IMAGINATIVE INTEGRATION IN FOUR NOVELS BY DORIS LESSING

by

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ABSTRACT

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Within the remarkable diversity of Doris Lessing's fiction, the author's interest in the interrelation between the individual and the collective remains a constant. Her early works pursued this theme within a socio-political framework; however, her continued explorations have evolved an apolitical ethos which unfolds progressively in all of her work since *The Golden Notebook*. The impetus of this development, which has encouraged Lessing's experiments with various narrative techniques, is her desire to articulate a formula integrating the self with society; in one form or another, the catalyst of this integration is the creative imagination. By tracing related thematic and aesthetic courses of development in four novels—*The Golden Notebook*, *The Four-Gated City*, *The Making of the Representative for Planet Eight*, and *The Good Terrorist*—this thesis will demonstrate how Lessing's quest for integration has shaped her present apolitical ethos.
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INTRODUCTION

Doris Lessing's fiction demonstrates the recognition that in the analysis of parts, the whole will invariably be lost. In the understanding that an authentic picture of man cannot be rendered alone from a photograph of a brain or of a world, Lessing's work includes fictive heights ranging from the intrapersonal to the galactic. Thus the variety of genres that constitute the Lessing oeuvre has resulted from the author's quest to create a holistic, if composite, model of man and his social surroundings.

In Lessing's struggle to achieve this model, her fiction has evolved through several stages before arriving at this present phase's ethos. Early works, such as The Grass is Singing and Martha Quest, represented the individual as a product of external social pressures. The detailed characterization and the didactic bent of these novels caused critics to place Lessing firmly within the realistic tradition. But Lessing soon focused upon a dimension of existence which, while poorly conveyed by realism, became central to her evolving artistic perception: human potentiality as expressed through the creative imagination. From the first appearance of this theme, a
radical shift of the dynamic between self and society occurred. No longer was the self to be seen as a pawn of outer forces, in conflict with or in submission to society; at first intuitively, and then consciously, the author began to outline a grand design of human integration with society that both unifies her composite image of man and represents her personal hope and ideal for him. From The Golden Notebook on, Lessing explores the topography of the creative imagination, discovering its shapes and offering these as the potentially catalyzing agents of personal and social harmony.

In the context of this evolving vision, The Golden Notebook serves as a foundation upon which subsequent novels build. It breaks away from the conventions and underlying philosophy of realism in several important ways. First, its structure dramatically portrays the ineffectiveness of realism as a mirror to the open forms of conscious and unconscious experience. It does this by enclosing a novel, Free Women, among the fragments of notebooks that appear to be extensions of that novel but are actually its sources. Second, its composite depiction of Anna Wulf demonstrates not her unreliability as a narrator so much as the unreliability of any singular narrator in the task of self-assessment. Anna's insanity is her compulsion to summarize her own manifold history into a manageable capsule of
identity; her inability to assimilate even her own past does her efforts to wholly commit herself to social causes.

Anna's salvation, although qualified, comes through an act of the imagination. While the notion that she is "knowable" breaks down into the fragmentary visions of the notebooks, their creative reintegration in the "Golden Notebook" and "Free Women" sections shows the unifying tendency of this impulse. And the reader's best understanding of Anna likewise comes through an act of imaginative integration, for the character that stands at the novel's close does so as an unfinished creation, realized only in potentiality. Thus the contribution of The Golden Notebook to Lessing's evolving ethos is a new recognition of potentiality, revealed by and consubstantial with the human imagination, as an aspect of portrayal. Chapter One will examine the notion of potentiality in detail.

The Golden Notebook's interplay of creator and created align Lessing's aesthetics more closely with Romanticism than with Realism. Yet in the light of subsequent works, that novel maintains an essentially realistic focus upon the individual. Her next major novel, The Four-Gated City, displays more prominently the power of the creative imagination to fuse the self with society. She merges personal and social evolution by ending Martha Quest's
journey to self-understanding in a fictive projection of a changed world where a radically altered form of man, and therein the seeds of a better society, can be found. By the end of this epically proportioned novel, Lessing has taken up and discarded a number of systems for human progress, leaving only the possible realization of our imaginative potential as a path to a better future.

From this stance, it is an easy step to fantasy and to the space fiction series Canopus in Argos: Archives. Within this series, the fourth novel, The Making of the Representative for Planet Eight, takes Lessing's vision of integration to its conclusion. In this fable, the creative imagination resides in the ability of a race to accept and even see beyond its own extinction. In creating this fable, the author once again fuses social and individual perspectives, this time by making individual characters interchangeable. Each is important only in his respective duty, and even this distinction becomes meaningless as the ice that envelops the planet also immerses its inhabitants in a single transcendent experience. As young Martha's dream in the realistic Martha Quest becomes the mature Martha's reality in the fantastic conclusion to The Four-Gated City, so Anna Wulf's dream of "becoming" others takes on a literal meaning in this fable.

With this novel, the ethos culminates: the endeavor to
reveal the self, which led at first to the transcending of realism's boundaries in pursuit of human potential, has evolved a mystical paradigm in which the fully realized self (of which the fully realized society is merely an extension) is itself merely an extension of a universal, life-and death-encompassing "Necessity." And this word, which is associated more than any other with Lessing's flight from the personal and particular to the abstract and universal, is simply a metaphor for the human imagination as Lessing conceives it. Chapter Two will chart the progress of this metaphor in these two novels.

One senses that after The Making of the Representative for Planet Eight Lessing has arrived at the same place where she was when she started The Golden Notebook. Having given up the philosophical restrictions of realism for what Ursula K. LeGuin calls the "open universe" of science fiction, her cosmology (read "her imaginative construct") becomes bogged down in its codified principles of Necessity. Shrewdly, though, Lessing seems to utilize this very imaginative inertia in The Good Terrorist.

Lessing herself admits that this novel focuses upon an "unimaginative" protagonist; and on many levels this work succeeds in demonstrating how bleak and circumscribed the life of an unimaginative person, even a political one, can be. Alice Mellings lives within her own ideology, and this
prevents her from achieving a holistic relationship with the social complex that surrounds her. It is true, as Denis Donoghue points out in his review, that "Mrs. Lessing doesn't let Alice discover that the idea in which she lives is a blatant stereotype" (3). The major thrust of her previous fiction suggests that this may be intentional on Lessing's part, that the novel means to direct by misdirection (as in the manner of the Sufi teaching story which offers wisdom by exposing foolishness). In other words, The Good Terrorist might even be considered as satire.

In any event, Alice Melling's characterization emphasizes negatively the lesson Anna Wulf learns in The Golden Notebook: while Anna's plight reveals how the presence of imagination necessarily broadens our concept of that character's "reality," Alice's plight shows how the lack of imagination limits it. Chapter Three will consider this terrestrial novel in the larger context of Lessing's fictional ethos.

Some final theoretical considerations: rather than the product of a coherent theory, the "creative imagination" as it appears in Lessing is best understood as a developing concept whose shapes arise and become defined through the author's work. Even her literary criticism reveals an evolution of meaning for this term. Significantly, Lessing
wrote her best known literary statements—those contained in "The Small Personal Voice"—over thirty years ago. Her essay on the role and responsibility of the modern writer contains a politically-centered definition of "imagination" which would change as her conceptions of literature changed to allow growth beyond realism. It reveals the boundaries of her early aesthetic perspectives, yet it hints at the directions of growth her own work would take:

We are living in a time which is so dangerous, violent, explosive, and precarious that it is in question whether soon there will be people alive to write books and to read them.... What is the choice before us? It is not merely a question of preventing an evil, but of strengthening a vision of a good which may defeat an evil....

There are only two choices: that we force ourselves into the effort of imagination necessary to become what we are capable of being; or that we submit to being ruled by the office boys of big business, or the socialist bureaucrats who have forgotten that socialism means a desire for goodness and compassion—and the end of submission is that we shall blow ourselves up....(7-9)
Much of Lessing's subsequent work seems to demonstrate the author's own struggles to attain the lofty ideals expressed here. In a 1969 interview with Jonah Raskin, Lessing admitted that she, like her *Golden Notebook* protagonist Anna, is "tormented by the inadequacy of the imagination" (70), expressing the difficulty that a writer or any conscious individual faces in attempting to integrate the "sense data" of an increasingly complex world into any coherent, unified perspective. We may see, then, how Lessing came to leave behind purely political solutions in search for the kind of vision that might reveal new means for our becoming "what we are capable of being." This search would lead Lessing simultaneously inward, to the realm of the inner psyche, and outward, to an idea of holistic evolution. Jungian, Laingian, and Sufistic influences begin to pervade her work beginning with *The Golden Notebook*. These influences reformed Lessing's concept of the nature of interactions between individuals and groups, and they spurred her on to find aesthetic forms capable of expressing these interactions.

Ultimately, Lessing's escape from realism toward a more holistic perspective surfaces in the integration of social and aesthetic theory. Lessing's concept of the creative imagination, then, is not simply literary. It embodies the principle that "ethics and aesthetics are one" (Wittgenstein
Thus Lessing characterizes the creative efforts of artists, including fantasists, as "a sensitive organ which tends to notice things that other parts of humanity don't. . . . Showing us what we're like" (Stamberg 4). And Lessing feels that this facility is open—potentially—to all of us; when asked about how our awareness of humanity's identity and place have changed in this century, she replied: "I should imagine what happens is that we have double vision, if not many visions. One of them is the old one about the immense importance of the individual, which should continue; and another eye, which shall focus on that and on seeing everything in perspective, and which shall be a very valuable one, because it might enable us to be less lethal to each other" (Stamberg 3). Lessing's fiction reveals a mind in constant search of the "perspective" provided through the imagination, which to her represents not only the "living power and prime agent of all human perception" (202), as Coleridge saw it, but also the pathway to individual and collective self-transcendence.
In The Golden Notebook, what seems at first to be a conventional novel supplemented by diaries becomes a complex unfolding portrayal of a woman's struggle to come to terms with the emotions and attitudes that have shaped her art. Cumulatively, these notebooks represent a record of painful self-discoveries, because Anna Wulf allows herself few illusions about her life or her art. Anna eventually struggles through this pain, and in so doing she achieves a kind of inner knowledge that overcomes the antipathy threatening both her art and her well-being. The essence of this inner-knowledge comes to Anna with her readiness to recognize and make a part of herself the pain of others. Anna's discovery, which gives her a better understanding of her place in the world as an artist, reveals how an act of imagination can transcend the level of the self and become a collective act. In this way, The Golden Notebook foreshadows subsequent novels, in which Lessing further explores the creative connection between these two levels of experience.

Lessing writes in her introduction to the novel:
There is a skeleton, or frame, called *Free Women*, which is a conventional short novel, about 60,000 words long, and which could stand by itself. But it is divided into five sections and separated by stages of the four notebooks, Black, Red, Yellow and Blue. The Notebooks are kept by Anna Wulf, a central character of *Free Women*. She keeps four, and not one because, as she recognizes, she has to separate things off from each other, out of fear of chaos, of formlessness—of breakdown. Pressures, inner and outer, end the Notebooks; a heavy black line is drawn across the page of one after another. But now that they are finished, from their fragments can come something new, *The Golden Notebook* (vii).

There is an additional creative effort borne out of the struggles documented in the notebooks: *Free Women*. For out of the breakdown and breakthrough that Anna experiences in the Golden Notebook, Anna is able to compose a novel beginning with an expression of trust, a sentence suggested by an American, Saul Green: "The two women were alone in the London flat" (639). These lines begin *Free Women*, and as the reader discovers this fact the seemingly static and
atemporal organization of the novel as a whole is altered: this discovery unveils the independent life and life-giving capacity of the notebooks. In short, the form of the novel allows the reader to experience vicariously Anna's triumph over personal and artistic stasis.

Since the personal and artistic lives of Anna are intertwined, her devolution as an artist provides a useful perspective on her mental breakdown. Anna's position on art since the publication of her only novel is indicated by her ambivalent attitudes toward her work and toward art in general; the notebooks collectively form a tissue of contradictory attitudes, which is part of Lessing's narrative strategy to define the personal and aesthetic stands her protagonist finally takes. In the Black Notebook, contradiction characterizes Anna's memories of war-time Africa. (This notebook consists of a lengthy recollection of the events and people upon which her only novel, Frontiers of War, was based. It also contains a great many of Anna's opinions about the rights and the place of the artist.) While recalling the memory of her friend Willi, she breaks into a theoretical discourse in which she concludes that adjectival descriptions cannot approach the fullness of a character, and that her true interest is in elucidating characters "so that a reader can feel their reality" (71). On the other hand, she defends her right to
describe someone in just these terms—calling George a "good" man and Willi not a "good" man (110)—and asserting this right against those who would question the effectiveness of the novel form in revealing the character in the face of the "the disintegrating . . . human personality" (109).

The characters and the situation portrayed in the narrative section of the Black Notebook are also replete with ambivalence; it renders events much more cynically than the romanticized novel which sprang from Anna's memories (and which was reviewed as a realistic portrayal of the time). Yet even her recorded memories, when looked at in retrospect, appear false to Anna. She writes, "I read this over today, for the first time since I wrote it. It's full of nostalgia, every word loaded with it, although at the time I wrote it I thought I was being 'objective'" (153). Anna's comment demonstrates how her pertinacious critical intelligence allows her to see the sentimentality that builds up in our memories and obscures efforts at clear self-assessment. And the goal of accurate self-assessment obsesses Anna: it drives her to begin the notebooks. Yet she eventually recognizes that this effort to "tag" her experiences, like her attempt to define herself through political affiliation, is doomed to failure by its distortion of chaos into a false sense of order.
So Anna must put behind her the experience of Africa as chronicled in the Black Notebook—an act which she will repeat with all of the notebooks as she confronts the limitations of their separate visions. For in fact, the very existence of the notebooks, which arose in response to the nostalgic "false order" of her past literary efforts, imposes a stratified order upon the undifferentiated essence of experience. Anna is thus continually caught between her artistic consciousness and her artistic conscience, and this dilemma forms the substance of her writer's block.

One way out of her artistic dilemma, Anna thinks, would be to write "a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life" (61). Her efforts at producing such a work begin in the Yellow Notebook, where she includes part of a novel, The Shadow of the Third, and ideas for novels and stories.

The divisiveness and ambivalence which characterize the Black Notebook imbue this notebook as well. Its movement from a coherent narrative to an array of parodies and fragments parallels its creator's psychic deterioration. Anna's partial recreation of herself in Ella, the protagonist of Shadow, becomes an attempt at exorcism. The level on which this exorcism operates, however, is open to debate. On the one hand, the novel may distance Anna from
the anxieties stemming from her past affair, bundling them into a fictionalized package. On the other hand, this novel fragment stands around a theme that becomes increasingly obvious as a source of Anna's creative regeneration: the theme of the "other." Anna even recognizes that the completion of such a novel, focusing as it would upon an understanding of the complex tensions inherent in the interrelation of its three characters, would depend upon her ability to unearth the pain involved in such a relationship. Anna's interest in this theme signifies her recognition of the need to take into herself a fuller understanding of this "other"; her failure to complete the novel signifies her reluctance to achieve this.

Her own analysis of her effort with this novel is that "as soon as one has lived through something, it falls into a pattern. And the pattern of an affair, even one that has lasted five years and has been as close as a marriage, is seen in terms of what ends it... It is that which would give the thing its shape" (227-28). From this she concludes that the shaping emotion of the novel would be "pain," and that "literature is analysis after the event" (228). What makes these observations important is that they demonstrate how Anna's critical intelligence simultaneously exposes and buries the means to her own rescue: her commentaries upon her literature distance her from the pain that lies at the
heart of her creativity and literally arrest the potential novel's further development. And Anna's initial creative effort in the Yellow Notebook now diffuses into a haphazard array of story fragments and paradies.

Immediately after this entry the Blue Notebook, which Anna initially conceives of as a strict record of personal events to counteract her habit of "fictionalizing," begins. Anna's decision to write an unemotional diary is doubly ironic because this notebook immediately takes up in its chronology the most rigid patterning of all her records, and because it eventually evolves into the most vividly emotional and disturbing of all her records. Initially it records her meetings with a psychoanalyst, whom she visits out of an inability to feel (232). Even in analysis she never admits to having a writer's block, but maintains that life as she understands it makes writing irrelevant. She asks Mrs. Marks (Mother Sugar), "'Why can't you understand that . . . I can't pick up a newspaper without what's in it seeming so overwhelmingly terrible that nothing I could write would seem to have any point at all?'" (251). Yet this manifestation of Anna's obsession with the "outside world" portrayed through the newspaper begins when her personal diary (the Blue Notebook) becomes known to Mother Sugar, and thus becomes established as a way for Anna to overcome her writer's block. It is at this point that the
personal entries end and the news clippings, detailing man's increasing technological and destructive capacities, begin.

When these entries and the "bare-boned" personal ones end, some three years later, Anna has worked her way through another stage in her effort toward creative understanding. She records, "So all that is a failure too. The blue notebook, which I had expected to be the most truthful of the notebooks, is worse than any of them" (468). Anna's revelation is that the most "objective" record of the past of itself brings to light nothing unless there is a consciousness with which it can interact to create meaning. This conclusion will lead Anna finally to confront the forces of her consciousness which have created her artistic and personal fragmentation.

Once again, then, Anna's critical intelligence turns upon itself in an act of self-condemnation which prompts further aesthetic and personal exploration; once again, Anna progresses closer to the goal of an authentic aesthetic; and once again, the way toward this goal appears as a new way of looking at life. Further evidence of this emerges in her conversation with Mrs. Marks; Anna accuses Mrs. Marks of trapping her psyche within a series of repetitive, allusive patterns which distort the personal truth she seeks within herself:
Perhaps the word neurotic means the condition of being highly conscious and developed. The essence of neurosis is conflict. But the essence of living now, fully, not blocking off to what goes on, is conflict. In fact I've reached the stage where I look at people and say--he or she, they are whole because they've chosen to block off at this stage or that. People stay sane by blocking off, by limiting themselves. (469)

Anna's thoughts foreshadow the process by which her qualified salvation will occur and reflect how the novel's fragmentation will lead to coherence, for they imply that the ambivalence with which Anna imbues her perceptions of the world--her "double vision"--is part of a psychic dialectical principle by which Anna's goal, "'to walk off, by myself, Anna Freeman'" (471), may be reached. And, by relating the form of the novel to its protagonist's development, Lessing provides a hint of the integrative potential arising out of the ambivalence and fragmentation of the notebooks. This process crystallizes within the dream which Anna presents to Mrs. Marks at their last meeting:
I dreamed I held a kind of casket in my hands, and inside it was something very precious. I was walking up a long room, like an art gallery or a lecture hall, full of dead pictures and statues. . . . There was a small crowd of people waiting at the end of the hall on a kind of platform. They were waiting for me to hand them the casket. I was incredibly happy that at last I could give them this precious object. . . . But instead of a beautiful thing, which I thought would be there, there was a mass of fragments, and pieces. Not a whole thing, broken into fragments, but bits and pieces from everywhere, all over the world. . . . This, looking at the mass of ugly fragments, was so painful that I couldn't look, and I shut the box. But the group of business men or money-people hadn't noticed. They took the box from me and opened it. I turned away so as not to see, but they were delighted. At last I looked and I saw that there was something in the box. It was a small green crocodile with a winking sardonic snout. I thought it was the image of a crocodile, made of jade, or emeralds, then I saw it was alive, for large frozen tears rolled down its cheeks and turned into diamonds. . . . Mrs. Marks
listened to this dream without comment . . . I went out of that darkened, solemn room, in which I have spent so many hours half-in, half-out, of fantasy and dream, . . . and I reached the cold ugly pavement. I saw myself in a shop window: a small, rather pale, dry, spiky woman, and there was a wry look on my face which I recognized as the grin on the snout of that malicious little green crocodile in the crystal casket of my dream. (253)

At the end of her analysis, Anna still has her writer's block, but she has gained several experiences that point the way to a potential breakthrough. One of these is Anna's readiness to believe in the possibility of something completely new arising in her life: as she tells Mrs. Marks, "Sometimes I meet people, and it seems to me the fact they are cracked across, are split, means they are keeping themselves open for something" (473). Anna, of course, sees, this in herself. (And while Mrs. Marks maintains that Anna's perception is simply a manifestation of collective experience, she does suggest that Anna should write about it.) Another important experience is the strong emotion which presents itself in Anna's dream of the "anarchic principle" embodied in a symbolic, deformed sprite. This
creature possessed an inner vitality . . . caused by a purposeless, undirected, causeless spite. It mocked and jibed and hurt, wished murder, wished death. And yet it was always vibrant with joy" (478). This dream evokes fear in Anna; and yet Mother Sugar, when she hears of the dream, sees that it represents the possibility of a breakthrough. Again, this symbol is characterized in terms of potentialities: Anna must wait for a long time after the end of her analysis for the "positive" aspect of this dream to materialize.

In the meantime, Anna must cling to the clues to the dream of integration she haphazardly picks up on a road to social disaffection, alienation, and threatening dissolution. We remember that a growing personal and political disillusionment parallels her artistic decay. She is besieged by a failed marriage and a broken affair, by contempt for the blind bureaucracy that is the only remnant of the Communist Party's "great dream," and by the increasing difficulty she has in presenting a composed mother's face to her daughter, Janet. Before she can go on in her exploration of self, she must put these distractions aside. By the time she leaves analysis, she has accomplished the first two of these, and when Janet leaves for school, she senses that "[a]n Anna is coming to life that died when Janet was born" (548).
To this "new" or rediscovered Anna we attribute a certain freedom of spirit that allows her, for example, to experiment with her perceptions through the game of "naming," a game of imaginative projection. We may recall that Anna's first notebook started with "Every time I sit down to write, and let my mind go easy, the words, It is so dark, or something to do with darkness. Terror. The terror of this city. Fear of being alone. Only one thing stops me from jumping up and screaming or running to the telephone to ring somebody, it is to deliberately think myself into that hot light" (56). Thus potential creativity exists as one possibility that may arise from Anna's immersion into an atmosphere of freedom. We should also understand that Anna is subjecting herself to isolation in order to attain this freedom, and that the fear voiced by Jack, her Party friend—the fear that her "soul is in danger" (361) from her being alone and with nothing to do—also looms as a real possibility.

The obvious truth is that both of these possibilities manifest themselves in Anna's last recorded stages of aesthetic and personal evolution, because insanity and imaginative revelation are so closely interrelated. And her contact with Saul Green is the catalyst that ignites Anna's dangerous self-discoveries. She takes this American into her home as a boarder and soon falls in love with him.
Saul's contradictory nature makes him particularly attractive to Anna. She immediately characterizes him as a man who is at odds with himself (and we know that Anna feels an affection for people who express conflict in their bearing, as her affairs with Willi and Michael, and even her short meeting with the American literary agent, Edwina Wright, attest to). Anna sees how his large, loose clothing poorly fit his lean body and how his manner of conduct produces a singularly unsettling effect upon her. She notices that "his eyes are cool grey-green, and never off guard" (550), and that his moods alternate tumultuously; at one moment she finds him putting her under a "stockman's comparison-making" (549), and at the next she discovers him capable of compassion and deep insight into her lifestyle as a "free woman" of the Fifties.

As Anna's relationship with Saul moves from intrigue to blind love and beyond, the violent fluctuations of his personality become ever more apparent to her. When the brief idyllic stage of their affair passes and turns into a cycle of jealousy and defensiveness--as Anna knows that Saul is sleeping with other women--Anna sees that there are separate selves in each of them interacting, sometimes nearly simultaneously, with corresponding aspects of their opposite:
I said: "You've slept with another woman, haven't you?" He stiffened and said, sullen: "No." But I didn't say anything and he said: "But it doesn't mean anything, does it?" What was strange was, that the man defending his freedom, and the man who said, pleading, It doesn't mean anything, were two men. I couldn't connect them. I was silent, in the grip of apprehension again, and then a third man said, brotherly and affectionate: "Go to sleep now."

I went to sleep, in obedience to this third friendly man, conscious of the other two Annas, separate from the obedient child--Anna, the snubbed woman in love, cold and miserable in some corner of myself, and a curious detached sardonic Anna looking on and saying: "Well, well!" (562)

Once again the theme of fragmentation appears; in fact, the many levels through which it passes suggests that Anna's relationship with Saul recapitulates the many phases of Anna's movement toward self-understanding as recorded in the notebooks. But this relationship transcends these previous stages in its moving Anna to make the empathic connection
between her own sense of brokenness and Saul's inherent discordances; interestingly, these moments of understanding she describes as "a crack in a substance through which something else pours" (559), recalling her earlier pronouncement to Mother Sugar. These moments cause Anna much pain and increase her sense of anxiety, but as she strives to understand and accept Saul—an act which, Anna begins to realize, is inseparable from understanding and accepting herself—an incipient wholeness emerges. Anna dreams her troubling dream of anarchy in different ways: the dwarf becomes her, then Saul, then both of them together, and Anna thinks that she "may have dreamed the dream 'positively'" (595). She also buys a new, golden notebook to replace all of the others with, as Anna puts it, "all of myself in one book" (607).

The Golden Notebook records Anna's furthest movement away from the threshold of sanity. Much of it consists of a dream sequence, a sequence of revelations which allows Anna's ambivalent, seeking-and-evading imagination access to a more unified perception of life and, through this, a stronger creative potential. The sequence begins by taking her into a dream involving a tiger, which Anna identifies as Saul. When another part of her mind begins to fictionalize this dream, the "dream-person"—"a person concerned to prevent the disintegration of Anna" (614)—tells Anna that,
"instead of doing what I always do, making up stories about life, so as not to look at it straight, I should go back and look at scenes from my life" (616).

This seemingly easy task becomes excruciatingly difficult for Anna, who begins to see the gap between her new and old perceptions of the past. The concerned "controller" becomes a tormenting projectionist, who taunts Anna as he forces her to watch her past through new eyes:

I was faced with the burden of re-creating 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 . . . The projectionist was still waiting, sardonic. What he was thinking got into my mind. He was thinking that the material had been ordered by me to fit what I knew, and that was why it was all false (620).

As the sequence progresses, Anna sees aspects of her past that her "ordering mind" had previously ignored and scenes she had never before imagined. One of these scenes, a soldier on a hillside, becomes the first image in Saul's novel.
When the sequence ends, Anna finds herself awake and using her literary imagination, creating stories in her mind and thinking about how to write them. She contemplates Ella again, and with a markedly new and invigorated apprehension: her ability to distinguish between Ella's true and "better" natures and those of her own, "to laugh because of the distance between what I was imagining and what in fact I was, let alone what Ella was" (637), shows a clearing of the labyrinths of fictions, creators, and creations that her mind had formed and then become entangled in. She is also waiting for Saul to return; she knows that their time together is nearly ended. When they do part, each has written for the other the first line of a new story. Yet it is not only in this sense that the "Golden Notebook is written by both of them," as Lessing notes (vii). By letting her witness and even take part in his struggle against anarchy, Saul helps Anna put her own maelstrom of perceptions—that has everchallenged her prior notions of identity and creativity—into perspective.

From this creative perspective springs *Free Women*. The plot of this novel need not be discussed in any detail. It is clear that it evolved from the notebooks and is not simply a narrative complement to a series of diaries. It contains Anna Wulf, but an Anna created by the Anna Wulf of the notebooks. In many ways this created Anna resembles the
Ella of the aborted Shadow: this Anna, like Ella, takes up social work, and she professes a somewhat greater belief in progress through social causes than the Anna of the notebook. Free Women also spreads Anna's notebook experiences and attitudes among different characters. More importantly, though, the contrasts and similarities between the notebooks and Free Women compositely form a message about the creative process.

What, then, is this message? Lessing maintains that the novel's meaning is in its shape, but what does this shape stand for in relation to Lessing's evolving ethos? An understanding of The Golden Notebook's raison d'être is necessary to answer this question:

About five years ago I found myself thinking about the novel most writers are tempted to write at some time or another—about the problems of a writer, about the artistic sensibility. I saw no point in writing this again: it has been done too often. Yet, having decided not to write it, I continued to think about it, and about the reasons artists have to combat various kinds of narcissism. I found that if it were to be written at all, the subject should be, not a practicing artist, but an
artist with some kind of block which prevented him or her from creating. In describing the reasons for the block, I would also be making the criticism I wanted to make about our society. I would be describing a disgust and self-division which afflicts people now, and not only artists.

Simultaneously I was working out another book, a book of literary criticism, which I would write not as a critic, but as practicing writer, using various literary styles, in such a way that the shape of the book would provide the criticism.

... 

Thinking about these two books, I understood suddenly they were not two books but one; they were fusing together in my mind. I understood that the shape of this book should be enclosed and claustrophobic--so narcissistic that the subject matter must break through the form.

This novel, then, is an attempt to break a form; to break certain forms of consciousness and go beyond them. (Schleuter, Novels of 49-50)

Obviously, a large capacity for "double vision" must be needed to apprehend the message of a book that, from its
conception, combined two. The "forms of consciousness" that Lessing refers to are thus simultaneously social, psychological, and aesthetic—as these qualities become fused within the author's developing ethos. On a social level the novel portrays the myriad pressures that assail the individual who searches for identity, while on a psychological and aesthetic level it elucidates the many facets of that individual who is created through these pressures.

Earlier works, such as the Grass is Singing and Martha Quest, also dealt with these themes, but The Golden Notebook develops a more complex level of insight into them because of the unique structuring principle it employs. The enclosed, "claustrophobic" form erodes our ability to distinguish the true Anna from her creations: the careful reader knows that even the "illumined" Anna of the Golden and late Blue notebooks, from whom the impetus of the inner novel derived, represents a literary creation stemming from an idea first mentioned in the Yellow Notebook: "A man and a woman--yes. Both at the end of their tether. Both cracking up because of a deliberate attempt to transcend their own limits" (467). And this entry gives the idea to Ella, Anna's "creation." These acts of reflective enclosure help Lessing show that, as Sprague and Tiger note, "the separation between fact and fiction is finally and
intentionally precarious" (11). Ultimately, Lessing's dualisms and mirrorings lead us toward an acceptance of ambiguity as a valid epistemological lens.

Our conclusions about Anna or the value of her creative output must, then, remain tentative, and couched in equivocality; like the characters in Anna's dream, we may alternately see Anna's final work—Free Women—as a jewel or as a crocodile tear. For it is not clear, despite all Anna's struggle toward self-knowledge and rediscovered creativity, that her literary accomplishment represents the achievement of her implicit goal: "a novel powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order." For there are different kinds of order, such as the mind's false ordering of experience through filters of sentimentality or self-parody or the general attempt to stay "normal." The enclosed conventional novel, which portrays only a hint of the desperation of Anna's psychic struggle, does not seem free from this ordering: its protagonist finds peace in the type of social cause that the notebook's Anna abandoned long before but still imagines for her alter-ego, "'the third'--the woman altogether better than I was" (637).

Yet this sense of equivocality that emerges from The Golden Notebook may be the passage to its most vital creative vision. A large part of Anna's growth resulted from her acceptance of elemental psychic conflict. Such
conflict ultimately forms the central ambivalent vision of the novel. The authentic, alternative "creative ordering principle" that Anna sought, then may lie in the tension or conflict between the openness to experience that characterizes creativity--as revealed through the notebooks--and the distancing effect of bundling up that experience into the literary work itself--as revealed in *Free Women*. "Literature," as Anna writes, "is analysis after the event" (228). In *The Golden Notebook*, this analytic principle stands along side the possibility or viewing life with creative vision, the potentiality that founds Anna's deepest "illuminations": Anna records that "there is no way of putting this sort of knowledge into words. Yet these moments have been so powerful . . . that what I have learned will be part of how I experience life until I die" (633).

And in this way, Anna contacts primal level of experience where the creative imagination, born of empathy and intuitive understanding, abides. Such knowledge came only though much psychic struggle, pain and growth; moreover, Anna could only describe it as finding "the place . . . where words, patterns, order, dissolve" (663). Considered as a whole, then, *The Golden Notebook* affirms the necessity of openness to this level of experience while it concedes, and even aesthetically demonstrates, the difficulty of maintaining or capturing it.
CHAPTER TWO: QUEST FOR INTEGRATION

As Lessing sees it, the modern writer faces twin responsibilities. One should endeavor to be "an architect of the soul"; "But if one is going to be an architect, one must have a vision to build towards, and that vision must spring from the nature of the world we live in" ("Voice" 7). The Golden Notebook conveyed this struggle centripetally, spiralling inward from the chaos of the outermost layers of Anna Wulf's consciousness to an imaginative, empathic, and elusive core. The Four-Gated City portrays this same struggle, but its narrative movement is centrifugal, reaching out with an ever-enlarging point of view that breaks through the confines of its roots in realism and the bildungsroman toward science fiction and prophecy. This culmination novel in Children of Violence reveals a shifting of the author's original intentions for this series, "the individual conscience in its relations with the collective" ("Voice" 14) becoming fused through the author's development of archetypal City. As readers, we participate in this act of imagination through our effort to see the entwined narrative themes--the soul's attainment of wholeness and the surrounding world's acceleration toward destruction--with
the same kind of "double vision" that Lessing predicates her
her artistic coda upon.

In her book *The City and the Veld*, Mary Singleton cites
William Blake as the source of Lessing's title:

> And the four gates of Los surround the universe
> within and
> Without, and whatever is visible in the
> vegetable earth, the same
> Is visible in the mundane shell (reversed in
> mountain and vale)
>
> *(Jerusalem 72, 11.45-47).*

Blake's cosmology provides a crucial insight into the
novel's thematic underpinnings:

There is, according to Blake, a mental power that
circumscribes the soul of man. This Blake calls
reason (represented by Urizen). There is also a
spiritual power which Blake calls variously energy,
poetic genius, imagination, which illuminates the
soul. The first is a limiting, analytical power;
the second is synthetic. The former leads to
destruction; the latter to salvation. . . . Man must not be deceived by the testimony of the senses, but must keep in touch with spirit; he must learn to see not with but through the eye. And above all, spiritual energy, the God in man, must be free to express itself in love and creative activity. In the end it will bring about a reunion of what reason has divided, and men will live as one man, united in brotherhood. (Bredvold 1445-1446)

For Blake, the symbol of this regenerative act lies in the creation of a new City, Jerusalem, which, as Singleton puts it, "stands both for the integrated man and the perfected society" (187).

Blake's vision, then, is recreated in Lessing's novel. While their terminology differs, the underlying ethos is the same. Urizen, bare rationality, isolated reason, is exposed as a horror and as a precursor to destructiveness. When nurtured without the benefit of tempering imagination and passion, its inherent malevolence erupts. Los (Imagination) appears in manifold forms, manifesting itself in prophetic dreams, telepathy, and visions. In the carrying-out of the Bildungsroman theme, Martha Quest attains an imaginative
understanding which embraces but only acceptance of normal social responsibility but also openness to the presence of a paranormal reality. Paralleling this narrative movement, the realization of Ideal City unfolds. Like Blake's Jerusalem, this symbol finally emerges more clearly as a state of consciousness than as a place or physical state.

The novel opens in London, 1950. Martha is newly arrived from Africa, after two unsuccessful marriages, an affair, involvement in Communism, and the responsibility of raising a daughter. At first, Martha mingles with London's working class, fascinated by their ability to live out their lives within their tiny social and geographic circles. Martha, however, is plagued by the restlessness and a feeling of incompleteness that has always been a part of her. She wanders aimlessly at night through London's streets in an attempt to escape from her responsibility and destiny, yet these come to her anyway:

And now, into the quiet, came something she had forgotten--one always did forget. She had forgotten what could happen when the dark deepened and one thought it would remain, being so strong. It was as if behind the soft space was a maniac ready to dance inwards with idiotic words and
phrases. . . .

A great descent down, down, was before her. Then a wave would lift her up again to where she was now, on a height, and from where she could glimpse other perspectives. The tune said: Mother, must I go on dancing? Infuriating, ridiculous, banal, this had recently entered her listening mind as soon as she reached the boundary in it. Always. Mother, must, must I go on dancing? Yes, she knew only too well she had to go on dancing. (38)

Martha tries to ignore the message that her listening mind holds, but she is soon confronted with another, this time prophetic. In the throes of love-making, she sees an image of "a man and a woman, walking in a high place under a blue sky holding children by the hand, and with them all kinds of wild animals, but they were not wild at all" (59). This vision is juxtaposed with another, an image of herself as a middle-aged woman in a household full of children. This vision causes her pain, yet it represents the road she will follow to self-fulfillment.

She begins to seek serious employment and by "accident" finds herself as the live-in secretary to an author, Mark Coldridge. Martha becomes drawn into an involvement with
his whole family. She becomes Mark's lover briefly, but remains his consultant and assistant. She befriends his wife Lynda, who has had bouts with insanity since childhood, and she helps Lynda cope with the pressures of the family. Martha, however, essentially maintains the role of matron in a household that, through a series of tragic events, becomes filled with children.

During this time of assuming more and more responsibility, Martha begins to explore her inner consciousness and discovers powers of telepathy. When she mentions to Lynda her ability to hear others' thoughts, she finds that Lynda has always had this capacity, which is responsible for her diagnosis of insanity. As Martha continues her inner search (sometimes alone and sometimes with Lynda), she transcends the individual ego and enters a collective realm; what she at first perceives as "the maniac with the dancing tunes" she now understands as a wavelength to be tuned into. The banal background music swells into "a great chaos of sound" (473), and she realizes that she is hearing the fugue of a million minds.

These paranormal explorations affect Martha's normal social life as house mother, which comes to reinforce her psychic movement toward the collective. Throughout her dealings with the children, she feels that they are part of a great cyclic pattern: while she plays the role of
"oppressor," they play the role of "anguished victim." She increasingly views them as past selves, as aspects of herself relived.

Thus Lessing continues the theme of "sameness" that we saw in The Golden Notebook's repetitions of characters, emphasizing the fundamental commonality of all human action and thought. The core of this concept appears in Lessing's comment that "I don't believe anymore that I have a thought. There is a thought around" (Raskin 68). It appears, too, in Lessing's characterization of Mark, Martha, and Lynda as "variations on a theme" (397), as ripples in an ocean of humanity.

Yet, considering the Blakean vision that imbues this novel, the characters of Mark, Martha, and Lynda may also be viewed as variations on a theme through their differing paths to self-fulfillment, or approaches to "the City."

With respect to Blake's cosmology, Mark is the most rationally-centered and therefore the least mature. As with Anna Wulf, we may see his personal development reflected in the growth of his writing. The point of view of his first novel is very distanced and analytical. Its "attitude was as if humanity (the earth and its people) were a variety of living organism, a body, and war was a boil breaking out on it . . . ." (125). Later the fever of a political cause--Communism--infests him. His work then becomes filled with
passion, but it is clearly not his best work. Later still, he gives up both writing and political causes, and begins to embellish the walls of his study with facts and figures about defense expenditures, pollution, population, and what he calls "factor X; that absolutely obvious, out-in-the-open, there-for-anybody-to-see fact which nobody was seeing yet" (414). This motif appeared in The Golden Notebook with Anna Wulf, too: like Anna, Mark demonstrates his concern to bring personal and social disjunction into order; and like Anna, his approach proves him to be somewhat open to creativity but essentially distant, rational. Yet Mark makes two relevant conclusions from this data: that a catastrophe was imminent, and that steps should be taken to organize a relocation center for survivors in some other part of the world. His conclusion proves correct, and his self-appointed task occupies him to the end of his life.

Mark's closest approach to the City comes before all of this, however. It takes the form of a story entitled A City in the Desert. Fired by conversation with Martha, he constructs a literary blueprint of the mythical city, the archetypal City of Martha's dreams. One feature of this city is particularly portentous:

There was no central building to the city, yet the
people maintained that somewhere in it was such a lode-place or nodal point—under the city perhaps; perhaps in some small not apparently significant room in one of the libraries, or off a market. Or it could have been that the common talk about this room was another way of putting their belief that their existed people, in this city, who formed a kind of centre, almost a variety of powerhouse, who had no particular function or title, but who kept it in existence. . . . and it was among the gardeners, so the stories went, that could be found, if only one could recognize them, most of hidden people who protected and fed the city. (133-134)

This feature turns out to be a bit of divine inspiration on Mark's part, but Mark is a rational man who cannot accept the possible existence of an extrasensory dimension. He never does. When he is over eighty, and living in one of his relocation camps, he writes, "Last night I dreamed of Lynda. My son dreams of her, he says. He says she isn't dead. I'm not going to ask what he means. I can't stand that nasty mixture of irony and St. John of the Cross and the Arabian Nights that they all (Lynda,
Martha, Francis) went in for" (612-613).

If Mark comes closest of the three to representing Urizen, then Lynda, with her advanced psychic abilities, most closely represents Los—the Imagination. Her character also provides an excellent summation of the phrase "children of violence," for she is a victim of that violence which invariably seems to result when society encounters the unknown:

Lynda had acquired before she could talk that sharpness, the acuteness, of the child with parents at loggerheads who are putting on a front, and quarrel over a teapot than over the central difference, because quarreling over a teapot is safe. Lynda's antenna for atmospheres and tensions and what was behind words was her first developed organ. (493-494)

When she is fourteen, Lynda reveals her ability, and is then taken from one doctor to another. And her sickness does indeed begin, for she must deny the existence of an inner voice so that she may be diagnosed as "sane" and can be freed. The voice remains but now transforms from a source of help into a cruel tormentor, an enemy. Lynda's
development in the novel is her struggle against this self-hater. She makes advances but never completely wins this battle; however, we discover in the final epistolary section that Lynda finds a broad-minded doctor through whom her capacities are at last recognized.

And Lynda's braveness encourages the self-searching Martha. Yet Martha also encounters the same psychic force that torments Lynda:

Dragons guarded the entrances and exits of each layer in the spectrum of belief, or opinion; and the dragons were always the same dragon, no matter what names they went under. The dragon was fear; fear of what other people might think; fear of being different; fear of being isolated; fear of the herd we belong to; fear of that section of the herd we belong to. (489)

In order to see how far she can go in her psychic exploration, Martha stays alone in a small room for a month. Here she makes her furthest discoveries, in a psychic region where she can either transcend or sink into madness. In the end, however, Martha succumbs to fear, the "self-hater" which defeated Lynda. After her retreat, this entity haunts
her, but before long she beats back the demon by keeping herself busy with the children; Martha's experiences as self-explorer and matron will be seen as ideal preparations for her final destiny.

The novel's characterizations of Mark, Martha, and Lynda provide a threefold glimpse into the "soul" of the modern individual. As Sprague and Tiger note, they form a kind of collective protagonist (11). But The Four-Gated City also outlines in epic manner the condition of the surrounding world. Margaret Drabble had this particular novel in mind when she wrote that Lessing was "one of the very few novelists who have refused to believe that the world is too complex to understand" (53). In keeping with the dual nature of her culminating theme, then, Lessing makes every effort in this novel to tie these elements together, to juxtapose the social and the personal. In the novel's opening, for example, we may view setting as a literal physical description of a London still suffering the effects of World War II; however, as we begin to explore Martha's disparate state-of-mind, we become aware that the setting parallels it. Later, after the passing of a "bad time" (on a social level, the Cold War years; on a personal level, a series of crises for the Coldridge family), the narrative depicts Martha's psychic recovery: "It was as if she had pulled herself up hand over hand, out of a hold full
of dirty water, a sour greyness. An interior experience had matched the exterior, the bad time" (285). Two pages later, the narrative depicts London: "The city had lost its grey shoddiness; that dirty, ruinous, war-soaked city she had arrived in where the food was uneatable, the clothes hideous, the people with the manners of a beleaguered minority--it was gone (287). [Emphasis mine]

Unfortunately, this correspondence of the social and the psychological does not long remain in a parallel configuration; such harmony is illusory, as Martha comes to realize:

She walked through this city and kept that other in her mind, so that a long street of fashionably bright buildings had behind it, or in it, an avenue of nightmare squalor, a darkness and a lightness together, the light so precarious a skin on a weight of dark, for these old carcasses had been dabbed, merely, with paint: there was a surface of freshness, hiding weight of shoddiness that threatened to crumble and lean, like the house in Radlett Street, with its white surfaces over a structure attacked by war and damp.(287-288)
This passage foreshadows the tearing down of the Coldridge house (also located on Radlett Street) and the war to come. It reveals the opposing vectors of motion between Martha and the world around her: while Martha moves toward integration, the world moves toward disintegration.

The fundamental cause of these different outcomes can be traced to the presence or absence of self-consciousness. While Martha risks sanity or dissolution in order to unearth her identity, society appears as that "organism which above all is unable to diagnose its own condition" (430). Society's deficiency of self-awareness and need to compartmentalize results in an accumulation of unseen symptoms, tensions, and imperatives which develop at cross-purposes to one another. As Lessing projects this trend into the future, she draws a scenario of disaster which coincides with unchecked amoral rationality (Urizen): the epistolary section which ends the novel chronicles the senselessness characterizing the events leading up to a world-wide nuclear war. Here, then, we find Lessing's final statement about an issue which takes up the greater part of the Children of Violence series: the betterment of man through social progress.

The future of Lessing's Ideal City cannot, then, rest with society but must depend upon the development of integrating awareness, which, as we have seen, can only be
attained on the level of the individual. This is the heart of Martha's lifelong quest and her destiny. For while she does not come to symbolize the integrated human, Martha lives to witness the birth of such people, individuals who form a self-aware collectivity: a new species of man.

To help us better understand the nature of this "integrated human," Lessing uses a quote from Indries Shah's *The Sufis* as a preface to the fourth and final section of *The Four-Gated City*:

Sufis believe that, expressed in one way, humanity is evolving toward a certain destiny. We are all taking part in that evolution. Organs come into being as a result of a need for specific organs. The human being's organism is producing a new complex of organs in response to such a need. In this age of the transcending of time and space, the complex of organs is concerned with the transcending of time and space. What ordinary people regard as sporadic and occasional bursts of telepathic and prophetic powers are seen by the Sufi as nothing less than the first stirrings of these same organs. (54)
In the novel, the nuclear war itself provides the catalyst for the final step toward the fusion of the collective and personal; and the result, in a world filled with misery and death, is the birth of seven children who hold the promise for a new golden age for man. They have evolved (via the atomic radiation, perhaps) into a new human species: they are telepaths. These children symbolize Blake's dream of a society in harmony with the individuals forming it, for they lack the basic fault of society: collective unawareness. These children form a collectivity of individuals with mutual and absolute self-knowledge; they are, as Martha writes, "beings who include . . . history in themselves and who have transcended it" (608). Their awareness, then, which includes knowledge of man's evils, frees them from the dragons of self-hate. Thus freed, their powers may run openly without causing them fear. And Martha, whose destiny is to be shipwrecked on the island where the children grow up, again glimpses her early vision, but this time in the outlines of an emerging reality:

They tell us not to be afraid. They say that in three years' time Britain will be opened again, will begin to revive. The islands around the coast will be searched. We, this community, will
be taken off and to America. From there we will disperse. The seven will not stay in one place, but will be scattered over the world. (608)

Within this prophetic vision, the Blakean metaphor and the Sufi world-view coalesce. The author also alludes to the inner story City in the Desert. The outer novel's final epistolary reference to one of the "evolved" children (Joseph Batts) as a gardener circles back upon the fable, to the reference that "it was among the gardeners, so the stories went, that could be found, if only one could recognize them, most of the hidden people who protected and fed the city" (134). Considering the entire novel, then, as fabulation, one finds its social outline vitally connected to the workings of the creative imagination.

The children who represent the result of this effort remain, however, in the obscure ether of possibility, juxtaposing and balanced against the visible and real threat of total annihilation. We, the readers, are responsible for bringing this centrifugally-moving novel full-circle upon its early realistic roots by making this fabulation a part of our (noumenal) reality; or self-understanding. In so doing, we finally apprehend the novel's archetypal theme: like the endeavor of the desert city's inhabitants to find
the binding "core" of their city, our effort to find the essence of this archetype reveals that we are its essence.

This a point that Lessing reiterates in succeeding novels, such as Briefing for a Descent into Hell and The Memoirs of a Survivor, where discovering our collective nature is offered as a viable alternative to strictly social or personal solutions. In these novels, the author experiments with point of view to emphasize the vital reality of a collective, humanizing consciousness. In Briefing for a Descent into Hell, the narrative alternates between the outer world's perception and diagnosis of Professor Charles Watkins and the patient's inner experiences. In The Memoirs of a Survivor, an anonymous narrator describes the social disintegration of the world outside her apartment in terms much like those used to describe Charles Watkins' breakdown. The anonymous narrator commenting on the world and the doctors commenting on their patient play out roles; they are types who attempt to put experience into definable categories, a theme we saw in The Golden Notebook. The doctors' attempts are unsuccessful; their tools and theories do not reveal the richness and necessity of their patient's inner journey. But the anonymous narrator's generic description of society is valid because it juxtaposes this view with that of an alternative world which lies just behind the inner wall of
her own apartment; in time, this world becomes real while the strife-torn outer world dissolves. Allegorically, this novel demonstrates the power of the theme that illuminates the conclusion of *The Four-Gated City*, the theme of possibility or imagination.

Lessing's next major effort is her space fiction series *Canopus in Argos: Archives*. The entire series operates on the level of myth, as the novels portray an epic history of mankind and its benevolent guardians, the Canopeans. In *Shikasta*, the first novel of the series, Lessing alludes to Biblical events in describing the genetic and social breakdown of the human species. Efforts of a malevolent and parasitic planet, Shammat, destroy the balance of cosmic forces that had previously maintained man's higher nature. Like Blake, Lessing depicts history in terms of man's devolution from his best nature into a self-destructive species; reaching back from the "creation" of man, the novel describes the same events that led up to global war in *The Four-Gated City*. The two works intersect at several other points; in fact, the diaries of the character Lynda Coldridge appear here, as well as mention of the psychic children who represent man's possible future. Thus this work's point of view spirals outward in scope, time, and perspective in relation to *The Four-Gated City* as that work had in relation to *The Golden Notebook*, demonstrating the
author's ever-growing concern for "processes" and "analogies" and her lessening concern for "personalities."

Lessing's ethos of integration achieves its most universal level of realization in the fourth novel of the series, *The Making of the Representative for Planet Eight*. In technique and its structure, it recalls an earlier work, *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. Like *Memoirs*, it fills the form of fable, and it also juxtaposes realistic physical descriptions with imaginative visions; both works provide the reader a glimpse of a metaphysical reality which lies behind—or beneath—our conventional view of the world around us. Both vehicles, the anonymous narrator's attempt to see the immanent world behind her wall and the Representatives' struggle to transcend their fate, invite us to consider the value—and the "Necessity"—of integrating imagination into our understanding of the human species.

Yet this later work, as a product of the *Canopus* series, speaks from an even broader perspective. While *Memoirs* contrasts a projection of political anarchy and decay with an apolitical vision of peaceful collaboration, *The Making* presupposes the existence of such a society. The conflict and eventual synthesis of Nominalist and Idealist views of reality defines its structure. On one level the novel chronicles physical and social processes: it describes how the change in climates affects the planet and
the living patterns of its inhabitants. On another it portrays a gradual, widening awareness that comes to the Representatives. Charged with the caretaking of their kind, the Representatives face the futility of keeping themselves alive; yet, through a driving sense of "Necessity" that they do not fully understand, they continue to struggle. Ultimately, the character of their struggles effects a change in the way the Representatives see themselves, and this change leads them past the barrier of death and toward the fullest realization of their "purpose": the Representatives become the Representative.

While characterization tends to be flat in this fable, a tapestry of complementary motives and mythic elements fills out the narrative. The story opposes light and dark, life and death, and motion and stasis. Yet it implies that these are arbitrary divisions which describe existence only by analogy. Recently Lessing has gone on record about the inadequacies of dualistic thinking; accordingly, this novel concerns itself more with processes than definitions (as the title implies). While the epic journey and mentor-student relationship give this novel mythic proportions, the dominant theme involves the development of an integrative awareness.

As we have seen before in Lessing's work, conflict sparks this awareness, and for the Representatives this
conflict is the arrival of an Ice Age. Their mentors, the Canopeans, initially prepare them for this planetary change by having them build a globe-encircling wall to protect them from the brunt of the ice. The Canopeans plan to take the inhabitants to a new world, Rohanda, but this world becomes inaccessible to them when it devolves into Shikasta, "the stricken one" (Earth). The Representatives must now face what their teachers call "Necessity" in its starkest terms: they must adjust their bodies, their living conditions, and, most importantly, their thoughts to this irrevocable change. Their survival, which depends on their ability to change, takes a subordinate role to their acceptance of whatever fate awaits them, even if it means total extinction. This is the message that the Canopeans carry and the planet's inhabitants must struggle with.

Doeg "represents" the Representatives most nearly, for his function is that of story teller, keeper of legend and of history. Appropriately, he narrates this story; and he is his people's closest contact with the Canopeans. The novel's beginning and concluding sentences note, "You ask how the Canopean Agents seemed to us in the times of The Ice" (3) and "This tale is our answer" (121). As it turns out, he learns the most about and from the Canopean named Johor (the main narrator of Shikasta). Johor's dialogues with Doeg recall the method of the Sufi, who instructs his
student only to the degree he merits instruction. And the revelations which spring from their conversations reflect a Sufi world-view. As Indries Shah writes in *The Way of the Sufi*, "The Sufis state that there is a form of knowledge which can be attained by man, which is of such an order that it is to scholastic learning as adulthood is to infancy" (26). When Doeg grieves for his people and bemoans their hardships, Johor does not offer him sympathy but instead prods, asking him "Representative Doeg, whom do you represent? And what are you?" (55). Doeg here records his own reaction, along with a bit of narrative editorializing that smacks of Sufism:

He leaned forward at this, looking straight into my face, but what welled up in me then put an end to a moment that could have saved me so much questioning, and pain. But we may not hasten certain processes in ourselves: they have to work their way, and often enough, without our active or conscious aid. (55)

All of Johor's colloquies with Doeg ultimately center around this question of identity, and the Canopean waits for Doeg's greatest moments of struggle to prod him further.
When Doeg turns Johor's question back on him, asking him who they represent, Johor reminds him of a Canopean lesson given the Representatives before the Ice came. At this time, Canopus had called the Representatives together to watch the slaughter of a beast, then pointed to the beast's entrails, exhorting them to understand that the "charm" and "grace" of the beast which gave it reality could be found in the beauty of the natural world them. Canopus had then held up the heart of the beast, showing how it was whole yet part of a greater whole; and then they had brought instruments that showed the Representatives how life at its most invisible level still constituted a dance. Johor also points Doeg toward the symbolism of dreams, and how we all connect through the common world we enter in sleep. While Doeg perceives this world as "the dark from which we all come" (59), Johor reminds him that it consists of "dazzling light" and that he will find this world only when he earns it (59). In several ways, then, the Canopeans thus gradually lead their students to understand that life and death are merely complementary aspects of their identity.

Yet to achieve the fullness of their identity as Representative, the representatives must experience this truth firsthand and not merely accept it with their intellects. When they ask Johor why they must attempt to prolong their struggles as long as possible against their
certain fate, he answers them, "There is more than one way of dying" (64). So they do try to survive, rousing the indolent to action, building temporary shelters against the continuous moving onslaught of ice that eventually breaks through their great protecting wall and chases them to the planet's shrinking warm pole. And as they fight against the accumulating and enveloping world of ice and death, the inhabitants begin to take into themselves the awareness that they are evolving because of their struggles. Doeg recalls this, when he finally approached the pole and saw the still-blue sky and green earth ahead of him:

Even as I stumbled towards the blue and lovely summer ahead, I was saying to myself, I, a smear or haze of particles upon which light shines, I, a nothing, a conglomerate of vast spaces defined by a dance my mind cannot comprehend, am running forward into--nothing, for if I saw this summer land as Johor does, with his Canopus eyes, I would see a universe of space in which faint shapes drift and form and dissolve--I, nothing, am running forward into nothing, weeping as I run--and where live the emotions that make these tears, Johor? (72-73)
As the ice encroaches upon this patch of summer, the Representatives' final stronghold, the deadly present encroaches upon the past roles which they have carried out. Each one realizes that his identity, his function as maker or healer or storyteller, has been made obsolete by their common fate. And so this question of their identity once again haunts them and drives them onward together back into the ice, toward their deaths, and beyond—toward a new vision of what it means to be a Representative:

We went floating onwards, free and light, and when we looked for orientation at the carcasses we had inhabited, we saw only that we were among throngs of the most marvellous intricate structures and shapes... it was not at once that we understood that these multitudes of infinitely various shapes were snowflakes: that were, or had recently been, were our enemy... But what new eyes were these that could see our old home thus, and where were we, the Representatives?... if we had lost what we had been, then we were still something, and moved on together... we were feelings, and thought, and will... (117-118).
These newly-formed creatures, as part of a unified yet multi-faceted entity, have found the constant that lies buried beneath the swirling and dissolving dance of change which makes up physical reality. While Doeg once wondered where his emotions lay among the complex temporal dance that he understood himself to be, the newly-formed entity, of which Doeg is now a part, has come in touch with the essential "charm" or common feeling that defined the species. As this essence remains with them in their liberated form and is thus timeless, they now see the world around them from an eternal perspective. To such eyes, the world becomes not a time-bound progression from birth to death, but an infinitely large lattice of potentialities and permutations, a grand matrix of possible formings and evolutions. To these eyes, reality equals infinite possibility. Their new vision, then, demonstrates the ultimate imaginative achievement.

The new terms by which this Representative understands itself reveals the outward spiral of Lessing's developing ethos. It shows that the only important social process is one that leads to increased collective self-awareness. By exploring the form of the fable, Lessing leads the reader toward a conception of an immanent and fundamental reality, one that enmeshes our individual and collective existences within a common tapestry. The key to this visionary
reality, then, comes through a supreme effort of imagination. To see man's past and future, and his myriad potentialities as equally valid "realities" within the embracing laws of "Necessity" takes nothing less. And so The Making of the Representative for Planet Eight shows the end of Lessing's quest for integration: we are tied through the endless possibilities that cumulatively define us, the world around us, and the infinite "realities" of which we are a part.
CHAPTER THREE: THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

Thirty years after she produced her seminal critical essay that touted realism as the supreme literary form, "The Small Personal Voice," Lessing returned to realism in The Good Terrorist. The novel's subject matter and form came as a surprise to readers who expected her foray into "space fiction" to continue. In a 1984 interview, however, Lessing revealed that she had become stalled in the writing of the sixth Canopus novel and then started The Good Terrorist, "about a girl . . . who drifts into being a terrorist out of sheer stupidity or lack of imagination" (Tiger 6) (Emphasis mine). The way Lessing develops this theme in her portrayal of Alice Mellings shows how the larger holistic concerns of her fantastic fiction still reveal themselves in this work of "scrupulous realism."

In an interview with Caryn James, Lessing stated that at the time of the Mountbatten murder she was in Ireland, where she witnessed the gleeful response of local teenage boys (3). This, as well as the December 1983 bombing of Harrod's inspired The Good Terrorist, though its protagonist may have had even earlier origins. In Shikasta, an
"archive" note related the actions of a privileged girl who entered a radical group. Her life soon degenerated into sado-masochism, and the Canopeans put her history into their archives to demonstrate how most twentieth-century social systems produce inhumanity. This girl was one of six individuals who were supposed to have been helped by a Canopean emissary, named Taufiq, whose unfinished mission it was to help "capture the imaginations of a generation, focusing inner questions and doubt" (126). The Good Terrorist does not convey its indictment of society as obviously and as didactically as does Shikasta. Nevertheless the author consistently works at spurring the reader's consciousness beneath the novel's surface toward her imaginative ethos, through a method similar to Taufiq's (or to Indries Shah's, for that matter): by raising questions rather than answering them.

Yet the means through which Lessing's ethos emerges in The Good Terrorist distinguish this work from her earlier realistic novels or the more recent space fictions. Its spare style belies the author's interest in plumbing the depths of her characters' psyches. Recent criticism has, however, begun to dispel the impression given by early reviewers that Lessing's is simply a flat portrayal of radicals. Katherine Fishburn, for example, mentions that the novel contains two texts, one conveying Alice's
presentation of events, the other conveying the pathology behind her presentation (198-199). In fact, these two opposing vectors create the narrative tension that propels the story toward its inevitable conclusion. And beneath these, Lessing's ethos appears as the subtext, lending the novel a third dimension of structure. Its presence is revealed by its absence, through the chasm created by the two unsatisfactory alternatives it lies between; obliquely it points toward their transcendence. While in The Four-Gated City and The Making of the Representative Lessing lays out a blueprint of her integrative vision, here she directs readers toward it by indirection, inviting them to partake of that "effort of imagination" necessary to make it palpable.

Paradox often inspires such imaginative effort, and in the novel this endeavor centers, of course, on the oxymoron "the good terrorist." This oxymoron defines Alice Hellings, an urban "heroine" who emerges as a pathetic figure, who saves an old house but allows innocent people to die "for a united Ireland and peace to all mankind" (435). Such behavior does not submit to easy explanations. There is more to her than the book jacket's depiction of her as a competent organizer and political leader. And Alison Lurie's analysis of her as essentially "strong, emotionally intuitive, and sympathetic" (203) but with an occasionally
emerging "darker side" (204) conveys neither the depth nor the relentlessness of conflict between Alice's "halves." Lessing's own characterization of her--"a woman . . . who is very caring and into sheltering people, but at the same time she's quite prepared to blow the whole city up" (James 3)--suggests that something fundamentally enigmatic inheres in the psyche of Alice. To penetrate this enigma means focussing the myriad impressions that arise from Alice's consciousness. And this is accomplished by discerning how the texts interact as the narrative progresses, because they reveal the antithetical components of her character, while their combined patterns form a coherent picture of Alice. The reader, then, makes the effort that Alice cannot, for Alice's unimaginativeness is precisely her inability to meld these components.

The initial impression the reader receives of Alice and her fellow radical, Jasper, is one of seasoned hardness. At the novel's opening, they are searching through an abandoned Edwardian house:

His face, as she expected it would be, was critical and meant to be noticed. For her part, she did not have to be told that she was wearing her look, described by him as silly. "Stop it," he
ordered. His hand shot out, and her wrist was encircled by hard bone. It hurt. She faced him, undefiant but confident, and said, "I wonder if they will accept us?" And, as she had known he would, he said, "It is a question of whether we will accept them."

She had withstood the test on her, that bony pain, and he let her wrist go and went on toward the door.(3)

Yet the author soon undermines this portrait of these characters. In their first meetings with the rest of the ring, Jasper quickly emerges as an immature character, both politically and emotionally. And this is a fact that Alice is painfully aware of. We learn that they met while she acted as a housemother at college, he being an unsuccessful student who became dependent upon her. The irony with which Lessing sketches their relationship reveals just how tenuous now the bonds are that Alice clings to.

Having decided to participate in a commune at this house, Alice immediately launches into a campaign to transform the squat into a fully equipped and comfortable home. By the sheer energy of her will, it seems, she enlists the aid of the otherwise apathetic members of the
clan in cleaning up the house. And through a combination of ingenuity, charm and fraud she manages to bring electricity, hot water and gas into the house. Initially, the reader is swept along with Alice's fervor as readily as those who help her with the renovations and other positive achievements that make her a leader. This fervor marks the novel's text, which represents the surface of the novel, its action and the point of view of Alice.

But even as the refurbishing takes place, several aspects of the novel's more revealing "countertext" emerge. One dramatic example, Alice's association with Jasper, has been mentioned. Their sterile relationship contrasts with the sexual relationships of both the homosexual and heterosexual couple within the squat. Jasper cannot stand to be touched by Alice, and on several occasions Alice demonstrates a similar reaction to physical encounter. An early instance of this attitude displays how Alice's benevolent and pathological motivations interact:

She did not want what she knew would happen. And it did, the grunting and whispering and shifting and moaning--right on the other side of the wall, close against her ear. It was too much. Love, that was; which everyone said she was a fool to do
without; they were sorry for her.... Alice lay as stiff as a rod, staring at the shadowed ceiling, where lights from the cars in the road fled and chased, her ears assaulted, her mind appalled. She made herself think: Tomorrow, tomorrow we'll get the electricity done. (49-50)

The conflict portrayed here highlights the irony of her favorable appraisals of Jasper and of her relationship with him, such as when she considers the problems of the lesbian couple and decides, "Well, at least Jasper and I have got it all sorted out" (128).

Alice's paralytic behavior also occurs whenever she conforms opportunities for self-understanding. For instance, when she tries to get her mother to guarantee payment for electricity, both the conversation and her reaction to it hint at a pathology at play: her mother tells her, not for the first time, evidently, that the house will have to be sold for their lack of income. And still her proclamation that Alice cannot "just turn up, as if nothing had happened, with a bright smile, for another handout" leaves Alice in a daze of "shadow and light" (19) so that she stands paralyzed at the telephone booth with a long queue behind her. As the narrative unfolds, this response
appears more and more frequently.

Meanwhile, memories of her life at her mother's house continue to intrude upon her new communal life. At one point, a memory of an argument her mother has with a close friend shortly before she and Jasper left possesses Alice, and she has to control herself from being sick (75). Her reaction implies recollection of her mother's house's impending sale, but at another point she actually sends a young mother and child to the old house with a note asking her mother to take them in. When the girl returns, frantic with rage, with the news that the house is for sale, Alice only vaguely remembers "cases on a kitchen table, filled with crockery wrapped in newspaper" (224). She then goes to the now-empty house, for a while squatting down in the corner where her bed used to be, then ripping down all the curtains and leaving with them tucked under her arms. Back home with her mother's curtains, she sits through the afternoon, wondering:

Where was her mother, for a start? Did she imagine she could run away from Alice, just like that? Was she mad? Well, she must be, not telling Alice and Jasper ... Here somewhere deep in her mind a thought began tugging and nagging, that her mother
had told her. Well, if so, not in such a way that Alice could take it in. (227)

Another important sign of aberrancy in Alice involves the violence she exhibits toward the middle class and toward anyone who opposes her; certain symbols of capitalistic decadence particularly enrage her, one being wasted material. As money is the biggest obstacle to her goal of a fully-operational house, Alice constantly seeks for sources of it. At one point this leads her into a scavenging raid in the attic, where she finds some antique dresses. But when a subsequent search reveals a trunk with nothing but empty jars, Alice becomes enraged, thrashing about in the attic and screaming out against the "Bloody filthy accumulating middle-class creeps" (193).

Similarly, when her mother refuses to guarantee payment for the house, Alice telephones her father, who also refuses—and she later throws a rock through his window for this. Filled with a "burning anger," she then forces her way into her "Aunt" Theresa's apartment. Theresa is not there, and she stands in the sitting room panting, thinking about tearing up the room and stealing its valuables before she calls Theresa at work to ask for her signature. Theresa refuses but offers instead to speak with her that night. So
Alice returns, and when she leaves, after having defended her lifestyle, she has fifty pounds with her. Theresa's irritated husband Anthony pronounces her, at thirty-six, a case of "arrested development," to which Theresa replies "Oh yes, I expect so, but darling Alice, well, she's a sweet girl--a sweet thing, really" (42).

Subsequent events tend to confirm Anthony's theory. The novel's frequent references to the college squat Alice helped make into a student house intimate a kind of recidivism at work in her makeover of the house; moreover, Alice endeavors to recreate the kind of middle-class suburban existence she professes to hold in contempt, which she (and Jasper) only just left at her mother's house. So when Faye, one of the original squatters, who disapproves of Alice's domestic work, challenges Alice's revolutionary spirit, saying, "I don't know anything about you, Comrade Alice. Except that you are a wonder with the housekeeping" (129), she brings into focus one line of thought being developed in the countertext.

Along this line, Alice refuses a major opportunity to prove her revolutionary resolve when she turns aside an offer to join a Communist spy network. The house next door to the squat is inhabited, as it turns out, by a Russian agent named Andrew, who admires Alice's resourcefulness. He considers the others at her squat to be useless to his
cause, but feels that Alice's middle-class upbringing would make her an excellent "plant" in a sensitive industrial setting. Alice and he have, however, very different visions of radical commitment. She cannot, it seems, bring herself to feign that mission's coinciding "bourgeois" lifestyle: this aside from the "daily, sometimes hourly reports" (203) he has been receiving of Alice's domestic endeavors. They meet only once more after this incident, and here Andrew shows that his interest in her is no longer political, while Alice responds to these advances in her typically rigid manner.

So Alice's middle-class domestic tendencies keep her from holding a terroristic outlook, while they do not completely free her from one. To summarize, though, her behavior forms a clear pattern: she sits immobilized by the enormity of her problems, or she reacts spontaneously, sometimes violently. These responses arise out of her inability to resolve her ambivalent situation, and eventually impulses guide all of her acts, with the result that Alice's benevolent motivations become marred by increasingly pathological activity.

One instance of this occurs, of course, when she leads the poor mother and child on a fool's errand. Another occurs when her search for money leads her to steal money from her father's printing shop. As a result she manages to
get another squatter fired, a pathetic young black man named Jim whom she had gotten a job at the shop. When Jim loses the job (and quickly drops out of the narrative), a distraught Alice then proposes holding a Congress of their budding political party, the Communist Centre Union. In contriving this meeting she again acts impulsively, once again bringing her motivations for an evidently selfless act into question. During the Congress the other members, even Jasper, play a much larger role in developing the policies and initiatives of their group, but Alice succeeds in her domestic organizing. While the others are applauded for their speeches, Alice is applauded for her soup.

Why, then, did Alice propose the meeting? A clue emerges when one considers that she made the proposal directly after her failure to get Jim, the young black man, a job. As the Congress draws nearer, it becomes increasingly apparent that this political event sprang out of Alice's desire to raise herself out of her doldrums. To Alice the Congress is a party, and her actions mimic those of her mother, who was once known for her parties. That Alice deeply resented these parties lends a revealing irony to her imitative behavior:

Suddenly a whole army of recollections invaded
Alice was standing in the middle of the pavement, in the rush hour, embracing an aluminum saucepan large enough to cook a small shrub, staring and apparently in a state of shock.

She was remembering her mother's parties. They had gone on all through her childhood and adolescence . . .

When there were parties, when there were people in the house, it seemed Alice became invisible to her mother, and had no place in her own home. . . .

(261-3)

Alice stands there, inwardly raging that her parents could have displaced her from her bedroom for their parties, but essentially caught in a progressive state of emotional paralysis. Alice's unresolvable inner conflict comes to the fore in this moment of revelation: the reader glimpses the possible origins of her antisocial leanings, while he watches Alice repeat the very behavior of her mother's that she hates and that symbolizes the corrupt bourgeoisie. This moment crystallizes the increasing untenability of Alice's position in the novel as the "good terrorist." It also represents a turning point in the novel, for after the
Congress Alice's constructive energies will have been spent, marking the final overtaking of the text by its countertext.

The first signs of Alice's waning energies come even before the house's renovations are complete. Her group, and the Communist group they have befriended in the house next door splinter, leaving Alice behind. Jim's departure negates all of Alice's efforts to keep him employed and a part of the squat (the others have not wanted him there). Andrew, who represents the seductive world of professional Communism, exits the narrative as stealthily as he entered it. One of his associates, Muriel, makes clear to Alice that their departure ends Alice's chance to participate in the Communist "master plan" of broad infiltration. Tellingly defining Alice, this associate explains:

"Alice, you are either with us or against us ..."

"Or do you simply want to go on being one of the useful idiots?"

Alice did not react to this, remained in her stance of infinitely patient, dogged enquiry.

Finally, Philip, the frail, waif-like painter who, along with Alice, contributes the major effort to the restoration of the house, leaves in a flurry of anger directed toward Alice. He cites her failure with Jim and other instances of her alleged cruelty, but Philip's final exit invites irony because she had in fact treated him more fairly than had the other squatters. As a whole, theirs has been a brother-and-sister relationship, one that ends tragically, however, when he has an accident soon after departing the squat. As he dies, Alice sees with the clarity of hindsight something she has never before realized:

This was what happened to marginal people, people clinging on but only just. They made one slip; something apparently quite slight happened, like the Greek, but it was part of some downward curve. . . .

And now came the thought: Philip was along way down on that curve before he had asked if he could live with us. What we thought we saw was somebody at the beginning of a curve, with a new business, everything in front of him, but it wasn't like that at all. . . . All of it was perfectly clear, like a graph. (340-341)
As Alice considers her friend's entropic slide into death, the narrative offers an analogous perspective on Alice; seen from this perspective, the positive efforts of the zealous homemaker seem only to mask a cancer of the soul, and the fact that she too is at the end of a curve, not at the beginning of one. For having failed or been deemed amateurs at every turn of revolutionary effort, Alice and the squatters have now arrived at a formula for homegrown terrorism. As she tells an incredulous Communist operative who arrives in Andrew's wake, "We are English revolutionaries and we shall make our own policies and act according to the English tradition" (369). And from this decision evolves the bombing that she participates in at the novel's end, an act which will forever cut her ties with her past.

Consequently, a numbness fills Alice even as she and the other squatters prepare for this event. Gordon O'Leary, the operative who follows up after some material that the once helpful squatters have disposed of, observes Alice's erratic behavior as she attempts to explain her group's newfound political policy:

She was happily afloat, all kinds of reassuring and apt phrases offering themselves to her as though a
tape coiled off in her mind that she did not know was there at all. If, however, she could have seen her own face, that might have been a different matter; for the upper part of it, brows and forehead, had a worried and even slightly frantic look, as if wondering at what she was saying, while her mouth smilingly went on producing words. (372)

Surrealism punctuates this meeting: Alice has trouble either remembering or believing where he comes from, and she thinks she sees him moving in slow motion as he leaves.

The more she becomes caught up in the planning, the greater her torpor becomes. Because her former intuitive acuity has abandoned her, she can longer make clear decisions or judgments about people. On the morning of the bombing, a British counteragent openly visits Alice with questions about Comrade Andrew and Gordon O'Leary, and Alice cannot even discern who he might be. Only "a flash of recognition, or of warning" (430) clues her in that this English-sounding man who calls himself Peter Cecil might in fact be English, and this thought fully presents itself to her only after the bombing and after she has agreed to a further meeting with him.

The exhilaration of violence offers only a brief
respite from the novel's accumulating psychological torpor, for Alice has begun to cut her mind off from responsibility for the bombing even before it occurs. As the car-bomb is about to explode in front of a London luxury hotel, though, Alice suddenly comes to herself and runs to a telephone to report the event. Not telling the location of the coming bombing, Alice impulsively claims it to be an act of the IRA. All but one of the group flee back to the house after the explosion, Faye having died in the car. Suicide is strongly implied here, since Faye set the timer and the bomb went off five minutes early. This fact negates one more positive effort of Alice's, that of saving Faye from an earlier attempt at suicide. The others, back at the house, now decide to split up and abandon the house, since they have just learned that their house will be taken over by the Council.

This leaves Alice, finally, in her characteristic inertia, sitting alone in a house that she is loath to give up and which in a way even represents her. For even after all of the good intentions which surrounded its development during the novel, it still contains one symbolic, fundamental flaw that threatens at any time to undo all the good: rotted beams in the attic.

With an editorial voice the narrator may refer to this final Alice as a "poor baby," but Lessing's methodical
"nullification" of her protagonist implies that only through a further level of textuality may these competing images of Alice be reconciled. Here, as elsewhere, such effort evokes the literary imagination, but toward what kind of ethos or vision does Lessing lead her reader here? No character or institution in the novel offers a hopeful alternative to Alice's predicament of lethal unimagination. Alice's various comrades emerge as either dandies, sociopaths, or incompetents; the most responsible members of the squat, Mary and Reggie, are wrapped up in their own lives and possess little sense of social consciousness; and Alice's mother, who may have the most mature outlook of anyone in the novel, carries a deep sense of failure. She astutely observes that Alice, for all her radical posturing, fulfills the same circumscribed role of matron that she played out until her divorce from Alice's father. But while she may have gained some bitter portion of wisdom, she does nothing but dream about what a life unencumbered by a middle-class family might have allowed her.

So, in The Good Terrorist, as in The Golden Notebook, Lessing's overarching ethos reveals itself more through the narrative's form than through its ideological content. And several familiar themes arise through this narrative's countertextual conflict. In personal terms this novel treats an idea Lessing has treated elsewhere in societal
terms: the related processes of unawareness and violence. Like Lessing's apocalyptic world in The Four-Gated City, Alice's unawareness and violence increase together, each feeding upon and catalyzing the other. Alice's characterization portrays an obverse image of what Lessing draws in The Making of the Representative and the epistolary section of The Four-Gated City, where the author links man's societal potential and developing psychic awareness. Similarly, Alice's deterioration forms a negative model of the pattern of growth and self-discovery found in the epic psychic journeys of Anna Wulf and Martha Quest: while Anna and Martha grow through being able to see others as they see themselves, with holistic understanding, Alice stays trapped in her blinding ideology, unable to see just how much she reflects both the parents who raised her and the world that she holds in contempt. The dedication to The Four-Gated City, in which Lessing elucidates the apocalyptic character of the modern world, serves equally well as a paradigm of Alice:

Once upon a time there was a fool who was sent to buy flour and salt. He took a dish to carry his purchases.

"Make sure," said the man who sent him, "not to
mix the two things--I want them separate."

When the shopkeeper had filled the dish with flour and was measuring out the salt, the fool said: "Do not mix it with the flour; here, I will show you where to put it."

And he inverted the dish, to provide, from its upturned bottom, a surface upon which the salt could be laid.

The flour, of course, fell to the floor.

But the salt was safe.

When the fool got back to the man who had sent him, he said: "Here is the salt."

"Very well, said the other man, "but where is the flour?"

"It should be here," said the fool, turning the dish over.

As soon as he did that, the salt fell to the ground, and the flour, of course, was seen to be gone.

A dervish teaching story, from The Way of the Sufi by Indries Shah
CONCLUSION

Lessing's philosophical development since *The Golden Notebook* has not always translated into improved literary quality. Her use of genre seems dependent upon the particular theme she explores in the growth of her ethos, and often this growth has resulted in some heavy-handed narrative efforts. *The Golden Notebook* remains her narrative tour de force, but it shows only a fragment of the mosaic of human potentialities formed by her subsequent work. Dark tones dominate this mosaic, as the intertwined themes of man's self-destruction and willful unawareness overshadow their opposites, those of harmony and imaginative understanding. The Anna Wulfs and Martha Quests are outnumbered by the Alice Mellings (whose name, incidentally, forms an anagram of "lemming").

But as rarely as they occur, acts of the imagination represent the only light the author holds out to us: in her developed ethos, such acts transcend politics by making the empathic, imaginative connection between self and other, between the personal and the collective, without an intervening ideology. Roadblocks to this state of
imagination abound, but in Lessing's vision, so too do their manifestations; however, their seeking may involve ridicule or even the risk of insanity. So Lessing's fiction prods its reader toward at least a vicarious experience of "double vision": its narrative forms maintaining the traditional perspective of individual sentience, while its content probes the imaginative possibilities of our collective being.
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