

## GOLDEN MOBIUS STRIP: LESSING'S "THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK" AS A FRAGMENTED NARRATIVE

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### Özet

*(Altın Mobius Şeridi: Parçalı Bir Anlatı Olarak Lessing'in "Altın Defter")*

Savaş sonrası dönem edebiyatı, veya postmodern edebiyat, genel olarak ikileme, zıtlık, kaos, ve parçalanma sıfatları ile tanımlanır. Ancak, çok geniş bir alanda kullanılan parçalanma, bu sıfatlar arasında anahtar bir kavramdır. Ayrıca hümanist bütünlük ülküsünün başarısızlığına tanık olan postmodern dünya kendi parçalanmış doğasını kabul etmiştir. Öte yandan parçalanma postmodern romancıların popüler ilgi alanlarından biri halini almıştır. Bu ilgi sadece konusal alanı değil ayrıca birçok postmodern romanın yapısına da yansır. Bu açıdan; Nobel Ödülü sahibi Doris Lessing'in, saplantılı denebilecek ölçüde parçalanmaya ve katmanlaşmaya açık romanı Altın Defter, bu konuya verilebilecek kusursuz bir örnek niteliğindedir. Kitap, parçalanmayla sadece konusal olarak ilgili kalmaz; aynı zamanda yapısal olarak da parçalıdır. Dolayısıyla; bu çalışma, romancıların anlatı stratejilerinde de yansımaları bulan 20. yüzyılın çok yönlü yapısını, yukarıda bahsedilen romandan örnekler göstererek, "postmodern" diye adlandırılacak "durum"un doğal bir sonucu olarak tartışmaya çalışacaktır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Parçalanma, Anlatı, Altın Defter, Doris Lessing, Postmodernizm, Postmodern Edebiyat, Postmodern Roman

### Abstract

The post-war period literature, or postmodern literature, is generally described with the adjectives duplication, contradiction, chaos, and fragmentation. However, fragmentation is the key concept among them as the term is employed in a wide range of fields. Witnessing the failure of humanist ideal of wholeness,

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*postmodern world has acknowledged its fragmented nature. On the other hand, fragmentation has become one of the popular concerns of postmodern novelists. This concern does not only show itself in thematic sphere, but also it echoes in the structures of many postmodern novels. In this respect, the Nobel Prize winner Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* is quintessential as the novel displays an almost obsessive concern in fragmentation. The book is not only about fragmentation, but also structurally is fragmented. The present study, therefore, attempts to discuss the multi-faceted structure of the twentieth century which found its reflection also in the narrative strategies of the novelists as the natural outcome of what may be called the postmodern condition by citing examples from the abovementioned novel.*

**Keywords:** *Fragmentation, Narrative, The Golden Notebook, Doris Lessing, Postmodernism, Postmodern Literature, Postmodern Novel*

The Enlightenment and industrialization which had started more than two centuries ago became the two most important determinants which shaped our contemporary cultural condition and literary scene. The process of rapid modernization, impact of which was deeply felt in technological, economic and social spheres of life, took place in the history of the world thanks to the outcomes of Enlightenment and industrialization. While modernity formed and strengthened the tenets of western culture with its emphasis on positivistic sciences and rationality, postmodernity, even though it was considered as the offspring of modernity or as the movement that follows modernity, challenged and shook the westernized fixation of the modern era. In a sense, postmodernity not only became "intensifier" of modernism as Linda Hutcheon and Brian McHale agree, but also, by its plurality and multi-layered forms with their decentralized fixations, became an alternative rather than the successor of modernity.

While the twentieth-century reflected fragmentation, dissolution, alienation and breakdown, two different perceptions of these themes stand out in the Modernist and Postmodernist domains, should the century be divided into two periods. The first perception is the mournful one by the Modernist authors who lamented the loss of an order in society and who feared chaos. The second approach, the postmodern one, neither seeks nor desires for a totality, unity or wholeness. Instead, there is an acceptance of the fragmentation. Moreover, postmodernism celebrates the fragmentation by welcoming differences, localities, and it denies totalization. Postmodern thought, contrary to the project of modernity, questions, criticizes and deconstructs grand narratives and concludes that any attempt to create an order or unity inevitably results in disorder, fragmentation or dissolution. Due to this fact, Lyotard calls for local, regional or provisional mini

narratives rather than employing a grand narrative. He even goes further to cry out that "we have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience." Then, he proposes to declare "a war on totality" in order to "activate the differences and save the honour of the name" (Lyotard, 1984: 81).

Postmodern literature, then, embraces the fragments of society by acknowledging their existence. Postmodernist novelists handled the issues of the fragmentation and made this subject their major thematic concern. The thematic concern in the fragmentation echoed in the formal and stylistic aspects of many postmodern novels. Hutcheon, for instance, claims that "narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate or resolutely provisional and limited – often undermining their own seeming omniscience" (Hutcheon, 1987: 17). Postmodern literature, for Hutcheon, questions and challenges all totalizing and homogenizing systems, and "postmodern provisionality and heterogeneity contaminate any neat attempts at unifying coherence – formal or thematic" (Hutcheon, 1987: 17).

Postmodernism is, then, the interrogation of generally accepted values of a society concerning coherence, unity and order. However, Hutcheon admits that "[postmodernism] acknowledges the human urge to make order, while pointing out that the orders we create are just that: human constructs, not natural or given entities" (Hutcheon, 1995: 41). Another idea concerning the differentiation of the narrative in postmodern literature is connected with "the knowledgeable, newly formidable, often condescending reader" (Danziger, 1996: 4). Confronted not only with a vision of a enigmatic and chaotic world, but also with this new reader, and conscious of the idea that there is no underlying reality, postmodern novelist suffers a decrease in his power to recreate the world. Thus, Danziger puts forward that the "haunted" postmodern novelists "resort to a desperate shifting from one narrative mode to another to avoid looking too naïve or too positivistic or too committed to the sheer joy of conventional storytelling" (Danziger, 1996: 4). Postmodern novelist, conscious of the fact that the truth value of her story would certainly be questioned, experiences a "manic urge to test all paradigms without commitment", and thus the narrator is led to "de-center her perspective and to focus on the possibilities of escape across an alien border" (Danziger, 1996: 8-10). This supports the plurality and multiplicity of postmodern perspectives.

In this respect, the Nobel Prize winner Doris Lessing's masterpiece *The Golden Notebook* is quintessential as it displays thematic, formal and also

stylistic fragmentations. The fragmentation is the basic theme handled in the novel almost in an obsessive manner. Due to this fact, the theme of the fragmentation is well reflected in the structure of the novel with its disaggregated nature. The reflection of obsessive fragmentation in the form also generates a fragmented narrative strategy which in turn nourishes the formal and thematic fragmentation.

British novelist, Doris Lessing as the “epicist of the female experience, who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny”<sup>1</sup> was honoured with Nobel Literature Prize in 2007 at the age of 88, after a career of more than 50 years. However, it is an incontestable fact that her masterpiece, in other words what makes her the “epicist of the female experience” is *The Golden Notebook*, a novel talking through its form. Published in 1962, *The Golden Notebook* was an outstanding achievement as it is considered to be one of the first examples of postmodern British fiction. In the collected work *Notebooks/Memoirs/Archives Reading and Rereading Doris Lessing*, Jean McCrindle and Elizabeth Wilson express their first reactions as women in 1960s and then their rereading the text at later ages. For McCrindle, *The Golden Notebook* was “the most courageous book [she] had ever read – both in its structure – keeping the different parts separate and connected in order to express and avoid chaos – and in its honesty of content” (McCrindle, 1982: 44). In the following chapter of the said collection, Elizabeth Wilson brings Lessing and De Beauvoir together and comments that “in the strange cultural landscape of 1960 they loomed up, Cassandras of women’s experience, an experience that was everywhere silenced, concealed and denied” (Wilson, 1982: 57). The book was controversial as it has inspired different interpretations and critical receptions since its first publication. As Lessing would later negate in her much-cited preface to 1972 edition of *The Golden Notebook*, while the novel was perceived as a text handling the issue of sex war or as a feminist manuscript by some, others interpreted it as a strongly political text reflecting the historical and cultural climate of the moment. However, in the direct contradiction, Lessing, in the Preface, rejects especially the claims that define *The Golden Notebook* as a feminist text and points out her intention clearly: “My major aim was to shape a book which would make its own comment a wordless statement: to talk through the way it was shaped” (13). However, Doris Lessing in the 1950s presents a writer committed and strictly adherent to a realist tradition, and she declares

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<sup>1</sup> Nobel Prize.org, [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/index.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/index.html), Retrieved on 2008-09-11.

her commitment obviously in "The Small Personal Voice" at a time when the issue of the role of the writer and the intellectual was a hot debate:

*For me the highest point of literature was the novel of the nineteenth century, the work of Tolstoy, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Turgenev, Chekhov; the work of the great realists. I define realism as art which springs so naturally from a strongly-held, though not necessarily intellectually-defined, view of life, that it absorbs symbolism. I hold the view that the realist novel, the realist story, is the highest form of prose writing; higher than and out of reach of any comparison with expressionism, impressionism, symbolism, naturalism, or any other ism. (qtd. in Taylor, 1982: 18)*

However, five years after the appearance of "The Small Personal Voice", Lessing published *The Golden Notebook* (1962) with its encyclopaedic size. The book provided an antithesis to what Lessing had previously claimed as it displayed a structural play and an astonishing formal experimentation. Besides, it was in *The Golden Notebook* that Doris Lessing tried her hand more boldly in the female experience. It was not just this thematic indulgence with the female experience that made this novel a major achievement of her career. It was the structural play that gave its shape to the novel which consequently made it a novel written before its time. In other words, Lessing in this novel, without hesitation plays with the traditional novel form and explores, accommodates and comes up with new models to communicate the epic of the female experience in the postmodern fragmented world.

*The Golden Notebook* was widely praised and became one of the influential novels of the post-war English literature. Obviously not a "little novel about emotions" (57), *The Golden Notebook* has invoked mixed interpretations. In the Preface, after negating ideas which had put forward that she "had written a tract about the sex war," Lessing makes it clear that "the essence of the book, the organization of it, everything in it, says implicitly and explicitly, that we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalize" (10). In one of the Red notebook entries, Anna Wulf, the protagonist, also declares that "humanism stands for the whole person, the whole individual, striving to become as conscious and responsible as possible about everything in the universe" (320). In these statements, there is an apparent stress on integration, wholeness and affirmation of humanist aesthetics which are against the fashion of experimental fiction of 1960s. However, unlike what Lessing states, *The Golden Notebook* is not put in an order or presents wholeness in the sense that established conventions ask for.

In other words, as Molly Hite remarks in her article “Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* and *The Four-Gated City*: Ideology, Coherence, and Possibility” (1988), *The Golden Notebook* is “about coherence” while it is “by realist conventions” incoherent. (Hite, 1988: 17). However, *The Golden Notebook* bears in itself a kind of unity, a unity which:

*is made up of contradictory strands of narration that seem to resolve into ontological levels but end up resisting strategies of naturalization, and it deals with the political perils of assuming that there is a coherent, explicable universe and a “real story” that adequately reflects it (Hite, 1989: 62).*

For Danziger, *The Golden Notebook* is “ultimately a novel about our ongoing need to impose patterns upon the mess of experience – despite the ultimate falseness of those necessary patterns or paradigms” (Danziger, 1996: 55). It is true that there is a universal human desire to produce systems in order to give shape and order experience. However, postmodern fiction itself challenges such assumptions by establishing, differentiating, and then dispersing “stable narrative voices” (Hutcheon, 1995: 58-118). In other words, *The Golden Notebook* is the embodiment of Lessing’s dissatisfaction with the established conventions of the realist tradition and also the modernist fiction. Lessing, in fact, searches for new models to communicate the experiences of a blocked woman writer, who spent her youth in Africa, became first an active and then, a disappointed communist, who was a politically committed writer, a mother, a wife – or a mistress sometimes – a woman. These disparate identities of Anna Wulf and the complex articulation of her experience show itself on a number of different ontological levels. However, Anna Wulf suffers from the disability to describe “the real experience”:

*Words. Words. I play with words, hoping that some combination, even a chance combination, will say what I want. ... The fact is, the real experience can’t be described. 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. The people who have been there, in the place in themselves where words, patterns, order, dissolve, will know what I mean and the others won’t (549).*

As Anna believes that "there are whole areas of [her] made by the kind of experience women haven't had before" and as she wants "to be able to separate in [herself] what is old and cyclic, the recurring history, the myth, from what is new" the difficulty and complexity of articulation of experience gets harder and harder (414-415). Moreover, Anna Wulf, as an artist, loses her faith in the power of language to convey meaning. In the novel, there is a constant emphasis on dissolution and thinning of language. Words are not anymore reliable as they "lose their meaning suddenly" and for Anna, "the gap between what [words] are supposed to mean, and what in fact they say seems unbridgeable" (272). Besides, the stories which are mere products of language also suffer from this anxiety since a story may be read as a parody, an irony or seriously. For Anna, this fact is "another expression of the fragmentation of everything, the painful disintegration of something that is linked with what [she feels] to be true about language, the thinning of language against the density of our experience" (273). Thus, *The Golden Notebook* becomes an arena in which the density of experience tries to find its way for articulation. In this troublesome way, necessarily there are fragments, gaps, lapses, shifts and multiplicity in the narration, which are the very characteristics of postmodern literature.

Lessing, then, experiments with innovative narrative strategies to reflect and stress the complexity of experience. The book's obsessive thematic concern on the fragmentation, that is the breakdown of a blocked writer, is well echoed in the structural and formal characteristics. Lessing divides her book into parts, each associated with a different colour. The first part is titled as Free Women which, in Lessing's words "is a conventional short novel, about 60.000 words long, and which could stand by itself" (7). This short novel or novella is divided in itself with four different notebooks – Black, Red, Yellow, Blue – ensuing each Free Women section. There are five Free Women sections each followed by these notebooks. Following these coloured notebooks The Golden Notebook, which is also followed by the last Free Women section which operates, physically speaking, like a conclusion part, appears. The protagonist of the novel is Anna Wulf who is a blocked writer. Her 'realist' novel, *The Frontiers of War*, was a success which provided her with an income sufficient to make her living. However, she believes that this novel was just a "lying nostalgia, a longing for licence, for freedom, for the jungle, for formlessness" (63). Owing to this dissatisfaction with her first novel which took its place in the traditional stream with its realist bearings, she is in a desperate search for new models to relate her experience in a more truthful manner. Yet, Anna is obsessed with the fragmentation. Her attempts to come up with a suitable and reliable

method in order to achieve a kind of wholeness constantly results in frustration. As a matter of fact, it is Anna's attempts to recover from the block that renders the book so fragmented and divided. She wants to impose an order upon the chaos of her life. She admits that the only kind of the book which interests her is "a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life" (76). However, her attempts only prove that the reality that she struggles to reflect is itself split.

Free Women is written in the third person omniscient narrative; sections have an objective and authoritarian voice. Its rational voice and ordered structure can be associated with the elements of the conventional realist novel. For instance, Free Women achieves an ending unlike notebooks. In a sense, Free Women is a parody in its flatness and orderliness when compared to the chaotic and fragmented notebooks. This comparison also emphasizes and stresses the fragmented nature of the notebooks. The Free Women sections are crucial for the text since they provide the reader with the necessary information and function as the skeleton for the structure of the novel. However, there are differences between the notebooks and the Free Women sections. For instance, when compared to the highly subjective first person account of notebooks, the Free Women sections give the sense of a highly controlled narrator with a tight formal structure. Yet, the Free Women sections appear dissatisfactory with the lack of a tension and suspense which characterize the notebooks. The first Free Women section starts with the sentence: "The two women were alone in the London flat" (25). However, in the inner Golden Notebook, it is realized that this sentence is offered by Saul Green to Anna, to make it the first sentence of the next novel (554). Then, unlike the apparent idea, it is clear that the Free Women is born out of the notebooks. In other words, the Free Women is the fictionalized version of the notebooks. Thus, the narration turns back where it started like a mobius strip, a situation which Molly Hite also agrees (Hite, 1988: 22). The narrative indeed resembles to mobius strip as the content of the novel folds back in on itself as the end of the novel takes the reader back to the beginning.

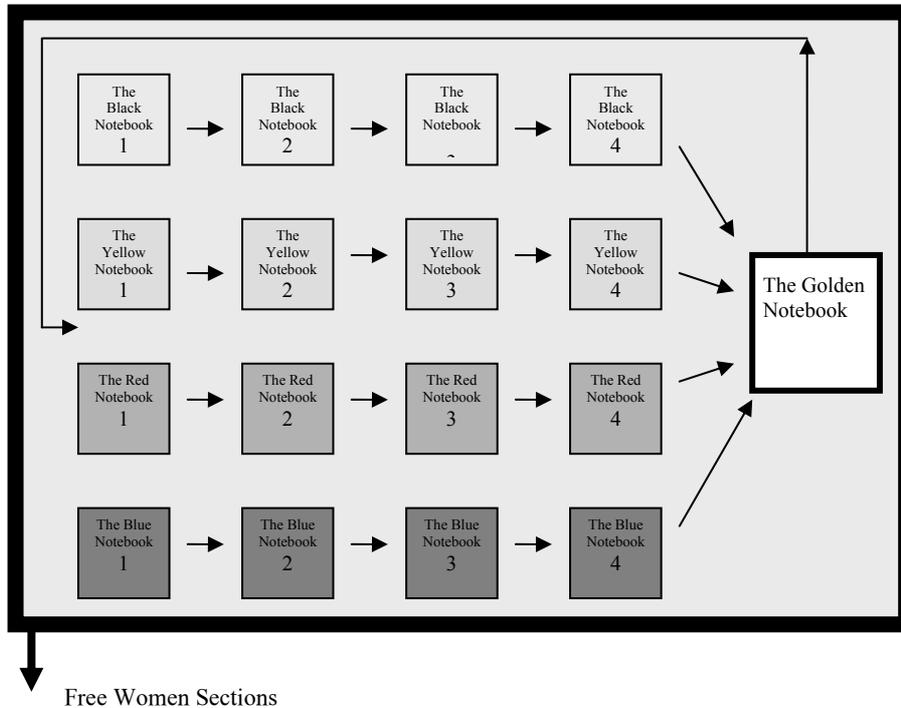


Figure1. Narrative Scheme

In the notebooks, Anna attempts to examine her life in disparate styles and perspectives. The memoirs from Africa constantly haunt her; communism disappoints her; as a woman she is still dependent on a man and is defined in terms of male discourse; as a writer, she is dissatisfied with the common models and suffers from the writer's block. All of these aspects of Anna found their voices in the separate notebooks. The Black Notebook is divided into two columns, headed 'Source' and 'Money' and written in the first person. In it, Anna deals with her past experiences in Africa, mostly her frustration both in the African blacks' internal conflict and the oppressive attitude of the whites upon them. Due to her block, the notebook ends with pastiches and copied materials. In the red notebook, Anna relates her experience with the British Communist Party. Day by day, Anna's unease with the party grows, and finally, she decides to leave the party. Again, this notebook ends with the newspaper cuttings about violence. In The Yellow notebook, Anna writes a novel called 'The Shadow of the Third,' which is in fact her fictionalized life. It also bears her comments on the process of

writing it. The narration is the third person omniscient. The Blue notebook consists of Anna's diary writings. It is, in fact, an obvious attempt to keep a factual account of what happens rather than fictionalized version. Mainly, it deals with Anna's mental break-down, her block and sessions with psychotherapist. Yet, she cannot unify these disparate perspectives of her life in a single piece.

Finally, in the golden-coloured notebook, Anna synthesizes the various experiences kept separate in the other books, so that they approximate to a kind of wholeness. Attaining this integration enables her to begin to write again. Anna's major motive in separating aspects of her life is to impose a certain order on chaos. However, in the final part, Anna realizes that by allowing the chaos in, she could create something as an artist. She abandons her notebooks and records events solely in the Golden notebook which, in itself, welcomes dissolution and separation. The reader is also taken back to the beginning as it is understood that the beginning sentence of the *Free Women* would be the first sentence of Anna's next novel. Thus, in a cyclical manner, Anna turns back to fragmented beginning.

Linda Hutcheon remarks in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* that "there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one Truth" (Hutcheon, 1995: 109). Thus, every perspective is as correct as the other. As there is no ultimate correct perspective, no perspective presented in *The Golden Notebook* can be privileged over the other. Due to this fact, *The Golden Notebook* refuses to resolve into a single 'real' story." (Hite, 1989: 101) Anna, thus, admits that she attempted to melt all her perspectives in a pot:

*"The material [her past] had been ordered by me to fit what I know, and that was why it was false" (538).*

What was false is her search for the wholeness and unification, and what she knows is the established conventions of storytelling. That is classical realist tradition through the guidance of which Anna shaped her first novel, *The Frontiers of War*.

Very much akin to the formal and thematic characteristics of the novel, Lessing employs multiple narratives which also show that the novel is stylistically fragmented. The novel contains multiple narratives. The narratorial voice of the *Free Women* sections of the novel is the third person omniscient. On the other hand, the *Black*, the *Red*, the *Blue* and the *Golden Notebooks* are all related in the first person. Apart from these, in the *Yellow*

Notebook, Lessing again switches to the third person as Anna Wulf narrates the story of Ella. What is striking in the multiple narratives of *The Golden Notebook* is that even if the voice of the narrator changes, it still belongs again, in a way, to the same character. At the end of the novel, it is realized that the opening sentence of the Free Women section was proposed to Anna by Saul Green. Due to this fact, it is not wrong to claim that there is one narrator in *The Golden Notebook*. However, this single narrator is multiplied in herself in order to produce multiple narratives. Moreover, in the Yellow Notebook where Anna relates the story of Ella, her fictitious character, there is a mixing of the narration. Ella is an artist like Anna Wulf or Doris Lessing is. The fictitious Ella writes a story in which a man is portrayed on the verge of suicide. However, it is the fictitious Anna narrating the fiction of her fictitious character. Thus, by mixing narrations and stories, the impact of multiple narratives is intensified. Furthermore, this abundance of writer-figures in the novel – not to forget Doris Lessing as the real life writer placed in the outmost level – provides a multi-layered narrative structure which can be schematized in four frames in terms of Genette's diegetic levels:

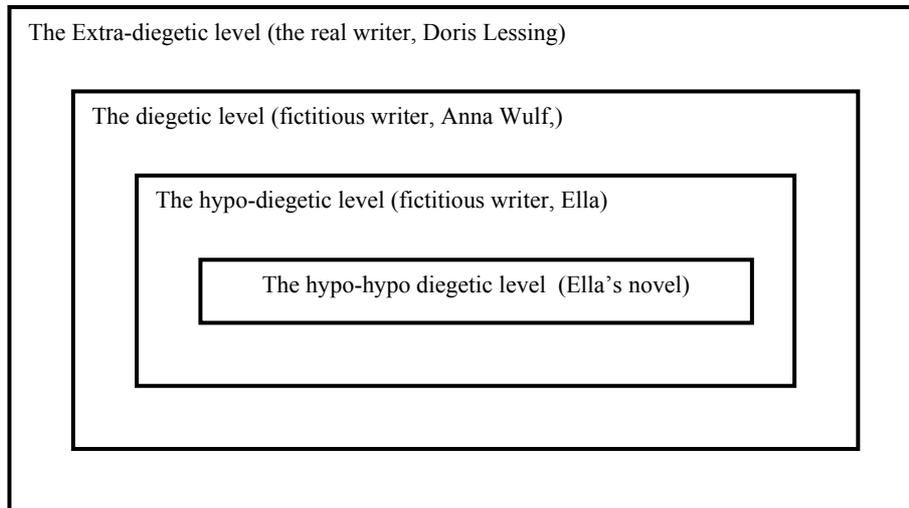


Figure2. Diegetic Levels

Lessing seems well aware that in the fragmented world, employing disintegrated and multiple narratives is the best way to articulate the fragmentation of the protagonist. Each notebook of the novel is attributed to the fragmented identities of Anna Wulf, who is, in fact, in quest of a unified

identity. Anna herself explains the reason of her effort to keep four separate notebooks to her therapist, Mother Sugar:

*“I keep four notebooks, a black notebook, which is to do with Anna Wulf the writer; a red notebook, concerned with politics; a yellow notebook, in which I make stories out of my experience; and a blue notebook which tries to be a diary”* (418).

Apart from the abovementioned roles – the writer, the communist – Anna has to carry in herself roles of a mother and a lover and finally the role of Free Woman. Anna’s identity crisis traces a fluctuating mood. Sometimes it is her motherhood that turns the scale, but sometimes it is her role as a lover to Michael that dominates the crisis.

After writing the notebooks of four different colours each symbolizing her different and fragmented identities, Anna Wulf writes the Golden notebook in which she sums and accommodates the voices admitting that “it’s been necessary to split myself up, but from now on I shall be using one only” (521). However, as mentioned above, the final part of the novel takes the reader back to the beginning which also points out that the best and the final solution for Anna Wulf is to accept the fragmentary nature of her life and the surrounding world. Then, it can be asserted that this device of multiple narratives functions as a structuring mechanism of the plot, and through the use of multiple narratives, the fragmentary nature of the novel is again emphasized. For Molly Hite, there are two considerations which connect the novel with the narrative ruptures of postmodern:

*First, the pervasive rhetoric of psychic integrity, unity of vision, and narrative coherence is repeatedly aligned with the orthodox Marxism that Anna finally repudiates. Second, this rhetoric resounds through a work that ultimately breaks down its major characters without even making a gesture at reassembling them, and that bifurcates its plot to the point where two separate and irreconcilable versions of a story jostle uneasily for ontological supremacy – for the status of being the account of what ‘really’ happened (Hite, 1988: 16).*

The major aspect of Anna’s break down is essentially her fictional creation Ella. The assonance in the names and the two double letters in the

middle obviously suggest the connection between Ella and Anna. However, in the course of the Yellow notebook, the narrative of Ella gets so complex and mature that Ella becomes a separate character free from Anna. It is also noteworthy that in the narrative of Ella, neither communism, nor Africa is mentioned. The account of Ella is strictly devoted to the relationship between man and woman. As if she acknowledges this idea, Anna writes:

*I see Ella, walking slowly about a big room, thinking, waiting. I, Anna, see Ella. Who is, of course, Anna. But that is the point, for she is not. The moment I, Anna, write: Ella rings up Julia to announce, etc., then Ella floats away from me and becomes someone else. I don't understand what happens at the moment Ella separates herself from me and becomes Ella. No one does. It's enough to call her Ella, instead of Anna" (404).*

Surprisingly, the account of Ella, or "The Shadow of the Third", is left incomplete by Anna. Ella does not suffer from a self-division unlike Anna who experiences this self-division and expresses it through the separate notebooks. Even though Ella does not shatter or fall into pieces, the Yellow Notebook does break down in its narration. The last part of the Yellow Notebook is full of short stories or short drafts of writing entitled like "A Short Novel" or "Romantic Tough School of Writing" (466-474). In other words, in spite of Ella, the narrative is broken down and fragmented into the tiny pieces.

For Molly Hite, there are two main narratives in *The Golden Notebook* – the narrative of the Free Women sections and the narrative of the notebooks. In both two narratives, the protagonist's name is Anna who tries to overcome a psychological breakdown in assistance with an American man – Saul Greene in the notebooks and Milt in the Free Women. There is a single story but two different versions of the expression, and these versions are irreconcilable. The process of psychological breakdown of Anna reaches its peak in the fourth instalment of the Blue notebook and in the Golden notebook, whereas it corresponds to the last sections of the Free Women. When compared with "the long, intense first-person account in the Blue and Golden notebooks", the narrative of the Free Women is "shorter, more dispassionate" with its third person account (Hite, 1989: 92). Their endings are also different. The Free Women presents a conciliatory ending in which the two women kiss and separate – Molly is married, and Anna decides to devote herself to the social concerns. This ending recalls the traditional

realism. The Golden Notebook also ends with a separation – this time Anna and Saul separates. However, this separation will give birth to *The Golden Notebook* thanks to the assistance of Saul Green.

*The Golden Notebook*, in fact, has an unconventionally open ending. Moreover, in the course of narratives, or in the struggle of the truth that takes place between the notebooks and the Free Women, Lessing does not privilege one narrative over the other. Neither of these narratives provides the reader with the satisfaction of a wrapped-up ending. In other words, Lessing diagnoses the problem as the fragmentation, breakdown or disintegration. Yet, she does not show the exact cure for it. *The Golden Notebook* does not offer a solution to the problems that it points out. It may be that, rather than showing the way towards wholeness, *The Golden Notebook* stresses the option of acknowledging multiplicity. Anna claims in a conversation with the therapist:

*“I’ve reached the stage where I look at people and say – he or she, they are whole at all because they’ve chosen to block off at this stage or that. People stay sane by blocking off, by limiting themselves”* (413).

Possessing a coherent identity is then limitation. Lessing implies that the blocking off certain aspects of an identity does not necessarily provide total harmony, integrity or unity. In contrast, the blocking off presents a limitation and reduction into a single fragment. Then, the blocking off is not the right way to avoid the fragmentation or chaos. The acceptance of the fragmentation – multiple identities in other words – is suggested by Lessing in order to form a kind of unity that comprises of the fragments.

In all these ways and methods, Doris Lessing in *The Golden Notebook* scatters not only the characters or plot, but also she disperses the narrative line. As mentioned above, even though the novel is about the coherence, it does not display the coherence in the sense that a conventional novel demands for. Moreover, despite Lessing’s attack against the compartmentalization that takes place in the Preface, the novel denies the possibility of a holistic vision which would include an ultimate reality. Instead of a holistic vision, there are multiple perspectives in the novel which observe and relate the separate experiences of a woman with several socially constructed identities. Anna Wulf first keeps her accounts in separate notebooks; by keeping them apart, in a sense, she blocks or limits them. Conscious of impossibility of attaining a precise order, Anna

acknowledges her fragmented nature. Thus, the narrative, with its mobius strip design, takes the reader back to the beginning of the novel where the reader plunges into the fragments.

Interpreting Hite's idea, Tonya Krouse asserts that this mobius design "compels readers to look backward at modernism and forward at postmodernism" (Krouse, 2006: 40). It is true that *The Golden Notebook* is a novel which carries the modernist tension of unity in itself. The protagonist restlessly searches for a model into which she can mould all her experiences accurately, and out of which she can achieve certain unity. This is also what Lessing is anxious about as she also requests that people "must not compartmentalize things" (10). Unfortunately, what Lessing presents her readers is an already "compartmentalized" and fragmented, text and she hopes that out of these "fragments can come something new, *The Golden Notebook*" (7). As largely analyzed above, the inner Golden Notebook, in this manner, disappoints her readers as it denies unity in itself. However, Lessing's understanding of unity is important here as it is best embodied in "the game" Anna plays. In the game Anna creates a universe object by object starting from the tiniest element to the largest:

*First I created the room I sat in, object by object, 'naming' everything, bed, chair, curtains, till it was whole in my mind, then move out of the room ... I would create the world, continent by continent, ocean by ocean (but the point of 'the game' was to create this vastness while holding the bedroom, the house, the street in their littleness in my mind at the same time) until the point was reached where I moved out into space, and watched the world, a sun-lit ball in the sky, turning and rolling beneath me. Then having reached that point, with the stars around me, and the little earth turning underneath me, I'd try to imagine at the same time, a drop of water, swarming with life, or green leaf. Sometimes I could reach what I wanted, a simultaneous knowledge of vastness and of smallness. (480-481)*

Lessing's idea concerning the fragmentation and unity, then, resembles to a jigsaw puzzle. In a jigsaw puzzle in order to form the whole picture, the tiny pieces should be put in their accurate places. Each individual item is meaningless separately and needs other items to acquire a meaning. On the other hand, if one item is missing, the overall picture will necessarily lack a meaning. Then, each item is as important as any other item. This is "the simultaneous knowledge of vastness and of smallness" which requires even

an acknowledgement of the existence of “a drop of water, swarming with life”. Then, *The Golden Notebook* proposes readers to acknowledge the fragments. The novel promises a unity on condition that each individual item of this unity is granted a meaning and an acknowledgment. Denying, limiting, ignoring or excluding any item in this multi-pieced unity is not proposed as a solution in the novel. Instead of ignoring them, the novel suggests that the whole and the united picture can have a meaning thanks to the fragments that compose it. In other words, *The Golden Notebook* anticipates a postmodern understanding of the unity and fragmentation that would be announced by the critics like Lyotard and Hutcheon decades after the publication of the novel. As this quality of the novel makes it explicitly a novel ahead of its time, it also denotes that while the novel seems to carry a modernist tension for the unity, this tension is transformed into a postmodern understanding of the fragmentation.

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