well as the veld, and the closed windows imply desolation and a sense of lifelessness. Before the arrival of the De Wets, Mrs Gale decides to arrange the house for them. When she dares to go there at night under the moonlight, "it looked dead, a dead thing with staring eyes, with those blank windows gleaming pallidly back at the moon" (Lessing, p. 81). Repeating the word "dead" and the blank windows in this quotation further suggest desertion, even though the house is paradoxically personified with eyes looking at the moon, like its previous description during daylight. In addition to its outside appearance, the inside full of "sacks of grain", "loose mealies", "mice" and "cockroaches" (Lessing, p. 81) add to the meaning of a dead house devoid of order and loveliness. Soon, however, Mrs Gale turns it into a house of her own appropriation "furnished with things taken from her own home" (Lessing, p. 82) and in which beds are placed on opposite sides of the room, like the ones in her own place. She thinks that the arrangement of the house would be good "for a woman who might be unused to living in loneliness" (Lessing, p. 81). This is how she conceives the house as a place lacking love, care and intimate relations. Mrs Gale's own appropriation of the house could also be interpreted as an instance of colonial desire for a reformed house for the employees whose structure is intrinsically inferior (located in the empty veld) and, consequently, needs to be appropriated and improved through the taste and interest of the coloniser.

Major and Mrs Gale's decision to allocate the other house for the De Wets also demonstrates the relationship between power and spatial division. As Soja notes,

[t]he multisidedness of power and its relation to a cultural politics of difference and identity is often simplified into hegemonic and counter-hegemonic categories. Hegemonic power, wielded by those in positions of authority, does not merely manipulate naively given differences between individuals and social groups, it actively *produces and reproduces difference* as a key strategy to create and maintain modes of social and spatial division that are advantageous to its continued empowerment and authority. . . hegemonic power universalises and *contains* difference in real and imagined spaces and places (1996, p. 87).

Rather than creating an alternative mode of thinking about space that restructures the opposites in new ways, Major and Mrs Gale impose the power of the British over the Afrikaner couple

through social differentiation and spatial division of the houses in the real and imagined spaces of the land. This shows how their colonial authority is constituted in two ways: on the one hand, the evidence of their authority comes from within itself, namely their employer position. On the other hand, the location of homestead away from the other house, which is also fenced and protected, can reveal their superiority. Through the establishment of a social and spatial difference between the two cultures, the Gales seem to prove their colonial authority. Accordingly, their conception of the other house might be considered as a space where issues of hegemony are addressed. As Soja puts it, the repressed people “have two inherent choices: either accept their imposed differentiation and division, making the best of it; or mobilize to resist, drawing upon their putative positioning, their assigned ‘otherness’, to struggle against the power-filled imposition” (1996, p. 87). The De Wets appear to accept their otherness due to employer-employee and British-Afrikaner relationship, by staying in the old house as Major Gale’s assistant, yet they show their reaction to Mrs Gale’s arrangement of the house by changing its decoration. After their settlement into the old house, Mrs Gale visits them and notices “the front room was littered with luggage, paper, pots and pans. All the exquisite order she had created was destroyed ... [and] the two beds had already been pushed together” (Lessing, p. 87). This presumably shows the grid the British impose on the Afrikaner and the spatial and cultural response of the De Wets to the workings of power. The mixture of disparate appropriation of the house can be read as the articulation of cultural differences and reaction against the exercise of power and allows the De Wets to construct their own vision of the house. Also, the order Mrs Gale sets and the mess the De Wets make represent how the boundaries between organisation and chaos changes in line with cultural backgrounds, namely the British and the Afrikaner in this context. It might also be interpreted as another instance of hybridity where personal preferences and cultural habits clash.

Apart from the De Wets’s subtle changes to Mrs Gale’s construction of space, the younger woman questions assigned gender roles as a wife, using the same house as a medium of reaction. Judith Butler’s notion of “gender performativity” in *Gender Trouble* (1999) is helpful in understanding how Mrs De Wet shows her reaction against her husband’s indifference and the male view of women as wives and mothers. Butler argues that gender identity is the result of a process in which the subject repeatedly performs gender acts under the influence of discursive enforcement but it is also “a changeable and revisable reality” (p. xxiii) in line with individual preferences. The fact that Mr De Wet marries his wife because he wants her to take care of the domestic affairs and raise children reveal his view of the roles attributed to the woman. However, through individual gender performance, Mrs De Wet attempts to create a thirdspace within the boundaries of the assigned real-and-imagined space of the house. After a visit to the Gales’s house and homecoming one night, Mrs De Wet hides under the bed in order to take her husband’s attraction. She creates, in Soja’s terms, “an alternative mode of understanding space as .... a location from which to see and to be seen, to give voice and assert radical subjectivity ....” (1996, p. 104). Watching her husband

and the “silly” natives “running about like ants<sup>10</sup>, looking for [her]” (Lessing, p. 101) in the empty and dangerous veld all night from the place where she hides can be a real challenge to her husband’s lack of interest towards her, and by extension, seems to be a political act. As bell hooks, a feminist theorist and cultural critic, puts it in “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness”, “It was this marginality . . . as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives” (1990, p. 149). In relation to this, Mrs De Wet is able to problematise gender relations by reconstructing her identity as a venerable Afrikaner woman and reconstituting her house as a site of resistance. Through individual performances, she shows who she wants to be, a respected woman, and by doing so, affirms and sustains her subjectivity.

Since there is an intense interaction between the women and their physical environment, particularly their relation to different parts of the landscape – artificial and natural – may indicate various aspects of human perception, thought and lived experience. In order to understand these relations, it is necessary to discuss briefly the development of the concept of landscape. After centuries of discussions, ranging from being a linear, measurable and geographical space to having an aesthetic value, in the twentieth century, the concept of landscape has been revitalised by foregrounding the subjective inferences of the landscape. As Denis Cosgrove puts it, it is time “for the incorporation of individual, imaginative and creative human experience into studies of the geographical environment” (1985, p. 45). Viewed from this perspective, landscape is considered no longer as a static entity to be observed, looked at, represented or described but as a transformed and reconstituted one through human actions, which also evokes Henri Lefebvre’s groundbreaking conceptualisation of space as a socially produced product of human relations. Likewise, Cosgrove also claims that “landscape is a *social* product” (1984, p. 14). The concept designates broader circumstances of human involvement through experience of the particular landscape, attribution of meanings, interpretation of symbols, practice of everyday activities and workings of ideology. From such a perspective, as Christopher Tilley notes, landscapes might be defined “as perceived and embodied set of relationships between places, a structure of human feeling, emotion, dwelling, movement and practical activity within a geographical region which may or may not possess precise topographic boundaries or limits” (2004, p. 25). Landscapes disclose not only the human actions and activities based on perception, conception and experience of space but also the attributed meanings, symbols and cultural images that form a way of understanding the relations between humans and space. With respect to Lefebvre’s spatial trialectics, the interpretation of landscapes operates on various levels: a particular part of landscape can gain meaning

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<sup>10</sup> The word “ant” comes from Old English aemette, akin to “emmet”. “The ant is known for its wisdom, prudence, or foresight”. Cited from Ferber, Michael, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. In the story, however, Mrs De Wet’s laughing and depiction of her husband and the natives as “silly” and “stupid, running like ants” might show her humorous attitude toward a group of people rushing around and looking for her rather than emphasising their intelligence or insight.

first, through personal interaction based on sensual experiences and practice of everyday activities, second, through the workings of knowledge and power in structures of domination which articulates, controls and manipulates the individual and collective experiences and finally, through the direct and lived experience of the socially, culturally and imaginatively produced space. Among these different levels of interpretations, the latter one, which puts the emphasis on the personal and individual experience of the landscape, implicates its complexity as well as plurality. In Stephen Daniels' words: "we should beware of attempts to define landscape, to resolve its contradictions; rather we should abide in its duplicity" (1989, p. 218). Although the word "duplicity" appears to imply a negative connotation meaning deception, this perspective disentangles the concept of landscape from its geographical, social and cultural boundedness and provides ground for more interpretations, which might reveal the personal and alternative modes of experiencing the relations with different parts of the landscape.

Following the discussion on how women try to create alternative (thirdspace) domestic sphere, different parts of the landscape such as Mrs Gale's garden should be taken into consideration. Although it is difficult to generalise about the way that the garden represents meaning, I will argue that it has multiple and changing meanings based on the perception, conception and lived experience of the characters, especially of Mrs Gale. It provides an essential insight into not only the socially constructed gender relations and cultural differences but also the possibility of its re-constitution from a thirdspace perspective paving the way for new meanings. What is perceived and conceived about the garden in the text, for instance, is an artificial and tamed part of nature, an ordered entity with everything arranged spatially, a display of the semi-public domestic sphere where the gender relations are observed. For Major Gale, it functions as a space of taking walks in order to discuss business with his assistant. Based on colonial ideology, he presumably considers the garden, like the other parts of the landscape, as a space to be cultivated and expanded. With its ostentatious nature and architectural elements, the garden might also be an evidence for social status, wealth and power to be shown. Yet, paradoxically, Mrs Gale attributes deeper meanings to the garden, and in fact, creates an alternative space within the apparent boundaries.

The creation of an English garden is a way of dealing with the life in Rhodesia, which Mrs Gale equates with physically and mentally being in exile. Similar to the decoration of the house, her English background is also seen in her garden. The attempt to create as much of the home country environment as possible is nowhere more evident than in her desire to plant and embellish the garden with English flowers and elements. She tries to overcome her loneliness by creating a two-acre garden "over years of toil" (Lessing, p. 80), which evokes her struggle for the constitution of a space of her own. "[T]he rose garden" (p. 83), "her vivid English lawns, her water-garden with the goldfish and water lilies" (p. 80) and the fountains are all natural and architectural elements used to epitomise her life in England. Since the African climate is not appropriate for the English plants to grow, the Gales spend a lot of money to water them throughout the year, which is "an extravagance" (p. 83). The presence of water is not related to a practical or functional purpose like irrigation but to an aesthetic and ornamental one. As Mark Bhatti notes, "gardens are artefactual and

therefore creations of human creativity that mould nature according to individual frames of reference" (p. 184). Indeed, a considerable amount of time, effort and money is spent by the Gales to create the garden which becomes an important part of their social identity and colonial superiority. However, such a creation also seems to be an illusion attained by transferring recognizable design patterns. Despite its familiarity, there are certain differences in terms of plants and flowers, which add a distinctive cultural meaning to the garden. Mrs Gale's garden is not only characterised with the English features but also intertwined with "her flowering African shrubs" (Lessing, p. 80) that grow naturally under the walls of the garden. These walls are constructed to act as a point of interaction between the dry and harsh conditions of the veld and the green, shaded and comfortable environment of the garden. No matter how hard she tries to separate her house from the veld, the natural flora of the African environment penetrates into the so-called bordered garden. The description of the African shrubs and the English lawns – with adjectives like "flowering" and "vivid" – actually might show the forced juxtaposition or gathering of the plants and underline the inevitable merging of the two cultures as a kind of interruption which breaks the continuity of the garden's Englishness.

The garden might offer possibilities for individuals to develop sensual, conceptual and personally lived experiences as well as allow the individual to connect to the natural world. In the case of Mrs Gale, it serves as a border that distinguishes the house from "the austere wind-bitten high veld" (Lessing, p. 83) surrounding the farm, and by extension, becomes a shelter where she retreats from the pervasive wilderness of the empty veld and has her most immediate and sustained contact with nature. The garden is significant because it is here that she observes the landscape such as the hills, the mountains, the valley and the river from a distance. As Tilley puts it, monuments and places are important because they "afford a particular sensory perspective in relation to its surroundings" (2004, p. 38). Mrs Gale's garden seems to be her monument that is of cultural and personal importance and interest providing a view particularly towards the mountains and the hills, which she possesses and values so much.

In addition to the perceptual and conceptual understanding of the garden, what is lived and experienced involves personal and individual contact with nature. Thus, it discloses enlivening experiences of individuals including confrontations, discoveries and transformations and becomes more than a physical space where everyday activities take place. That enhancing interaction with the garden is actualised when Mrs Gale takes a step further and goes out alone for the first time one evening to prepare the old house for the De Wets, and even though she has an unnamed fear outside the garden she walks without a lamp light. That night "[t]he garden was filled with glamour, and she let herself succumb to it" (Lessing, p. 79). Feeling enchanted by the beauty of the flowers under moonlight, the garden seems to take on a new meaning other than its practical usage for daily activities, and becomes a place for discovering the unknown for Mrs Gale. Since she is not used to going outside the garden at night and feels some kind of uneasiness and anxiety, she stops "[a]t the gate under the hanging white trumpets of the moonflowers . . . looking over the



space of the empty veld between her and the other house” (Lessing, p. 80). The gate functions as a threshold where she hesitates to go beyond at least for a moment. By means of the moonflowers that blossom at night, she manages to step forward through the gate “shutting it behind her with a sharp click” (Lessing, p. 80), which shows her determination to challenge her confined life and confront her fears. She goes beyond the boundaries<sup>11</sup> one by one passing through the garden, the gate and the empty veld on her way to the other house. By building on a secondspace perspective which considers the garden as a part of the private/domestic space, Mrs Gale restructures it as an alternative space where she disorders the dichotomy between the inside and the outside and transforms the established conceptualisations of the garden from a restrictive place with its boundaries to an illusionary one where she escapes to. From then on, she disregards her husband’s warnings – “You can’t go running over the veld at this time of night” (Lessing, p. 98) – saying she will act as she desires. Hence, she draws upon the material and mental spaces of the dual categories but goes beyond them, and by extension, like a nomad “blur[s] the boundaries without burning bridges” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 26). Mrs Gale’s lived experience<sup>12</sup> provides a confrontation not only with her fear of being outside at night but also a discovery of deceiving herself with her friend Betty. “The thought of Betty . . . sustained her through the frightening silences” (Lessing, p. 82) on the road to the other house and worked “in imagination at least, as a counter-weight to her loneliness” (p. 82). However, the intermingling odour of decay in the veld and of the heavy perfume of the moonflowers “at the gate” (p. 82), force Mrs Gale to realize that she has, in fact, nothing to share with Betty, as she has not seen her for years; therefore, she stops consoling herself with her friend from then on and describes this experience as “a victory over herself” (p. 83).

The meaning of the garden varies in accordance with the personal relations as well as social and cultural backgrounds of the individuals. As opposed to Mrs Gale’s interest in the garden and her intimate connection with it, for Mrs De Wet, it is just a physical space used for practical reasons. In response to Mrs Gale’s showing off her garden, Mrs De Wet says, “My mother was always

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<sup>11</sup> Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins analyse in *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings* (2009) the writer’s “border crossings by mapping her shifts across all kinds of borders – geographical, ideological and generic” (p. 3). Among the writers of the book, I share Pat Louw’s interest in the effect of landscape and place on the construction of identity in Doris Lessing’s African stories. Louw, in her article “Inside and Outside Colonial Spaces: Border Crossings in Doris Lessing’s *African Stories*” analyses both gender and genre in relation to the colonial division of space between domestic indoors as feminine and outdoor veld coded as masculine, and emphasises the fluidity of ‘cultural identity’ in terms of border crossings. In addition to the women’s moving in and out of the enclosed spaces, which is a two-dimensional movement, I will contribute to the analysis of the relationship between female characters and their surroundings by focusing on how they constitute a thirdspace perspective based on their lived experiences.

<sup>12</sup> This lived experience can also be explained with reference to Henri Lefebvre’s “conceptual triad” including three moments or levels of space. Among them is the spaces of representation or representational spaces which is “directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ . . . This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (1991, p. 39). The garden, appropriated by Mrs Gale, is constituted out of meanings attributed to it from a personal viewpoint. By doing so, she intervenes in the construction of meaning of the garden under the influence of colonial and male hegemony and reconfigures it as “the space of ‘yes’, of the affirmation of life” (Lefebvre, p. 201).

too busy having kids to have time for gardens” (Lessing, p. 93) and shows her indifference towards cultivating a garden. For her, Mrs Gale’s garden is just a place which “must cost a packet to keep up” (p. 93). This suggests class and economic differences as well as employer/employee relations. As the daughter of a crowded Afrikaan tribe and the wife of an assistant, Mrs De Wet reflects the social and cultural differences between the two women emerging in their attitudes to the garden. The garden, then, becomes a source of differences and represents the dissimilarities between, for example, men versus women (Major and Mrs Gale) and Afrikaan women versus British women. The meanings that are attached to the garden, in line with the perceptual, conceptual and lived experiences of the individuals are, therefore, multidimensional.

Mrs Gale’s garden, which was once a place of comfort and peace, is indeed emptied of such feelings when Mrs De Wet disappears in order to attract the attention of her husband: “That night Mrs Gale hated her garden that highly-cultivated patch of luxuriant growth stuck in the middle of a country that could do this sort of thing to you suddenly. It was all the fault of the country!” (Lessing, p. 100). Following this incident Mrs Gale immediately destroys her own creation, “tearing blossoms and foliage to pieces in trembling fingers” (Lessing, p. 100), which might show her frustration at the fragility of her constructed alternative life in the garden. Her garden functions not only as a space to escape but also as an imaginary space where she constructs her identity and a sense of home. Thus, the realisation of the potential dangers in the veld compels Mrs Gale to question the configuration of the garden “stuck” in Africa. Being in the garden was a way of ensuring a solitary life of contentment or a shelter for her; however, on this occasion, it seems not to act as a thirdspace of possibilities which has catalysed Mrs Gale’s life between the binaries like the inside and outside, the civilised and the primitive, the cultivated and the wilderness etc. After Mrs De Wet’s showing up from where she hides, eventually, the garden seems to be transformed to its earlier peaceful atmosphere – “musical with birds” (Lessing, p. 103) – however, nothing remains the same for Mrs Gale. She awakens from her so-called peaceful and isolated life confined to the limits of the house and the garden. Her construction of a sense of home in Kloof Grange, her identity as Major Gale’s wife and as the mother of four children and her connection to an old friend Betty are all destroyed with the realisation of her illusionary experience of the constructed world of her own.

Despite Mrs Gales’s interest in cultivating a garden, and Mrs De Wet’s indifference to human-made nature, both women attach a bonding with the natural environment and create alternative understandings of such space. Generally speaking, names are given to certain geographical places such as the mountains, rivers, valleys etc. to imbue them with a local meaning and significance but in this story the names of places are not specified so they are more open to have symbolic meanings and personal interpretations. Moreover, the location of the mountains and the river somewhere in Africa might evoke the idea of everywhere and nowhere for Mrs Gale and reveal her sense of in-betweenness.

There is an interaction between the mountains and Mrs Gale's perception through a frame of meanings which are shaped by her imagination. She perceives the mountains from the bench in her garden with awe and transforms them into symbols of power and strength to reflect her challenge: "Sitting here, buffeted by winds, scorched by the sun or shivering with cold, she could challenge anything. They were her mountains: they were what she was; they had made her, had crystallized her loneliness into a strength, had sustained her and fed her" (Lessing, p. 84). Through her claim to the mountains by using the possessive pronoun "my" and her appropriative gaze, she creates an illusion of possessing the spatiality of the mountains in her mind, which enables her to forget the perception of the physical reality and to attribute metaphorical meanings of power supporting her life.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the poetic plural form of the word means "a region remote from civilisation" (OED I. 1. d), which may suggest the idea of being in an uncivilised place, and paradoxically enough Mrs Gale consolidates her exile position as a white settler's wife in Africa with the mountains' stability in the distance. The winds, the sun and the cold refer to the natural cycle of life and together with the use of the words "buffet", "scorch" and "shiver", they recall her hard times in the country. It is the mountains, nevertheless, that materialise her loneliness into a symbol of power. With their enormity and vastness, they stimulate in her a sense of resistance and freedom. While watching how their beauty and grandeur changes under the play of light, she moves away from her isolation, just like the veranda scene where she is described as a spectator: "Modulating light created them anew for her as she looked, thrusting one peak forward and withdrawing another, moving them back so that they were hazed on a smoky horizon, crouched in sullen retreat; or raising them so that they towered into a brilliant cleansed sky" (Lessing, p. 84). This suggests that the mountains (as she imagines them) keep shifting in their metaphorical stability, depending on the light which conditions her gaze. The phrase "crouched in sullen retreat", according to Louw, is a suggestion for "the anti-pastoral settler fear of black uprisings as a result of their colonial dominance" (2010, p. 41), but I find this interpretation unrelated to the context of the story, which has no implications of uprisings by the Africans. On the other hand, however, how watching these peaks and retreats relieves her may be associated with the dynamics of her life with ups and downs, struggles and confrontations. Thus, through her claim to the mountains, "my mountains" (Lessing, p. 93), she actually territorialises them as her own to eliminate the pain of her loneliness, and to provide a spatial relief from her confined farm life. It is possibly an important indicator of her attitude about African land when the mountains, among the other parts of the landscape, are selected as the symbol of freedom and strength.

Mrs Gale's relation to the mountains may also signal an escape from the life going on the lower parts of the landscape such as her domestic environment. Perhaps her association with the mountains might define her as a woman trying to figure out her marriage. The phallic connotation of such natural elevation and the changing view of the mountains under the play of lights, coming forward and receding, thrusting and withdrawing, evoke a sexual imagery. It might be interpreted as a transformation of sexual desires into a possessing spatiality. Despite her distant relationship

with Major Gale and her cold marriage without any affection and sexual intercourse as is reflected in her aloofness from the mountains, Mrs Gale keeps her connection both with her husband and the mountains since they strengthen and sustain her struggle in Africa. What is conceived about the mountains seems to be related to the colonial understanding of the landscape, which regards such physical entities as potentially dangerous and wild places in the form of secondspace perspective. However, it is the lived experience of Mrs Gale and her conception of herself in relation to the mountains that bestows new meanings and creates a thirdspace perspective.

Rivers are also important parts of the natural landscape that are held in respect and admiration in different cultures for various reasons. Apart from their practical functions, rivers are also embedded with powerful symbolic meanings and values. As J. E. Cirlot notes, in *A Dictionary of Symbols*, river is “an ambivalent symbol since it corresponds to the creative power both of nature and of time. On the one hand, it signifies fertility and the progressive irrigation of the soil; and on the other hand, it stands for the irreversible passage of time and, in consequence, for a sense of loss and oblivion” (1962, p. 262). With respect to this, unlike her adoration for the hills and the mountains, the river which acts as a border dividing the Kloof Grange from the African wilderness does not evoke the same positive feelings for Mrs Gale. Rather, she associates the river with danger because of the indigenous plants, wild animals such as the crocodiles and “bilharzia” (Lessing, p. 94), a life-threatening disease. She never crosses the river, never gets closer to it, perhaps in order to avoid the recognition of her situation in exile. Apart from being a dangerous place for Mrs Gale, the river acts as an interruptive element intruding upon her physical reality by disturbing her concentration on the mountains due to “an intoxicating heady smell” (Lessing, p. 94). Similar to the unpleasant odour of the meat which disconnects the Gales’s from reading the letters, the natural smell of the river seems to invade her present connection to the mountains. This shows how smell defines and pervades spaces. What is interesting is that her attitude towards natural smells changes when she is outside. Having challenged herself by going beyond the borders of the house at night with the intent of preparing the other house for the De Wets, for instance, she draws “in deep breaths of the sweetish smell of maize and made a list in her head of what had to be done” (Lessing, p. 81). The word “maize” is locally understood to denote the main crop of a district, which might belong to Africa in this context. Similarly, after cleaning the house in the days following, for Mrs Gale “the place was bare but clean now, and smelling of sunlight and air” (Lessing, pp. 82-3). Her attribution of positive meanings to the smells coming from the natural environment when she is outside the borders of her house might be significant to explain how her sensorial and perceptive understanding of the physical realities– the veld, the other house, the natural and local material reality – alter accordingly. However, since she views the river from her restricted perspective, its heady smell does not change for Mrs Gale.

As opposed to Mrs Gale’s dislike for the river because of its suggestion of danger, Mrs De Wet shows her excitement for it through her acts and words, calling it “my river” (Lessing, p. 93). It is a counter point to Mrs Gale’s “my garden” and “my mountains”. She walks to the river every day,

sits on the edge of a big rock, dangles her legs in the water, picks water lilies and fish. What she observes, in contrast to the older woman's fear, is "a lovely pool" in which "there's a kingfisher, and water-birds, all colours" (p. 94). Mrs De Wet's upbringing in Africa has a direct impact on how she conceives the river as smoothly flowing water with a "lovely smell" (p. 94). As Tim Ingold defines, it is "perceptual relativism – that people from different cultural backgrounds perceive reality in different ways since they process the same data of experience in terms of alternative frameworks of belief or representational schemata ...." (2000, p. 15). The river, in this context, with its clean water and visible rocks under it, becomes a peaceful place with the suggestion of a flux in life. The continuous flow of water signifies new beginnings for Mrs De Wet. This reading of the river may bring into mind Heraclitus's famous premise: "One cannot step twice into the river, nor can one grasp any mortal substance in a stable condition, but it scatters and again gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs" (1983, p. 53). Her relation to the river as a place of continuity, transition and fluidity and her resemblance of the river to a pool evokes a reaffirmation of herself. As opposed to the fixed qualities of the garden and its static appearance, the river is in motion. Moreover, it offers a place to escape from the monotony of life and to struggle against loneliness. The responses of both women, then, to the river are determined by what they think of them under the influence of their cultural backgrounds. The river below the hills and the high mountains are the two poles that these women represent, and the meanings attributed to these geographical formations by them reflect their differences in terms of socio-cultural issues.

Mrs Gale is a woman of taboos, restricting and making herself in charge of things such as managing the servants, writing letters to Betty, inviting the De Wets to dinner and morning teas, removing "the weight of worry off her husband's shoulders" (Lessing, p. 78), adapting herself to his routine, taking care of Mrs De Wet like a child, all of which are actualised as a sense of duty. Correspondingly, she tends to keep things in control, put everything in order, and thus, attempts to categorise not only her physical materiality but also her feelings and relations. After her first meeting with the De Wets, to illustrate, Mrs Gale sits on the veranda, "looking at the sunset sky without seeing it, and writhing with various emotions, none of which she classified" (Lessing, p. 86-7) because her long-standing so-called peaceful life is broken. In order to have a sense of security, a sense of home and a sense of identity, she constitutes individual patterns in her life. It might explain why she creates such a garden, why she tries to impress Mrs De Wet with her garden, why she stays within the boundaries of her house and why she associates herself with the mountains rather than the river. Because of her dependence on her responsibilities and taboos, she feels "guilty all the time" (Lessing, p. 90). She suffers from a feeling of having committed wrong or failed in an obligation. When she hears the news of the De Wets's arrival, there is "a look of guilt" (Lessing, p. 78) in her eyes, perhaps because she might have neglected her duties as a wife and mistress of the house. Due to sleeping until eight and wasting those three daylight hours, "she was guilty enough" (Lessing, p. 79) since she could not string along with her husband's routine. Rather than sending the houseboy to invite the De Wets to dinner, Mrs Gale herself walks to the house "partly from contrition" (Lessing, p. 87) because she admits the fact that "it was no crime to get married" (Lessing, p. 87) for the new couple. The words "contrition" and "crime" imply a feeling of

guilt again because she might be accusing herself for her insistent and manipulating behaviours towards the De Wets.

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of the interdependent relationship between the female characters and their surroundings, such as the house and the natural environment gives insight into how space is constructed within the realms of the real (material) and the imagined (mental), which lead to the social and spatial confinement of the two women in the story. Since Mrs Gale lives in the cultivated parts of the African land, which is limited to the house and the garden, her perception and conception of the land remains within the boundaries of closed space. Mrs De Wet, in a similar way, is supposed to stay in the house but keeps her close connection to wild nature. In order to deal with isolation in the African land, both women attempt to restructure those spaces as alternative orderings and transform them from restrictive conceptualisations with boundaries to places where they can escape to. While the garden and the mountains, for Mrs Gale, become alternative spaces where she can have personal connections, the river and its natural flora provide Mrs De Wet with a space of her own. In addition to the configuration of alternative mode of thinking about space, Mrs Gale confronts the vulnerability of her life in Rhodesia along with the arrival of the De Wets in Kloof Grange, “who had succeeded in upsetting her and destroying her peace” (Lessing, p. 97). She questions her relation to her husband and imaginary friend Betty. This questioning also leads to her recognition of the constructedness of material reality and sense of home. Not only her appropriation of the house and her identification with the mountains but also her changing attitude towards the garden, which was comforting at the beginning, later disturbing and finally ambivalent, might suggest Mrs Gale’s nomadic nature or her sense of belonging nowhere. Mrs De Wet, on the other hand, dares to challenge her husband’s indifference by extending the house to a lived space where she problematises the established understandings of gender and seems to sustain her identity as an Afrikaner woman. Her association with the river, suggestive of fluidity and transition and her new life in Kloof Grange, could also be promising for a young woman. The inconclusive ending of the story, with a depiction of the Gales standing at the gate about to enter the garden and Mrs Gale’s requirement of getting people of their kind next time, can imply a return to their established routine life and acceptance of the differences. As for the women, the ambiguous ending paves the way for interpretations about whether they will continue leading their lives as performing idiosyncrasies of gender and constituting alternative spaces or not.

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