



The Nobel Novels of Britain; An Investigation to the Core of Noble Literature in the Selected Works of Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy and Doris Lessing

Revista Publicando, 5 No 14. (1). 2018, 654-678. ISSN 1390-9304

The Nobel Novels of Britain; An Investigation to the Core of Noble Literature in the Selected Works of Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy and Doris Lessing
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ABSTRACT

The works of Rudyard Kipling, the first and the youngest, Doris Lessing the last and the oldest and at the same time the only female author and John Galsworthy the only lawyer-novelist Nobel Prize winners of Britain are critically analysed in this paper to investigate the common core of the literary nobility of their selected works, *The Jungle Books*, *The Good Terrorist* and *The Forsyte Saga* respectively. This paper also intends to find the noble literary quality of the aforementioned works which made them worthy of Nobel Prize in literature. At the turn of the 20th century, Alfred Nobel, in his will, decided to found an organization in order to cherish scholars and scientists who have done significant activities in their fields. To nobody's surprise, he included literature as one of the fields worthy of the reward, being immensely interested in literature himself. It is imperative to point out that firstly, the researcher's examination of the Nobel laureates is narrowed down to novelists and secondly, they are chosen to cover different periods of the life of the Nobel Prize, having in mind that the history of the Nobel Prize is divided into different periods by literary commentators concerned with the Nobel Prize and its standards according to the approaches taken for choosing the winners in each phase. Covering different periods of the history of the Nobel Prize, it appears that some other non-literary factors may have played a significant role in choosing the winners. On the one hand, there have been writers who won the Noble Prize due to political prejudices of the Academy like Kipling; on the other hand, writers like Galsworthy and Lessing seem to have benefited from this approach of the Nobel Academy. Galsworthy, striving to give voice to the other silent part of society and suppressed writers and Lessing, a constant supporter of the change and improvement in the condition of women, were involved in some political issues in attempts to bring into light political and social flaws of society and political system.

Key words: Alfred Nobel, Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy, Doris Lessing, Noble Novel



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1. INTRODUCTION

Alfred Nobel was born in Stockholm, Sweden on October 21, 1833. Immanuel Nobel, Alfred Nobel's father, was an engineer who carried out some experiments trying to invent new ways for blasting rocks. Alfred Nobel was also endowed with technical talent and received a decent scientific and technical education. Mass production of dynamite contributed to Nobel's wealth significantly which later was to be invested in his foundation. His wealth was significant in his own time and since he did not have any inheritor, he decided to dedicate his wealth to humanitarian causes. This was partly because he was well aware of the misuse of his invention and could see that his invention took many people's lives. He was called by his contemporary people the lord of dynamite and the merchant of death. Since he had a peace seeking character, he was anxious of how he would be remembered.

There are two major reasons which account for Nobel's decision to allocate his money for the awards for significant activities done in the mentioned fields. One holds that his brother was killed in an accident and a French newspaper confused him for Alfred and ran headlines like the merchant of death is dead now, due to his inventions of explosive materials which had caused the death of many people. It is said that he did not want to be remembered as a person who contributed to the killing of people so he was inspired to establish the Nobel Prize. The second reason maintains that: having pacific inclinations, according to his friends, he was influenced by his friendship with Bertha von Suttner (née Countess Bertha Kinsky). She was against the military use of dynamite. She wrote a book *Lay Down Your Arms* and consequently became a major figure in peace movement in Germany and Austria. She was given the Nobel Prize for peace in 1905. The Nobel Prize website comments on this friendship as one reason by which Alfred Nobel was encouraged to establish the Nobel Foundation. "[...] no doubt this [friendship] influenced Alfred Nobel when he wrote his final will which was to include a Prize for persons or organizations who promoted peace." (Ringertz, Alfred Nobel - His Life and Work)

Alfred Nobel's possible goal for establishing the prize is best described by John Steinbeck. John Steinbeck, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962, mentioned that beyond doubt, Alfred Nobel was seeking a controlling and assuring path for preventing his invention from misuse and finally he found that there was no better way



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to a peaceful world than investing in the mind and soul of humans. Steinbeck believed that Nobel's will promoted human knowledge and made progress possible:

“Nobel saw some of the cruel and bloody misuses of his inventions. He may even have foreseen the end result of his probing - access to ultimate violence - to final destruction. Some say that he became cynical, but I do not believe this. I think he strove to invent a control, a safety valve. I think he found it finally only in the human mind and the human spirit. To me, his thinking is clearly indicated in the categories of these awards. They are offered for increased and continuing knowledge of man and of his world - for understanding and communication, which are the functions of literature. And they are offered for demonstrations of the capacity for peace - the culmination of all the others.”
(Steinbeck, Banquet Speech)

In order to find possible criteria or standards by which the winners of the Nobel Prize are chosen there are three sources available: Alfred Nobel's will, the statements made by the members of the Nobel Academy when announcing the winner of the year and interpreting the number of the distributed prizes. In the following parts it is attempted to closely study the aforementioned sources to see whether a pattern can be discovered against which the winners are measured and by which they are awarded the Nobel Prize.

2. ALFRED NOBEL, THE FOUNDER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE

In this part Alfred Nobel's will is examined to find out what he had in mind when writing his will. In 1893, Alfred Nobel wrote an unusual will and dedicated the bulk part of his vast estate to the establishment of the Nobel Prize in order to cherish magnificent deeds done in the fields of medicine-physiology, physics, chemistry and peace. Two years later, he added literature prize to his will. The Nobel Prize for Economy was later added in 1968 by Sweden's Central bank, but did not have a place among the first five prizes. Alfred Nobel completed the last draft of his will in 1895. In the first part of this will he left a small part of his wealth to his family and friends and the rest was dedicated to prizes to be given annually to the winners in each aforementioned fields.

In the second part of his will, Alfred Nobel stipulates that he wants his estate to be allocated to the foundation of an institution. He urges that his money is to be invested by his executors and the interest of which should be divided into five equal parts and given to people who have made great contributions in the above-mentioned fields. He does not leave it to the executioners of his will to decide what entities are to select the winners. He



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states the names of the institutions and academies responsible for choosing the winners. The Swedish Academy, composed of fifty voting members who are under supervision of a committee of five, is in charge of choosing the winners of the Nobel Prize in literature. “The whole of my remaining realizable estate shall be dealt with in the following way: the capital, invested in safe securities by my executors, shall constitute a fund, the interest on which shall be annually distributed in the form of prizes to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to mankind... one part to the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction; [...] that for literature by the Academy in Stockholm [...].”(Nobel, Full text of Alfred Nobel's Will)

Moreover, he points out what contributions in the mentioned fields make them worthy of the prize. For instance in the field of literature he asserts that the winners' works should qualify as a literary attempt possessing an idealistic spirit. In addition, he mentions one other criterion which should be fulfilled by the winners in all fields which is bestowing benefit to the humankind. These two criteria seem to be subjective and open to many different interpretations by the members of the Academy, therefore, it is attempted to identify and study the influential elements and components present in the selected works of the literary writers according to which these authors have been selected as the Nobel Prize winners. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the people responsible for choosing the winners should pay no attention to the nationality of the winners: “It is my express wish that in awarding the prizes no consideration whatever shall be given to the nationality of the candidates, but that the most worthy shall receive the prize, whether he be a Scandinavian or not.” (Nobel, Full text of Alfred Nobel's Will)

The second source which is used in order to discover more standards is the number of the distributed prizes in the life of the Nobel Prize. The number of the distributed prizes is presented and interpreted to see whether firstly, the Nobel Foundation has been fair in giving out the prizes to the winners and secondly, a pattern can be discovered regarding how the prize is distributed and the Nobel Foundation's approach on how the winners are selected.



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Table 1: “Number of Nobel Laureates based on field” (Nobel Prize Facts)

Nobel Prize	Number of Prizes	Number of Laureates	Awarded to one Laureate	Shared by two Laureates	Shared by three Laureates
Physics	109	201	47	32	30
Chemistry	107	172	63	22	22
Medicine	106	210	38	31	37
Literature	108	112	104	4	-
Peace	96	103+26	65	29	2
Economic Sciences	47	76	24	17	6
Total	573	900	341	135	97

The Nobel Prize has been given out 573 times from 1901, the year in which the Nobel Prize was first awarded, to 2015, according to the official Nobel Prize website. In the field of literature, 108 Nobel prizes have been awarded of which 14 prizes belong to women. Four prizes have been given to two people who share the same prize. The youngest winner, Rudyard Kipling, was 42, and the oldest winner, Doris Lessing, was 88. The average age is 65 years old for all the Literature Laureates between 1901 and 2015. In the years 1914, 1918, 1935, 1940, 1941, 1942 and 1943, the Nobel Prize in literature was not presented.

In the history of the Nobel Prize, women have been able to win 49 prizes. Chemistry: 4, literature: 14, peace: 16, physics: 2, Medicine: 12 and Economic Sciences: 1. According to the statistics presented by the Nobel Prize website, women have been given only one eleventh of the prizes. In the twenty first century, women have become Nobel Laureates more than ever. In the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, women have been more active in scientific fields, as well as political sphere. Such a rise shows that as the world has progressed toward cultural and scientific growth, women have become more active in redefining their social roles, identities and fighting gender inequality and have been involved in some activities to emancipate themselves from conventional beliefs which consider them to be inferior to men.

Of all prizes around 83 percent of the prizes have been awarded to Western countries, including Western Europe, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but a

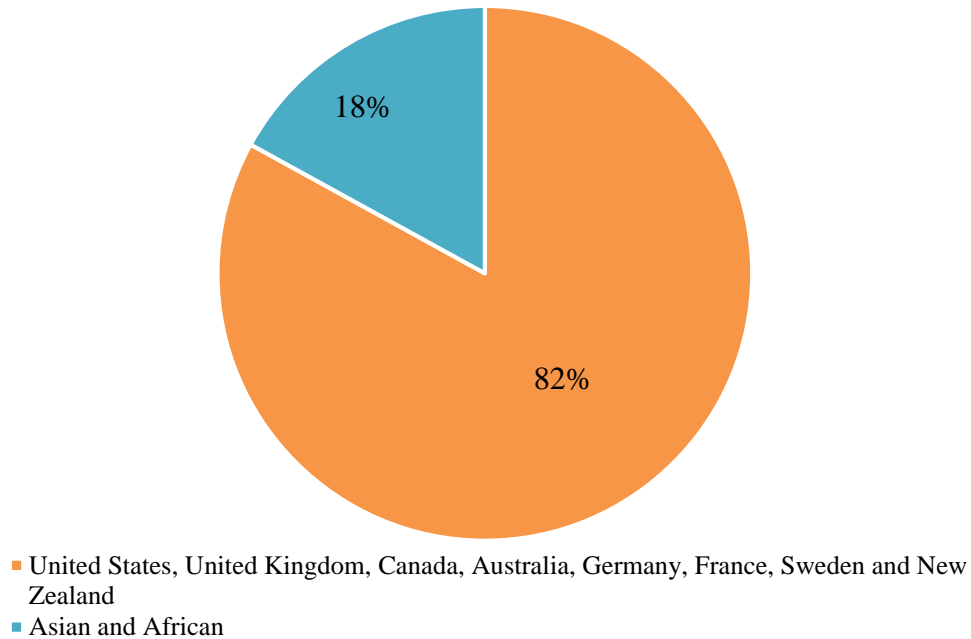


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small percentage is dedicated to Asian, African and Latin American countries. The following figure shows the uneven distribution of prizes in the world. Despite the vastness and large population of Africa and Asia, fewer awards have been dedicated to these continents.

The number of all distributed Nobel Prizes based on Continent and Country



Max Fisher, an American writer, editor, journalist and philanthropist, presented, in an article titled *The Amazing History of Nobel Prize, Told in Maps and Charts*, published in 15 October 2013 in Washington Post, the following results based on the analysis of statistics on the prizes:

“[...] More than half all Nobel laureates come from only three countries: the United States, Britain and Germany. [...] the United States has 4 percent of the world's population and 34 percent of its Nobel laureates. [...] All of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East combined have only 104 Nobel laureates. These regions hold 81 percent of the world's population but only 10 percent of its Nobel laureates. [...] The region with the fewest Nobel laureates per capita is Africa. There is one African Nobel prize per 62 million Africans alive today. By comparison, there is one American Nobel prize per 900,000 Americans alive today. [...] The Middle East has had 20 Nobel laureates: 12 Israelis, four Egyptians, one Palestinian, one Iranian, one Turk and one Yemeni.”(Fisher, *The amazing history of the Nobel Prize told in maps and charts*)



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Having taken a look at the number of the distributed prizes between different countries, it seems that members of the Nobel Academy, dedicating more prizes to western countries, has been heedless of what is stated in Alfred Nobel's will as to paying no attention to the winners' nationality. Accordingly, several controversial decisions have been made in the history of the Nobel Prize. For example, in 1973, Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, North Vietnamese leader, jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize for trying to restore peace in Vietnam, while the US was bombing Vietnam the year he was rewarded the prize. However, Mahatma Gandhi became the nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize several times, but never received it. Gandhi made great effort at peacefully gaining India's independence from Great Britain. He was nominated for the Peace prize five times, but Norwegian committee never gave him the prize.

The Nobel Prize in Literature has also been criticized. Many literary critics and scholars believe that the Nobel's Academy has not awarded great authors like Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, Jorge Luis Borges, Leo Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, Emil Zola and Mark Twain due to political and non-literary reasons. . Jan Guillou, a famous Swedish journalist and writer, was critical of Tomas Tranströmer's election as the Nobel Prize laureate. Guillou believed that the only reason that Tranströmer, a Swedish poet, psychologist and translator, was given the Nobel Prize was his nationality. Guillou remarked that this was the eighth time that a Swedish writer or poet had become the Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature. He argued that Swedish people made up a small nation and this number was not logical. At the same time, he jokingly wrote that this event reminded him of 35 years ago when two Swedish writers, Eyvind Johnson and Harry Martinson became Nobel Laureates in Literature while both were members of Academy of Swedish Writers and the electing committee. Marie-Claire Chappet, writer, journalist and editorial assistant, in an article in *The Daily Telegraph* points out that Herta Müller's election brought about much criticism in regard to the Nobel Academy's bias toward Europeans. She argues that "others were not as convinced and the selection of Muller was heavily criticized for returning the award to its Eurocentric bias." (Chappet, Nobel Prize for Literature: the good, the bad and the British)

In order to discover more criteria for choosing the Nobel Prize laureates in literature, it helps to take a look at the reasons of choosing the winners of the first and last two decades of the life of the Nobel Prize. When a writer is chosen as the winner of the year, the Nobel



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Academy announces the winner through several sentences pointing to some prominent aspects for which the winner is selected. If the announcements are interpreted as a kind of the criteria, since they reveal more or less what the members of the Academy have taken under consideration for choosing a winner writer, one can refer to them as criteria or standards of the Nobel Prize in different years.

After reviewing the criteria of the first twenty years and those of the last twenty years for giving the prizes, it can be deduced that in the first period, the Academy was more concerned with literary aspects of books and criticizing their literariness; including poetic composition, rare combination of the qualities of both heart and intellect, poetic inspiration, originality, serving the language and restoring local languages, having unique literary style, creativity, reviving literary genres, the power of imagination, description and narration, vivid images, abundance of pleasant feelings, idealism and representation of sympathy and love of truth, variety and etc.

However, in the second period, defining a new mission for literature and viewing literature as a means to serve other goals like political ones, the Academy put forward other features and criteria that are not related to the literary facets of the works; some of these features are: existence of historical and biological issues in the literary work, representation of suppressed histories, revealing the absurdity of society's clichés and their subjugating power, discovery of new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures, picturing the landscape of the dispossessed, depicting structures of power and trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt, and defeat and etc. Most of these criteria can be regarded as non-literary reasons or almost having nothing with what Alfred Nobel mentioned in his will. It can be said that these features may have resulted in the election of nominees who have, more or less, been involved in some political games and have put literature in service of criticizing political powers. So it can be argued that political powers may have a say in the fate of the Nobel Prize. This point is highlighted in many laureates' speeches. For example, when making the speech after receiving the award, Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Prize winner in 1986 for literature, pointed to the mysterious nature of the Nobel Prize. He asserted that the Nobel Prize goes to people who are dependent or close to some particular groups.

Narrowing the examination of the Nobel laureates down to novelists, in the following parts, it is tried to take into careful and detailed consideration literary works for which



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Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy and Doris Lessing have won the Noble Prize, though it is known that the Nobel Prize is more of a literary accomplishment of a writer during his or her literary life.

3. FIRST BRITISH LITERARY PRIZE RE-VISITED, DID REALLY KIPLING DESERVE THE TITLE?

Rudyard Kipling was a prolific, novelist, short story writer, journalist and poet. He has remained yet (in 2017) the youngest author who has won the Nobel Prize. When announcing Rudyard Kipling as the winner of the year in 1907, the Academy in Stockholm admired him as a writer who possessed: “[...] power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the creations of this world-famous author.” (All Nobel Prizes in Literature)

Howard Booth remarks that many literary reviewers consider Kipling as the leading writer of short stories like *Just So Stories* and *The Jungle Books* or poems such as a poem called *If*– and the versatile author of the novel *Kim*, on the other hand, some other recognize him with his hostile approach towards other nations as a promoter of British Empire. His opponents refer to the Kipling’s sense of racial superiority over other people: “Many associate Kipling with poems such as ‘If–’, his novel *Kim*, his pioneering use of the short story form and such works for children as the *Just So Stories*. For others, though, Kipling is the very symbol of the British Empire and a belligerent approach to other peoples and races.” (4)

Kipling is also known as a writer with some political tendencies. He deemed for the English a moral responsibility, regarding their expansion all over the world, which he referred to as “The White Man’s burden” and believed in imperial mission that was stated by Queen Victoria to be the protection of “the poor natives and advance civilization” (Abrams 985) but it is stated in *Norton Anthology of English Literature* that England pursued many motivations in establishing their empire: “It sought wealth, markets for manufactured goods, sources for raw materials, and world power and influence.”(985)

Kipling’s opposing critics refer to Kipling’s sense of racial superiority over other people. They argue that he has attempted to show an idealized and one sided picture of the English in his works. He has used the tales in *The Jungle Books* to justify British imperialistic role in the world implying in his stories the justice and power of judgment of white people who can be relied on and trusted. Jad Adams also refers to this theme in Kipling’s *Traffics*



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and Discoveries. He remarks that Kipling is looking down on other countries and races. Jad Adams, in an article published in the newspaper *The Guardian*, states: “His more coarse sense of racial superiority is omitted from this selection, though it still shows in his contempt for the Chinese, compared with his respect for the Japanese, whom he saw as able imitators of the west. Similarly, he hated the "swaggering self-consciousness of freedom" shown by American counter-clerks, and was disgusted by the liberal use of spittoons in the US.” (Adams, *Kipling Abroad: Traffics and Discoveries from Burma to Brazil* edited by Andrew Lycett)

Moreover, in order to discover whether Kipling was really an original writer, putting into test what was sated by the Nobel Prize as the major reason for choosing him as the Nobel Laureate, it is inevitable to look for the sources which he used to write his book. To write *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book*, Kipling has contemplated several important sources and has made use of them. In his own biography, *Something of Myself*, Kipling writes how the stories of The Jungle Books have formed, mentioning three sources of inspiration for The Jungle Books: “It chanced that I had written a tale about Indian Forestry work which included a boy who had been brought up by wolves. [...] some memories of the Masonic Lions of my childhood's magazine [*Boy's Own Magazine*], and a phrase in Rider Haggard's *Nada the Lily*, combined with the echo of this tale.” (67)

Furthermore, Philip Mallett, in his book *Rudyard Kipling, a Literary Life*, remarks that there are also some other textual sources which influenced Kipling in his writing of The Jungle Books: “[...] a pamphlet by Sir William Sleeman, *An Account of Wolves Nurturing Children in their Dens* (1852), Robert Sterndale's *Natural History of the Mammalia of India and Ceylon* (1884), and Lockwood Kipling's *Beast and Man in India*, published in 1891.” (82)

In addition to these, the researcher thinks that one can also mention an important untold truth regarding the source of The Jungle Books which was never mentioned. Should anyone read both The Jungle Books and *The Panchatantra*, they will confront some striking similarities between these works of fiction. *The Panchatantra* is an ancient Indian compilation of beast fables in prose and poetry that were written in Sanskrit. It will be very difficult to dismiss the idea that Kipling has taken advantage of his familiarity with



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Indian myths and its ancient fables like *The Panchatantra* as the source of inspiration for his stories.

These similarities can be discussed in several levels. First of all, both of them were written as instructive books in order to teach young people through some entertaining stories. Secondly, they have employed the same didactic and adventure genres to convey their educational messages. Last not the least, the writers of *The Panchatantra's* and *The Jungle Books* have employed both some animals and human characters in order to create great opportunities for themselves to deal with their desired themes. It seems necessary to include some information about *The Panchatantra* because it may help the researcher to come to a conclusion contrary to what is remarked in the Nobel Foundation's statement regarding Kipling's originality of thoughts and ideas. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "*The Panchatantra* is the oldest extant collection of fables in Sanskrit literature, dating probably from the 3rd century BC to the 4th century AD." (Panchatantra) Dealing with subjects such as war, friendship and lost property, *The Panchatantra* is comprised of fables in which animals are characters that are employed by the writer to deliver some moral teachings. The writer of *The Panchatantra* introduces himself in the *Preamble* to the text as the teacher of young princes, kings and statesmen: "[...] successful in educating three very refractory princes in six months time through storytelling, so that they become expert in the art of government." (Rajan 4)

Having its origin in the oral tradition of storytelling in pre-literate societies of the distant past, *The Panćatantra* was widely well received all over the world and translated into important languages of Asia and Europe. For instance Chandra Rajan, an expert in Sanskrit and lecturer at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada and the translator of the book from the Sanskrit, refers to one of the oldest versions of the book translated in Iran: "[...] the original *KalilawaDimnah*, the Arabic version of the *Panćatantra* translated in Iran is dated back to AD870. This manuscript in Arabic script dates from 897 H (AD 1491)." (21)

There is an account that is stated in the Britannica Encyclopaedia which claims "one version reached the West as early as the 11th century." (Panchatantra) Chandra Rajan, the translator of *The Panćatantra from the Sanskrit*, claims in the Preface to the book that the author of *The Panēatantra* deserves to be called the creator of a new "literary genre of storytelling; who had many imitators over the centuries, none of them his equal." (16)



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Possessing genuine artistry skills and imagination, he was able to bring into literature numerous characters, human and non-human in *The Panćatantra* that have delighted children of all ages in all places at all times, and still continue to do so.

According to the aforementioned notions about *The Panćatantra* and Kipling's life in India, it can be deduced that Kipling has been influenced by Indian literary and cultural background. As an Anglo-Indian writer, Kipling had the chance to observe and explore the whole range of life in India from earliest childhood. Considering recurrent Indian themes in his stories and Kipling's preoccupation with Indian traditions and customs dealt with in his different literary works, one can cite many instances in his books as evidence of his familiarity with Indian culture and literature which have helped him come up with the ideas to embark on writing these books for children. Accordingly the Nobel Foundation's praise for Kipling, when introducing him as a winner of the prize who possesses 'originality of imagination' and 'virility of ideas', may be rejected due to the lack of acceptable ground.

Moreover, regarding his political tendencies and opinions towards other nations, there are many instances in his books which Kipling's views are contrary to Nobel's standards. In a sense, Kipling's works can also be considered to be serving his country's imperialistic policies and as a kind of literary correspondence of the English nationalistic inclinations rather than what was stated in Alfred Nobel's will as to give the reward to the person who has "conferred the greatest benefit to mankind and in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction." (Nobel, Full text of Alfred Nobel's Will) Taking into consideration all the aforementioned reasons, in the end it seems that Rudyard Kipling was not the best choice for the award.

4. JOHN GALSWORTHY, THE POET LAUREATE / ADVOCATE IN DISGUISE

John Galsworthy's father was so interested in law that planned for his son, John, to be a lawyer too. John Galsworthy attended Oxford to study law at the age of 19, from 1886 to 1890 but he did not seem to be very dedicated to law. He was convinced by his father to pursue his studies on marine law so he embarked on a round-the-world voyage in 1892 to become familiar with some important aspects of maritime affairs. Then he set out on another voyage in 1893 during which he made a close and lasting friendship with Joseph Conrad. Joseph Conrad's friendship seemed to have considerable influence on John



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Galsworthy. James Gindin remarks that John Galsworthy called Conrad as one of his early literary friends: “Galsworthy referred to Conrad as his earliest literary friend, one for whose judgement he had great respect.” (108) The trace of his earlier studies in law can be found in his works from plays, novels to other writings. Alec Frechet says: “His novels and plays give considerable space to lawyers, judges, surveyors, solicitors, notaries and clerks, as well as to accounts of prisons, prison staff and conditions. What he was mainly interested in was legal practice, and jurisprudence, and for this purpose he used his knowledge of the procedures and arguments that lawyers are prone to engage in. It was a vast field, on which he could exercise his sense of humour, and often his satirical gift.” (14)

Reading his works of fiction, one may conclude that he had been influenced by his law studies, but instead of appearing in a court of law and issuing lawsuit and winning the case in court, he uses his books in order to drop lawsuits against social problems and existing legal problems such as the laws related to divorce and social discriminations of a society mostly based on social strata. Engaging the mind of his readers in the problems of the legal system through his works, he explains different aspects of the problems which he deems stem from legal weaknesses that need to be changed.

He uses his knowledge of the law in several ways in his writing; for instance in parts of *The Forsyte Saga*, the work for which he received the Nobel Prize, he may be assumed as a divorce lawyer who illustrates problems of the laws of divorce; sometimes he plays, in *Saint's Progress*, the role of a lawyer who defends a defenseless woman with German origin living in England. He also explores how familial life, individual rights and innocent children are affected by war in *Saint's Progress*. On a wider scope, the writer tries to arouse sympathy for human condition and turns into a lawyer for soldiers from both sides of the war and all people affected by war. In order to arrive at a more profound understanding of some parts of Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, it appears a good idea to read his works from a lawyer perspective.

Galsworthy was involved in a number of controversial social activities and tried to reflect upon some problematic issues of his society and the class to which he belonged in his work, opposing many basic and central features of the upper middle class. He was preoccupied with a wide range of literary and extra literary activities whether in his plays, poems, short stories or in his novels especially in *The Forsyte Saga*. His liberal inclination



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can be traced in his campaign against censorship. He wrote *A Justification of the Censorship of Plays* arguing against dictatorship and trying to abolish censorship. Moreover, he espoused stripping the House of Lords of some of its power and redefining its role, the Liberal revival of 1906, reforming prison condition in England treated in his famous play *Justice* 1910, the Married Women's Property Act and the Matrimonial Clauses: "Galsworthy's extra-literary career provides an exemplary case in point. He defected from his own class in denouncing the Boer War, supported reform of the House of Lords, and refused a knighthood." (Caserio 45) As a writer against violence and war, Galsworthy denounced South African War also known as the Boer War fought in 1899-1902. He was the founder of an organization of writers, PEN International, in 1921 which aimed to spread freedom of expression for all writers and support writers who were suppressed for political reasons by their government without considering their race, nationality and religion.

Although emerging from an upper middle class, Galsworthy never shared the same political and social views with them and more importantly he never took advantage of his public eminence and fame in order to be a promoter of nationalistic causes like jingoism or his class values, as it is known the English middle class had enough influence to impose its views on the fiction of the time. The Forsytes, as the representative of the British upper middle class, are very conscious of their social position. They are criticized for their emphasis on social power, possessing attitude, property and fortune. Introducing the Forsyte family, Galsworthy makes it clear that he is dealing with the problems of a wealthy upper middle class family which can be taken as the miniature of the whole society. Robert Caserio remarks that Galsworthy is telling the story of "[...] a family whose acquisitive traits embody a national genotype, the Forsytean tenacity which is in all of us." (5)

The first novel of the *The Forsyte Saga*, *The Man of Property*, is named after one prominent characteristic of the characters in the novel: their desire to collect property and their acquisitive spirit which is termed by Galsworthy as possessive instinct. This instinctive feature is treated in a number of ways and is investigated in different levels. There are different forms of acquisition which are dealt with in the novel, possession of property and money, possession of art and possession of people. This possessive instinct is particularly embodied in the character of Soames, whom is called by his uncle the man



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of property. As it is stated by Geoffrey Harvey, Soames' existence is defined by the "fundamental principle of possession" (Galsworthy 21) His love of art shown in the novel by his collection of paintings is drowned in the greedy ocean of possession. It seems that he loves them more due to their financial value that they will have in the future than the sole reason of their artistic value, which is the opposite of Galsworthy's notion of the relation between Art and possession. The point is directly stated by Galsworthy, when he describes Soames' interest in the Barbizon school painters, a group of French landscape painters in the late 1840s, and comments: "These were the coming men, he said; he should not wonder if a lot of money were made over them; he had his eye on two pictures by a man called Corot, charming things; if he could get them at a reasonable price he was going to buy them—they would, he thought, fetch a big price some day." (517) His interest in art and particularly in paintings is ultimately at the service of his greater craving for money and property. It seems that everything is defined by him in terms of possession even when he tries to express his love for Irene, he clings into the only means which he considers to be of immense value in life, offering money and gifts.

Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* also aimed to present the condition of women and the problems that were imposed to them by the society and/or the legal system. Galsworthy tells of, in his two first novels, social and domestic problems that women were suffering from and women's attempt to alter their condition in the society. Galsworthy took part in some major campaigns to help women's voice be heard. The Married Women's Property Act was an attempt to emancipate women from legal subordination to their husbands and gave them the right to own property. Women could give away or sell their property or have their own wills before marriage but after marriage they were to yield to their husbands all their rights. This point is also referred to in many occasions in the novel, for instance when describing Nicholas's marriage, Galsworthy satirically alludes to the time before the passage of the Married Women's Property Act as the 'golden age' for men: "He [Nicholas] himself had married a good deal of money, of which, it being then the golden age before the Married Women's Property Act, he had mercifully been enabled to make a successful use." (40)

One other important legal reform that helped women assert their rights and brought about an immense change in their condition was The Matrimonial Causes Act. Before the passage of the Act, women were denied to tack back their property as they owned before



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the marriage. They could not ask for divorce as it was only possible for them under very difficult and arduous conditions, while men would enjoy an easier process of divorce. This act was passed by the Parliament as the result of the long struggles of social critics and activists demanding change in the condition of women. The Act involved some changes in the traditional customs regarding the laws of divorce and granted women to ask legally for divorce from their abusive husbands. “The Matrimonial Clauses Act, which afforded legal separation to abused wives; the ‘Jackson’ case, which held that a man could not confine his wife in order to enforce the restitution of conjugal rights; and of course the franchise.” (Galsworthy 30)

Prophesying the destructive end of this path, John Galsworthy fought against upper middle class attitudes and the decline in moral standards of the Victorian society and strived to lead the society towards, in Alfred Nobel’s word mentioned in his will, an ideal direction. This is where John Galsworthy’s novels meet the criteria of the Nobel Committee. It can be claimed that his ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity between his fellow citizens and all other nations are in line with the spirit of Alfred Nobel’s will that demanded to give the prize to the person who has aimed to make significant contributions to humans’ lives. It may be concluded that most of his literary activities and especially *The Forsyte Saga*, with its dominant theme of social-criticism, are in accord with Nobel Foundation’s criteria, thus Galsworthy’s literary attempts and activities seems to be Nobel worthy.

5. DORIS LESSING; THE POLITICAL ORIENTED POET

Doris Lessing’s family was living in Persia, when she was born in 1919. After the First World War her father went to work for the Imperial Bank of Persia. In 1925 they moved to the British colony in Southern Rhodesia in order to buy land and start farming. Doris and her brother, Harry, were raised on a farm. She had to attend boarding schools until she finished her formal education in 1932. She had two failed marriages; she married Frank Wisdom, a civil servant, in 1939 when she was nineteen which lasted only for four years. She entered into another unsuccessful marriage in 1945 with Gottfried Lessing but it ended in divorce in 1949 and in the same year moved to London for the rest of her life. Critics such as Ruth Whittaker, the literary critic and the writer of the book *Doris Lessing, Modern Novelists*, have maintained that Lessing’s background has been a profound influence on her literary works. Lessing is said to have been involved with various



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movements and political activities in different periods of her life. Doris was fascinated by politics from her early adult years. After her first marriage, when she was living in Salisbury, she joined the Left Book Club, a group of Communists. According to her official website, she was disappointed by the Communist movement because she perceived a gap between theories and practice: “During the postwar years, Lessing became increasingly disillusioned with the Communist movement, which she left altogether in 1954.” (Biography, From the pamphlet: *A Reader's Guide to The Golden Notebook & Under My Skin*, Harper Perennial, 1995) Ruth Whittaker says that when Lessing was in England, she had little political involvement in her first few years. In 1952-3 she started to write in two magazines *Daylight* and the *New Reasoner*, encouraging working-class writers and promoting Marxist theories. But it is said that she left the communist party after the Soviet Union invasion of Hungary in 1956. Whittaker points out that Lessing has also been considered as one active member of the feminist movement in 60s after the publication of *The Golden Notebook* in 1962. This view was interestingly repudiated by both Lessing and some feminist critics who held that the book was an inadequate statement of their cause. Whittaker says that Lessing has had to reject her support of different movements and parties all the time. She reasons that it is due to the point that Lessing was always open to change her mind and never wanted to be a trumpet for any movement: “Because Mrs Lessing's viewpoint is continually evolving, she shrugs off earlier influences, or rather, she incorporates them, and moves on. For this reason she tends to resent critics who emphasize her former allegiances [...]” (4)

When introduced as the Nobel Laureate in 2007, Lessing was described as, “that epicist of the female experience” (All Nobel Prizes in Literature), bringing Lessing’s treatment of women and their experiences into focus. Moreover, many critics have held that *The Good Terrorist* is associated with feminist themes and the condition of women. Therefore, it seems necessary to elaborate on Doris Lessing’s opinion on women and feminist movements and the character of Alice, the protagonist of the novel.

Lessing argues that Women's Movement should be open to criticism, otherwise it will leave no place for speaking of the truth and it will be as oppressive as the patriarchal culture; moreover, it will not serve women in the end; on the contrary they will be harmed by the movement. She holds that she wants independency for women and tries to create female characters illustrating features such as freedom, independency and intelligence, or



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to be, in her own words: “free, independent, a loving mother, compassionate but not sentimental, intelligent but not overbearing.” (Ingersoll 108) She maintains that she attempts to hold a realistic view on women and not to depict them in her works as ideal figures: “And I harbor no illusions about how women can be. They are not better nor worse beings; they are human beings.” (Ingersoll 108) In the same interview, she explicitly expresses her stance on Women's Movement. She asserts that she demands equality for women and describes what she means by equality. She wants the difference between likeness and equality to be paid attention to: “Of course, I am for women's equality; of course, I consider women inherently equal to men. However, I would never maintain that men and women are alike. They simply are not. Physically, psychologically, and intellectually, they are not—which is not to say that women must be more stupid than men. They have other gifts. No two people in the world are perfectly alike; how can men and women be alike?” (Ingersoll 108)

Alice is the main character of the novel around whom all actions of the story revolves. Alice, in her mid-30s, unemployed since her graduation from university, aims to make a home for her comrades in a London squat. Reviewers hold that Doris Lessing has been able to skilfully create a believable character that possesses some complex and opposite features. According to several literary commentators Alice shows many opposing and contradictory behaviours and emotions throughout the novel. Mona Knapp, the associate editor of the *Doris Lessing Newsletter*, asserts, in *World Literature Today*, that Lessing's heroine, Alice, is the good terrorist. Alice's contradictions in her behavior implied in the title of the novel has also been acknowledged by some other commentators like Robert Boschman. Boschman, in an article on Doris Lessing Published in *Doris Lessing, edited and with an introduction by Harold Bloom*, believes the title of the novel is an oxymoron which refers to Alice's contradictory decisions, impulses and thoughts: “Thus, on one level, the novel's oxymoronic title suggests both sides of Alice's contradictory personality. She is torn between “doing good” and terrorizing her family and society, between rebuilding the vandalized house where the would-be revolutionaries squat and tearing down the social order that she sees in excremental terms.” (Bloom 98)

Doris Lessing also acknowledges the existence of contradiction in Alice and describes her as a caring woman, though not adult, who on the one hand strives to shelter her friends but on the other hand is ready to blow up the whole city. Alice is depicted by Lessing as



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a person who is trying to renovate a dilapidated house by negotiating with the housing authority in order to convince them not to destroy their squat house. Unlike other members of the group, she strives to make the house a livable place and provide her comrades with food and money by doing whatever it takes from asking money from her friends to stealing from her parents in order to pay gas, water and electricity charges and paint the house. But at the same time all her activities prove to be catastrophic for society; she has joined a group that aims to blow up buildings and killing other human beings.

When talking about women's movement and women's struggle for achieving full equality with men, it seems inevitable that women's relationship with men and how women are viewed and treated by men should be discussed. The attempt of the female characters in *The Good Terrorist* in order to cause change and make contribution to their society leads to their involvement in terrorist violence. Margaret Scanlan maintains that although women in the novel are involved in political activity, they are not actually empowered and are shown by Lessing to be trapped in the same patriarchal system but here by the men in their own group. Ironically a group that demands change has not changed its views on women and the conventional role for women: "Just as in *The Secret Agent* Conrad shows how the authoritarian bullying characteristic of the police is replicated in the terrorist network, so Lessing shows women on the left trapped in the patriarchy they despise." (Scanlan 87)

As it was already mentioned in Doris Lessing's background, she was involved with different political issues in some periods of her life. Doris Lessing describes, in the second volume of her autobiography *Walking in the Shade*, that in *The Good Terrorist*, she has dealt with group activities and has depicted "the vagaries and dynamics of group behaviour—not merely political" (251). She remarks that her book has helped to disillusion many people about the actions of different groups and as a result of reading her book, she argues that, many members of these groups were encouraged to leave them. Doris Lessing states that there is no difference between these groups whatever they are: "a feminist group, a black activist group, Greenpeace, animal rights" (251) because, she argues, they all have similar nature: "A group is a group —just as a mob is a mob. The machineries that activate them are the same, whatever the cause." (251)

Doris Lessing's display of squat crowds as some inept young people, filled with a sense of self-importance, who seek change and utopian dreams through destructive actions, a



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common trend in 1960s, is her condemnation for the ineffectual activities and dead-end ideologies. Knapp also declares that Doris Lessing has both shown them as “spoiled and immature products of the middle class” (471) and scorned their incompetence regarding their incapability to bring about any practical change. Ruth Whittaker maintains that the novel does not rule out the problems that these political groups are against; nevertheless, it is a response to those who favour extreme actions to root out those issues. Ruth Whittaker describes that they should be considered as a distressing symptom of the many diseases from which society suffers and for which they are not able to propose a plausible treatment. “*The Good Terrorist* does not deny the aspects of the twentieth century that so incense the squatters; modern urban architecture, lunatic bureaucracy, an increasingly embittered and violent police force: all these are described with accuracy and without surprise.”(130)

Challenging extremes political actions, Doris Lessing, through the character of Dorothy, reveals revolutionaries’ aims and exposes them as some extremists with ulterior motives. She says that revolutionary people like her daughter and her comrades are a bunch of self-delusional people who know nothing about politics and how the game is played. She tells Alice that they like to feel that they are important and what they do matters but the reality is something else. She divides the people of the world into two groups. Those who are in charge of everything and decide what the next moves are going to be and those who are kept ignorant about what is really going on ‘up there’. She compares their efforts to bring about revolution as a kind of child’s play which is counted to nothing by the people who run the country. She talks from experience that they are going to end up with nothing because they are not equipped with what is necessary for bringing about change as contrary to those in power who have plans and know how to manage things in order to get the best out of it. “This world is run by people who know how to do things. They know how things work. They are *equipped*. Up there, there's a layer of people who run everything. But we -- we're just peasants. We don't understand what's going on, and we can't do anything ... Oh, you, running about playing at revolutions, playing little games, thinking you're important. You're just peasants, you'll never do anything.” (Lessing 334)

Doris Lessing’s depiction of the squat crowds can be interpreted as her criticism of squatters and what is actually going on between them. Lessing in her interview with Sedge Thomson's conducted November 15, 1989, in San Francisco, refers to her familiarity with



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squat people and what they really are up to: “I’ve known a lot of people who’ve lived in squats [...]. What has struck me was the preoccupation with money all the time, understandably: I have been told that most conversations are about money.” (Ingersoll 185) She describes them as some unemployed people who are on Social Security and are used to mooching other members off. She condemns them as not having any practical aim, only pursuing their own interests. They are illustrated as some incompetent youngsters under the illusion of self-importance who are not afraid to take part in violent actions and endanger people’s lives. Ruth Whittaker in her book says that Doris Lessing’s conclusion is insinuated by Dorothy’s statement about the ultimate aim of such groups: “Dorothy knows that for the members of the CCU change simply means 'how to get power for yourselves’” (129).

6. CONCLUSION

Kipling can be mentioned as a writer who not only did not meet the minimum standards of the Nobel’s will, “producing the most outstanding work in an ideal direction” (Nobel, Full text of Alfred Nobel's Will) but acted against it. Kipling’s strong political inclination towards imperialism led him to express racial superiority over other nations such as India, China and Japan. It can be said that his condescending attitude may hardly be interpreted to be even close to an ideal direction. Furthermore, it is stated that Kipling was rewarded the prize in literature because of his “originality of imagination” (All Nobel Prizes in Literature). This factor can also be repudiated on account of his familiarity with Indian culture as a source of inspiration for his works and the *Panchatantra*, keeping in mind that his Jungle Books belong to the category of beast fable and is similar to the *Panchatantra*, one of the oldest books of beast fables.

When studying and analyzing reasons why John Galsworthy was chosen as the winner of the Nobel Prize in 1932, the speech made by Anders Österling, member of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, may be helpful, expressing that Galsworthy’s literary and non-literary activities were taken under consideration and were highly influential in choosing him as the Nobel Laureate. Intending to spread freedom of expression and support writers suppressed by their governments, Galsworthy established the PEN International, an international organization of writers that can be interpreted to be in line with Alfred Nobel’s desire for the future of literature expressed in his will as an



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ideal direction. Moreover, he, as a social critic, employed his pen against war and violence and for causes such as women's movement and modifications in the Married Women's Property Act and the Matrimonial Clauses. Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, the work for which he was chosen as the winner, may be deemed to be a harsh criticism of his society's defects. In *The Forsyte Saga* can be found elements, such as Galsworthy's continuing support for women and change in the laws of divorce and married women's property, disapproval and condemnation of upper-middle class and its acquisitive spirit, which comply with Alfred Nobel's conditions in his will and consequently make Galsworthy a fit choice for the prize.

Doris Lessing may be named as a writer who owes a great deal her Nobel Prize to the political approach that was taken by the Nobel Academy in the past 50 years. As a result of this approach the members of the Academy would give priority to writers, such as Orhan Pamuk and Doris Lessing, who were dealing with political issues and were criticizing social and cultural conditions of their countries in their works. Lessing's life and literary career seem to be dedicated to political activities, dealing with political topics and themes such as Feminism, Communism and Marxism in her vast number of books. *The Good Terrorist*, the novel for which she was rewarded the prize, may be considered as a political novel or a novel, in Lessing's words, about a political character who thinks of herself as a "genuine revolutionary" (182). *The Good Terrorist* was inspired both by the writer's personal experience in political parties and left groups and by several real life incidents of political violence such as the Harrods bombing in London and the assassination of Lord Louis Mountbatten by IRA. It may be claimed that Lessing's life and works like *The Good Terrorist* and *Golden Notebook* would also corroborate the conclusion that writers with political works stood a much higher chance of winning the Nobel Prize.

In the end it can be said that Alfred Nobel's vaguely expressed criteria and longing for change allowed for diverse and conflicting interpretations of his will by the individual members of the Nobel Academy, enabling them to exert influence and put into effect their own personal and subjective ideas. Having discussed and reviewed three works of literature and their writers out of 112 Nobel Laureates, it may be concluded that it cannot be said that the Nobel Academy has always been unfair. Nevertheless, there have been a great many writers, such as, in critics' opinions, Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, James



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Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, Jorge Luis Borges, Leo Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, Emil Zola and Mark Twain, who were worthy of the award but were denied the Nobel Prize, on the other hand there are also authors, like Rudyard Kipling, Tomas Tranströmer and Winston Churchill, who did not deserve to win the title Nobel Laureate but were awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. In the end it may be claimed that the Swedish Academy seems not to be concerned with pure literature and their decisions are mostly overshadowed by political trends. Moreover, it can be claimed that little heed is taken to the will by the Nobel Academy which has resulted in the un-integrated methods as the consequence of political biases of the selecting members of the Nobel Prize.

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