

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FROM MARXISM TO MYTH:
A DEVELOPMENTAL STUDY OF THE NOVELS OF DORIS LESSING
by
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For George Sajeck, my father:

He would have appreciated his name here more than
an epitaph on a "half-acre" tomb.

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Lorelei Cederstrom

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Introduction

Although Doris Lessing published her first novel more than twenty-five years ago, only quite recently has she acquired attentive and respectful critics outside Britain. In the last several years, a flurry of interest has grown up around this novelist, perhaps because her words have finally reached an audience able to appreciate her message. Doris Lessing has become, suddenly, a "standard" author. For example, one of her short stories, "From Room Fifteen," appears in the latest revision of the Norton Anthology of English Literature. Two book-length studies of Lessing and her work have been published; several doctoral dissertations have come out, and there are an ever-increasing number of articles on her work in the scholarly journals. Indeed, Contemporary Literature (Autumn, 1973) has published an issue devoted entirely to Lessing criticism. Courses on her works are being taught on university campuses, and many women's studies and contemporary novel courses include selections from her writings. In short, Lessing, who is both a prolific novelist and short-story writer, has begun to receive the attention of critics.

Critical acclaim brings with it a new set of problems and no one is more aware of the peculiarities of this attention than Lessing herself. She has described the kind of letters she receives from people all over the world, each

commenting on what he or she believes to be the "message" of one novel or other. Lessing cites three major groups into which this correspondence falls. She writes:

One letter is entirely about the sex war, about man's inhumanity to woman and woman's inhumanity to man, and the writer has produced pages and pages all about nothing else, for she--but not always a she--can't see anything else in the book.

The second is about politics, probably from an old Red like myself, and he or she writes many pages about politics, and never mentions any other theme....

The third letter, once rare, but now catching up on the others is written by a man or woman who can see nothing in it but the theme of mental illness.

But it is the same book.¹

In somewhat over-simplified fashion, Lessing has cited the three major themes of her novels: Feminism, Marxism, and Psychology; and each theme has attracted its own group of critics. Interest in Lessing within the United States began about the same time that radical Feminism achieved international prominence and it is not surprising that so many extremist women have been drawn to a novelist writing so truthfully about their lives. Problems began to arise, however, when Lessing asserted that she was not an adherent of Feminism, Marxism, or any other "ism."

Feminist and Marxist critics alike, who attended the series of lectures Lessing gave at the New School for Social Research in New York, were shocked by the things which she told them about their lives. First, Lessing denied the efficacy of any political action. In spite of the fact that she was a Communist when she began her career, she told her

audience repeatedly that she does not believe in any of the "so-called authorities" whether external or internal.

"People must learn to trust their own experiences," she said. She emphasized that she wants people "to learn to look at themselves; that is what her novels are about."²

Statements like this were bound to arouse the animosity of critics with a particular bias. Marxist critics, for example, who expected Lessing to remain a committed revolutionary, were upset not only by her words, but by the direction of her recent novels as well. They felt, on the whole, that her movement from social realism in the early novels, to mythology and psychology in the later ones, was a kind of heresy. Unable to accept this change in Lessing, they continue to force her later works into the earlier patterns. Such recent articles as Anne M. Mulkeen's "Twentieth Century Realism: the 'Grid' Structure of The Golden Notebook"³ assert that Lessing continues to be a Marxist because her novels reveal the dialectic between the individual and the complexities of modern life. This works very well until Briefing for a Descent into Hell, where the complexities of modern life have only the most tenuous value in relation to the complexities of the inner world.

Feminist critics have been equally dismayed; for how can a writer who portrays women's problems so accurately fail to carry the banners against male dominance in our society?

Lessing refuses, however, to become a partisan in the sex war, for she is more interested in the psychological dimensions of male-female relationships. A critic who approaches Lessing from the Feminist angle may well wind up in the same situation in which Florence Howe was placed during an interview. Howe disliked the male characters in The Golden Notebook, and queried Lessing about them.

F.H. But your male characters in that book are really very unpleasant, all of them. There isn't a good male character.

D.L. I don't think that's true. What's that doctor's name?...Why is he unpleasant?...

F.H. Well, he's marvelous to a point then he leaves.

D.L. Well, men do leave, after all. That doesn't make them less marvelous.⁴

Such honesty to herself and her characters creates serious problems for anyone with equally strong ideas of Lessing's place in the scheme of critical analysis.

In spite of the difficulty of pinning Lessing down, her aesthetic principles are discernible and have evolved gradually over the course of her career. It is the purpose of this study to trace the logic of Lessing's development, observing the elements that remain the same as well as the changes, while exploring the Marxist, Feminist, and psychological patterns as they are utilized within the framework of her unique talent. Psychological criticism, provided that it is not reductive, remains the most inclusive way to account for her later novels, for it is clear that midway through the Children Of Violence series, a "new" Lessing

began to emerge. Martha Quest, that most political of all protagonists outside of Soviet-realist novels, began to explore the labyrinths of her own mind rather than the dynamics of social action. After Landlocked, the fourth volume in the series, political action is always secondary to the inner workings of characters who are undergoing a crisis before change.

The changes in Lessing's interests parallel certain changes in her life. She moved from politics--she was a card-carrying Communist in Rhodesia--to the world within, probably as a result of her own psycholanalysis undertaken with a woman whom she describes as a "Roman Catholic, Jungian and Conservative."⁵ Lessing notes that in spite of the fact that she did not like much of the terminology used, the analyst was helpful to her because of the quality of her ideas. Quite simply, Lessing has become involved with ideas that can only be termed Jungian. Lessing herself, as well as all the major characters in her most recent novels, is involved in what Jung terms "the process of individuation." Lessing's distrust of collectives was engendered by this later interest in Jung, for with Jung, she has come to realize that the only efficacious changes occur within the individual himself, rather than through group action. In spite of the fact that so much of Lessing's fiction is devoted to social and political activity, her ideas about the individual and the group are, in the end, much like Jung's, who writes: "In the last

analysis the essential thing is the life of the individual. This alone makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately springs as a gigantic summation from the hidden sources within individuals. In our most private and subjective lives we are not only the passive witnesses of our ages, and its sufferers, but also its makers."⁶ Martha Quest, who tests her individuality against all the collectives, is a prime example of this trend of thought. This is another important aspect of Lessing's break with the Marxists, for at the New School Lessing clearly established the individual rather than the economic order as the prime mover in social change. At her lectures, discussing the problems of the early Feminists, she recalled the way scorn was heaped upon these women for asserting their basic human rights by going to restaurants alone, having male visitors in their rooms, believing in love outside of marriage, and so on. "We can see from looking at these women," Lessing said, "how it is possible for a social and moral climate to change without changing the economic base."⁷

Lessing believes that society is altered by the forces for change that irrupt in individuals. At the New School, Lessing described for her audience the ways in which they could take responsibility for their own lives. First, she emphasized that each must find "the self we are and were before the external/internal authorities got hold of us."

She suggested a number of ways to do this, methods which are, once again, indebted to Jungian analysis. Her list is short: "cultivate learning about your dream life, look at the group you're a part of and try to see which of the group's ideas are really yours, conjure up your earliest memories."

Lessing's most recent novels assert, repeatedly, the necessity of self-knowledge through the inward quest. Moreover, she attempts through formal experimentation to break down our ordinary kinds of perception. She wants to turn us back within, and provides a way out of the primordial maze by means of archetypal patterns and cosmic analogies. The Golden Notebook, Lessing's most difficult novel, is a key example. In it she traces the process of individuation in a neurotic, Marxist, Feminist character. Anna Wulf, the protagonist who is also a novelist, seeks relief from a writer's block from a Jungian analyst, disintegrates, and reintegrates as a new individuated personality. This novel is both a paradigm of Lessing's personal development and of her development as a novelist. The author's message has been consistent in the last four or five novels. In each case, the protagonist undergoes an experience much like that of Anna Wulf. Martha Quest, Professor Charles Watkins, Kate Brown, and the "Survivor" all experience a heightened awareness of what life is all about through contact with their inner, energizing centers. The overall process of development in Lessing's novels, then, is a movement from Marxism

to myth. Her early novels can be termed socialist-realist works as Lenin and Lukacs define such novels. In them, Lessing exhibits a belief in the Marxist premise which describes a unity between the individual and society creating "an organic world vision in which every action, thought and emotion of human beings is inseparably bound up with the life and struggles of the human community."⁸ In The Grass Is Singing, and the first three volumes of Children Of Violence, Mary Turner and Martha Quest are individuals fighting within and against a community more important than they are. These early works with their strong social orientation are novels in the conventional sense. From The Golden Notebook on, Lessing's novels assume a new quality and could better be termed mythic narratives.

Evelyn Hinz, in her seminal study of the distinctions between the novel and the mythic narrative,⁹ cites as a basis Mircea Eliade's studies of primitive and modern societies. Eliade feels that the most important distinction between the archaic world view and that of modern man "lies in the fact that the former feels himself indissolubly connected with the cosmos and cosmic rhythms, whereas the latter insists that he is connected only with history." Hinz continues, "Here in essence also lies the difference between the perspective of the novel and that of mythic narrative: in contrast to the novelist who, like modern man, is oriented toward history, the mythic artist, like archaic man, regards history

as illusion, and the activities, institutions, and values associated with it as profane or symptomatic of man's fallen condition. Like archaic man, the mythic artist conceives of reality as that which is imbued with the divine, that which is eternally recurrent, that which is transmitted in sacred history or myth." Lessing's career, then, includes both the novel and the mythic narrative and is characterized by the movement from one to the other.

While Lessing's early stories are more precisely novels than mythic narratives, there are some qualities of the latter present from the outset. Lessing, from the beginning of her career, was clearly influenced by D. H. Lawrence. This obvious influence has been cited by Lessing's main critics; however, her changing attitudes toward the Lawrencean content of her novels has not been discussed. While Lawrence was an important influence on the symbolism in The Grass Is Singing, and the vibrant descriptions of the living world in all of her novels, his predominant influence has been on her use of "cosmic consciousness," that feeling of unity with the life and order of the universe. There are differences in the way each writer perceives cosmic consciousness which must be noted. Lawrence experienced cosmic consciousness primarily through sex. In Lessing, on the other hand, the intense sense of being at one with the living cosmos is seen most frequently as a backdrop to failed lives, or as a commentary on the blindness of ordinary

life, with the crucial and important exception of Martha Quest's relationship with Thomas Stern. However, in most cases, cosmic unity, for Lessing, requires more than a man and a woman. For her vision is of a hierarchic society in which man, his social, biological and spiritual functions, are all linked to the natural hierarchy of earth, sun and planets. Moreover, Lessing's cosmic vision derives not from a mind-obliterating sexual experience, but from a mind-exploring breakdown, a psychic death and rebirth. Sex may trigger this event for Lessing's characters but it is not capable of providing transcendence without self-knowledge. While Lawrence explores the body's transcendent mysteries to achieve cosmic harmony, Lessing explores the mind's mysteries for the same purpose.

While Lessing's debt to Lawrence is evident throughout her career, there is an increasing use of cosmic symbolism in the later novels. The moment of crisis, the crux of her developmental process, occurs in the fourth volume of Landlocked. Here, in a scene highly reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence, in a loft over a garden with her lover, Martha Quest achieves a moment of illumination that alters her perceptions of reality permanently. After this crisis in Martha's life, Lessing's novels move more and more into the mythic.

Beyond Lawrence, there is another important influence on the structure of her later symbols which requires some

clarification. Lessing's movement into mythic narrative involves an increasing use of Jungian symbols of the structure of the psyche. Some of Jung's basic theories must be discussed here in order that Lessing's use of them may be understood. As has been mentioned previously, Lessing's protagonists are all middle-aged (with the exception of Martha Quest at the beginning of her story) and undergoing what Jung terms a crisis of individuation. Individuation, a sense of integrated self-hood, is the goal of the process of assimilation between conscious and unconscious. The synthesis of the unconscious with the conscious is necessary in order to prevent the unconscious from irrupting destructively, for middle-age is the time when the repressions of half a lifetime are most likely to break forth and assume autonomy. Thus, the goal of individuation is to harmonize the two sides of the individual, to make peace between the personality and all its unconscious resources.

At this point, a distinction must be made between the unconscious (or subconscious) as defined by Freud, and the unconscious in Jung's terminology. Lessing's perception of the unconscious is very much like D. H. Lawrence's definition in Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious. Lawrence, Lessing, and Jung do not, as Freud did, see the unconscious purely as a repository of repressions and negative traits, but believe it contains an important potential for growth as well. In this respect, Lessing discussed the unconscious

in an interview with Jonah Raskin at Stony Brook, New York, wherein she clearly aligned herself with Jung and Lawrence against the Freudians. She told Raskin: "The Freudians describe the conscious as a small lit area, all white, and the unconscious as a great dark marsh full of monsters. In their view, the monsters reach up, try to grab you by the ankles, and try to drag you down. But the unconscious can be what you make of it, good or bad, helpful or unhelpful."¹⁰

Lessing utilizes a distinction which Jung made between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The former contains all the elements which have been repressed from one's individual history, while the collective unconscious is an inherited "memory" of certain basic, eternally-recurring psychic patterns. These inherited forms and ideas are the archetypes--symbols and figures that appear in the myths, literature, and dreams of people of every culture. Both the personal and collective unconscious are used in several of Lessing's novels. Charles Watkins, for example, explores both areas in his descent into the innermost parts of his psyche in Briefing. In Memoirs of a Survivor, the two areas are most distinct. The Survivor explores the personal unconscious as she visits certain "rooms" which contain "a scene from her memory, or her history which had formed her,"¹¹ and the collective unconscious as she visits another set of "rooms" she calls "impersonal scenes." Here she encounters the archetype of the self and experiences

the cosmic harmonies which derive from this encounter.

In her investigations of the psyche and explorations of the conscious and unconscious, Lessing returns to certain archetypes. Throughout her novels, these same configurations appear: the persona, the shadow, the anima/animus, and the self. To understand what Lessing is doing, a brief description of each of these terms as Jung defines them is necessary. First, the persona is an archetype unlike the others, for it occurs throughout life, while the rest occur primarily at individuation. Martha Quest, almost from the outset of the Children of Violence series, is intrigued by the persona, which is one's public mask, determined by one's social role.¹² Martha discovers that this mask can be set aside readily as another is assumed. Martha, therefore, suffers less than Charles Watkins or Kate Brown, who have mistakenly identified the persona with the whole of their personalities. As a result, each suffers as the undeveloped parts of the personality struggle with the persona for existence. This struggle is what has brought each of them to the point of crisis.

Beyond the problem of the mask, the persona, lies the shadow, which is one of the first archetypal configurations to appear as individuation begins. The shadow has occurred in literature frequently before Lessing,¹³ for it is that Mr. Hyde which everyman carries within--the dark side of the personality which is projected onto other people of the same

sex. Charles Watkins expressed an awareness of the difficulty of the shadow when he questioned whether his true self was the cool observer or the creature of blood who came alive in the darkness. "I was already beginning to doubt that I knew who was stronger, which was stranger, which was host, what was myself and what a perverted offshoot." Watkins was plagued with the same duality of mind that bothered Captain Leggatt in Conrad's story upon the arrival of his shadow, the secret sharer. Like so many of Conrad's characters caught up in the problem of the shadow, Watkins was forced to confront his opposite as his true self. Lessing's characters, on the whole, are not as shadow-ridden as Conrad's, although the shadow is operative in such pairs as Anna and Molly in The Golden Notebook, and Kate Brown's relationship with the girl, Maureen, as well as several other women in The Summer Before the Dark.

Frequently, however, in Lessing's fiction shadow projections take place on a national or international scale. In The Grass Is Singing and many of her African stories, the white Africans project their own negative qualities onto the blacks. In another case, Martha Quest observes the way that Mark Coleridge projects all good qualities onto his own political involvements and all evil qualities onto the other side. She recognizes that this has been a pattern in most of the political activity she has observed. Martha becomes aware of the social dangers of the shadow, for unless the shadow is

recognized as part of oneself, it serves as a justification to hate and destroy others. There is a powerful scene in Landlocked wherein Martha and her friends attend a newsreel in which defeated, starving German soldiers are held up to ridicule by a commentator who makes snide references to these remnants of "the master race." Martha alone sees that these are defeated "boys." The others continue to heap upon them projections of their own destructive qualities. Martha's ability to understand her shadow and transcend it is a part of her uniqueness. Anna Wulf, too, conquers her shadow when she recognizes the dwarf-like creature who takes joy in destruction to be a part of herself. This is an awareness of profound social significance. Erich Neumann, one of Jung's pupils, has written that the sources of all evil are within, rooted in the problem of the shadow, "where the personality experiences its relationship with the enemy of mankind, the drive to aggression and destruction, in the structure of its own being."¹⁴

Another archetypal figure which is encountered primarily through projection is the anima/animus. Each is a compensatory image from the unconscious, a link with one's own creative centers, which is projected onto an individual of the opposite sex. Jung has defined the anima conclusively as an "eternal image of the woman, not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definite feminine image. This image is fundamentally unconscious, an hereditary factor of

primordial origin, an imprint or archetype of all the ancestral experience of the female, a deposit, as it were, of all the impressions ever made by woman."¹⁵ More difficulty arises when Jung defines the animus, for the anima can be encountered in centuries of art and literature while the feminine unconscious has been virtually mute. Doris Lessing is a pioneer here; she is one of the first writers to confront the animus in terms so real as to be frightening. Anna Wulf struggles with her animus in madness and near death until she achieves creativity and a transcendent self-knowledge. Emily Bronte's Heathcliffe, alone, comes close to arousing the terrors of the animus in the way that Lessing does in The Golden Notebook.

Another aspect of the animus which Lessing has also described is the yearning for wholeness, for a sense of self-hood experienced by women who have not come to terms with the animus. This yearning is frequently attributed to the loss of a particular male, rather than to a need which can be met from within. Anna Wulf, waiting, night after night, for Micheal whom she knows will not return, is one example. Also, in A Ripple from the Storm, Lessing writes of Martha, mourning "him who brought her 'self' to life." When the bearer of the projection is gone, she "lives with the empty space at her side, peopled with the image of her own potentialities until the next man walks into the space."

The stripping away of the facades of the persona, the confrontation with the shadow, the links with the deepest layers of one's own need through the anima and animus--all these are steps in the individuation process which leads, ultimately, to the self. The self is the most important archetype as it absorbs all the others as aspects of its cosmic totality. The self is "the archetype of order, organization and unification, it draws to itself and harmonizes all the other archetypes and their manifestations in complexes and consciousness. It unites the personality giving it a sense of oneness, and firmness."¹⁶ The self is thus the goal of the individuation process, and represents a state of self-realization in which all tensions between the conscious and unconscious are dissolved.

Each one of Lessing's characters is on a quest for the self and each has a glimpse, at least, of its fleeting beauty. The quest, however, is a difficult one, for the personality must be individuated before the self can become manifest with any degree of completeness. Thus, the self is rarely encountered before middle-age, the age at which most of Lessing's characters begin the trial of introspection which will lead them eventually to the cosmic wholeness of the self.

It is a vision of the self that Martha Quest pursues through the five volumes of the Children of Violence series. It is clear that she does find the self when she describes

the "crystalline gleam," the "rare, fine air" of the island on which she lives in the closing pages of the final volume. Professor Charles Watkins has a similar vision before his forced return to the world of persona functions which others term normality. In The Summer before the Dark, it is a yearning for self-hood that sets Kate Brown off on the adventures of her most important summer. The Survivor, the protagonist of Lessing's most recent novel, achieves the most complete union with the self. Her "walking through the walls" at the end of the book is a symbol of her ability to move beyond the functions of the ego or persona into a realm where these facades mean nothing, where everything is tinged with the sweetness and wholeness that only a union with the self can afford. The Survivor also speaks of "the one who went ahead, showing them the way out of this collapsed little world into another order of world altogether."¹⁷ This "one" is the transpersonal dimension of the self, the revelation of the deity within, in which reality is "imbued with the divine."

Lessing's career as a whole, then, can be seen to move from an awareness of certain archetypal elements in human experience which, in the earlier novels is destroyed by economic necessities and the evils of the social system, to the realization that the archetypal experiences can lead one beyond these confining systems to a transpersonal realm of peace, harmony, and integration.

While the Jungian structure of Lessing's symbols provides a ready framework for the discussion of her novels, a word of caution is in order. It is not enough for the critic merely to point out that she is using this archetype or that one. It is also essential to explore the reasons that the archetype manifests itself in a certain manner. To this end, it is important to utilize a synthesis of each of the standard critical methods in order to avoid a reductive "nothing but" approach that does not do justice to the richness of her novels.

Leslie Fiedler, in an important essay on archetypal criticism written in the fifties and not often anthologized, suggests that there are two important factors in a work of mythic art--the archetype and the signature. Fiedler defines signature as "the sum total of individuating factors in a work, the sign of the Persona or Personality, through which an archetype is rendered, and which itself tends to become a subject as well as a means" of a work. "Literature" he notes, "can be said to come into existence at the moment when a signature is imposed upon the Archetype. The purely archetypal, without signature, is myth."¹⁸

Criticism of the signature, Fiedler points out, involves an analysis not only of the artist but of the social collective of which the individual is a part. The critic in search of a non-reductive approach might expand Lessing's assertion that she was, in the Children of Violence series, exploring

the relationship between the individual and the collective to include the relationship between the collective and the archetype as well. Fiedler adds that "the critic in pursuit of the archetype finds himself involved in anthropology and depth psychology (not because these are New Gospels, but because they provide useful tools); and if he is not too embarrassed in such company to look about him, he discovers that he has come upon a way of binding together our fractured world, of uniting literature and non-literature without the reduction of the work" (pp. 466-467).

Lessing's unique contribution can be understood most fully through a developmental approach that considers both the archetypes and the signatures and both the myth and the clothing of the myth. In this way her talents both as a novelist in the conventional sense and as a writer of mythic narrative can be appreciated. Jung has defined the function of the creative process in a way which summarizes the methods of Lessing's fiction in addition to indicating the paths that the critic of her works must follow. He writes:

The creative process consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping that image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back into the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present.¹⁹

With consummate skill, Doris Lessing has given the reader a glimpse of the eternal harmony, order, and beauty to be found within each one of us, which resolves the disorder and chaos of our lives in time and history. For, as she asserts in the epigraph to Briefing, "there is never anywhere to go but in."

Notes: Introduction

- ¹ Doris Lessing, A Small Personal Voice, ed. Paul Schlueter, (New York, 1974), pp. 42-43.
- ² Marilyn Webb, "Becoming the Men We Wanted to Marry," Village Voice, 4 Jan. 1973, p. 14.
- ³ Anne M. Mulkeen, "Twentieth Century Realism: The 'Grid' Structure of The Golden Notebook," Studies in the Novel, 4 (Summer 1972), p. 427.
- ⁴ Florence Howe, "A Conversation with Doris Lessing," ConL 14 (Autumn 1973), p. 427.
- ⁵ Lessing, Small Personal Voice, p. 58.
- ⁶ Carl Jung, Collected Works (New York, 1964) X, p. 315.
- ⁷ Webb, p. 19.
- ⁸ Mulkeen, p. 263.
- ⁹ Evelyn Hinz, "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction," PMLA 91 (1976), p. 905.
- ¹⁰ Lessing, Small Personal Voice, p. 67.
- ¹¹ Doris Lessing, Memoirs of a Survivor (New York, 1974), p. 45.
- ¹¹ Erich Neumann in Depth Psychology and a New Ethic, (New York, 1973), defines the persona precisely as Lessing utilizes it. He writes: "The persona, the mask, what one passes for and what one appears to be in contrast to one's real nature, corresponds to one's adaptation to the

requirements of the age, of one's personal environment, and of the community. The persona is the cloak and the shell, the armour and the uniform, behind which and within which the individual conceals himself--from himself, often enough as well as from the world." pp. 37-38.

¹³ See also Otto Rank in The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings (New York, 1932) who has traced the shadow as a double in the myths and folktales of several cultures.

¹⁴ Neumann, p. 80.

¹⁵ Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby, A Primer of Jungian Psychology (New York, 1973), p. 47.

¹⁶ Hall and Nordby, p. 51.

¹⁷ Lessing, Memoirs, p. 213.

¹⁸ Leslie Fiedler, "Archetype and Signature," in Art and Psychoanalysis, ed. Wm. Phillips, (Cleveland and New York, 1963, p. 462.

¹⁹ Carl Jung, The Portable Jung, ed. Joseph Campbell, trans. R. F. C. Hull, (New York, 1971), p. 321.

Chapter One

The Grass Is Singing

Doris Lessing's first novel, The Grass Is Singing (1950), is of great interest to the developmental critic, for in its unique blend of Marxist-Realism and psychological scrutiny, it holds the two main elements of her career in a curious balance. On its basic level, this novel is about the destruction of a pair of white colonials, Dick and Mary Turner, by social and economic forces. Due to the intensity with which the race relations and class structure of colonized Africa are described, the novel yields well to a Marxist-Realist analysis, such as that of Michele Zak in the special Lessing issue of Contemporary Literature.¹ However, in a journal kept during a return visit to the Africa of her childhood, later published as Going Home (1957), Lessing indicates some dissatisfaction with the criticism of her African stories: "I have a notebook full of satires, plots, anecdotes, which at one time or another I was impelled to write. But the impulse died in a yawn. Even if I wrote them well--what then, it is always the colour bar; one cannot write truthfully about Africa without describing it. And if one has been at great pains to choose a theme which is more general, people are so struck by the enormity and ugliness of the colour prejudices which must be shown in it that what one has tried to say gets lost."²

Besides describing the reasons she turned from the African landscape in her later novels, Lessing's statement also summarizes the limitations of social criticism of her first novel. In a developmental study it is useful to focus upon some of these other themes which may be hidden by the "ugliness" of the race relations described. While the novel is, admittedly, a reasonably straightforward work, its undercurrents involve many of the ideas which Lessing brings to maturity in subsequent works.

Most importantly, this little novel touches upon one of Lessing's main interests as stated, years later, in her lectures at the New School for Social Research in New York, for it can be seen as a story about the individual and the forces from within and without that destroy or inhibit his growth and development.³ While this is undeniably a class novel, and is undeniably about the colour bar, Lessing is equally interested in the internal causes of the Turners' problems. While the social structure affects the quality of the Turners' lives, there is also a debilitating psychological pattern affecting them. There is, to use Anna Wulf's term as she describes her own feelings about Africa in the Black Notebook segments of The Golden Notebook, a "nostalgia for death", a "total sterility"⁴ which emanates from within the young Turners. This sterility is manifest in all the relationships they have. Their black laborers are little more than farm animals to them, their friends are people with

whom they discuss the crops once or twice a year, and their relationship with each other is, ultimately, one of mutual destruction. The lack of creative connections with others is both the result of the economic system and of a psychological rigidity, a "death" in the vital centers of each of them. While critics focussing on the colour bar may overlook it, Lessing carefully indicates that this "death" is not due to the social pressures alone, but evolves from a denial of one's cosmic connections. Rejecting organic connections, Dick and Mary Turner, suffer from a severe misalignment in their vital, unconscious centers.

It is useful to distinguish between literary characters destroyed by external forces and those destroyed by internal ones, for such a distinction exists between the characterizations in a Marxist-Realist novel and a psychological novel. In this case, Marxist analysis deals very well with the external causes of the Turners' dissolution. However, as in the "class novels" of D. H. Lawrence, the psychological dimension of the problem is as important as the economic system within which it develops. Michele Zak asserts the opposite in her analysis. She insists that the emotions portrayed in this work are not purely personal emotions rooted in psychological conflict, but are the products of society. Further, she notes that Lessing "even in this, her first and many ways slightest, effort, rejects the world view of the modernists, preferring instead to portray the

dialectical relationship that Marxism insists always exists between the individual circumstances of one's life and the material nature of the social and economic system with which one lives" (p. 481). While this is true to a point, Zak's definition of the Socialist-Realist dialectic is so broad that it would be difficult to find a novel that cannot be made to fit. While Lessing's novel is a Marxist work in that it explores the social structures and the dependence of the individuals upon these structures, the internal problems of the Turners cannot be altered by a change in the external aspects of their lives alone. The novel is amenable, undeniably, to the view that the individual is conditioned by society; however, the Turners would be unhappy no matter what the economic structure. Should the colour bar, the relationship between the races be changed, the "nostalgia for death" which results from a lack of contact with their energizing centers, would still be present. In short, this novel lacks the historical optimism of the totally Marxist-Realist work, for the characters are confined, they lack freedom due to the oppressions of the economic system, but their real lack of freedom is based upon the fact that in the core of their beings they lack spiritual values and have vainly attempted to fill the gap with economic ones.

In Marxist terms, The Grass Is Singing fits more closely Gorky's description of pre-revolutionary writings. Gorky

notes that "the basic and chief theme in pre-revolutionary literature was the drama of the individual, to whom life seemed cramped, who felt himself superfluous in society and sought to find some convenient place for himself, and, since he could not find one suffered and perished, either after reconciling himself to a society that was hostile to him or by turning to drink or suicide."⁵ Lessing's novel is as much a "drama of the individual" rooted in psychological problems as it is a realist novel describing the dialectic between the individual and society.

For this reason, critics who have analyzed the psychological patterns of the novel and the inner causes of the Turners' destruction have come closer to understanding the full scope of Lessing's message here, and its importance as a basis for her later novels. Paul Schlueter, for example, in his thematic analysis of the novels⁶ approaches a definition of the psychological pattern operative in this work, but does so at the very moment when he dismisses the novel as derivative (p. 18). Schlueter was set on the right track by an early review of the novel by R. P. Draper, who points out a parallel between Lessing's novel and Lady Chatterley's Lover. Draper writes:

The Grass Is Singing is a study of the decay of a marriage between an ill-matched couple who live on a poverty-stricken, incompetently managed farm on the Rhodesian veld. The sexlessness of their marriage is a parallel to the impotence of Sir Clifford Chatterley, but it has its roots in poverty and deprivation rather than in industrialism and false "liberalism." The black houseboy who becomes the Mellors intruding on this relationship is ambiguously regarded by the

white woman. He brings destruction instead of rebirth; and it is not destruction of a cleansing Lawrentian kind, but the violent culmination of a long demoralizing process. Yet the peculiar compulsion which the houseboy exerts over the white woman is intensely Lawrentian; and the scene in which the woman accidentally comes upon him when he is washing himself is clearly derived from Lady Chatterley. The breaking of the "formal pattern of black-and-white, mistress-and-servant" by the "personal relation"--against all the racial instincts of the woman--is also reminiscent of the way in which Mellors, simply by being what he is, breaks through the class barrier which Connie instinctively raises between them (p. 19).

Draper is correct in his assessment of the importance of the personal relation here, for like the class novels of D. H. Lawrence, the personal dimension breaks through the social barriers and establishes the arena of conflict within the characters rather than in society at large.

Referring to Draper, Schlueter states that while this quotation makes "too much of certain obvious parallels.... It is certainly true that Lawrence is...a tangible influence on the novel." Schlueter, however, does little with this idea other than to conclude that "citation of such parallels is not intended to prove direct influence so much as Mrs. Lessing's being "closer in spirit and method" to Lawrence than one might otherwise have assumed" (p. 19). This closeness in "spirit and method" is important because it provides a key to Lessing's fundamental interests. What is significant is not the seeming derivations from Lawrence but the ways in which Lessing is utilizing the same archetypal patterns. It is apparent that more than one or two of Lawrence's novels

inform this book, for many of his ideas about human psychology, particularly his attitudes regarding the relationship between men and women, appear as an undercurrent here and in Lessing's later work. Persistent parallels can be made with Lawrence's works on every level of the novel; and his mature articulations of his beliefs provide a comprehensive approach to the archetypal patterns in Lessing's novel.

This novel about the decay of a marriage is concerned, then, with the same problems that obsessed Lawrence. Lessing, like Lawrence, is exploring the relationship between man and woman, and the connections between mankind and the cosmos. "What we want," Lawrence wrote, "is to destroy our false, inorganic connections, especially those related to money, and re-establish the living organic connections with the cosmos, the sun and earth, with mankind and nation and family. Start with the sun, and the rest will slowly, slowly happen."⁷ The story of the Turners presents the consequences of a failure to establish these organic connections. Much of the fault is due to Mary's rejection of archetypal values; she ignores her own womanhood, denies her husband's manhood, and leads them both into a crisis where economic success is substituted for spiritual awareness. The marriage fails because there is no "blood" contact between the Turners on the level of archetypal masculine and feminine; and the farm fails when the money to be made from it becomes more important

than the quality of life they lead on it. Without connection, without meaning or value, the lives of the Turners drift toward death in the wasteland of those who lack a living relationship with their archetypal heritage.

Much of the blame for the failure of this marriage can be attributed to Mary's ignorance and fear of sex. Lessing has indicated, however, a more profound problem, a sexual emptiness that precedes her marriage. To a certain extent, the problem that infects the Turners is like a disease transmitted from parent to child, conditioned, but not caused, by society's values.

This comes into focus in the second chapter of the novel, which deals with Mary's early life. It opens with what Lessing terms "the central symbol of south Africa: the store."⁸ The store as a center has a profound significance in both social and psychological terms. While it can be granted that, in Marxist terms, the store as center is an indication that the root of Mary Turner's problem is an economic one due to the capitalist basis of the society, in psychological terms, the store can be seen also as a denial of the archetypal center, a rejection of the hierarchic society⁹ in its substitution of a profane center for a sacred one. Unlike the primitive societies in which the center of the community was a religious edifice, a sacred place where people could come for spiritual renewal and communion with the gods, in Mary's

world, Lessing notes, "the store was the real center of her life" (p. 32). The store was a powerful center for Mary primarily because "it was the place where her father bought his drink" (p. 33). Thus, the values of the society with the store at its center are thoroughly profane. For instead of strengthening the life of the community, it weakens that life by encouraging debt and drunkenness: "the store was the powerful, implacable place that sent in bills at the end of the month" (p. 35).

It is clear that D. H. Lawrence's ideas inform the description of Mary's parents as well, for they too have suffered from the lack of an archetypal center. The emptiness in their marriage, based on a substitution of economic values for spiritual ones, foreshadows the emptiness in Mary's relationship with Dick. Lacking spiritual bonds, Mary's parents provided only negative models of what marriage might be: their quarrels were never "over anything but money" (p. 35). Mary's parents denied the man and woman in each other and so measured each other only in terms of dollars. Her father "drank himself every evening into a state of cheerful muddled good humour, coming home late to a cold dinner, which he ate by himself. His wife treated him with a cold indifference.... She behaved as if he were simply not there for her. And for all practical purposes he was not. He brought home the money and not enough of that" (p. 34). While the

false values of capitalism have destroyed Mary's parents in much the same way that those values destroy the Turners, the basis of the problem is deeper, for both families lack, to use Lawrence's term, organic connections with mankind and nation and family, having substituted false, inorganic ones related to money.

Mary lacks, therefore, any awareness of the creative vital connection possible between a man and a woman. Based on the life she observed with her parents, she sees marriage as an economic contract rather than a hierogamy; and in later life, as a self-supporting young woman, Mary feels no need for such an arrangement. Her life is economically sound, so "smooth and comfortable" (p. 37) but lacks all roots. She is unawakened to the creative power of sexuality: "at thirty, nothing had changed." She lives in a "girl's club" (p. 38) where she acts as a "maiden aunt" to the younger girls. She lacks all sexual definition; to use Lawrence's term, she has no "blood-consciousness" but instead has "a profound distaste for sex" based on the "things she did not care to remember" (p. 40) about her parents' intimacies. Mary has no awareness of what is missing until she overhears other people speaking of her lack of sexual interest; then, she feels "hollow inside, empty" (p. 45). Most important, Lessing states; "she knew so little about herself" (p. 46). Social pressures rather than desire for connection lead Mary to accept Dick

Turner as her husband. The young farmer becomes a focus for her own emptiness, "all her restlessness, her vague feelings of inadequacy, centered on him" (p. 51). Dick fell in love with an image of a woman he saw in the reflected light of a cinema; Mary fell in love with Dick as an antidote to her emptiness. Each used the other as a vessel for his own projections and each encountered only a reflection of his own inadequacies instead of a vital otherness.

The reality of their marriage, their physical union, shattered their projected images of each other without providing any real connection. Mary "was able maternally to bestow the gift of herself on this humble stranger, and remain untouched"; Dick was "left feeling let down and insulted without having anything tangible to complain of" (p. 57). Instead of vital, blood-connection, each remained isolate; the archetypal feminine in Mary was still unawakened, and its masculine counterpart in Dick denied.

Dick is unable to articulate his disappointment in the relationship; he merely waits, patiently, for her to accept him. "And all this time he treated her like a brother, for he was a sensitive man, and was waiting for her to turn to him of her own accord. The relief she was unable to hide that his endearments were no more than affectionate hurt him deeply, but he still thought: It will come right in the end" (p. 65). Because she could not

accept him as a man, their relationship regresses to a more primary level; she mothers him, never accepting Dick as an equal and a mate. Minor irritations develop into "another of those little scenes which comforted and soothed her: he apologizing, abasing himself, and she forgiving him" (p. 75). The lack of mature connection between them gives added impetus to the trivial complaints each has about the other; Dick's irritation focuses on her inability to manage the servants, Mary's on his inability to put the farm on a sound economic basis. Instead of awakening the archetypal feminine within her, Dick begins to arouse Mary's negative animus.¹⁰ She begins to nag him constantly about the minor irritations of her existence; and she begins to speak to him in a voice not her own. "It was taken direct from her mother, when she had had those scenes over money with her father" (p. 83).

Mary tries desperately to maintain a relationship with Dick based on a respect for him as a breadwinner, "as a man she paid no attention to him, she left him out of account altogether. As a farmer she respected him. She respected his ruthless driving of himself, his absorption in his work. ...In her feeling for him in relation to his work was admiration, even affection" (p. 89). Mary has, clearly, substituted money for love. D. H. Lawrence in a letter to John Middleton Murry, exposed the reasons for this kind of substitution: "A woman unsatisfied," he wrote, "must have luxuries.

But a woman who loves a man would sleep on a board....You've tried to satisfy Katherine with what you could earn for her, give her: and she will only be satisfied with what you are." When Mary forces herself to face Dick's inadequacies at making money, even this minor admiration for him ceases. Dick continues to dream of making a profit from his farm thereby setting things right with Mary until she becomes aware of the fact that these are only dreams and gives vent to her fury and frustration.

At this point, unable to control herself and hating herself for it, Mary lost her temper--lost it finally and destructively. Even as she raged against him, her feeling was of cold self-condemnation because she was giving him the satisfaction of seeing her thus....She raged and wept and swore, till at last she was too weak to stand, and remained lolling in the corner of the sofa, sobbing, trying to get her breath. And Dick did not hitch up his pants, start to whistle, or look like a harried little boy. He looked at her for a long time as she sat there, sobbing; and then said sardonically, "O. K. boss" (p. 96).

Mary's rage, her conviction of her own rightness, is typical of the negative animus. Mary is substituting the voice of her own negative and masculine side for the masculinity she has denied in her husband. Jung has noted that the animus is in evidence when a woman speaks in this hard tone of absolute conviction. "When such a conviction is preached with a loud, insistent, masculine voice or imposed on others by means of brutal emotional scenes, the underlying masculinity in a woman is easily recognized. However, even in a woman who is outwardly very feminine the animus can be an

equally hard, inexorable power. One may suddenly find oneself up against something in a woman that is obstinate, cold, and completely inaccessible."¹¹ Dick's "O.K. Boss" is an ironic acknowledgement of Mary's dominance. His own masculinity was no match for the power of her negative animus. This acknowledgement of the true relationship between them is the climax of the novel. Once their relationship has been established on the basis of this negative principle, any hope of creative masculine and feminine interaction is destroyed and the Turners move slowly toward mutual destruction in a relationship best described as one of animosity.

Nonetheless, there is an indication that Dick may have been saved from destruction by the vitality he derived from working on the land. He had organic connections to the living world through the cycles of growth and regrowth on his farm. Mary's insistence that the farm be made economically sound denied him this last real connection. "She was looking at the farm from outside, as a machine for making money: that was how she regarded it" (p. 129). Cosmic connections through the land were Dick's centers; by failing to recognize this genuine value--the vitality he derived from life in the cycles of the seasons--Mary ultimately denied Dick all life. He was made to feel "lost and blank, without support for his life" (p. 132).

Mary, we are told, "exerted her will to influence him" into making money out of the land. Another of Lawrence's

basic premises is operative here, for he saw will, or "mind-consciousness," as being the antipode to creative "blood-consciousness." Mary needed a man who would not be influenced by her will, but one who would believe in himself enough to stand up to her. "She needed a man stronger than herself, and she was trying to create one out of Dick. If he had genuinely, simply, because of the greater strength of his purpose, taken the ascendancy over her, she would have loved him, and no longer hated herself for becoming tied to a failure" (p. 134). Lawrence notes that a woman fights a man hardest when she realizes that he has lost his strength of purpose: "A woman does not fight a man for his love," he wrote, "she fights him because she knows, instinctively, he cannot love. He has lost his peculiar belief in himself, his instinctive faith in his own life-flow, and so he cannot love. He cannot."¹² Mary assesses her inability to love Dick in the same terms: "He was all to pieces. He lacked that thing in the center that should hold them together. And had he always been like that? Really she didn't know" (p. 145).

To attempt an answer to Mary's question, Dick, it is safe to assume, had the potential to expand his already operative connections to the land had he not married a woman who denied his masculinity and denigrated his love of the land when it did not provide economic success. The fault, then, is primarily Mary's, for she short-circuited the flow between

them, until they burned each other out. Mary, from the beginning of the novel, is shown to lack all connections to other people and has no awareness of the fulfillment she could experience as a loving woman, confronting her archetypal feminine being.

Mary's psychological condition, her lack of connection to the feminine self, is reflected in the patterns of imagery used throughout the novel. Mary's relationship to the natural world, to the earth, to the farm, and particularly to the sun, are symbols of her relationship to her inner being. As the novel progresses, her movement through an increasingly hostile landscape reflects her lack of connection with her psychic roots. Although Mary is, at first, attracted by the beauty of the countryside, "finding it strange and lovely with the dull green foliage, the endless expanses of tawny grass shining gold in the sun, and the vivid arching blue sky," (p. 60) she shortly comes to resent the same sky and sun, recoiling from the heat, the trilling cicadas and the heat lizards crawling over the baking rocks (p. 70). Mary's increasing dislike of the sun becomes an image of her rejection of the archetypal masculine, the creative principle. Rejecting the creative power that she could obtain from this masculine principle in nature or through her husband, she becomes instead a shrill virago, her negative animus venting itself on her husband and servants. Symbolically, as her negative animus grows, the sun becomes a weakening heat,

which Mary feels is trying to destroy her. "As time passed, the heat became an obsession. She could not bear the sapping, undermining waves that beat down from the iron roof" (p. 73).

The store, in addition to its other meanings, is used as a symbol of Mary's condition and helps to focus on her problems with Dick. His schemes to make money take on an ironic twist when he arranges to set up a kaffir store on his farm. Since Mary has substituted luxuries for love and maternal pity for sexual fulfillment, no better thrust at her inadequacies could be imagined than to have her work as a storekeeper to the blacks she resented. It is in this unholy center that Mary's emptiness is demonstrated, once again. Not only has she rejected the archetypal masculine in her relationship to her husband, but she has denied her own maternal nature as well.

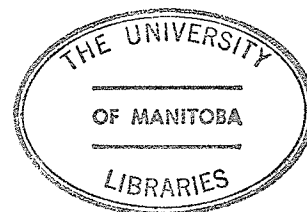
Ironically, the archetypal feminine is thrust at Mary by the black women and their children: "If she disliked native men, she loathed the women. She hated the exposed fleshiness of them....Above all, she hated the way they suckled their babies, with their breasts hanging down for everyone to see; there was something in their calm satisfied maternity that made her blood boil. 'Their babies hanging on to them like leeches,' she said to herself shuddering, for she thought with horror of suckling a child" (p. 99). Facing these living and symbolic reminders of her own failure

as a woman, Mary lets the store fall into ruin and regresses to daydreaming about the "beautiful lost time when she worked in an office and lived as she pleased" (p. 101). Instead of confronting herself and her inadequacies as a woman, she runs away from the farm in a futile attempt to regain her youth and the time of her virginal isolateness.

Mary's failure to regain the life she had left when she married could have forced her to come to terms with her life and her marriage when she returned to the farm. Dick's illness, shortly after her return, however, brings out instead all of her worst qualities. During his illness, she is forced to supervise the workers and to assume Dick's role as foreman. She is, we are told, "exhilarated by the unfamiliar responsibility, the sensation of pitting her will against the farm" (p. 116). In this situation, Mary's negative masculinity comes into its own. Not only does she attempt to dominate the workers with her masculine will, but she assumes the outward trappings of maleness as well. In the most telling symbolism of the novel, Mary, as "boss lady" carries on her arm a "long sjambok" with which she intimidates the workers. While her husband had no need of such a symbol and left it hanging on the wall, she "carried the long thong of leather looped round one wrist. It gave her a feeling of authority, and braced her against the waves of hatred that she could feel coming from the gang of natives....And, really, she liked it. The sensation of being

boss over perhaps eighty black workers gave her new confidence; it was a good feeling, keeping them under her will, making them do as she wanted" (pp. 117-18). With the assumption of a masculine role, the voice of Mary's animus takes on a new tone. She speaks, once again, in a voice not her own, but it is no longer the voice of her mother nagging her father about money. She now uses the voice of her father directly. Reprimanding the natives, she discovers that "the phrases of this lecture come naturally to her lips: she did not have to look for them in her mind. She had heard them so often from her father, when he was lecturing his native servants, that they welled up from the part of her brain that held her earliest memories" (p. 120). The archetypal repetition, unavoidable in this case, is complete.

It becomes obvious in her attitude toward the workmen that Mary's hatred and desire to impose her will upon them is an outgrowth of her smoldering resentment of her husband's weakness. During the earlier problems with her household servants, it is made explicit that her dislike of the blacks is a sublimation of her feelings toward her husband. "For the sake of their life together, she had to smother her dislike of him because of the way he had behaved, but then, it was not so easy to smother; it was put against the account of the native who had left, and, indirectly, against all natives" (p. 84). Ultimately, her



resentment of the native men is based on her denial of the archetypal masculine in her husband, as her hatred of the women is founded on her own inadequate feminine principle. The void created by the lack of relationship to these archetypes is readily filled by her negative animus, which takes full control when she assumes her husband's duties. Because her masculinity is only a compensation, Mary resents the reminders of the living maleness of the workers: "she hated their half-naked, thick-muscled black bodies stooping in the mindless rhythm of their work. She hated their sullenness, their averted eyes when they spoke to her, their veiled insolence; and she hated more than anything, with a violent physical repulsion, the heavy smell that came from them, a hot, sour animal smell" (p. 121). This attitude causes her to over-react to the most masculine of the natives when she imagines in him a threat to her authority and her masculine image: "she saw in his eyes that sullen resentment, and--what put the finishing touch to it--amused contempt. Involuntarily she lifted her whip and brought it down across his face in a vicious swinging blow. She did not know what she was doing" (p. 125). The whip gives her only a momentary ascendancy, for almost immediately, she becomes aware of his strength and masculinity. "He was a great hulk of a man, taller than any of the others, magnificently built, with nothing on but an old sack tied round his waist. As she stood there,

frightened, he seemed to tower over her....Then she saw him make a sudden movement, and recoiled, terrified; she thought he was going to attack her. But he only wiped the blood off his face with a big hand that shook a little" (pp. 125-26). The inadequacy of Mary's masculine persona is made quite apparent in this simple confrontation; but, in spite of the sterility of her masculine side, when Dick is well again she gives up only the outward symbols of power. She reverts to nagging, to dominating her husband by the logic of her animus once more, and drives him to put the farm on a sound economic base.

The sterile domination of the farm by economic principles, and the driving of Dick by Mary's will, grind to a halt with the failure of the tobacco crop. Symbolically, the crop that would have made them rich is destroyed by drought: the land raped for profit dries up and yields no crop at all. The loss of the crop is the final blow to Mary. From this point, she merely drifts, virtually will-less and only half-alive: she feels "as if a soft rottenness were attacking her bones" (p. 139). Mary tries to ward off the death-drift by asking Dick for a child but it is too late for that solution. "He saw she was desiring a child for her own sake, and that he still meant nothing to her, not in any real way" (p. 141). The sterile wasteland of their farm and their relationship cannot support life. With the failure of the farm and the awareness of

his true relationship with Mary, Dick's destruction is also virtually complete. Mary watches him grow impatient with the natives until finally he begins to hate the land and its cycles which have trapped him. Mary's condition becomes more extreme, her lassitude and headaches are amplified by the heat of the sun that now saps her strength completely. "And now she gave way. All day she sat numbly on the sofa with her eyes shut, feeling the heat beating in her brain" (p. 148).

The mutual disintegration of Dick and Mary is brought to a climax when Moses, the native she had struck with her whip, is hired as a house servant. Symbolically, Moses is at home with all the elements from which Mary recoils. He would, for example, stand idly "under the unshaded force of the sun which seemed not to affect him" (p. 151). Ultimately Moses becomes invested with all the power of the unconscious life which Mary had repressed. Coming upon him washing himself one day, she recoils, feeling "as if she had put her hand upon a snake" (p. 152). Schleuter has discussed the Freudian implications of the snake here; however, Mary's revulsion from the black man as snake is not a purely sexual aversion. The snake can be interpreted as a symbolic phallus but it is also, in Jungian theory, a reminder of the lost instinctual life, a symbol against which Mary's relationship to the world within can be measured. Moses, like the snake, reminds Mary of the

archetypal world she had rejected.

As Moses grows in power over Mary, as her projections invest him with increasing strength, she drifts slowly toward insanity. She feels as if she were "a battleground for two contending forces" (p. 156) as the final bits of her will struggle against her embodied unconscious. Her mind, "nine-tenths of the time was a soft aching blank" (p. 157) and at other times her mind ceases functioning altogether. Her animus often speaks through her directly; she is not even aware the the voice she hears is her own. She disintegrates completely and rejects herself, her life, and all she has become: "the sound of that soft, disjointed, crazy voice was as terrifying as the sight of herself in the mirror had been. She was afraid, jerked back into herself, shrinking from the vision of herself talking like a mad woman in the corner of the sofa" (p. 158).

Mary begins to live in a world peopled only by her own projections. As her conscious mind breaks down, Moses becomes more and more dominant, and the masculine force she denied to her husband becomes a destructive power when projected onto her black servant. Moses is able, by virtue of her projections, to assert himself in ways that Dick could not. He commands Mary "like a father," asserts his will over her, and does not respond to the "cold biting voice" (p. 161) of her animus. She begins to feel "hopelessly in his power" drawn by a kind of "dark attraction"

and at last is forced into a complete resignation of her authority (p. 163). By denying the creative power of the archetypal masculine, Mary is forced to succumb to its power as destroyer.

The destructive masculine principle of Mary's unconscious also dominates her sleep. Twice, she dreams of the native touching her, standing over her "powerful and commanding" (p. 164). She also dreams of her father, holding her struggling mother in his arms, and later holding Mary in a smothering embrace against the beery front of his trousers.¹³ These dreams all emphasize, once more, the physical reality of the archetypal masculinity she rejected. In her relationship with Moses, Mary's animus is insignificant compared to his powerful physical dominance; so in her dream she has her face pressed against the genuine maleness she had denied. These images coalesce in the dream in which Moses and her father become one figure who approaches and touches her over the body of her dead husband. It is significant that the social roles--father, servant--are of no significance. Both are equally menacing and are seen as one person because of the quality she has resented in both, namely their masculinity. "He approached, slowly, obscene and powerful, and it was not only he, but her father who was threatening her. They advanced together, one person, and she could smell, not the native smell, but the unwashed smell of her father....It was the voice of the African

she heard. He was comforting her because of Dick's death, consoling her protectively; but at the same time it was her father, menacing and horrible who touched her" (p. 174).

Weakened by nightmares, psychologically dominated when awake, Mary is able to stave off Moses' power only by using the strength of another man, the overseer, to come between them. By this time, however, it is too late; there is nothing left of the Turners to salvage. Their psychic destruction, resulting from their inability to establish a true psychic relatedness, took place long before Mary's death or Dick's madness. Mary comes to realize that the overseer cannot compensate for a weakness she has within. Her dependence on his aid seems to her a "weak reliance on a human being who should not be expected to take the responsibility for her " (p. 212).

The final pages of the novel utilize all the images of the wasteland to indicate the terrible sterility when the creative interaction between archetypal masculine and feminine is denied. In psychological terms, the psyche that rejects the creativity of its archetypal heritage is shown to be forced to submit to it in a destructive form. All these elements are embodied in the image of the sun, once again, as its intensive power continues to obsess Mary. There is nothing left of her, we are told, "but one thought: that between her and the angry sun was a thin strip of blistering iron; that between her and the

fatal darkness was a short strip of daylight" (p. 206). The store as symbol appears once more, but it is now ruined, as void as the life Mary and Dick had tried to establish around this profane center. In her wanderings, Mary believes she sees Moses standing behind the empty counter in the store, a pointed reminder of the instinctual life that should have been at the core of their existence.

Moses as symbol of the instinctual life is the appropriate avenging force to take Mary's life, and he does so almost without conscious purpose. He is omnipresent in the last pages, waiting everywhere in the darkness to take revenge on Mary. Mary's projections are central to her death; she makes no effort to protect herself from Moses but faces with a blank inevitability the fact that he will destroy what little remains of her as he had already destroyed her will. Drawn by that same "dark attraction" she had always felt for him, Mary at last succumbs, moving out into the darkness, into Moses' arms and the "long curving shape lifted above his head" (p. 216). With a psychological and symbolic inevitability, Moses becomes an image of a Greek Kouretes, an avenging fertility demon with a crescent sword, who sacrifices Mary for her denial of the organic connections between man, woman and cosmos. After weeks of heat and drought, Mary is struck down in the midst of thunder. Significantly, the coming of rain to the parched wasteland does not take place until she has perished in the dust.

In conclusion, the symbolic structure and Lawrencean content of this novel indicate that the psychological and archetypal realms are at least as important as the colour bar or the capitalist social system in understanding the causes of the Turners' destruction. While Lessing's interest in the world within does not develop significantly until she has exhausted the thematic possibilities of political action in the Martha Quest series, it is present, nonetheless, as a basic element in her handling of characterization in this first novel.

As stated earlier, the two main elements of Lessing's career, Marxism and psychology, are held in a curious balance here. In subsequent novels, these elements are never so thoroughly integrated again. While Marxist analysis, therefore, is equipped to deal with the social aspects of this novel, the psychological patterns which are so important in developmental terms must also be considered. Lessing has indicated here that the world within has its own dynamics which are affected only superficially by the political structure. The societal pressures are, ultimately, as insignificant as the ant-heap beside which Moses stands on the closing page of the novel, waiting for the instruments of white justice to descend upon him. Moses has been invested with the archetypal power of the destroyer and takes Mary's life for causes which transcend time or history, thereby making the attempts of the police to deal with his

"crime" appear superficial. While the wheels of justice grind on, and society attempts to affix the blame in terms it can understand, Moses, symbolically, stands apart and waits, "staring straight into the sun" (p. 26).

Notes: The Grass Is Singing

¹ Michele Wender Zak, "The Grass Is Singing: A Little Novel about the Emotions," ConL 14 (Autumn 1973), 481-90.

² Doris Lessing, Going Home (London, 1957), pp. 17-18.

³ Webb, p. 15.

⁴ Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook (New York, 1962), p. 287, and p. 525.

⁵ M. Parkhomenko and L. Myasnikov, Socialist Realism in Literature and Art (Moscow, 1971), p. 50.

⁶ Paul Schlueter, The Novels of Doris Lessing (Carbon-dale, 1973).

⁷ D. H. Lawrence, Apocalypse (London, 1932), p. 224.

⁸ Doris Lessing, The Grass Is Singing (London, 1950), p. 32. Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

⁹ Cf. Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (Princeton, 1971), p. 12.

¹⁰ For a complete discussion of the animus, see M. Von Franz, "The Process of Individuation" in Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl Jung (London, 1964), 198-207.

¹¹ Von Franz, p. 198.

¹² D. H. Lawrence, A Selection From Phoenix, ed. A. A. M. Inglis (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 375.

¹³ Paul Schlueter sees this dream as a "symbolic fellatio" (p. 16) and therefore an indication of Mary's fear of

sex. I see the dream, instead, as another indication of Mary's fear of the archetypal masculine, which includes sex, of course, but also includes the ideas of power, dominance, and the creative and destructive masculine principle within the self. Mary's sexual problems are only the outgrowth of her more basic failure to get in touch with the archetypal masculine and feminine within.

Chapter Two

Children of Violence

As I stated in my introduction, The Grass Is Singing and the first novels of the Children of Violence series are strikingly different from Lessing's later novels. Because the alteration in Lessing's aesthetic interests occurs midway through the Children of Violence series, these five novels--Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage, A Ripple From The Storm, Landlocked, and The Four-Gated City--which trace the development of Martha Quest through half a lifetime and across two continents, are paradigmatic of the growth and development in Lessing's art. These novels were published over a period of seventeen years (1952-1969) and reflect the development of Lessing's personal, political, and aesthetic consciousness.

The shift in Lessing's perspective is reflected in her treatment of her protagonist. In the first three novels of the series, Martha Quest establishes her identity through relationship with the collective structures of society. Her personality moves and changes with the social, biological, and political pressures of her times. In the final two volumes of the series, however, and in Lessing's subsequent novels, Martha Quest and the other protagonists move in increasingly private worlds, finally existing in spite of the collective pressures, developing, but only

inwardly, as a result.

The movement in Lessing's fiction from Marxist-Realist social aesthetics to the private Jungian realm of the psyche and its symbols occurs, as has been stated, midway through the Martha Quest series. This is not to say, however, that Lessing was uninterested earlier in the psychology of her characters. As indicated in my chapter on The Grass Is Singing, Lessing explored extensively the symbolic landscape--both internal and external--which destroyed the Turners. Martha Quest also, can be discussed from the outset in psychological, including Jungian, terms. It is Lessing's emphasis on the psychology of her characters which changes in the course of the series. In the opening novels, Martha is explored, according to Lessing's stated intention, almost entirely in terms of her "relationship to the collective." This collective, in all its forms, eventually loses its influence on Martha. Martha's increasing interest in madness, psychology and the inner world assumes even greater importance with the destruction of the collective that occurs in the Epilog to The Four-Gated City. The destruction of the world by war heralds the end of Lessing's interest in political and social problems. This collapse of the outer world parallels the beginnings of Lessing's explorations of the world within. The collectives and their ability to mold the individual are still present, but exist only as negative symbols in the psyche.

In order to understand these developmental changes more clearly, it is essential to offer some consideration of the author's political and social aesthetics at the outset of her career. At the time Lessing began to write the Children of Violence series, she had been active in politics in Rhodesia and England for many years. In 1957, she stated that she was a Marxist, a "committed artist,"¹ one who believed "in the class analysis of society and therefore of art." Lessing asserted, however, a belief in the artist as a visionary, "an architect of the soul," not as a mere "propagandist for any political party" (p. 6). She stated also that she believed the "basic ethical conflict of Communism to be the basic problem of the committed artist as well--namely, "what is due to the collective and what to the individual conscience" (p. 12). That this personal and political problem was also at the heart of the Martha Quest novels was made explicit when Lessing angrily asserted that the central message of these novels had been overlooked. "Not one critic,"² she wrote, "has understood what I thought would be obvious from the first chapter, where I was at pains to state the theme very clearly: that this is a study of the individual conscience in its relations with the collective" (p. 14).

Lessing indicated that she recognized the dangers to the artist of such a political commitment. She spoke of the contemporary "reaction against socialist art jargon."

The reaction, she said, "is so powerful and so prompt that one has only to stand upon a public platform and say that one still believes in the class analysis of society and therefore of art, in short that one is a marxist (sic), for nine-tenths of the audience immediately to assume that one believes novels should be simple tracts about factories or strikes or economic injustice" (p. 3). No writer of tracts, Lessing instead subscribes to Lukacs' description of the aesthetics of Marxist-Realism. Lukacs writes: "In the Marxist conception, the triumph of Realism implies a complete break with that vulgar conception of literature and art which appraises creative works mechanically in terms of a writer's political attitudes according to a so-called class psychology."³ Realism, for Lessing, transcends any other "ism" and springs from a "strongly-held view of life." Moreover, she writes, "literature must be committed" (p. 6); the writer who has a feeling of social responsibility "must be a humanist and must feel himself as an instrument of change for good or bad" (p. 6). Lukacs notes that, while not the first to do so, Marx and Engels made "humanism the crux of an aesthetic outlook" (p. 86).

Lessing was trying to integrate her personal vision with a political aesthetic. She saw the position of the committed writer as tenuously wending a way between Marxist and Western art, between the view of man as isolated, unable to communicate, and the view of man as "a collective

man with a collective conscience" (p. 12). The balance, the point of rest between these poles is "the writer's recognition of man, the responsible individual, voluntarily submitting his will to the collective, but never finally, and insisting on making his own personal and private judgements before every act of submission" (p. 12). Lessing is exploring both the need for commitment to something greater than oneself as well as the dangers of such commitment. Lessing refers to Marxism as an attempt at a "world mind, a world ethic"⁴ and was strongly attracted to the unity this suggests. In these novels, the author explores both the need for connections and the dangers of an "inner loyalty felt as something much greater than one's self" (p. 12).

It is precisely this fine line between collectivity and individuality that most concerns Lessing in the early Martha Quest novels. For while Martha's individual voice asserts an independent, nearly feminist, and personal quest, she is, in her dialectic with the society around her, an example of the "type" as described in Engels' principles of Marxist-Realism. This "type" is a specific term in Marxist criticism. Lukacs defines Engels' type as characterized by "the convergence and intersection of all the dominant aspects of that dynamic unity through which genuine literature reflects life--a vital and contradictory unity--all the most important social, moral, and spiritual contradictions of a

time" (p. 78). The type, Lukacs notes, is the means by which the individual and the collective can be synthesized by the creative imagination. "Through the representation of a type, the concrete, universal and essential qualities, what is enduring in man and what is historically determined, and what is individual and what is socially universal, combine in typical art" (p. 78). Understanding Martha as such a "type" prevents a misreading of the emphasis that seems to be placed upon her as an individual. Lessing does not wish the reader to become completely involved in Martha's rebellions or reactionary assertions any more than with the mindless collectives that confront her. As Marxist art, these novels are presenting a dialectical relationship, founded on contradictions, between the individual and the various collective agencies which confront the individual. In her later novels, when Lessing becomes aware of the fact that all quests are necessarily journeys within, that the political and social pressures are externalized facets of the psyche, and that all meaningful collectivities lie within the collective unconscious, her approach to Martha expands beyond any codification of existing aesthetics, including Marxist-Realism.

Thus, Martha is most clearly a "type" in the first novel of the series in which she is exposed, as a child, to the all-pervasive influence of the collectives in the adult world. Here Martha weighs her individuality and her need

to submit against all the powerful external pressures: social, moral, spiritual, biological and political.

I. Martha Quest (1952)

The first volume of Children of Violence portrays Martha as a vulnerable adolescent set adrift in a sea of collective pressures disguised as social relationships. Lessing analyzes the basis of the family, friendship, love, and marriage in collective attitudes as Martha asserts a shaky individuality against these conventional structures. Martha's emotions, the primary means by which she knows herself, are adolescent and based on reactions rather than actions. Through Martha, Lessing is exploring the social conditioning of certain emotions. She demonstrates here the basic Marxist premise that emotions are a product of society. It is the excellence of Lessing's art which enables us to be distanced both from Martha's predictable responses and from the collectives demanding these responses, in order that we can examine each critically. Martha's fragile individuality is being tried by all the powers of social conformity. Martha's "quest" is, after all, an archetypal one, a search for a sense of self in the midst of powerful, conditioned attitudes and emotions.

In the first chapter of the novel, Lessing defines many of the fundamental forces against which Martha is

rebellious, as well as the means by which Martha will attempt to assert her basic individuality. Lessing, very skillfully, makes us aware that Martha's individuality is not based on inner strength or self-knowledge; rather, Martha simply asserts herself in a direction opposite to whatever pressure she confronts. Any individuality she has stems not from an inner motivation, but rather from an adolescent tendency to resist.¹

Our very first view of Martha establishes the stubborn but negative individuality she has developed in reaction to her mother. In a positional metaphor, Lessing describes a scene of generational tensions. Martha's mother and Mrs. Van Rensberg, a neighbor, are sitting carefully screened from the afternoon sun, while Martha is sitting in the full sunlight if only because that way her mother will find "it necessary to protest at half hourly intervals that Martha would get sunstroke if she did not come into the shade."² This is typical of Martha's attitudes throughout, for Mrs. Quest is the voice of the first collective pressures with which Martha must deal. Lessing has skillfully analyzed the pressures which a mother can exert upon an adolescent girl, as well as the kind of social attitudinizing which passes for motherly wisdom.

Mrs. Quest is "a matron," nothing else. Her conversations with Mrs. Van Rensberg consist of "certain rites in the talk of matrons." Martha, as a matron's daughter

"was merely expected to play the part 'young girl' against their own familiar roles" (p. 8). Martha feels herself continually pressured by these matrons and their attitudes, and her resistance to this domination has taken the form of resistance to all she thinks her mother is and all her mother believes. Martha has no sense of herself, but knows only that she does not want anything that her mother wants for her.

In this reactionary mood, Martha compromises not only such small things as her physical comfort, but she allows her intellectual development to be influenced by negative reactions to her mother, as well. Martha is, for example, reading Havelock Ellis simply because her mother had commented that Havelock Ellis was "disgusting." Martha admits that she is dominated by a "fatal demon," which demands that "at the slightest remark from her mother she was impelled to take it up, examine it, and hand it back like a challenge" (p. 11). Mrs. Quest is not easily thwarted, however. When Martha attempts to elude her mother's dominance by reading books of which Mrs. Quest does not approve, Mrs. Quest re-establishes supremacy by taking control of Martha's education, thereby subsuming such a slight deviation as a single book.

Mrs. Quest is well aware that any education which Martha might receive would have to compete with the years-long accretion of maternal folk-wisdom to which Martha has

been exposed. The conversation between Mrs. Quest and Mrs. Van Rensberg is a typical example. Their talk is an educational ritual of the social group to which they belong, rather than a private discussion. Martha has been exposed for many years to this verbal folklore, in which collective traditions about love, marriage and the family filter down to the younger generation. The women do not converse in any ordinary way but instead exchange "phases of their respective traditions." Each repeats to the other tales of her own courtship and marriage interspersed with such moral truisms as: "A girl must make men respect her;" or "A man will never marry a girl he does not respect." Martha's response is to assert a basic feminism wherein she calls the attitudes of these women "loathsome, bargaining and calculating" (p. 12), but this standard feminist stance is, once again, a reaction rather than a conviction.

Martha's reaction to her mother and societal conditioning has left her in a kind of clear space, in which she has established what she will not be, but not as yet what she will be. Sitting beneath a tree, aligning her spine with its trunk in an assertion of her link with nature if not with society, Martha repeats, almost as a kind of charm, that "she would not be like Mrs. Van Rensberg, a fat and earthy housekeeping woman; she would not be bitter and nagging like her mother. But then who," she asks, "was she

to be like? Her mind turned toward the heroines she had been offered, and discarded them. There seemed to be a gap between herself and the past" (pp. 16-17). This creates a serious difficulty for Martha; adolescent rejection of the past, while preventing domination by collective opinion, will not, on the other hand, enable Martha to align herself with the more valuable gifts of the past. Martha, in effect, must begin anew, without the lessons of tradition.

The collective has defences against a rebelling individual, however, for Martha's opinions or reaction, no matter how violent, are dismissed by the women as being "part of a phase," or as Mrs. Van Rensberg asserts: "it's the age" (p. 13). Martha is very aware of these pressures and rejects firmly any suggestion that there may be a determined pattern to her behaviour. This accounts in part for her dismissal not only of tradition but of the textbook knowledge she has met with in books given her by her mentors, the Cohen boys. For Martha, these textbooks represent an inherited and institutionalized body of knowledge. She rejects the work of these "experts" in psychology, history, economics, or politics with the same violence with which she rejected her mother's folk wisdom and with the same awareness of any conditioning influences that might indicate a determined pattern to her behaviour. Her reaction is described as "a twisting spasm of spite against these cold-minded mentors who so persistently analyzed her

state and in so many volumes" (p. 14).

Forced to begin anew, Martha discovers within herself a "detached observer" who reacts instantly to any pronouncements about Martha and her time. She learns to maintain an ironic perspective in the face of social dogma. When the books tell her: "she was adolescent, and therefore bound to be unhappy; British, and therefore uneasy and defensive; in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, and therefore inescapably beset with problems of race and class; female, and obliged to repudiate the shackled women of the past" (pp. 14-15),³ Martha responds by attempting to set herself outside of these patterns. She asks: "If we know it, why do we have to go through the painful business of living it?" She feels that it is "time to move on to something new, the act of giving names to things should be enough" (p. 15). Martha also rejects a significant and growing "feeling of fate, of doom" that emanates from all the authorities. In short, Martha rejects the view of history as unalterable, of life as conditioned, and of freedom as adherence to any scheme of conventional morality.

Requiring some support for her sense of self in the midst of so many subtle pressures, Martha attempts to assert her individuality by establishing a rather rigid and exalted idealism. On a rather childish level, she self-righteously imagines social relationships that are, if superior to nothing else, at least more ideal than those of her mother.

Looking at the exchange of tradition that passes for friendship between her mother and their neighbor, Martha asserts her own definition of friendship in which "actual friends are but distant relations to those of whom we are pledged" (p. 12). Real friends, Martha feels, but does not articulate, should exist somewhere beyond the forces of conditioning, just as real love lies apart from the habits of her parents and real knowledge away from the deterministic theories in her textbooks. Martha's problem is that she has not yet discovered the inner world where these "distant relations," these ideal forms, reside, but continues to search for them in the social world.

Martha's development of the "detached observer" and tendency toward daydreaming of idealized structures are indications of a healthy if undeveloped individuality. This is also demonstrated in the way in which Martha perceives her landscape and her own position in this landscape. Martha's relationship to the land, the farm and the veld assume one of the fundamental patterns of psychological assertion--the mandala.⁴ One of these configurations occurs when Martha establishes a "center" within a landscape otherwise "hardly marked by man" (p. 8). Martha's perception of the landscape moving off toward the veld with her house in the center assumes the symmetrical dimensions that characterize the mandala.

The house raised high on its eminence into the blue and sweeping currents of air, was in the centre of a vast basin, which was bounded by mountains. In front, there were seven miles to the Dumphries Hills; west seven miles of rising ground to the Oxford range; seven miles east, a long swelling mountain which was named Jacob's Burg. Behind there was no defining chain of kopjes, but the land traveled endlessly, without limit and faded into a bluish haze, like that hinterland to the imagination we cannot do without--the great declivity was open to the north (pp. 8-9).⁵

Martha requires the sense of containment and order that the mandala provides, for without such structuring she suffers from agoraphobia. She feels caught between the vastness of the landscape and the repetitions of patterns; she is lost between emptiness and stale traditions with only the frailest beginnings of a structure of individuality to offset the forces which crowd in upon her.

In an effort to fuse her individuality to social forms, to integrate the mandala of the veld with the social patterns in her ordinary life, Martha begins to imagine a mythical, four-gated city. Through her vision of the four-gated city, an ideal social order is united with a healthy individuality. Martha imagines a noble, raceless and culturally-integrated city which transforms the mandala, her individual landscape, into a social plan. In adolescent fashion, however, Martha's city excludes her parents, in fact, "most of the people of the district are excluded from the golden city because of their pettiness of vision and small understanding" (p. 17).

It is important to notice that this city, this symbol which reappears in each volume until its completion in volume five of the series is, at the outset, a social symbol. In Lessing's Marxist-Realist novels, particularly in Martha Quest, salvation from collective pressures can occur when an idealized political vision comes to fruition. Martha's vision is of a Utopian society, and this is, above all, a social ideal.

We are provided with a strong symbolic contrast in the first chapter of the novel between the ideal city and the reality of Martha's world. Martha's house represents the reality of her situation and acts as a social symbol in the same way the store does in The Grass Is Singing. Sitting in the center of a landscape, a strong position, the structure is weak nonetheless. It is built "native style with mud walls and thatched roof, and had been meant to last two seasons." It is a house "precarious and shambling, but faithful, for it continued to remain upright against all probability" (pp. 20-21). Martha feels the same way about the vestiges of "empire," the social system imported from Britain which was intended to last only temporarily. The place where Martha lives, and all it represents seem to her "temporary" somehow, and "never, not for a moment, considered as home" (p. 22). Martha's room in the family home is more fragile than the house itself. It seems a precarious shelter from the vast landscape beyond her window. She

needs something more solid with which to shelter herself as she feels more and more isolated and alienated. Using another common symbol, Lessing describes Martha's looking-glass as too small, for she can see herself in it only in fragments.

As a refuge from this sense of fragmentation and transience, Martha relies entirely upon her imagination. Besides the golden city, the Utopian social vision, Martha seeks unity and transcendence in a more personal sense. She experiences a transitory state of emotion, a vision, beyond consciousness which "caused her to forget everything else" (p. 60). She is unable to decide whether the feelings elicited by this vision are pleasurable or painful since both are involved. What is most important to her is that this experience is one of "integration" in which she "becomes one" with the natural world. The joys of transcendence are limited, however, and once gone, they leave Martha with a knowledge of "futility; that is, what was futile was her own idea of herself and her place in the chaos of matter." From illumination to despair, from idealism to defeat, Martha never loses her ability to respond to the cross-currents of her time, as she seeks to integrate that which is always fragmented. It is no wonder that Martha finds herself in a "confusion of violent feelings" (p. 62).

Lessing describes the dangers that confront the fragile adolescent individuality when social and biological

pressures are too powerful. In the second chapter of the novel, Martha's defiance and reactive assertions are forced back in upon her; she becomes a near-automaton wandering about in a "heavy trance-like state."⁶ Reacting to her parents and her culture with an imaginary tiredness and hypochondria, Martha feels "as if a spell had been put upon her" This feeling so envelopes Martha that she does not bother to take her matriculation exams while at the same time she resents the fact of her brother's fine education (p. 34) and the fact that her father's medicines (p. 25) had cost more than her schooling. Martha's environment seems to respond to her inner feelings; her house seems to "decline and lean inward" while her mother's voice murmurs "sleep, sleep...like the spell of a witch" (p. 31). Martha asserts her individuality only in response to her parents' decisions; and she reacts mechanically and arbitrarily, without any real conviction. When pressed intellectually, she merely reacts and finds herself defending not only "Jews and Kaf-firs" but "Hitler as well" (p. 33).

As Martha matures, she becomes aware of a new problem in her relationship with the collective. Society is not as organized as Martha once imagined. Not everyone presents a solid wall of conformity like that of her mother and Mrs. Van Rensberg. Instead, she finds fragmentation everywhere, a world divided by factions and class distinctions. Even the Cohen boys, with whom Martha shares a Marxist political

vision, are divided, for "Solly is a Zionist, while Joss is a Socialist" (p. 49). In the community at large, there are more divisions. Martha notes that "the district was divided into several separate communities, who shared nothing but Christian names, cards at Christmas, and a member of Parliament" (p. 53). The community consists of "the tobacco families, the Scots families, the English eccentrics, and the Dutch Afrikaans" (pp. 54-55). Unlike the vision of a unified society in Martha's golden city, these people are separated not only by culture and tradition, but by race as well. Martha finds these divisions debilitating; and "the effort of imagination needed to destroy the words black, white, nation, race exhausted her." This fragmentation works not only against society as a whole, but also against the individual for everyone must be fitted into a classification of one kind or another. Martha notes that "she could not remember a time when she had not thought of people in terms of groups, nations, or colour of skin first, and as people afterward" (p. 56). Martha's problem, which is both societal and personal, has been summarized by Micheal Thorpe: "Though she sees the colony in a 'sickness of dissolution' Martha, a child of her time and place, is infected herself" (p. 20).

Martha has a greater difficulty asserting her sense of self against the collective when its pressures are psychological and archetypal rather than conventional and social.

Lessing, however, points out the danger of collective absorption in all situations. The description of Martha's submersion in the role of "archetypal young girl" at the end of the first part of the novel, is a representative example. Invited to a dance, Martha becomes so absorbed by an image of herself as Cinderella that she is unable to recognize her escort even though "he is a boy she has known all her life" (p. 84). At the party, Martha is swept up by the crowd and loses even the individuality afforded by a role like Cinderella. The young people dancing are "transported by their common purpose into part of the large whole, the group." As part of the group, "the responsibility of being one person, alone, was taken off them" (p. 85).

In the intensity of the mating rituals described in this part of the novel, all individuality is lost; the young people ignore serious differences in personality or belief as each is submerged by the role being played. For example, Martha's escort, Billy, overlooks all too readily "the facts of her personality," particularly her political alignment with the Kaffirs, as Martha dances in his arms.

This "group power," the attraction of the peer group, is more obvious in the second section of the novel. While Martha eagerly leaves her home and family for a job in the city, because she feels that "an extraordinary, magnificent and altogether new life was beginning," in reality her job offers only new collective pressures. As the secretary of a

law firm, Martha's freedom is rigorously channeled by the economic necessities of her job and the social expectations regarding the manner in which a young girl, newly independent, must live.

Martha is faced, almost immediately, with the facts of her economic position and the limitations forced upon the "worker." The economic structure, she discovers, is full of inequalities and the workers at the bottom rung of the ladder are exploited. Martha notes not only a startling disparity between the salaries of the black office workers and the white secretaries, but also in the limited possibilities for the advancement of a woman in the work force. Mr. Cohen, Martha's employer, becomes the new spokesman for the collective, providing Martha with basic lessons about the "girl" as worker. These lessons are a series of banal conventions that Martha would have rejected vehemently had they come from Mrs. Quest. Mr. Cohen's statements that "most girls work in an office simply to pass the time till they get married," and that "there is no reason why girls should not have a good time till they get married" (p. 107) are accepted by Martha as simple facts which she herself should have noticed. These "lessons" have an effect which her mother's never did, for Martha is moved into becoming one of the "rare, efficient secretaries" extolled by Mr. Cohen.

Not only her job, but Martha's social opportunities are rigorously controlled by collective opinion. Martha's first

male acquaintance in the city, Donovan Anderson, defines himself entirely in terms of the collective. He speaks continually in the plural which refers sometimes to his mother and himself (and thereby Mrs. Quest, for Mrs. Quest and Mrs. Anderson are old friends); at other times, the "we" is all the "junior civil servants," and on other occasions, Donovan's plural is the social group which "always" goes to the Regal. Even his love-making is determined by collective expectations. They go to the Kopje by moonlight because "thats where all we boys and girls go to look at the lights and hold hands" (p. 119). Once there, Martha is informed that "we must admire the lights and feel romantic." Donovan chooses "Matty's" clothes, approves of her hair styles and ushers her to predictable and approved gatherings. Between the demands of her job and the evenings with Donovan, Martha loses any individuality and becomes the "Matty" whom Donovan has programmed.

A voice from the past moves Martha into contact with another group. At the suggestion of her old mentors, the Cohen boys, Martha attends a meeting of the Left Book Club where she encounters another kind of collective. She is struck, first, by the disparity between the intellectuals and their equally intelligent wives, who are, nonetheless, occupied more with their children than with political efforts. Still looking for models, Martha compares these women to her mother and her mother's friends, and

rejects both alternatives. Rather than selecting either conventional role, Martha decides she will be, instead, "fierce and unhappy and determined" (p. 131). In spite of the failure of this group to provide for the involvement of at least half of its members, Martha is, nonetheless, attracted by its ideology. She reads the New Statesman and Nation as eagerly as a new convert to Christianity reads the Bible, and feels herself, as a result, to be drawing closer to that elusive brotherhood of ideas of which she dreams. Martha's golden city reappears in her fantasies at this point and exhibits once again her idealistic tendencies. The people who inhabit her city continue to be more generous than those she meets in reality. Her city is a place "where people who were not at all false and cynical and disparaging, like the men she had met that afternoon, or fussy and aggressive, like the women--where people altogether generous and warm exchanged generous emotions" (p.134).

Martha's commitment, albeit limited, to the Left Book Club, sets her apart from the group to which she belonged with Donovan. Donovan resents her relationship with "the local Reds" who are "a bunch of Jews, too" (p. 138). Donovan's influence on "Matty" erodes slowly, but he does not lose her completely until she is absorbed by the larger collective at the Sports Club. Dorothy Brewster has summarized the influence of this group: "The Sports Club

could qualify as a 'collective'; its members live a group life, very much in the public eye, very good examples of 'togetherness'" (p. 106). The club, while not restricted, is patronized primarily by civil servants and secretaries. As a group, its mores are quite rigid and understood by all. The men are "wolves" and the girls are, "it was assumed, responsible for the men." Above all, "it was all so public, anything was permissible, the romances, the flirtations, the quarrels, provided they were shared. These terms, however, were never used, for words are dangerous, and there was a kind of instinctive shrinking, and embarrassment, against words of emotion, or rather, words belonging to that older culture, to which this was an attempt at providing a successor" (p. 152).

In the group, intimate personal relationships were frowned upon, marriage "was felt deeply as a betrayal" (p. 153). But should a couple persist, a marriage itself would be "swallowed whole" by the club, provided they married from the club. This substitute for brotherhood in collective approval provided for Martha a glow of seemingly "universal goodwill" (p.154) and gave her the sense of acceptance it gave those who obeyed its dictates.

Martha is caught up by a smaller group of couples in the Sports Club and yields to their pressures by spending all of her spare time with them. She responds to the group with a mixture of "boredom and pleasure," (p. 182) yet never

asserts any individual will to do anything without them. Viewing the constant round of social activities, Martha realizes a futility but cannot separate herself. "She was, in fact, suffering from the form of moral exhaustion which is caused by seeing a great many facts without knowing the cause for them, by seeing oneself as an isolated person, without origin or destination; but since the very condition of her revolt, her very existence had been that driving individualism, what could she do now" (pp. 182- 83)? Martha has polarized her experiences so that she sees only two alternatives: an isolate individuality or membership in one of the groups. Caught between two negative choices, Martha feels herself trembling with a "restless force" too powerful to be confined by either.

Rumors of war provide a support for any weakening of Martha's loyalties to the collective. The membership of the Sports Club, tending to drift apart after several years of togetherness, is bolstered by the war. Martha, too, is caught up, absorbing "highly coloured fantasies of heroism and fated death" (p. 185). In spite of herself, Martha feels locked into a collective "nostalgia," a "dreamlike, compelled amity" which carries her along in its unsettling tide into her first sexual experiments.

Although Martha rejects the fumbling advances of Perry at the Sports Club because she recognizes that his sexual attempts are merely part of the game, her first affair is

merely the result of one of her moods of reaction. Rejecting Perry, she succumbs to the charms of Adolph King, who is different from the others in that he is a Jew and in that his sexual interest is genuine rather than feigned. Martha is, however, not responding to the man, nor he to her. Martha re-organizes the inadequacies of her first sexual experience "to fit an imaginative demand already framed in her mind. Nor was she disappointed. For if the act fell short of her demand, that ideal, the-thing-in-itself, that mirage, remained untouched, quivering exquisitely in front of her....And since this was what she demanded, the man himself seemed positively irrelevant" (p. 202). Eventually, Martha's feeling is one of obligation as a result of the sexual involvement, and Adolph views Martha as a conquest to be paraded before the members of his own club. Martha feels betrayed by her sexual attraction to this man once she becomes aware of his limitations as a person. She rejects his "self-consciousness" and dislikes the way he stalks "the great for recognition" (p. 208). She sees that Adolph is playing a role--that of perpetual underdog, inviting rejection, then arousing guilt in those who respond. Once Martha becomes aware of this mechanism, Adolph's power over her begins to weaken.

In reaction to the games of Adolph and the sterility of the social life she is leading, Martha isolates herself for a while and reconsiders the relationship in terms of

her own personality. Martha recalls the feeling she had in her moment of illumination on the veld. She begins to attempt to relate her experiences to this inner yardstick. She rejects her experiences in town, her identity as "Matty" and returns to reading. As she reads, "mostly, she rejected: what she accepted she took instinctively, for it rang true with some tuning fork to guide within her; and the measure was that experience...which was the gift of her solitary childhood on the veld: that knowledge of something painful and ecstatic, something central and fixed, but flowing. It was a sense of movement, of separate things interacting and finally becoming one, but greater--it was this which was her lodestone, even her conscience" (p. 220).

While this "lodestone" has an affect on Martha's intellectual development, the biological and social pressures continue to be more powerful than her fleeting visions of transcendence. "All the time that she dreamed with a fierce hunger of escape, of doing something vital and important, the other secret pulse was beating" (p. 233). While Martha dreams of quitting her secretarial job and imagines a serious future for herself as a writer and journalist, Lessing intrudes and with authorial irony notes that "one may imagine oneself as altogether unique and extraordinary...but one behaves inevitably, inexorably, exactly like everyone else" (p. 232).

Social pressures eventually bring Martha back into the fold of the Sports Club where she meets Douglas Knowell. In Douglas, Martha feels a kinship, a sense of brotherhood based, however, only on the fact that he reads the New Statesman. Compared with the Cricketeers at the club Douglas is an intellectual; this, coupled with the sexual urgency of her age, impels Martha toward him with a sense of inevitability. Martha's sense of self is too new to stave off either her sexual needs or the social pressures, so Martha finds herself engaged, publicly, not only to Douglas, but to the collective values against which she had been struggling. "Martha was completely swept away by it all. There were occasional cold moments when she thought that she must somehow, even now, check herself on the fatal slope toward marriage...and then the fatal thought of what would happen if she did chilled her. It seemed that half the town was celebrating; she had not begun to realize how well known Douglas was; the Sports Club were magnificently marrying him off" (p. 219).

Martha's marriage to Douglas is, in her mother's words, a "proper marriage"; and in it Martha is almost totally lost. The sexuality in her marriage is determined by a reaction against her parents' Puritanism and carefully plotted by Mrs. Van der Velde's book on marriage, bought by Douglas because he "had seen it in his young married friends' bookcases," thereby insuring that he and Martha

"can't go wrong" (p.250). It is highly significant in terms of Lessing's development to be aware of the collective and social nature of this wedding. Martha's marriage is a legal and social function, not a spiritual or hierogamous union.⁷ This is made explicit in the concluding section of the novel.

Douglas and Martha, in preparation for their marriage, return to the landscape of Martha's youth. In traditional fashion, they are seeking parental approval for the wedding. The journey home reveals to Martha all the elements missing from her marriage. As she leaves the sterility of the town in which she had spent so much time, she is moved by the "naked embrace of earth and sky" and understands, if only briefly, the nature of her loss. This "frank embrace between the lifting breast of the land and the deep blue warmth of the sky," this union between male and female principle in nature, has been missing from all the relationships she has formed. "Living in towns," Martha notes, "she had forgotten this infinite interchange of earth and sky" (p. 252). Once at home, Mrs. Quest regains a lost hold over Martha as she joins her voice to all those who view marriage as a social rather than spiritual function. She assures herself that Martha is not pregnant, that Douglas has enough money, even gives up her own engagement ring to Martha out of concern for "what people will say" if she does not have one.

Surrounded on all sides by conventional pressures and an impending "proper marriage," Martha attempts to commune

for a final time with the landscape and tries to establish her sense of self in relation to it. She tries to become a point of focus, once more, within a mandala of natural processes. "She looked over the landscape of her childhood, lying dark and mysterious, to the great bulk of Jacob's Burg, and tried to get some spark of recognition from it. It was shut off from her, she could feel nothing. There was a barrier, and that barrier (she felt) was Douglas" (p. 258).

Yearning for hierogamy, for connection, for spiritual wholeness, Martha finds only dry collective conformity. "Surely she should have had to fight, face real opposition, only to emerge a victor at the end, crowned by the tearful blessings of her father and mother?" (p. 264). Hierogamy occurs only in the world of the romance in one who is in tune with the archetypal centers within. Martha's yearnings for a heroic or romantic union go unanswered in the mundane patterns of a secular culture. This is apparent in the wedding ceremony itself, for it is stripped of all beauty and meaning. The attendants and guests are all people important to Douglas' career, with Mrs. Quest on hand to be sure that everyone plays his role correctly. Devoid of blessings, the wedding is, nonetheless, rife with bureaucracy, for Martha "signed about nine different documents...in triplicate, too" (p. 269). The wedding lacks emotional catharsis, for the sexual union had already been consummated

and the spiritual union ignored. Feeling her hand thrust into Douglas' hand by Mrs. Quest in order to receive the ring, Martha asks, pointedly, "'Who's getting married, me or you?'" (p. 269). This final question is answered by Mrs. Quest herself who sighs to Mr. Maynard after the ceremony that "'It's such a relief to get your daughter properly married'" (p. 270). Martha's marriage in March, 1939, is clearly a victory for the collective, for the novel ends with Martha correctly captured, her individuality betrayed, but the social pressures satisfied.

Notes, Chapter Two: Children of Violence

¹ Lessing, Small Personal Voice, p. 3.

² After Lessing's denunciation of the critics in Declaration, virtually everyone approaching the Children of Violence series pays lip service to her statements. For example, see Dorothy Brewster, Doris Lessing, Twayne English Authors Series (New York, 1965), p. 103, and Paul Schlueter, p. 23. However, Lessing's concern with the relationship between the individual and the collective has not been firmly related to any Marxist-Realist aesthetic operative in her novels.

³ Georg Lukacs, Writer And Critic and Other Essays, ed. and trans., Arthur D. Kahn (New York, 1970), p. 85.

⁴ Cf. Lessing's "Preface to The Golden Notebook" in Small Personal Voice.

Notes, Part I: Martha Quest

¹ Since Martha has no genuine self-awareness in these opening novels, I cannot feel, as Dorothy Brewster does, that Martha's personality is consistent. Brewster writes: "Martha, from her first appearance at the age of fifteen, has a well-established identity--not fixed, of course; but one can count on it through all the experiences she goes through in the next dozen years, not to lose its main characteristics" (p. 103).

Notes: Martha Quest, Continued

² Doris Lessing, Martha Quest (London, 1965) p. 10. Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

³ Micheal Thorpe in Doris Lessing (London, 1973), feels this passage to reveal Martha's "heavy consciousness of herself--derived from books--in relation to them and the spirit of the time" (p. 20). This overlooks Martha's immediate and self-aware dismissal of the attempts of "experts" to codify her behaviour.

⁴ Edward F. Edinger, Ego and Archetype (New York, 1972), asserts that the mandala appears frequently in the drawings of adolescents (or adults in a crisis) whose ego development is weak, p. 9.

⁵ The mandala is, according to Jung, "the premonition of a center of the personality, a kind of central point within the psyche, to which everything else is related, by which everything is arranged and which is itself a source of energy. The energy of the central point is manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to become what one is." in "Concerning Mandala Symbolism," Collected Works IX, Book I, p. 367.

⁶ In "The Black Notebook" section of The Golden Notebook, Lessing writes of the young girl at the Mashopi hotel who is in the same kind of trance, based primarily on biological changes at adolescence.

Notes: Martha Quest, Continued

⁷ Hinz, op. cit., notes that one distinction between the novel and the romance is that the romance tends to view marriage as hierogamy, while the novel sees it as a social contract. It is significant that Lessing's characters who are caught up in the social problems of their times view hierogamy as something lost. Martha's experience with hierogamy occurs in Landlocked, and signals a change in Lessing's approach to her protagonist.

II. A Proper Marriage (1954)

Martha Quest ends with Martha's "proper marriage" as Mrs. Quest terms it, and the second volume of the Children of Violence continues Lessing's exploration of the relationship between the individual and the collective in terms of the fundamental human union of the title. Marriage is both a personal and a social structure, and Lessing probes the individual and collective pressures that shape, establish, and hold together this basic unit of society. Martha's marriage is, above all, a social arrangement into which she has drifted with little or no individual will. Having completed the round of engagements open to her as an independent young woman in town, the next step for Martha is, inevitably, marriage. Instead of a personal decision for marriage, however, Martha marries Douglas out of a "dragging compulsion,"¹ that begins when they meet. Martha dislikes Douglas, is repelled by him for the most part, but submerges her dislike in the "delight of other people in the marriage" (p. 45).

Martha's marriage is described as a kind of social conspiracy; she is aware of the fact that she "didn't like any of the things she had become obliged to like by the fact of marrying," but the problem is, Martha notes, she has "not been alone for five minutes since her marriage" (p. 10). Martha's individuality, her wavering sense of self, is

allowed no time for development. She has succumbed to a power beyond herself; the three month courtship and marriage are the result of something "impersonal and irresistible" (p. 69).

Martha's individuality, while not destroyed, is nonetheless quiescent; she is lulled by the pull of collective and archetypal forces more powerful than her individual will. Martha's youth, documented in the first volume, had been spent, if not in self-assertion, at least in a rejection reaction to the collective pressures around her. Now she is pliant; if nothing else, she sees the futility of her earlier revolt. Her parents and the limitations of their lives seem too unimportant to care about one way or the other. "She felt, obscurely, that the whole thing was old-fashioned. The time for dramatic revolts against parents was past; it all had a stale air." The futility of Martha's revolt is made apparent when she finds herself repeating the mistakes of her parents. She warns her husband that "it all doesn't matter. Nothing one does makes any difference, and by the time we're middle-aged we'll be as stupid and reactionary as our parents--and so it goes on, one might as well get used to it!" (p. 43).

Lessing has linked Martha's feelings of futility to a recurring symbol in the novel, the wheel at the fun fair, whose "dragging circle of lights" flickers "through her sleep like a warning" (p. 38). This wheel is a symbol of

the negative wheel of life; like the Indian samsara, or the Wheel of Fortune in the Tarot deck, it is an aimless cycle, a treadmill. The steady, monotonous revolutions of the wheel remind Martha of "a damned wedding ring." Marriage, like the wheel, presents a pre-ordained pattern of repetition, which however brightly presented, "cages" the Martha struggling to know herself. While she feels caught herself, she clings to the idea that she can break the circle by refusing to have a baby, thus ending the pattern with herself.

Trapped, there is no area of her life in which Martha is allowed to feel unique, or to experience any sense of self-development or growth. Instead, there is only submersion in the role everyone, including herself, expects her to play. The collective pressures are established at the beginning of the novel, and although banal, they are able to overpower Martha because they are linked to a national cynicism in the face of war. The collective attitudes are capable of providing some models of behaviour for a young woman who sees only two alternatives--conformity or disintegration and doom.

Holding the marriage together, these collective pressures are subtle but constant instructions which take the form of attitudes every bride must have, and certain activities in which every bride must take part. The collective also provides rules for wives on the care of husbands, seen

as a generic class. One such social "must," on the list of every bride, is a visit to Dr. Stern, "the woman's doctor." The function of Dr. Stern is to provide a gloss of educated and scientific commentary to counteract the socially destructive tendencies of young women being submerged by their roles as wife and mother. His waiting room is described as always "full of women all of whom must be assured, for various reasons, that everything was all right" (p. 20). Dr. Stern offers lectures "designed for the instruction of brides" (p. 19), which are for the most part ignored by the young women who prefer to rely on their own experiences. Besides the advice of Dr. Stern and the comments of her friends, Martha relies on handbooks of behaviour which ease her feelings of restlessness by assuring her that her emotions are normal, that "everyone" feels the same things she feels. Martha is aware of a certain paradox in her situation, for "while she insisted on being unique, individual, and altogether apart from any other person, she could be comforted in such matters only by remarks like 'Everybody feels this' or 'It is natural to feel that'" (p. 31). It is interesting that she has been so conditioned by her marriage that she accepts the very comforting "part of a phase" theory she rejected years earlier.

Martha's marriage has conditioned her in other ways as well. Her need for connection has always been a basic part of her political interests. As one who could not separate

herself from ideas of social progress, Martha continually seeks to relate herself to political causes which seem to provide an answer. Martha's marriage had been preventing these political associations from developing, for as one of her friends points out, "the wife of a civil servant can't be a Red" (p. 28). When she rebels against this restriction by visiting Solly Cohen at his "Utopia" in the colored quarter, she finds rebellion not worth the cost. This political "Utopia" is based on principles of exclusion rather than inclusion, for although they live in the colored quarter, the Utopians have no contact with the natives. Their Utopia, moreover, is an exclusively male preserve. Martha is exiled from this society by her sex, but also because she is aware of the fact that its Utopian premises are a fiction. Even the economic base of this community is unsound, for all the members are living on income from their fathers; Solly's share, for example, is the capital from a store which exploits the Kaffirs. Returning home to Douglas after this attempt to move into a political association once again, Martha dismisses the whole episode with a wry and satirical self-mockery. She went to visit at the commune, "because, as everyone knows, we girls go through these moments of not wanting to be married." Douglas confesses a similar desire for freedom and their shared secrets lead to a round of love-making in which "they experimented with a couple of new positions sanctioned by

the book" (p. 54).

Martha seems more isolated now than she was on the veld. She exists in terms of collective stereotypes for much of her day; in the few moments she has alone, she attempts to formulate a "theory" (p. 72) that will account for her feelings about her experiences. She returns to books to find answers but deduces "that women in literature were still what men, or the men-women wished they were." Nonetheless, Martha, in spite of herself, is "likely to return to her bedroom profoundly comforted with some such resounding and original remark as 'The young husband, therefore, must be careful to be specially understanding during the difficult weeks after marriage'" (pp. 73-74). Martha resurrects the "detached observer" of her youth out of a growing necessity for something beyond the life she is leading. This enables her to "preserve an equilibrium because of an observing and satirical eye focused upon her own behaviour from a superior vantage point that was of course in no way influenced by that behaviour" (p. 74).

Forced thus to intellectualize and separate her feelings from her social role, Martha finds herself fascinated by the black women she sees in whom no such division exists. Martha's fascination with these women is like Birkin's interest in the black totem in D. H. Lawrence's novel, Women In Love. A statue of a black woman in labor is described there as "pure culture in sensation, culture in the physical

consciousness, really ultimate physical consciousness, mindless, utterly sensual."² Martha's vision of the black woman is one of an accepting maternity, a womanhood which has not been tampered with by male culture or political consciousness. Outside of Dr. Stern's office, where Martha was forced to listen to a lot of intellectualizing about being a woman, she sees a native woman under a tree: "She held a small child by one hand and a slightly larger one by the other, and there was a new baby folded into a loop of cloth on her back....Martha felt her as something simple, accepting, whole" (p. 26).³ With her sexuality mapped out by positions in books, her political consciousness without direction, her marriage a social contract, her emotions part of a "phase" every young bride goes through, Martha feels herself in fragments, "strenuously held together by nothing more than an act of will."

Compartments, particularly the separation between body and mind, the physical and spiritual, the dispassionate eye and the feeling self, come to be seen by Martha as "an offence against what is deepest and most real in her." It is at times like this that she calls to mind the black woman, who appears as a shadow of herself as she might be: "And again she thought of the simple women of the country, who might be women in peace, according to their instincts, without being made to think and disintegrate themselves into fragments. During those first weeks of her marriage

Martha was always accompanied by that other, black woman, like an invisible sister simpler and wiser than herself: for no matter how much she reminded herself of statistics and progress, she envied her from the bottom of her heart. Without, of course, having any intention of emulating her: loyalty to progress forbade it" (p. 75). Much as she might yearn after instinctual consciousness, Martha is at this point still dominated by what D. H. Lawrence felt to be the two great inhibitions to the instinctual life--the will, and ideas of progress.⁴

Ideas of progress, however, come to a halt with the approaching war. Yearning for unities, Martha is readily caught by the false intimacy and simplistic nationalism generated in wartime. War, with death approaching for so many, makes Martha's individual problems seem insignificant to her. She is caught up in the wave of collective emotion in which the young people, drugged by visions of heroism and death drift along in a round of futile pleasures. Martha and the other young people dance away each night "as if they formed one soul," fearing to face alone the death now imminent. The young men enlist en masse, for "they all were longing to be swallowed up in something bigger than themselves; they were, in fact, already swallowed up" (p. 78). Lessing demonstrates that war and the roles demanded by war are as repetitious and futile as those demanded by marriage. Both trap individuals into patterns they would

not seek for themselves and both present an illusion of connection for those who must seek wholeness in collective relationships to compensate for an emptiness within.

Social progress halted by the war, Martha becomes more susceptible to the pull of the instinctual life, to the demands of collective archetypes. Martha envies Douglas his ability to find a role so easily, that of "the young hero off to the wars for adventure." The wheel of the fun fair, with its tedious repetitions now takes on a symbolic dimension larger than the tedium of her marriage. The world at war is involved in a repeated act which betrays individuality everywhere and destroys any hopeful view of life. In wartime, mankind is tied to the wheel, "bound and betrayed" (p. 81). It is in this mood of cynicism and in the knowledge of the inevitability of defeat for individuality that Martha is forced to come to terms with her pregnancy.

This combination of war and biology makes Martha aware of the social conditioning of her emotions and values. Lessing assumes a basic Marxist-Realist stance as she presents the difficulties which Martha faces while attempting to deal with the problems of cyclicity and the nightmarish repetitions of history. Martha begins to view individuals as powerless, as mere toys in the complicated games of society, because she is incapable of dealing with historical patterns. She sees herself and her mother in a new light.

She was looking at Mrs. Quest in a deep abstract speculation, as if neither she nor her mother had any validity as persons, but were mere pawns in the hands of an old futility. She could see a sequence of events, unalterable, behind her, and stretching unalterably into the future....This the nightmare, this the nightmare of a class and generation: repetition. And although Martha had read nothing of the great interpreters of the nightmare, she had been soaked in the minor literature of the last thirty years, which had dealt with very little else: a series of doomed individuals, carrying their doom inside them, like the seeds of a fatal disease.

Believing these "minor" writers, rather than seeing the social contexts of the problems they present, Martha feels that she as an individual can prevent the pattern from repeating. If the seeds of doom are within, then "it was within her power to cut the cycle" (p. 109). Having a child, Martha believes, will create another victim for history, so she vacillates between having an abortion and giving in to her mother's joy which will trap her in the cycle. She accedes to her mother, deciding that it is too late for an abortion. "It occurred to her that this child had quickened already; she understood that this long process had been one of determined self-deception--almost as if she had wanted this damned baby all the time" (p. 117). Martha clearly does not know herself; she is aware only of a subtle process of self-deception: "for what" she asks, "was the use of thinking, of planning, if emotions one did not recognize at all worked their way against you" (p. 118). Besides not knowing herself, Martha does not understand the ways in which her emotions are conditioned.

In the second part of the novel, Martha finds herself again caught between two powerful forces. Her pregnancy pulls her toward the instinctual life, "the dark, blind sea that was motherhood"; while, on the other hand, the war and accompanying nostalgia and patriotism exert powerful social pressures upon her. As indicated in the chapter on The Grass Is Singing, while Lessing shares with D. H. Lawrence a belief in the values of cosmic wholeness and of the beauty of the instinctual life, she is too realistic, at least at this point in her development, to believe that anyone can submerge one's individual will in the dark tide for any more than fleeting periods. This ambivalence is evident in Martha's response to her pregnancy. "She was essentially divided, one part of herself was sunk in the development of the creature, appallingly slow, frighteningly inevitable, a process which she could not alter or hasten, and which dragged her back into the impersonal blind urges of creation; with the other parts she watched it; her mind was like a lighthouse, anxious and watchful that she, the free spirit, should not be implicated; and engaged in daydreams of the exciting activities that could begin when she was liberated" (pp. 144-45).

Martha is very vulnerable to the pull of the instinctual life, urged as she is by biology and her image of herself as she "should be, calm, rich, maternal, radiant" (p. 148). The fact that she is part of a recurring

historical cycle becomes less important because her pregnancy has the effect of seeming to alter time. Often, she feels as if she can transcend any ordinary time sense; it seems that "inside her stomach the human race had fought and raised its way through another million years of history; that other time was claiming her...it was becoming an effort to recognize the existence of anything outside this great central drama" (p. 129).

The polarities of the instinctual life and social conditioning are vividly portrayed in a section of the novel that is recognized by virtually every critic has reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence. Lessing describes a dance which Martha and another pregnant friend undertake as a kind of assertion of freedom against "prohibitions and firm masculine attitudes against getting cold or tired" (p. 152). Envious of the shared experiences of their husbands, who fought together "among the mud puddles...their eyes gleaming with savage joy out of mud-streaked faces" (p. 151), the women need a similar assertion of communion. Across the street from the maternity hospital, a symbol of the sterile and rule-ridden approach to childbearing, the women take off their clothes and run wildly, shouting in triumph through the rain. Martha submerges herself in a muddy puddle of water; and in this baptism into the natural life, she enters the life of the pond where frogs and snakes share a watery existence with her unborn child. In

a Lawrencean moment, heralded by the snake she sees, she retreats to her car and safety, brought back by the inner voice of masculine prohibitions, similar to Lawrence's voice of education which separates him from the snake of his poem.

While the influence of Lawrence on this scene has been noted by both Dorothy Brester and Paul Schlueter,⁵ neither has analyzed the reasons for Martha's ambivalence toward the instinctual life. In this scene, as in most of the novel, Martha is divided. She yearns to be maternal and unthinking, and she wants to be a fully developed individual. This split stems from the fact that while she identifies the world of masculine prohibitions with her conscious mind, she also attributes individual freedom to consciousness, to maintaining the strong hold of the mind and will. She therefore can achieve no union of will and being. Her conscious mind rejects masculine patterns, yet since her free will is a product of this masculine consciousness, she cannot submit to her unconscious needs to be absorbed in the instinctual life of motherhood. Martha does not seem to feel, as Lawrence's characters do, that one need only give up will and individuality in order to lead an instinctual life. The instinctual is, for Martha, only another collective, another means by which she can test the strength of her individuality.

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Martha's

baby at the maternity hospital involve the same duality. While the physical experience of the birth brings out a "soaring elation" (p. 157), the maternity hospital views the event mechanically, as part of the "easter rush" (p. 158). Moreover, Martha herself is divided; while she yearns to give herself up to the experience, there is a part of her which criticizes and desires to remain in control: "There were two Marthas, and there was nothing to bridge them. Failure, complete failure. She was helpless with rage. She heard the pain-gripped Martha cry out, 'Oh God, oh God!' and she was curious at the ancient being in her that cried out to God. Damned liar, coward, idiot! said Martha to herself from across the gulf. It only needs that you should call out 'Mother!' And behold, Martha, that free spirit, understood from the exquisite shore of complete, empty non-sensation that she had been groaning out 'Mother, Mother, Mother!'" (p.164). When Martha does achieve a freedom from "mind-consciousness," it only releases her into pain. Urged by a black matron to "let it come" Martha manages to "let the cold knot of determination loosen, she let herself loosen, she let herself go, she let her mind go dark into the pain" (p. 165).

After the child is born, the rules of the maternity hospital immediately restore the dualities to Martha's experiences. On the one hand is the community of women "all absorbed into the rhythms of eating, sleeping and nursing"

(p. 170) and on the other hand are the proponents of the rigid, formulaic approach to child-raising which was dominant in the 1930's. From the first day, the women and babies are put on a schedule. While the women find that their breasts ooze milk when they hear the babies cry, the nurse says "they can't be hungry till six. It's against the rules!" (p. 169). Martha quickly finds her relationship with her daughter regulated by "the clock striking six, ten, two, six, ten" (p. 176). Freed thus from any emotional or instinctual patterns of motherhood, Martha is nonetheless captured by time. History, too, will not let her off so easily, for, no sooner does she feel "herself free to see what life might have to offer, when authority spoke again: all of Douglas's generation were whisked into uniform and into a camp just outside the city" (p. 178).

The third section of the novel describes Martha's struggle for individuality in the society of women and political dissenters left behind by the war. The war-effort, that great collective, absorbs most of the community's vitality and all of its manhood. Martha, the other women and some struggling political movements are all that remain outside the one central concern. The "council of matriarchs" and its leader, Mrs. Maynard, are the effective organizers of those at home. The young women are expected to help entertain the airmen from England, and the entire

community is drawn into the social life at the clubs. Martha, dancing with one of the airmen, realizes that "he had sunk into the collective wash of emotion...that was what he wanted most, she could see: not to have to think, to let himself go into it, to let his mind flow out and away from the terrible necessity of his days" (p. 201).

Martha soon finds her free time absorbed by the collective emotions at the club and her personal time tied to Caroline's schedule. Her relationship with her daughter continues to be characterized by rigidity and adherence to rules. She tells a visitor that "it's against the rules to cuddle a baby out of hours--the book says so" (p. 195). When Caroline rejects the schedule, Martha is so rule-ridden that she feels it to be a personal failure. "She was good for nothing, not even the simple natural function that every female should achieve like breathing: being a mother" (p. 197).

Feeling herself to be a failure as a mother, and unhappy with the life at the clubs, in what is now a fairly consistent pattern, Martha makes a cursory attempt to return to a meaningful life through political activities. At Mr. Maynard's urging, she attends a meeting of the Left Club. Here she is alternately attracted and repelled by the group. At one point, listening to a speaker, Martha responds, "as if to her own deepest voice speaking" (p. 212). Later, observing the familiarity of the members of the group with

each other based on their years of association, she feels a sense of futility and entrapment, "as if nets were closing around her....She was instinctively shaking herself free of this mesh of bonds before she had entered them: She thought that at the end of ten years these people would still be here, self-satisfied in their unconformity, talking, talking endlessly" (p. 216). Always ambivalent, no sooner does Martha decide to leave the group, than the talk from the room strikes her as a "unit of cheerful sound," a "warm community" (p. 218), to which she wishes to belong.

Martha's movements in this novel are characterized by cyclic and recurring patterns--revolutions, like those of the fun-fair wheel. Back home with Caroline, she again finds her life "regulated by the clock to Caroline's needs; and she went to bed at night exhausted by Caroline's experience." She finds herself on a treadmill, hurrying from one activity to the next," and yet there was nothing at the end of it to hurry toward." The wheel, samsara, repetition, "cycles of guilt and defiance ruled her living and she knew it; she had not the beginnings of an understanding of what it all meant" (p. 224).

Lessing neatly parallels the futility and repetition of Martha's life with Caroline with the tedium of the war as it is experienced by Douglas and the other young husbands. The young men do not know where they are, merely on an air strip like any other. The war, too, is repetitious

and dull. "They had marched, drilled, and waited; slept under canvas in the open--and waited" (p. 236). Boredom and frustration are as far from Douglas's ideals of heroism as child-raising by the book is distant from Martha's vision of a radiant maternity. Sent home from the front for an undramatic ulcer, Douglas feels cheated of the unifying experience he had hoped to find in war. "It seemed that his whole life had led without his knowing it to the climax of being with those men, his fellows, his friends, parts of himself, in real fighting, real living, real experience at last. And he was out of it....A crock, he thought bitterly'" (p. 248).

Back at home, both Martha and Douglas take little comfort in the stale patterns of their marriage, since each has experienced a sense of personal failure in the larger communal life. Martha becomes aware very quickly that Douglas has not developed. "She was married to one of the boys; he would always, all his life, be one of the boys.... the condition of being a woman in wartime, she thought angrily, was that one should love not a man, but a man in relation to other men" (p. 246). Douglas, in turn, finds a wife and daughter who live entirely by a timetable. While the patterns of home-life satisfy Douglas enough to remark, if half-sarcastically, "there's no place like home," (p. 271) Martha finds herself, once again, watching "the shape of the big wheel in the window." Fearing another

pregnancy and further entrapment, Martha "was again lying through the nights, listening to the sad music of the fun fair" (p. 272). The entrapment encompasses the two of them, as Micheal Thorpe has pointed out: "We see that Douglas, no less than Martha, is the victim in this dishonest marriage, and both are guilty" (p. 21).

The final section of the novel shows Martha struggling against the same collectives that thwarted her at the opening. The same social pressures that brought about her marriage now are applied toward talking her into having a second child. Martha already has a "large house, four servants, Caroline and a husband" (p. 272), which makes a second child only the next revolution of the wheel. The forces aligned against Martha are the comfortable patterns of young married couples.

They were all married couples, and the wives were pregnant, or intended to be soon, or had just had a baby. They all earned just so much a month, owned houses which they would finish paying for in about thirty years' time, and in the house was furniture bought on hire-purchase, including refrigerators, washing machines, fine electric stoves. They all had cars, and kept between two and five servants, who cost them about two pounds a month each. They were all heavily insured.

They took holidays at the Cape once in four or five years, gave sundowner parties to each other once or twice in the month, and went dancing or to the cinema two or three times in the week. They were, in short, extremely comfortable, and faced lives in which there could never be a moment's insecurity. 'Security' was the golden word written up over their doorways, security was so deeply part of them that it was never questioned or discussed: the great climax of their lives would come at fifty or fifty-five, when their houses, gardens and furniture would be their own, and the pensions and policies bore fruit" (pp. 276-77).

Lessing describes clearly in these chapters the kind of "self-narrowing" that is required by the middle-class life. The constriction of the lives of these people is so extreme that Lessing verges on satire. These middle-class women, in particular, foreshadow Kate Brown of The Summer Before The Dark, in that Lessing is indicating through Martha's experience, all the steps that bring Kate to her sterile middle-age. Martha is more aware than Kate, however; and Lessing has not yet turned to satire, for Martha views coldly and critically all the limitations of the conventional life. As the pressures on her to have another child increase, Martha notes, "what one did not see, what everyone conspired to prevent one seeing was the middle-aged woman who had done nothing but produce two or three commonplace and tedious citizens in a world that was already too full of them" (p. 303). Kate Brown never sees this woman until she is there, at middle age, herself. Both Martha and Kate, however, are drawn into the pattern by the same process of self-deception. Each has a vision of a mother as a "source of warmth and creativeness" for a brood of children; and Kate, unlike Martha, never allows the reality of motherhood to interfere with this vision.

When motherhood becomes consistently disillusioning, Martha revolves in a political direction once more. Looking through Communist pamphlets, Martha forgets the ideal of motherhood to which she had so recently responded and

feels that "for the first time in her life she had been offered an ideal to live for" (p. 315). The "Logic of History" (p. 319) now presents to Martha a means, other than the personal, by which she can deal with the world around her. In her absorption by the political, the novel loses much of the power of interest commanded by Martha's individual voice. The characters that dominate the next novel in the sequence--Anton Hess, Andrew, Maisie, and Jasmine--move into the foreground. These characters are more important in terms of ideology than personality, and foreshadow the collective power of political life that absorbs Martha in the next novel.

In a farewell to the personal, the final chapters of the novel detail the end of the marriage of the title. Attempting to appease Martha, to enable her to endure a marriage made unendurable by her political awakening, the voices of conformity offer an "everyone" who feels about marriage exactly as she does. Before she can be free, they each approach Martha and attempt to fit her back into the social mode. But neither Mrs. Talbot, nor her mother, nor any other spokesperson for marriage can prevent Martha's realization that she has been "bored, bored, bored" (p. 353). She is also aware that Douglas, her mother, and their friends must play out certain roles as she leaves the marriage. She notes that "what she did and what Douglas did was inevitable, they were involved in a pattern of behaviour

which they could not alter" (p. 369). This awareness of their roles, as well as her own, sets her free. Martha's marriage degenerates into violence and threats, but she endures it all as the wheel completes its revolution. After their final, vicious night together, Martha asks Douglas: "'What's it all about? You don't believe in it, I don't believe in it--what do we do it for, then?'" (p. 378).

Martha's political idealism enables her to leave her daughter with a clear conscience, for she believes that she is setting her free of the wheel of repetition by her action. Such commitment brings a wry comment from Mr. Talbot on the last page of the novel. Unable to convince Martha to stay, he notes: "I suppose with the French Revolution for a father and the Russian Revolution for a mother, you can very well dispense with a family." Martha, at this point, agrees.

Thus, in the first two novels of the series, we have observed Martha's entrapment by one collective after another. While she asserts a keen individuality, when it is tested Martha proves that she is unable to see beyond any of the social patterns far enough to prevent the next inevitable process from capturing her. She has moved through the steps of conventional development: rebellious adolescent, working girl, young married woman, new mother, war-wife, and finally, divorcee. In each case, the movement from one pattern to the next involved a rebellion and a fearless determination not to be caught for long. Martha, however, has not been

self-knowing enough to transcend the revolutions of the wheel of repetition entirely.

While the first two books have shown Martha first yielding to then transcending social and biological pressures, the next volume details a more serious loss of herself, for Martha becomes involved with an ideology she regards as greater than she is. From the beginning, Martha has had only the inner yardstick of her vision on the veld to sustain her individuality and transcendent impulses. At the end of this novel, however, she has begun mistakenly to link this experience of illumination to the intellectualized unities described in party propoganda. Martha's difficulties in growing beyond these political structures which have captured her idealistic spirit are detailed in the next chapter.

Notes: A Proper Marriage

¹ Doris Lessing, A Proper Marriage (St. Albans, 1966). Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

² D. H. Lawrence, Women In Love (New York, 1960), p. 71.

³ Paul Schlueter, (p. 19) relates this passage to The Grass Is Singing. Martha's vision of the black woman seems more relevant to her ideas about the instinctual life during her pregnancy than to the "native problem" of the earlier novel, as Schlueter would have it.

⁴ This conflict in Martha between will and instinct is never solved by Lessing in the same way that Lawrence reaches a solution. I will attempt an explanation later in this chapter.

⁵ Dorothy Brewster (p. 112) cites Lawrence here in terms of the cosmic consciousness operative. Paul Schlueter (p. 105) cites Lawrence's poem, "Snake" and makes the obvious connection. Neither attempts to deal with the special way that Lessing is using Lawrence here.

III. A Ripple from the Storm (1958)

At the end of the first section of A Ripple from the Storm, (1958), Martha reminds herself that "it would be pleasant to be ill for a day or two, to have time to think, or even ... to be alone for a little, not always to be surrounded by people."¹ This thought is not new to her; at the beginning of A Proper Marriage, Martha found herself surrounded by people who wanted to keep her properly married. Now, all her time is taken by "the group," the young Communists with whom she made acquaintance at the end of A Proper Marriage. While Martha has always had an interest in politics, now she is totally absorbed by political obligations and, in the first half of the novel at least, there is very little of Martha's individuality in evidence. There has been little critical commentary on this novel probably because there is so little of the Martha the reader has come to be interested in to be seen, and so few of her experiences beyond the political are presented. Michael Thorpe,² for example, calls this novel a "valuable cautionary tale" since "neo-Marxist revolutionism continues to sacrifice the individual to a 'collective' absolutism." He sees "futility" as the prevailing mood of the story, for the activities of "the group" at a time of world war and unexpected alliances are destined to be ineffective.

Martha's total political involvement has come about in

the four months since she left her husband and daughter. While free of a "proper marriage," Martha has not achieved enough individuality for genuine freedom. Martha has cut herself off from all the social influences of her past, including Mrs. Quest, who has temporarily disowned her. Freed in one direction she has become bound in another, for "she lived in the 'group' and did not care about the judgments of anyone else. She felt as if she were invisible to anyone but the group" (p. 26). Even her child, about whom she does not allow herself to think, is less important than the vision she cherishes. On those rare occasions when she was alone she hardens herself and strengthens "the buttresses and arches of her own dream: over there, she thought, meaning in the Soviet Union--over there it's all finished, race prejudice and anti-semitism" (p. 27).

In spite of Martha's dreams and exalted conception of the work of the group and the glories of Communism, the reality of the situation is vastly different. As Michael Thorpe has succinctly stated: "Unlike mid-thirties Europe, the Colony offers the tiny Communist group no footing in the 'mass'; it is cut off by ignorance and suspicion from its natural base among the Africans. Repeating recent European history, the group forms reluctant alliances with the Social Democrats and becomes fragmented, but it is the flaws within themselves that Mrs. Lessing brings out so shrewdly. She shows how political purism may betray indi-

vidual weakness and, in practice, destroy the individual it pretends to serve" (p. 22).

Lessing is indicating the personal cost of Martha's idealism. It is precisely her dreams that have brought Martha under the present domination by the political. She believes that she has at last found people who share her vision of the four-gated city (p. 34). She feels a connection; they are all "part of the great band of international brothers, and as they talked, their eyes met, exchanging looks of infinite devotion and trust." Lessing demonstrates that Martha's dreams have little relationship to reality. Her idealism has blinded her and continues to do so for much of the book. The separation between the real world and the world as "the group" sees it is focussed in a little scene.

A small ragged, barefooted black child, pot-bellied with malnutrition, hesitated on the opposite corner outside McGrath's holding a note in his hand. He had been sent by his white mistress on some errand and could not find the right address. Martha and Jasmine smiled at each other, saying in the smile that because of them, because of their vision, he was protected and saved: the future they dreamed of seemed just around the corner; they could almost touch it. Each saw an ideal town, clean, noble and beautiful, soaring up over the actual town they saw, which consisted in this area of sordid little shops and third-rate cafes. The ragged child was already a citizen of this ideal town, co-citizens with themselves; they watched him out of sight around the corner smiling: it was as if they had touched him with their hands in friendship. (p. 34)

Many of Martha's most valuable qualities have been submerged by her belief in the exalted ideas of communism.

Her love of nature and her small personal voice which were linked to the cosmic in moments of illumination on the veld are stilled in the interests of ideology. This is brought out in a brief scene where Jackie Bolton, a member of the group, is censored for holding a meeting in the out-of-doors and quoting from Gerard Manley Hopkins. Such things are "counter-revolutionary, of course" (p. 21). Martha's personal lyricism requires an outlet and she attempts for a while to channel it into political idealism. Listening to a speech by Anton Hesse on "the great step forward," she feels as if "the calm voice were linking her with those parts of her childhood she still owned, the moments of experience which seemed to her enduring and true, the moments of illumination and belief" (p. 62). As Anton speaks of the way all events are linked in historical processes, Martha finds words being created for that experience of unification and exaltation that had always before to her been nameless. She feels that "she was linked with them all, and from the deepest need of her being" (p. 63). It is highly significant that Martha links her transcendental experiences to an intellectual, political, historical and social movement. In so doing, she temporarily stills the inner voice of her unconscious, her womanhood, and all the emotional parts of young Martha that she requires for a total individuality.

Eventually, Martha discovers that while ideology is beautiful and answers a spiritual yearning in her, in practical terms there is very little that is accomplished. This is illustrated in another short scene. Returning home from a meeting in which her noblest dreams achieved exalted articulation, Martha is confronted by Mrs. Carson, her landlady, shivering in the kitchen in a nightdress, "her ear pressed to the crack of the door which led into the garden," (p. 67) frantic with fear of a "nameless black marauder." Martha is unable to convince even a person with whom she has continual contact of the virtues of brotherhood. Another practical failure in the group is a result of the factions. The "Krueger faction" and the Communist group can barely "bring themselves to exchange more than the minimum of politeness" (p. 84) after their meetings. Martha discovers also, that only a small portion of time can be allotted for practical projects like selling pamphlets to the colored people, for as Hesse warns the group who believes these contacts to be important: "the work of a Communist party in any given country is based on an intellectual analysis of the class structure, the class forces in that country at a given time. It is not based on individual and personal feelings" (p. 91).

Martha is not allowed to submerge these "individual and private feelings" completely, for the relationship of these feelings to the collective is the subject of Lessing's

art. This is indicated in the development of a sub-theme in the novel. The sub-theme focuses on the women in the group, and the way that political work requires compartmentalization and repression of important parts of their feminine natures. Regulation of emotions, even for the good of the party, proves impractical when carried on for any length of time. The novel, thus, is a "cautionary tale," but more directly cautionary than Thorpe believes. It cautions against repression, sublimation and the domination of the feminine personality by masculine social forms.

The sub-theme is announced when Martha discovers that she cannot still the personal pain and sorrow she feels at the end of an affair she has had with a young airman. The group feels that she has wasted too much time in a personal relationship that could be better spent on service to other people. Martha is unconvinced. She continues to yearn for the man "who brought her 'self' to life." The emptiness of Martha's idealism is nowhere more obvious than in the description of her reactions to the loss of her lover. The affair itself is a trivial one--another relationship into which she has drifted without much individual will. Martha admits that she frequently submerges her feelings about William. When he reminds her of Douglas, her husband, she becomes "Mattie" and jokes about her work day. Overall, she felt that "it was not worth disliking William when he was bound to be leaving so soon" (p. 20). Yet,

long after Douglas had petulantly had William posted elsewhere, Martha continues to grieve for him. It is clear in the very words with which she describes her loss, that Martha is not yearning for William but for all the parts of her inner being which have found no expression in the group: "She mourns for the temporarily extinct person she can only be with a man she loves; she mourns him who brought her 'self' to life. She lives with the empty space at her side, peopled with the images of her own potentialities until the next man walks into the space, absorbs the shadows into himself, creating her, allowing her to be her 'self'--but a new self, since it is his conception which forms her" (p. 46). Throughout the novel, Martha represses her instinctual feminine self for the group, except when that self is brought to life through personal relationships with men. Since her psychic wholeness has been identified with the conscious, masculine and political spheres, there is no external means by which she can express her feminine nature. Lacking, thus, the true inner wholeness of a unified being, Martha's feminine side expresses itself in ways that are destructive to the rational, political Martha. With a man she becomes feminine out of an inner need which responds to the man's pre-conceptions, not because she has integrated femininity into her personality.

Martha's repressed feminine unconscious surfaces briefly in a dream she has at the beginning of part two; she

dreams of an "extinct saurian that had been imprisoned a thousand years ago, in the rock....It's alive, she thought. It's alive after so many centuries. And it will take centuries more to die. Perhaps I can dig it out? (p. 96). Martha's feminine unconscious, like the Jungian lizard of her dream, is buried, allowed only a cursory acknowledgment during the few moments that she is alone. It is significant that Martha has this dream only at a moment of weakness. It heralds an illness that forces her to stay in bed and give up her political work for a few days. Also significant is the fact that Martha is nursed back to health entirely by males--Anton, Jimmy and Dr. Stern. Her waking life is dominated entirely by male attitudes, by a collective that is masculine, political and more powerful than the feminine social collectives that Martha confronted in the past. Martha becomes aware of having lost part of herself in the course of her illness as one male takes over for another: "Good Lord, he's taken me over. He's responsible for me. And through the wall Anton was talking her over with Dr. Stern. An old feeling of being hemmed in and disposed of prickled through her. I hate it all, she thought wildly, not knowing what she hated or why she was imprisoned" (p. 106).

Martha is so dominated by ideology, taken over so completely by male political attitudes that she drifts into a relationship with Anton that is entirely impersonal and based

on convenience. Martha's feelings are not aroused by Anton except in a confusing ambivalence: "she felt him to be logically right; she felt him to be inhuman and wrong. There was no way for her to make these two feelings fit together. She was still weak and sick, and she let the problem slide away from her....It was now accepted that Martha and Anton were a couple" (p. 111). Martha's relationship with Anton is characterized by a lack of emotion on her part and a "possessiveness in him, something dogged and cold." She and Anton are together not for personal reasons but because the future seemed to them all as "something short and violent" (p. 123).

Martha is not alone in her domination by the masculine consciousness; the whole community has adopted ideas that are "logically right" but "inhuman and wrong." This comes into sharp focus in the following chapter. Here Martha's pregnant friend, Maisie Gale, confronts Mr. Maynard, the grandfather of her child-to-be. Maisie wishes to get married, while Mr. Maynard assures her that marriage to his son or an illegitimate child are both out of the question. When Maisie realizes logically that an abortion is the only answer, he begins to haggle about the price. Later, crying to Martha, Maisie says, "they think of life as if it's all money" (p. 117). This scene is in turn juxtaposed with one of Mr. Maynard in court, dispensing justice with a logical but inhuman consistency. Black men are

fined a month in jail for being in the white part of town without a pass. A woman in debt with a drunken husband to support is told to put her children in a creche in order to earn less than the price of keeping them there. A white youth charged with speeding who earns fifty pounds a month is fined two pounds while a black lorry-driver with the same crime receives the same punishment although he earns only four pounds a month. Logic, unfeeling justice, dominates every part of the society in which Martha lives, She has merely aligned herself with the group that appears to be more just but is, in reality, equally emotionless and hard.

For the most part, the Communist group under Anton's direction is rigidly logical. Personal feelings are irrelevant. For this reason, the meetings Lessing has described come close to satire. As problems are brought before Anton for discussion, he coldly dissects them and considers them solved. This kind of analysis of personal problems makes them seem absurd and solves nothing. Emotional problems are, ultimately, untranslatable into the logical language of Communism. The absurdity and limitation of logic, the masculine mode of consciousness, is never more evident than when the group discusses women. As the time arrives for individual criticism of the comrades, beginning with Jasmine, a regressive sexist attitude becomes evident. Jimmy is unable to separate his expectations of comrades from

his conception of bourgeoisie women. "'It's not just about Jasmine,' he stated, 'it's about all the women comrades.... All of you--lipstick and red nails and fashion magazines. That's not communism. Women should be respected and not behave like...'" (pp. 133-34). Anton replies, "'You are raising the whole question of the position of women. May I suggest that we appoint an evening for the discussion of the position of women?'" (p. 134). Martha's reaction to this is instructive. She "watched in herself, and with surprise because it was contrary to what her instincts told her about Anton....the feeling of trust and relief well up, as if Anton's words built a pillar on which she could support herself. Draping myself like a silly clinging vine on anything that seems strong, she told herself disgustedly" (p. 134). While Martha imagines herself part of a brotherhood, protected by ideals, even her fellow comrades see women as a group apart. By identifying herself with a group holding these attitudes, Martha has to repress not only any part of herself not communist, but a substantial part of her feminine nature as well. Jasmine comments that "all men, whether communist or not, have remnants of middle-class ideas about women" (p. 135). Jasmine is proven to be absolutely correct, for even abstract Anton wishes a bourgeois marriage with Martha.

It should be stated that Lessing is not asserting feminism here, she is demonstrating the ways in which women

themselves, regardless of men's attitudes toward them, submit to male ideas of their behaviour. Martha feels fulfilled only through a relationship with an individual man, yet she spends every waking minute attempting to establish a communist brotherhood which has not come to terms with the women in its own group. In her personal life, she is living with a man who dominates her with logic, yet whose own feelings are illogical. This is an incisive analysis of the personal and social realities which result from collective masculine pressures. Martha is more easily absorbed by the intellectual masculine of the political collectives than she was by the instinctive feminine of the social collectives, because, as was mentioned in the last chapter, Martha has identified her self with consciousness. She hopes to find herself as woman through a consciousness that by its very nature denies her feminine instinct and emotions. It is no wonder that the lizard of her dreams, the haunting unconscious, is buried and virtually extinct. All of the attitudes which encompass Martha are antithetical to her feminine nature. For example, at the meeting in which Jasmine's cosmetics are analyzed, Maisie's pregnancy is discussed; and, without her presence or permission, her "problem" is solved. Andrew reminds Anton that "there's nothing wrong with us trying to help someone who's in trouble. I remember one of our lassies back home got herself in trouble and we fixed her up with a husband"

(p. 178). Andrew is "assigned" the responsibility for Maisie's problem and becomes her husband with the same lack of emotion that Anton became Martha's. Maisie sums up the problem when she reacts to the proposal with the comment: "there's something not right about this, it's too cold-hearted" (p. 171).

Maisie, throughout this novel, is the voice of ordinary womanhood. She is unintellectual, pregnant, and believes in her feelings. Maisie marries Andrew, for example, because she loves him, not because the party demands it. Anton, significantly, dislikes her from the first meeting. In fact, she becomes only a nominal member of the group, and Anton never misses an opportunity to point out her limitations to the other members (p. 255). It is significant that it is Maisie's baby that prevents Martha from attaining one of the most important of her political goals. At the end of the novel, Martha misses a meeting of the Congress in order to attend to Maisie in labour, as her human values and womanly nature begin to assert themselves.

Another character besides Maisie who provides a comment on Martha's political involvement is Mrs. Van der Bylt. She is an active laborite, a "social democrat," and the wife of a Magistrate. Mrs. Van, and her marriage, provide a means of evaluating the efficacy of Martha's political involvement, as well as giving us a view of Martha

through the eyes of another politically active woman. Martha is acquainted with Mrs. Van der Bylt and her tireless work for the community. She "had printed at her own expense several useful pamphlets" which provide a commentary on her views and interests: "How To Keep Your Baby Clean. How To Feed Your Family. Kill Those Flies! Three others expressed Mrs. Van's other and perhaps deeper self: African Woman, You Are Not A Slave! How To Conduct A Meeting Properly. The Principles Of Trade Unionism" (p. 197). Mrs. Van, through her political activities seems to be an entirely social woman, to have no self beyond her work. The ironies in her situation, however, become readily apparent. For at the meeting of the group pushing for an African branch of the Social Democrats, Mrs. Van makes public note of the fact that no women are present. She "interrupted a lean, bent, bespectacled teacher who was demanding education--'for if we are children, as the Europeans say we are, then as children we demand education as a right so that we may grow to men'--to say: 'Men and women, sir, may I point out that there is not a woman here this afternoon? And why not? Are your wives fit for cooking and bearing your children but not to stand side by side with you in your struggle?'" (p. 201). The irony is that Mrs. Van's public stance is different from the premises on which her own marriage is based. Mr. Van requires "a great deal of attention from his wife." He needs her to "play

cards with him, to read to him, or arrange his cushions and find his books" (p. 207). Her active political work is undertaken at great cost to her personal energies, for "it had been understood from the beginning of this marriage that Mrs. Van's duties were first to her children, then to her husband, and finally to her work." Mrs. Van accepts personal compromises as a necessity. She is incapable of breaking up a marriage because of political incompatibility.

Unlike Martha, she harbors no inner images that can harm her: "She did not do what nearly all women do when they understand they have made a bad bargain--create an image and fight a losing battle, sometimes for years, in that no-man's land between image and the truth. She told herself that her development must depend on her own efforts and that they must be secret efforts....Emotion was dangerous. It could destroy her" (p. 209). Mrs. Van is dominated by masculine attitudes and expectations. She behaves the way women are expected to behave in a conventional marriage--a role she has assumed through her husband's demands; and she behaves politically the way a "worker" is expected to behave. While the two strands of her life are incompatible, she adjusts by compartmentalizing herself.

According to Lessing, compartmentalization is the price that women must pay if they attempt to adjust themselves to male attitudes that are contradictory. The personal and the political cannot mix even in a woman like Mrs. Van

der Bylt, whose expectations are much lower than Martha's. Mrs. Van makes a private gesture to Martha that brings together many of the ironies in the positions of both women. Touched because Martha attended a meeting on the day of her wedding to Anton, (p. 213) Mrs. Van presents Martha with a bouquet of red roses from her private garden. She is unaware that Martha's marriage is a logical arrangement intended to help Anton with the immigration authorities. Martha is therefore upset by Mrs. Van's happiness at the conventional aspects of her marriage: "What has it got to do with me?" she asks, and later terms her marriage a "bloody farce." Martha feels that Mrs. Van's conventional life can have nothing to do with her life; "she could never understand this in a million years." Neither Mrs. Van nor Martha can see the connection between them that transcends their differences. Both are making personal sacrifices for political involvement. Mrs. Van is a living warning to Martha of what she must sacrifice if she continues in the direction in which she is moving. Taking the roses from Mrs. Van, Martha feels "the pain of the thorny stems ... like a warning" (p. 220); but Martha is too absorbed by the group at this time to heed the warning.

The last chapters of the novel focus on Martha's marriage to Anton. She comes to realize that he, the intellectual leader of the group, has conventional attitudes toward marriage. This evaluation of Anton allows her to view the

group itself more critically. The group falls apart in the last part of the novel, as Anton's intellectual approach fails to solve any of the problems of the group members. Martha's disillusionment begins shortly after the legal marriage when she discovers that a "new personality had been born in Anton." He buys furniture for their apartment which seems to her "ugly and conventional" (p. 239). This private concession to the conventional life also carries over into his expectations of what Martha's life should be like. While extolling his former wife's dedication to party work, insisting that "she had a mind like a man's," he expects Martha to cater to him in domestic matters. As Martha becomes aware of Anton's increasing dependence on her, she realizes that Anton sees something in her "that she did not recognize as being any part of herself" (p. 248). First as a comrade, now as a wife, Martha is being forced into conventional molds that do not recognize her as an individual. Martha endures the relationship because she is sustained by a fantasy of a "faceless man who waited in the wings of the future, waiting to free the Martha who was in cold storage" (p. 247). Furthermore, Martha endures Anton because she feels that personal problems are insignificant in the face of the problems of the world at war.

The novel ends with a scene which focuses for Martha the futility of the group, the inadequacies of Anton, and

the failure of the party to deal with women in any manner other than the stereotyped. Anton sends Martha to call the group together for a meeting. At great personal sacrifice, the members gather to hear Anton announce that he wishes to propose that they "have a series of lectures on the history of the communist party." Anton, having made a fool of himself and the group in this way, is deserted by the others. They decide to devote their attentions to political matters that they find more practical and meaningful. One member notes: "We've got to the point where we spend more time calling each other names than we do on real work" (p. 274). As one member after the other defects, Martha realizes that her social dream is over: "in short, the group was at an end. At this Martha felt herself cut off from everything that had fed her imagination: until this moment, she had been part of the grandeur of the struggle in Europe, part of the Red Army, the guerillas in China, the French underground, and the partisans in Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece" (p. 278)

Cut off from more meaningful connections, Martha recognizes a renewal of a personal element in her relationship with Anton. Although they are sexually and emotionally incompatible, and his views of marriage are inconsistent with his political attitudes, Martha realizes that Anton needs her as a human being. Her feelings begin to change when Maisie points out that Anton is weaker than Martha

realizes: "Offered the information that Anton is cracking up, Martha at first rejected it. She examined the pale, closed face of this man she had inexplicably married and thought him as self-sufficient as a fortress: 'a petty bourgeois interested only in his furniture'. But her heart had begun to ache for him.... It was going to be a marriage after all." Ironically the first reality her marriage demands that she face is that "it would please him if she became less of a communist" (p. 275).

Thus, at Anton's suggestion, Martha misses the Congress and gives up any hope of an important political future. Moreover she finds herself settled into a marriage more sterile than the one she had left. Martha's mood at the end of the novel is, indeed, one of "futility" (p. 281) as she remarks dryly: "I'm not a person at all, I'm nothing yet--perhaps I never will be" (p. 279).

In conclusion, while Martha has demonstrated less individuality in this novel than at any time in her story, Lessing is, nonetheless, presenting a strong case for individual integrity. The real battle here has been between Martha's silent, inner, feminine voice and the articulate, male, political attitudes. Martha has been completely absorbed by the latter on the conscious level, but in the tensions of the narrative between plot and sub-plot, Lessing has indicated the dangers of such total personal sacrifice.

By the end of the book, Martha's disenchantment is

total. The political brotherhood of her dreams has degenerated into an organization of Kafkaesque absurdity and her personal life is characterized by the mundane elements she had hoped to leave behind with Douglas and her "proper marriage." Lessing's presentation of Martha's discontent with herself and the collectives prepares the reader for the breakthrough she experiences in the hierogamous relationship with Thomas Sterne described in Landlocked, the next novel of the series.

Notes: III. A Ripple From The Storm

¹ Doris Lessing, A Ripple From The Storm (St. Albans, 1966). Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

² Thorpe, p. 22. Paul Schlueter simply states that A Ripple From the Storm "is especially emphatic about politics" (p. 24). Frederick Karl, A Reader's Guide To The Contemporary English Novel (Toronto, 1961) complains about the political content of the first four volumes of the Children of Violence series. He notes that they "often become trivial, especially when the main line of the narrative becomes lost in political detail or in inconsequential personal acts." He adds when Lessing "details the dogma of the Marxist-Trotsky-Stalin axis, the reader lets go," (p. 303). All three of these critics have overlooked Martha's growing discontent with herself and her society.

IV. Landlocked

In developmental terms, Landlocked (1965) is one of the most important novels in the Lessing canon. Published seven years after the third volume in the Children of Violence series, and three years after the strikingly original Golden Notebook, Landlocked appears to be more conventional than one would expect after following Anna Wulf's excursions into madness. Paul Schlueter feels that all four of the first volumes of this series are conventional novels like the envelope of The Golden Notebook.¹ Several critics have written about the startling differences between The Four-Gated City and the other novels of the series, but no one has made an intensive analysis of Landlocked in these terms.

The closest thing to a proper recognition of the importance of Landlocked appears in an article by Dagmar Barnouw² who sees the important differences in Lessing's handling of character in The Four-Gated City to be foreshadowed in this novel. She writes:

The 1965 Landlocked, however, anticipates, if only by implication, certain aspects of the new Martha who, on the whole, seems to have been born during that sea voyage, separating Africa from England, and The Four-Gated City from the rest of the Children of Violence.... Though it did not expose Matty to a new stage of the self, Landlocked prepared her to an extent to become Martha. In this fourth volume individuals and the relations between them are suddenly, if infrequently penetrated by an understanding that has to be founded

on an attitude toward psychological and narrative control different from that in the other three volumes as well as in The Golden Notebook (p. 501).

It is not clear what Barnouw means when she says that Martha is not exposed to a new "stage of the self." A close analysis of the novel indicates that "Matty" builds upon a vision of the self she had, briefly, in the past. Moreover, she is exposed to a new perception of historical reality--one that clearly transcends the socially-oriented Marxist perspective that dominated her in the past.

This novel is, then, clearly pivotal, for it marks the movement in Lessing's technique from Marxist novel to mythic narrative. These subtle changes in "narrative control" and the use of more immediacy in terms of technique which Barnouw points out are reflections of a new aesthetic. Lessing remains interested in social problems and world politics but her approach to these matters is altered. This change in Lessing's fiction has been summarized in the opening paragraphs of an article by Marion Vlastos on Lessing's use of R. D. Laing. Vlastos states that there are "two basic ways to attack a social problem--from the outside or the inside, by reforming the structure of society or by revolutionizing the consciousness of man."³ Lessing's novels, for Vlastos, reflect a movement from the former to the latter. While this pattern is in agreement with the basic premises of the study at hand, Vlastos has not traced

the beginnings of this alteration in Lessing's aesthetics back to their source in Landlocked, for she states that "the first four volumes of the Children of Violence series are marked with the stamp of historical determinism, and the Martha Quest of these early volumes--a heroine portrayed with striking realism--is personally committed to political action" (p. 245).

Vlastos and the other critics cited have overlooked several aspects of Landlocked which indicate the shift in Lessing's interests. In the first place, the implications of the theme of this novel are that Martha is yearning for a release from historical cycles, and she effectively begins to achieve her freedom from commitment to political or historical patterns. The obvious thematic statements, while seemingly consistent with the preceding volumes, indicate the new direction. Martha and Anton Hesse are, literally and figuratively, landlocked in Africa. Bureaucratic red tape has tied up their divorce which has effectively locked them into a sterile relationship. To compensate for the dry sterility, the wasteland, of her social situation, Martha continually dreams of water and escape by sea: "In this nightmare she was caught in, in which they all were caught, they must remember that outside, somewhere else, was light, was the sound of water breaking on rocks."⁴ Martha's nightmare is like that of Stephen Dedalus. Her personal history when combined with the

violence of the society in which she moves, provides the framework of her personal nightmare. She has suffered from an oppressive mother, rigid social attitudes, two marriages, and futile political work, which have locked her into a repetitive and apparently meaningless cycle.

The history of Martha's generation after all is one of war and violence. As "Children of Violence," Martha and her friends are part of a historical pattern which appears to leave an unmistakable mark. During a period of extreme depression, Martha indicates that she is trapped by the history of her times: "The soul of the human race ...that part of Martha and of Thomas was twisted and warped, was part of a twist and damage--she could no more disassociate herself from the violence done her, done by her, than a tadpole can live out of water. Forty-odd million human beings had been murdered, deliberately or from carelessness, from lack of imagination; these people had been killed yesterday, in the last dozen years, they were dying now, as she stood under the tree, knowing this was true, her mind could not stand it, it became numbed" (p. 203). While this attitude is clearly a major theme, not only of this novel but of the series as a whole, it does not represent the final word on Martha. An important part of Landlocked is devoted to exploring the means by which Martha is able to transcend her personal history.

Martha accomplishes her transcendence of history and the patterns of futility that mark her as a child of violence in two ways. First, she does so by developing a new aspect of selfhood, a cosmic perspective, if you will, analogous to her moments of illumination on the veld, yet significantly beyond them. Secondly, she transcends history by moving into a hierogamous relationship with Thomas Stern. This archetypal relationship is one in which time and history are invalidated by the eternal and transpersonal aspects of their union.

Martha's transcendence of history, then, is, in the first place, based upon a new perception of herself. Martha's new view of the nature of the self is related to an earlier awareness, however. In A Proper Marriage, Martha described a sense she had of existing somewhere beyond the patterns others call reality. She saw herself as "engaged in examining and repairing those intellectual bastions of defence behind which she sheltered, that building whose shape had first been sketched so far back in her childhood she could no longer remember how it then looked. With every year it had become more complicated, more ramified; it was as if she, Martha, were a variety of soft, shell-less creature whose survival lay in the strength of those walls. Reaching out in all directions from behind it, she clutched at the bricks of arguments, the stones of words, discarding any that might not fit into the building" (p. 109). Martha

who in this earlier novel saw herself as soft and shell-less was still dominated by the patterns, words and arguments, by which others structured reality for her. As she progresses in the course of this novel, and her sense of individuality develops, she becomes stronger than the constructs through which she moves.

The image of Martha existing somewhere behind walls, or in rooms is repeated and developed in Landlocked. At the beginning of this novel, Martha states that her life is like a series of rooms, each vastly different from the others. She sees herself as the only connecting link between a group of totally unrelated environments: "Her role in life, for this period, was to walk like a housekeeper in and out of different rooms, but the people in the rooms could not meet each other or understand each other, and Martha must not expect them to. She must not try and explain or build bridges" (pp.21-22).

This continuing metaphor is particularly interesting developmentally because it is one that Lessing returns to repeatedly. In her recent novel, Memoirs of a Survivor, Lessing uses this image as the dominant metaphor. The difference between the rooms as metaphor in Memoirs and the rooms which Martha walks through in Landlocked, is that the rooms in the latter novel have an existence in historical reality as well as in Martha's imagination whereas the rooms of the "survivor" exist only within her memory and imagination.

Lessing has used the image of the self as a series of rooms in another context which sheds some light on the metaphor in this novel. The image appears in Lessing's review for the New York Times of a book of Sufi lore by Indries Shah called Thinkers of the East. Lessing has exhibited an interest in Sufism in her writings as well. A few brief studies have linked her thought to certain aspects of Sufi belief. She is fond of quoting from Sufi stories, and the fourth part of Landlocked is prefaced with a quotation from the Nasrudin stories. These stories are a unique part of Sufi lore; they are, a critic writes, "intended to inculcate Sufi thinking, to outwit the old villain, which is a name for the patterns of conditioned thinking which forms the prison in which we all live."⁵ In her review of these allegories of man's inability to perceive more clearly, Lessing writes of the unenlightened in these terms: "they were like children in a house from which they had never been allowed to stray, doomed to walk from one room to another without knowing that there could be another house, elsewhere, with different furnishings and a different view from its windows."⁶ In Landlocked, Martha is, at first, one of those condemned to a repetitious round of visits among enclosures reminiscent of a Sartrean hell. She is, however, developing all the while an inner and transcendent selfhood.

Lessing presents the structure of Martha's personality

at the beginning of the novel through the metaphor of the rooms. In the very first appearance of this image, we can see how far Martha has progressed from the soft, shell-less creature of her childhood. Martha feels an inward strength she has not known before: "what was real in her, underneath these metamorphoses of style or shape or--even, apparently-- personality, remained and intensified" (p. 20). This is described fully in a dream she has. The description of this dream is quite lengthy, but since it provides in a reasonably concise manner, a predominant image both in this novel and in Memoirs of a Survivor, it will be quoted in full.

Her dream at this time, the one which recurred, like a thermometer, or gauge, from which she could check herself, was of a large house, a bungalow, with half-a-dozen different rooms in it, and she, Martha (the person who held herself together, who watched, who must preserve wholeness through a time of dryness and disintegration) moved from one room to the next, on guard. These rooms, each furnished differently, had to be kept separate--had to be, it was Martha's task for this time.

... Yes, she knew that,--Martha knew that, if she could not trust her judgement, or rather if her judgement of outside things, people, was like a light that grew brighter, harsher, as the area it covered grew smaller, she could trust with her life (and with her death, these dreams said) the monitor, the guardian, who stood somewhere, was somewhere in this shell of substance, smooth brown flesh so pleasantly curved into the shape of young woman with smooth brown-gold hair, alert dark eyes. The guardian was to be trusted in messages of life and death; and to be trusted too when the dream (the Dream, she was beginning to think of it, came in so many shapes and guises, and so often) moved her back in time, or perhaps forward--she did not know; and was no longer the shallow town house of thick brick and cement and tin, no longer the farm house of grass and mud; but was tall rather than wide, reached up, stretched down,

was built layer on layer, but shadowy above and below the shallow mid-area comprising (as they say in the house agents' catalogues) 'comprising six or so rooms' for which this present Martha was responsible, and which she must keep separate (pp. 20-21).

In Martha's conception of the nature of the self, the separation between the outer "rooms" and the inner "guardian" corresponds to certain Sufi ideas as well as to Jung's description of the structure of the psyche. Jung describes the personality as having two centers, the ego and the self: "The ego is an incarnation which participates in the vicissitudes of time, space and causality. The self, as the center of the archetypal psyche, is in another world beyond consciousness and its particularizing modes of experience. The ego is the center of subjective identity, the self the center of objective identity."⁷ The self, according to Jung, serves the same function that Lessing's guardian does. Von Franz notes that "the self can be defined as an inner guiding factor that is different from the conscious personality and that can be grasped only through the investigation of one's own dreams. These show it to be the regulating center that brings about a constant extension and maturing of the personality."⁸ The self, moreover, is rather late to develop; at first it is only an "inborn possibility." In Martha, the self has evolved from a soft, shell-less creature hiding behind social and intellectual constructs, to a guardian and a guide, a strong and trustworthy center for her individuation.

Lessing describes the "six or so" rooms through which Martha moves and for which the guardian is responsible in the first part of Landlocked. Each represents a part of Martha's personal history or a collective which had dominated her in the past, but which now invokes only a fragmentary response from one compartment of her ego. As she moves from room to room in Part One, Martha discovers that the activities which she once considered worth doing seem barely worth the strain such compartmentalization forces on her. At work, Martha refuses a promotion because she cannot devote herself "heart and soul" (p. 14) to being a typist. The time and thought that would have to be invested in this fragmentary activity seem to her to sap the strength she needs for survival: "She had to survive, she knew that; this phase of her life was sticking it out, waiting, keeping herself ready for when 'life' would begin" (p. 19).

In another room, with Maisie, Maisie's daughter Rita, and Rita's grandparents, the Maynards, Martha is forced to remember her own daughter, as well as all the entanglements of legal relationships which intrude upon the simple and natural patterns of a mother and daughter. Maisie is much the same person that she was in A Ripple From The Storm, an uncomplicated and down-to-earth sort, who is enmeshed on all sides by a complex of social expectations. Maisie calls upon Martha repeatedly to help her to sort out the

social and moral problems the Maynards cause. The fact that Martha solves these problems so easily indicates that she is, now, able to deal with social relationships more readily than she could in the past.

With the Cohen boys, in another "room," Martha finds herself reviewing another stale pattern. Joss and Solly are still trying to work with Africans, to establish an "African group," and are still divided by ideology. While listening to the Cohen boys repeat their perpetual argument, Martha maintains a hold on herself by conjuring up another image of the rooms which characterize her outer existence as well as an image of the developing center of her personality: "Inside her opened up the lit space on to which...emotions would walk like actors and begin to speak without (apparently) any prompting from her. This empty lit space was because of the half dozen rooms she had to run around, looking after. The tall lit space was not an enemy, it was where, some time, the centre of the house would build itself. She observed, interested, that it was now, standing there looking at the Cohen boys, the antagonists, that the empty space opened out under her searchlights" (p. 35). This vision enables Martha to contain emotions, factions, any violence of opinion, in a viewpoint which encompasses them and renders them subservient to a wider perspective.

As Martha moves through her continuing round of political activities, she discovers that an old daydream is still with her. In A Ripple from the Storm she had thought of herself as a kind of sleeping beauty, waiting for a man would could "bring her self to life." Martha still feels the need for a relationship with a man. Here this need is described in architectural images as a need for "someone who would unify her elements, a man would be like a roof, or like a fire burning in the centre of the empty space" (p. 37). This indicates that Martha is not yet an individuated being. She is not yet aware that the strengths and unities she seeks already exist within. This need and the beginning of her psychic development occurring together are responsible for the depth of meaning she finds in the relationship she comes to have with Thomas Stern.

While her alibility to love requires some development, Martha appears to be well on her way toward understanding something about the limitations of social relationships. In another room of her life, at the old party office, watching the people in the room go through familiar patterns, Martha indicates that she can recognize social roles and appreciate their value for certain individuals: "People can know what their roles are, the parts they play for others. They can fight them, or try to change; they can find their roles a prison or a support" (p. 38). Martha's awareness of roles enables her to transcend the influence

of any one of the parts she must play as she moves through the disparate rooms of her life. The fact that activities that once affected her totally are now seen as ephemeral and related only to ego-consciousness indicates that Martha has achieved a new understanding of collective structures. In two other "rooms," Martha observes that roles can become consistent patterns, structuring the style of a life-time from birth to death. Johnny Lindsay, a committed political worker, continues to worry about the formation of the African group even on his death-bed, while Mr. Quest, made neurotic by his war experiences, continues until the time of his death to think only of himself and his medicines (p. 39).

Martha's new-found ability to recognize roles for what they are and perceive groups as fragmentary influences which have no affect on the core of her being enables her to be free, at last, from the power of the collective. This freedom extends to her marriage as well. Anton tries, repeatedly, to make demands on Martha which will draw her into a conventional marriage. Martha endures these demands because "practically everything he said, or did these days, was nearly a reproach for her not doing, or being, what he now wanted her to be" (p. 42), but she does not allow them to affect her in any meaningful way. "That's my husband, thought Martha. What nonsense! ...and her flesh said: He's got nothing to do with me" (p. 66). Anton remains an

unimportant part of her life. He is not the unifying element of whom she had dreamt, nor does she allow his influence to extend to any other part of her existence than the narrow "room" in which she meets him.

Based on her understanding of the function of roles in society, Martha gains a strength which will not allow her to succumb to political pressures or narrow factionalism again. This is indicated in a significant scene in the early part of the novel. At the cinema, Martha and her friends watch a newsreel in which an announcer berates a starving German dressed in rags. The reaction of each of Martha's friends varies from Thomas's violent hatred of all things German to Solly's indifferent cynicism. Martha maintains a distance from the emotionally-charged atmosphere. She sees the remnant of the ragged German army, the defeated soldier, not as a representative of Nazism, but as a young man near starvation. The close-up reveals "the face of a shocked, frightened boy," who stares, "his cheekbones speaking of death, into the faces of a thousand full-fed people, his victorious enemies in a little town in the centre of Africa" (p. 55). An enemy seen close-up becomes a mere human whatever his ideology. Martha's position is now the opposite of that exalted idealism which led her to accept the Communist Party on an ideological basis alone, without regard for the individuals whose lives were being affected on a personal level by party decisions.

This new distance between Martha and society, and the increasing importance of the personal dimension, colors all of the first section of Landlocked. In the third chapter, which discusses the past and present of Mrs. Quest, Lessing's style undergoes a metamorphosis as well. Dagmar Barnouw has pointed to a new "illuminating immediacy" in Lessing's treatment of Mrs. Quest. The chapter dealing with Mrs. Quest is, however, "detached from any distinct perspective, even Matty-Martha's" (p. 501). This chapter provides important insights into Mrs. Quest's motivations and, as Barnouw has stated, "her relationship to Martha can suddenly be understood." Mrs. Quest is discussed in terms of the personal tragedies of her life--the death of her mother in childhood, the isolation of her life as a farmer's wife, the weakness of her husband--rather than in terms of the influences of collectivities and social patterns. Her tragedy lies in "her powerful, unused energies," (Landlocked, p. 85) rather than in the historical patterns which determined her generation. This movement into the personal dimension of Mrs. Quest's life is a new departure for Lessing, and indicates a change in her artistic interests.

Corresponding to the immediacy and personal dimension with which Lessing now views her characters, there is a detachment and almost disinterest in political affairs. The work which Martha continues to do for the party is

summarized in a line or two, whereas in earlier volumes of the series it would be detailed through complete chapters. In the fourth chapter Martha indicates that she has an insight about politics which would account for its decreasing influence. Martha becomes aware, suddenly, of a simple fact: "public opinion changes." Martha learns how "a belief can turn" even "into its own opposite" (p. 89). She notes that once-respectable opinions are now considered disreputable and ideas once hotly debated are accepted by everyone.

In the past, Martha had turned with the tide of opinion, particularly if it stirred her idealism. Now she has discovered that ideas, opinions, even ordinary concepts of nation, are illusory. The war has brought about such great changes in the political alignment of nations, and refugees complicate the problem further by moving in such great numbers that the borders of countries are seen to be mere lines on a globe rather than meaningful delineations of nationalities or political inclinations. Martha describes her sense of this event: "all over the world," she notes, "human beings were shifting in great masses from one country, one continent to another: myriads of tiny black seeds trickled from side to side of a piece of paper shifted about in a casually curious hand" (p. 90). Martha's perspective is one in which human beings can be seen as both insignificant and highly variable. Lacking constants

and meaning, Martha is faced with the same problems which Anna Wulf has faced in The Golden Notebook. She can either be submerged by a feeling of minuteness and ineffectuality or she can find a compensation within. Martha, at this point, does neither, but holds herself in readiness for salvation by escaping from Africa and Anton. "When I get to England," she reminds herself, "I'll find a man I can really be married to" (p. 101).

It is clear by now that Lessing's perception of the nature of individuality has changed. This is reflected in the development of Martha Quest's perception of herself and the world around her. She is no longer testing her individuality in terms of the collectives for she has, by now, found them all wanting. In addition to the change in Martha's perception of the nature of selfhood in this novel, Lessing's development can be traced through her views of the relationship between men and women. In this novel, marriage as a social institution (Martha and Anton) has no real impact on Martha's life, while her relationship with Thomas Stern, which can be called a hierogamy, alters her perceptions of the world around her. Evelyn Hinz, in her important genre study involving the distinctions between the novel and the romance, has stated that the use of hierogamy rather than marriage is an indication that a writer is not writing a novel in the conventional sense but a "mythic narrative."⁹ This cannot be underestimated

in terms of Lessing's development. Lessing has, after all, devoted several volumes of "Children Of Violence," most particularly A Proper Marriage, to an analysis of marriage as a social form. In Landlocked, she ceases to be interested in the social attitudes which condition marriage, for she has already analyzed all the collective attitudes that shape marriage in society.

In the relationship between Martha and Thomas Stern, developed in the second part of Landlocked, Lessing turns to the archetypal, unconscious and transpersonal dimensions of marriage. Lessing is bringing to completion the vision of marriage as a part of cosmic patterns which she presented as a background to the failed marriage of the Turners in The Grass Is Singing. Unlike the Turners, who fail to achieve a hierogamous union, the relationship between Martha and Thomas reverberates with cosmic harmonies. This relationship signals an end to the Marxist-Realist dimension of Lessing's work. In The Golden Notebook, which interrupted the "Children Of Violence" series, Lessing explored the creative possibilities of the inner world through Anna Wulf's "descent" into madness. There Anna discovered the fertilizing effect of encountering one's other half--her masculine and creative spirit, the animus of her unconscious--which is projected onto Saul Green. Unlike Anna's, Martha's enriching union occurs in the "real" world. Thomas and Martha encounter the cosmos and its harmonies through

each other.

Lessing seems to have realized that if Martha's quest is to remain significant, if she is to be as viable a heroine in the 1960's as she was in the 1930's, Martha must transcend the social, historical, and political collectives which have threatened her and move into the psychological quest that characterizes contemporary life. From "political action" and "historical determinism" Martha moves into an increasingly inner arena for her conflicts. The relationship between the individual and the collective now involves the collective unconscious, the archetypal inner realm, as well as the world outside.

Martha's internal quest begins with her experience of hierogamy, an experience which has already occurred when the second part of the novel opens. The change in Martha and the importance of the new experience is presented, once again, through the metaphor of the rooms. The image at the beginning of the second part speaks for itself in revealing that Martha has achieved a new and altered consciousness:

She had complained that her life had consisted of a dozen rooms, each self-contained, that she was wearing into a frazzle of shrill nerves in the effort of carrying herself, each time a whole, from one 'room' to another. But adding a new room to her house had ended the division. From this centre she now lived--a loft of aromatic wood from whose crooked window could be seen only sky and the boughs of trees, above a brick floor hissing sweetly from the slow drippings and wellings from a hundred growing plants in a shed whose wooden walls grew from lawns where the swinging arc of a water sprayer flung rainbows all day long, although, being January, it rained most afternoons.

Once upon a time, so it is said, people listened to their dreams as if bending to a door beyond which great figures moved; half-human, speaking half-divine truths. But now we wake from sleep as if our fingers have been on a pulse: 'So that's it! That's how matters stand! Martha's dreams registered a calmly beating pulse although she knew that loving Thomas must hold its own risks, and that this was as true for him as for her (p. 103).

Martha's feeling of wholeness, of completion and unity, that results from the relationship with Thomas Stern is a harmony that has not been achieved by any other character in Lessing's fiction.

All of the elements which characterize hierogamy and mythic narrative are present in Lessing's description of Thomas and Martha. This relationship is hierogamous in that it is not only a meeting of man and woman, "but of the elements--earth and sky." (Hinz, p. 905). It involves as well a sense of cosmic participation--a fulfillment of relationship reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence's image of the rainbow, in which the love of Tom Brangwen and Lydia reaches to the cosmos in an arching radiance beneath which the child Anna dances.

Another quality which this relationship shares with other hierogamous unions in fiction is the disparity between the partners. Hinz has cited this novel specifically, noting that Lessing's presentation of "the superior Martha Quest" and "the peasant gardener Thomas Stern" (p. 907) is an example of the primary means by which the union of opposing elements is presented in mythic fiction.

Hinz moreover discusses the purposes of hierogamous unions in archaic ritual and in fiction. The mythic writer, she notes, presents such motifs for reasons similar to those which motivated the performance of hierogamous ceremonies in archaic societies. The most important function of such rituals in both cases is to abolish time and history: "hierogamy demands, in the first place, that one abandon one's connections with history, or, more dramatically, that one attempt to reverse the process of civilization and to abolish profane time" (p. 908). Lessing's use of hierogamy signals a complete reversal of her social consciousness, her interest in the relations between the individual and the historical period in which she lives. Now, the relationship between two people, Martha and Thomas, is the center of her concern, and the moments between them abolish their history: "they held in that moment everything the other was, had been, ever could be" (p. 108).

History, profane time, the time Martha is forced to spend away from Thomas in the loft, continues to make demands on her, and Lessing carefully documents Martha's movements between the loft and the world outside. Most demanding of all are Martha's old commitments. As Hinz notes, "difficult ... yet even more necessary to put aside are the internal evidences of profane time, one's past, for example" (p. 908). Martha is able to deal easily with the "rooms" which she found stressful in the earlier parts of

the novel. She abandons her job with a "simplicity of will that was Thomas's gift to her." She realizes that "by herself it would have taken weeks of thinking, I should do this or that, and then a drift into a decision. But now she lived from this new centre, the room she shared with Thomas, a room that had in it, apparently, a safely-running dynamo, to which, through him, she was connected. Everything had become easy suddenly" (p. 113). Nonetheless, Martha finds her political commitments more difficult to deal with than her job. Her former political relationships continue to absorb certain amounts of her time. Her punishment for this relapse into profane time is ironically appropriate; time and history are united in her purgatory when she is hired by a political foundation organized by Mrs. Van Der Bylt to type the history of the Rand as dictated by Johnny Lindsay. Her days are characterized, thus, by rapid shifts from the world and its demands and the time in the loft, when she felt "herself" and "no one put pressure on her" (p. 117).

Another aspect of her past with which Martha must deal is her legal relationship with Anton. Martha's movement from the profane, the world of history and society, by virtue of the increasing importance of the sacred union with Thomas, creates a barrier when she is forced to acknowledge Anton as her legal husband. The time she spends with him seems more and more a trap: "she had to cut Anton out

of her consciousness, had to bring down a curtain in herself and shut him out." Even when they are lying side by side, she maintains a separateness from him: She was not there: she had knotted her emotions tight with Thomas and shut Anton out" (p. 119).

Eventually Martha is able to recognize the distinction between hierogamy and marriage, although she does not use these terms herself. She finds herself rejecting Anton's physical presence in ways that she accepts Thomas. Looking at Thomas' hands, she feels "as if he were holding her" (p. 161), while Anton's hands are distorted into something alien. Her physical revulsion forces to consciousness a new awareness. She recognizes "just how terrible a crime she had committed by marrying Anton, by marrying Douglas ... against herself and against them." Martha feels betrayed by the collective attitudes and the social policies that made these marriages seem the thing to do: "How was she to have foreseen the world she would enter when she loved Thomas? Why had no one told her it existed in a way she could believe it? How strange it was--marriage and love; one would think the way newspapers, films, literature, the people who are supposed to express us talk, that we believe marriage, love, to be the desperate, important, deep experiences they say they are. But of course, they don't believe in any such things....How

was it that no one made me feel that it could matter, marrying someone" (p. 162).

Martha's development is not a smooth progression, but characterized by vacillation. She moves back and forth, now caught up by history and the fatalistic and deterministic attitudes which characterize the historical period in which she is living, then aware once again of the unimportance of historical reality in comparison to the cosmic perspectives which Thomas has given her. The reason for this vacillation is that Martha has one more important lesson to learn; she must integrate hierogamy as one of the steps in her quest for Martha. It is too easy for her merely to be caught up in the intensities of the relationship without undergoing any further development. Lessing presents both the ecstasy of Martha's experience and the necessity that the experience give her some inner strength: "Martha and Thomas sat side by side, hardly breathing--breathing, as it were, through each other. They did not look at each other, but felt Thomas, Martha, through their arms, their thighs, their stomachs.... They sat in these guises and felt life running through them.... She had twenty senses and a heart so filled with delight it held all the night and everything about her.... He felt it and turned to her smiling, and her heart fell into sorrow, remembering what had been beating at the edges of her consciousness for days now--a long time; that of course all

this was going to end and soon" (pp. 152-53).

It is clear that in order for her relationship with Thomas to be more than a beautiful interlude, Martha must be able to integrate the pain of his loss without sinking into despair. As the time approaches that Thomas and Martha must separate, she finds the experience with him changing as well:

Together in the loft, they spoke less. They were in the loft less often. To be together was like--she could not say. It was true for Thomas, too, because when they looked at each other, the sensation of sinking deeper and deeper into light was stronger. Being together was, for both of them, a good deal more than Martha being with Thomas. Sometimes it was so intense, they could not stand it, and separated. Or the loft seemed too high, too fragile, too small, and they left it and walked very fast through the streets. But this could only happen at night, because of the danger of being seen. Sometimes when they made love it was so powerful they felt afraid, as if enormous forces were waiting to invade them. But they did not know what this meant (pp. 160-61).

The loss of Thomas occurs little by little and the pain of that loss is ameliorated by Martha's ability to move into a cosmic perspective. For example, after the separation, while traveling with Jack, a fellow party worker, to visit Thomas at the home he shares with his wife and child, Martha feels an empty space "opening inside her" (p. 165), a space through which humanity moves in minute fragments: "And the empty space not only contained her and Jack, two tiny ant-like figures, she contained the space--she was the great bell of space, and through it crawled little creatures, among them herself" (p. 168). Martha's rooms,

the earlier metaphor for both her historical reality and ego-consciousness are now dissolved into this vast spaciousness. This "complete sacrifice of egotism and of the possessive attitude toward oneself and one's own emotions and instincts"¹⁰ are the psychological gift of the hieros gamos. Martha's sense of loss and pain, as well as the cosmic distance by which she perceives reality mark the beginnings of her integration of the experience she has had with Thomas. She undergoes, however, a new trial, a backsliding if you will, a movement into despair before she is able to integrate her experiences.

The third section of the novel is full of images of pain, violence and death. The dissolution of the walls of the ego brought about by the formation of a new center in Thomas, plunges Martha into a temporary chaos when that center is lost. The images in this section of the novel parallel the movement in Martha's emotions from pain of loss to disintegration. Martha's purgatory occurs, appropriately, through her re-absorption in the trivial. What has been seen by some critics as a loss of power in this novel is rather an important aspect of Martha's descent into chaos--here a condition of landlocked insignificance--before she can emerge as a complete human being. The quotation which prefaces the third part of the novel is the wryly ironic quote from Saint Polycarp: A.D. 135: "My God, in what a century have you caused me to live." Martha is a "carper"

here. She blames, first, the condition of society and the loss of Thomas for her pain. Focusing on loss, Martha has not yet assessed the aspects of her experience with Thomas that continue within her.

The opening paragraph of this section is characterized by such a dryness, a matter-of-factness that it seems to be written by another author. It is useful to compare the lyricism with which Martha described the world during her experiences with Thomas to the sterility of language in this section. For example, sitting in a restaurant surrounded by news clippings (reminiscent of Anna Wulf before her descent), Martha sees only the mundane. "There was a letter from Joss lying on the stained tablecloth near a cruet which looked like the Albert Memorial and had seven different kinds of vinegar and pickle, apart from the usual salt, pepper, mustard" (p. 177). Looking around, Martha notices that everyone is silent; "they felt like people filling in time before trains on a station platform." Martha, too, is in a strange condition of inactivity. She is "no longer 'running around and about'. What was the point when she was going away at any moment? She would not organize things; she would not go to meetings" (p. 179).

We are given further insight into Martha's disintegration by means of a description of her home on the veld. Once the home was a symbolic center for her experiences;

mandala-like she placed herself and her house in the symmetrical center of her world. Once again, the house parallels the structure of Martha's ego, and once again, both are collapsing. She visualizes that "the old house had sunk to its knees under the blows of the first wet season after the Quests had left." She imagines the house and the city around her sinking into dust: "Dryness, dryness-- the air snapped with it, she could feel the pressure of dryness shaping her substance, the dust was its creature and the air of October gritted on her tongue" (p. 197).

Martha's disintegration and descent into chaos is characterized by a reversal in her ordinary rhythms, which involves an actual descent into darkness: "Since Thomas had left a few weeks ago, Martha's life had been turned inside out. Once her life was a daytime life, she woke to a day in which she would probably see Thomas. But now the days had lost their meaning, and it was at night that she came awake and lived" (p. 198). It is in this mood that Martha is absorbed fully by a fatalism she always rejected:

"Every fibre of Martha's body, everything she thought, every movement she made, everything she was, was because she had been born at the end of one war, and had spent all her adolescence in the atmosphere of preparations for another which had lasted five years and had inflicted such wounds on the human race that no one had any idea of what the results would be....Martha was the essence of violence, she

had been conceived, bred, fed and reared on violence" (p. 202).

By seeing herself in this limited fashion, as nothing but a child of violence, Martha's descent into chaos is almost complete. For the first three volumes in the series, Martha had rejected anything that might indicate that her future was determined, now she acquiesces and takes a kind of comfort in the fact that all her friends have violence marked upon them in the same way.

It is in this section of the novel that Martha is forced to come to terms with the death of her father. In archetypal terms, Martha's descent also involves confronting her historical past in order that she can re-emerge born of herself rather than her past. Martha's preoccupation with death comes into focus in these terms:

In that house people sat around waiting for an old man to die. Martha was afraid to visit her father, because she wished to wipe that house and everything in it out of existence, it was so terrible and ugly. But she went nearly every day. Before she set out to see her father she took herself in hand, held herself quiet: the house was more than ever like a nightmare, all her most private nightmares were made tangible there, and that is why she stood outside it at night, looking at it like a stranger. In this way she focused it, targeted it, held it safe so that later, when she got home and went to bed, she would not actually dream of it because she had forced the dream into her consciousness; she had already experienced, awake, the quicksand which swallowed so easily love and the living (p. 204).

Love and the living are less important to Martha in this part of Landlocked than in any other of the volumes

which precede it. Living a nightmare, Martha's dreams are, in spite of herself, haunted by visions of death. Not only her father, but Thomas appears to her in a vision of war and death. In this dream she sees herself "imprisoned on a high dry plateau" while everyone moves away and a sound of healing water is heard off at a distance. Even the return of Thomas in the fourth chapter of this section does not help Martha, for he is both disinterested in her and disintegrated in himself. Martha's former friends all appear to her as lacking meaningful activity. The women she once worked with in the party she sees as "middle-aged women neurotic with dissatisfaction" (p. 212). The cycles of repetition and meaninglessness seem ready to engulf Martha on all sides. It must be re-emphasized at this point that the fatalism which characterizes this section of the novel is a phase through which Martha is passing. It is not the central theme of the work as a whole.¹¹

The final section of the novel indicates that Martha is beginning to integrate her experiences with Thomas. She realizes that she has changed but does not yet understand the implications of the change: "Her experience with Thomas had been so deep, in every way, that she was changed to the point that--but here it was that she was unable to go further." The only way she can describe the experience is by remembering the feeling it gave her. "Some force, some power had taken hold of them both, and had made such changes

in her--what, soul? (but she did not even know what words she must use) psyche? being?--that now she was changed and did not understand herself" (p. 222). One of the psychological characteristics of hierogamy is that it brings about a change in attitude, a change in regard to one's way of viewing oneself: "In this ritual [hierogamy] the woman recognizes and asserts...that her sexuality and the emoluments it can bring are not her own, her possession, but represent the demands of life itself, which flows in her, and whose servant she is: her body, her psyche is but the vehicle for life's manifestations" (Harding, p. 179).

The closing chapters of the novel deal with Martha's preparations for leaving Africa. She completes her divorce from Anton; her father, Johnny Lindsay, and Thomas have died; and her relationship with the Party suffers from her disillusionment with the Soviet Union. Her work for the Party also, has come full circle. A new group of young, excited, politically-active people has been formed to whom Martha and her friends are all "members of the old guard" (p. 281). At a meeting she attends, Martha watches a younger version of Anton with a "vision which he wished them to share" (p. 282). The young people present announce that their wish "is to establish socialism in this country--now!" (p. 285). Watching the old roles continue in new lives, Martha is able to foresee that in six years time, the young group will be sitting where she is, but full of nostalgia

for lost opportunities as the circles of repetition complete themselves.

Apart from completing all of her old activities, the most significant event in the last section of the novel is that Martha is given the task of editing Thomas's papers. He had been visiting native compounds and sending notes back to Martha to be typed. The final document Martha receives from him is a combination of notes on the conditions in rural areas and some incomprehensible jottings. The history of the tribes he knew is intermingled with his journal entries and the mad scribblings. This notebook, so much like Anna Wulf's, is entrusted to Martha, who "sat holding this extraordinary document, fitting the leaves in between each other, separating them, so that sense and nonsense met each other, as in a dance, and left each other; and meanwhile thought of Thomas, the strong, brown man she had known--this was the same person"(p. 279). Martha, as editor separating sense and nonsense, is through a creative act metaphorically assimilating her experience with Thomas. Dagmar Barnouw feels that Martha has not developed significantly in the course of this novel and that "Thomas is ahead of Martha on the way to the self--having admitted chaos" (p. 501). This view overlooks two significant points. First, Martha has already confronted chaos in the form of violence and death in the previous chapters of the novel. While she did not descend into madness, she was able to

experience a new level of selfhood as a result of the archetypal hieros gamos. Secondly, Martha is the editor of Thomas's notebooks. She is able to separate reason from madness. As artist, as editor, she reveals that she has creatively assimilated her experiences with Thomas and that, consequently, she stands beyond him on the path toward an integrated selfhood. Thomas's notebooks, significantly accompany Martha to England in her suitcase, a symbolic tribute to the spiritual integration of Thomas into the life upon which she will be entering. When she arrives in England, Martha is a new being; the experiences of Landlocked prepare us fully for the Martha of The Four-Gated City.

Notes: IV. Landlocked

¹ Schlueter, p. 64.

² Dagmar Barnouw, "Disorderly Company: From The Golden Notebook to The Four-Gated City," ConL 14, (Autumn 1973) pp. 500-501.

³ Marion Vlastos, "Doris Lessing and R. D. Laing: Psychopolitics and Prophecy," PMLA, 91 (1976), p. 245.

⁴ Doris Lessing, Landlocked (St. Albans 1967), p. 244. (Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text).

⁵ Nancy S. Hardin, "Doris Lessing and the Sufi Way," ConL 14, (Autumn 1973), p. 568.

⁶ Doris Lessing, "What Looks Like an Egg and Is an Egg?" New York Times Book Review (May 7, 1972), p. 42.

⁷ Edinger, p. 166.

⁸ Von Franz, p. 163.

⁹ This discussion of Lessing's use of hierogamy is indebted to the principles of "mythic narrative" set out in the article by Evelyn Hinz cited previously.

¹⁰ M. Esther Harding, Woman's Mysteries (New York, 1971), p. 182.

¹¹ Frederick Karl asserts that by the time of writing The Four-Gated City, Doris Lessing "has descended into despair." He relates this to the theme of violence in the series as a whole and does not deal with the way Martha Quest is able to transcend violence in Landlocked (p. 302).

V. The Four-Gated City

While less interesting structurally than The Golden Notebook, The Four-Gated City (1969) is, nonetheless, an important novel in terms of the development of Lessing's themes. In this novel, she presents the theme of descent into the inner world which is seen as a prerequisite for self-development at middle-age. This idea of middle-age as a time to look within and assess one's values will continue to occupy Lessing's imagination in the three novels which follow. The theme of descent within is a departure from the rational unfolding of Martha Quest's personality as she tested herself against social conditioning in the preceding novels of the Children of Violence series. In The Four-Gated City Martha is more deeply concerned with self, yet the demands of maturity bring her into meaningful contact with others. As Micheal Thorpe notes: "Martha's renewed quest is neither political nor sexual in emphasis: neither can 'create' her now; more active and independent than before, she embarks on inward self-exploration. Yet at the same time her life at the centre of the distraught liberal household is a focus of widening responsibility toward and understanding of others, not an engrossment with self. There are no absolutes now, individually or collectively" (pp. 23-24).

Martha's self-exploration involves all the gradual processes of change and learning that go to create a mature human being. She has come to England with the idea that life will begin for her across the sea, that she will discover her golden city and live an integrated life, culturally, socially and morally. Instead, Martha finds entrapment; the social and historical patterns she confronts are more rigid than those she had left behind in Africa. This is reflected in the imagery at the beginning of the novel. "The Four-Gated City begins with stiflement and strangulation. The key images in the first pages are of grime, globules of wet, brownish-gray textures, oilcloth with spilled sugar, gritty smears, grease, thumbmarks."¹ London is a city of ruins after the bombings of the war, yet amid the ruins, Martha finds rigid role-playing and pre-determined social attitudes rather than new beginnings.

Walking about in the rubble of London, Martha is given the opportunity to test her sense of identity; she compares her personal history with what she observes of British history. In one symbolic scene, Martha peels the layers of wallpaper off a bombed-out building noticing the increasing ugliness of the successive layers. Martha finds a decadent civilization, a world on the edge of apocalypse, yet oblivious to anything beyond the mundane games people play with each other within the rigid demarcations of social stratification. Martha sees England as "a country absorbed

in myth, doped and dozing and dreaming, because if there was one common fact or factor underlying everything else, it was that nothing was as it was described--as if a spirit of rhetoric (because of the war?) had infected everything, made it impossible for any fact to be seen straight."²

Martha alone seems capable of seeing things as they are. As she watches people diminish themselves in order to fit social requirements she counts the personal and psychological cost of living by rhetoric. Rejecting a job, she notes: "the trouble is, you have to choose a slot to fit yourself to, you have to narrow yourself down for this stratum or that" (p. 36).

In the first section of the novel, Martha refuses to allow herself to be narrowed in this way. She is offered a series of jobs, each of which requires a certain role to be played, and a certain set of standards to be assumed. To function in this society she feels that "one's daytime brain was slotted, compartmented, pigeon-holed" (p. 45). Martha is too busy at another task, for she has painfully "detached" her daytime brain from meaningless activity in order to nurture the growth of a center of awareness within. At the beginning of the novel, then, Martha asserts the necessity of an inner development to counter the blind, structured, ant-like activity she sees in the world around her. Dirty, obsessed, bombed-out London offers no medium in which she can be herself without compartmentalizing.

Amid the ruins, Martha has discovered a loneliness which is her "friend" and an inner "silence" (p. 47) which gives peace. "If only she could go on like this, walking forever through the interminable, damp, hostile streets of this doomed city, all cracked and thinned and darkened by war-- if only she could stay here in this area of herself she had found....Her mind was soft, dark empty space. That was what she was" (p. 48). Lessing, we have seen, frequently uses architectural images to describe Martha's psychological patterns. Here, the bombed-out and grimy city signifies the end of Martha's social and cultural dependence. Civilization and political action having proven meaningless, Martha has given up her external connections and escaped instead into the bedrock of herself.

Lessing outlines, very clearly, in the opening chapter of the novel, the structure of the psyche as she sees it. Martha describes three main divisions in her inner self. "First, the quiet empty space, behind which stood an observing presence. Then into the quiet space, behind it, an enemy, a jiggling fool or idiot" (p. 49). This latter Martha describes more fully as "a wave-length, a band where music jiggled and niggled, with or without wordsthe words, or tunes, were not all at random: they reflected a state or emotion. Because the words of the songs, or the phrases, had a relevance, one could learn from them, if one did not shy off, indignant, annoyed, because of the

banality, the silliness, the jumble of this band of sound just behind (beside?) the empty space" (p. 49).

This description of the levels of the psyche is not unique to Lessing. They are the same as those described by Jungians in their many works that deal with the psyche and its structure.³ On the road to self-knowledge, Martha is reminding herself that the ego (one's conscious personality) can be separated from the persona (the role one is forced to play). Martha sees very clearly how fragmentary the persona can be, for she herself has worn several of these social masks. She has been Martha, Matty, or a "hip-swinging socially gallant girl" (p. 25), depending on the expectations of the persons about her. Martha has discovered that there is no limit to these roles. At one point, she assumes false names as she meets strangers and allows them to "fill in" (p. 27) for her whatever they need her to be. This brings Martha to the realization that if she is not any of the personas, she must exist somewhere else.

Her next problem involves the identity of the "calm observer." She wants to come to terms with the inner being who "watches and waits." In order to explore this part of herself more completely, Martha believes that she must shut out "responsibilities and commitments" (p. 51) or she will succumb to what others expect of her and forget all the important discoveries she has made. In a Wordsworthian image, Martha indicates that she feels that ordinary life will

cause a "sleep and forgetting" of parts of herself that she must not forget.

The knowledge of a certain condition belonged to one, when one was inside it. That was memory. No use to say: remember the lit space and its marvellous brother, the turn of the spiral above it when one had gone through the band of noise. Because having left them behind, having sunk away, one was in a place with its own memories, its own knowledge. You could, perhaps, during the long day of work, responsibility, people, noise, have a flash of a reminder: These places exist but that was because the day had lifted you towards them like a wave, for just a brief moment. You could think: I can reach it again when you were near it, not otherwise. Because for some reason the walls of the place you were in now had become thinned, and light came in from the other. That was why people did not remember. They could not. (p. 52)

Martha is determined, above all, to remember. Lessing asserts repeatedly that remembering is difficult. What Martha wishes to remember is the unity she has sensed in the transcendent cosmos. What she is offered is compartmentalization. The reason for her forgetfulness is that the unconscious, this repository of all that one is and might be--the cosmic realms of the integrated self and transcendence, is and remains the unconscious. One can establish links to the self, can work through dreams and intuition to an awareness of the "lit space," but all the contents of the unconscious will sink once more into the darkness of forgetting. On the boat to England from Africa, Martha had a vision of people as "drugged and hypnotized" for most of their lives. Those who slip out of the pattern and see beyond it, do so for only a brief period. Martha

realized then, that "we keep learning things and then forgetting them and so we have to learn them again" (p. 111).

Lessing is anticipating, here, the realization which Professor Charles Watkins arrives at in Briefing For A Descent Into Hell, for the theme of remembering and forgetting is an integral part of Lessing's view of the inner world. Both in this novel and in Briefing she is concerned with the transpersonal meaning of life which is lost or forgotten in ordinary consciousness. This idea of life as a "sleep and forgetting" is no more original with Lessing than it was with Wordsworth. Indeed, the theme is so universal that it can be considered an archetypal pattern in psychic growth. Mircea Eliade has written a synopsis of mythologies of memory and forgetting, tracing these patterns through Indian, Buddhist, Greek and Gnostic thought. In each case he describes, ordinary life is seen as a fall from the world of the spirit, "a loss of consciousness of the Self,"⁴ and a fall into the cycles of existence. Not only is ordinary consciousness compared to a kind of sleep in all these mythologies, but also Martha's concern with keeping awake, with realizing and understanding who she is, has mythological connotation. Eliade notes: "liberation can be compared to an 'awakening' or to a new consciousness of a situation that existed from the beginning but that one was unable to realize. From a certain point of view 'ignorance' which in the last analysis, is an ignorance of

oneself--can be thought of as a 'forgetting' of the true Self" (p. 118).

Martha's task, clearly, is to remember her true Self. Indeed, the cyclic, repetitive structure of this novel is due to Martha's periodic forgetting and remembering. A primary reason for her forgetting is that she finds herself drawn into patterns of responsibility by necessity. She must work in order to live but she does not want work which will force her into ordinary levels of consciousness. Thus, before she makes a decision which will entrap her in any particular pattern, Martha reviews the various opportunities that have been presented to her. Once again, she walks through various "rooms"--various social structures to which she alone provides a connecting link--hoping to find one in which she can be "herself."

The first "room" which Martha visits is one which had provided transcendence in the past. In order to delay "forgetting," she visits Jack's house, "the house that Jack built," a house of sex, and beyond sex, union with Eros as an archetypal force. Jack, and Martha's former lover, Thomas, both shared a similar awareness of the temporality of the flesh and the miracle of life realized most fully through sex. The realization of Eros, the "placing" of the instinctual, is a basic step in Martha's individuation. The sexual experience with Jack reminds Martha of her time with Thomas. With Jack and Thomas, sex is a kind of wave-

length, a union with a force, "a power which held and controlled, took both up and over and away from any ordinary consciousness into an area where no words could be of any use" (p. 71). Jack is not personally responsible for Martha's experience of the timeless Eros. He is merely the "instrument that knows how to reach it" (p. 72). Martha relates the "plane" she achieves with Jack to the other brightly lit space. "Yes, exactly like walking down the street in a high vibrating place: you can't 'remember' it-- it's the same place" (p. 72). This place that she reaches with Jack is an image of the completed Self. Here everything is unified, whole. Sex, as well as the rigors of sleepless walking, by placing physical demands on her, allow her to transcend her normal ego-consciousness and reach the cosmic realm in which all contraries blend.

Lessing uses the images of ascent and descent to describe Martha's movements between normalcy and this transcendent realm. With Jack, when they "tune in" to sex, they "let the wheel carry them up and over" (p. 74). From this "upper" level of wholeness, the divisions of ordinary life and what it means to be normal become clear to Martha: "This time, when her mind finally clicked off, went beyond the pictures and the voices, she did not retain any memory of it: was aware again only as she made the slow descent. The different rhythms disengaged and she entered normality: which was, she understood now, a condition of disparateness.

She had never really seen before how the separate parts of herself went on working individually, by themselves, not joining: that was the condition of being 'normal' as we understand it" (p. 74). Eros, thus, provides Martha with a flight into the higher realms of being.

While Martha's vision of transcendence is a wholesome one, she nonetheless discovers that sex cannot provide her link to the cosmic self in a manner satisfactory to this stage in her development. Her hierogamous experience with Thomas Stern in Landlocked had taught her all the lessons she needed to learn about the trans-personal dimension of sex. For the most part she is merely seeking escape, for transcendence through love and sex is primarily a youthful experience. At thirty-five, Martha requires a transcendent link through a more mature level of her personality. This realization comes to her in a dream-like vision she has while with Jack. Her vision informs Martha that she must come to terms with the family as a social unit, and with family responsibilities at middle-age. Martha's vision presents her with herself as a middle-aged woman in a house full of half-grown children "tortured and hurt" who look to her for strength and endurance. Martha had rejected the family as a social structure when she gave up Caroline, her daughter. As a Communist she had felt the bourgeois family to be wrong: "a dreadful tyranny, a doomed institution, a kind of mechanism for destroying everyone" (p. 80).

Martha had believed that people form families because they harbor inner images of the golden age, "a marvellous family walking with their animals."

It is disturbing to Martha, who does not share the dream of the archetypal family and who has rejected this structure in the past, to discover the family as a part of herself. Sleeping beside Jack she envisions the family and, more importantly, she sees herself in a new relationship to the family. Parents, and children's rebellion against them, are an inevitable pattern of life: "you've got to accept....parents have no choice but to be the world for their children. And if the world is ugly and bad for that time, then parents have to take that burden on themselves, they are ugly and bad too" (p. 82). Understanding this, Martha comes to accept the function of a middle-aged person in a family; she learns that providing a center for others is based on knowing herself. In her vision she sees that "she was worried and anxious: but she held the fort, she manned defences." The realization that she can be the center of a family and not betray her own need for development is an important part of what happens to Martha subsequently. This awareness of herself at the center of a family involves the putting away of childish things in her movement from Eros to the Self.

While Martha slowly accepts the importance of this vision, she reviews some of the other alternatives that

have been offered to her. She still fears becoming a "matron" like her mother, and is not ready to make a total commitment to her own needs. Holding fast to the resolution not to become one of the "sleepwalkers," she rejects all the responsibilities which do not correspond to her inner image. The first of these opportunities is a job at Iris and Jimmy's Café which offers a patterned kind of life with a suitor, Stanley, as well. Martha, whose easy sociability in the past has often placed her in false positions, manages to close the doors firmly on the limiting possibilities of this lower-class existence, as she did earlier on a middle-class job. Next she reconsiders the possibilities of political activity. She agrees to speak with Phoebe, a woman who believes in social action and would put Martha to work for the cause of Socialism and Native rights. While listening to Phoebe describe the job, Martha has an insight into fragmentation. She has been aware, for a long time, of the separation and isolation of the different groups of people she knows. While "rooms" like this were a part of the social structure in Africa, Martha sees that they exist just as rigidly in England. This forces Martha to confront the possibility that the source of compartmentalization lies in human nature itself. She feels that this is one of the important discoveries she has made recently, and which must not be lost by immersion in collective routines:

This was a country where people could not communicate across the dark that separated them.... It was nothing to do with class.... There was something in the human mind that separated, and divided. She sat, looking at the soup in front of her, thinking: if I eat, if I start this routine of meals, sleep, order, the fine edge on which I'm living now is going to be dulled and lost. For the insight of knowledge she now held, of the nature of separation, of division (for any number of different sets of words would serve to state it, none being of any real use), was clear and keen--she understood... understood really (but in a new way, was in the grip of a vision), how human beings could be separated so absolutely by a slight difference in the texture of their living that they could not talk to each other, must be wary, or enemies (p. 93).

While Martha rejects political work now because she realizes that it will not be able to dissolve these separations that exist within the structure of each individual, she finds herself drawn to another job which Phoebe suggests to her, that of secretary/housekeeper to Mark Coleridge, a writer. Martha's ambivalence toward accepting this job and her reasons for finally doing so are instructive. Her hesitation is based upon her fear of accepting herself at middle-age which she attributes to a fear of "forgetting" who she really is. Martha does not see that the role must be played out, that she must learn from this stage before she can transcend it. Martha feels, first of all, "attacked" by the Coleridge house--"claimed" (p. 99). She realizes that she will be tied down, which she does not want: "Anything here in this house, she understood, would be the absolute opposite of everything she had hoped to find" (p. 102). When Mark Coleridge tells her of his wife, Lynda, in a mental

hospital, and she sees the haunted face of his child, her impulse is to flee from these demands which are, in fact, required as much by her self development as by the Coleridges. Symbolically and intuitively, she returns to Jack's house. She learns, or rather, relearns that Jack's house cannot provide a meaningful refuge for her. Martha accepts, finally, that Jack's house of sex is a regression, a movement from the demands of the self. While she rails vehemently against the responsibilities of the job at the Coleridge home, inwardly, she has already accepted it. She is exhausted, wary of Jack, and afraid of Mark's household, even unable to remember what she had understood about herself. In this state, she presents Jack with all the negative attributes of Mark's house: "It's been sitting there waiting for me for years--everything as sick and hopeless as you can imagine....and a dominating mamma over all, and a wife in a mental hospital, and a man just sitting waiting for some sucker like me to cope with everything" (p. 107). But, while she objects, the demands of maturation have already claimed her and she reminds herself at last, "I know perfectly well I'm going to move in" (p. 114).

Even after working at Mark's for a few months, she still refuses to accept the responsibilities of the family and plans repeatedly to tell Mark that she is leaving. There is a certain amount of irony in Lessing's handling of Martha once again. Martha is still obtuse, slow to accept the

inevitable and slow to understand herself. Martha appears to be on the verge of a breakdown, for she has accepted the job with Mark against her conscious intent, and is unable to act upon her desire to quit. At middle-age, Martha is walking a thin line between complete self-sacrifice (the danger being that she will be completely absorbed by her role as Kate Brown is to be in The Summer Before The Dark), and the creative giving-up of herself in the responsibilities necessary for growth. This is what Martha must learn from the Coleridges, and she is subliminally aware of this even while she struggles to avoid what appears to be total self-sacrifice. When Mark and his brother Colin become the centers of controversy over what is believed to be Colin's act of treason she notes: "I shall tell Mark that I'm leaving. Today. I don't want to be involved in all this.... She meant the atmosphere of threat, insecurity and illness. Who would have thought that coming to this house meant--having her nose rubbed in it.... Something new, surely, not what she had lived through already, was what she ought to be doing? Why was she here at all? If you start something, then there's no getting off, getting free, unless you've learned everything there is to be learned" (p. 121).

Beyond her insight into the family, there are other things which Martha learns at the Coleridge's. She has, for example, an important insight into the way that people play roles in response to each other. She watches Mark go through

a series of personalities which each bring out a corresponding personality in herself. Against Mark's cool, detached personality, for example, she plays "the Defender" and vice versa; and against Mark the writer, she plays the writer's competent secretary; Matty returns when Mark requires a bit of clowning; and always, there is the watcher, the inner person who observes the roles come and go.

As she observes herself playing old roles, Martha finds herself yearning for stability, for a personality linked not only to the outside world, but to all the aspects of itself in a meaningful whole. She requires the kind of strength she had found through Thomas, an assurance that stems from a centered being. Mark understands Martha's quest for integration and describes for her, in symbolic form, exactly what she needs. He tells Martha about a four-gated city, a "hierarchical city" (p. 151), which is nourished by its connections with a transcendent reality, a celestial archetype. This city is both a symbol of an ideal society and a symbol of a life in which individuality is enriched by sharing in a transcendent hierarchy. Sensing Martha's need for a center, Mark speaks of the feeling of integration in the hierarchical city, and the sense of brotherhood among all "the hidden people who protected and fed the city."

There are several important aspects to this city, the central symbol of the novel, which must be understood.

First, as a hierarchical city, it is like those which have been traced through various cultures by Mircea Eliade. He notes the transcendent significance of these cities which gives them a reality that endures beyond time and history. Due to this "extra-terrestrial archetype, be it conceived as a form or purely and simply as a 'double' existing on a higher cosmic level"⁵ these cities are changed thereby from meaningless chaos to meaningful cosmos. In this regard, the city as a symbol thus incorporates the yearning for connection which Martha has exhibited through all the stages of her quest. Until her experience with Thomas, this yearning was most frequently satisfied through her political activity for Martha is seeking a meaningful order, a "cosmos" rather than the chaos of contemporary life. The city which Mark describes reflects the danger of chaos as well as the contentment of cosmos, for while Mark tells Martha of the "harmony, order, joy" of the four-gated city, he also tells her of an outer city of envious, short-lived, and dangerous people who were seeking the secrets of the center and who finally kill the inhabitants in their frantic efforts to locate the source and the center. Integration within, destruction without, and the precarious balance between the two--these are the outlines of the four-gated city, just as they describe the social structures of various civilizations, ancient and modern.

Second, it is not difficult to see that this city is also a model of the structure of the psyche, a fact which is inherent in its form. This structure has been misunderstood by several critics, particularly Frederick Karl who writes: "in geometry, the circle indicates perfection, completion. But Doris Lessing utilizes not circles but fours. . . . The fours indicate all directions, negate completions, baffle expansion, intensify the enclosed quest. There is no magic in four" (p. 308). Karl has overlooked the importance of four in psychological terms, for "one of Jung's major discoveries is the psychological significance of the number four as it relates to the symbolism of psychic wholeness and the four functions. The significance of the quaternity is basic to his whole theory of the psyche, both as regards its structure and its developmental goal, the individuation process" (Edinger, p. 179). The image of a four-gated city is used for the same reason that Martha conceived of her youthful world, the African landscape, in a mandala pattern. As a child, she created a symbol of wholeness, a world with herself at the center to compensate for her youthful instability. Now she requires a resting place as well. "Quaternity, mandala images emerge in times of psychic turmoil and obey a sense of stability and rest" (Edinger, p. 182). Thus in the world of political upheaval, madness, and death in which Martha finds herself living, the city provides a necessary compensatory image on both a

personal and social level. In each case she is structuring chaos, creating a meaningful organization of herself and her place in the world. Martha's development can be gauged by the increasing complexity of the worlds she structures.

Thus, the four-gated city is a symbol of Martha's desire for a centered life, for a life participating in a transcendent reality. It is, also, a further development of the architectural symbolism Lessing has used throughout to indicate Martha's psychological development. Here Martha's dream and Martha's reality are described fully; she must preserve her vision of the sacred city, develop a strong center within herself so that something will endure in a time of violence. In this way, Martha will be able to transcend the patterns of historical determinism, outlined in Landlocked, which would make her "nothing but"⁶ a child of violence.

Violence takes on a new dimension in this novel, as Martha is threatened by the violence of people who resent the Coleridges as well as by the violence of her own inner turmoil. Her endurance will be tested against these stresses from within and without. The most significant function of the Coleridge household is that it provides a framework for Martha's breakdown and reintegration. Like Anna Wulf in The Golden Notebook, Martha must undergo the process of individuation. In the Coleridge household, Martha is surrounded by people who are on the edge of despair and ready

at any moment to move into madness. Martha had been close to a breakdown after the loss of Thomas, but was preserved at that time by leaving Africa. Now she must undergo the process of disintegration and reintegration which has been delayed too long.

The Coleridges are all, in one way or another, going through a "bad time": Mark's brother Colin has defected to the Soviet Union; Colin's wife committed suicide leaving behind their troubled child; Mark's wife, Lynda, set up housekeeping in their basement flat with a friend from the mental hospital, Dorothy; and in the midst of all this Martha is called upon to provide a center for them all. Yet, because the members of the family are being tested by stresses of every kind, they provide an ideal medium for Martha's individuation.

In describing Martha's experience with breaking down, Lessing utilizes the images of descent which she will perfect in Briefing for a Descent into Hell. Several characters in the novel descend beyond their normal personalities, break down, and confront new aspects of themselves in the process. Lessing's interest in madness, in descent to the world within, has been related in several articles to the work of psychotherapist R. D. Laing.⁷ Both Laing and Lessing see madness as beneficial, and normality as a condition of insensitivity. Breakdown, for Laing and Lessing, is a means of providing an impetus for psychic growth. Besides breaking

down, descent also involves a loosening of the hold of old values and ideas. Martha has already demonstrated some insight into the roles people are forced to play. Now she discovers something about polarization and attitudes. This realization owes something to Lessing's discovery of Jung, for Jung has described the way in which a life overbalanced by a role or limited persona will have compensating images of wholeness in the unconscious ready to irrupt. Thus, whatever attitude is assumed by the conscious personality, its opposite will be present in the unconscious. Moreover, these unconscious qualities, the shadow of one's conscious beliefs, are frequently projected onto the world at large and with all the vehemence of a conversion. Martha has observed this in herself and in Mark Coleridge: "Mark had suffered a conversion, sudden and dramatic, and Martha was able to follow it through its rapid stages since it was identical as far as she could see with the one she had undergone ten years before.... He was undergoing in his own person, through his own experiences, that process which can affect nations or parties or people in which everything that is good in oneself is identified with a cause and everything bad identified with the enemy" (p. 193).

Martha is further along the road to descent than Mark, for she realizes that he is using language "identical with hers of ten years ago. He had walked into a personality, or if you like, a state of mind, and he was inhabiting it"

(p. 193). In this case, Mark has assumed his own shadow personality which is "hot-eyed, angry, violent, unable to listen." Since Martha recognizes this personality as one of her own, she is able to transcend her own shadow defences. By watching rapid conversions in Mark, she learns of the dangers of any polarized attitude. Mark is exhibiting one of the inevitable problems of a rigid point of view, which once again owes something to Jung, who wrote: "The snag about a radical conversion into one's opposite is that one's former life suffers repression and thus produces as unbalanced a state as existed before."⁸

Mark, like Thomas before him, of whom Martha is now reminded, is at war with himself. Martha sees two personalities fighting each other, each with its own mode of expression. Martha recognizes that this battlefield of two personalities is the beginning of a descent: "From here, this place, Thomas had gone down into madness and to death. Mark? Well this was one kind of a descent, of an entering in.... Here a nerve of memory sounded: she had thought of this before, when?.... She had understood once before that the new, an opening up had to be through a region of chaos, of conflict" (p. 195).

Martha's own region of inner chaos and conflict is entered shortly. Her breakdown is accelerated by the arrival of Mrs. Quest. In Landlocked, Lessing had provided an

insight into Mrs. Quest's frustrations and failures as Martha's mother. Now we are able to observe their effect on Martha. The announced arrival of her mother throws Martha first into a state of panic. "Her mother--ah yes, here it was, and she knew it. She had been blocking off the pain, and had blocked off half of her life with it. Her memory had gone" (p. 227). In Martha's descent, she encounters many of the experiences that have come to accompany a breakdown in our society. Not only has she forgotten the painful parts of her past, but she also suffers from despair and considers suicide. Finally, she consults an analyst who she hopes will give her the means by which she can deal with her mother.

Martha's problems bring her into a new relationship with the inhabitants of the symbolic basement flat. She begins to explore the positive as well as the negative values of madness. By recognizing her own unity even with the "mad" people in the basement, Martha is able to learn from their experiences. She finds within herself an interesting ambivalence about Lynda and Dorothy: "The basement flat, its occupants, were isolating themselves in her mind, as if it was a territory full of alien people from whom she had to protect herself, becoming alien, so that for two pins she could become a hater" (p. 232). It requires only a slight shift in Martha's awareness and understanding for her to see the household as a "whole." Then, she "was

feeling that again, as she had before, in a heightened, meaningful way, as if a different set of senses operated in her to enable her to feel, even if briefly, the connection between them all" (p. 235).

Martha is able to observe madness from a detached point of view which encompasses both the point of view of its victims, Lynda and Dorothy, and the point of view of one seeking help for psychological problems. Her intensive self-analysis and her experiences with Lynda and Dorothy have given Martha more objectivity than a newcomer to analysis might ordinarily have. Lynda and Dorothy speak to Martha about the glib insights that accompany Freudian analysis. They warn Martha about the analysts who "make you a 'nothing but'" (p. 235). Lynda explains "nothing but" as a joke they had in the hospital: "It's that point when they get all pleased because they can say: You're nothing but--whatever it is. They've taken weeks and weeks to get to that point, you know, and it's, you're nothing but Electra....'It's nothing but you want to sleep with your father....Nothing but, nothing but, nothing but" (pp. 235-36).

Martha rejects this kind of limitation as she has rejected all other reductive alternatives. Martha is seeking an amplification of herself, a view that will encompass all the polarities in an individuated self-hood. In this connection, Jung has rejected precisely the Freudian labels which Lynda describes. He writes: "The two theories of

neurosis [Freud's and Adler's] are not universal theories: they are caustic remedies to be applied, as it were, locally. They are destructive and reductive. They say to everything, 'You are nothing but...' They explain to the sufferer that his symptoms come from here and from there and are nothing but this or that....For the human psyche, be it sick or healthy cannot be explained solely by reduction" (Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p. 46).

In analysis, Martha questions whether the two parts of her personality, "the one that watches" and the one who is watched, are the same as Lynda's schizophrenic duality. It is this doubt that brings her to her analyst, although she can recover the painful parts of her experience by herself. By the time Martha begins her sessions with Dr. Lamb, she has already made considerable progress toward self-knowledge. She has a clear idea both of what she has lost and what she still requires: "What Dr. Lamb must do for her was to give her back pity, the strength to hold it, and not be destroyed by it. She must be able, when her mother came, to pity her, to love her, to cherish her and not be destroyed" (p. 244).

Dr. Lamb is able to provide Martha with a meaningful assessment of the duality she feels and the importance of the "silent watcher." Martha, he decides, needs emotional catharsis rather than the intellectual understanding of the watcher. In a flash of insight, Martha recognizes this fact

herself: "Somewhere in Martha sat the person who watched and waited. Oh God, if only she could kill that person, send her, it, him, away, make it silent, be able just once again to vanish entirely into this place of smooth warm bodies whose language was more beautiful and more intelligent than any other" (p. 250). Because the watcher has become too intellectualized, the stability, endurance, and survival of the self has been linked to knowing, to logos. This is the reason for the strong appeal of eros; she seeks the forgetfulness of bodies. Dr. Lamb points this out very clearly to Martha when he says: "I think you are proud of your knowing.... It's your intelligence you are proud of. You're still fighting your mother with that--the masculine intelligence" (p. 252).

In this way, the structures of Martha's personality, in spite of her self-analysis, have begun to rigidify. Mrs. Quest's arrival and departure at Dr. Lamb's suggestion have little affect on Martha's inward exploration except to increase her need for these sessions. The second part of the novel ends with Martha committing her energy to what she terms the "salvage" operation--forcing her memories into awareness so that she can "burn" them up and move beyond the painful past. Martha has learned, however, to take her inner world seriously. Dr. Lamb and the trauma of her mother's visit have set Martha on the right path, for she must deal with her personal history before it can be transcended.

The third part of the novel details Martha's breakdown. As we have seen, Martha has always been a rationalist, holding her intellectual apprehension as central. Thus, at middle-age, as the old patterns are confronted with their opposites, Martha finds that her rational processes are no longer capable of providing her with what she needs. This process of breaking down is a tedious and repetitious one. Lessing shows that Martha clings to old patterns unless shaken from them by illness, trauma, or hard work. Mrs. Quest has provided the first such dent in Martha's armour of rationalism. As the third section opens, Martha describes a feeling of fragmentation which Mark shares: "They were split people, he with his Lynda, whom he would always love, and she with--what she had acquired over the last three, four years" (p. 311). What Martha has acquired in these last years is the ability to compartmentalize her past and its pain. She has turned pain into "a landscape she could move into and out again. The hatreds and resentments were places or regions in her mind which she could visit, test" (p. 312).

Having established a workable relationship with the past and its pain, Martha begins to see herself in new terms. She calls herself a "survivor," a word with special meanings which Lessing will develop in Memoirs of a Survivor. Martha states that she has given herself over to intensive work on her inner being "for the sake of--survival" (p.312).

Martha defines a survivor as one who "had made discoveries. She had wrestled herself out of the dark because she had to, and had entered places in herself she had not known were there" (p. 312). One of the important discoveries the survivor has made is that sex and love are less important to her now than the cultural phase of her development. Martha sees "woman-in-love" as a quality of being with certain predictable patterns of behavior. She sees that love can be destructive if it leads one away from self-knowledge: "If one is with a man, 'in love,' or in the condition of loving, then there comes to life that hungry, never-to-be-fed, never at peace woman who needs and wants and must have" (p. 313). Martha is no longer mourning for that part of herself she described in A Ripple from the Storm, as one who can only be "herself" with a man. Now she sees that with a man she is only "woman-in-love," a role no more herself than any other. Martha has learned that "when its a question of survival, sex the uncontrollable can be controlled" (p. 314).

Sex is a transitory means of achieving a link to the parts of the self that are timeless. Martha is interested now in the permanent parts of herself, those which are not dependent upon anyone else. Survival, which is based on one's ability to endure and transcend even painful experiences has made not only sex but many things seem ephemeral in comparison. Martha contrasts, for example, the survivor's

stable inner world with the world of time and history which goes through rapid cycles of growth and destruction. Looking at London, which had once seemed a bastion of historical permanence, she sees it now as if through the lens of a speeded-up camera: "a city must now look like fountains of rubble cascading among great machines, while buildings momentarily form, change colour like vegetation, dissolve, reform" (p. 315). This vision sets London apart from the four-gated city which is characterized by slow growth, landmarks, and solidarity. Martha is becoming aware, in every part of her experience, that stability and permanence can be found only within.

As a "survivor," Martha finds that life in the Cole-ridge house continues to provide a framework for her psychological development. She becomes aware that the family reflects aspects of Martha herself. Each member of the household looks at Martha and sees a projection of himself. She sees that the function of a middle-aged person in a household is to be "a deputy in the centre of a house, the person who runs things, keeps things going, conducts a holding operation" (p. 366). Martha foreshadows the position of the survivor in Memoirs who moves among people who are all parts of herself. Martha feels that at middle-age, "more than ever one was forced back into that place in oneself where one watched; whereas, all around the silent watcher were a series of defences, or subsidiary creatures,

on guard, always working, engaged with--and this was the point--earlier versions of oneself, for being with the young meant all the time reviving within oneself that scene, that mood, that state of being, since they never said anything one hadn't said oneself, or been oneself" (p. 368).

Martha, in the past, had feared, above all, this condition of being a middle-aged person. Now, as she experiences it from the inside, she understands that being middle-aged means that one must understand oneself well enough to provide a center for the fragmentary personalities of others: "fragments, reflected off the faceted mirror that was one's personality, that responded all the time, every second, to these past selves, past voices, temporary visitors" (p. 369). The middle-aged person, Martha finds, is a "conspirator with time" (p. 375), for she has "acquired an insight into people that appalled even oneself" (p. 373). The value of this experience is that in the process she discovers something about her own permanence. She sees that the years in the Coleridge household were "spent above all in the exercise of holding on to what is permanent in people; while moods, phases, stages flowed past; what else is the business of bringing up children? She had had an education in recognizing a person's permanence" (p. 415).

As Martha explores the world within, she becomes increasingly interested in what she terms "knowing." This knowing involves intuition, thoughts beyond the simple

thinking functions of the mind. As she recognizes the "permanent" facets of the people around her, she discovers that she has the ability to hear, to tune into what other people are thinking. She recognizes that this is what Lynda had been experiencing all the time. Lynda's voices were merely a heightened form of an awareness available to everyone: "For what else had Lynda been saying all this time ... But Martha had not been able to hear. She had not had anything to hear with--there being no substitute for experience" (p. 385). Now that she understands what Lynda had been telling her, Martha can learn from Lynda because Lynda knows the unconscious better than the rest. Having made the journey, Lynda can become a guide, a psychopomp, as it were, for Martha. Thus, the two of them become explorers of the interior together. In the process, they read, question, write letters, and search for others who have had similar experiences. When there is no response outside, "they used their dreams, their slips of the tongue, their fantasies ... as maps or signposts for a country which lay just beyond or alongside, or within the landscape they could see and touch" (p. 388).

The quest excites them; they feel doors opening, new sensations, glimpses of something "like a finer air shimmering in the flat air of everyday" (p. 388). Lessing here begins to use the image which is predominant in Memoirs of a Survivor. For the Survivor, ordinary life, the walls of the rooms in which she lives, slips away to give a glimpse

of a transcendent and more beautiful reality. Martha describes the object of her quest in much the same terms, as if "sweetness known all one's life, tantalizingly intangible, had come closer, a little closer, so that one continually sharply turned one's head after something just glimpsed out of the corner of an eye, or tried to refine one's senses to catch something just beyond them" (p. 388). Martha and Lynda pursue this ephemeral sweetness with a kind of compulsion, and they are not afraid of attempting unorthodox means to achieve knowledge. "Perhaps it was because if society is so organized, or rather, has so grown, that it will not admit what one knows to be true, will not admit that it is, except as it comes out perverted through madness, then it is through madness and its variants that it must be sought after" (p. 389).

This is a point that Lessing has made before and will repeat, that madness can be a positive experience, that breakdown is a prerequisite for renewal and that the only negative aspect of the experience is the negative framework in which society has surrounded it. In Lessing's comprehensive study of the individual in relation to the collective, madness is an area that cannot be overlooked. Martha, by facing madness directly, is trying herself against all the social values as she confronts their opposites in a rejected world. Lessing describes the alternatives to the creative breakdown in this same section of the

novel. Phoebe, who is very much the kind of person Martha used to be, is undergoing a breakdown at the same time. Phoebe is sent to a Freudian analyst (p. 406) whom she believes to be less intelligent than she is. The result is that Phoebe becomes rigidified, "more Phoebe than ever." Martha notes, sadly, the fact that Phoebe did not benefit from the experience: "If only she had been able to hold the 'breakdown,' to explore it, develop it, use it; turning her back on it, she refused a chance to open and absorb. She became, instead, more rigid, more controlled" (p. 409). These two approaches to breakdown are the subject of Lessing's more recent novels. Martha, the Survivor, and Kate Brown, to a much more limited degree, learn to utilize the breaking-down experience for growth, whereas Phoebe and Professor Watkins become more channeled, allowing the hold of the ego to tighten.

As the children for whom she held herself responsible have grown up, Martha is given more freedom to continue her descent in the final section of the novel. Martha recognizes, now that it is over, what it has meant to be in charge of growing children: "To have worked through, to have stood firm, in that storm which was the young one's adolescence was, after all, to have been made free of one's own" (p.463). This cycle completed, Martha is once again waiting patiently for the "next step." Martha wonders, as she begins the inward journey again, what methods she will utilize this time.

She has at hand "the qualities she had developed during that long past period of fighting to drag herself out of a pit" (p. 476). The transcendent world is still there, as well: "she had charted that tempting, dangerous, glamorous territory lying just behind or interfused with this world." Martha is thus prepared for the next cycle of involvement to begin.

The people in Mark's house soon provide the means for the next step in Martha's descent. All of them can be seen to be testing themselves against madness in one way or another. While Martha waits, Lynda paces her basement rooms, testing the reality of the walls, and upstairs, Mark, like Anna Wulf, covers his walls with clippings about insanity. Martha is fascinated by Lynda's explorations and decides to enter "Lynda's country." She realizes that here is a door she has been through before but that she has once again "forgotten" its meaning for her (p. 508). She recognizes that Lynda's pacing is her way of testing "the walls for weakness, for a thin place," hoping that one day she "will simply step outside, free." Unlike the protagonist in Mem-oirs of a Survivor, Lynda and Martha can only dream of the final step to freedom, or transcendence, which the Survivor ultimately takes.

In her yearning for the "sweetness" of that other place, Martha begins to test her own limits, to force herself beyond the confines of ordinary experience. With Lynda, Martha

tries to move "through the lump of incomprehension which was Martha in her daylight or normal condition" (p. 515). In her desire to control the area of heightened comprehension in herself she seeks those who have already been there, who have learned about controlling the inner world. Martha begins a period of reading in which she consults anyone who has written about the world within: Eastern philosophers, Christian mystics, Astrologers, Alchemists and Rosicrucians. She discovers that they were all speaking about "the same processes, the same psychological truths" (p. 370). This leaves Martha confused, for she finds that there are a multitude of approaches, simply "too many doors" (p. 531).

Martha's experiences in Mark's house do not give her enough time to be alone. Lessing feels that one must be alone and free of interference if descent is to be meaningful. Consequently, Martha isolates herself and begins another period of "work." She characterizes her exploration as "a brief trip into a totally uncharted interior" (p. 550). Martha's experiences here involve an archetypal confrontation with the contents of the unconscious. As she descends, she confronts once more the central problem of psychological development, the problem of the shadow. In her earlier descent, she had encountered the social form of the shadow as it appears in polarized "conversions" or fixed points of view. Here, her analysis involves a meeting with all those parts of herself which she had forgotten or chosen

not to confront before. She finds herself accompanied by the "Devil" at times, and at others by "the Self-Hater," as personal and archetypal shadow figures alternate on her descent. Martha is undergoing the process by which the unconscious shadow is assimilated by the conscious self, "a process in which the ego is compelled to recognize that it is evil and sick in mind, antisocial and a prey to neurotic suffering, ugly and narrow minded--an analytical technique which punctures the inflation of the ego and obliges it to experience exactly how and where it is limited and one-sided, conditioned by its type, prejudiced and unfair."⁹ Martha learns that it is a deeply painful experience to encounter within ourselves all that we hate most.

Martha finds herself enmeshed in the pairs of opposites once again. For she "would retrieve from her own depths a phrase or an idea which embodied what she thought, but it would at once be swallowed by its shadow" (p. 554). Now, Martha finds that all opposites are a part of herself. She concludes that "I am what the human race is." She finds in herself Nazi and Jew; she is civilized and savage; she can be as hating as a Fascist, or as loving as a Liberal. She is, in short, all pairs of opposites: "Love, hate, black, white, good, bad, man, woman" (p. 555).

By realizing that both sides of the shadow lie within, Martha has taken a significant step toward individuation.

In so doing she is able to link the conscious associations of the ego with the shadow that is normally buried in the unconscious. She has come to recognize the nature of the self, that mid-point of the personality which is built upon the assimilation of both extremes in the axis of polarization. As Martha confronts her shadow, she realizes that her personality has been constructed on an awareness of only half of the truth. In her journal of the descent she notes to herself that "every attitude, emotion, thought, has its opposite held in balance out of sight but there all the time. Push any one of them to an extreme, and booms-a-daisy, over you go into its opposite" (pp. 565-66).

Martha sees herself in hell, in Bosch or Dali country, on a journey through the stations of the cross with the Devil as her guide. All these indicate Martha's involvement with her shadow. In this connection, Erich Neumann, who asserts that the basic problem of contemporary society and of modern man is to confront the shadow adequately so that it will not be projected in any more wars or acts of private violence, characterizes the terrors of this confrontation in exactly the same way Lessing has done. He writes: "It is a part of the destiny of modern man that his way should first lead him 'down to the depths', not 'up to the heights'; is it then surprising that the guide who meets him as he sets out on his journey should turn out to be no shining angel of light but the dark shadow-figure of his

own evil?"⁹ Neumann notes also that "it is at this stage, however, that the dark and paradoxical secret of the transformation of the personality begins to become a living experience" (p. 145). Martha's transformation involves holding on to the knowledge of the transcendent reality which she continues to forget. Her journal entries record her confrontation with her shadow and her reminders to herself not to forget her insights. First she wallows in the horrors of the darkness of her shadow believing "if all these sub-human creatures are aspects of me, then I'm a gallery of freaks and nature's rejects." She reminds herself that these are only one pole, one extreme of the truth and can be transcended. She writes: "See above. Fool. [A reminder to herself to look to her earlier journal entry about the pairs of opposites]. Don't you ever learn. These things are there. Always. I can choose to be them or not" (p. 567). Martha comes dangerously near to being submerged by her shadow but is saved by this understanding of the self which absorbs all opposites. She notes: "I've seen the underneath of myself. Which isn't me--any more than my surface is me. I am the watcher, the listener" (p. 569).

With this realization, Martha is ready to go back to the Coleridge house. Changes are being made in that household which are symbolic of the change in Martha as well. The Coleridge home is to be torn down, the family has grown

and Martha has no real need to remain with Mark. Martha views now the transience of all the patterns of life that seem so permanent when one is living through them. Watching the Coleridge's depart, "Martha remembered feeling before (again, again, again) her life was like a railway platform which served trains departing fast in every direction" (p. 579). Martha understands that "her life was about to blow itself into a new shape, with no idea at all how or when" (p. 593).

Repetition, forgetting and remembering, disintegration and reintegration, the novel has come full circle with Martha as watcher, waiting patiently for the next step. The last page of section four asserts the cyclicity of Martha's experiences, her sleeping and forgetting, then her awakening and growth. Martha has been through it all, and now awaits the moment of transcendence which will come as inevitably as the forgetting.

To symbolize Martha's hope of transcendence this final section ends with the first sight of the natural world we have been given in this novel. Martha has not come very far psychologically, but she has progressed from ruins to new growth; she has moved from the bombed-out streets of London in the opening chapter to the long lawns, the stars, and the running streams of the English countryside, where "the air was full of the scent of water and flowers" (p. 607). The natural world has always accompanied Martha in her

moments of transcendence, both on the veld, and in the loft. Now in her summarizing moment of illumination, it is fitting that the natural world should once more assert itself. Martha's final words to herself are important; they assert the cyclicity of her experience and repeat, once again, that all hope lies within:

She walked beside the river while the music thudded, feeling herself as a heavy, impervious, insensitive lump that, like a planet doomed always to be in the dark on one side, had vision in front only, a myopic searchlight blind except for the tiny three-dimensional path open immediately before her eyes in which the outline of a tree, a rose, emerged then submerged in dark. She thought, with the dove's voice of her solitude: Where? But where. How? Who? No, but where, where....Then silence and the birth of a repetition. Where? Here. Here?

Here, where else, you fool, you poor fool, where else has it been ever...? (p. 607)

Martha fades from importance in the Appendix to the novel which carries us forward to the year 2000 and announces her death in passing. What is significant is that the Appendix, while announcing the end of civilization, does not announce the end of the individual. Lessing, too, has come full circle, for she recognizes that political activity is not the salvation of the masses but its destruction. She has recognized that salvation comes only from within and can only occur in the few individuals who are brave enough to make a painful interior journey. In the remnants of manuscripts from the remaining pockets of civilization which are collected in the Appendix, it becomes clear that the transcendent ones are the survivors. In a

final letter from Martha just before her death, she announces that for some of them "the veil between this world and another had worn so thin that earth people and people from the sun could walk together and be companions" (p. 658). Martha has succeeded in her quest, she has achieved that unity which she had been seeking from the beginning. The world for her at last bears "a transparency, a crystalline gleam" (p. 660). From the unified world of the self, Martha has witnessed an apocalypse, but has left behind a message of hope for all those who can hear.

Notes: V. The Four-Gated City

¹ Karl, Reader's Guide, p. 304.

² Doris Lessing, The Four-Gated City (St. Albans, 1973), p. 26. (Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text).

³ See for example: C. G. Jung, Psychological Reflections (New York, 1953), p. 143. See also, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche. Collected Works, Vol. 8, pars. 749-795; and "The Structure of the Unconscious" in Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (Princeton, 1966), pp. 269f.

⁴ Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality (New York, 1963), p. 116.

⁵ Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (New York, 1959), p. 9.

⁶ "Nothing But" is a term familiar to anyone who has undergone Freudian analysis. For a more complete discussion of this term see pp. 189-90 below.

⁷ See, for example, Marion Vlastos and Paul Schlueter.

⁸ Jung, Two Essays, p. 75.

⁹ Neumann, Depth Psychology and a New Ethic, p. 79.

Chapter Three

The Golden Notebook

In the midst of her explorations of Martha Quest's political activities with "the group" in A Ripple From The Storm, Doris Lessing interrupted the Children of Violence series with a strikingly original novel, The Golden Notebook (1962). This novel introduced a new dimension both in Lessing's development and in the novel of the twentieth century. On every level The Golden Notebook is a thought-provoking work, for it comes to terms with the social and psychological problems of the artist in our time and reflects, at the same time, the aesthetic problems of Lessing the writer.

The Golden Notebook has received the most critical attention and acclaim of any of Lessing's novels, for any attempt to come to terms with her art must account for its structural and thematic intricacies. This novel states the theme of all Lessing's subsequent novels, including the last two volumes of the Martha Quest series. From this point on, Lessing's interests lie clearly within, in the Jungian landscape of archetypes, dreams, and the path of individuation. It is the purpose of this section to deal with The Golden Notebook primarily in terms of Lessing's developing interest in this inner world. Ultimately, I hope to

demonstrate that the central theme of the novel does not yield the full implications of its meaning unless one approaches it with Jung's map of the interior--namely an understanding of his symbols of the structure of the psyche.

Doris Lessing has emphasized, repeatedly, that The Golden Notebook is a very carefully constructed work, that it was intended to "break certain forms of consciousness and go beyond them."¹ This can prove very perplexing to the critic who discovers discrepancies amid a confusing welter of fragmented notebook sections,² particularly since the careful construction of the novel leads one to feel unifying patterns at work long before one is able to articulate them. There is a shock of recognition in the final "Free Women" episode where Anna, by this time quite mad, is moving back and forth among the clippings with which she has covered her walls, "matching statement with statement, one set of words with another."³

The Golden Notebook has been seen by several critics as a mirror of the disintegration of our times. Anna Wulf is described as reflecting in herself the "frustrations and contradictions and dilemmas of her age."⁴ While the complex and fragmented "grid structure"⁵ reveals the disintegration of the individual and society, nonetheless the movement in the novel is from fragmentation and chaos toward integration and wholeness. Lessing stressed this in the 1971 Preface to the novel. She said that many critics had

failed to recognize the second theme, which is that of unity. She wrote: "there is a formlessness with the end of fragmentation" which gives way to a "triumph of unity." This unity can most readily be seen in terms of the psychological pattern. The process of reintegration and regrowth that occurs in an individual through union with the creative centers within after an incursion into madness, is the controlling idea and structural framework of the novel. This movement can be described as a fictional representation of the "Process of Individuation"⁶ as Jung has defined it.

There is no doubt that Anna Wulf symbolizes the fragmentation and disintegration of society at the beginning of the novel. This is indicated in the fact that she keeps four notebooks, each representing a rigidification and separation of one element of her personality; to use Lessing's metaphor, each notebook is but one color out of the total spectrum Anna must use if she is to be an integrated artist. Anna feels that she is rescuing an element of herself from chaos by this containing function of her compartmentalizing ego. These notebooks become only fragments shored against her total ruin, and she is flooded, finally, by all she had repressed. Anna must return willingly to the state of chaos, let her notebooks dissolve into the prima materia once more before she can begin again the painful construction of the self. The synthesis of these fragments that

takes place in the course of the novel is a result of Anna's psychological integration--all the notebooks coalesce in the single Golden Notebook as all the parts of Anna come together. It is through the understanding Anna receives in her sessions with a Jungian analyst, Mrs. Marks or "Mother Sugar," that she becomes capable of discovering the strong, healthy, and integrated Anna within, her archetypal self. Her integration as an artist is demonstrated by her writing of the "Free Women" sections of the novel, which Lessing terms a "conventional novel."

Several critics have related the sense of wholeness in the novel to either Lessing's Marxist philosophy or her feminism or both.⁷ At her lectures at the New School, Lessing rejected "isms" of any kind. She indicated, clearly, that she regards any ideologies as secondary to the process of growth within the individual. At these lectures, Lessing spoke of the disappointment expressed by the groups of feminists who attended her first lecture series in the United States, for instead of directing the enthusiasms of these women toward political revolution or group "consciousness-raising" as they expected, she firmly re-directed their energies back within themselves. A member of the audience reported: "Lessing's talks were about internal and external authorities. When people come to listen to a culture hero, they expect she'll give them answers, shape their lives, tell them something they don't already know. It

takes a great ego to give answers under such conditions, but it takes an even greater one to lay out all the problems and then refuse the impulse to direct. Lessing wants people not to see her as an authority; she wants them to look to themselves. That is what her books are about. Then why lecture? To tell people that."⁸

The Golden Notebook, too, is structured around the idea of external and internal authorities. Each one of Anna's four notebooks deals with one of these authorities that divert or misdirect her energies from the necessary task, that of self-development. In the depiction of these authorities, Lessing has emphasized the special problems involved in the integration of the artistic personality, particularly the artist as woman. A disintegrated woman in a collapsing social structure is faced with one of two possibilities: acceptance of external authorities, which provide a temporary shoring against the ultimate breakdown; or acceptance of the person within, growth by individuation, and a resultant breakthrough. In the case of Anna Wulf, the novel encompasses the movement from the former to the latter.

Anna's problems are located in the conflicts between two aspects of her personality: her desire to create, and her neurosis, her inability to accept herself. Otto Rank, in his investigation of the often-noted resemblances between the artist and the neurotic, points out that the neurotic

differs from the artist in that he is unable to accept himself, "his own individuality, his own personality." The artist, on the other hand, has learned not only to accept himself but to project this acceptance in his work. Rank wrote, "the precondition then, of the artistic personality is not only its acceptance but its actual glorification of itself."⁹ In these terms, women artists are all the more caught; society makes them neurotic. Developing in a patriarchal culture, women have few models to follow. Germaine Greer formulated the problem when she said, "Most of my life has been most powerfully influenced by the culture for which he [the male artist] stands, so that I'm caught in a basic conflict between inculcated cultural values and my own deep conception of an injustice."¹⁰ The woman as artist must struggle not only against these cultural biases but against her own self-pitying feelings of injustice as well.

At the New School, Lessing offered her audience a number of suggestions for counteracting these cultural authorities that prevent self-knowledge and self-acceptance. Her suggestions follow the principles of Jungian analysis, and are the same devices Anna Wulf learned from "Mother Sugar." "It is necessary," Lessing said, "to get below to find the self we are and were before the internal/external authorities got hold of us." The ways to do this are, "cultivate learning about your dream life, look at the group you're a

part of and try to see which of the group's ideas are also really yours, conjure up your earliest memories" (Webb, p. 17). All of these suggestions, she added, are based on one crucial thing: learning to be alone with oneself and liking it. This ability to be alone is a quality Lessing feels few women are capable of achieving; and it is a lesson that Anna Wulf is forced to learn during the progress of the novel. Thus, in each of the notebooks, Anna deals with one of the problems she must face in coming to terms with herself; each deals with a different stage or problem in the development of her personality through the process of individuation.

The Black Notebook begins with the basic problems of creativity, including the relationship of the past to the creative impulse. It also describes Anna's attempts to deal with chaos, including her first confrontation with the darkness within. The image of Anna, high on a stool, arranging her notebooks on a table in front of her is reminiscent of the God of Genesis, preparing to separate firmament from chaos. Anna writes first in her Black Notebook, moving from nothingness, doodles and scribbling, to blackness, a "startled" writing and the painful beginnings of light. "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 smell of the sun on hot rock. Dry and hot, and the silk of dust on my cheek, smelling of sun, the sun" (p. 56). Anna's light, however, is no sooner created than it is plunged back into the darkness around it. The first segment of the Black Notebook, the "Source" section, is black not only because it describes the activity of the creator bringing order out of chaos before the coming of the light--but because it describes a world thoroughly obsessed with a death wish. Although decaying cultural values, the war-torn world of Central Africa, are the sources of Anna's first novel, they are also partially responsible for the demise of her creativity. The white-settled Rhodesia of Anna's youth was a world of prisoners, imprisoned not only by the war but by the rigid social structures that placed restrictions on human relationships, not only those between black and white but men and women as well. All the relationships that developed within this culture had strong sado-masochistic tendencies. Anna married a man she did not love, lived with a man she did not like, and loved a man who died after their first embrace. The other characters in the Black Notebook do not fare much better, ranging from one young woman's incestuous love for her dead brother, to a white man whose adulteries led to the birth of a mulatto child raised by its mother in the black colony. These are the earliest memories conjured up by

Anna the artist; and although her first novel was successful financially, Anna is aware of the "nostalgia for death" that surrounds these experiences.

Beside the personal problems of Anna, the Black Notebook deals with the problems of the novelist in our time. Anna points out that the novel has become merely an outpost of journalism. We read for information, to find out what is going on in ever more remote areas. Instead of functioning as an organ of universal human culture, the novel merely investigates and reports individual cultural peculiarities. The novel thus serves as a function of fragmented consciousness. The "novel report," as Anna terms it, is a means of grasping for wholeness but it is doomed to failure because it lacks awareness of any underlying cultural philosophy.

Anna questions her integrity as an artist in this notebook. She recognizes that she falls continually into irony, that parody is impossible, that the artist seems to be given absolute freedom--discipline is not required. Integrity, as she sees it, involves writing the truth; but every time she begins, her words fall into a story, a fiction, not the truth. Anna has, at this time, rejected Mrs. Marks' answer to these problems; namely, that truth is never objective, that one sees at large only projections of the configuration of one's own psyche. Why stories? Mrs. Marks would reply that stories present the closest

representation of truth, an archetypal truth. It is much later that Anna achieves awareness of the function of the storyteller; the story becomes larger than life when Anna's daughter learns to brush her teeth because "it's in the story" (p. 363). At this time, Anna is rejecting the wholeness that could come from seeing herself and her work in relationship to the continuum of the collective unconscious. Her attitudes toward the collective unconscious are exactly like those of her peer group in Africa toward the Bushman paintings. They are defaced relics of an incomprehensible past, merely a backdrop against which they act out destructive fantasies. The tone of the Black Notebook is self-punishing. Anna is refusing to fit things together, refusing to see wholes, rejecting her connection with the archetypal truths that nevertheless continue within her.

The third appearance of the Black Notebook presents a symbolic incident that brings together several trends. Anna and her friends spend what seems an interminable afternoon killing pigeons for a pie. The crushed bones of the birds, the smell of blood in the cruel heat of the sun and the compulsive nature of the killing become symbolic of the warring world at large and Anna's inability to transcend her allegiance to her peer group even when their activities are futile or destructive. The killing of the birds may also symbolize Anna's refusal of transcendence, for the

bird has been defined by Jung as a universal symbol of man's yearning to get beyond the subjective confines of his experience. The Black Notebook appears only one time after this incident; and it consists of a single page. Anna's memories of Mashopi and Central Africa have dried up. She records a dream about Africa which she sums up as a dream of "total sterility." The value of this milieu to the creative process lies only in that it encompasses Anna's earliest memories. African memories disappear with the nostalgia for death as Anna's individuation begins. Structurally, the Black Notebook thins as the Blue Notebook thickens.

The Red Notebook is the second to appear. It deals with Anna's relationship to the Communist Party. The Party is one of the external authorities that Doris Lessing warned about in her lectures. Absorption in the work of the Party provides a socially justifiable way to escape coming to terms with oneself. The Party offers a great collective dream to those who suffer from fragmentation. Anna has a vivid dream about their shared fantasies:

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 glittering web was alive. There were many subtle and fantastic colours, but the overall feeling this expanse of fabric gave was of redness, a sort of variegated glowing red. In my dream

I handled and felt this material and wept with joy. I looked again and saw that the material was shaped like a map of the Soviet Union. It began to grow ... Then I look and it is like a vision--time has gone and the whole history of man, the long story of mankind, is present in what I see now, and it is like a great soaring hymn of joy and triumph in which pain is a small lively counterpoint (p. 298).

Like the others, Anna joined the Party to put an end to the "split, divided, unsatisfactory way we all live" (p. 161). However, the "collective psyche," to use Jung's term, inhibits individuation by providing group support for fantasies. Anna's own analysis of the situation leads her to discover that the great collective dream developed out of a more basic need for an archetypal Great Father. For example, Anna records that many members of the Party have fantasies of being recognized by Stalin, or in some way having their work for the Party acknowledged. This dream compensates them for the stasis in their own development. This belief in a Great Father, as Anna discovers, is so strong that it keeps the Party Regulars in a state of political naiveté; they refuse, for example, to believe stories about the treatment of Jews in Russia, or about the massacres Stalin ordered. Anna learns, too, that almost every person she meets in the Party has a novel or a book of poems hidden away somewhere. The self-development necessary for the artist has been submerged in the collective dream; and a satisfactory collective art has yet to emerge. Moreover, words, the artistic medium of Anna

as writer, are to reveal nothing but the collective ideology, which creates an insurmountable problem for the Communist artist.

In this connection, Jolande Jacobi, writing about the problems of the individual and the collective consciousness, observes that the ego must, if it is to be healthy, serve an intermediary function between the demands of the collective unconscious (the archetypal world of the psyche) and the collective consciousness (the social and political realms).¹¹ The ego, she notes, is in danger at all times of being swallowed up by one or the other. Anna Wulf is, in turn, absorbed first by one, then by the other. The Red Notebook describes her absorption by the collective consciousness in the dream of a Great Father, a Communist brotherhood and a new Golden Age. Jacobi notes that the attractions of both collective unconscious and collective consciousness are similar; both have an archetypal appeal but, "the contents of the collective consciousness are only the empty shells of archetypes" (p. 112). Moreover, Jacobi observes that: "Although they lack the numinosity of the archetypes their action is quasi-archetypal for their ideals are at first numinous--like the archetypes --but in time they are replaced by propaganda and the pressure of opinion." The refusal of Anna's group to criticize any pamphlet or article from the Soviet Union indicates the strength of this pressure of opinion. This is

developed in a scene in the Red Notebook when a group meets to discuss a pamphlet, "Stalin on Linguistics." Anna discovers an unbridgeable gap between what words are supposed to mean and what they really say. So great is her need to retain the collective dream, the image of the Great Father, that she finds herself apologetic about the pamphlet rather than critical. Jacobi warns that "many an intellectual succumbs to the slogans, the isms, the collective commandments and prohibitions that come to him from outside, while he remains utterly uncomprehending toward the symbols that rise up from within him, for his mind has long since lost all relation to the other parts of his being" (p. 112).

It is significant that one of the most difficult decisions Anna makes in the course of the novel is the decision to leave the Party. Jacobi has written also about the difficulties involved in freeing oneself from the clutches of the collective consciousness: "For this liberation requires an individual consciousness or ego which is able to differentiate, which has become aware of its limitations and thus knows that it must at all times retain its living bond with the two realms, the collective unconscious and the collective consciousness, if it wishes to retain the wholeness of the psyche" (p. 113).

The pain and difficulty which the psyche encounters in the process of liberation is also documented in the Red Notebook. In the final section of this notebook, Anna

recounts the story of a teacher who achieved his dream of being invited to the Soviet Union. He was under the illusion that he had been invited personally by Stalin. The only person, he discovered, who was interested in his expositions of ideological theory was a tour guide who was forced to sit up half the night listening to him with her face paralyzed in politeness. When the teacher returned to England, he told Anna that he felt as though the whole center of his life had collapsed. The Red Notebook ends with this sense of total defeat. Jung has warned about the sense of absolute loss that accompanies the defeat of a collective ideology, for the loss of support of the collective consciousness can be overwhelming without the wholeness of the individuated personality as recompense.

The Yellow Notebook is the one most often cited by critics who are trying to make a case for Doris Lessing as either a feminist or an anti-feminist; and evidence can be found for both positions in this notebook. It is essential therefore to re-establish at the outset that this notebook is a series of fictional accounts written by Lessing's fictional protagonist. We are thus twice removed from Doris Lessing, and once removed from Anna Wulf. Taken at face value, this notebook is a graphic account of the sexual wasteland of our times. But, because of the point-of-view problem, one must consider carefully every statement

made in this notebook.

The title of the largest portion of the stories in the Yellow Notebook is a Jungian one; Anna's novel about Ella is called "The Shadow of the Third." The Shadow is Jung's term for the dark, regressive side of one's own personality, the side one most readily projects onto others. Lessing is using a very Conradian device here; we are presented with a series of mirrors reflecting other mirrors. Lessing is writing about Anna who is writing about Ella who is also a writer. Ella, moreover, is having an affair with a man who is just like a man Anna has known and loved. This affair is further complicated in that Ella is projecting her positive side in the affair while her lover is projecting his negative side. This becomes a kind of funhouse mirror world set up to portray contemporary sexual madness. Ella, Anna's fictional heroine, is a weak woman, incomplete in herself, who is looking for a sense of wholeness through relationships with men who are at least as fragmented and diseased as she is. Ella is a fragmented character projecting wholeness onto fragmented men who are projecting wholeness onto her. In the course of this notebook, Lessing does, however, touch upon some of the most profound problems that men and women face in dealing with each other, or that arise in any human relationship.

In spite of the fact that Lessing is presenting a series of negative portraits of men, including those who are

unable to love, unable to commit themselves, unable to give emotional support, unable even to give sexual pleasure to their partners, Lessing is taking women even more roundly to task. In one of her lectures at The New School, Lessing quipped, "I've never met a man who would stop his work entirely in order to have a love affair and I've never met a woman who wouldn't." In this notebook, Lessing has documented the fate of these women who refuse to develop themselves, drifting instead from one man to another for support. Reference was made earlier to her definition of this personality problem in A Ripple From The Storm, where she wrote: "There are some women who can never be themselves with anyone but the man to whom they have permanently or not given their hearts. If the man goes away there is an empty place filled with shadows. She mourns for the temporarily extinct person she can only be with the man she loves; she mourns him who brought her 'self' to life." This is another reverberation of the way Lessing is using the term Shadow in this section.

Without her lover, Ella has lost part of herself and is mourning this as much as the loss of Paul. That this is more than the ordinary end-of-the-affair is indicated by the intensity of suffering Ella undergoes.

She stood there, night after night. She could see herself standing there, and said to herself: This is madness. This is being mad. Being mad is not being able to stop yourself doing something you

know to be irrational. Because you know Paul will not come. And yet she continued to dress herself and to stand for hours at the window, waiting every night. And standing there and looking at herself, she could see how this madness was linked with the madness that had prevented her from seeing how the affair would inevitably end, the naivety that had made her so happy. Yes, the stupid faith and naivety and trust had led, quite logically into her standing at the window waiting for a man whom she knew, quite well, would never come to her again (p. 227).

This Ella who mourns for Paul is another person seeking an external authority on whom she can place the burden of herself so that she will not have to grow. Faith, naivety, and trust, which Ella sees as virtues, veritable feminine pearls cast before male swine, are easy and passive compared to the rigorous self-analysis required in order to develop. Ella's emotional being is passive, inert, masochistic, entirely based on relationships with men rather than her own individuated self-hood. When the affair with Paul is over, instead of finding out who she is, she tries instead to become like the men she has known. She emulates the external authority figure. While it is very often true that people we love have qualities we need, Lessing, like Jung, points out that we can obtain these qualities by growth within, not by merely assuming these qualities as a kind of persona. Ella's feeling of abandonment, her pain, force her to assume those very attitudes she has always disliked in men, but which she feels will help her to become as they are. She forces herself into affairs by telling herself

that "a man now in this situation, the sort of man I would have been if I had been a man, would go to bed and think no more of it" (p. 323).

This is, in Jung's terms, a "regressive restoration of the persona"--that is, a limiting of her own potentiality out of fear or pain. Ella is assuming the negative qualities of the person she wishes to become like, someone who is less than she is. The affairs she enters in this mood are delightfully absurd. The first is with an American brain surgeon who is a specialist in leucotomies--cutting the brain in half. This is a blatant symbolic reference to what Ella is doing to herself in the affair with him. This man is the one who thinks a full sexual experience lasts about ten seconds after which he rolls over, throws his arms in the air and shouts, "Oh boy, oh boy."

Through the sexual metaphors of Ella's experiences, Anna discovers that she must find her own values, define her own contexts. This realization is enveloped in the metaphor of the orgasm. Ella learns that she is not like men, that integrity (implied is the integrated personality) is not chastity or fidelity but the orgasm. She cannot deceive her body into a belief in this regressive pattern. Anna's accounts of Ella's experiences move ever deeper into the sexual wasteland. Through a series of scathing affairs, Ella is forced to trust her own emotions; she recognizes that the men she encounters live on an emotional level in

sex much lower than the one they use at work, a level on which she cannot exist emotionally.

Anna finally allows Ella to come to a realization of her problem and looks with her toward the creative imagination for a means to integrate unhappiness into her life: "Then she [Ella] finds herself thinking: I've got to accept the patterns of self-knowledge which mean unhappiness or at least a dryness. But I can twist it into a victory. A man and a woman--yes. Both at the end of their tether. Both cracking up because of a deliberate attempt to transcend their own limits. And out of the chaos, a new kind of strength" (p. 467). The final entries in the Yellow Notebook involve Ella's attempts to put flesh on these images, to transform fragmented personal experiences into the wholeness of art. Anna, too, must wait for the images to take shape within before she can integrate this passive, negative Ella, her shadow side, into the totality of a vital selfhood.

The Blue Notebook is the key notebook; it is Anna's diary and is concerned with her psychological development. This notebook is especially rewarding because we are given some important glimpses of Anna's analysis with the Jungian Mrs. Marks. Mrs. Marks diagnoses Anna's problem in the first appearance of the Blue Notebook. She is suffering from a writer's block which in turn is the result of her

refusal to grow beyond the stages in her past that have caused her pain or suffering. Anna is suffering from an emotional paralysis, a regressive desire to feel nothing at all rather than to suffer pain. It is the end of her affair with Michael that has brought her into analysis. Jung points out that a trauma of this kind is equivalent to the mythical call to the hero as he sets out on his voyage of self-discovery.¹² This call is one that Anna's Ella has totally ignored, falling back instead into regressive patterns. Anna's analysis is essentially over at the beginning of this notebook but she is still learning how to assimilate her unconscious into her conscious life. Intellectually she had rejected Mrs. Marks' diagnosis of her problem, offering a series of rationalizations for her refusal to develop. Anna claims that she does not have a writer's block, she cannot write because the novel, as a literary genre, reflects only the fragmentation of the modern world; Anna cannot feel because men are not worth the effort; she cannot reach for wholeness because she is just one tiny and unique individual encompassed by the problems of the world. Moreover, she is a "free woman" and sees no precedents for her situation, no archetypal patterns she can recognize. Even as late in the novel as the third appearance of the Blue Notebook, Anna can be seen rejecting the advice of Mrs. Marks:

I said: 'No don't smile yet. I believe I'm living the kind of life women never lived before.'

'Never?' she said....

'Never.' I said.

'The details change but the form is the same,' she said.

'No,' I insisted.

'In what way are you different? Are you telling me there haven't been artist women before. There haven't been women who were independent? There haven't been women who insisted on sexual freedom! I tell you there are a great line of women stretching out behind you into the past, and you have to seek them out and find them in yourself and be conscious of them' (p. 472).

Anna rigidly rejects all hints that she is not unique. Mrs. Marks is aware of what she is doing and tells her, "My dear Anna, you are using our experience together to re-enforce you own rationalization for not writing" (p. 474).

Immediately following this abortive encounter, the old Anna begins to disintegrate. She attempts to re-solidify the divisions of the notebooks but is forced to recognize the tenuous hold of her ego. "I remain Anna because of a certain kind of intelligence. But this intelligence is diminishing and I am very frightened" (p. 477). Anna moves now into an encounter with the collective unconscious. All the chaotic elements kept firmly repressed by her compartmentalizing intelligence break loose and she undergoes a flooding of unconscious contents into her conscious mind. Her ego, the controlling persona, is destroyed and she is forced to create a new Anna, related to those women within about whom Mrs. Marks told her, an Anna in tune with the wholeness of an individuated selfhood.

There are several aspects of her personality that Anna has to reconsider and reintegrate on her road to wholeness. The first of these involves a recurring dream she has. The dream is of a threatening dwarf whom she sees as a principle of joy in destruction loose in the world at large. This image goes through several transformations in the course of the novel. It begins as an inhuman figure, a vase, then becomes the dwarf, then turns into Saul Green, and finally Anna sees her own face on this creature that mocks, jibes, hurts, wishes murder and death. Mrs. Marks warned Anna that she must learn to dream this figure positively, for as a Jungian she would see him as a spirit goblin, a kabeiros, "an archetypal figure, like Rumpelstiltskin whose alluring 'help' brings ruin to woman, and threatens what is most precious to her but, precisely because she has recognized and named it, releases her from its power and leads her toward salvation" (Jacobi, p. 101). Before Anna can be saved from this monster of her unconscious, she has to recognize it as an element of her own personality and counter its negative aspects with a positive figure from within. The internal archetype which Anna can summon to her aid in this cause is that of the Wise Old Woman, the Witch, an image of the strength of Mrs. Marks that she finds in herself. Anna's unconscious provides this knowledge in a dream in which both figures appear.

I had the bad dream again--I was menaced by the anarchic principle this time in the shape of an in-human sort of dwarf. In the dream was Mrs. Marks, very large and powerful; like a kind of amiable witch. She heard the dream out and said: 'When you are on your own, and are threatened, you must summon the good witch to your aid.' 'You,' I said. 'No, you, embodied in what you have made of me.' So the thing is over then. It was as if she had said: Now you are on your own. For she spoke casually, indifferently almost, like someone turning away. I admired the skill of this; it was as if, on leave-taking, she were handing me something--a flowering branch, perhaps, or a talisman against evil (p. 250).

A part of Anna's problem with this figure is that she has projected this frightening breakthrough of energies from the self to the world at large. It is not difficult to project images of destruction on to the modern world as the number of clippings about war and violence that Anna affixes to her Blue Notebook testify. "Projections," Jung has said, "change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face."¹³ It is only when Anna dreams of the dwarf wearing her own face that she begins to dream positively. She is released from its power when she sees that that which she has feared is within and can be controlled by the strong "amiable witch" she also has within.

The second problem Anna confronts in her process of individuation, as outlined in this notebook, is the conflict in her between her need for freedom and the restrictions of motherhood. The situation between Anna and her daughter Janet is essentially a Uroboric--primordial, instinctual--one in which there is a strong identity of Mother-Daughter, Ego

and Self. There is a great tendency for every woman to fall back into the instinctual archetypal role in which the demands of consciousness are secondary to the unconscious demands of the Great Mother. Erich Neumann in his study of the psychic development of the feminine has set out the pattern of the problem in which Anna Wulf is enmeshed.

Now it is an essential difficulty of feminine psychology that the feminine must develop toward and beyond the masculine, which represents consciousness over against the unconscious. Herein it comes into conflict with the Great Mother, the feminine archetype of the unconscious, and with the primordial feminine relation as exemplified in the myth of Demeter and Kore. But this development in conflict with the Great Mother must not lead to a violation of the feminine nature by the masculine and its peculiar psychology; nor must it cause woman to lose contact with the unconscious and the feminine self. The difficulty of distinguishing between the progressive character of the self and the regressive character of the Great Mother is one of the central problems not only of feminine psychology.¹⁴

This kind of conflict is vividly embodied in a few scenes in Anna's diary where she forces herself out of bed with her lover in order to get her daughter off to school. She resents having to leave her lover, yet she resents him for making her feel guilty for leaving his bed. This is so much a part of Anna that even when her daughter leaves her home for boarding school, Anna plays the Great Mother to several men in her life, most notably Saul Green.¹⁵

In the individuation of the feminine psyche, the stage beyond the assimilation of the primordial Great Mother is the one already touched upon in the Red Notebook sections.

The dominance of the Great Mother in the individual psyche gives way to the Great Father as the developing consciousness moves from instinctual roles to the roles of the dominant collective consciousness, in this case typified by the patriarchal attitudes Anna encounters working for the Communist Party. It is not surprising that Anna's diary entry of her last day at work for the party is punctuated by frequent trips to the bathroom to be sure that her co-workers remain unaware of her menstrual flow. Anna's instinctual feminine unconscious has no place here, yet she cannot move beyond the instinctual feminine by denying it but by establishing contact with the feminine self of which the instinct is only a part.

There is still one important element of the psyche with which Anna must come to terms. While she has rejected the masculine biases of the collective consciousness, she must come to terms with the man within, her animus, Saul Green. Neumann notes that beyond the sphere of the Great Mother and the Great Father the individuating woman enters a stage of encounter in which the creative masculine and feminine confront each other individually. In Anna, this phase has already moved beyond the individual encounter and entered the arena where the masculine spirit within her, her animus, battles for existence with her ego. Anna's animus, Saul Green, is so strong that he breaks down the

hold of her ego completely. "I longed to be free of my own ordering, commenting memory." Anna writes, "I felt my sense of identity fade" (p. 585). Previously Anna had rejected any implication that her sense of uniqueness was unhealthy. She refuted Mrs. Marks' statement that there were long lines of women stretching out behind her who shared her experiences. Where she once clung to her unique, ordering, frozen ego, she now pays the price for the repressions demanded by that ego. The flooding of her conscious mind with unconscious contents, triggered by a confrontation with her animus, occasions an excursion into madness.

Anna learns, eventually, that breakdown can be positive; and she begins the painful process of reconstruction. Anna admits to Saul Green, for the first time, that she is suffering from a writer's block. Saul Green, as animus, aids in the destruction of Anna's ego while providing, at the same time, a constructive link with the self. He frees her creativity, and eventually gives her the first line for her novel, a novel she writes as the "Free Women" sections of The Golden Notebook. As a symbol of her emerging selfhood, Anna purchases a new notebook which contains all the elements of her personality in one. The Anna of this notebook is feeling intensely and is no longer rigidified. Her self is not yet stabilized for she moves back and forth between disintegration and assimilation several times. Eventually, though, the self emerges in the form of a "new, disinterested

person," who is capable of controlling her dreams and ordering her unconscious into form. This self is based on the awareness of a small endurance, an inner strength equal to the greatest tasks. Anna begins to see her fictional Ella again and sees how valuable the creative imagination can be in the face of death, fear, and a sense of dissolution: "I was thinking that quite possibly these marvellous, generous things we walk side by side with in our imagination could come in existence simply because we need them, because we imagine them" (p. 637).

The novel ends with a sense of disintegration in the world at large but a sense of wholeness in Anna. She has learned the lessons of her unconscious, has found strengths in the depths of her personality, and most importantly, has learned to utilize her demons creatively. Lessing, like Jung, believes that the only cures for world-wide disintegration will come from integrated individuals. With this novel, Lessing has shown the way the writer can do more than reflect the disintegrated consciousness of his age. Disintegration can be turned against itself; it can be used to probe the depths of the unconscious to the point where a truer sense of integration can be discovered. "Individual consciousness," Jung wrote, "is only the flower and the fruit of a season, sprung from the perennial rhizome beneath the earth; and it would find itself in better accord

with the truth if it took the existence of the rhizome into its calculations."¹⁶ With this novel, Lessing has begun to explore these roots in earnest. Her interests are affirmed in the epigraph to her following novel, Briefing for a Descent into Hell where she writes: "I have termed this a work of inner space fiction, for there is never anywhere to go but in."

Notes: The Golden Notebook

¹ This quotation appears on the dust jacket of the British edition of The Golden Notebook (London, 1962), and affirmed by Michael Joseph, Ltd., Lessing's publisher, as having been written by her.

² John L. Carey, "Art and Reality in The Golden Notebook" ConL 14 (Autumn, 1973), p. 439, is confused by the "curious discrepancies" he finds in the novel and concludes they must be due to "carelessness on Lessing's part" or "perhaps to her deliberate attempt to mirror the confusion of life in art." Mr. Carey feels, and I agree, that "such explanations, however, do not seem very satisfactory."

³ Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook (1962; rptd., New York, Ballantine Books, 1972), p. 654. Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

⁴ Anne M. Mulkeen, p. 264.

⁵ The "grid structure" is Mulkeen's term for the structural complexities of The Golden Notebook.

⁶ This is not to imply that Lessing is using the process of individuation in a mechanical manner. Her use of Jung is original and organic to the development of the story of Anna Wulf.

⁷ Reference has been made previously to Lessing's Marxist and Feminist critics. It is unnecessary to enumerate them here. The checklist of Lessing criticism in the Lessing

issue of ConL 14 (Autumn, 1973) indicates that at least half of the work done on Lessing falls into one or the other of these positions.

⁸ Webb, p. 16.

⁹ Otto Rank, "Art and Artist" in The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings (New York, 1932, rptd., 1959), p. 131.

¹⁰ Quoted by Rosalyn Drexler, "What Happened to Mozart's Sister?" The Village Voice (May 6, 1971), p. 70.

¹¹ Jolande Jacobi, Complex Archetype Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Princeton, 1959), p. 111f.

¹² See also, Joseph Campbell, The Hero With A Thousand Faces (Princeton, 1968).

¹³ Joseph Campbell, ed., The Portable Jung (New York, 1971), p. 146.

¹⁴ Erich Neumann, Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine (New York, 1971), pp. 131-32.

¹⁵ For a thorough analysis of Anna as Great Mother see Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen, "The Pieta as Icon in The Golden Notebook" ConL 14 (Autumn 1973), pp. 457-70.

¹⁶ Carl Jung, quoted by Joseph Campbell, The Portable Jung, p. xxi.

Chapter Four

Briefing For A Descent Into Hell

Doris Lessing asserts many radical ideas in Briefing For A Descent Into Hell (1971). She tells the reader that madness is superior to the condition of sleepwalking most of us call normality; that the inner world contains all the variety and beauty of the world outside; that fantasies can be more "real" than recorded history; that there is an archetypal "form" which enriches the real world; and that the heroic quest leads the adventurer of our era into the world within. Startling as these ideas may seem in a novelist who began her career as a Socialist-realist, they have developed logically from Lessing's earlier novels.

Deceived by her startling ideas, critics, for the most part, have emphasized the contemporary radicalism of Lessing's message, while paying very little attention to the archetypal nature of this novel.¹ Lessing's ideas, on the whole, are as old as psychology which, in turn, finds its patterns in the ancient mythologies. Lessing is not, as critics would have it, saying new things in an old way. She is, instead, asserting old ideas but in a new way. That is, her message is archetypal but it bears the signature of a novelist in contemporary society. The critic must explore both the archetypal patterns utilized in

Briefing as well as the contemporary trappings of these patterns in order that Lessing's skill as a novelist can be properly understood.

It is important to emphasize the fact that Lessing's development after The Golden Notebook is logical and follows clear patterns, provided that Lessing's message is interpreted correctly. Frederick Karl, for example, whose examination of the novels of Lessing in A Reader's Guide To The Contemporary British Novel ends with The Four-Gated City, was unable to foresee the direction of Lessing's work and was stymied by the possibilities for her future development. He notes that in spite of "all her prolixity, she has almost nowhere to go." ² Karl feels that Lessing has been "getting less personal, as she suggests in her NAR interview, and she has destroyed the objective world. There is always science fiction," Karl suggests, "but in that mode these intense human relationships which are the strength of her earlier work can have no outlet" (p. 312). Karl has failed to see the direction of Lessing's later work, because in his interpretation of The Golden Notebook and The Four-Gated City, he asserts that Lessing has succumbed to "apocalyptic visions." Although Karl could not see it, Lessing demonstrates clearly the importance of the personal and the necessity of the interior quest in both the Children of Violence series and The

Golden Notebook. Lessing believes that the survival of society depends upon the strength of the individual, a strength which comes through the process of individuation. Anna Wulf and Martha Quest have both undergone the inner quest which alone can enable one to survive in a world lacking a strong cultural center.

This interest in the interior, in the personal, has increased in each successive novel. Finally, in Briefing, Lessing indicates that she has been working toward the establishment of a new genre, a contemporary form in which these old patterns can be revived. She terms this form "Inner Space Fiction" noting that "there is never anywhere to go but in."³ This developing interest in depth psychology has been described accurately by another of Lessing's critics, Micheal Thorpe. Thorpe writes that from Landlocked on, there is an "intensifying concern with exploring the mind's frontiers."⁴ He notes that while this concern is "relatively limited in Landlocked, in the episode of Thomas Stern's paranoia and breakdown before death, this becomes central in the inner Golden Notebook where Anna and Saul break down into each other and form new self-knowing personalities and in the characterization of Lynda and of Martha's arduous struggle to achieve self-transcendence in The Four-Gated City. Looking further back," Thorpe states, "we can see early indications of this development in the

portrayal of the unbalanced Mary in The Grass Is Singing and in the fluid presentation of Martha's many selves in the earlier novels of the series" (p. 30). Because of these trends, Thorpe concludes, "it is not, therefore, surprising that this novelist so often loosely associated with such rationalist obsessions as Marxism and Feminism chose in 1971 to publish Briefing For A Descent Into Hell, a concentrated study of a middle-aged man's mental 'breakdown' and reflecting her interest in the ego-extinguishing inward vision of Sufism, his confrontation with the God within" (Ibid.).

Lessing's interest in the "ego-extinguishing" inward vision is one aspect of her developing interest in the archetypal self. In the intensity of her exploration of Professor Charles Watkins' descent into the psyche and confrontation with the self, Lessing demonstrates, once again, her credentials as a writer of mythic dimension. Lessing's approach to setting, plot, character and theme is infused with the "extra-literary" quality of a mythic narrative--namely a spiritual discovery that takes its vocabulary from the world of myth and its insights from the world of psychology. Watkins' confrontation with the self involves a meeting with the gods, gods that live within yet derive from a transpersonal source. In this connection, Jung has noted that that goal of individuation, the integration of the ego

and self, always involves this kind of spiritual discovery, for beyond the personal dimension of the psyche, there is a "pre-personal or transpersonal dimension which is manifested in universal patterns or images such as are found in all the world's religions and mythologies."⁵

Watkins' experiences with the transpersonal dimension of the self involve explorations of a psychic depth well beyond the reach of his conscious personality. In his descent, he discovers not only the spiritual quality of myth, but its exemplary function, its continuing value for contemporary life, as well. As he yearns for the primal unities of the integrated self, Watkins has a chance to observe that man's intellectual history is an attempt to affix a vocabulary to the numinous origins of psychic life. Watkins re-enters the sacred time of mythic origins, the "fabled Time of beginnings"⁶ and traces the steps by which man has become alienated from the primal unities of the self.

Thus, as a result of his descent, Watkins discovers that the gods live, and that life has a meaning and order if we are capable of comprehending it. He learns that the sacred and vital function of myth is as important for contemporary man as it was in archaic societies, and works to re-establish unifying links with his psychic inheritance through mythic symbols. Watkins finds that fragmentation,

intellectualization, and compartmentalization, which are the principle causes of his breakdown, have an antidote in the cosmic harmonies of the world within.

On its most basic level, Lessing's narrative involves the descent motif, which is as old as literature. As he begins the descent, Watkins first believes himself to be Ulysses, set adrift by the anger of the gods, seeking to be re-united with the crystal, which is a transcendent condition, an image of the completed self.⁷ Lessing indicates here that she agrees with the psychologists who find that the archetypal experiences of death and renewal once available through heroic ordeal are now encountered primarily through nervous breakdown. While Watkins is Ulysses, his quest is within, as he is seeking to restore connections with inner, energizing sources. Watkins is not unique, for his descent is a frequently-occurring experience at middle-age when the rigid roles one has played for half a lifetime are no longer satisfying. As Ulysses, Watkins hopes to find the kind of heroic meaning for his life that he had read about, but which was sorely lacking in the reality of his life as a professor.

Lessing's use of the interior journey as heroic quest provides an illuminating contrast with the work of James Joyce in his tale of another contemporary Ulysses. Both Lessing and Joyce see, to use T. S. Eliot's phrase, "the

immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history,"⁸ and both have turned to mythology as an antidote. But while Joyce uses mythology as a way of providing meaning where none exists, Lessing uses myth to point out a meaning that continues within each person. Mr. Bloom's daily life is given an ironic and comical heroic dimension when his rounds in Dublin are compared with Ulysses' wanderings. Lessing, on the other hand, virtually ignores Watkins' daily life in order to reveal the enriching heroic dimension within, carried by every man as a part of his archetypal heritage. While Professor Watkins' journey is aborted by a return to normality, Lessing, nonetheless, asserts that there is a way out; a path of renewal is available to all who are otherwise bogged down in a round of meaningless activity. Thus, while Bloom never understands the heroic dimension of his life, Watkins is undergoing an authentic heroic trial. Joyce is "manipulating" parallels with mythology while Lessing's parallels are organic, for she recognizes that madness and the heroic voyage utilize identical symbols.

This fact has been noted previously by several psychologists, from Freud through Rank and Jung, and cited most recently by Joseph Campbell in his book, Myths To Live By. Campbell states that "the imagery of schizophrenic fantasy perfectly matches that of the mythological hero journey."⁹

Campbell relates the path of the schizophrenic to the pattern he traced in his earlier book, The Hero With A Thousand Faces. The usual pattern for both experiences is: "first of all, a breakaway or departure from the local social order and context; next, a long, deep retreat inward and backward, as it were, in time, and inward, deep into the psyche; a chaotic series of encounters there, darkly terrifying experiences, and presently (if the victim is fortunate) encounters of a centering kind, fulfilling, harmonizing, giving new courage; and then finally, in such fortunate cases, a return journey of rebirth to life" (p. 208).

While this is certainly the bold outline of Watkins' descent, to treat Lessing's narrative purely in terms of the monomythic heroic quest, however, severely limits its richness. For, in the course of Watkins' psychic voyage, he is not only Ulysses, but encounters the source of all mythical experiences. He repeats cosmogonic myths and undertakes rituals which are inspired by a spiritual need for redemption and renewal. Watkins is not only hero but sinner; he is lost and redeemed, as he traces the origins of mythic experiences within.

To begin exploring the novel itself, it is important to consider the reasons for Lessing's choice of a male protagonist, for with the exception of some short stories, all of her protagonists have been women. It becomes clear

through the symbols that surround Watkins' descent, that Lessing selected a male, especially an intellectual, a professor of classics, in order to create a contrast between the masculine Logos, the ordered world of reason, time, history and consciousness, and the feminine Eros, the world of the unconscious, in which the savage, instinctual and uroboric mysteries come into their own.

It is clear from the outset that Watkins' ordinary life has been one of repression. When questioned by his doctors about the kind of man Watkins is, his wife asserts his respectability in terms which belie his inner world. She noted, emphatically, that he is the opposite of the kind of person who has a breakdown, that he is always energetic, sleeps less than other people and has only one small problem with stammering which has been corrected (p. 146). The lack of sleep and the energies directed toward work indicate that Watkins has been protecting himself from the unconscious. He fears that relaxation might release the Dionysian elements which threaten his Apollonian stance. While his unconscious works to break through the wall of talk which defends his conscious mind, Watkins clamps down on it by "remembering to speak very slowly and carefully, particularly when tired, and above all, by not forgetting to take the doctor's pills (p. 171). This is the kind of fear and rigidity which made Anna Wulf cling to the rigid categories of her notebooks; and like Anna Wulf, Watkins was

unable to continue this for more than a brief while before his total collapse.

All of Watkins' relationships are characterized by this rigidity. His response to Rosemary Baines, a woman who attended one of his lectures; Constance Mayne, his mistress; and Jeremy Thorne, a colleague; are all characterized by a cold, rational, aloofness. They feel that he is insensitive to their problems. When Rosemary Baines approached Watkins with an open friendliness, a feeling of brotherhood, and a desire to exchange ideas with a kindred spirit, he closed off the friendship, telling her that all his time is "taken up with interviews and visits in connection with his work" (p. 171). Jeremy Thorne also suffered from Watkins' aloofness. When Thorne and his wife tried to broach the topic of their marital problems, Watkins offered advice with such a cold impersonality that Thorne concluded that he does not even "pay lip service to ordinary feelings" (p. 189). Constance Mayne's description of Watkins corresponds to Thorne's, for in spite of the fact that she changed her life radically several times at Watkins' suggestion, he treated her with an abstract detachment she found difficult to accept.

In short, Watkins is intellectual, aloof and unemotional. All of these qualities, classical and Apollonian, prevent Watkins from living in a spontaneous relationship with

the immediate. In his descent, Watkins must touch upon all those levels of the psyche which can provide a compensation for his abstraction. Since he has denied the instinctual and Dionysian side of life, preferring the ordered world of the intellect, his descent, therefore, provides him with a vision of the primitive mysteries and harmonies which he has lacked.

It is significant that this embodiment of the masculine Logos begins his descent as Ulysses. Like his mythical forebear who was forced to wander by the wrath of the sea-god Neptune, so Watkins' sin against the feminine unconscious, the principle of Eros and Dionysus, denies him entrance to the crystal. As an image of the completed self, the crystal cannot accept Watkins until he has assimilated both sides of his nature. That it is Watkins' logical mind that has brought him to this impasse is pointed out by the terms in which Watkins perceives himself upon rejection by the crystal. He is the only one of twelve left behind by the crystal's ascent (p. 74), which abandonment leads him to feel "a kind of curse" as if he were "branded with his ship." Like Judas and Cain, two single-minded, unfeeling, yet rationalizing forebears, Watkins will have to pay for his rational crime by an immersion in the irrational. Watkins attempts to use his reasoning powers to save himself; he builds a raft which turns into a cross, "a clumsy collection of cross

rafters" and breaks apart in the sea. Before he can attain the crystal, his descent carries him farther back, back into the most primitive origins of the psyche. Watkins traces man's evolutionary steps, from Eden to the fall, and beyond the Fall through all the various attempts to re-establish links with the numinous spirits of the psyche.

The first stage in Watkins' journey leads him back to the Golden Age, an Edenic paradise. Following a night-sea journey on a dolphin's back, he enters a world of sunshine, white sand, rushing water, scented flowers, and friendly animals. This vision of Eden is necessary for Watkins, for by living in the mind, by asserting Logos, he has lost touch with the natural world which in its cyclic rhythms provides an antidote to the world of time and history. Watkins' consciousness alienates him almost immediately from the natural world--he feels his brain invaded by moonlight, as the unconscious tries to break through. But Watkins has not escaped from the need for the rhythms of nature, it is merely that his understanding has blocked him. He will, consequently, regress farther and be forced to change his relationship with myth from a knowledge of myth as intellectual history, to a living link with the harmonies of the spheres.

Before Watkins can assess the importance of myth, he must understand the relationship of myth to the natural world. In this connection, it appears that Lessing would agree with the philosopher Schelling who maintained that

"mythology represents the repetition in the human spirit and consciousness of the processes of nature...that the myths also disclose ties uniting man with the primary processes of world-creation and formation...that deep natural processes were at work even before the consolidation of matter; and man's destiny was still rooted in them, although his divorce from higher spiritual sources had already taken place.¹⁰ Nowhere can this divorce from spiritual sources be seen more clearly than in a man like Watkins whose entire life had been spent "teaching" the classics. He has been lecturing to students on the "meaning" of myths while exhibiting the most profound lack of understanding of the sacred and numinous power of these tales of the gods which he analyzes.

Watkins is forced to confront the sin of understanding by having his consciousness flooded by the non-rational, i.e., by going mad. Only by losing control of his rational powers can he discover the symbols through which the psyche unites the intellectual, natural, and spiritual realms. Lessing demonstrates that Watkins' "mind-consciousness," to use D. H. Lawrence's term for the sin, is the evil which stands between him and the mysteries and harmonies of life. His glimpse of Eden and all the layers of civilization beyond the Golden Age are experienced by Watkins in a living panorama so that he can discover both the roots of his

problem and of his salvation. He learns that his powers of reason cannot help him, and he is caught up in the blood-rituals and death which are at the source of life as much as their polar opposites.

After Eden, Watkins enters the age of the origins of civilization. He must learn a necessary truth from this age, an age in primitive societies which Joseph Campbell terms the "epoch of the hierarchic city state."¹¹ This regressive pattern of descent is inherent in the structure of the psyche and has been traced by Erich Neumann. He writes: "The roots of every man's personality extend beyond the historical area of his factual existence into the world of the numinosum. And if we follow the course of these roots, we pass through every stratum of history and pre-history. We encounter within ourselves the savage with his rites; within ourselves we find the roots of our own culture, but we also find the meditations of Asia and the magical world of the Stone Age medicine man."¹² Watkins, in this new place, uncovers the ruins of an ancient city, like Martha Quest's four-gated city, which once had a natural accord of earthly, heavenly, and individual affairs. It is significant that the city which Watkins finds has no roof, and appears never to have had one. This city, open to the sky, is a symbolic construct of Watkins' need, as the four-gated city reflected the integration which Martha sought.

Watkins needs the order and integration of the city, but he also requires a renewal with the natural world. He finds both an orderly plan in the structure of the city, and a link with nature in the encroaching greenery and the sky which is the only roof. The city is also an "axis mundi," a place where the sacred enters the profane. Watkins recognizes the "center" in this city and ritualistically prepares a mandala, "a circle in its square" for the coming of the crystal. Watkins' preparation of the center is a ritual of renewal in which he establishes his links with the "sacred Time of beginnings." Watkins' life had always led him away from such non-rational practices; thus his attention to the cleansing of the square in the center of the city for his spiritual visitors is a demand made by the self for a recognition of its sacred essence. By making himself at home in the city, Watkins has joined himself to the world of nature and the world of the spirit in preparation for an integrated life.

Watkins' developing self-hood, however, requires a relationship with the irrational, the destructive feminine, as well as the creative feminine in the world of nature. The Dionysian must be assimilated before the perfect crystal will bestow the symbol of unity on Watkins' efforts. Thus, Watkins finds himself in a new and more primitive phase; he is "moon-crazed." He has fallen from Eden and the harmonious hierarchic city. His fall is reflected in his divided

consciousness; he is "shapes of flesh, flesh and time" and a mind which "sees that face, that body, those hands, feet" which "is not inside the same scale of time" (p. 58). The duality of thinking and being alienates Watkins from the perfect unity he had felt in the city; the ruined houses there now "had set themselves from him" (p. 59). In his fallen condition, he recognizes that since the time of his arrival he "had drawn evil into his surroundings" (p. 60). Death and the slaughter of animals are the first aspects of the evil that Watkins feels. He experiences a primal fear of darkness as well, cringing in "terror of the night and its treacherous glamorous sucking light" (p. 60). Now the world he had rejected in his Apollonian conscious life is his master. He encounters the instinctive feminine of nightmare, seeing women with blood "smeared around their stretched mouths." He notes, significantly, that the women are "all intimately connected with him ... bound by experience he could not remember." With these women, he eats bloody hunks of meat and dances in Dionysian abandon around a fire onto which naked, dead babies are thrown.

As Ulysses asked to be tied to the mast of his ship to withstand the call of the sirens, so Watkins desires to be bound, for he wishes to be "immune to the Moon Light." Watkins understands that the lure of this primitive life of the night comes from within himself. He says, "I was already beginning to doubt that I knew who was stronger, which was

host, what was myself and what a perverted offshoot" (p. 65). Watkins must assimilate this aspect of his shadow; until then, the crystal leaves him behind once more because he had been drawn into the bloody feast in the forest.

Rejected by the crystal for the second time, Watkins encounters an even more primitive layer of himself. He regresses to the stage that King Lear encountered on the heath, and Gulliver met in the Yahoo--he sees the bestiality of man in all its horror. Observing a creature, a "dog-rat" as he begins to call them, Watkins, like Gulliver watching the Yahoo, sees that "it and I were of a similar species" (p. 71). Watkins experiences the same revulsion that Gulliver felt. "Dark brown hair on skin burned brown by wind and sun. I was covered and decent! Whereas this beast...but I felt too disgusted with it to stay there matching myself point by point."

The episode of the dog-rats embodies Lessing's negative vision of mankind. Watkins sees in the dog-rats the degradation of most of the human species. They are "occupied and self-absorbed;" their talk is merely "for the sake of relieving a pressure of energy." Moreover, "a greater part of their time was spent in sexual display" (p. 73). Watkins watches wars in which the dog-rats and monkeys kill vast numbers of each other until the dead lie rotting all over the sacred city. When he observes a battle between a female

dog-rat giving birth, the males, and her pups, Watkins feels "that everything was ended, and there was no hope anywhere for man or for the animals of the Earth" (p. 85).

Watkins' pronouncements of doom are no more Lessing's final view of man than Gulliver's are Swift's, for Watkins achieves transcendence, passing beyond the boundaries of loathing in which Gulliver remained trapped. In a ritual of atonement, Watkins prepares the sacred center of the city for the return of the crystal. He finds strength in a white bird, Jungian symbol of transcendence, who teaches him how to prepare for the second coming of the ship of light. The tireless preparation of the center, the experiences with the Dionysian and instinctual layers of his personality have brought Watkins to terms with himself. He enters the Crystal at last, his own body "now a shape in light" (p. 89). All of his experiences are assimilated in his new perception of cosmic unities. "In this dimension minds lay side by side, fishes in a school, cells in honeycomb, flames in fire and together we made a whole in such a way that it was not possible to say, Here Charles begins, here John, or Miles or Felicity, or Constance ends" (p. 92).

From the crystal, Watkins enters a state of heightened awareness in which he achieves new perspectives upon the nature of reality. Looking down at humanity from the crystal, Watkins sees cosmic unities; "viewed from the vantage point

of the enclosing web of light," he notes, it "was not at all a question of individual entities as those entities saw themselves, but a question of wholes" (p. 94). Man's place in the cosmic harmonies alone gives him importance; as Watkins says, "and this was the truth that gave the utter insignificance of these notes their significance: in the great singing dance, everything linked and moved together" (p. 96).

From this cosmic height, Watkins moves into another ancient pattern of thought. He sees the earth and all the planets as a unit of forces which determines individual and national destinies. Each country is "held in laws they could not change or upset" (p. 99). This view of the universe is like the Medieval patterns in which the microcosm and macrocosm are part of a divine plan. Watkins, reliving the Medieval philosophy he had learned, describes these patterns which bind the earth and planets together. "I saw how lines and currents of force and sympathy and antagonism danced in a web that was the system of planets around the sun...and this web was iron, a frightful necessity, imposing its design" (p. 99-100). This is related to the need for a harmonious structure, a unity of all of the elements of himself which are fragmented. In this regard, Joseph Campbell has pointed out that the "pageant of the seven spheres" in Medieval philosophy, is an aspect of the epoch of the hierarchic city state, for the order of the city is a reflection of the order of the heavens. Campbell, moreover, indicates

that both the hierarchic city and the orderly universe are reflections of the psyche. He writes: "the mesocosm of the local state, conceived as a reflection of the universe, was actually a reflection of something from deep within man himself."¹³

As Watkins relives these ancient patterns of understanding man's destiny and discovers the great whole of which the individual ego is only a part, he begins to perceive his own problem with more accuracy. His psyche is presenting a vision for him of an ordered whole which he had been ignoring in favor of the ego. He sees that "saying I, I, I, I, is their madness ... for these microbes [humanity] are a whole, they form a unity, they have a single mind, a single being, and never can they say I, I without making the celestial watcher roll with laughter or weep with pity." With his new vision, Watkins understands the reasons for the condition of forgetfulness most of us call normality. He attributes the fall simply to a crash, a comet that "set us off centre, and away from the sweet sanity of We" (p. 103). Yet, he sees that we all retain a "queer half memory of the time before."

This realization is the climax of Watkins' interior journey. He sees that the peculiar situation of man, and the reason for his discontent, is that he lives both in the world of cosmic harmony and in the fallen world. "But man-wise, microbe-wise I am before the Crash and in a cool sweet

loving air that rings with harmony, is harmony, IS, yes, and here am I, voyager, Odysseus bound for home at last, the seeker in home waters, spiteful Neptune outwitted and Jupiter's daughter my friend and guide" (p. 104).

His descent having accomplished its goal, Watkins' problem now is to communicate his understanding to others. He does not know how to describe what he has seen. In the "briefing" section of the novel, which gives it its title, Watkins makes use of two of the ways this message has been conveyed. As he confronts the problems which plague both novelist and patient, Watkins becomes a personification of Lessing the artist. Watkins underlines the problem when he says to his doctors "I gotta use words when I talk to you." He notes, "probably this sequence of words, 'I've got to use words', is a definition of all literature seen from a different perspective" (p. 105).

The message which Watkins wishes to present to the doctors is the archetypal story of a pre-natal life which is forgotten in life on earth. Edward Edinger¹⁴ has traced this story through old Jewish legend, the old Gnostic Hymn of the Pearl, and Platonic philosophy. All of these versions of the story involve a descent from a condition in which the connecting link between the ego and its suprapersonal origins has been forgotten. Watkins makes use of two transmutations of this legend. First he tells the story utilizing the person-

ification of the planets as found in old mythology. He also describes the gods as they exist in Greco-Roman mythology. While Watkins, as a classical scholar, had access to these tales for most of his life, here, for the first time, he perceives that the old myths were discussing his own life and origins. Reviewing philosophy, archeology, and all the myths of man's origins, Watkins summarizes man's condition by saying "No one knows what has existed and has vanished beyond recovery, evidence for the number of times man has understood and has forgotten again that his mind and flesh and life and movements are made of star stuff, sun stuff, and planet stuff" (p. 111). Because man forgets, Watkins believes, the gods are forced to send a message of reminder again and again. The message is always the same, reminding man that "Yes, there is a Harmony and that if they wish to prosper they must keep in step and obey its Laws" (p. 113).

Watkins is not satisfied with the language of myth. He has, after all, heard it all his life to no avail. So he retells the story in a more contemporary idiom. The "briefing" is presented this time in the language of science fiction wherein the gods are given contemporary names, such as Minna Erve, Merk Ury, the Chief, etc. This rather flip-pant approach to mythology has invited the wrath of at least one of Lessing's critics who feels that Lessing "does not possess the wit or deftness with ideas that science fiction

requires. Indeed, she is earnest and hamhanded, her few attempts at humor pitiful. (At the briefing Minna Erve and Merk Ury preside, and there is much chat of 'poor, dear Pluto' and so forth)."¹⁵ This denunciation is due to the critical fallacy which analyzes the author rather than the character she has created. This wry "sci-fi" passage is, after all, the second of Watkins' attempts at using words. Lessing pointed out clearly in The Four-Gated City that there are many sets of vocabulary for the experience of cosmic harmony. Watkins is trying on some of these, to see whether they "fit" his experience and can communicate it to doctors who are far removed from the language of myth. Also, by verbalizing his experiences in this way, Watkins gains command of what he has learned and is ready to return to what others call normality. He realizes now, as Martha Quest did while walking the streets of London in a state of heightened consciousness, that ordinary life makes us forget. "I never learned to live awake," he mourns, "I was trained for sleep" (p. 129).

It is at this moment that Watkins returns from his descent, awakening in a hospital whose function it is to make him remember nothing but the reality that existed before. He is confronted with the spare "facts" of his life, facts which have no importance in his new view of things. Watkins finds that he is alone; his experiences of the cosmic "we"

seem an aberration to the rest of society. This is the reason that he finds words so inadequate; for, as he says to his doctors, "all these words you say, they fall into a gulf, they're not me or you" (p. 141). Literalism without symbolic value upsets Watkins, for the ideas he wishes to express can only be understood through symbols. "I'm not what you say. I know that. I'm not Professor Charles Whatshisname. Or if I am nominally that, it isn't the point" (p. 144).

The remainder of the novel presents Charles' struggles to retain what he had learned in his descent. In an ironic attempt to jog his memory by agreeing to electric shock, Watkins instead loses all memory of his cosmic bonds. In spite of Watkins' failure to retain what he has learned, Lessing's picture is not totally bleak. There are some people who manage to retain a memory of these harmonies in spite of the restrictions of society on such memories. Lessing presents parallels to Watkins' experiences, once again indicating that there are many forms and modes of expression for the message of cosmic harmony.

One such parallel is presented in the little story of Rosemary Baines, the woman who offers her friendship to Watkins before his descent. She is "awakened," and understands, intuitively, things that cannot be expressed in words. Attending a lecture given by Watkins, she is struck by a vulnerability in him, and gains an awareness, a half-light

of some truth, coming through the words of his lecture. She notes: "It is not a new thought for me that the quality of a lecture or lecturer need not have much to do with the actual words used" (p. 148). Moved by Watkins' speech, Rosemary describes to him a brotherhood of people she has encountered who share her perception of things which lie beneath the surface of reality. She is eager to determine whether Watkins is one of them, for his talk has widened her perceptions considerably. Giving a lecture on the topic of improving the educational system, Watkins had spoken of a feeling people have about their children--that the educational process is covering something more precious than anything that is given to them in return. Watkins' words, Baines says, "had fed us, woken us, made us recognize parts of ourselves normally well hidden and covered over" (p. 153). This shock of recognition gives a new quality to her perceptions. She feels tuned in to what she terms "the wavelength." For, she says, "it was like suddenly touching a high-tension wire. Of being, briefly, on a different, high, vibrating current, of the familiar becoming transparent" (p. 154).

Speaking to Watkins of her "group," the "we" who "meet each other" and attract others, who are "already in the same orbit" (p. 156), Rosemary Baines mentions Frederick Larson, who has had experiences which also parallel Watkins'. Both Larson and Watkins have spent their lives in full knowledge

of ancient cultures. Larson, an archeologist, traveled in Greece, and observed "primitive" cultures in Africa. He has learned to distrust archeology as he observes the way its theories shift with each contradictory discovery. He also discovered that the societies which are termed primitive by the archeologists were "more integrated with nature than any he could remember" (p. 165). The seeds of distrust have led Larson to a period of crisis, a crisis of faith in his profession, which he relates to the crisis of doubt which shattered the lives of Victorian clergymen. Larson's psychologist simply terms his problems the "male menopause" and dismisses them. Whatever terms are applied to the experience, it is one that is shared, for Watkins, Larson, and Baines have all undergone a period of crisis and experienced an illumination as a result. Lessing is indicating, once more, that there are many sets of words that can be applied to this experience.

Watkins, himself, expresses the experience in one more set of words before the novel is finished. When it is suggested by one of the doctors at the hospital that Watkins write down some of his experiences to prove his grasp of reality, he records some incidents purported to have taken place in Yugoslavia during the war. Watkins does not please the doctors with his story, however, for his tale is archetypally but not historically true. This story begins,

once again, with a briefing session before a descent--this time the descent is a parachute drop into Yugoslavia. This variant of the descent motif is another indication of Lesing's skill and the versatility of the old pattern. Before the descent, the young soldiers are described as being "in the condition of peasants in a technological society," for they still "believed in the power of heroism over any odds" (p. 205). The young heroes, Charles and his friend, Miles Bovey, were "dropped together on a dark and very cold night into a total darkness." The parallels with Watkins' earlier Ulyssean journey are obvious. In the Yugoslavian countryside, his companion killed, Watkins traces the steps of another heroic adventure, this time among the brotherhood of the Partisans. The members of this group share youth, enthusiasm and efficient heroism. Watkins presses the Ulyssean image noting that "their heroism had the simplicity of other days, a clean straightforwardness, like the heroes outside Troy. These were people like those." (p. 209). Watkins emphasizes the feelings of unity among them: "Remembering that time is as if a friend's eyes rest in longing curiosity on your face, and you feel your face spread in a smile because of the warmth the two of you generate."

Watkins describes for the doctors exactly what it is that this experience shares with his previous descent, for he notes: "It is only in love and in war that we escape from the sleep of necessity, the cage of ordinary life, to a state

where every day is a high adventure, every moment falls sharp and clear like a snowflake drifting slowly past a dark glistening rock, or like a leaf spinning down to the forest floor" (p. 210). While this story shares with the descent a heightening of ordinary perceptions, it is also purified of many of the personal elements which colored his adventures as Ulysses. Although he traces the same path, this time the story has a pristine neatness about it, and a cyclical quality which indicates that Watkins understands the nature of cosmic harmony enough to tell about it in an artistically satisfying manner.

Just as Watkins had to live through man's evolutionary processes in his previous descent, so the Partisans retrace the psychological history of man on earth. They begin in the wilderness where all seems empty: "the world as it was before man filled and fouled it" (p. 211). Lessing unleashes the full power of her cosmic imagery as Watkins describes the splendours of the world through which they moved "like the first people on earth" (p. 212). The dreams of the Partisans are of bringing a cosmic harmony to earth as soon as the war is done. "When this war was over, we all knew, and our trusting hands, our smiles, our dedication promised this --this land that was so rich and so beautiful would flower into a loving harmony that was as much a memory as a dream for the future. It was as if every one of us had lived so,

once upon a time, at another time, in a country like this, with sharp sweet-smelling air and giant uncut trees, among people descended from a natural royalty, those to whom harmfulness and hate were alien. We were all bound in together by another time, another air. Anything petty and ignoble was an outlaw. We could remember only nobility" (p. 212). Watkins has expressed here, as clearly as any character in Lessing's fiction, the essence of her message. This vision is the one which can save mankind from its oblivion. Watkins has proven himself with the description, for he has found words which can be understood, or understood at least by everyone except his doctors.

Part of the story which Watkins tells is his experience of falling in love with another Partisan. This love has none of the pettiness which has characterized his other so-called love affairs in reality. His love for the girl, Konstantina, was based on their love of the group of which both were a part. The group was fighting to bring peace and harmony to all men. "We knew all this," Watkins notes, "because, it was as if we remember it. And besides, did we not live like this now, loving each other and the world?" (p. 213). Konstantina and all the Partisans learn to measure their worth against the best that each of them is capable of being. In this way, their heroism becomes an expression of their inner beings.

Watkins' meeting with Konstantina, their love, and her death all express a new Watkins. As he tells about her, it is clear that he has achieved a new awareness of life and the organic cycles of which life is a part. He notes that he met Konstantina at a funeral. Their love moves very quickly from death to life then back to death again, for Konstantina is speared by a doe protecting her new-born fawn from intruders. Burying Konstantina under some leaves, he "left the glade with its new grave, where the mother deer had one blood-dulled horn pointed at me, and the little fawn stood upright under its shining green fountain" (p. 224).

This little tale of life and love as part of the rhythms of the cosmos is rejected by Watkins' doctors because the incidents described are not "true" to the facts they regard as his experiences, regardless of their archetypal truth. The moments of his story are Watkins' only moments of wholeness, for he allows himself to be persuaded to try electric shock treatments. He realizes that there is something he wants to "remember," but does not realize that he already has a workable relationship with these elements he believes forgotten. Watkins feels that he must remember some truth, but ironically, forgets everything once ordinary memories are restored to him. The story of the Partisans, however brief, is important, for it reveals the quality of Watkins' potential. He describes the beauty of a life lived

within the cosmic harmonies--a life which Watkins himself had for too brief a time.

While it is too late for Watkins at the end of the novel, Lessing's vision is, nonetheless, optimistic. Rosemary Baines, Frederick Larson, the girl, Violet, are "survivors"; each is capable, in his or her own way, of holding on to that vision of cosmic unity. If there is an "apocalyptic vision" in this novel, it is of a society which attempts to destroy the very element that can give it life, the inner life of the individual. But the destruction is not universal; each individual has the choice, and each has the directive, "there is never anywhere to go but in."

Notes: Briefing For A Descent Into Hell

¹ Much has been made, for example, of the relationship between Briefing and R. D. Laing's The Politics of Experience, suggested by Paul Schlueter, p. 123. While the parallels are undeniable, they do little to aid in understanding Lessing's skill as a writer of mythic narrative. Schlueter's premise has been developed by Marion Vlastos, op. cit., who attaches great weight to Lessing's use of Laing, but fails to indicate Laing's borrowings from Jung, or Lessing's access to Jung through her own psychoanalysis with a Jungian. Douglas Bolling, "Structure and Theme in Briefing For A Descent Into Hell" ConL 14 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 550-564, has assessed the basic archetypal patterns at work, but undervalues the novel because he has not related the work to Lessing's developing interest in Jung.

² See the preceding chapter on The Four-Gated City for a more complete discussion of this problem.

³ On a title page of Briefing For A Descent Into Hell (St. Albans, 1972) this epigraph appears in full. Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

⁴ Michael Thorpe, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵ Edinger, p. 3.

⁶ Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 5.

⁷ Cf. Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 221.

⁸ T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," in The Norton Anthology of English Literature (New York, 1968) II, p. 1832.

⁹ Joseph Campbell, Myths To Live By (New York, 1972), p. 208.

¹⁰ Owen Barfield, "Dream, Myth, and Philosophical Double Vision," in Myths, Dreams, and Religion, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York, 1970), pp. 219-20.

¹¹ Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (New York, 1970).

¹² Erich Neumann, Art and the Creative Unconscious (Princeton, 1959), p. 131.

¹³ Campbell, Primitive Mythology, p. 205.

¹⁴ Edinger, op. cit., pp. 118-125.

¹⁵ Doris L. Eder, "Doris Lessing's Briefing For A Descent Into Hell: The Writer's Consciousness Confronts Apocalypse," Modern British Literature (Spring, 1977), p. 107.

Chapter Five

The Summer Before The Dark

On the opening pages of The Summer Before The Dark (1973), we are introduced to the thoughts of Kate Brown, the protagonist. She is in the process of "'trying on' ideas like so many dresses off a rack."¹ She finds that attitudes toward crucial experiences are "stereotyped," based on an unthinking belief in the power of phrases, and have little to do with what she really feels (p. 2). Summing up a mild discontent with her life, with social attitudes and the words society uses to describe inner growth, she makes a series of statements: "We are what we learn. It often takes a long and painful time. Unfortunately, there was no doubt, too, that a lot of time, a lot of pain, went into learning very little" (p. 4).

The implications of these statements are double-edged. On the one hand it is possible to assert that, in the course of the novel, Kate Brown is describing the essence of her experiences, for while she suffers and agonizes a great deal, we will discover that she learns very little.² This trend of thought might lead the attentive reader to criticize Lessing for failing to reach the introspective depth, the archetypal power, or thematic impact of her preceding novels, which also dealt with the problems of self-development at

middle-age. While Kate Brown attempts to come to terms with herself and her life, she does so in an unexpectedly shallow manner. In short, the developmental critic, looking for another example of the individuation process in a middle-aged protagonist will be sorely disappointed, for this is, instead, the story of an average woman's confrontation with stereotypes, both societal and psychological.

The other implication of Kate's statements is that her comments about the power of phrases, and taking very long to learn very little, are an ironic commentary by Lessing about the obtuseness of her audience. Before attacking Lessing for failing to live up to critical expectations regarding the psychic voyage in prose fiction, it is useful to remember the considerable ironic skills which she has displayed in her earlier works. In the immediately preceding novel, Briefing for a Descent into Hell, the literal-minded psychiatrists and Felicity, Watkins' absent and unconcerned wife, are handled with a skillfully ironic touch. The obtuseness of Professor Watkins himself before and after his descent is a further example. Looking back to The Golden Notebook, there are examples of Lessing's satiric/ironic perspective in virtually every section. For example, she calls attention to the limitations of the "conventional novel"³ with the wryly ironic captions to the "Free Women" sections. There are, further, a number of

self-parodies of Lessing's story of Anna in the sections Anna Wulf writes about her fictional Ella.

In what is perhaps the most telling sequence of all, Anna Wulf comments on the difficulties of writing parody at the present time, for she notes that the tenor of our age is so full of irony that it is frequently mistaken for realism. In this segment of the Black Notebook, Anna Wulf and her friend, James Schafter, submit satiric articles and pastiches to several literary magazines. Since these articles reflect the expectations and critical biases of the journals, each is accepted at face value. Anna concludes that: "something had happened in the world which made parody impossible" (p. 436).

In short, instead of blaming Lessing for failing to live up to pre-conceptions about the kind of novel she is writing, the critic must recognize that Lessing is shifting modes here, thereby taking her audience to task for their casual acceptance of her message, and making an analysis of her works based on thematic expectations useless.

If there is any doubt about Lessing's satiric intentions, a careful examination of Kate Brown will indicate that she is a very frail vessel for a message of serious importance. Lessing's earlier protagonists were, by reason of intelligence or sensitivity, more substantial carriers of Lessing's message, and provided more material for an intensive psychological self-confrontation. Anna Wulf, for

example, was an imaginative writer, and Professor Charles Watkins was a teacher of the classics with a full background in myth. The limitations of Kate Brown, however, are as implicit in her name as the hungry drives of Anna Wulf are reflected in hers, for Kate Brown is an average, middle-class, middle-aged, British wife and mother with a limited imaginative range. Kate's problem, moreover, is not a deeply psychological one; she is simply confronted with that most typical of all problems of such women, what to do when the children leave home. Kate Brown, herself, refers to her situation as "that well-documented and much-studied phenomenon, the woman with grown-up children and not enough to do" (p. 19).

The banality of Kate, however, is exactly the point. In the same way that Swift chose an obtuse Gulliver, Lessing has chosen a limited woman as her protagonist in order that the reader will not identify with her. The author has stated repeatedly that she wishes us to "learn to look at ourselves," not to accept the words of any authority, not even those of Doris Lessing. What Lessing has done is to write a "conventional novel" about a commonplace psychological situation from a keenly ironic perspective, for the author does not wish us to fall into the mistake of accepting Kate's easy answers to difficult problems. Kate's quest for psychic integration is riddled with irony for Kate ultimately has no real self. She is still the victim of

authorities; she merely rejects social stereotypes in order to succumb to psychological ones.

Early reviews indicate that critics have been unable to see the satiric/ironic qualities of this novel. Time⁴ cautiously provided a plot summary without drawing any conclusions. A blurb on the book jacket⁵ from a dubious source called Best Sellers states that "there is hardly a cliché or predictable action or character in the book." The two articles on this novel published by scholarly journals⁶ have taken it very "seriously" indeed. One of these critics, R. L. Widmann, states that "Lessing has written of madness in her earlier novels and stories; here she does so with even more insight about the values of psychological introspection. She now defines the state of madness as that situation in which women, young, middle-aged and old, find themselves when they listen to and succumb to the enormous pressures to become only roles" (p. 382). Lessing's developmental processes indicate clearly that this is not madness in her terms. Martha Quest's battles with collective attitudes and role-playing are the beginnings of her self-analysis, which in itself precedes her investigation of madness. In contrast, Kate Brown's "trying on" and "taking off" of conventional attitudes seems a very trivial exercise, and a very limited definition of madness as well.

Since Widmann's comments are in disagreement with the major premises of this chapter, a comparison of Lessing's

"insight about the value of psychological introspection" in this novel and her previous ones is in order. First, the depth and quality of the protagonist's inner voyage can be compared with the earlier "descents." Conclusions can be drawn about the development of Kate Brown's awareness as a result of her introspective journey; and the degree to which she assimilates her dream life, her unconscious, can be studied. Secondly, Kate's relationship to the outer world can be explored. If she has confronted the inner world in a meaningful way, the earlier novels lead us to expect that her relationships and social behaviour should alter as well.

Kate Brown, however, is limited in all these respects. Her inner voyage is curtailed and reaches a peak during an illness characterized by lethargy. Her insights are articulated only superficially and the self-awareness she develops is only slightly more interesting than her awareness of stereotyped attitudes on the first page of the novel. Kate's dream life, too, is a reflection of the limitations of her conscious personality, for her unconscious focuses on the mechanical repetition of a single dream which is, finally, allegorical rather than symbolic. Finally, Kate's social behaviour is altered so slightly that one becomes aware of the fact that in certain cases even a trauma is not effective in moving someone like Kate away from the norm. Lest there be any doubt about Lessing's intention, the tone with which Kate's adventures are described is so ironic, and the

process so mechanical, that is is clearly more satiric⁷ than mythic.

Since The Summer Before the Dark follows Lessing's most powerful psychological studies, the lack of depth in Kate Brown's interior voyage is glaringly apparent. Kate's journey cannot, as Widmann would have it, be called a descent into madness at all. She merely begins to look beneath the surface of things. At the beginning of the novel, Lessing wants us to see Kate as a woman who has been caught up in the collectives of her community. Everything has been sublimated to her social role, and as a result, she has neglected her inner life. To demonstrate that Kate is dominated by the collective, Lessing calls her repeatedly, at the beginning of the novel, simply "a woman." Kate moves through a series of typical attitudes: "A woman stood on her back step, arms folded, waiting" (p. 1). Lessing uses the third person, objective technique to describe Kate's movements throughout the first section, emphasizing that her life in one of stereotypes.

In order to maintain our serious interest in Kate as protagonist, however, in order that the confrontation with her inner life be meaningful and interesting, we need a sense of some part of Kate capable of reaching beyond these stereotypes. Lessing, instead, maintains an ironic perspective on Kate, utilizing the omniscient narration to tell us those things which Kate is too unimaginative to perceive:

"Sometimes, if you are lucky, a process, or a stage does get concentrated. It was going to turn out for Kate that that summer would be such a shortened, heightened, concentrated time...By the time it was all over with, she would certainly not have chosen to have it differently: yet she could not have chosen it for herself in advance, for she did not have the experience to choose, or the imagination" (pp. 5-6).

One of the main satiric targets in Lessing's handling of Kate is the way in which she has so totally and willingly given herself up to the collective; she has sublimated so much to her social position because she lacked the imagination to see any alternatives. Kate, "waiting patiently," is described as having deliberately chosen the appropriately conventional all through her life. She has limited herself to fit all the stereotypes associated with her role as wife and mother: "her appearance was choice, all exquisite tact, for it was appropriate for this middle-class suburb and her position in it as her husband's wife. And, of course, as the mother of her children" (p. 7). Her dress, which came off the proper rack, her hair, "the place where most energy had gone into choice," her suburban home, which "she the mother, would run" (p. 9), were all consciously selected to fit a pattern.

Because Kate Brown is so shallow, such a social caricature, it is clear that Lessing did not intend us to believe

in her. Even when Martha Quest is totally absorbed in the collective while working for the Communist party, she maintains a sense of self that Kate Brown never has. Kate Brown gives the reader little to care about; her life, home and family are cardboard cut-outs, like illustrations from an advertisement--stereotypes so banal they are satiric. Even Kate's job, which could have been a meaningful move out of the collective for her, involves an organization sketched in bold, farcical outlines. At work for "Global Foods," Kate is as easily manipulated as she was at home. She falls into whatever role the bureaucracy demands of her with little problem. She becomes at work exactly what she was at home, "a nurse, or a nanny....a mother, a parrot with the ability to be sympathetic about minor and unimportant obsessions" (p. 29). Even the fact that Kate is aware of her absorption in social patterns does not limit the tedium of that absorption. While Kate tells us that she inwardly nurtures a sense of another self, an "individual who sat and watched and waited," we are not convinced that the inner person has any more validity than the cardboard exterior.

Lessing presents a contrast between Kate as she exists before and after the confrontation with her real self, her inner being. And, to be fair, Kate does move into a somewhat more convincing individuality at the end of the novel. However, the depth of her awareness has increased so slightly

that Lessing forces us to ask whether it was worth all the effort.

The beginnings of Kate's perception of her inner being are also banal. At Global Foods, she becomes aware of the fact that she has an existence behind the surface that others see. "There she sat, Kate Brown, just as she had always been, her self, her mind, her awareness, watching the world from behind a facade only very slightly different from the one she had maintained since she was sixteen....This is what it must feel like to be an actor, an actress--how very taxing that must be, a sense of self kept burning behind so many different phantasms" (pp. 43-44). Lessing, from the beginning of Children of Violence, has described characters obsessed with the discovery that people are so readily classified by their externals, such as clothing or body language. Kate Brown seems startled by the fact that slouching, "sitting badly," presents a different sexual message than an alert, attractive, interesting manner. She tries the same trick over and over; sitting badly she becomes invisible to men, sitting alertly she attracts their interest. Only one absorbed by social roles could be so fascinated with this obvious mechanism. Like Martha Quest in The Four-Gated City observing the reactions of construction workers as she passes them in a shapeless black coat, and the conditioned responses of the customers in Baxter's to her "uniform,"

a simple black dress, Kate Brown, too, is fascinated with the reactions of people to the varying facades she presents. While this same mechanism functions as a symbol of Martha's growing individuality, with Kate Brown, Lessing focuses on the surface of sexual attraction for satiric effect. Nowhere does Kate experience the creative and destructive power of the archetypal sexual connection that Lessing has explored in earlier novels, nor does Kate's fascination with reactions to her facade indicate an individuality growing beyond containment by these masks.

While Lessing has stated that an individuating personality must learn to look beyond the surfaces of the ego in order to discover "who and what one was before the external and internal authorities got ahold of him," Kate Brown sees both the inner and outer world, the ego and the self, with the same lack of depth. What was Kate before the outer authorities took ahold of her, before she became a wife and mother? Kate remembers a jeune fille in a white dress, who was sexually attractive but had neither warmth nor sympathy. The latter are attributes that were developed especially to fit the role of wife and mother as smiling stewardess, "making a whole of individuals who could have no other connection" (p. 45). While Kate no longer wishes to live within the social stereotypes of wife and mother, she is also rejecting an integral part of maturation and self-development.

The personality, as it grows, learns to accept new patterns, occasionally selfless ones, as the ego moves toward an embracing, all-connecting self-hood. Kate is neglecting an important part of selfhood, the establishment of cosmic connections through love, which she might encounter doing the very thing she eschews, "making a whole of individuals who could have no other connection." Kate has little to offer beyond this, other than a grim mask behind which she makes ironic comments. If this latter is the sense of self she has sublimated all these years, Lessing intimates that she may have been correct in doing so.

Lessing is, of course, asserting that one must have the time and opportunity to explore the sense of self behind the social facades even if that sense of self is not socially acceptable and requires an incursion into madness, or involves hostile and anti-social attitudes. Like Virginia Woolf, Lessing believes that a woman, particularly at middle-age, must find a room of her own and spend some time discovering who she really is. Kate Brown anticipates and fears this kind of introspection: "She was going to have to return to London, to be alone somewhere for two months, and to look, in solitude, at her life" (p. 56). While Kate feels this to be a necessity, she is readily diverted from the pain of genuine introspection when the opportunity for a sexual liaison arises. Jeffrey offers Kate a diversion, a trip in

which she will function as half of a couple, and she readily accepts this comfortable role because it offers no challenges.

Kate's journey with Jeffrey is an escape from self-analysis; consequently, Lessing has turned it into a parody of the archetypal psychic voyage. The voyage is reminiscent of one made by Alvina Houghton and her husband Ciccio, in D. H. Lawrence's novel, The Lost Girl. Unlike that journey away from civilization and its restraints toward a vital sexual connection, Jeffrey and Kate's trip together is a voyage into sterility. Unlike mythical journeys where encountered obstacles add to the strength and knowledge of the traveler, here the obstacles are increasingly debilitating. Kate's journey into the heart of darkness takes place with a man snoring feverishly on her shoulder as they travel on increasingly shabby buses through increasingly dusty villages.

As a couple, Jeffrey and Kate have little to contribute to each other. Jeffrey himself has little reality other than his social facade. He appears as a diversion at the moment Kate has decided to spend some time alone. There is little motivation for their attraction other than the fact that he was there, wanted a woman, and Kate could not resist the challenge. Jeffrey is a stereotype and Kate falls immediately into regressive patterns as he pours his trite history--trying to find himself, etc.--into the ears of

"skilled listener" (p. 61) Kate. She drifts into this role and this kind of relationship for the same reason that she has drifted into every other one, because it is easier than asserting a sense of self that must be met.

In spite of the absurd elements, the relationship is indicative of one element in Kate's growing selfhood. Since she is approaching her climacteric, one of her most important realizations will be that life is no longer expanding through sexual connection with others but now must contract as the time has come for introspection. The failure of Kate and Jeffrey to establish any real connection indicates that this affair is a regressive pattern. Moreover, the relationship does not fit any of the enriching patterns of man-woman relationships. Others, particularly the conventionally correct Spaniards they meet, regard them as the stereotyped older-woman, younger-man affair; but Kate has already had this experience, and with a genuinely younger man. Jeffrey's illness forces Kate away from absorption in a repetitive situation toward self-analysis. The holiday makes Kate painfully aware of the difference between the conventional attitudes toward them as a not altogether "correct" couple and the sterile reality of the situation.

Kate plays two main roles with Jeffrey: she is the smiling, sexually knowledgeable woman of the world, and she is the healing mother. Kate more readily accepts the first role than the second, but she finds that Jeffrey brings out

the maternal more than the sexual in her. Jeffrey's level of sexual awareness is limited; he responds to the obvious attraction of a European woman-of-the-world, Madame Phiri, and is fascinated by barefoot young girls on the beach. While Kate feels challenged by Madame Phiri enough to take on the affair, Jeffrey's interest in the beach girls makes Kate aware of the banality of the relationship: "If she had been asked then what scene or set of circumstances would be best calculated to bring home to her a situation, a stage in life that she must recognize, no matter how painful, then she might have chosen this: to stand on the edge of a mile of soiled and scuffed sand that glittered with banal moonlight, watching a hundred or so young people, some younger than her own children, beside a young man who--it was no use pretending otherwise--made her feel maternal" (p. 82). Jeffrey's illness prevents any real sexual relationship, so Kate is forced into a useless mothering. Playing mother to a sick man not her son enables Kate to spend some time with her thoughts. She remembers her own son's resentment at maternal fussing that continues beyond usefulness. Alone and vigilant, Kate begins to assess the patterns of motherhood that she had developed with difficulty but which had become unnecessary. "For why should it be necessary for a mother to be there like a grindstone at the heart of everything? Looking back it seemed as if she had been at every-

body's beck and call, always available, always criticized, always being bled to feed these--monsters" (p. 89). Kate begins to see that motherhood becomes an obsessive fussing rather than a loving concern when it is carried on beyond the needs or desires of those who are mothered. Jeffrey is too ill to appreciate her care, so Kate, involved in a pattern in which she receives no support, begins to evaluate, objectively, those "virtues" she developed to meet the needs of a growing family.

These qualities were necessary when her children were young but have become outdated and poor substitutes for the real virtues she requires for self-development. "With three small children, and then four, she had had to fight for qualities that had not been even in her vocabulary. Patience. Self-discipline. Self-control. Self-abegnation. Chastity. Adaptability to others--this above all. This always. These virtues, necessary for bringing up a family of four on a restricted income, she did slowly acquire" (p. 92). Kate's growing sense of self enables her to question whether characteristics acquired by necessity can be termed virtues at all. "But virtues? Really? Really virtues? If so, they had turned on her, had become enemies. Looking back from the condition of being an almost middle-aged wife and mother to her condition as a girl when she lived with Michael, it seemed to her that she had acquired not virtues but a form of dementia" (p. 92). This minor insight is

Kate's most significant discovery and forces her to attempt to assess what will remain of her when the need for these maternal virtues has ceased to exist.

At this point, Kate might have been capable of genuine self-awareness and she might have been receptive to messages from her deeper self. Kate's sensitivity to her inner life is illustrated, however, by a recurring dream. Parallel to Kate's growing awareness of the obsessive social pattern of motherhood which had absorbed her, Kate begins to recognize an inner need dramatized in her dream. While it is a psychological truth that the unconscious will present compensating images of wholeness for the undeveloped parts of the self,⁸ Kate's absorption in stereotypes carries over into her unconscious. The recurring dream which Kate has of carrying a dying seal to water becomes mechanical and repetitive rather than creative by virtue of its constant repetition. Kate slowly and patiently, using all the virtues of motherhood she rejected as dementia, carries the dying seal closer and closer to water in a series of fourteen dreams. This has been termed a Jungian dream in Widmann's analysis and early reviews of the novel, but to do so gives the mechanism more archetypal power than it possesses. Jung has noted that "dreams are as simple or as complicated as the dreamer is himself" and this repetitive dream is as simple and stereotyped as those attitudes for which the dream is supposed to compensate.

Jung has recounted in detail, in several of his works, the recurring dreams of certain of his patients. But nowhere, even in the dreams of the most obsessed monomaniac does the same dream recur with the same particularity of detail as often as Kate's dream of the seal. Lessing's subtle handling of the dreams of Anna Wulf and Martha Quest indicates that she is depicting, deliberately, the limitations in Kate Brown's unconscious life. Moreover, a Jungian dream is fraught with symbolism and archetypal power; it has personal, social and archetypal reverberations. Kate's dream, however, is not symbolic but allegorical. D. H. Lawrence defined allegory as "narrative description using, as a rule, images to express certain definite qualities. Each image means something, and is a term in the argument and nearly always for a moral or didactic purpose."⁹ The seal dream has a didactic purpose for Kate, and moreover, is made an explicit allegory for her life. Simply, and the simplicity is a reflection of Kate's shallowness, the dying seal which she carries in her arms to the water signifies Kate's need to nurture her inner self in spite of the demands of the collective persona.

Kate explicates the dream herself when she realizes that there is a part of herself that she had wanted to nurture but which had been neglected in favour of the social self. In Kate's words: "While her body, her needs, her

her emotions--all of herself--had been turning like a sunflower after one man, all that time she had been holding in her hands something else, the something precious, offering it in vain to her husband, her children, to everyone she knew--but it had never been taken, had not been noticed. But this thing she had offered, without knowing she was doing it, which had been ignored by herself and by everyone else, was what was real in her" (p. 126). The dream comes into focus for Kate while, sitting alone beside Jeffrey, she begins to see that the real business of her life is now not to mother him but to give herself time to assess who and what she is beyond the role she is playing. "Going to sleep and entering this dream," she realizes, is "as much her business for this time in her life as being in this hotel in the poor dusty village in a blazing August, as visiting Jeffrey and waiting for his recovery, as wrestling with her emotional self, which seemed like a traitor who had come to life inside her. What she was engaged in was the dream, which worked itself out in her" (pp. 128-29).

Once again, Lessing forces us to be aware of the limitations, the matter-of-fact description of this process as Kate perceives it in comparison to the complex and painful explorations of the self in the dreams of Anna Wulf and Martha Quest. Like these earlier protagonists, Kate moves into a room of her own where she can assess the messages of

her unconscious; but unlike them, her self-analysis is much too straightforward and simple. Kate's introspective voyage takes her back to England, to a hotel room in Bloomsbury (a pointed choice of location) where she opts out by allowing herself to become ill.

Kate has two insights during her stay in Bloomsbury, but both are only slightly more intensive analyses of the realization she had earlier--that people are judged by the degree to which they conform to social patterns. Kate learned at Global Foods that she could sit unnoticed in a crowd if she presented a certain attitude; now she becomes aware that all that she is as Mrs. Brown is such an attitude. She revisits her home and is unrecognized by her best friend; she sees that without the mask of her persona she is unrelated to the continuing existence of her former life. She feels freed by this realization that the social patterns can be separated from herself: "they looked right through me. They didn't know me. Far from being saddened by it, she was delighted, she felt quite 'drunk' with relief that friendship, ties, 'knowing people' were so shallow, easily disproved" (p. 151). Lessing raises the question once again of whether there is anything in Kate to compensate for the loss of her collective self. We see Kate tearing at the mask, but cannot see any face beneath.

Kate's second insight occurs when she attends a play.

She wants to see a play, any play, because she wants to watch the social games in a focussed form; "she wanted to see people dressed up in personalities not their own" (p. 152). At a Turgenev play, Kate, freed of the restraints of Mrs. Brown, openly applauds or derides the actors, feeling justified, for "it was a farce and not at all a high-class and sensitive comedy filled with truths about human nature. The fact was that the things happening in the world, the collapse of everything, was tugging at the shape of events in this play and making them farcical. A joke, like her own life. Farcical" (p. 155).

The collapse of everything that Kate sees, however, is only the collapse of the social mask, the role, the persona. Kate has a vision of the players as mere voices of outworn ideas and of the audience as a group of animals programmed to respond to these well-worn attitudes, (just as Lessing's audience is programmed to respond to her novels as psychological documents regardless of the ironies in her tone). Finally, Kate discovers that she too has been playing a role, wearing a set of masks that had received social approval but limiting herself only to those faces that had received applause: "those actors were absolutely right. They didn't allow themselves to be shut inside one set of features, one arrangement of hair, one manner of walking or talking, no, they changed about, were never the same. But

she, Kate Brown, Michael's wife, had allowed herself to be a roundly slim redhead with sympathetic brown eyes for thirty years" (p. 161). The terms of this insight, which focus almost entirely upon her role, "Michael's wife," and her appearance, raises the question of whether this is a significant insight. Does it make any difference what mask she wears? The problem, once again, is that Kate's internal development provides no compensation for the "collapse of everything" in her world. Kate is a mannequin with no essential individuality once the indentifying garments have been removed. Unlike a personality linked to an archetypal form which has a recognizable shape no matter what clothing it wears, Kate is a blank.

If Lessing wished us to believe that someone exists behind the masks, Kate would show some evidence of a heightened and broadened ability to reflect, of a newly-created and more inclusive sense of self based on the integration of her unconscious, through assimilation of the seal dream. In the final section of the novel, we are given glimpses of Kate's basic self, of her new relationship to the world, and of the nature of her new perspective on life. Lessing's handling of the "new" Kate, however, is riddled with irony. Kate begins to assert a sense of self in her relationship with Maureen; but there remain serious limitations in Kate's ability to perceive other people. While Kate's relationship with

Maureen has more reality than her lifelong friendship with Mary Finchley, Kate is no more able to see beyond Maureen's surface than she was able to understand Mary. Kate never realizes anything about the mechanism of projection, or about confronting oneself through one's moral opposite.

Mary Finchley, throughout the novel, functions as a rather mechanical shadow. Everything that Mary is, Kate is not; and whenever Kate moves beyond what is expected of her she hears Mary's voice in approval. Mary's unconventional attitudes toward love, marriage, and sex are juxtaposed throughout with Kate's conventional ones. Kate notes at one point that "she was going to have to understand what Mary meant to her, what she was standing for" (p. 94); but Kate does not do so. Maureen simply takes over Mary's role; she becomes a personification of certain of Kate's opposite qualities, and Kate never assesses either relationship. If Kate were capable of genuine self-knowledge, a basic step would be to come to terms with this young girl, with the parts of her own self in and beyond Maureen. Kate sees Maureen only as someone more free than she is. She feels assaulted by Maureen, "because quite simply, of the marvelous assurance of the girl's youth. Of her courage in doing what she felt like doing. Yes, that was it, that was what she, Kate, had lost" (p. 169). While Lessing makes it obvious to the reader, Kate is incapable of seeing Maureen

as a polarization of her own opposite qualities. Kate mechanically suppresses herself for convention's sake, Maureen as mechanically rejects all convention--neither one is free of convention or has any sense of self, for both are only reacting, albeit in an opposite manner.

The relationship with Maureen has about the same function as the trip with Jeffrey in that it provides two important opportunities for Kate. First, Kate finds herself, in both cases, on the verge of playing outworn maternal roles; and secondly, both relationships provide her with the time and opportunity for self-reflection. With Maureen, Kate has no responsibilities and no collective support for her social patterns; she feels that this "was the first time in her life that she had been alone and outside the cocoon of comfort and protection, the support of other people's recognition of what she had chosen to represent" (p. 172). The only new insight Kate has is that these social roles were mutually supportive. Just as she had provided maternal warmth and comforting smiles on demand, so she, too, had been held together by other people's concern. When Maureen and her friends respond to Kate merely as a person, without the warmth and attentive politeness of her own children, Kate feels hurt and lost; she realizes that "all her life she had been held upright by an invisible fluid, the notice of other people" (p. 180). This awareness might have enabled

Kate to explore the parts of herself that are not given collective approval, but Kate is content merely to be aware of the mechanism without considering its alternatives.

This problem permeates the novel. Kate is aware of the absurdity of the collective facade, of "what a load of shit" (p. 200) all of the social games are; but we wonder who she really is; "who," Kate asks herself, "was going back home?" (p. 201). The limitations of Kate's ability to achieve self-knowledge are glaringly apparent in the "final" Kate we view. She feels that she has made important discoveries about herself. In her dreams, she has carried the seal to the sea; she has, allegorically, achieved a peace with that seeking part of herself; but her relationship to the world has been changed only in terms of externals. If it all really does not matter, if masks are only a part of the games people play, and if Kate genuinely has an awareness of these things, then her new sense of self should not continue to focus on exteriors. Kate has selected one of the most trivial aspects of her social mask to serve as a symbol of her new awareness: "her experiences of the last months, her discoveries, her self-definition; what she hoped were strengths, were concentrated here--that she would walk into her home with her hair undressed, with her hair tied straight back for utility; rough and streaky, and the widening grey band showing like a statement of intent" (p. 244).

Kate's hair and clothing were chosen carefully by her at the beginning of the novel to suit a social stereotype--her selections involved an "exquisite tact." Now Kate has chosen her hair to make an opposing statement, to symbolize her inner rebellion. But, who is Kate? Does it really matter which way she wears her hair? She has complained that inside there was a person, a continuity, that "she was the same despite the masks" (p. 19), which makes her selection of her hair as statement even more useless. All that has happened is that Kate has moved from the social stereotype she was at the beginning of the novel to a different kind of social stereotype at the end. Lessing has ended Kate's self-exploration at the point it might have begun were she not a satiric target. Unlike Anna Wulf, who is an interesting individual at the beginning of The Golden Notebook and who moves into the tangle of the unconscious and back again, and unlike Professor Watkins, who is most fully alive when encountering his psychic depths, Kate Brown has no real personality to gain or lose by confrontation with the unconscious. All that she has learned will focus on a statement about her hair.

If there is a message here, it is an ironic one. Kate has rejected, throughout the novel, not only the masks people wear but the words with which they cover genuine feelings. In the first section of the novel, Kate notes that her marriage was held together by words; "discussing everything was

the "root and prop" of her relationship with her husband. Her relationship to her children, too, has been characterized by playing word games, using "love" words to cover their resentment of each other. Kate knows that words and phrases for certain situations help to form the stereotype, the mold into which even hostile and negative impulses can be safely poured. She assesses also the possibility that "perhaps all the banter and psychologizing and criticism was not the healthy and therapeutic frankness she had imagined, but a form of self-deception" (p. 87). Kate makes this analysis early in the novel. She learns more slowly to reject the stereotyped roles that correspond to these words; but neither of these discoveries has any validity in terms of the life to which she will return. Her hair style, now chosen to please her, and not selected to fit a social pattern, is going to be a "statement." She "had lived among words, and people bred to use and be used by words. But now it was important to her, a matter of self-preservation, that she should be able to make a statement, that she should be understood, that she would, and would not, do certain things to her hair...now she was saying no: no, no, no, NO: a statement which would be concentrated into her hair" (p. 244). But Kate's statement will undoubtedly be "placed" by her family as part of a "phase," a predictable menopausal rebellion, and one is left wondering how long the new Kate will endure. As Kate closes

the door to Maureen's flat and moves back into the world of Mrs. Brown, one still has no grasp on the real Kate and one is left with the terrible feeling that Kate's statement is as trivial as the terms of that statement.

Thus, Lessing is undertaking a new mode in this novel. She is satirizing her complacent audiences who read about self-exploration but are too much like Kate Brown and cannot move out of the collective except in predictable patterns. In her presentation of the cardboard stereotypes--the smiling Mrs. Brown; the Kafkaesque Global Foods organization; the mechanical shadow, Mary Finchley; the husband and four children out of a magazine advertisement; the faceless lover Jeffrey; and the rebel-without-a-cause Maureen--Lessing demonstrates the full range of her satiric skills.

Lessing has presented an absurd social vision and has indicated the ease with which one can be absorbed in collectives even when believing that one is undergoing psychological introspection. Kate, clearly, is in the dark and in her final summer achieves little light before the coming of the chill wind of old age and sterility. Even in the deepest layers of her unconscious, Kate never achieves any individuality. While Lessing has presented the dream life of earlier characters in a meaningful way, utilizing the dreams of Martha Quest, Anna Wulf, and Charles Watkins to offset a cultural sterility by presenting a compensatory and vital inner

life, Kate's serial dream is trite, functioning as a simple allegory for Kate's limited perceptions.

Kate becomes, ultimately, only a puppet voicing Lessing's satiric view, presenting Lessing's own vision of the collective mania that passes for life. That it is Lessing who has the perception and not Kate is apparent in the last scene of the novel. Kate's symbolic closing of the door to Maureen's flat forces a final ironic comparison. Unlike Nora in Ibsen's play closing the door on the social games of the doll's house, Kate becomes an absurd Nora, closing the door of introspection in order to re-enter the drawing room wearing a new hair style.

Notes: The Summer Before The Dark

¹ Doris Lessing, The Summer Before The Dark (New York, 1973), p. 19. Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

² Barbara F. Lefcowitz, in "Dream and Action in Lessing's The Summer Before the Dark," Crit 17, ii, feels that there is a "lack of interaction" between Kate's conscious and unconscious and that in the end, she is unable to break out of the "stereotypic female role" in any visible manner, p. 117.

³ Lessing, in her 1961 Preface to The Golden Notebook, refers to the "Free Women" sections as "a conventional novel" and a summary, albeit inadequate, of all the chaotic events and psychological insights of Anna Wulf's life which went into the making of "Free Women." Lessing's ironic captions are an acknowledgement that simple statements condensing the action cannot begin to assess the agonies of the creative act.

⁴ Time, May 21, 1973, p. 68.

⁵ This blurb appears on the inside page of the Bantam edition (New York, 1973).

⁶ Cf. Lefcowicz, op. cit., and R. L. Widmann, "Lessing's The Summer Before The Dark" ConL 14 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 582-85.

⁷ Lessing's technique here would seem closest to the

"fourth phase" of satire, "the ironic aspect of tragedy" as defined by Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism (New York, 1969) pp. 236-37. "As a phase of irony in its own right, the fourth phase looks at tragedy from below, from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience. It stresses the humanity of its heroes, minimizes the sense of ritual inevitability in tragedy, supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe, and makes as much as possible of human misery seem, in Thoreau's phrase, 'superfluous and evitable.' This is the phase of most sincere, explicit realism."

⁸ See the discussion of the compensatory function of the unconscious in the introduction, p. 9.

⁹ Lawrence, Phoenix, p. 543.

Chapter Six

The Memoirs of a Survivor

Early reviews of Doris Lessing's most recent novel, The Memoirs of a Survivor (1974) indicate that this may be her most misunderstood work. The dust jacket of the Knopf edition asserts that "Doris Lessing's new book is a darkly visionary novel set in the not too distant future when men, women, and even young children are fighting for survival in a world that is swiftly falling apart."¹ A review in The New Statesman says that the novel is "about the present extended forward a few years to show the end of the process of disintegration we see around us."² Time terms this book "a ghost story of the future."³ Lessing herself, however, describes the novel as "an attempt at autobiography." Autobiography, which implies a historical past, a sense of having already lived through the events portrayed in the novel, is at odds with the futuristic interpretations of the critics. It is important that the protagonist is a "survivor," writing "memoirs." I hope to demonstrate that critics who see the novel as set in an imminent future limit the immediate impact of Lessing's message and misinterpret the symbolic landscape through which the protagonist moves.

There is some justification for a futuristic interpretation, for the world Lessing describes can be seen merely as a logical extension of trends already in evidence in our

culture. On what appears to be the realistic level of the novel, the protagonist lives in a decaying city, in which the age of affluence is past. Technology, progress, all the gadgets of modern civilization have broken down: food and fuel are in short supply; elevators and automobiles are becoming obsolete; and an airplane is a rare enough sight to encourage comment. As public services decline and government merely comments on events that have already taken place, the residents of the city are thrown upon their ingenuity in order to survive. Because we are living at a time when there is a decline in basic services, when inflation has limited everyone's ability to survive, when the fear of diminishing energy sources is already with us, the vision Lessing presents seems merely to be extending the sense of a cultural decline already coming into public consciousness. Lessing, however, is not writing a science-fiction narrative of the future; she is continuing the exploration of the archetypal psyche begun in earlier novels--an exploration rooted in the eternal present of a mythic narrative. Thus, the cultural decline which the protagonist describes is not a futuristic vision, but instead, an accurate portrayal of a contemporary interior landscape. It can be demonstrated that the disintegrating city is the surrealist landscape of the ego when its cultural symbols, its sense of unity with the world around it, are no longer

functioning creatively. It can also be shown that the vital scenes behind the wall are the world of the compensating unconscious, the dwelling place of the unifying archetypal forces. Together, the city and the rooms behind the walls are symbols of the psyche in its totality; the movement of the protagonist between the two dimensions is a symbolic portrait of an individual who has established creative links between conscious and unconscious, the ego and the self, and who has, thereby, discovered the means of survival.

The "realistic" level of the novel, the world in which "everything had broken down," (p. 10) is a symbolic portrait of the ego in a time of cultural failure. This breakdown is a result of the inability of society to provide a sense of wholeness, of connection with any principles beyond itself. In her first novel, The Grass Is Singing, Lessing utilized a similar landscape to indicate a personal and cultural failure. Her characters in that novel, the Turners, were condemned to sterility, madness and death on a wasteland made barren by their inability to establish a connection between themselves and the cosmos. The sterile plain on which they lived was a symbol of their lack of psychic wholeness. In this most recent novel as well, the protagonist lives in the wasteland of a decaying city amid the "stony rubbish," the "heap of broken images" that constitute reality without archetypal unities. Lessing is, once again, demonstrating

that she is a writer of mythic dimension; she is a kind of shaman,⁴ indicating the path to follow to revitalize a decaying culture. In this novel, more clearly than in any other, she is asserting the value of the symbolic life.

In a time of cultural failure, collective symbols of psychic wholeness, principles of cosmic or religious connection, have worn out. Jung has made this point repeatedly, insisting that our explorations into primitivism, the occult, and psychology, as well, are a compensation for the loss of a unifying world view.⁵ The artist, too, has a compensatory function, for he must find within himself "the primordial image best suited to compensate for the one-sidedness of the present."⁶ Many writers have attempted their own means of providing this compensation. T. S. Eliot, reviewing Ulysses, claims that Joyce solved the problem of the loss of a life-giving symbolic heritage by asserting the "mythical method" in which the modern writer manipulates a "parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" as a means of "controlling, of ordering, of giving shape to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."⁷ In contrast, Lessing, in Memoirs of a Survivor, is moving man off the wasteland of contemporary history, not by manipulating parallels but by presenting a vision of a vital symbolic life linked to the heritage of the archetypal psyche. In this portrait of one who has survived, Lessing makes use of all the techniques and symbols of psychic

exploration which she developed in her earlier novels. This novel also contains a profound social significance, for in it Lessing presents a healing vision for our culture. By establishing a vital relationship with the self, Lessing's *Survivor* transcends all the limitations of her times and exemplifies the necessity for establishing a vital relationship with the suprapersonal archetypes which are the sources of being.

This novel is the most Jungian of any of Lessing's novels and she uses Jung's descriptions of the structure of the psyche as the basis of her symbols. Jung has described the psyche as a totality that consists not only of personal experience but which also has a "pre-personal or transpersonal dimension."⁸ This is apparent throughout the novel, particularly since Lessing's protagonist completes her experiences with a vision of the "One," a being who is an image of the protagonist's perfected self. This transpersonal dimension of the self was expressed in other novels, for example in the gods which Charles Watkins discovers on his descent, or in the moments of illumination that transform Martha Quest at certain times in her life. The *Survivor*, however, achieves the most perfect union with this being that is the self yet has a numinosity and perfection beyond the self. The protagonist describes the transpersonal dimension of the self as a sense of a transcendent presence

in the rooms behind the wall. She refers to it in vague terms as a feeling of "sweetness...a welcome, a reassurance" (p. 14). The presence also has "a Face, or the shadow of one," a familiar face belonging to the rightful inhabitant of the inner rooms. Jung has described the perfected self in similar terms as an "inner empirical deity" which is "identical with the imago dei."⁹

Another Jungian aspect of this novel involves Lessing's development of the distinction which she has made previously between the world of the ego and that of the self. In earlier novels, Lessing separated the limiting world of ego functions from the unifying view of the self. The "rooms" through which Martha Quest walked in Landlocked, for example, were various ego-relationships based on different aspects of Martha's conscious personality and social needs. In Memoirs, Lessing has created two dimensions in order to describe these two aspects of the psyche. Here, the ego is described in terms of the wasteland. The city, increasingly devoid of life, characterized by cultural decay, is a portrait of the protagonist's ego, her relationship to the collective, which is crumbling at middle-age. The world of the ego weakens as the protagonist establishes links with the self in the rooms behind the walls. In this connection, Jung has noted that the self "unifies the total psyche, conscious and unconscious." It is, ultimately, "the supreme psychic authority" and "subordinates the ego to it."¹⁰ Thus,

it is not surprising that the rooms behind the walls become "every bit as important" to the protagonist "as the ordinary life in that neat and comfortable, if shabby, flat" (p. 5).

Having projected her psyche onto the world at large, the protagonist of Memoirs, then, moves between the outer world, the world of the ego, inhabited by her neighbors-- Emily, Gerald, June, and Hugo--and the inner rooms, which, as the unconscious, contains both a personal dimension and the transpersonal experience of the archetypal self. The novel begins after the protagonist has been transformed by communication with the inner rooms; she is remembering the process of transformation which was first signaled by a process of degeneration and rapid change in the outer patterns of her existence. It is significant that this protagonist, like so many of Lessing's others, is middle-aged, for that is said to be the most vulnerable or accessible time for transformation through archetypal exploration.¹¹ A "survivor" of transformative experience, she is looking back, and the world she describes is an image of the basic condition of ego-consciousness. She was living, as it all began, "on the ground floor" at "earth level" in a block of apartments which were "a model of what such buildings should be for decency and solidity" (p. 6). The decline of this building, and of the solidity of the conventional life that surrounds it, are images of the weakening of the protagonist's ego-relationship with the external world. At the

beginning of the novel, this relationship is still functioning in a relatively normal manner; she has respectable neighbors, Professor White and his family, and maintains fairly ordinary standards of life. Her alienation from this world, however, has already begun. She feels that soon she will "have to leave this city" (p. 8) as anarchy and chaos are beginning to threaten her more each day. She also feels the compensating pull of the inner rooms, which she has begun to explore tentatively. On her second visit she expresses the feeling that "this place held what I needed, knew was there, had been waiting for--oh, yes, all my life, all my life" (p. 13). While inviting, the inner rooms are not ready for her occupancy; she is not yet finished with the old patterns since there are aspects of her life with which she has not yet come to terms. Before she can move into the inner rooms, she is forced to assess what she was, who she is, and all the ordinary patterns of the personality in its human relationships. The first chapter sketches the basic problem: the protagonist is caught between the disintegrating world of the ego and the compensatory vision of wholeness, which is as yet only the "conviction of a promise" (p. 14) in the inner rooms.

Exploration of the psyche is not as simple as the architectural imagery that outlines it. The second chapter of the novel introduces a new element in the collective life of the protagonist. A man, who is never identified, leaves her with

a child, Emily; he explains nothing, but merely states: "this is the child...she's your responsibility" (p. 15). The child delays the protagonist's communication with the inner rooms for a while and she resents the delay: "I could not help thinking that to have a child with me, just as the wall was beginning to open itself up, would be a nuisance....All kinds of emotions I had not felt for a long time came to life in me again, and I longed simply to walk through the wall and never come back. But this would be irresponsible; it would mean turning my back on my responsibilities" (pp. 23-24). Coming between the protagonist and the inner rooms, Emily symbolizes the protagonist's younger personality, a repository of her youthful attitudes, an element in her development. Responsibility requires that she assess this pattern and all such patterns before there can be meaningful communication with the inner rooms, the wider and deeper vision of the self.

Emily is the first in a series of deliberately abstracted relationships. There is a surrealistic quality in the protagonist's relationship, not only with Emily, but with each of the other characters in the novel. Lessing represents symbolically the problems of ego formation. The protagonist must learn of the separation between the reality of other people and the roles into which they are forced. The characters in this novel exist principally on the plane of projection, and therefore they are related to both the

inner rooms and the city outside. Since reality, the ego, is in a state of decay, these inhabitants of the psyche are allowed to exist without any of the trappings of ordinary relationships. Each character is a personified projection of an aspect of the protagonist's personality. As the world of the ego, the old patterns of consciousness and the outworn social structures crumble, more primitive forms of relationship are given access to the psyche of the protagonist. Thus, Lessing is no longer interested in ordinary descriptions of human relationships and social conventions; instead her characters are abstractions, they have become pure symbols, projections of the various layers of the survivor's personality.

The relationship between the other characters and the inner rooms of the protagonist is established immediately after Emily's arrival. On her next visit, the protagonist notices a change in the rooms; she finds them crowded with furniture of various eras and is left with the realization that "the whole place should be cleaned out" (p. 24). She feels that the furniture is causing a delay, a set-back in her communication with these rooms. Before, the rooms were empty except for a painter's ladder, but they were filled with a sense of expectancy, a readiness for a new life. Now, however, there "were no empty rooms, every one was crammed with objects, all needing attention" (p. 25). In symbolic terms, before there can be meaningful communication

with these rooms, she has to rid her unconscious of its old patterns and habits. Emily is a means by which she can assess some of her most basic personality structures. Her memories, a sense of limiting personal history, must be re-evaluated before she can enter the rooms of unlimited vista.

With Emily, the protagonist assesses all the old social patterns through which a young girl moves and establishes her identity. Through Emily, she explores the family, love, security, the growth of tolerance and responsibility. Emily, as a young girl at the verge of womanhood, is at an important time of transition when one can observe most clearly the growth of the personality as she moves from the collectivity, from the shelter of the parents, to the development of her own individuality. Emily is not a separate person but the archetypal jeune fille--a stage in life through which the protagonist has passed but which she has not assimilated. She notes: "for my part, her condition was as close to me as my own memories" (p. 47). The protagonist assesses the youthful stages of her own development in two ways: she watches Emily move through the common patterns of relationship with the collective life of the city; and she explores the way that such social patterns are formed as she watches the girl's parents imprint collective attitudes on their child in a series of "personal scenes" behind the wall. Thus, in the relationship between Emily and the protagonist, Lessing explores the growth and development of

the feminine psyche, observing the growth of the ego as it moves from the parents to the collective to individuality. For the protagonist, the act of assessment itself is a means of moving beyond individuality toward individuation. By observing in Emily the personification of the steps of her own development, she consciously assimilates the collective patterns which formed her and moves beyond them as she transcends her memories, "burns" out the personal in the rooms behind the walls, and links her ego, her collective personality, to the eternal and transpersonal self.

Before she can be linked with the "sacred center," before she can move into the timeless realm of the archetypal self, the protagonist has to rid herself of a sense of an irremediable personal history. She does so by reliving these memories, the "personal scenes," thereby relating them to a stage in her own development which has been transcended and assimilated. The series of "personal scenes" are all characterized by an atmosphere of enclosure. In this enclosed place, she is reliving the time in which the ego was confined by the collective and had no awareness of the self. While memories exist side by side with the liberating self in the unconscious, their atmosphere is different--stagnant and debilitating. To enter the "personal," the protagonist states, "was to enter a prison, where nothing could happen but what one saw happening, where the air was tight and limited, and above all where time was a strict unalterable

law and long--oh, my God, it went on, and on and on, minute by decreed minute, with no escape but the slow wearing away of one after another" (pp. 41-42). Memories are the continuation of the historical personality of the protagonist; she must unify these isolated fragments of time, make them part of the larger patterns of her life, in order to discover the direction and meaning of her destiny. The assessment of memories is not possible until middle-age, for Emily never visits these scenes; the youthful self of the protagonist in Emily is not capable of seeing the way that the unconscious drives one beyond the limitations of the personal toward archetypal and transcendent realities.

One of the first patterns which the protagonist observes in Emily is her negative and defensive reaction to everyone about her. Emily asserts her growing ego by emphasizing her distinctness, her uniqueness and superiority to everyone she sees: "there wasn't anybody who came near her, into her line of sight who was not experienced by her as a threat" (p. 30). The protagonist sees beyond Emily's defensiveness, however; she recognizes that asserting one's individuality by critical analysis of others, limits one's self above all: "I realized what a prison we were all in, how impossible it was for any one of us to let a man or a woman or a child come near without the defensive inspection, the rapid, sharp, cold analysis....It was impossible not to hear Emily without feeling one's whole being, one's sense of

oneself, lowered, drained. It was an assault on one's vitality: listening to her was to acknowledge the limits we all live inside" (p. 31).

Emily continues, for a while, to define her self in terms of her own uniqueness, however. She becomes interested in survival techniques, as the youthful ego is prepared not only to take on the world but to survive without its help. Emily takes pleasure in "tracking down things" (p. 51), in building fires from scrap, in preparing meals with wild herbs. All of these are indications of a healthy, youthful ego, but the other side of this coin, of the developing sense of independence, is self-absorption. While pleased with Emily's developing individuality, the protagonist worries about her excessive self-concern: she asks: "how could this heavy, dreaming, erratic child, so absorbed in herself, in fantasy, in the past, survive what we would all have to survive?" (p. 52). The answer that Lessing provides is that the ego can only survive through transformation, by moving beyond the limitations of the personal.

Emily undergoes transformation gradually, as she moves from self-absorption toward identification with the collective. The protagonist and Emily watch primitive forms of social organizations--gangs and tribes--group and regroup on the pavement outside their windows. These gangs are abstractions of all social organizations and Emily's relationship to them is a vivid portrait of the young ego and its

need for support from its peers. In this world, abstracted to its basic elements, Emily moves rapidly through ordinary stages in her development. As she relates to various collective patterns, her transformation is signalled by a change in clothing. Lessing has utilized this mechanism in earlier novels; for example, both the black coat belonging to Mrs. Van which Martha Quest wore, and the housewife's clothing which Kate Brown selected off the proper rack were related to the roles society demands. One day, the protagonist finds Emily wearing the "archetype of a girl's dress" (p. 57) which she varies with accessories as she moves through the steps of a young girl's development. The protagonist is aware of the significance of the costume changes. She watches not only a young girl trying on images of womanhood but the way in which all young girls search for identity in society: "this child, this little girl, had found the material for her dreams in the rubbish heaps of our old civilization, had found them, worked on them, and in spite of everything had made her images of herself come to life" (p. 57). Only by seeing these processes in Emily is the protagonist able to assess the futility of this process. She sees these societal roles as "old images, so indestructable, and so irrelevant."

The protagonist sees the failure of the collective and its cultural forms; these old images can no longer vitalize her sense of self. Nonetheless, she watches Emily's absorption

in these images until she has a vision in the inner rooms which enables her to understand the difference between identification with social stereotypes and unity with an archetypal pattern. She sees a room in which people are bringing to life a pattern on a carpet by matching scraps of cloth to its design. She terms this a "central activity" which "continued, must continue, would go on always" (p. 79). The real matching work is not accessible to Emily, for she is busily attempting to vitalize herself through the old stereotyped images of the young girl. Emily's patterns, her images, like those of all young girls, are personal and limited; they focus on externals--roles and costumes--rather than on the necessary work of relating to archetypal unities in the inner being, which is the job for middle-age.

Emily is still trapped by the collective patterns, although she moves through them very rapidly as "crysalis after crysalis was outgrown" (p. 59), for she was "preparing herself to be a woman among other women." As she establishes herself as a woman, the "personal" scenes focus on Emily's mother, a woman trapped by the marriage and children "society had chosen for her" (p. 69). Emily is moving beyond containment by her parents, but her womanhood is colored by her mother's attitudes. She carries the burden of her mother's doubts--a "guilt at ever having been born at all" (p. 70)--with her as she attempts to establish an identity among her peers. The protagonist is made aware of the

"trap" of the rigid conformity demanded by the conventional images of love and marriage, but she still must watch Emily live through each painful and inevitable stage of transformation. Emily does not feel the limitations required by these roles; she does not hear the warning, droning, voice of her mother commenting on the tedium of her days; and inevitably, Emily falls in love. She meets Gerald, the archetypal young man, a leader, by necessity, if not by choice, and through him experiences "the first love of tradition" (p. 83).

Emily now moves through the next step in the development of the feminine psyche as she learns of the power of Eros, the need for connection which transcends the self-sufficiency which characterized her in the past.¹¹ Now, "she was being filled over and over again with a violence of need that exploded in her....All around her the business of living went on, but Gerald was always at the heart of it: wherever she turned herself in some task or duty, there he was, so efficient and practical and busy with important things, but she Emily was possessed by a savage enemy, was raging with joy and grief" (p. 85). Lessing explores some of the basis of this need in Emily through "personal" scenes of parental rejection and resentment. The child's desire for connection is thwarted again and again by the parents' inability to love. As a baby, she receives physical contact as a duty rather than as an

expression of acceptance. One of these scenes describes the father tickling his daughter as "a service to the mother" (p. 86). He is amusing the child, tiring her by a violence of physical contact disguised as a game. The atmosphere of this scene is "filled with a hot anguish, the fear of being held tight there, the need for being held and tortured, since this was how she pleased her captors" (p. 87). This game is setting the stage for some of the masochistic tendencies that color Emily's love relationships in later life. In a need for connection, for love, she has learned to submit to torture, any kind of contact, in order to participate and avoid the alienation so painful to the fragile ego.

The mother, too, fails to provide the acceptance: "between the little girl's hot needful yearning body, which wanted to be quieted with a caress, with warmth; wanted to lie near a large strong wall of a body, a safe body which would not tickle and torment and squeeze; wanted safety and assurance--between her and the mother's regularly breathing, calm body, all self-sufficiency and duty, was a blankness, an unawareness; there was no contact, no mutual comfort" (p. 91). Emily, thus, directs the yearning for contact toward Gerald, seeking in him the acceptance she will never find in human relationships. Emily must live through the inevitable and painful stage in her growth in which she will discover that the connection she needs can only come from the transpersonal level of the psyche, and not through

personal relationships.

The protagonist is able to see clearly how Emily's falling in love with Gerald is part of a process conditioned by personal history and a certain stage in time, but which, nonetheless, can be transcended: "there she was, enclosed in her age, but in a continuum with those scenes behind the wall, a hinterland which had formed her....From that shadowy region behind her came the dictate: You are this, and this and this--this is what you have to be and not that; and the biological demands of her age took a precise and predictable and clock-like stake on her life, making her exactly like this and that...and in due time she would fill like a container with substances and experiences...she would become mature" (p. 92). While an inevitable process, the protagonist does not see maturity as "an apex of achievement" but instead was waiting for "the moment she would step off this merry-go-round, this escalator carrying her from the dark into the dark" (p. 93).

As the protagonist becomes more aware of Emily's entrapment in the continuum of history and time, memory and stages of development, the inner rooms, the "impersonal" scenes take on a new dimension. Instead of inevitability, the rooms provide an expansive, unlimited view. She has a vision of a "Whole," a "one Presence" uniting and subduing all the isolated and fragmentary beings who had ever lived in that place. She is filled with the feeling that she

"was being led, was being shown, was held always in the hollow of a great hand which enclosed my life and used me for purposes which I was too much beetle or earthworm to understand" (p. 100). This experience enables her to endure more patiently the patterns of inevitability she observes in Emily. Emily is moving out of the yearning of the first love: "A restlessness, a hunger...was being assuaged," and she is content to wait, and watch what would happen next, to see if she could "understand" it. This patient waiting enables her to move beyond Emily's memories; as an observer she can make the connections which Emily, caught up in the continuum, is unable to make.

The next collective patterns which the protagonist explores through Emily's involvement are the basic units of social organization. Emily establishes a kind of family; she assumes responsibility for a younger girl--June. June's arrival also heralds a further disintegration in the world at large; the city is on the verge of anarchy, the buildings are half-deserted, and the groups on the pavement are seen as "nuclei of barbarism" (p. 103). Lessing continues to explore the way the ego moves beyond itself; as it expands toward connection, it reinforces itself in social organizations. The family which Emily, Gerald, and June establish explores both the family and the more primitive communal organizations which precede the family structure. In an attempt to move beyond the family as an economic unit,

Emily's group is based on primitive kinds of survival, and they move from socialist and communist patterns to anarchy and the end of social organization altogether. Lessing has been interested in the problems of social organization in earlier novels, especially in A Ripple From The Storm where Martha Quest sublimates everything to her political activities. Just as the collective failed to compensate for Martha's lack of individual development, so the group on the pavement eventually fails Emily. The limitations of socialism and communism are made evident as Emily's group attempts to establish workable arrangements. In a symbolic scene, Emily takes the protagonist on a tour of the upper level of her own building. The upper rooms of the apartment block are no longer residences for individuals but have become a market place, consisting of a series of stores where broken articles are recycled and labour is free and abundant. The image is the political ideal of each giving as much as he can and each taking only what he needs. As an upper level of the symbolic apartment house, these communal structures represent a higher level of ego identification. But this collective effort, like all collective efforts which Lessing has described in earlier novels, is doomed to failure. Martha Quest and Anna Wulf both worked for the Communist party until their own needs became more pressing. Here, it is Emily, alone, who is captured by the group rather than the middle-aged protagonist. Once again, Lessing reveals both

the ideal aspects of this work as well as their opposites.

The underside of the selflessness of the collective efforts is represented in June and, more pointedly, in her family, the Ryans. Emily and June both live in a world where "things did not belong to people as they once did" (p. 117). This is fine if it indicates that goods are shared, but with the Ryans, Lessing demonstrates instead a carelessness about themselves and everyone else. The "way of the Ryans" is a life in which "each day, each experience, was sufficient unto itself, each act divorced from its consequences" (p. 121). The Ryans owned nothing and cared for nothing, and if they required anything, they simply took it. The absence of personal property in the Ryans indicates a lack of self esteem, a significant collapse of the ego. Selflessness carried to its logical conclusion results in the Ryans, who are survivors, but who exist without any sense of their own worth. June has inherited this quality from her family and, consequently, leaves Emily to join one of the militant Women's Groups on the pavement. June leaves without even saying goodbye; because she has no sense of self, she assumes that her absence will be of no importance. "She deserved nothing, was owed nothing, could not really be loved, and therefore could not be missed. So she had gone" (p. 167).

Emily, like the characters in earlier novels who were submerged in collective activities, is eventually disillusioned.

By devoting herself to these family and extended-family structures, Emily is performing useful work, but eventually she discovers that this work cannot compensate for the stasis in her own development. One day she understands that she is only an interchangeable cog in an impersonal mechanism, and that the work will go on without her. She quits feeling confident that, as far as the work is concerned, "if I didn't, someone else would." The protagonist is alarmed at Emily's indifference, for she recognizes that lacking her identification with the collective, Emily is on the verge of a collapse. She notes that "the other side of this thought, its shadow, is dark indeed, and leads to every sort of listlessness and despair: it is often the first step... towards suicide....At the very least, it is the most deadly of the energy-drainers" (p. 139). Emily experiences the realization that she is not personally necessary as a kind of alienation, a rejection. The "personal" scene that accompanies Emily's existential despair reinforces her feeling of worthlessness and rejection. In this scene, wallowing in despair is related to the feelings of a baby who is scolded by its mother, called "naughty" and "dirty," for playing with and eating its feces.

Emily's despair, her failure to establish her identity and sense of worth through collective structures leads to a change in the relationship between the inner rooms and the world in which Emily moves. Alienation can only be overcome

by a break-through of energies from the self; but Emily has not yet reached the limits of her explorations of the real world, and the protagonist must bear with her. The walls of the ego are shaken, however, and the protagonist states that her own life is entering a new phase. She "now began a period when something of the flavour of the place behind the wall did continuously invade my real life" (p. 145). She hears the rejected baby crying behind the walls, reminding her of the alienated ego, unable to bear the pain of rejection, yet unable to establish connection with the collective in any meaningful way. This is the period of the "final hot summer" (p. 145) before transcendence. They move across the empty plain of the wasteland; alienated from the world outside, they are not yet ready to move away from its limitations. Emily's social relationships continue to follow stereotyped patterns, but the protagonist is beginning to move beyond her own absorption in these patterns as she becomes more familiar with the inner rooms. Emily's life is characterized now as a kind of reverse evolutionary process: "how many centuries had we overturned, how many long slow steps of man's upclimbing did Emily undo when she crossed from my flat to the life on the pavement! And what promise, what possibilities, what experiments, what variations on the human theme had been cancelled out!" The origins of alienation are explored in the "personal" scene which follows. They learn that the baby whose crying invades their

life is not Emily but her mother as a baby. This mother-baby is ignored in turn by its mother and the process is one that has repeated from generation to generation. The child is captured by time, history, and ignorance. Alienated from the moment of birth, the child's ego is lost, without connection, trapped in the rooms of memory, the "little, hot place where puppets jerk to their invisible strings" (p. 150).

All the levels of the novel begin to interpenetrate after the period of Emily's despair, and the investigation of its origins. The importance of memories, the personal and collective experiences, are being relegated to their proper positions. They are entering a time of collapse, a time which the protagonist terms "it." This "it" is the end of the old patterns, or at least the time when the protagonist has become aware of the inadequacy of ego-functions. She is pervaded with a "consciousness of something ending" (p. 151). Emily experiences this collapse in terms of the uselessness of her efforts for the communal good. She feels much the same way that Martha Quest felt at the end of A Ripple from the Storm: she worked and worked "and it was always the same, something happened and it all came to nothing" (p. 152).

In the world outside, the feelings of Emily and the protagonist are paralleled by the disintegration of all forms of social organization. Anarchy has moved onto the pavements

outside, and the protagonist must explore the basis of this anarchy within as she comes to terms with still other layers of the personality. By recognizing the limitations of the ego and collective roles through Emily, the protagonist now explores the most basic elements of existence--the animal and instinctual levels of being. Lessing makes a Swiftian distinction between the instinctual and the animal. Hugo, Emily's animal, is contrasted with the cruel instinctual behaviour of the children of the Underground. Hugo, the dog, has a quiet dignity, strength, and loyalty which these children lack completely. These gangs of children are the only functioning social units. They have no loyalty to each other, nor to Gerald who has protected them. They are in a group "only for the sake of protection in numbers" (p. 172). These yahoos "wrecked everything, tore up the vegetables in the garden, sat at windows throwing filth at passers-by like monkeys" (p. 175). They lack the dignity of animals and have only perverted imitations of human values: "they were worse than animals and worse than men" (p. 177). The protagonist, Emily and Hugo are threatened by these children, while Gerald, applying masculine logic to the situation, continues to believe that something can be made of them, that some order can be brought to the anarchy of the instincts.

The protagonist must come to terms with the place of the instincts in the structure of the psyche. The psyche, of course, exists within an animal body which Lessing

portrays, through Hugo, as having an inherent dignity. The instincts, however, are conditioned by society to conform to certain patterns, and when social structures are weakened the instincts can become perverted. Thus, the Underground children move without restraint across the city, symbolizing the instinctual life which is no longer under the control of ego structures. In the last "personal" scene which the protagonist observes, Lessing makes these contrasts between the instinctual and animal levels of the psyche more clear. It is significant that Hugo accompanies the protagonist in this vision, and plays an integral part in her understanding of the scene. "Hugo was not just my accompaniment, an aide, as a dog is. He was a being, a person, in his own right, and necessary to the events I was seeing" (p. 183).

In this scene she comes upon Emily wearing a red dress, a blatantly sexual dress, embodying the debased sexual fantasies of perverted instinct. Confronting each other, Hugo, the protagonist, and Emily form a basic triad of the personality: the "faithful animal," the debased instinctual, and the "anxious guardian." Emily, in this scene, has gone beyond being manipulated by imprinting patterns of behaviour. She is mocking the very attitudes which she is demonstrating, flaunting the perversions which pass for conformity at a time of cultural failure. Emily's mother, who can only accept comfortable convention, causes Emily to vanish, "in a flash of red smoke, like a morality tale of flesh and

the devil." Emily's disappearance causes the frustrated mother to turn upon Hugo with the hatred she felt for her daughter, calling him a "dirty, filthy animal" (p. 185). All the mechanisms of instinct, repression and perversion of instinct, are contrasted in this scene with Hugo's simple animal behaviour. The unfairness of the mother's attack on the dog focusses on the fact that the animal--physical existence--becomes the scapegoat for the perversion of instinct. The protagonist and Hugo feel a sense of relief at escaping from this scene; purified of perversity by confronting it in Emily and her mother, the animal body and its mentor are no longer capable of being confined by the repressions of the conventional.

This is the last appearance of the "personal" scenes. The protagonist has accompanied Emily through all the scenes of their common past which had formed the protagonist as a cultural being. She has confronted all the repressed psychic material of the personal unconscious. Having burned out the power of this room, the protagonist finds herself in a period of dryness. Culture, social patterns, memories, the ego, the animal, the instinctual--all these aspects of the conscious personality have been explored. She exists now in a "dim and heavy" atmosphere, waiting for the "comfort and sweetness" of the other rooms which she has seen.

The final chapters of the novel describe the last days of the old way of life. Ego structures useless now, the

city, in a state of virtual collapse, symbolizes the most basic conscious functioning level of the psyche. Existence is confined to bare survival: the walls of the apartment have thinned out; air is no longer breathable; water is sold on the streets and stolen when there is no way to pay for it. The Whites, the repository of ordinary life within social convention, are moving out of the neighboring apartment. They are an indication of the symbolic nature of the protagonist's perceptions. Her neighbors, the Whites, continue to maintain a life which functions within ordinary channels. Only the protagonist has had the visions which destroy the sense of order in a world which is still functioning for the Whites. Seeing them ready to leave, the protagonist remembers a more ordinary life: "seeing them thus, all three together, was a reminder of that other world or stratum of society, above ours, where people still presented themselves through clothes or belongings, for occasions.... I stood silent, watching the Whites fuss and arrange, seeing my past, our pasts: it looked comic. It was comic. We always had been ridiculous, little self-important animals, acting our roles, playing our parts....It was not pretty, watching the Whites and seeing oneself" (p. 191). With the departure of the Whites, with the demise of any belief in conventional patterns of order, the abandoned building is available to be taken over by the children of the Underground. The anarchy of the instinctual life is prepared to accommodate

itself to any lapses in the more conventional structures.

In these final chapters, the relationship between the protagonist and Emily also undergoes an alteration. Emily is functioning as an adult. The apartment is "Emily's place now" (p. 196). The time has arrived for which the protagonist was waiting at the beginning of the novel. As Emily took over the protagonist's clothing, because she required it, now she is taking over the protagonist's life, for the latter has virtually ceased to function through externals at all. Thus, the "flat was Emily's," and the protagonist "was her elderly attendant." Emily has, in a relatively brief time, lived through virtually all the stages of transformation, and she has achieved a kind of maturity. She now reacts to the demands of the social forms with the ennui of middle-age. She gives generously of herself to Hugo and Gerald because they need her to give to them, but, like Martha Quest at the end of The Four-Gated City, she is no longer establishing her sense of identity by means of relationships. The protagonist assesses Emily's condition in these terms: "I was seeing a mature woman, a woman who has had her fill of everything, but is still being asked from, demanded of, persuaded into giving: such a woman is generous indeed; her coffers and wells are always full and being given out. She loves--oh, yes, but somewhere in her is a deadly weariness. She has known it all, and doesn't want any more--but what can she do? (p. 197). Emily is

beyond love, beyond seeking fulfillment in stereotyped human relationships. Emily has achieved a view of love more like the attitudes of a woman of forty: "like the jaded woman of our dead civilisation, she knew love like a fever, to be suffered, to be lived through: 'falling in love' was an illness to be endured, a trap which might lead her to betray her own nature, her good sense, and her real purposes" (p. 197). Emily is not capable of placing the needs of another before her own individual development. Having assessed this most important problem in her development, Emily and the protagonist are able to merge. Moving through the rubble of the stereotyped patterns they have outgrown, Emily and the protagonist spend most of their time now "organizing" their life and their rooms, preparing for transcendence.

At the beginning of the final chapter of the novel, Emily, Gerald, Hugo, the protagonist, and the Underground children are the only remaining inhabitants of the city. Gerald is still moving about in the world at large attempting to create patterns of social order among the children; he continues to believe that instinct can be channelled into positive forms, and that life has some value for its own sake. Life is continuing but only at the basic level of survival; they have "air, water, food, warmth" (p. 201) but not much else. Civilization and social forms have disappeared almost entirely; there are only lonely survivors in a world abstracted to its roots. They are now at the lowest

level of alienation; still removed from the self, the ego moves among the ashes of the old forms, for it can no longer be vitalized by connection with collective patterns.

Gerald, the symbol of masculine Logos, is the last holdout before the transformation. He moves through the streets, "revisiting the scenes of his triumphs" (p. 208). He views the collapse of everything as a personal rather than collective defeat. If there is a principle operative in the world at large, it is "inconsequence." The survivors are at the mercy of the Underground children whose behaviour is unpredictable. Gerald attempts selflessly to bring order to the anarchy around them, but he is forced to recognize inconsequence catching up to him when he is stoned by the very children he was attempting to protect. Gerald remains reluctant to dismiss the children who would victimize him, he felt that "to give them up was to abandon the best part of himself" (p. 210). Gerald, by his continual concern for the children, earns his way into the group of survivors. He is the aspect of the psyche capable of establishing new forms in the future. His tenacity and ability to deal with the elemental levels of existence qualify him for survival beyond the collapse of the old order. Gerald is unable to make any changes so long as he remains with the children on their level, and he is forced at last to acquiesce to Emily's demands that he leave the children. He recognizes that his activities among the collective will be doomed until he is

able to invest those activities with a transpersonal vision.

Gerald's acquiescence breaks the last hold of the collective on the survivors. Now each of the characters has been forced to confront the inadequacies of the ego-structure. Or, on another level, through the inadequacies of Gerald and Emily, the protagonist has encountered, on the plane of projection, the inability of her ego to create anything but temporary shelters. She has carefully assessed all the conventional social patterns through which Emily moved. She has observed the limitations of any collective attempts to provide support or a sense of meaningful connection to the developing ego. She has explored basic existence in a world limited by history and memory, the world of rigid cause and effect which culminates in despair. She has also explored the instinctual levels of existence which culminate in inconsequence and violence. In short, she has explored all the limitations of the world of consciousness, the world of the ego, which is dominated by stale patterns and stereotyped ideas. She has also achieved a vision of the other realm, the world of the self, which alone is capable of providing meaning and connection to the fragmentary patterns of the ego.

In the closing scene of the novel, the protagonist watches Gerald, Emily, and Hugo--these projections of partial aspects of the psyche--step through the walls of the ego into the all-encompassing totality of the self. They

move beyond "it," beyond the consciousness of everything ending; for all that has ended is a false way of looking at the world. As the walls dissolve at the end of the novel, the protagonist moves into a realm in which the real world, the "personal" scenes, and the impersonal scenes are all one. All are kaleidoscopic reflections of a reality that exists only inside the protagonist. She sees people from the "personal" scenes, the mother and father, as impermanent reflections in an iron egg which breaks open to reveal another scene, this time a scene from the impersonal rooms. The world of "reality" in which Emily, Gerald and Hugo were living is nothing but fragments: "that world, presenting itself in a thousand little flashes, a jumble of little scenes, facets of another picture, all impermanent, was folding up as we stepped into it, was parcelling itself up, was vanishing, dwindling and going" (p. 212). Against the impermanence of this reality, these timebound elements, Lessing asserts the presence of "the one person I had been looking for all this time" (p. 213). This is the inner imago dei, a vision of the self as the center of the totality of the psyche. She has become one with the self as she incorporates and reconciles within herself all the contradictions and limitations of the world through which she has moved. She does not walk through the wall herself, but sees Emily, Gerald, and Hugo led by that "One who went ahead showing them the way out of this collapsed little world into

With this image, Lessing, too, has completed her quest. From the destruction of the Turners who fail to achieve cosmic connections in her first novel, through the struggles of Martha Quest and Professor Watkins to retain a vision of their moments of illumination, to the creative integration of Anna Wulf, Lessing has been working toward the image she has presented in Memoirs of a Survivor--of an individuality integrated with a cosmic and all-embracing vision. In her descriptions of the merging of the individual life into the greater life, Lessing herself has become for us "that One who went ahead," showing us "the way out of this collapsed little world into another order of world altogether."

Notes: The Memoirs of a Survivor

¹ Doris Lessing, The Memoirs of a Survivor (New York, 1974). Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text.

² Ronald Bryden, "On The Move," in The New Statesman, December 6, 1974, p. 826.

³ Melvin Maddocks, "Ghosts and Portents," Time, June 16, 1975, p. 66.

⁴ Andreas Lommel, in Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art (New York, 1967), p. 10, defines "shamanizing" as that "psychic technique by means of which one can subordinate the spirits [inner images of a collective or personal kind] to oneself; that is to say, bring order into one's own chaotic psyche and gain control of the power of one's own unconscious imagery."

⁵ Jung, Psychological Reflections, p. 348.

⁶ See Introduction, p. 20.

⁷ T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," p. 1832.

⁸ Edinger, Ego and Archetype, p. 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹ Jung, Psychological Reflections, pp. 135-36.

Conclusion

While any conclusions drawn about a living novelist are necessarily tentative, it is possible, nonetheless, to assess the patterns of Doris Lessing's development as set out in this dissertation and attempt an evaluation of her progress. By now, I hope to have demonstrated the direction of Lessing's development, namely her movement from realism, especially Marxist-Realism, to mythic narrative. We have observed that all of Lessing's novels subsequent to The Golden Notebook reveal her increasing concern with the inner world and a diminishing interest in the social-political realms.

While this pattern is clear, the implications of this movement for an evaluation of Lessing's aesthetics are more difficult. It does not suffice to say that Lessing is no longer writing novels with traditional concerns, for the critic must not abandon all conventional modes of evaluation. Lessing's later novels invite comparison with the earlier ones, and this comparison has caused many of Lessing's most faithful readers to express disappointment with the direction of her recent work. The problem with The Summer Before the Dark can, of course, be mitigated when one views that work as a satire, but parts of Briefing for a Descent into Hell and Memoirs of a Survivor are not readily accepted by

readers who value Lessing for the realistic mode of her earlier works. The problem the critics face is due in part to the fact that Lessing has not articulated her aesthetic principles as fully as other writers of equal significance. The lack of critical directives is deliberate, for Lessing's distrust of authorities extends to herself. She does not want to provide a final word on her novels and thereby destroy the vital need which brings the reader to her work. Consequently, the critic's only sources are the statement of Lessing's commitment to realism in the "Small Personal Voice" essay written in 1957, and her clarification of her purposes in writing The Golden Notebook which was published as a preface to a new edition of that novel in 1962. Biography, too, provides no answers, for Lessing refuses to release any new biographical information and will simply "not hear" any personal questions in an interview. Thus, we have only the intriguing hints of radical changes in her life gleaned from her few interviews, and the information given in passing to Jonah Raskin that she had undergone analysis with a Jungian. Lessing stated, in her lectures at the New School, that she is a new person every two years. Her novels will, of necessity, reflect this growth. We have, therefore, no authorities whom we can cite, leaving us the evidence of the novels themselves.

Another aspect of the problem facing the critic is the

fact that Lessing is becoming increasingly self-conscious. While her novels are becoming more and more Jungian, Lessing's view of the self is becoming more firmly documented, more intellectualized, than it was when she wrote The Golden Notebook. Leslie Fiedler, in "Archetype and Signature," has stated bluntly but succinctly a general premise which helps to explain the difference between the response elicited by Lessing's earlier realistic works and that elicited by her later mythic ones. "The chief value of 'realism' as a theory," he writes, "is that it helps create in the more sophisticated writer a kind of blessed stupidity in regard to what he is really doing, so that the archetypal material can well up into his work uninhibited by his intent; and in a complementary way, it makes acceptance of that archetypal material possible for an audience which thinks of itself as 'science-minded' and inimical to the demonic and mythic." If we substitute politically-minded or feminist for science-minded in that statement, we can see why the later novels with their symbolic depiction of abstract psychological states are rejected by readers who can only accept mythic narrative in the guise of something else.

Thus, while Memoirs of a Survivor is unquestionably a masterpiece of "inner-space fiction," the abstraction of the characters and the symbolic nature of the landscape through which the Survivor moves distance the novel from the reader

by removing the clothing of realism from the portrait of the psyche. By presenting characters who are abstractions of the various levels of the protagonist's personality moving across a landscape which is also a projection of an interior world, Lessing has diminished the humanity of her characters. While the internal and external levels of the novel are linked through a completely-realized symbolic system, the abstraction diminishes the involvement that leads one to read a novel like The Golden Notebook again and again. For unlike the nameless Survivor, Anna Wulf retains all of the humanity, the pain, the stubbornness, and enigmatic complexity of a fully-realized literary character, in spite of the psychological nature of her experiences.

Another difficulty with Lessing's later novels is due to the fact that Lessing's theories are leading her to write about experiences that can only be termed elitist. The failure of Charles Watkins or Mary Turner to achieve individuation and the satiric thrust at her audience in The Summer Before the Dark indicate that Lessing believes that the inward quest is one that is not successful for everyone. Before one can achieve a harmonious relationship between conscious and unconscious, there must be a depth of intelligence in the conscious personality and a depth of sensitivity in the unconscious. While the collective unconscious is something that is shared by everyone everywhere, an enriching

contact with the transpersonal dimension of the self is rare. It is a heroic quest, and myth informs us of the scarcity of such heroes. Without a depth of being the process of individuation is stunted; the inward quest becomes something as trivial as understanding a single archetypal dream in a lifetime of dreaming. The Kate Browns of this world--those who have their being entirely in social functions--cannot achieve much by the inward quest other than a readjustment to the society which has formed their world. Thus, by pointing out that individuation is not for everyone, Lessing has become more elitist than the liberal critic would allow, and certainly less concerned with social responsibility than the Marxist critic would desire. Lessing makes it clear that while everyone may struggle toward individuation, not all achieve it.

Finally, while I do not wish to undervalue either Briefing or Memoirs of a Survivor, The Golden Notebook remains, for me, the pinnacle of Lessing's achievement. The greatness of the novel rests in the balance that Lessing has achieved between human--vital, living--characters, realistic situations, and psychological penetration. Lessing's unique blend of form and content in The Golden Notebook extends our view of the human condition, expands our perception of the relationship between art and reality, and demonstrates the relationship between madness and the creative life.

The Golden Notebook is significant, also, for its portrayal of the archetypal feminine. Lessing's contribution to our understanding of the nature of the feminine psyche is immense. From her earliest novels, in characters like Mary Turner and Martha Quest, Lessing reveals aspects of feminine psychology which have never been so fully explored. While Mary Turner of The Grass Is Singing is destroyed by the cosmic forces she has denied, nonetheless, a reverse image of cosmic self-hood is presented. We can see, clearly, what Mary might have been. Even in a character with the obvious limitations of Martha Quest, Lessing has revealed the essence of the feminine spirit. Although the relationship of Martha Quest to society is described extensively in realistic terms, the Children of Violence series also provides a vivid portrait of the expansion of the individual from ego-consciousness toward individuation. From the moment of her hierogamous encounter with Thomas Stern in Landlocked, Martha becomes less and less ego centered. Her personality expands until by the Appendix to The Four-Gated City the Martha as we knew her has died, but the essence of Martha survives in those who carry on her ideas. Lessing's portrait of the relationship between Anna Wulf and the personification of her animus, Saul Green, in The Golden Notebook is, however, Lessing at her best; she breaks new ground in the field of feminine psychology in her description of

the frightening encounter between the creative and destructive forces within. In her description of the Saul/Anna encounter, Lessing demonstrates the creative function of the animus in terms more like that ascribed to the animus by Jung and his followers. While feminism in a political sense may no longer be a viable form for the discussion of Lessing's work, the feminine remains the heart of her contribution, for the archetypal roots of every woman's psyche have never been so fully expressed as in the novels of Doris Lessing.

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