

**Exploring Narrative Time: An Analysis of the Evolution of
Characters in Select Novels of Doris Lessing**

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By

Maya Davi Chalissery

University Registration: U. O. No. 12240/2016/Admn dated 18.10.2016

Research Supervisor

Dr. Sherly M. D.

PG Department of English and Research Centre

Vimala College (Autonomous)

Thrissur – 680009



Affiliated to the University of Calicut



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Maya Davi Chalissery

V/ 654 Chalissery House

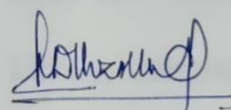
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Thrissur – 680012

Kerala, India

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I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled “**Exploring Narrative Time: An Analysis of the Evolution of Characters in Select Novels of Doris Lessing**” is based on the original work done by me under the guidance of **Dr. Sherly M. D.** and has not been included in any other thesis submitted previously for the award of any degree. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using **iThenticate** software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.



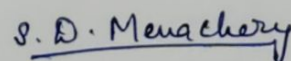
Maya Davi Chalissery

Research Scholar

PG Department of English and Research Centre

Vimala College (Autonomous)

Thrissur – 680009



Dr. Sherly M. D.

Research Supervisor

Place: Thrissur

Date: 01.01.2025

Dr. Sherly M. D.

Research Supervisor

Associate Professor & Head (Retd.)

P G Department of English and Research Centre

Vimala College (Autonomous), Thrissur

Kerala, India

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Exploring Narrative Time: An Analysis of the Evolution of Characters in Select Novels of Doris Lessing**” is a bonafide record of studies and research carried out by **Ms. Maya Davi Chalissery** under my supervision, and submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English. To the best of my knowledge, this research work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, or such similar title, or recognition. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using **iThenticate** software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

Place: Thrissur

Date: 01.01.2025

S. D. Menachery
Dr. Sherly M. D.

Research Supervisor

Dr. Sherly M. D.

Research Supervisor

Associate Professor & Head (Retd.)

PG Department of English and Research Centre

Vimala College (Autonomous)

Thrissur

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the corrections and suggestions recommended by the adjudicators, in the thesis titled "**Exploring Narrative Time: An Analysis of the Evolution of Characters in Select Novels of Doris Lessing**" submitted by **Ms. Maya Davi Chalissery** (U. O. No. 12240/2016/Admn dated 18.10.2016), Research Scholar, PG Department of English and Research Centre, Vimala College (Autonomous), Thrissur, have been duly incorporated. The contents of the hard copy and the soft copy submitted herewith are one and the same.

Thrissur

Date: 01.01.2025

S. D. Menachery
Dr. Sherly M. D.

Research Supervisor

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I bow before the Almighty who makes all things possible.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines nine novels by Doris Lessing and seeks to trace the evolution of characters within the said works. The writer's shift from subjective expressions and portraits of characters, to an understanding and subsequent presentation of the individual characters as being representatives of the universal, has been studied. It investigates how time has been expressed in the narratives, how this expression leads to an experience of time and explores how narrative techniques have been employed by the writer to this effect. The study proposes to address the gap of analysing the works of Lessing through a theoretical lens of narrative time. Mark Currie's theory of time facilitates the investigation. The study examines Lessing's works to discover both a thematic presentation of time as well as a formalistic employment of time techniques. This leads to the analysis of the expression and experience of time, both as a literary and metaphysical concept. The various elements enumerated by Currie have been discovered in the novels, including non-linear narration, prolepsis of different kinds, different voices and changing narrative situations, flashback and the use of memory and recollection. The notion of temporal distancing within plots and the temporal contexts of the stories have been investigated to study the potential of narrative time. The experience of temporality lends the characters the quality of being flexible and allows them to transform. This then represents the transient principle of life which supersedes the notion of permanence. By exploring the potential offered by the use of such techniques, the thesis seeks to establish the impact of narrative time that reaches beyond the constricted notions of plot, characterisation, design and narrative.

Keywords: Narrative time, temporality, character design, character evolution, Doris Lessing

പ്രബന്ധസംഗ്രഹം

പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ ഡോറിസ് ലെസിംഗിന്റെ ഒമ്പത് നോവലുകൾ പരിശോധിക്കുകയും പ്രസ്തുത കൃതികളിലെ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളുടെ പരിണാമം കണ്ടെത്താൻ ശ്രമിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. വ്യക്തിനിഷ്ഠമായ ആവിഷ്കാരങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളുടെ സൂക്ഷ്മമായ അവതരണത്തിൽ നിന്നും, വ്യക്തിഗത കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളെ സാർവത്രികത്തിന്റെ പ്രതിനിധികളായി മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നതിനും തുടർന്നുള്ള അവതരണത്തിലേക്കും എഴുത്തുകാരിയുടെ മാറ്റം പഠിച്ചു. ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിൽ സമയം എങ്ങനെ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കപ്പെട്ടു, ഈ പദപ്രയോഗം എങ്ങനെ സമയത്തിന്റെ അനുഭവത്തിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു, കൂടാതെ എഴുത്തുകാരി ഈ ഫലത്തിനായി ആഖ്യാന സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യകൾ എങ്ങനെ ഉപയോഗിച്ചുവെന്ന് പര്യവേഷണം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ആഖ്യാന സമയത്തിന്റെ സൈദ്ധാന്തിക ലെൻസിലൂടെ ലെസിംഗിന്റെ കൃതികളെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നതിന്റെ വിടവ് പരിഹരിക്കാൻ പഠനം നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നു. കൃത്യസമയത്ത് മാർക്ക് ക്യൂറിയുടെ സമയ-സിദ്ധാന്തം അന്വേഷണത്തെ സഹായിക്കുന്നു. സമയത്തിന്റെ തീമാറ്റിക് അവതരണവും സമയ സങ്കേതങ്ങളുടെ ഔദ്യോഗികമായ ഉപയോഗം കണ്ടെത്താൻ ലെസിംഗിന്റെ കൃതികളിൽ ഈ പഠനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. ഇത് സാഹിത്യപരവും മെറ്റാഫിസിക്ക് സങ്കല്പവും എന്ന നിലയിൽ കാലത്തിന്റെ ആവിഷ്കാരത്തെയും അനുഭവത്തെയും വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നതിലേക്ക് നയിക്കുന്നു. നോൺ-ലീനിയർ ആഖ്യാനം, വ്യത്യസ്ത തരം പ്രോലെപ്സിസ്, വ്യത്യസ്ത ശബ്ദങ്ങളും മാറുന്ന ആഖ്യാന സാഹചര്യങ്ങളും, പ്ലാഷ്ബാക്കും ഓർമ്മയുടെയും ഉപയോഗം എന്നിവയുൾപ്പെടെ ക്യൂറി എണ്ണിയിരിക്കുന്ന വിവിധ ഘടകങ്ങൾ നോവലുകളിൽ കണ്ടെത്തി. പ്ലോട്ടുകൾക്കുള്ളിലെ താൽക്കാലിക അകലം സംബന്ധിച്ച ആശയങ്ങളും കഥകളുടെ താൽക്കാലിക സന്ദർഭങ്ങളും ആഖ്യാന സമയത്തിന്റെ സാധ്യതകൾ പഠിക്കാൻ അന്വേഷിച്ചു. സമയത്തിന്റെ അനുഭവം കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾക്ക് വഴങ്ങുന്ന സ്വഭാവം നൽകുകയും അവയെ രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുത്താൻ അനുവദിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഇത് ശാശ്വത സങ്കല്പത്തെ മറികടക്കുന്ന ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ക്ഷണികമായ തത്വത്തെ പ്രതിനിധീകരിക്കുന്നു. അത്തരം സങ്കേതങ്ങളുടെ ഉപയോഗം വഴിയുള്ള സാധ്യതകൾ പര്യവേഷണം ചെയ്യുന്നതിലൂടെ, പ്ലോട്ട്, സ്വഭാവരൂപീകരണം, രൂപകല്പന, ആഖ്യാനം എന്നിവയുടെ സങ്കുചിതമായ സങ്കല്പങ്ങൾക്കു പുറത്തേക്ക് എത്തുന്ന ആഖ്യാന സമയത്തിന്റെ സ്വാധീനം സ്ഥാപിക്കാൻ തീസിസ് ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു.

കീവേഡുകൾ: ആഖ്യാന സമയം, താൽക്കാലികത, കഥാപാത്ര രൂപകല്പന, കഥാപാത്ര പരിണാമം, ഡോറിസ് ലെസിംഗ്

Abbreviations Used

BDH – *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*

CoV – *Children of Violence*

FGC – *The Four-Gated City*

GN – *The Golden Notebook*

GS – *The Grass is Singing*

LL – *Landlocked*

MQ – *Martha Quest*

PM – *A Proper Marriage*

RS – *A Ripple from the Storm*

SBD – *The Summer Before the Dark*

SPV – *A Small Personal Voice*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a marked difference in the way novel-writing and fiction was progressing. One of the chief developments was the emergence of women writers whose works were representative of the changing realities of an intensely transformed post-war world. The period also bore the consequence of writers, critics, thinkers and readers wishing to move beyond the theory and practice of the social realist canon. The readership and critical climate were receptive of fiction that was based on modern (and later post-modern) principles that also sought to introduce increased levels of experimentation into novel writing. This allowed a departure from strictly formalistic principles and the adoption of innovative practices in story-telling. While world literature adopted trajectories that suited their particular socio-cultural, political and historical contexts, there were tendencies to blend the traditional with the emerging trends. A generation of writers came up who presented matters of current relevance within frameworks of contemporary and historical importance. This influenced the plot structure, character design, forms adopted, themes explored and the specific political stand of the writers and characters. Consequently, the literature produced during the age contained the violence, confusions, philosophies and anger of a post-war world. They exposed kinds of government that were emerging, the political relations between countries and the various movements of importance to arts, culture and literature. The works that were published oscillated between traditional norms and the emerging conventions of change. Doris Lessing can be situated, read, studied and analysed within this context. Her body of work illustrates the times she lived in,

along with the multicultural background she belonged to. Her productions can be placed between the traditional realist novels and the absolutely post-modern experiments of the twenty-first century, into which she infused renewed ways of relating stories. Within the plots and among the characters, one can find themes as divergent as a British settler-woman's illicit relationship with an African house-boy and a fantastical rendering of an apocalyptic end to the present world. From the debut novel that studies a white woman within the socio-political and cultural space and norms she is forced to comply with, to extensive exploration of human minds and women's psyche that transform over time and space, the writer offers a wide range of material for literary and critical inquiry.

The primary texts chosen for this study include *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *Children of Violence* (the series including the five novels *Martha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), *Landlocked* (1965) and *The Four-Gated City* (1969)), *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971) and *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973). Lessing's debut novel *GS* gathered much critical acclaim for the penetrating critique of racial and colonial supremacy that it challenged and for the bold portrayal of an illegitimate affair between a white woman and a native farm boy. Her work was placed within the discourse of the prevalent socio-political discussions of the time and found ready reception among people who were fashioning out a counter-culture. After the publication of the *CoV* (the first three novels) and the seminal *GN*, the writer began to be hailed as a feminist with the characters Martha and Anna being embraced as exemplar literary models of the personal-political dichotomy. Since the phenomenal reception and world-wide attention that Lessing gained through the publication of

these books, the writer has been analysed and studied through the lens of several theoretical and ideological frameworks. There have been literary enthusiasts, critics and academicians who have decoded her writings employing theories of Marxism, colonialism, postcolonialism, structuralism, post-structuralism, memory studies, narratology, modernism, postmodernism, gender studies, new historicism, trauma studies, ecocriticism, posthumanism, post-truth and gerontological studies. Studied as a realist with shifting affiliation to postmodernist aesthetics, critics have often engaged with her works by employing autobiographical criticism. Her works have also been analysed using reader response theory and deconstruction, to decipher the writer's influence, presence, expression and craft. The other novels included in the thesis, show her ideological evolution from a realist with communist leanings to a critic of the political discourses prevalent during her time, raising concerns regarding colonialism, racial and regional supremacy reinforced by unfair political arrangements. *BDH* and *SBD* are novels written during the phase that carry marked deviations from her earlier ideologies as she shifted to experimentation in the structural arrangement of narratives and adopted genres like fantasy, mystical narration, speculative and science fiction.

Apart from the novels chosen for the thesis, Lessing has published novels like *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1975) which contains a prophetic rendition of the fantasy genre that examines the confluence and mutual action of psychological and social collapse. These years also saw her short story collections being published, including *The Story of a Non-Marrying Man and Other Stories* (1972), *This Was the Old Chief's Country – Collected African Stories, Vol. 1* (1973), *The Sun Between Their Feet – Collected African Stories, Vol. 2* (1973), *To Room Nineteen – Collected*

Stories Vol 1 (1978) and *The Temptation of Jack Orkney – Collected Stories Vol 2* (1978). The writer's affiliation shifted from political writing to science fiction and she published the five-novel sequence titled *Canopus in Argos: Archives* between 1979 to 1983. *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) and *If the Old Could* (1984) was published carrying the pseudonym Jane Somers. The writer held that this was done to expose the politics of the publishing industry revealing the activism that she embodied. These two works highlight the hypocrisy of the publishing industry and are an attempt to demonstrate the challenges faced by new budding writers. She moved to horror, humour and fantasy bringing out novels as *The Fifth Child* (1988), *Ben, in the World* (2000) and *The Cleft* (2007). Her autobiography in two volumes titled *Under My Skin* (1994) and *Walking in the Shade* (1997) are supplemented by semi-autobiographical works like *In Pursuit of English* (1960), *Going Home* (1957), *The Sweetest Dream* (2001) and *Alfred and Emily* (2008) and works like *African Laughter* (1992) and *Time Bites* (2004). These carry prose pieces about her life, choices, writings, inferences, opinions and comments. She has also penned two operas, three dramas and *Fourteen Poems* (1959), a collection of poetry. These reveal the variety of themes the writer has explored along with the rich range of forms, structures and literary genres that the author has contributed to.

Lessing's works have drawn much attention for the wide range of themes, mix of genres and narrative strategies that she employed. What is of greater significance is the honesty that can be found in her writing that reflects her life and experiences. Further, the writer has had a sense of multiculturalism ingrained within her due to the life she has lived. She was neither a complete native British writer nor did she belong to the alternative, colonial, imperial or diasporic crop of authors. This

makes it possible to assess her writings as belonging to the margins, however mainstream they may seem to be. It is this unconventional stand that allows the writer to carve out a separate and distinct place for herself in the context of world literature. Her exposure to politics and participation in Communist groups helped shape the ideological basis that are reflected in her works. She felt deeply about women issues and presented an uncoloured and honest preview of the challenges faced by women along with verbalising the multiple facets of their existence including their psyche, desires, vulnerabilities, frustration, wishes and ambitions. Added to these are the hundreds of interviews and media engagements that the writer involved with throughout her life. With frank interactions, bold statements and a highly verbal personality that hid nothing from those seeking answers, Lessing was expressive and brutally honest in her opinions. These outpourings that emerge as videos and publications added to the rich volume of resources that could be approached by her critics, students and other academicians. The writing aesthetics that she followed along with her sensibilities and standpoints revealed in her stories contribute much in the reading, comprehension and interpretation of her works. The thesis refers to these resources to analyse the choices made by the writer and in the exploration of underlying influences as revealed through her plots and characters.

The writer contributed to the age of feministic writing that saw the emergence of women writers writing vociferously and gallantly about class, politics, ideology, struggle, psychological explorations, self-discovery and identity. Involving herself in issues of great magnitude, the writer was articulate and involved in matters that found expression in her literary output as well as her public engagements. These brought her international attention and acclaim and hold her

writings in high stead and relevance even today; the topics of her writings – ranging from colonial oppression, nuclear disaster, a future apocalypse that might destroy the world, inner-space, mind and psyche, radical politics, dreams, visions, mystical reveries and prophecy – bear the same significance in the twenty-first century with the growing manifestations of these issues being witnessed across regions, cultures and borders. Lessing chose to protest against many of the labels she had been given exclaiming that she wished not to be compartmentalised into such limiting terminologies of affiliation. Highly articulate and unafraid of voicing her opinions in public, she was quick to express her disagreement with the taxonomies linked to her and her writing. Her evolving ideology was often found to correspond with her writings, but posed challenges for critics who would be disavowed of any interpretation that pertained to her earlier philosophy. She refused to be categorised as a Marxist, as a writer who represented the voice of racial equality of Africa and declared that her *GN* should not be hailed as a feminist manifesto alone. She discredited the efforts to study her works biographically raising concerns regarding the loss of artistic value that her writings possessed when placed within such personal or historical contexts. For, she has always professed to be socially sensitive and held a deep commitment to employing art and writing as a vehicle of social change. This responsibility that the writer holds has often been reiterated in her interviews and reflects in the themes and structure of her writings. While rising in significance and offering themes, plots and characters who align with her intentions, the writer effectively used narrative strategies to reinforce the content and context of her writings. In all of her writings and expressions of interests, Lessing has placed before the readers the world of reality as she has experienced it, often contrasting it with the ideal, raising concerns of global proportions while at the same time

designing futures that people must work towards. While there have been criticisms that she has faced for the content, form and ideology voiced by her books, fact remains that they bear deep implications and significations even decades after their first appearance.

Scholars, critics and academicians have carried out extensive studies on the writer and her work. She has been a widely discussed author for the political statements, ideological stands, gender issues, psychological and spiritual themes that her works covered as well as for the strategies she employed. There are innumerable research articles, books and theses that discuss her art and craft. They provide the public with exhaustive analyses and studies to understand, interpret and reflect on her works. Several critics have investigated her significance in world literature and have discussed her influence on other writers. Yet, while her themes and narrative strategies have formed the basis for these, the employment and expression of time – both thematically and technically – has been excluded from the vast resources of critical work. There are critical works that deal with general criticism and appreciation of Lessing's literature. Books by Claire Sprague (1990), Margaret Moan Rowe (1994), Paul Schlueter (1994) Harold Bloom (2003), Debrah Raschke et al (2010) and Kevin Brazil et al (2016) are mostly edited critical works that contain chapters discussing multiple layers of interpretation ranging from studies on the influences upon the writer, the political ideology she upheld, the reception of her works, the structure of her novels, the inspiration behind some characters to topics like the possibility for the outlining of a spiritual ideal that is essentially her own and even a comparison between Lessing and other writers like D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf.

Doris Lessing and the Forming of History, edited by Kevin Brazil, David Sergeant, and Tom Sperlinger, discusses the potential that literary criticism possesses in viewing history as a deterministic and teleological process as well as the role of writers in shaping such history through their narratives. While early critical attention turned towards Lessing as a writer of bold words and celebrity status, later criticism veered towards a deeper analysis of her works to find strains of the socio-political context of the twentieth and twenty first century. Claire Sprague's work *In Pursuit of Doris Lessing: Nine Nations Reading* elaborates on the play of culture in the examination of the writer's works, working on the multiple shades of cultural differences that the texts carry while at the same time highlighting the difference in their reception owing to such factors. There have been various articles and testimonies by readers who have misinterpreted Lessing's writings upon a single reading. Paul Schlueter compiled *A Small Personal Voice* with the intention of correcting such misunderstandings by scholars and critics. Such literal readings later lead to interpretations that resonate with personal experiences and found expression in volumes that took up themes, structures and characters of Lessing for a personal examination by certain writers. There has been a continuous interest in the writer's life and works, inspired by the release of Jenny Diski's memoir, Lara Feigel's autobiographical-critical hybrid *Free Woman*, and Roberta Rubenstein's *Literary Half-Lives*, which explores Lessing's relationship with Clancy Sigal. The collection of essays in Harold Bloom's critical edition *Doris Lessing: Bloom's Modern Critical Views* holds how the writer has an appeal that goes beyond the literary content and structure representing her time in an age of ideologies qualifying her as an artist possessing the spirit of the times. Earl G. Ingersoll's *Conversations* brings together a series of conversations that has been arranged chronologically from her interviews

in the early 1960s to ones in 1993. These include the writer's views on the need to escape the entrapments of dominant discourses, the inadequacy of support for writing, the financial strains posed by a writing career, Marxism – its appeal and failure, her choice of space fiction, the freedom offered by different modes of writing above and beyond the themes, plots, techniques and the stories behind her novels. *Doris Lessing: Women Writers* by Margaret Moan protests against the reading of women by structures that have been strengthened by a male dominant theoretical framework and offers interpretations that align with an essentially feminist reading of the writer's works. Bootheina Majoul's work, *Doris Lessing: Poetics and Being of Time* while contextualizing Lessing, also offers a comparative study of her and other writers, while studying the writer within her temporal framework as well as the continuance of her writings beyond time. Sharon L. Jansen's *Reading Women's Worlds from Christine de Pizan to Doris Lessing* presents a chapter dubbing Lessing and Charlotte Gilman as madwomen in the attic and deals with their struggle against the pervasive ideology of the notion of true womanhood.

Apart from these books, there are plentiful resources in the form of journal articles, research publications, doctorate theses that form a collection of studies on the writer. Lessing has fundamentally been described as a feminist writer – a label that she has often renounced describing her works as being more than just about gender war. Mona Knapp (1984), Elizabeth Maslen (1994), Sharon L. Jansen (2011), Lori J. Marso (2016) and Ratna Raman (2020) discuss her take on feminism and women's rights. They analyse her works through the lens of contemporary feminist theories and place the writer upon a high pedestal of women's writing and women issues. Their works focus on the writer's experiences and hence, the intense

convictions her works reveal in standing up for women rights. However, they do not philosophise or ponder upon the influence of time on the writer, the change in the use of time owing to changes in her ideology, that has been both celebrated and heavily criticised for the strong political views she held and reiterated. Her changing political affiliations and convictions, as well as her frank criticism of Marxist practice and Communist activism find place in studies by Evangeline Priscilla and G. Christopher (1996), Elena Anca Georgescu et al (2011), Yan Zhou (2020) and Zhang Xin-yue (2021). Their works blend concepts and issues related to colonialism, race, community and culture into a political discussion. While they do draw out a clear picture of her political views, they have left the passage of time and its impact on the writer untouched. Lessing has herself declared that she adopted certain opinions because they embodied the spirit of the times and that she would often reconsider and thus change her opinions. This in itself brings the topic of time into discussion. This becomes particularly relevant when one finds in her works characters who reconsider their choices and end up deciding that their past self thought differently and would not be able to agree with their present self. The shift in the writer's ideology invites a scrutiny of the temporal aspect of her writing – be it the internal content of time or the external understanding of time.

A major area that has found prolific work being done in understanding the content, form and mode of her works is in the field of psychology and psychoanalysis. The author has been deeply engaged and attracted to the notions of mind, psyche and identity. These have formed the foundation for theses and writings by Lorelei Cederstorm (1990), Shu-Ming Hung (2012), Hajer Elarem (2015), Anna Cervantes (2016) and Maria Emilia Alves Couto (2017). They have written

profusely about the many variations of engagement with psychology.

Psychoanalytical works that sought to study the psyche of characters, the reason behind their life choices, the influence that experiences play on their mind, the conflicts within themselves, transactions between characters and the presentation of certain archetypes find expression in these works. While these works employ the theories of Jung, Lacan, Freud and Laing to study her characters, a study that analysed the complete trajectory of the evolution of her characters was found to be lacking. These deal with the fragmentation, inner turmoil, emotional wreckage and the characters' constant fight with themselves to reach a resolution. The aspects covered include the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self, the influence of space and the utilisation of supporting characters on the design and development of protagonists, specific studies on the female psyche as well as focussed analysis of the mother-daughter relationships as portrayed in her works. However, the specific investigation of how time is presented through the progress of the characters' lives and how temporal techniques are utilised to present the evolution of character – that eventually carry the plot forward – has been found to be absent in these analyses. Further, there has been no work done on the comparison between the experiences of Lessing's that find a progressive and loyal reflection in the lives of different characters. The writer increasingly involved with topics that transcended the realistic everyday topics of the age and experimented with form and content in her writings. She became influenced by Sufi traditions and shifted her aesthetics to align with spiritual and philosophical thoughts. Shadia S. Fahim (1994) and other research articles present an interpretative and thorough exploration of the Sufistic phase of Lessing's career and outline the philosophical underpinnings of her oeuvre. They also sought to examine the writer's earlier works to discover traces of the Sufistic

and spiritual influence in the early part of her literary production. While such philosophical inferences contribute to the universality of Lessing's writings, placing her in a context of relevance in today's literary sphere, these do not refer to the manner in which the temporal concerns have been represented and how such representations have evolved over time. There are a few works that deal with the past and future that can be found among studies in this area but they cater to the spiritual and mythical connotations of the experience of time-space and make no reference to the technique of time as utilised by the writer.

The craft of fiction writing as upheld and practiced by the writer has a massive representation in the critical works on Lessing. Alice Ridout (1997), Natasa Miljkovic (2012), Tracy Hargreaves (2012), Mira-Czarnecka (2016), Ellen Peel (2016), Mizuta Noriko and Nadeschda Bachem (2018) and Flutura Boci (2020) deal with the narratology adopted, the genres produced and the movements the writer decided to participate in. These and the many other works that have been produced to examine the entire literary production of the writer have revolved around the structural, thematic and political ramifications of her writings. They have extensively studied the experimentation in form and narrative techniques, elaborating on metafiction, fragmentation, epistolary writing and the utilisation of diary and journal as narrative devices. They assess the author for both the individual works that showcase her skills as well as scrutinise the change in the methods she adopted over the course of her career. These also compare her writing style to other significant writers to highlight what sets the author apart. There is an overlapping of themes and theories in this line of analysis as gender, psyche, politics and spirituality find a space in the study of her narrative scheme and techniques. While a few novels

have been taken up to be analysed to identify the use of narrative time, an extensive study on how the concepts of memory, recollection and anticipation has been portrayed and outlined is a gap identified. Also, while the employment of time techniques like flashbacks, internal monologue and non-linear narration has been studied, an in-depth analysis of the implication of their use and the specific choice of techniques invites more attention. The transformation of the writer from a loyal realist to a writer with leanings towards experimental fiction and sci-fi has formed the basis for some of these studies but they do not refer to the use and effect of the fluidity of time and time references that have made such experimental expression of plots possible and largely successful.

The works listed above appear to be exhaustive in the examination and exploration of Lessing as a writer, her works and the prolific literary legacy she has left behind. However, the aspect of narrative time as has been employed by Lessing to bring about intense impact on both the reader's understating of time and their experience of time seem to be absent from studies. The temporalizing technique, the implications of the use of time and the consequent comprehension of time and temporal aspects of experience, being and existence was found to be an area that required further research. This thesis analyses the narrative time applied upon a study of the writer's characters, and has chosen nine novels that include the largely popular *GN* as well as the comparatively less studied *SBD*. This allowed to establish a range that would contribute to an examination of different aspects spread across two decades of the writer's career. Further, the narrative analysis of the concept of time with special reference to Mark Currie's theory can widen the scope of narrative

analysis of other writers and broaden the growing field of temporal studies within narratology.

Lessing's writings have constantly engaged with the importance of self-knowledge and the shaping of an individual's identity. This study aims to analyse the evolution of the self in the novels of Lessing from multiple vantage points with the objective of closely examining the past, present and future of the characters, as well as, their interaction with both internal and external forces that shape them and their lives. It proposes to scrutinise the interdependence between her fictional creations and their surrounding scenarios. This would lead to an analysis of their background, ideologies, ethics, principles, histories, relationships as well as deeper concerns like psychology and temporality. Lessing's works present multi-faceted characters and their attempts to carve out an identity for themselves. They indulge in political movements and seek joy, peace and fulfilment through relationships that soon become layered with complications. Some characters express their inner-most emotions through writing which also presents their attempts to come to terms with their repressed desires that manifest as dreams and/or occasional (sometimes absolute) departure from reality. This study seeks to investigate through the lens of time, incorporating the passage of time, its impact and influence on the characters' life as well as on a wider scope – that of elements of world politics and history. Although the quest for personal, social and political identity, feminism, communism as well as negotiating trauma and grappling with the confounding dilemma of human relationships have been a constant source of examinations in works of literature, particularly that of Lessing, this study that proposes to closely observe the evolution of an individual with respect to time, would lead to a better

comprehension of the author's intent and literary brilliance. When examined from the point of view of time, new ways of seeing and reading are opened up before every reader. The thesis is an analytical study that seeks to trace the evolution of characters and character sets of Doris Lessing through an examination of the nine novels chosen.

The thesis requires a detailed assessment of the narrative techniques used, genres explored and themes presented, along with several other considerations related to characterisation, picturisation, setting and presentation of the novel. Although non-fictional works by Lessing may be hinted at, the main focus of study would be her novels. The narrative strategies used will be analysed. The emphasis will be on aspects of time and temporality that deeply influence the shaping and delivery of the narrative. The way in which time is presented along with the specific techniques that the writer employs to use time in her writings will form one of the chief concerns of this study. The various ways in which time becomes an important element in novel-writing is elaborated upon using examples from the primary texts. The role played by narrators, the point of view, the ideological standpoints, the pressing concerns highlighted have been linked to the narrative strategy of time and temporality. The theory and subsequent explorations of Mark Currie in the work *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* which revolves around narrative, fiction and the philosophy of time would be incorporated and studied extensively and applied in the fiction chosen for study, so as to bring out the quest for self. The methodology followed will be of textual analysis and discourse analysis focusing on the theory of narrative time propounded by Currie. It becomes imperative at this point to explore the theoretical aspects of narrative time and

temporality. This dynamic discipline has witnessed reformation and growth from various quarters and in many different ways. An attempt to comprehend the discipline in totality requires a reading of the major contributors. It has been observed that there is, often, an overlapping of concepts and ideas, as the later theorists, comment on, improve and extend the existing studies. Their efforts were to widen the reach, boundaries and contents of the tools of narratological analysis. The classical narratological theories were engaged in analysing the universal aspects of narratives, which presented as elements, instances and characteristics in a majority of the texts. Later, the structuralists sought to investigate the devices and techniques that depended heavily on binary oppositional pairs. This included concepts like deep and surface structure, opposite modes of narrative and the presence or absence of narrators. There arose the need to analyse how various aspects reconciled into a coherent text and to study how the aspects blend, separate, impact and engage with and within individual narrative texts. The attempt was to closely identify, evaluate and assess the potential of narratives and the available possibilities. Although time is not an observable aspect of experience, it can be represented and manifested, thereby attaining a quality of being perceived. It is this possibility that narratives offer which has added to the corpus of time studies, an interdisciplinary area that blends science, philosophy, aesthetics and literature. When narrowed down to a literary concept, time becomes both an aspect of narrative expression as well as an analytical tool.

Discussions of time that began in philosophy and physics gained greater attention within literary criticism and aesthetics by the twentieth century. The pioneering thinkers in the discipline followed formalist and morphological

approaches to the study of time. The Russian formalists, Viktor Shklovsky, Alexander Reformatzky and Boris Tomashevsky along with Günther Müller assumed that the narrated events move away from the chronological order of the story. Within narrative theory, time was represented and studied as the order and placement of events. Theorists like Georg Lukács, A. A. Mendilow, Ian Watt and Mikhail Bakhtin worked extensively on the relation between time and the art of novel writing. Others, like Seymour Chatman, Tzvetan Todorov, André Gaudreault and François Jost have explained the relation between time and its representations in various media. Writers like Thomas Mann and E. M. Forster have explored narrative temporality in detail. Their works provide a foundational framework for understanding how time operates in storytelling. Further to these writers and critics, the seminal works by Paul Ricoeur, Gérard Genette, Franz Karl Stanzel, Frank Kermode and Peter Brooks lent substantial progress to the world's understanding of narratology, and changed the tenets of narrative theory. The various dimensions of the representation of time had been explained by these theorists, particularly Genette to be the difference between story, discourse and narration. The latter half of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century witnessed the rise of different novels and storytelling techniques. They increasingly rejected linearity, absolute cause and effect models of plot rendition and a representation of temporality as progressing towards the future. Peter Carey, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes produced various stories/ theoretical texts. These took established notions of narrative and time – deconstructing them, re-aligning them and reshaping them. It is within this context that Mark Currie can be placed, for having brought out books like *About Time* and *Postmodern Narrative*

Theory that built upon the theories propounded by Genette, Ricoeur, Derrida and Brooks among others.

The Russian formalists, particularly Shklovsky and Tomashevsky, emphasised the formal properties of texts, to explain the readers' experience. Their approach to narrative time centred on the distinction between *fabula*, which is the raw sequence of events, and *sjuzhet*, which stands for the way those events are presented in the narrative. They focussed on the ability of temporal distortions to create dramatic effects. They utilised such techniques as prolepsis, analepsis, ellipsis, deceleration and acceleration to mould narrative progress. Concepts like defamiliarization and the inclusion of plot devices, to establish causality, suspense or thematic resonance, were adopted. Their attempts were deliberate and sought to achieve a temporal estrangement, thereby utilising time as a functional concept rather than a passive setting of context. These can be seen to have laid the foundation for the development of further research in the area, with later narratological theories (including those of Genette) augmenting these concepts. Another work that can be studied as a foundational text for understanding the operation of time in story telling is Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*. His theory focussed on the manipulation of chronological and causal relationships to enhance storytelling. His emphasis on the interplay between story, plot, and reader engagement contributed to a further understanding of the techniques of narrative. Although largely appreciated for having introduced and analysed these concepts, his criticism has often been held as lacking technical precision which later theorists achieved. The latter half of the twentieth century produced such works as Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*, Brooks' *Reading for the Plot*, Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*

and Genette's *Narrative and Discourse*. Kermode's ideas were deeply philosophical and investigated the human attempt to navigate the complexities of time, mortality, and meaning. His insights aided an understanding of how readers engaged with texts to make sense of existence. He held that human beings utilised fiction to impose meaning upon the chaotic flow of time. They sought coherence and therefore narratives had to be built around moments that contributed to the meaning-making exercise. Herein was the importance of treating the significant elements of time rather than a mere passage of it in texts. While Kermode blended philosophy with an understanding of narrative time, Brooks adopted a psychoanalytical approach. Closure was central to Brooks's theory, as it provided a resolution to narrative desire and retrospectively organised the narrative's temporal structure.

The seminal works of Ricoeur and Genette have formed the basis for several analyses and critiques recently. Currie himself refers to the theorists liberally while establishing his observations and insights. Rooted in phenomenology and hermeneutics, Ricoeur's theory sought to bridge the philosophical concept of time with its narrative representation. His central question in *Time and Narrative* was how narrative mediates between the objective, measurable cosmological time and the lived and subjective phenomenological time. He drew heavily from philosophers like Aristotle (mimesis) and Augustine (subjective time). Genette's narratology, as outlined in *Narrative Discourse*, focussed primarily on the structural aspects of narrative, such as order, duration, and frequency. Genette's theory, with an affiliation to structuralism, assumed a degree of coherence and systematic structure in narratives. A study of these theories proved helpful in a better comprehension of Currie's statements pertaining to time and temporality in narratives. His work while

engaging with modern theoretical frameworks, focussed upon the poststructuralist, postmodern expositions of narrative forms, thereby aiding better understanding of contemporary cultural and literary studies. While taking as the foundation the existing theories, the theorist also refers to cognitive science and temporal philosophy, thereby lending a multidisciplinary quality to his theory, aligning it with the present academic trends. His theory can be placed at the phenomenological level which, in turn, is at the cross section of philosophy and literature. His theory comes across as a highly adaptable framework which does not restrict to highly formal structures or rigid rules. Some of the previous theories could only be applied to written narratives, while Currie's can be analysed to interpret dynamic media. These aspects presented a strong case for the adoption of his theory as the research framework in the analysis of Doris Lessing's work. The writer's works have transcended the time periods they were published in and have been studied across various literary movements. Further, she has often exhibited changing ideologies and the adoption of different genres for literary expressions. Currie addresses complex temporal phenomena in ways that permit their employment in the study of fragmented and multi-temporal experiences of contemporary narratives. An analysis of simultaneity, delay, an orientation towards the future involving anticipation, instability of meaning and fluidity of time that reflect the uncertainties of postmodern existences which his theories support, find lesser representation in earlier theoretical studies.

An engagement with the theories and a detailed analysis of Currie's, reveals the strength of the theoretical framework offered by Currie. He focuses on a narrative theory that would cater to the texts in the twenty-first century. This allows

a reading of contemporary texts and a re-reading of the previously studied fictional works. The post-modern, fragmented, multimedia texts can be analysed better following the techniques and criticism provided by the theorist. While other theories deal with technicalities, Currie brings the technicality into a confluence with the real. He thus speaks of fiction in relation to real life. An example would be how he lays down a comparative study of Brooks' theory and his own. He says that as in life, fiction too is unpredictable in spite of the fact that the future of a plot or narrative is already scripted in a work. The reader who reads can only anticipate that future events in the book be in the design that he assumes. The same uncertainty that exists in life, thus, exists in the anticipation of future events in reading. This in turn affects the way time is experienced by the reader ("The Expansion of Tense", 354). Lessing can be analysed better because of the uncertain future that her characters finally end up in.

The writer does not cater to the conventional fictions of societal expectations and often disagrees with established canons and norms. The metafictional writing that the author incorporates requires a theory that would specifically analyse the text as a work of fiction and a political statement. She speaks of how language and literature establish practices that are regressive, patriarchal and cater to the requirement of the powerful. It becomes a vehicle to normalise certain societal and cultural codes. She has created characters who questions these or end up failing due to these. The disappointment and disillusionment with available literature and language systems become the themes of her plots. An analysis of such plots requires theories that combine the social cultural and philosophical. Currie achieves this by combining the study of time with contemporary cultural theories to explain time-

space compression, accelerated recontextualisation and archive fever. He also refers to theories by Husserl, Heidegger and Derrida to achieve a theory of narrative time that is relevant.

Lessing's writings are characterised by non-linear plots, fragmented narratives and broken/ multi-dimensional character consciousness. Theories that deal with the mechanics of narrative structure such as the ones provided by Genette alone cannot be utilised for an exhaustive analysis. He offers concepts like story (fabula), narrative (*sjuzhet*) and discourse. While these can provide insights into the writing mechanics, it does not explain reader engagement with the text. Currie emphasises the readers' experience of time, particularly how narrative devices like prolepsis and analepsis shape anticipation and retrospection. His theory aligns with cognitive and phenomenological approaches, focussing on how narratives evoke temporal emotions such as suspense, nostalgia or anticipation. Apart from these concepts, Currie's theory explores how narrative time interacts with identity, memory and future orientation. He examines how temporal structures influence self-perception and existential understanding. This sets his writing apart from other theorists like Ricoeur, whose central idea is how narrative mediates between cosmological and phenomenological time. Currie operates within a postmodern and poststructuralist framework examining how narrative time reflects and constructs contemporary human experience. The works chosen for this study, present strong characters who face challenges to their ideology, politics, social positions, identity and existence. An analysis of the progress of the plots, evolution of their selves and the outcome of their life requires a theory that is contemporary and blends the cultural, metaphysical, philosophical and literary. This has been provided by Currie in his

works. Currie takes a stand that is contrary to the common belief that postmodern narrative primarily challenges and revises historical interpretations of the past. He argues that future must be (and is) the focus of contemporary fiction, elaborating on how present events carry the anticipation of future – a concept that leads him to explain the technique of prolepsis in its context. He examines significant philosophical views on time through a detailed analysis of select English novels. Through this approach, he convincingly demonstrates that fictional narratives offer profound insights into time through their structural and temporal innovations, rather than merely through their thematic content. His theory highlights the narrative's performative capability to enhance the philosophical understanding of the complexity of time.

The study is divided into five chapters. The chapter following the introductory chapter is titled "Evolution of Characters" in which an attempt is made to trace the evolution of characters as they seek their true 'selves'. The transformation of particular characters corresponding to various aspects such as their outlook to life, their philosophy, their ideological standpoints as well as their political activism will be recorded. The shift in the focus of Lessing's writings will be explored along with an analysis of the relation between the individual and the collective. The third chapter titled "Temporalizing Lessing: Evolution of the Author" will investigate the experience and expression of narrative time, distinguishing between the concepts of time and temporality and will trace the narrative situations, focalization and perspectives in Lessing's novels. Currie's theory focussing on such aspects as temporal distancing, the futurity involved in reading and the implications of the 'present' will be explored. Chapter four, "Narrativizing Action: A Study of

Narrative Time”, will explore the employment of narrative time, analysing aspects of Currie’s theory pertaining to tensed and untensed view of time, fictional knowledge and prolepsis. It will examine time as a subjectively experienced concept. The final chapter will conclude the thesis summarising the findings. It will reiterate the impact of the analysis and inquiry, explaining how the research gap has been compensated and will list further scope for research.

Chapter 2

Evolution of Characters

Doris Lessing's aesthetic orientation and philosophy has shifted away from the propounding of political ideology to an objective and profound faith in the value of spirituality. This shift can be found to be reflected in the narrative context and form of her works; moving away from an attachment to dogmatic Marxism towards an identification with the central tenets of philosophy and spirituality. Works brought out in the first half of the writer's career focused on the manner in which the experience of each individual is restricted by the concrete and absolute conditions around the individual. She later began to concentrate on the mystical, rather than material reality, as the basis of objective knowledge. The author has undergone a transformation from a concrete Marxist writer and socialist to an abstract and transcendentalist writer who bases her understandings and experiences on ideals and values that are aligned towards mythic, spiritual and philosophical lines while being political and social. The focus of her fiction is said to have altered from the external to the internal; from a political and social involvement to psychological, philosophical and finally mystical appreciations of the nature of existence. In other words, her works reiterate that, the structure of reality comprehensively changes and a form of primary truth can only be achieved through an inner spiritual revolution.

The exploration and exposition of the relationship between the individual and the collective has been an enduring thematic focal point of Lessing's works. She has stated that the major concerns of the early volumes in the *CoV* series was to examine this relationship: "not one critic has understood what I should have thought was obvious from the first chapters, where I was at pains to state the theme very

clearly: that this is a study of the individual conscience in relation with the collective.” (*SPV* 14). Lessing's characters have exhibited a growing out of and away from one's own closed self and recognizing the universality in experience and responses. She doesn't believe in viewing oneself as an autonomous and closed entity of self-construction and free choice. Rather she sees an individual as a vehicle of personal uniqueness that in reality is the manifestation of a general and shared consciousness. This reflects in *GN* wherein the writer states that when the individual is seen as a microcosm, one can see beyond personal subjectivity and construct a universal out of the personal: “The way over or through the unease at writing about “petty personal problems” was to recognize that nothing is personal in the sense that it is uniquely one's own. Writing about oneself, one is writing about others since your problems, pains, pleasures, emotions ... can't be yours alone” (12).

She adds that “growing up is, after all, only the understanding that one's unique and incredible experience is what everyone shares” (12). With the progress of her writing, the author became increasingly engaged with presenting the evolution of the self and transformation of the individual in her characters. This transformation is reflected in the modes of narration that she adopted. This evolution has been presented and can be examined not only in the transformation of particular characters within the novels of Lessing, but also in the development of entire character sets who are far more intellectually endowed and aligned to higher thinking capacities in later novels. Distinguished for its political energy, varied narrative strategies, variety in genres chosen and the range of themes explored, her work concerns itself with the lives of people whose stories she seeks to relate and their interaction with the world. While the earlier novels narrate the tales of women

and the manner in which life advance, leaving them transformed physically and mentally, her later books attend to the individual's efforts at countering the societal forces of marginalisation and acculturation.

Lessing's characters engage and struggle with conventions established by the community and the roles prescribed. The *GS* presents Mary Turner confronting the oppressive gender and racial dynamics in a colonial Rhodesia. Mary's evolution reviews societal expectations and standardised belief systems that form a part of their culture and castigates the dehumanising impact of systemic oppression on an individual's identity. Martha Quest of the *CoV* series experiences much internal strife, for her sensitive intellectual self is agonised by empty political and philosophical ideals as she travels from a colonised Rhodesia to a post war London. She suffers several relationships, as she journeys across a changing social and political landscape, holding onto her notions of identity that are shaped by the struggles she goes through. The writer employs a fractured and divided narrative structure to portray the fragmented personality of Anna Wulf in the *GN*. Anna's character unfolds in a series of storytelling and narrative techniques which classify and organise her 'self' and her life. Through a breakdown of traditional story-telling conventions, the character challenges societal expectations, prejudiced notions of psychological integration and explore the boundaries of relationships. Lessing's interest in psychology is further evident in *BDH*, in which she studies the workings of the human mind. The protagonist, Charles Watkins, experiences a psychological collapse leading him to explore his own psyche. This introspective exercise allows the writer to probe the intricacies of self-awareness and consciousness, unveiling the progress of a character's mental state. In *SBD*, Kate Brown takes the revolutionary

decision to step away from her duties as a wife and mother to analyse her identity, purpose of life and what she means to others. The novel chronicles her journey away from discourses, that she had mindlessly followed, to her emergence as an authentic individual. The *Fifth Child* offers another compelling character study, in the picture of a family that begins to deteriorate and fall apart after the birth of a challenging child. The writer skilfully presents the pressure on familial relationships burdened further by people's expectations which ultimately transform their lives. In *The Good Terrorist*, the author relates the story of a group of idealistic activists whose political aspirations conflict with their initial intentions. The characters undergo key changes as they struggle to reach a consensus about their convictions, thereby becoming the media for exhibiting Lessing's engagement with the intersection of political ideologies and personal principles. Her short stories prove to be potent documents showcasing powerful glimpses into the progress of characters placed in diverse contexts. "To Room Nineteen", to refer to one, analyses the gradual unravelling of a superficially perfect marriage as the protagonist, Susan Rawlings, challenges general expectations and her own desires. As with her character studies, this story probes the multifarious versions of identity and the consequences of a repressed self. Her resourcefulness as a writer manifest in her ability to generate characters belonging to various time periods and backgrounds. Lessing's characters navigate dynamic landscapes that shape their identities, past and future. These landscapes include the challenges of post-colonial Africa, a war-torn Europe especially a post-war London, the political cataclysms of the 1960s, and the intricacies of contemporary life. She has crafted out human beings in her works who do not merely carry forward the plot of the book, but become elaborate studies in psychology and socio-political dynamics. It is her deep and original understanding of the human predicament that

she transforms into verbal representation of depth and authenticity. An analysis of her work in character evolution is a multilayered journey of political, psychological and social magnitude. Her nuanced depictions supply the readers with philosophical insights into the dynamic nature of human experience and responses.

At the centre of Lessing's debut novel, *GS*, is Mary Turner whose lack of wisdom and worldly knowledge, along with the social circumstances that she is forced to adapt to, make her a failure in managing her household, relationships and authority resigning her to a tragic fate – one of having to wait for her own death for deliverance. She fails at a marriage that she believed would offer her meaning and ends up being disgusted with the incapability and weakness of her husband, Dick Turner. Mary's profound revulsion for the conventional sexual relationship stems from witnessing her mother being a passive recipient of her father's empty, drunken, meaningless sexual advances. The marriage offers her no joy and contrary to her expectations leaves her disappointed having taken away her economic and emotional independence. Her repressed sexual desire resurfaces in a perverted sense, as she finds herself being attracted to Moses, the black African servant. While she fails at managing the natives on the African backveld where her British husband has set up his farm, she comes to develop an intense desire towards Moses. Although characterised by an experimental mode of narration, the interspersed omniscient narrator and the point of view of Mary provide readers with the apparent notion of the novel possessing a conventional style of storytelling. The issues dealt with like race, gender, politics and the human mind blend and the tone of irony and sarcasm comes to the fore through sporadic comments by the narrator. The consensus of realistic narration holds that human life possesses a commonness and that human

beings inhabit one world with shared meanings and experiences. Such everyday experiences find expression in realistic fiction that strive to depict life as it is. Writers often employ narrative strategies such as detailed characterisation, coherent plots and context rooted in reality. The language used is natural and reflect authentic speech patterns, which allows the readers to relate to the context and characters. In *GS*, the writer provides an intricate development of the protagonist, narrating a nuanced tale of her thoughts, emotions, relationships and vulnerabilities. Unfolding during the colonial era, the novel describes the racial conflicts, economic differences and power structures prevalent in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The novel progresses in a convincing logical manner, with the exception of the first chapter, with the cause and effect of events being clearly drawn out. The story employs a combination of flashbacks and present-day narration to recount the murder of Mary and the context that leads to this tragic fate. The challenging landscape and culture of the African farm is explained in painstaking detail, which along with the vivid depiction of the harsh realities, adds to the realistic quality of the novel. The writer offers a critical commentary on colonisation, racism and the oppressive trait of the society in which the characters live, using the framework of a realistic narrative that enhances the impact of the story. The *GS* follows the principles of realism, maintaining a faithful representation of the world being described, ensuring the relatability of characters and addressing socio-political issues of significance. The novel ensures a commitment to authenticity that allows readers to engage with and deliberate on the complex realities it explores.

Mary's life has been one of great emotional turbulence as she journeys from being a love deprived child – that sees her as a daughter of parents who have neither

love nor respect for each other – to being a love deprived thirty-year-old, married to a man who provides her neither joy nor fulfilment. She lives through a period of youthfulness when she gains some stability being economically independent and yet loses it all as she gets married and moves to a white farm in Africa and is forced to take up authority over the native farm help. She comes across as a perturbed and confused young woman who attempts to save her marriage by placing hope on her husband getting better at managing their life and affairs. Once she resigns to the fact that he cannot live up to her expectations, she spirals into an abyss of despair and helplessness, incapable of achieving any emotional stability. The novel begins with a newspaper excerpt that reports her death, thus setting the tone and context for the unravelling of a tragic tale. As the omniscient narrator declares that “The newspaper did not say much” (*GS* 9), the readers sense a foreboding atmosphere of complexity and indeterminacy, making them doubt if the written word can do justice to the stories of human beings. It is only in the second chapter that the story truly begins with the narrator referring to Mary’s troubled childhood, youth and unsatisfactory marriage to Dick leading to an unconventional and questionable affair with Moses. The physical context of her life presents an irony as she is surrounded by vast stretches of land and yet feels claustrophobic and tied up. More importantly, the writer presents the protagonist as lacking any introspection and self-reflection, which is a stark contrast to Lessing’s later novels which show characters to be intensely self-aware. Mary’s sense of self is shaped to a great extent by the unwritten tenets and social expectations placed upon her by her colonial community. She has not had much contact with the African people:

She had never come into contact with natives before as an employer on her own account. Her mother's servants she had been forbidden to talk to; in the club she had been kind to the waiters; but the 'native problem' meant for her other women's complaints of their servants at tea parties. She was afraid of them, of course. Every woman in South Africa is brought up to be. In her childhood she had been forbidden to walk out alone, and when she had asked why, she had been told in the furtive, lowered, but matter-of-fact voice she associated with her mother, that they were nasty and might do horrible things to her. (58-59)

While white men exercise power over women owing to their patriarchal superiority, the black men portrayed as being violent, savage and sexually threatening, keep women subdued due to the fear that such images invoke in them. Here, discussions about the Black Peril stereotype, which refers to the fear among colonial settlers that the natives were attracted to and hence liable to harm white women, are relevant. This scare led to the fear among women intensifying while it was taken as an excuse by the white men to engage in inhuman acts of subjugation and slavery against the native black people. One of the areas that has been documented as having experienced Black Peril in grave intensity is Southern Rhodesia where it spread during the years before the First World War. This gains much significance when read in congruence with the life of Lessing as she spent her initial years in the same place. The portrayal of Mary as a woman having great revulsion towards the black people initially, but later finding herself drawn towards Moses who receives her repressed sexual desires, can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt of the writer to subvert the stereotype that had been prevalent during her time. The plot then

becomes a political statement aimed at clarifying the injustice of such inhuman and unreasonable situation of embittered racial tensions and ethnic discrimination. The discourse of Black Peril succeeded in ingraining certain convictions: that the white women were physical possessions of the white men; and that, black men were prone to giving in to their primal instinct and sexual energies without any control. This was ingrained by the colonial settlers within the people of their community, especially among the women to ensure that the white supremacy and the racial, patriarchal and ethnic order was adhered to without any opposition. It is this order that is broken by Mary as she finds herself being attracted to Moses.

Mary's regressive evolution is largely due to the lack of a self-awareness, which consequently makes her succumb to social pressures. The identity that she has forged for herself is the collective identity which leads to much conflict towards the end of her life and the end of the novel. She believes she is a misfit and decides to marry to satisfy the expectations of people around her. Hastily abandoning her initial notion of self, she takes up roles that she fantasises will lend purpose to her existence and endow her being with meaning, thereby promising acceptance in her community and among the people around her. Thus, desperate to conform she invites her own tragedy. Her failure can be attributed to her desperate attempts at internalising the accepted ideologies of imperial, racial and social superiority. But while Mary's character remains weak and incapable of absolute compliance with the norms, subsequently dwindling into regression, insanity and death, the writer nevertheless draws her out as a symbol of protest as she breaks the conventions of racial superiority and engages in an amorous liaison with a farm labourer. Initially, she aligns with her culture's racist colonial views, recoiling at the "reeking bodies of

the working natives” (69) and perceiving black women as “strange; ... alien and primitive creatures with ugly desires she could not bear to think about” (95).

However, her accidental observation of her black houseboy Moses washing himself triggers a shift. In this voyeuristic moment, she experiences a paradoxical arousal and the repulsion she experiences and believes to harbour, changes into a sort of “dark attraction” (154) that confuses her. This episode marks a pivotal point where Mary, through voyeurism, begins to transcend the rigid racial divide, acknowledging Moses’ humanity – and thereby the humanity of the natives – for the first time:

What had happened was that the formal pattern of black-and-white, mistress-and- servant, had been broken by the personal relation; and when a white man in Africa by accident looks into the eyes of a native and sees the human being (which it is his chief occupation to avoid), his sense of guilt, which he denies, fumes up in resentment, and he brings down the whip. (144)

Mary transitions from an early repulsion to a later voyeuristic engagement, and from an optimistic expectation of conjugal life to a state marked by disgust and indifference. Her once determined and expectant self that hopes for a dynamic existence evolves into a passive resignation, awaiting an end of despair, dejection and death. This metamorphosis reflects a shift from a thoughtless and capricious conformist to an inadvertent non-conformist who disrupts established traditions, thereby deconstructing the conventional narrative of colonial superiority. Jeannette King comments upon this when she says that Mary’s lost notions of self is both decisive and crucial as she finds her idea of herself to be destroyed and is unable to recreate herself. It must be noted that she “split into two selves, the one who feels totally without power, and the other whose power is ‘borrowed’ from the system

which enforces her own oppression” (12). Thus, Mary startlingly recognises her transformation into a mere semblance of her former self. Once embracing the belief that “the world was a miracle of colour” (192), she was confronted by a stark contrast: “Step by step, she had come to this, a woman without will, sitting on an old ruined sofa that smelled of dirt, waiting for the night to come that would finish her” (195). Her evolution also remains significantly incomplete, for she cannot reconcile with the disappointment she feels about her husband’s incapacity, is unable to embrace the desire she feels towards Moses, transitions from being hopeful of positive change to being passively indifferent and most significantly fails at her attempt to disengage from traditional colonial hierarchies, reverting to her initial inclination of conforming to public expectations. This regression becomes evident when she distances herself from Moses following an intimate encounter, prompted by the presence of Tony Marston, thereby succumbing to prevailing norms and perceptions. As she spirals into utter confusion regarding her actions, the justification for the same, her defences, the consequences she would have to face and the person she had become, she becomes a shadow of herself, with a constant sense of impending doom:

The idea of herself, standing above the house, somewhere on an invisible mountain peak, looking down as a judge on his court, returned; but this time without a sense of release. It was a torment to her, in that momentarily pitiless clarity, to see herself. That was how they would see her, when it was all over, as she saw herself now: an angular, ugly, pitiful woman, with nothing left of the life she had been given to use . . . (194)

In this context, a study of the confluence of power relations and identity assist in understanding the progress of Mary's characterisation. At the beginning of the novel, she is shown to be incapable of considering black people as fellow human beings. She refuses to see how any person can have a personal relation with the black natives. She is disgusted with and fears their presence, which makes her carry the thong of a leather whip wound around her wrist as she goes about supervising them. This piece of leather gives her the assurance of an authority which she does not seem to possess in reality. She assigns a group identity to the natives, calling them "gang of natives" (117). However, the seeds of an inner turmoil that exposes the conscience within Mary comes to the fore when she gets enraged by a servant who carried a "blank, neutral surface" and answered in "a soft neutral voice" (68). Mary is so frustrated by the neutral stance of the servant that she feels like throwing a plate in his face so as to elicit some sort of human expression, even if one of pain. This 'absence' affected by the natives – referring to the attempt by the native people to remain subdued, neutral and quiet – is subverted by Lessing as the novel progresses. For, the absence is then assumed by Dick who becomes unavailable and distant to Mary while the presence of the black houseboy, Moses, gains greater space and significance in her life: "Dick became to her, as time went by, more and more unreal; while the thought of the African grew obsessive. It was a nightmare, the powerful black man always in the house with her, so that there was no escape from his presence. She was possessed by it and Dick was hardly there for her" (167). The American literary critic, professor and historian, Henry Louis Gates Jr. in the essay titled "Introduction: Criticism in de Jungle", emphasises the problematic effect of portraying 'blackness' as a negation or politically subversive canvas. When implemented for literary impact, this portrayal may carry potential consequences,

yet its insistence by the prevailing white community introduces political threats. Gates' focus in this essay revolves around an analysis and exposition of what 'blackness' entails and its prospective manifestations. Conventionally interpreted as a form of negation, Gates acknowledges novel ventures to define 'blackness' as a pulsating spirit, an active presence being cultivated in response to the traditional historical narrative that depicted it as an absence for over two and a half millennia. Gates expresses trepidation regarding the danger associated with deriving "the terms of one's assertion from a discourse the universe of which has been determined by an Other" (125). He underlines the intrinsic irony in endeavours to establish a black identity within Western languages, wherein blackness is fundamentally characterized as an absence or negation. These ironies are evidently observable in *GS*.

Mary's association with Moses begins with an incident of asserted power over the native. She whips Moses that makes him immediately engage in his work, giving her a sense of power but not before also inducing a fear within her as the native turns to look at her. These contradictory emotions of power and powerlessness place her in a confused state of alliance within the surrounding community. In another instance, Mary watches Moses washing himself and he uses non-verbal cues to demand privacy. He seems to gain some power over her after this, as he forces her to treat him like a human being. This later develops into her recognising him as an individual, consequently changing her initial attitude of supremacy. However, Lessing presents Mary as being emotionally and ideologically weak, thereby leaving the character to feel perturbed in the face of such changes. The writer also employs narrative tricks to communicate this weakness by allowing Charlie Slatter to carry on with the narrative. Slatter becomes the spokesperson of

the farmer fraternity as he holds that the whites cannot stoop beyond a specific level. Tony Marston is given a more distanced voice by the author as he wonders how Mary evaded the barrier so firmly placed by the superior whites. While the writer positions her as a statement against the injustice of practices that propagated the ideology of racial supremacy and stereotypes like the Black Peril, Mary evolves into a symbol of fragmented feminine identity who also exhibits the fault in the patriarchal structuring that leaves women on the fringes of possessing a complete individuality. She is thrown into turmoil, not merely because of the racial supremacy that places her above the natives, forcing her to refuse them an identity, but is also victimised by the lack of an individuality owing to power relations arising out of gender discrimination. It is this contradictory position of authority and powerlessness, this situation of being in charge and not having any agency at the same time, this flux of having an identity yet losing it to established power structures that Mary finds herself in; her response is not to carve out an identity of her own but to wait for death after a mental breakdown. Thus, the writer has made a deliberate attempt in the designing of a character who becomes an articulate advocate through her death. Catherine Belsey discusses this plight of women:

To take a familiar instance, women in our society are at once produced and inhibited by contradictory imperatives. Very broadly, women have access both to the liberal-humanist promise of freedom, self-determination and rationality, and at the same time to a specifically feminine ideal of submission, relative inadequacy and irrational intuition. The attempt to locate a single and coherent subject-position within these conflicting models, and in

consequence to find a non-contradictory pattern of behaviour, can create intolerable pressures. (54-55)

It is seen that Mary's inability to think beyond notions established by the collective shape her identity rendering her incapable of a transformed self. She is also deprived of advanced faculties of communication, with the writer giving her an introvert colouring; she retreats into herself, keeping her vulnerabilities, fears and anxieties to herself. As the novel progresses, she is shown to leave certain sentences unfinished. Thus, unable to reconcile with the expectations and failing at formulating her own ideology, the protagonist disintegrates completely losing any semblance of unity or coherence between her own conscience and the collective decree. The evolution of Mary enhances the thematic and formal structuring of the novel and throws into focus such themes as the position of white feminism, racial supremacy, colonial authority as well as the shaping of the psyche of the characters.

The journey of self-discovery that Martha Quest sets out on, in the quintet series *CoV*, begins with her as a sensitive adolescent, intensely influenced by iconoclastic authors growing up in a world reeling under the aftermath of a world war and heading towards a second one and engaging in conflicting views and ideologies with the people around her as she becomes increasingly disturbed by matters like race, authority and power. Martha grows up on a farm of white settlers in Africa, as the daughter of colonial minded parents who embrace their white identity to exercise power over the natives. The five novel series shares with the readers the adolescent Martha's protests, a hasty marriage that yields no contentment and a disturbed motherhood, both of which she abandons in her quest for identity. Lessing makes her set out on a trip to her homeland, England, after getting involved

in Communism that turns out to supply no answers, no joy. She reaches England only to get thoroughly disillusioned by the landscape, weather and a growing sense of rootlessness in place of a sense of belongingness that she had been yearning for and dreaming of since her childhood. The writer makes her question the hollow existence and pompousness of the left political organisation in the third novel as she becomes increasingly sensitive to politics and political differences. A failed second marriage, an atomic attack, a fantastical journey that takes the survivors onto an island and a broken protagonist who loses all sense of individuality and selfhood conclude the series. Martha thus goes from being trapped within unjust dichotomies of white/ black, superior/ inferior, master/ slave to being hopeful of liberation to finally recognising the lack of an identity as she gives into the pressure of the collective, finding herself to have evolved into that which she had tried so hard to run away from. However, what sets Martha apart, is the fact that she is constantly struggling against the unjust. She must be applauded for her perseverance in fighting the forces of colonial racial subjugation; she has been placed on a higher pedestal than Lessing's first female protagonist, Mary Turner, by endowing Martha with higher intelligence, reasoning faculty and a critical bent of mind from an early age:

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, unescapably beset with problems of race and class; female and obliged to repudiate the shackled women of the past. She was tormented with guilt and responsibility and self-consciousness. (14-15)

The socio-cultural milieu that Martha grows up in, demands significant deliberation to comprehend the evolution of her character. As a white settler growing

up on an African farm, her identity is coloured by various bonds, strings and affiliations. Conflicting ideologies shape her understanding leading her to question notions of power. Also, having grown up on a farm, she becomes emotionally attached to the soil and yet, harbours a longing for her homeland that she believes can reinstate stability and meaning to her identity. Martha's character is constantly thrown into situations of despair as she faces debilitating forces of pressure from having to conform to notions that she finds disturbing and unfair. However, she exhibits a strong sense of perseverance as she fights against the narrow mindedness of her parents, the failure of the Communist Party and the tragedy of a holocaust. She engages in a constant struggle to rise above such differences and envisions a world that has overcome such discrimination:

She looked away over the ploughed land, across the veld to the Dumfries Hills, and refashioned that unknown country to the scale of her imagination. There arose, glimmering whitely over the harsh scrub and the stunted trees, a noble city, set foursquare and colonnaded along its falling flower-bordered terraces. There were splashing fountains, and the sound of flutes; and its citizens moved, grave and beautiful, black and white and brown together; and these groups of elders paused, and smiled with pleasure of the sight of the children – the blue-eyed, fair-skinned children of the North playing hand in hand with the bronze-skinned, dark-eyed children of the South. (17)

It is this ideal world that Martha dreams of and envisions. She does not share her mother's belief that all natives are "filthy and dirty and disgusting" (289). She finds within herself contradictory forces that shape her understanding of the world and thereby her identity. As an adolescent she devours books of the nineteenth century

which fall short of enlightening her about the world she was living in, which was essentially modernist. Ravaged by the world war, Martha who had been exposed to the white settler supremacy and consequently being a part of the same, should have given in to the forces of racial imperialism, but does not. She is constantly involved in an exercise of self-assessment and becomes the vehicle through which the novelist exposes her thoughts and views about the evolution of a female consciousness. In the attempt to do so, the writer places Martha in a situation of much complexity. She finds herself torn between various groups, being a member of which she has to accept or mould her views/ affiliations so that a position of consensus can be arrived at. She has to navigate between the subjugated native Black community, the domineering male White community and the community of imperial farm owners/ settlers who impose their assumed superiority fiercely.

Martha believes that love has the power to bring her joy, fulfilment and a sense of identity. She gets married and initially gains a social identity. However, she soon realises that matrimony has shackled her physically and emotionally leaving no space for personal development or self-assessment. She feels that a trip to England will yield her identity and belongingness but the journey and stay also prove futile as she sinks deeper into an alienated existence. Her ideas about life, marriage and love come from books which fail to prepare her for the arid bonds, unsatisfactory roles and fragmented identity that she finds herself suffering with. She asks “If you read novels and diaries, women didn’t seem to have these problems. Is it really conceivable that we should have turned into something quite different in the space of about fifty years? Or do you suppose they didn’t tell the truth, the novelists?” (*PM* 229). Martha carries the burden of patriarchal subjugation that the women before her

were subjected to. It is this same patriarchal discourse that her female friends have internalised. This makes them advise her regarding her wifely duties and leaves her shocked and in stark disagreement with their opinions that hold how women must be happy to be married and to bear children. Martha realises that women have failed to recognise the forces of masochism and misogyny that have governed their existence and identity for ages. She perceives in her mother and in other matronly characters the dangerous metamorphosis into insignificant individuals with no sense of self or independence. She decides that she will not fall into the trap of such a tradition and decides to establish her own views and live according to her own terms. While the writer draws the protagonist out to be an optimist who believes that she can change into a woman uninhibited by such forces, yet she steps into moments when she feels that she “could take no step, perform no action, no matter how apparently new and unforeseen, without the secret fear that in fact this new and arbitrary thing would turn out to be part of the inevitable process she was doomed to” (90). The mother-daughter conflict presented through arguments and conversations between Martha and Mrs. Quest is far more developed and extensively detailed in comparison to *GS*. In an analysis of Martha’s character, her disagreement with her mother gains much importance as her identity is deeply affected by her attempts – often futile – to not grow into a version of her mother. She disagrees with the belief system that her mother advocates whether it be in the dealing with natives or the upbringing of her daughter Caroline. The problematic relationship that she shares with her mother may be the reason for a failed motherhood and unsatisfactory maternity that Martha experiences. At a point, she gives into depression for she believes she has grown into a failure, unable to fulfil what women have apparently effortlessly been doing for thousands of years – the role of being a mother. Motherhood – conventionally held

to be responsible for completing a woman and lending her a purpose in life – only leaves her in grave doubts for she can find neither a purpose nor meaning in her life on account of having become a mother. If anything at all, she considers pregnancy a cage that traps women depriving them of any sort of freedom, liberty and independence. Martha laments how she loses the agency and independence she possessed with the arrival of her baby. She stands in contrast to Mary Turner, who is sensitive towards the plight of her mother. Her mother who is a victim of male oppression finds a confidante in Mary who can only remember with sorrow the pain her mother has gone through. Her cold sexuality and parched feminism stems from having empathetically shared her mother's grief of a failed marriage and meaningless conjugal life.

As *PM* progress, the readers find in Martha, a constant sense of disapproval of men's treatment of women. The writer presents various interactions she has with the male characters, to portray the masculine superiority established by the patriarchal forces in the society. As Sheila Rowbotham comments:

Our ideas of what is 'feminine' are a strange bundle of assumptions, some of which belong to the Victorian middle class and others which simply rationalise the form patriarchy assumes in capitalism. Either way the notion of 'femininity' is a convenient means of making us believe submission is somehow natural. When we get angry, we are called hysterical. (23)

Her association with the Jewish boys with whom she enjoys a warm friendship ends when she hears that one of them is attracted to her. She stops visiting them only to give rise to a misunderstanding that she decides so because of their race. This shows

the misconceptions and expectations of men. Had Martha's choice been respected, no misunderstanding should have arisen. She also develops an attraction to a young man, Donovan Anderson, who displays her before his friends. She is disturbed and uncomfortable with Donovan's attitude and severs all relations with him. She marries Douglas with the belief that he would in some way help her gain a sense of self. Reflected here is the social pressure that Martha is weighed down with; the feeling that a marriage would lend her life a sort of validity. However, she is disgusted with Douglas' habit of showing her off and considering her an acquisition. She detests the value she is given on the basis of physical attributes and utility. She refuses to be the coy wife who should look good for her husband, be satisfied with and proud of his wealth, and be happy about being paraded around among his friends. Martha soon realises that her marriage had been a mistake and feels suffocated and trapped by her role as a wife. She decides to divert all her attention to activism and politics, but faces intense societal pressure to fulfil her duties according to conventional gender roles with the people around her asking her to remain "properly married" (353). Lessing also discusses such matters as loyalty and fidelity, presenting instances which reveal the hypocrisy prevalent in the world; a man having an affair seems not a serious offence as much as a woman engaging in an attraction outside her marriage. The suspicion that Douglas harbours and the incessant questioning that he subjects Martha to, is symbolic of the double standards that the world so unfairly allows the society to propound. Douglas resorts to violence and abusive language when he finds out that Martha has been associating illegitimately with another man in his absence. Lessing cleverly portrays how Douglas who has had several affairs at his place of posting considers himself above judgement, while a similar fault on the part of a woman is unbearable. While

Douglas does offer Martha material comforts, the consistent mandate to please the husband, to comply with his demands, to compromise on her individuality, frustrates Martha who has always sought liberty and self-reliance. Her dissatisfaction grows when Douglas upon whom she has placed no restrictions, discourages her from taking the Red Cross Course that she wanted to do. Confronted with such shocking male hypocrisy, Martha is appalled at the level of double standards which makes “intelligent and liberal minded men lapse back into the anonymous voice of authority whenever their own personal authority is threatened, saying things of a banality and a pomposity infinitely removed from their own level of thinking” (106-07).

As Martha becomes increasingly politically conscious, she diverts most of her energy into the Communist Party’s work and becomes increasingly pro-native. She works diligently for the uplift of the black natives. She becomes intellectually and ideologically attracted to another member who is dedicated to the same cause. In the novel, *RS*, she enters a second marriage that offers no respite and no novelty as she finds herself being treated as a possession by her second husband, Anton Hesse. The reason for this marriage growing bitter is probably aggravated by the change in Anton after marriage. When Martha notices that “a new personality had been born in Anton with the marriage,” (*RS* 285) and that the tone of his voice changes while talking to her “...when she had said so, told her in a new voice, also acquired since marriage,” (285-86), she is disappointed and feels betrayed. He had not gotten over the memories of his first wife and she quickly finds that she holds no significance in his life. Martha, who had hoped for companionship, love and intellectual partnership finds herself bound to a man who offers her no respect, no conjugal joy and no

sexual satisfaction. Thus, drained socially, emotionally and intellectually, Martha decides to leave him and subsequently gets involved with another man while still married to Anton. Love, that she hopes will complete her and help shape her identity in turn leaves her dejected. Married life, that she hopes will offer her affection and belongingness, demands that she give up her individuality thereby making futile all her efforts at understanding and accepting herself. She is constantly bogged down by collective expectations and inner turmoil that place an eternal pressure upon her, influencing her decisions, choices and thereby her future. *RS* also portrays the internal degeneration of the Communist Party along with Martha's advancement as an activist. From being a novice who was in awe of others working in the Left political context, she evolves into someone who could take up duties and inspire others:

Martha had been used to watching her [Jasmine] descend demurely from a platform with her files and papers, or selling pamphlets at the door, feeling that she must be entirely superior order of person, not because she was competent, but because competence was the result of service in public causes of one kind or another.

Now Martha could do these things herself. She had learned without knowing she was learning by being with Jasmine so much of her time. She understood she had become for others what Jasmine had been for her... (9)

As her personal life disintegrates, she grapples with Communism that gives birth to further conflict within her due to the contradictory nature of her ideology and the practices (ill-practices) around her. The contemporary socio-political context and her

mental disturbances aggravate as she involves further with them. Anton, whom she believes can be the source of her motivation for activism, however, turns out to be hollow and lacking in substantial principles, merely giving in to a romantic notion of the movement without getting involved comprehensively. The presentation of Anton as a political ideal has been employed by Lessing to reveal the patriarchy which allows and encourages men to be politically active – and thereby come across as being more politically conscious and aware – while women are not given the same merit. The writer also intelligently allows Martha to be sensitive towards the failure of the Communism she upholds while Anton is portrayed as being unaware of the meaninglessness of his actions. The evolution of Martha, especially in *RS*, is also the exposition of political ideals that the author wishes to exhibit before the readers. Martha becomes the spokesperson of the author's politics, political consciousness, political awareness and political dilemma. In *Walking in the Shade*, Lessing says:

I have been tempted to write a chapter headed 'Politics', so that it could be skipped by people who find the whole subject boring, but politics permeated everything then; the Cold War was a poisonous miasma. And yet it is hard from present perspectives to make sense of a way of thinking I now think was lunatic...But I am talking of a generation, and we were part of some kind of social psychosis or mass self-hypnosis. I am not trying to justify it when I say that I now believe all mass movements – religious, political – are a kind of mass hysteria and, a generation or so later, people must say, But how *could* you believe...whatever it was? (capitalisation of B and italics as in the original). (53)

It is this intention to present the perspective of the times that makes Lessing write the *RS* with characters like Martha and Jasmine, the former having grown into an individual with idealistic views of equality and the latter being one who shares this vision. The book opens with the characters Martha and Jasmine involved in imagining a vision of an ideal town that would rise in the future; “Each saw an ideal town, clean, noble and beautiful, soaring up over the actual town they saw.” (*RS* 40). This image is accompanied by a general feeling of exalted happiness as they rest upon their conviction that such a future is indeed possible. Martha has grown into a sympathetic and egalitarian minded individual who detests racial supremacy and upholds the fundamental rights and rightful place of the native blacks in the society.

A significant development in the character formation of Martha is when she realises how she has been allowing herself to be influenced by external forces. Although engaged constantly in her quest for individuality, she had inadvertently given in to various external opinions, internalising conventional roles, adapting to matrimony and even bearing a child as a result of the acceptance of people’s viewpoints. Herein lies the complexity of Martha’s character, for she does both – realise and resent – at the same time: realise that she has been at the receiving end of the community’s conventional notions compartmentalising herself into patterns and expected roles, and resenting this very fact. She contemplates towards the end of the novel thus: “Why is it I listen for the echoes of other people in my voice and what I do all the time? The fact is I’m not a person at all, I’m nothing yet – perhaps I never will be” (333). This marks a fundamental change in her character as her determination to draw out an identity for herself, that had been the driving energy of all her decisions, meets a setback with this revelation. Her intense struggle to

maintain a distance from all that had shaped the women around her finds her moving closer to set patterns and norms. It is this protest that she assumes will change the course of her life that makes her plunge into politics. But the novel shows how she fails in the same, for she is unable to see the reality in its totality and in an objective perspective. She falls into the comfort that activism offers her – a comfort that allows her to move away from wifely duties and motherhood. This is chiefly because Communism offers her hope and a sense of optimism. She believes that this ideology can change what has been damaging the past and has the power to avoid any sense of repetition thereby establishing a new order that can solve the problems of the prevalent society. Martha holds on to the faith that her dedication to Communism and the power of the Left organisation can infuse into her personal life a sense of purpose and coherence which can free her from the anarchy and authoritarianism of the traditional practices of family, gender and race. The conflicting emotions of hope and despair that colour her personal and political life forms the core of this novel. While Communism, that she feels can change the course of the world and make it better, falls short of bringing any change; Anton too disappoints her both as a political partner and a companion in life. She oscillates between joy and dejection, between success and failure in her relationship with Anton. At times, he inspires her, reinforcing her faith in a better future, but at other times, shocks her with an impracticality and romantic vision that she realises is not plausible. The novel also shows how Martha has been holding onto trauma which manifests as dreams. One dream which she believes is about her homeland, England, and the other in which she sees an ancient mysterious lizard as a symbol of the past. There is a renewed awareness within the central character of her fragmented and traumatised consciousness, as the third novel of the quintet draws to a close. She has

been disillusioned by the organisation that she had believed in, which has degenerated into mere propaganda and hollow reactionary movements. Her marriage to Anton pales and impacts her emotionally as she identifies male chauvinism in him and finds her getting trapped into what she originally wanted to escape from. The social and political decay among members of the group only further her dejection. While Martha stands out for her incessant efforts in fighting the norms, she fails to realise her limitations in dreaming out an individuality for herself and in comprehending her female consciousness. Towards the end of the novel, the reader finds Martha torn between two convictions: "One, it is inevitable that everything should have happened in exactly the way it has happened: no one could have behaved differently. Two, that everything that had happened was unreal, grotesque and irrelevant" (334). Dejected and devoid of hope, the book closes with an image of Martha laying down with her back turned to Anton who is seen analysing the discouraging situation afresh, something that gives her neither any hope nor any consolation.

The fourth novel in the series, *LL* begins with Martha waiting for the death of her father and a divorce from Anton, anticipating and preparing to leave Southern Rhodesia. In the novel, the second world war has ended leaving millions of people dead. There is disillusionment and depression caused by the absolute madness that a war of such magnitude brings. Martha gets involved in a relationship with Thomas which furthers her breakdown as she alters the boundaries of her knowledge about herself, thus gaining certain intuitive powers. She also becomes detached from Southern Rhodesia's Communist Party and joins the Socialist Democratic Party. On the personal and ideological level, she goes through intense transformations.

Towards the end of the *RS*, she meets Mrs. Van der Bylt whom she accepts as her mentor. It is with Mrs. Van that she joins the Socialist Democratic Party. The world that has undergone massive changes owing to political, social and economic disruptions, considers Communism as being the solution to the unrest and division around. Thus, people are drawn to the Communist forces that offer the hope of a world without differences and discrimination. Martha who places on people and ideology the power to offer her peace from the thoughts and ideological diversion that she has harboured since her childhood, slowly starts to realise the futility of it all. This leads to a sense of dislocation that leaves her disoriented and unhappy with the conventional philosophies upheld by others within her political circle. Images of a ruined city replace that of the ideal town that she had envisaged in the previous phases of her life. Martha thus breaks away from the pressures of conventional norms only to find herself under pressure for a new kind of knowledge. Her mental breakdown begins with this novel as she finds herself being subjected to recurrent dreams, especially a dream about a house the rooms of which, she must keep separate and a nightmare of being landlocked. While the Martha of the first three novels of the series is the writer's spokesperson of the changing times, societal pressures upon women, conventional regressive gender roles and the emergence and subsequent degeneration of the Communist Party, the final two novels present the confinement of the protagonist within the wreckage of the twentieth century post-war world. This ruin mirrors the personal and psychological disintegration that Martha spirals into. She undergoes intense physical states to reach this disintegration intentionally, with an aim to understand her 'self' in comparison to the world. Apart from dreams, she has mystical experiences that exhibit the development of new capacities within her. She receives the power to modify and restructure time: she

imagines the past and future while on trips, travels and during moments of contemplation. Images of light and water pervade her visions, becoming at different times, symbols of life, death, regeneration, enlightenment and even extra sensory experiences.

Martha finally recognises and achieves a sense of 'self' in this novel. She also recalls moments from her past that were visionary in nature, for they gain meaning at the present point in her life. *LL* presents a fusion of her awareness of self, bringing together the various understandings of herself, blurring the divisions. This is metaphorically described as "Adding a new room to her house" (122), referring to the recurring dream that asks her to keep the rooms separate. She finds ecstasy in her relationship and physical union with Thomas only to quickly relapse into not wanting such a dissolution. This conflict also mirrors her ambivalence towards her relationship, "The relationship – whatever was the right word for it – was in an altogether new dimension. They were in deep waters, both of them. And neither understood it, could not speak about it" (191). Although she engages in a lot of relationships with men throughout the series, it is with Thomas that she achieves a sense of love and togetherness that feels real and absolute. It is also with the separation from Thomas, as he leaves for Israel, that Martha begins a sort of self-reflection that leads her to philosophical and ideological ruminations. Thomas – the heavily traumatised Jew whose family had been destroyed in the death camps of Europe, who has been exiled from where he belongs – with his disintegrated soul and psychology, provides Martha with the mental, emotional and spiritual energy to identify layers of her 'self' that believes and revels in love. And yet, she does not completely comprehend her feelings in the context. Lessing presents the blend of

dilemma and knowledge born within her thus: But she did not know what had taken place between her and Thomas. 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. (268). The union of Martha and Thomas, outside natural forces and social norms – for both were married to other people – breaks the conventional patterns of marriage and hence, may be considered to be incapable of possessing meaning or truth. Yet, it is presented as the only bond that she truly involves in and relishes. The vision and dream of the house becomes intertwined in this context; while she was shown to be wandering lost in the dark, from one room to the other in the beginning of the novel, her experience with Thomas allows her to add another room symbolising new knowledge. This marks the shift of the series from realism to myth as Thomas and Martha become mythical characters – the former offering rebirth and enlightenment to the latter who is on the quest for self. Thomas' death leaves a profound impact on her emphasising the role he has in her transformation, furthered by the lack of such an impact by the loss of other men in her life. *LL* marks the culmination of love, marriage, family, reading and communism. Thomas dies and Martha steps out of the fantasy world of love that she had created. She achieves the sense of reality which she had been aiming for, with this escape. She decides that marriage is an institution that no longer caters to providing her with any sense of bonding and only pushes her into a system that she was trying to escape. The two final novels mark the ultimate degeneration of family ties as her father dies and her mother almost disowns her, unable to accept the change that has come over her. Martha who heavily depended on reading no longer finds any consolation, as even reading cannot lend any sense of meaning to the world around her. This world has

been exposed to a brutality that cannot be comprehended by the ordinary human being. Millions had been killed in a war that changes the course of the world. Human beings struggle to understand this world and the happenings around them. Finally, the last scene shows a dismal political meeting that leaves Martha thoroughly discouraged, marking the final detachment from Communism which had only been a fantasy with an unkept promise of setting everything right. She takes up resistibility for herself, no longer willing to give in to determinism and the fact that she had been shaped by the world around her. She attains a sense of heightened consciousness that makes her aware of faculties she possesses and acquires the capacity to exercise these powers.

FGC, the final novel of the *CoV* series, shows Martha as walking the streets of London in a state of elevated consciousness. She has freed herself from love, marriage, society, family and political idealism, stripping down to being her true self. Upon reaching England she gains a sense of anonymity that offers her the liberty to shake off previous labels and affiliations. She gains a freedom that allows her to be herself in a city that knew nothing about her and hence, expected nothing from her. However, her mental space is taken up by people who still have a stake in her life, “Caroline invaded her mind, the two men she had married so absurdly, her mother. Debts. They had to be paid. A great descent down, down, was before her. Then a wave would lift her up again (when?) to where she was now, on a height, and from where she could glimpse other perspectives” (*FGC* 49). She takes up the position of secretary and housekeeper to Mark Coldridge, a writer and accepts the responsibility of holding together his family, including his children and his estranged wife, Lynda, who is afflicted with mental infirmity and is confined to the basement

of his house. The writer begins a new chapter in the life of her protagonist by offering her a position that is not as central as with the other novels. No longer is the focus merely on Martha, her choices and her life. She gets associated with the lives of people in another family and can alter their futures. This can be considered a deliberate attempt by Lessing to portray and present the change in Martha from one who was constantly confused and influenced by the external world into a person who is sure about herself and the world around her. The entire stint of Martha at London shows her to have attained greater consciousness, heightened awareness and better knowledge of herself. As she intentionally slips into a mental breakdown, she becomes more confident about herself, probably also because of the understanding that what she was going through is the experience of the collective; not an isolated personal experience that had no reference points or explanation for comprehension. She grows increasingly out of herself and aligns her development to that of the collective stating:

...that if she was feeling something, in this particular way, with the authenticity, the irresistibility, of the growing point, then she was not alone, others were feeling the same, since the growing point was never, could never be, just Martha's; could not be only the property or territory of one individual. No, if she experienced and was asking questions, others looked for her as she looked for them. (534)

Martha's quest is altered as her insights about the world grow, leaving her at greater peace. She no longer searches for new, undiscovered and original methods to reach an understanding of herself. Rather, she takes up roles that she had renounced – that of a wife and a mother but with a difference. She assumes the matronly

position of being a surrogate to the Coldridge family and delves headlong into her responsibility. She becomes the Muse to the writer in Mark, a mother to the children of the household and even a companion to his wife who is confined to the basement. Once she settles into these roles, she realises that she needs a recognition of herself and have an absolute understanding of who she was. Martha realises in her interactions with Lynda that one must be willing to go beyond the ordinary mental exercises to attain a heightened state of knowledge. She subjects herself to episodes of starvation and renunciation of food, drink, sex and social life. She wills herself into a mental breakdown to gain higher perceptions and extra sensory knowledge. Her faculty to reconfigure time, her visions, mystical experiences and imagination, offer clarity and understanding. She journeys into her past, revisiting her thoughts and earlier selves in the characters and situations around her. This is a struggle as Martha and those around her work hard to recall the natural instincts and knowledge that years of education, conditioning and society had made them forget. Both Mark and Lynda guide her on this final quest to attain a unified self that explains to her, her existence and place in relation to the collective. As the plot escalates to an apocalyptic end with a nuclear disaster, forcing Martha and the others onto an island and the birth of a generation of children who possess psychic powers and extra sensory perceptions, the series becomes a metaphor of the evolution of its protagonist who goes from being a thinking and rebellious adolescent living in a white world within a black society into an individual with extraordinary senses and understanding living in a world marred by the destruction owing to a catastrophe. She creates for herself an alter ego called Matty, sometime early in her childhood, on the farm, on the high veld as an act of survival. This was an attempt to survive the rebellious thoughts she had; thoughts that stood against the prevalent white

sensibilities and was against the notions of white supremacy and imperial authority. By the end of the series, Martha descends into schizophrenia – a total breakdown – creating alternate realities for herself. From creating an alter ego to understand and survive reality, she transforms into one with heightened consciousness and intensely sensitive perception who creates her own reality to survive the world of the late twentieth century.

The novels of Lessing, especially those selected for the present study, when placed in chronological order can be taken to show a clear progress in the philosophy that the writer upholds and believes in. Her writing style, the specific affiliations, responses and development of characters, the political and ideological statement that the novels make, point to the definite changes and growth in the writer's thinking and mindset. Thus, the character of Martha Quest, introduced to the world in 1952 with greater intellect, sensitivity and sensibility, can be considered a bolder and smarter version of Mary Turner of Lessing's debut novel published in 1950. The first three works of the quintet series that Martha is a part of came in 1952, 1954 and 1958. In 1962, the writer published the seminal *GN* followed by the remaining two novels of the *CoV* in 1965 and 1969. These – *GN* and the last two novels of the *CoV* series – present characters who exhibit similarities in their quest and the methods they adopt; in their response to situations and the socio-political context of their life; in their choice of mental and emotional states and the ordinary course of events that leave them intensely impacted. Martha of the final novel almost echo and mirror Anna Wulf of the *GN*. Both the novels *GN* and the *FGC* are set in post-war London with the protagonists being single women making a life for themselves in the city. Both the protagonists are on a journey to identify, understand

and embrace their 'selves'. Although the books were written around the same time (published seven years apart, however) and while the themes overlap as does the emotional strife and breakdown presented, the characters also preserve certain distinct individual traits that help maintain the two novels as separate entities. The similarities only point to how the author, her life, her ideology and her impression find a voice through her writing. While Martha in *FGC* finds a job as a housekeeper and secretary to a writer, Anna is a writer herself who is financially independent and raises her child as a single mother. While Martha facilitates Mark in his writing as his muse and thus, goes through the struggle with him, Anna herself goes through the problems of producing literature. Anna's breakdown is a response to her life situations and a detachment from her work while Martha's is a deliberate attempt to gain a higher level of understanding by a forced attainment of emotional and irrational state. Both characters meet psychiatrists who help them understand the origin, cause and solution to their mental states. Both have tumultuous relationships and end up saturated with bonds that allow them no joy nor enlightenment. A pattern of progress can be discovered in the characterisation of heroines in the writer's career. Her novels became louder and bolder expressions of feminism, humanism, realism, psychological deliberations, mystical explorations and pedestals of political opinion over time. The *GN* became for an entire era all that they had wished to find in a novel about thinking, feeling and proactive women. It symbolised the spirit of a generation of women who wanted to speak and be understood, who wanted to introspect and discover and who wanted to accept and be accepted. As Sprague comments in *In Pursuit of Doris Lessing: Nine Nations Reading*: "What we discovered, when we read the *Golden Notebook* or the Martha Quest novels, was a writer who, it seemed, knew us better than we knew ourselves, who – as Anna Wulf

would say – ‘named’ us and the welter of ambiguities in which we floundered. *This*, we felt, was what was lacking in our study and teaching of literature. . .” (76-77).

GN opens with the protagonist, Anna Wulf, in disillusionment after a failed relationship with Richard who returns to his wife and a marriage that had gone stale. Thus, Anna is shown to be “in pieces” and afflicted by an “awful moral exhaustion” (*GN* 44). The novel is as much a document of experimentation in form and structure – a successful one – as it is an examination of the development of a woman who is on the search for truth and identity. She is so impressionably confronted with the reality in all spheres – personal, political and professional – that she finds it imperative to divide her experience and existence into four notebooks framed by a short novel that is again divided into parts interspersed between the notebooks. Her actions mirror the efforts of the author to produce a novel that takes the form of a metaphor and stands as a symbol of the protagonist’s life and consciousness. Anna and her friend Molly, whom she reconnects with after many years, are shown to be in conversation trying to pick up from where they had separated years earlier. This conversation, however, has no warmth and intimacy and the theme of a breakdown is introduced here, as the protagonist observes that all things have started cracking up as their friendship. After spending the war years in Rhodesia, she returns to London in the second half of the twentieth century as the successful author of the novel *Frontiers of War* which does well commercially, offering her financial freedom and independence. A divorcee and single mother to her daughter Janet, Anna is shown to have had many irrelevant affairs before she settles in London. The narrative moves forward with Anna and Molly taking up the roles of free women. They are independent, divorced (hence are neither bound by the shackles of

commitment nor have the security of matrimony), free to choose their way of life and yet face emotional struggle. Her mental chaos and disintegration stem from the lack of a coherent sense and integrating element that can convincingly hold together the various notions and versions of her 'self'. While these women appear free, they long for a sense of true liberation that would allow them ideological and personal freedom that seems elusive and unattainable. Anna is dejected by the moral and ideological trepidation she sees around her. She yearns for independence from men, yet is aware of her sensual longing that would keep her dependent. She wants to free herself from male domination and yet, finds herself accepting their position allowing them to control her emotions and understanding. She worries that she will face "defeat from men" and that she would be "stuck fast in an emotion common to women of our time, that can turn them bitter, or lesbian, or solitary" (421). It is this conflict that colours the independence and freedom of the women whom the author creates. Her women work hard to forge an existence of meaning and purpose through their profession, political activism and the exercise of freedom. However, they revert to being weaker versions of themselves owing to their constant need for love and dependency. "... the truth is I don't care a damn about politics or philosophy or anything else: all I care about is that Michael should turn in the dark and put his face against my breasts" (271). It is this depressing dependency that Anna's character succeeds in breaking thereby forging for Lessing's characters a new fate and a new route map for personal growth. The birth of this genre of new woman is referred to at the beginning of this novel when Molly says that "I've decided that we're a completely new type of woman. We must be, surely?" However, Anna's reply to this optimistic suggestion is that "there is nothing new under the sun" (26).

The four notebooks that present Anna's fragmented self are: the Black Notebook that details her experience in Africa and the shaping of her novel; the Red Notebook that discusses her political involvement, disenchantment and subsequent distancing from the British Communist Party; the Yellow Notebook that explores her emotions and relationships, using the vehicle of fiction, thus shaping out to be the draft of her next novel and the Blue Notebook which she maintains as a daily diary of the frank outpourings of her thoughts in life, on the roles she plays, her sexuality and desires as well as the sessions with her psychotherapist Mrs. Marks. Readers meet the different versions of Anna in an organised manner as they are taken from one notebook to the other, opening up layers of Anna's character. As the novel progresses, readers find references to and similarities between other Lessing heroines. They also find marked differences between the other heroines and Anna Wulf. On a passionate quest to discover, explore and cement her identity, Anna outshines all the other women protagonists. The central characters of her novel *Shadow of the Third*, Ella, becomes her alter ego just as Martha Quest had formed her own alter ego. Again, like Martha, Anna grows sceptical of the Communist Party and withdraws from it, ". . . somewhere at the back of my mind when I joined the Party was a need for wholeness, for an end to the split, divided, unsatisfactory way we all live" (157). After recognising the definite gap between Marxist theory and Communist practice, Anna decides to let go of political affiliation for it offers no resolution to her divided self and no solution for the broken world that horrifies her. The efforts of Anna to acknowledge her divided self is revealed as the different notebooks open up versions of her consciousness. In her attempt to understand and reveal the truth about her identity, she must inadvertently fuel the splitting of her personality and character. She sets up dialogue between her various 'selves' thereby

furthering the disintegration and collapse of her identity. These interactions also involve transactions between the socio-political context and artistic ponderings and practice. For, Anna is a woman, activist, lover, mother, friend, critic, writer and social observer rolled into one. She holds together her experiences, her failures, her disengagements, disappointments, successes and tries to integrate these into an understanding of her 'oneness'. This fragmented consciousness presents extreme manifestations of a divided conscience and identity. The structural form of the novel emphasises the split and provides the key that can unravel the truth about who she is. This is also an attempt by Anna to keep herself open and sensitive to the world around her, to succeed as a writer and overcome the writer's block that she continues to suffer from. It is through her writing that she hopes to reach a unified self, and this requires her to "enter those areas of life, way of living, education, sex, politics, class bar me [Anna] from" (76). Only then can she produce a work "powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life" (76). Anna does not hesitate in dissolving her 'self' to expand the boundaries of her consciousness in order to write about the world that would in turn offer her success in the pursuit of self.

While the characters of Lessing before Anna Wulf were symbols of political ideology, social and imperial consciousness and the conflicting versions of inner self, the *Golden Notebook* became a profound manuscript that brought to the fore the eternal conflict between man and woman. The clashing ideology is presented in a number of man-woman relationships that fall short of fulfilment and reveals the fundamental cause for the growing rift between existing social norms and women's space. A powerful criticism exposted in this regard is by Gayle Green in her book

Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change who states that men are divided from others for they are divided in themselves; she explains that they are incapable of wholeness and hence, are unable to see others as whole, often reducing women to stereotypes that erase any sense of humanity they possess. Unwilling to risk freedom, they cling onto marriage for certainty and acceptance, thereby inviting dependency (Greene 101). It is this hollowness, this depravity among men that make characters like Richard justify his illegitimate affairs claiming them to be physical needs, referring to how physical and emotional can be seen as experienced separately by men whereas women tend to blend both, for a satisfying love. It is during such painful and traumatic episodes that the various versions of her 'self' come to the fore with her acknowledging that these different 'selves' assume responsibility according to the changing situations. Such instances are also linked to writing, thereby maintaining the consistency in connecting her psychological state with the action of recording things. For instance, after Anna's conversation with Michael towards the end of their relationship, she reveals the division of her personality into different people thus:

Afterwards I fought with a feeling that always takes hold of me after one of these exchanges: unreality, as if the substance of my self were thinning and dissolving. And then I thought how ironical it was that in order to recover myself I had to use precisely that Anna which Michael dislikes most, the critical and thinking Anna. Very well then; he says I make up stories about our life together. I shall write down, as truthfully as I can, every stage of a day. (GN 297)

The same awareness of another 'Anna' hits her when she is about to leave the British Communist Party as she asks herself who is the Anna "who will read what I write?" (345). She is afraid of this other Anna's judgment and gaze and wonders whether under the influence of this 'self' she might decide not to leave the Party. Lessing, however, does not intent to present the novel as a feminist manifesto – as she has declared multiple times – but depicts the behaviour of men and women as being a response to the destructive forces of a distorted society. The end of relationships owing to such disappointments prove crucial in the development of Anna as she leaves both the Party and Mrs. Marks' sessions following her breaking off with Michael, "Michael is leaving me, that's finished"; "And I'm leaving the Party. It's a stage of my life finished. And what next? I'm going out, willing it, into something new...I'm shedding a skin, or being born again" (315). This marks a shift in Anna's understanding and thereby a modification in her efforts that take a new turn from here. She assumes authority over herself and achieves a sense of agency that allows her to change and control the course of her life. She also learns that she must search for coherence within herself, rather than searching for this knowledge in others with whom she associates or has a relationship with. She discovers that her mind can offer her that which she had been searching for elsewhere, especially among the external. It is this understanding that makes her question the authenticity of memory, for what she remembers as something important in the past may lose significance in the present. She asks herself whether she would have wanted another memory in the present. It is here that Anna realises that she has constructed facts from happenings around her and that these happenings were also constructed from events in her memory. This conflict between truth and reality, and the memory of truth and reality can be taken as a contributory factor that furthers Anna's breakdown. Faced with

confusion of what was real in the past and what was constructed by memory, she can only carry in her mind a burdensome realisation: “And now it was terrible, because I was faced with the burden of recreating order out of the chaos that my life had become. Time had gone and my memory did not exist, and I was unable to distinguish between what I had invented and what I had known, and I knew that what I had invented was all false” (538).

Emotional turmoil, psychological dilemma and uncertainty is important in the development of the character as Lessing did not merely present a crisis of the self that involved a search for identity or personal coherence; rather, her work can be considered a document reflecting the moral, political and intellectual crises of the period. The author then makes Anna spiral into a breakdown that proves to be a breakthrough. As with the final novel in the *CoV* series that shows the need for a forced renunciation of worldly pleasures for attaining a sense of higher perception, Anna too is made to explore the non-rational to understand the vast expanse of her mind and thereby, her ‘self’. As R. D. Laing has commented, “I’m aware that the man who is said to be deluded may be in his delusion telling me the truth, and this in no equivocal or metaphorical sense, but quite literally, and that the cracked mind of the schizophrenic may *let in* light which does not enter the intact minds of many sane people whose minds are closed” (27). Her retreat into herself and assessment of the differences between what is real and what constructed, begins early in the novel. She is constantly disturbed by the conflict between the capacity of art to represent and the artist’s capacity to present the truth. She holds herself at fault and criticises herself for moving away from reality. She condemns the use of imagination in the depiction of reality and reflects that her attempt to change everything into fiction

must be an attempt to conceal something from herself (*GN* 232). The failure of various artistic media, thus, is presented in the demand for film rights of her successful novel *Frontiers of the War* that, however, needs to be edited according to the sensibilities of the majority, which Anna refuses to comply with. Added to this is the loss of her confidence in how the film as a medium, that should ideally present reality, distorts the truth towards other ends. Her internal strife escalates as she finds herself facing an inner emptiness. As Janet, her daughter, goes to boarding school she retraces into her past self who is not a mother. She then plunges headlong into a feisty and passionate relationship with young Saul Green who takes up boarding at her home. Unmarried, a writer and a fellow disenchanted Communist, Saul brings into Anna's life an unprecedented energy of introspection, conflicting forces of reality and imagination, and sexual tension. They engage in love, hate, sex, passion, arguments about philosophy, ideology, reality and self. She starts falling under the influence of spells of madness; often hallucinating and seeing visions and dreams. She feels the walls closing in on her and yet remains confined indoors intentionally. She starts engaging with her inner self as the fragmentation of her mind attains the greatest heights. Her notebooks slowly start losing their exclusivity and begin to mix up with the themes they were originally designed to hold. After an episode of great hostility, psychological war and cruel self-destructive transactions with Saul, that culminate in an explosion of sexual energy, Anna emerges healed and transformed. With this final escape from the inner disunification, she accepts reality and gives up efforts at compartmentalising her thoughts and thus, herself. She thus resolves her split selves into an outpouring that becomes the golden notebook. This becomes the manuscript of her mental recovery, fostering the climactic moving away from chaos to order. It is in this notebook that all fractures dissolve and the threads of narrative

that had been kept separate come together in a final act of integration. Through a formalistic experimentation, Anna Wulf becomes the symbol of coherence and thereby, unified versions of multiple selves that people harbour within themselves, “The essence of the book, the organization of it, everything ... says implicitly and explicitly, that we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalize” (10). Thus, Lessing achieves what she had set out to: cement the fact that unity and integrated understanding can lead one to the truth.

A discussion of Lessing’s novel *BDH*, published in 1971, makes it necessary to situate the time of its writing and publication within the socio-political, geographic and temporal context of its production. Recovering from the world wars, witnessing a rise in industrialisation, agriculture, trade, decolonisation, emergence of independent countries and a consequent economic progress, the world was on an upward journey from the 1950s onwards. Scientific study and technological advancement did much towards the progress of the human race that furthered the development of modern ideas, empirical knowledge and concrete notions. However, there also arose a tendency to equate man with reason and woman with nature (and thus, the irrational) that garnered much support from the dominant discourses that preferred a patriarchal establishment of the truth, coloured by gender differences and an unequal sex war. There also emerged a stark division between the countries that were participants in technological and economic advancement and other countries deemed underdeveloped. These gain significance in the discussion of *BDH* as the author adopts newer narrative strategies and departs from the usual plot themes, embracing critical thought and expression of subjects like science, scientific temper, education and systems of representation. She critiques this generation’s

understanding of the world with all its strangeness, stubbornness, established ideological structures and apparatuses of social and political control. Charles, the protagonist, is introduced as an amnesiac found wandering on an embankment near the Waterloo Bridge with no knowledge about his identity nor any memory of his past life. He is placed under treatment at a hospital and is attended to by two doctors, interestingly called Dr. X and Dr. Y. The tension in the novel begins early as both the doctors cannot reach a consensus on the diagnosis and hence, offers contrary treatments both of which are rejected by the patient. In a delirious stupor, Charles retracts into dreams that take him through fantastical experiences and visions. Upon deeper exploration, these ramblings and reveries reveal worlds of knowledge as his journey opens up symbols, images, metaphors and engagements which exemplify the concerns of the twentieth century world. This is executed by making him emotionally and mentally unstable thus having to manage two versions of himself. He harbours within himself the waking Charles who is confined to a hospital bed and a roaming self who finds himself in an alternate universe, with a clear purpose in his life. Added to this is the real-world, real-time identity of the character revealed through letters of his wife, acquaintances and conversations that people have about him. Thus, the search for Charles' identity frames the narrative of scientific discussion, political discourse and twentieth century critique that the novel is. The writer who had been deliberating on such topics as feminism, politics, psychology, racism and colonisation, widens her representational endeavours to include the growing scientific milieu of the time. This makes Lessing foray into science fiction and the more complicated inner space fiction. She examines the recesses of the human mind, revealing faculties and possibilities that, though unconventional, can assist the human race in a successful comprehension of the world and its ways. In

uniformity with her views about the psyche and psychology, the protagonist is a victim of mental breakdown – as concluded by the doctors – and owing to the mental instability, is forced to take up a hospital bed. The tension escalates as the doctors and others deem the patient to be unwell while Charles himself gains better understanding having travelled to higher levels of existence in his dreams.

The patient is revealed to be fifty-year-old Professor of Classics at the Cambridge University earlier possessing a sound mind, an intellect par excellence and a highly reputed academic career. The novel progresses from presenting him as a “Rambling, Confused, Amenable” (*BDH* 11) patient with whom the doctors engage to find his identity, while he travels to alternate universes living with a concrete sense of self and purpose in his dreams. The patient’s family and acquaintances are introduced, who help identify and place the character within the real-world context that he belongs to. The imaginary world is reduced in representative space and the real world starts seeping in and pervading the narrative. The final resolution is when he is coerced into acknowledging that he needs an electric shock as part of his treatment that can bring back his memory and thereby, his real self/ identity. Charles’ identity becomes a concern for those around him, a fact which makes this novel different in its treatment of the quest for ‘self’ for, the protagonist here is himself not as involved in the examination of his self as the protagonists of other novels. Thus, the supporting characters gain greater importance in this novel for they reveal the various layers of the protagonist’s self. However, the reason for his identity crisis – split self and amnesia – become evident from the beginning. His visionary and hallucinatory episodes are blended with his conversations with the doctors who provide him with facts about himself from

letters and statements given by his family and friends. However, he has a subjective understanding about himself that does not align with these facts given by others, and thus, lends a poignant theme to the novel that can be read in congruence with the psychological standpoint of Lessing's previous novels, *GN* and the *FGC*. In continuing with the viewpoint propounded in these novels, Charles too becomes afflicted (endowed) with a mental breakdown, a state that allows higher perceptive powers, non-conventional states of existence, alternate understandings of reality and a liberated sense of being. It not only allows better understanding of one's self, according to the opinion of the writer, but can also contribute to the growth of an individual in particular, and the society at large. The journey of Charles can be seen as a voyage from the socially accepted Professor to the true self that he is, an identity that he had repressed. His amnesia brings out this identity but the tragedy is that the dominant ideology that had forced him to stifle his true self earlier, refuses to acknowledge the emergence of the new self in Charles. The doctors, who symbolise this inflexible power, prescribe upon him his old identity which he is trying to shake off and remark "you have no choice, Professor. We know that's who you are" (140). This assumed and privileged position of knowledge gives them the authority to exert upon Charles their version of reality – about him and the world around him. What drives him to a state of madness, thus, is not any mental frailty, but rather, the prevalent authoritative discourse that cannot tolerate his attempts to question, redefine, subvert or critique it. A rejection of the authority – as the protagonist does – is not encouraged, for the foundational existence and propounding of this ideology rests upon an unquestioned credibility and authenticity that the ideology and perpetrators of the ideology enjoy. The repressed self thus finds freedom in the dreams and visions explicitly expressing opinions,

understandings and experiencing his identity in totality, thus affirming R. D. Laing's premise that insanity is not a departure from the real but is an attempt at achieving ontological security through the expression of a different self:

What are to most people everyday happenings, which are hardly noticed because they have no special significance, may become deeply significant in so far as they either contribute to the sustenance of the individual's being or threaten him with non-being. Such an individual, for whom the elements of the world are coming to have, or have come to have, a different hierarchy of significance from that of the ordinary person, is beginning, as we say, to 'live in a world of his own', or has already come to do so. (43)

The Professor's renunciation of identity brought about by a loss of memory and apparently unintelligible and insane conversations reflect Laing's theory, bringing into focus the topics that the character (and thereby, the author) wishes to highlight.

Charles' dreams become symbolic of the counterculture that was gaining popularity during the time of the novel's writing and release. In the quickly changing and volatile world of the 1960s, there arose discourses that sought to specifically communicate dissent and disagreement with the prevalent narratives and authority, enjoyed by the states, governments, capitalist forces and scientific power labels. During the journey into the mind, Charles gains a sensitive understanding of the world and is enriched with better knowledge. On the contrary, the persona he possesses as a professor is infected with self-centeredness and indifference which can be seen as his response to a disturbing world. Repressed within his consciousness is the just sense of what is fair and true; his colleague and friend,

Jeremy Thorne, reveals that he was not always likeable and that there were many disagreeable traits in him. The amnesiac Charles travels to an idealistic world of lush greenery and abundance. He travels across the sea and is brought to a land where he finds animals, delicious fruits and a landscape untouched by civilisation or human presence. He travels and lives in an abandoned city in the centre of this land which however becomes the site of a violent conflict between the two tribes of the rat dogs and monkeys. The images become more gruesome as he becomes involved with women, female existences, and engage with them in bloodied, carnal ritual. His purpose, however, is to wait to be taken up into the heavenly 'Crystal' that would lead him to a realisation of his higher aim. His transactions with the blood-smearred women, including the primitive and wild activities they engage in, make him fear that he may have fallen from grace and may not attain a place in the Crystal. Once he achieves this end, he gains a sense of 'knowing' that provides him with a sense of self. Once within the Crystal, he realises that all people are a part of a whole and are mutually dependent. However, this is possible only through a journey into the womb like crystal that symbolises a regression into the past, which is a journey into the pre-linguistic stage. He is not able to achieve this unity once he has been initiated into the Symbolic Order. Once he becomes a part of the society, he is forced to conform to the dominant discourses. Yet, the unity is lost as no original thought that deviates from the dominant norms is encouraged within the society. Differentiating takes away the identity while similarity/ adaptation provides a validation of identity. However, this validation makes it impossible for him to leave the dominant discourse. The narrative of the Crystal within the narrative of Charles' search for self proves to be a metatext, of the fact that anything other than normality will not be accepted. It will be rejected, or will be labelled as abnormal and needing treatment,

or will be marginalised. He then participates in a convocation of the Gods where divine beings are being instructed and oriented about their descent into hell, which is in fact the earth, and their mission of saving the world from doom. This journey – and all that the character witnesses and experiences – becomes symbolic of the course of the world, the power of established hegemonies and the consequences that this race will have to face in future. Drawing up pictures of fantastical lands and creatures, imaginary interactions and whimsical associations that provide dream-like ambitious missions, the writer intensely scrutinises and presents her disapproval of the contemporary times. Thus, Charles, during his spells of madness, becomes the voice of an enlightened being who reprimands world citizens, castigates all forms of violence, condemns the existing power structures and hopes for a reformed world. As the narrator, during his insane journey, he can only lament thus as he tries to stop the war between the rat dogs and monkeys:

I cried out to them, ‘No, No, No,’ not to foul the river and then the sea, but remembered how men had poisoned all the oceans and rivers so that the beasts and fish were dying there, and so, feeling sick and hopeless, I went away, thinking that what corpses succeeded in making their way from out the dark riverine channels through the earth, and out to the waterfalls and cataracts, and from there to the wide level river, and at last to the sea – these corpses would at least be cleaner offal than the lethal filth men feed to sea creatures. (*BDH* 79)

Images of such destruction only escalate as in the graphic description of the rape and death of a female rat dog (85) which flash pictures of such violence and grotesque attack that it shocks and numbs the readers into horrified silence. Thus, Lessing

includes into the text of the novel psychological revelations, her dissent against existing discourses, a protest against assumed authority by prevalent ideologies and a vehement attack on the rising conflict and subsequent strife that leads to political, racial, geographical and ethnic wars. She criticises the society for placing upon a pedestal the ideologies adopted by those in power without a word of protest and holds responsible established systems of authority and knowledge that allow such unfairness. While in the earlier novels the characters tried to reach a coherent sense of identity, *BDH* criticises the conventional labelling process and questions the need for identification as per the dominant ideology along with the quest for self. It vouches against such categorising and classifying discourses, seeing them as detrimental to attaining a knowledge of the self. Such categorisation lack objectivity as they align to dominant ideological notions – apparently advanced societies on the merit of technological and economic superiority, term other societies ‘primitive’ and backward, doctors and hospitals riding on their educational/ qualification powers deem patients unwell (in this context – psychologically unfit), unwilling to accept or approve of a possibility that they may in fact be able to attain a higher sense of consciousness in their state:

Each individual of this species is locked up inside his own sull, his own personal experience – or believes he is – and while a great part of their ethical systems, religious systems, etc, state the unity of life, even the most recent religion, which being the most recent, is the most powerful, called Science, has only very fitful and inadequate gleams of insight into the fact that life is One. In fact, the distinguishing feature of this new religion, and why it has proved so inadequate, is its insistence on dividing off,

compartmenting, pigeon-holing, and one of the most lamentable of these symptoms is its suspicion of and clumsiness with words. (120-21)

The professional identity of Charles and the regression into amnesia – a state of ‘knowledgelessness’ – become significant in the discussion of dominant ideology, accepted discourses and the educational system followed, as the writer employs his lectures, interactions with his colleagues and the enlightenment of his peers as a critique. As Jeanette King comments, “His growing perception of the limitations of these institutions, used to justify the dominant ideology and to repress all forms of thought which threaten its security, is suggested in the retrospective narrative of the events leading to his breakdown” (59). In one of his lectures, Professor Charles holds that education must be the force that questions established discourses with the end to reform the society. It is education that can undo the errors of the past and shape out a future that is ideologically sound, ethically grounded, egalitarian and beyond differences that divide humanity today. However, it is this very system of education that upholds differences, reinforces divisions among people and countries and ultimately feeds and sustains discourses established for the benefit of the dominant power structures. While he lectures, parallel trains of thought distract him that he dismisses, but which are in fact the thoughts of his repressed self, coming to the fore. These contradictory statements that arise within him divide his ‘self’ thereby leading to a breakdown of such magnitude, that he cannot even recognise himself. This is strengthened by Lessing’s own testimony, written in the Afterword to this novel, in which she condemns an educational system that teaches children to label and define. The discussion thus reverts to the need for unity and not fragmentation. A system that only teaches to classify and divide falls short of

preparing young minds to examine critically and ask questions. They merely learn to define existing knowledge and thereby inadvertently support and propound dominant discourses. In Charles' evolution, one finds the writer's visionary message that the world will have to break away from such conventions, ideologies and dominant narratives to build a better society. The author's study of the quest for identity that featured female protagonists takes a turn here as the readers are offered the journey through the life of a male character. However, some force of alienation, separation and differentiation must be highlighted that keeps the man divided and away from the people around. If gender and gender discrimination made this possible for her women protagonists, it is the madness and related amnesia that offers Charles this element of difference. This marginalisation on the basis of an unstable mind can be equated with the marginalisation of her women characters on the basis of gender. The novel ends with the protagonist reverting to his own self, losing the gift of vision that had been granted. He cannot recall his interactions with the characters during his spell of amnesia and returns to normality as prescribed by the very same dominant forces, the superiority of which he had sought to fight against.

The author who sends Charles back into the reality that he was attempting to leave, one which leaves him broken and in a delirious state, also gives a cyclical journey to another character Kate Brown in the novel *SBD*. Published in 1973, this novel appears to be an ordinary story about an ordinary woman facing a mid-life crisis considered to be a very ordinary everyday affair. The protagonist then becomes a symbol of all middle-aged women in ungrateful and stale marriages, living a life of apparent privilege, offering services and engaged in work as expected

of them. Like them, she plays roles prescribed by the society and lose her true identity in the transaction that makes her don masks, garbs and identities quite contrary and unlike her true self. “The truth was, she was becoming more and more uncomfortably conscious not only that the things she said and a good many of the things she thought, had been taken down off a rack and put on but that what she really felt was something else again” (*SBD* 4). Wife to a famous neurologist Michael Brown, mother to four children and a respected middle-class lady belonging to the suburban community, Kate, comes across as a woman without the need for any dissatisfaction or dilemma in life. But the identity that these labels had provided for her prove to be inadequate and problematic as she starts introspecting her ‘self’, life and existence. She then inspects and evaluates her past and the multitude of myths she had been bearing for many years. These myths, expectations and discourses – forced upon her by the collective – had been governing her choices, thoughts and decisions. Once, she decides to view them critically, begins the journey of a long quest for identifying, understanding and accepting the inner self that was markedly different from the self she had been living as. The metaphor of the rack holding several different dresses symbolising personalities or roles develops into a full-blown image referred to repeatedly to point out the versions of Kate born out of the manipulations from different quarters that she had given in to. As her husband leaves for America to attend a conference, she finds herself confronted with an emptiness and purposelessness that makes her question her identity or the possible lack of it:

She was wishing that whatever stage of her life she was in now could be got through quickly for it was seeming to her interminable. If life had to be looked at in terms of high moments, or peaks, then nothing had happened to

her for a long time; and she could look forward to nothing much but a dwindling away from full household activity to getting old. (8)

She thus decides to alter the course of her life that had not deviated from the familial and social roles that she had been expected to play. She realises that she had so far been defined solely in terms of her husband's profession, his financial standing and in the degree of authority and duty she had in bringing up her children. So deep was the internalisation of these expectations that "She did not allow her appearance to bloom; she had observed early in the children's adolescence how much they disliked her giving rein to her own nature" (10). Her children had grown up and no longer needed her for emotional support thus depriving her of a purpose and yet, they required that she feed and accommodate them. She realises that she had been starved of any sense of identity, meaning and aim in life and decides that harboured within her was a truer self that she had silenced, to carry on with the roles and play the characters scripted by the people around her.

Kate gets a job at Global Foods and travels to Turkey for an international conference as part of her professional assignment. This stint away from home proves instrumental in her quest for self as she seeks to reflect on who she was, and how she had been changed by context and situations. She then travels to Spain and becomes involved in an affair with Jeffrey, a younger man who she expects will fulfil her want for love and acceptance. She returns to London and stays at an apartment on her own, away from her family, engaging in self-analysis. Thus, the novel offers Kate, opportunities to forge a different identity for herself in tune with her inner self and to lend peace to the conflicting forces of arguing voices that seek answers to the confusing abode of multiple 'selves' that she finds herself to be

housing. However, the job that she wishes will offer her agency and a different perspective asks of her to engage in the business of offering nutrition, warmth and sustenance – a role akin to that of a food provider and emotional crutch that she had been playing so meaninglessly for many years. The affair with Jeffrey, too, proves futile as he falls ill and begins to depend on her for support and care. Again, she becomes a mother figure and even a nurse to the unwell young lover. Her stay at London away from home also forces her into a role of responsibility and accountability – one that she nevertheless refuses to accept in full measure – for, at the flat is Maureen who is of the same age as her daughter and seeks answers to her personal dilemmas from her. The seemingly simple narrative of the novel gains momentum as this journey of hers is placed alongside with the voyage that she undertakes into her mind, into the inner space. As the new roles she accepts become disguised versions of the old ones that she had found to be hollow and meaningless, she travels back in time to her past and realises that she had been conned by her upbringing and conditioning. Kate ruminates:

Looking back now at the beautiful girl, indulged by her mother, indulged and flattered by her grandfather, treated always with that slightly mocking deference which is offered to girls, and contrasting her with the same young woman of only five years later, she was tempted to cry out that it had all been a gigantic con trick, the most monstrous cynicism. Looking back, she could see herself only as a fatted white goose. Nothing in the homage her grandfather paid womanhood, or in the way her mother had treated her, had prepared her for what she was going to have to learn, and soon. (102)

She feels betrayed by these forces that had left her ill-prepared for what was to come in her life. As she adapts and settles into the roles of wife and mother, she acquires skills and talents to take up the responsibilities that they came with and begins stifling her real self within her, in an anxious and hurried acceptance of what she had been prescribed and what was expected of her. So deeply ingrained in her is the need to conform to all these conventions, that she finds her mental space invaded by thoughts of her children as she sits idly enjoying her holiday in Spain. She remembers how she had been screamed at by her sixteen-year-old son for being overbearing and hence making him feel suffocated. The episode she recollects can be considered a very commonplace happening in families with teenaged children. And yet, it triggers a sense of alarm in her for having given up so much of herself only to be made to feel “like a little girl going off to sulk” or “like a cat or dog that has been kicked inadvertently by a friend” (92). As her family requires her to merely be someone who can put food on the table at the right time and maintain a homely accommodation for them, she becomes disillusioned with her past self that had complied so readily with these demands suppressing and almost annihilating her true self. As she examines the need to rescue herself from this complacency, she starts transforming in physical appearance and in her outlook towards the world and the role she plays in it.

The novel can also be seen as a critique of motherhood – a theme that finds plentiful expression in Lessing’s works. As the journey of liberation and identification of the self progresses, Kate becomes bluntly honest about her reaction to her children calling them tyrants and monsters. The notions of motherhood explored in the context of many Lessing protagonists find extensive discussion in

SBD. Mary Turner, who loathed motherhood and was disgusted by it, Anna Wulf who struggles to succeed in it and Martha who abandons it, pale as mothers before Kate who reflects, infers, concludes and places before readers observations that are absolutely relatable and of universal significance. Be it the sudden need that is placed upon young women to fight for qualities like “Patience. Self-discipline. Self-control. Self-abnegation. Chastity. Adaptability to others” (102) or the complete obliteration of the self as children take over the mental, physical and social life of the mother leaving no space, no time and no energy for personal growth, engagements or indulgences, or the guilt that comes with not performing up to or meeting the expectations of children, who have no limits to their needs and desires, “Feeling guilty seems almost a definition of motherhood in this enlightened time” (110). Kate’s journey inward reveals the seething concerns, pains and grievances that mothers all over the world have in varying degrees of gravity. Again, it is the mother daughter relationship of sorts that finally allows the character a resolution of her journey. As Maureen and Kate bond in the flat where she stays away from her family at London, they engage in conversations that help Kate retrace her steps and travel back in time to the past permitting a reconsideration and revision of her choices and decisions. Maureen is presented with the same choices that Kate was in her youth, but she exhibits more of agency in her decisions. However, Kate realises that although more empowered than she was, Maureen still chooses a future with a man and accepts roles prescribed by conventions. Thus, she too is shackled metaphorically by expectations and leaves Kate wondering whether she is free in the true sense of the word. As she engages with Maureen and continue talking to her about life and her past, she confronts aspects of herself in the memories of days gone by, in her perception about family, in her consideration and adoption of narratives of

joy that are shaped by external forces and the relationships she shared with people. The climax of her reflection and self-analysis is attained as she discusses her friend and neighbour Mary Finchley with Maureen and ponders on who Mary was, what she meant to her and what she stood for:

It took me a long time to understand that Mary was really quite different from me. From every woman I've known...Something's been left right out of her ...Nothing has taken on Mary. She hasn't any sense of guilt – *that's* the point. We are all in invisible chains, guilt, we should do this, we mustn't do that, it's bad for the children, it's unfair on the husband. Mary isn't, it's been left right out of her.

...Love – all of it, romantic love, the whole bloody business of it – you know, centuries of our civilisation – it's been left out of her. She thinks we are all crazy. (248-50)

Mary who makes Kate feel better about herself, becomes the true self – a liberty that Kate had been denied for so long. In her lengthy discussion with Maureen, she states that “At one time, thinking of Mary was a kind of comfort and support – I think a much better and finer-feeling and sensitive ...But now I wonder” (252). It is with this Mary that Kate laughs on jokes about marriage and married people. The same Mary also fails to recognise Kate at the end of the novel when she returns home, a woman changed in her attire, physical appearance and her general outlook about life.

The difference in how one views oneself and how the others view them is at the heart of this novel that employs this difference to present the split in Kate's personality. She is constantly embroiled into resolving this difference which is the

cause of her disturbance. She abandons domesticity and retreats into a flat in London away from all the labels and strings that demand that she lives in particular ways satisfying the collective forces around her. She goes on travels to other countries to free herself physically and mentally from the various *costumes* she has had to wear to gratify the world. She is thus surprised to observe how a slight variation in the way she carries herself can significantly alter the perception about her and the level of attention she attracts. She considers it extra-ordinary that the same person can be ignored or can garner attraction on the mere criteria of physical appearance, posture and general demeanour. “This is what it must feel to be an actor, an actress – how very taxing this must be, a sense of self kept burning behind so many different phantasms” (50). Throughout the novel, she seeks a resolution of the varying forces of the actual self and the pretended self. She delves deeper into an understanding of herself as she compares the definition, she has given herself and the definition that the patriarchal dominant discourse requires her to adopt. She realises with growing dismay how she has been reducing and silencing her real self into senseless role-playing on the basis of the outsider’s gaze. She had been seeing, measuring, assessing herself and has been acting on the basis of this gaze. She embarks on looking at herself objectively and discovers that who she is and what she had been pretending to be is entirely different, and that this has been adversely affecting her growth. As she reaches an impasse in her life, where she feels unwanted by her family, she is forced to re-evaluate herself and her situations in life. Her subjective identity comes to the fore and she establishes in her own mind the need to change her views, ways and even her appearance and demeanour. It is this insight that makes her choose to free herself from the social mandates that required her to remain available, attractive and conforming. It is this rebellion that she voices when

she says: “the long, grinding process of always, being at other people’s beck and call, always having to give out attention to detail, minuscule wants, demands, needs”. She says that this has turned “an unafraid young creature” into “an obsessed maniac” (105) who is “always available, always criticised, always being bled to feed these monsters” (100). She is outraged, wounded and seethes in righteous anger for being neglected by those for whom she had given up her freedom, youth and identity. She refuses to be treated as an “old nurse” (105) and wants to be much more than a mere supplier of nutrition and performer of household chores. As her emotional threshold gives up and her thoughts break free of the conventions she had wordlessly and mindlessly accepted, she feels dissatisfied and disgusted at her own passivity that had made her accept the images fed to her about herself. So, she finds no joy and no more contentment as a woman, wife, mother and lover. The complete abdication of previously formed bonds is accentuated with Mary, her friend, not recognising her towards the end of the novel. This wounded self finds expression in her dreams, a particular recurring one offering her the image of a wounded and stranded seal that she finds on the rocks on the beach, which she must rescue. She finally succeeds by returning the seal to the sea:

The sea was full of seals swimming beside each other, turning over to swim on their backs, swerving and diving, playing. A seal swam past that had scars on its flanks and its back, and Kate thought that this must be her seal, whom she had carried through so many perils. But it did not look at her now.

Her journey was over. (266)

This profound image and sequence form the climax of the novel, rendering interpretations to Kate’s journey. Subsequently, it becomes a significant element of

the plot and develops into a metaphor of the protagonist's quest for self. The seal that is returned to the sea can thus be Kate's self that achieves a sense of existence and purpose when situated within the context of the society. As Kate returns to her family, much to the disappointment of several readers and many critics, she decides to keep her altered hairstyle which then becomes a symbol of transformation.

Lessing can be charged with betraying the hopes of many who wished to see a complete relinquishment of the old Kate and the emergence of a renewed persona, but the fact that she returns with a changed appearance must be taken into serious consideration offering complex expositions. She can be seen re-entering her past life with re-awakened understanding and an unwillingness to accept the prescribed rules and roles that a dominant patriarchal and authoritative world forces upon women like her:

Her experiences of the last months, her discoveries, her self definition...were concentrated here – that she would walk into her home with her hair undressed ... like a statement of intent ... All her adult life ... she had been in an atmosphere where everything was said...She had lived among words... But now that it was important to her, a matter of self-preservation, that she would be able to make a statement, that she should be understood...now she was saying *no*: no, no, no, NO: a statement which would be concentrated into her hair. (269-70)

Often criticised of being a mundane story about an average woman living a life of little consequence, *SBD* gains meaning when read as a microcosmic text chronicling the life of women with such problems surrounding identity, self-realisation, madness, collective pressures, dominant discourses and freedom. While

the narrative is a seemingly inconsequential and simple one, it nevertheless takes the readers on the highly eventful journey of Kate from a woman caught in an unsatisfactory domestic context, to an unsatisfactory career, then to a sexual affair with a sick, young man that proves unsatisfactory and finally to an isolated woman living in a flat grappling with such disarming thoughts as identity and self. The ordinariness of the novel is lifted and the intensity settles on the minds and understanding of readers, when they realise that in fighting these ordinary problems, entire lives of women come to an end, with no consequence, no memory, no title of heroism, nor an acknowledgement of who they were or what they did during their lifetime. It is against this trivialisation of women's problems that the novel raises a strong voice of dissent. This is symbolised by the image of the sun rising in front of her after she watches the seals of the sea. Thus, a renewed and rejuvenated Kate decides to merge with the external world, of which she had previously been a part, and yet also decides to keep her identity separate, different and true to itself, free from any sort of manipulation/ conditioning. While the title suggests that Kate's future is dark and thus offers no hope, yet the actual ending of the novel places before the readers the possibility of a successful journey into oneself that can help one discover his/ her identity and return to the original positions and roles with the decision to maintain the authenticity of this new and true self.

An analysis of the nine novels yields a profound portrait of weighty concerns that govern the world and topics of much contemporary relevance, in spite of having been written more than half a century ago. While the first few novels are easier to comprehend and have less of technical experimentation, the author in her later career presents substantial reflections, fuller characters and complex techniques. The

writer draws out characters reeling under the pressures of social control, dominant ideologies and regressive discourses in the garb of progressive thoughts and philosophies. Within the clutches of internalised structures of knowledge, social and moral conditioning and limited understanding, they often grapple with much difficulty to survive in a world that prescribes action with substantial discrepancy between theory and practice. Mary Turner breaks away from conventions and immerses herself into an affair with a native, thereby shocking the white community and rebelling against assumed white racial supremacy. The consequent conflict and the lack of conviction lead to her death thus stating that Mary was not empowered with the faculty to subvert established norms and digress onto paths that had not been forged. She only reaches a tragic end in her attempt to resolve the split within her thoughts and belief systems. Martha Quest is made to undergo intense strife and struggle, having to denounce her familial bonds, have difference of opinion with her parents and involve in matrimony and affairs only to get disillusioned with people, ideologies, principles and politics. However, she does proceed towards a transcendental wholeness with a final apocalyptic disaster offering her insights and a new knowledge that liberates her and assists in the revelation of self. Anna Wulf, a study in fragmented identity, who celebrates her different and split selves in four different notebooks too goes through mental breakdown, tumultuous political journeys, passionate yet futile affairs but succeeds in achieving a psychological integration after episodes of mental turmoil and emotional breakdown. Anna who offers the image of a complex layered individual, who becomes the epitome of personality introspection and self-reflection with her literary ventures and whose life and times presented in a hugely successful experimental production of literature, has become for the world a dominant character involved in the quest for self.

Lessing adopts far more complex techniques and ventures into inner space fiction with Charles – a male protagonist whose marginalisation occurs due to the amnesia he suffers from; a fact that makes him as vulnerable as her white lady protagonists. He is presented as having received many symbolic revelations thereby providing a narrative that abounds in metaphors, mystical and fantastical elements which become artistic interpretations of the strife, challenges, past, present and future of the world. He is forced into a normality prescribed by the established powers of authority – a paradox – that leads to the interpretation that nobody, not even educated, well-placed, thinking and respected individuals can escape the actions of the dominant forces. Any attempt at altering such discourses would be met with zero tolerance and enforced solutions of prevalent dictates. Finally, Kate Brown with her mundaneness and ordinariness attains a transformation that she refuses to part with. She returns to her old life with her family, but with a different understanding of her identity. As a changed person, she decides to establish her own views against the roles mandated by the narratives that she had been conditioned to comply with. Not only do the novels present the evolution of these characters, but also how these lives are punctuated by the context of political ideologies and conflict, war and civil unrest, scientific discoveries and geopolitical changes, increasing capitalism, racial differences, marginalisation and a clash of cultures. Weaving through the narrative are references to myths, legends and the Bible as the writer employs varying degrees of realism and fantasy as well as the experimental utilisation of inner space fiction to contextualise these narratives and enhance their impact. One can read a pattern of repeated images and subjects in the evolution of characters; not only the protagonists but also in the other characters who complement the central roles and fulfil crucial functions in their scepticism,

breakdowns, epiphanies, revelation and successful integration of self or tragic disintegration of their identities. The protagonists often renounce roles in their personal lives but end up in surrogate versions of the same roles in other people's lives.

Within the varied narratives can be found similar patterns of doubt, repression, renunciation and intellectual conflict. Mary loathes motherhood, Martha renounces it, Anna struggles with it and Kate is frustrated by it – the deliberations about maternity, pregnancy, childbirth, child rearing, upbringing and the strained relationship between mother and children transcend the limits of individual novels to form a continuous strain of narrative in most of Lessing's novels. A linear progression in the development of the theme can be marked with the first character of Lessing refusing it and the subsequent characters struggling with it and the final Kate being dejected by the ingratitude of children and the futility of having given up so much to be reduced to the position of a mere nurse or servant. Discussions of Communism pervade the first few novels with the characters becoming spokespersons of the writer's disillusionment and consequent disengagement with the practice that had become farcical, ineffective and hollow. The theme of mental restlessness, turmoil and breakdown too becomes a common strain in the novels. As these themes are worked upon, the writer's protests against dominant discourses that allow no deviation from established practice and no voice of disagreement, find expression in the situations that the characters are placed in. It is this endeavour that lends the other characters importance, as they become the vehicles that carry forth these themes in their interactions with the protagonists. Dick's failure as a husband and master, Moses' petrifying hold upon Mary, the other white settlers who harbour

prejudices and discriminatory mindsets; Mrs. Quest with her racial supremacy and conformity to conventions, her strict upbringing of Martha and the constant arguments they engage in; the many men Martha involves with, especially Douglas, Anton, Thomas, Jack and Mark who lead her into thorough disappointment in love and belongingness causing her to renounce all sorts of affectionate bonds and sexual desires – all these characters offer inferences and valuable observations. Jasmine with her diligence, Mrs. Van der Bylt as Martha's mentor, Max with his patriarchal views, Tommy with his defeatist attitude, Michael and Richard with their infidelity and disloyalty, Molly with her readiness to long conversations and her retreat into marriage and finally, Saul, who shapes Anna's introspection with his passionate wild energy, leave unavoidable marks on the protagonists. In *BDH*, the following characters shape the protagonist's evolution: the doctors who become symbols of authority that cannot be questioned, Violet and Rosemary who become the revealers of the need to remain in amnesia, and the fantastical and mystical characters – both human and animal creatures. Michael Brown, Mary, Maureen, Jeffrey and Kate's children play significant roles in the development of Kate's character in *SBD*. These characters along with the protagonists offer a complete picture of Doris Lessing's ideological standpoint, politics, feminism, humanism and the vision that she had for the world. The writer has stated how she was looking to establish the compassion and humanity that the nineteenth century literature stood for. She wishes to produce literature that would cater to the contemporary times but carry the spirit of the earlier age. She writes about this in the first essay in the collection *SPV* and notes, "We are living at a time that is so dangerous, violent, explosive, and precarious that it is in question whether soon there will be people left alive to write books and to read them. It is a question of life and death for all of us; ... Artists are the traditional

interpreters of dreams and nightmares, and this is no time to turn our backs on our chosen responsibilities” (11).

The novels offer detailed studies in characterisation. The writer utilises narrative techniques to present bold themes that carry the spirit of the times while questioning dominant discourses. This is achieved through narrating the life stories of characters who are vocal, sensitive and unafraid to take decisions which do not align with the prevalent norms of the collective forces. Each of the protagonists and the characters around them, who are closely bound to them, are faced with some conflict that they seek to resolve through a journey into themselves/ their psyche. On this journey, they reconsider their past decisions, are faced with confusing choices, find internal conflict, challenge the established norms, bear psychological breakdowns and fragmentation and experience failure in love and friendship. The characters begin from a point of conflict or self-doubt and progress with greater knowledge of their ‘selves’. While *GS* and *CoV* have protagonists whose entire lives are portrayed, lending the novels a *Bildungsroman* quality, the *GN*, *BDH* and *SBD* narrate the life of central characters who have attained age and maturity and possess financial, intellectual and ideological independence to a large extent. This variety in characterisation has allowed the writer to relate novels that contain distinct time frames. While some novels like the *GS*, *CoV* and *GN* describe entire decades in the lives of their characters, the others like *BDH* and *SBD* only place before the readers particular episodes and actions that is restricted to a specific time frame that revolves around a single event. The various time techniques and narrative strategies employed by the writer makes it possible for the past and future of the plots and

characters to be revealed. This, then leads to an analysis and better understanding of the potential, features and uses of narrative time.

It is time, which is the important shaping agent that qualifies the journey the characters embark on. The past and future of the characters studied in detail reveal the impact that time affects. The various narrative techniques show the different ways in which time can be employed to aid the expression and experience of temporality. *GS* shows an inverted narrative style as it begins with the climax. Mary's murder is the first chapter with the story then being narrated as the events that lead to her murder. The story is structured as moving forward as the situations leading to the murder are unravelled, making it a flashback narrative. The temporal distance between the narrated and the narrator also becomes accentuated for the narrated has been murdered. *CoV* has often been described as *Bildungsroman* and takes the readers across two decades of Martha's life. She often reminisces about her past, referring to events that that have been described in earlier novels of the sequence. This makes readers read every page as containing the potential to become an object that will be recollected later. The present gains significance in the future which in turn describes the present moment thereby giving rise to a hermeneutic circle. The shift in Martha's circumstances and life situations have been explained within real-world temporal contexts.

Time in *GN* has been expressed in a flexible manner through a fragmented narrative. Such a compartmentalisation allows for the juxtaposition of several time frames and different themes within the same narrative. The non-linear narrative is, however, provided a logical framework by maintaining a consistent and linear narration within the separate notebooks. The regular shifts between them create a

non-chronological narrative which subsequently symbolises the way consciousness works. The use of time qualifies the narrative structure which in turn stands for the protagonist's pursuit of self. The apparent neat structure of the novel aided by the mathematical arrangement of the various fragmented parts convey the employment of time to highlight the transformation of the protagonist. The discontinuous notebooks are situated within clearly mentioned time frames and non-chronological narration that is nevertheless spread across linear notebooks that appear in a regular order in an experimental and innovative use of narrative time. *BDH* has a changing narrative situation which aids the characterisation, for the novel begins with the protagonist who has no knowledge about who he is. The narration adopts a first-person narrative voice to take the plot forward as nothing can be described about the character who does not know anything about himself. Readers are taken on a journey along with Charles. As the various correspondences and conversations reveal who he is, the narrative shifts into a third-person impersonal narrator who refers to the protagonist as 'Professor'. The plot relies heavily on flashback to present the true identity of the character. The narrative then offers the time movements of going backwards and forwards in time. While the plot moves forward with Charles' evolution taking the readers from a present situation to a future point in time, the recollection that reveals his identity is a journey into the past. This movement can be seen in *GS* as well, with the story progressing towards the unravelling of a mystery but taking the plot towards the death of the protagonist that has been detailed in the first chapter. The *SBD* has Kate who reconsiders her past in the anticipation of a future that would yield her a better understanding of her 'self'. She recollects all that has happened and even ends up reformulating opinions about previously established experiences and their reception. Through her evolution she

transforms into an individual who no longer wishes to live as per the society's expectations and familial responsibilities that reduce her to a mere nurse or housemaid. Time has not only been represented in the mode of narration but also through the protagonist's ageing and the consequent portrayal of this through her physical appearance. She no longer finds it necessary to wear her hair in a particular style and almost becomes unrecognisable as she returns to her family as a changed person.

Time – in its portrayal and in the impact it has on the characters' lives – succeeds in presenting the transformations that characters go through. All the characters whose narrated life begin with a conflict, go through strife and turmoil, are influenced by discourses and the perspective of the collective forces around, experience life-altering incidents – some cultural, some political, some psychological along with societal and familial pressures – that leave them changed. This change can be discovered in their outlook, in the views they later propagate, in the ideology that they embody and even in their changing physical appearance. The change is not always positive for Mary awaits death for her deliverance while Charles returns to his previous identity, one that had resulted in his disintegration in the first place. Martha places herself in psychologically strained contexts, Anna gives in to a passionate yet destructive relationship and Kate returns to her family. Yet, all protagonists and many of the characters can be found to have emerged through the strife that the narrative puts them through, with fresh perspectives and an altered attitude. The sensitive reader who can sympathise with the characters and can thereby achieve an identification with them also finds a shift in their ideological views and perspectives in life and living. Through complex structures and explicit clarion calls for renouncing dominant theories, the writer seems to succeed in doing

away with unthinking repetition and thoughtless complicity with the reigning principles of politics and ideology that the times forces upon the readers. Lessing seems to reiterate what she explicitly said in the Preface to *GN*, that one must constantly be engaged in discovering new facets and experiencing novel circumstances just as her characters engage in varied topics, growth patterns and emerge transformed ideologically, physically and emotionally. She achieves this through a dedicated narration of the evolution of characters, the portrayal of the passage of time and consequently theorising or eliciting thoughts on matters as deep and philosophical as identity, being and existence. “There is only one way to read, which is to browse in libraries and bookshops, picking up books that attract you, reading only those, dropping them when they bore you, skipping the parts that drag – and never, never reading anything because you feel you ought or because it is part of a trend or a movement” (Lessing, *GN* 18). Thus, she has created characters who evolve over time and continue beyond such trends and movements that compartmentalise or classify them, to symbolise personalities and personal journeys of self-discovery that transcend time and space.

Chapter 3

Temporalizing Lessing: Evolution of the Author

Doris Lessing has used compelling narrative techniques to craft characters and design plots that lead to a profound exploration of themes that range from psychology to politics and further to social action. She has been celebrated for her bold attempts at breaking conventional form and experimenting with literary strategies of storytelling. An exploration of the writer's narrative techniques will supply a deep appreciation for her contributions to the literary landscape and the significance of her work in shaping the comprehension of human experience and the power of storytelling. Throughout her works, she employs time and temporality to intensify characterisation, augment thematic resonance and explore the complexities and nuances of human experience. Her novels show a progressive journey not only in the development of characters, but also in the evolution of the writer. Beginning with *Mary Turner*, who is presented as a symbol of unjust white supremacy among the British settlers in a heavily subjugated and enslaved African community, the evolution of the novelist can be traced out with marked progress. She shifts from mere critical presentation of social and political concerns into ideological dialogues and introspection that reflect in the debates, discussions around and understanding of Communism as presented in her novels, and then into the much complex psychological ruminations of the form, structure, location and comprehension of 'self'. Lessing then plunges into fantasy and science, thereby growing as an author, as the mode, framework, plots and contents of her oeuvre explode into profound outpourings of reality, constructed by external forces and experienced subjectively (and the conflict born thereof). One also finds that the author's writings abound in

symbols, images and mystical references with characters often identifying themselves with the classics, the legends and biblical characters. As the characters gain higher faculties, perceptions and psychic/ cosmic powers, the writer herself seems to be possessed with the same as she produces such fantastical pieces of fiction in progression. Her works are characterised by allusions, imagery, symbolism and metaphors. Readers are offered an opportunity to analyse the complex features and techniques that her works contain, which grew in number and intensity as her career progressed. Added to this is the sensory appeal that the writer incorporates to complement the way readers experience the stories, characters and the situations that they find themselves in. Be it the hallucinations that evoke claustrophobia, the smells detailed, the feel of soil, earth and human touch, the sounds that accompany the happenings – the narratives evolve from being mere discourses of politics and life, into entire texts of experience that pull the readers into alternate spaces of reality. Such spaces and texts tear them apart, jolt their conscience, shock their perceptions and leave them awash with newer knowledge and a complete experience of being transformed along with her characters. The formalistic arrangement of narrative strategies in novels has been investigated to explore the expression and experience of temporality.

Currie, in *About Time* states how, “It is only when a degree of formalism is allowed back into the analysis that the critic can do justice to the nature of narrative: to the fact that its statements about time are inevitably involved with their temporal structure, or that time is a theme of narrative, but it is also part of the temporal logic of storytelling” (28). The novelist achieves this end – that of expressing time through a temporal structure – owing to the narrative experimentation she employs,

that complement and emphasise the plots, themes included, issues highlighted and the course of events in the characters' lives. Her narrative behaviour, too, has developed and progressed from an adherence to the conventional realist mode to alternate and non-conventional fragmented narratives that have moved away from mere fiction to fantasy and later to science-fiction. Her writings have taken forms ranging from novels and short stories to autobiography, drama, poetry and even operas. The journey and evolution of the narrator and narrative temporality in her works, the possible reasons for the choices she makes and the potential of the art and craft of writing have been explored here. For, in writing lies complex processes involving the human psyche, life experience, a revisiting of the past and envisioning of the future. This shows how writing possesses a therapeutical potential, which is especially true in the case of Lessing whose writings reflect and reveal much about her life, thoughts, experiences, ideologies and convictions. A writer, unafraid to speak her mind during her many interactions with the world, she lent the same bold voice and fearless zeal to her characters who while disintegrating under the strains of the external world or the social collective, manage to maintain a sane hold on their thoughts as they venture on a quest to discover and cement their identity. While many characters succeed in achieving some coherence, others fail, taking the readers along with them on a journey of self-analysis, introspection and revelation. It becomes necessary then, to study the novels as an extension of the writer's life, especially while examining the works of Lessing that carry autobiographical references and follow a personal mode of writing in many contexts. The narrative strategies employed, the characters portrayed, the plotlines and the framework within which the stories and characters are situated, reveal details about the writer's life and even psyche. In evaluating the choices Lessing makes, one can attain a

knowledgeable stance of the evolution of the writer herself. While her characters embark on voyages of self-analysis to achieve a sense of self, the author seems to have set out on a similar journey with them. The novelist herself refers to this effort in her writings when she says that writing is often "... the mixture of journalism and the *Zeitgeist* and autobiography that comes out of a part of the human consciousness which is always trying to understand itself, to come into the light" (*SPV* 163). Her writings carry attributes of self-representational writing and autobiographical elements that lead the writer to a realisation of the individual self. These provide the writer with opportunities to explore her past experiences as she tries to portray them as the 'present' time of her writing. She has often been credited with the ability to present multiple interpretations of the human psyche, the symbolic order and the socio-political milieu of the times. It is this multi-layered approach to reading that the writer wishes her works offer. Elaborating on the potential that books hold for offering various analyses and how they cease to exist once all interpretations are done, Lessing says:

...the book is alive and potent and fructifying and able to promote thought and discussion *only* when its plan and shape and intention are not understood, because that moment of seeing the shape and plan and intention is also the moment when there isn't anything more to be got out of it.

And when a book's pattern and the shape of its inner life is as plain to the reader as it is to the author – then perhaps it is time to throw the book aside, as having had its day, and start again on something new. (*GN* 21)

This is in tandem with the many interpretations of how narratives define writers. For as the psychologist George Kelly says, personalities grow out of the schema people choose to construct from their perceptions of happenings around them and how such mental frameworks influence expectations about their future. Sociologist Peter Berger's observation can be read alongside this view, that, stories are important in shaping social realities, exhibiting how people's unique characteristics and perceptions change as they move from one life theme to another.

A novel has been understood to have a story content that has a beginning, middle and end. This is the basic definition of a novel and offers no challenge, neither to the readers nor researchers nor analysts. The story can progress along a linear timeline and offer life and situations of the characters to the readers. However, the novels selected for this study can be held to possess a plot frame. Plot frame can be described as an external frame or plot holder that is launched by the description of an event that introduces the protagonist and initiates the actions that then carries the narrative forward. It has to be noted that the frame being referred to, is neither a structural one nor a contextual one. Instead, the frame is a point in the narrative that all future sequence of actions and series of events refer to and revolve around. Such a plot frame – a specific event that situates the plot and the characters within the narrative – can be identified in the novels being analysed. The *GS* is framed by the murder of the protagonist Mary Turner, the *CoV* series arise out of the dilemma Martha finds herself in at the beginning of *MQ*. Anna Wulf of the *GN* faces a writer's block that leads to the fragmentation of her identity and a subsequent exercise of maintaining different notebooks, consequently developing a dependency on relationships to learn more about herself. In *BDH*, the discovery of a man who

has lost his memory is the plot frame, while in *SBD*, it is the realisation that Kate has about being of no consequence to her own family members. This realisation comes about as a result of a least expected outburst by her younger son Tim who screams at the dinner table about how she has been smothering him, turning him into a baby (100). The plot frame can be an incident, a character's epiphany or an event of socio-political or historical significance. The frame is introduced in the beginning of the narrative and all characters, action, conversations, events, opinions, ideologies and resolution take the readers back and forth between the frame and the narrative's course. These plot frames gain significance when seen as the elements that lend the quality of anticipation to the 'present' that is narrated. For, "The temporal structure of a present lived as if it were the object of a future memory" (Currie, *About* 11) is made possible with the description of these plot frames that promise a significant and impactful future in the narrative text. Currie holds that narrative theory has often elaborated the "presentifying of the past" (5) but suggests that the correlative property of the present "experienced in a mode of anticipation" (5) deserve greater attention. This futurity is achieved by Lessing with the employment of the aforementioned plot frames that keep the readers captivated by the anticipation of events that happen after the initial episodes of action.

In the discussion of the narrated present being held as anticipating future, Currie explains how the future is what produces the present. It can be held that the importance of the anticipative function of the narrative is emphasised because of the role it plays in signifying the present being discussed. Also, "the existence of the future is clearly produced by the structure of temporal reference in a written narrative, and not by the nature of fiction itself" (18). This is where the

aforementioned plot frames gain significance. They place the future in perspective with the plot being narrated. Therefore, there are protagonists engaged in constant recollection and anticipation who look forward to a future and stay connected with their past, and narratives that are structured to physically and tangibly represent these movements. Such movements are particularly marked in Lessing's works. *GS* has the climax described in the first chapter, laying out the future at the very beginning. The story then is revealed in flashback although not in the regular preterite; instead, the story is related as unfolding from the second chapter onwards, leading to the climax narrated at the beginning. The *CoV* that begins with *MQ* gives the impression of having a linear structure but there are several references to past and future events that appear in between narrations. There are particular references to the future that builds a sense of anticipation as in *LL*:

Between now and twelve tonight, she would have moved from the office and Mr Robinson, up-and-coming lawyer, future Member of Parliament, with his wife, two children, and his house in the suburbs, to Maisie; from Maisie to Joss and Solly Cohen; from them, the Cohen boys, to old Johnny Lindsay; from the old miner's sick-bed to her father's, nursed by her mother; from the Quest's house to Anton. (24)

The *GN* maintains the tempo with regular narration of the four notebooks and the Free Women section. In *BDH*, the discovery of a man who seems to have no knowledge of his identity admitted as a patient at the Central Intake Hospital launches the structure of anticipation with the details being given in the form of an admittance sheet. The very first line of *SBD* – “A woman stood on her back step, arms folded, waiting.” (3) – lends a sense of ‘waiting’ for what is to unfold. This

then, is the central tenet of Currie's theory. He holds that reading is a process of repeated anticipation that takes place in the non-fictional life; and that, fiction has become a space where time has been "rehearsed, developed and expressed" in a new way (*About* 6).

Lessing employed several narrative techniques to shape her writing into expressions of her intent and ideologies. The particular analysis of the specific narratology of Lessing requires an exploration of the various elements of narrative and an examination of how it has evolved over time. Readers find full-fledged characters placed within realistic contexts congruent with the socio-political and cultural milieu of the times represented in the stories. Mary of *GS* represents the anti-apartheid stance of the writer and also highlights the double marginalisation that women face on the basis of gender and the race/ class they belong to. The action that builds around the character supplies the necessary information for the development of the character and the plot. She is also placed within a realistic spatial-temporal context and between socio-cultural issues that are easily relatable to, during the time of the publication of the book as well as during later times of reading for the historical importance of such texts. Martha of the *CoV* sequence is drawn out as a fuller version of a rebellious, ideologically driven, independent woman and is placed within specific time frames with the temporal aspect given special attention by the writer. The passage of time, the political scenario and the affairs of the world are juxtaposed with the growth of Martha from a young girl into a matronly woman. By the end of the series, Lessing brings into the text, aspects that add to the fabula in multiple dimensions. While the first three novels – *MQ*, *PM*, *RS* – focus on the protagonist, her activism, her ideology, her quest for independence and her psyche,

the final two – *LL* and *FGC* – show marked excursions into a different plane of writing and thought. The fabula is lent a different narrative experience by incorporating elements that aid a psychological evolution and evaluation of the choices, relationships, actions and life of the characters. The final book showcases a dynamically described apocalyptic ending to the world as is known today, owing to a nuclear disaster. The aftermath described in the book highlights the change in both Lessing's adoption of varied themes as well as the transformation of the formula and conventions of novel writing adopted. *GN* and *BDH* both portray strong characters as well as divergent, unconventional and subverted notions of accepted psychological, emotional, interpersonal and intrapersonal bonds. While the fabula and story are important here, these are exemplary models of the potential of the text that the writer utilises. *SBD* presents the temporal aspects of aging, realisation, self-doubt and self-discovery using Kate as the medium for illustrating the process of growth and development. It can be said in this context that Lessing's earlier works were about fabula and story, before she later becomes closely concerned with the text. Consequently, she experimented with form and structure and produced different genres. In this shift can be read Lessing's growth as a writer – mastering different modes and forms of narration – as well as her progress as a spokesperson and reformer of the society. She wrote women's stories that detailed the life choices and responses of women. Her writing was about women, their lives and the times they lived in, and went beyond what women of that age were writing. It not only articulated the challenges that gave birth to second wave feminism but also placed the feminine sensibility within the socio-political and cultural frame of the time. This is voiced by Gayle Greene who writes:

...her fiction was also, from the beginning, a “women’s writing” centering on women’s consciousness and concerns. It resembled, in its exploration of female interiority, the “feminine” sensibility of post war writers such as Elizabeth Bowen, Sylvia Plath, and Penelope Mortimer, but it went beyond what these novelists were doing, not only in dramatizing the malaise that produced the second wave of feminism, but also in presenting it in political terms. (15)

The gravity and intensity of the project that the writer had adopted was of great magnitude. She turned to the potential offered by the flexibility of narrative text to present the density of issues she was dealing with.

Lessing’s exploration of narrative time is characterized by its depth, complexity and thematic resonance. Through the use of stream of consciousness, non-linear narrative structures, multiple perspectives, and symbolic temporality, she crafts narratives that challenge readers to reconsider their understanding of time and its role in shaping human experience. By engaging with the writer’s innovative approach to temporality, readers are invited to embark on a journey of temporal exploration, uncovering the mysteries of memory, identity, and the passage of time itself. The stream of consciousness narrative technique has been utilised to portray the fluid and dynamic nature of temporal experience. By immersing readers in the unfiltered flow of characters’ thoughts and memories, Lessing captures the fragmented and nonlinear quality of human consciousness. This technique allows her to depict the intertwining of past, present, and future within characters’ minds, blurring the boundaries of linear time thereby permitting an experience of temporal fluidity. The conventional chronological order is often disrupted in her writings by

employing non-linear narrative structures, such as flashbacks, fragmented timelines, and temporal loops. Through these techniques, she creates a sense of temporal disorientation and complexity, challenging readers to piece together the narrative fragments and consider the significance of temporal disruptions. This non-linear approach to storytelling allows an exploration of the recursive nature of memory, the persistence of past that the present carries, and the cyclical patterns of human experience. The writer includes multiple perspectives into her narratives, allowing for a polyphonic exploration of temporal experience. By shifting between different characters' viewpoints, she highlights the subjective nature of time and the ways in which it is shaped by individual perceptions and experiences. This multiplicity of perspectives enables Lessing to depict the relativity of time, showing how it can be experienced differently by different characters and how it intersects with broader social, cultural, and historical contexts. Her narratives are often imbued with symbolic temporality, using recurring motifs and imagery to convey deeper layers of meaning and resonance. Through symbols such as the desert, the river, and houses with many rooms, she explores the existential dimensions of time and the eternal recurrence of certain themes and patterns across human history. This symbolic approach to temporality adds depth and richness to the narratives, providing opportunities to contemplate the profound mysteries of time and existence. Specific instances of the use of these techniques will be dealt with in the following chapter.

In the discussion on temporality and distancing, Currie lays down how temporal distancing and the experience of temporality can qualify the existence of being. Through an extensive deliberation on the implications of 'presence', he concludes that the traditional view of past events described being read as the present

is inadequate in assessing literary works; he suggests that the future of the narrated events be taken into greater examination, thereby highlighting the concept of anticipation. With a theoretical base strengthened by the philosophies of Derrida and Heidegger, Currie explains the temporality of being and the temporality of reading, commenting how a reflection of oneself is made possible by temporal distancing. Currie builds on existing narrative theory referring to different theorists to formulate a philosophical take on the use and effect of narrative time. Wayne C. Booth in his seminar study of narrative, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, writes:

Whether or not they are involved in the action as agents or as sufferers, narrators and third-person reflectors differ markedly according to the degree and kind of distance that separates them from the author, the reader, and the other characters of the story. In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader. Each of the four can range, in relation to each of the others, from identification to complete opposition, on any axis of value, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and even physical. (155)

Distancing of this kind found in Lessing's works can be analysed to show how time can be moulded through structural techniques. There are instances in *GS* where the moral distancing between the narrator and Mary is less and the temporal distance of the narration and narrated is maintained at a level to sympathise with Mary's actions. She disagrees with Dick's decisions but finds ways to justify his actions, "Arguing against her dull premonitions, she told herself that the season had been good, and Dick quite pleased; ... She had become adjusted, without knowing it, to his negative judging of a season by the standard of the debts he had *not* incurred... She said to

herself that other farmers did these things and made money” (90-91). The narrator portrays Mary as thinking in Dick’s favour but adds that his actions could be manipulative. This helps justify the later meltdown that Mary has, “At this point, unable to control herself and hating herself for it, Mary lost her temper – lost it finally and destructively” (91-92). The character of Tony too sympathises and finds ways to justify Mary, “ ‘Complete nervous breakdown,’ diagnosed Tony, who was just off bed. He had the kind of mind that is relieved by putting things into words: the phrase was an apology for Mary; it absolved her from criticism” (184). However, when the temporal distance between the narration from Tony’s point of view shifts, the moral distance increases. This is because the events that take place later– he witnesses an intimate scene between Mary and Moses –influence his judgement of her. In *BDH*, the distancing is made possible by the mixing up of chronological order – the first part of the novel presents the heavily fragmented, hallucinating and dreaming Charles who is disoriented and forgetful. The second part lays down the reasons for this state. The narration that is predominantly first-person in the beginning becomes full of other people’s perspectives with limited first-person narrative passages. These perspectives are represented using letters and broken conversations. The distancing among characters, between the narrator and characters and between the narrator and readers enhances the effect of the narrative organisation. There are constant time shifts as the story goes from one point in present to a point in the past as memory after memory is recollected by those associated with the protagonist. The last part has a third-person narrator, and the conversation between Violet Stoke and Charles shows how the narrator has been distanced from what is happening. The narrator and the narrated separate giving rise to a distance that had not existed previously. This distancing is also symbolic of the

distance that has developed between the inner psyche of Charles and his external personality to which he will return with the shock treatment. Thus, the shock treatment will not only bring the old identity closer to the protagonist, but will also fuse the past with the present. The identity that existed in people's recollection of the past will finally become the present, with it becoming a part of Charles' reality. as the narrator becomes distanced, the time coincides – all the past memories reconcile and resolve into a single narrative as Charles starts his journey to become his old self, “But supposing I remember what I want to remember? They take it for granted that I'll remember what they want me to remember. And it's desperately urgent that I should remember, I do know that. It's all timing, you see. I know that too” (*BDH* 246-47).

The *CoV* with a third-person narrator ends with a series of documents relating stories of the characters. The narrator disappears as the letters attached carry the narrative forward. The resolution of Martha's conventional *bildungsroman* story deviates from the normal path and ends in the character's realisation that the hope for a future lies in the vision of having individuals who are unified by the reality they share rather than by the factors that differentiate. The time that has progressed from that of the world war dividing people and leaving them devastated has made the world evolve into a place that houses people who are able to communicate without speech and children better than the generation that preceded them. The futuristic vision presented by the writer is highlighted by the fact that the narrator is the most distanced towards the end of the series. There is temporal and intellectual distancing that is presented over the passage of time. The narrator who had been following the same time-frame as the characters, suddenly vanishes leaving only

documents from which the readers must decipher the end of the series. Such distancing assists in inverting and subverting the traditional flow of communication thereby enhancing the effect and bringing about a transformed understanding of being. Manfred Jahn in his book *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative* has established that the standard structure of fictional narrative communication is three-tiered and has a level of non-fictional communication, one of fictional communication and a third level of action. In the first, communication flows between the author and the reader, in the second, it flows between the narrator and the audience/ narratee/ addressee and at the final level of communication, it flows between characters (4). There may also be a fourth level of communication between the non-fictional and fictional levels – implied fictional communication between the implied author and the implied reader. The role played by a narrator, whether over or covert, can be distinguished by the voice they employ. One can have a first-person narrative wherein the narrator relates a story about himself/ herself. The other possibility is a third-person narrative wherein the narrator tells a story about other people. Lessing's use of narrators and narratorial voices are shaped by temporal concerns along with physical and moral distancing. The narrative situations in her novels enable the use of temporality to not merely present the time frames, but also situate characters within particular socio-political and historical ages as well as ascribe a past and future to the present being narrated. The characters and plots can, then, be taken to possess both an inter-dependence between the various time references while at the same time standing apart as individual events.

In Currie's discussion about the experience of time, he refers to Heidegger frequently owing to the philosophical nature of his analysis. For, Currie holds that

narrative time and the temporal aspects of fiction can convey to the readers – and therefore to the literary world – the meaning of time as experienced in daily life. This makes it important to understand that the anticipation of retrospect which lends the ‘present’ its meaning must be analysed well. For, the future is not only a concept that lies waiting in the pages of a book. Rather it is one that qualifies and quantifies the quality of presence. It is here that temporal distancing gains significance. The distance that the writer wants the reader to maintain and consequently the distance that a narrator maintains shapes the experience and understanding of these notions of past, present and future. It also brings into question the kind of narrative stances that the writer chooses for her works. For, the type of narrator who narrates the story decides this distance between the various stakeholders. While a third person narrator with zero focalisation is more distanced and judgemental, a self-narration can be biased but more relatable. The novels present a dynamism ensured by the interplay of tensed and untensed views that has been achieved by Lessing through the use of different modes of narration, narrative voices and narrators. She has employed the following types: In a first-person narrative situation, the narrator and character belong to the same fictional world and the I-figure takes the centre stage in narration. This I-figure can be the narrating-I or the experiencing-I. For instance, when the action is reported or related by an older and wiser version of the ‘I’, the narrating self engages in retrospection, assessment and the inference of moral observations or conclusions. On the contrary, it is possible that the action and plot is narrated as it happens or as it is experienced, at any specific moment of time. The focus is then on the experiencing self, the experiencing-I. With the advent of the twentieth century, the narrator as an experiencing-I grew in prominence, with the narrative being told in the present tense. It is also interesting to note that when the

narrating-I and the experiencing-I blend to become the central character, the text becomes an autobiographical one. When the first-person narrator is a minor character, the naivety, lack of comprehensive knowledge and vagueness may hinder a presentation of the whole, leading to a sense of unreliability.

In an authorial situation, the narrator exists outside the world of the story and is above its characters and situations. This position lends the narrator a privileged perspective that other characters do not possess. The distance maintained by the authorial narrator and the ability to offer insights into the fictional world and comments about characters, their lives and actions, endow the narrator with a God-like quality of an all-seeing, all-knowing spectator and commentator. Thus, authorial narrators enjoy an omniscience that permits them to study the stories, look into the psyche of characters, interpret and analyse the events and even predict what might happen in the future, using techniques and literary tools at her/his disposal. Such authorial narrators may be mistaken to be the voice of the author (even the author himself/herself) which need not be the case every time. This narrative situation gains significance in the context of Lessing, for, as Fludernik says: "...the authorial novel commonly has that kind of narrator whose authoritative presentation of the narrative world and whose trustworthy dependability for the reader constitutively align the narrator with the image of the author, in fact the implied author" (93).

In the figural narrative situation, the narrator is almost absent being replaced by the source of consciousness present within characters. It often takes the form of a reflector character who is an individual with emotions and perspectives, but does not speak like a narrator. The reader appears to be seeing through the eyes of a character, thereby giving the feeling of an absent narrator. Such narratives that convey an

illusion of immediate access to the story related by the narrator through the reflector's consciousness are called reflector mode narratives. These narrative situations, listed by Stanzel, can be found within Lessing to further understand and analyse the concept of narrative time. In *GS*, the narrative situation complements a subversion of the traditional linear mode of story-telling with the climax appearing first. This supports the element of anticipation that the 'present' of the narration carries, making readers constantly investigative of every action and word that is narrated. In *CoV*, the third person narrator shifts into different focalizations, to present the point of views of different characters at different times. The temporal context within which the plot is situated, which are congruent with the real-world events happening at the time, are presented impartially through multiple focalizers. While the narrator shifts between time frames within the lives of characters, past events are recollected and the future is referred to through such techniques as foreboding and foreshadowing. *GN* with a non-chronological narrative structure, maintains consistency in the narrative situations split into different kinds within the different notebooks and sections. This allows time to be linked with the experience of narrating as well as the experience of reading, bringing the characters and readers into close contact. *BDH* which begins with the dual narrative stances of first-person narration and an impersonal dramatized conversation style narration, changes into third-person narrative by the end. This not only refers to the time contained but also underlines the thematic and ideological concern contained within the book. Charles, who seems to be connected with his self at the beginning of the novel, loses this connection as he returns to normalcy. The third-person narrator of *SBD* with Kate as the focalizer differs from the other novels in the structure of narration. The novel uses shorter sentences – in comparison to the long-winding and parenthetical

sentences in the other novels – often giving the impression of slowing down the pace of narration which is what the protagonist also does. She slows down her life to reflect on her past and identify her true self. Stanzel also propounds the concepts of narrative profile and narrative rhythm, that are based on the degree of the presence of the narrator, ordering and placing of narration, dialogue, comments and descriptive passages. There may be a distinct narrator present in the initial part of the novel whose role may then thin out. Narrative profile refers to the degree of presence of narrator who reappears and claims text space in between and re-emerges in full at the end of the text. Narrative rhythm lends tempo and pace for the text, as it determines the sequencing of narration, plot discussion, observations and climax. Implicit working of narrative time can be seen to be at work here. The narrator/narrative situations place the texts within temporal frameworks determining the presence and distance between readers and the characters, within characters and between characters and narrators. The temporal colouring, subsequently, carries forward the plot and the thematic concerns that the author wishes to express and uphold.

The narrative of *GS* begins as heterodiegetic with a third-person narrator who remains outside and takes on the role of a judgemental outsider. The third-person narrative presents the thoughts and feelings of a particular type of person representative of the white settler community. Tony Marston becomes this representative whose perspective the novel employs to bring into question the hypocrisy in the attitude of the whites. The narrative stance then shifts. While the narrative voice remains constant, the focalization employed is an internal one as Mary's point of view is adopted throughout the novel with occasional jumps to

present Dick's viewpoint. The plot frame, however, is launched through external focalization as the news and news report of Mary's murder is seen through the eyes of an outsider. The subsequent retrospective narrative that follows the news report adopts an internal focalization. The presence of Mary's point of view, however, highlights the challenge of unreliability as readers are presented with a biased perspective. Added to this is Mary's slow emotional breakdown. Also, the life and thoughts of Moses, the black servant, remains largely inaccessible to the readers who can only observe and underline a sense of passivity on the part of Moses. However, there are, occasional inclusions of judgment passed by the narrator who criticises Mary's behaviour thus utilising the power of authorial narrative as described by Stanzel. Thus, while the perspective is limited, the authorial stance allows Lessing to present an objective and honest view of the paradoxical situation that the white settler community lives in, the dilemma of which is embodied by Mary. The writer both adopts and rejects the conventions of realism in her journey to formulate a form of narrative that would transcend the demerits of such close readings that realist novels and omniscient narrators offer. In the words of Jeanette King:

Nineteenth century European realism thus embodied a literary tradition and the kind of social commitment with which, in the 1950s, Doris Lessing could identify. However, she rejected the implicit assurance and authority of the omniscient narrator so often associated with that tradition. She adopts instead a narrative method which works against any final, closed reading, any authoritative sanctioning of a single attitude as 'correct'. She introduces a

degree of questioning, of uncertainty, which indicates her awareness of the formal and cultural contradictions inherent in such an identification. (7)

This can be taken to mark Lessing's beginnings in formulating a narrative method that is exclusively her own, and forecasts her future adoption of experimental forms of story-telling and novel-writing. The *GS* presents parallels between the suppression of women's desires that shape the formation of their identity and the suppression of the African race for the establishment and subsequent maintenance of the white racial supremacy. This can be achieved only with the use of a third-person narrative force to project his/ her own thoughts and judgements onto a representative character and the employment of internal focalization to present the world of the white community in the black continent, as seen through the eyes of an experiencing character.

The series *CoV*, written over a period of seventeen years, marked Lessing's departure from realism but only after reinforcing some concepts of the tradition in the initial books of the series. For instance, the writer described the series as a 'bildungsroman' thus situating it within the nineteenth century realist conventions. But just as the protagonist is both a participant in the society coloured by the tenets and norms of the age, and the voice of rebellion against the ideological discourses laid down by the dominant forces of the age, the *MQ* and *PM* too both inhabit and seek to leave the realist traditions. The novel opens with an apparently objective description of the visual context that demand/ assume a sense of familiarity with the readers that the scenes are likely to evoke. What is also assumed is the congruence of the familiarity of the situation to the familiarity of the novelistic convention being presented before the reader. The narrator adopts the role of an omniscient authorial

presence and offers details about the characters, their choices, their demeanour, behaviour and goes onto provide observations about the society and even the world in general. The objection that can be raised against such an authorial stance is the absence of objectivity that lends readers the freedom to formulate their own understandings and perceptions; instead, it lays down text that mislead the readers into accepting and adopting the views of the narrator. This authorial voice sides with the protagonist in submitting a biased perception – a prerogative offered by the privilege of being above the world of the actants and action. The realist tradition thus creates a narrator who offers assumptions that are shared by the reader and author, or at least by the implied reader and the implied author. This, however, reveals the failure of realism as a system that makes no space and leaves no place for the exposition of many themes, possibilities and narrations. There is no structural nor thematic space for the description or analysis of the non-rational, which, however, is a part of the protagonist's life and times. This contradiction is highlighted in yet another paradox that leaves readers disappointed with the narrative taking a course against what is expected. Martha with her rebellious thoughts and feisty nature can be expected to break conventions and reinstate norms with progressive practices that do away with the old traditional regressive customs. Following suit, it is natural for readers to expect her to move away from traditional notions of marriage and conjugal life. However, in the conventional adoption of marriage as the normal course of her life, she presents the same ambivalence in ideology as exists in the adoption and rejection of realist conventions. However, the marriage is not elaborated upon as a celebratory event and does emphasise that Martha only sees it as a necessary step to escape into another chapter in her life. Thus, as Jeanette King comments, "The novel therefore both thematically and

formally questions the tradition of which it appears to be part, undermining the concept of the unified, essential individual self which is central to humanism, and questioning the capacity of the realist traditions to deal with radical experiences that lie outwith the parameters of that humanism” (24). The subsequent novels *PM* and *RS* reflect a conflict, in their existence as narratives of the socio-political scenario of the times, as well as documents that propound a journey inward. These novels examine the confines of the characters’ consciousness to understand their personality. Their personalities are a sum totality of repressions, influences and silenced retorts/ responses to situations the characters find themselves in, and the circumstances that shape them into being who they are. This conflict is resolved as the novels depart from the realist tradition, shaking themselves free of the notions that decapacitate them from presenting anything that is not rational. The words of Gayle Greene are of significance in this context:

What is also at an end for Lessing, at least for now, is the narrative mode that assumes that the social reality we inhabit is the whole of reality. Realism is part of the impasse reached at this point in the series, complicit with the conditioning that prevents the creation of anything new. Lessing will find means of breaking through ... formally, in the narrative innovations of *The Golden Notebook*, *Landlocked*, and *The Four Gated City*, and philosophically, in the Sufism that becomes pronounced in the final volumes of the *Children of Violence*. (56)

It must be noted that the series *CoV* gains specific importance for being situated around the point at which the writer’s radical shift in ideology and conformism to narrative traditions begin. Three of the novels written before the *GN*

are different in their theme, form and perspective from the final two written after the publication of the *GN*. What begins as a project in realism, with an authorial narrator, a chronologically arranged episodic relating of the plot line and the growth of a single protagonist goes through immense transformation as the later novels adopts elements of mysticism, fantasy and intuitive reporting along with an introspection into the character's psychology. The narrative stance too shifts and so does the perspective of the narration. A shift in focalization can be observed in the novels. While the narrator remains omniscient, the writer adds different perspectives through offering different focalizations in between the narration from the dominant focal point (Martha). For instance, in *RS*, Part two, Chapter 2 is related from the point of view of Maisie; Part 2, Chapter 4 from Jimmy's perspective and Part 3, Chapter 4 has Mr. and Mrs. Van der Bylt as the focalizers. In *LL*, Part 1, Chapter 3 is from Mrs. Quest's point of view although it is interspersed with Martha's perspective. There are also instances where the omniscient narrator stands independently offering zero focalization. Lessing, who encounters a conflict between the adherence to realistic conventions and the need to break away from these traditions, finds in her literature the need for a formalistic experimentation that would help alter the available techniques to free literature and the novelistic form from established practices. While the writer sought to move away from the confines of realism, she nevertheless decided to maintain a level of formalism. This is congruent with Currie's theory that states that rather than explaining time or discussing time as a theme, narratives must essentially employ time in the temporal structuring and narrative arrangement to aid the experience of temporality. He holds the form of internal time consciousness and the supremacy of temporal structure above the presentation of time. While he upholds the importance of present as an

object of future memory, the question of the existence of this future has been problematised. The future in reading is concrete as the narrative carries the future events in the text, while the future of life is uncertain and unspecified. Another problem that arises is how a narrative allows the adoption of any temporal standpoint. Currie states that the ‘already-there-ness’ of future in narrative text as contrasted with its absence in life, reveals the twin problems of fictionality and retrospect. “In the case of retrospect, the already-there-ness of the future is a product of temporal reference, whether the future is imagined or actual, and in the case of fictionality, the already-there-ness of the future is the product of the mind’s freedom to invent the future” (*About 20*). In such cases, narratives can be held inadequate at presenting authentic models of time. However, the narrative if seen as a space of experience and – to extend this possibility – seen as a consciousness, the future in the reading of a text and the future in life may both appear to be uncertain, thereby providing narratives with the capability of being models of time. The experience of cosmological time cannot be represented exactly in the narrative, for it cannot carry the “ineluctability of the collective present” (21) that the general experience of time entails. It can be shown, however, that the temporal structures within narratives can extend an experience of time in the portrayal of their characters and plots. Such a model of time holds true in real life.

MQ begins the series with the exposition of the socialist historical aspect of the society that forms the content and the individualistic aspect that focusses on the development of its protagonist, Martha. The omniscient narrator in both the novels *MQ* and *PM*, present itself as an authorial figure placing Martha on an elevated plain of intellectual and ideological superiority. While the narrator does call out the

protagonist for her contradictory stand in her treatment and assessment of natives, yet, she is held in high stead for sharing the ideological stand with the narrator. What is then revealed – in Martha’s empathy towards the natives and her rejection of racial prejudices – is the humanistic leanings of the novelist. The narrator holds how the characters must rise above the everyday experiences and formulate an alternative discourse attaining a balance between and reconciliation of the personal and political. The authorial narration then places the text within another context, that of its relation to the reader’s reality and truth. Colin MacCabe discusses this in his *James Joyce and the Revolution of the World*: “...the whole dialogue is surrounded by a metalanguage which being unspoken is also unwritten, and which places these discourses in inverted commas and can thus discuss these discourses’ relation to truth, a truth which is illuminatingly revealed in the metalanguage” (218). This metalanguage guides the readers in deciding upon the stand and angle from which the narrative must be perceived. The omniscient narrator then becomes the primary connection between the reader and the storyworld and its characters.

Critics have often attempted to unravel the various levels of narration that go beyond a structural analysis, as the life and times of Lessing find an outlet in her literature. There is the outlining of the levels as being at three different levels related to the thematic (historical), formal/ related to the genre (bildungsroman) and at the level of form or theoretical affiliation (symbolic) as postulated by Eve Bertelsen in the article “Doris Lessing’s Rhodesia: History into Fiction”. *GN* and the novels that followed also display a renewed and enhanced use of focalisation techniques. Currie’s words must be referred to, for a recent and updated interpretation of the importance of focalisation:

What I am suggesting here is that a different account of focalisation, and therefore of the *moving now* of narrative and fiction, is required for the description of narrative temporality. It seems necessary, in particular, that the question of *now* is restored to an account of the distribution of knowledge, actuality and certainty that structures a narrative, and so to understand the perspectival structures of focalisation in terms of temporal position: of what is certain, what is expected and what is unexpected. (*Unexpected* 113)

The focalisation colours the narration with emotional appeals, affiliations and affinities towards characters, their choices and their responses. The sympathetic presentation of Martha and the partiality of the narrative voice becomes evident in the contrast between Martha and the other white characters in the novels. They are presented as possessing stereotypical characteristics, and lack the intellectual and ideological superiority that the protagonist is graciously permitted. Be it the Cohens, the upper middle class English ladies, the members of the Sports Club that she frequents, the fellow members of the Party or the Left Book Club – they fall short of possessing ideological clarity and vision in the words of the narrator. The employment of irony and satire lend the narrator a position of a censoring counsel. For instance, the following is how the wishes of the colonial people are verbalised:

How exciting life must have been then, sighed the people in the district, remembering their distant origins – and yet the district had not been settled much more than thirty years. How wonderful if that wild man on the black horse appeared again in his scandalous glory! How wonderful if Commander Day walked into the store (as he had once in the golden age) flanked by his two half tamed leopards, with his three native concubines behind him – alas,

alas, he did not, they did not, the time for the creation of legends was past.

(MQ 54)

Such irony and satire are, at times, turned towards Martha as well, in spite of the narratorial sympathy that she enjoys.

Although given commendable respect for the self-criticism that she subjects herself to – “She could not afford to keep this thought clear in her mind; the difficult, painful process of educating herself was all she had to sustain her” (18) – she is also described as being unable to act upon her position to change her situation. Another instance of the limited capacity of Martha is revealed in her inability to articulate herself: “Perhaps, if she could have expressed what she felt, she would have said that the calm factual air of the writing was too distant from the emotion that filled her, perhaps she was so resentful of her surroundings and her parents that the emotion overflowed into everything near her” (9). The clever use of the word “perhaps” in such instances draws readers closer to the narrator and makes them see the perspective that the narrator presents, as though they were concluding from inferences they have gleaned. The narrator assumes a position of authority by voicing out, the choices that Martha can make but does not, and by declaring the actions that she should have initiated but fails in doing, and by presenting before the readers a more all-encompassing view that is far above the restricted space and time that Martha is allowed:

...and it did not occur to her to ask, not until long afterwards, how it was that she, not more than a few weeks in time from the farm, hardly separated from it in space (since this little town was so lightly scratched on the surface of the

soil that one could see the veld by lifting one's eyes and looking down to the street, while the veld grasses sprung vigorously along the pavements) – why it was that she read the poets as if they were confirmation of some kind of exile? (221)

The narrator also seems to paraphrase certain episodes where dialogues between the characters would have been adequate to carry the story forward; but the narrator adds observation and a commentary which attracts the readers' understanding and prescribes a perspective that the readers then unknowingly take. For example, in the episode of her first encounter with Douglas, her dialogues are accompanied by the narrator's comments (238) which offers an interpretation that is inadvertently accepted by the readers. The narrator is also critical and rational about the idealism of Martha as well of the anti-colonial sentiments that the whites harbour: "They longed only to hurl themselves ... into complete self abnegation; and if they were asked to spend the rest of their lives in prison, so much the better" (*PM* 345). In these examples, one can find the concept of hypothetical focalisation, which David Herman has illustrated as that which, "entails the use of hypotheses, framed by the narrator or a character, about what might be, or might have been seen or perceived – if only there were someone who could have adopted the requisite perspective on the situations and events at issue" (303). Currie discusses this concept in detail in *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise*. He explains that focalisation is "the key mechanism by which a narrative locates a reader in narrative time, and controls the distribution of knowledge across time, in relation to which the events of a narrative sequence are already or not yet known" (102). Hypothetical focalisation enhances this strategy by supplying readers with possibilities that may

or may not actualise in the future of the plot. It also contributes by offering moral and ethical considerations placing a distance between the narrator, character and reader.

Authoritative narrative viewpoint in the *RS* gains particular significance as the novel was written and published after Lessing had broken away from her affiliation to the Communist Party. The form and content consequently assume a didactic role with the authoritative narrator offering a scathing critique of Communism through an ironic portrayal of characters. An instance is where Mr. Maynard expresses his criticism about Martha's idealism: "What do you suppose you are going to change? We happen to be in power, so we use power. What is history? A record of misery, brutality and stupidity. That's all. That's all it ever will be. What does it matter who runs the country? It's always a bunch of knaves administering a pack of wolves" (*RS* 64). All the characters are represented as reeling under the forced enactment of roles (unknowingly sometimes, thus proving the influence of the ideological apparatuses that repress). This leads to disillusionment among some, despair, ideological vagueness and intellectual hollowness within others. The bonds formed are socially, philosophically, ideologically and emotionally crippling. Such bonds offer no enlightenment and no validation to Martha and her convictions. *RS* also shows a deep engagement with politics and a subsequent/ parallel disengagement with the landscape and physical milieu. The narration of the novel too reduces attention on the description of the landscape and focusses on political conflicts. The novels highlight the disenchantment with politics which is linked to an emotional disconnect from personal spaces that must essentially offer the knowledge and perspective about

one's identity and psyche. This reflects in the form of the novel too, as it loses a narrational coherence occasionally, as the organic unity of the plot is sometimes lost, with time flowing without an explicit mention of its passing during ideological expression of philosophies and political principles. A marked difference in the discourse of this novel is the predominance of dialogue as compared to its absence in the previous novels of *MQ* and *PM*. The dialogues stand uncoloured by the paraphrasing attempts of the narrator. Thus, they gain an unmediated quality, lending greater merit and much worth to the characters speaking the words. Verbal irony contributes to the depiction of irony and satire in the novel by the placement of contradictory utterances. In place of the explicit narration of the previous novels, the *RS* has the narrator engaging in monologues that blend with the scheme of the novel. Martha's thoughts and transactions are not contextualised or censured or passed comments on by the authorial voice, thereby allowing a greater integrity and deeper individuality to the character. Thus, while the *MQ* and *PM* had an internal focalization with Martha being focalized, *RS* and the following novels, have Martha as both the focalizer and the focalized. The narrative also adopts a figural narrative situation when such monologues are presented in the novel. Such narrative monologues also permit the writer to implicitly refer to the ideological forces at play. As Cohan and Shires state in their book *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*: "In regulating what is sayable, how it can be articulated, who can speak, where, and under what conditions, a discursive practice controls the dissemination of certain knowledges, thereby ensuring the domination of certain social interest by producing a certain kind of subject" (141).

The physical context of Martha has undergone substantial change in *RS* as she is taken away from the muddy and fertile veld to the dusty and dry urban regions. Thus, the narrative too loses the romanticism that existed between Martha and her lively environment – which had seeped into the level of discourse and narration – as she moves to an urbanised context. The premise of *RS* being an intensely political one, the description of the physical milieu find reflection in the narration. Rubenstein describes the writing as “flat and undynamic” (57). *RS* seems to be deliberately fashioned as a text that intentionally shakes off the romanticism of the previous novels and does not incorporate the lyricism, symbolism and intense psychological voyages that the succeeding novels exhibit. Upon a careful examination, the dryness, flatness and lack of dynamism of the novel can be taken as the retreat into basics, before the launching of the path-breaking formalistic experiment that Lessing takes up in the novels after *RS*. Various ‘ends’ mark the conclusion of this novel – in fragmentation, splintering, dispersal (Greene 55) – the end of Maisie and Andrew whose relationship fall apart, the end of the Communist Party group that falls apart owing to a failure of informed and intellectual outcome from strong ideologies, the end of Mrs. Van’s political career and the end of Martha’s affiliation with the Communist principles and group that leave her thoroughly disillusioned. This fragmentation and ending becomes metaphoric for the end of a phase of Lessing’s career where she chose loyalty to traditional conventions of novel-writing and marks her narratorial shift to alternate narratologies. These depictions of various ends also aid the experience of temporality. A definite end contextualises the progress of the event, thereby highlighting the duration of it and its significance. The events then become symbolic of certain phases or outlook or the experience of evolution that character undergo. Such endings of sub plots,

relations, phases communicate the transient nature of time – what Currie refers to as ‘authentic time’. He says that authentic temporality “is a more active, decisive, and self-owned relation to time, one which knows that time, for Being, is finite and crucially, one which can project forward to Death” (*About* 52). The incorporation into plots, such images, scenes and story elements that are finite helps one to experience the various qualities of the nature of time.

With the *GN*, the writer begins to challenge herself and reinstate her ideology through characters and situations that defy conventional frameworks, and adopts novel and original methods of narration. The writer renounces traditional narrative practices that do not theorise, nor even mention “...the various impossible temporalities of experimental fiction, medieval dream visions, playful Renaissance texts, science fiction, or postmodernism” (Alber et al 114). In *GN* can be found a highly fragmented character whose personality, context, psyche and existence are separated thematically through an exposition and presentation by a third person narrator and structurally through four different notebooks, a resolution of which is found in the culminating golden notebook. The narration is a mix, alternating between first-person narrator and a third-person narrator. The complexity is lent with the protagonist taking the role of the narrating-I and the experiencing-I, but becoming the voice of the narrator in one of the notebooks, by narrating the story of Ella, who is modelled after her. The two novels *LL* and *FGC*, present Martha with a slowly disintegrating psyche on a journey that offers her intuitive powers and sees her having powerful dreams and visions. *BDH*, with its different storyworld, mystical and mythical allusions and fantastical episodes of logic-defying experiences present unnatural spatial and temporal elements. The narrative situation

is one that shifts between a first-person narrator and an impersonal rendition of conversations. There are also occasional excursions into a third-person narration towards the resolution of the novel. *SBD* with a protagonist who finds herself at a crossroad in life and weighs options that go against the conventional roles she is expected to play, offers readers unnatural mindsets to consider. The narration is consistent with a third-person authorial narrator with Kate as the focalizer.

Narratives generally present before the reader community a story focussing on the human race, or on natural elements in association with mankind, experiencing or facing situations that mirror real world incidents. These works by Lessing are different in various ways. As is written in “Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models”:

Many narratives defy, flaunt, mock, play and experiment with some (or all) of these core assumptions about narrative. More specifically, they may radically deconstruct the anthropomorphic narrator, the traditional human character, and the minds associated with them, or they may move beyond real-world notions of time and space, thus taking us to the most remote territories of conceptual possibilities. (114)

It can be seen that the impact, reach and influence of Lessing’s later novels is highly enhanced owing to the formalistic practices, temporal innovations and narrative craft that the writer employs. Such narratives then succeed in depicting “...situations and events that can move beyond, extend, or challenge our knowledge of the world” (115).

In his discussion about the various kinds of distance that appears between the reader, writer, narrator, narratee etc, Currie builds on existing theory to state that “The nature of the distance that can occur in any of these [spatial] relations also varies: it may be physical, in the sense that the narrator may describe from a distant point of view, it may be temporal, in the sense of distant retrospect, or it may be moral in the sense that the narrator may judge the moral character of the characters he narrates” (*About* 58). The temporal distancing in *GS* helps readers experience the pastness of time. The protagonist is dead and the narrator is merely unfolding the past to reveal what had happened. The moral distancing is established when Tony as the focalizer in the first chapter is shown to be thinking: “And if he had acted according to his by now muddled ideas of right and wrong, his feeling that a monstrous injustice was being done, what difference would it make to the only participant in the tragedy who was neither dead or mad?” (26). He is seen to be taking the side of Moses, who had committed the murder. The narrator distances from the characters and seems to be offering the role of judgement to the reader by placing before the readers the facts. Tension is built up by making Tony think:

If you must blame somebody, then blame Mrs. Turner [Mary]. You can't have it both ways. Either the white people are responsible for their behaviour, or they are not. It takes two to make a murder – a murder of this kind. Though, one can't really blame her either. She can't help being what she is. I've lived here, I tell you, which neither of you has done, and the whole thing is so difficult it is impossible to say who is to blame. (*GS* 27)

This shows the author's power over the narrative distance that can influence readers. This is what Currie explains as the “persuasive power of fiction” (*About* 58). The

impact of temporal and moral distancing is even more pronounced in instances of first-person narration. This can be found in *GN*, where Anna is constantly considering and reconsidering her actions. She reads Saul's diaries and finds herself being deeply affected by what is written in them. She understands that the act of reading such personal writings is wrong and yet laughs it off stating: "I laughed although I was angry, and the fact that I laughed restored me. I am mad, obsessed with cold jealousy which I have never experienced before, I am the sort of woman who reads private letters and diaries; yet when I laugh, I am cured" (*GN* 503). Later, reconsiders her actions and changes: "I stood and thought: I can find out the truth by going upstairs and looking at his diary. But I knew I would not, and that I never would again. All that was finished" (548). The temporal distancing between the two versions of herself, one that delighted in finding out personal details from Saul's diary and the other that refuses to, changes the way the character is received. This is an example which contains "the temporal distance of tense, but also moral distance, the self-distance of moral judgement" (Currie, *About* 60). A reformed Anna looks back on one who committed the mistake. The moral distance is facilitated by the temporal distance between the recollection and the recollected.

There are also instances where the temporal distancing between wrong-doing and correction is reversed. As in *RS*, where Martha realises that she cannot apologise for sharing a political joke with Anton who takes offence at it. She feels that Anton is unreasonably upset about it and that it is beneath her dignity to take such things seriously. Also, she loses hope in her marriage with Anton. However, her realisation is followed later with her conforming to Anton's expectation. "She understood that what she had to do was to put her arms around him and apologize. But she was

fighting against the final collapse of her conception of him. She knew that the moment she put her arms about him, to coax him out of his silence, that creature in herself she despised would be born again: she would be capricious, charming, filial” (RS 326). At a later point, she feels a mix of sympathy and longing for Anton and her earlier resolve to stay away without apologising weakens: “It was going to be a marriage after all. She accepted the fact with a mixture of dismay and of protective tenderness. It could not last longer than the war – on that point she was determined, but while it lasted she would be open to feeling” (328). Martha goes against her own ideals to make up with Anton. Such instances showcase how temporality changes the characters, their decisions and choices. Time is expressed in reverse, for in her refusal to apologise lies the indication of the end of their relationship. Yet, she gives in to her vulnerability and seeks him. The narrative at that point informs the reader that the bond would not last long after the war. Time is warped in its expression and yet, the outcome becomes clear because of the conviction of the character. This then becomes an example for the explanation that Currie lays down, that the future qualifies the present for the capacity that the present holds, as being the object of future memory.

Narrative temporality from the perspective of temporalizing characters presents how time affects the evolution of characters, how events in their lives progress and how they change over time along with corresponding changes in their context. Temporalizing readers places them in a context of socio-political and historical reality that allow them to derive their own conclusions. Narrative temporality can be seen to present itself in the relationship between the text and the act of reading that offers a model of time that can be analysed to derive inferences as

to the meaning and purpose of being. Reading can be seen as a tensed activity while the text itself exists as an untensed entity. This holds that while the text consists of blocks of untensed episodes, plot sequences and thematic manifestations, reading infuses these with an order that provides a before and after. It is reading then that carries the events from the *possible*, that lay in the future of the text, to the *actual* that the act of reading achieves. Currie brings about a resolution to the binary opposition of this concept by resolving:

Phenomenological approaches to the act of reading have referred to the reading process as one of actualisation or concretisation to reflect this coming-into-existence of the events of a narrative as they pass from the future into the present and the past, and therefore offers a model of time in which the tensed and the untensed views of time exist in a dynamic relation with each other” (*About* 16-17).

Lessing leaves behind a legacy of thought that is not limited to or confined to a particular age and can generate meanings and elicit social action outside of the temporal anchoring that they belong to. She has represented the inadequacy of language to accommodate updated and contemporary changes into the narrative; such confessions and revelations of the limitations of literature and language permit a quality of open-ness to her texts. These can be interpreted using a lens that is congruent with the age in which the analysis is being done. It becomes imperative to refer to Currie’s discussion of the contemporary novel, the contemporaneity of novels, the politics that is inherent in the nomenclature and categorisation of such novels and “the production of modern temporal experience” (24) that they contribute to. It is here that Currie brings in his interpretations and reservations against Linda

Hutcheon's influential proposition in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, wherein the metafictional aspects of modernist novel blend with the historiography to produce a type of fiction which is distinctively capable of fulfilling the "poetics of postmodernism" (*About 25*). In tune with this theory is the significance attached to postmodern novels that contain a representation of the past, with novels which do not align to this ideology or presentational/ representation content being excluded from their epoch. Currie comments at this juncture that, "Yet the contemporary world that one might construct from the historiographic metafiction would be a hopelessly partial portrait, not least because the present world is not present in historiographic metafiction" (*About 26*). Currie explains how the present that is portrayed in such novels fall short of representing the entire picture for it is a direct hegemonic representation of the interests of particular groups, who are affiliated to the academic new historicist. He calls for a remedy to do away with exclusions that such practices inherently lead to: "The counter-manoeuvre being offered here is to displace the structures of exclusion with a kind of analysis committed to the future orientation which, as it has been suggested, characterise the present moment, the now of reading, the contemporary novel and the collective experience of time which characterises the modern world" (*About 27*). In view of these concerns, Lessing's novels can be found to be making structural and thematic reiterations of the said ideological and representational shifts laying down statements (in content and form) regarding how language, literature and reading need to be aligned differently.

As the novels *MQ*, *PM*, *RS* relate narratives that maintained an ambivalence in the strategies used, conventions followed and structural patterns, the seminal *GN* published after them and the subsequent novels of *LL* and *FGC* successfully break

through the established and largely conformed-to notions. The first three novels of the series present the individual intensely impacted and shaped by the collective opinions and societal expectations. Many of the decisions taken by the characters are coloured by the structures of social make-up and psychological conditioning that these characters have been subjected to. Those novels that show the individual to be within the hold of conventions also exhibit the closest affinity towards the formal conventions. The use and place of books, role played by literature and the failure of these, can be held to further emphasise the renunciation of the realist tradition. She presents how literature and language have shortcomings and proves that their powers, extent and reach can be of adverse consequence and absolutely futile. The writer can be seen to be declaring that the traditions followed, can no longer serve the purpose of the scheme and context of the fiction of the twentieth century and later. The placement and detailing of language and forms of verbal expression – in speech or writing or print – can be taken to refer to the ideological apparatuses that state and cement conventions and norms. The time that is presented when detailing the socio-political context of the plots also reveal the prevalent ideology of the age. With the evolution of characters, their outlook to life and ideological viewpoints also transforms owing to correspondences, experiences and relationships. It is in this transformation that the writer presents her ideological stance. As time progresses, plot develops and characters evolve, the readers are offered both thematic and structural elements of time which symbolise this transformation.

Lessing wrote during the time when Marxism was undergoing a resurgence and the French Marxist theoretician, Louis Althusser had brought out theories that breathed new intellectual rigour into Marxist philosophy by offering novel insights

and redefining its basic concepts. Ideology – a term used liberally in this thesis – can be defined as a set of beliefs, values, ways of thinking and forms of relations which human beings in a society perceive and conform to, by an interaction with which they identify themselves, define their personalities and cement their positions in the society, including the roles they play and the expectations they carry. Althusser declared that “...ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way as to recruit subjects (it transforms them all) through the very precise operation that we call *interpellation*” (190). Individuals thus become subjects to the ruling intellectual and ideological principles upheld by the ruling class. In explaining the reach and impact of ideology, Althusser differentiates between state power and state control. He explains that state power is exercised by such repressive structures (Repressive State Apparatus) as law, courts, prisons, police force, defence force which operate using physical force. But Ideological State Apparatuses or ideological structures are covert and subtle forces that make no explicit declarations nor exert physical force, yet, govern the reigning value systems, thereby establishing certain ideologies that the entire society then conforms to. These are groups and communities like educational institutions, religious communities, media, political organisations and even art and culture which foster certain systems of ideas and attitudes which are aligned to the mission and aims of the prevailing state governments and political system. Althusser explains this as: “If the ISAs ‘function’ massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, in so far as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, *beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of the ‘ruling class’” (245). As the characters evolve, their ideologies exert power over them, influencing their decisions and altering their futures. They base their actions on the dominant

ideologies but find only disappointment at the end. For example, it is this that leads to the tragic end of Mary; not the fact that she is murdered, but the fact that she is resigned to this fate. Martha can be seen to be disillusioned by the politics she chooses and feels that she had been influenced by the dominant forces. She had tried to keep herself away from such forces but realises the futility of such attempts. Charles and Kate go through similar phases, for they repress their true selves to conform to ideology.

Martha is drawn out as an avid reader who depends on books to shape her understanding of the world and even herself. She turns to books for guidance in her quest for 'self' as she seeks answers to questions about her identity, life and existence between the covers and lines of written words. This, however, only succeeds in drawing out enormous and extensive pictures of an ideal world, a golden city that is Utopian and sadly, unattainable. She is only shown the dream of an ideal place of living with no support and no assistance in deciphering the course of action and path she must embark on to achieve such visions: "Books. Words. There must surely be some pattern of words which would neatly and safely cage what she felt – isolate her emotions so that she could look at them from outside" (*PM* 61). This desire to look at things from outside can be seen as representing the intention of the writer as well. Unwilling to be complicit in the imperial supremacy and subjugating exercises undertaken by her white community, Lessing often stood outside the system rebelling against norms and conventions. Such ideological stances are reflected in her choice of conflicts presented in the novel, in the opinions of her characters (particularly protagonists) and in the formalistic techniques she adopts. Lessing's design of Martha as a novel reader and literature enthusiast is a deliberate

attempt at the presentation of how literary narratives fail in creating newer ideologies and fail in making possible an escape from repressive traditions. Greene says:

It implies an understanding of fiction at odds with the traditional view of realism as a neutral or innocent reflection of a pre-existent reality; in fact, it implies a view of it more like Roland Barthes' than Georg Lukács'.

According to Barthes and others, realism produces meaning by evoking and combining cultural codes that are received ideas of the culture, and it appears "realistic" because it draws on familiar systems that reaffirm our sense of the familiar. Moreover, since each invocation of a code is also its reinforcement or reinscription, realist narrative does more than encode ideology: it actually creates it. (39)

The writer's attempt can be described to be to write a novel within the realist conventions of the time and yet expose its shortcomings, thereby demonstrating the need for newer forms of fiction. Raymond Williams defines *hegemony* as "...the whole lived social process as practically organised by specific and dominant meanings, values and beliefs of a kind which can be abstracted as a "world-view" or "class outlook"" (109). His definition explains hegemony as being more than mere ideology and holds that it "is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs..." (109). Hegemony can then be taken to mean the prevalent set of contemporary socio-political and cultural system, that makes no effort at imposing itself on any particular individual, yet, exerts an invisible and strong control on the entire society by laying down beliefs and values that are to be followed. It is this that Althusser terms interpellation – the force that makes an individual feel that she/he is free and

independent of any controlling force while discreetly making her/him follow and conform to the status quo. This is further supported by the language and discourse that is proliferated by capitalistic powers and ideologies.

The first novel *MQ* conforms the most to the traditional realist norms and conventional forms, for at the young age that she is introduced to readers at, she can only decipher so much from the world around her and from the romantic notions fed to her by the books she loses herself in. The initial phase of Martha's life shows her as incapable of creating or shaping an alternative to substitute the world that she is disappointed and dissatisfied with. She has only the inferences and knowledge gained through reading and transactions with her surroundings, to depend on, to offer her some sense of understanding of the system that she is a part of. Her response to the world is either a result of her reading or her rebellion, that protests the views, opinions and attitudes adopted and spread by her mother and other matronly characters in her circle. Reading and the opinions of the collective shape her notions of 'self', her responses, her appearance, her ideologies, her choices and her sexuality. She gives in to the notions the society so explicitly offers her (forces upon her) in the first three novels. In *MQ*, she takes up marriage as a release from the life that she finds to be meaningless. She is further pushed into marriage by the comments of people around her, rather than by an honest desire or deep yearning within herself. In *PM*, Martha immerses herself completely into marriage and motherhood, thereby finding herself grappling with situations that are unfamiliar and unexpected. Towards the end of the novel, she realises the absolute failure and resignedly understands that she would be placed in contexts that do not align with her life philosophies nor fulfil her desires. She gives up the roles she had taken up –

both as a wife and a mother in her journey to discover her true self. In *RS* she is exposed to politics and whole-heartedly takes up political activity in her attempt to gain control over her life and her future. To her disappointment, she finds herself forced to relive and repeat the same conformity-ridden life that the previous roles had demanded of her. Thus, the three novels place Martha in three distinct situations presenting conflicts and challenges that she must resolve to move forward and attain a coherence in her quest for identity. The chaos she finds herself in, in all the three novels though owing to distinct contexts must be resolved for the final journey into an understanding of her 'self'. These narratives also reveal the progressive disintegration of the conventional notions of story-telling with the climax of this degeneration and futility being reached at in the *RS*. As Greene observes: "And indeed, the narrative quality of *Ripple* – flat, stale, unalleviated by the brilliant flashes of poetic imagination that animate most of Lessing's fiction – in itself suggests stalemate" (42). Just as Martha finds herself in a state of imbroglio and dilemma, the narrative too mirrors the theme and forebodes the launch and possibility of a form of novel and fiction that could take the twentieth century novel and novel-writing out of this stalemate.

As Lessing achieves a shift through efforts directed at experimenting and modifying her own narratology, her protagonist shifts from basing her identity on principles construed by the society and takes up a journey that is more inclined inwards. This also marks a shift in the writer's ideology as she seems to uphold that the knowledge of self, comes not from an examination of one's external realities but through an introspection of who lies within. Thus, her writings reflect and uphold – both structurally and thematically – the shift from socialism to humanism and

thereby to Sufism, from history to myth, from politics to psychology. They exhibit formal departure from the realism of *MQ*, *PM* and *RS* to the lyric, metaphoric and mythic forms of *LL* and *FGC* that was produced after the exposition of her break from formal realism, in the highly experimental document possessing formal structuring, thematic exploration and psychological and psycho-analytic ruminations that the *GN* was. Thus, the inadequacy of language is taken up, not merely in the presentation of its weakness and failure in the imperfections of reading and literature portrayed in the novels, but also in the structural and ideological transformations the writer undergoes. Roberta Rubenstein writes that Lessing's focus transitions away from "psychological realism" to "the symbolic, mythopoeic, and mystical dimensions of experience that go beyond language" (109). Throughout her works, in degrees of progressing seriousness, one can find a critique of the symbolic order, the failure of which she communicates by showing how literature and language falls short of achieving expected ends. For instance, Martha is fed on nineteenth century literature that betrays her by offering meaningless and impractical images of notions, not only in matters of love and relationships but also on social and political issues. This strain of inadequacy and failure manifests in multifarious representations. While Martha grows dissatisfied with her books, Mark in *FGC* struggles with his writing, Anna Wulf of *GN* is presented with a writer's block and Charles of *BDH* who teaches Classics concludes that the educational system followed is faulty and needs a revamp. An examination of why Lessing presented this theme, can yield the observation, that her works become a strong statement that literature and literary forms have been failing in bringing about change. It can be added that the writer's efforts are towards producing literature that does not follow such traditions blindly, but adopt features that can lead to ends as envisaged by her towards an informed and

enlightened human race. This can be read along with the revisionist Marxist interpretations to clarify how ideology and ideological processes fail – a point that the writer seems to be emphasising in her works.

All of the author's protagonists – Mary Turner, Martha Quest, Anna Wulf, Charles Watkins and Kate Brown – in the novels taken for the present thesis, as well as some other characters in the said works like Tony Marston, Molly, Violet, Thomas and Saul, search for meaning and identity in the place they inhabit, in this world, in their associations with the community they belong to, in the traditions they follow (knowingly or unknowingly), in their interactions with political forces, in the forced social norms placed upon them, and the emotional and personal turmoil they subject themselves to. In their attempt to resolve conflicts within themselves and between them and their societies, and to finally attain the true sense of identity, these characters both try to hold a distinct place for themselves in the prevalent discourses and become complicit with the said discourses at the same time. For instance, Mary is dissatisfied with the treatment of blacks and often finds within herself conflicting thoughts, in her understanding of the power dynamics between the white settlers and the black farm help. This conflict presents itself in the emotional response that she experiences as she feels both disgust and fascination for the blacks. Her repressed desires find an outlet through her illegitimate and questionable relationship with the black houseboy Moses whom she previously subjects to cold cruelty. She is conditioned since a young age to believe in the superiority of the white skin, and that the blacks must be subjugated to maintain security and safeguard their apparently rightful position of supremacy. She is made to believe the oral reinforcement of her mother's words that sought to shape her understanding, intellect and social

behaviour. In *CoV*, Martha's books teach her to believe in a highly romanticised vision of a world that she realises is impractical, unattainable and even outright false. She rejects the English literary tradition that she is brought up on, for the inability of "Dickens and Scott and Thackeray and the rest" (*MQ* 36) in presenting a relatable reality. Her readings evoke a sentimentality and a romanticism that she realises is untrue and baseless and of no efficiency, offering zero contribution to her quest. It must be mentioned that newspaper reading too, is criticised in *CoV* as Martha is offered advices on reading different newspapers until, she realises that it is only a tool used to reinforce ideologies by groups and communities for their benefit and growth. In her reading and the collection of books she devours, she finds an image being supplied to her – that of a rebel; however, they offer no guidance nor any clarity regarding what is to be rebelled against and how. Reading, therefore, only promotes a belief among the characters that the reader has an identity and individual existence apart from the social, political and historical structures that she/he belongs to and that she/he has the freedom to speak, act and think on her/ his own. But as King says, "...the subject is also the subject of – in the sense subjected to – the language he or she uses, and thus, of the values and beliefs inscribed in it" (17).

The failure of language is also emphasised in situations and instances that make the characters incapable of explaining what is happening to them, or describing the situation, events and often relationships. As in *LL*, where Martha's relationship with Thomas takes her to new levels of understanding and intuition, her opinion is voiced as: "Why had no one told her it existed in a way that she could believe it? How strange it was – marriage and love; one would think, the way

newspapers, film, 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” (193). As also the lines: “To be together was like – she could not say” and “...she and Thomas, their feelings for each other, their relationship – whatever was the right word for it – was in an altogether new dimension. And neither understood it, could not speak about it” (191). There are various other instances where characters seem to be at a loss for words and find language inadequate. This also reflects in how Martha herself is relegated to the background by the end of the series. She starts out as the focus of the novels but by the end of the fifth and final book written seventeen years after the first, her death finds place only in an insignificant parenthesis. The *FGC* also shows Mark as a writer struggling with language to create a work of literature worthy of reading. The shortcoming of language also finds an intense representation in the character of Anna Wulf who writes a successful novel, but finds herself battling writer’s block as she settles down to write another novel. The successful writer, Wulf, cannot manage or mould language to suit her, just as she cannot manage her life and relationships. Charles, with a commendable academic profile, discovers and notes with growing detachment the limitations of educational systems (that depend on communication, theories and knowledge processes). He finds that these merely justify dominant ideology and work towards silencing any voice of dissent or disagreement that seeks to question its validity or security. Herein can be found the sentiment voiced by Althusser whose analysis of the school as a dominant Ideological State Apparatus holds that formal education, educational practices and educational institutions only foster and perpetuate opinions and a blind faith of established authorities. In *SBD*, the critique is presented as an argument against High Art through Kate Brown’s

experience and conclusions. Kate and Michael frequent the theatre and enjoy performances – “But this kind of play Kate had always found to be the most filling. Ibsen, Chekov, Turgenev – the sort of play where one observed people like oneself in their recognisable predicaments” (169). But when Kate attends the play *A Month in the Country Again*, alone and after the realisation that she must claim her own space and identity, she finds herself unsure, thinking about how she had earlier found the play and its protagonist to be so relatable. She asks herself, confused: “Yet the last time she had sat here she had said of Natalia Petrovna, that’s me. She had thought, what person, anywhere in the world, would not recognise her at once?” (170) and had thought the character to be “... the mirror of every woman in the audience...” (171). She feels that theatre and drama have begun to fail her and calls it “Rubbish, it was all rubbish...” (171). Lessing makes a powerful statement against such art that fails at portraying truth and only repeats the process of propelling the dominant thought structures. This is voiced by the narrator, “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 those like them, and making them farcical. A joke. Like her own life. Farcical” (172). While apparently expressing truths, art was bound to and complied with the concerns and dictates of time, culture and class. These instances correspond to the failure of the realist tradition and can be upheld as analogies and metaphors to describe and explain the shortcomings of novelistic traditions that the writer found at her disposal.

Lessing’s response to dominant ideology finds reflection in the themes and structure of the novels. As Greene observes: “Lessing was drawn to Marxist

aesthetics because it was concerned with the questions that concerned her – about the ideological complicity of linguistic and narrative convention, the relationship of politics to art, the possibility of revolutionary form” (104). Although Lessing distanced herself from the Communist Party, she was an active participant of the New Left that was emerging, that focuses on the analyses of media, communication systems, literature and culture, in other words, Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatuses. The writer speaks out through her narrators and characters, against set ideologies, as can be seen in the *GN* when Anna – who uses the word *myth* to refer to the prevalent ideology – says about a book:

The writing is bad, the story lifeless, but what is frightening ... is that it is totally inside the current mythThis novel touches reality at no point at all ...It is, however, a very accurate re-creation of the self-deceptive myths of the Communist Party at this particular time; and I have read it is about fifty different shapes or guises during the last year. (*GN* 346)

The book can be taken as a symbol for literature in the context. This disappointment echoes through various sections and passages of the *GN*; Anna’s notebooks contain critical commentary on the aforementioned ideological complicity of literature, and state that all literary productions, in one way or the other, are bound to a circular process of repeating and enforcing the ideological structures within which they exist and thrive. This could also be why Kate is crafted as a character who wishes to break the code of language and searches for a truth beyond the roles assigned by the society, customs followed and expectations placed upon her. As the writer’s career advances, she moves farther away from the realist tradition, incorporating into novels like *SBD*, elements of metafiction and unconditional formalistic methods to

present a true reflection of reality. In *GN*, *SBD* and *BDH* can be identified the author's attempts – which have been largely successful – at working out a form of novel-writing that can be placed beyond the ideological framework of the time as a true mirror of the society. The blending of concepts like the inadequacy of language, breaking the code of the symbolic order and the critique of dominant literary forms are deliberate attempts at stating the author's stand on the matter. The readers are given Kate, who works as an interpreter having the duty to break language codes to make familiar a foreign language. As Betsy Draine comments: “Both in her private life and in her work, Kate is in search of what lies behind the veil – a once obscured meaning, a half-forgotten identity, a long-evaded truth” (116-17). It becomes clear that one has to lift and look beyond this veil of language to attain the knowledge of truth. Literature carries ideology, not only in the context that is produced but also in the form and structure that this content is presented in. Eagleton states:

In selecting a form, then, the writer finds his choice already ideologically significant. The languages and devices a writer finds to hand are already saturated with certain ideological modes of perception, certain codified ways of interpreting reality; and the extent to which he can modify or remake those languages depends on more than his personal genius. It depends on whether at that point in history, ‘ideology’ is such that they must and can be changed. (*Marxism and Literary Criticism* 25)

He has also stated that “significant developments in literary forms, then, result from significant changes in ideology” (23).

The failure of language, literature and ideology as presented in the novels gain greater significance owing to the impact that time has on them. It is through a steady evolution of the characters that this point is postulated in the novels. The characters realise the failure and recognise the need for ideological shifts through the passage of time. Thus, temporality places on them the need to transform while at the same time pointing to the deceptive nature of the notion of permanence. All the characters find themselves searching for an anchor – either in relationships or ideologies or discourses or their particular beliefs – which they subsequently fail in attaining. They travel from one failed circumstance to another expecting a resolution of some kind. As time passes, what they understand however is the transience of time, the ever-changing convictions and the need to reconsider their beliefs. Again, life experiences and long sessions of introspection lead them to self-discovery. The journey of the characters highlights the experience and expression of time. These translate into the experience of readers. It is here that the concept of narrated time and time of reading come together in process of organic unification. The tensed and untensed views of time as well as the binaries of objective and subjective time, descend upon the readers to whom the text wishes to communicate. The act of reading as well as reflection on the act of reading contribute much to a human being's understanding of time. The concept of 'being' is then the resultant picture of a blend of these understandings. The cause-and-effect nature of the narrative along with the specific analysis of characters reveals the inseparability of the past, present and future that the text intertwines. At the same time, a deliberation upon this shows the separation that these axes of time reference have on the notion of cosmological time. The difference in the time frames expressed in the novels, the distance between the narrator and the narrated and the consequent distance between the author and the

reader thus illustrates this point. As Currie comments: “The paradox of temporal distance is merely the recognition that an account of the inseparability of past, present and future in the mind depends upon their separation in the ordinary, or metaphysical, conception of time, and in reverse, that the metaphysical conception of time cannot deny the inseparability of past, present and future in consciousness” (*About* 71). The consciousness referred to here may be understood as narrative consciousness. Thus, the narrative supports the understanding of time and further encourages thought on the experience of time. This leads to an understanding of the nature of being and the effect that time has on existence.

Lessing can be seen to postulate that, language and literature, to a great extent, is complicit in establishing and reinforcing prevalent ideologies through various state ideological apparatuses that cater to the powerful profit-making powers governing the course of events in the society. She crafted characters who thought, spoke and acted against this establishment, who did not necessarily always succeed in the usual sense of the word, yet achieved the objective of placing before the readers alternate thought processes, frames of critical analyses and opportunities to introspect and formulate their own ideologies. Lessing refers to, conceptualises and asserts – in the nine novels – the failure of the apparatus of literature that had been dependent on realist conventions to portray reality, and proves that only a work that dares to stand on the margins and look objectively at the dominant traditions (of structure, ideology, terminologies and techniques) can pull literature out of the impasse of relating mere stories, and infuse the much-required dynamism that art must, undoubtedly and diligently, uphold. She achieves this by creating characters who occupy their exclusive spaces on the outside of popular belief structures and

ideological discourses, and situating them within texts that do not conform to the popular formulaic structures and frames. While narrative time has often been studied for the techniques that present time, it also appears in the particular references of its passing and impact. These permit the expression of the concept of time and aid a better comprehension of the notion of temporality. These include the manner in which the passing of time is experienced by the characters. Also, the amount of space allotted within a narrative text along with the particular vocabulary that refers to time and temporality add to a deeper understanding. The *GS* contains the following lines: “After a while, even her restlessness passed. She would sit for hours at a time on the shabby old sofa with the faded chintz curtains flapping above her head, as if she were in a stupor. It seemed that something had finally snapped inside of her, and she would gradually fade and sink into darkness” (133-34); and “That short time, she looked at everything straight, without illusions, seeing herself and Dick and their relationship to each other and to the farm, and their future, without a shadow of false hope, as honest and stark as the truth itself. And she knew she could not bear this sad clear-sightedness for long;” (136). These express the concept of time by rendering an experience of time that resonates with the readers through the use of such vocabulary. Similarly, Martha’s thoughts in *RS* must be examined: “As usual a demon of impatience was snapping at her heels, pushing her into the future...Two days ago, walking through the park with Jasmine, the girls had agreed, as if talking about some period a long way behind them, that they had been very romantic and irresponsible when they had joined the group. That conversation with Jasmine now seemed a long time ago” (29-30). Another example is when Dr. Stern expresses his displeasure at Martha refusing to go to a hospital in spite of being ill. He compares her to his native patients who are uneducated and therefore afraid of

the hospital. She feels thus: “Dr. Stern, in using such an argument, was so infinitely removed from her that it was as if he had moved back into the past” (127).

The narrator in *LL* can be found to be musing: “A couple of decades, a decade, in these rapid days even a year, demonstrate how suddenly the season of a belief can turn. Into its own opposite, the rule seems to be –” (103). A similar structuring of paragraph reveals the passage of time for purposes of describing the present in *BDH* wherein the narrator thinks: “The Earth is allowed to be millions of millions of years old, but the birth of civilization is still set somewhere between two thousand and four thousand B. C.,” (109). Both of these lines, as also paragraphs and sections described in similar manner, express the passage, impact, record and influence of time. They help the readers to ponder upon the experience of time and temporality. Another example where time is shown to be the organising and ordering criterion is in *GN*. Time is presented as the order in chaos, the cause as well as the result of the need for a purpose in life. It expresses the importance of having a defining force in life that will help experience, control and manage time: “Anna understood, when Janet had gone to school, how much she had depended on the discipline which having a child had enforced on her – getting up at a certain time in the morning, going to bed soon enough not to be tired because of having to get up early, arranging regular meals, organizing her moods so as not to upset the child” (561).

Temporalizing has been a method of anchoring characters and readers within contexts that seek to alter their understandings, perspectives and their futures. The characters evolve on journeys of self-discovery by undergoing intense emotional strife and inter-personal turmoil. The readers are placed within contexts of socio-

political and historical situations succeeding in formulating thought processes of different kinds. These elicit original ruminations and comprehension that seek to question dominant discourses, thereby permitting the evolution of new thoughts and narratives. What remains then is the temporalizing of the writer, for the evolution that she undergoes, for the transformation that she accepts and adopts and the psychological resolution that she arrives at, having formulated a notion of her 'self' through the act of writing. The development of Lessing as a writer and the progress of her career is reflected in the evolution of her characters. Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist, has studied the impact of the process of narrating a story on the storyteller's emotional and cognitive being. His main concern was on inquiring about the influence that the process of storytelling entails, highlighting the impact it has on the writer's experience and knowledge about himself/ herself, the society he/she lived in and the world. He examined the story as possessing two landscapes: one at the level of action and the other at the level of consciousness. These elaborates on the action involved in knowledge, thought and feeling. He held that stories could be used as mediators. They formed and presented a connection between the text that the narrative is and the story-teller's consciousness. Writers are constantly engaged in the process of making the familiar strange, through an active transmutation of "the declarative into the subjunctive" (12). With this, they constantly construct, reconstruct and validate their lives and experiences, and above these, their self-hood which Bruner comments can progress only with a capacity to narrate:

Through narrative, we construct, reconstruct, in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow. Memory and imagination fuse in the process...The

human mind, however cultivated its memory or refined its recording systems, can never fully and faithfully recapture the past, but neither can it escape from it. Memory and imagination supply and consume each other's wares. (93)

Bruner also underlined the relationship between storytelling, memory and identity, and says that "individuals who have lost the ability to construct narratives have lost their selves" (86). This finds resonance in the crafting of the novel *BDH*. Much like the protagonist Charles, who undergoes a profound psychological and spiritual journey, the author herself was deeply interested in the workings of the human mind and consciousness. Throughout the novel, Charles is found seeking answers to questions about identity, perception, and reality, mirroring Lessing's own philosophical inquiries into the nature of existence and the self. The novel can be read as an allegorical exploration of the writer's own intellectual and spiritual evolution. The descent into the underworld, the visions he has regarding the assignment that he has been given and his experiences can be interpreted as a metaphor for the journey of self-discovery and transformation that the novelist herself underwent throughout her life. The novel's symbolism and allegorical elements reflect her own engagement with mythology, mysticism, and Jungian psychology. Through Charles' interactions with other characters and his observations of the world around him, she critiques aspects of contemporary society, including imperialism, colonialism, and the dehumanizing effects of modernity. Bruner holds that telling stories about another person's experiences and knowledge links a storyteller to the other, "to read other minds, to tell what others might have been thinking, feeling, even seeing" (85), and when an individual experiences memory

loss, “[they] seem to have lost not only a sense of self but also a sense of other ... selfhood is profoundly relational, that self, ... is also other” (85).

For Bruner, stories exist on the dual levels of individual and social. Stories that are narrated carry the reflection of experiences that help maintain one’s identity and establish uniqueness. “... by comparing our accounts of ourselves with the accounts that others give us of themselves” (65). Bruner emphasizes the deep potential of storytelling, where “the joint and mutual use of language gives us a huge step in the direction of understanding other minds” (62). He does this by emphasising that language is used as a social and cultural tool that mediates one’s relationship with the outside world. This examination of one’s mind and consciousness pervade many of the novels. *GN* offers a representation of a multiplicity of discourses in a structurally complex narrative that includes four notebooks framed by sections entitled *Free Women*. These four notebooks that separately include the “...literary discourse, psychoanalytic discourse, political discourse and the discourse of sexual relationships” (King 39) lay open before the readers a heavily fragmented psyche on the path to self-discovery and personality integration. Lessing also employs the protagonist as a medium of socio-political and literary critique as she voices her opinions and comments on topics as diverse as politics, human relationships, love, scope of literature and literary skills. The context of the novel divulges the writer’s particular opinions and perspective on Communism, human bonds and the prevalent practice of novel writing. Anna repeatedly opines against the traditional form of novel, penalising realism for its failure in presenting reality as is required by the age. She holds how one can only perceive reality as an intensely subjective experience; thus, reality being a product

of the external and social forces, its analysis and critical exploration reveals a critique of the dominant discourses that it inherently is a part of. The novel can also be "...read as 'about' novel-writing, an example of what has become known as reflexive form, since it both thematically and formally, explicitly and implicitly, raises questions about the nature and function of the novel, without being exclusively concerned with literary production" (King 37). The structural complexity is enhanced with the four notebooks carrying different moods and phases of the protagonist's life with the Black and Red Notebooks being the voice of her ideological, political and racial stand, the Yellow Notebook, a novel within the novel and the Blue carrying diary entries within a diary. This novel within a novel and diary within a diary provides the writer with a structurally unnatural possibility of showcasing herself – the "...author as reader as well as writer of her own work" (38) – thereby reiterating the various interchangeable roles the writer, reader and characters play.

Throughout her life and writing career, Lessing has been deeply engaged with the issues of women, women representation and women's literary expressions. *SBD* discusses these in details. The seemingly unconventional and ordinary story of *SBD* unfolds along three different planes and incorporates dream sequences that lend an unnatural quality to the narrative. The story unfolds on a physical level relating to the life and circumstances of the protagonist, on a symbolic/ metaphoric level as the protagonist finds her reality being intertwined with the dreams she lapses into – recurring throughout the course of the novel and on the temporal level as she recollects her past and tries engaging with it to decipher, draw out and identify/ regulate her future on the basis of new knowledge gained. Gender and the

implications of gender gain an important space in the evolution of Lessing's characters. Over time, her protagonists realise the need to do away with the roles and norms that are associated with each gender. Gender is often held to be a social construct over and beyond a bodily concept. Women often find themselves under pressure to perform the roles expected of them. As the characters transform and evolve, they are often in conflict with notions of gender that restrain and obstruct their path of self-discovery and development. Lessing's writings and characters break the stereotype of gender dichotomy and stand against established gender roles and gender performativity. She creates Martha who gives up the roles of wife and mother, and Kate who steps away from her family on her journey of self-discovery, inviting criticism from the compliant cultural codes and code-bearers. Time plays an important role in the way the characters' understanding of gender and gender roles changes. It is this concept that the writer focusses upon, thus magnifying the significance of *SBD* and intensifying the philosophical and political statement the book stands for. The preconceived notions of gender that had been accepted and propounded by the social structures were questioned by Brown, as she re-examined the need to comply with her family's demands, and transforms emotionally and psychologically (symbolised in her physical transformation as well). This challenge was also presented through narratology as the writer incorporated the element of dreams that had always been a symbol and signifier of the unconscious. The recurring dream sequence can be analysed as an unnatural element – a symbol strengthened by its positioning within a seemingly ordinary narrative. Kate can be identified with the seal that appears in dreams and finds herself being attracted towards the dream, recognising representations of her context in them. Her experience of the dream leaves a deep impact on her reality with the final rescue of

the seal resolving her dilemma and bringing her situation to a peaceful culmination. On two parallel planes that seem to allude to each other, the lost, vulnerable, injured, dying seal is returned to the sea while Kate herself returns home to her daily responsibilities towards the end of her journey of self-discovery.

In *CoV*, self-representation is intricately woven into the fabric of the narrative, as the protagonist, Martha Quest, navigates her way through the complexities of her own identity and the changing social and political landscapes of twentieth century Africa. The series, follows her from her youth in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) through adulthood, as she grapples with personal relationships, societal expectations, and her own sense of self. At the heart of her journey is a quest for autonomy and self-realization in a world that often seeks to confine and define her according to rigid gender roles and societal norms. Throughout the series, Lessing offers readers a nuanced portrayal of her inner thoughts, desires, and struggles, allowing her to emerge as a complex and multifaceted character. Martha's self-representation is particularly evident in her relationships with men, including her tumultuous marriage to Douglas Knowell and her affair with the enigmatic Mark Coldridge. Through these relationships, Martha grapples with questions of love, desire, and independence, ultimately asserting her own agency and refusing to be defined solely by her connections to men. Moreover, her political awakening and involvement in various social movements throughout the series serve as a means of self-expression and self-representation. As she becomes increasingly disillusioned with the colonial system and the injustices it perpetuates, she aligns herself with various causes, including workers' rights and anti-colonial struggles, forging her own path and asserting her own beliefs in the

process. Such a summary of the *CoV* narrates as a life story of Lessing herself, for the ruminations and observations Martha place before her readers are Lessing's own concerns and grievances. Lessing had dropped out of school in adolescence and had found recourse in reading and literature which she later states betrayed her to a certain extent. Her political confusions, ideological turmoil, her stint with the Communist Party and even Martha's final act of depriving herself of food and water to attain heightened notions of self and consciousness are episodes from the writer's own life.

Narrative temporality is experienced collectively by the characters, readers and the writer throughout the novels taken for study to fashion out understandings about one's consciousness and the very state of being. A temporal distance that is achieved by narrative strategies assist in better comprehension of the lives and minds of characters while at the same time placing readers and consequently the writer on high pedestals that offer enhanced perspectives of one's consciousness. As Currie comments: "The paradox of temporal distance then is merely the recognition that an account of the inseparability of past, present and future in the mind depends upon their separation in the ordinary, or metaphysical, conception of time, and in reverse, that the metaphysical conception of time cannot deny the inseparability of past, present and future in consciousness" (*About* 71).

Chapter 4

Narrativizing Action: A Study of Narrative Time

Narratives offer multiple vantage points opening up possibilities for various perspectives and interpretations. Such possibilities are enhanced by techniques employed by writers to verbalise the plots and characters they wish to present before readers. The action that takes these plots forward is anchored in their temporal frames to supply them with context, signification and extended meaning for a comprehension of not merely the story of the narrative, but also the ideologies, theories, statements and standpoints that writers wish to enunciate. Narrative time is a fluid concept that lends dynamism and significance while revealing details of the plot being structured and the action being related. Twentieth century criticism witnessed a polarisation of theoretical approaches that sought to classify literary works either formally or historically. John Crowe Ransom posed a valid argument that the literary critic must be provided the freedom to analyse works on the basis of academic and technical prowess and faculty rather than on the basis of their inference to historical context or philosophical rhetoric. The writer must, he argued, be allowed to develop technical expertise in exploring the nuances of fiction and fiction-writing. In 1983, Eagleton propounded the immensely influential literary theory that held the opposite, that a purely formalistic lens would deprive the critic of the opportunity – and consequently the will and required motivation – to study the historical context and ideological fundamentals that narratives possess. Mark Currie's theory, developed in his book *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time*, provides a framework for analysing the temporal aspects of narrative fiction. He postulates that narrative time is more than a linear sequence of

events; rather, it is an interplay of temporal elements such as duration, frequency, order, and rhythm. A richer insight into how time functions within narratives can be gained by applying Currie's framework to Lessing's works. His book links story-telling with future time and the nature of being, and studies the relationship between these concepts. There are two chief concerns that the book presents and studies: one, that reading is an act of anticipation, an act that experiences the present as an object of future memory and a point of future reference; and the second that studies the role and place of fiction that has changed since the twentieth century, transforming fiction into an entity that permits and ideologizes a new experience and expression of time. The former proposition outlined in Currie's work employs the concepts of anticipatory mode of reading, social theories and a philosophical account of time. These are then examined through the analytical framework offered by the notions of prolepsis, temporal distancing and tense. There will also be a brief recourse to how temporality can be read in tandem with, and can be connected to self-consciousness.

Currie held that postmodern narratives must be lifted out of their affinity and critical affiliation to a historical recounting of the past, and that they must instead focus on the anticipation of future that is contained within the narrated present. He theorises that theme and context of novels can only do so much in presenting time and argues that narratives possess performative capacities which can be explored, identified and enunciated for further enquiry within structural and temporal innovations. He states that fiction can present time while philosophy can only explain time. Currie proposes a hermeneutic circle positioned around the action of presentification and depresentification that "makes us live life as if it weren't present and read fictional narrative as if it were" (86). Readers tend to live life and share

experiences or tell stories with an implication that such a narration is the object of future memory whereas, a novel is read imaginatively as being a narration of present moments although the future is already concretised in the following pages. This leads him to conclude that time is a subjectively experienced and comprehended concept, than one that exists in an absolutely external measure. Linked to his hermeneutic circle is also another observation that "...there is a third possibility that might make us look at time in a different way: that fiction, like deconstruction, can present the unrepresentable, and can be the impossible..." (86). His theory must be read within the context of his ruminations of postmodern narrative theory that discusses the shortcoming and criticism against the placement of the understanding of the Saussurean sign within a structural context. He quotes Derrida to explain that the concept of the sign must be broadened beyond the pure meaning it is ascribed, to include a more fluid understanding for "...the meaning of any sign was somehow always qualifying those which preceded it in the sequence or waiting to be qualified by those which followed" (*Postmodern* 83). Structuralism rose as a predominant theory requiring critics, analysts and writers to read narratives as belonging to particular frameworks and needing a syntactic and synchronic analysis of the same. The Saussurean dictate of the sign being a spatial concept eliminating the temporal implications attracted criticism from those who sought to explore narrative time. Currie identifies that this criticism needed closer examination and concludes that "In theory, structuralist narratology was neither ahistorical nor disinterested in the temporal organisation of narrative, but in practice anything temporal was quickly translated into spatial relationships or differences" (*Postmodern* 83). Currie explains that it is Derrida's concept of *différance* that brings back time into the analytical framework. Difference explains that a sign and the sentence to which it belongs

shares a signification in the structural positioning, while the concept of *différance* implies that the relationship between elements in an utterance are fluid and in motion. Signs then gain meaning from the context, are qualified by the element that precede them and anticipate the elements that will succeed them.

The meaning of a sign is not intrinsic and explicitly present as a unique and separate concept, but is spread out across the accompanying and qualifying elements. Referring to this concept as the *trace* of sign, Derrida explains that any sign is embedded within a context and its meaning carries the trace – hint, suggestion or context – of the signs which surround it. But the imparting of this trace structure to a sign while reintroducing time into meaning also strikes at the very notion of time. Currie goes onto problematise such theories that attack the linearity of time in the presentation of history. He explains that narrative linearity represses difference and thus contributes to “the structure of exclusion” (*Postmodern* 85). He proceeds to discuss the metaphysics of presence and elaborate on the underpinning notion of origin as the moment of meaning-generation. The assumption of new historicism is analysed to reach a resolution that textualization and materialism are interdependent and mutually qualifying. This is highlighted by the fact that narratives cannot be seen as mere imaginative or creative output of one’s mind. Rather, they stand for ideological and political practices forming a part of the tangible reality. Currie proceeds to discuss nations and narrations to hold that such a focus on the concept of national identity, while being a preoccupation of deconstructionists, has not contributed much to narratological insights. He concludes that:

...if narrative is as central to the experience of history, knowledge of history, the construction of personal or collective identity as the various new historicisms have claimed, the value of a socio-narratological approach is measured by its contribution to the knowledge of narrative mechanisms and strategies that perform these decidedly political functions rather than by their revolutionary potential. (99)

This point is important in the context of analysing Lessing, for, she has essentially sought to narrativize the historical and political in her stories that seek to form identities for characters and send them on quests for self-discovery. It becomes imperative to examine temporal concerns in narrative while at the same time placing the narrative within a temporal framework. The reader then engages in an exercise of sense-making that can reveal the signification, ideology, context, origin and even future implications of texts being read, some of which have been articulated in later parts of the same text or sequel texts. Lessing while presenting revolutionary texts that seek to establish altered ideologies and voice out against dominant discourses also adds to the socio-narratological approach that seeks to evaluate the contribution of narrative strategies towards articulating the socio-political and historical concerns within texts.

Lessing's narrative techniques are notable for their adaptability, intricacy, and thematic richness. Her narratives abound in techniques ranging from stream of consciousness and non-linear storytelling to diverse perspectives and symbolic imagery. These lend her works a quality that eludes simple classification, encouraging readers to examine her novels from various perspectives. Her inventive storytelling prompts readers to reassess conventional ideas about authorship,

identity, and narrative unity, while also encouraging profound reflections on humanity and the complexities of contemporary existence. Be it the framing technique that she uses to place narratives within a larger framework of context, or the flashback and foreboding that is brought into the plot, the writer has successfully employed various technical uses of time to enhance the relating and reception of her novels. She challenges traditional concepts of chronological order by frequently utilising non-linear narrative structures, such as flashbacks, fragmented timelines, and temporal displacement. The writer infuses her narratives with complexity and depth with a rearrangement of events and by introducing temporal ambiguity. This prompts readers to actively participate in unravelling the narrative threads and discovering deeper meanings. She offers a nuanced portrayal of characters and their world by incorporating multiple perspectives. By shifting between perspectives, Lessing underscores the subjective nature of experience and the intricacies of human relationships, fostering empathy and encouraging readers to reconsider their preconceptions. The writer has employed time to narrate the plots as also to present the identity formulation of her characters. It is here that the evolution of her characters become linked with the use of time techniques on her narratives. The construction of identity is neither a uni-dimensional project nor a linear or chronological process. Rather, it involves the confluence of elements that challenges ideologies, shapes outlook, dismisses thoughts and encourages original ideas. Such narratives add layers to the identity of a subject by offering moments, actions, experiences and responses that are formulated, defined and narrated at different moments by characters or narrators. Such moments of reconstruction of meaning are inserted with the aid of temporal techniques and through an employment of such strategies as distancing, prolepsis, flashback, retrospective examination and an

anticipation of the future. Changes in an individual's experiences, expectations and opportunities throughout life inevitably shape the narratives they create. These fluctuations influence how time is perceived by characters, impacting the depiction of continuity or discontinuity between different moments in the past and present.

The writer uses parallelism in many of her novels to link the protagonist's present with her past, offering reasons and explanations for the choices the character makes and the situations that she finds herself in. Novels, particularly *GS*, *GN*, *BDH* and *LL*, utilize shifts in time and space, ensuring the merit of juxtaposition, authorial choice, flexibility and emphasis. Space and time is fluidified, to refer to graver concerns as the existential crisis and challenges faced, along with emotional imbroglio faced by white settlers on the African farms. This is further cemented with the change in perspective as the novels progress. For instance, the perspective in *GS* changes from the second chapter onwards which shifts from the focus on society to a focus on the protagonist as an individual. *GN* with its unconventional form and distinct perspectives offers readers the fragments of protagonist through separate sections demarcated according to particular ideas of theme and intent. The time frames skip and recur with the linearity being thrown into distress. *BDH* juxtaposes different time frames that are linked to the two different progress lines of the plot. On the one hand is the plot that progresses along the protagonist's consciousness. On the other is the real-world real-time unravelling of the story that portrays the life of the protagonist as a patient at the mental facility. Readers are taken on a journey that the protagonist undertakes through his consciousness, memory, sleeping and waking moments. There are, description of his reveries, episodes of his enlightened consciousness, events of a supernatural, mystical and dream-like nature that seems

fantastical as well as his memory of times ranging from that of his pre-birth days to the present. *LL* and *FGC* deviates from the socio-cultural, realist and political narrative that the *CoV* sequence had been in the previous three novels and adopts narrative techniques that place a spotlight on the form along with the thematic concerns. A non-linear structure replicates the fragmented nature of memory and allows the writer to discover the interrelation of past and present in shaping the plot and characterisation. The writer also employs repetitive motifs and imagery to create a sense of cyclical time within the narrative. For example, in *GS*, the recurring descriptions of the oppressive heat and the barren landscape of the farm serve as reminders of the relentless passage of time and the protagonist's entrapment within her circumstances. Currie in his book outlines how narrative theory benefits from a literary and formal engagement with the philosophical interpretation of the present. He holds how fiction makes it possible to express altered experiences of the present in three ways: through a compression of the time-space, a recontextualization of events and archive fever (*About 9*). The potential of these utilized as narrative techniques releases the possibility of blending places, people and conflicts that have been geographically distanced while a recontextualization through critical endeavours can assist in the adoption of ideologies presented to be aligned with those of the context of analysis within different time frames. Archive fever posits that an event is not recorded because it happens, rather, it happens because it is recorded. These allow the subject being discussed to be aware of its representation, thereby designing a present in which self-consciousness plays a major role. Techniques like retrospective narration, the placement of a climactic event at the start of the novel – thereby establishing a certainty to the narrative end – substantiate Currie's arguments in which he quotes Heidegger and Derrida to explain the concept

of time. It cannot be designated as a mere sequence of *nows* but must have to be a present that carries an anticipation of future events.

Analysing the temporal aspects of characterisation yields three levels at which characters and plot may be qualified by the use of narrative time. These three ways may be seen as the means of establishing a time-frame and lending a time reference to the characters: one, attributing textual properties to a character; two, time reference that can be identified from structural description; and three, observations that can be drawn from extra-textual references, like the socio-political and cultural background of the plot. In *GS*, the passage of time is expressed explicitly with a sixteen-year-old Mary adopting choices and growing into a twenty-five-year-old and later getting married and growing older. The real-world time is verbally expressed while the narrative time is described and utilised as the novel demands. For instance, while the narrative distance between a sixteen-year-old and a thirty-year-old is only that of one page (35-36), there are episodes where the writer describes mere days over a number of pages: “After a while, even her restlessness passed. She would sit for hours at a time on the shabby old sofa with the faded chintz curtains flapping above her head, as if she were in a stupor. It seemed that something had finally snapped inside of her, and she would gradually fade and sink into darkness” (133-34). The extended description of the physical context as well as the use of adverbs like ‘gradually’ define a slow-paced passage of time. The use of verbal techniques to refer to time is portrayed brilliantly by the writer who succeeds in even implying that the time that is experienced is different from the exact amount of time that passes. The following passage may be analysed as an example of this point:

Time passed quickly, rushing upwards, as it does in those periods when the various crises that develop and ripen in each life show like hills at the end of a journey, setting a boundary to an era. As there is no limit to the amount of sleep to which the human body can be made to accustom itself, she slept hours every day, so as to hasten time, so as to swallow great gulps of it, waking always with the satisfactory knowledge that she was another few hours nearer deliverance. (*GS* 128)

Again, time is employed to describe the emotional state of the protagonist as can be seen: “And she waited. For the first years she had been waiting and longing in the belief, except for short despairing intervals, that somehow things would change” (128). The same technique of equating temporal aspects of nature and seasons with emotions can be found in plenty in the novel. After their marriage when Mary is brought to Dick’s house, she suffers the heat for she has mentally prepared herself for the suffering. But she loses her patience and the description is given in the following manner: “And then, suddenly, the heat became intolerable” (66). This change in weather is followed by a fall out between them with Mary saying, “You expect me to love like a poor white in this pokey little place of yours” (79). This altercation is followed by a spell of cold mutual treatment that finds Mary weakening and giving in to self-pity. In the context, the narration plays out thus: “The tension between them lasted for an intolerable week, until at last the rains fell, and the air grew cool and relaxed” (80). The temporal context of the plot is expressed through information that is not directly associated with the character. References to white settlers in the African continent, the description of the master-slave dynamics and the conversations around the white-black divide along with

established hierarchies situate the text within the socio-cultural temporal framework it belongs to.

The sources of temporal aspects mentioned explicitly, stated with the use of textual cues and inferred from implicit and implied references can be found within the novels of *CoV*. *MQ* places the plot within the spatial temporal context with clear reference to the time as well as the political situation. While there are passing references to the South African country where the plot unfolds and the time frame describing Martha as “a girl of fifteen” (*MQ* 7) and description of other characters, a prime example of the passage of time as well as the expression of temporality can be found in:

And so it all went on, through '35, '36, '37, '38; during that Christmas season of 1938, it was as if the Club had existed forever, that it would exist forever; it was like a fairy story, drenched in nostalgic golden light, where everyone is young, nothing changes. The tranquil blue gums at the foot of the playing fields, the banked jacarandas at the back of the golf course, the hedges of hibiscus, splashed with vivid scarlet over the glossy thick green—these enclosed a magic circle, and inside it nothing could happen, nothing threatened, for some tacit law made it impossible to discuss politics here, and Europe was a long way off. In fact, it might be said that this club had come into existence simply as a protest against everything Europe stood for. (154)

The verbal description of the passing of time as well as the placement of the plot within a specific geographical location helps establish the socio-political space the story belongs to. There are also techniques used by the writer to refer to the passing

of time. The employment of such textual cues and verbal references provides the readers with information regarding the progress of the plot. They also symbolise the intent of the characters and alternately those of the writer when time is made to stand for change in ideology or the befalling of certain fate or when it is used to develop conflicts within the plot. Again, there are passages that explicitly mention the passing of time but implicitly communicates the effect that this passing has on the story and its characters. One such instance is:

She had left the farm a few weeks before; but put like that it was nonsense. Those few weeks seemed endless, one could not think of time—which is an affair of seconds, hours, days—in connection with it. It seemed she had been in town for years—no, that was another term for the divisions of the clock. What she had experienced since she got that momentous letter from Joss, which had released her from her imprisonment like the kiss of the prince in the fairy tales, was something quite different from the slow, measured years she had spent on the farm. (*MQ* 217)

Again, the passage of time and the need to comply to cultural norms is presented in Mrs. Quest's worry about the need to get the seventeen-year-old Martha married. There are references to how the protagonist looked old beyond her age and the nervousness that her mother goes through. These along with the young girl's actions only escalate the atmosphere of conflict between the mother and daughter. All this is connected to the disappointment that the mother faces especially in the instance where she finds Martha reading a book titled *The Decay of the British Empire*; "That Martha should be reading this book struck her mother as criticism of herself; she

began to think of the hard and disappointing life she had led since she came to the colony” (70).

The concept of time – its characteristics, its fluidity, its varied perception and the impact it has on lives and how it is in turn shaped by one’s circumstances – has been portrayed with great clarity and detail in *PM*. Part 2 Chapter 3 can be taken as an exemplary illustration with the narration of childbirth and post-delivery hospital days taking up the entire chapter. The written expression of time, the altered experiences, and the individual’s understanding of time are elaborated upon. For instance, the writer narrates that “...every morning they awoke to deserts of time. Both would turn over, to sleep away another hour or so. At least when they were unconscious time resumed its proper shape” (*PM* 156). This shows how time is perceived in relation to the circumstances that the characters are living in. Another instance is when Martha is in labour and the pain comes as regular bouts of uneasiness and contractions:

Martha noted that something new was happening to time. The watch that lay six inches from her nose on her crooked arm said the pains were punctual at two minutes. But from the moment that the warning hot wave of pain swept up her back, she entered a place where there was no time at all. An agony so unbelievable gripped her that her astounded and protesting mind cried out it was impossible such pain should be. It was a pain so violent that it was no longer pain, but a condition of being. (163)

The writer not only presents the manner in which time is passing but also employs description that relates the manner in which time is experienced. This further

conveys much to the readers who can relate to the character better. Thus, the text draws the readers closer into the lives of its characters. The writer juxtaposes the passage of time regularly with the placement of a watch on the wrist of the protagonist, while at the same time puts her through pain that erases all notions of time within her consciousness. This helps her achieve an organic presentation of the employment and experience of temporality within her novel.

The third novel of the series, *RS*, carries greater and more complex references to temporality as the plot becomes intertwined with deeper concerns of politics, activism and ideology. The vocabulary used indicates the speed and duration of time of particular events and take the readers on the journey with the characters. As can be seen in the passage where the communist outfit that Martha is a part of discusses who a Communist is and refers to the vision of Lenin:

Instantly they were transported into the very heart of their vision: during the last few decades when people in the West have suddenly become communists, they have always been contemporaries of Lenin. They felt themselves to be in a vast barbaric country (though not their own) sunk in the sloth of centuries, members of a small band of men and women with rifles in their hands, prepared to die for the future. They pictured themselves, moving fugitive from one hiding place to another; saw the mob of ragged workers storming the Winter Palace; heard Lenin say: 'Comrades, we will now proceed to build socialism.' (*RS* 45).

The deftness with which the writer manages to employ words possessing temporal reference can be observed in the above passage. In a brief paragraph, she captures

the journey towards the past and future that takes place in the minds of the characters. At the same time, she expresses the ideology that they uphold and the spirit that they possess. The significance of the temporal context – the times they were living in – adds to the general impact of the scene while at the same time conveys the context to the readers. The use of the word ‘instantly’ is a clever play in expressing different durations of time frames. The characters and readers are transported instantly to distant time references in the past and future. Such a play of words can also be found in *LL* wherein the duration of time is presented as “Day after day, and still day after day, the two women sat on the veranda, smoking” (305). The phrase ‘day after day’ is ordinary – even clichéd – but followed with ‘and still day after day’ adds to the impact it has on the readers. A similar instance can be observed in “For years and years now, Mrs. Quest had not been allowed to be more than a physical being” (304). Thus, the employment of such temporal techniques adds to the general appeal and critical merit of novels.

The very essence of the *CoV* sequence is captured within a paragraph that employs temporal reference and uses vocabulary related to time. For, the novel sequence is irretrievably linked to the temporal context of the real world within which it exists. It is narrative time that makes it possible to concretise such notions, for without a temporal anchoring the substance of the plot, the significance of its placement within the contemporary times and the impact it wishes to make on particular readers and literature in general will be lost. The following passage has been written crisply and yet contains the soul of the entire series of novels:

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

world 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 did not believe in violence.

Martha was the essence of violence, she had been conceived, bred, fed and reared on violence. (*LL* 242)

Throughout the series, time and temporality play a role in shaping the characters and in designing them as symbols of various concepts, notions and politics that they embody. What sets the sequence apart is the possibility of viewing the five books as constituting one organic unity. It becomes easier to analyse the passage of time and decipher the past, present and future of people, events and issues. The fact that the sequence was completed over two decades adds to the temporal significance the books carry. Readers can examine the growth and evolution of the writer and how time has changed Lessing along with an analysis of the characters. *GN* abounds in temporal techniques. It brings together time, temporality, experience, existence and questions the purpose of life and knowledge about self through its deeply sensitive and highly impressionable protagonist. Through Anna and her books, *GN* offers readers with a presentation of time as a theme as well as through its structure and form. There is a clear exposition of the time in which the story of Anna is unfolding for it opens with “Anna meets her friend Molly in the summer of 1957 after a separation...” (25). Thereafter, the past and present of Anna are spread across different notebooks. These notebooks carry temporal references of their own. This is clearly mentioned with the use of dates and the description of events of global significance that describes the temporal frames to which they belong. The

significance of time and how development of various kinds – personal, political, global – can impact the world is portrayed through numerous sub plots interweaved with the primary one. The references to the concept of time ranges from the socio-political milieu of different episodes in Anna’s life to the scientific developments of the time. For instance, an entry in the Blue Notebook, maintained as a diary, has the following news recording on 1st September 1951: “The technique of quick-freezing germ-cells and keeping them indefinitely can mean a complete change in the significance of time. At present it applies to the male sperm, but it might also be adapted to the female ovum. A man alive in 1951 and a woman alive in 2,051 might be ‘mated’ in 2,251 to produce a child by a pre-natal foster-mother” (*GN* 221).

BDH has a paragraph that exemplifies the employment of vocabulary for describing the passage of time while at the same time referring implicitly to the temporal movements that have shaped history:

A hundred years or so ago (earth time), divines and historians and antiquarians of all kinds stated categorically that the world was created 4000 odd years ago, and anyone who did not go along with this thesis had a hard time of it, as the memoirs, biographies and histories of that period make so sadly clear. What a great step forward into sanity and true thinking has taken place in such a very short time: they’ll concede now that the age of the physical world is longer than that—oh, quite considerably, by many millions. A hundred years of scholarly thinking has stretched back a millionfold the age of the earth. (109)

The vocabulary employed expresses the forward and backward movement of time, symbolising the jumps that a reader's consciousness takes between past and present, and between different time frames within the same past. In *SBD*, the protagonist's emotions are described using the time frame that she had expected certain experiences to happen within: "She had not expected it this summer. Next summer, or the year after that, yes, but not *now*. What she had set herself to face had been all in the future. But it was *now* that it was happening" (23). The novel demands that the ordinary and uneventful life of the protagonist be highlighted. This could be a reason why in the initial part of the novel, wherein the characterisation is being drafted, the time given to each action is of significant duration. Kate is shown to be thinking deeply while making coffee, a process that is spread over three pages. While each little action involved in making coffee is described in detail, the philosophical train of her thoughts go thus: "We are what we learn. It often takes a long and painful time" (7). The textual description of making coffee corresponds with the thematic point being voiced. Thus, the characterisation as well as the reading is shaped by employment of three sources – textual, structural and extra-textual – with respect to the temporal aspects as presented by the analysis of the novels.

The analysis of novels supplies the observation that time can be expressed verbally and in the description of the temporal framework within which the plot is situated. It can also be conveyed through the utilisation of symbols, metaphors, characters and such techniques as dreams, visions and reveries. These instances of techniques, tools and references to time through a verbal description of its passing and a formulaic presentation of its features and impact can be found in plenty, across

all novels. Not only is it linked to carrying the plot forward but plays an integral part in voicing the intent, ideology, stance and opinions of the characters as well as the writer. It is closely linked to the journey of self-discovery that the characters embark on, for it is time that provides them with experience and subsequently with knowledge. The above analyses shows that time is both a dimension that qualifies the narrated world and an analytical aspect that links the various strands present in the narrative.

Currie in his works on Postmodern theory and narrative time builds upon the theoretical frameworks that have been prevalent till his time. He calls upon extensively the narratological epochs established by Genette and Ricoeur while at the same time referring to Husserl, Heidegger and Derrida in his elaboration on time, philosophy and linguistics concerns. The use of narrative time in *GS* is presented over a span of several years and is structured around a series of flashbacks and shifting perspectives. The writer uses the flashback technique utilized in investigative fiction with the murder of the protagonist being narrated at the beginning of the novel. This places the climax as the starting point of the plot and thereby plays with the concept of Currie's present as an object of future memory. The future that awaits readers in narrative fiction is revealed at the very beginning with the effect that the past of the plot becomes the future of the reading. The inversion of these elements of time keeps up the tempo of the narrative while parallelly maintaining a sense of constant suspense in spite of the murder having been verbalized. Achieving this inversion thus illustrates the writer's brilliance from her debut novel itself. The retrospective account of Mary's life is then narrated from the perspective of an omniscient narrator aligned to the perspective of Mary –

although there are brief digressions to perspectives of others. The murder frames the novel which then progresses in the fashion of a detective or mystery novel, employing flashback that unravels the episodes, intentions and situations leading to the murder. The initial placement of the news report of the murder lends an inevitability to the climax of the novel. The increasing tempo provides a gathering momentum to the novel infusing into the structure a compelling quality. The retrospective narration then takes the novel forward incorporating an empathy for Mary, an external consciousness provided by Marston and the foreboding of tragedy in the observation of the omniscient narrator who passes comments about how there are people "...for whom the best things have been poisoned from the start" (*GS* 46). While Mary's perspective is presented, Tony Marston and Charlie Slatter become significant voices of white sensibility, the former offering non-judgemental opinions and the latter giving prejudiced notions. The socialist realism that the writer brings into the narrative, however, fails in leaving out the perspective of the black houseboy who remains an exotic and mysterious, yet highly stereotyped character. Moses is presented as a symbol of brute force, unbridled sexuality and shown to be capable of extreme physical strength. The realistic structure of the novel reveals the socio-cultural and racial forces at work, while the thematic inclusion of psychological exploration of the character's mind exposes the shaping of an individual's conscience and consciousness. The form and theme blend in the act of extracting the signified out of the various signifiers that make up the fabric of the novel. At the outset the *GS* does not seem like an unnatural narrative – with its conformity to realism, the circular narrative, the omniscient narrator and the flow from exposition to conflict to climax and resolution; the writer seems to be following the format of traditional Victorian style and yet, one cannot overlook the

tweaking of temporality that lends the novel a modernist colouring. The qualities of flashback, flexibility, juxtapositioning and authorial voice along with the parallel study of individual and social critique help situate the novel within an emerging category of fiction that contributes to the growth of the discipline. The bold portrayal of a relationship between a white woman and her black houseboy with the white woman finally becoming apologetic and seeped in guilt at a stand of disloyalty towards the black servant that she adopts under pressure, was against the social and political milieu at the time the novel was published. The strong ideological concerns voiced in the novel can be identified to mark the beginning of a digression and divergence of the novelist, predicting a departure from conventional novelistic techniques in her later years.

The *CoV* – the writing of which spans seventeen years – expresses and uses time extensively as it traces the life and experiences of Martha Quest from her youth in colonial Southern Africa to her adulthood and self-discovery in post-war England. The protagonist is dissatisfied with life on the farm and within the confines of restricting ideologies that do not resonate with her sensibilities. Her various attempts to escape her stifling existence and life, however, is met with defeat and futile cyclical attempts, as each time her steps meet with backlash and she ends up being disappointed in her choices. Time is shown to be a burden that she wishes to escape with the past being presented in stark contrast to the glorious future that she expects – portrayed as images of an ideal city, ideals of romantic love and the recourse she has in the political affiliation to Communism. The cyclical nature of time and the untensed quality appears to colour the techniques used as her choices leave her searching for an elusive happy future. “Each attempt at the new entrenches her more

firmly in the old, leaving her trapped in cycles – biological, psychological social, political, historical” (Greene 40). The narrator states that “nothing could alter the pattern” (*PM* 94-95) and that “*It had all been done and said already*” (34). The parenthetical statements with long-winding descriptions are some of the formalistic techniques that aid in the establishment of time that does not change the character’s reality. The repetitions and recurring nature of linguistic devices and symbols also resonate in the repetition of words and phrases. For instance, when the phrase “One cannot remember” (21-22) is repeated to emphasise forgetting. The unresolved endings that leave loose ends at the conclusion of narratives also can be studied as a temporal narrative technique. This can be linked to philosophical underpinnings, for in the lack of a definite close rests the potential for further beginnings. The future is thus left open with possibilities being tied to its existence. In *CoV*, the end of novels, although portrayed as the end to psychological and emotional bonds, offer new beginnings and trajectories – the loss of Martha’s maidenhood at the end of *MQ*, the end of her marriage at the close of *PM*, the loss of the group’s integrity and her falling out with political affiliation with them at the end of *RS* as also the end of her marriage to Anton at the end of *LL*. Currie’s argument that fiction can present the unrepresentable finds expression in Martha’s dream of the extinct saurian, that she finds fossilised but alive after centuries. Again, the imaginative compression of space time, as explained by Currie, is represented in this image. The temporal quality to the half-fossilized living creature gains currency when it becomes the symbol of history. For, Mr. Maynard describes it as “a record of misery, brutality, stupidity,” the representation of the errors of the past. The view that it is a “specimen of horror from a dead epoch” (*LL* 46-47) assumes intense signification when the temporal binding of the novel is removed and the symbol is isolated as a message

for the contemporary world. Lessing's use of narrative time and time sequences place before the readers weighty symbols and literary tropes for analysis.

The employment of lyricism and pictorial metaphorical details to the plot of the novel, adds to the impact of the novel. The imagery of the landlocked city, desertified landscapes and dream houses that appear in prophetic dreams and frightening nightmares blends the objective with the subjective. The lyric mode that the novel is written in, supplements the crafting of unnatural storyworld for as Joanna Russ says, the lyric mode "...consists of *the organization of discrete elements* (images, events, scenes, passages, words, what-have-you) *around an unspoken thematic or emotional center*. The lyric mode exists without chronology or causation; its principle of connection is *associative*" (87). The shift to a lyric mode facilitates the verbalisation of experiences that would be inexpressible in earlier conventional modes. The effect of the themes is further made intense by the vivid imagery that captures the sentiments of the age. The city that Martha envisions and the one that she finds herself in are in stark contrast to each other. The image of the ruined city helps establish a surreal quality to the scenery which then adds to the unnaturalness of the narrative. This surrealism and the dream-like quality of the narrative becomes pronounced with the flexible use of temporality. Such techniques and narrative strategies pull the work out of mimetic reductionism – the concept that every aspect of a narrative can be explained along the lines, understanding and interpretation of real-world knowledge and cognitive parameters.

Lessing's works require the readers to reject and renounce certain prejudices and preconceived notions in their approach to literature. This includes accepting the fact that stories may exist outside communicative frameworks that can be

comprehended and expressed on the basis of real-world situations and events. Such an affiliation – of associating everything to real-world events – can cause a neglect of the potential of unnatural narratives like *LL*, *FGC* and *BDH*. Within this potential rests information, insights and philosophical inferences that characters – and through them, readers – attain in their journeys. It can be observed that the writer too achieves a superior sense of understanding of her/ his reality, the world and the self. The use of dreams and visions while being an employment of narrative time is also an example of the experience of narrative time (and hence, will be analysed in the following chapter as well). Dreams are given a quality of reality such that they qualify and influence events in ways that register them as conscious experience. The scope of narrative time and the flexibility of time techniques allow the writer to speed and slow down the experience of time by characters. Such a refiguration of time becomes pronounced in *FGC*. The prowess of the writer is brought to the fore as she utilises even emotional episodes and psychologically charged incidents in the life of characters to qualify and quantify the element of time in her novels. The intensity of Martha's relationship with Thomas, takes her across the boundaries of 'self' as she had never imagined was possible but also alter the time frames and her experience of time. This is further enhanced by the inadequacy of language that is represented in the loss of words that she suffers when trying to verbalise her bond and the kind of relationship she shares with him. The symbols used and metaphors employed too are coloured with a temporality as the writer resorts to revoking and recalling images with changed ramifications and impact within the narrative. The images of the ruined city, the natural elements that stand for particular places, or people or ages are all revisited and revised to offer newer significations. The house with many rooms – the image in her dream – is revisited but Martha loses sense of

time as Lessing states that her perspective moves “back in time, or perhaps forward – she did not know” (*LL* 15) and the house no longer retains the earlier image of being the farm house and becomes taller and shadowy. The image is further distorted as she desperately tries to keep the rooms separate as the dream requires her to. She runs into multiple images of this dream till the past, present and future blend into an entangled image that destroys all sense of chronology.

Martha’s mystical experiences take her beyond the time space restrictions as she imagines the past and lets her mind roam over to the future by conjuring up images of places and events that she has not visited and can only imagine. This temporal displacement allows the writer to offer the characters enlightening perceptions leading them to new forms of knowledge. In relinquishing the linearity of narrated time, the writer is able to portray a character who transcends such concerns as time and space and thereby attains heightened consciousness. By the final book of the series, Martha has become detached from the external forces that had held her captive and assume an identity that is not contained within the temporal or spatial concerns of her previous identity. This offers her a renewed sense of freedom, for, “There she was: she was, nothing to do with Martha, or any other name she might have had attached to her” (*FGC* 36). *FGC* uses more than narrative content and plot features to startle the readers and prepare them for the disintegration and breakdown of the central character. The seemingly slow-paced and linear novel changes tempo towards the middle of the story and then accelerates at a pace that shocks comprehension. This technique allows the writer to achieve the protagonist’s psychological resolution and symbolise the world’s cataclysm that awaits at the end:

London heaved up and down, houses changed shapes, collapsed, whole streets were vanishing into rubble...it seemed as if the idea of a city or town as something slow-changing, almost permanent, belonged to the past...if time were slightly speeded up, then a city now must look like fountains of rubble cascading among great machines, while buildings momentarily form, change colour like vegetation, dissolve, re-form. (*FCG* 318)

The *FGC* abounds in the use of techniques of narrative time as Martha's act of flexing time is portrayed through imaginative reconfiguration, déjà vu and foreshadowing. Added to this is the discourse regarding imagination and episodes of visionist journeys, that characters like Lynda go through. The theme of repetition recurs as the protagonist moves forward and backward in her consciousness and in her understanding of herself, existence and the world. As Greene comments: "The narrative structure of *The Four-Gated City* – a pronounced linearity catapulting toward The End, counterpointed by patterns of recurrence and circular return – suggests a sense of time both as arrow and as circle, those notions associated with West and East, history and myth, modern and archaic, male and female" (82).

While the writer relinquishes realism and upholds language as possessing limitations, she inadvertently refuses to give in to drama and hence, reduces the writing to a sort of bland reporting, packaging bildungsroman with futuristic elements. Critics like Schleuter, Rubenstein and Sprague find the narrative to be unfulfilling of a new trajectory and observe a sense of imitative quality "...as though length and flat structure could convey the ideological deadness and paranoia of the Fifties" (Sprague 116). However, a close and involved reading of the novel provides elements that lend the novel a quality of high merit that places it above such

criticisms. These factors include the character's mental trauma and subsequent psychological breakdown. The novel also shows the relegation of the protagonist to the background as the collective rises as a highly influential force around her. The Coldridge household becomes a microcosm of the political and cultural milieu of the time while the plot develops into an extensive, futuristic, prophetic and visionary revolution. The refusal to employ romanticism and lyricism, the complete renunciation of drama and the stark portrayal of a futuristic island that the children of violence inhabit, the characteristics and features of these children and the vision of a world they symbolise present a dream for a changed and transformed world before the readers. The writer chooses to portray, relate and present unnatural storyworld to jolt the readers out of the complacency that they seem to have slipped into. While her attempt was to pull literature out of the complicity that it harboured in reinforcing dominant ideology, she also sought to pull the readers out of the complicity of approval and affinity to certain ideologies. By the end of the series, the individual and the collective diverge and the world is portrayed hurtling down the road to complete annihilation. After the apocalypse, the Appendix of the *FGC* narrates the story of the destroyed future – with the survivors not knowing what had happened or how serious and grave the damage was. The administration rules over the disoriented crowd and the monstrous children, portending a terrible world. But the writer designs an island – Martha's Island – that rises as a citadel of hope and future possibilities. Although the new government constituted repressive machinery, the new children had powers that could control and overpower the government. The thinking capacity of the human race is restored – untouched and untainted by any ideology – the ability of which places mankind above such debilitating forces of repression and regressive philosophies. "The old right of the individual human

conscience which must know better than any authority, secular or religious, had been restored, but on a higher level, and in a new form which was untouchable by any legal formulas” (*FGC* 586). Lessing resorts to narrate unnatural storyworlds to illustrate a counter-image of the present world.

In order to save the world, however, Lessing must destroy it, for she cannot conceive a way of breaking the chain of determinism and destruction within this world or the laws of probability and causality that govern it. The shading into the fantastic obscures a contradiction: whereas the novel proper suggests that change is accomplished by working it through – that by enduring the process one moves beyond it, and such virtues as patience and endurance are what is “needed” – the Appendix breaks the circle in a fairly dramatic way and allows a heroic resolution. (*FGC* 91)

The novel that begins as flat and dry recounting of events escalates into the fantastic and futuristic establishment of a new order and differently designed reality.

BDH – a novel that blurs the lines between reality and delusion – is a captivating exploration of madness, identity, and the human psyche. The effect and impact of the narrative is enhanced with the employment of a time framework that makes possible a juxtaposition of the real and imagined, the possible and the impossible. The alternate reality that forms the vision of the protagonist, into which he travels in his dreams and experiences fantastical and surrealistic events reinforce the attempt by the writer to create adequate thematic distancing and diversion from the dominant discourses to lay down a valid and radical critique of the ideology.

BDH can be defined as one among the “... many fictional narratives [that] confront

us with bizarre worlds that are governed by principles that clearly transcend the parameters of the real world” (Alber et al 3). The structural innovation stands to supplement the thematic and ideological stand that the writer wishes to reiterate. Through the world of Charles, Lessing establishes the futility of professions like his own that holds onto notions of progress that keep them away from learning from the past, and gives the false impression that societies that are in tandem with nature must be primitive and underdeveloped. The vivid and exotic world that Charles travels to in his dream is logically impossible and is rendered a mystical quality for being a product of Charles’ imagination according to the dominant discourse of normalcy and psychological stability. The Repressive State Apparatus at work here is that of the mental health facility and its doctors who label Charles as a patient requiring medical treatment and hospitalisation. The discourse adopted by these doctors derive validity from the prevalent ideology that empower them with an authority owing to the tangible quality of the conflict at hand. While on the one hand, the novel establishes the dominant discourse as being empirical, verifiable and objective and therefore, of greater acceptance and merit, on the other, the author designs and develops storyworlds that shock, surprise and amaze the readers who are drawn into the absolutely fascinating portrayal of alternate realities that bear no resemblance – neither in physicality not logic – to the real world. Through this exercise, the writer also establishes marked and deliberate definitions of certain philosophies, theories and ideologies that she wishes to discuss and elucidate before the world. She attempts to rigorously and consistently reveal the hollowness and failure of a system that prevents one from formulating an impartial perspective freed from coloured influences. As King comments:

In this novel, Lessing suggests, like more recent feminist theories, that this kind of theoretical disclosure, with its emphasis on distinguishing characteristics, classes, orders and hierarchies, embodies an inherently oppressive impulse to imprison reality in rigid structures. In such systems, ‘otherness’, what does not fit, is suppressed or dismissed by such formulae as ‘the exception that proves the rule’, in order to preserve the consistency of the theory, its guarantee of authority. (61)

The inclusivity that the writer wishes to incorporate into the writing is made evident from the very beginning of the novel, the epigraph of which reads: “...this miniscule world of the sand grains is also the world of inconceivably minute beings, which swim through the liquid film around the grain of sand as fish would swim through the ocean covering the sphere of the earth” (*BDH* 7). Such vivid imagery forecasts the inclusion of highly visualist description of the dreams and visions that show an alternate world filled with verdant jungles of thick foliage and wildlife that engage in fierce battles for territory. Also included are careful and explicit description of the fantastical Crystal, the communion of Gods and the journey of the protagonist.

The novel, divided into two parts, takes the readers on a journey to worlds that appear fictional and fantastical, alluding to metaphoric contents that symbolise the situations and places that mankind finds itself confined to at various points in life. By analogy, the unnamed seafarer of the first section in *BDH* can be taken to be any ordinary human being recollecting and reorganising experiences of the entire race through a journey into his own consciousness. The first part of the narration, thus, takes readers through the experiences of the perceiving self while the next part is composed of letters, conversations and testimonies of people who know the

protagonist. The first part is also composed of the doctors' evaluation of the patient's consciousness and mental integrity. This section encapsulates the impossible storyworld that contributes to *BDH* being an unnatural narrative. The seafaring character is shown to be adrift a ship and on a quest. A Crystal lands twice but while his friends are allowed access, he is left behind. The consequent journey is an attempt by the character to reach and become a part of the Crystal. The unnatural physicality of the depicted world blends with the unnatural logic as the protagonist is associated with the first organisms growing out of the slime as they become land creatures. The symbolism explains the emergence of human consciousness and its development on its journey towards enlightenment. The seafaring protagonist is taken to the land with the help of a dolphin, where he comes across exotic creatures. He arrives at an archaic city reminiscent of the four-gated city of *CoV* and is attracted towards its centre that houses a circle in a square configuration. The experiences and visual contexts that the protagonist finds himself in is both physical and psychological as the character travels through times and spaces that symbolise the stages of evolution of the human race. The unity and peace reached at, is disturbed by the turbulence and unrest that creeps into the world/ city that the protagonist inhabits. Presented as a dark shadow, the character reels under the influence of the lunar power linking multiple metaphoric and mythical interpretations. Juxtaposed with this journey and altered state of consciousness in an unnatural world are the doctors' inferences that mark him as abnormal. Alternately, the protagonist witnesses bloody battles, wild rituals and the execution of fantastical rites. The introduction of carnal desires and the images of flesh, bodies, physical union and conflict further escalate the allusions offered reminding one of the Biblical Garden of Eden where the fruit of the tree of knowledge, when eaten, leads

Adam and Eve to fall from grace and eternal shame. "...now I understood my fall away from what I had been when I landed, only three weeks before, into a land which had never known killing. I knew that I had arrived purged and salt-scoured and guilt-less, but that between then and now I had drawn evil into my surroundings, into me..." (Lessing, *SBD* 66). The protagonist is later taken up into the Crystal after he successfully completes a flight into the sky with the aid of a bug white bird. As he is received into the Crystal, the inner and outer spaces merge, blending the self with the collective and offering him the realisation that the human mind is part of a collective that houses the consciousness of the human race. The microcosm becomes the macrocosm, uniting into a consciousness that helps fuse the inner and outer notions of one's being. The narrative designed and described widens the readers' minds, offers varied perspectives and allows them to prepare intellectually, emotionally, philosophically and ideologically to accept the presentation of unnatural minds through unnatural acts of narration.

The narrative offers no authorial guidance as the alternating first person narration and limited third-person narrative does not indulge in any authoritative or omniscient reporting or commentary. Throughout the novel and even during significant events, the impersonal third person narrator describes situation, life and choices of the protagonist in limited perspective such that readers often have to interpret and appreciate the narrative on their own and according to their sensibilities. The unpredictable element of narration – both in context and structure – succeeds in presenting a reality that is understood without any bias or personal fallacy by the readers who are exposed to alternate versions of reality and possibilities. As King comments:

No discourse in this novel, therefore, is privileged by its correspondence with the 'real world' of the readers, or through authorial narrative comment. Nor, on the other hand, can Charles' dream-life be said to be endowed with the traditional status of 'special pleading', the authority of the authentic, 'this is how I felt' witness. For instead of his experiences being presented consistently in the first person, they are presented through a series of narrative perspectives which break down any source of a pre-existent, unified subject, so that there can be no coherent, identifiable originator of meaning. (67)

Lessing uses the protagonist's mind to declare the need for narratives that relinquish narratorial authority that prescribes signification. Charles, before his amnesia, talks about discourse that interprets power relations as natural consequence of narratives that take meanings as being closed and final. This is placed in contrast to his awakened consciousness that brings to the fore his repressed awareness, stating the importance and potential of plurality of meanings. He breaks free of established structures that support closed discourses, and opens up entire worlds of alternate possibilities. It is only an unnatural narratology that provides a writer with the freedom to explore such topics as voiced in *BDH*. The writer incorporates such themes as elevated consciousness, intuitive thinking capacities and extra-sensory perceptions into the later novels. These enable her protagonists – and through them, her readers – to explore the vast expanse and flexibility of the human mind. "In one of a series of lectures given in 1972 at the New School for Social Research, Lessing alluded to her own conversion from the rationalist position to one accommodating

the connections among extrasensory perception, elevations of consciousness, and the intensification of personal energy” (Bloom 219).

The fact that the protagonist is labelled to be regressing and possesses lesser grasp of reality compared to when he was admitted – an observation by the doctors treating him – heightens the impact of the statement that Lessing seems to be making. The intense spiritual and philosophical journey that the protagonist is on, is deciphered as a state of delusion by the radical discourses that Charles is subjected to. Readers who travel with the character through experiences, both internal and external, find themselves jolted into the real-world scenario during the interlude offered by the episodes of medical treatment and hospital scenes. The novelist seems to be using these logical contradictions to state the dominance and strength of established frameworks of knowledge and ideological apparatuses. The theory of R. D. Laing indicates that the same forces that claim to be treating mental infirmity seems to quieten and nullify the self-discovery and healing processes that such departures from accepted notions of normalcy actually are. This is particularly emphasised in the structuring of the novel, for as the novel reaches a resolution, the readers realise that all that is revealed in the second part of the novel regarding the past and personal history of the protagonist is the reason for whatever happens with him – both on a physical plane and a spiritual/ psychological plane – in the first part. His notions, understandings and convictions – many of which he does not allow his conscious self to acknowledge, thereby repressing them – emerge in the physical settings and situations he experiences in his reveries and psychic travels. “The narrative organisation thus expresses two kinds of knowledge: the “information” of the external world of social interaction, and its imaginative transformations at the

unconscious levels of the protagonist's psyche" (Bloom 224). Through an adoption of such unconventional narrative strategies, Lessing succeeds in presenting the interdependence and close existence of contradictory forces of prevalent ideology and reforms, sanity and insanity, the real and the imaginary in order to present before the readers the multi-faceted personalities and psyches in a hugely pluralistic world. While these splits cause an aggravation of rift between the perception of one's self and the external world that the self is a part of, the writer wishes to present the need for the unification of such notions and perceptions for a true understanding of the self, its evolution and its role in the world:

Lessing's increasing use of paradox, symbolic imagery, and nonlogical frames of reference indicates her attempt to formulate an imaginative way around that logical contradiction [the sanity of insanity and the insanity of sanity]. Though the reduction in scope, diversity of characters and events, and density of language (in contrast to the earlier major novels) result in a more schematic work of fiction with occasional stylistic lapses, *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* as a whole is an innovative and effective fusion of form with idea. The suspension between realism and fantasy retains both the metaphysical and formal ambiguity of the whole – a narrative strategy that allies the author with others for whom the "open" ending is the only way to express the uncertainties inherent in the subjective or confessional mode. (Bloom 229)

Lessing's celebrated work, *GN*, employs time as a technique and an experiential plane as the readers are pulled into the narrative that is formally and thematically arranged upon the temporal framework it contains. She employs a

fragmented narrative structure, dividing the novel into four distinct notebooks, each representing a different aspect of Anna's life: black, red, yellow, and blue. This fragmentation mirrors Anna's fractured psyche and the compartmentalization of her experiences. The use of the diary as one of its multiple narrative modes imbues it with a self-conscious temporality. The passage of time as revealed through the impact that time has on consciousness lends the narrative the quality of being temporal. This is presented through the employment of such elements as diary writing. Anna wonders:

Why do I never write down, simply, what happens? Why don't I keep a diary? Obviously, my changing everything into fiction is simply a means of concealing something from myself. Today it was so clear: sitting listening to Molly and Tommy at war, very disturbed by it; then coming straight upstairs and beginning to write a story without even planning to do it. I shall keep a diary. (211)

While the diary, as a literary form, embodies a reference to both the past and the future. It preserves the past in the present for future recollection. Lessing's manipulations of its calendrical format in *GN* reveal a profound ambivalence about writing and the future. Through the innovative use of this diary form, Lessing chronicles the experiences of her unconventional protagonist, an author grappling with an extended bout of writer's block. Anna turns to the diary partly as a means of passing time until she can write well. The writing she undertakes during this unproductive period ultimately becomes Anna's Golden Notebook. As expected, the diary format offers glimpses of the protagonist at various intervals and in different modes and guises, while also serving as a definitive way of marking time in a novel

that partially eschews chronology. However, these dated entries also symbolize the diary's entanglement with capitalist developments, as its emergence coincides with the rise of such inventions as clocks and pocket watches that facilitated the spread of industrial capitalism. This leads to an exploration of archive fever as discussed by Currie and the act of recording the present. The novel exposes how time itself is politicized, how individuals may be differently affected by the experience of time, and how the aesthetics of time presented in narratives can reflect or reimagine moments of crisis. It also raises questions about what literary fiction can achieve along political and ideological lines. While the narrative technique in *GN* differs significantly from previous novels, the writer explains that it aims to present a realistic portrayal of contemporary socio-politics and culture, thus rendering a historical novel in form. The writer employs a novel narratological strategy to convey the diverse discourses in the external world through Anna's fragmented internal self.

The novel that seems to offer a resolution in the concluding golden notebook and seems to carve out a design for itself with framing sections, upon close examination, reveals narratorial techniques and strategies with unusual implications. *Free Women* appears to be Anna's authorial voice and commentary that is added to the novel at a later date after the notebooks are written. There are similarities between the verbalisation of *Free Women* and the narration of *GN*. Thematic and verbal similarity and the chronology along with the interspersing of events and the journey that the readers are taken on, lead to a blending of reality and fiction with narration of the real being included in the narration of the fictional. This extraordinary arrangement then blurs the line between the influence of the author and the

presence of the narrator making it unclear when the narrator appears and when, the writer. With the absence of a single narrator, the signifiers lose the ability of signification and open up the lines, pages and sections for interpretation by the reader. The importance of every page in particular and the novel as a whole, is not governed by a single authorial or narratorial voice, and offers flexibility for examining the events in the novel. The life of characters and the writing of the author elucidate topics like the ideology expressed, philosophy followed and the psyche of the writer. Such a narrative style, that can be described as irrational and unconventional, allows the writer to present her intentions in totality. As Marder notes,

The Golden Notebook has deliberately been composed in such a way as to frustrate any attempt to describe it linearly or to invoke the categories that are usually applied to conventional narratives. Lessing's use of circularity implies that we must change our mental set in some fundamental way and reconsider our assumptions about character and chronology. This seems to be what she had in mind when she described her work as "an attempt to break a form; to break certain forms of consciousness and go beyond them".

(51)

Throughout the novel, the past, present, and future are depicted as fluid realms of events, reinterpreted in ways that reflect the writer's scepticism about the limitations of language and narrative in capturing her knowledge and emotions. Anna, in her visionary experiences within the Golden Notebook, realizes that the past is not a closed chapter but an ongoing project she still needs to confront and work through. This notion of the 'untimely' suggests a leap into an unfamiliar future disconnected

from the present. Significantly, Anna finds clarity and insight only when she transcends conventional notions of time and enters a state of 'timelessness'. *GN*'s intricate narrative structure, with its jumbled diary entries, delays, flash-forwards, and repetitions, disrupts the reader's sense of chronology, creating a sense of temporal disorientation akin to what Derrida associated with the nuclear age and the onset of postmodernism.

A discussion of tensed and untensed view of time is imperative at this point. Currie explains that the Anglo-American approaches to the philosophy of time distinguished such a tensed and untensed view as the difference between the A-series representing "a view of a sequence in terms of the past, present and future" while the B-Series "represents the time of a sequence as a block, in which the relation between events are understood as a sequence of times and dates in which events relate to each other in terms of *before* and *after*" (*About* 17). He explains this with reference to how the 'present' is expressed in narrative fiction. The A-theory holds that the 'now' is of primary importance and places the 'present' above all other concerns; everything else ceases to exist and has only the significance of qualifying this presence. The B-theory however offers equal importance to all points of time reference. It sees these as co-existing factors that make up the whole. It can be viewed as a spatial entity that holds the aspects together on a virtual landscape that takes form through the act of reading. While, there has been constant academic debate to decide the superiority of one above the other, Currie holds that the significance of time and the understanding of time can come from a blend of both. He holds that fiction has the power to fuse these two theories allowing both the tensed and untensed views of time to be present simultaneously in novels. An

examination of Lessing's works supports this argument. One can find the interplay and co-existence of tensed and untensed views of time in her works. It is through such analyses that Currie contributes to the discussion of the enlarged critical terrain of post-modern analysis. He presents one of its chief claims as an argument to the notion of historiographic-metafiction. He scrutinises the way in which its predominance has tended to narrow critical interest to "retrospective models of narrative" (*About* 6). Currie stands against the practice of the narrative ascribing "to the notion of the present as a place from which we continuously revise stories about the past," paying lesser attention "to the relationship between story telling and the mode of continuous anticipation in which we attach significance to present moments". For Currie, this anticipatory mode involves both the fictional use of prolepsis and a much more general "mode of being" in which one experiences the present primarily "as the object of a future memory" (6). It is here that Currie argues against the historiography that is understood as a key element of the postmodern aesthetics. For it entails that retrospection be given prominence over anticipation. This is linked to the tense in narratives, for retrospection places above all, the present coloured by the past. He, however seeks for the importance the present bears for holding the potential to signify the future and reversely, how the present is produced by the future it refers to. Currie develops this argument by extending various approaches to this temporal structure, from Husserl's protention to Derrida's supplementarity to Genette's prolepsis.

Time, time reference and temporality are distinct yet inter-dependent and inter-related topics. Another fact that is verifiable and observable is that the verbs that carry tense need not be the only source of placing events, happenings and the

plot within particular time frames. Temporality is lent by other factors that are not linked to the absolute tense of the verb used. There can be other words that clarify the time and reference to actions. The following examples may be examined to analyse this point:

1. “The whole thing was a gigantic deception. From the moment she had said she would marry...some sort of machinery had been set in motion which was bound to involve more and more people.” (*MQ* 45)
2. “Those ‘few days’ were one of the periods which recurred in her life when she read like a famished person, cramming into the shortest possible time a truly remarkable quantity of vicarious experience.” (220)

Both these instances are worded as past events and yet bear a future sense of reference. The complex possibilities of narrative time are heightened by the fact that the first instance above is a realisation that comes after ‘more and more people’ have been involved. This makes Martha feel that this would be the norm. There are also other possibilities as expressing the ‘presence’ when speaking in past tense. As in, “As soon as it was light, she bathed, put on a dress that swung around her, brushed her hair this way and that, and failing to control it, tied it into a scarf, ordered, but could not eat, a lavish cosmopolitan breakfast, and left the hotel without knowing where she was going.” (*SBD* 179). This crisp description of Kate’s activity blends various tenses and carries forward the narration while referring to past events but informing about the present situation including the fact that she had not eaten and that she did not know where she was going to. Such play of tenses has a bigger role to play within fiction. Lessing employs the complexity of it to convey the intensity of moral conflict within her characters. For example, Martha who was still married

to Anton engages in an affair with Thomas and ends up having physical relationships with both. She loses sense of what had gotten over her and questions if she would have allowed this, in case the order of events were reversed or altered in some way. She feels she is not herself and ruminates:

Who, then, was this person in Martha who first of all signalled to her husband, her legal possessor (or some kind of possessor) that she had been unfaithful to him, and who then went on (without Martha knowing about it, let alone sanctioning it) to signal invitations to him, because apparently she *had* to buy this disliked husband's compliance, even forgiveness. And by offering him her sex! (*LL* 141).

This is how her mental conflict is verbalised. Again, the backwards and forwards movement of time is utilised in plenty in *GN* to voice the thoughts of Anna. In the entry for 11th August 1956, she writes: "Not for the first time in my life I realize I have spent weeks and months in frenzied political activity and have achieved absolutely nothing. More, that I might have foreseen it would achieve nothing" (394). She continues, "Afterwards, I thought about it. Long ago I decided that at a political meeting the truth usually comes out in just a speech or a remark ignored at the time because its *tone* is not that of the meeting. Humorous, or satirical, or even angry or bitter – yet it's the truth, and all the long speeches and contributions are nonsense" (395). These also present a play of words and the multiple movements time can adopt. It also reveals the flexibility in being anchored within a time frame – the episode mentioned is a dated entry – and yet, refer to past and possible future events.

Currie illustrates manners in which fictional time and extra-fictional elements shape and oppose one another. According to the theorist, it is the differences between time as a structure of fiction and time as a mode of being that creates a hermeneutic circle between these two concepts. He elaborates:

The unknowability of the future in a block universe is largely predicated on the collective nature of the present, and ... there is no correlative for this in the fictional narrative as a model of time.... It is the collective imprisonment in the same present that gives the notion of objective or cosmological time its meaning, and this ineluctability of the collective present cannot be reflected in the reading of a written narrative. It is more rational to think of the narrative, the already-there-ness of its future, and its tangible block view of its own universe, as a model which exactly fails to represent the ontological conditions of human being. In this failure, the model of time which is offered by narrative does its work by crossing the boundary between actual and potential future to produce a hermeneutic circle between narrative and time, which encourages us to envisage futures on the model of teleological retrospect which narrative encodes. (*About 21*)

About Time offers a detailed discussion of the existence of future within a narrative text, and the impossibility of a certain future in real life. The possibility of narratives to lay down an explanation of the nature of time and aid the understanding of time is questioned. However, Currie as well as an inquiry into the novels proves that the uncertainty of future can be recreated in a narrative. For, until the readers actually turn the pages and read the story, the references to future events in the novels may or may not be true. For instance, there are times when certain characters plan to speak

or act in a certain way, but end up not doing so. Some examples are at one point, Martha is annoyed with Mrs. Quest and plays out an imaginary conversation in her head thinking about the honest rebuttal she can give her mother. She thinks of sarcastic comments that she might tell her. The tense used is played out as though the conversation is happening: “She was thinking she might say: Well, as it happens, I’ve got to meet Athen...Maisie’s on the thorny path to hell...” and so on. But this is followed by Martha saying “See you soon” (*LL* 97). Again, in *BDH*, the protagonist is shown to be arguing with his doctor against a shock treatment to bring back his memory. He argues at length and closes the conversation with the hope that his memory might come back without such an intervention. However, after a brief episode of narration, another patient comes in with much agitation and asks him whether what she heard about him agreeing to a shock treatment was true. He replies to this in the affirmative. This exchange offers the news to the readers that Charles had agreed to a shock treatment. (*BDH* 245). *GN* shows Anna considering certain course of actions and yet, engaging in exactly the opposite. These add to the uncertainty of having the occurrence of the events in future, that are referred to in narration.

The untensed view of time that reveals a block idea of the narrative universe as detailed by Currie can be found in the employment of dreams and visions as a narrative technique. These also further de-temporalize experiences by recurring throughout as a symbol/ metaphor that colours the entire existence of characters. Lessing can be seen to utilise such techniques to present her own visions. Dreams that have always been included in Lessing’s writings deserve much analysis. Critics have engaged in both Freudian and Jungian interpretation of dreams, be it the

dreams and nightmares of Martha, the visions of Anna, the fantastic reveries of Charles or the recurring seal dream of Kate. The role of dreams in the fiction she has created has been elaborated upon by the writer herself along with the multiple interpretations offered by readers and critics. As Lessing stated in an interview with Jonah Raskin that “Dreams have always been important to me...” and that “With a few symbols a dream can define the whole of one's life, and warn us of the future, too” (*SPV* 71). She explains:

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, 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. Our culture has made an enemy of the unconscious, . . . other cultures have accepted the unconscious as a helpful force, and I think we should learn to see it in that way too. (72)

Dreams are utilised as medium to go beyond established structures, to lay down and interpret the psyche and life of protagonists. Often, they become the tools of introspection and lend characters clarity of thought and action. The inclusion of dreams also carries the agenda of shifting the focus to the unconscious. For, education, social conditioning and pressures of the collective unconscious cage the individual into giving up the insights within her/his unconscious. Jung in his theory on individuation explains a journey towards one's self that requires a confluence of the conscious and unconscious. Man born into societal censure and control, victimised by ideological apparatuses and influenced by the collective forces, must return to the original unconscious embedded within oneself to attain the true sense

of identity. This requires a return to the basics – a journey away from the debilitating forces of repression and regression. Mary, Martha, Anna, Charles and Kate must return to this state of being – uncoloured, uninfluenced and constituting newer knowledge and essence of the self. This could be a reason why Lessing's works emphasise the unconscious.

The use of dreams is generally done to symbolise the emotional and psychological turmoil the characters are in. Mary dreams frequently and is always terrorised by what she sees. Mostly she dreams of herself as a victim under the influence of someone powerful or physically intimidating. These change her sleep pattern as the plot intensifies: "Now she dreamed through her broken nights, horrible, frightening dreams. Her sleep, once an instantaneous dropping of a black curtain, had become more real than her waking" (*GS* 156). The dreams are sometimes used to convey a timelessness, a sense of having no account of the passing of time. This is sometimes blended into the narrative or explicitly verbalised as when Mary ponders: "But why, this last morning, had she woken peacefully from a good sleep, and not, as usually, from one of those ugly dreams that seemed to carry over into the day, so that there sometimes seemed no division between the horrors of the night and of the day?" (192). There is in *CoV*, especially the earlier novels, daydreams that help voice out the interests and desires of the characters. Readers find numerous references to daydreams, be it the Martha's parents' dream to return to their homeland, or Martha's daydream of being free and unbound to the shackles of matronly affairs, or Douglas' daydreams of adventure. Daydreams are referred to as abstracted "drug[s] against any sort of action" (*PM* 286). Dreams often recur in

Lessing's novel as a symbol of people, events, places or ideological conflict or longing for an unfulfilled desire. Martha sees such a dream:

She had been dreaming of 'that country'; a phrase she used to describe a particular region of sleep which she often visited, or which visited her – and always when she was overtired or sick. 'That country' was pale, misted, flat; gulls cried like children around violet coloured shores. She stood on coloured chalky rocks with a bitter sea washing around her feet and the smell of salt was strong in her nostrils. (*RS* 113)

This dream symbolises her longing for England. This is followed by another dream in which she sees a half-fossilized lizard that is centuries old yet alive, "steadily regarding her with a sullen and patient query" (114). This lizard becomes a symbol of time as the ancient creature dwells between life and death. It is impossible that it must be alive, yet it is in her dream. Martha – a white woman of British origin among the black natives of Rhodesia – seemed to be in the wrong place exerting a power that she should not have possessed. The earlier dream of the country with violet-coloured shores stands in stark contrast with the image of this ancient fossilized lizard. Not only is time brought into the frame but also the concept of history and whom the country belongs to. Another recurrent dream that evolves into a deeply symbolic and metaphoric image is that of the bungalow with many rooms:

...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. For if she did not—well, her dreams told her what she might expect. The house crumbled dryly under her eyes into a pile of dust, broken brick, a jut of ant-eaten rafter, a slant of rusting iron. (*LL* 22)

Lessing utilises this dream to show the fragmentation that Martha’s mind is going through. This precedes the mental breakdown that the character will face in the following novel. Again, the novel written after *GN* was published carries forward the theme of fragmented psyches and personalities. Thus, the concept of time not only forms a thematic presence; it develops into a notion that transcends particular novels becoming a common factor that colours all the writer’s works.

The fragmented presence of characters and their minds can be taken as the untensed view of time. Their dreams can be taken out as independent units without the influence of a past and future. They can occur by themselves and have intrinsic value – rendered by the repetition and recurrence throughout the novels. Kate’s life and evolution, too, is congruent with the dream about a seal. As the plot progresses and her journey moves forward, the seal continues to appear in her dreams reaching a final resolution where a changed Kate sets the seal free. “It was moaning. She picked it up. It was heavy. She asked if it were all right, if she could help it. It moaned, and she knew she had to get it to water. She started to carry the seal in her arms down the hill” (*SBD* 34-35). The dream of the seal is one of the predominant dreams in the entire collection of novels taken for study. The seal can be considered to be a character in the novel owing to the number of pages and volume of plot that it stakes claim to. The journey of the seal symbolises the journey of the injured mind of the protagonist. In the last dream, as Kate sets the seal free, the narrator concludes

that “Her journey was over” (266). Dreams that are the subject of much psychoanalysis carry the potential to become a symbol of time and temporality. Generally discussed for the inner meanings, connotations and denotations that they embody, the analysis here places dreams as the reference point for a discussion on narrative time. Not only can they be taken out as independent units of representation, they connect different parts of the plot together, form a sequence connecting the past with the present and even portend the future. This brings one back to the discussion of Currie’s present becoming the object of future memory as well as it carrying the anticipation of retrospect. For, dreams generally are referred to after it happens and is related. Events may pass after they are narrated. Dreams on the other hand, are taken up for the signification they carry, for the roles they play and for the ideas that they stand for. They are referred to by the writer, characters and even readers. They become more than the surface structure that they contribute to, within fiction. While maintaining the quality of fictionality, they raise the novel to philosophical levels. Dreams symbolise the psyche, the repressed ego, the unconscious but within the form of fiction, they contribute to the understanding of narrative time and temporality.

A major contribution of Currie has been the utilisation of prolepsis, which can be identified in Lessing. In the realm of narrative theory, prolepsis denotes the anticipation or hinting at future events within a story. Currie’s exploration of prolepsis underscores its pivotal role in shaping readers’ expectations and interpretations of the narrative. In his extensive study of future reference, Currie outlines three types of prolepses: narratological, structural and rhetorical. These are used to enhance the characterisation by lending the narrative different varieties of

time references. They also influence the reception of the story and the readers' experience. While readers generally project forward in the act of reading to imagine the future of the narrated events, prolepsis is the actualisation of this forward movement in the time contained within the narrative. This time reference may vary according to the type of prolepsis used: narratological when the anticipation takes place within the time locus of the narrated, structural when between the time locus of the narrator and the narrated, and rhetorical when between the time locus of the narrator and the reader/ audience (Currie, *About* 31). In the novels, narratological prolepsis is limited to foreshadowing and the use of symbolism to signify the approaching future. Structural prolepsis has been utilised to effectively induce a sense of anticipation within the readers while rhetorical prolepsis appears through repetition, especially in the form of dreams and visions. Lessing adeptly employs this narrative device to enrich the depth and complexity of her storytelling.

Throughout her works, Lessing strategically utilizes foreshadowing to suggest forthcoming developments or outcomes. These subtle hints, conveyed through dialogue, imagery, or symbolic motifs, create a palpable sense of anticipation and suspense, urging readers to speculate about the trajectory of the narrative. For instance, in *GN* the protagonist's struggles with writer's block and emotional turmoil serve as precursors to the novel's climactic moment of crisis. The narratives often employ temporal displacement, presenting events out of chronological order or offering glimpses into the future. By disrupting conventional notions of linear time, she invites readers to contemplate the implications of these events on the unfolding narrative. Similarly, in *MQ*, the protagonist's reflections on past experiences subtly allude to future developments, heightening the narrative's anticipation and intricacy. Lessing also utilizes narrative framing devices to introduce proleptic elements into

her stories. For example, in *FGC* Martha's return to Southern Africa after years abroad foreshadows forthcoming events while providing contextual groundwork for readers. Such proleptic elements in Lessing's works often carry symbolic weight, hinting at broader thematic concerns or underlying tensions within the narrative, as exemplified by the recurring imagery of barren landscapes and stifling heat in *GS*. Elements and instances of foreshadowing can be read along with this discussion as a temporal technique. Chapter 9 of *GS* ends with a passage that portends the fate that awaits Mary:

Always she stopped herself, unable to bear the anger that would follow. But she felt as if she were in a dark tunnel, nearing something final, something she could not visualize, but which waited for her inexorably, inescapably. And in the attitude of Moses, in the way he moved or spoke, with that easy, confident, bullying insolence, she could see he was waiting too. They were like two antagonists, silently sparring. Only he was powerful and sure of himself, and she was undermined with fear, by her terrible dream-filled nights, her obsession. (*GS* 167)

The narrator states that she could not meet the eyes of the native house-boy for "she knew it would be fatal" (167). A similar sense of foreshadowing is offered by the bungalow dream in *LL*, where Martha finds that the mansion, she dreams of, is reduced to ruin:

And then, while she watched, the ruin changed: it was the house of the kopje, collapsed into a mess of ant-tunnelled mud, ant-consumed grass, where red ant-made tunnels wove a net, like red veins, over the burial mound of

Martha's soul, over the rotting wood, rotting grass, subsiding mud; and bushes and trees, held at bay so long (but only just, only very precariously) by the Quests' tenancy, came striding in, marching over the fragments of substance originally snatched from the bush, to destroy the small shelter for the English family that they had built between teeming earth and brazen African sky. (23)

Here, the narrative gives the sense that there is destruction awaiting Martha in the future. As the sequence progresses, we find Martha moving away from the African continent to England. While this might look like an escape, it leads to Martha losing all sense of identity before she takes up her role as a housekeeper and caretaker at the Coldridge's household. In this capacity, she finds herself adopting those titles and fulfilling those duties which she had kept away from in the previous novels. It is only in a final act of disintegration that she consequently finds herself after a thorough examination of her psyche. Lynda with her schizophrenic enlightenment guides her in this quest of hers that offers her a destination in her journey of self-discovery.

The *GN* has an episode where Molly and Anna exchange calls and converse about where Tommy might be. Molly seems frantic and worried that Tommy is acting a bit aloof and distant. Also, she appears to be concerned about not knowing the exact whereabouts of her son after sending him to meet his father with whom Molly is divorced. There are various exchanges between the women like: "So I said to Tommy: Your father insists you go to see him at once. Tommy said, all right mother, and got up and went. Just like that. To humour me. I got the feeling if I'd said, Jump out of the window, he'd have jumped" (*GN* 234). The conversation

continues with Anna asking Molly about who Tommy had met. Molly goes on to say: "I'm terrified, Anna. Something awful is happening, I'm sure of it. Oh God, I don't know what to do, and I must rush" (235). This episode is followed by Tommy shooting himself later. Such instances keep the readers waiting for what lies ahead in the narrative. Episodes like these are employed in plenty to bring about an effect of suspense and instil in readers fear as well as doom. Also, the placing of these events is done in such a way that the narrative preserves the readers' interest. While some of these are directly involved with the action and characters, some others may be triggered by unrelated people, scenes or brief happenings. An instance in *SBD* is where Kate is pushed into introspection and self-reflection upon watching a seemingly ordinary sight on the road – that of a young mother walking up the street with a baby in a push chair. Kate studies the young girl while stuck in the traffic jam and feels as if the entire street is suddenly filled with such young mothers.

Then, having most conscientiously absorbed the truth of these young women—it was painful, the contrasting of herself with them—she looked at the movements, at the faces, of her contemporaries. Twenty years was the difference, that was all it needed, to set these brave faces into caution, and suspicion. Or, they had a foolish good nature, the victim's good nature, an awful defenceless niceness—like the weak laugh that sounds as if it is going to ebb into tears. They moved as if their limbs had slowed because they were afraid of being trapped by something, afraid of knocking into something; they moved as if surrounded by invisible enemies. (*SBD* 104)

The protagonist feels that the young mothers possessed something she had lost with the passage of time in her marriage – confidence. She envisions a similar fate for

these young mothers, subsequently conveying to the readers her feelings and the need for the breakdown she was heading towards. This communicates to the readers the inner turmoil that the character is facing, intensified by the depth of her realisation that stands in contrast with the ordinariness of the scene that triggers it. The novels abound in such instances that can be observed in action, plot twists, characters, their outlook and the progress of the story.

Structural prolepsis has been utilised to shape the narrative and maintain a constant sense of anticipation within the readers. This can be seen in full measure in *GS* where the novel begins with the protagonist's murder and the readers wait for the narrator to unravel the events leading up to the tragic end. It can also be identified in the absolute rootlessness that Martha is moving towards evident from the first book of the quintet *CoV*, which shows her to be disappointed with her context. She is shown to be yearning for an escape, preferably to her homeland. The detachment that Kate experiences and the regular and pervasive medical intervention that Charles undergoes maintain a sense of anticipation that is lent by the structuring of the narrative. Within the discussion of prolepsis, Currie brings in the concept of double time which the act of narrating memories entails. He states: "It is a mental event located in the narrative's quasi-present and yet its content, when represented in fiction, will function to narrate the past within this quasi-present: the memory holds within it the time of its happening and the time that it recalls" (*About* 36). The novels have several references to past events related by the characters. This has been used to share details about their past, to explain situations, to express reasons for their ideological views, or as justification for their actions in the present. For example, when Thomas relates to Martha how as a young Jewish, Polish peasant

boy, he – along with his friends – used to go to watch American films to look at women. He states that this must be how the Africans see white women (Lessing, *LL* 101). Martha during an argument with her mother, brings up a memory of her overhearing a conversation between her mother and father, about how domineering her grandmother was and how she interfered with the upbringing of her grandchildren. Martha quotes this memory while arguing about how Mrs. Quest was unnecessarily interfering between Caroline and herself (*PM* 287). *BDH* contains such instances in plenty with the entire narrative revolving around recollections about the protagonist by his friends, family and acquaintances. The writer also further develops the technique of memory by embedding memories within recollections. An instance is where Constance writes to Doctor Y: “I once met a friend of Charles (with Charles), who said that Charles once said to him that he – that is, Charles – had decided early in the war that he wouldn’t survive it” (*BDH* 197). Thus, the writer utilises narratological prolepsis to express varying time frames within narrated time and structural prolepsis to bring about an anticipation that is caused by the narrating of an event that the archived record brings about in future.

Time – referred to verbally and formally – with the employment of descriptive passages which convey the movement and effect of time as well as the implication of temporality through structural creativity is further explicated with the use of imagery. Imagery and symbolism aid in an enhanced effect of communicating time and temporality within the narrative. In *GS*, an entire episode of barns being built, the image of which is described as the scene is watched by Mary, has been utilised to refer to time:

She watched the progress of the block of tobacco barns that were being built in the vlei below as she might have watched a ship constructed that would carry her from exile. Slowly they took shape; first an uneven outline of brick, like a ruin; then a divided rectangle, like hollow boxes pushed together; and then the roof went on, a new shiny tin that glinted in the sunlight and over which the heat waves swam and shimmered like glycerine. Over the ridge, out of sight, near the empty potholes of the vlei, the seedbeds were being prepared for when the rains would come and transform the eroded valley-bottom into a running stream. The months went past, until October. (129)

An examination of this paragraph yields that not only does the building of the barn become a symbol for the passage of time but also for Mary's condition. She looks on with longing as though it will offer her some sort of respite from the physical and emotional claustrophobia that she experiences. The reading of books has been employed by Lessing to describe the passage of time, as in *MQ* where the protagonist is described at length lost in her reading:

Then she returned to resume that other journey of discovery which alternated with the discoveries of a young woman loose in town: she returned to her books. She was reading her way slowly and vaguely from book to book, on no better system than that one author might mention another, or that a name appeared in a publisher's spring list. She was like a bird flitting from branch to darkening branch of an immense tree; but the tree rose as if it had no trunk, from a mist. She read as if this were a process discovered by herself; as if there had never been a guide to it. She read like a bird collecting twigs for a nest. (220)

This passage highlights how the writer uses both verbal and visual techniques to indicate the passage of time. A similar visual can be found in *FGC* where the narrator says “Meanwhile, she read. She read. She read. She searched and sampled and dipped and extracted what she needed” (236). The writer even develops this technique and places an entire book of memories as a symbol that stands for time and memory while at the same time embodying an important aspect of the plot. In *FGC*, wherein Martha becomes the caretaker of the Coldridge family, Francis brings in a large book one day which contained press cuttings and photographs of his father, Mark Coldridge.

They began in 1949. Page after page of the great book was filled with what the newspapers had said about Mark, during the bad time. There was nothing there that wasn't painful: and for a small boy, reading about his father, it was not possible to imagine the cumulative effect of the thing. Martha was shocked-she was not able to take it all in at once. She sat down, lit a cigarette and it was her turn to look helplessly at him, waiting for aid. (327)

The entire book is placed within a temporal frame and it becomes a symbol of time as the record that it contains is dated. And yet, it transcends the quality of being caught in time as the impact, influence and implication it possesses along with the significance it gains as time passes only increases.

A device that functions as a representative of temporalization and aids in communicating time and its effects is the mirror. The image and symbol of mirror appears throughout several of Lessing's novels. While Anna finds herself peering into mirrors, Martha is surprised by the image that she sees when she does, Kate

finds herself being transformed totally through the reflection that she sees. It is her reflection that causes her to finally reach a resolution regarding her evolution as an individual. In *GS*, Mary catches her reflection in the mirror to the following effect: “She turned from it, clenching her hands, and saw her face suddenly in the mirror. Faded, tousled, her lips narrowed in anger, her eyes hot, her face puffed and blotched with red, she hardly recognized herself. She gazed, shocked and pitiful, and then she cried, weeping hysterically in great shuddering gasps...” (146). The effect that her reflection has on her remains a trauma as she is later seen to compare other disturbing factors to the experience: “The sound of that soft, disjointed, crazy voice was as terrifying as the sight of herself in the mirror had been” (149). A fifteen-year-old Martha can be found to examine herself in a handheld mirror, “...she sometimes propped the mirror by her pillow, and, lying beside it, would murmur like a lover, ‘Beautiful, you are so beautiful.’ This happened when Mrs Quest had made one of her joking remarks about Martha’s clumsiness, or Mr Quest complained that girls in this country matured so early” (*MQ* 22). This is in contrast to a similar examination she engages in towards the end of the novel where she abruptly leaves her lover Douglas in between an episode of physical intimacy and finds herself looking into a mirror that she passes. Readers find Martha constantly looking into the mirror at different points in life, especially during times when she is faced with uncertainty regarding her looks and low self-esteem. While some of these instances makes her consider herself and the effect that her physical self might be having on people; at other times, she is indifferent: “At this point Martha would sometimes examine herself in the mirror. (On this evening of heat and thunder she examined herself, found herself ugly, and returned to her bed unable to care that she was ugly.)” (*RS* 295). She oscillates between feeling good and bad about herself and her looks. This

is captured by the writer as the character's response to her reflection in mirrors. In *FGC*, for example, while Martha is apprehensive of a future that "fills her stomach with a pit of terror because of what was approaching" (235), she however remains calm on the outside: "In the mirror she saw a solid, competent looking woman with a fresh light make-up and hair that gleamed an attractive dark gold. The dark eyes, made-up, seemed unchanged" (236). The image of the mirror, therefore, symbolises time, growth, aging and evolution. It stands as the spokesperson of one's self-esteem, assuming the role of a judgemental know-it-all that carries the power and authority to make or break an individual. It has been employed to symbolise how time passes, how this change is reflected in the lives of characters through an exposition of the effect it has on their physique and psyche.

The mirror as a device that is linked to time gains more currency in *BDH* and *SBD*. During an episode of wandering through the world created in the mind of the protagonist, Charles begins to ruminate what the moon might be thinking. He goes on to philosophise, linking nature with the consciousness that minds possess, and thinks:

Looking into a mirror, or into the glossy side of a toppling wave, or a water-smoothed shining stone like glass, we see shapes of flesh, flesh in time. But the consciousness that sees that face, that body, those hands, feet, is not inside the same scale of time. A creature looking at its image, as an ape or a leopard leaning over a pool to drink sees its face and body, sees a dance of matter in time. But what sees this dance has memory and expectation, and memory itself is on another plane of time. So each one of us walking or

sitting or sleeping is at least two scales of time wrapped together like the yolk and white of an egg. (*SBD* 58)

The writer brings in a direct reference to the concept of time and seeks answers for the cosmological meaning of time, in this context. Charles follows the above thought with questions that combine the different aspects of time, including the passage of physical time, the understanding of the concept of time and how time is perceived by consciousness. His question “What am I? What is this Time?” (58) links time to being, to existence and brings to the fore a discussion that Currie theorises throughout his book. Charles finds the evolution of all living things closely related to time and states that thinking about this time is outside of the realm of this world. His words seem to reflect Currie’s theory that narrative time above and beyond expressing the various ways in which time can be narrated and presented, also contributes to the understanding about temporality, being and existence. It is this that narratives make possible for the readers. In *SBD*, the mirror is used to great effect. It becomes one with the journey of self-discovery that the protagonist travels on:

For years Kate, who spent the requisite amount of time in front of many different mirrors, had been able to see exactly what he was seeing, when his face was close above hers. Oh it was all so wearying, so humiliating ... had she really spent so many years of her life—it would almost certainly add up to years! —in front of a looking glass? Just like all women. Years spent asleep, or tranced. (178)

The entire novel focusses on the feeling of worthlessness that the protagonist feels that makes her reconsider her actions. She introspects and finds that she had made mistakes at various junctures in her life. Again, it is the mirror that is placed at the point where she realises such truths about herself and her being: “For the whole of her life, or since she was sixteen—yes, the girl making love to her own face had been that age—she had looked into mirrors and seen what other people would judge her by. And now the image had rolled itself up and thrown itself into a corner, leaving behind the face of a sick monkey” (178). This must be read as a harbinger of the later transformation that she undergoes physically. She takes up a hairstyle that leaves her unrecognisable and decides to return to her family. In the choice to alter her physical appearance to do away with artificiality, lies the acceptance of her real self. It is also interesting to note that while the device of mirror finds a space in almost all of the novels chosen for study, the significance it bears and the symbolism it stands for evolves in congruence to the intensity with which Lessing’s works have evolved.

The above analyses of the employment of time techniques within the novels reveals the effect that time has on the plot, the characters as well as the readers. While the writer employs techniques that explicitly showcase the passage of time, there are other methods that have been used to refer to how time changes, moves and impacts. The fact that each incident, every event and the actions described also carry the potential of a future that will soon materialise has been examined. Currie states that written narrative provides what lived experience does not: the certainty of a future. He offers new and stimulating approaches to a variety of questions crucial to the study of time and contemporary narrative. He elaborates on the relationship

between phenomenological time and the interior time of narrative; the operations of time in the construction of narrative self-reflection or self-distance; the relative importance of time as the thematic content of narrative and time as the form of narrative; and, most crucially, the specific contribution that narrative can make to a philosophical understanding of the nature of time. One of the underlying factors in Currie's analysis is his largely successful attempt at placing the philosophy of time and narrative in conversation by highlighting rather than removing their differences. He convincingly argues that if narrative has something to add to the knowledge of the experience of time, it can be said that this knowledge lies not in a novel's overt discussion of temporality, but rather in the specific formal practices that narrative allows. It can be discovered in the play between seeming depth and absolute surface, the interaction of content and form, the difference between the temporality of reading and the temporality of narration.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

A study of the evolution of characters reveals authorial intent, places the novels within contemporary times and elucidates the craft of fiction writing through an exposition of the various tools and techniques involved. It helps analyse the concept of time as it is represented, utilised and brings on desired effects. Some of the oldest theoretical principles holds the notion of characters in close association with action, with some theorists placing action's importance above that of characters. Action being inherently and essentially linked with time – in theory, theme, act of narration and reading – a character study contributes much to the analysis of the various facets of time. An exploration of the nine novels reveals the journey of the characters from a point of self-doubt and conflicting notions of self in relation to the society, to a point of self-discovery. The novel *GS* and the novel sequence *CoV* present protagonists who are represented from their teenage years onwards while *GN*, *BDH* and *SBD* portray central characters who have reached certain points in life that lend them maturity, financial and intellectual independence and greater agency. While some novels narrate entire decades in the lives of its characters, some only contain within the narrative text, a part of the character's life. However, the utilisation of the several temporal techniques of narrative, allows for the writer to refer to the past and future of the characters thereby producing wholesome characterizations that evolve into semiotic entities carrying functional value. Mark Currie has outlined various elements of narrative time that can be identified in fictional works for a better understanding of the metaphysical concept of time. He states that both a thematic and a technical presentation of time through

formal literary devices can contribute to the understanding of time, and subsequently help reflect on weighty matters like being and existence. Rather than employing time or discussing time as a theme, narratives must essentially employ time in the temporal structuring and narrative arrangement to aid the experience of temporality. He upholds the supremacy of temporal structure and the form of internal time consciousness to the presentation of time. Such techniques are present in plenty in the narration of novels. These include non-linear narration, prolepsis of different kinds, different voices and changing narrative situations, flashback and the use of memory and recollection. The employment of images and symbols to represent time and signify the passage of time has also been found in the novels. These techniques highlight the evolution of the characters.

One of the central tenets of Currie's theory is that while the narrative had earlier been understood to be a retrospective activity of detailing past events, its worth and merit lies in the quality of every narrated moment carrying the anticipation of future or the anticipation of retrospection. He contrasts this act with actual life where each moment is understood to be the object of future memory. He draws out his hermeneutic circle of the presentification of past in fiction and the depresentification of events in real life. This holds true in the works of Lessing who has crafted plots that anticipate a future for the characters at every step taking the readers along with the protagonists on their quest for self. While narrative may be seen as stories being told about past events, her novels revolve around the future of its protagonists. Rather than focussing merely on the events that shape them into who they are, the writer focusses on their choices, responses, reactions and decisions that take them into their future that gets qualified and quantified by their actions.

The analysis of writings is particularly beneficial for establishing Currie's theory that time expressed through an anticipation of future markedly emphasises one's understanding of the cosmological notion of time. He reiterates the changed notion of how time is a derivative of temporality; how an understanding of time is what the experience of temporality yields. As readers are pulled into the lives of characters and are made to examine their past and present as they journey with the characters towards their future, the readers evolve in their understanding of time. They exist then in the anticipation of future that qualifies the act of reading as well as the act of narration.

Time plays a decisive role in determining the identity of a character. While Mary is portrayed as a teenager who grows old, marries and develops into the symbol of unfair and conflicting notions of the supremacy of one class over the other, it is the passage of time that reveals the choices, emotions, responses and inner conflict of the character. The early years are covered through short recollections of significant details whereas the complication of the plot, exposition of the ideology, the catalyst that changes Mary's perspective are described in detail through long passages of dedicated description. The juxtaposition of the brief episodes of limited detail against the backdrop of more pressing and thematically important information is made possible by explicit references to the theme and concept of time. The *CoV* elaborates the growth of Martha across decades over the sequence of five novels. The techniques of flashback, retreat into past, prolepsis and narrative framing contribute to the development of the *bildungsroman* that *CoV* has often been regarded as. The *GN* brings together the past, present and future in a confluence of a series of 'present' narrated before the reader who successfully

experiences the fragmentation the protagonist goes through. The author delightfully weaves Anna's past by placing sections of the different notebooks interspersed regularly. While the black notebook takes the readers into the past that shapes her perspective and activism, the blue notebook is a diary that records events chronologically while the yellow is the draft of a novel she wishes to publish in the future. The writer uses time creatively to emphasise and draw out the life, psyche and evolution of the central character. *BDH* blends two planes of normalcy – one as laid down by the dominant discourses and symbolised by the medical facility and facilitators Charles comes into contact with; and the second, the world that he travels to that is the virtual manifestation of his repressed self, where he is endowed with tasks and finds a purpose to his existence. The regular passing into and out of the visionary experiences augments the exploration of inner space fiction that the novel is. There is also a play of time frames as, unlike other characters who progress from one identity to another truer one (attained after gruelling experiences), Charles travels from a state of memory loss to a state of reclamation of identity that is supplied by people who know him, although that is not how he sees himself. Time is shown to be fluid as he evolves from an apparently disoriented man and assumes the true identity, which, in fact, is a false pretence that has stifled his true self. The novel presents an exploration in the present into the past of a character only to promise a future that negates the experience of his presence. He is sent back into the state he was in his past, along with the fantastical reveries, which is a brilliant portrayal of narrative time and its effects on both the characters and readers. *SBD* finds Kate travelling back in time to her past to reconsider her choices while at the same time contemplating what/ who she had evolved into.

Lessing's characters are spokespersons of the author as also the voice of the times and historical context in which they lived. They share their ideology with the author and a close exploration of the character's evolution and the writer's life reveal congruent movements and shifts in ideology and principles between the author and her literary creations. Each character is on a quest to reach a point of coherence and self-discovery. Battered by societal expectations, impacted by the stereotypes and the debilitating influences of the collective ideologies and victimised by the political frameworks they find themselves adherent to, the characters go through disheartening and nerve wrenching psychological, social and political conflicts in their journey to self-identification. They are forced to battle grave inner turmoil that leave them with fragmented notions of 'self' falling into schizophrenic fits of annihilation and consequent relief. The socio-political events that they are a part of, explicitly and implicitly, along with the emotional and familial trauma that shapes their psyche contributes much to their attempts at finding their true self. They often travel to their past only to dream of a future that can free them of the scars of their life that has left an indelible mark on them. They seek this release, knowledge and coherence in politics, friendship, love, matrimony, motherhood, writing, activism, psychological rendezvous and even in temporary states of heightened awareness offered by altered psychological states of being. They are as much affected by their existence as their influence upon the shaping of their future. While most characters find an end and a resolution at the end of their attempt to discover themselves, some can only find self-destruction and complete annihilation. The tone and mood of Lessing's writings offer a conducive environment for the design and development of these characters – most of whom are women with strong opinions, a critical bent of mind unafraid of asking questions and harbour intense rebellion

within themselves against the dominant socio-political and cultural discourses. These reflect in their actions, thoughts, words and find an outlet in their interactions with the society, their families, their community, friends, lovers and in the particular careers that they engage in. This has been communicated with great efficacy and enhanced effect by the expression, experience and employment of narrative time and temporality by the author.

The presentation of time, use of narrative time techniques and the impact of changing time blend to form narratives that offer both a thematic presentation as well as a formalistic portrayal of the chronological concept of time. This is communicated with the complete transformation of the characters as can be seen from the change in their outlook by the end of each of the novels. Mary who attempts to exert her white supremacy over the natives end up realising her powerlessness and the injustice of this subjugation. Martha who rebels against her mother's essential white sensibility and seeks recourse in communism and political activism, transforms into a young woman disillusioned with politics and familial bonds. The identity of her 'self' that she seeks in the external forces and in her relations with people and politics, evades her and she turns inward. Her association with Lynda sends her back in time to review her life choices and unravels the various layers of her mind to reach a resolution to the understanding of herself. Anna who struggles with her fragmented psyche goes through psychological turmoil and writer's block to emerge as a changed individual with altered world views. She writes a novel towards the end after an explosive relationship with Saul that transforms her being. Charles of *BDH* whose strong ideological views are against the dominant discourses represses his real self that questions, ending up losing his

memory and embarking on a hallucinatory journey into imaginary parallel worlds. He journeys through time only to go back to his old self that silences original thought and divergent views. The evolution of his character marks the journey from enlightenment in forgetfulness to compliance in remembering. Kate's discovery of her true self represents the journey of an ordinary wife and mother, who – taken for granted – decides to leave the duties and roles she had been mindlessly conforming to, in order to evolve into her true self. The tensed and untensed views of time were analysed by studying the employment of dreams. They carry an intrinsic quality making it possible to examine them as independent elements while they maintain an indispensable hold on the role they play within the narrative and plot. Also analysed are images and symbols that have been revealed to become metaphors supporting the evolution of characters with philosophical and critical material. These have then been found to reveal the role they play in supplying insight into narrative time. The fluidity of time has been expressed through a use of such techniques as foreshadowing that was found within the novels. It was established that various techniques both formal and ideological as well as verbal and technical have been employed by Lessing in her novels.

The other characters who influence the central characters have come within the lens of examination, although the chief focus has been on the protagonists. The transformation of particular characters along various aspects such as their outlook to life, their philosophy, their ideological standpoints as well as their political activism has been recorded. It was also discovered that the entire character set of Lessing has undergone significant transformation through time. The nine novels spread over two decades support the establishment of this argument as can be found from a perusal

of the altered personalities of the characters. While all her characters do not reach a positive resolution of their quest for identity, yet, they journey forward and are changed by the experiences. They address important questions related to life, living, being, purpose, politics, ideology and conformity. They find themselves in conflict with their society, families, lovers, friends as well as their peers. Their rebellion, disillusionment, enlightenment and final release have been expressed descriptively. The transformation of characters was often found to be a reflection of the socio-political and cultural milieu that they belonged to. This expression of the passage of time can be held in congruence with their evolution. Parallels can be drawn between this and the journey the world takes from colonialism to freedom, from a regressive culture to an open and changed future. The growing up time of the characters and the forward movement of the plot have been focal points in the narratives.

Time and temporality that can be seen and experienced almost as characters in Lessing's works are further lent merit and accentuated by the employment of narrative strategies that shape the progression of the plot and the evolution of the characters. The order in which the events are organised, the duration of each occurrence and the recurrence of images, symbols, dreams, visions as well as the repetition of events that are significant to the narration of the story are deftly managed by Lessing. It can be held that the technique of prolepsis outlined by Currie is employed to perfection by the writer who uses the flashforward technique to heighten the impact of the plot and communicate the influence of the events on the characters to the most optimum extent. Lessing has employed the technique of narratological and structural prolepsis as established by Currie to enhance the reading experience as well as to contribute to characterisation and plot development.

Be it the fate that awaits Mary, revealed in the first chapter of the novel, or the psychological breakdown that Anna is hurtling towards as she maintains different notebooks to record her varied experiences or the absolute detachment that Kate experiences, the possibility of medical intervention that will ultimately bring back Charles' memory depriving him of a final resolution, or the apocalyptic end that is portended by the absolute loss of identity by Martha as she uproots herself from familiar context and moves to a city where she finds the altered spatial temporal existence being reflected in concrete objects around her as well as in the abstract experiences that life offers her. Lessing also uses narrative framing to place her characters and their life in their particular frames of temporal, historical, political, ideological and personal importance. The various kinds of narrative situations she employs assist in deciding upon the amount and extent of temporal distancing that can help emphasise the thematic concerns while offering the readers with flexibility in interpreting and understanding the events narrated. It is this temporal distancing that allows protagonists to engage in constant recollection and anticipation. It facilitates looking forward to a future and staying connected with the past, and forms narratives that are structured to physically and tangibly represent these movements. Currie discusses the authenticity of notions like present, being, time and experience drawing distinction between narrative/ fiction and life. Lessing's works yield several examples to demonstrate how this concept of temporal distance and the paradox born thereof affect the readers' experience.

In all these novels, it is time that allows the change, aids the transformation, presents the characters' journey and validates the identity that they arrive at. Time is utilised to place the characters within the socio-political and cultural context and to

clarify their personal, political and philosophical mindset. It is time that runs parallelly along the line of historical and political development of the world in which the characters live as well as in their personal lives. The plots portray the evolution of the world that begins at a particular point in history, goes through a conflict and emerges at a later point with changed political relations, a changed history and a different cultural context. This same transformation is reflected in the evolution of characters. While the world moves from binding principles of colonialism, racism and blind faith in dominant ideologies, the characters too move away from the established norms of social, personal and psychological confinement. The experience of temporality lends the characters the quality of being flexible and allows them to transform. This then represents the transient principle of life which supersedes the notion of permanence. By the end of the novels, the characters realise the futility of maintaining an unchanging and constant ideology. They realise that psychological liberty and true knowledge of self must be fluid concepts that cannot be established through fragmentation or compartmentalisation. Their identity is coloured by their ability to constantly evolve and change with the changing times. Their views remain within a flux till they attain a resolution that comes with breaking free of norms that disallow growth. The resultant life philosophies of the characters teach them the key to liberty and free thinking. The writer temporalizes her characters to achieve this end while also placing her readers within the various time frames she has designed. The evolution of her characters along with the progress of her plots leave the readers with an experience of time that helps analyse the metaphysical concepts of time, change and evolution within their own lives. Currie's theory that detail aspects as narrative time and temporality can successfully be adapted to investigate works that have been accorded much critical acclaim, to

further analyse the literary, thematic and structural merit that they carry. What is then revealed is the fact that such works transcend the time frames within which they have been written and cannot be restricted to the temporal contexts to which they belong. Lessing's writings establish the impact of narrative time that reaches beyond the constricted notions of plot, characterisation, design and narrative. Rather, narrative time lends a sort of permanence to art, through the expression of the quality of transience as is reflected in her writings and as has been outlined through an evolution of the many lives she has presented in her works.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

Literature allows an exploration of the subjective treatment of time, that allows the expression of one's personal understanding of time, that holds the potential to analyse the multiple notions of time. An area that carries potential is the linguistic manifestations of time and temporality in literature. A technical analysis of language can yield insight into the possible styles and forms of narrative that are yet to be utilised. The particular grammar and vocabulary linked to the expression of time can be studied in detail to identify the differences between the surface and deep structure of fictional works. Psychology has often scrutinized time and the experience of time in its examination of the mental states, psyche and emotional being of people. Empirical research linking psychology and temporality may be an area that can develop theories promoting mental health, healing and intervention.

The examination of literary notions of time can be taken as the foundation for philosophical ruminations that may be expressed implicitly or explicitly within literature. Enquiries into the ontological status of narrative time within fictional and non-fictional works can be undertaken. This can be linked with the hermeneutic approaches to time and narrative, illuminating the process of interpretation and meaning-making in narrative texts. Studies can be carried out in the field of how narrative time shapes perspectives to contribute to the readers' awareness of history, culture and civilization. This can subsequently contribute to a re-examination of cultural heritage through an analysis of available materials and resources of historical merit. A further link to temporal paradoxes incorporating topics such as alternate timelines, narrative loops and their historical and philosophical

implications may be undertaken. Debates and deliberations on how temporal perspectives shape moral judgements and ethical dilemmas, leading up to studies on narrative representations of suffering, reconciliation and redemption may be undertaken.

A major area of possible research links time and the digital world. The temporal dynamics in narratives of virtual reality can be investigated to reveal how such realities influence the perception and experience of time. Entire new interpretations to concepts like presence, immersion and interactivity shape temporal engagement in the story-telling process within the digital world. The compression of time within micro-narratives, the expression of time in performative narratives and the presentation of time on digital platforms offer scope for inquiry and original thought. Beyond the elements examined within this thesis, topics like the pacing and rhythm followed in digital content and the possibility for adjustment of the established narrative time of such content through user engagements is a matter of interest. With the access to multiple forms of media, the potential of narrative time and temporality being represented across multiple interfaces within different time-frames to cater to the sensibilities of different communities may be scrutinised. The compression of space-time within digital spaces can open up possibilities for other types of speculative and imaginative fiction. Representation of time utilising visualization techniques, the influence of such on sense-making and audience decisions can be utilised to study the potential of using narratives to effect changes within spaces of production and consumption of products and services. The commercial aspects of narrative time being utilised for such activities as marketing and promotion may also be analysed.

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