

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA  
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

March 9, 1981

Mrs. Elspeth Huxley  
c/o Weidenfeld and Nicolson  
91 Clapham High Street London SW4  
England

Dear Mrs. Huxley:

I have just finished reading *Nellie* and I write to tell you how much nostalgic pleasure it gave me, and how much I enjoyed getting to know *Nellie*. This is a marvellous book, about a remarkable person.

Let me tell you, briefly, "where I'm coming from," (as my students would say) because this obviously influences my reading of the book. Born in Durban, South Africa in 1923; 5 years with S.A. forces in World War II; university-- Rhodes, Cambridge, Oxford, reading economics, then social anthropology; 5 years in colonial administrative service, Tanganyika; 3 years urban African affairs, Bulawayo; 4 years teaching at University of Ghana; since 1963 with University of California. From 1970-1980 I've made several visits to Kenya, spending 2-1/2 years among Mbeere, of Embu District: my geographer colleague, Bernard Riley, and I are concluding a book on the Mbeere. This sounds like 2 application for a job, or a reference (Hearer is a good plain cook, generally reliable), I'm sorry. That's enough of myself.

Because of this background, I am intensely interested in colonialism, especially in Africa, and teach a course on its social and economic aspects. I read widely on the topic, and have seldom read such an insightful, honest--and frequently, most amusing--account as that in your mother's letters. I have, of course, read most of your books (not, yet, the Scott biography) and have long admired your writings. I think your presentation of *Nellie* is outstanding, a great book.

The volume I read was lent to me by an anthropologist friend, Greet Kershaw, who now teaches in California, but who was working as a social worker, then anthropologist, in Kiambu, actually during the Mau-Mau period. Greet "insisted I read *Nellie*, and now I must have my own copy.

Any reader would like *Nellie*, but my knowledge of Kenya, and of the colonial period, gave an extra dimension--in sympathising with the complex