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"I AM ANNA WULF": *THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK* REVISITED

When Doris Lessing won the Nobel Prize for Literature in October this year, the Swedish Academy described her as "that epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny."[1] Certainly, this prodigious eighty-eight-year-old British author has always been known for her unique style and her steadfast commitment to challenging social mores. She has published over fifty works, including novels, collections of short stories, operas, numerous non-fiction books and the two volumes of her autobiography. And her literary career is still going strong after fifty-seven years, with her latest novel, *The Cleft*, coming out earlier this year.

Lessing has never been one for conforming to literary conventions. Throughout her career, she has consistently challenged conventional notions of form and theme, making it difficult for critics to categorise her as any particular kind of writer. Lessing has written speculative fiction, such as the *Canopus in Argos: Archives* series (vol.1-5, 1979-1984) and *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971). However, she never allowed herself to become trapped in a particular literary box. *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1975), for example, was seminal in exploring the fiction/non-fiction divide (Lessing has said that this futuristic dystopia was "an attempt at an autobiography"[2]) whilst *The Fifth Child* (1988) could be read as a kind of postmodern parable. Novels like *The Good Terrorist* (1985) and *Love, Again* (1996) are relatively realist in their structure (although thematically they deal with material that was somewhat revolutionary at the time they were published — the depiction of a terrorist cell and the romantic life of an older woman, respectively).

In many ways, Doris Lessing is one of the few writers to have consistently interrogated the socio-cultural and technological changes of the last sixty years. From her first novel, *The Grass is Singing*, first published in 1950, Lessing has probed the hegemonies of her age. *The Grass is Singing* depicts the life of Mary Turner, a young white women living on a farm in Rhodesia and an African farmhand, Moses, who is accused of Mary's murder. Lessing, who herself grew up on a *veld* in what was then Southern Rhodesia, wrote this text when she was in her mid-twenties. In the 1950s, when colonialism (and apartheid) remained largely unchallenged, this text was dangerous for a young, white, South African woman to write, but it certainly set the tone for Lessing's career. (In fact, as a result of this book, she was prohibited from entering South Africa from 1956-95.) Lessing was to go on to write about Communism (she was a member of the

Communist Party in both South Africa and Britain), feminism, anti-psychiatry, terrorism, ageism and growing pressures on the environment. One of her more recent books, for example, the dystopian *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999) depicts the futuristic "Ifrik," a land devastated by drought and environmental degradation, failed technology (presumably of our age) and genetic experiments gone wrong. Having said this, Lessing's work is rarely didactic. Through her characters, she explores the complexity implicit in these themes, often interrogating her own closely held beliefs in the process

But it is not just her themes that can be confronting to readers. Stylistically, Lessing has always broken the rules. Realist modes of representation often give way to layered texts, where narratives overlap and frames of reference are broken. The seeming logic of the "real" world is replaced with worlds within worlds, non-linear temporal settings and various versions of "reality" that unproblematically co-exist. Often the very capacity of language to convey meaning comes under scrutiny, sometimes becoming the "subject" of her writing rather than the tool by which her stories are told. The breaking of conventions in Lessing's work, is, however, never done gratuitously. Language, story and unconventional literary techniques are always in the service of uncovering the hidden machinations of society and the human psyche.

One of Lessing's best known works, first published in 1962, is *The Golden Notebook*. As is true of many of her other books (including the *Children of Violence* Series vol. 1-5, 1964-69), *The Golden Notebook* was ahead of its time, on a number of levels, but particularly in terms of its narrative structure and themes, and its exploration of the female subject. In many ways, *The Golden Notebook* exemplifies the uniqueness of Lessing's work as a whole. It is stylistically innovative, thematically confronting and utilises many literary techniques that are characteristic of later postmodernist writings.

Written at a time when Second Wave feminism was just beginning to challenge patriarchal control over the material conditions of women's lives, *The Golden Notebook* delves into the complex inner lives of women. But Lessing's challenge to simplistic notions of what it meant to be a woman didn't stop at thematic exploration. As is characteristic of much of Lessing's work, *The Golden Notebook* also took apart the linguistic frameworks by which women had previously been contained (by predominantly male authors). Lessing deconstructs phallogocentric language in much the same way later French theorists like Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous were to do in the 1970s, when Third Wave feminism began to focus on women's identity/subjectivity. Indeed, many of the literary techniques suggested by postmodern feminists such as Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray, regarding representational practices that undermine the Symbolic Order, can be found in Lessing's early work, particularly *The*

Golden Notebook.[3] Despite the fact that Lessing has always been wary of "isms" including feminism, the Swedish Academy (responsible for awarding the Nobel Prize) acknowledged the feminist movement's indebtedness to Lessing and *The Golden Notebook*, stating, "The burgeoning feminist movement saw it [*The Golden Notebook*] as a pioneering work, and it belongs to the handful of books that informed the 20th-century view of the male-female relationship."[4]

The issues raised by this book are no less relevant today than they were then. In fact, in this book Lessing has foreshadowed many contemporary debates regarding the nature of subjectivity. For this reason, and because it was such a radical departure from previous books written by women about women (thus making it a classic), it is worth revisiting *The Golden Notebook* in order to understand what, exactly, made this such a controversial book at the time it was published.

The Golden Notebook is often considered one of Lessing's greatest works because of the, "... immensity of its conception, its formal intricacy, the inclusivity of its concerns, its historical accuracy, the intellectual capacity of its protagonist, and above all the fact that the entire book asserts that the 'filter which is a woman's way of looking at the world has the same validity as the filter which is a man's way'."[5] On its publication in 1962, *The Golden Notebook* received much critical attention, not all of it good. Many critics didn't understand the unconventional form of the book, its strange and often contradictory messages regarding society and the nature of subjectivity, and its fragmented and apparently chaotic style. Many women, however, saw it as one of the first books to genuinely articulate the female experience.

Although *The Golden Notebook* can, and has been, interpreted from various perspectives — feminist, socialist, psychoanalytic, amongst others — it is also a great example of postmodern writing, both thematically and in terms of the literary techniques it employs. The structure of the novel itself challenges many of the conventions of the realist novel. It is framed by a novella, written primarily about its main protagonist, Anna Wulf, and her friend Molly. There are five instalments of this novella, titled "Free Women," throughout the novel, interspersed by a series of notebooks written by Anna. The Black Notebook is a record of various aspects of Anna's bestselling first novel, *Frontiers Of War* — the raw material, financial transactions and critical commentaries. The Red Notebook documents Anna's involvement with the British Communist party and her various political activities. The Yellow Notebook is a "romantic novel" called *The Shadow Of The Third*, written by Anna, in which the life of the protagonist, Ella, very much mirrors aspects of Anna's own life. The Blue Notebook, a journal and Anna's attempt at a "factual," "objective," account of her life, explores

her ideas regarding art and writing, and their relationship to concepts such as "truth" and "reality." All of these notebooks represent different aspects of Anna's life which she separates out in an attempt to understand herself and the apparent chaos of her life, and more practically, to overcome writer's block. As Lessing notes in the book's preface, Anna keeps four notebooks, "and not one because, as she recognises, she has to separate things off from each other, out of fear of chaos, of formlessness — of breakdown."[6] Martens suggests that the split diary works on four different levels: 1) it "mirrors Anna's split personality"; 2) it reveals the "universal condition of partial perception"; 3) it "shows the failure of language by example"; and 4) the Inner Golden Notebook "establishes the theme of unity, effaces point of view ... and achieves the ideal of transubjectivity."[7] Eventually the various notebooks collapse into each other and into the Inner Golden Notebook, where Anna merges with another writer and her lover, Saul. Here, everything fragments and breaks down into chaos. Anna eventually emerges from this in the final instalment, in "Free Women," both more integrated and more accepting of the incongruities and fractured nature of existence.

The structure of *The Golden Notebook* challenges traditional understandings of narrative progression and form. Lessing suggests that the structure should be read as an integral part of the text, saying she hoped that, "... if the book were shaped in the right way it would make its own comment about the conventional novel ..." and that the form of the novel was "... another way of describing the dissatisfaction of the writer when something is finished: 'How little I have managed to say of the truth, how little I have caught of all that complexity; how can this small neat thing be true when what I experienced was so rough and apparently formless and unshaped?'"[8]

The notebooks draw on materials and writings from various genres and literary forms including newspaper clippings, Communist Party propaganda, short stories, literary criticism, reviews and journalistic pieces, making it at times a kind of literary collage. It is a multi-layered and complex text, with several levels of narrative co-existing within the same novelistic space. Often the reader finds him/herself reading a story within a story within the primary text itself.[9] As Lightfoot describes:

> In *The Golden Notebook* we see the novelist writing a novel (Doris Lessing on Anna Wulf) about a novelist writing two novels (Anna on Ella and "Free Women"). These two novels respectively are about a novelist writing a novel and about a novelist not writing a novel.[10]

Another writing technique that is commonly used by Lessing to undermine linearity and narrative progression is erasure. Erasure, where a fictional world,

scene, object, concept, word or person is constructed, then deconstructed or erased,[11] occurs several times in *The Golden Notebook*. An example of this can be found in the Yellow Notebook. Anna describes a story that is "inside Ella" but follows it with the comment, "Ella does not write this story. She is afraid that writing it might make it come true."[12] In this instance, Anna is asking readers to erase from their memory what they have just read and to accept a new version of the event. Obviously it is impossible to forget what we have just read, thus the technique has the simultaneous effect of excluding and including the erased text. McHale describes this "bifurcation" as "... violating sequentiality by realizing two mutually exclusive lines of narrative development at the same time."[13] He suggests that the "ontological peculiarity" of a world in which events both do and don't happen displaces the "truth/falsity" dichotomy resulting in a kind of "ontological flickering" between the various realities.[14]

Erasure also acts to foreground the relationship between author, reader and narrator. The narrator momentarily draws the reader into the text by giving direct instructions as to how they should respond to a particular passage. This happens repeatedly in *The Golden Notebook* where an omniscient narrator, on a narrative level higher than Anna (who is the primary narrator of the text) intrudes into the text. For example, in the Yellow Notebook, Ella, (the narrator of this novel/notebook) a creation of Anna, writes a set of stories that prefigure Anna's break-up with Saul, making us wonder, as Greene suggests, "... if Ella is 'writing' Anna, is she 'authoring' her author?"[15] In *The Golden Notebook*, the levels of reality are deliberately confused, the reader is invited to enter the text (as if she/he were a character), as is the author. Likewise, the narrator moves in and out of narrative levels. As Barthes suggests, this kind of literary structure acknowledges the problems with (and challenges) traditional understandings of a text's origin and reception.[16]

Literary techniques such as the layering of narrative fragments, using various genres and erasure, result in a text that is multilayered and cyclical[17] rather than linear and progressive. This results in what McHale describes as a "hesitant" text, a text that is unwilling to reach conclusions or offer a fixed version of "reality." Whilst we are very familiar with many of these techniques today, at the time *The Golden Notebook* was written, it challenged traditional novelistic conventions and made readers, and theorists, think differently about the novel generally.

Thematically the novel works on many levels. As Greene suggests, the central question posed by *The Golden Notebook* is, "... how [do we] oppose a system by means of linguistic and literary conventions that have been forged by that system ..."[18] It asks the questions "... how can literature be truthful; how can writing accommodate experience; how can language still communicate when

the world is turned upside down ..."[19] Lessing was writing post World War II, post-Hiroshima and in the wake of Stalin. In many ways, *The Golden Notebook* maps the way in which language is highly contingent and easily co-opted into the service of oppressive regimes.

One of the most striking elements of *The Golden Notebook* is the fragmentation of Anna's character. The four notebooks can be understood as different aspects of her split personality and often depict contradictory versions of her character and the characters of others. Anna talks about her various "Selves" or the different Annas and often describes herself in the third person. At one point while talking to Molly, Anna thinks, "I wonder what I'm going to say? And who the person is who will say it? How odd, to sit here, waiting to hear what one will say."[20] This is a kind of "ontological" questioning of subjectivity. Instead of asking, "Who am I?" a question which may belong to a modernist interrogation of the Subject, Anna asks, "Which Self is this?" implying multiple versions of the Self, none of which is necessarily a "true" Self. Later in the text, Anna tries to "... summon up younger stronger Annas, the schoolgirl in London and the daughter of my father, but I could only see these Annas as apart from me."[21] This sense of dislocation from the Self, of schizophrenic alienation, is typical of a postmodernist understanding of the Subject.

Saul, Anna's lover in the Inner Golden Notebook, is actually schizophrenic. His sense of time is completely distorted,[22] his loss of an integrated identity is reflected in his speech, which Anna describes as, "... jumbling phrases, jargon, disconnected remarks"[23] and his constant "I I I I"[24] diatribes in which he enters into a state of self-obsessed individualism. In the Inner Golden Notebook, the distinction between Self and Other is completely dissolved as Anna and Saul merge into one another. Anna is living "inside [her and Saul's combined] madness." As Lessing comments in the preface to *The Golden Notebook*, Anna and Saul:

> ... 'break down' into each other, into other people, break through the false patterns they have made of their pasts, the patterns and formulas they have made to shore themselves and each other, dissolve. They hear each other's thoughts, recognise each other in themselves.[25]

Anna says, "I wondered when we began to talk, which two people would be talking."[26] By this stage in the text both exist in a state where their multiple Selves have merged and are indistinguishable from one another. The conclusion Anna seems to reach is that the Self is a multidimensional, chaotic and constantly changing entity, which is, as Danziger suggests,[27] how Anna likes it. As Anna states near the end, "I am a person who continually destroys the possibilities of a future because of the number of alternate viewpoints I can focus on the present."[28]

The Golden Notebook not only questions the belief in an integrated, fixed Self but also challenges all truth claims, questioning the idea that "grand narratives" such as Communism and Science, have a unique claim on truth. The text particularly undermines the notion that concepts such as "truth," "memory" and "history" can be viewed as being in any way objective. Of course, this is standard fare in contemporary literary theory, but it was revolutionary at the time it was written. An example of this questioning can be found in the Blue Notebook, when Anna decides that the only way she can really capture the "truth" of her life is by describing a single day in detail as a list of objectively recorded events. After this experiment she notes that:

> The Blue Notebook, which I had expected to be the most truthful of the notebooks, is worse than any of them. I expected a terse record of facts to present some sort of a pattern when I read over it, but this sort of record is as false as the account of what happened on 15th September, 1954, which I read now embarrassed because of its emotionalism...this would be more real if I wrote what I thought.[29]

She quickly realises that "her desire for truth is frustrated by the unreliability of memory and language."[30] Earlier, Anna comments while looking back on her time in Africa in her early twenties (the subject matter for her novel, *Frontiers Of War*) that she is, "... appalled at how much I didn't notice, living inside the subjective highly-coloured mist. How do I know what I 'remember' was important? What I remember was chosen by Anna of twenty years ago. I don't know what this Anna of now would choose."[31] One of her earlier lovers, Michael, says that, "... this is a time when it is impossible to know the truth about anything."[32] When describing her history Anna says, "... the material of [my] past has been ordered by me to fit what I know, and that was why it was false ..."[33]

Many contemporary theorists contend that "grand narratives" of any variety are totalising and lead to the oppression and marginalisation of the "Other," or groups outside dominant hegemonies or cultural elites. The four notebooks critique and undermine various "grand narratives." As Danziger notes:

> One by one she [Anna] divests herself of the patterns that had allowed her to make sense of the world: the romantic idealism of her African experiences, her Marxist politics, psychoanalysis, her sexual needs, and her presuppositions about the value of traditional realistic fiction.[34]

The Black Notebook documents the many contradictions and problems within the Communist Party in Britain, of which Anna has been a member for some time. It is also critical of its utopian vision for the future. Psychoanalysis is also undermined as, "... traditional, rooted, conservative, in spite of its scandalous familiarity with everything amoral."[35] For some time Anna sees a psychoanalyst

— Mrs. Marks, or Mother Sugar, as Anna and Molly call her. Mother Sugar sums up the psychoanalytic view of art as being purely about form:

> People don't mind immoral messages. They don't mind art that says murder is good, cruelty is good, sex for sex's sake is good. They like it, provided the message is wrapped up a little. And they like messages saying that murder is bad, cruelty is bad, and love is love is love. What they can't stand is to be told that it all doesn't matter, they can't stand formlessness.[36]

For Anna, her life is about giving in to chaos and formlessness. The concept of a whole integrated Self is undesirable and limiting,[37] as is the concept of art/writing as permanent and lasting.

The Golden Notebook also challenges the notion that language has the capacity to contain "reality." As Anna's personality starts to fragment, so too does her belief in language's ability to convey meaning.[38] She says:

> I am in a mood that gets more and more familiar: words lose their meaning suddenly. I find myself listening to a sentence, a phrase, a group of words, as if they were a foreign language — the gap between what they are supposed to mean, and what in fact they say seems unbridgeable.[39]

This echoes Derrida's theory that there is a "meaning-creative" gap between words (as signifiers) and the reality/objects they are trying to depict. Later Anna comments on a story by a "comrade." At first she believes it to be written ironically, then she thinks it is parodic, but eventually realises that it is in fact serious. She comments that, "It seems to me this fact is another expression of the fragmentation of everything, the painful disintegration of something that is linked with what I feel to be true about language, the thinning of language against the density of our experience."[40] Not only is she commenting here on the fact that language no longer seems to have the capacity to reflect or capture "reality" but it is also a comment on the way "grand narratives," such as Communism, lose meaning when the language they employ becomes jargonised. This also results in language becoming a kind of "surface without depth." Anna eventually concludes that her writer's block is a direct result of this loss of meaning. She says:

> ...I am increasingly afflicted by vertigo where words mean nothing. They have become, when I think, not the form into which experience is shaped, but a series of meaningless sounds, like nursery talk, and away to one side of experience...the words dissolve, and my mind starts spawning images which have nothing to do with the words, so that every word I see or hear seems like a small raft bobbing about on an enormous sea of images. So I can't write any longer.[41]

Cheng links Anna's description of language to a generalised postmodern mood, suggesting that, "As the change of the world is paradigmatic, so the traditional dualistic, hierarchical basis of representation must be subverted. Consequently, language becomes misleading, doomed to confusion or self-contradiction. Language turns schizophrenic, self-alienating."[42]

The "mood" of the age is a strong theme in *The Golden Notebook*. Draine describes this "mood" as "... a paralysing fear of the formlessness of the present, a despairing sense of emptiness and futility ... The postmodern sensibility is that of Anna Wulf."[43] In the final pages, Milt (a version of Saul) characterises the age by saying, "... the dark secret of our time, no one mentions it, but every time one opens a door one is greeted by a shrill, desperate and inaudible scream."[44] Anna describes how the age she lives in differs from what has gone before, saying, "They didn't feel as I do. How could they? I don't want to be told when I wake up, terrified by a dream of total annihilation, because of the H-bomb exploding, that people felt that way about the crossbow. It isn't true. There is something new in the world."[45] She says that, "the truth of our time was war, the immanence of war ..."[46] Although Anna has visions of "... a life that isn't full of hatred and fear and envy and competition every minute of the night and the day ..."[47] her perception of the age as one of unabating violence, fragmentation and anxiety also carries "... at times the implication that mental breakdown may be the only appropriate response to the condition of living in the twentieth century."[48] If anything, these insights have more resonance now than they had in the 1960s.

Despite the sense of fragmentation and chaos that dominates this text, *The Golden Notebook* has an underlying desire for unity and connectedness. As Lessing says in the preface:

> The way you deal with the problem of subjectivity, that shocking business of being preoccupied with the tiny individual who is at the same time caught up in such an explosion of terrible and marvellous possibilities, is to see him as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general, as indeed life always does, transforming a personal experience ... into something much larger; growing up is after all only the understanding that one's unique and incredible experience is what everyone shares.[49]

Anna's breakdown is described as a necessary precursor to her becoming "whole" again. The descriptions of her merging with Saul are a kind of recognition that her identity is not separate and distinct from those around her, but that other people feed into her identity and she into theirs. Throughout *The Golden Notebook* various characters, especially Anna, talk about unity and wholeness as desirable outcomes, with the suggestion being that chaos and the disintegration

of the Self will ultimately result in a resurrection of sorts, of a relational Self that exists in a much more harmonious and connected state. Anna describes a dream that illustrates this:

> I dreamed there was an enormous web of beautiful fabric stretched out. It was incredibly beautiful, covered all over with embroidered pictures. The pictures were illustrations of the myths of mankind but they were not just pictures, they were the myths themselves, so that the soft fabric was glittering and alive ... Then I look and it is like a vision — time has gone and the whole history of man ... is present in what I see now, and it is a great soaring hymn of joy and triumph in which pain is a small and lively counterpoint. And I look and see ... the bright different colours of the other parts of the world ...This was a moment of almost unbearable happiness, the happiness seems to swell up, so that everything suddenly bursts, explodes — I was suddenly standing in peace, in silence. Beneath me was silence.[50]

When she wakes up she says, "... so much of my life has been twisted and painful that now when happiness floods right through me ... I can't believe it. I say to myself: I am Anna Wulf, this is me, Anna, and I'm happy."[51] Her experience in the dream connects her to the whole of humanity across all time. It is this sense of connection that allows her to feel genuine joy. This conception of the world contradicts the postmodernist belief that there is no unified Subject and no intrinsic "meaning" or "truth." It does concur, however, with postmodern feminist notions of the Self. They understand subjectivity as being multifaceted, fluid and relational.[52] It is also very much in line with Sufi understandings of the world.[53]

Post Anna Wulf, many women have come to the conclusion that "womankind" is not a singular, homogenous group, easily contained by any universal definition. Anna's identity is interrelational, layered and in a constant state of flux. Lessing seems to conclude that women are multifaceted and complex.

The preoccupations of *The Golden Notebook* are as relevant today as they were in the 1960s. The novel questions the notions of "reality," "truth" and "memory." It challenges the capacity of language to contain meaning. It interrogates the nature of subjectivity. But perhaps most importantly of all, it asks us as readers to unflinchingly dissect the dominant political and social narratives of the age.

Endnotes

[1] As quoted by Motoko Rich and Sarah Lyall at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/world/11cnd-nobel.html

[2] Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography, 1919–1948* (London: Flamingo, 1995) 28.

[3] For Kristeva, the semiotic is similar to the feminine in as much as it is repressed and marginalised. As a result it is implicitly "Other" and therefore potentially subversive as it "deconstructs the binary oppositions that are fundamental to the structures of symbolic language." Julia Kristeva, "Oscillation between Power and Denial" *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle De Courtivron (Great Britain: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981) 165–67. See also Rosemary Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1992) 219–23. Cixous says: "Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word 'silence.'" Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh Of The Medusa," in *Signs*, trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, Vol.1, no.4 (1976) 229.

[4] As quoted by Motoko Rich and Sarah Lyall at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/world/11cnd-nobel.html

[5] Jean Pickering, *Understanding Doris Lessing* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990) 3.

[6] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 7.

[7] Martens as quoted in Yuan-Jung Cheng, *Heralds Of The Postmodern: Madness and Fiction in Conrad, Woolf and Lessing* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) 92.

[8] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 14.

[9] McHale defines the term as follows: "A true *mise-en-abyme* is determined by three criteria: first, it is a nested or embedded representation, occupying a narrative level inferior to that of the primary, diegetic narrative world; secondly, this nested representation *resembles* ... something at the level of the primary, diegetic world; and thirdly, this 'something' that it resembles must constitute some salient and continuous aspect of the primary world, salient and continuous enough that we are willing to say the nested representation *reproduces* or *duplicates* the primary representation as a whole ... *Mise-en-abyme* is one of the most potent devices in the postmodernist repertoire for foregrounding the ontological dimension of recursive structures." (his italics). Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (Great Britain: Routledge, 1991) 124.

[10] Lightfoot as quoted in Shadia Fahim, *Doris Lessing and Sufi Equilibrium* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 80.

[11] Jacques Derrida as quoted in Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (Great Britain: Routledge, 1991) 100.

[12] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 448.

[13] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (Great Britain: Routledge, 1991) 108.

[14] Brian McHale, 106.

[15] Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn eds., *Making A Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge 1990) 113.

[16] As is well known, Barthes suggests that the relationship between the author, reader and narrator is primary, stating that, "... a text's unity lies not in its origin but in

its destination" Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *Image, Music, Text,* ed. S. Heath. (London: Fontana, 1977) 148. This idea is echoed in Lessing's preface where she comments on, "how odd it is to have, as author, such a clear picture of a book, that is seen so differently by its readers." She acknowledges that the importance of the reader's input and interpretation is vital to ensure that a book is "alive and potent and fructifying." Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 22.

[17] *The Golden Notebook* is a self-begetting novel. The final lines of the text are also the opening lines. At the end of the novel, Saul "gives" Anna what become the first lines of *The Golden Notebook.*

[18] Gayle Greene, *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change* (University of Michigan Press, 1997) 106.

[19] Yuan-Jung Cheng, *Heralds Of The Postmodern: Madness and Fiction in Conrad, Woolf and Lessing* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) 80. Danziger also suggests that, "[*The Golden Notebook*'s] explicit subject is the play of overlapping paradigms: both its form and content are resolute attempts to come to terms with multiplicity and fragmentation" (Danziger 1996) 46.

[20] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 497 and 345.

[21] Lessing, 571-2. As Michael notes, "There is no essential Anna in *The Golden Notebook;* instead the novel offers many versions of Anna on several narrative levels ..." (Magali Cornier Michael, "Woolf's *Between the Acts* and Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*: From Modern to Postmodern Subjectivity" in Ruth Saxton and Jean Tobin eds., *Woolf and Lessing: Breaking the Mold* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 47.

[22] Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 554.

[23] Lessing, 570.

[24] Lessing, 560 and 568.

[25] Lessing, 7.

[26] Lessing, 600.

[27] Marie Danziger, *Text/Countertext: Postmodern Paranoia in Samuel Beckett, Doris Lessing, and Philip Roth* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996) 47.

[28] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 623.

[29] Lessing, 455.

[30] Betsy Draine, *Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) 73.

[31] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 148.

[32] Lessing, 301.

[33] Lessing, 620.

[34] Marie Danziger, *Text/Countertext: Postmodern Paranoia in Samuel Beckett, Doris Lessing, and Philip Roth* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996) 63.

[35] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 26.

[36] Lessing, 461.

[37] Lessing, 456.

[38] This theme recurs repeatedly in *The Golden Notebook.* As Green notes, "When Anna can accept that there is no reality apart from the mind that perceives it and the words that shape it, she can accept that none of the versions [of herself as found in the notebooks]

is true — or all are true, or truth itself is a fiction, invented rather than discovered. It is this that gives her the power of renaming. New possibilities incur ontological instability, and as Anna's role becomes more creative, we cannot always tell what is real and what is created." (Gayle Greene, *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997) 113.

[39] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 299.

[40] Lessing, 301.

[41] Lessing, 462–63.

[42] Yuan-Jung Cheng, *Heralds Of The Postmodern: Madness and Fiction in Conrad, Woolf and Lessing* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) 85.

[43] Betsy Draine, *Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) 87.

[44] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 636.

[45] Lessing, 459.

[46] Lessing, 571.

[47] Lessing, 459.

[48] Marguerite Alexander, *Flights From Realism: Themes and Strategies in Postmodernist British and American Fiction* (Great Britain: Edward Arnold,1990) 85.

[49] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (Great Britain: Panther Books, 1985) 13–14.

[50] Lessing, 297–98.

[51] Lessing, 298.

[52] See Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989) 197–98.

[53] According to Fahim, this dream image, and the themes in *The Golden Notebook* generally, resonate with a distinctly Sufi understanding of the world. Sufism, a spiritual and philosophic belief system that has clearly influenced Lessing, suggests that it is necessary to look beyond the personal and material in order to become "complete." As the Sufi, Idries Shah says, "the complete Man...is both a real individuality and also a part of the essential unity" (Shah as quoted in Fahim 1994) 15. Fahim also comments that in order to understand *The Golden Notebook*, "the reader should ... suspend the rational mode in order to perceive the underlying balance within the emerging mystical dimension which does not pertain to the laws of time and space. The ultimate effect does not aim at an experience of absolute aesthetic freedom from tangible reality [rather, the aim is] the transcendence of the one dimensional mode of experiencing reality." Shadia Fahim, *Doris Lessing and Sufi Equilibrium* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 84.