摘　要

多丽丝·莱辛（1919— ），英国著名小说家，创作丰富，总计有数十部长篇小说，七十多部短篇小说，两部剧本，一本诗集，多本论文集和回忆录。最富盛名的则是《金色笔记》。莱辛关心社会政治问题，对人的问题犹为关心。她的作品主题广泛，包括殖民主义、女性主义、马克思主义、精神分析以及宗教神秘思想。她的小说种类繁多，有悲剧、寓言、神话、成长故事、科幻小说等。她先后获得毛姆文学奖和梅迪契斯奖，几度成为诺贝尔文学奖的重要候选人，被公认为当代最优秀的文学家。

本文在对文本的分析中尝试把女性主义批评理论与叙述学理论合理地结合起来，从女性主义的角度分析莱辛《金色笔记》中的“自由女性”安娜形象和《青草在歌唱》中的玛丽形象，以揭示莱辛笔下的女性在现代工业社会、后殖民文化和男权社会中所受到的束缚、压抑，在社会中所处的边缘失语状态，以及她们对父权制社会的反抗，对女性主体意识和自由的不懈追求。同时，本文又从叙述学的角度入手，分析作为实验小说的《金色笔记》的叙事策略，以显示隐含作者及女主人公安娜如何试图从叙述主体、叙述层次、叙述方位以及情节、语言行为等叙述话语方面来颠覆男性话语，争取女性话语权，实现女性自我意识的言说。本文还尝试从叙述视角与叙述结构方面来分析莱辛的现实主义小说《青草在歌唱》，以显示作者如何展现女主人公玛丽在白人殖民社会所受的双重压抑以及她的抗争过程，从而在文本中充分体现女性意识的言说。

女性主义把“声音”这一术语看成女性拥有社会身份的重要标志，有了自己的声音，女性才能在男权中心的社会中占有一席之地。然而，女性往往受到男权话语的控制而处于失语状态。如安娜与玛丽都因受男权社会的压抑和束缚而分别失去创作能力和表达自我意识的言说能力。在女性文本创作中，女性表达观念的声音则受到叙述形式的制约和压迫，该如何颠覆传统的父权制书

写秩序，建构女性的语言与文本创作，多丽丝·莱辛形成了自己的叙述策略，她摒弃了传统的单一、完整、理性的叙述形式，解构了传统文本中的男性中心意识，代之以女性为叙述主体，女性为中心人物，采用女性视角、超叙述层次、非时间化的情节结构、开放性的结尾以及破碎的语言来充分言说女性意识、女性经验，体现女性主体性，最终达到在文本中建构女性的叙述权威。

关键词： 女性意识；　叙事策略；　安娜·伍尔夫；
玛丽·特纳；　《金色笔记》；　《野草在歌唱》

ABSTRACT

Doris Lessing (1919-) is one of the world's most important living English novelists. Until now she has written more than ten novels, seventy short stories, two dramas, one collection of poems, many papers and reminiscences. Among these the most famous book is *The Golden Notebook*. Throughout her career, the themes of her works are consistently concerned with the modern society and philosophy ranging from Marxism, Feminism to Sufism. In the process, it has become increasingly critical of Western European culture, and the rational, liberal humanist tradition so central to it. She was awarded Somerset Maugham Award of the Society of Authors for *Five: Short Novels* in 1954 and French Prix Medicis for Foreigners for *The Golden Notebook* in 1976.

This paper, from the viewpoint of feminist criticism, through analyzing the heroine "free woman" Anna in *The Golden Notebook* and the heroine Mary in *The Grass Is Singing,* tries to reveal these women's marginal social position and the oppression they have felt in the modern industrial society, which is full of patriarchal and colonialist culture and shows their resistance to the patriarchal rule so as to assert the female freedom, subjectivity and self. This paper also uses the method of narratology to analyze the narrative strategies of *The Golden Notebook* and Lessing's early realistic novel *The Grass Is Singing* from the aspects of narrative subjectivity, narrative level, narrative perspective, plot and language so as to show how the narrator and character Anna and the heroine Mary subvert the traditional male discourse and obtain the female narrative authority and to show that women's self- consciousness can be expressed through a reformed language. The paper tries to link the feminist

criticism and narratology properly in the text analysis, to combine the different concepts of "voice" in feminism and narratology and argues that many of novel's innovative structural and thematic strategies serve specific feminist aims. That is to say, the form is the meaning.

Whether *The Golden Notebook* is a feminist novel or not is hotly debated in the critical field. Lessing herself, in a rather bitter 1970 introduction to the novel, claimed that *The Golden Notebook* was "not a trumpet to women's liberation" or merely a book "about the sex war". She doesn't neglect there is a feminist theme in the novel. The heroine Mary is seeking female self-consciousness in *The Grass Is Singing*. Anna is looking for freedom in politics, marriage and writing in *The Golden Notebook*. In this we can find Doris Lessing's feminist self-consciousness. Through analyzing the narrative strategies of *The Golden Notebook* and *The Grass Is Singing* , the aspects of over-narrative, narrative perspective, focalization, focus character, fragmented plot and foregrounded features of language, we can see Lessing's intention to subvert the traditional male rational, lineal narration and tries to construct a new female discourse for narrative authority.

Key Words: feminist consciousness; narrative strategies; Anna Wulf; Mary Turner; *The Golden Notebook*; *The Grass Is Singing*

Chapter I

The Debate on Doris Lessing's Feminist Consciousness

1.1 Lessing's Family and Educational Background and Her Works.

Doris Lessing was born in Kermanshah, Persia, on 22 October 1919. She began life as Doris May Taylor. Both of her parents were British: her father, who had been crippled in World War I , was a clerk in the Imperial Bank of Persia; her mother had been a nurse. In 1925, lured by the promise of getting rich through maize farming, the family moved to the British colony in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), but the farm, situated on the edge of the veld, never prospered. Lessing has described her childhood as an uneven mix of some pleasure and much pain. The Taylors, living on the frontier on the edge of the veld, were poor by white settler standards, though still immensely wealthy compared to the native farm hands; making Lessing sensitive to inequalities of race, class, and gender. This experience of social injustice informs all of Lessing's work. Living on the frontier also made her aware of her marginality. But just as Michael Thorpe says: "Growing up on the lonely farm on the high veld between the wars the young Doris had little racial consciousness and only a slow dawning understanding of the true relations between her people and the blacks. She had the freedom and space to live largely solitary childhood which makes for introspection, dreaming, a close fellowship with the natural surroundings, a freedom from early intellectual involvement. The early freedom from the confinements of the female role gave her lifelong independence of mind"(Thorpe, Michael, 1978: 6).

Like other women writers from southern Africa who did not graduate from high school, Lessing left school at the age of fourteen,

and then made herself into a self-educated intellectual. At that time, she read extensively, particularly the great nineteenth-century European novelists and books of contemporary political or social interest and the sex studies of Havelock Ellis.

In 1938, Lessing left home and began her working life. In Salisbury, Doris met a civil servant named Frank Wisdom whom she married in 1939. They had two children, John and Jean. The marriage ended in divorce in 1943. During the war Doris became increasingly interested in politics, and she joined a small Marxist group where she met a half-Jewish German refugee called Gottgried Lessing, whom she married in 1945. Their son Peter was born in 1947, and they divorced in 1949. In the postwar years, Lessing became increasingly disillusioned with the Communist movement, which she left altogether in 1954. By 1949, Lessing had moved to London (where she still lives) with her young son. That year, she also published her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, and began her career as a professional writer.

Lessing's life has been a challenge to the belief that people cannot resist the currents of their time, as she fought against the biological and cultural imperatives that fated her to sink into marriage and motherhood. She says, there is whole generation of women, as if their lives came to a stop when they had children. She thinks, most of them became somewhat neurotic because of the contrast between what they were taught at school, what they were capable of being and what actually happened to them. Lessing believes that she was freer than most people because she became a writer. She has always taken the profession of writing extremely seriously. Her best-known statement on the social responsibility of the writer appears in *The Small Personal Voice*: "A writer……represents, makes articulate, is continuously and invisibly fed by, numbers of people who are

inarticulate, to whom one belongs, to whom one is responsible"(Lessing, Doris, 1974: 20-21).

As a complex and prolific writer, Lessing has been involved with all the important intellectual and political movements of the twentieth century: Freudian and Jungian psychology, Marxism, existentialism, mysticism, sociobiology, speculative scientific theory and feminism. All these interests appear in her fiction, which consequently serve as a record of the changing climate of the times. However, I think a feminist perspective suggests a more promising entrance into her work; as a woman writer, Lessing has certainly articulated many of the issues that concern women. Almost all her novels are dominated by female protagonists, which present the most accurate picture and the best analysis of the situation of women. Her major characters, particularly Mary Turner, Martha Quest and Anna Wulf, are the central figures in the roll of twentieth-century female literary protagonists. Their effort to understand and ultimately transcend the biological and social expectation incumbent upon them as women occupy an important position in Lessing's fictions. Although Lessing has refused to endorse the feminist movement, seeing its interests as too parochial, she clearly supports women's rights, and touches upon the question of women's liberation. Being acutely conscious of racism and class division, she has consistently seen women's issues in the context of the need for liberation of all oppressed groups.

Margaret Moan Rowe says: "a fact of colonial life that would form the dramatic basis of Lessing's first novel *The Grass Is Singing*" (Moan Rowe, Margaret, 1994: 3). Lessing's first novel *The Grass Is Singing* which was recognized as a notable achievement in the twentieth-century fiction has explored the brutality of racism in southern Africa and the oppression experienced by women in a male-dominated society. A woman's loneliness in the man's world is

the basic problem in this novel. The uncelebrated landscapes that Lessing is trying to record are both the barren Karoo and the claustrophobic, inner landscape of the new woman. The thesis focuses on how the female protagonist of the novel, Mary Turner, perceives her relationships with her mother country—England, and with the white community in Southern Rhodesia, and with the native, and analyzes what roles Mary Turner plays in the three significant spots in her life. In the process of her self-identity, Mary Turner's power relationships with men and with the black influence how she perceives her subject position in the settler society. The story unfolds Lessing's concern with social, economic and political structures, the crucial relationship existing between the white masters and the Black African servants. Her overriding concern is about women's growth, their awakening and their final "freedom". These points can also be found throughout all of her short stories and the *Children of Violence* series. After the publication of *The Grass Is Singing* in 1950, her five novel sequences with the general title *Children of Violence* include *Martha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm*(1958), *Landlocked*(1965) and *The Four-gated City*(1969). In reference to this sequence, Lessing articulates her interest in the tension between the individual and society, pointing out that" it is a study of the individual conscience in its relations with the collective" (Lessing, Doris, 1974: 14). The novel documents the building of the female protagonist's character through a succession of social interactions. The narrative is structured by her search to find herself. This search focuses on the answers to two fundamental questions that occupy Martha throughout her life: what constitutes the individual—that is, what is identity? What is its proper relation to the collective and whole? The sequence provides an inclusive dialogue answering the questions. Martha is "caught between the pressure to

conform and the urge, intermittent but increasingly insistent, to be *free to make her own life*" (Kaplan, Sydney Janet, 1976: 153). The sequence combines elements of a psychological autobiography with the powerful exploration of the relationship between black and white, men and women in southern Africa. Lessing's combination of psychological introspection, political analysis, social documentary, and feminism gives a characteristic tone to her novels and short stories. These elements are effectively combined in her novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962), which explores the sexual problems of an independent woman in the man's world while at the same time probing her political conscience as well as the needs and dilemmas of a creative writer.

We can almost say that women question is the most important topic in every piece of her early works. Even in her later "space fiction", this topic is still available, only the background shifts into the wider outer space. In the early 1970s, influenced by the writings of the renegade psychologist R • D • Laing and by the principles of Sufism (the mystical ecstatic aspects of Islam), Lessing's realistic investigation of social issues took a mythical turn. In *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), she explores the possibilities of myth and fantasy, restrained within a broadly realistic context. In a series of novels with the general title *Campus in Argos: Archives* (written between 1979 and 1983), she describes the effort of a superhuman, extraterrestrial race to guide human history. The novel conveys the scope of human suffering in the twentieth century with an imaginative power. Katherine Fishburn says that Lessing's most famous restructuring of feminist thinking is her most feminist work, but her most thorough restructuring of it is *Shikasta.*

In the three novels that follow her space fictions, *The Diaries of*

Jane Somers, *The Good Terrorist (1985)* and *The Fifth Child(1998)*, maternal concerns is ascendant. All three novels explore relationships in unconventional families, especially mother-child relationships. In these novels, Lessing re-enters earth's atmosphere and breathes new life into what she terms the family novel. In *The Diaries of Jane Somers,* most of the human faces attached to the various social services are women's faces. In it Lessing presents an old woman Maudie Fowler's world. It is a world of incontinency, grime and smell; a world where more and more the body betrays any hope of going on and do-gooders threaten remaining dignity. But more important it is also a world of pleasure in thought of the past, in taste of real cream and in pride of independence. Maudie has learned the value of a room of one's own. "That's the main thing", she (Maudie) says, "Training. It stands between you and nothing. That, and a place of your own"(Lessing, Doris, 1984: 19). In Maudie Fowler, Lessing creates an individual with a rich memory and whether or not it is lying 'nostalgia'. Maudie's remembrance of the terror and delight of growing up in Victorian England anchors the narrative. Betrayed by her family, exploited by employers and isolated by aging, Maudie Fowler could have been robbed of her final dignity by Lessing and presented as a victim. But she is not, because of Lessing's careful and loving attention to her past and her emotional complexity. In another protagonist Janna's narrative, care-taking which is always taken by women is hard work and not freely chosen. After seeing these women's hardwork, Janna changes her view of the world. Based on Maudie's life, Janna discovers new material in the ward maids: " I want to write about these ward maids, the Spanish or the Portuguese or Jamaican or Vietnamese girls who work for such long hours, and who earn so very little, and who keep families, bring up children, and send money home to relatives in Southeast Asia or some little villages

in the Algarve or the heart of Spain. These women are taken for granted. The porters are paid well in comparison; they go about the hospital with the confidence that goes with, I would say, not being tired. I know one thing, these women are tired." (Lessing, Doris, 1984: 240) Here Janna articulates her function as representation of those who cannot speak for themselves. She gives voice to the point of view of aged working-class women who clearly cannot command an audience in their own right. In *The Good Terrorist*, using a third-person narrator as her agent, Lessing explores the contradictory impulses in Alice Mellings, focusing on the consciousness of her.

Lessing's work in the 1990s has been a series of short stories. Some of these stories, which deal with racial and social dilemmas as well as loneliness, the claims of politics, the problems of aging, especially for women, the conflict between the generations, and a whole spectrum of problems of alienation and isolation, have a pungency and force that are lacking in her more discursive novels. *A Small Personal Voice*, *Going Home* and *African Laughter* are autobiographical essays, memoirs and travel writings. Her first volume of an autobiography, *Under My Skin* was published 1994. Lessing is very much a writer of her time, deeply involved with the changing patterns of thoughts, feelings and culture during the last forty years. As a predominantly realistic novelist, she has consistently explored and tested the boundaries of realistic technique, and one feels that there is a fundamental continuity between her life and her work.

Lessing's novels show a great variety of narrative techniques and forms, including "tragedy, socialist realism, Bildungsroman, modernist perspectivism, parody, allegory, quest romance, parable, legend, and science fiction saga,"(Draine, Betsy, 1983: XI) as Betsy Draine points out. Lessing's eleven works utilize both conventional

and innovative structures and techniques. The search for a different method for communicating the complex nature of consciousness led Lessing to change the form of her fiction in order to conceptualize that subject. Midway through her career, with the publication of *The Golden Notebook* in 1962, Lessing described that novel as her attempt to "break a form; to break certain forms of consciousness and go beyond them." The shape of *The Golden Notebook* is an indication of her attitude on the question of realistic fiction. In that statement Lessing refers to the tradition of the narrative form which she has recognized—after writing five conventional novels—as inadequate to express her particular vision. With *The Golden Notebook* and the novels that follow it, the author continues to break through forms of consciousness, and to express her discoveries in narrative structures that occasionally become analogues for the unconventional experience they describe. Lessing shows a series of protagonists who struggle to define or discover themselves within (and against) the norms of their milieux, " 'when she (Lessing) feels trapped by readers' expectation or by her own earlier practice, she invents a new form or springs for a new identity, always describing such more as liberating, always in search of freedom."(Green, Gayle, 1994: 14)

By the time she published the first installment of her *Canopus in Argos: Archives* series, her complex narrative techniques have come to dominate her characters, leading us to the inevitable conclusion that the meaning of *Shikasta* lies less in them than it does in the structure itself. We can say in her science fiction Lessing has found a new vehicle to transmit the same philosophical principles which she described in 1957 and apparently still adheres to those dealing with the social responsibility of the artist.

After this formal experiment, Lessing returned again to realism in *The Summer before the Dark* (1973). In this novel she describes

what it is like for a woman on the far side of middle age to confront the fact that she has been virtually a non-person all her life. Although the book is clearly an example of realism, much of its meaning is conveyed in a lengthy dream sequence—a fact that suggests Lessing's increasing interest in symbolism. Just one year later she published *The Memoirs of A Survivor*, which uses the persona of another middle-aged woman to predict the fall of Western civilization. From 1983 to1984, Lessing took the unusual step of publishing two pseudonymous novels (jointly as *The Diaries of Jane Somers*) and *The Good Terrorist* (1985) which are also written in the style of documentary realism. A more recent novel, *The Fifth Child* (1988), combines elements of realism and fantasy, exploring the effect on a happy family and the birth of a genetically abnormal, nonhuman child. The diverse structures suggest that in the ten-year period between *The Four-Gated City* (1969) and *Shikasta* (1979), Lessing was seeking alternative forms to realism that would best allow her to maintain her artistic commitment to society.

Up to now, Doris Lessing has written more than ten novels, seventy short stories, two dramas, one collection of poems, some papers and reminiscences. For all these great achievements, she is regarded as one of the world's most important living English novelists. In 1954 and 1976, she was awarded Somerset Maugham Award of the society of Authors for *Fives: Short Novels* and French Prix Medicis for Foreigners for *The Golden Notebook.*

1.2 The Definition of Feminist Consciousness and Doris Lessing's Feminist Consciousness

Consciousness (from Latin, conscire, to be aware) in psychological terms, describes the state of being aware of ourselves and our surroundings. It is a state of awareness about our actions, thoughts

and feelings. It should be understood that there are traditions of female thought, women's culture, and female consciousness, but that are not feminist. Female and feminist consciousness stand in complex relation to each other: they have overlap, for the female is the basis of the feminist, yet the feminist arises also out of a desire to escape the female. The female is ourselves, our bodies and our socially constructed experience. It is not the same as the feminist which is not a natural excretion of that experience but a controversial political interpretation and struggle. "Feminist consciousness describes a state of awareness and understanding of women's socio-economic conditions" and " is an awareness of social, economic and political relationship between personal experience and the larger society" (Sharon K.Hom & Xin Chunign, 1995: 61). In the feminist criticism, feminist consciousness refers to the political consciousness that the gender roles prescribed by societies all over the world for women are rooted in deep prejudice that puts the women at social, political and economic disadvantages. Women are supposed to be passive, subservient, prone to nurturing roles, then to adopt into those roles. The feminist consciousness is for someone to be critical of the tendency among many women to define their self-esteem in terms of their bodies, or reduce them to sex objects. Feminist consciousness is also the desire to counter and stamp out, through collective action and a broad ongoing cultural conversation, such restriction imposed upon women. Feminist consciousness often results in questioning the status quo with its associated implications.

The middle-class ideology of the proper sphere of womanhood prescribed a woman who would be a perfect lady, an angel in the house, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, and queen in her own realm of the home. The goal of many Western feminist theories and practice is "a change in

consciousness", a shift in the perception of reality. As a tool for recognizing and legitimating marginalized voices, sources of authority, consciousness-raising emphasizes the full range of complexities in a women's daily lived experience. Consciousness-raising describes a process for transforming the personal problems of women into a shared awareness of their meaning as social problems and political concern. In other words, the personal become political. The feminists conduct a "political" struggle to raise consciousness among the oppressed and to effect a radical change in the power relationships between the oppressor and the oppressed. The implication of challenging the status quo that feminist consciousness might entail include potential embarrassment and exclusion by individuals who might not feel at ease with new paradigms, as they might require a change in deeply held values and attitudes on their part. Men benefit in the short run from the power arrangement that puts them above women, and many men might see it in themselves' interest to keep the women in their places. To such men, the feminist consciousness is an alarming development and they might resist it in any way they can. They will likely create overt and covert, interpersonal and institutional roadblocks in the paths of women who might challenge the status quo and even form alliances with women who might not be conscious enough or vocal enough. They socially isolate and marginalize the vocal among women with those politics that these men might have vehement disagreements with. Feminist consciousness is compounded by the racial and class differences and differences in sexual orientation. These differences make the coming forth of feminist consciousness harder than it already is, especially for those who might be from less privileged groups in each case. For those women, there might be a need not only to challenge sexism but also racism. They are placed on the "double status disadvantage"

position.

In the earlier phase of modern feminist writing on literature (Kate Millette, Germaine Greer, Mary Ellmann) the emphasis was often quite political in the sense that the writers were expressing angry feelings of injustice and were engaged in raising women's political awareness of their oppression by men. In Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics(1970)*,she used the term "patriarchy" (rule of the father) to describe the cause of women's oppression. Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male. This concept of identity rests on the idea that women share the same experience: an external situation in which they find themselves—economic oppression, commercial exploitation, legal discrimination as examples; and an internal response—the feeling of inadequacy, and a sense of narrow horizons. Despite democratic advances, women, argues Millet, have continued to be coerced by the system of sex-role stereotyping to which they are subjected from the earliest age.(However, feminists refuse to assert a "masculine" authority or truth). Women are riveted into a lopsided relationship with men; he is the one, she the other. The oppressor is seen as consciously endeavoring to sustain the oppression indefinitely through ideology (patriarchal). In these crudely political theories ideology is reduced to a completely one—dimensional weapon of domination. As Cora Kaplan puts it, "ideology is the universal penile club which men of all classes use to beat women with." Men simply project on to women attributes of weakness and masochism.

Feminist novels concern the indicators of power—gender, race, class, sexuality—that affect women's lives, women's consciousness, women's subjectivity and therefore, women's agency. Some women writers openly advocate the use of fiction as revenge against a patriarchal society, persuade women to lead "emancipated" individual

lives and overcome the limitations of the feminine role. They attack the idealization of women by men in territories occupied by women such as the home, reproduction and care for others as well as the image of women silenced, dependent, and marginal. "Radical Marxist feminists believe that women's literature should dedicate itself to the forging of a new consciousness of oppression by developing cultural myths of women in struggle and women in revolution" (Showalter, Elaine, 1977: 314). The feminists challenge many of the restrictions on women's self-expression, denounce the gospel of self-sacrifice, attack patriarchal religion, and construct a theoretical model of female oppression. Making their fiction the vehicle for a dramatization of wronged womanhood, they demand changes in the social and political systems that will grant women male privileges and require chastity and fidelity from men. They transform the feminine code of self-sacrifice into an annihilation of the narrative self and apply the cultural analysis of the feminists to words, sentences, and structure of language in the novel. Their works are the records of feminist consciousness expanding and maturing. "The task of a radical woman's literature should be to replace the secondary and artificial images women receive from a male chauvinist society with authentic and primary identities. Such a literature would be directed toward other women and would opt to describe revolutionary life-styles. It would challenge the sexist bases of language and culture" (Showalter, Elaine, 1977: 315). According to Adrienne Rich, it would be accompanied by " a radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulses," that would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see—and therefore live—afresh".

Is Doris Lessing, one of the most famous female writers, a

feminist writer? The question is not so important. Although she says: "to get the subject of Women's liberation over with—I support it, of course, because women are second-class citizens, as they are saying energetically and competently in many countries. It can be said that they are succeeding, if only to the extent they are being seriously listened to. All kinds of people previously hostile or indifferent say: 'I support their aims but I don't like their shrill voices and their nasty ill-mannered ways'" (Lessing, Doris, 1974: 25). Here Lessing avows her commitment to women's right and she also shows her dissatisfaction with the women's liberation. She sees "the aims of women's liberation will look very small and quaint." She described *The Golden Notebook*'s being "instantly belittled, by friendly reviewers as well as by hostile ones, as being about the sex war, one was claimed by women as a useful weapon in the sex war." "This novel was not a trumpet for Women's Liberation" (Lessing, Doris, 1974: 25). Despite Lessing's statements, Margaret Rowe comments: " Lessing wrote her most—celebrated novel, *The Golden Notebook*, in 1962, for readers—especially women—then and now" (Moan Rowe, Margaret, 1994: 36). Although Lessing does not like her work to be labeled as feminism, the Women Question is doubtlessly one of the important themes of her works. The novel has been seen as Margaret Drabble observes "as a book about Women's liberation, and with good cause" (Drabble, Margaret, 1986: 188). *The Golden Notebook* presents the most accurate picture and the best analysis of the situation of women in the 1950s. Lessing clearly supports women's rights. Acutely conscious of racism and class division, she has consistently seen women and their issues in the context for the need of liberation of all oppressed groups. Lessing uses her protagonists to explore a "female" consciousness and value system. Each of the central female figures in Lessing's novels struggles within

the constructs of her social, political and physical reality. Mary Turner and Anna Wulf struggle for an ideal of freedom that is both external and internal. To them, "the concept of freedom—artistic or otherwise—resist on the belief that there can exist a subjectivity untouched by ideology—free, autonomous and unified (King, Jeannette, 1988: 44).

Chapter II

Feminist Consciousness of Heroines in Doris Lessing's Works

2.1 Anna's Exploration for Subjectivity and Freedom as a New Woman.

Doris Lessing's powerful *The Golden Notebook*, begins to point out, in a variety of notes of disillusionment and betrayal, that the free women were not so free after all. Lessing's free women are Marxists who think they understand how the oppression of women is connected with the class struggle, who have professions and children, and who lead independent lives; but they are fragmented and helpless creatures, still imprisoned by traditional female role. Anna Wulf, the narrator—protagonist in the novel, is not waiting for destiny. Initially Anna appears to be "a free woman". She is the author of a successful first novel, *Frontiers of War*, which gives her a measure of financial freedom. But that first success becomes an obstacle to Anna's continued work since so much of her energy is given over to subtle warfare with film producers who take options on her novel. Anna thinks "when a film mogul wants to buy an artist—and the real reason why he seeks out the original talent and the spark of creativity is because he wants to destroy it"(Lessing, Doris, 1962: 69). She also "knows very well from what level in myself that novel, *Frontiers of War*, came from" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 69). It is a "bad, dead, banal writing, is the other side of my coin, I am ashamed of the psychological impulse that created *Frontiers of War*." Anna realizes she is "incapable of writing the only kind of novel which interests me: a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life"(Lessing, Doris, 1962: 68). So she has decided "never to write again, if that is the emotion which must feed my writing" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 341). "I,

Anna, reject my own 'unhealthy' art, but reject 'healthy' art when I see it. The point is that this writing is essentially impersonal. Its banality is that of impersonality" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 248). She rejects the "conventional" novel, just like her first novel, *Frontier of War*, because these kind of novels leave out "true life", furthermore she feels they are completely untruthful. In these kinds of novels, female experience cannot be fully expressed. To her, that is a kind of an unhealthy art, full of stale nostalgia. Anna, as a novelist, suffers from writer's block as well because she feels guilty at writing about personal emotion rather than about the revolutionary struggles going on all over the world, because in that society one of the dilemmas for an artist who is also a Marxist is the question of subjectivity. The person who writes from personal commitment instead of being at the service of the party is liable to criticism. But to Anna, such called "healthy" art, is in fact a muting of the dissenting voice, a means of disguising individual differences. She is forced to recognize that such words belong to a specifically ideological discourse, rather than to her own experience. Her own literary discourse has indeed been the object of the political discourse, the object of the patriarchal discourse. Confronted by literary discourse, Anna, as an artist, is always a marginalized one. Anna has writer's block. She becomes excessively subjective and separate from others. Responding to Mother Sugar who presses her to write again, Anna says: " why can't you understand that……I can't pick up a newspaper without what's in it seeming so overwhelmingly terrible that nothing I could write would seem to have any point at all?"(Lessing, Doris, 1962: 246) She finds that women have always faced social and economic obstacles to their literary ambitions. She retreats into deeper and deeper silence, but at the same time she has also developed some sense of superiority in connection with her ability (and inability) to write the kind of book

she admires. The only writing she is able to do between the celebrity of her first book and the breaking of her writer's block is in the notebooks (black, red, yellow, blue) that form the bulk of the narrative in Lessing's novel.

In the notebooks, Anna tries a lot narrative strategies to break her writer's block to get ride of the traditional writing, and to find an innovative writing style. Her *Blue Notebook* represents an attempt to come closer to objective "reality" than she succeeded in doing in her first novel. But these diaries also raise doubts and questions about the "reality". First Anna attempts at recording the objective reality of her own existence in the *Blue Notebook*, but it soon ends, and the diary ceases to be any kind of personal document, instead of being replaced with newspaper, cuttings documenting the wars, violence and destruction which make the news from 1950 to 1954, which she clearly feels constitute something more "real" than her individual existence. Later in the *Blue Notebook* Anna again attempts an "objective" version of reality by summarizing the preceding pages of detailed descriptions of her thoughts, feelings and activities in a single day, in a single paragraph beginning with "A normal day". This "neat and orderly" entry (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 360) is followed a month later by even briefer entries, short factual statements: "Got up early. Read so-and-so. Saw so-and-so," continuing for eighteen months (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 455). These narrative strategies are Anna's opposition to "healthy art", since political conformity requires the suppression of individuality. Anna chooses the arts because she feels that there is humanity, freedom and choice, as the concept of the artist, as the voice of the free individual speaking out against society's conventions and values. After experimenting with various styles of recording events, Anna recognizes that her "terse record of facts" is "as false as the account" that is full of "emotionalism". This

recognition not only emphasizes the inherent fictionality of all writing and the impossibility of mimetic representation but also reveals that the rationality traditionally associated with men is no guarantee of fact or truth and, in fact, serves only to create the illusion of fact or truth.

On the pilgrimage towards freedom, women's main battlefield is sex. Love is an important element in life. Women cannot endure a marriage without love. The misfortune in marriage is men and women's unequal positions, men dominate women and consider women only as a sexual tool instead of a lover. In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna and Molly both divorce for this reason. Anna realizes this fact and tries to make herself more independent, and searches for alternative means of sustenance as men may soon lose interest in her. Anna has divorced, but she does not want to give up her own sexual life. On the contrary, she looks on it as the core of being a free woman. She lives in the beautifully decorated house, makes up and wears tidy or even sexy fashions. She even seduces men bravely. Lessing presents sexual relationships as "essential, unvarying, components of human experience". Near the end of novel, Anna Wulf describes her strongest need as " being with one man, love, all that, I've a real talent for it" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 625). Anna's sexual desire differs from men's. Men view sexual relations with women as carrying no emotional attachments, while women need the combination of sex and love, body and spirit. What women want is modern sexual love based on mutual love. Lessing stresses the importance on the perfect combination of sex and passion. When Anna is told that sex is all to Michael when they are together, Anna senses coldness on stomach. It's an entire negation of her. Once she realizes that she is only a sexual tool in front of Michael, Anna decides to leave him in spite of the feelings of bitterness. They abominate the lack of mutual

understanding and the indifference of their conjugal feelings. In *The Golden Notebook*, we can find that the females tend to fall an easy prey to hypocritical advances of egocentric male chauvinists like Richard. Molly and Anna claim to be free women, but what Molly says is extremely revealing: "of course practically all the men one knows are married to nice dreary women, so sad for them. As it happens, Marion is a good person, not stupid at all, but she's been married for fifteen years to a man who makes her feel stupid……now we free women know that moment the wives of our men friends go into the nursing home, dear Tom, Dick and Harry come straight over, they always want to sleep with one of their wives' friends"(Lessing, Doris, 1962: 241). Molly tries to show that women are mere objects of sexual gratification for men. For men sex is of paramount important and such marriages that lay greater emphasis on the physical aspects are bound to be fragile. In fact, Anna and Molly are simultaneously free and not free: they are free to reject traditional familial arrangements but not free from western ideologies of romantic love or from victimization by male lovers.

In Anna's notes for a new novel, *The Shadow of the Third*, we are told the constructing process of Ella's sexual identity. "Men are thus depicted in the novel as 'naming women', using the language of the patriarchal order to define and thus limit women" (King, Jeannette, 1988: 40). The fear of losing Paul's love creates in Ella a sense of lack which in turn creates a corresponding desire to change, to conform to this imaginary shadowing ideal in order to regain his love and approval. She thus begins to hide her work from him, silencing part of herself, because it incurs his disapproval. He believes her too ignorant and naïve to write about suicide, or to encroach on his expertise as a psychiatrist. He thinks the discourse of Ella as an inappropriate source and medium for writing about his professional

domain, a domain in which he possesses "knowledge" and authority. This aspect of Ella's relationship provides an idea—a woman has a new personality created for her by her lover, although she was more of these things. Finding he loves the creation she becomes, she realizes he has rejected her real life. Ella is aware that her emotional dependence on man does not equip her for this kind of life that she sees herself as living the life of the liberated woman. Although at the end of this kind of relationship, a woman has to "recover" herself, to revive the self that has been repressed in that particular relationship. At the end of her five-year affair with Michael, Anna has to use "the critical and thinking Anna" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 327), the side of her he likes least, to restore what she conceives of as her identity. Consciously or unconsciously she appears that women are constrained by the language available to them, inscribed with patriarchal values, which ensures that a 'real' man can only be conceived in opposition to a 'real' woman—dominant to her passivity. Women firmly oppose their husbands' promiscuity while they are subject to the household duties and the care for children.

Another point we notice from the novel is that Lessing discusses not only the true meaning of love or the inequity women have encountered or men's rudeness and infidelity, but also women's concern with career and politics. With the craving for free thoughts, Anna makes another commitment, taking part in political action, and joins the communist Party. Joining the party "was a need for wholeness, for an end to split, divided, unsatisfactory way we all live. Yet joining the Party intensified the split" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 162). It is the world of publishing that first interests Anna in joining the Communist Party. The same as many idealists, Anna considers the Communist Party a panacea for the world's economic and social ills. She holds a sincere optimistic desire to see the world improved and to

have the injustice of a supposedly inhuman competitive system of values eliminated. But she soon finds out that "truth" is not a very highly prized commodity in Communist publishing. She, as an editor, although her duty is giving different advice, in fact, she has no rights to criticize. She was once given a novel by a faithful party member for publication, which she evaluates "a very bad book", because "this novel touches reality at no point at all", and it is identical in phrasing, style and tone, all individuality being suppressed by this kind of party discourse, the line—in this case the defense of Stalin. But the publisher, John Bute, remarks: "It's no masterpiece……but it's a good book, I think" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 346-347). Then the book will be published because the decision has already been taken. The book's publication is decided by the Party. "This is the level on which the party should be judged, the level on which it actually makes decisions, does things; not on the level of the conversations I have with Jack which do not affect the Party at all"(Lessing, Doris, 1962: 341).

Whether in the Communist Party in Britain in 1957, or in Postwar Southern Africa, Anna observes the same muting of the dissenting voice: "the phrases of our common philosophy were a means of disguising individual differences" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 294). Anna finds herself stammering when refuting accusations about Stalinism. The linguistic disfunction is the first indication of a withdrawal of such public loyalty since every discourse is inscribed with the values of a particular ideology, there appears to be nowhere for the individual's voice to be heard. The notion of "free speech" like freedom itself, is an illusion. Because the individual's voice is lost, the individual's 'truth' is also lost. The implications of this suspicion and suppression of the individual's voice are serious for Anna. She is forced to use such words that belong to a specific ideological

discourse, rather than her own experience. Her own subjectivity has been erased in the work. Furthermore Anna's perception of the actual practice of socialism, ranging from the Prague executions and Stalinism to the McCarthy hearings, intensifies her cynicism. Therefore, joining the Party intensified the split within Anna. Anna thus reflects that the Party has been saddled with a group of dead bureaucrats who run it. She and most other Communists suffer from a profound disillusionment. Maryrose, the young Communist Anna knew in Africa, comments bitterly: "Only a few months ago, we believed that the world was going to change and everything was going to be beautiful and now we know it won't" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 429). Anna decided to leave the Communist Party at last. Her wish to look for freedom in politics is also lost.

2.2 Mary's Resistance to the Colonial and Patriarchal Society and Her Failure.

The Grass Is Singing was written before Lessing left Rhodesia and published the year after she emigrated to England. The novel is set in Africa and deals mainly with the White women's marginal social position and the oppression Mary feels in a colonial background which is full of patriarchal and colonialist culture. The novel shows her resistance to the patriarchal and colonialist rule so as to assert the protagonist's feminist consciousness of looking for freedom, subjectivity and self-identity. Through the female protagonist, Mary Turner, it is easy to appreciate the complexity Lessing intended in *The Grass Is Singing*, which like her later works is a novel resistant to a single interpretation.

As a female writer, Lessing always maintains her concern for the women issues, which arouse the gender problem, the colour problem and the complex clash of value systems in white settler society. The

novel focuses on a woman's failed attempt to battle with the colonial society's attempt to force women to be what they should be. Adopting a Marxist approach, she argues that "colour feeling is basically money feeling……in spite of all the rationales of racialism" (King, Jeannette, 1988: 8). *The Grass Is Singing* gives prominence to these economic factors in the determination presentation both of the poor whites, Dick and Mary, and of those who are more successful. Mary's hostility to men can be attributed to a childhood impoverished by her father's drinking and embittered by her mother's struggles for economic survival.

In a colonial Rhodesian background, Mary's family is of the white working class, which is small and scattered in a large black working class. It is isolated from the working masses by race, and from the white middle class by worse economic conditions. This creates frustration, shown in Mary's father, that expresses itself in drinking and cruelty to the family. Mary's mother is oppressed by poverty and by her husband. Since Mary is brought up in such a loveless family, she has come to look upon sex as one of the punishments women must bear. By the time Mary achieves financial independence as a stenographer, she gets her first chance to be freed from her father's control over the family. "Being alone in the world had no terrors for her at all, she liked it, and by dropping her father she seemed in some way to be avenging her mother's sufferings. It had never occurred to her that her father, too, might have suffered. 'About what?' she would have retorted, had anyone suggested it. 'He's a man, isn't he? He can do as he likes'. She had inherited from her mother an arid feminism"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 33). She initially resists the traditional role of wife by refusing adulthood, remaining "girlish", she likes the "friendly impersonality"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 32) and unvarying routine of life which secures her from all the strife

of poverty and frustration, but the age of thirty and a single woman's position give her no rest. Her independent life is destroyed by the collective insistence on marriage for women. "The conventionality of her ethics, which had nothing to do with her real life, was restored by the thought of those friends, and the memory of their judgments on other people"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 108). The fragile self she has built once again disintegrates when she overhears some of her friends criticizing her too young clothes, laughing because sexuality seems left out of her make up: "she just isn't like that, isn't like that at all, something missing somewhere"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 39). What she overhears destroys her self-image together with an awareness of the loss of social approval. The vast hollowness that will later overwhelm her makes its first appearance. She is hollow inside and empty, as if there were nothing in the world she could grasp. This incident makes glaringly apparent the instability of her so-called identity, the absence of an autonomous unified essential self. Because her idea of herself is destroyed, she has to re-create. In this hollow state she marries Dick out of a desperate need for a husband to release her from the life she has built—a life she later looks back on as ideal. She once thinks maybe the marriage can help her find her self-identity in the society, but she is proved wrong.

After marrying, Mary finds what she has tried to escape from, only dogged her present state. The ugly primitive farmhouse reminds her of her mother's "wooden box", when the heat, beating through the corrugated iron roof, undermines her, she begins to complain in a new voice "taken direct from her mother", a voice that is not her own but that of "the suffering female"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 86). She feels "it was not in his house she was sitting, with her husband, but back with her mother, matching her endlessly contrive and patch and mend—till suddenly she got to her feet with an awkward scrambling movement.

Unable to bear it, possessed with the thought that her father, from his grave, had sent out his will and forced her back into the kind of life he had made her mother lead"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 75).

In fact, after marriage, Mary is placed on the "double status disadvantage" position by the white settler society. Dick's failure in managing his farm makes them looked down upon by the white settler society. Economic factors account for the loss of self-esteem and social approval experienced by Dick and Mary. The first time that Mary meets the Slatters, "she had noticed Mrs. Slatters looking keenly round the room, pricing every cushion" (Lessing, Doris, 1976: 82). In this society, financial success is a guarantee of racial superiority, without it, the white man or woman is reduced to the level of the native. The individual's failure thus threatens the myth of white superiority, according to which black men are poor because they lack the ability and willingness to work. At the end of the novel, Charlie wants to help out the Turners, which is not impelled by Christian charity but by the need to preserve the myth. "It was not even pity for Dick that moved him. He was obeying the dictate of the first law of white South Africa, which is: 'Thou shalt not let your fellow whites sink lower than a certain point; because if you do, the nigger will see he is as good as you are'"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 210). They ask the Turners to leave Africa, which means Mary and Dick have been deserted by the white settler society.

Besides this, Mary also feels the pressure from her marriage and her relationship with Dick. The weak, ineffectual Dick's motive to the marriage is dominated by insecurity—using marriage to fulfill his illusionary world to ensure his position with a family on the farm. He tells himself to love Mary, "because it was essential to love someone". As Mary is not up to the standard his dream requires, Dick speaks in an authoritative voice. He blames Mary for wasting water when

bathing. Dick really never thinks of his wife needing a ceiling to keep off the heat coming through the roof and rebuffs her "luxurious" demand. Mary and Dick match out of need, not out of affection. She continues to evade the physical dimension of marriage, submitting to sex without giving herself, and adopting a pseudo-maternal attitude toward Dick to avoid confronting him as woman to man. In the male-oriented and conflicting world, nothing is dominated for her. For Mary Turner at that time, freedom is a return to her life before marriage. She dreams of the happiest period of her late-girlhood when she is independent, bound to no one, and free from conflict of any kind. When Dick insists that Mary work in the Kaffir store he builds, she recognizes in his plan the repetition of her childhood nightmare. The only way she can break the cycle is to run away to the city, but the job she took before will not be held by a married woman again. Her old employer pushes her off. She is once again denied by society. As a married woman, with "crinkled and brown hands", she "thought for the first time that she hardly looked the part"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 112). The company only fits for the girls with pretty frocks and dressed hair. Having no choice, she has to return to the farm with Dick. The farm that means freedom for a white man means prison for his wife. Dick's love of the farm means imprisonment for Mary. She realizes that she will never leave.

To return to the farm with Dick, Mary is invaded by an even heavier emptiness. She tries to face her future with "a tried stoicism". Just then, Mary experiences a real satisfaction on the farm when she is forced –through Dick's illness--to play a masculine role. She exploits to the full the sense of power that situation gives her. She is a more efficient farm manager than Dick, having a far keener eye for the best ways of maximizing profit. "Only Dick's bout with malaria, which temporarily restores Mary's feeling of being needed and her

superiority of position" (Rubenstein, Roberta, 1979: 20). But being a woman, she does not know how to handle natives properly. When Mary takes on the role of "master", the repressed self is brought into play and at this point the interface between sexual and racial ideology becomes clear. The repressed anger Mary feels towards Dick will be turned against the natives in a form which is legitimized. When she hits Moses with the whip, all the violence underlying this system is brought vividly into the open. Mary's act of violence against Moses represents an illegitimate usurpation of male power, which releases feelings so frightening to Mary's conforming-self. Only in relationship to black male servants and laborers can she press her will to victory over men in general because, after all, the collective condones it. However, her energy and efficiency threaten Dick's position in the society. She is not allowed to assume the role of the white boss, since she –as a woman- exists on the margins of the black/white power structure. She is forced to believe she would respect a man who stands up to her, as the collective demand. No matter how feeble her husband, no matter how incompetent in comparison with herself, the relationship between Mary and Dick must appear to be based on male dominance. Denied this "masculine" role, and unable to conform to the acceptable roles of wife and mother, Mary lapses once more into passivity. Her attempt to usurp male authority is indeed seized on as the popular explanation for her murder.

The limitations imposed on this once independent and active woman at last results in Mary's mental and physical breakdown. Mary begins to lapse into apathetic silences in the middle of sentences, to weep at the smallest provocation and neglect household details. Only her relationship with Moses retains a negative vitality. As a man, Moses exudes a sexual power that Mary unconsciously seeks. Dick becomes not just dreamlike but unreal; the sole reality is the ubiquitous

presence of Moses. Becoming an automaton, she obsesses on Moses: " the knowledge of that man alone in the house with her lay like a weight at the back of her mind", which dwindles into "a soft aching blank"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 171-172). The only part of Mary's mind still awake is the one responsive to him, when he wants to leave the farm, she bursts into tears and begs him to stay. By a process of metaphoric substitution, the forbidden desire for the father becomes a desire for Moses, the trigger for the release of the forbidden violent emotions, so that the primal taboo on the desire for the parent is a safeguard, at the cost of transgressing the taboo on a desire for the black, Mary yields her dominant position, submitting to Moses "almost fatherly" gentleness: " she could hear his voice, firm and kind like a father commanding her"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 161), and she surrenders responsibility for herself to him.

Mary's relationship with Moses suggests on the one hand, she has finally succeeded in becoming what she was thought to be incapable of, as is evident from her triumphant "they said I was not like that"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 199), she becomes a true woman with the addition of conforming her female self. Her horror of human physicality has gradually changed into the kind of fascination she feels when she watches Moses bathing, which is a resistance to the sexual oppression to women. On the other hand, Mary's relationship with Moses represents a challenge to racist ideology, indicating Mary's potential liberation from racism. The novel shows when Charlie visits the Turners, he is horrified, not simply by Mary's flirtation with a native, but by the fact that she has gone native, wearing cloth sold for natives in the store. The relationship between Mary and Moses is illegal in a white settler society. In that society men outrank women even more than they do at "home" in middle-class England. The "natural" relationship of dominant man

and submissive woman becomes problematic in this society only when the man is black and the woman white, clearly if the sexes are reversed, there is no difficulty at all. In 1978, Michael Thorpe notes that: "since 1903 in Rhodesia it has been a criminal offence for a black man and white woman to have sexual intercourse but no such law applies where a white man and a black woman are involved" (Thorpe, Michael, 1978: 12). This law recognizes that the relationship between white woman and black man is a point of tension, a weakness in colonial culture. Thus women must abide by the rule that Mary Turner inadvertently violates. The collective here comprises the long-time British settlers, who have rigid codes on which they depend to keep their errant compatriots as well as the natives in line. So when Mary rejects the collective, she is forced to slip into alienation and madness.

As Mary is killed by Moses, the investigating group settles the whole thing by this conclusion that "needs a man to deal with niggers……Niggers don't understand woman giving them orders……" Their shared contempt for women serves as a clue to the motivation. When the white people see the news about the murder, "many must have snipped out the paragraph, put it among old letters, or between the pages of a book, keeping it perhaps as an omen or a warning, glancing at the yellowing piece of paper with closed, secretive faces. For they did not discuss the murder, that was the most extraordinary thing about it. It was as if they had a sixth sense which told them everything there was to be known, although the three people in a position to explain the facts said nothing. The murder was simply not discussed"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 1-2). People treat Mary "with a fine fierce indignation against Mary, as if she were something unpleasant and unclean, and it served her right to get murdered"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 4). In this novel, Mary is presented as the victim of pressure to

conform to a female stereotype, the victim of the patriarchy white settler society, and the victim of her poor economic position.

In the 19th century's Western literature, the admired heroines are those who have no sexual partners but melancholia. But in the late 1950s, many women writers began to describe a new idea about women's freedom, women's thoughts of marriage and sex, women's work and political view. Doris Lessing, as a typical representative, unfolds a huge picture about how modern western women search for independence, identity, freedom and self-realization. She has created a series of new women, such as Anna Wulf and Mary Turner. Lessing admits that she has displayed a field in *The Golden Notebook* what has never been displayed before. She says, "a lot of women were angry about *The Golden Notebook*, what women will say to other women, grumbling in their kitchens, complaining, and gossiping or what they make clear in their masochism, is often the last thing they will say aloud—a man may over hear" (Lessing, Doris, 1976: IX). To her, women's sexual action, political life and career are important parts of women's life. They reflect women's spirit, ideas and personality, but they are covered or distorted in past literature. Through Anna Wulf's exploration for freedom and Mary Turner's resistance to the colonial and patriarchal society, we can see Doris Lessing's feminist consciousness reflected in her works.

Chapter III

The Construction of the Feminist consciousness in the Discourse.

3.1 The Traditional Narrative Strategies of Female Writers.

Ever since 1963, when Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, this chorus of protest has been amplified by the impassioned voices of angry women. The literature that now seems to speak out most eloquently against the status quo is being written by women—women of color, women of lower class, women who are feminists, lesbians and political separatists. Not only do they criticize Western values and customs, but also they criticize the very language that has been used to preserve their customs. Dale Spender's *Man-Made language*, as the title suggests, considers that women have been fundamentally oppressed by a male-dominated language. If we accept Foucault's argument that what is "true" depends on who controls the discourse, then it is reasonable to believe that men's domination of discourses has trapped women inside a male "truth". From this point of view it makes sense for women writers to contest men's control of language rather than merely to retreat into a ghetto of feminine discourse. These women primarily assert their right to speak and write, explore female experience, introduce a new voice and subject matter into poetry. Women writers do have a voice in our society. The conditions under which men and women produce literature are materially different and influence the form and content of what they write. Literary values and conventions have themselves been shaped by men, and women have often struggled to express their own concerns in what may well have been inappropriate forms.

In Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*(1977), she takes the view that there is a profound difference between women's writing and men's, and that a whole tradition of writing has been

neglected by male critics, she divides the tradition into three phases: "feminine", "feminist" and "female". The first phase is "a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, internalization of its standards of art and its views on social roles". The second phase "is a phase of protest against these standards and values and advocacy of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy". The third phase is "a phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity"(Showalter, Elaine, 1977: 13). She identifies the "female" phase from 1920 to the present, entering a new stage of self-awareness about 1960. But she also mentions that there are no obviously rigid categories. The phases sometimes overlap. There are feminist elements in feminine writing, and vice versa. One might also find all three phases in the career of a single novelist.

The third, "female" phase which inherits characteristics of the former phases develops the idea of specifically female writing and female experience. These feminist writers write long novels of subjective consciousness. They favor a sort of negative capability, a "multiple receptivity" which rejects definite views and opinions which they call masculine things. They also rationalize the problem of "shapeless outpourings" by working out a theory that saw shapelessness as the natural expression of female empathy and pattern as the sign of male one-sidedness. They consciously tried to produce elliptical and fragmented sentences in order to convey what she considered to be the shape and texture of the female mind. Woolf regarded a female writers' career was hindered in two ways. First, they were imprisoned by the ideology of womanhood. The idea of "the Angel in the House" called for women to be sympathetic, unselfish and pure. Secondly, the taboo about expressing female passion prevented her from telling the truth about her own experiences as a body. This denial of female

sexuality and consciousness was never overcome in her work of life. Her attempts to write about the experience of women were conscious and aimed at discovering linguistic ways of describing the confined life of women. She believed that when women finally achieved equality with men, there would be nothing to prevent women form freely developing their artistic talents.

After Virginia Woolf, a new frankness about sexuality (adultery, lesbianism, etc) enters women's fiction. Female sexuality is directly associated with the poetic productivity— the psychosomatic drives which disrupt the tyranny of unitary meaning and logocentric (and therefore phallogocentric) discourse. The major theorists of this view are Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous.

Kristerva's work has frequently taken as its central concept a polarity between "closed" rational systems and "open" disruptive "irrational" systems. Poetic language introduces the subversive openness of the semiotic "across" society "closed" symbolic order. Poetic language practices within and against the social order. The "semiotic" is associated with female body, while the "symbolic" is lined with the "Law of the Father" which censors and represses in order that discourse may come into being. Woman is the silence of the "unconscious" which precedes discourse. She is the "other", which stands outside and threatens to disrupt the conscious (rational) order of speech. In avant-garde literature, the primary processes invade the rational ordering of language and threaten to disrupt the unified subjectivity of the "speaker" and the reader. The avant-garde poet, man or woman, enters the Body-of-the-Mother and resists the Name-of-the-Father. Kristeva sees this poetic revolution as closely linked with political revolution in general and feminist liberation in particular: the feminist movement must invent a "form of anarchism" which will correspond to the "discourse of the avant-garde".

Anarchism is inevitably the philosophical and political position adopted by a feminist who determines to destroy the dominance of phallogocentrism(domination by phallus logic) .

Helene Cixous' essay, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, is a celebrated manifesto of women's writing which calls for women to put their bodies into their writing. Cixous writes ecstatically of the teeming female unconscious: "write yourself. You body must be heard, only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth". There is no universal female mind, on the contrary the female imagination is infinite and beautiful. Writing is the place where subversive thought can germinate. It is especially shameful that the phallocentric tradition has succeeded in not giving women their say. Woman must uncensor herself, recover "her goods, organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal".

The heart of Cixous' theory is her rejection of theory: feminist writing "will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system". This transgression of the laws of phallocentric discourse is the woman writer's special task. Having always operated "within" male-dominated discourse, the woman needs to invent for herself a language.

Much of feminist criticism wishes to escape the fixities and definite of theory and to develop a female discourse which cannot be tied down conceptually as belonging to a recognized (and therefore probably male produced) theoretical tradition. Whatever the difficulties, women have the right to assert their own values, to explore their own consciousness and to develop new forms of expression corresponding to their values and consciousness.

In the early seventies a shift towards a more angry tone occurs in the novels of Penelope Mortimer, Marid Spark and Doris Lessing. These contemporary women's novels observe the traditional forms of

nineteenth-century realism, but it also operates in the contexts of twentieth-century Freudian and Marxist analysis. They were beginning a renaissance in women's writing in order to form an authentically female literature, providing woman's view of life and woman's experience. They have insisted upon the right to use vocabularies previously reserved for male writers and to describe formerly taboo areas of female experience. Anger and sexuality are accepted not only as attributes of realistic characters but also as sources of female creative power. There is a new frankness about the body and about such topics as adultery, abortion, lesbianism and prostitution. "In trying to deal with this recognition of an ongoing struggle for personal and artistic autonomy, contemporary women writers have reasserted their continuity with the women of the past, through essays and criticism as well as through fiction. They use all the resources of the modern novel, including exploded chronology, dreams, myth and stream of consciousness, but they have been profoundly influenced by nineteenth-century feminine literature" (Showalter, Elaine, 1977: 302). These women novelists are continuing a phase of female self-discovery and self-scrutiny in forms and vocabularies very different from those employed by Woolf. "Mortimer, Lessing, Drabble, Byatt and Spark all seem to be moving into new phases in their writing. Feminine realism, feminist protest, and female self analysis are combined in the context of twentieth-century social and political concern"(Showalter, Elaine, 1977: 304).

In the 20th century, as we know, Modernism and Post modernism eschews the mimetic quest of the realistic novel. The linear narrative structure gives way to more fragmented prose. Fluid, unorganized thoughts are expressed without formal sentence structures in a stream of consciousness. The omniscient viewpoint, with its assumptions of

cognizance and authority, is superseded by a multiplicity of apparent random impressions. "The chronological, causal narrative was modified or abandoned ··· ··· embraced the non-rational, the subconscious, the uncertain, the evanescent and, moreover, insisted that these aspects of life were as true, if not more true, than the carefully constructed strata-slices of life-presented by the realist novel"(Fahim, Shadia.S, 1994: 62).

3.2 The Innovative Form of *The Golden Notebook.*

Lessing is deeply concerned over form, as she once mentioned she wanted "to shape a book which would make its own comment, a wordless statement: to talk through the way it was shaped" (Lessing, Doris, 1974: 32-33). What she needs is a variety of methods to convey many layers of consciousness of her characters and their states of minds. The causal delineation of experience became inadequate. She says: "this particular form enables me to say things about time, about memory—about the human personality, because personality is very much what is remembered ·····if I had used a conventional style, the old-fashioned novel····· I would not have been able to do this kind of playing with time, memory and the balancing of people" (Bloom, Harold, 1986: 49). Although Doris Lessing will never identify herself as a radical feminist writer, she does share many of the same political views as these women. Although she has been, by birth, a member of the elite, white, ruling class, she has always stood in opposition to its nationalistic, imperialistic and sexist policies. She expresses her political views not by attempting to restructure thinking itself, but by attempting to restructure the language. During Lessing's writing period, she is always seeking alternative forms to realism that would best allow her to maintain her artistic commitment to society. The artistic

commitment that Lessing identifies as the goal of her writing, calls for the artist to serve the needs of the people. Lessing claims that at the very least an artist must recognize that "one is a writer at all because one represents, makes articulate, is continuously and invisibly fed by, numbers of people who are inarticulate, to whom one belongs, to whom one is responsible" (Lessing, Doris, 1974: 20-21). This kind of artistic commitment can readily be found in the writing of those cultural subgroups who have traditionally been exempted from the mainstream of white, middle-class life. In attempting this, she has tried to restructure one of the most venerable cultural forms—that of the novel.

In Lessing's career, we can find all three phases: the feminine phase, feminist phase and female phase. Lessing "has an extraordinary barometric sensitivity to the social climate, but she anticipates trends rather than capping them with a novel. Thus the encyclopedic study of intellectual political women in *The Golden Notebook*(1962), preceded, and in a sense introduced, the Women's Liberation Movement. Lessing's early fiction (that is, the novels up to *The Four-Gated City* in 1969), has many similarities to Victorian feminine and feminist writing" (Showalter Elaine, 1977: 308). Olive Schreiner, another South African novelist, influenced the first Martha Quest books. Martha resembles Maggie Tulliver, both women are "caught between pressure to conform (not only to the local moves, but also, as it were, biologically, as a woman) and the urge, intermittent but increasingly insistent, to be free to make her own life"(Kaplan, Sydney Janet, 1976: 153). "Lessing's theories of a male deficiency in the ability to love and of differences in the ways men and women use language powerfully extend the female aesthetic theories of Richardson and Woolf"(Showalter, Elaine, 1977: 308). Her most famous restructuring of it is also her most feminist

work—*The Golden Notebook*. Lessing, through various narrative strategies, forces us to examine our everyday world from new perspectives. Although language can be used by those in power to create social myths to enslave our minds, Lessing also shows that language can be used as a tool of intellectual liberation, helping us to transcend both the authority of the state and free our mind. Her use of female symbolism, her commitment to feminist-theory and her harshly physical allegories, are part of her effort to articulate the tense indirect perceptions of a new womanhood.

Lessing's novel *The Golden Notebook* is located within the context of the massive questioning of western ideology that has dominated intellectual life since World War II. Like other literature of the period, *The Golden Notebook* responds to a new world of violence, terror and chaos: the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Stalin's purges, South African Apartheid and the instability of new independent Third World nations. Within this disturbing context, *The Golden Notebook* attempts to situate and define a new female subject, to re-analyze the relationship between reality and literature, and to construct a new novel form. So many of the novel's innovative structural and thematic strategies serve specific feminist aims. The novel moves toward the creation of a new female subject and toward an aesthetic means of depicting the new subject.

As a specific and engaged political stance, feminism can address or encompass virtually any topic or theme. In 1971 introduction to the novel Lessing claims that *The Golden Notebook* is not merely a book "about the sex war". This novel should be something more than "the dumping-ground for the personal emotions". "Lessing used similar language to describe Virginia Woolf 'I've always felt this thing about Virginia Woof—I find her too much a lady—but I feel that her experience must have been too limited, because that's always a point

in her novels when I think, fine, but look at what you've left out'" (Showalter, Elaine, 1977: 310). Indeed, *The Golden Notebook* has such a large scope that it cannot be reduced to a specific theme. It attempts to depict human beings trying to cope with the violence, terror and fragmentation of the postwar atomic age. Lessing tries to reconstruct the political, social and cultural experience of women. The novel situates women's struggle in relation to other emancipatory struggles around the globe. This novel's positioning of Anna as a developing subject carefully delineates the ways in which subjectivity is linked to historical, cultural, economic, political and material situation as well as the psychic patterns it has engendered.

The novel treats large topics—such as the role of aesthetics, mass political movements, atomic weapons and racism—it does not neglect the more personal issues that many contemporary women confront on a daily basis. In *The Golden Notebook,* Anna finally convinces herself that the personal is political. The feminine ego is merged into a transmitter for collective consciousness. *The Golden Notebook* challenges the conventional distinction between high art and daily life and redefines representation. The novel breeches the dividing line between public and private events. For instance, Anna's life as a member of the Communist Party interweaves with other aspects of her life and identity such as her relationship with Michael, her bodily functions, her caring for her daughter and her grocery shopping.

Those forms, not usually honored by literary critics, the dairy, journal, memoir, autobiography and letters are often used by female writers to rescue hundreds of "lost" female voices. In *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing uses the form of a dairy to express the wide range of female experience. "The phrase female/male subjectivity refers to the experiences or thoughts of a female or male person"(Sharon

K.Hom & Xin Chunying, 1995: 122). "Since only women have undergone those specifically female life experience (ovulation, menstruation, parturition), only they can speak of a woman's life, furthermore, a women's experience includes a different perceptual and emotional life, women do not see things in the same ways as men, and have different ideas and feeling about what is important or not important" (Seldon, Raman, 1988: 130). In her dairies, Anna records her female experience about every day life. Anna's writing style reflects effectively Lessing's writing style, as a female writer should focus on female experience that can reflect female subjectivity fully.

The novel presents Anna not only as a writer and a political activist but also as a woman having to deal with her own female body, with the grocery shopping, with her young daughter and her lover. Women's experience is about feminine psychology, womanhood and inner space, and about the divided self. When Anna notes that her menstrual periods are starting on the day she has chosen to record objectively, she has a moment of doubt before proceeding as planned, but her self-conscious choice to record her moment of doubt and then to include the physical details and feelings that dominate her day as a result of her period indicates that the novel rejects the traditional veiling of the female body and its functions. Menstrual cycles are part of women's physical existence and their presence within the novel is a political statement. It signifies the inclusion of women's specific perspectives and experiences within a new aesthetics that challenges the dichotomy between high art and mundane physical existence.

Lessing insists upon the right to use vocabularies previously reserved for male writers and to describe formerly taboo areas of the female experience. She tries to unify the fragments of the female experience through artistic vision, and concerns them with the definition of autonomy for the woman writer. That range of experience,

and in particular, sexual experience, marks the importance of *The Golden Notebook* because as Rachel Brownstein observes "it articulates certain facts that had previously been unmentionable" (Brownstein, Rachel, 1982: 26). In *The Golden Notebook,* Lessing gets close to what Woolf said she and no other woman writer had been able to do "telling the truth about my experience as a body". Lessing does this on the level of fiction and metafiction as Anna records her own physical experiences and as she analyses the problems of a woman writer writing about sex. In the yellow notebook Ella/Anna/Lessing celebrates the vaginal over the clitoral orgasm, the emotional over the mechanical attitude toward sexuality: "A vaginal orgasm is emotion and nothing else, felt as emotion and expressed in sensations that are indistinguishable from emotion. The vaginal orgasm is a dissolving in a vague, dark, generalised, sensation like being swirled in a warm whirlpool. There are several different sorts of clitoral orgasms, and they are more powerful (that is the male word) than the vaginal orgasm, there can be a thousand thrills, sensations, etc, but there is only one real female orgasm and that is when a man, from the whole of his need and desire, takes a woman and wants all her response" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 213). The preceding quotation does explicate a woman's thinking about sexuality on a fictional map drawn by a woman.

Anna writes openly about her sexual attitudes, making explicit the sexual protest hinted by their predecessors. Anna also describes how she is taken over by "the housewife's disease" peculiar to women:" I-must--dress--Janet--get—her--breakfast--send--her--to--school--get--Michael's--breakfast--don't--forget--I'm--out--of--tea--etc" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 326). The novel points the political and aesthetic implications of these activities, which have traditionally been relegated to the domestic or private sphere. Western culture's

insistence on separating private and professional life—which is linked to the dichotomy between the sexes and linked to binary logic in general—forces Anna to keep separate her roles as writer and political activist from her roles as mother and lover. The novel emphasizes the interconnectedness of Anna's various roles and the fragmentation of the world in which she lives and calls for a novel form that can encompass both the domestic and private sphere. Only that form can express women's experience truthfully.

The novel disrupts conventional representation with a stance that combines feminist and postmodern impulses, destablizes western thoughts and aesthetics, and disrupts rigid dichotomies. The novel allows for the chaos and fragmentations of the contemporary world. "The structure of the novel rejects linear narrative and requires the reader to piece together Anna Wulf's fragmented experiences in ways which duplicate her own reconstruction of what had happened. The novel's evocation of the turbulent inner life is emblematic of alienation and disintegration. The formal organization reinforces the subject matter and reflects a particularly acute awareness of the relationship between ideology and literary form" (Joannou, Mroula, 2000: 25).

Lessing's long novel is a compilation of various pieces or texts. A short five-chapter frame novella, entitled "*Free Women*", is written in conventional realist narrative form. The fragments of four notebooks are kept by the central character of " *Free Women*" Anna Wulf. She uses each of the notebooks, distinguished by color, to record a different aspect of her life, the "*Black Notebook*" focuses on Anna the writer and on the memory of her early experiences in a communist cell in Africa, the "*Red Notebook*" records her intensely conflicted relationship with the British Communist Party, the "*Yellow Notebook*" fictionalizes Anna's own life, particularly her love affair with Michael,

in the form of a novel entitled *The Shadow of the Third*, and the "*Blue Notebook*" is closer to a diary and tends to focus on states of mind. Eventually Anna ends each of the four notebooks and begins a new "*Golden Notebook*", which records her descent into madness with her new American lover Saul Green. The novel as a whole is also circular; it has no beginning or ending. Near the end of the novel, Saul gives Anna the lines that begin the novella, "*Free women*", and the novel, *The Golden Notebook.* Anna's various pieces of writing thus construct the novel: fragments of a novella and of five different notebooks, and the editorial notes that introduce and order the fragments.

Rather than presenting the reader with a supposedly neutral representation or copy of a real woman, Lessing's novel offers multiple versions or images of Anna as the only means of approximating such a woman living in the contemporary world. Since Western culture has traditionally positioned women on the object side of the classical dichotomy between subject and object, the first step toward creating a new female subject is to destabilize the opposition. Lessing's novel takes up this challenge by positioning Anna as both subject or teller, and object or character, of her story.

In order to depict a woman's attempt to define herself as a subject and a writer, the novel co-opts a number of postmodern aesthetic strategies. Through the complex structure, the novel complicates the issue of Anna's subjectivity by presenting Anna as more than just a character in a novel. Indeed, *The Golden Notebook* contains various versions of character called Anna, as well as a writer and an editor also named Anna. The novel offers many versions of Anna on several narrative levels, so that the name Anna can at best refer to a composite of various roles, functions and representations. Anna is the editor of her various pieces of writing that she organizes to form *The Golden Notebook;* Anna is the author of various private

notebooks; Anna is the author of a traditionally written novella entitled "*Free woman*"; Anna is the subject-character of the notebooks; Anna is a character in *"Free Woman"*, and Ella is a fictional representation of Anna in the "*Yellow Notebook*". These versions of Anna suggest or approximate what the human being or character named Anna might be like. Lessing provides her protagonist, Anna Wulf, with a vocation as a writer, thus enabling the Anna to increase the degree of self-consciousness concerning both the experience of herself and her narrative expression. Instead of Lessing narrating and commenting upon her protagonist's experiences, the writer Anna Wulf—the invention of Doris Lessing—narrates and examines her experiences directly. Even the apparently omniscient narrator of the *"Free Women"* section is ultimately revealed to be Anna Wulf. In one sense, *The Golden Notebook* is a metafiction—a novel about writing novel—in which both the process and the form are examined. In relinquishing the authorial omniscience of the earlier novels, Lessing assumes a more subjective narrative stance, for the only perspective available is the events and experiences filtered through Anna Wulf's own consciousness. It undermines the binary logic that has traditionally reinforced the oppression of women and the erasure of women's histories within Western culture, through hierarchical oppositions such as those between man and woman, subject and object. As traditional forms have tended to silence those who threaten the position of power held by white, bourgeois males in Western culture, the novel disrupts traditional narrative and subjective, and the western metaphysics that underlies them. It enacts new forms of narrative and subjectivity as means of positing possibilities for a new female subject and artist and new modes of representing them. The effect of *The Golden Notebook*'s critique of western metaphysics and its use of various disruptive strategies indicates the novel's

subversive feminist aims.

By presenting fragmentation as a function of Being rather than as the result of a plethora of subjective interpretations, the novel has stepped decisively toward the postmodern: after all, Anna's dreams emphasize that she fills a variety of subject positions. Indeed, postmodern notions of identity posit set of dynamic roles, in which human beings constantly take up and give up various sociocultural subject positions and thus have no singular unified stable subjecthood. *The Golden Notebook* challenges that very notion of the integrated self through its various versions of Anna, and through the recognition by the Anna of "*The Golden Notebook*" that chaos is part of her existence and thus part of her identity. Anna does not synthesize her various selves but rather accepts multiplicity as a function of being itself. While Anna achieves some kind of balance, it is a new kind of balance that defies conventional notions of wholeness, and the binary logic on which they depend, and instead, embraces multiplicity. The male-centered nature of the opposition between sanity and insanity is particularly evident in the traditional association of sanity with reason, order and men and of insanity with emotions, chaos and women. Challenging what is essentially a deeply male centered Western opposition therefore becomes a potentially feminist as well as postmodern move. Thus through a combination of subversive and established aesthetic strategies, by presenting human beings as conglomerations of dispersed personalities, the novel reveals that the notion of a "centered self " is at best only an illusion, the novel develops a new female subject.

In conjunction with its challenge to the humanist subject and delineation of a new female subject, *The Golden Notebook* disrupts established aesthetic forms and moves toward a more dynamic novel form designed to better capture a chaotic world in which identity is no

longer stable or centered. In much the same way as it presents the new subject as a multiplicity of selves in process, *The Golden Notebook* depicts the process of creating a new kind of novel which is made up of a multiplicity of forms and segments. The fragments do not indicate divisions but rather combine to form a text-novel, which becomes in effect an intricate tissue of texts. This does not mean that Lessing's novel lacks coherence or consistency: its fragments are specifically designed and ordered so that they enter into dialogue with each other. The gaps between them create a web of meaning. Through its emphasis on textuality and its often ironic juxtaposition of pieces, the novel criticizes and physically disrupts the conventions of realism and certain modernist mode even while it at times uses them. The novel is subversive and disrupts established aesthetic forms for depicting characters and notions of fixed identity; the novel draws its readers into a conventional narrative and then explodes that narrative; the novel is very structured and yet resists form; the novel tells a story and yet challenges the very conventions by which stories have been told within western culture. In order to write a contemporary woman's history, the novel must hold on to narrative. At the same time, however, the novel disrupts the various narrative forms. The form in *The Golden Notebook* remains overt circularity and has a metafictional structure. Through elements such as the ambiguity of voice and superimposition of distinct narrative levels, the novel continually disrupts its own narrative structure and thereby resists a rigid form. Its multiple forms and fragments testify not only to the rejection of realisms mimetic aesthetics, but also to simultaneous moves beyond modernism and toward feminism.

The novel within the novel, "*Free women*", functions on one level as a parody of the conventional realistic novel form by pointing out its limitations. It is a third person chronological narrative with a

clear plot and story but with no in-depth analysis of the chaos that inhabits its characters' lives. The five chapters of "*Free Women*" make up less than one fourth of *The Golden Notebook*, and this space allotment alone demonstrates that traditional narrative has limitations. The division "*Free Women*" into chapters interspersed by long notebook fragments further highlights the inability of the conventional novel to depict contemporary women's existence by itself. "*Free Women*" functions both as a parody of the conventional novel and as a basis or organizing principle for *The Golden Notebook.*

The metafictional quality of the novel defies the very notions of beginning and ending. *The Golden Notebook* is a process of depicting a contemporary woman's story and creating a new novel form. "*Free Women:5*" at the physical end of the book does not make this chapter the ending of the novel, since *The Golden Notebook* includes but goes far beyond the short conventional "*Free Women*". Moreover, "*Free Women:5*" cannot be the ending of the novel as a whole, since it ends with Anna deciding to engage in marriage counseling for the working class and to give up writing, an ending that *The Golden Notebook* belies by its very existence as a product of Anna's writing and editing. The penultimate section of the novel, the "*Golden Notebook*" fragment, is not the novel's ending either. The "*Golden Notebook*" segment ends with Saul providing Anna with the first line of both "*Free Women*" and *The Golden Notebook,* which gives the novel circularity and overtly defies any notions of a definitive ending or beginning. The novel disrupts traditional narrative strategies and rejects linear or chronological narrative.

The disruption of notions of beginning and ending associated with traditional narrative is simultaneously a feminist move in Lessing's novel. The implicit rejection of "*Free Women:5*" as an ending is a rejection of both conventional narrative and the

conventional roles imposed on women. Lessing's novel pushes beyond this cynical and ironic resolution by making Anna the author of "*Free Women*" and of *The Golden Notebook* and thereby providing alternative or multiple endings. The novel does not negate the ending of "*Free Women*", however, since it places *"Free Women"* in final position; instead, it offers a multiplicity of endings and thus a greater number of possible roles for women: Anna as social worker, marriage counselor, author of "*Free Women*" and author-editor of *The Golden Notebook*. Similarly, the novel has no real beginning. *"Free Women: 1*" opens the book and yet does not begin the story or the writing process that the novel delineates, since Saul gives Anna its first line in the "*Golden Notebook*" section that is located almost at the end of the book. The "*Black Notebook*" fragment that is in second position is not a beginning either, since it jumps back and forth between the present and Anna's past. Through its disruption of the concepts of beginning and ending, the novel rejects the definitive limits of conventional narratives that have traditionally constrained women to particular roles and plots.

The Golden Notebook challenges not only conventional narrative form but also established notions of representation. The notebooks contain recollections, fictionalization and analysis of the past as well as recent events in Anna's life, newspaper clipping's dealing with war, atomic and hydrogen bombs, and violence in general; and various attempts to record the truth of events by writing in ever briefer and terser styles.

Anna's dreams of an art that is "a mass of fragments and pieces" demonstrates her need for aesthetics; adapted to the fragmentation that is part of her life and of the world at large. Much of the novel focuses on Anna's search for this new novel form. Anna quotes an artist's saying that "the world is so chaotic that art is irrelevant",

which sets up the novel's quest for a new and relevant, aesthetic form.

The Golden Notebook disrupts not only established narrative and aesthetic forms but also language writing itself. While the five chapters of "*Free Women*" demonstrate conventional language usage, the various fragments that make up the five notebooks offer a wide range of forms and styles. Most of these sections engage in untraditional uses of language, particularly grammatical fragmentation or disjunction. The lack of connectives, for example, resists the order and linearity.

The novel engages questions of traditional conceptions of the stability of language. Anna's awareness that "words lose their meaning suddenly", and that there exists a "gap between what they are supposed to mean, and what in fact they say" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 300), illustrates contemporary theory's recognition of language as an unstable system in which meaning is always sliding and shifting. The novel not only undermines the notion of language as stable but also highlights the difficulty of representing material conditions through the mediation of language that western culture has structured to uphold a particular status quo. By questioning the way in which language as an ordering mechanism has been employed by western culture to ensure the hegemony of white bourgeois males, Lessing's novel challenges the western male-centered culture.

Lessing's deliberate use of sentence fragments is one way in which the novel destabilizes conventional language usage and the notion of language as a rigid structure and opens up a space for a certain degree of formlessness. "The first book, the black notebook, began with doodlings, scattered musical symbols, treble signs that shifted into the £ sign and back again, then a complicated design of interlocking circles, then words" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 63). The beginning of the first fragment of the "*Black Notebook*" exemplifies

this pulling towards formlessness within language: "Every time I sit down to write, and let my mind go easy, the words, it is so dark, or something to do with darkness. Terror. The terror of this city. Fear of being alone. Only one thing stops me from jumping up and screaming or running to the telephone to ring somebody, it is to deliberately think myself back into that hot light……white light light closed eyes, the red light hot on the eyeballs. The rough pulsing heat of a granite boulder. My palm flat on it, moving over the lichens. The grain of the lichens. Tiny, like minute animals' ears, a warm rough silk on my palm, dragging insistently at the pores of my skin. And hot. The smell of the sun on hot rock. Dry and hot, and the silk of dust on my cheek, smelling of sun, the sun" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 63). Through a manipulation of language, the novel calls into question conventional language usage. It opens up a space for new forms to communicate previously marginalized or unconstructed experiences and identities, such as new female subjectivities and new aesthetic modes that exist outside of binary structures. As Anna's inner splits widen, she further recognizes the inability of conventional language to depict madness, the world of chaos, formlessness and dissolution. "Words. Words. I play with words, hoping that some combination, even a chance combination, will say what I want. Perhaps better with music? …… I think, bitterly, that a row of asterisks, like an old-fashioned novel, might be better. Or a symbol of some kind, a circle perhaps, or a square. Anything at all, but not words" (Lessing, Doris, 1962: 618). Then the *Black Notebook* gives way to collected newspaper clippings that describe the war and violence in Africa. The clippings are the external form of what Anna feels happening within herself, their presence in her notebooks is evidence of her growing inability to articulate it in traditional words.

The novel questions and disrupts the established status of fiction,

the author, and conventional expressive representation. Lessing lays the foundation for a new way of representation that undermines binary logic and its inherent limitations and that no longer excludes the historical and material situation, with all its violence, fragmentation and multiplicity. The experimental form of the novel, with its various indeterminate fragments, its overlapping narrative levels and its lack of closure, physically invalidates sharp distinctions between high art and mass culture. Since women writers have traditionally been marginalized from the realm of serious literature, challenging the distinction between high art and mass culture also undermines the opposition between men and women. The novel's unconventional narrative engages in attempts to communicate a woman's history and to offer women a multiplicity of roles, identities, aesthetics and endings, so as to move beyond male-centered constructions.

3.3 The Narrative Strategies of *The Grass Is Singing*

In her early traditional realistic novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, although Lessing didn't use the experimental narrative strategies to reflect her feminist consciousness, we can still find the emergence of her feminist consciousness through the narrative style.

Many recent critics have suggested that realistic fiction tends to encourage, through its frequent use of an omniscient narrator, closed reading, which they identify as a major weakness of the form. Although as a realistic novel, *The Grass Is Singing* avoids inviting such a narrative method to prevent such closure. In *The Grass Is Singing,* Lessing invites a special narrative method: the narrative voice--who speaks--remains constant, the voice of the third person narrator, but the 'mood' or point of view--who sees--changes. The opening newspaper report is typical external focalization--adopting a

point of view external to the object of study--delivered by an observer who lack of inside knowledge of the murderer. But the generalizations and assertions which follow are confident conjectures as to what 'must have been'. These are the inevitable conclusions of the insider, based on a body of shared experience and unspoken assumptions which make all human behavior predictable. The text of *The Grass Is Singing* thus draws attention to the partiality of this point of view.

In the first chapter, Lessing uses Tony Marston's point of view to pose the questions that the collective deliberately ignores. The overwhelming question in the first chapter focuses on the motivation which the old colonials who have "become used to the country" are determined to ignore. They try their best to conceal the real motivation. The opinion of the collective is that Moses murdered Mary Turner for stereotypical reasons, in the course of a robbery, for example. Tony believes that to understand the murder, "the important thing……is to understand the background, the circumstances, the characters of Dick and Mary, the pattern of their lives". To the white settler society, the relationship between Mary and Moses is shameful, especially to the white men's dominant position. To white men, white women are their private property. Moses and Mary's behavior is a great challenge to the white men's dominant position. So in the first chapter, the omniscient narrator also once choose Charlie's point of view to show his detestation to Mary and his indifference to Mary's death. This element of bias becomes clearer with the use of free indirect speech, where the narrative's internal focalization--observing character and event from within the consciousness of a specific individual Charlie--becomes more obvious. "It was not right to seclude themselves like that; it was a slap in the face of everyone else; what had they got to be so stuck-up about? What, indeed! Living the way they did! That little box of a house—it was forgivable as a

temporary dwelling, but not to live in permanently. Why, some natives (though not many, thank heavens) had houses as good; and it would give them a bad impression to see white people living in such a way" (Lessing, Doris, 1976: 3). This passage employs the tone and language appropriate to the attitudes expressed, so that the third-person narrative (using the same voice), is now colored by the thoughts and feelings of a particular kind of person—the successful white settler.

The second chapter switches away from the collective view of chapter One. As the narrative progresses, events are increasingly present from Mary's point of view and a chronological account of Mary's life begins by the third person narrator. This account continues for the next eight chapters, bringing the narrative up to the evening of the day before the murder. From Mary's point of view the narrator's account gives the facts of her psychological development, which shows the oppression she suffered from society, the process of her self-identity, and how she perceives her subject position in the settler society. That is why Margaret Moan Rowe "read(s) it as Bildungsroman, a maturation novel albeit a limited one, and concentrate on the development of the female protagonist Mary Turner" (Moan Rowe, Margaret, 1994: 14). From escaping the terrible childhood memory, as a young woman she leaves home and represses the memories of traumatic experiences and makes a safe life for herself. She is happy and valued as an efficient secretary, but this life is destroyed by the collective insistence on marriage for women. Other people's words destroy her self-image again. After marriage she once tries to find self-identity in family life, but she failed, Dick's weakness and the vile living conditions are depressing. Her situation, increasingly approximating her mother's, reawakens her repressed emotions.

In the account of her psychological development, the narrator

explains that she suffers from an unacknowledged, unrecognized "dark attraction" from the black native, Moses. Once again she suffers the oppression from collective opinions. One night while Mary is overwhelmed by terrible sexual dreams about her father, Moses assumes responsibility for Dick's care. At this point Lessing shifts from the objective narration of the earlier part of novel into a subjective point of view, describing events as if perceived by a consciousness highly distorted by emotional anguish. Nightmare and reality become indistinguishable as she dreams that Dick is dead and ambivalently feels both relief and guilt. Moses merges into the image of her father, who approaches her lasciviously, swelling soul. "He came near and put his hand on her arm.……He was confronting her because of Dick's death……but at the same time it was her father menacing and horrible, who touched her in desire"(Lessing, Doris, 1976: 192). Lessing condenses the several important male figures in Mary's life into one—an image revealing through her protagonist's feelings toward her father the sources of Mary's frigidity; her dread of domination, and her repressed sexuality. The retrospective narrative that follows chapter One has a more specific internal focalization: events are consistently seen from Mary's point of view. As always with this kind of subjectively oriented narrative, the problem of reliability arises. In these chapters, through Mary's own point of view Lessing makes a thorough narrative of Mary's experience and reflects Mary's feminist consciousness truthfully.

The last two chapters of *The Grass Is Singing* compares two very different perspectives: the external, conventional reality and values of South Africa, represented by the Turners' opportunistic neighbor, Charlie Slatter, and Mary's disintegrating inner reality. Having brought the reader increasingly closer to Mary's state of mind, the narrative now reverts to the outside view of the first chapter, and the

collective perception resumes. On a rare visit to the Turners, Charlie notices the altered power relationship between mistress and servant, and is shocked by the undercurrent of coyness on Mary's part and the impersonal contempt of Moses's. The outsiders, through whose eyes, interpret Mary's behavior as sexual. Charlie Slatter is distressed by her disturbed coquetry. A second external perspective is supplied by Tony Marston. Marston is amazed when he realizes that Moses dresses and undresses her with an air of "indulgent uxoriousness" (Lessing, Doris, 1976: 219). Marston sees that nothing he can say will bring her back into the collective frame of mind: "she has forgotten what her own people are like" (Lessing, Doris, 1976: 222). Both persons share contempt for Mary. She is regarded as something unpleasant and unclean. The oppressiveness of the whole system and the strifling weight of ideology cause her death at last. The final chapter of the novel is told almost entirely from the perspective at the abnormal consciousness of Mary Turner. The description of Mary Turner's last day dramatizes the extreme point of her breakdown. In the last two chapters Mary's reactions, whether seen from without, as in the penultimate, or from within, as in the last, show clear dissociation and the oppression she feels from the dissociation. Her madness grows both from her years-long repression and from the irreconcilability of her desires. She has internalized the color bar, which makes her desire for Moses which is inadmissible even to herself; further, she associates him with her father. The two sexual relationships most vehemently forbidden by the collective thus in Mary's mind intersect in Moses.

In many ways a traditional novel in the shaping of plot, through a male/female relationship and its consequences, *The Grass Is Singing* traces the story of Mary Turner, a conventional white South African woman, as her personal vulnerabilities intersect with the

repressive social and psychological pressures of her environment. The narrative begins not with the unfolding account of her life, but with the factual newspaper account of her death at the hands of her black servant, Moses. Thus the cyclic pattern of narrative is initiated with the end at the beginning. Mary's tragic fate is mirrored in and reinforced by the organization of the narrative. The development of Mary's fate grows inevitably out of the dialectic plot: the dominance and the resistance, the oppression from outward and her own desire for seeking self-identity. Each time she faces alternatives available to her, she chooses to surrender to the collective view. In fact she has no choice and her fate has been destined by the white settler society. Both dialectics unfold toward a single end, achieving a negative resolution in the murder already announced at the beginning of the novel. Thus the return to the beginning is the formal expression of Mary's life. The novel describes a circle that encloses imprisonment of her own fragmented being.

In the absence of a clear authorial point of view, privileged over that of the character, we nevertheless have to accept this dominant point of view as it stands, attempting to evaluate and make sense of its perceptions as best we can. Through these points of view we can diagnose the hypocrisy of Rhodesian society quickly. While Marston's and Charlie's emphasis is primarily on vindicating the murderer and the woman who "got herself murdered", we can see Mary's death has not won the sympathy of her white neighbors, but their hatred.

Conclusion

"Doris Lessing is a writer with an extraordinary fictional career. Undoubtedly, the English fiction since the war would have been inane and inept without her. Her reputation as a novelist has remained firm so far"(Myles, Antia, 1991: 100). We can say Doris Lessing writes as a prophet for her times who, from her earliest work, has shown women, to be not on the margins, but at the central point of the interlocking contradictions of the age. In *The Grass Is Singing,* Mary Turner, the white settler's wife trapped on the isolated farm on the veld, slowly goes mad under the weight of an untenable system which has her locked in the conflicting roles of perpetrator and victim. Her death is covered by a local conspiracy of silence, the meaning of her experience marginalized out of existence. The following novels, *The Children of Violence* sequence, show the struggle of a daughter, raised on a similar farm on the veld, not just to escape from repeating the mother's life, but actively to take on the weight of history, instead of cracking under the strain. She walks out of the women's place, freeing herself from the old role and taking on a new task, a new form of conception and birth. In 1962, Doris Lessing writes her most famous work, *The Golden Notebook*, in which we can see the progress of an independent woman Anna seeking freedom in her life. In *The Summer before the Dark,* Kate Brown, another mother escaping from her role, struggles to destroy her old identity lest it becomes a heritage. She casts out the error that in women is defined as goodness: self-discipline, self-control, self-abnegation and adaptability to others. In *The Memoirs of a Survivor,* both mother and daughter also figure work to form a new female identity, the older woman sorting out the rooms of the past, preserving some, destroying others, while the girl goes out into the world to be recast by experience. As a major writer,

Doris Lessing speaks out of the female experience of the time.

Also Lessing sees herself as trying to unify the fragments of female experience through artistic vision, and she is concerned with the definition of autonomy for the woman writer. Lessing starts her career with *The Grass Is Singing* and has written three volumes of her *Children of Violence* sequence, in realistic formula. At the point of writing *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing begins to explore the very premises of realism. In this novel, there is indication of her attitude on the question of realistic fiction. After that, she publishes a series of science fiction. Katherine Fishburn suggests that even though Lessing's artistic techniques might have changed in thirty years, her artistic commitment has remained constant. In her science fiction, Lessing has found a new vehicle to transmit the same philosophical principles she described those dealing with the social responsibility of the artist. Lessing returns again to realism in *The Summer before the Dark.* In this novel she describes a woman on the far side of middle age to confront the fact that she has been virtually a non-person all her life. No matter what narrative strategies Lessing uses, her artistic commitment will not change. As an artist, she is concerned about the fate of human beings, but as a woman writer, she consciously or unconsciously shows her concern for women exploring feminist consciousness and their process of self-identity. Her novel situates a woman's struggle in relation to other emancipatory struggles around the world. The specific focus of her novels is on female protagonists and the need for transforming the various institutions and thought systems which highlight her feminist standpoints. The innovative structural and thematic strategies, especially in *The Golden Notebook* and *The Grass Is Singing,* serve specifically her feminist aims. After analyzing both the theme and the form, we realize the carefully planned unity of the two. In the two books, Doris Lessing pays equal

attention to both concerns so that meaning and structure reinforce each other and their interaction becomes the clue to the understanding of the novels.

The two novels, as Lessing's masterpieces, delineate the grim material situation of women and yet never divorce women's specific oppression from larger problems and structures. In the broadest sense, we can say Lessing is a feminist. Her novels reveal her feminist perspective by focusing on the problems of the entire structure of existing Western society and culture and their effects on women.

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