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***The Space of Belonging:
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In La Production de l'Espace, Henri Lefebvre invokes the revolutionary attitude of May 1968, saying "only a bulldozer or a Molotov cocktail can change existing space" (68), the kind of oppositional slogan which draws support by virtue of its radical spontaneity, the notion that the system as it exists will be completely destroyed and presumably re-built from the ground up. Lefebvre goes on to point out the shortcomings of such a political plan, noting that even if the total destruction of the current system were possible, it would be ill-advised, since too many questions are left in the wake of eradication: Re-build what, and with what means of production? Re-build, but with what ideas, knowledge, and capacities? Too often, what is rebuilt following revolution resembles in large part what was already in place, with the same problems of inequality, competition between individuals and groups, and finally domination by some, submission by others. Doris Lessing has been aware of such contradictions for a long time now -- her literature of social critique insists on the necessity of taking the whole, the "ensemble," into account if any real transformation is to take place, the necessity of escaping from an "us" versus "them" framework of binary opposition if social progress is to occur. Lessing understands that the current system must be changed from within, by degrees, even though the removal of stable reference points, necessary to effect such change, can provoke as much anxiety among subjects as any violent revolution. The Marriages between Zones Three, Four and Five achieves for the reader what Kathleen Kirby calls the "funhouse" effect, something we do willingly "with the intention of deranging our usual ways of knowing . . . not to produce more knowledge, but to worry the foundations of

knowledge” (107). Lessing’s goal is not to re-build simply from the ground up, but precisely to re-conceptualize the ground, the base, the foundation on which we build.

Canopus in Argos: Archives is a series of novels placed in outer space, of which The Marriages between Zones Three, Four and Five is the second, first published in 1980. Lessing’s view of the universal order of things has been influenced by such tools as Marxism and Sufi philosophy, and the inter-galactic setting of The Marriages is a way of encouraging the reader to adopt an objective distance during a critique of the current system and an exploration of possible solutions, always considering the system as an enormous whole, as an interconnected network of cause and effect. Although set in outer space, Lessing nevertheless refuses to class the Canopus in Argos novels within the category of science fiction, preferring instead the term “space fiction,” a definition which highlights the social, cultural and philosophical elements of the works, rather than the technical aspects. In The Marriages, the planet is divided into Zones, and the inhabitants of each particular Zone seem perfectly adapted to the norms, expectations and habits of their respective environments. They seldom think about the other Zones, even those which are neighbors, and they go there even less; crossing a border into another Zone makes them physically ill. Those who reside in Zone Three think of themselves as superior to residents of Zone Four, Zone Four has similar feelings toward Zone Five and so on. As long as each subject remains in his or her proper place, everything seems fine, everything seems “normal.” Like most subjects, the residents of the Zones are provided with an identity manufactured within a social context, a milieu defined by parameters of time as well as space. Kathleen Kirby, building on Freud, reminds us that subject formation is a spatial affair, always being re-negotiated:

To become a subject, to become a person, is to “learn one’s place.” The infant becomes a subject by extricating itself from its object world, by learning the difference between “self” and “other,” “inside” and “outside,” “here” and “there.” But throughout life, these differences must continually

be explored, examined, and reconfirmed. Subjectivity is *necessarily* and *fundamentally* a spatial achievement. (85)

Although Freud generally favored the subject's inherent psychological processes, this spatial definition corresponds very well to the social and cultural aspects of subject formation, where identity is a function of ideological environment, in a large sense, never forgetting that the environment is itself a cultural construction. The space which a subject occupies, his or her "proper place," is a formative space in terms of identity, a space even more confining than a prison, and therein lies the problem. The subjects of The Marriages, like most, are not considering their place within the largest possible context; their identity has been constructed on the basis of "us" versus "them," and Lessing insists that there is only "us." The "proper place" of a subject is within humanity as a whole, not divided into groups based on race or gender or geographic Zones, and the purpose of the novel is to narrate the mingling of these disparate Zones, inter-marriages commanded by a supreme being as a way of evolution toward a more ideal, more unified humanity. The transition is difficult, and never complete; those who cross from one Zone to another lose their feeling of belonging. They become alien, not only in the new Zone, but upon returning to their original Zone as well, since stable reference points have been exposed as arbitrary cultural constructions. Indeed, these people in transition could be described as schizophrenic, given that they are now required to adhere to a new conception of time and space, in a context where inside and outside have lost their meaning and any "absolute" definition of external reality has disappeared (see Kirby 59). The long, difficult process of change begins with Al Ith, the Queen of Zone Three.

The first indication that Al Ith and her people have that something is wrong in Zone Three comes not, in fact, from the realm of humans, but from the animals. They seem unwell, and the birth rate is down. Al Ith has had messages regarding the problem with the animals, but she has been too preoccupied with her forced marriage to the warrior-king of Zone Four to give it the attention required, for which she reproaches herself (Marriages 26-27). Her self-reproach is justified,

she knows, because the animals are a part of the whole to which every living being belongs, a whole in which humans have no claim to superiority.^[1] And as she searches her mind for the origins of this current problem, Al Ith understands that a disregard for the whole is to blame:

We asked ourselves if we had grown into the habit of seeing ourselves falsely. But how could it be wrong to approve our own harmonies, the wealths and pleasantness of our land? [. . .] And we saw how long it had been since we had thought at all of what lay beyond our borders. That Zone Three was only one of the realms administered generally from Above, we knew. We did think, when we thought on these lines at all, of ourselves in interaction with these other realms, but it was in an abstract way. We had perhaps grown insular? Self-sufficing? (14)

Al Ith questions a shepherd boy in Zone Four, and finds that the animals are suffering there as well (37). The problem of infertility does not respect borders, nor does it respect division according to species; questioning the warrior-King of Zone Four, Al Ith discovers that human birth rates are down as well, and that the plant kingdom is involved too, so much so that the peripheries of Zones Three and Four “are lying derelict” (56). Lethargy and declining birth rates are of course not the problem, but rather symptoms of a much larger disorder. The residents of these neighboring Zones have developed a sense of belonging, of identity, of membership based on geographical borders, yet as they have begun to discover these borders are cultural rather than natural constructions, more arbitrary and permeable than they had imagined.

Zone Three is described as a mountainous region, rich in natural beauty, while Zone Four is a low country, quite barren and humid. The border between them is invisible, yet like most normative constructions has profound effects. Anyone approaching the border begins to feel ill-at-ease:

The inhabitants of Zone Three, straying near the frontier, or approaching it from curiosity as children or young people sometimes did, found

themselves afflicted with repugnance, or at the least by an antipathy to foreign airs and atmospheres that showed itself in a cold lethargy, like boredom.(12)

Anyone actually crossing the frontier becomes physically sick, in danger even of dying, needing a special shield as protection from the debilitating effects of the foreign atmosphere (33-34). Lessing's choice of the word *atmosphere* is significant; it can of course mean the air we breathe, but more telling is its meaning of ambience or ideological environment. If one accepts the arbitrary and permeable nature of borders, it follows that the air does not change dramatically as one crosses from one side to the other. A subject's self-assurance within his or her identity can, however, be seriously challenged as stable reference points change as the subject's environment changes. As Kirby suggests, whether on a personal or a geopolitical level, boundaries can protect and define as much as they confine, and the subject who finds him or herself unprotected and undefined in relation to "reality" risks a certain loss of identity, of belonging, even risks being defined as psychotic, with all of the implications of marginalization and institutionalization which follow. Kirby then goes on to pose certain questions regarding changes in boundaries versus real social transformation: "Is the danger here that we change the space of the subject, the mental landscape, instead of affecting the external world? Do we change our ways of thinking, change ourselves, and think that amounts to changing culture's articulation of spaces? Does changing the *space* of the subject, theoretically or psychologically, magically represent an intervention in social constructions of the real?" (see 116-117). Lessing's answer, in The Marriages and elsewhere, is that positive social evolution is impossible unless we change our current ways of thinking, from an ideology based on division into groups to a more universal view, taking into account the whole of humanity. Theory and practice cannot be separated. The practical constraints and level of resistance are enormous when considering a radical change in a subject's ideological formation, and in The Marriages we see that it takes time even to make a start, just as it took a long time to deteriorate,

little by little. An enlightened few show the way, for others to gradually follow, in a process which is never completed. Al Ith is one of these few, and as she becomes accustomed to border crossing, she can do so with no ill effects.^[2] As we will see, however, her ability to transgress the frontier does not mean she is well-integrated into the larger society; quite the contrary, although she gains insight, she loses a great deal of her sense of belonging.

The border between Zones Three and Four is, at least initially, unguarded, since its integrity has never been threatened. Al Ith and the residents of Zone Three have nevertheless heard tales that the Zone Four side of the border is protected by a “round fortress of the deadly rays,” and seeing one of these installations after crossing the border she approaches to have a closer look. She is stopped by the commanding officer Jarnti, on the pretense that the fortress is too dangerous, even as children are playing around it (36). The fortress is of course empty, a hollow threat to impress a non-existent enemy as well as to keep up appearances regarding the necessity of maintaining a huge army for the residents of Zone Four. The case is much the same, as we will see, along the border between Zone Four and Zone Five, where the army participates in frequent manoeuvres and mock battles invented by its general, unnecessary in terms of defense but used to keep the troops from getting bored, to keep their morale up and to avoid embarrassing questions regarding the necessity of maintaining such an enormous force of troops. Zone Four is described as an incredibly poor region, largely because all of its resources are used to support the army rather than in more productive endeavors like farming. Al Ith is of course shocked by the contrast as she crosses into Zone Four, on her way to meet her future husband, the warrior king Ben-Ata. She is making the trip because she has been ordered to do so by the Providers, and although unnecessary she is under military escort; she is not so much going to meet the king as being brought to meet the king, a fact which she resents and which only serves to reinforce her disgust with Zone Four. Everywhere is evidence that Al Ith is now a stranger in a strange land. Her voyage from Zone

Three to Zone four is, literally and figuratively, a descent; the landscapes cannot be more disparate:

And so Al Ith made the passage into the Zone we had all heard so much of, speculated about, and had never been in. Not even with the shield could she feel anything like herself. The air was flat, dispiriting. The landscape seemed to confine and oppress. Everywhere you look, in our own realm, a wild vigour is expressed in the contours of uplands, mountains, a variegated ruggedness.

[. . .] But here she looked down into a uniform dull flat, cut by canals and tamed streams that were marked by lines of straight pollarded trees, and dotted regularly by the ordered camps of the military way of life. (35)

Al Ith concludes that she has entered a “barbarous” land (36), falling as she does into the trap of binary opposition, the colonial notion of savage versus civilized, of us versus them, a politics of closure and group interest which her forced association with Zone Four is supposed to remedy. And of course part of Al Ith’s alienation has to do with gender, as she comes from the more androgynous space of Zone Three into the more stereotypically masculine space of Zone Four. Kirby, commenting on Frederic Jameson’s essay “Cognitive Mapping,” considers just such awareness of corporeality based on gender, keeping in mind that gender is far more a cultural construction than a biological fact:

[. . .] leads me to posit a gender differential in spatial negotiation. One feature of [Jameson’s] spatial anxiety may be the way this space makes his body *become* conscious to him, an occurrence that is unusual, as he is accustomed

[. . .] to forget the body, to use orienting principles that allow him to erase his physicality. For women in the West, this “forgetfulness” is much less available (and comes as a real relief when it does occur). To become conscious of embodiment could only be a positive step for masculinity, as

much as such consciousness is also a perpetually wearying aspect of femininity.(61-62)

Al Ith, as an alienated being, has never been so aware of her corporality, her clothes, her ideas. The royal palace to which Al Ith has been summoned has been specially built for them, with private quarters for the queen on one end, for the king on the other, and in the middle a large room with arches giving onto pavilions, gardens and fountains (43). This is to be the space of negotiation between the two Zones, and although the palace is within Zone Four neither feels comfortable here. Al Ith is initially confined to the palace by the air of Zone Four, although Ben-Ata feels no less confined in this environment to which a soldier is unaccustomed. They have been ordered to be together: “They looked at each other with a frank exchange of complicity: two prisoners who had nothing in common but their incarceration” (42). They are the principal actors in this compulsory social experiment, and they understand, at least to a degree, that the future of humanity depends on their ability to make a whole of their respective Zones.

The first meeting between Al Ith and Ben Ata does not go well, nor does it last a long time. Al Ith is not at all what Ben-Ata had expected as the figure of a queen, as she does not wear extravagant clothes, and Ben-Ata is everything Al Ith had feared; brutal, oafish, a man who spends almost no time with women except to treat them as spoils of war. Indeed, their first sexual intercourse is a rape, given that Ben-Ata treats Al Ith the same way he treats the women who are thrown at his feet after a victory, namely as the conquered enemy (47). Ben-Ata is not in the habit of philosophical thinking, but is clearly concerned by the new Order, while Al Ith has moments of illumination, flashes of insight when she “*almost* understood something” (60), and this marks a beginning for them, not as sovereigns of individual realms but as guides for the people in a much larger, more unified sense:

If they were nothing else, these two, they were representatives and embodiments of their respective countries. Concern for their realms was

what they were.[. . .]Their people were what *they* were, their thoughts were.Their lives could be nothing else, or less . . . yet now both were aware, and deeply, so that they were shocked and stirred to their depths, that all this concern and this duty of theirs had not prevented them from going very wrong . . . (61)

Al Ith and Ben-Ata are able to spend a little time together, becoming a bit more accustomed to one another, and then Al Ith receives the Order:“It is time for you to go home now, Al Ith.You will have to come back later, but now go home” (66).She is delighted to leave Zone Four, but soon discovers that the idea of “home” is not the same as it once was.She has been changed by her short stay in Zone Four, as she knows when she meets the man Yori after having crossed back into Zone Three.In the past, he has always known right from the start whether a woman is pregnant, but with Al Ith he cannot tell.She speaks of having been “poisoned” in Zone Four, as she now has fits of crying and suspicious thoughts regarding the intentions of others, feelings which are new to her.Indeed, Al Ith believes that if she were to couple with Yori, she might be “cured” of the Zone Four disease, yet she understands that the synthesis with the other Zone is required of her; the ultimate goal is far more important than her personal well-being:“. . . that is how it is with them down there and I am infected by it. . . I believe that perhaps, if we joined, completely, I might be cured, improved at least.But there is some other obligation on me, an imposition I have to obey”(75).Although Al Ith is undergoing her first sentiments of alienation, she also begins to have her first insights about group responsibility regarding the present crisis, as well as the necessity of considering all of the other Zones as well, not simply the association with Zone Four:

. . . everything was entwined and mixed and mingled, all was one, that there was no such thing as an individual in the wrong, nor could there be.If there was a wrong, then this must be the property of everyone, and everybody in every one of the Zones – and doubtless beyond them, too.This thought struck Al Ith sharply, like a reminder.She had not

thought, not for very long, about what went on beyond the Zones . . . for that matter, she thought very little now about Zones One and Two – and Two lay just there . . . (77)

As she rides around her realm, Al Ith tries to deepen her insight, all the while struggling with feelings of guilt about the current state of her people, and just as she is turning her horse in the direction of home, she receives the Order to return to Zone Four (79). The transition, from Zones which are defined and limited by each other to an ideal space which includes all the Zones and whatever is beyond, has begun. Al Ith carries and creates, during this continual phase of transition, a sort of hybrid space which resists what Michel de Certeau calls the stability of place and favors the movement characteristic of space (173).^[3] Al Ith no longer has a place, and it is exactly that sense of stability and being content with the status quo which must be abandoned for social transformation to occur. The loss of one's proper place, of stability, is also the obstacle which provokes the most resistance, the most fear.

Glancing over her shoulder on her way back to Ben-Ata, Al Ith continues the process of expanding her mind, trying to see diverse elements as a whole: "So that this beautiful realm of hers was held in her mind extended, or lengthened: it had been finite, bounded, known utterly and in every detail, self-enclosed . . . but now it lapped and rippled out and upwards beyond there into hinterlands that were like unknown possibilities in her own mind" (80). She is beginning to understand that external, "real-world" space, divided and fixed as it seems to be, is in fact a social and mental construction; the cartographic frontiers between the Zones have not moved, yet as Al Ith's ideas and perceptions change, she finds that the division of space is not as clear or absolute as it once was. Her perception changes reality, and in her role as queen and guide, she is in a position to change the perception, and hence the reality, of others as well. Even Ben-Ata, for whom she has little affection, has a role, to "balance in some way those far blue heights of Zone Two" (80). On this visit to Zone Four, Al Ith meets, for the first time, another woman of that Zone, Dabeeb, Jarnti's wife and one of Ben-Ata's mistresses. Al Ith is amazed

that this strong, handsome woman, who in Zone Three would be highly regarded, is in Zone Four a slave (81). From Dabeeb, Al Ith will learn not only how the women of Zone Four are subjugated and separated from the men, occupying a space differentiated along gender lines, but also how they exploit and resist their position. The women of Zone Four hold a secret ceremony, to which no men are allowed entry, and Al Ith asks if she may join the company. Women and girls of all ages assemble in the stone hall of an old ruined fort, hidden deep in the forest, to pass the night singing, dancing, eating and drinking. But the festival has a more serious purpose, namely stretching the women's neck muscles, which allows them to raise their heads and admire the cloud-capped mountains of Zone Three, an activity forbidden by law. Their songs recall forbidden beauty, such as a string of beads "made of clouds and snow" (167), or are misanthropic, "If I said to you, you are a man, You'd pick up a stick, Throw it for a dog to fetch. . . (170), a ceremony of song which reminds Al Ith of the use of songs and poems in Zone Three, as a means of re-capturing lost memories. The ultimate goal of the women's ceremony is to keep alive the memory of a time when the men of Zone Four used their time more profitably than in making war. Like many social spaces, this one too has a history :

What the men should be doing was not making war, in reality or in pretence. That was a displacement of something else, some other aim, or function, something enjoined that they had forgotten . . . and had not only forgotten but now forbade. But why? What had happened ? [. . .] If 'to climb the mountains' was the proper activity of men, then what did that mean? (174)

Climbing the mountains means contact outside of Zone Four, exploring other regions, meeting other people, sharing ideas and skills, widening perspectives, creating a space of "us" in a large sense, not defined and limited by oppositional relations of "us" versus "them." And although Al Ith sympathizes with these women and has every intention of responding to their plea for help (173), she understands that such division between men and women is part of the larger

problem. She even reproaches Dabeeb, after Arusi's birth, for the women's attitude, "content to treat your men as if they were enemies, or idiots you can't trust or small boys" (218). The women's ceremony does serve as a beacon of hope, a way of refusing to accept their present condition as normal or eternal, given that at some point in the past things were different, and supposedly better, and their appeal to Al Ith shows a serious desire for change, in spite of the risk. bell hooks speaks of the ever-present risk involved when one occupies a space from which to begin positive social transformation: "For me this space of radical openness is a margin – a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a 'safe' place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance" (149). The intensity with which the women perform the ceremony, as well as their tears, show that they understand the risks and the possible rewards too. Once the ceremony is finished, however, and the women no longer occupy a strictly-feminine space, everything seems to return to "normal," at least in the Zone Four sense of the word, but the appearance of everyday routine does not mean that the women's resistance, or desire for change, has abated. They maintain, discreetly, their community of resistance.

Al Ith's recent visit has meant pleasurable sexual intercourse, for which Ben-Ata has been in training with a courtesan, and she is now pregnant as she receives the Order to return to Zone Three. The child which she carries is of course destined to be a mediator between the Zones, and as a result of this pregnancy Al Ith feels more alienated than ever as she returns to her realm; in fact, in Zone Three the people no longer recognize her. Upon meeting Kunzor, one of her mates, she finds that she is no longer close to him. He remarks that she has grown different, that her shell "had taken in a new substance" (141), and for her part Al Ith has no desire to return home, to her realm, feeling that it is no longer hers (141). She wonders if the arrival of the baby will liberate her, suspecting all the while that the baby is only a small part of the master plan, a small step toward the goal determined by the Providers. Kunzo tells her, "You cannot host a soul from a land as far from us as that place is, and not lose yourself to it, Al Ith." Asking what she can do to

remedy her sense of alienation, Kunzo replies, “Al Ith, you know there is nothing you can do” (142). Arriving at the palace, Al Ith is unrecognized, even by one of her own children, and her sister Murti effectively banishes her from Zone Three; while she understands that Al Ith has an important role to play for everyone’s sake, Murti cannot allow her to bring the Zone Four “contagion” with her (148). Her sense of alienation, at least with regard to her former realm, is now complete, even as she understands that the moment has arrived to begin considering the other border, that of Zone Two. For his part, Ben-Ata too is changed, and feels an outcast in his own kingdom. He is agitated during Al Ith’s absence, he has been unusually kind to his horse, and most important of all, he decides to recall his declaration of war on Zone Five, a decision he knows will not be understood by his men:

He knew that his soldiers would say that he was a woman’s victim and was not fit to be a soldier. He thought they were right. He did not want to go back into his own land, where it seemed any thought he was likely to have was bound to be discordant or seditious. (156)

Like Al Ith, Ben-Ata is discovering that a change in his perception can change reality, can change spatial division, can even displace the “common sense” way of thinking. And like Al Ith, he finds that the process is incomplete, for soon after their son Arusi is born, Ben-Ata receives the Order that he is to marry the queen of Zone Five (229).

Al Ith and Ben-Ata are devastated by the news; Al Ith is to return to Zone Three, Ben-Ata is to marry again, and their son is to remain in Zone Four but see his mother six months every year (228-229). Both are saddened, but obey the Order without question. Even Ben-Ata, the warrior king, is described as “helpless,” resigned to follow the will of the Providers (229). Al Ith says goodbye, and returns to Zone Three “like a returned exile” (230). And Ben-Ata, for his part, finds himself in Al Ith’s previous role, waiting to be coupled to someone whom he considers savage and uncivilized in relation to “his people”:

It occurred to him that his was how poor Al Ith had been made to think and suffer as she sat in her palace waiting for his soldiers to come and bring her down by force to him. She had known that her life, her ways of thinking, her rights, her habits – everything – were about to be torn apart, destroyed, re-framed and re-assembled by some barbarian, and there was nothing she had been able to do about it. And there was nothing he, Ben-Ata, could do about it. (253)

Since his contact with Al Ith, Ben-Ata is no longer the same person he was in the beginning. He has been prepared for his role as mediator of Zone Five, and even as he oversees the reduction of his own army (three-quarters of the soldiers have been sent home, with orders to improve the living conditions in the villages; see 263) he has every intention of using his new found insight to influence the neighboring realm. Ben-Ata and Vahshi are married, the expected arrival of a baby is soon announced (262), and Ben-Ata is given to long periods of reflection, having doubts about his ability to meet the demands of his role in the master plan. Even his new wife, whom he not long ago categorized as savage, respects his insights and has begun to have some of her own (264). Progress toward a unified whole is being made, although the immensity of the project is overwhelming, with many elements of the project happening at the same time. For example, the women of Zone Four have been quite content with the improvements in their quality of life, including the abolition of punishment for gazing into Zone Three. Confident in their advancement, they are overjoyed to take Arusi and some of the other children into Zone Three for a visit. During their voyage, they are impressed by the quality of the houses, the food, the pottery and textiles, yet they understand that they could quickly learn such crafts. What troubles them deeply is the amount of time it will take to change the foundation, the way of thinking about the things that really matter:

But as for the real differences, they would have to learn to feed from this other dimension that they had only just begun to think of. [. . .] how long would it take Zone Four to learn this absolute equality, individual to

individual, when divisions and classes and rank and respect for these – servility – had been stamped so long into its deepest substance?(273)

These women too are overwhelmed by the immensity of the master plan envisioned by the Providers, and they begin to realize that their sense of belonging to a limited group must give way to belonging in a much larger sense, and they are understandably disturbed by the displacement they feel. They feel as their guides have before them, and the most gifted of the guides, Al Ith, has continued the search for wholeness and integrity, turning now in the direction of Zone Two, the Blue Zone.

The visiting Zone Four women, arriving at the Zone Three palace, find that Al Ith is no longer there, but instead near the border of Zone Two, spending more and more time there, feeding what she knows to her son to take back with him (280-1). Al Ith is still banished from Zone Three by her sister, to the degree that she has a little shed at the foot of the path leading up to the blue mists of Zone Two, with guards to prevent her from returning, guards which again are unnecessary, as Al Ith is drawn closer and closer to Zone Two until, one day, she does not return (296-298). Others follow her. Birth rates among people and animals have returned to normal, and people of Al Ith's way of thinking came to be near her, unable to live in Zone Three as they had:

Each one suffered from an inability to live in Zone Three as if it was, or could be, enough for them. Where others of us flourished unreflecting in this best of all worlds, they could see only hollowness. Fed on husks and expecting only emptiness, they were candidates for Zone Two before they knew it, and long before the road there had been opened up for them by Al Ith's long vigil.(297)

And people from Zone Four, such as Dabeeb, come to Zone Three, and sometimes in the opposite direction as well, a continual movement between the Zones:

There was a lightness, a freshness, and an enquiry and a remaking and an inspiration where there had been only stagnation. And closed frontiers. For this is how we all see it now. (299)

Initial feelings of displacement are slowly being replaced by a feeling of belonging to humanity in a larger sense, not as a member of a particular geographic Zone, or gender, or other culturally-constructed group. A more universal, more androgynous perspective is replacing an ideological system based on binary opposition, as these enlightened people begin to realize that a subject is a function of the whole. Radical new spaces are being opened up, new spaces which create and change history, not without a good deal of displacement, alienation and suffering along the way. If what Lefebvre calls the space of *jouissance* does not yet exist, at least these people from the diverse Zones have not given up the search for real change (194). They understand, at least to a degree, that such an ideal space is not simply found, but made, created by people willing to consider humanity as a whole, not as insular and contented fragments.

Endnotes

1 In Lessing's work, the universal whole includes not only living beings, such as humans and animals, but non-living things as well, such as buildings, and whether their conception and design fit well within the whole. See pages 42 and 43 of *Marriages*, for example, for a description of the royal palace "built to specification."

2 Another example of an enlightened character in Lessing's oeuvre is Charles Watkins in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*. Professor Watkins is literally a messenger from the gods, but his message is not understood by the general population, and he is incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital as schizophrenic, having lost his identity. His message, regarding an imminent catastrophe involving all of humanity, goes unheard.

3 Michel de Certeau, in L'invention du quotidien : arts de faire, distinguishes between place and space : « Est un lieu l'ordre (quel qu'il soit) selon lequel des éléments sont distribués dans des rapports de coexistence. S'y trouve donc exclue la possibilité, pour deux choses, d'être à la même place. La loi du « propre » y règne : les éléments considérés sont les uns à côté des autres, chacun situé en un endroit « propre » et distinct qu'il définit. Un lieu est donc une configuration instantanée de positions. Il implique une indication de stabilité. Il y a espace dès qu'on prend en considération des vecteurs de direction, des quantités de vitesse et la variable de temps. L'espace est un croisement de mobiles. Il est en quelque sorte animé par l'ensemble des mouvements qui s'y déploient. Est espace l'effet produit par les opérations qui l'orientent, le circonstancient, le temporalisent et l'amènent à fonctionner en unité polyvalente de programmes conflictuels ou de proximités contractuelles » (172-173).

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First Response

This essay offers a lucid and thoughtful reading of Lessing's 'The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five', showing how the work engages with a logic of social and cultural transformation based on the relationship between identity and topos, what might, following Derrida, be considered in terms of an ontology (see 'Spectres of Marx'). What is not addressed is how Lessing is re-

working Marxism and Sufi philosophy particularly as regards historical materialism and consciousness. Thus, the work would benefit from broadening its concerns to the philosophical issues of relevance.