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Ph.D. Thesis

Closing Circles:

The Construction of Mother Archetypes in Five Novels by Doris Lessing.

Anna Casablanca i Cervantes

Thesis supervisor: Dr. Andrew Monnickendam.

Programa de doctorat en Filologia Anglesa.

Departament de Filologia Anglesa i Germanística.

Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres.

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*Als meus pares, que mereixen veure's reconeguts en tots els meus èxits pel seu exemple d'esforç i sacrifici, i per saber sempre que ho aconseguiria.*

*Als meus fills, Júlia i Bernat, que són la motivació, la força i l'alegria en cadascun dels projectes que goso emprendre.*



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## NOTE

In the present thesis I have used editions of the primary sources which are full reproductions of the first editions: the 1994 Flamingo Modern Classics edition of *The Grass is Singing*; the and 1993 Flamingo Modern Classics edition of *The Golden Notebook*, containing the 1971 preface by the author; the March 1983 Vintage Books edition of *The Summer Before the Dark*; the May 1989 Vintage Books edition of *The Fifth Child*; and the first edition of *Alfred and Emily*, published by Fourth Estate, 2008.

## NOTE ABOUT FORMAT

This thesis follows *The Purdue OWL*. Purdue U Writing Lab, 2010 Website based on the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) and the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), last edited on 10-10-2014.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Doris Lessing occupies an important place in British literature of the twentieth century and has gained an international reputation. Having published over fifty works, she received several prizes, among which are the Somerset Maugham Award (1956), and the Premio Príncipe de Asturias de Literatura (2001). She was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize on three occasions (1971 for *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, 1981 for *The Sirian Experiments*, and 1985 for *The Good Terrorist*). In 2007, Doris Lessing finally received the Nobel Prize after having been on the shortlist for forty years. She wrote essays, novels, plays, autobiography, poetry and short stories. She also collaborated with the composer Philip Glass on an opera based on her novel *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*. Some of her works have been adapted into films, such as *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1981), *The Grass is Singing* (1981) and *The Grandmothers* (2013).

Identity is central to Doris Lessing's work, as Pilar Hidalgo observes: "Lessing's novels have a political, historical and even utopian scope which other novels lack, but there is no doubt that the arguments respond to the new ideology of female identity and the resulting breakup with the love plot" (*Tiempo de Mujeres* 17).<sup>1</sup> Lessing's treatment of feminine<sup>2</sup> identity has to be seen as embedded in twentieth-century female *Bildungsroman* which overturned the classical heterosexual romance plot, leaving only

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<sup>1</sup> My translation. "Las novelas de Lessing tienen un alcance político, histórico e incluso utópico del que carecen otras obras, pero no hay duda de que sus argumentos responden a la nueva ideología de la identidad femenina y la ruptura consiguiente con el argumento del amor romántico."

<sup>2</sup> I am fully aware that the use of "feminine" might be questionable in some context where "female" seems more accurate. In consonance with some of the bibliography cited (Lorelei Cederstrom's *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche*, 1990; or Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963), I have not maintained a rigid separation of the two terms.

two possible alternatives for the heroine: marriage or death. Lessing can be defined as a precursor of the self-discovery novel, since her pentalogy *Children of Violence*, which makes a remarkable contribution to this theme, started in the fifties and it would not be until the seventies that this genre became mainstream.

Doris Lessing constructs her characters' identities according to a psychoanalytical background, showing how female characters often struggle between their identity as women and their identity as mothers. Lessing's female figures continue developing their identity in adulthood as one more phase of their lives, and the way they relate to the socially established concept of motherhood offers an innovative approach to the construction of selfhood. Maternity adopts different aspects in the novels of Doris Lessing, since each character sees the matter through her own perspective and personal experience; therefore, different forms of motherhood help to build up the notion itself as a compilation of the personal, psychological and cultural context of different individuals. It is precisely this complex process that will be the central subject of the present thesis. But before defining my approach more specifically, I will introduce in some more detail the notions of identity and subjectivity in the Lessing canon; in doing so, I will also justify my specific selection of novels and the theoretical approach I am going to take.

In order to investigate how women's identity develops psychologically and emotionally through their role as mothers, I will take into account such textual details as dreams, memories, fantasies and imagination. For instance, we will obtain a lot of information in the interior of the characters through Anna's dreams and reflections in her personal diary in *The Golden Notebook* (1962), as well as her character in the novel that she is writing, who functions as an alter ego. Kate's recurrent dream of the seal in *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973) will also provide the key to the character's

psychological state. Although Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing* (1950) is not a mother, she imagines how her desired child would be and positions herself with respect to motherhood according to her remembrances and dreams of her childhood. In *The Fifth Child* (1988), the imagination of a mother from the moment of pregnancy onwards makes the reader wonder whether her son is really a strange creature or whether she has created him in her mind. Finally, *Alfred and Emily* (2008) constitutes a work on the relationship between imagination and reality, in which Doris Lessing is both author and character at the same time. There is some continuity in the formal and psychological treatment of this subject which clearly responds, to a certain degree at least, to deliberate authorial intention. The characters in these novels cannot be taken as real people who can be psychoanalysed, but their personalities must be seen as the product of a cultural background in which psychoanalysis and its reinterpretations are vital. Lessing herself was keenly aware of this. When asked about her supposedly sceptical approach to psychoanalysis, Doris Lessing used to answer:

I have been reproached many times for being a declared enemy of psychoanalysis. Now, “enemy” is certainly an exaggeration, but I am actually an opponent of the current fashion of overpsychologizing. This tendency is a very bad phenomenon in a century which seems to have become speechless and in which words seem to be created rather for declarations of war than for declarations of love. Certainly humanity needs psychology too, simply because it suffers from deficiencies in expressing emotions. However, I have continued to oppose the methods of case studies with which human beings are classified and stamped... (Von Schwarzkopf, 104)

In fact, she explicitly mentioned psychoanalysis in her autobiography, therefore acknowledging the influence it exerted upon her novels, irrespective of any critical acceptance of its central doctrines. In *Walking in the Shade* (1998), the second volume of her autobiography, she goes beyond that and comments on the emerging social importance of psychotherapy in the nineteen fifties, the time of publication of her first novels. Although she herself went into therapy, she states: “These days, everyone goes to a therapist, or is a therapist, but then no one did. Not in England, only in America,

and even there the phenomenon was in its infancy.” (35). Apart from this, as we will see later on in this thesis, she overtly expressed her own views on Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung on several occasions, often disapprovingly. It is necessary, then, to acknowledge the persuasive presence of psychoanalytical elements in Lessing’s novels, even while registering her critical distance from it. It is a matter of cultural discourse and the use of symbols, not (it must be stressed) of any ideological sympathy on the author’s part.

As far as feminism is concerned, in the preface to *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing complains that the novel has been belittled for being primarily about the sex war, when her intended central theme was that of “breakdown”, “the inner self dismissing false dichotomies and divisions” (*The Golden Notebook* 8). She goes on to say that she has been in a false position ever since the novel was published. She did not want to refuse to support women, but her intention when writing the novel was not that of standing up for women’s liberation. The author was trying to describe “many female emotions of aggression, hostility, resentment” (8). In spite of these comments, in 2007, when the Swedish Academy awarded Lessing the Nobel Prize, they insisted markedly on her being “that epicist of female experience who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature 2007 - Press Release”).

Undoubtedly, subjectivity is one of Lessing’s major concerns: again, in the preface to *The Golden Notebook*, the author declares that there was pressure on writers not to be subjective at the time when the novel was written. Lessing’s depiction of subjectivity includes the world of dreams, which have a notable presence in her novels.

In an interview she gave to Jonah Raskin in New York in 1969, she stated:

Dreams have always been important to me. The hidden domain of our mind communicates with us through dreams. I dream a great deal and I scrutinize my dreams.

... The unconscious artist who resides in our depths is a very economical individual. With a few symbols a dream can define the whole of one's life, and warn us of the future, too. (Raskin 14)

Moreover, she clearly positioned herself in this respect in the interview with Margarete von Schwarzkopf that we saw before, explaining that she had kept a dream diary for years, thus recording her own oneiric experiences. As we shall see, she considers the images of the subconscious as even being as important as conscious life, and it is coherent that her protagonists' dreams should be offered to the readers.

Each morning as I wake I take up my scratch-pad to hold onto my nightly dreams. However, it is infinitely difficult to capture in words the atmosphere of a dream, this mixture of delusion and truth, fog and light. ... For that reason, I have abandoned, at least for the time being, my long-cherished project of writing an autobiography, which would comprise my dreams of the past ten years. Nevertheless, I will eagerly continue to pursue my dream research. (Von Schwarzkopf 106)

In any critical assessment of Lessing's work, then, the two factors I have just mentioned (subjectivity and the function of dreams) must be taken into account. But both of them inevitably point towards a wider subject, which is also at the core of the works I will be discussing here: the notion of identity. It is a topic that has repeatedly proved to be difficult to categorise, no matter what critical perspective one takes. Some authors support the unity of "self", while cognitive theories defend the fact that the subject develops a plurality of "selves", related each to specific spheres, which go together in the process of construction of identity. In recent interpretations of psychoanalysis and feminism, this female subjectivity in constant evolution is argued for in the work of authors as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous. Subsequently, identity became a key concept in gender studies in the nineteen eighties and nineties. Finally, the identity concept is revised and defined in terms of relations rather than sexual roles (as an influence of the "Object Relations" School and Nancy Chodorow)<sup>3</sup>. In recent feminism, with such authors as Eva Giberti and Silvia Tubert, it is no longer possible to

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<sup>3</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978 [1999].



keep one definition for the woman or mother category, since nowadays it is formed by the addition of multiple individualities. It is in this particularly diverse and varied context that Lessing's own representations of identity must be located.

Most of Lessing's heroines (Anna Wulf, Kate Brown, Mary Turner, Harriet Lovatt, Jane Somers, Martha Quest or Emily Mc Veagh) are searching for their identity, and the definition of a female self struggling against repressive external agents such as social background, often depicted by marriage and family, has widely been an object of research on Lessing. There have also been Kristevan readings of Doris Lessing by such critics as Edith Frampton and Ruth Robbins, which are partly related to my approach, but which deal with concrete details of motherhood such as breastfeeding or the gap between the ideals and the horrors of motherhood and childbirth. Such works will be helpful for my research and I will take them into account and incorporate them in my discussion; however, they will not define my own readings.

It follows from all that has been said so far that Lessing's novels are the outcome of a cultural background in which psychoanalysis and feminism are central, even while remaining deeply personal and idiosyncratic. The women characters she presents are, in part, a consequence of universally assumed and shared ideas on the role of mothers, and can even be seen as corresponding to the different types of mothers that Jung characterised as shaping the mother archetype. The present thesis will try to follow this perspective in detail, investigating the archetypal nature of several fictional characters and the creative way in which Lessing applies that archetype.

### **1.1. Structure of the thesis.**

This thesis is divided into seven main parts, namely: a first chapter as an

introduction, with the literature review and the theoretical framework of my study; the analysis of five novels, which occupy one chapter each; and a conclusion. In the first part I will give a concise account of the criticism on Lessing. There will be an exposition and discussion of these studies, to show that there is a space left for my own research. Apart from showing how these analyses do not respond to the same purposes as mine, thorough commentary on them is needed since they also provide an indication of my interpretation of the novels.

In the section on the theoretical framework, I will introduce some trends in psychoanalysis in order to apply their approach later on in the examination of the five novels. I will go through some of the theories of Melanie Klein, the Object Relations School and Second Wave Feminism, but I will also consider the theories of the nineteen seventies and eighties, post-Lacanian motherhood and most recent studies on gender, psychoanalysis and sociocultural influences on female subjectivity. Given the fact that concepts such as conscious/unconscious, the archetypes, the Law of the Father<sup>4</sup> and the imaginary/real/symbolic recur in the history of feminism and psychoanalysis, I will try to show how they might be used to explore the experiences of the female personalities I will discuss. Special mention will also be made of the concept of motherhood in twentieth century literature. This part does not pretend to be a survey or a history of psychoanalysis and feminism; rather, only the theory that is most useful to the purpose of my thesis, or which has proved more fruitful in explaining the female identity will be considered.

The second and main part of this work deals with a corpus of Doris Lessing's novels. With the study of these texts I intend to explain the identity of the women

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<sup>4</sup> From now on, this Lacanian term will be written in capital letters since there seems to be a consensus to do so among the Lacanian tradition in English. See Kristeva's "The True-Real" (*Kristeva Reader* 216) and Shoshana Felman's use of the terms "Father" and "Law" (105).

figures through dreams, memories, fantasies, imagination and the act of creation in the narrative by this author. The novels used for this purpose are *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), *The Fifth Child* (1988) and *Alfred and Emily* (2008). A full justification for the choice of these novels will be offered later on in this introduction.

The five novels that constitute the corpus of this thesis date from different periods in the literary career of Doris Lessing. *The Grass is Singing* (1950), her first work, is the product of the author's life in Africa; it was written in that continent and then published when the author had moved to London. *The Golden Notebook* (1962) was written in the middle of the novel-series *The Children of Violence*, with which it has many similarities, and is contemporary to one major work on feminism, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963); moreover, it shows a transformation of the author's view on life after her leaving the Communist Party in 1956. *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973) was written when the feminist movement was well established. *The Fifth Child* (1988) came after a major turning point in Lessing's writing: her experimentation with science-fiction. Finally, *Alfred and Emily* (2008) was announced by Lessing herself as her last work and it closes many thematically recurrent circles in the author's canon. From these five novels we will see how "Doris Lessing's work reflects a progression of women's conscious engagement with their subjectivity during various periods of their lives", as Amy Lee states (15). Spreading over six different decades, these five works offer Doris Lessing's views on motherhood, feminine identity and the subconscious, at five different stages of her literary production and, therefore, may help us draw conclusions on a possible development.

A final matter to be considered with reference to the structure of the thesis is the way in which critics have arranged or ordered Lessing's novels in the studies that cover

most of her canon, in contrast to the chronological arrangement of these works in this thesis. For example, in Lorelei Cederstrom's *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche*, there is a full analysis of Lessing's major fiction covering the period from her first novel up to 1983 and arranged into several sections according to their relation with the individuation process. In Cederstrom's arrangement of the novels, *The Grass is Singing* alone occupies the first chapter, called "The Feminine Denied". The fact that this novel is not grouped with any other work is justified by the second chapter of the study, "From the Political to the Personal", which includes the *Children of Violence* series, thus classifying Lessing's first novel as "the political", since it is previous to the author's shift to "the personal" (these are the thematic denominations used by Cederstrom). The section dedicated to *The Golden Notebook* is entitled "The Process of Individuation: Disintegration and Reintegration". Finally, *The Summer Before the Dark* falls into the category of "Failed Individuation", together with *Briefing of a Descent into Hell*.

As another major classification regarding identity building, Roberta Rubenstein proposes a chronological reading of the eleven first novels that traces the development in the forming of the protagonists' self, in strong contrast to Cederstrom. Three of the works of my own corpus appear in *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing*. Rubenstein discusses the novels by placing them in three different sub-sections of her study: the first, "Breaking Down, Breaking Out", includes *The Grass is Singing* together with *Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, *Retreat to Innocence* and *A Ripple from the Storm*: that is, one of Lessing's first novels and the three first parts of the *Children of Violence* series, which deal mainly with a leading character discovering the universe and gaining self-awareness and autonomy. The second sub-section is named "Breaking Through" and groups *The Golden Notebook* with the two last parts of the pentalogy, as these

works depict more self-conscious characters. The final subdivision, with *The Summer Before the Dark*, *Briefing of a Descent into Hell* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, is entitled “Returning to the Center”, and shows a focus on more private experiences, different from the collective. After the analysis of the five novels, in the conclusions to this thesis, I will turn to both Cederstrom’s and Rubenstein’s classification in order to present my own views.

## **1.2. Justification of the corpus.**

In this section, I will justify my choice of the five novels in which I analyse Lessing’s female characters and how they define themselves in connection with motherhood through the different expressions of their subconscious (such as dreams, imagination and memories of the past). We will see how the struggle for a consistent identity is present in the entire corpus, which will allow for a psychoanalytic interpretation of Lessing’s construction of her female characters’ identity. To that end, and in order to characterise both the working of the mind and the mother archetype in these narratives, my methodology will be discussed in the last part of this introduction, along with the main Jungian and Lacanian concepts applied to the novels.

My selection of novels for study responds to three motives: first, they offer different approaches to female identity-building; second, in each of them we have access to the subconscious through different symptoms or manifestations; finally, all the characters have a potential relationship to motherhood. Although not all of them are actually mothers, there is some reflection and positioning in this respect on their part.

The different manifestations of the subconscious that these novels offer are as follows: *The Grass is Singing* shows childhood memories with consequences in

adulthood, imagination of an alternative future life as a mother, and some minor dreams. Dreams and their subsequent interpretation, sometimes with the help of a therapist, have prominence in *The Golden Notebook*. As happens with all other issues in this novel, there is not a single main source of information of the subconscious but many minor, secondary and overlapping ones such as past memories, day-dreaming and imagination, literary creation and the way of matching the world's reality, personal reality and fiction. The third novel, *The Summer Before the Dark* sticks more to dreams as a reference to the psychology of the main character. In this case, there is one recurring dream in which symbols are more outstanding than in the two previous works under study. Apart from that, we can also find memories about the heroine's life before becoming a mother, which trigger a conflict between two different identities of the same—either younger or older—character. *The Fifth Child* gives the reader an account of the mother's fantasy about what happens in her womb and a full imaginative relationship between the mother and the unborn child in addition to a debate on the idealisation of motherhood and its realities. In the last novel, *Alfred and Emily*, it is Lessing herself who provides an imaginary alternative life for her mother while imagination and storytelling constitute a central issue which ensures psychological sanity.

The female characters' position with regard to marriage and motherhood is central to the construction of their identities. In this respect, we find several aspects related to the subject: first, the reasons for choosing not to be a mother, the later wish for motherhood, and the mother-daughter relationship from the daughter's perspective in *The Grass is Singing*. Second, *The Golden Notebook* shows multiple views of motherhood among which the experience of a specific single mother is the most significant. We also find motherhood as a reason for living, and salvation in the face of

the threat of breakdown. Third, in *The Summer Before the Dark*, there is a personal crisis regarding a woman's own identity as a mother or as an individual. The experience in this novel is that of the mother who spends twenty-five years caring for her family and suddenly does not know who she really is when she finds herself alone. *The Fifth Child* is a tale about a mother who cannot love her child as a result of not accepting an unexpected fifth pregnancy from the start. It also deals with the birth of a child who does not match her expectations and who makes her give up her previous unrealistic views on motherhood. Finally, it is important to point out that I discarded the Martha Quest series since my intention was not to deal with autobiographical writing; however, *Alfred and Emily* had to be included because it allows for a contrast between biographical and fictional writing. Apart from that, as if it were a compendium, *Alfred and Emily* recapitulates many of the issues present in the four previous novels.

Let us now see the contribution of each novel to the topic in more detail. The female figure in *The Grass is Singing* is a childless woman. Nevertheless, this work offers a special view of motherhood and the inner feelings of a woman in relation to her own reproductive potential. By choosing Mary as one of the women characters under study in my thesis, I am supporting Adrienne Rich's view that in order to define motherhood, we have to take into account the experience not only of women who are mothers but also of those who are not, either because they cannot have children, or because they do not want to (Velasco 142). Other important themes present in the novel are Mary's relationship to her mother as a child, her disgust at the biological realities of motherhood, and the revelation of inner processes through dreams and the subconscious.

There are many reasons for including Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* as an object of study. First, gender acquires special relevance because, as explained before,

the author has always tried to deny what literary critics insist upon: her writing “as a woman” or from a feminist viewpoint. The author states in the introduction to the Harper Perennial edition of *The Golden Notebook*: “To get the subject of Women’s Liberation over with—I support it, of course, because women are second-class citizens (...) but this novel was not a trumpet for Women’s Liberation” (8). The presupposition that Lessing was writing about the “war of sexes” was generated by the fact that in this novel women have futures beyond other more traditional literary endings such as suicide, death, madness or marriage.

Doris Lessing always rejected labels and, being so eclectic in her writing, she is, in fact, difficult to classify. *The Golden Notebook* is written from the perspective of someone who has already left the Communist Party and sees, from the outside, how that philosophy collapses. Accordingly, one of the most criticised aspects of the Party is that people become just a piece in the whole puzzle and they lose their sense of selfhood:

The real crime of the British Communist Party is the number of marvellous people it has either broken, or turned into a dry-as-dust hair-splitting officemen, living in a closed group with other communists, and cut off from everything else that goes on in their own country. (307)

The same can be extended to any other ideology, including feminism. Even when she explains her belief in Sufism in an interview for *Quimera*, she insists on the fact that it is not Sufism as a dogma, a religion or a psychological trend that she is interested in. What she is saying is that she does not believe in a given philosophy as “belonging to a group” but preserving the personal way of believing. All these -isms cancel what the individual really is; therefore, the real point of *The Golden Notebook* is its account of each and every single aspect in the life of a woman in the second half of the twentieth century (Bracho 62-67). The fact that Anna Wulf is a woman rather than a man determines her perspective on life a great deal. We must take into account that female identity is a main aspect on Doris Lessing’s writing, but womanhood is just one more



aspect in this novel, together with politics, Africa, literature and the process of writing, sexuality, the family, friendship, the relationship between men and women, psychology, children's education and many others.

In the same interview, Lessing states that, when writing this work, she intended a novel which included a comment on itself and, at the same time, dealt with the process of its own writing. *The Golden Notebook* is built up with bits and pieces, as the mirror of a divided self which tries to be reunited. Womanhood and feminism would only comprise one of these pieces.

Other reasons for including *The Golden Notebook* in this thesis are the following: first, the issue of motherhood is seen from a number of viewpoints due to the great number of mothers, biological or otherwise, among its characters. Second, the characters consciously struggle to be recognised as individual figures in their own right, and the struggle between the domestic and the public mirrors the identity crisis of the Western woman which has been explored by many other contemporary women writers such as Penelope Mortimer, Joan Barfoot, Marilyn French, Alice Munro and Margaret Atwood, to name a few. Third, the fragmentation, multiplicity and interrelation of viewpoints on identity are perfectly reproduced in the structure of *The Golden Notebook* with its infinite variety of narrative sources and devices.

One important reason for choosing *The Summer Before the Dark* is that Kate Brown's personal situation is completely different from that of Anna Wulf and Mary Turner, but similar to Harriet's in *The Fifth Child*, since both are raising large families. Nevertheless, there are also major differences between both characters: while Harriet is younger, still involved in her motherly duties, married to a cooperative husband and dealing with and fighting against unexpected misfortunes within the family, Kate Brown is a mature mother who has lived for the last twenty-five years performing the

role that Jung called “the good mother”. Her crisis comes when she suddenly realises that she has no identity apart from that of being a nurturing instrument. Her attitude coincides with that of Emily Taylor, in the autobiographical part of *Alfred and Emily*, whose true identity is restored by freeing herself from family life in the fictional part.

Along with the experiences Kate undergoes, a recurrent dream develops: she sees a dying seal out of water and knows that her mission is that of taking it back to the sea. The dream has several versions throughout the novel and its different representations seem to depend on the character’s state of mind and the different problems she has to face at each stage. She recognises this dream as the expression of her subconscious and her current situation and acknowledges that she will only be able to go back home once she has returned the seal to the sea. This dream offers a view of the anguish she feels at several moments of her development until she is able to understand her own self.

All the memories and dreams in the novel are, as Lee puts it,

unlocked by the new stimulation, which opens up uncharted territory for the domesticated Kate. Kate’s summer is an unprecedented exploration into the dark holes of her mind, her life and her emotions, almost a ritual confirming her coming to age decades after her coming of age. (16)

The interpretation of both this recurrent dream and the title of the novel has brought about intense debate among the critics; therefore, it will occupy a major part of my discussion in order to offer my own psychoanalytic readings of both.

Finally, it is worth including this novel because the positive final return home distinguishes *The Summer Before the Dark* from many of the novels of female emancipation that appeared in the nineteen seventies, confirming the fact that Lessing offers different futures for her women figures apart from the typical literary endings of confinement in domesticity, which have already been mentioned in connection with *The Golden Notebook*.

*The Fifth Child* is a major contribution to the interrelation between the subconscious and motherhood. It opens with a reference to the identity of the main female figure, who will later become a mother. From the very beginning, this character does not seem to have a strong individuality. Even before Harriet has her children, her definition of her own self depends on the people she relates to, for instance, her own views on family life that she has inherited from her parents.

Both Harriet and her husband David want many children due to their idealisation of family life. After having had their first four, Harriet starts facing the reality of caring for such a big family; however, she insists on her former ideas, sometimes also referred to as “the dream”. It is interesting to see the sociological context of the plot. The story takes place in the nineteen sixties and seventies, with feminism at its height and coinciding with the publication of such outstanding works as Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1969), Juliet Mitchell’s *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) or Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born* (1976). In such a context, a character with Harriet’s views on life is quite strange. Here, the author depicts the opposite to what happened in previous eras: although these traditional views on marriage and motherhood had been the only acceptable ones for the previous generations, in the sixties, a woman like Harriet quite often had to justify her ideas; more than that, she doesn’t give in to the fact that her former views on the family turned out to be totally idealistic and unreal in the long run.

Her fifth—and unexpected—pregnancy becomes a nightmare. She feels her condition as a curse and imagines the foetus’s demands and responses to her own thoughts. The baby inside her is moving all the time causing her much pain and distress, to which she replies by calling him names such as “enemy”, “savage”, “monster”, “alien” and the like. A fantastic mother-child relationship starts at this moment, causing

Harriet's anxiety about the baby, which the doctors and hospital staff do not share or understand.

Placed in this woman/mother dichotomy, Harriet follows her maternal instinct, which will destroy the unity of her marriage and family because of the special attention that such an individual requires. Much of the novel deals with the peculiarities of a child that does not match the idealistic expectations of his mother. Readers never know whether the child is special in some way or if it is all based on the mother's perception of it. As a result, "normality" will be a central theme for debate in this part of my thesis, since Ben's being "not normal" is determined by the way Harriet has described him right from the beginning of pregnancy. Myth and fairy tale, as part of the collective unconscious, will determine the atmosphere of the novel.

As already explained, the relevance of *Alfred and Emily* in Lessing's canon lies in the fact that it is her final work and it had been announced as such in advance. In the novel we can find many of the recurrent themes present throughout her career, such as her mother and father, the life of Europeans in Africa, marriage and family life and, above all, female identity. After reading such a final statement, a rereading of Lessing's production as a whole would offer new aspects for the interpretation of many works.

In *Alfred and Emily*, Lessing invents an alternative, happier life for both her parents, had World War One not taken place, in which they would never have married, and, therefore, plays with the possibility of her own non-existence. However, the most remarkable issue in this work is a restoration of her mother's identity and an understanding of the circumstances that made her so unhappy, which constitutes a reconciliation and somehow reinvents the matrophobia which permeates many of the author's works.

The novels will be dealt with in chronological order of publication. The reasons

for this organisation are twofold: on the one hand, it will offer thematic developments in this aspect as well as the features that remain untouched throughout Lessing's production. On the other, it will allow me to take a position with respect to the previous chronological classifications of Lessing's work.

With the analysis of the five novels, their similarities and differences will be made evident and a common thread will be established. We will see how the psychoanalytic theories of Jung and Lacan allow for a reading of these novels that can clarify the process through which five female characters, so apparently different from one another, are constructed. Conclusions will especially be drawn in connection with Lessing's different reinterpretations of the mother archetype, which can be read with the help of Jungian and, to lesser degree, Lacanian models. The place of motherhood in contemporary literature will also be outlined.

### **1.3. Literature review.**

In this section of the thesis I am going to comment on and analyse the criticism on the five novels under study, focusing on the subconscious expression of the female self regarding motherhood. In order to do so, I will include not only Anglo-American but also some important Spanish contributions. I will deal with the criticism by arranging the different publications thematically. Parallel to the comments on the most relevant research to my area of study, I will state how these have been useful and, more especially, how my own approach differs from previous ones.

### 1.3.1. Biographical readings.

A remarkable number of studies on the work of Doris Lessing have observed the relation between fiction and biography. The coincidences are outstanding if we take into account the author's narration of her own life in volumes one and two of her autobiography: *Under my Skin* and *Walking in the Shade*. From *The Golden Notebook* to *Alfred and Emily*, there are autobiographical references throughout her work, the pentalogy *Children of Violence* being the most obvious example. Even the author herself acknowledged this in a final statement to her career: "I would say *Martha Quest* was my first novel, being autobiographical and direct. My first novel, *The Grass is Singing* was the first of my real novels" (*Alfred and Emily*, 178)

The thesis that most of Lessing's work is autobiographical is mainstream. That is the reason why a biographical reading often cohabits with another approach such as psychoanalysis. As we shall see, there are a number of contributions dealing with psychoanalysis which direct their interpretation of the novels toward an underlying biographical background. As a link between the autobiographical and the psychoanalytic approach, in 1996 Lynda Scott studied self-representational writing from a psychoanalytical perspective, arguing that psychoanalytical and Jungian frameworks had been broadly used to analyse Lessing's writing and the characters' quest for selfhood, but it had not been applied to the novelist's construction of her own self. Many have been the critics who have discussed her identity and the autobiographical traits in the novels since then. In "Writing the Self: Selected Works of Doris Lessing", Scott explains how autobiographical writing works as psychotherapy: as she puts it, "self-representational texts become a presentation of oneself in various guises, a search for 'truth', 'answers', and a means of achieving explication and

purgation” (2). For Lessing, she argues, this enables her to “sustain a dialogue with herself and her past in an attempt to heal inner divisions and to create a unified self”, which is precisely what Anna Wulf tries to do by combining the experiences narrated in the four notebooks in one unique golden notebook. For Anna, as well as for the author, self-representational writing is a device for the finding of “self”.

One aspect of Scott’s article which is particularly significant to my thesis is the importance she gives to Lessing’s use of dreams in volumes one and two of her autobiography and in such works as *The Golden Notebook*, *Martha Quest* and *The Summer Before the Dark*, among others. For Scott, dreaming is similar to self-representation in the sense that Lessing uses it in many ways, as a method of meeting previous identities, of showing her daily life, or of overcoming an artistic block. For Lessing, dreaming is creative and Scott finally argues that writing about herself and reconstructing her own identity can be a form of dreaming or wish-fulfilment. Moreover, Scott states that, whenever memory becomes unreliable and writing fails to convey experience, dreams provide the opportunity to speak one’s mind. Scott concludes her article with the idea that Lessing’s self-representational writing is a form of psychotherapy, with psychological intercourse between Lessing as author and a character and between her fictive selves. Conversely, the aim of my thesis is not that of seeing Lessing’s novels as self-representational texts working as forms of therapy, but rather that of analysing the construction of female fictional selves under the cultural influence of psychoanalysis.

One aspect of Lessing which is present in these novels and that is especially relevant is the author’s matrophobia, characterised as a lifelong effort to try to understand and love her own mother, defined as possessive and egoistic (which is particularly present, for instance, in the relationship between Martha Quest and her

mother). As a result of this difficult relationship, Lessing depicts herself as a child who felt out of place, a lonely adolescent, more mature than the rest, who spent her time reading and was threatened by constant nightmares. In *Alfred and Emily*, the author seems to have solved this tension against the mother by reconciling herself to the mother figure at the very end of her literary career.

In her study *Madres e hijas en la teoría feminista. Una perspectiva psicoanalista*, Rosario Arias undertakes a thorough revision of the evolution of feminism and psychoanalysis in the last thirty years, and, very especially, of the relation between the two. This revision starts from the moment when the mother was routinely considered the cause of the daughter's misfortune, and develops towards a progressive restoration of the value of the mother figure. The author focuses on different stages of the mother-daughter relationship and its role in feminist criticism: Freudian psychoanalysis, Post-Freudian psychoanalysis and feminism, the "Object Relations" School with M. Klein<sup>5</sup> and Fairbairn, feminism (Simone de Beauvoir, Friedan, and Millet), Anglo-American Feminist Criticism (Chodorow) and its response from French Feminist Criticism (Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous), and finally, other recent feminist theories on motherhood.

Arias' Ph.D. thesis, *Madres e Hijas en la Narrativa de Lessing, Atwood y Mantel* (2001) follows exactly the same line of discussion, and contrasts Lessing's works (concretely, the *Children of Violence* series, *Memoirs of a Survivor*, *The Diaries of Jane Somers*, *The Good Terrorist* and some short stories) to the two other authors. The psychoanalysis, up to the appearance of the Object Relations School is the basis for the analysis of the mother-daughter relationship and its relevance in the construction of the daughter's identity, with especial reference to the pre-Oedipal. The blurring of

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<sup>5</sup> From now on, due to a coincidence in the surnames of two references in this thesis, Melanie Klein will be referenced as "M. Klein" while "S.M. Klein" will stand for Susan M. Klein.



boundaries between the fictional and the biographical also constitutes an essential standpoint to the study of the novels in Arias' thesis.

The work by Arias is highly relevant to this thesis since it deals with the mother-daughter relation in Doris Lessing's work, with particular attention to the ambivalent feelings of differentiation and separation from the mother, as experienced by the female characters. The mother-daughter relationship is again explained through the connection with Lessing's biography, which Arias justifies according to the writer's interest in such matters as authorship, identity and the relationship between fiction and biography. Arias' analysis is carried out in the same terms that Isabel Durán introduces in another biographically-based piece of research: "Doris Lessing: la interminable búsqueda del yo a través de Doris Lessing, Martha Quest and Anna Wulf", which deals with the construction of the identity of two of Lessing's fictional heroines (Martha and Anna). According to Durán, these figures, like most of Lessing's, are built around the struggle between the individual and the collective. However, Martha and Anna have the peculiarity of sharing experiences narrated by Lessing as well in *Under my Skin* and *Walking in the Shade*, respectively; of apparently shared experiences, then, with the author herself. In this article, important mention is also made of the difficult relationship between Lessing and her mother.

Having dealt with the criticism that focuses on the mother-daughter relationship, I should say that my own approach to this issue is completely different: instead of investigating how the female identity is developed in childhood in connection with the mother (a traditional psychoanalytic question), my intention is to show how the mother's self is built in the novels through the relationship between mothers and children. One of the contributions which gets closer to my approach is Claire Sprague's *Rereading Doris Lessing* (1987), which I am going to discuss later in this introduction,

in the next sub-section which deals with formal approaches. Sprague's analysis includes Mary's darkest side without discussing the character's attitude to her potential motherhood. And that is, to a certain extent, the step further that I want to take: by analysing the character of a woman who, either consciously or unconsciously, refuses motherhood, I will add significantly to the existing research on the universe of mothers in the works of Lessing. There are, however, other contributions which share common ground with my perspective, such as Amy Lee's "*The Summer Before the Dark, the Void of Motherhood*" (2004).

Works on the psychological development of daughters and the mother's influence as the primary socialising agent have been carried out, not only in reference to Lessing but to many other female twentieth-century authors who stand out for their treatment of motherhood: for instance, Margaret Atwood, Hilary Mantel, Margaret Drabble, Virginia Woolf, Frances Hodgson Burnett and Enid Bagnolf. Given that these patterns of the mother's influence on the daughter can be found in Lessing's life as described by herself, it may be assumed that if a study were made on the figure of the daughter in her novels, it would certainly be biographically-oriented. In fact, the search for identity by Lessing's characters can be defined as strongly recurrent, and Lessing herself declared "This business of 'finding who I am' has always left me wondering" (*Walking in the Shade*, 15). Anna Wulf's urge to write the four notebooks emerges from this need.

### 1.3.2. Approaches based on form.

Another key notion in the critical analysis of Lessing's work is structure. Lessing herself stated on several occasions that *The Golden Notebook* emerged from the

problem of giving shape to experience, giving coherence to existence, keeping oneself together, which is, at the same time, the main principle of the novel's structure. Actually, this issue is to be found within the novel in Anna's words, for instance, when she tells Molly that her diaries only describe chaos: "'What's in those diaries then?' 'They aren't diaries.' 'Whatever they are.' 'Chaos, that's the point.'" (56) As Durán explains, the division of Anna's own experience in four notebooks results from the diversity of her activities as a free woman, a socialist, private self and writer. More than that, Lessing takes the Lacanian view that the notion of self has been redefined as a fiction, and has been replaced by a new concept of "subject", which is always divided and in constant construction through its "others" (Durán, "Búsqueda" 101). One example of this diversity which particularly interests us is the enormous variety of devices through which Anna constructs her identity: the blue notebook with her personal diary, dreams, nightmares and therapy; the black notebook with her memories of Africa; her experience in the Communist Party, shown in the red notebook; and the yellow notebook which includes the novel *The Shadow of the Third*.

All the narrative varieties that we find in the book (letters, diary, review, parody, tale, cinema script, newspaper article, synopsis) as well as other typographical varieties described, such as crossing outs, manuscripts, black lines, asterisks, brackets, cuttings pasted on the notebook pages, form a pastiche, a palimpsest that projects the multiplicity of both, personality and the truth. (Durán 104)<sup>6</sup>

As I see it, the multiplicity of spheres of the self that create female identity in Lessing's works mirrors the multiplicity of mother figures and personal experiences which finally creates the "institution of motherhood", as Rich called it. Just as identity

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<sup>6</sup> My translation. "Todas las variaciones narrativas que encontramos en el libro (cartas, diario, reseña, parodia, relato, guión de cine, artículo periodístico, sinopsis) así como otras variaciones tipográficas que se describen, como tachones, manuscritos, líneas negras, asteriscos, paréntesis, recortes pegados sobre las hojas de los cuadernos, forman un pastiche, un palimpsesto que proyecta la multiplicidad de la personalidad y de la verdad".

is the addition of the different aspects of the self, motherhood is the recollection of all the particular experiences of mothers. More than this, and coming back to Durán's analysis of Martha Quest and Anna Wulf, the notion of "otherness" is always present in these two novels, which seem to run parallel to the relational nature of women so greatly emphasized by Chodorow in the 80s. The "other" through which female figures define themselves has many faces. In the case of Anna, the other is not only her child, but also her friend Molly, her fictional Ella, her lover Michael and the whole universe of characters with whom she has some kind of relationship. In order to grasp the total significance of these relations, structure is vital.

Sprague is a critic whose work I will refer to frequently in this thesis, since her findings explain the different systems of relations that are established between the characters, and how these relationships contribute to a psychoanalytical reading of the novels. The fact that I am using this critic's theories quite repeatedly does not mean that she remains the main authority in Lessing criticism, since other trends of study have developed in recent years, as we will see. However, her approach to the narrative patterns in the novels, which are thoroughly developed in *Rereading Doris Lessing* (1987), is quite helpful.

Other critics have focused on patterns and structures, and most of them coincide chronologically with the publication of Sprague's *Rereading Doris Lessing*. Hidalgo, for instance, in her article "Cambio histórico y forma narrativa en *The Golden Notebook*, de Doris Lessing" (1984), deals with two aspects that she sees as essential to this novel, that is, the fragmentation of the narrative technique, and the fact that this fragmentation mirrors a reality of ideological crisis. She confronts the problem of giving shape to experience and giving coherence to existence, and she does so by providing a detailed analysis of the structure in *The Golden Notebook*. Another example of criticism

dealing with structure in Lessing is *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narratives*, by Molly Hite (1989), which we will comment on later on, when we deal with matters of identity in Lessing's work.

### 1.3.3. Studies on identity.

A third thematic emphasis which has received much critical attention is identity and the quest for the self. Having a close look at this critical trend is essential to my approach. In all the studies mentioned so far, the quest for identity is characterised as closely related to the author's own experience. I will try to show how Lessing's female characters not only respond to her own particular, individual views, but also to a broader context. We are going to see how these identities are the product of a wider cultural, philosophical and sociological background with psychoanalysis and feminism as its main components. Moreover, I will focus on how these women define and position themselves in respect to the specific issue of their potential motherhood. Beyond this, an overview of the concept of motherhood in the novels will be reached.

In the matter of identity quest, the most useful studies on Lessing have been those focusing explicitly on Jungian psychoanalysis, such as Cederstrom's work and, especially, *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche. Jungian Patterns in the Novels of Doris Lessing* (1990). In the introduction the author argues for such an approach by stating that halfway through the *Children of Violence* series, a new, more psychological side of Lessing began to emerge, as she became more and more involved with Jungian ideas, from which she took the reasoning that society can only change when the individual changes. The most important Jungian notion in Cederstrom's study is that of individuation: her protagonists tend to break down but are reintegrated by self-

examination and inward quest in the attempt to assimilate elements of the unconscious into consciousness in order to achieve an integrated and harmonious selfhood; an important point that Cederstrom makes in her introduction is the difference between the Freudian and the Jungian unconscious which Lessing inherited. The latter highlights the potential of the unconscious for creative development, which I will fully deal with later. Moreover, Lessing makes a distinction between the personal and collective unconscious, which is full of inherited psychic patterns. So, a certain Jungian influence on Lessing seems to be clear, which also explains her use of Jungian concepts in her own investigation of the psyche; for instance, the archetypes involved in the individuation process.

Cederstrom also makes a distinction between works that can be analysed as Marxist-Realist—among which we have to include *The Grass is Singing*—and those which are considered psychological, especially Jungian, starting mid-way through the *Children of Violence* series. According to this distinction, the first group are novels in the conventional sense and depict individuals fighting against their social background, while the second group (from *The Golden Notebook* onwards) can be qualified as “mythic narratives”, in the sense that they offer an archaic worldview, in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos rather than to history. There is another distinction that Cederstrom makes between the first novels and the rest, from *Landlocked* onwards: the difference between the cosmic symbolism of D.H. Lawrence and the Jungian myth and archetypes of the later novels.

María Cristina Andreu’s Ph.D. Thesis (*Doris Lessing: Aspectos de la Búsqueda de Identidad*) was read the year after Cederstrom’s study was published. Both authors coincide in Lessing’s shift to the psychological after her first novels following the

disappointment with her previous political ideas, which made her portray individuals as social beings.

Although Andreu recognises a clear Jungian and Laingian influence on the novelist, and posits the individuation process as fundamental to Lessing's canon, her interpretation cannot be considered a psychoanalytic one and differs from mine quite clearly: she neither focuses on archetypes nor analyses the individuation process of the characters. Moreover, motherhood is not a central issue to her study and she does not characterise these heroines as representations of the mother archetype. Instead, she focuses on the heroines' struggle to define themselves against social impositions, mainly symbolised by marriage and the physical space they occupy, as she concludes:

The centre of her whole work is the depiction of the struggle between one's individual freedom and the physical, psychological, political and social constraints, symbolised by both, the external and internal space and the institutions created by humans. (Andreu 360)<sup>7</sup>

In order to justify this interpretation, she examines the quest for identity of the three main characters in Lessing's fiction until that moment: Martha Quest, Anna Wulf and Kate Brown. Fragmentation—in the case of Anna—and maturity—in Kate's—are central concepts both to this study and mine, although, as I have said, the two analyses are approached from different angles. In addition, this critic links the fictional to the biographical by dedicating the first half of her thesis to Lessing's identity as a writer, and discussing the author's inner quest, although she argues that Lessing's fiction should not be read as a concealed autobiography, but rather as imaginative literary writing in its own right (46). But previous to Cederstrom's and Andreu's analyses, there had been several other critical works. Based on a similar line of reasoning, we find Ralph Berets' "A Jungian Interpretation of the Dream Sequence in Doris Lessing's *The*

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<sup>7</sup> My translation. "El centro de toda su obra es la visión de la lucha entre la libertad individual y las limitaciones físicas, psicológicas, políticas y sociales, simbolizadas en el espacio interno y externo y en las instituciones creadas por el hombre".

*Summer Before the Dark.*” (1980) Berets also argues for a more Jungian than Freudian approach through a focus on the future rather than on the past of the individual, and a correspondingly minor focus on the sexual dimension of the individual, who, according to this Jungian view, has male and female components which need to be constantly balanced. In the same line, Rubenstein’s *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing. Breaking the Forms of Consciousness* (1979), refutes the idea of Lessing consciously adapting the Jungian model, yet she recognises her essential artistic and psychological compatibility with it (24). Moreover, in agreement with my own interpretation, she develops her analysis under the premise that “the common denominator in Lessing’s fictional world is the mind: the mind discovering, interpreting, and ultimately shaping its own reality” (7). Nevertheless, one of the first problems she reports in her study is precisely that of interpreting Lessing’s fiction without oversimplifying “by synopsis or by topical, biographical, or other reductions” (4). She continues by showing the limitations of considering Lessing an “African”, a “Marxist” or even a “Feminist” writer. She insists on the fact that her characters’ task is that of growing towards achieving personal wholeness and sexual identity although they embody a role of “everyperson”, which goes beyond gender limitations.

Although in a great part of the criticism the novels are not overtly named as specifically Jungian, special mention is always made of images, metaphors, symbols and the like, which are interpreted in the light of the mythological and archetypal contents of the collective unconscious. By doing this, major archetypal patterns present in our cultural background are applied to the fiction in order to decode its message. This has proved to be a useful approach; for instance, in the chapter devoted to *The Grass is Singing* in *Rereading Doris Lessing. Narrative Patterns of Doubling and Repetition* (1987), Sprague offers detailed comments on the dreams of Mary Turner, from a



psychoanalytical viewpoint. As she argues, they account for her imprisonment in her childhood, her failure to have resolved her relationship with her mother and father, the failure to turn the love for her father into love for her husband, her distaste for sex and her tendency to merge the concepts of father, husband and servant. In all, this approach explains Mary's identity through her childhood and the relationship to her parents. How she defines herself as an adult as concerns motherhood is not discussed.

As we will see in the chapter devoted to *The Summer Before the Dark*, criticism focuses on symbols. The signifier-signified relationship has been central to Susan M. Klein's "First and Last Words: reconsidering the Title of *The Summer Before the Dark*" (2002) in her interpretation of the title and the subsequent understanding of the entire novel. Conversely, Gayle Greene, who also focuses on symbols, suggests a different reading of the title in her *Doris Lessing. The Poetics of Change* (1996), although both critics share their insistence on the retrospective aspect of the protagonist's quest. *The Fifth Child* is one of the novels in which symbol and myth become the most visible since it works as a tale, a narrative form that Lessing uses "as a creative vehicle to examine the states of consciousness of the human soul" (Galín, 2007). In fact, *The New York Review of Books* presented it as the tale of a mother who cannot love her own child because she fears him, suggesting how perception and myth are interlaced.

Having seen the multiplicity of approaches in the critical sources discussed so far, one comes to the question of whether all the details I have been mentioning, such as images, symbols and dreams can, in fact, be interpreted under the lens of psychoanalysis or feminism. We also wonder whether we can rely on our cultural background as a guide to the novel, or rather, whether we have to deal with the textual elements as having an unavoidable reading unrelated to any concrete historic moment, literary source or philosophical trend. Lessing herself deals with this matter in

“Problems, Myths and Stories”, a text first given as a lecture at a seminar, *Human Solutions: Problem Solving and Society*, at the Institute for Cultural Research in London in 1998.<sup>8</sup> She starts the lecture by stating “We take stories and storytelling for granted. The great reservoir of myths, legends, parables, tales, that we dip into for entertainment, use for films and plays, refer to so as to elucidate a point or draw a parallel—it is always there and we hardly think about it.” (Lessing, *Time Bites* 273.) Lessing, then, makes it clear that some kind of collective unconscious, to use a Jungian term, is a recurrent resource in her work, since she believes in cultural background as an important source of our psyche. She then goes on and highlights the importance of the subconscious both in her personal and literary development: “We tell each other stories all day, and we daydream and fantasise, and when we fall asleep we tell stories again, for dreams are stories, not only wildly surreal, but as matter-of-fact and consistent as a B-movie” (274).

In the same line, Hite’s “The Future in a Different Shape: Broken Form and Possibility in *The Golden Notebook*”, which has already been mentioned in this introduction, convincingly analyses Lessing’s complexity against the reductionism and predictability of some psychological and cultural clichés. She begins by explaining that Lessing’s work questions the most usual notions of identity. A clear example of that is the different views that Anna Wulf and her therapist have on classifying human essence into a fixed number of pre-existing forms (in other words, Jung’s archetypes) which always implies a conceptual limitation. Hite considers the failure of language as a whole and defines “naming” as “a means of making safe, of restricting to manageable dimensions, of ruling out the radically unknown” (66) This discourse ends up with the statement that “she (Anna) is up against a concept of identity formed and enforced by

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<sup>8</sup> Lessing, Doris. *Time Bites*. London: Harper Perennial, 2005.

the literature that she herself (and Lessing herself) has espoused and helped produce; against “language” as guardian and guarantor of a humanism that perceives humanity as unchanging and that has in turn become rigid and conservative”; Hite also concludes that “What Anna is discovering is that the old methods of “naming” are insufficient” (68-69). This failure of “naming” allows for a greater significance of the figurative language of dreams, which started with Mary Turner, and which, as I see it, can be regarded as characteristic of her work. This figurative language, which succeeds in showing the main characters’ inner selves where other devices fail to do so, will play a prominent role in the discussion of the five novels.

The research on psychoanalytic influences in the work of Doris Lessing is not just inscribed in the context of the nineteen eighties and nineties. More recent research also focuses on the notions of self and identity. One example of recent psychoanalytic research is Sharon Wilson’s “Postcolonial Identities in *The Golden Notebook*” (2009) where she gives the first hints of a pattern of Jungian archetypes of shadow, anima, animus, persona and self<sup>9</sup> which triggers Anna Wulf’s process of individuation. Nevertheless, in recent years, more transgressive and innovative approaches have appeared with reference to the psychological construction of the characters. Terry Reilly, for example, in his “*Free Women and Freeman: the Language of Lobotomy in The Golden Notebook*” (2008), rescues this neuro-scientific technique from the first half of the twentieth century to discuss identity in *The Golden Notebook*. He finds evidence of the fact that Lessing may have been familiar with such practice and argues that psychological and social uniformity is precisely what the novel tries to resist.

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<sup>9</sup> The archetypes that are involved in the individuation process (persona, anima/animus, shadow and self) will be referred to with lower case letters and no inverted commas in this thesis. The reason for adopting this convention is twofold: in the first place, I intend to be consistent with Jung’s terminology and, in the second place, I am following the major scholarship on Lessing and psychoanalysis, such as the work done by Cederstrom and Rubenstein.

A newer approach which relates Lessing to anti-psychiatry and the work of Ronald David Laing is developing as an emerging trend. One of the most recent contributions to this field is Kerry Myler's paper "Madness and Mothering in Doris Lessing's *The Four-Gated City* (1969)", based on her own Ph.D. Thesis, *Doris Lessing and R. D. Laing: Madness and the Matter of the Body* submitted to University of Southampton in 2010. This article deals with *The Four-Gated City* (1969) in terms of Laing's *The Politics of Experience* (1967). Myler argues that Lessing uses Laing's work to rethink discourses of motherhood and madness. These are particularly important aspects because of their fundamental role in maintaining the social order. Discourses of mothering are concerned with the perpetuation of that same order. The author concludes that, for Lessing, the potential of humanity is only realized when the existing social order, including the sex/gender system, is ignored and, finally, destroyed. This approach opens a new field of possibilities for the study of the Lessing canon.

#### 1.3.4. Age studies.

In the last few years, there has been a development of a relatively new approach to literature which is particularly relevant to the work of Doris Lessing: age studies. Aging is an emerging topic in English literature as a result of the fact that the population in Europe is getting increasingly older. This demographic transformation and its consequences have been explored by authors as Julian Barnes, Penelope Lively and Anita Brookner. It is worth highlighting that Doris Lessing was, again, a pioneer in this topic. In *The Summer Before the Dark*, aging is introduced when the female figure becomes aware of her physical decay after twenty-five years of her marriage. Aging is also a main subject in *The Grandmothers* (2003) and *Love, Again* (1996):

She was like one of those landscapes where subterranean upheavals had tumbled to the surface a dozen strata, each created in vastly different epochs and kept separate until now, revealing mountains made up of rocks red, olive green, turquoise, lemon, pink, and dark blue, all in a single range. She could sincerely say that one of the strata, or several, did not care about this ageing carcass, but there was another as vulnerable as the flesh of roses. (*Love, Again* 235)

But it was in 1983-84, before this issue was popular, that Lessing explored it in detail in *Diary of a Good Neighbour* and *If the Old Could*, under the general title *The Diaries of Jane Somers*. Lessing not only examines aging in physical terms but she also questions the welfare state and investigates some related issues such as care and labour.

Barbara Frey Waxman published *From the Hearth to the Open Road. Feminist Study of Ageing in Contemporary Literature* in 1990, in which she deals exclusively with the work of contemporary women novelists who focus on aging women, among whom we find Doris Lessing. From a feminist viewpoint, the book discusses the emergence of the *Reifungsroman*, or novel of ripening, as a new genre: in this narrative structure, this ripening would imply moving from an initial state of passivity and deterioration into one of exploration, self-definition, growth, self-affirmation, and integration. In a very similar line, in 2004, The Doris Lessing Society published a special issue of their journal, *The Doris Lessing Studies*<sup>10</sup>, devoted to this topic. It offers papers by several critics which cover the concepts of self, the *Reifungsroman* and spiritual development in old age.

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<sup>10</sup> The Doris Lessing Society, dating from 1977, has been central to the impulse of the research and criticism on Lessing's work. They organise panels at the Modern Languages Association (MLA) Annual Conventions, they publish the journal *Doris Lessing Studies* (the former *Doris Lessing Newsletter*), and have held the First and Second International Doris Lessing Conferences (New Orleans, 2004 and Leeds, 2007), which brought together scholars from all over the world. The Doris Lessing Society is an American-based organization, which may account for the fact that Lessing's outcome has received more critical attention in the United States than in the United Kingdom.

### 1.3.5. Other approaches.

The role of spirituality, and especially of Sufism has also been studied as a significant aspect of Doris Lessing's narrative. According to Rubenstein, Lessing's attraction to Sufism has "validated preoccupations that were already present in her fiction, such as her interest in breaking through conventional ways of thinking and being". And in her novels, "she frequently embeds allusions to or transformations of Sufi teaching stories or focuses on emergent strands of the contemporary Zeitgeist well before they have reached the readers' awareness" ("Notes for Proteus" 16). In the same line, Müge Galin undertook a thorough study of the influence of Sufism in Doris Lessing's works in her *Between East and West: Sufism in the Works of Doris Lessing* (1997), which assesses spirituality in Lessing's work, while discussing some Sufi-like characters and their unconventional lifestyles. Similarly, this study also deals with Lessing's space-fiction utopias as possible alternatives to our Western ways of life.

Finally, I would add that in recent years there has been a major tendency to consider the postcolonial/global aspect as well as her experimentation with form and the postmodern Lessing studies. Among the most remarkable studies in these areas are, for instance, Sicher Efraim's and Linda Weinhouse's "Under Colonial Eyes: Doris Lessing and The Jews." (2013); Vesela Katsarova's "From Confined Space to Global Worlds and Complex Techniques: George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing." (2010); or Max Saunders', "After-Lives: Postmodern Experiments in Meta-Auto/Biografiction: Sartre, Nabokov, Lessing, Byatt." (2010). There has been less emphasis on Lessing's politics—sexual, social or otherwise—in recent years.

Finally, as motherhood has a special status in the discussion on identity-building in Lessing's work, Terry Caesar's article "Motherhood and Postmodernism" (1995) in

which he explores the mother figure in Postmodern literature with all its ambiguities, is outstanding because he applies his investigation to male writing and draws some dividing lines between men and women authors in this respect. Male narratives do not idealise the mother figure, while in female narratives, celebrations of motherhood based on the Kristevan notion of *jouissance* are to be found. Making use of his findings will help us interpret Lessing's novels and will also allow us to see if his hypotheses on motherhood are valid for women's writings. Caesar's article brings up questions such as "Why is a mother a necessary figure to re-create anymore?" "Is she still capable of telling her own story?" "What authority does the experience of a mother have apart from the institution of motherhood?" (1) In this respect, he argues that the mother occupies an abject space, since she is necessary for narratives conceived out of reality, while she is redundant in an age of technology. Finally, he concludes that Postmodernism does not abandon or redeem the mother figure.

#### **1.4. Theoretical background and methodology.**

My methodology in the present thesis consists in using only the theory that has been more fruitful in the reception of Lessing's works from a psychoanalytic and feminist viewpoint. These theoretical perspectives are, as I see it, directly applicable to my purpose and the analysis of the five novels under study. On several occasions, Doris Lessing herself stated her disagreement with Freudian psychoanalysis, but she acknowledged that a more Jungian approach can be applied to her writing, as will be made clear later on in this section. Let us see now how the different rewritings of psychoanalysis have influenced her work, especially with reference to the thematic issues I am dealing with.

#### 1.4.1. Jungian psychoanalysis.

It is necessary to consider Jungian philosophy in connection with Lessing's works in some detail. Jung's notion of the collective unconscious, so related to the study of primitive myth and ritual, was a remarkable influence on modern writers, and contrary to Freud's assumption of his work as scientific. Jung's relevance in literature can be explained by the fact that a new approach to criticism sprang from this combination of literature, anthropology and psychology, in which the literary works are explained according to the recurrent presence of archetypes, images and narrative patterns. Jungian psychology is responsible for the development of the concept of archetypes, arguing that beneath the personal unconscious there is a collective unconscious common to all humans, formed by what he called "inherited archetypes", not only socially from one generation to the next, but also through the structure of the psyche itself. Those archetypes, which are mainly unconscious, become manifest through myths, which reveal themselves and can be personalized in dreams. Neurosis, for Jung, comes from the non-acceptance of some archetypal element of the unconscious, which, instead of being assimilated by the conscious, is projected towards an object.

Jung's process of individuation, which has already been mentioned, is one of his main contributions to psychoanalysis, as well as a central notion in this thesis. The final goal of the process of individuation is the construction of the self, "the process by which a person becomes a psychological "in-dividual", that is, a separate, indivisible, unity or 'whole'" (Jung, *Archetypes* 275). Jung divides the psyche into the shadow, the anima/animus and the persona. Such a division presents some differences from the



Freudian theories of the id, the ego and the superego. The shadow corresponds to the inferior and darkest side of our personality, and is central to the beginning of the individuation process; it is projected onto another person or personified as such in dreams, and is never removed or assimilated, but it coexists with the rest of aspects of oneself: “The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly—for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies” (Jung, *Archetypes* 284-5). Cederstrom defines it as “The Mr. Hyde that everyone carries within—the dark side of the personality which is projected onto other people of the same sex” (*Psyche* 10). Rubenstein also states that the shadow is “the hidden and alien opposite component of the conscious or acknowledged personality. The shadow corresponds to the generally same-sex mirror opposite of the acknowledged self” (Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 23).

Similar to the shadow are the animus—the masculine archetype in a woman—and the anima—the feminine in a man—which both constitute projections:

It is a well-known fact that sex is determined by a majority of male or female genes, as the case may be. But the minority of genes belonging to the other sex does not simply disappear. A man, therefore, has in him a feminine side, an unconscious feminine figure—a fact of which he is generally quite unaware. I may take it as known that I have called this figure the “anima”, and its counterpart in a woman the “animus”. (Jung, *Archetypes* 284)

The anima is the image of the opposite sex carried in the unconscious, both personal and collective, which results in a bisexual nature of the human psyche. The anima operates as a mediator between the ego (the conscious will) and the unconscious. It is important to mention here that the anima is usually projected by the child onto the figure of the mother, in early childhood. Finally, the persona, unlike the rest of archetypes, does not only appear during the process of individuation but throughout a person’s life, and constitutes the public social role that a person acquires. The persona, a

term which was originally used to designate the mask, is precisely the mask worn by the collective psyche; this allows the individual to act according to the rules set by the collective psyche, while still believing in his or her own individuality (Jung, *Two Essays* 281). It also mediates between the ego and the external world. Expectations about class and gender are strongly connected to this archetype, as we will see.

The struggle between these three parts of the mind (shadow, anima/animus and persona) is to be found in the characters of our five novels which, in a dialogue between their conscious and their unconscious, find themselves in the process of finding their own identity. The presence of a Jungian influence in Doris Lessing's fiction has been a matter of discussion throughout her career. On the one hand, and this is particularly important to my methodology, Lessing acknowledges having used a psychological Jungian technique before even knowing what it was: that of knowing about a weak part in one's personality and deliberately pretending it was stronger (Biggsby 82). Moreover, she admitted her strong tendency to incorporate myth and dreaming in her writings, as we have seen. Such an association between the mythological and the real is quite close to Jung's conception, as he stated that myth, fairy tale and dreaming are the main expressions of the archetypes (*Archetypes* 5).

On the other hand, there are other aspects in Lessing that differ from Jung's approach; for instance, her rejection of "overpsychologizing", and the fact that when she occasionally mentioned her own psychotherapist, she stated that her being Jungian is what she disliked most about her (Raskin 14-15). Although Lessing acknowledges the existence of a subconscious, especially as a source of creativity (Newquist 5), she explicitly refuses the label, since "words are contaminated, full of traditional associations" (Torrents 66) and also because,

There are great gaps in English language where there are words like "spirit" or "soul" or "unconscious" or "collective unconscious". When you start writing in this area the

words are usually the property of some cult or other—"collective unconscious" belongs to Jungians. You might not want to have that association so you're always wrestling with words that haven't got the meaning you want them to have. (Dean 92)

All in all, the question of whether Lessing's attitude to dreams and identity has a Jungian layer will be one of my areas of investigation. This matter will be fully dealt with in the discussion on my five-novel corpus, and was already present in the previous parts of this introduction, since it has been widely debated by the critics. It remains true that many aspects of Jung's philosophy are evident in Lessing and constitute a valid approach.

Beyond the specific Jungian framework, the function of mythology and the tendency towards mythologizing is a major element in Lessing's fiction, and forms part of my approach. If we consider all the definitions of myth in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (156-157), they can be summarised as the representation of our instincts and awareness of the universe and human life, based upon an ensemble of both fantastic and factual stories, which do not match our standards of factual reality since myth is metaphysical and beyond science. Myth is collective and communal and all particular opinions and attitudes depend on that. Mythology is cultural, and reflected in people's folklore and traditions; archetypes, on the other hand, are images and motifs shared by all cultures, that is, universal symbols. According to Wilfred L. Guerin, "Myth criticism takes us back to the beginning of mankind's oldest rituals and beliefs" (191). Curiously enough, when Doris Lessing invents a new origin of humanity in *The Cleft* (2007), one of her last novels, she seems to acknowledge such notions as the maternal instinct or penis envy as a universal part of our collective unconscious. What she is really doing is inventing a new origin of mankind with the same archetypes and beliefs that have always ruled our subconscious.

#### 1.4.2. Feminism.

Another influential trend in the cultural background to Lessing's writings is feminism. This constitutes quite a controversial subject in itself since her novels have often been read—and even sometimes simplified—under this approach. Simone de Beauvoir, like many other objectors to Freudian psychoanalysis, disagrees with the relevance of sexuality, which, for her, is not necessarily the most important impulse. For Beauvoir, woman has been cast as the Other, against which man defines himself as subject, but not becoming the object of woman's subjecthood at the same time. Woman is created from man's needs and is therefore mysterious, complete, outside the tensions and struggles of existence, which incidentally are traits shared with the Jungian mother archetype.

In *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir explains that the world is divided into subjects and objects with no reciprocity or equality. More than that, such concepts as “choice”, “freedom”, “project” are normally available to man, while “determinism”, “immanence”, “alienation” and “alterity”, are associated constantly with woman. Her hypothesis of “being split” follows from this set of oppositions; as a consequence, both men and women are split and threatened by the fall into immanence, that is, the non-project. However, as Toril Moi puts it, women are characterised by being more split and ambiguous than men as a result of “their status as free and autonomous human beings, and the fact that they are socialised in a world in which men cast them as Other to their One” (qtd. in Ferguson and Wicke, 88).

Beauvoir is directly related to the subject of this thesis precisely because of the centrality of “being split”. In the analysis of the novels, we will repeatedly find ourselves faced with female characters who have fallen into immanence under the form

of fragmentation, that is, “being split”. For them, a search for reunification means undergoing an individuation process, which will end up—sometimes more successfully than others—in the construction of a complete self. This fall into the non-project corresponds to the exclusive dedication to the domestic, the way women have been socialised by men, as is clearly the case of Mary in *The Grass is Singing*, Kate in *The Summer Before the Dark*, Harriet in *The Fifth Child* and Emily in both the biographical and fictional parts of *Alfred and Emily*. The case of Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook* is a special one since, although she defines herself as a *free woman* and she belongs to a multiplicity of spheres, she is constantly struggling against her fall into immanence.

As the sense of project is vital for Beauvoir, one of her main objections to psychoanalysis is that it focuses too much on the individual’s past and too little on his or her future. Consequently, she proposes a new psychology which accounts for the aspiration to be a subject and the tendency of turning the other into an object. Therefore, her main concern with female psychology, rather than being that of showing the girl’s struggle between identification with the mother or the father, is that of explaining the hesitation between conforming to being the other or choosing personal freedom. Identification with a parent is seen as alienation, since Beauvoir’s view on the human mind is much more individualistic. Choice is a central term for her and this is the reason why she rejects the notion of the collective unconscious, although she accepts that shared history results in common perceptions and symbolism.

Another key factor that has defined the discussion of the central subject of my thesis, and which now I will sketch out briefly, is the work of the so-called “second-wave” feminism”. The first step towards our present notion of motherhood was taken by M. Klein, who, in the early days of psychoanalysis, incorporated the relation with the mother into her discourse, therefore becoming an influential figure for the “Object

Relations” School. She noted that Western culture has classified women into “good mothers” (all goodness, patience and generosity) and “bad mothers” (able to abandon their children). According to this, the central image of the mother’s breast constitutes “the good primary object” and its accessibility to the child will determine the type of mother that the child has access to (186-188). The “Object Relations” School, with D.W. Winnicott as its main exponent, emphasises the mother-child relationship in the pre-Oedipal period, which has been fundamental in explaining the mother-daughter relationship. It studies the relational “self” with an object, that is, everything—objects in the real world or even mental representations—that can be perceived as separate, with an identity of their own. The role of the mother is fundamental to the identity of the children.

Nancy Chodorow’s *The Reproduction of Mothering* offers a sociological analysis of motherhood through the mother-daughter relation, which reuses some of M. Klein’s main concepts. The mother has a larger role here than in the preceding system, which only took the father and male development into account. Chodorow takes some ideas from the “Object Relations” School, but introduces a new point: the relation of children with their mothers affects them in a different way depending on the baby’s sex. The reproduction of mothering only occurs “through social structurally induced psychological processes” (7), and the desire of daughters to act as mothers has nothing to do with their physical nature. We must take into account, in any case, that *The Reproduction of Mothering* has one clear aim: that of changing the society by modifying the family by means of “shared parenthood”, which would benefit both children and mothers.

A further contribution to contemporary motherhood is Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born* (1976), which was written directly from data obtained from research on

the personal experience of women; this became a central work for second wave feminism. It makes a firm distinction between the experience and the institution of motherhood. Rich's contribution to feminism lies in her discussion against the homogeneity of the mother category. The dichotomy between motherhood as experience and institution will be taken up again by later generations of feminists, and can be illustrated by the different instances of mother characters present throughout Doris Lessing's work.

In the nineteen seventies, psychoanalysis and feminism found some points of convergence, especially in the work of Juliet Mitchell, who argued for the subconscious as the space where patriarchal society represses women. The feminist criticism of Freud's concept of neurosis highlighted the fact that the women who were analysed in his works simply responded to external oppression. Nevertheless, in Mitchell's view, reducing behaviour to external factors means denying the existence of the unconscious:

Feminist criticisms of Freud claim that he was denying what really happens, and that the women he analysed were simply responding to really oppressive conditions. But there is no such thing as a simple response to reality. External reality has to be 'acquired'. To deny that there is anything other than external reality gets us back to the same position: it is a denial of the unconscious. Such a denial affects the concept of the child. Without the notion of an unconscious mind, there are only three possibilities for a presentation of infancy. The child can be a miniature and perfectly rational adult, correctly appraising social reality. Or it can become the absent centre of a world of other people: it is seen only as others relate to it. Or, finally, the child can simply vanish from the story. (Mitchell 12)

As we will see throughout the present thesis, these various possibilities for the development of the child are fictionalised throughout Lessing's work in different ways. We will also see how these theories can illustrate several aspects of her fiction, without ever becoming its ideological basis.

### 1.4.3. Lacanian psychoanalysis and the post-Lacanian.

Lacan's philosophy in the matter of the construction of one's own identity is vital to my study. His central contributions lie in the concepts of the imaginary, the real and the symbolic. The starting point for this tripartite terminology stems from his "mirror stage", initially introduced in the first volume of his *Écrits* (1966).

According to Lacan, the little child is not closed upon itself as one who has to open to the world and emerge from narcissism, but the opposite: primary narcissism defines a being subjected to events. When the child recognises itself in the mirror, it sees itself as complete for the first time. This experience is going to appear at certain points of my study, since I will be focusing on the characters' new self-image after having overcome inner fragmentation, which echoes the child's original self-awareness. When looking at the mirror, the baby sees its similarity to the other bodies and adopts its place among others. Therefore, the relation to others is the source of the feeling of unity we have just seen. Lacan used the term "imaginary" for this identification, coming from the Latin "*imago*". The belief in bodily unity, wholeness and autonomy is defined by Lacan as the phallus, that is, something that no one can have but everyone wants, signifying the opposite of completion.

The symbolic order is deeply related to the imaginary. It designates the place that a child occupies in a symbolic universe even before birth, and it was formulated as superimposing itself upon the imaginary. The child is born into a psychological triangle of love and rivalry (the family) where desire and prohibition are regulated. In this universe, the mother is an image of the child's self-love, the object of the child's narcissistic attachment; whereas the father is the symbol of the primordial Law, which stands for incest prohibition and the authority that represses desire. Entering the



symbolic means acknowledging the *name of the father*<sup>11</sup> and acquiring language, with its arbitrary symbols and norms. The symbolic transforms the imaginary “through the introduction of a difference in the position of a Third: Father, Law, Language, the reality of death, all of which Lacan designates as the Other” (Felman 105). Language is central to Lacan, and in the nineteen-fifties he started to apply the main Saussurian notions to his own psychoanalytical practice; from this interest in linguistics emerges the idea that the unconscious is said to be structured like a language. As such, it belongs to the symbolic order. The unconscious is “that part of discourse that is not at the disposal of a subject in re-establishing the continuity of his conscious discourse” (qtd. in Julien 62).

There is another aspect of Lacan’s work which interests us: the relationship between Lacan and feminism. As Deborah Luepnitz signals, in nineteen seventies America, psychoanalysis seemed to be a threat to women’s liberation for those who started questioning the conventions of patriarchy, since American analysts based on Freud’s theories tended to enforce ideas about “normal” femininity instead of helping patients discover their desires. In this context, Juliet Mitchell’s *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) had an enormous impact on a generation of women, as she showed how the reading of Freud most compatible with feminist politics was that of Lacan (Luepnitz 221). For this critic, it was worth taking Freudian psychoanalysis into account because its main topic of investigation was the desiring subject, which neither biology nor culture could thoroughly explain. It is this relation between Lacan and feminism that we are the most interested in, since motherhood and the mother-child relationship is

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<sup>11</sup> Lacan uses italics when introducing “*le nom du père*” (*Écrits I* 157-8), which he defines as the domain where “we need to recognise the support of the symbolic function which, since the beginning of historic times, identifies his person to the figure of law.” (My translation. “C’est dans le *nom du père* qu’il nous faut reconnaître le support de la fonction symbolique qui, depuis l’orée des temps historiques, identifie sa personne à la figure de la loi.”) However, I will be referring to The Law of the Father in capital letters and without italics according to the Lacanian tradition in English, as explained in note 4 of this thesis.

a major subject for Lessing, and her depiction has connotations that were also considered in the history of psychoanalysis.

I would like to highlight especially one specific article, “The Family Complexes”, a comparatively neglected work which appeared in 1938 as an encyclopaedia article. Lacan considers there the weaning complex and the intrusion complex. The former discusses the fact that having to separate from the breast creates an enduring desire for connection. For Lacan, what dominates human life is the image of the maternal *sein* (in French both “breast” and “womb”). Fundamental to the novels I am analysing as an aspect in the mother-child relationship is breastfeeding:

The weaning complex fixes the feeding relationship in the psyche in the parasitic form that the needs of the human infant being demand. It represents the primordial form of the maternal imago. It consequently forms the basis of the most archaic and stable sentiments uniting the individual to the family. (...) Thus constituted, the imago of the maternal womb dominates the whole of the life of man. However, because of its ambivalence it can be fully saturated in the reversal of the situation that it represents, something that strictly speaking is only realised in the unique experience of mothering. (Lacan, “Family Complexes” 14-15)

The latter concept, the “intrusion complex”, explains the young child’s encounters with siblings and rivals, (and includes the “mirror stage”): “The complex of intrusion represents the experience that the primitive subject goes through, usually when he sees one or several of his fellow human beings share in domestic relationships with him; or to put it another way when he realizes that he has siblings.” (Lacan, “Family Complexes” 23)

In the same way as Anglo-American psychoanalysis put its emphasis on the mother figure, for the French feminists, the mother’s absence is the origin of the subversion of the subject. Luce Irigaray became a precursor of the feminism of difference, reinterpreting the relationship with the mother and criticizing the Law of the Father, which confines mothers to a restrictive feminine model (that of the good mother), and represses the woman inside them. She pays especial attention to

contraception, which allowed women to control reproduction and therefore, to be seen as women, independently from their mother role:

Contraception and abortion raise the question of the meaning of motherhood, and women (notably because of their entry into and their encounters within the circuits of production) are looking for their sexual identity and are beginning to emerge from silence and anonymity. (Irigaray 36)

But, in this context, the major figure is Julia Kristeva, who significantly modified the inheritance of Lacan: Kristeva called the space where the feminine has been repressed “the semiotic order”. This is a pre-Oedipal period in everybody’s growth, but more especially in the development of women, which represents the undifferentiated state of the pre-mirror infant. Her view of the subject and its construction shares similarities with Freud and especially Lacan, as she understands identity as “always in progress” and rejects any fixed identity attributed to women. Motherhood becomes a source of exclusively feminine pleasure (*jouissance*) and power. Kristeva fully analyses the role of motherhood in Western society, especially in her article “Stabat Mater” (1977) and takes it up again in *In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith* (1987), where she explores this subject through the figure of the Virgin Mary. Her main thought is that motherhood is built upon a paradox: first, the representation of femininity is identified with motherhood; and, second, motherhood is the idealised fantasy of primary narcissism.

Following the Lacanian path again, it is in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), where Kristeva develops this key concept in her philosophy, which primarily refers to the separation from the mother in order to access the realm of language, culture, and the social (i.e. the symbolic order). Abjection is a concept that concerns “no man’s land”: the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other, and the subsequent response to a risked collapse in meaning. Abject is “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders,

positions, rules” (Kristeva, *Powers* 4). This concept of the abject will be central to my methodology in dealing with Lessing’s novels, as the five characters under study strive to escape from this abjection to achieve their own identity.

Post-Lacanian theories of motherhood, with such as Françoise Doltó, Silvia Vegetti and Genie Lemoine’s, again take women’s inner experiences as a basis. They argue for a primitive fusion with the mother and the later acquisition of language, which allows the child to represent the mother as part of the outside world. The feeling of loss and desire that the child will experience for life had been already postulated by Lacan. Daughters are supposed to build their own identity through narcissism, that is, through identification with the mother, seeing their own body as a possible container of life. The construction of motherhood is, therefore, defined as relational. The mother experience develops through the matching of the imagined, the real (corporeal reality) and the symbolic child (who has a place as a subject and a name).

In the nineteen nineties, gender studies ran parallel to the development of psychoanalysis and also incorporated sociocultural discourses on female subjectivity. Giberti states that the ways of being a mother have multiplied in the last decades of the twentieth century, even separating sexuality from reproduction (qtd. in Velasco 161). These different types of motherhood do not fit in the symbolic order, since we cannot define motherhood according to the place it occupies under the Law of the Father. Accordingly, Silvia Tubert finds that the identification woman/mother, rather than being essential, responds to a cultural construction. Motherhood is psychic as well as physical; conscious and unconscious; real, imaginary and symbolic (156). In 1991, Norma Ferro wrote her essay *El Instinto Maternal o la Necesidad de un Mito*, in which she argues such an instinct to be a cultural construct rather than being biologically determined. She starts her discussion by denying Freud’s notions of Oedipus complex and penis envy.

Ferro highlights a lexical mistake in the equation: Freud's penis envy results in the desire for a child, which means that the girl gives up masculinity in order to achieve femininity by means of motherhood. As a result, the binary opposition established here is man/mother instead of man/woman.

Regarding the identification between woman and mother, Tubert, in *Figuras de la Madre* (1996) states that the mother category does not fill the whole of the woman category. The concept of mother is more restrictive than that of woman since the latter implies a multiplicity of functions in which the former is included. Defining an individual as a mother means deleting any other of its functions in the social system. However, the woman and the mother concept cannot be completely dissociated from each other either. Moreover, the whole of reproduction does not fit in the concept of motherhood exclusively, since women's fertility can only be activated by the male biological principle. She adds that all the representations of motherhood share a reductive tendency by considering that all female desires are replaced by the desire for a child, which homogenises female identity and stems directly from Freud. In Tubert's view, this assumption should be deconstructed, in order to allow for the subject's individuality. Building an identity by relating motherhood and desire only responds to myth, since female desire is formed by a multiplicity of individual desires. In such a statement, we can see, as a basic influence, Rich's dichotomy between the institution and the experience of motherhood.

Tubert states that binary oppositions which include motherhood should be abandoned since these do not help to the comprehension of the complex notion of motherhood, but what they do instead is perpetuate the unitary representation of motherhood. This trend in the study of motherhood requires undergoing a study of the mother figures, with the impossibility of accounting for motherhood itself, rather than a

study of motherhood and the different representations that it has created. Tubert goes a bit further in this discussion and argues that, once the baby is born, the real child never fits the imaginary child of the absolute mother desire:

...although the desire for a child is often a conscious choice, related to social and family values of each subject, this project always brings unconscious meanings which will have to materialize in the body of the child to be born (...) Nevertheless. The birth of the child, in the best of cases, results in a new organization which brings about a break in the repetition, the articulation of the determinations of his origin in a unique way: the real child never matches the imaginary child of the mother's absolute desire, who is destined to satisfy her completely. (Tubert, *Deseo y representación* 155)<sup>12</sup>

According to Freudian theory, the social order relegates women to passive situations, which are applicable to sexuality as well. The girl will slowly abandon the hope of having a penis or her father's child, as she learns that these are unattainable desires, however, they will remain forever in her unconscious. This situation will force her to devalue her narcissism which will only be recovered by the bearing of a child. Her repressed sexuality will also have motherhood as the final target. The problem here, as Ferro goes on to say, is that the individual's narcissism is restored "as a mother", rather than "as a woman". Norma Ferro insists once and again on the inadequacy of the name "penis envy", for what she feels to be "power envy" instead; and she goes further in her argument, stating that this difference in the access to power has nothing to do with an intrinsic inferiority of women, but is due to the fact that education perpetuates and legalises this system. When the girl turns to her father, she does not search for a penis or a child, she wants the freedom and power that she sees in him:

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<sup>12</sup> My translation. "...aunque el deseo de hijo se presente con frecuencia como una elección consciente, relativa a los ideales sociales y familiares de cada sujeto, este proyecto es siempre portador de significaciones inconscientes que habrán de tomar cuerpo en el niño por nacer (...) Sin embargo, el nacimiento del niño da lugar, en el mejor de los casos, a una nueva organización que produce una ruptura en la repetición, el articular de una manera única las determinaciones de su origen: el niño real nunca coincide con el niño imaginario del deseo absoluto de la madre, destinado a colmarla completamente." (Tubert, *Deseo y representación* 155)

It is not anatomy which determines destiny. Both in politics and in religion, as well as in any education system, some domination is exercised which makes women envy men. The fact is holding power, rather than having a penis. (Ferro 42)<sup>13</sup>

All the values and features traditionally attributed to women have to do with motherly attitudes, such as submission and care. In addition, Ferro underlines the social role of caring for the elderly that many women undertake, thereby linking the mothering years to the years devoted to taking care of their elderly parents. As regards the most recent feminist theory, we will see in this thesis whether some of statements of the nineteen nineties on this aspect (either from feminists or literary theorists) could already be detected in the part of Lessing's bibliography that had been produced before, which would position her as a precursor.

Having outlined my methodological approach, I will now begin the discussion on the novels under the lens of the cultural framework which has just been described. My aims for such a reading are several: first, to elucidate the common traits in Lessing's construction of these five leading characters with reference to motherhood. In order to do so, a pattern of the archetypes implied by the individuation process in each plot will be offered. A second aim, which logically follows, is to examine Lessing's several rewritings of the mother archetype through psychoanalytical theory (mainly Jungian but also Lacanian). Finally, there will be room in my conclusions for some debate on the role of motherhood in postmodernism, by taking Lessing's narratives as representative of contemporary fiction.

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<sup>13</sup> My translation. "No es la anatomía quien marca el destino. Tanto en política como en la religión, como en todo sistema educativo, se ejerce aquella dominación que hace que la mujer pueda envidiar al hombre. No por el hecho de tener pene, sino por el de detentar el poder."

## 2. THE GRASS IS SINGING, 1950.

### 2.1. Introduction.

The character of Mary Turner is the basis of the discussion of Lessing's characters. She is her first female figure and, therefore, all the exploration of female growth and development sprang from this first text. In addition, as Lessing's craft develops, the characters that she created are quite different to this first. It is precisely this contrast between the first and later stages in Lessing's characterization of female identity which makes Mary Turner essential to the discussion, since there is a certain logical progression.

Mary Turner does not match the female characters in the remaining novels in one fundamental aspect: the fact that she has no children. However, her relationship to motherhood as a concept, and the attitude she has towards it, plays a part in the definition of her identity. Similarly, although the rest of characters either save themselves by overcoming an identity crisis, or creatively achieve individuation which is destroyed later on (as in the case of Harriet), Mary fails to do so from the start. This character is far less complicated than others but she still shows a capacity for analysing life and an obsessive concern about female sexuality and freedom, as Paul Schlueter argues (*The Novels of Doris Lessing* 21). Sprague states that *The Grass is Singing* represents, together with *Retreat to Innocence* (1956), approaches that Lessing was to redirect, which implies a change in the construction of identity between these two novels and the bulk of Lessing's production.

Nevertheless, a fact that seems to differentiate Mary even more strongly from the rest of Lessing's characters is the direction that her inner development takes, as it seems more the destruction than the construction of an identity. However, destructive



forces in identity building are not such an isolated issue. They appear to a lesser degree in some of the other novels: in *The Fifth Child*, these forces suppose the destruction of a self that had formerly been built on the wrong terms; in *The Summer Before the Dark*, the mother figure has to consciously destroy all the features that marriage and family life had imposed on her identity in order to arrive at the core of her real self; and in *The Golden Notebook*, the wrong forms of narration on which individuation is based make identity collapse, with a subsequent need for alternative methods of self-definition. The inclusion of Mary Turner in this thesis also responds to the aim of explaining the processes of female identity building in Doris Lessing's entire literary production. It is important to see how the character perfectly matches that of Emily in the biographical part of *Alfred and Emily*, which will be thoroughly analysed in the very last chapter of this thesis.

Race and the master-slave relationship are the main topics in *The Grass is Singing*: every event that takes place in the plot is related to the cohabitation of blacks and whites in South Africa, and therefore, everything has its implications in terms of the colour bar. However, there is a lot of psychological insight in relation to the implications that it has in Mary Turner's life and emotions. In this first novel there is an incipient treatment of female psychology, which, together with feminism and politics (Marxism) is said to be an important contribution of Lessing's work. As Rubenstein puts it, the common denominator in Lessing's work is the mind discovering, interpreting and even shaping its own reality (*Novelistic Vision* 7). This is what we see in Mary: a mind that not only interprets reality but also constructs it. Everything in this character's life is somehow created unconsciously by her own psychology.

The main aims of this chapter are, first, to show the failure of the identity-building process as a result of having based it upon dreams and imagination; and

second, to illustrate the importance of archetypes. The lack of a creative dimension of the main character will also be dealt with. In addition, another secondary character—Moses—will also be examined so as to establish his contribution to Mary’s final destruction and how he embodies Mary’s psychological counterpart. Moreover, in order to analyse the psychological processes that the leading figure undergoes, we must, first, clarify some of the terminology that will be used and the conceptual relation these terms have with the plot. The first part of this chapter will focus on the theoretical background of psychoanalysis and feminism in the form of an introduction to the second part, namely, a revision of the previous psychoanalytic interpretations of *The Grass is Singing*. I will finally offer my own interpretation from three different angles (based on Jungian, Lacanian and Kristevan philosophy).

## **2.2. Theoretical basis for a psychological reading.**

To start with, Kristeva’s notion of “the abject” will appear throughout the discussion on *The Grass is Singing*. As we saw in the introduction, the abject is opposed to rules and borders, to the point that it endangers order and even identity. The abject is neither object nor subject, as it is previous to entrance into the symbolic order. The first time we see Mary, she is presented as a corpse. The notion of “abjection” will have a strong significance in the construction of Mary’s character as a whole, since it is precisely the corpse that Kristeva considers the original example of the abject: “The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject.” (*Powers* 4). Having to do primarily with the crossing of conceptual boundaries, Mary’s death can be considered to be doubly abject, since it is Moses, the black houseboy, another abject figure, who kills her, violating all the established rules. Moreover, as we will see, it is not only in Mary’s death that we will

find abjection. This concept, as it emphasizes the unreliability of identity, will accompany Mary in the process of the search for an identity that does not achieve a subject status. It is permanently approaching breakdown, and its constantly blurring boundaries can only be abject.

Following feminist theory and the subject-object bond, we find in the novel the notion of being split developed by Beauvoir throughout *The Second Sex*. Immanence and the “non-project” will be central issues in the discussion. Apart from the fundamental notions that point to the failure of building up an identity, we will deal with Jungian philosophy in order to explain the process of individuation, and we will use the archetypes that come to play in this development (self, persona, shadow, animus and anima).

Middle age is said to be the time when the mechanisms of repression are most likely to break forth for the sake of autonomy, since the unconscious for Lessing, coming from Lawrentian and Jungian influence, allows for creative development, contrary to the unconscious in the Freudian tradition. This is related to the concept of the *Reifungsroman*, and we should, therefore, analyse whether the five novels studied fall into this category. In addition, another current of the psychoanalysis that will also be present in our discussion will be its structuralist, Lacanian, side. Such concepts as binary oppositions and language significantly underlie the plot. Moreover, the three dimensions of identity—the real, symbolic and imaginary—determine Mary’s socialization in the world, and also the (frustrated) development of her maternal potential.

Apart from psychological terminology, we will see the literary patterns of linearity and circularity, which become vital to understanding the construction of a character like Mary. According to Rubenstein, the linear mode is associated with

rational thinking, analysis and logic while circularity goes along with myth and non-rational levels of mental activity such as symbol, dream, hallucination, madness and the like, which we are mostly interested in (*Novelistic Vision* 8). The tension created by the contrast between these modes of cognition is remarkable in this author; moreover, the combination of the conscious and unconscious determines the Jungian process of individuation. Material from conscious life cohabits with oneiric experience in all of Lessing's characters, which positions them as concerns an identity-building process. Circularity and its combination with linearity in this novel, with their respective meanings as symbolic and analytic, add to the complexity of the process in a character like Mary.

### **2.3. Review of the previous psychoanalytical readings.**

Several critics have interpreted *The Grass is Singing* through a psychoanalytic lens. All this criticism will be thoroughly investigated as I evaluate the psychological forces at work in the plot. Nevertheless, there are some aspects in this critique which I would like to question, as I do not fully share them. To begin with, in considering *The Grass is Singing* and *Retreat to Innocence* as different from the rest of Lessing's production, Sprague generally sees these two works as minor. As I see it, the amount of criticism and discussion that *The Grass is Singing* has generated in the more than six decades since its publication does not support this view. We must also bear in mind its popularity (it underwent seven editions in the five months after its publication) and the fact that it is included in many university syllabuses worldwide. We may argue that some of the topics that Lessing masters later on in her career appear here as incipient

and will be further developed in subsequent novels, but it is far from being an isolated work in its themes and formal treatment.

By arguing that Lessing's earliest novels lend themselves to a Marxist-Realist analysis, while psychological, especially Jungian criticism should better be left for her later production, both Cederstrom and Andreu exclude *The Grass is Singing* from Lessing's psychological fiction. Nevertheless, I will argue for the presence of the first seeds of a slight Jungian influence in this novel, which gives coherence to the rest of the author's work.

One of the aspects that differentiates Mary from the rest of characters is that she is never reintegrated after her breakdown and thus, she fails and keeps failing on each attempt at approaching her personality. This places her in a stage which is previous in the development of identity, unlike Lessing's other characters; it could be seen as a proto-identity. Cederstrom states that this is a novel with a strong social orientation in which the community is stronger than the character. What I will try to elucidate, conversely, is the forces that are at work within the protagonist's inner development. Cederstrom here suggests that in the novel, the white Africans project their own negative qualities onto the black (*Psyche* 10) and she equates *The Grass is Singing* to the rest of Lessing's African stories in which one class appears as the shadow of the other. Nevertheless, what occupies us here is the process of building of an identity by one specific character who is struggling to have an individual mental insight to achieve individuation.

Contrary to Cederstrom, Rubenstein argues that it is Moses who functions as Mary's shadow, as he embodies "the intimacy, submission and sexuality excluded from her conscious awareness" (*Novelistic Vision* 27). I personally do not agree with this persona-shadow system that Rubenstein establishes, for a couple of reasons. First, the

shadow corresponds, as we have seen, to someone of the same sex; although Rubenstein takes the precaution of considering it as “*generally* same-sex mirror” (my italics 23), which would leave room for Moses as Mary’s shadow. Nevertheless, as I see the psychological interaction between the characters in the novel, I prefer to propose a different system of archetypes in which Moses has more to do with the animus as he somehow represents Mary’s masculine counterpart. In order to see the self-shadow-animus scheme that I propose, first we need to go back to Cederstrom’s reasoning. This critic argues that, as the marriage goes from bad to worse, Dick gradually becomes Mary’s animus, that is, the link to her creative and destructive centres, projected onto an individual of the opposite sex. In this discussion, Dick would embody Mary’s negative masculine side and she has substituted her own negative and masculine side for the masculinity she has denied in her husband. Mary shows dominance and speaks to her husband in a loud masculine voice and projects her own negative masculinity onto her husband. Once they base their relationship on these negative dynamics, there can be no possible identity-building (*Psyche* 23).

My perspective on these matters is quite different: although Moses makes evident Mary’s lack of conscious sexuality, I prefer to argue that he stands for the masculinity that Dick cannot offer her. Moreover, the animus does not have to be exclusively negative, as would be the case in Cederstrom’s argument. Let me go one step further and argue for the fact that she encounters in the black servant what is denied to her in her relation to her husband. Finding this masculinity in him relieves her, while regretting that she needs “a man stronger than herself” (127) and makes up for the subsequent impossibility of creating one out of Dick. This particular matter will remain in Mary’s unconscious, as well as her repressed sexuality, which is embodied by Moses as he materializes the masculinity that she is in search of.

A second objection to Rubenstein's argument is that there is a much clearer instance of the projection of one's shadow, which, at the same time, is central to my discussion: Mary finds her shadow in her mother, as the mother projects all her frustration and resentment onto her. In addition, her mother appears directly or indirectly, in memories and dreams, and symbolizes everything that Mary does not want to become, or even acknowledge about herself, which are typical traits of the shadow. In Mary's process of individuation, this stage as her mother's shadow carries a double weight, since she attempts to reproduce the persona-shadow relationship in her temporary and inconsistent desire for a daughter who would be her confidante and companion, as she used to be for her own mother. By doing so, she would perpetuate the projection of dissatisfaction and bitterness onto a daughter that would interiorise it as a secondary personality as well.

A further point of divergence between my interpretation and that of the previous criticism has to do with the meaning of the final chapter and, therefore, the conclusions on Mary's failed process of identity-building with regard to her personal destruction and death. Rubenstein insists on the feeling of euphoria that accompanies Mary's final acceptance of her fate. In playing "the game" that also appears in *The Golden Notebook*, that is, the mental recreation of domestic spaces from the inside to the outside, Rubenstein argues that it lacks the effect that Anna Wulf will try to achieve in the imagination of spaces. For this critic, the episode is an intense dramatization of Mary's breakdown. Her mood does not only respond to her overcoming her vital claustrophobia by mentally going from inside to the outside, it also anticipates the release that death will provide (*Novelistic Vision* 27-28). I do not totally agree with the opinion that this mental representation of spaces is not therapeutic for Mary. It is certain that everything is lost, there is no turning back to her madness, and she is about to die, but the mental

process that she undertakes helps to calm her, accept her situation and start a new day in which she will finally decide to go to the bush and accept death: “What had she done? Nothing of her own volition. Step by step, she had come to this, a woman without will, sitting on an old ruined sofa that smelled of dirt, waiting for the night to come that would finish her” (195).

Finally, my interpretation of the novel differs from the mainstream explanations of the key question in the plot, that is the motive for the crime, which Lorna Sage synthesises in the most concise way: “she rejects Moses, and he kills her” (26), and she continues, as a lot of other critics argue, by saying that we do not know with any certainty whether Mary has consummated her “dark attraction”. As I will explain in more detail at the end of this chapter, Mary’s murder has much more to do with a matter of the servant imposing himself over the boss, a reversal of power and a shameless demonstration of it.

## **2.4. Working of the mind.**

### **2.4.1. A circularity of memories and imagination.**

In the first chapter, we see the corpse, the confessed murderer and the reactions by the people in ‘the district’, which suggest that this fatal ending to Mary’s life was predictable. What we find in this first chapter is of vital importance, since we will be investigating the clues to this tragic ending throughout the reading process. Both Mary and Dick are abject figures in this opening chapter. They are seen through the lens of the other white settlers who feel pity for Dick, the “poor devil” (21) and indignation for Mary, who, somehow had put herself in an awkward position since she had transgressed



social rules. This first moment in the novel, that is also the last in the plot, shows the final outcome of a male character that is always defined through Mary's subjectivity in the context of a failed marriage.

Mary has been murdered, but there must be something that has driven her to her present state. It is then that we have to start a quest, beginning from her earliest childhood years and going through her development as an adult woman. The structure is a circular one that will lead us to the moment of Mary's murder but, this time, with the hints acquired by the understanding of her development in life. Symbolically speaking, this circle encloses Mary's life in the same way that she is confined into her own disintegrated mind. Only in this way can we understand the process of individuation. A similar circular arrangement of events is to be found in the rest of the novels that integrate this thesis: Kate escapes but returns to her starting point; Harriet ends up with the same big empty house that she had at the beginning of her marriage; and in the structure of *The Golden Notebook*, the end becomes the beginning. Lessing's career can be argued to be a circle, since we find the biographical material she used for *The Grass is Singing*, her first work, in *Alfred and Emily*, the last. Once again, as in her fiction, the end becomes the beginning.

The recurrent memories of Mary's childhood show that in *The Grass is Singing*, the mother-daughter relationship is decisive, as it is to a greater or lesser extent in Lessing's novels. The image of her mother appears recurrently, especially in moments of crisis and breakdown. The memories of the relationship between her mother and father, with its ambivalent emotional interpretations, also determine the attitude that she develops towards marriage and family in adulthood. At the beginning of the novel, we find the roots to Mary's later breakdown and failure at achieving her own individuation. The first step towards this failure is shown by the denial of her own womanhood, which

is exemplified by her horror at any type of intimacy: “she felt disinclined, almost repelled, by the thought of intimacies and scenes and contacts” (37), “there had been little privacy in her home and there were things she did not care to remember; she had taken good care to forget them years ago” (39). She feels good going out with men with whom she plays sports and who treat her like a comrade. She is sentimental at weddings but has a profound distaste for sex (39) and is defined as “a woman of thirty without love troubles, headaches, backaches, sleeplessness or neurosis” (38), which were generally assumed to govern her life as a woman.

At thirty, Mary marries desperately the first man that proposes to her. Her decision is a hurried one responding to her friends’ gossip and indiscreet remarks that “she isn’t like that” (40). She marries to escape her anxious state without taking into account that, in fact, “she isn’t like that”. In order to do so, she needs to idealise her future life as a married woman and ignore the difficulties of marriage and her own reality. Horrified at the possibility of any intimate relationship, she still looks for a husband in the same way as she will beg him for a child some years later: without considering that this is not what she desires but an idealised way out, based on the need to escape her own personality. Conversely, Dick’s motivation for a marriage is not more realistic. He literally dreams of a romantic relationship, a family that he cannot afford and the pleasure in spoiling a wife. The whole concept of marriage is called “a dream” in Dick’s case. Moreover, the character’s motivations will prove wrong in the long run, and will find their parallel in Harriet’s and David’s marriage and family plans in *The Fifth Child* (“the dream”), as we will see in chapter five of this thesis. There is no affection between Mary and Dick, and the negative connection established is one reproduced over and over again in Lessing’s fiction. Mary can only experience some tenderness towards her husband when she is clearly placed in a superior position, and

her new life as a housewife turns out to be an empty existence. Emptiness fills her life as she starts the way to emotional breakdown. Her weak psychic state will be affected by several external elements which will accelerate her destruction: the heat, the difficult relationship with the other white settlers, and Dick's failure as a farmer, are a few examples.

A great part of the lack of spiritual values that leads to the failure of their marriage responds to Mary's emotional detachment<sup>14</sup>. This is to be found in most of the characters we are dealing with; however, there is a basic difference between Mary Turner and the rest in this respect: we are told about Mary's coldness and the fact that "Mary did not have to learn this, because it was natural to her" (55). Always defined as odd, an attitude of detachment has always been present in Mary with respect to marriage, sexuality, motherhood and the notions that constitute an archetypal definition of womanhood. Contrary to this, regarding the other characters I am dealing with, this emotional detachment works as a device to avoid the agents that endanger their individuation process, and therefore, it constitutes the generator of a quest for one's own inner identity.

Having no other example than her parents', Mary's idea of a marriage is that of a contract which she has no need of, due to the fact that she is an independent, working woman. She only sees the need of getting married when she feels the social pressure on her but, again, she feels the need to preserve herself emotionally, as the only image she has of marriage is that of her father getting home late, unable to hide his drunkenness: "when she thought of marriage she remembered her father coming home red-eyed and fuddled" (39). Significantly enough, the rejection of the typical female roles has very

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<sup>14</sup> The notion of "detachment" frequently appears in the novels; therefore, this term is commonly used in Lessing's scholarship and was defined by Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis as "the freeing of the individual from distracting obstacles or claims of the lower self so as to allow he person to realize his or her spiritual potential" (51).

much to do with her view of her parents' marriage, which is mainly depicted through dreams and memories. She drops the possibility of becoming her own mother by "leading the existence of a single woman in South Africa" (35).

The negative memories of her childhood and fear about married life come especially through the figure of her father, who made her mother unhappy. This is the reason why, once her mother is dead, she leaves her father and feels that she is avenging her mother. Mary is obviously on her mother's side but she never feels identified with her; on the contrary, she struggles to be different. Jung's explanation of the defence against the mother perfectly matches Mary's attitude: the daughter feels admiration towards the mother although never in the form of identification with her. In this negative maternal complex, the daughter knows what she does *not* want, but has no firm idea about her destiny. Marriage is only a way of getting rid of the mother, although this is not Mary's case, since she already lived independently. Later on, unexpected difficulties will appear: problems with sexuality, unwanted children or a negative attitude towards maternal duties and the demands of marriage. It runs counter to Chodorow's idea that women produce daughters with mothering capacities and desires to mother, because what Mary is doing is nothing other than defending herself against her mother. That is the reason why, according to Jung, she will become unkind to her husband. There are some positive aspects to this complex, however, and these can be only glimpsed in Mary: such a daughter has some masculine aspirations that make her understand the individuality of her husband. This can be seen in her implication in Dick's life and preoccupations when she has to manage the farm. She could have been the friend and adviser of her husband, especially in the second half of her life, as Jung explains.

#### 2.4.2. Jungian archetypes and the mother-image in Mary's individuation process.

The influence of the mother figure leads us straight to the psychoanalytic framework and, more specifically, to Jung's individuation and archetypes, starting with the mother. As explained above, according to Jung, when the resistance against the mother takes place, there are always different types of problems in the daughter's marriage. "The mother as representative of the family (or clan) causes either violent resistance or complete indifference to anything that comes under the head of family, community, society, conventions and the like" (*Archetypes* 91). However, as Jung argues, the masculine aspirations of this type of women make them able to advise their husbands in a competent way. Such a phenomenon contributes to Mary's taking away Dick's masculinity and her competence when she is in command of the farm when her husband is ill.

Along with her denial of her own womanhood, that we have already seen, the first hints of further rejection of archetypes appear soon after Mary and Dick get married. Living in a sexless marriage, Mary's lack of womanhood finds its counterpart in the denial of her husband's manhood. In their wedding bed, Mary holds Dick's hand protectively "as she might have held a child's whom she had wounded" (56). The fact that she infantilises and feels guilty for her newly-wed husband suggests that she already knows that she is not going to give him the marriage he yearned for. As follows from this, Mary's usurpation of Dick's masculinity does not only respond to Mary's distaste for sex, which she maintains throughout her married years, but also to his failure as a farmer and breadwinner. This dynamic will lead to a mismatch between the couple at the archetypal level which will affect Mary's process of individuation.

Mary's marriage will determine her entire process of individuation by both affecting her own inner development and her relationship to the rest of characters at an archetypal level. At no moment does she consider her own views on marriage, nor the type of man that is most suitable for her, because she acts according to her imagination. Embracing marriage as an institution without considering her personal case, that is, experience, to use Rich's terminology, does not allow Mary to go any deeper in her identity quest. She can only achieve a persona, as we have said, that of the white settler's wife, since it is subject to the existence of a certain social class and is determined by marriage. In order to achieve selfhood, Mary needs to follow a process of personal growth that will lead her to wholeness. The self, the target of the entire process, includes all the other aspects of its cosmic totality and represents a state of communion between the conscious and the unconscious; therefore, if the process of individuality fails, the self is never fulfilled. Individuation and the self is what all Lessing's protagonists seem, at least, to envisage.

One of the few moments when Mary makes a real attempt to change her life is when she escapes the farm to go back to her past life, and, as we will see, Kate's process in *The Summer Before the Dark* parallels this since she discovers that finding her own self means restoring her primary identity as a young independent unmarried woman. Nevertheless, Mary's plan fails as she cannot find accommodation in the town or get accepted in her old office, and Dick finally goes to find her. As a result, this episode seems to make things easier between them at first but eventually Mary has to deal with the same barren existence that she had tried to give up. The major problem that Mary has in leaving the farm is that she bases her escape on dreams rather than reality. Apart from bringing Mary memories of her childhood and confronting her with sex and marriage, she always relies on dreams when she has to take decisions and they

accompany her at crucial moments of her life. When she decides to marry Dick, she is also conscious of the fact that it is an imagined idea of her married state that makes her take the step, as “She clung at the thought of him, in spite of the fact that she said to herself she was useless, a failure” (49), which means that she refuses to see reality. Nevertheless, her subconscious warns her of the fact that it is not going to be what she predicts, and she recurrently has dreams in which she cannot go forward: “long grey dreams in which she struggled through sand or climbed staircases which collapsed as she reached the top, letting her slide back to the bottom again” (49). Fantasy triggers her reactions and, as a result, she has to finally confront reality that always reveals itself abruptly and violently. As a result, the prevalence of the subconscious layer of her psyche, which erases her conscious mind, makes the process of individuation a failure.

In facing reality after the escape episode, Mary “saw the dreams of the last weeks fade and vanish” (100) and then she realizes that she has no money with her and she will not even be able to pay the hotel bill. Her going away from the farm is the result of an impulse based on her fantasies rather than a planned action. After this event there will be no more action nor willingness on her part to come to terms with her own life as she gets back with Dick showing “no opposition or hatred, only resignation” (101). But something else has changed, making her life even worse, as she had “not even day-dreams to sustain her” (102).

The persona-shadow-animus system that I propose seems to respond to a series of inadequacies. To start with, the persona that Mary embodies—as her only function is that of the white settler’s wife—starts teetering with the appearance of Tony Marston. In turn, he embodies the white settler who arrives anew and still holds onto the values that Mary has gradually lost, while Moses has been gaining ground in her mental state. As breakdown approaches, the masculinity denied to Dick becomes a negative force that is

projected onto Moses, so the servant starts treating Mary and imposing himself in ways that Dick never did. For Mary, Moses represents the only negative vitality left to her at a time when her personality deteriorates; her energy is consumed and she becomes a passive creature for most of the time.

Nightmares are the expression of the tension that Mary feels since she is unable to reconcile disgust and desire. Therefore, they are often about threatening sex, as she does not want to accept her attraction to Moses. Mary's psychic breakdown does not take place because of Moses but because of the image she has created of him. In Mary's unconscious life, the character of the black servant comes into play and her dreams also include the representation of her origins. As follows from this, the characters of Moses and her father merge. As Sage sees it, the past comes back with Moses's appearance in Mary's subconscious life, as he becomes "the bizarre custodian of her fantasies of hatred and yearning towards her despised father" (26). The fact that Moses and her father both represent the masculine principle is made explicit in a dream in which Moses is comforting her for Dick's death while she sees with horror how he approaches her in an obscene manner, "and it was not only he, but her father who was threatening her. They advanced together, one person..." (165). Mary finds all the attitudes that she associates with masculinity in this figure: protectiveness, on Moses's part, and menacing desire, on her father's.

This mixed character, therefore, embodies the masculinity that she has taken from Dick but that she cannot control, as Cederstrom notes (*Psyche* 27). According to this critic, in the hide-and-seek dream of her father, she is confronted with the masculinity she lacks by making her face the front of her father's trousers. It is seen as the confirmation that Dick is not valid as her animus, or masculine counterpart. As I see it, being drawn close to her father's sex and, taking into account that the father and the



black servant embody the same principle of masculinity, this dream shows that she must look for her masculine side in this hybrid figure. Since Moses and her father are the same figure in dreams, such an image confirms that Moses stands for the animus that is denied to her in marriage. Secondly, as I have said, it is Moses, rather than Mary's husband, who stands for her animus, as Mary has stolen Dick's masculinity. What emerges from this is the fact that Moses is not only seen as an abject figure but he also epitomises surrogacy, as he embodies the role that is denied to Dick in the first instance. Moreover, we should notice the contrast between Dick's abjection and lack of manhood in his reaction to Mary's death and Moses's acceptance of his own acts at the very end.

Symbols and images perform an important role in *The Grass is Singing*. There is a snake associated with Moses: once Mary watches him wash and after remembers his angry look waiting for her to go, she feels "as if she had put her hand on a snake" (144). Symbolically speaking, such an animal can be interpreted as an image for energy and pure strength, which are features that Mary admires in the servant and misses in her husband. In addition, we must not forget the Christian meaning of temptation present in the serpent and one of its main characteristics; that is, its crawling advance which will slowly and discretely enter Mary's life, gaining ground and finally dominating her mind and will (Cirlot 407). In the same direction, and with a powerful significance in this novel, we have the meaning of a snake as a symbol in Jungian theory, which is that of a mismatch or conflict between the conscious mind and instinct, the token of its threatening aspect.

In an interview granted to Michael Thorpe in 1980, when asked whether she saw the figure of Moses as an individual or as the essence of the African as the white sees him and fears him, Lessing herself recognised that she intentionally made him anonymous: "With the anonymity I tried to sum up how the white people would see

someone like this because they wouldn't see him very much as an individual at all" (Thorpe 100). This lack of depth and the fact that Moses has to be understood as a symbolic character adds to his role as Mary's psychological masculine counterpart and the representation of what she repudiates, namely, an inner aspect of herself. In the ambivalence between attraction and rejection, Mary never acknowledges Moses as her masculine analogue, which would hinder individuation.

Moses' role as the animus is central to a psychoanalytic understanding of the murder. The black slave constitutes, in Mary's subconscious, her link to her powers of creation and destruction. Moses destroys Mary—both psychically and physically—since her obsession reduces her to a person without will. He offers her a masculine side which she needs to acknowledge in order to complete her own sense of selfhood. Since this aim is not fulfilled, Mary's only salvation from breakdown will be death, which she willingly accepts. She will only have an identity once she is dead, and it is Moses who leads her to her own salvation, thus revealing his creative condition as her animus. We will go back to the meaning of death and the murder in the conclusion to this chapter.

If we take Freudian psychoanalysis as a basis to study the effects of Mary's childlessness on her failed individuation, we see that a wish for freedom and independence, and, more specifically, the unmentionable attraction that she feels towards Moses, constitute the unattainable desires relegated to the subconscious. These desires, according to Freud's conception, appear in Mary's dream life in a process of sublimation by censoring the perverse components of sexuality. Moreover, in an out-of-date justification on Freud's part, the wish for a baby is said to be a culturally legitimated substitute of the girl's wish for a penis. In any case, family life and motherhood constitute socially acceptable ends that sublimate other more perverse

desires. Having no children, Mary does not have any vital project into which to direct her libido and therefore, her psychic energy can find no objective.

At this point, we should take into account the observation that Sprague makes of the symbolic meaning of the name Mary. Apart from basic connotations of the Holy Mother, Mary, sister of Martha, has always been considered the representative of contemplative life in opposition to the latter, who stands for active life. If we follow Sprague's reasoning, it is not gratuitous that another, more active, character in Lessing's work has been called Martha (34).

Her husband, Dick, is not aware of Mary's attitude to motherhood and it is to an "apparently calm, maternal Mary that he proposed" (50). His desire to have children is postponed over and over again, which relieves Mary, but, contrary to what has been said, she also wants to have children, but it means nothing real to her, she only wants a child because she feels empty and nervous, "she felt she needed one child to save her from herself" (35). The result is that Mary is a doubly split character as she falls into immanence twice, to use Beauvoir's terms. Mary is, like any other woman, confined in the realm of the house, but her lack of a project is double as we have seen that there is no vital aim. Like all women, she is associated with motherhood and domesticity, as Beauvoir denounced, but her situation is even worse as her domestic world is empty and it throws her into a void. In her final moment of clarity, in the very last chapter, we can see with pristine precision that domestic life and marriage have played a negative role in Mary's construction of identity: for the first time in years, Mary wakes up restored from the night's rest and feeling complete and at peace. Dick wakes and tells her to go back to sleep because it is still dawn. Dick's presence, epitomizing her whole life as a married woman, momentarily disturbs her moment of lucidity and is felt as an intrusion: "Always he was there, a torturing reminder of what she had to forget in order to remain

herself" (191), which means that the solution, for Mary, is just getting rid of her persona as the wife and start a quest for the self that, apparently, she once had as an independent woman.

The model of a "married woman" that is closest to her is her mother, who, as I see it, becomes her own shadow despite Mary's resistance. In fact, in the definition of the shadow a certain reluctance to admit the projection of one personality onto the other is assumed. Mary's mother's role is made clear in the text itself: "Mary, with the memory of her own mother recurring more and more frequently, like an older, sardonic double of herself walking beside her, followed the course her upbringing made inevitable." (90) What Mary fights against is this "going bitter" that seems inevitable in marrying someone like Dick. This is the dark side of herself that her mother projects and she consciously refuses.

There is a remarkable dream that exemplifies Jung's idea that this secondary personality appears frequently in the subconscious. It takes place once Mary is already married: she is playing in the garden as a child when suddenly her mother calls her in. When she goes inside, the little girl is afraid at not seeing the mother and goes to the parents' bedroom to see her parents in a playful attitude. She runs away at this sight. It seems as if Mary's mother was calling her into marriage, as she makes her see the intimate part of it, which Mary has always refused. Her running away is not only due to the vision of her parents' privacy, but it also responds to Mary's reluctance to become like her mother, especially with respect to marriage. The description of the father is totally resentful and there is the confirmation that she hated him; however, it is the mother's attitude "struggling in mock protest, playfully expostulating" (162) which terrorizes her, as she has always refused to feel a loving attitude towards Dick. In spite of this, several aspects of her mother come through memories of her childhood that

Mary cannot avoid reproducing: first, a hostile attitude to life, which the mother showed by her dry manners towards her children (and that only gets mellower towards Mary after her siblings' death) which is expressed, in Mary's case, by a lack of social relations and the unconscious rejection of marital affection. And, second, the way her mother treated her father, with cold indifference, or even mockery, is reproduced in the way that Mary treats Dick.

When Mary's life becomes a void, she also tries to reproduce the figure of her mother through the sudden want of a child, which, instead of responding to some kind of maternal instinct, is just the aim to repeat the situation that she lived as a child and which soothed her mother's pains: "It would be company. She thought of herself as a child, and her mother; she began to understand how her mother had clung to her, using her as a safety-valve" (135). In quite an unrealistic way, she fantasizes about bearing a girl. She willingly ignores the work and care that a baby involves, and just wishes for the girl—since it had to be a girl—to grow older and become her confidante, as she herself used to be. This temporary desire for a child is nothing more than one of Mary's multiple—and failed—attempts at matching the conscious and the unconscious, that is her own daydreaming, in order to reach individuation. Finally, Mary does not direct her creative potential into motherhood and does not start any other vital project. In fact, the only time that she shows creativity is when she tries to arrange her home and spends her time decorating it, which is an occupation as ephemeral as her sudden desire for a child.

#### 2.4.3. Lacanian influence on Mary's individuation process.

A system of binary oppositions can be set up with respect to Mary's relationship with Moses, since they embody respectively male and female, black and white, dominant and submissive. At the same time, their relationship brings about the tension

between conscious and unconscious in Mary's psyche. It is when trying to reconcile these two realms that Mary somehow creates a parallel reality that governs her life and brings about the failure of her process of growth and acquisition of an identity. Similarly, at the other end of the spectrum, Kate Brown, explained in chapter four, will only complete individuation successfully once she is able to integrate dreams in conscious life and make sense of them after a long development and training. Furthermore, a figure such as Moses provides the idea of unreliability of language which is common in all the novels discussed. There is a problem in naming Moses, as he remains as the unknown "other" in relation to which Mary defines herself. According to Anievas Gamallo,

Both *The Grass is Singing* and *The Fifth Child* are the stories of a woman's relationship with an unknown and inexplicable other, and her inability of the society around her (and perhaps ultimately of the writer himself) to come to terms with him, to re-present him. (121)

Although my approach is eminently Jungian, at this point of the discussion we need to acknowledge the influence on Lacanian postulates on the novel. As we have seen, Mary's family relationships as a child were quite traumatic and, therefore, her entrance in the symbolic order of language is not an easy one. Poverty, a complicated family with a distressed mother, and an alcoholic father destroyed by the death of two of their children, constitute a dysfunctional context where the access to the symbolic order is quite problematic. As an adult, Mary keeps having recurrent dreams with a partially incestuous content, which means that she does not fully achieve the acquisition of language, or social and family structures. Mary's failure at entering the Law of the Father keeps her out of the social roles that would have perpetuated the family concept, that is, making her reject marriage first, and secretly rejecting motherhood later on, (although she herself sometimes has doubts in this respect). Due to her inability to enter the symbolic order, Mary is not able to shift her erotic love for her father onto her

husband. A further effect of this conflict is her finding an object of desire which blurs with the figure of her father in the deepest layers of her subconscious, and who, in addition, cannot be defined. According to Sprague, Moses does not awaken in Mary the secret desire that the black males are expected to arouse in white females, but he reawakens “the only strong sexual feelings that Mary has ever had, and they are connected with her father, not with her husband, to whom orthodox psychoanalysis says they should have been transferred” (22): if Mary had acquired language and the symbolic order correctly, I would say.

Frampton goes a bit further. She claims that Mary’s leaving the Law of the Father is clear in this narrative, as if she had once been subject to it and had consciously rejected it later on. Accordingly, Mary gradually yields to Moses’s maternal care and, by returning to childhood, she goes back to the semiotic just before her death when she sees the world as an infant would (22-23). As I see it, however, Mary’s difficulties in conforming to the Law of the Father and social norms in general result from an involuntary and unwanted phenomenon. Going back to the pre-Oedipal can only be seen as a desire to go back to a phase before the original problem took place; she was not incomplete as separation from the mother had not yet happened. By recalling this state, Mary recovers the original wholeness and, therefore, avoids having to undertake her eternal quest.

Following Lacan’s reasoning, in the definition of Mary’s identity, the necessary Other whom she confronts is Moses. Apart from being a surrogate animus in substitution of Dick, a symbolic character who lacks depth and only defined in a system of binary oppositions, Moses is abject since he is inexplicable and unknown. Therefore, the fact that he works as Mary’s projection turns her into an even weaker and emptier character.

There is a passage in the novel, however, where Mary can glimpse her own identity, if only for an instant. It consists of the motif of looking into the mirror, which is, therefore, quite illustrative of the Lacanian mirror stage:

He was struck motionless with surprise. Mary was sitting on an upended candle box before the square of mirror nailed on the wall. She was in a garish pink petticoat, and her bony yellow shoulders stuck sharply out of it. Beside her stood Moses, and, as Tony watched, she stood up and held out her arms while the native slipped her dress over them from behind. When she sat down again she shook out her hair from her neck with both hands, with the gesture of a beautiful woman adoring her beauty. Moses was buttoning up her dress; she was looking in the mirror. The attitude of the native was of an indulgent uxoriousness. (185)

For the only time in the novel, Mary seems to be acknowledging her own self, in the same way as the child sees its own reflection as a complete entity. “The gesture of a beautiful woman adoring her beauty” shows such recognition of herself. It is important to highlight the fact that, in the mirror stage, when the child acknowledges its own complete self, it does so as opposed to some Other: that is, siblings (as part of the “intrusion complex”) or parents. In this episode, the reflection does not only show Mary, but Moses too, thus placing him as the Other against whom one defines oneself. As a consequence, after all the difficulties in reaching the symbolic, the Other she finally finds is as unrepresentable and unknown as the entity that Moses epitomizes; therefore, wholeness and the individuation process cannot be achieved.

Finally, Mary’s temporary desire for a baby offers a Lacanian interpretation of her failure at developing her own reproductive potential: for a while, Mary fantasises with the possible future existence of a child, but this imaginary representation will never match the real or corporeal reality nor will it never result in an individual with its place in the world and a proper name. This phenomenon represents a mismatch between the imaginary, the symbolic and the real that post-Lacanian feminists such as Françoise Doltó were about to repostulate as an essential procedure in motherhood a quarter of a century after the publication of *The Grass is Singing*. Nevertheless, the foundations of



this theory had already been developed by Lacan in the mirror stage theory presented in the Congress at Marienbad in 1936.

#### 2.4.4. Kristevan influence on Mary's individuation process.

There is one more aspect that adds to the inadequacy of Moses as a mirror character for Mary in her quest for individuation. The great cultural boundary that separates Mary and Moses is embedded in the narrative element of the native women breastfeeding their babies. Milk and lactation occupy, as symbols, a central position in the way Mary sees the natives<sup>15</sup> but also, and more importantly, to her own potential motherhood. Breastfeeding is a recurrent image in the minds of Lessing's female characters, as it has many meanings and implications in the collective unconscious. In *The Fifth Child*, for instance, the refusal to breastfeed the fifth baby constitutes an important element in the plot.

In a way, breast milk stands for the abject and for the crossing of conceptual boundaries in *The Grass is Singing*. Within the cultural context of the novel, breastfeeding is set as an image related to the natives and reproduction, which Mary overtly rejects. As Sarah Gamble explains, the individual must define itself as independent and reject anything that threatens this unique selfhood. Abjection draws attention to the precariousness of identity as it includes all that is perceived as unclean or polluting, all that reminds the subject that it cannot escape biology (Gamble qtd. in Ridout and Watkins 17). Therefore, Mary might try to assert herself as an independent self, but in a way the lactating breast reminds her of the fact that she cannot escape the bodily functions, and that there is a potential sexuality and fertility inherent in herself

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<sup>15</sup> The choice of the term "natives" to refer to the black population from now on in this thesis responds to Lessing's use of it in the novel.

that she tries to ignore. Moreover, as Frampton argues, breastfeeding is an image of the blurring of boundaries defining individuals. It also stands for the breach of a limit between the interior and exterior of the body, violating not only the frontiers between self and other but also those between inside and outside (21). The same reasoning could be applied to sexual intercourse: sexuality would mean, for her, allowing the abject to pollute her and threaten her individuality. In fact, there is no problem in her starting a relationship with a widower in order to marry, until physical contact appears: “A relationship developed that was clear to both of them, until he proposed to her, was accepted, and began to make love to her. Then, a violent revulsion overcame her and she ran away; they were in his comfortable drawing room, and when he began to kiss her, she ran out of his house, into the night...” (42).

Lactation reinforces Mary’s childlessness. An opposition between the character and what is expected from the name of the mother of the Western world is made evident when her attitude towards the intimacy with Dick is explained in terms that are traditionally attributed to the Virgin: “She was able *maternally* to bestow the gift of herself on this humble stranger, and remain *untouched*” (My italics, 55). Mary Turner is delineated according to the Christian values associated with the Holy Mother, which she will not match. It is interesting to see how the only token of a motherly attitude on her part is always directed to her husband Dick, thus infantilising him and usurping his masculine power. As follows from this, the abjection Mary feels towards the reproduction and lactation that she observes in native women can be extrapolated to sexuality. The same applies to Moses as a member of this cultural and racial group. The fleshiness that she observes in native women is extended to the whole race, and most particularly to Moses who, in addition to being defined as abject is, at the same time, the object of Mary’s “dark attraction”. Then, we have the complete picture since, according

to Frampton, revulsion and attraction are the two sides of Kristeva's notion of abjection (19). Consequently, when Moses first touches Mary, it can be seen as a token of abjection, since he is seen as corporeal and polluting. In coming into contact with Mary's white skin, he is breaking the boundaries of Mary's persona, that is, the role she performs in society as the white settler's wife. As a result, Mary's process of individuation is endangered.

## **2.5. The psychology of spaces.**

There is one central aspect in Mary's imagination which finds its equivalent in the rest of novels that I analyze, that is, the psychology of spaces. Caged into domesticity, it is vital to see how the heroine feels the house, and also how her perception of the house takes place at a cognitive level that lies between conscious reasoning and observation on the one hand, and unconscious rambling on the other. From the moment when Mary gets married, she becomes obsessed with the house. First, because for settler women it is important to exercise their power as a housewife, since the house constitutes a place of belonging in the new country, as Pat Louw explains (176). Moreover, the scene of her being in such a place with Dick reminds her of her childhood when she watched her mother "endlessly contrive and patch and mend", and she gets "possessed with the thought that her father, from his grave, had sent out his will and forced her back into the kind of life he had made her mother lead" (54-55). We see here that her first perceptions of the house take place through past remembrances which make it stand as a symbol of the kind of life that Mary would have rejected but which she consciously chooses—with the secret hope that circumstances will change in the future.

The second reason for her obsession with the house is the fact that it constitutes the only goal for all her psychic energy. She buys materials with her own savings and works hard at the transformation of the house into a home. During the process, she looks for Dick's approval, which, in a way, brings them closer together. She finishes quite soon and has to search some other occupation and then, something else. Mary spends most of her time looking for a life project. All the difficulties that Mary encounters with the servants are due to the struggle that is established, as she wants to exercise her power in the house. The situation is related to the way in which the house defines her identity, and her authority is reinforced as she feels increasingly threatened by the male-dominated world of the farm, as well as by the poor standard of the dwelling (Louw 179).

Psychoanalysts identify the house with the human body and thought (Cirlot 120). Bearing this in mind, we can interpret that the transformation that Mary devotes herself to is not only the conditioning of her new home but also the attempt to renew her mind and enhance her own personality now that she has become a married woman. The process seems to be finished as far as the house is concerned, but external transformation does not match inner growth and the character feels empty when she has, only apparently, completed a process. As time goes by, Mary finds nothing to direct her psychic energy towards. She will spend hours and hours sleeping, which will make her experience dreams and nightmares more strongly than waking life. Again, this will result in a mismatch between the conscious and the subconscious, which will add to a subsequent breakdown. We must take into account that by the end of the novel, the only small part of her mind that is still awake is that concerned with the native (149) who, being the object of her obsession, creates a vicious circle of nightmares.

In Louw's opinion, the settlers have two different attitudes to the African house. Being built with natural elements, the identification between the house and the veld is just logical, but there is always a psychological disposition to either keep the house closed to the external world, or isolate the house from nature. This is exemplified by the attitude that Lessing adopted in her childhood, as it was the position that Lessing's mother held and which is depicted in the novel by the figure of Mary (Louw 166-167). Not going further than the veranda, Mary is keeping herself *in* Africa, while not being *of* Africa, as Louw, again, puts it. As a transition between the internal domestic space and the external world, the veranda constitutes a marginal space—which Mary does not dare to cross—providing a metaphor of the colonial's alienated psyche (Louw 174). For Mary, being there is a way of observing the landscape while keeping out of it and maintaining her own cultural traditions. Little by little, greater concern appears for this inner domestic space, as the seeds of Mary's madness and she only recovers her mind when she has to cross the veranda and take care of the farm.

Being enclosed in the house cannot lead Mary anywhere but to her own tragedy, due to her own psychological condition and the social reality of the settlers. Louw argues that "The proximity of African servants in settler houses, for example, can lead to invisible boundaries being drawn up inside the physical perimeter of the house. These are the boundaries of social norms that were strongly enforced in the settler community" (Louw 170). It is the failure in this enforcement, inside the boundaries of the house, which leads Mary to breakdown and death. As Mary's alienation increases, in her mind, the house seems to become smaller and smaller, since a strong element that partly triggers her lunacy is the constant proximity to Moses. The excellent way in which Lessing narrates the—seemingly—unwilling contact with the black servant brings about a feeling of oppression, incarceration and even a metaphoric overcrowding, as the house

seems to be too small to accommodate them both. This sensation in the protagonist's imagination is reinforced by objective conditions that come as external perception: the unbearable heat makes the environment rarified and psychologically unhealthier, Moses's proximity more overwhelming, and the house smaller. It is, again, the house that is responsible for such conditions, since the material they have used as a roof increases the sensation of heat. Mary blames the house for her unease as if it acted against her, as if it was endowed with some kind of conscious will.

This imagination of spaces is expressed most poignantly on the morning that Mary is going to die. She mentally plays what Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook* will later call "the game": lying in bed before getting up, she recreates in her mind first the room, then the house and finally the bush.

Lazily she created the room in imagination, placing each cupboard and chair; then moved beyond the house, hollowing it out of the night in her mind as if her hand cupped it. At last, from a height, she looked down on the building set among the bush—and was filled with a regretful, peaceable tenderness. (190)

Her mental representation of the room, the house and the bush makes her understand her situation. Moreover, it restores her from the agitation of the recent constant nightmares and clarifies her mind in order to be conscious of the crucial moment that she is living. By doing so, she seems to come to terms with her present situation to finally feel at peace with herself, since she feels some kind of regretful tenderness and only impersonal pity for Dick. It is as if she could finally verbalise her true feelings. Placing herself in the world makes her understand a few things. First, she acknowledges the fact that she is facing reality rather than dream. Second, she can interiorise her own death as the representation of the collapse of the system of archetypes.

We find another symbol, related to the house and the temperature, which plays a special role in Mary's process. Outside the four walls that she hardly ever leaves, there is the natural world that she not only ignores but also loathes until the last day of her

life, as exemplified in the revulsion she felt when she saw the African women breastfeeding. In this natural landscape, the sun constitutes a major element, since she hates it for being the source of the suffocating heat that is leading her to despair. According to Juan-Eduardo Cirlot (419), among the multiple symbolic meanings of the sun, it stands for the reality of things as opposed to the fluctuations and constant changes of the moon. Trying to live in a world of fantasy, Mary consciously avoids seeing the reality outside herself. Apart from this, the sun is the supreme god of light, source of fertility and life (Hall 109), precisely what Mary is increasingly trying to reject. She avoids fertility as she resists becoming an image of her mother, cancels out her own womanhood and fears pregnancy, birth and lactation. She also rejects life as she gradually gives up and allows her own destruction. Very closely related to this is a third meaning of the sun: the male principle that she fears. Such terror blocks Mary's sexuality and, therefore, her fertility. As we have seen, all the nightmares that reveal this masculine principle are terrifying and sexually menacing, so Mary cannot accept Moses as her object of desire: she has not embraced the mechanisms of repression inside the family structure; moreover, sexual intercourse with Moses—who replaces Dick in terms of the masculine principle she is seeking—is not possible since it would mean the conscious acceptance of her father as the object of her erotic love. As a result, Mary's failed entrance into the symbolic blocks her sexuality.

## **2.6. Conclusion.**

At this point, and in order to continue with the interpretation of the novel, we must recapitulate what fails in Mary's progression towards individuation. First, there is no matching between the conscious and the unconscious, therefore, this persona cannot

achieve wholeness. In the theories of Jung, fantasies and dreams have a creative function and reflect the psyche's endeavor to overcome trouble or dilemma and give solutions for the times to come. In a sense, this is what Mary does by sitting alone on the sofa thinking about what to do with her life. Nevertheless, the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious should be one of constant dialogue. The unconscious is not to be repressed or ignored; it is not to be made conscious either. In Mary's case, she makes her dreams, obsessions, imagination and past memories prevail, making them the only reason for the scarce occasions in which she attempts to take action. Moreover, dreams with unpleasant sexual connotations dominate her conscious life in a way that makes her daytime obsessions grow. The reader even wonders how much of the unbearable heat, one of the few physical sensations that Mary experiences, is due to the housing conditions and how much is exaggerated by her neurosis. The ubiquity of Mary's unconscious makes her life sink into chaos.

We could then deduce that she is only a persona, the role that one performs in society. But just before her death we discover that there is a clash. Mary represents the wife of the white settler; however, with the appearance of Tony Marston she discovers that she does not even perform that function as she is supposed to. With the newcomer, Mary's destruction plunges into the void and death is the only way out. Tony Marston is the key element in the denouement, although he has received little attention. Once Marston arrives to take the Turner's place, he acts as the embodiment of social convention. Despite the fact that Charlie Slatter was the person who "from the beginning of the tragedy to its end, personified Society for the Turners", and "without him things would not have happened quite as they did" (13), it is Marston's presence which brings about Mary's unease. And she cannot oppose the mentality that Marston has brought back from Europe because she has lost the capacity to stand against the



group mind, as we have seen before. As the new white arrival, “Tony wanted to be accepted by this new country” (26) and therefore sticks to the white settlers’ ideas. Slatter censors Mary’s performance with the servant as a “horrible parody of coquetry”, “social coyness” and “conventional flirtatiousness” (174-176). However, Slatter tries to prevent it from getting more serious by warning Dick and insisting that he should get rid of the houseboy, that they should leave, and Mary should get treatment. What Marston does is to make Mary confront reality and come to terms with it. When he enquires whether it is customary in the country for the black servants to dress white women, she shows evident signs of breakdown by repeating “they said I was not like that” (187), which is what her old friends said when she was an unmarried woman. Thus, she is questioning her life after marriage.

A counter-process starts in Mary’s mind after Marston’s arrival: “Why did you come here? It was all right before you came”, she moans (187). She was used to her failed identity and a persona that she performed by only living on a farm and sitting on the sofa all day long. But this persona has proved to be unsuitable because she has been living between nightmare and reality and has crossed some boundaries that endanger her own role. She embroils herself in an intense debate on her own identity: “Against what had she sinned? The conflict between the judgment on herself, and her feeling of innocence, on having been propelled by something she did not understand, cracked the wholeness of her vision” (195). Mary’s consciousness of her own failure makes her fade away, and death is her only possibility. Apart from showing Mary her own failure at performing a role that is expected from her, Tony’s arrival also endangers Moses’s status as Mary’s animus: with his criticism of Mary and Moses’ habits, Tony implies that these would be appropriate only between husband and wife, and, therefore, makes it clear that Mary’s masculine counterpart should be Dick rather than the servant. This

reasoning, then, adds to the fact that Mary's search for her own self is built upon the wrong base.

In Mary's accusation that everything is changing for the worse since Tony's arrival, there is the implication that he works as a catalyst for the final tragedy. As Moses sees that Mary is coming to terms with their inappropriate interaction, he feels that he is losing power over the boss. This is the main reason for the murder. Moses could have allowed Mary to go away, as he has lost her anyway; however, what Moses seeks is to reaffirm his own power: he could have killed Tony, the new boss, when he watched him sleeping in the tent. However, he prefers to kill Mary who is already gone in some way instead, and keep Tony alive in order to show off his hegemony, which he has gained by entering Mary's psyche little by little. The way of asserting his power is by not escaping from the authorities. In order for his crime to have the desired effect, the whites have to know straight away that he has been the murderer: "And this was his final moment of triumph, a moment so perfect and complete that it took the urgency from thoughts of escape, leaving him indifferent" (206).

Decision-taking and placing oneself in the subject position is very much related to creativity in the female characters. We will discuss this in the chapters on *The Golden Notebook* and *The Fifth Child* as the force that triggers the process of individuation. Moreover, in both novels, this creativity is tightly linked to motherhood. Nevertheless, rather than conducting her creativity to motherhood, Mary uses it in a destructive direction when she unconsciously creates an image of Moses. It is precisely this representation—rather than Moses himself—that determines their obscure and intriguing relationship. This image, the creation of Mary's imagination, is the agent that leads her to breakdown and, finally, death.

As explained before, despite Mary's corpse symbolising the abject, that final morning of Mary's rendezvous with death is the antithesis of abjection. In some sense, Mary is born into her death. This is shown by her feeling of euphoria and the identification with nature and the bush, which she had always resisted. The merging with the natural world and the subsequent neutralisation of isolation from her surroundings anticipate release. She will soon be freed from her suffering, which is death in life, and she briefly experiences this liberation as the dissolution of her bodily boundaries. Crossing these boundaries no longer constitutes a danger of contamination or abjection because her death and fusion with nature will precisely save herself from her ambiguous state between life and death.

In order to come to final conclusions on Mary's outcome and the meaning of the ending of the novel, we should draw a parallel with the analysis of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. This analysis will contribute to the interpretation of both, the entire novel (as these lines appear as a preface to *The Grass is Singing*), and also the verse which Lessing adopted as the title of her novel:

In this decayed hole among the mountains  
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing  
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel  
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.  
It has no windows, and the door swings,  
Dry bones can harm no one.  
Only a cock stood on the rooftree  
Co co rico co co rico  
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust  
Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves  
Waited for rain, while the black clouds  
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.  
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.  
Then spoke the thunder. (Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land*. Lines 385-399)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> All quotes from *The Waste Land* correspond to Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land*. London: Faber and Faber, 1978.

These lines are a fragment of section V, “What the Thunder said”, which, according to T.S. Eliot, justifies the whole work<sup>17</sup>. *The Waste Land* is a poem of sterility, about the land that is barren and cannot revive and, by extension, a metaphysical poem dealing with devastation after the First World War and the emotional and spiritual sterility of Western man. This sterility, symbolised in these lines by the “decayed hole among the mountains”, is physical as well as spiritual in Mary’s case. It is important to see that the place mentioned in these lines is no other than Chapel Perilous of medieval legend, surrounded by horrors and mystery; as the poem advances, this fearful atmosphere vanishes to welcome daylight, which corresponds to Mary’s final step from madness and the unknown to an instant glimpse of real life before her dying moment.

The fifth and last section of *The Waste Land* is about the renewal of the land when there is a final promise of rain, an intimation of its nearness and recovery. In a way, *The Grass is Singing* follows the same structure, since we have been told about Mary’s empty life, which will find its meaning in the final chapter when, paradoxically enough, she dies. The salvation in *The Waste Land* as concerns nature, myth and religion is paralleled by Mary Turner’s entering transcendence by identifying with nature and embracing spirituality at the end of her inner process. This is what Cederstrom sees as a Lawretian influence on the work of Doris Lessing, in other words, the “depiction of “cosmic consciousness”, that special feeling of unity with life and order of the universe” (*Psyche* 7). However, the critic argues that in Lawrence’s work, “cosmic consciousness” is primarily achieved through sex, while in Lessing it depends

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<sup>17</sup> “Eliot wrote to Bertrand Russell (15th October 1923) that he was glad Russell liked *The Waste Land*, ‘and especially Part V, which in my opinion is not the best part, but the only part that justifies the whole, at all’.” (Southam, 104)

on a group of social, biological and cultural aspects, which Mary would have to solve in order to achieve this connection with the cosmos.

The crowing of a cock that she hears when daylight and moonlight still blur, echoes the sound in the poem when the cock announces the coming of a new day and, therefore, rebirth. The key to the significance of the crowing in *The Grass is Singing* is also to be found in *The Waste Land*. The inclusion of this sound has been interpreted as following two different traditions: on the one hand, the crowing of the cock precedes the death of Christ (after Peter's betrayal) and, therefore, salvation; on the other, it is a signal for ghosts and spirits to go back to their realm, as it announces daylight (Southam 107). In Mary's case, it also arrives with a feeling of hope as she knows that her dying day has started. In the observation of nature that Mary offers us, she also mentions the fact that this "marvellous moment of peace and forgiveness" was "granted her by a forgiving God" (192), which reminds us of the god that is present in the poem and reappears in the last section as an unrecognisable presence: "Who is the third that walks always beside you?" (line 359).

In the morning before her death, Mary has a vision which reminds us of the fallen graves about the empty chapel: this is her mental recreation of the house once they have left it. Without anybody to inhabit it, the house will be somehow swallowed by the bush and destroyed. Everything will start rotting and the rats, and then the beetles, will arrive. The vision is quite loathsome, but after a while, as well as in the verses of the preface, the rains will break and purify the air. The grass will grow where there used to be a house and little by little, the empty space will be green. Once the inhabitants that have filled this place with their sterility are gone, life will bloom again.

Thunder is quite a remarkable element in this scene, recalling the title of the poem section, "What the Thunder Said". Thunder reminds us of the "sterile thunder

without rain” in line 342 of *The Waste Land*, just before the verses reproduced at the beginning of the novel. Significantly enough, it is not until she is dead that the rain starts, announcing purification and fertility. The final thunder before rain, just at the moment when Moses is killing Mary, acts as the trigger, as catharsis: Mary is liberated from herself, she screams and her last thought is that the bush is avenging itself. With the thunder silencing her scream, she literally sees the trees advancing in a rush, like beasts, that is, nature invading everything, as she had imagined in the future vision of the house (205).

It is important to consider how, at some point on that fatal day, Mary thinks of Moses as “the young man who would come before the night to rescue her” (198). She has finally acknowledged that her death is the only way of saving herself, which she has tried to do so many other times, first by getting married, then by wanting a child. In this final episode, with the close parallel to the final part of *The Waste Land*, we discover the symbolic meaning of the name “Moses” for the native servant. At the beginning of the novel, he perfectly matches the biblical origin of his name by embodying the leader. Moses was the prophet who led his people, the Israelites, out of Egypt in the Exodus after the Ten Plagues. As Moses is the member of the black community who lives with Mary, he symbolises all the black people as a class, as well as the abjection that they represent. As a leader of the natives, Moses is the one who stands out in the crowd for their rights, he is hurt by Mary with the sjambok. Mary fears his reaction and spends her life in anticipation of his revenge, first, by complaining to the police and, some years later, in the form of some aggression against her. The foreseen aggression, when it occurs, has nothing to do with the biblical Moses, or with the servant’s role as a guide of his people. And yet, a connection with the biblical myth can be perceived here, one which becomes even clearer if we consider the following lines from “What the Thunder

Said”, the fifth part of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, in which there is an allusion to the figure of Moses in the Bible:

Here is no water but only rock  
Rock and no water and the sandy road  
The road winding above among the mountains  
Which are mountains of rock without water  
If there were water we should stop and drink... (lines 331-335)

Let us now move onto the role of dreams in Mary’s psychological development. Most, if not all, of Mary’s dreams have to do with her childhood negative and traumatic experiences. In Jung’s philosophy, such regression is a self-regulating mechanism for adaptation and healing. Symbols found in dreams are full of meaning, but they are not the only sources of information for our minds; as Jung himself postulated, both rational and non-rational ways of thinking, and, as the novel advances, we see how the former gradually diminishes in Mary’s psyche. Moreover, the material in dreams has to be processed instead of being directly incorporated into conscious life, as Mary has done. Explaining dreams by means of archetypal amplification (in Jungian terms, finding meaning in archaic mythological motifs) is the therapeutic process that Mary never follows, as she never develops consciously the images she receives from dreams (Young-Eisendrath 70-71).

A second condition for individuation to end successfully, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, is to stand up against the group mind. Although Mary sometimes seems not to fit in the community of the white settlers, this is by no means a constructive circumstance, since it only brings about a greater sense of isolation. Mary never feels herself part of a group; however, the other white settlers appear every now and then to remind her that she belongs to a class and should act accordingly, causing remorse. In relation to Moses, it is the transgression of moral rules regarding desire which gets transformed into disgust, fuelling Mary’s obsession, insanity and resentment.

Consequently, she does not even dare to recognise her attraction to Moses even to herself.

After such discussion, we can say that Mary has found an escape to her failed process of individuation. She started taking decisions to be saved from herself since she just wanted to avoid the building up of a persona as a spinster. And, focusing on her own imagination on her future married life, she starts on a path of destruction by establishing wrong projections of herself which do not match the archetypes that Jung defined for the process of individuation. At the end, with the final scene of coming to terms with life and nature, we can see that what is abject is the corpse and everything that is bodily, but not death in itself. When she dies, Mary leaves the abjection of death in life, as death infecting life, in Kristeva's terms. As abjection threatens individuality, we can see an antithesis of abjection at the end of the plot and the reaffirmation of herself since her death means reaching wholeness and, therefore, the self.

Although Mary's crisis in her early forties will fix this age as the crisis stage for Lessing's major female figures—some included in this thesis—if we consider Mary's complete evolution, *The Grass is Singing* cannot be regarded as a *Reifungsroman* as a novel of “ripening towards death in a fruitful way” (Waxman 2). In order for the novel to fall into such category, Mary should have come to terms with her past and reacted. Some decision-taking is required, but Mary's case is a life of dissatisfaction and sterility in which she is unable to change things. There is no future for her as the only act she undertakes which entails a bit of willingness is that of going to the bush, knowing her fate, accepting it and giving herself to death.





### 3. THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK, 1962.

#### 3.1. Introduction.

Doris Lessing's masterpiece, *The Golden Notebook* is, by far, her most complex novel. Analysis in terms of identity, the unconscious and the dream life of the main character deserves a very thorough and detailed explanation due to the multiplicity of narrative viewpoints and levels, the doubling and repetition of characters and situations, and the variety of narrative genres and techniques that are present.

The extensive criticism that the novel has generated, such as the work done by Cederstrom, Rubenstein, Sprague, Inta Ezergailis, Durán, Magali Cornier Michael, Shenli Song and a number of other authors, focuses mainly on Anna Wulf's process of disintegration and breakdown, and her quest for unity. In fact, this is what she strives for throughout:

Alienation. Being split. It's the moral side, so to speak, of the communist message. And suddenly you shrug your shoulders and say because the mechanical basis of our lives is getting complicated, we must be content to not even try to understand things as a whole?... humanism stands for the whole person, the whole individual, striving to become as conscious and responsible as possible, about everything in the universe. But now you sit there, quite calmly, and as a humanist you say that due to the complexity of scientific achievement, the human being must never expect to be whole, he must always be fragmented. (320)

Each of the critics mentioned argues for a greater or lesser degree of subsequent reintegration by the end of *The Golden Notebook*; opinions span from the achievement of the whole self to the fact that integration is just an illusion. Nevertheless, the process goes from the first stage in the protagonist's recording of her life events in four different notebooks, through the subsequent shift to a unitary all-inclusive narrative. This novel can be considered a *Reifungsroman*, in line with most of the other works in this thesis.

To start with, the name of the heroine is central to my analysis. As Sprague already pointed out, “Anna” is a palindromic name, and she connects it to the fact that the protagonist is the only female character that operates as an active principle in the novel, and “is present everywhere, from the beginning to the end, and back again” (68). But we could go a bit further in this respect and argue that she does not only go back and forth in terms of plot and contents of the novel, but rather, she can move from sanity to insanity, from unity to fragmentation, from public life to confinement, from fact to fiction, and back again. It has already been noticed that the surname Wulf constitutes a pun on the name of a major figure of the English literature, Virginia Woolf, as Lessing constructs a character that is “suffused with the spirit of ‘They wished for the truth’”, as she characterises Virginia Woolf in the foreword to the 2003 edition of *Carlyle’s House and Other Sketches* (xii). More than this, Anna’s work as a writer is identified with what Lessing herself states about Woolf: “What Virginia Woolf did for literature was to experiment all her life, trying to make her novels nets to catch what she saw as a subtler truth about life. Her ‘styles’ were attempts to use her sensibility to make of the living the ‘luminous envelope’ she insists our consciousness is” (Lessing foreword ix). The similarities between Woolf and Lessing have been studied by such authors as Lynda Scott, Rubenstein, Cornier Michael and Sprague. I believe the most interesting point is that not only Lessing but her own character, Anna Wulf, share with Woolf the worries about how to build personal selfhood with the different input a person is subject to, that is, as a mixture of fact and fiction where the working of memory and the subconscious is vital in terms of the final outcome. By writing her life and creating her own identity, Anna Wulf as an authorial fictive self and makes us enter the realm of the metanarrative, which will be central to my approach.

The fact that Anna's original surname is Freeman runs parallel to the title of her novel *Free Women*. More than this, as Reilly argues in an outstanding article on *The Golden Notebook* and the language of lobotomy, this surname is the same as that of one of the main neurosurgeons who developed this practice in the United States. Walter Freeman defended the results of lobotomy in personality changes, the enhancement of autonomy and its beneficial effects. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Reilly explains that the arguments defending this neurosurgical intervention came from the premise that behavioural uniformity should be the final objective of psychosurgery, which is precisely what *The Golden Notebook* most forcefully tries to avoid (Reilly 17-18).

After this thorough analysis of the protagonist's name, the possibility of a rich psychological reading of the novel—with the process of creation as a central matter—should be anticipated. My approach to the construction of the protagonist's identity in *The Golden Notebook* will be twofold: on the one hand, it will be based mainly on the narrative process; and, on the other hand, it will incorporate the postulates of Jungian psychology and its archetypes. In addition, I will also include the patterns of doubling and repetition developed by Sprague and partly shared by other critics, such as Rubenstein, Cederstrom and Sharon R. Wilson.

The formal organisation of *The Golden Notebook* is also fundamental. It offers a general overview, a panoramic vision on the life of a person, and the historical and social contexts of the time. There is a multiplicity of narrative genres—journal, novel, letters, film script, parody, journalistic article—forming a pastiche to show that the variety of forms of writing parallels the multiplicity embedded in personality and in reality. In reference to this, my approach will pay special attention to the boundaries between autobiographical and fictional writing, as this will determine the functional and

psychological relations between characters, so as to determine the protagonist's process of individuation.

This set of narrative categories will initially be approached through Béatrice Didier's theory of journal writing (*Le Journal Intime*, 1976), according to which, the personality of the journal writer is split into two: the subject and the object. The former (active) is said to embody male principles, while the latter (passive) is assumed to be mainly feminine. This will lead us to the following theoretical point of my argument, since the subject/object division in journal writing parallels the anima/animus dichotomy established by Jung. In addition, Didier's theories about the principles of reliability and truth in autobiographical writing help to sustain the subsequent investigation into the blurring of boundaries between factual and fictional accounts of reality. If we apply all this both to the personal diaries in *The Golden Notebook* and the novels included in it, we can see how the subject writer has masculine projections (the animus) as she allows only some male characters to interfere in the creative process, in her subsequent rereading and analysis. Such a phenomenon shows how these male characters complement the identity of the main female figure in her process of individuation. Anna, as the major character of the narrative, remains always the object in it and, therefore, constitutes the female counterpart of the male characters she introduces in the animus/anima dichotomy.

Nevertheless, Anna's animus is not identified with only one of the characters related to her writing, but it is constituted by all the men present in the multiple accounts of Anna's life, (Saul as instigator, Tommy as audience, or Milt as potential reader). Sprague has identified a number of doubles in the novel, which can be formed by a male and a female character, either both male or both female characters. This critic, then, states that all male characters melt into one and so do all female characters

and, by the end of the novel, both male and female converge in the very person of Anna (77). As I will show later on, I partly agree with this, but, in contrast to Sprague's theory of the doubles, I consider the characters to be multiples, rather than doubles of one another. My choice of the term "multiplicity" is also grounded in the fact that Anna Wulf comes in several forms in the novel, as Cornier Michael explains: "the novel contains various versions of a character called Anna as well as a writer and an editor also named Anna", and she goes on to say that this multiplicity questions the traditional notions of character and the humanist concept of whole (47). Moreover, as Rubenstein claims when dealing with the topics in Lessing's work as anticipating the *Zeitgeist* (or "spirit of the age"):

Anna Wulf's relentless microscopic analysis of her multiply divided "self" as she experiences psychological breakdown anticipates the now-commonplace postmodern idea of the self as a social construction. *The Golden Notebook* marks a shift from the humanist ideal of wholeness to the poststructuralist/postmodern view of the self as a fiction in which parts or fragments do not necessarily cohere. (Rubenstein, "Notes for Proteus" 17)

Therefore, if Anna Wulf is multiple in herself, we should also be using the term "multiplicity" to define the universe of characters that run parallel and contribute to the creation of such a multiple self. As we will see, both male and female characters are contained in the identity of the main female figure. Consequently, Anna Wulf—this identity in which all female characters are fused—is also complemented by the male characters in the novel from the very start of the writing process and Anna's development. All the men in the novel are placed as the masculine projections of Anna as "moi-sujet" thus constituting a collective animus which corresponds to her anima as "moi-objet". Anna's confrontation of her animus—of everything that is inside herself, but which she perceives in an entity of the opposite sex—will ensure her process of individuation.

In order to follow Anna Wulf's development throughout her writing process, it is vital to consider the main characteristics of journal writing as a genre, since the contents of the personal diary—the four notebooks—seem to work as the starting point for the rest of materials present in the novel. In characterising the process of writing a diary, Didier writes: “The journal is a reassuring place, it is the refuge against the rest of the universe, against this void, this dizziness which threatens to snatch you, against this jump towards the unknown, towards multiplicity and dispersion” (91).<sup>18</sup> Here (in a way that is coherent with the mainstream criticism on *The Golden Notebook*) Didier treats the term “multiplicity” as a synonym for “dispersion”. The change in the terminology that I will be using should be highlighted: “fragmentation” for the negative drive that instigates insanity, “multiplicity” for a positive power that ensures fulfilment. Nevertheless, the writing of a journal is considered therapeutic: “The conquered privacy is the maternal intimacy recovered thanks to a second birth which allows for self-analysis, anamnesis and the resort to writing in order to translate this discourse” (91).<sup>19</sup> I will prove this healing power of journal writing in the case of Anna Wulf by analysing the archetypal motifs that are present for the achievement of wholeness—to put it in Jungian terms.

Taking into account the previous criticism on *The Golden Notebook* as well as the theory of journal writing and the process of individuation already mentioned, I have structured the present chapter into three main parts. First, I will study the correspondence between journal writing and the fragmented self of the main character as the starting point of her transformation. The second section will deal with

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<sup>18</sup> My translation. “Le journal est un lieu sécurisant, c’est le refuge contre le reste de l’univers, contre ce vide, ce vertige qui risque de vous happer, contre ce saut vers l’inconnu, la multiplicité, la dispersion.”

<sup>19</sup> My translation. “L’intimité conquise, c’est l’intimité utérine et maternelle retrouvée, grâce à une seconde naissance que permettent l’auto-analyse, l’anamnèse et le recours à l’écriture pour traduire ce discours.”

individuation, with such notions as archetypes and roles. It will be divided into four sub-sections, namely, the perspectives on fragmentation and the self; then, the animus and anima (as referring to the masculine characters in the novel); next, the shadow (which applies to the women in the novel); and finally, the mother image in connection with the animus and anima. The third and last section deals with the domestic space as symbol.

### **3.2. Notebook writing and the fragmented self.**

The conflict we find in *The Golden Notebook* is twofold. First, this novel depicts women's fear of exposure, especially through the writing of diaries or notebooks. That may be the reason why there is an overlap between what is portrayed and what is made up, thus "Anna's perception of herself as a creative writer eclipses her identity as a diary writer" (Martinson 124). Second, this work, with multiple layers of reality, "occludes authorial presence and complicates any notion of a knowable 'I'" (Martinson 122-123). Anna does not even know who this "I" is, thus resisting the use of the pronoun which, as we shall see, contrasts with Saul's compulsive use of it: "He talked—I found myself absent-minded, then with my attention half on what he said, realized I was listening for the word *I* in what he said. I, I, I, I, I—I began to feel as if the word I was being shot at me like bullets from a machine gun" (487). The constant unreliability of language in the novels analysed in this thesis finds its main example in the word that designates the subject ("I") but is unable to encapsulate all its meaning. This unreliability extends to the writer's depiction of factuality throughout the novel. The use of language and its failure to provide communication is even theorised upon in an ironical way at some points of the plot, for instance, when dealing with the different nature of both sexes: "if we lead what is known as free lives, that is, lives like men, why shouldn't we use the



same language?’ ‘Because we aren’t the same. That is the point.’ Anna laughed. ‘Men. Women. Bound. Free. Good. Bad. Yes. No. Capitalism. Socialism. Sex. Love...’” (59). Nevertheless, as a writer, Anna still relies on conventional labels to convey meanings, as they are taken for granted: “Ella was angry. ‘Every night you lie in my bed and tell me everything. I am your wife.’” (198)

In order to analyse the role that language and writing—through each notebook—has in Anna’s process towards wholeness, Sprague’s view is essential: “Her reunited self does not discard the four notebook selves. Hence division leads to or can lead to multiplication or growth.” (59) To show that multiplicity may be positive when it is integrated in the completion of wholeness, Sprague further develops her argument by integrating the lesson taught in the nineteenth century by the doubles pattern: “unity is achieved by at once incorporating and discarding negative or incomplete selves” (60), which is what Anna Wulf does, in fact. Such a literary trend was fully analysed by Karl Miller in *Doubles. Studies in Literary History* (1987). Although Miller does not mention Lessing’s writing, his work makes a contribution to the understanding of *The Golden Notebook* by analysing the tradition which inspired it. Miller’s work focuses on the concept of duality and “the imagination of two minds or more for the human individual” as an aspect of European and American literatures which was asserted and perpetuated in literature and art from Romanticism onwards. Miller considers this literature to even precede the writings of Lacan and Derrida, the former being considered in this thesis as one of the main influences on the novels by Doris Lessing. In this analysis, the author deals with numerous authors and works, such as Dostoevsky, Poe, Wharton, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1601), Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), or James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824).

The fact that doubles flourished especially in the nineteenth century can be explained by the new and deep concern about subjectivity. A need for reaffirming the self arises with the subsequent threats to it, which allows for profound debate on the issue. There is a general obsession about losing identity since personality could and could not be unified. Therefore, this scenario allows for doubts about one's self and when the recurrent double appears, the question arises whether either is the true one. Doubles emerge both as mainstays and as threats to identity, due to the fragmentation that this development entails. For instance, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1848) is full of doubles which the main character finds as projections of herself—both mirrors (Helen Burns) and opposites (Bertha Mason)—which appear and exhaust themselves at each vital moment as she advances on her road to identity construction and salvation. Conversely, Emma Bovary (Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 1857) meets her own doubles at successive stages (Héloïse, Hippolyte) on her path to destruction. As an heiress to both characters, Lessing's Anna Wulf undergoes both destruction and later recovery through projection and mirroring onto her own doubles. Here Lessing is taking the theme of doubles one step further, not only because of the double direction it establishes (from collapse to reestablishment and back), but also because it is Anna herself who creates her own doubles, and therefore becomes the character of her own metafiction.

There is a passage in the blue notebook which is central to this nineteenth century dialectic. This is highly relevant to my discussion, as it puts together dreams and the self-image in a mirror, thus relating two essential phenomena of psychoanalysis:

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 (...) 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 opened the box and forced them to look. 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—I recognized a lump of red earth that I knew came from Africa, and then a bit of metal that came off a gun from Indo-China, and then everything was horrible, bits of flesh from people killed in the Korean War and a Communist Party badge off someone who died in a Soviet prison. 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 businessmen 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. I laughed out aloud when I saw how I had cheated the businessmen and I woke up. (...) 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. (230)

Recognising the mirror reflection as herself signifies having interiorised her own identity, according to Lacanian theory. In a recreation of the mirror stage, Anna sees her imago and associates it with the crocodile that she has seen in her dream—and therefore, with all the fragments and pieces coming from everywhere in the world from which the crocodile emerges—meaning that her complete self is formed at the same time by a unitary entity and an amount of little bits and pieces at the same time. In order to complete her quest for identity, Anna will have to accept all the multiple sides of herself and comprehend that to be whole means much more than the sum of different parts. She is ready to enter the imaginary order. Nevertheless, and adopting a Lacanian reading, Anna's search for her own identity and wholeness is identified with the phallus—the object of desire that is never achieved. This is the reason why identity is in constant redefinition: because it never achieves complete unity, and Anna should comprehend this instability. Accordingly, for Lacan, alienation, that concept which we saw Anna despise on the first page of this chapter, is a necessary condition for any true, autonomous subject.

Let us now begin by seeing the different strategies that Anna tries to implement in order to convey the healing quality of writing a personal diary. First, attention should be paid to the golden notebook, which responds to “all of myself in one book” (528).

“Golden” has a major significance. As Michael Ferber summarises in his *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, “‘Golden’ is applied to whatever is best or most excellent, such as the golden rule, the golden verses of Pythagoras, or the golden mean” (86). Anna Wulf, then, regards this notebook as an improved version of all that she had been writing before, even as the work that cancels out all her previous writing, since division and compartmentalisation have proved to be wrong. However, her project will only work under the acceptance of the multiplicity of spheres and selves that had previously triggered madness. That is to say, the same fragmentation that she has confronted, once acknowledged and processed, becomes the element that amends sanity. The movement is, therefore, a circular one as her palindromic name suggests: from sanity to breakdown and back to sanity; from fragmentation (negative) to unity and back to multiplicity (positive). Nevertheless, such an experiment is, in the end, not enough to recover an integrated identity. Acceptance of her own fragmentation is needed and she will be one by knowing that there are different aspects of herself that she has to let go as, at the very end of the novel, she finally kisses and separates from Molly, who has been a fictional alter ego fundamental to her inner process.

In order to understand the mechanics of Anna’s development and final salvation, it is perhaps more practical to start at the end of *The Golden Notebook*, as the process of reading of this novel should not finish with its last page. On the contrary, the reader should start over again and interpret it for a second time, bearing in mind that the character-author writes the *Free Women* section under Saul Green’s command in order to overcome her writer’s block and depression. In this way, not only is the protagonist’s psychic process circular, but so too are both the novel’s structure, and the reading experience.

It is fundamental to see that when Saul gives Anna the first line for her new novel, “The two women were alone in the London flat”, he is making her acknowledge that she is divided, and that her two women are the two different sides of herself: “I’m going to give you the first sentence, then. There are the two women you are, Anna” (554). Anna, in a way, seems to ignore the real intention behind the initial sentence of her work, as she writes about herself and Molly. In this respect, Sprague explains that, when we go back to the beginning and start the second reading of the novel, we realise that Molly appears to be one aspect of Anna that is given an independent identity (61). One of the central subjects in this chapter will be Molly’s existence, which in turn will only make sense after having examined the link between Anna and all the male characters, out of which Saul seems to be a sort of amalgam or spokesperson.

Additionally, Durán argues that *Free Women* does not add much to the ensemble of *The Golden Notebook*. She describes that section as second-rate, incomplete, conventional and dull, although all of these characteristics are intended to show that our inner self (the journal) is always richer than our external self (102). It just performs the function of showing the thin line which separates fact from fiction. Content and style of this section have no relevance apart from this: by starting a plot with two female characters who stand for “the two women that you are”, Anna creates Molly as a fictional character and thus makes it clear that, at least, there are elements in the personal journals that are made up, thus making the reader suspicious of their supposed veracity.

The method that Saul suggests as potentially healing, rather than being the writing of a unified diary, is the creation of a novel in which Anna’s splitting in two is not only accepted but actually becomes the starting point. She has stuck to the idea of a supposedly superior manner of recording her experience, which proves not to be

adequate in the long run. In the golden notebook, there is still fragmentation and a chaotic accumulation of Anna's life experiences. Paul Tanner appears in it, along with the Communist Party, her experiences in Africa, dreams, motherhood, the novel that Anna writes and psychoanalysis. Among all this disarray, the golden notebook remains unfinished, and it is indeed abandoned. Once Anna has written the sentence that will make her surface, the new diary extinguishes itself naturally: there is no need for forcing unity on to a single piece of writing, since the real therapy will be that of accepting her multiple identities and depicting them through creative writing. But not only that, the solution to her dilemma will also be the acceptance of fictionalisation as her only outlet, to fight her dissatisfaction with the unreliability of her own personal writing.

The fact that the protagonist's narrative ends abruptly when she gives the notebook to Saul, and he uses it for his own writing, is anything but gratuitous. Once the notebook is completed, what the reader finds is a change in authorship. This authorial shift could not have been possible at any other point of the novel, carried out by any other character, since Saul stands for Anna's animus, as the bulk of the criticism has pointed out. Therefore, what we get is the completion of the diary by a second author that is, archetypically and symbolically, identified with the main one. Moreover, role-changing is quite remarkable since, at the end, Saul starts the novel that Anna has suggested to him in the very notebook that had been used as her personal journal. All these circumstances, which Anna acknowledges, make her drop her writing experiment for good, as she willingly hands the notebook to Saul for fictional creation:

I laughed, and I went to the pretty new notebook, while he went off downstairs, and I wrote: 'On a dry hillside in Algeria, a soldier watched the moonlight glinting on his rifle.'

[Here Anna's handwriting ended, the golden notebook continued in Saul Green's handwriting, a short novel about the Algerian soldier.] (556)

Factuality and reliability are two central aspects of Anna's self-construction as an integrated identity. As Didier argues, diary writing is as insincere as any other type of writing, and there is always a tension between what must be said and what is hidden for decency's sake. By finding some balance, the writer creates a portrait that sustains itself much better than any direct copy, or simplification, from reality. The image shown is, therefore, falsified, although the primary goal of the writer may be that of abandoning indefiniteness for the sake of truth. (Didier 114-116) The first lines of the blue notebook, the so-called personal diary, are quite illustrative:

I came upstairs from the scene between Tommy and Molly and instantly began to turn it into a short story. It struck me that my doing this—turning everything into fiction—must be an evasion. Why not write down, simply, what happened between Molly and her son today? Why do I never write down, simply, what happens? Why don't I keep a diary? Obviously, my changing everything into fiction is simply a means of concealing something from myself. Today it was so clear: sitting listening to Molly and Tommy at war, very disturbed by it; then coming straight upstairs and beginning to write a story without even planning to do it. I shall keep a diary. (211)

The writer (Anna) is warning the reader about the thin line that separates what is entirely factual from what is not, and acknowledges her own tendency to fictionalise the input coming to her from real life. In contrast, she introduces a diary entry that she had written four years before, just when Janet was conceived, labelled "a diary that she started once before", that is, what could be called "the real thing" (211). In this way, the contents of the blue notebook are immediately placed under suspicion.

Although the blue notebook is the space where dreams are developed at length and where the subconscious finds its place in this journal, there are samples of recognisable fiction for its own sake. Tommy reads Anna's notebooks and finds an entry in the blue one where she narrates how she sees herself lying on the pavement while she is at the same time standing by the body, and then starts licking the brains and the blood on the floor. Tommy discusses with Anna about the need to put brackets around this fragment, because what matters is not this fragment but the "ordinary

things”: However, these “flashes of madness”, as she calls them, are not suppressed from the narrative itself, and, in this case, it seems fully integrated into the discourse that is meant to be true. But there is more than this: the passage is supposed to be a paragraph of the blue notebook which is quoted in *Free Women*: it is clear that reality and fantasy intermingle and even melt in the text. However, every now and then, a series of newspaper cuttings appears in the blue notebook, as if trying to remind us that what is recorded there is real life, and to reinforce a feeling of fact that is not fully achieved by the narrative itself. Although materials are arranged under the headings “A novel” or “The notebooks”, what belongs to life and what comes from imagination is never kept separate.

Another experiment in the blue notebook shows us how two different versions of the same events may vary from one another, and how the narrator can be trusted in one of the versions but not in the other. It is the entry for 15 September, 1954 (296-326), the crucial day when Anna decides to leave the Party and Michael finally abandons her. In the first case, it takes thirty pages to explain what is put forward in eight lines in the second, quite detached, version:

A normal day. During the course of a discussion with John Butte and Jack I decided to leave the Party. I must now be careful not to start hating the Party in the way we do hate stages in our life we have outgrown. Noted signs of it already: moments of disliking Jack which were quite irrational. Janet as usual, no problems. Molly worried, I think with reason, over Tommy. She has a hunch he will marry his new girl. Well, her hunches usually come off. I realised that Michael had finally decided to break it off. I must pull myself together. (326)

Both narratives appear to be unreliable, as the reader wonders how much is exaggerated or made up, or how much is silenced. The basic events are the same, but in each fragment a very distinct general message goes through. Both Anna Wulf and Doris Lessing, as writers, are warning us here that everything in the writing process is subjective, especially in personal diaries, truthful though the writer intends to be. Even the choice of words is significant to the nuances implicit in the writing. In fact, when



she explains how her life is divided into four notebooks, she differentiates clearly “and a blue notebook which *tries* to be a diary” (my italics, 418). Unreliability underlies most of the writing in Anna Wulf’s notebooks.

How much of this is a precise report of events and how much is magnified, disguised, concealed or even made up, readers cannot know; not even in the yellow notebook, which overtly contains a creative piece of work, can we infer the amount of biographical material that is present. In fact, the behaviour of characters that appear both in *Free Women* and in the blue notebook does not differ between one text and the other, between one genre and the other.

In writing the journals, Anna has to face a division which, according to Didier, is inherent in all diary recordings:

Being split is in fact the phenomenon most frequently and universally observed by the journal authors. However, it takes very diverse forms. The most fundamental and evident one results from the act of writing itself. The journal writer is two: the one who performs and also the one who sees himself perform, and writes. (116)<sup>20</sup>

In relation to this, Cornier Michael notices that the first step towards creating a new female subject in the novel is that of destabilising the opposition between subject and object, in which woman has always been positioned on the object side. She defines it as “the delineation of a new female subject that is not grounded in binarism”. *The Golden Notebook* is assumed to have taken up this challenge directly by positioning Anna as both subject and object, teller and character. Cornier Michael’s explanation goes further than this: she observes that the shifts Anna undergoes from one side to the other makes her occupy both and neither; therefore, the protagonist’s position in this dichotomy is no longer stable (Cornier Michael 48).

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<sup>20</sup> My translation. “Le dédoublement est en effet le phénomène le plus fréquent et le plus universellement constaté par les auteurs de journal. Mais il prend des formes très diverses. La plus élémentaire, la plus évidente vient du fait même de l’écriture. Le diariste est deux: il est celui qui agit et celui qui se regarde agir, et qui écrit”.

The explanation for this instability of the character depends very much on the contribution of archetypes to the journal writing process, which, at the same time, play a strong part in her individuation process:

The me subject must be a little distant and make a mainly intellectual judgement, whereas the me object will be the refuge of the virtues of sensitivity and passion. Well-known oppositions are to be met in the identikit of the opposed sexes: the female one has the privilege of sensitivity, but lucidity and power belong to man. The distribution between observer and observed takes over the ancient duality masculine-feminine. According to the oldest tradition, it is a recovery of the opposition between *animus* and *anima*: the journal would be the dialogue between *animus* and *anima*, the gaze of the former on the latter (120).<sup>21</sup>

More than this, this splitting of the writer can become even more complicated with reference to the writing and reading process. Apart from the “me-subject” and the “me-object”, there is a possible “me-who-reads”, as ulterior reading is assumed in the dynamics of writing a diary (Didier 118). Although self-analysis is vital to the writing of any journal, we will see that Anna seldom re-evaluates events by reading her own personal writing. Therefore, the reading of the notebooks by other figures in the novel becomes a central part to my argument.

Now, before entering the difficult terrain of the psychoanalysis, we need a more accurate look at the role that this theoretical framework performs in the novel to define the process of individuation, as well as the circular pattern between fragmentation, reintegration and multiplicity that I suggest. In order to offer a fairly complete portrait of the matter, I will incorporate into my discussion the use of concepts extracted from Jung’s theory, although the work of Ronald David Laing will also be mentioned.

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<sup>21</sup> My translation. “Le moi sujet se doit d’être un peu distant, de porter un jugement surtout intellectuel, tandis que le moi objet sera le refuge des vertus de la sensibilité et de la passion. On retrouve là des oppositions familières dans les portraits-robots des sexes opposés: le féminin a l’apanage de la sensibilité; mais la lucidité et le pouvoir appartiennent à l’homme. La répartition entre le regardant et le regardé reprend donc la vieille dualité masculin-féminin. C’est, selon la plus ancienne tradition, une reprise de l’opposition entre animus et anima: le journal serait le dialogue d’animus et *anima*, regard de celui-ci sur celle-là”.

### 3.3. Roles, archetypes and individuation.

#### 3.3.1. Perspectives on fragmentation and the self.

As Wilson observes, archetypes help to unfold the book's design, as does the concept of the double, developed mainly by Sprague, who, on the other hand, argues against a psychoanalytic reading. Other several critical attempts show that psychoanalysis runs counter to the message that Lessing wants to communicate in *The Golden Notebook*. Reilly quotes Sprague herself and Virginia Tiger to argue that "psychoanalytic theory, that inexhaustible ally of Lessing's concerns, has generally and only rudimentarily surfaced in influence studies" (Reilly 17). As Reilly explains, this may be due to Lessing's rejection of any psychoanalytical interpretation of her works.

We must take into account that what Lessing criticised is, specifically, the type of discourse psychoanalysts use. This becomes clear from an interview with Jonah Raskin in 1969, when she explains how she based the character of Mother Sugar on her own psychotherapist, Miss Sussman:

My own psychotherapist was somewhat like Mrs. Marks. She was everything I disliked. I was then aggressively rational, anti-religious, and a radical. She was Roman Catholic, Jungian, and a conservative. (...) I couldn't stand her terminology, but she was a marvellous person. (...) If she had used another set of words, if she had talked Freud talk, or aggressive atheism, it wouldn't have made a difference (Raskin 14-15).

It is quite remarkable to see how the description of Lessing's psychotherapist coincides with the conceptual distance that Anna experiences towards Mrs Marks in *The Golden Notebook*:

Mother Sugar, who is nothing if not a cultivated woman, a European soaked in art, uttered commonplaces in her capacity as witch-doctor she should have been ashamed of if she were with friends and not in the consulting room. One level for life, another for the couch. I couldn't stand it; that is, ultimately, what I couldn't stand. Because it means one level of morality for life, and another for the sick. (76)

In spite of this criticism, in the same interview, the author defends the value of the unconscious, although not in Freudian terms. She also deals with the importance of

dreams and symbols in her life and writing and, moreover, speaks about her dreaming deliberately for creative reasons (Raskin 14), which, in the novel, is what Mother Sugar tells Anna to do with the dream of the dwarf in order to overcome her breakdown. And moreover, as we shall see, Jungian theory is justified by the final positive outcome of Anna's process of individuation, in which her dreaming and her writing counterbalance the input of her waking life, or rather exceed it.

Regarding the psychoanalytical subtext in Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, it has been argued that Anna's need to divide her troubled vital experience as a "free woman", writer and communist into four notebooks anticipates the reinterpretations of Lacanian "divided self" carried out by French feminists some years later. As a further development in psychoanalysis, after Lacan and the subsequent re-readings of his work, the notion of self has been redefined as a fictional construction and replaced by a permanently divided subject, which is always in construction by means of its others (Durán 101). With *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing is building a personality in terms which are quite compatible with post-Lacanian psychoanalysis by defining Anna through bits and pieces of her experience and always in relation to other characters, who at the same time embody the Jungian archetypes present in the inner process of the quest.

It is necessary to start the explanation of the individuation process by remembering the circular pattern proposed in the introduction to this chapter, which goes from fragmentation to reintegration and back to multiplicity. As Cederstrom puts it, reintegration takes place after Anna's incursion into madness. Her inner fragmentation is indicated in the four notebooks, and she feels that she is rescuing herself from chaos by compartmentalising herself, but her writing finally becomes only fragments of herself and she must return willingly to her former state of chaos

(Cederstrom, *Psyche* 117). Going back to this unity, therefore, will imply interiorising her own multiplicity. The same critic completes this perspective by saying that “in her 1971 Preface to the novel, Lessing pointed out that many critics had failed to recognize the second theme of the novel, that of unity” (117) This unity will precisely be one of the mainstays of my study.

The presence of the unconscious in the novel and its importance in Anna’s quest for her own identity is made plain in the last parts of the novel, where dreams actually solve some incidents or even seem to warn her about the events that are going to take place, i.e. her breaking up with Michael. Anna’s integration of unconscious material into her life is parallel to her own process of reintegration, since the division in the notebooks and the appearance of her dream life question the boundaries between fact and imagination. The subject’s conscious and unconscious lives, essential to individuation, are interconnected.

Anna’s problem in finding her own identity is the conflict between the desire to create, brought about by her persona, the writer, and her breakdown, which is brought about by the inability to accept herself, as Cederstrom, again, observes. (*Psyche* 119). One important stage of this conflict is joining the Communist Party once she has no job. This provides a collective support for her vacillating sense of self, through the absorption by Party members of the archetype of “the great father”, Stalin. When, finally, Anna Wulf becomes more interested in personal matters and abandons Communism, she is trying to find a self, beyond her public persona, which seeks wholeness and integrates both her conscious and unconscious life, which matches Cederstrom’s approach (“Elements” 50-53).

In Cederstrom’s interpretation, each of the notebooks stands for a different stage or problem in the process of individuation; namely, the black notebook deals with

creativity and her search for truth, a concept that she believes to be objective, unlike Mother Sugar's warning that it is to be found in the creative expression of archetypal truth; the red notebook is about the Communist Party as a socially justifiable way to escape coming to terms with herself, as it offers a great collective dream; the yellow notebook provides one of the Jungian terms that will be central to the process (that of the shadow); finally, the blue notebook is the key one as it fully deals with Anna's psychological development and provides glimpses of her analysis as well as a thorough discussion on her dreams (*Psyche* 119-130). Nevertheless, from my perspective, the importance of the latter lies in its creative dimension as a fictional work.

It is worth acknowledging the slight presence in the novel of another psychotherapeutic trend that questions the psychoanalysis as the only valid interpretation of one's inner self, as it would equally account for fragmentation and the self. Laingian psychiatry introduced by Michael, Anna's lover, shows a world of sickness in which patients are the symptoms. The philosophical ideas of this character can be brought to the interpretation of the novel as a whole since, in Laing's theory, the schizophrenic is split between an inner self and a false self, usually constructed to protect the inner self, which cuts it off from feeling. This would justify the different stages in the narrative and the division between the—supposedly—realistic diaries and the—also supposedly—fictional narrative of the several novels-within-the novel. (Pickering 48)

The importance of considering Laing's theory in connection with this work is that Lessing seems to have anticipated its main ideas, which were mainly developed in *The Politics of Experience*, five years after the publication of *The Golden Notebook*, especially the notion that schizophrenia is a strategy invented by the subject in order to live an unliveable situation. Accordingly, "ontological insecurity" is the cause of

schizophrenia: the individual may feel more unreal than real, precariously differentiated from the rest of the world. In these cases, healing comes through an inner voyage, accompanied by a sense of ego-loss and feelings of the enhanced significance and relevance of everything (Laing 116). As we can see, this approach already appears in *The Golden Notebook* at a historical moment when it had not even been fully developed theoretically, and can account for some of Anna's mental processes, seen as all the fragments in her narrative and newspaper cuttings parallel her inner fragmentation and unease. She enhances the relevance of everything outside herself as she feels the loss of her identity, and hardly differentiates herself from the rest of the world. As a result, she feels as if international conflicts of the moment were her real personal problems.

Although the investigation of antipsychiatry and Doris Lessing would constitute a remarkable option for further research (that I will suggest in the conclusions to this thesis), I will be focusing mostly on the Jungian influence on Doris Lessing's writing of *The Golden Notebook* (understood in cultural, rather than in strictly psychiatric terms).

All in all, *The Golden Notebook* is very much about the need to perform roles which are sometimes different from the real personality of a woman (but which match what society requires), and result in the Beauvoirian notion of split selves. In a way, Anna defines herself as writer, although we are told in the first section of *Free Women* that she has only written one novel and will soon not be able to live on what she gets from *Frontiers of War*. Moreover, this persona is constantly endangered as she fights a writer's block which is leading her to madness, and endangering her own identity. It is remarkable to see at this point how Lessing was anticipating the French feminist readings of the Lacanian divided self by classifying her protagonist's existence into four different aspects (Durán 101).

In order now to characterise the other archetypes that ensure individuation, it is important to revise the definition that Rubenstein makes of the shadow, as she describes a compensatory system in which the hidden part of the personality is expressed in dreams, and waking life as a shadow or “other”, which represents the denied aspect of the self. Until these complementary aspects are accepted as part of one’s personality, the self cannot achieve wholeness. Projection is the mechanism that makes us see these elements in others. The fact that this tendency in literature is often symbolised by the figure of the alter ego or double (*Novelistic Vision* 76) will be crucial to my approach.

### 3.3.2. The men in the novel: animus and anima.

Cederstrom states that Emily Brontë is Lessing’s predecessor in revealing the animus in her creation of Heathcliff; however, she only came close to the fear of the animus with the intensity that we find it in *The Golden Notebook* (Cederstrom *Psyche* 12). Nevertheless, Brontë was the pioneer in revealing it in both its positive and negative aspects, as it is all condensed in the celebrated phrase “Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff” (*Wuthering Heights* 82). On the other hand, the gender opposite, the anima, had already been recurrently depicted in centuries of literature and art history.

Most of the critics that have examined *The Golden Notebook* as a psychoanalytic text regard Saul Green as Anna’s animus, since Anna is incapable of acknowledging her own failures but she sees them personified in Saul. He destroys the old Anna first, which allows for a new one to be created according to the animus’ latent duality. To start with, for Anna, the “I” that Saul uses compulsively is quite threatening since, by hearing it and acknowledging Saul’s reliance on his sense of self, she realises her own instability and therefore fears using “I”, since it fails to encapsulate her identity (Griffin



23). Although Saul's self is paranoid, he can use and repeat the "I" that Anna does not utter, because a pronoun cannot convey the multiple selves in her identity.

Having searched for her own self through relationships with men and the Communist Party, it is not until Anna lives with Saul that she has to confront her animus, and she does so quite efficiently as she struggles with him and she "lets go, one by one, of the old personalities that she had used in dealing with men" (Cederstrom qtd. in Wilson 19). In this conflict between the masculine and feminine, she even feels her sense of identity fade. In this cathartic moment, she recognises her writer's block for the first time, and the fact that breakdown can be positive as it allows for the start of the process of reconstruction. Greene argues that Saul can be a kind of symbolic guide who Anna has created out of the men she has known and which expresses her own "masculine potential, that is, her animus" (113). The release of her animus represents integration and wholeness, the first step being her determination to write the whole of herself into one book, which comes out of her discussions with Saul.

Apart from Lessing's merit in having offered a depiction of the animus which is both destroyer and creator, another important aspect is that the yearning for wholeness has nothing to do with the loss of a particular man, but with a need of completion that comes from within (Cederstrom *Psyche* 12). So, if the desire for unity can only be fulfilled by coming to terms with the masculine identity inside the character, it is not out of the question to consider that Anna's animus should be "all men", which would in the end constitute a generic idea of man.

Let us now see in which ways Saul can be considered to embody all the male characters in the novel. To start with, all the relationships experienced with men in the novel are self-destructive. Nevertheless, as we have seen, what makes Saul go a bit further than the rest of characters in the completion of individuation is the

reconstruction that he causes by symbolically triggering the creation of her next novel, *Free Women*, which goes beyond the golden notebook by integrating multiplicity as a necessary aspect of Anna's completed self.

Let us start by analysing all the men who relate to Anna, as a group. As Wilson states, all of them (Max/Willy, the two Pauls, Michael, Milt, Nelson, Richard and Saul) are doubles of one another and act as foils to Anna. They are all sexist, dominating, insensitive and unfaithful (Wilson 19). In her theory of doubles, Sprague claims that the central character conflicts are between Anna and her male (rather than female) doubles, who are connected with destructive powers whose existence Anna tries to deny in herself (Sprague 67). All the male characters are associated, as a unifying trait, to the oneiric dwarf-like creature in Anna's subconscious. Shortly after Anna starts sleeping with Saul, she dreams of what she calls "the dream of joy in spite", as had occurred with all the men who surround her. It is remarkable to see how Anna recognises this figure in her dreams as if she expected it to appear just because she has started a relationship with a new man: "In my dream, I even nodded a sort of recognition—so there you are, I knew you'd turn up sometime!" (492) With this, Anna sees this principle as predictable in all the relationships she may have with men. In the concrete appearance of this concept, the equation of Saul with the negative animus shows strong sexual implications, which Anna has also found in the rest of men she has previously had relationships with.

This episode is vital to the interpretation of Saul, since it is in relation to him that Anna can interpret the meaning of this dream, and therefore confirm the fact that Saul—and any other previous man—works as her counterpart. For the first time she seems to accept that this notion also applies to herself as Saul's counterpart in the anima/animus dichotomy: "I put myself back to sleep, and instantly I was the old man, the old man

had become me, but I was also the old woman, so that I was sexless. I was also spiteful and destructive” (492). This is the final message of her dream.

Anna is reluctant to undergo psychoanalysis, as she failed to see the applicability of archetypes to real life until the very end of the novel, when she learns to dream her dream of joy-in-destruction positively, as Mother Sugar had suggested her to do:

Telling Mother Sugar of this dream, recreated for perhaps the sixth or seventh time, she asked, as usual: ‘And how do you name it?’ and I replied as usual with the words spite, malice, pleasure in hurt; and she enquired: ‘Only negative qualities, nothing good about it?’ ‘Nothing’, I said, surprised. ‘And there is nothing creative at all there?’ ‘Not for me.’

She then smiled in the way I knew meant that I should think more about it, and I asked: ‘If this figure is an elemental and creative force, for good as well as for evil, then, why should I fear it so terribly?’ ‘Perhaps as you dream deeper you’ll feel the vitality as good as well as bad.’ (420)

A lot can be said about the depiction of the psychoanalytic practice in this novel. We can see in it the Lacanian concept of the analyst: as an agency outside the subject, she cannot define the patient and can give no truth to her; accordingly, the psychoanalyst shows Anna that there is no clear answer and acts as a mirror to search for clues inside her own self. In her visits to Mother Sugar, we can see her unconscious revealed by the analyst as the part of discourse which is not available to the subject consciously. These sessions meet a Kristevan reading, since this critic defines the function of the analyst as “to reawaken the imagination and to permit illusions to exist” and goes on by saying that “Analytic discourse (...) issues from the web of imagination” (*In the Beginning was Love* 18). In the end, by revealing her imagination, Anna comes to the desired result of psychoanalysis: “After a lengthy process of remembering and self-discovery, the analysand learns to know himself, submerged though he is in the immanence of a significance that transcends him: the *unconscious*.” (*In the Beginning Was Love*, 61) The final outcome of the treatment, for both authors is that of self-knowledge after searching for the unconscious inside oneself. More than this, lack of unity will be

accepted and integrated while complete wholeness takes the place of the Lacanian phallus, as we have seen.

On the opposite side, Anna's acknowledgement that she can apply psychoanalysis to real life has led me to disagree with Rubenstein's claim that she does not accomplish integration through her creative capacity, since Mother Sugar is a representative of the tradition that Anna has come to reject (*Novelistic Vision* 84). Although Anna remains multiple at the end of the novel, the final positive dream of the Rumpelstiltskin figure of joy-in-spite, as it is called in the novel, allows her to start her way to some degree of reintegration and justifies a Jungian reading of this work. Moreover, the appearance of this unifying dream in connection with several different characters gathers them together as a unitary entity, the animus, which has a strong impact on Anna's construction of herself. The hint that the psychoanalyst gives her is the first step towards her own recognition of the multiple Anna and the acknowledgement of all the characters that form her identity. To understand such reasoning, we must, first, undergo a Jungian analysis of both the male and female sets of characters.

The clearest double for Saul, Milt, enacts his fictitious counterpart in the text of *Free Women*. An American who comes for a room and ends up by getting involved and having casual sex with Anna, Milt reproduces Saul's effects on her after they quit each other: she seems to be on the road to sanity after breakdown, finding a flat and getting a job. Acting in a far less aggressive way, Milt does not play Saul's destructive role but, on the contrary, is able to restore Anna's unified self by having interminable discussions on the difficulty of personal relationships, insanity and life in general. His is a simplified contribution which pushes Anna towards writing a novel which would develop her multiple personality.

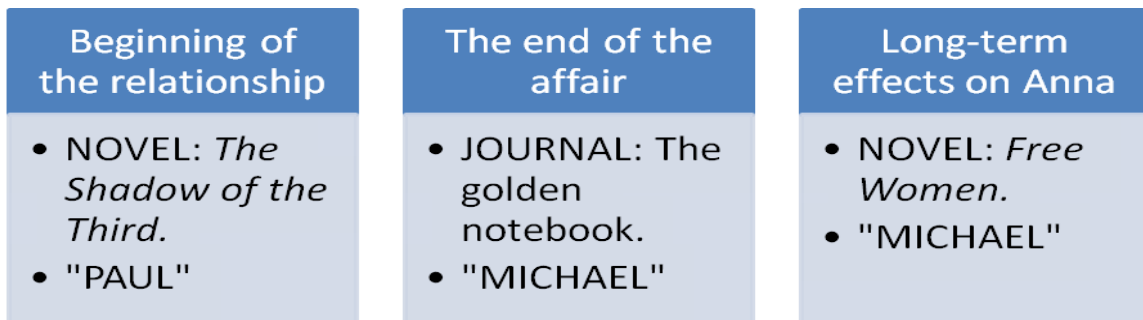
Anna keeps Milt out of her writing and, significantly enough, tells him that she has been trying to “cage the *truth*” but “it’s no good” as she “heard the dull flap flap, as the lids of her notebooks closed” (571). This sharp closing of the notebooks very much implies her moving on to something else. Apart from that, Anna thanks Milt for “taking that nonsense from my walls” (the newspaper cuttings that had invaded her existence), adding “Another few days and I really would have gone round the bend” (573). None of the negative aspects of the male characters listed by Wilson are to be found in the figure of Milt. By incorporating him in her fiction as Saul’s double, Anna is recognising the decisive role that he plays in her path to personal growth and unity.

Another male figure in the *Free Women* section is Richard. A simple personality, he has one set of negative dominant characteristics: he is egocentric and irresponsible, obsessively unfaithful. He is always inconsiderate towards Anna and Molly, and tactless when dealing with his wife’s alcoholism. He always blames others for his problems and permanently lives in self-justification. Richard may epitomize the criticism that Anna and Molly have to face for the life they are leading, which they defend despite their dissatisfaction:

Richard again visibly suffered. ‘Yes—and you call yourself Miss Jacobs. Miss. In the interests of your own right to independence and your own identity—whatever *that* might mean. But Tommy has Miss Jacobs for a mother.’ (39)

Michael and Paul contribute a fundamental role to this discussion: the former appears in the journal and, therefore, is ostensibly factual; the latter is confined in the fictional world of Anna’s creation. Michael and Paul also seem to be complementary in the chronological building of the plot: while they stand for the same character, the blue notebook covers the time when Anna and Michael’s affair is coming to an end, whereas in the yellow notebook there is a detailed narrative about the beginning of the relationship between Ella and Paul. In both cases, however, there is a full commentary

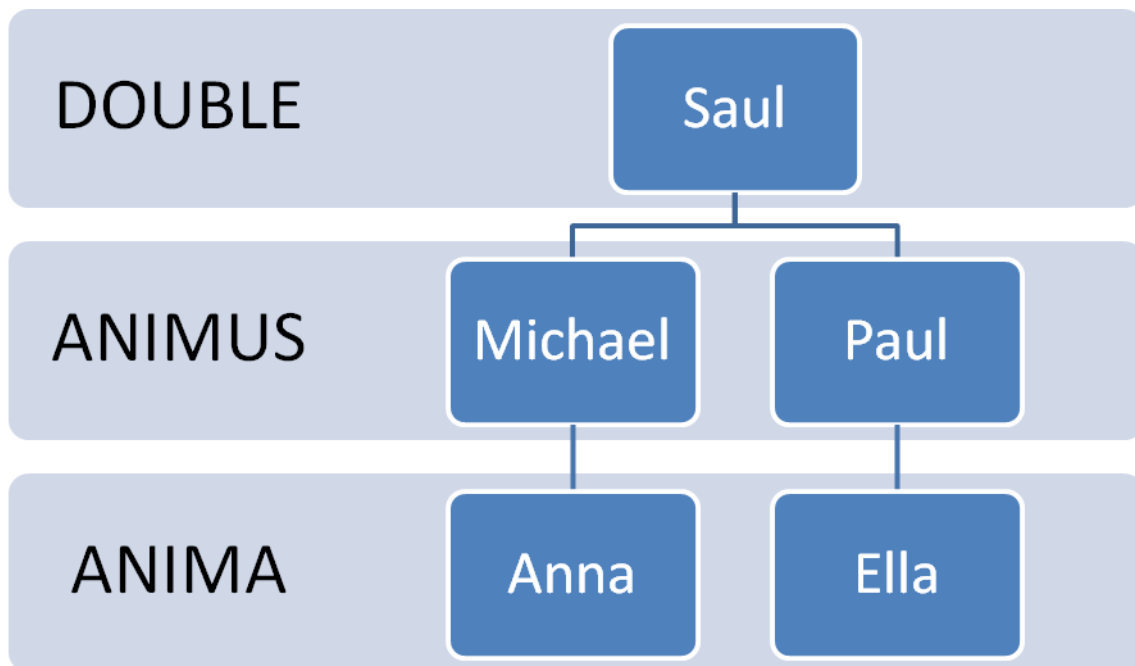
on the effects that both lovers have had on Anna/Ella. In the case of Michael, these effects are not only recorded in the diary, but they are also recreated in *Free Women*, which is said to take place in 1957, three years after the affair is over. This means that Michael's character is brought into fiction three times: first, in *The Shadow of the Third* under the name of Paul; second, in the blue notebook, which, as we have already seen, has proved to be fiction; and third, in the likewise fictional *Free Women*. The distribution of the two characters who stand for the same entity is summarised in the following diagram:



**Diagram 1: distribution of the Paul/Michael character.**

Apart from the fact that Paul/Michael acts as the double of Saul in his role as animus, Rubenstein recognises in Anna/Michael and Ella/Paul the anima/animus dichotomy (*Novelistic Vision* 80-81) and goes on to say that Ella experiences Paul both positively and negatively, as happens with Anna's approach to Saul and, on a subconscious level of the mind, with the dwarf that recurrently appears in Anna's dreams. It is important to remember here that Saul's contribution to the individuation process is also destructive, which permits a subsequent breakthrough. This ambivalence is significant, both in Paul and in Michael, although destruction may be more noticeable

in Paul's case, as we will see. These sets of doubles which converge under the figure of Saul can be visualised as follows:



**Diagram 2: characters who embody the anima/animus dichotomy, and their doubles.**

As happens with almost all the male characters in the novel, both Michael and Paul function as earlier versions of Saul. Once again in Lessing's fiction, names provide clues to the relationship between characters: "Paul" and "Saul" are quite similar and easy to mistake; moreover, the biblical reference adds to the fact that both characters are equivalent. As was usual from Judaism to Christianity, Saint Paul had two names—one Hebrew and one Latin—with certain assonance. As a Roman citizen, he was called Paul while he was given the name Saul at the time of his circumcision, thus becoming Saul of Tarsus.

Both Michael and Paul try to cause unease and resentment in their partners as a response to their attitudes. Making fun of Anna's being "an authoress" also brings about her anger, and the same thing happens to Ella when "his (Paul's) voice is always full of distrust when she mentions her writing" (194). Paul always has an accusatory

disposition when he supposes that Ella has other lovers, or that she had planned to have sex on their first date, and he even blames her for keeping him away from his children. Michael shows deliberate hostility towards Anna's obligations as a mother by using his cold irony (for instance, in the words "Well, the cares of motherhood must ever come before lovers", 214). Moreover, Michael always wants sex when Anna is stressed and listening for her daughter, but loses interest when there is no danger that the child might hear them. Anna reacts angrily and recognises the desire of causing pain that she sees in his behaviour: "Janet, the little girl, the eight-year-old, represents for him partly women—other women, whom he betrays to sleep with me; and partly, child; the essence of child, against whom he is asserting his rights to live" (299).

Anna suffers from fragmentation quite clearly during her relationship with Michael: she often thinks about her two personalities (Janet's mother and Michael's mistress) which she cannot reunite (301), when it is precisely unity and wholeness that she is looking for. Ambiguity is also seen as being related to her feeling of resentment, of which Michael is the source; and yet, he is also capable of taking away Anna's resentment towards herself: "When I have my period, I rest on the knowledge that Michael will love me, at night; it takes away the resentment against the wound inside my body, which I didn't choose to have" (324). Michael's role as Anna's animus can be seen very clearly in the re-evaluation of events that she makes some time after they break up, when she rereads her notebooks. She realises that her personality has changed with Michael's influence and feels that she does not even recognize herself, now that he does not complement her. (418) Sprague points out that the quality which Michael adds to Anna is experience to her innocence, as she is still optimistic about the human condition (Sprague 76).



Paul's case is far more complicated. As this character belongs to fiction and has been created after a thorough analysis of Michael's behaviour, the influence he has on Ella is emphasised and deeply examined by Anna, the writer. In doing so, Anna is evaluating her own situation. According to Cederstrom, Ella contributes her positive side to the affair while Paul projects his negative side, which could account for their complementarity. She goes on to say that Ella's problem is that her self-definition depends on a man's perception of her, and she seeks wholeness in relationships with men—just like Anna does. However, the most important point Cederstrom makes is the fact that “Ella is a fragmented character projecting wholeness onto fragmented men who are projecting wholeness onto her” (Cederstrom *Psyche* 125-6), which can be made extensive to Anna herself and her relationships to all the men in the novel.

The negative effects that Paul has on Ella are explained in the first part of the yellow notebook. Paul limits Ella's intelligence by creating another kind of Ella, innocent and credulous, who refuses to foresee the end of the affair; once this woman in love is destroyed and she starts thinking it over, she fights to go back to naivety (194). In Ella's case, destruction does not entail subsequent reconstruction: as Ella could only define herself through Paul's perception, she resents the loss of his presence as an external authority which makes her face the Jungian notion that a person should obtain the qualities he or she needs by personal growth within, rather than acquiring them through a persona. Later on in life, Ella tries to behave like the men who have hurt her in sexual relationships, which in Jung's terms would correspond to a “regressive restoration of the persona”, limiting her own potentiality and, therefore, preventing her individuation process (Cederstrom *Psyche* 127).

In fact, the narrative shows how, years later, in Paul's absence, Ella tries to become Paul—the authority that she lacks. As Michael James Griffin has observed, her

relationship to Paul “is one in which Ella never seems to reach climax or conclusion without circling back to Paul” (Griffin 22), and notices this dependence in the following fragment: “She put herself to sleep, as always, by thinking of Paul. She had never, since he had left her, been able to achieve vaginal orgasm; she was able to reach the sharp violence of the exterior orgasm, her hand becoming Paul’s hand, mourning, as she did so, the loss of her real self” (277). This critic points out that, in a way, Ella’s own body acts as the agent of the masculine subject; therefore, this episode insists on the fact that Ella needs Paul to be complete. Moreover, Ella’s “mourning the loss of her real self” shows that she is still far from achieving wholeness, mainly because she seeks the qualities she needs for growth outside herself and adopts them as a persona.

Quite a number of critics, such as Suzette Henke or Sprague, postulate De Silva as the embodiment of the sadistic oneiric demon. This character symbolizes fear of failure and rejection, as he is cruel, sarcastic and detached. Words such as “hostility”, “aggression”, “corruption”, “cold”, “sadist” or “cruel” are quite frequent in his description (436-7). He is immoral, has deserted his family after having forced his wife to have a second child that she did not want. He overtly accepts his attraction for depravity and tries to persuade women into sexual practices that may be degrading. Consequently, Anna recognizes him at first glance: “I recognized the smile—it was the essence of my dream, it was the smile from the figure in my dream” (438); and, therefore, joy-in-spite is directly identified with him when it appears in Anna’s dreams: “I have dreamt of De Silva twice. He is, incarnate, the principle of joy-in-giving-pain. He was in my dream without disguise, just as he is in life, smiling, malicious, detached, interested” (440). Although, as we have seen, all men in the novel are related to the dwarf-like creature in Anna’s dreams, De Silva is the purest embodiment of the principle of destruction, and only at the end of the notebooks, in the last incident of

madness with Saul, do we find the revelation that that both Anna and Saul embody De Silva, or the joy-in-spite creature, as I already explained when dealing with Saul (518).

Even the most secondary characters add to Anna's negativity. Two other male sources of discomfort are Ivor and Ronnie, who, instead of openly criticising her, use irony and mockery against the female world, where Anna belongs. The butt of their jokes is precisely the weaknesses that she does not want to accept; therefore, the fact that these attitudes can be recognised in the two homosexuals, designates them as her masculine projections. Anna's frailty is made evident when she is not strong enough to turn Ronnie out and it is only increased when he makes an exhibition of leaving to make her feel "a bitch" (361). The process of her growing weakness is finally completed when she cannot prevent Ronnie from coming back to her own house.

All these masculine characters are, at the same time, synthesised in the character of Tommy, who is a negative figure by definition: more significant than his suicide attempt is his reaction to being blind. He feels satisfied by the uneasiness that his mother feels towards the events, an attitude which is extended to Anna, as she suspects that his failed attempt at self-destruction was a result of reading the notebooks:

... 'And the thing is, I have to leave the room because I know quite well *he* knows I'm feeling like that and...' She stopped herself. Then she made herself go on, defiantly: 'He enjoys it.' She gave a high yelp of laughter, and said: 'He's happy, Anna.' 'Yes.' Now it was out at last, they both felt easier. 'He's happy for the first time in his life. And that's so terrible... you can see how he moves and talks- he's all in one piece for the first time in his life.' Molly gasped in horror at her own words, hearing what she had said: *all in one piece*, and matching them against the truth of mutilation. (335)

The language that we find in Tommy's description is the same to be found in the characterisation of the destruction principle: "The *malicious* stranger had come back, and was sitting in front of her, his eyes full of *spite*" (238), "He saw her blush and smiled *malignantly*" (239), "She could almost see the enemy—something *evil*, she was sure of it; an almost tangible shape of *malice* and destruction, that stood between her and Tommy, trying to *destroy* them both" (243) (my italics).

The negative aspect of Tommy even makes Anna feel endangered: “Tommy’s presence in the room and the necessity to think of how to face him had kept her more or less Anna, more or less herself.” (240). This effect is the same that she gets with Saul, when she feels her own identity menaced, and, beyond the boundaries of *The Golden Notebook*, this sensation parallels the mother-son relationship in *The Fifth Child*, which will be dealt with in chapter five of this thesis. In connection to this, Anna’s dream of the two babies brings about her sense of guilt because Tommy tried to kill himself after reading her four notebooks. The person who risks disappearing in the dream is precisely the only one who has ever read the notebooks, and the one to blame is the writer; consequently, there is something wrong in these journals that seems destructive to any form of identity.

By creating the character of Tommy in *Free Women*, Anna is creating a counterpart of Saul in the fiction: he is, moreover, the only character who has access to her own writing process. In the personal journal, it is Saul, rather than Anna, who draws conclusions about the convenience of keeping four diaries or of putting everything into one. Moreover, his suggestion to start a new novel is the catalyst to Anna’s breakthrough. As for Tommy, he is the only external authority in the fictional world of *Free Women* who reads the notebooks, when Anna’s self-analysis seems to be insufficient: “And I read them. I hadn’t read them through since I first began to keep them. I was disturbed by reading them” (418). Following Didier, both Saul and Tommy (and by extension, all the male characters) perform their masculine role and act as counterparts to Anna, who remains, as the “moi objet”, in the domain of the observed (regardé) that the novel explores<sup>22</sup>, which proves that Anna and Saul/Tommy depict the anima/animus pair.

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<sup>22</sup> On the specific quotes of Didier about this duality, see p. 110-111 in this thesis.

Griffin explains that Anna's internal division between reader and writer is a device which creates an Other and, moreover, there is a constant fear that she will not be able to express herself, as she is overconscious of a reader who will impose personal interpretations on her writing, and who will try to transform her (Griffin 20). Therefore, this critic is right to highlight her thoughts: "who is that Anna who will read what I write? Who is this other whose judgment I fear?" (312). This other Anna is no more than a specific part of herself projected onto a member of the opposite sex, her animus. This coincides with both the Lacanian concept of identity (which is unstable and in continuous flux due to the subject-object dichotomy created by consciousness) and its Kristevan parallel (subjects are always in process, losing their identity and fluctuating in their relations to the other). The fact that Anna witnesses the object means that she is forever separate from it.

### 3.3.3. The women in the novel: the shadow.

Let us now complete our discussion of Anna's process of individuation by concentrating on the shadow archetype. Lessing provides the novel with a variety of characters who work as Anna's shadow, not only by giving her alter egos, but also by making Anna create her own alter egos in her writing. Thanks to the creative aspect of the animus, she deals with her split personality by transforming it into two different characters in her writing (Anna and Molly). This is the clue to the fictional nature of the events recorded in the journal and reaffirms Anna's conscious knowledge of this fact: "Obviously, my changing everything into fiction is simply a means of concealing something from myself." (211)

Sprague explains how, at the reception of *The Golden Notebook*,

It took a while to recognize Anna Wulf's role as Anna-editor or Anna-writer or Anna-scriptwriter, or to accept *Free Women* as fiction or to question the "truth" of the notebooks. (65)

She goes on to say that "Anna creates Molly, who may be as fictive as Ella" (72). Greene seems to suggest an interpretation along the same lines: "When Anna can accept that there is no reality apart from the mind that perceives it and the words that shape it, she can accept that none of her versions is true—or all are true, or truth itself is a fiction, invented rather than discovered" (113). Molly, therefore, can be regarded as fictionalisation of some of Anna's inner aspects when she attempts to unfold her personality in order to better analyse it. The Molly in *Free Women* is indeed created by Anna as a projection of herself. The Molly in the blue diary might be, leaving a loose end (one of many) in the reading of *The Golden Notebook*. Nonetheless, if we take into account the fact that the blue notebook functions as the space where the subconscious finds its place, Molly could have two distinct natures: first, she could be a real character who shows up as Anna's projection although Anna does not recognise her as such. In this case, the writer needs to make the conscious effort to extrapolate the hidden traits of her personality present in Molly and consciously adapt her to her fiction, where she creates a fictional Molly. Second, Molly in the personal diary may be as fictive as in *Free Women*, which would reveal the fact that in the journal writing process, Anna has already been dissociating two different aspects of herself by providing two different characters. In this case, the difference between both narratives would be the fact that, in the novel, Molly is overtly a fictive character in an attempt to recreate "the two women that *she is*" (my italics, 554). This matter perfectly matches the blurred nature of fact and fiction which, according to Didier, underlies the journal.

Readers can best appreciate the real meaning of the beginning of *Free Women* in their second reading of the novel, when they have acquired the knowledge this novel comes from Saul Green's urging Anna to write it. The real implication of the initial

scene is, therefore, Anna's reassembling of her multiple self after the long period of vital fragmentation (depicted as a long separation from Molly) which has driven her to a breakdown. Only after having read the complete story of Anna's disintegration, writer's block and search for reintegration, does the reader understand that the novel is an account of putting herself together through the writing process in order to achieve unity. The starting point comes after the development of the entire plot, which makes *The Golden Notebook* the most circular of Lessing's novels, even more than *The Grass is Singing*.

Molly and Anna have already been recognised by the critics as a shadow pair (Cederstrom *Psyche* 10). However, those who interpret Molly as Anna's shadow, do not consider her as Anna's fictional creation; conversely, the only critic who argues for Molly's fictionality (Sprague) does not make a Jungian reading of the two women's relationship. My approach is, therefore, an all-inclusive one, since I interpret the relationship between Anna and Molly in Jungian terms by arguing that Anna Wulf creates Molly as her shadow by using aspects of herself that she does not overtly recognise. Thus she isolates those traits in order to analyse them in her struggle towards wholeness and individuation.

Anna's creation of Molly embodies her acceptance of multiplicity. Durán interprets the importance of "otherness" as having to do with Chodorow's notion of the feminine "relational self", an aspect which can indeed be perceived in *The Golden Notebook* (Durán 103). In my view, Anna even has to create a character in order to define herself in relation to someone. There are some personality traits present in Molly which Anna longs for, that is, the qualities that Anna seeks inside herself in order to permit personal growth. As she fails to recognise these qualities in her inner self, she brings them to life in the character she creates as her alter ego. These features could be

listed as her spontaneity, her ability for role-changing and her many talents. These are nothing more than complementary traits to her most outstanding characteristics, certainly present in herself, although they lie in the most profound layers of her psyche. Anna is also gifted, but more focused on the specific discipline of writing, as she sticks to her writer's persona and to her role as an observer. Apart from this, a few elements show that they can also stand for the same person: for instance, their same age, the fact that they are both divorced mothers who would like to remarry, and the fact that they were both Communist Party members. Although they are quite different physically, they seem to be the same entity, and Anna even states: "I discovered while you were away that for a lot of people you and I are practically interchangeable" (26) Even Richard, Molly's ex-husband, goes to Anna more than once when he wants to talk about the conflicts with his son Tommy or his wife Marion; in fact, he receives no understanding from his ex-wife and seeks it in Anna. It is just as if he was appealing to different qualities in the same person, since, in his view, talking to one or the other will have the same final results. The result is that, apart from being complementary and interchangeable, Anna comes to adopt an active role as Tommy's mother.

In her several fictional enterprises, Anna also recreates her dark side—present in the figure of Molly—in such characters as Ella and Julia, as fictional counterparts to herself and Molly, respectively. Those characters, in turn, have their own shadows, mainly embodied by Muriel, the decent and idealised wife and "woman at home", who acts as an evident shadow for Ella. To make the pattern even more multiple, there are also echoes of Muriel in Marion and Maryrose. Once again, we find a pattern of multiplicity in female characters, all doubling Anna, equivalent to the model we found in the case of the male ones, all contributing to the notion of masculinity.



Cederstrom concludes that Anna can only conquer her shadow when she recognizes that dwarf-like creature as a part of herself, as a dark side that is normally hidden and ignored (Cederstrom *Psyche* 11). However, as I see it, this entity has more to do with the animus, as it is always a person of the opposite sex who brings about this malicious force. Therefore, when Anna eventually recognises this power in herself, it has to be identified as the anima, as a projection of the men in the novel. Once this specification has been made clear, in order to identify the shadow, attention should be paid to all the female characters and the personality traits that are present in Anna, but also exemplified in other women characters. What makes *The Golden Notebook* unique and profound is the fact that Anna, as a writer, creates her own shadows by providing them with the personality aspects that she does not dare recognise in herself.

Muriel needs to be analysed in detail, since she is the character most clearly playing this archetypal role. The key to a Jungian reading of the character appears right in the title of the novel she inhabits: *The Shadow of the Third*. There is widespread critical consensus in the interpretation of “shadow” and “third” in this title, which makes Muriel the main alter ego (and shadow figure) for Ella. Muriel the wife performs what Ella in fact is, or wishes to be: the woman at home who takes care of Paul. Moreover, from a formal point of view, the appearance of this character is brought about by the Michael/Paul pair, thus enhancing the relevance of these two masculine characters. In Anna’s notes, she herself acknowledges Muriel to be Ella’s shadow and also plans its development: “From this point of the novel ‘the third’, previously Paul’s wife; then, Ella’s younger *alter ego* formed from fantasies about Paul’s wife; then, the memory of Paul; becomes Ella herself.” (396). From this passage we can infer that, once the affair is over, this shadow turns into a memory of Paul himself; and finally, Ella recognises him as her animus (*Novelistic Vision* 81). Throughout this development,

Ella clings to this shadow as a sort of protection. The following account of Anna as she plans her novel is quite illustrative:

If I were to write this novel, the main theme or motif would be buried, at first, and only slowly take over. The motif of Paul's wife, the third. At first Ella does not think about her. Then she has to make a conscious effort not to think about her. This is when she knows her attitude towards this unknown woman is despicable: she feels triumph over her, pleasure that she has taken Paul from her (193).

Here we have the hidden and unacknowledged feelings that the shadow contributes: the feeling of cheating the wife. The principle of pleasure in giving pain is, therefore, also present in Ella, as she has adopted her role in the anima/animus dichotomy in which Paul is her masculine counterpart.

In her imagination, Ella builds a picture of Muriel which is exactly her opposite, and thus complements her weakness and insecurity: "A serene, calm, unjealous, unenvious, undemanding woman, full of resources of happiness inside herself, self-sufficient, yet always ready to give happiness when it is asked for" (193). The prefix "un-" is quite significant in this description: depicting her in negative terms that convey the meaning of a lack of qualities reinforces the fact that she is nothing in herself. And finally, there is a remark by Anna Wulf, the writer, that this image has nothing to do with reality and is only what she would like to be herself: "this imagined woman is her own shadow, everything she is not" (193). Ella's wish to develop those inner resources for happiness is outstanding here, which is only logical since in Lessing's works, paralleling the Jungian postulates, the need of the characters to seek wholeness stems from inside themselves.

Nevertheless, in order to bring Muriel to life, Anna Wulf has had to create Ella as her own alter ego; this particular effect could be called "the shadow of the shadow". Ella is weak as a character, as we have already seen in her relationship with Paul, and Muriel's effect on her is acting as an excuse for her own weakness, since the wife's existence prevents Ella from living with Paul. In this way, Ella seems always unfinished

as a character, or one trying to take a more positive form. In the meantime, she is the defence against the personal and social disintegration that troubles Anna (Cederstrom "Elements" 52). Just in the same way as Muriel acts as an idealized shadow for Ella, Ella acts as a negative shadow for Anna, with passive, self-destructive, insecure and weak tendencies, which she fails to recognise in herself. Several critics have seen this multiple mirror effect with Muriel, Ella and Anna, as suggesting that Anna is using her shadow creatively (Cederstrom "Elements" 2); however, I prefer to propose that it goes in the opposite direction and that the protagonist's creativity allows her to recreate dark aspects of herself in the various fictitious characters that she puts in the position of "alter ego" in order to make these personality traits come to light.

In order to summarise the shadow matter in the novel, we must bear in mind that both Molly and Ella are products of Anna's creativity. The fact that the shadow is distributed in two figures rather than one can be explained by the fact that Ella is a negative shadow, that is, a dark side of personality that Anna does not recognise, while Molly is a more positive shadow figure, created to express the positive side, one side Anna often fails to see in herself, but which is also there. The rest of the female characters work as shadows of one another. The entire pattern, then, brings about the multiplicity we found in male characters, and which is linked to Sprague's reading of the doubles. Even Janet, Anna's eight-year-old daughter, brings her own self to completion at some point, and even merges with her, standing for the part of herself that she wants to protect. Going to the child's bed to wake her up in the morning, she states "I shrink, in affection, to Janet's size, and become Janet" (...). "Then I make myself be Anna: I see Janet, a small child in a big bed" (...) "then I tell myself I must protect her from nothing, this need is really Anna wanting to protect Anna" (...) "A pretty little girl. Janet. Anna." (299-300)

Anna finally being able to leave Molly—“The two women kissed and separated” (576)—is an important matter on the *Free Women* part. This separation suggests that the heroine has finally been able to accept and internalise her multiple nature, and no longer needs to depict it in another fictional self. From this moment onwards, she will be *one*, built up by many different aspects of herself. Moreover, since Molly is just as fictional as Ella, when Anna says goodbye to her, she is letting go of all the figures that represent either Molly or herself in the novel: Ella, Julia, Maryrose, Marion, Muriel. (Sprague 67). In the process of building Molly up, Anna has gradually recovered her writing self and overcome her writer’s block and her depression. She is now unified as one sole identity which comprises all the qualities resulting from the multiplicity of female characters which form her identity.

In consequence, could we argue that Anna embodies all the women (just as the animus that she confronts embodies masculinity as a whole)? As we have seen, just as the male figures work as a set of multiples rather than doubles, the same happens with all the female characters who seem to duplicate Anna. Furthermore, Anna embodies different personalities when dealing with men and she acts differently with each of them. The different women characters represent the different personalities who personify herself and relate to the multiplicity of men in the novel, who can be seen as making a complex unity between them all, just as the female ones do. Anna is finally made up of all the men (who stand for her animus), all the women (who embody the anima) and also by all the relationships among them, as it is summarised in the following diagram:



**Diagram 3: multiple male and female characters who constitute the anima/animus pair and converge in Anna.**

Sprague draws a parallel between *The Golden Notebook* and *The Children of Violence* series, where all the women and all the men appear to melt into one. She argues that this tendency is a common feature in Lessing's work. She also mentions T.S. Eliot's influence on the author as she directs us to the note to *The Waste Land*, where the same phenomenon happens with both sexes meeting in Tiresias. She suggests that this also happens to Anna, when she finds out that the joy-in-spite principle underlying her masculine counterpart is present in herself too (Sprague 60). This observation finally closes the issue of the multiple male and female characters who perform Anna's animus and shadow respectively to form a reintegrated and complex self.

#### 3.3.4. Animus, anima and the mother-image.

After this analysis of the animus and shadow, it is necessary to describe how those two archetypes needed in individuation correspond each to the “primitive or paleological” thinking, or to “splitting or division”, which appear in deep levels of the psyche, in the processes of image-making and projection, as Rubenstein explains (*Novelistic Vision* 76). In primitive thinking, which is known in deep psychology as “condensation”, several ideas or figures may be superimposed upon one person or symbolic figure, which synthesises them all. This is the case of all the male characters that fuse in the animus being identified as the Dwarf, which, in turn, is associated with Anna, as she constitutes the other side of the animus/anima dichotomy. Splitting is the opposite process, which involves the distribution of emotions among several figures, and is to be visible in the construction of several shadow figures which contain the many qualities of Anna’s womanhood and motherhood. The symbolic value of these analogical, associative and image-making processes dramatised in fiction has been appreciated by Rubenstein, who emphasises the value of *The Golden Notebook* for its depiction of such processes by means of divisions, splits and projections. All in all, the main objective of the novel’s structure, that is, the depiction of a multiplicity of spheres of the self to create a female identity, is achieved by the creation of a multiplicity of female characters who constitute different aspects present in Anna. All things considered, Anna is the woman archetype formed by the sum of all the female identities in the novel.

Motherhood in *The Golden Notebook* is an issue that has possibly not been given the importance it deserves by the critics. It is far from being omnipresent in the novel, in contrast to the number of pages devoted to relationships between men and women,

politics or the historical context. Ezergailis has even argued that “There is a lack of maternal element though Anna tries to be a good mother.” And she goes on by saying that “As long as she has Janet with her, she will keep herself just sufficiently integrated to function as mother. Once Janet goes off, she lets chaos in and eventually there is some hope of the kind of reintegration” (Ezergailis 16-17). I will now try to prove that the multiplicity of identities that constitute Anna make her an exponent of all the diverse and subjective experiences of women in respect to their potential motherhood. This matter is linked to the concept of “mother figure” theorised by the second wave Feminism, and specifically in the theories of Adrienne Rich: all the infinite subjective experiences of women towards their potential motherhood (even from those who are not mothers) build up the institution of motherhood of which Anna is the representative. I will now illustrate the permanent presence of the subject of motherhood in the novel, as well as its power to make the main figure achieve the completed self she has been searching for.

The character of Max would be in a good position to further the process of individuation, as he occupies the place of the husband, his embodiment of the animus would be just natural. However, his participation in Anna’s identity building has to be discarded, thus paralleling Dick in *The Grass is Singing*. Anna was frigid with her husband, which creates a distance between them that she never experiences with anyone else. The dreams she associates with Max do not have the joy-in-spite element which is present in the rest of her relationships with men. The unconscious material linked to Max seems always to involve a lack of feeling because helplessness is the only sensation that she gets when she remembers her married days. The fact that Max is not included in the multiple-faced animus is fully coherent with his factual (non-fictional) nature. As we have previously concluded, all the characters are narrative constructions

which build up the various novels included in *The Golden Notebook*, the same can be said of the so-called personal journals which, in fact, are not such. Max is not central to any of the notebooks, but appears in them just as a vague memory. The diary entry about Anna's decision to have a baby, and which has Max as a leading character, is introduced as a completely factual one as opposed to Anna's tendency to fictionalising; therefore, the ex-husband appears as one of the few elements which do not respond to Anna's invention: "I seem to remember starting a diary once before Janet was born. I'll look for it. Yes, here is the entry I vaguely remembered" (212).

Remarkably enough, when discussing Max, who "never touched me at all, never got close to me", Anna concludes "But there's Janet..." (213), which suggests that, in contrast to the dismissal of Max as an archetype contributing to Anna's psyche, he seems to be involved in the appearance of the mother archetype, which Anna herself performs, and which consequently has more weight in the individuation process. In that process, each archetypal figure that Anna confronts, including the mother archetype, is a projection of the collective unconscious. The matching of the qualities that are not assimilated with herself takes place in dreams and is embodied by others. (Cederstrom, "Elements" 51). In her personal life, Anna comes to terms with her animus and shadow in a fairly complicated manner, because of the doubling of characters in the novel. In the political sphere, she faces the Jungian wise old man, or great father (which is mirrored, to a lesser degree, by Mother Sugar in the blue notebook) as standing for a given philosophical discipline.

The mother archetype is (together with the joy-in-spite principle) a vital element in Anna's growth. Let us now look at this issue in more detail: Anna Wulf does embody the mother figure for several characters in *The Golden Notebook*. She has a motherly attitude to all the men in the novel and acts as Janet and Tommy's functional mother.



This is confirmed by her dream of them as two babies. Tommy's attitude after his suicide attempt brings about one of the most outstanding dreams in the novel, which pictures Janet and Tommy as Anna's two children. Janet is healthy and satisfied, while Tommy is starving. Consequently, Anna wakes up anxious, confused and guilty. Apart from the remorse she feels as the instigator of the suicide attempt through her writing, this dream shows her acceptance of responsibility over both children. In her role as a counterpart to Molly, Anna turns out to be a more active mother to the young man than Molly ever could be.

A global definition of the mother archetype characterises such a figure as the receptacle of life (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 625). Apart from being a mother, Anna seems to perform the role of the vessel containing the totality of life as a result from all the diverse material which she creates and recreates in her many writings. Apart from that, there is some ambivalence between life and death in the mother archetype, which is also exemplified in Anna's dream of the two babies. Its positive values are "all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility" while there is a negative side of "anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate" (Jung 82). Both sides are represented by the two babies in the dream, Janet being the one who receives nurture and care, Tommy being starved by his own mother (564-565). A crucial fact is that Anna's breasts appear empty in the dream because Janet has had all the milk in them, which seems to link the dream to one of the first psychoanalytical interpretations of the mother figure: M. Klein's. According to this theory, Anna is acting towards Janet as the good mother through her breast, "the primary good object", the symbol of infinite maternal goodness, patience and generosity, while she is acting as the "bad mother" towards Tommy by not breastfeeding him, which is associated to

mistreatment, abandonment and non-recognition of her own child (qtd. in Velasco 138). Nevertheless, Tommy's starvation is not just a consequence of having neglected him, but is the representation of something hidden and poisoning that has been revealed to him.

The Virgin Mary, the archetypal Christian mother, is said to be the mother of her own God and therefore, the daughter of her own son, as he is God, her own creator. (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 625). This complex dialectic parallels *The Golden Notebook's* enactment of this reversal of the child giving life to its own mother. Anna recognises that she performs different roles that can be defined as those corresponding to the archetypal roles of woman/mother, and that those roles may be mutually exclusive: "I haven't moved, at ease, in time, since Janet was born. Having a child means being conscious of the clock, never being free of something that has to be done at a certain moment ahead. An Anna is coming to life that died when Janet was born" (512).

There is always a conflict in Anna between the need for freedom and the restrictions of motherhood, and she sees her fragmented identity as the result of the tension between her maternal and sexual selves: "The two personalities—Janet's mother, Michael's mistress—are happier separated. It is a strain having to be both at once." (301). This phenomenon stems from the difficulty, explained by Ferro (29), and included in the introduction to this thesis, in defining oneself as a woman (rather than a mother) as opposed to man, since the psychoanalytic definitions of femininity necessarily entail motherhood. However, Anna finally assumes both dimensions, thus defeating the impenetrable dichotomy that Kristeva explained in "Stabat Mater" as being basic to Western civilisation:

A woman will only have the choice to live her life either *hyper-abstractly* ('immediately universal', Hegel said) in order thus to earn divine grace and homologation with

symbolic order; or merely *different*, other, fallen ('immediately particular', Hegel said). But she will not be able to accede to the complexity of being divided, of heterogeneity, of the catastrophic-fold-of-being' ('never singular', Hegel said). (173)

Nevertheless, Janet seems to represent Anna's contact with normality, which she only abandons when the daughter leaves for boarding school. The child's world shows a mediating power, as it forces Anna to participate in Janet's day and structure her life clearly and recurrently, thus keeping her from the verge of breakdown (Ezergailis 50): "I have been very depressed. I have depended a great deal on that personality—Janet's mother. I continually ask myself—how extraordinary, that when inside I am flat, nervous, dead, can still, for Janet, be calm, responsible, alive?" (435). The idea of remaining alive for the children's sake meets a more philosophical explanation in Ella's—Anna's alter ego—words, which are linked to the dialectical sense of life-giving, from mother to child and from child to mother: "How odd!—the phrase is, to give a child life; but a child gives life to its parent when the parent decides to live simply because to commit suicide would hurt the child" (297).

In Jungian psychoanalysis, the effects produced by the mother on the child are twofold: first, those corresponding to personality traits present in the mother and, second, those corresponding to projections by the child. Therefore, in a man's psyche, the anima archetype initially appears mingled with the mother image (Jung 82-83). The mother archetype is, therefore, perceived through the unconscious and is the first anima image which the man has to project onto someone of the opposite sex; which is first identified with the mother only in order to be shifted to the lover later on in life (Cirlot 291). This explanation brings us again to the definition of Tommy as the most outstanding element of a collective animus corresponding to the anima performed by Anna. It is precisely in its role as anima that the mother figure acquires its double aspect: the constructive and the destructive natures (nurture and neglect), which

correspond, simultaneously, to the destruction previous to the subsequent reconstruction that Saul Green brings about as Anna's animus.

The importance of motherhood does not end with her embodiment of the mother archetype: on the contrary, it is precisely her role as mother which makes her a relational self. This type of female self results in a psyche built through a process which corresponds to the model of women's perception of reality that Chodorow theorised (77). With the transmission of the nurturing values from mothers to daughters, women learn how to care about others and therefore finally define themselves accordingly.

Although central to the development of Anna as a relational self, the mother-daughter relationship in the novel is far from being an easy one. Lessing's matrophobia, which many critics have pointed out, is made especially evident in her autobiography. In *The Golden Notebook* there is a dysfunctional relationship between mother and daughter, as "Anna's own mother is never mentioned and her utopian ideal centres (...) on a relationship with a man that transcends the banalities of domesticity and conversation" (Mephram 129). The usual model for this dysfunctional relationship would be the failure of the mother and the young daughter to understand each other. However, the phenomenon is reversed in the tie between Anna and Janet. Despite Anna's profound identification with Janet, it is the daughter who wants to go away to a boarding school, since she does not feel comfortable in her mother's world. The quest for the mother is as painful for all the characters, even for Saul, whose search for the mother is one aspect of her identity problems and complicates his relationship with Anna:

Like all Americans you've got mother-trouble. You've fixed on me for your mother. You have to outwit me all the time, it's important that I should be outwitted. It's important to lie and be believed. Then, when I get hurt, your murderous feelings for me, for the mother, frighten you, so that you have to comfort and soothe me... (543-4)

The effects that Anna has on her children, either real or surrogate, have a remarkable meaning if analysed under the light of Jungian psychoanalysis. As has been stated, Anna and Tommy act as the “animus-anima” pair but, beyond this, Jung’s mother-complex of the son is also recognisable. Homosexuality and Don Juanism (to use Jungian terms) are not found, as such, in the character of Tommy, as could be expected as a result of mother-complex in a man. However, if this complex is approached from a non-pathological dimension, as Jung himself suggests, its positive effects are present in the depiction of Tommy; therefore, Tommy’s sexual identity is not discussed, but we find in him the great capacity for friendship which is presupposed in this type of men, which allows him to recover friendship between the sexes, as is shown in his relationship with Marion. Due to his mother-complex, Tommy is gifted as a teacher and makes Marion discover the realities of the social and political context they live in, motivating her and making her critical and active. The positive side of Don Juanism is also present in him, in the form of a resolute manliness, opposition to injustice, perseverance, toughness of will and a revolutionary spirit. Nevertheless, this non-conformism may sometimes result in frustration and rejection of reality, which triggers his suicide attempt. (Jung, *Archetypes* 85-87).

Janet, on her part, personifies resistance to the mother when the mother-complex affects the daughter. As Jung puts it, “the motto of this type is: Anything, so long as it is not like Mother!” (*Archetypes* 90) Janet feels the fascination that never results in identification, as well as an “intensification of Eros which exhausts itself in jealous resistance.” (*Archetypes* 90-91). As a result, Janet knows what she does *not* want, which is precisely her mother’s universe and lifestyle, which she escapes by going away to boarding school, which Anna overtly disapproves of:

When she said: ‘I want to go to boarding-school’ with the petulant charm she is using now, trying her wings as a woman, what she was really saying to me was: ‘I want to be

ordinary and normal.' She was saying: 'I want to get out of the complicated atmosphere'. (476)

In the same way as menstrual disturbances or abhorrence of pregnancy on the part of the daughter are interpreted as resistance to the mother as uterus, Janet's willingness to ignore her incipient sexuality may be seen as the same phenomenon. Moreover, "the mother as *materia*, "matter", may be at the back of these women's impatience with objects, their clumsy handling of tools and crockery and bad taste in clothes" (Jung *Archetypes* 90-91), as she is charmed by wearing the school uniform. What Anna mourns is her daughter's resistance to womanhood and refusal to become a feminine woman (just as she is):

The young girl's quality, the petulant indulgent-child's charm, which she put on like a pretty dress about a year ago, vanished the moment she put the uniform on. On the station platform she was a nice, bright little girl in a hideous uniform, among a herd of such young girls, her young breasts hidden, all charm vanquished, her manner practical. And, seeing her, I mourned for a dark, lively, dark-eyed, slight young girl, alive with new sexuality, alert with the instinctive knowledge of her power. (479)

As a result of this analysis, it is worth considering Caesar's characterisation of motherhood as occupying an abject position in the postmodern novel, which we have already mentioned in the introduction. In *The Golden Notebook*, mothers are not degraded, but allowed to have their own voice. Anna lets us see how she fits in the universe of mothers as she speaks overtly about her motherhood, which is something that Ella and Molly, as alter egos, also do. Although the mother figure is far from being abandoned in this novel, in some respects it seems to be near abjection. Women characters need to be mothers and "real women" at the same time, and they are neither mere members of the institution of motherhood nor fully recognised individuals. Legitimacy is considered important and, consequently, Anna marries Max; so, there is some dependence on institutions. Nevertheless, due to the multiplicity of spheres that constitute the protagonists' life, she achieves a personality that combines motherhood with all the other aspects of womanhood. In relation to this, an aspect that differentiates

*The Golden Notebook* from the rest of the novels in this thesis is the fact that motherhood does not work as the sublimation of subconscious desires. The protagonists live their sexuality as parallel to their motherhood, and being mothers is not a way of directing their libido to a vital project since they are all working women as well as mothers.

Motherhood in this novel takes place in an era of contraception and artificial techniques of reproduction, which constitutes, for Caesar, one of the main threats to motherhood. We are not told which methods the female characters use, but it is clear that they plan their pregnancies, so they use the possibilities that science offers them. However, in the passage in which Ella discussed the possibility of having a child without a man being involved, she rejects reproductive technologies (199). Doris Lessing anticipates the multiple ways of becoming a mother, to which we are accustomed in the twenty-first century, and which even separate sexuality and reproduction. Therefore, arguing for traditional motherhood is an attempt to prevent the mother figure from falling into uselessness and abjection, since both Caesar and Ann Kaplan explain that these discoveries are responsible for the saturation of the mother (Kaplan 128-429).

To give an overall view of Anna's relationship to her own motherhood, and that of most characters in the novel who function as parts of herself, we can cite Kristeva:

The desire to be a mother, considered alienating and even reactionary by the preceding generation of feminists, has obviously not become a standard for the present generation. But we have seen in the past few years an increasing number of women who not only consider their maternity compatible with their professional life or their feminist involvement (...) but also find it indispensable to their discovery, not of the plenitude, but of the complexity of the female experience, with all that complexity comprises in joy and pain. ("Stabat Mater" 205)

Although mothers are far from being idealised, as Caesar states is the case in women's writing, they do not risk disappearance in this novel, either. On the contrary, the

constant search for the mother by several characters, such as Tommy or Saul, in their relationship with Anna highlights the fact that the mother is still an important figure. Such notion is reinforced by the pet-name that Anna invents for her psychoanalyst, “Mother Sugar”, which suggests the conscious need for someone to take the psychological and relational role of the mother that she lost at a very early age.

### **3.4. The domestic space as symbol.**

Inner spaces are very much connected to Anna’s most domestic self and role as a mother and, in line with the Jungian background present in the novel, the house has a major importance as a symbol for the psyche. According to Susan Stanford Friedman (qtd. in Durán 95), spatialisation is apt for female fiction because it emphasizes the psychodynamic and interactive nature of narrative processes and allows for a relational approach which connects text and context. This phenomenon is remarkable in *The Golden Notebook*.

First, the houses that Anna inhabits determine, to a certain extent, her development in the building of an identity: when she fictionalises her process of growth in *Free Women*, the two women (she and Molly) are represented as being alone in the London flat, after a long separation. Going back to Molly’s house for a visit means, for her, coming to terms with her multiple personality after she has lived alone for a while and fought fragmentation and breakdown. At one point, we see how this house depicts all her previous experiences and the old happier days: “these small smiling rooms had held hers and Michael’s love, four years of Janet’s childhood, her growing friendship with Molly.” (450)

Anna sees the functioning of her mind in terms of inner spaces, something which is in fact a recurring trait in the bulk of Lessing’s fiction. The heroine even states it



consciously when she thinks about the matter of identity: “And thinking about this, which I have done so much, I discover that I come around, by a back door, to another of the things that obsess me. I mean, of course, this question of ‘personality’” (114).

*The Golden Notebook* constitutes a key work in the imagination of spaces, it accounts for the representation of the house and the outside that appears for the first time in *The Grass is Singing*. This process appears to be a major mental exercise with therapeutic effects on Anna’s anxiety, which brings her close to madness. It consists in creating the room mentally, object by object, then moving to the house, the street, London, England, up to the entire planet. However, the point of “the game” is “to create this vastness while holding the bedroom, the house, the street in their littleness in my mind at the same time” (481)

In psychoanalysis, dreams about the house are highlighted, as it is identified with the human body and thought. Its front is usually interpreted as symbolising the public aspect of man, its mask or, rather, the self; the ceiling and upper floors represent the conscious mind and reasoning, while the basement is the subconscious (Cirlot 129). Consequently, the protagonist’s imagination portraying the house brings about the combination of conscious and subconscious necessary for individuation. In addition, the fundamental meaning of the dream depends on the ascending, horizontal or descending sense of the movements in the house, and it may express a progressive, static or regressive phase accordingly (Chevalier 259).

As Hidalgo points out, psychological breakdown usually implies some kind of confinement in order to seek refuge from the outer world, which is quite present in Doris Lessing’s fiction, especially in *The Golden Notebook*, where the room is a refuge as well as a place for experimentation, and in Anna’s case, literary experimentation is

vital for the restoration of her identity. Nevertheless, the external world is present in the room through the newspaper cuttings that she pins to the wall (“Cambio histórico” 99).

The movement from the particular to the universal and back to the individual in Anna’s imagination when playing “the game” parallels the mental voyage from the individual psyche to the collective unconscious, which allows for dreaming and imagination in a dialectic between the conscious and the subconscious, which is vital for the individuation process. Such an exercise is therapeutic for Anna, since it allows her to see her exact place in the universe. This is precisely her main concern when she keeps four journals in order to depict not only her personal experiences, but also the interrelation between the individual and the socio-historical context in which she lives.

The importance of this issue in *The Golden Notebook* is that all the meanings given to spaces in the rest of the novels that form this thesis converge in this novel. Working as a compendium of the psychology of spaces in Lessing’s work, this novel does not only depict “the game” that Mary undertook as a therapy and left as inheritance to Anna Wulf. This novel also shows the detachment that the protagonist is able to experience towards her past life through the observation of the house which constitutes a fundamental moment in *The Summer Before the Dark*. More than this, the house constitutes a fortress against the outside world when Anna keeps herself confined and has no other contact with the outer life than the newspaper cuttings that she pins to the walls. Similarly, in *The Fifth Child*, the house protects the family from the outer reality in order to maintain their idealistic fantasies about life.

### **3.5. Conclusion.**

Molly’s fictional nature is a fundamental concept to understand my conclusions on this novel. If we understand Molly, and therefore call the rest of characters in *Free*

*Women and the blue notebook* into question, Anna's process of individuation has to be observed as originating from the force of literary creation. In a state of fragmentation and breakdown, the character's alliance with Saul will result in the activation of her own creativity, which is especially significant as her restoring force, since it has to necessarily rely on her imagination, that is, her subconscious. By means of this imagination, she creates, or re-creates a set of characters who will show the aspects of personality that are unknown to herself. Instead of projecting herself onto other characters, Wulf therapeutically creates them in order to visualize her hidden traits. Moreover, the link between imagination, creation and the individuation process is a common trait in all the novels analysed in this thesis. In Anna's case, her creative process is a literary and linguistic one. However, language still proves unreliable, which is exemplified by the fact that the indefiniteness of "I" cannot contain the entire meaning of the subject. This phenomenon coincides with the whole corpus of this thesis, but it is in *The Golden Notebook* where language is most especially granted the power of creation and of construction of an identity.

In this respect, it is vital to take into account the characteristics of such literary genres as the novel and the personal journal, with their factual and fictional dimensions, which often blur and overlap. By gathering all these pieces of writing together, Anna the author combines both the conscious and the subconscious, in a process that is fundamental for individuation. Once she has integrated multiplicity by rewriting herself into fiction in several forms, she achieves a self instead of a persona by means of her creative power. The relation between fact and fiction is, therefore, the same as the one Jung postulated between conscious and subconscious, as the coexistence of both allows for individuation.

Due to the role creativity has in the building of Anna's identity, both Mother Sugar and Saul must be considered as central to Anna's process of individuation because of their direct relation to the creative principle. By including the psychoanalyst in her writing under the archetype of the wise old woman who suggests to the protagonist that she dreams her most terrifying dreams creatively, Anna is acknowledging the part that the subconscious plays in the creation of herself. Only with the help of psychoanalysis is Anna capable of interpreting the figure of malice in her dreams:

I was in a dream with another person, whom I did not immediately recognize; and then I understood that this terrible malicious force was in that person who was a friend. And so I forced myself awake out of the dream, screaming, and when I awoke I put a name to the person in my dream, knowing that for the first time the principle was embodied in a human being (240).

With this clue, the dwarf will be first identified with the men in the novel and then with herself, who, at the same time, is a condensed version of all the female character in the plot. The conclusion reveals that all the men and all the women that she has created constitute different sides the same entity, forming a system of archetypes who define Anna. Malice is the common essence which appears in all the characters and therefore unifies them as different projections of a single person.

My interpretation goes a step further than the Jungian readings mentioned so far, as it adds some Lacanian ideas to Anna's individuation process (although only marginally). The role of the analyst has been given a partly—Lacanian characterisation in my reading of the novel since Mrs. Marks is portrayed as someone who cannot define the patient nor give her any truth but acts as a mirror for a quest inside herself. Apart from this, I have interpreted Anna's identification of herself in a mirror as an allusion to the mirror stage, where the child sees itself as whole for the first time, thus symbolising the character's completion of her mental recovery; however, in this completion, there is acceptance of the fact that she is made up of different pieces, that is, that hers is a

“divided self” in Lacanian terminology, which Durán also recognises. I conclude this reasoning by adding the Lacanian and Kristevan concept that identity is in constant evolution: accepting inner fragmentation puts unity in the place of the phallus, or the object of desire that is never achieved, which means that Anna’s identity is always incomplete and in progress.

In order to write this Jungian analysis of the novel, I have not only focused on the archetypes which are at play in the individuation process (anima/animus, shadow, self and persona) but I have also mentioned some others such as the wise old man, the archetypal figure of the dwarf, or the mother. Although motherhood is not the main issue in *The Golden Notebook*, I decided to reserve a sub-section of this chapter to treat this theme in a more extended way than it is usually dealt with. This decision responds to two different reasons; namely, the fact that psychoanalysis always defines femininity as related to motherhood, and also the fact that the mother archetype is characterised by a number of dichotomies which parallel all the fragmentation and contradiction that Anna finds in the rest of aspects of herself. The inclusion of the mother archetype has proved useful in understanding the character’s growth (as it is a vital element of this development), and also in interpreting the relationship with other characters (either working as the animus or the shadow), since Anna performs the mother role for a number of other characters. The mother archetype has also proved vital to convey the meaning of some dreams present in the novel, as this archetype is part of the collective unconscious.

All in all, my approach to *The Golden Notebook* can be considered inclusive of the analysis of pattern mainly developed by Sprague, and the Jungian reading which was especially undertaken by Rubenstein and Cederstrom. The refusal of some critics to apply psychoanalysis to the interpretation of the novel is grounded on two facts: first,

their argument that this trend only surfaced in influence studies (as the type of literary research which traces direct influences of one author on another and understands the study of literature in terms of intertextual connections); and, second, Lessing's rejection of psychoanalytic interpretation. However, the value of such a trend has become clear throughout this chapter and also through the fact that Anna's final outcome is a completed individuation process in the strict Jungian sense, which can also be related to the later Lacanian and Kristevan developments.

In order to conclude the discussion on *The Golden Notebook*, we must have a look at the critical debate on the two endings it contains. Yuan-Jung Cheng raises the question of whether the inner ending of the golden notebook (Anna and Saul stimulating each other) is parodied by the very ending of the novel on section five of *Free Women* (Anna and Molly kissing and separating). The fact is that the ideal ending is not placed at the end of the novel, while the very end seems unsatisfactory for most readers (Cheng 7). The answer to this question is to be found both in Hite's and Greene's interpretation of this double ending. On the one hand, Hite suggests the existence of no single real ending and, therefore, Lessing has not solved the matters of fragmentation and disintegration (99). On the other hand, Greene defends that the reader's imagination "brings the notebooks together and completes them", so Lessing writes beyond the idea of the ending (119).

As I see it, these two last positions are plausible if we take into account that the matter is not that of overcoming fragmentation, but accepting and integrating it into the depiction of life, as I already stated at the beginning by suggesting a more positive term for this, such as "multiplicity". Such fragmentation in both interpretations suggests two things: first, that the ultimate goals of the Jungian process of individuation are both the recognition of multiplicity and all the archetypes that form Anna, as well as knowing

who she is; and second, the Lacanian notion that the true goal of personality development is that of embracing the insatiability of desire (for unity) and the subject/object dichotomy.

With such a double ending, Lessing offers a doubly challenging reading experience: first, she proposes a positive kind of multiplicity (instead of “fragmentation” or “disintegration”) that can be postulated only by accepting that wholeness is achieved by integrating multiple meanings, layers of reality and narratives. Secondly, she invites the readers to actively manage all those levels of signification and solve the riddle by either recognising multiple endings or starting a second reading with a different meaning to the first. All in all, these notions of multiplicity and writing beyond the idea of an ending are, then, compatible with Lessing’s aim at shaping “a book which would make its own comment, a wordless statement: to talk through the way it was shaped” (Preface to *The Golden Notebook* 13).

Nevertheless, the second ending, which seems to have been interpreted as secondary or less significant, has a rather symbolic meaning, as I see it. Anna and Molly kissing and separating epitomises the former’s inner unity by acknowledging her multiple personalities; therefore, she can detach herself from the system of archetypal characters needed to analyse herself, which Molly embodies at this point.

In conclusion, *The Golden Notebook* is a circular work both thematically and formally. At the psychological level, we shift from sanity to breakdown and back to sanity again (or either, from fragmentation to unity and back to multiplicity). Formally, the progression goes from the beginning to the end of the novel, and back to the beginning. In this respect, it is consistent with other works, such as *The Grass is Singing* or *The Summer Before the Dark* and with the entire literary career of Doris Lessing, as we will see in the general conclusion to this study. Nevertheless, the case of *The Golden*

*Notebook* constitutes the most complicated one in terms of circularity, as it shows a double circle, which corresponds to the two readings needed to decipher this work.





## 4. THE SUMMER BEFORE THE DARK, 1973.

### 4.1. Introduction.

In common with the two previous novels discussed, *The Summer Before the Dark* focuses on a central identity which needs to be readjusted. To explore this, the protagonist takes “artefact”, as she calls it, out of her in order to find her purest self. She starts her quest in her dreams, in the subconscious rather than in the outside world; therefore, symbols and myth become appropriate devices to interpret the developments of her inner self. As a result of her introspection, we will see that personal change goes along with the reinterpretation of stereotypes and social rules. My aim in this chapter is to analyse the subconscious and its outcome as contributions to the construction of the female character’s identity.

This novel has the greatest dream collection of the five works that constitute this thesis. All the images can be interpreted according to Jungian psychoanalysis, although some references to Lacan and Kristeva will also be made. It is important to point out here that, in contrast to the rest of novels in my corpus, symbols—as part of the collective unconscious—occupy a central part in *The Summer Before the Dark*, which is the reason for devoting a complete section of this chapter to symbolic meanings and images. The rest of the sections, in consonance with the other four chapters of this thesis, will explore the individuation process.

To grasp one of the main implications of *The Summer Before the Dark*, we must bear in mind that this work has been considered a *Reifungsroman*. What makes it appealing to readers is that it attempts to combat the negative stereotypes of the older protagonist as a matter of self-acceptance rather than self-hatred. Kate Brown comes to

terms with past decisions in order to free herself from dissatisfaction with an unauthentic life, unlike Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing* (Pezzulich 8). This process is linked to a fundamental concept in Sufism, which Lessing followed from the nineteen sixties: the idea of the seeker (Galín 23). In this doctrine, inner transformation can only be experienced rather than discussed, which is what Kate does as she transforms herself without giving any explanation to her family. Developing a personal potential is central to Sufism, and so, in many of Lessing's novels, we find an aging character generating new identities, as is the case of the characters of *Love, Again* or *The Diary of a Good Neighbour*.

Nevertheless, there have been critical voices. Cederstrom characterises *The Summer Before the Dark* as Lessing's most misunderstood novel in the sense that, rather than fitting into the Jungian pattern, this work is full of satire and irony since Kate Brown is too predictable and conventional to undergo any deep transformation. Accordingly, early reviews have been either unable or unwilling to see irony on Lessing's part in choosing a limited woman with whom the readers could identify. In the development of this section, I will be arguing against the lack of depth and archetypal power that Cederstrom claims (*Psyche* 151-153).

At the beginning of the novel, Kate Brown seems happy in her confinement within the roles that govern women's lives: love, marriage, children, which all belong to the social setting. Moreover, Kate considers them as dresses on a rack, to be put on or taken off, with no relation to her authentic self (2). Accordingly, her appearance is said to be a matter of choice, which just fits her position as middle-class wife and mother. As we will see, after a lifetime's devotion to her family, she has become a non-self and has adopted her persona as if it constituted the whole of her identity. As a result, Kate's

disappearance from the economy of being is made evident as we have to wait for five pages until her name appears.

In spite of all this, the changes she envisages in a person's life are explained in these terms: "My life has changed because I have changed" (3), thus shifting her point of view from object to subject. She acknowledges that things are not generated by themselves but originate in personal will. In finding herself in command of her own life, she will find the motivation to undergo an inner development similar to that of other Lessing's female characters "to break free from the life-roles and values earlier they had earlier chosen when these prove inadequate for further inner growth" (Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 200). This change of attitude is what differentiates Kate from the leading character of another similar plot, that of "To Room Nineteen" (1978): in *The Summer Before the Dark* the heroine overcomes the existential void through the quest for her true self, because, as the author stated, "life certainly shouldn't be without excitement" (Newquist 8).

There have been several approaches to this novel which have to be considered. In "First and Last Words: Reconsidering the Title of *The Summer Before the Dark*", Susan M. Klein focuses on the signifier-signified relationship both in the title and in the novel. In order to do so, S.M. Klein characterises Kate's role as a mother and her views on motherhood by using such textual details as her memories of the past. If we focus on the re-creation of the summer of 1948 when she was single and young and interpret it as the summer in the title, we see that "the dark" can only refer to her later life as a wife and mother. It is quite remarkable that the period of Kate's life that is narrated through memories instead of fact is precisely the central and authentic moment in it. It is this interpretation of the title that makes S.M. Klein's approach original and innovative. In this respect, Linda Chown points to the association of darkness to wisdom in Western

thought, and highlights Lessing's interest in Sufism. Charmaine Wellington argues that the dark is a positive motive in Lessing's work, so, in this novel it symbolises Kate's inner world, which is going to be finally integrated with her outer self (Chown and Wellington qtd. in S.M. Klein 228). S.M. Klein's response to these two considerations is the idea that rewriting the title as "*The Summer in the Dark*" would be necessary for these interpretations, since it is during the summer that Kate's development and discovery of her unconscious takes place. S.M Klein's analysis has many points in common with my approach since it takes memories of the past as one aspect of the subconscious to show the character's construction of her identity with regard to motherhood. Nevertheless, it does not consider Kate's rich dream life, which has been fully dealt with in other sources.

Generally speaking, the summer of the narrative has been taken as the summer in the title and "the dark" has been understood as Kate's future after going back home; we will find an example of this pessimistic mainstream interpretation in the work of Greene (137-9), and Rubenstein: "Kate's assimilation of the dark side of herself, her inner life, makes it possible for her to face the inevitable darkness of older age and, eventually, death" (*Novelistic Vision* 215).

Greene's view of *The Summer Before the Dark* is more traditional and straightforward, since the summer the title talks about is the summer when Kate is alone after twenty-five years of caring for her family. Kate avoids confronting herself for a while and only when she refuses to nurse her young lover Jeffrey does she discover her own needs. What follows from this is that she will go back home and settle for domesticity because she has no choice. One point in common with S.M. Klein's article is the retrospective aspect of Kate's quest for identity, since she is still trying to understand what has happened to her in all these years of family life. The question

arises of whether these two interpretations of the title are mutually exclusive, or whether there is even a solution in-between. My own interpretation will emerge at the end of this chapter.

Greene analyses the crisis in Kate's life, as well as her quest for identity through events and conscious life. In addition, she insists on the relation between personal and collective crisis. Although the dreams of the heroine are mentioned, the central and recurrent dream of the seal is explained as running counter to her return home. The seal is saved by being taken to the sea where she will join her own kind. Likewise, Kate will go back home with her family where she will definitely lose her own identity, which means spiritual death.

Greene's and Amy Lee's research go in the same direction, as they investigate the process that the character experiences when she is confronted by her own subjectivity once she is taken out of her domestic context. "Kate's process consists mainly of repudiations of the conventions that have defined her" among which are those that have socialised her as sex object, mother, wife and woman in love (Greene 128-9). Kate, therefore, tries to reformulate her views on motherhood in terms of individual experience rather than dealing with it as an institution. The fact that she experiences the issue through feelings of remorse and guilt has nothing to do with any idealisation of the matter, and her major discovery is the fact that her apparent happiness when confined in her world of motherhood was an illusion.

From this approach, the novel works to reject labels in matters of identity and self-definition; and Lee finally concludes that motherhood, rather than being a fictional category to comply with, should be considered a loss of many other individual aspects of oneself. Throughout "*The Summer Before the Dark: the Void of Motherhood*" (2004), Lee analyses the recurrent memories of that summer of Kate's youth in

Mozambique, when she was an individual and had the power of sexual attraction. The situation contrasts with the non-self she has become over the years due to her maternal essence and relational definition of herself.

Lee argues that Kate's summer works in two directions: namely, as a time for analysis of her own life, and as an opportunity for gathering new input through the new experiences she undergoes. The result is none other than having to make a decision about what role she wants to undertake in the family and the importance she wants to give to her own individuality. Kate's not dyeing her hair any more is again seen as a symbol of rebellion against custom, since during the summer she has gained the strength to deal with her life from a subject position.

The crisis and quest for one's own identity in *The Summer Before the Dark* has also been dealt with through age studies, since Kate lost her sense of self along with her youth. One remarkable example is Suzanne Leonard's "Playing in the Shadows: Aging and Female Invisibility in *The Summer Before the Dark*" (2004). Nevertheless, both issues—aging and motherhood—are closely linked, since what Kate does is to compare herself to her former identity before a parenthesis of twenty-five years of caring and nurturing, which is what we found in S. M. Klein's article. Instead of focusing on how Kate deals with her transformation into an object rather than a subject after a life of domesticity—which was Klein's approach—Leonard shows how she tries to redefine herself and decide how she is going to deal with her aging process once she has acknowledged and accepted her coming to age. In fact, both issues are tightly related, not only in this novel but in Doris Lessing's work as a whole because she often deals with the struggle to grow in each different stage of life. As Josna Rege states: "They (Lessing's works) present the great human task as a developmental one, that of finding the way to live one's own life and simultaneously to come to terms with the roles that

both society and biology dictate, through stages of childhood and adolescence, marriage and child-rearing, middle age, old age, illness, and death” (4).

#### 4.2. Subconscious life and symbols.

Once Kate has all that it takes for her interior journey, the dreaming experience takes place. Although there has been harsh criticism of the dream sequence of the seal, its importance lies in the fact that it brings the character’s inner self and her waking life together, which is vital for individuation. As Kate soon observes, it begins “like the start of an epic, simple and direct” (29): she anticipates the fact that interpretation will be feasible.

The strongest criticism of this dream comes from Cederstrom, who, in her attempt to consider the work satirical, argues that “her unconscious focuses on the mechanical repetition of a single dream which is allegorical rather than symbolic” (*Psyche* 154), in the sense that D.H. Lawrence defined the former: “narrative description using, as a rule, images to express certain definite qualities. Each image means something, and is a term in the argument and nearly always for a moral or didactic purpose” (Lawrence qtd. in Cederstrom, *Psyche* 161). Rubenstein agrees with Cederstrom that these dream narratives are “too transparent or schematic” (*Novelistic Vision* 218), and states that no dream occurs several times with the same level of detail as this one. In spite of this criticism, I will be discussing the symbolism of these dreams from the collective unconscious as postulated by Jung.

The first episode of the serial dream only gives us some hint that something important is about to happen in this woman’s inner life, since she can only remember its atmosphere, a mixture of anxiety and joy. Anxiety comes from not knowing who she is



after three years feeling that her identity as a mother has become outdated; and the joy results from the fact of being on her own to start an inner quest that will lead her to the restoration of herself. In this transformation, psychological images are mixed with everyday issues. In her dream, she sees a seal out of water and she tries to save it by taking it to the sea. As a result, she starts a long and arduous journey, parallel to her deep search inside herself. The seal's dehydration runs parallel to Kate's mental and physical starvation; therefore, she will be saved through a long journey on both levels (waking life and dream).

Much criticism comments on one parallel between Kate's psyche and the seal, which is self-evident; but a deeper interpretation of Kate's oneiric representation is made possible by analysing the images and symbols that are present and often come from collective imagery. Within a mythological or archetypal approach, the meaning of the dream of the seal is multiplied. The seal embodies the main character but in a variety of different aspects. First, what Kate needs to save is her subconscious: embedded in her day-to-day obligations and reality, she seldom has room for her psychic development and needs to consider the unrepressed outcome of her mind, only present in her dreams and flashbacks. Moreover, Jungian philosophy reinforces this interpretation, since animals are said to represent the non-human psyche, the instincts and the subconscious (Cirlot 73) and water, which Kate so eagerly tries to find in her dreams, is the commonest symbol for the unconscious for Jung (Guerin 157-158). The traditional implications of water, such as the cycle of "birth-death-resurrection, purification and redemption, fertility and growth" (Guerin 157), also play an important part since the heroine needs resurrection after having been inwardly dead in order to grow and develop her potential. These processes will only take place once the seal is restored to its natural environment. At the same time, Cixous defines water as both the

feminine element par excellence and a symbol of the maternal uterus (Moi, *Politics* 117). One peculiarity of this recurrent dream is that it will go through different phases, parallel to the different steps towards the reconstruction of identity.

Dreams offer symbolic images that have to be decoded according to universally shared meanings. The collective imagery inherited the association between seals and virginity from Greek mythology, since in those legends, the Nymphs are followed by the gods and become seals in order to remain untouched. Moreover, the same source includes the tale that some female seals take their fur off and walk around the beaches under the appearance of beautiful women (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 748). This meaning seems to add some significance to the plot. As we will see later on, Kate's subconscious often reveals itself through flashbacks to her youth. Similar to the women under the seals' fur, this unmarried Kate must still reside in her present invisible core, hidden under the mask of her public self, the Jungian persona (Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 203).

Apart from this mythological meaning of the seal, Berets states that Lessing plays with the word "seal" as both the animal and the stamp used as proof of authenticity, the object of Kate's search. (Berets 119) Moreover, he argues that the image of the injured seal captures a sense of loss and separation, "the sense of self that has been disowned in order for the individual to accommodate herself to the pressures of her social milieu", which matches the Jungian perspective that the individual is an entity but also a part of a larger unit that we spend our life seeking, since this sense of integration is broken at birth (120). In this way, Kate's original self, her younger identity, is supposedly complete, but it gradually lost its unity as she embraced social impositions and became fragmented according to the demands of the people around her.

The second time that the dream appears, Kate recognises it as “the continuation” (47), announcing its importance since she has already learnt that “The hidden domain of our mind communicates with us through dreams” (Raskin 14)<sup>23</sup>. With the heavy and slippery seal in her arms, she is not sure she is walking in the right direction, and she is worried because she has nothing for the seal’s wounds. Going north will be her intention throughout the different episodes of the dream, despite knowing she is wrong. She will eventually decide to change her route, both in dreams and in real life.

The next episode of the dream shows the thoughts within a dream, a device that we also find, in a way, in *The Golden Notebook*. Kate is in a cinema watching a film about a bombed turtle that she had seen twice in wakefulness. This scene makes her think of the seal as her responsibility, but she does not know where it is.

As she thought this, she knew she was dreaming but she searched about, as it were, for the other dream, the dream of the seal; for while she could do nothing for the turtle, who was going to die, she must save the seal, but exactly as if she had strayed in the wrong room in a house, she was in the wrong dream, and could not open the door on the right one. (*The Summer Before the Dark* 68)

As we saw in the introduction, Lessing claimed the importance of dream interpretation and the possibility of actually governing one’s dreams, or even dreaming on purpose (Raskin 14), as depicted in the present fragment. At this moment of the plot, Kate has already become aware of the need to continue with this serial dream as the analogue to her psychic evolution. This dream appears in a moment of relative confusion, between her maternal instinct and a more individualistic attitude. At this turning point, she searches for the seal to find the hints of what she really desires.

Let us now see what the multiple images of this dream tell us symbolically. The turtle has different meanings in different cultures, but the most widespread one denotes long life, endurance and strength (Hall 49-50). Being associated with age, it mirrors Kate’s need to face aging in her own way, which is violently endangered by the

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<sup>23</sup> For the complete quotation, see p.4-5 of this thesis.

conventions she has followed for so long. In her present situation she has already lost any chance to preserve a personal approach to aging (the turtle); therefore, she needs a change and consciously seeks the seal so as to find in her unconscious the reformulation of her identity and then deal with old age in a more suitable manner. Generally speaking, the turtle works as an image of the existential and, due to its slowness, it involves natural evolution (Cirlot 446-447).

In its next appearance, the seal is struggling on a hillside to reach the ocean. Some remorse is involved, as suggesting the feeling of guilt associated with the maternal, when Kate realises that she should not have left it there. Despite this sense of failure of maternal duty, a different meaning arises when we consider its location in the plot: Jeffrey is ill and Kate is fighting back her maternal instinct in order not to leave her personal and deepest self (the seal) unattended.

As this episode goes on, the atmosphere of myth and tale is insisted upon, highlighting the importance of a symbolic and archetypal interpretation. Kate tries to blow the fire into life in the fireplace of a house which seems inhabited, but is empty at that moment. This fire parallels the rescue of her family life from the ashes of the last three years, but it may also provide a strong image of the need to get her mother role over and done with: the house is traditionally identified with the female, that is, Kate. Moreover, it is identified with the body, human life and human thought, also found in the correspondence between the several mental states that the character experiences and the different lodgings that she occupies (Cirlot 120). What follows, her reviving the fire inside herself, is the logical result of her preoccupation with how to feel sensual with Jeffrey the night before: in a Renaissance allegory the flames of passion surround Lust, one of the Seven Deadly Sins (Hall 100-101). Moreover, Heraclitus of Ephesus defined it as an agent of transformation and a symbol of regeneration, together with water

(Cirlot 209-210). With her dream, Kate is very consciously intensifying her inner process of renewal.

Parallel to the lighting of fire, Kate finds some water to splash on the seal and revive it. In the house there is also a lot of housework to be done, which epitomizes Kate's need to work on herself—which will have an effect on her own family, now transformed into mythical creatures. The dream reaches its climax with a new character who she knows has always been her lover. This character may correspond to Jeffrey, since he is described as a young man and also, as Rubenstein suggests, because the dream occurs while she is watching over him. Moreover, her refusing him because she “must take the seal to the sea first” (101), shows that, on reaching middle age, she “must attend her spirit before she can indulge her body”. This pressure is what makes any sexual relationship between them impossible and will lead to their eventual parting. (*Novelistic Vision* 208).

A different theory arises with the possibility that this lover embodies Michael, Kate's husband. This interpretation finds its roots in the fact that this character will appear in a later episode of the dream. His appearance as a prince or a nobleman reinforces idealisation as well as youth, which is not a current characteristic of the husband; however, in the dream, Kate knows that they had always been lovers. Their wanting to make love for years takes us back to their original identities, which they need to recover. Kate needs to feel sensual again, she wants to go back to Michael “as a woman”, free from the burden of being a mother. Taking the seal to the sea first means finding herself, saving Kate Ferreira, the young unmarried woman, the virgin under the image of a seal, otherwise, she will never have a “perfect” relationship with Michael. This dream will also be discussed in the section on individuation.

After having narrated her dream, it still takes Kate some time to dream of the seal again, or rather, to dream and remember. The dream seems to slip away in the morning, but as it is so realistic, she still feels the physical sensation that she has been carrying the seal. She is even afraid that the inability to dream might mean that the seal is dead, thus insisting on the dream as a parallel reality. She only knew that she was travelling away from the sun that never rose, a small sun with no heat, lying behind her back. She was entering a cold night as everything was getting dark. This is a moment of inner sterility, since she has not made a decision or completed her transformation yet. The sun, the source of life and fertility which mirrors death and resurrection, does not rise in this dream image, suggesting the death of the former Kate but still not revealing a rebirth that will take a long time to be completed. The scene mirrors the futility of her current indefiniteness.

The fact that she is listening as if her inner tutor wanted her to understand something makes us realise the extent to which Kate is aware of the usefulness of dreaming (119). It is in this dream that the dark of the title appears: there is a sun with no heat and she finds herself walking in a chilly twilight. The sun has been worshipped as the all-seeing god of light worldwide, and it most often stands for the source of fertility and life. Paralleling Kate's process, the sun is also a symbol of death and resurrection due to its setting and rising (Hall 109). Kate's identity, as well as the life of the seal, are endangered, and walking into darkness with no heat adds extra difficulties for survival. In this complicated moment in her summer adventure, dreaming of herself walking in the dark expresses a mystic void, showing the undeveloped potentialities that lead to chaos (Cirlot 344).

The phenomenon of a dream that develops is not new to her. Nevertheless, this particular dream is of a different quality because its atmosphere is so recognisable that

even without seeing the seal from the start, she can foresee its appearance. She finds herself in an arena in a Roman amphitheatre with the seal. Wild animals appear from cages and she has to run to escape with the seal climbing the stands with great effort while she feels how her strength nearly vanishes. The scene is distressing and fearful (128). This is an unequivocal image of the many threats that endanger her personal identity and inner development, and can also be seen as the embodiment of the people around her. Rubenstein goes one step further to interpret this dream as “her effort to understand her physical being that becomes not just a sexual redefinition but one involving her entire corporeal reality. Her own physical nature is part of the animal self that she must accommodate, including the fact that the body ages and eventually dies.” (*Novelistic Vision* 211).

While considering leaving Jeffrey in Spain, although he is weak and ill, Kate reaches the conclusion that she must not go north with the seal any longer but must try to find the sea instead. Travelling inland with the seal (and, by extension, with Jeffrey) has proved wrong now. Consequently, she decides to go to England and take care of herself physically and, above all, mentally (Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 209). The journey that she was making with Jeffrey and which she interrupts was “an escape from self-analysis”, “a parody of the archetypal journey to the center”, “a journey into sterility” (Cederstrom, *Psyche* 158). At this point, the burden is so heavy that the temptation would be to drop the seal—her personal needs—and return to conventional matters. Fortunately, Kate reacts and engages herself in the right journey to self-growth. Counter to Cederstrom’s interpretation, my perspective is that Kate is given the chance to see that what has collapsed is her persona or social mask, and therefore, she must avoid the situations which perpetuate this motherly role as the sublimation of all her inner energies. Once she acknowledges this, she acts accordingly and starts her

introspection, which she is experiencing in the form of illness (Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 209).

As she approaches a village, we can see that this episode is the continuation of the scene with the young prince in the house. The reader can identify the prince with Kate's husband at this point since this unknown character, now a king, has grown older. First they dance together and she feels good to be his "chosen consort" (143) but then she is rejected for other, younger, women. As a result, she is despised by the people and, moreover, she has to admit that he needs to dance with all the women, which reminds us of the way she is forced to accept that her husband is constantly having minor affairs. This shows her emotional dependence, the fear of infidelity and of losing her sexual attractiveness. Again, these matters are not her priority and she wants to escape because the seal, which needs her so badly, is alone somewhere else.

After the delay that this adventure supposes, she finds the seal in the twilight, inert in her arms, dying. Everything is frozen; it needs some water. Kate breaks the ice to find water and splash the seal, saving it for the time being. Kate consciously knows, in her waking life, that the seal is very weak and, therefore, when she dreams, she deliberately searches for it. Nevertheless, only unimportant dreams, seen as interferences, reveal themselves while the seal seems to be living in another compartment of Kate's mind. What we find here is the will to dream something concrete, blurring the conscious and the subconscious. More than this, the relation between both goes in two directions: real life feeds dreams and dreams give indications to face real life.

Kate interprets the dream of the seal to some extent. Once she needs to put everything into words in order to tell it to her young flatmate Maureen, she analyses, interprets and values it in connection with the most recent events of her life by saying:



since that afternoon, the afternoon that everything changed, ... *out* I went, *out* of my life, since then, what I think has been really going on is my dream. ... All the things that went on outside ... fed the dream. Yes. It was the dream that was... feeding off my daytime life. Like a foetus. I've only just seen it. (208)

How Kate experienced the different phases of the dream is also explained: she insists on the fairy tale and fable atmosphere at the beginning, which suggests that symbolic meanings are to be found, and that a moral will be drawn from it. Afterwards, she only has flashes of the dream that she cannot remember in the morning and she wonders whether the period she is spending in Maureen's flat may not be feeding the dream properly. She is tempted to think that perhaps she'll never save the seal, but then there would be no point in the entire sequence. What Kate needs is Maureen's advice to go on dreaming in order to concentrate on the seal and reach the end of the story. The authority that Maureen has over Kate is that of showing both her lost youth and sense of self; therefore, Maureen's observation is welcome and accepted.

Shortly after, Kate starts dreaming and remembering again. The seal makes her notice a cherry tree in full bloom in the middle of the snow: an image of fertility and life. In China and Japan the flowers of the cherry tree are considered an image of spring and feminine beauty (Hall 143), which concurs with the rebirth that Kate is experiencing, since she is blooming internally like never before. Nevertheless, the blooming cherry trees in Japan are sterile and their flower is fragile and ephemeral, thus standing for ideal death, away from earthly matters and the precariousness of existence (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 199), which might suggest Kate's entrance into old age, as we see how she continues walking in the dark ahead (229). As I just claimed, there is a possible interpretation of the character's facing a symbolic death, that of the maternal Kate as a simple nurturing agent with no real self. In this case, and following the interpretation of the title developed by S. M. Klein, the dark can also involve her married life as wife and mother and the dream of her going into darkness would be a

recollection of her entrance into marriage. The cherry tree, then, would constitute an image of the regeneration of her psyche after the revaluation of the nurturing capacity that the realistic and symbolic lines in the narrative bring about.

Eager to put an end to dream and identity rebuilding, she induces herself into a dream by going to the zoo to watch the seals swimming. She achieves the desired effect when eventually she is able to save the seal and take it back to the ocean. The symbolism of the scene parallels this optimistic ending: the seal was full of hope, like her; she was walking on spring grass full of flowers and she observed the seal join its own kind, an image of unity which alludes to Kate's return home. The sentence "her journey was over" (241) is central, as it signifies both her dream journey and the interior journey she has undergone during the summer. The fact that the sun was in front of her, not behind, indicates that Kate will be able to see her own life and identity with more clarity from now on.

The dream sequence reunites the different types of dreams that the Jungian tradition recognises: those that relate to the personal situation of the dreamer, those that reflect a cultural heritage and those that may foretell the future of the individual or the culture (Berets 126). Between the various phases of the dream of the seal and other major dreams, the author provides us with reflections that complete and comment on how Kate sees her dream life. One of these appears when she compares her near understanding of Spanish, as if she was suffering amnesia, to "waking from a dream in which she has been flying, unable to believe that in reality she can't just step into the air and soar off and away" (108). Apart from showing the merging between subconscious and conscious life, so important in this work, the image of flying, in dreams and myth (Icarus), articulates the wish of sublimation, of inner harmony and of overcoming conflict, especially for people who are not capable of taking off by themselves, which is

precisely what Kate achieves (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1027). Kate finally acknowledges this significance of dreaming, when dreams of flying are referred to later in the novel and when she observes her young house-mate Maureen sleeping in the arms of a man. At this point, she exclaims “remember the warm safe sweet sleep that is the dream of flying when you are young and lonely, which is all your fantasies come true at once?” (199). Kate, therefore, extrapolates it to youth, when many desires for the future are present, but hers is a case of crisis and rebirth.

A minor dream that also appears between the different stages of the seal sequence reveals “a lake of dreams where shadows of ideas moved as cool and light as fishes” (123); she adds that it was far from the landscape where she and the seal were making their journey. Significantly enough, she views the seal as her dream, the one that counts, since it is latent and goes on and on while she is awake but which she can only observe at times. It adds to the character’s process since her psychic state can be inferred from its symbols. Kate is analysing herself, while looking at the bottom of the lake, to find the subterranean treasures that the lake may hide, where such mythological creatures as fairies, sorceresses, nymphs and mermaids are to be found, thus suggesting her extraordinary capacity to dream, since the lake epitomizes the creation of imagination (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 556), and the beings in it embody the subconscious (Cirlot 360).

The most outstanding image in this dream is water, which is associated to birth and cyclical renewal again (Chevalier and Gheerbrand 773). The fishes that she dreamt of are said to be the image of shadows of ideas, using a Platonic element that Lessing has rescued from the collective imagery to make the meaning recognisable. Kate’s subconscious life, developing simultaneously to the events of her waking life, echoes Plato’s two worlds: the real world and the world of ideas, the latter being the original

and perfect one, which is represented in physical reality, as shadows. Therefore, Kate's subconscious triggers her transformation and the events in her life, rather than being the remembrance and recreation of fact. Moreover, this dream anticipates another image: that of observing the seals in the zoo like fish swimming in a bowl (235), meaning that the seal also embodies her thoughts and feelings.

Her imagination also furnishes the novel with symbols and mythological images, for instance, explaining her children's complicated adolescence and calling them "the monsters" (68) (which takes us to that menacing presence of the son who threatens identity in *The Fifth Child*). Fighting against the monster implies the struggle to release the subconscious (Cirlot 306); that is, she needed to reveal her purest self and gain her own personality beyond her relationship with her teenage children. The monster image appears again as she imagines herself trapped in a monstrous baby that has to be soothed and given attention on demand. The monster here embodies the cosmic force, very close to chaos, the hidden potentialities in the deepest layers of consciousness (Cirlot 306), which we will find again in *The Fifth Child*. In Kate's case, these deeper levels of consciousness are revealed by being finally able to ask "Have you forgotten who I am, my position in this house?" and the recognition that "The fact that she would be ashamed to say this aloud showed there had been some progress?" (175). The author herself explains the writing process and her purpose in the following way: "I built dreams right into the story, so that the way out for this woman was in fact through her dreams of this magical seal that she found on the hillside" (Hendin 54). Dreaming is so central to Kate that it is not only a way to escape from the void of her life, but also the key to her breakthrough.

Another mental process to be found alongside dreaming is past memories that reveal the original identity of the heroine, and which appear as flashbacks soon after the

introduction of Kate. This moment is crucial in the novel, not only for her lost youth, but also for her sense of self, equally lost as she decided to marry rather than go to university. With her choice, she ignored and hid half of her potential, which is nevertheless kept latent for a second opportunity taking place a quarter of a century later. This is what Lessing talks about in her novels of identity: the “potentialities and forms of consciousness in the progress towards wholeness” (Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 200), that is, the Jungian process of individuation.

### **4.3. The individuation process.**

As we have already seen, the insistence on the need for water and the multiple appearances of animals in Kate’s dreams point to the need to develop her subconscious life in the same way as her conscious mind. The Platonic reference of the fish swimming like the shadows of ideas in the lake of dreams also reinforces the fact that both levels of consciousness need to coexist in order to achieve wholeness and, in Kate’s case, undergo a transformation which will be coherent with her own personal view of life. The conscious and the subconscious have to be parallel, just as the real world and the world of ideas were in Platonism.

After the mother’s role in the family has become outdated, she analyses her present situation and finds no sense in going on as she is. As Amy Lee puts it, “to mother is not only to give birth biologically but also to give up oneself” (17). In order to recover her identity and see who she really is, Kate needs to repress the automatic maternal response she experiences towards the people she encounters, which is illustrated very graphically through her reflections on her life:

What she was good at was to be the supplier of some kind of invisible fluid or emanation, like a queen termite, whose spirit (or some such word-electricity) filled the

nest, making a whole of individuals who could have no other connection. (...) She had been set like a machine for twenty-odd years of being a wife and a mother (45-46).

As a result, she considers getting a job because what she really needs is redefinition outside the family.

At the start, however, she becomes a position rather than a person at her first job in Global Food, which means that she has adopted another persona. The interchangeability of these public personalities suggests that these are roles rather than full identities: “In her first week she had only had time to think, as she flopped exhausted into bed, that she had become a function, she had become, she *was* language for a couple of dozen international civil servants” (28). Her role is impersonal and factual, and she feels important and professional. However, language has another aspect in my discussion, since it proves unreliable according to psychoanalysis, as we are seeing in these novels. In consonance with this, we will see later on how language is also insufficient for Kate.

As time goes by, however, she returns to her former personality and becomes a kind of mother, fundamental to the company, but it does not bring anything new to her. She is admired and praised for her work, but feels empty, as it is a trait inherent to her and requires no effort. In this situation, Kate provides the nourishment, protection and growth attributed to the positive side of the contradictory Jungian mother archetype, and to the good mother categorised by M. Klein. The character does not realise her own value, being one in the crowd of “middle-aged women, at the end of half a lifetime of working with children and so forth, (who) are the most highly equipped people there are. They can turn their hands to absolutely anything. They can cope with God-knows-what human situation with tact and patience” (Bikman 59). This is Kate’s merit, which she does not value because it prevents her from growing personally, and she even feels guilty about the salary she receives. At the same time, guilt is precisely a common trait

of mothers, “Feeling guilty seems almost a definition of motherhood” (*The Summer Before the Dark* 98).

The first changes in the conception of herself arrive soon as she feels “blooming, expanding, enlarging” (51), because she is wanted and needed. Three years have passed since that moment of crisis. There was something to be reformulated when Tim said that she was suffocating him, but she had been reluctant to accept it and she took it as a threat to the family unit. Far from being easy, the children’s adolescence had been highly demanding, time-consuming and unpleasant. They were constantly in conflict with her, while her husband did not really implicate himself. But half the problem was actually finding it hard to keep herself separate from them, as they were providers of her relational self while her “real self” was “quietly offstage, in observation” (*The Summer Before the Dark* 51-52).

In order to analyse her present state and what marriage and motherhood have done to her, Kate recreates some images which remind her of air hostesses, who are admired for their kindness and attractiveness, and for whom getting married is like going off a stage into a small dark room, to follow the image that the title *The Summer Before the Dark* suggests. This change is similar to the shift between Kate Ferreira and Kate Brown. This image reinforces Susan Klein’s theory that the summer in the title is the summer of 1948, when Kate was staying in her grandfather’s house in Lourenço Marques (S.M. Klein 228-240).

As she is embedded in personal crisis, she also experiences Jeffrey’s illness as a spiritual one (the conflict between becoming a lawyer or a vagabond), and it parallels her own mental process. This event coincides with the pattern present throughout this work, in which inner conflict is expressed through physical rather than mental breakdown. Kate is also getting ill, and chooses to concentrate on her physical and

mental illness. By doing so, she consciously and willingly undertakes a process of personal growth leading to the desired goal of wholeness. Many of the reflections on her life over those last two decades take place as the result of watching other people and their attitudes. In this initial phase she recognises personal lack when she sees children and cannot help missing her family, but also feels like “this mother with a quarter of a century of being attuned to other people’s moods” (*The Summer Before the Dark* 76). Similarly, observing other younger women, she identifies freedom and, most especially, confidence, as what she has lost “in excesses of self-consciousness, in awareness of the consequences of what she did” (93). Kate is just trying to recognise the basic problem so as to have the key for the change she needs.

Another method for finding out what has happened to her in the last twenty-five years is that of mentally summarising her marriage. It is described as a happy one at the start: they were a couple in love, maintaining a social life until the second baby brought the need to comply with the rules of marriage as institution—having a car, a mortgage, and so on—for the children’s sake.

More than that, this was the first step towards Kate’s transformation into a role. When she considers and estimates her process, she is “tempted to cry out that it had all been a gigantic trick, the most monstrous cynicism” (91), that is, the same feeling that Harriet Lovatt (*The Fifth Child* again) experiences after having built up a family. In Cederstrom’s view, Kate’s rejection of the stereotype of wife and mother also means dismissing an important part of maturation and self-development (*Psyche* 157). Contrarily, as I see it, warmth and sympathy are discarded as they are a part of Kate’s relational self, a fundamental side of her persona rather than an attribute of her identity. These are, therefore, false, and imposed on her incipient new personality. In the end, she



recognizes how motherhood has changed her, and how it has become an obsession that she needs to overcome (Klein 229).

As we see, the persona that Kate embodies is based on relations and her transformation goes from the social to the personal. At some point before the beginning of her adventure, the persona has proved insufficient and therefore she should undergo her individuation process to achieve wholeness. The priority is that of separating her person from her context so as to arrive at her deepest self by means of dreaming and imagination, on the one hand, and flashbacks that transport her to her previous identity, on the other. The change that Kate will undergo by having access to her own subconscious will be optimistic and positive if we apply a Jungian rather than a Freudian approach to the novel, as Ralph Berets brilliantly explains. First, because Freud's orientation towards life was mainly pessimistic, with no possibility of getting beyond neurosis, while Jung contemplated the chance of becoming an integrated unit again. Second, because Freud focused on the past in the interpretation of dreams (unresolved past conflict had to be worked on before being able to deal with the present), while Jung took as the main point the goals and hopes that the individual has for the future, which have to be understood in order to advance in life, as happens in Kate's dreaming process (Berets 118). Accordingly, from the very beginning of the novel, on certain occasions, especially in moments of introspection, Kate's imagination makes her feel a cold wind. In her narrative, this is often linked either to the future or to the re-examination of the present in order to face the future. When the wind appears in dreams (daydreaming in the novel), it often announces an important change that is about to take place (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 998).

According to Jung, individuation can only be reached by the assimilation of polarities, like sexual oppositions, so present in our life and culture. As we have seen in the previous chapters, “individuation” here means

development of a unified psyche through the creation of a link between one’s conscious life and the darker shadows of the unconscious (...) a bridge between the conscious world with its social imperatives and the deepest needs of the unconscious. (Cederstrom “Elements” 50)

One polarity that has to be considered is that of the masculine and feminine nature of a person. A woman such as Kate will have to find and accept an unconscious masculine figure. In the dream of the prince, there is a first hint of the animus. In its embodiment in Jeffrey, we see that Kate projects herself on her lover, allowing her to recognise her own moment of breakdown, which parallels Jeffrey’s. If we consider the prince as an embodiment of Michael, Kate recognises her husband’s lost youth as her own, which is what she needs to find in order to regain her purest self. By combining both meanings, we find the ambivalent content of destruction and creation of the animus, and she cannot have a perfect relationship with the nobleman until she has attended to her unconscious and inner self, which means destruction of her current self and the subsequent personal rebuilding.

Here we have an example of splitting, or the distribution of a symbolic value among several characters. This phenomenon reproduces the division we found of the masculine principle between Mary’s father and Moses in *The Grass is Singing*, and also mirrors, in a smaller measure, the distribution of the animus among the several masculine characters in *The Golden Notebook*. In this case, Michael and Jeffrey do not only share the animus archetype, but they also bring about Kate’s feeling of loss in a turning point in her life. We must remember that this, together with the condensation device, has been introduced in the previous chapter as the analogical, associative and

image-making devices that make Rubinstein's critical analysis of Lessing's work so remarkable.

Maureen acts as Kate's shadow, apart from being the "before" to Kate's "after" (*Novelistic Vision* 212), and thus personifies the subconscious, as the same-sex projection of her hidden self. In observing Maureen (the embodiment of her younger self), Kate sees the change that she has undergone in the last two decades and the girl's former refusal to marry gives Kate the strength to stick to her newly built identity. More than that, Kate's relation to Maureen constitutes the final test for her new way of seeing herself. Relating to a much younger woman, she envisages the way to deal with her children now that she has overcome her obsession with motherhood (S. M. Klein 234). Remarkably enough, it is with someone her daughter's age that, for the first time, Kate finds a form of communication that does not depend on her maternal role.

By telling the girl her dream, she finds coherence between the mythical and personal planes (Rubenstein 214). Moreover, we should not forget that the shadow sometimes reveals itself through dreams. It is not the case with Maureen, but, as we have seen, memory of the past is an aspect of the subconscious which may also take part in the individuation process by revealing the shadow; therefore, instead of being a character of Kate's dreams, Maureen recreates a younger identity in Kate's recollections. In the same way that the dream of the seal shows the main character's inner conflict, she has other dreams in which she observes Maureen's crises. Kate unconsciously accepts her as a younger alter ego and shadow, so the girl's crisis affects Kate's process of redefinition. During the period when Maureen cannot make up her mind whether to get married or not, Kate dreams of a caged bird in the flat, which is darting in and out of dark spaces, saying "no, no, I won't" (208).

Like all the female characters who are discussed in this thesis, Kate has a special relationship with motherhood. As we saw before, she displays the features of the good mother not only in relation to her fellow workers in Global Food, but also as the carer and nurturer inside the family unit. However, as she needs to define her own self and starts an inner quest where subconscious forces are also required, the character moves towards a new definition of herself as a mother, one which will be more inclusive and ambivalent. Kate's external transformation and decision not to conform to the social rules in terms of physical appearance is accompanied by her doubts about whether her family will approve of this or not. Although she is happy with her individuation process, she feels reluctant about going home because she fears their reaction and, especially, whether they will recognise their mother and wife in her. This takes us to the other side of the mother archetype, the part which includes what is hidden or secret, such as all the inner process that she has undergone, which is not public for the rest of the family. That transformation matches my final interpretation of the title in the conclusion to this chapter.

#### **4.4. The psychology of spaces.**

A further aspect of the main character's subconscious, which adds to her entire redefinition, is the way she experiences space. Spaces work as inner houses or analogues to psychic states in Lessing's fiction, as we will also observe in my discussion of the remaining novels. In *The Summer Before the Dark*, feeling identified with a small room shows the need to focus on individuality and leave the rest of life outside. Remarkably enough, what Kate really values is its neatness and the lack of objects with associations. She also needs the impersonality of the place in order to start again and build herself again from scratch. This is her way of leaving all that is

secondary aside and starting a process of simplification. Being out of the trap for personal growth that is her family, she will gradually feel more and more detached from the house she has lived in for so long.

Apart from the importance of being identified or feeling well in a given place, her perception of her own psyche is that of being compartmentalised, as in the dream of the turtle. This notion of her mind structured in parallel to the spaces is present throughout the plot. Rubenstein characterises the process as putting her inner house in order while she is searching congruence between the mythical and personal planes (*Novelistic Vision* 213). According to Debrah Raschke, the ties between body and psyche, which are so typical in Lessing's narrative, often emerge in the motif of the house, defined by Jung as standing for the psyche at a given moment (15). Moreover, the house is linked to maternity and cultural ideology, as Victoria Rosner states, and as we have already seen in the dream of the seal (qtd. in Raschke 15).

Significantly enough, Kate analyses the hotel room in London, the next lodging she occupies, from the housewife's viewpoint. She values functionality and simplicity as she did in the previous spaces, and it therefore propitiates her introspection, as there is nothing else to distract her. Nevertheless, she cannot help observing that "the curtains would wash in a washing machine", that "the carpet was dark grey, would not show the dirt", or that "the walls would probably have to be vacuumed at least twice a week", to finally wonder "what was the point in being in a hotel if you brought with you the housewife?" (138). At this time in the novel she is still half-way between her personal and her relational self.

These thoughts gradually dissolve as she gains mental spaces in which she acts as an individual. One example of this is precisely linked to her own house, when she goes there, takes a look from the outside and feels it being like "looking at her own life"

(146). For the first time, rather than identifying with the house, she feels uninvolved with it, which allows her to analyse her life, and also herself, from the outside. Detachment grows as she develops personally and by the end of the novel, when she knows that her house is open again and her family are back, she represses her maternal instinct in order to go one step further and finish the story of the seal, before she can go back home completely restored. Her house seems to belong to another world, as she feels outside her own life: “*her* life was going on: but she was not there” (221). She is not a mere personification of her functions—nurturing, keeping the family together, providing love, warmth advice—but has an independent identity. As we can see throughout this thesis, a feeling of detachment is central to the construction of female identity, as a concept that brings about the key moment in the growth of the character.

#### **4.5. Language and the symbolic.**

In Kate’s inner process, she finds out how unreliable and insufficient language is, especially for explaining her emotions and narrating her subconscious life. Lessing therefore subscribes to the Sufi belief that inner transformation can only be experienced rather than discussed. Language as insufficient, and naming as oversimplification forms a constant theme in many of Lessing’s novels. In Lacanian terms, the unreliability of language goes together with the invalidation of social conventions such as the nuclear family, as the child embraces the mother-father-child triangle and enters the Law of the Father when she or he acquires language.

Together with language, the corporeal language of appearance is characterised as “artefact” since it does not stem naturally from what Kate is, but from the conventions established; it does not correspond to the identity that Kate is aiming for. Similarly, it is

always hard to find words to name the different phenomena and processes that are at play in her mental transformation. Words fail to convey full meaning. When trying to infer the difference between the young Kate and her elder self, she says that there is a difference in “spirit”, although she knows that it might not be the right word for it, and that the alternative names she has tried have also proved misleading. She mentions the limitations of language, although it is in fact language which makes the difference between her original and present selves. She is different now because she has been labelled a wife and a mother. Naming is what determines one’s persona and social identity (35).

Language and communication seemed to be efficient for Kate’s family during the children’s development, or so she thought. Calling family conversation “love talk” was nearly a euphemism for disagreement inside the family unit. Finally, this example of language seems to be failing to provide full meanings and cannot be relied upon, since all the years trying to give priority to communication also lead inevitably to chaos and the need to reformulate all household relationships. Tim’s accusation that his mother is treating him like a baby is immediately recognised by everybody as outside their routine “love talk”. Careful though Kate has been to create right spaces for positive communication, this is just as deceptive as naming things and, therefore, another channel has to be found. Tim has not found “love talk” useful to express his feelings and Kate has not been able to use language to find a way out, preserve personal identity, or ask her family for help to adapt to the changing patterns of the family unit.

Social convention often determines how things are perceived and named. When analysing her long and slow personal change in the twenty-five years of being a wife and a mother, Kate sees that she had been acquiring so-called virtues. She realises that they had not been in her vocabulary before and she had never thought of giving a name

to them, although they were already there: “Patience. Self-discipline. Self-control. Self-abnegation. Chastity. Adaptability to others” (91). She is also said to have been amused by the terminology of what every mother had to become, that is, social demands create the language to define roles. What society had classified as virtues seem to turn into the enemy, when one wants to detach oneself from their social function and develop an independent personality; therefore, the labelling of certain qualities depends on the intentionality of using a word. Her aim, at this point, is that of showing these attitudes as a form of dementia, since they have transformed her into a role without a will.

Related to this are Kate’s “cow sessions” with her friend Mary Finchley, in which they mainly chat and enjoy being without their families for a while. Feeling free allows them to laugh at the absurdity of some aspects of their life and at the establishment of certain social norms. The concepts that make them laugh the most describe the family, motherhood and child-rearing, such as “well-adjusted”, “typical”, “normal”, “integrated”, “secure”, “ordered”, “healthy”, “home”, “father”, “the breadwinner” and the like, that is, words that show suppositions about how women have to act or ideals which do not always match their expectations.

In all the examples we have seen, we reach the conclusion that Kate “anticipates a failure in the symbolic realm of language to properly express what her family now needs to understand” when she goes back home transformed into a new identity (Leonard 13). It is impossible for her to put her inner quest and growth into words. That is why, as we will see later on, she will have to rely on her physical transformation to express her changing consciousness. This physical transformation, therefore, has much greater importance than Cederstrom stated: “All that she has learnt will focus on a statement about her hair” (*Psyche* 166).



One of the results of Kate's interior journey is that she has to rely on language in order to redefine her sexuality. She identifies it as having betrayed her true self since she recognizes that her sexual impulses, apart from blinding her to the patriarchal nature of heterosexual relationships as a universal, "have given rise to an identity of self-concept that is gendered, for they have compelled in her a number of traditionally feminized behaviours, among them the compulsion to always put others' needs ahead of her own" (Leonard 11), and this is precisely what she needs to get rid of. Her sexuality is also felt as negative when she is lying in bed, "feeling very sick again, but longing for her husband, the familiarity of their knowledge of each other, their intimacy" (142). She sees her sexual needs as distracting her from the belief that at this moment her only duty is to think what her life has become: "Her sexuality (...) was a traitor to her conviction that now, at this time, she had only one duty: to think about what her life had become, what it was going to have to be" (125). But before drawing these conclusions, Kate has needed to question herself and reflect on her position as a sexual being. She always does so with regard to two main characters in the plot: first, Jeffrey, with whom she has a more than disappointing extramarital affair; and, second, her neighbour Mary Finchley, who is said to have no sense of guilt about sex and infidelity.

In her relationship with Jeffrey, Kate comprehends that she approaches him in a maternal way and, when he is undergoing a personal crisis, she listens to him as if he was one of her children. She wishes she were a "love woman" instead, as she puts it, and states the presupposed importance that she expects from labelling (100). At this moment, she thinks that she only has to remember Michael in order to recall how it felt, that is, she needs to go back to her own self before motherhood. What she sees here is the conscious determination to redefine herself.

When Kate starts her affair with Jeffrey, she considers the role that Michael's constant infidelity played in her marriage, which had also made her feel maternal towards him, "as if he had a weakness for eating sweets and would not restrain it" (63). She also remembers the time, ten years before, when she had been in love with someone else, and her approach to sex was completely different. More than this, she imagines what Mary would have said about infidelity, since she lacks the respect for social norms and the sense of guilt that Kate experiences in excess. At this point, she starts feeling that everything is relative and she questions her conformity: "At one time, thinking of Mary was a kind of comfort and support—I'd think I'm much better and finer-feelinged and sensitive than that irresponsible creature. But now I wonder. I really do" (228).

There is a close relationship between Kate's redefinition of her sexuality and a remarkable change of look, as a kind of non-verbal language. Her first change of appearance takes place when she buys new dresses for a way of life that does not contemplate her domestic role. She observes that "No young person likes to see dear mother all glossy and gleaming and silky" (37). However, her deepest transformation takes place in the opposite direction. As Kate becomes increasingly conscious of her identity, she becomes aware of the fact that she has been embedded in a system of social expectations since her adolescence. Her changing body, facing ripeness, makes her react against time and use "artefact" to keep herself sexually attractive and visible. After these considerations, she starts her own exploration of the matter that consists in emphasizing and then reducing her sexual appeal (Leonard 11). Going on with her experiment, she decides to challenge the same system that has praised her so far for being young and attractive, and, by half way through the plot, her appearance has changed so much that she does no longer seem "the pretty cared-for woman of the home in South London" (141), mainly because of her refusal to dye her hair again.

The mirror plays an important part in Kate's external transformation. In the same way as young Kate was constantly observing her beauty, now she sees herself behind the face of a sick monkey, after her illness. A monkey highlights the idea of Kate's extreme thinness, but also brings about some connotations that relate to her inner change. It is an agile and amusing animal, sometimes ridiculous for playing the clown and imitating humans, which is how Kate sees herself: a poor imitation of what she used to be. Apart from this, another attribute is that of wisdom in Eastern art, one of the qualities that Kate has been acquiring with age and spiritual introspection (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 884). Moreover, monkeys are believed to possess great inner strength and unconscious activity (Cirlot 306). But what is it that Kate seeks in the mirror? Suzanne Leonard states that she does not leave the imaginary maternal for the symbolic paternal that would force her into the patriarchal realm of language and position her as a sexual being. Instead, Kate recreates the mirror stage by offering the maternal body the capacity for expression when "the light that is the desire to please had gone out" (243).

I would propose, however, that Kate had entered the symbolic indeed. She conformed to the norms but the experience was disappointing. She positioned herself as a sexual being when she looked at herself in the mirror as a young lady. At that point in her development, she recreated Lacan's mirror stage and recognised herself as an independent woman ready to live her own life. Once she adopted the Law of the Father, she undertook the traditional female role that society assigned her and embraced the socially-constructed woman category. It is always defined in terms of the maternal, and therefore makes Kate feel incomplete in the long run because the mother concept never comprises the whole meaning of womanhood. This is why a quarter of a century later, when language has proved unreliable, Kate looks at herself in the mirror. She performs the mirror stage again, this time after a separation from the Other that her family

constitutes and which the symbolic had introduced to transform the imaginary and define her own self, as Lacan explains. In the second performance of the looking-glass phase, Kate chooses freedom from her family ties.

In contrast to her younger appearance, her monkey face has now got the capacity to show anger and displeasure; her means of communicating to her family that she has changed (Leonard 13-14). Her change of looks—as a part of body language—helps us foresee the completion of her redefinition through the achievement of a necessary goal: that of having a balance between image and self, body and psyche and between private and societal expectations.

Apart from the mirror, Kate also draws conclusions about change after watching other people on the street and identifying with them. Her transformation is already complete, but, at this moment, the important matter is the contrast between how she really thinks at the moment with what she used to be like. Other people's attitudes exemplify past situations that she recognises and analyses from a distance; for instance, the difference between men's and women's approach to family life that she had once experienced is illustrated by a couple she sees in a café. The young wife wants to go home, because the neighbour who is looking after the baby wants to go to bed, while her husband's attitude showed that he was contrasting present servitude with past freedom (180). Another very significant scene takes place just before Kate's final decision to go back home: Maureen and Kate see a girl about Maureen's age pushing a push-chair with one small child crying and at the same time another crying child by the hand. Her face only reveals misery. We are told that "The girl's look at Maureen said everything about what she had lost when she became the mother of two small children. Water filled her eyes and the three creatures went on up the street." (233-4). Kate does not remember if something like this had happened to her. It is as if the sacrifice of

motherhood did not allow her to remember the worst parts of it, or rather, as if motherhood meant the loss of one's individuality to the extent that mothers avoided thinking about it.

#### **4.6. Conclusion.**

After this summer of growth, Kate develops a sense of the "Here and Now" and of the relevance of the present moment to the rest of her life. Wondering "how was her summer out of the family going to seem to her on a year or so's time?" (232), she acknowledges the effect of her inner change on the future. Her summer of reflection and solitude has resulted in a process of individuation. She now shows readiness to deal with the divisions of her inner self that age provides. In Jungian terms, the look at oneself and the development of potentialities in the second half of life parallels the course of the sun, which after having illuminated the world, withdraws its rays to illuminate itself (Jung qtd. in Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 201). Although Kate's thoughts and reconsiderations constitute the biggest change in her life, she does not discard anything she had previously done, as Doris Lessing herself explains in *Conversations* (Hendin 46). This means that by going back home, she does not repudiate either her past family life or her summer development. At that point, as the heroine herself explains, her future, rather than springing from her immediate past, is going to continue from where she had left off as a child. She has access to her real self for the first time, although it had always been offered to her family, but was never noticed or valued. Thus, the development that Kate undergoes makes this novel fit perfectly into the category of the *Reifungsroman*.

The process of individuation that Kate has experienced is not only a result of re-connecting up her subconscious to her conscious and social self, but also that of reuniting a subject which feels fragmented in a progression towards wholeness, as was the case for Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook*: “It seems to me as if little bits of me are distributed among my family, Tim’s bit, Michael’s bit, Eileen’s piece-and so on” thinks Kate (245). Nevertheless, as has been made clear throughout my discussion of the novel, Kate’s development is paralleled by Harriet’s in *The Fifth Child*. The final outcome, however, is very different for each of these two characters, as we will see in the next chapter.

By stating that Michael does not dream, Kate highlights the difference between them. What happens to him always comes from the outside, while Kate’s development is that of incorporating her inner processes to her outer performance. This same mechanism is present in many of Lessing’s female characters and very especially in Anna Wulf, Harriet Lovatt, Emily McVeagh and Mary Turner, while male characters are generally flatter ones, since the author has not paid the same attention to their development. There are some exceptions, like that of Jack Orkney (*The Temptation of Jack Orkney* 1972), who has been considered a prefiguration of Kate (*Novelistic Vision* 201).

The result of Kate’s search is not only a restoration of the relationship between her mind and her body but also a reevaluation of her nurturing capacity. My contribution to this aspect comes through applying the basics of Lacanian philosophy to the preceding Jungian readings of the novel. From my perspective, the choices that Kate has made include her rejection of the place she occupied after having entered the symbolic order. She does not accept language as a tool to communicate with others anymore; by doing so, she despises the triangular structure of the nuclear family, the patriarchal

notions of marriage and motherhood, and the social expectations projected on her as a wife and mother. The fact that she works as a translator and that “she *was* language” (28) at the outset of her mental process is vital: she embodies convention until she realises that it is an illusion and that she needs to overcome it. We must also take into account that tension does not come from her marriage, which has always been described as happy, but from the limitations of the institution itself. It is convention—which gives her a social position and role, provides her a name and positions her as a sexual being—that has blocked the possibility of defining herself personally for so many years. She goes back to this position, but now she defines herself on her own terms.

If we now try to relate this to our understanding of the role that the mother has in postmodern narratives, we can see that the mother is still present, but her role is quite outdated. The mother can explain her own story, but she needs some inner redefinition to do so. This is closely linked to the question of the mother’s authority outside motherhood: it is only after having observed the institution from the outside and analysed life from a distance that she can narrate her own experience. Before Kate’s adventure, her role as a mother had not been abandoned, but it looked redundant, thus epitomising a position of abjection in the Kristevan sense of the word. My approach to the novel shows that the redemption can only take place once she has undergone her individuation process, which requires the rejection of conventions and institutions. Contradictory though it may seem, Kate achieves wholeness by making herself invisible to the world because this is what she chooses by herself, regardless of her relational identity. The imaginary is what prevails, as it is precisely her own image that matters in the new definition of herself that she articulates.

After a thorough analysis, I would like to offer an interpretation of the title. S. M. Klein’s option seems to be the most original one. Nevertheless, the general reading

of “the dark” in the title is the one that identifies it with the future that awaits Kate. Although both interpretations look completely logical and plausible, the title can also be read otherwise. I would suggest, therefore, the title certainly refers to both summers, which can be seen as forming a palimpsest, according to Gérard Genette’s approach to intertextuality in *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré* (1982). As a document written several times, one version over the other, the latter text requires the reader to reread or remember the earlier one, thus acknowledging the relation between both. Consequently, in order to envisage the meaning of “the dark” after the second summer, we must interpret its meaning according to the summer of 1948, the experience which lies beneath and before it. Only with this previous knowledge of Kate’s entering “the dark”, as a symbol of marriage and family life, can we deal with the summer of her mature age and subsequent re-entering and updating of it. This interpretation of the title as depending on the meaning of the two recurrent experiences constitutes part of my contribution to the analysis of the novel.

As I see it, there is a clear relation between the dark in the title and the notion of the subconscious, which is, moreover, verified by the author herself: “The Freudians describe the conscious as a small lit area, all white, and the unconscious as a great dark marsh full of monsters” (Raskin 14). The dark, however, is not the process that Kate undergoes, but the result of such a process, that is, the new approach she has gained. Kate has learnt to observe and consider her subconscious experience together with her conscious life; therefore, the dark that Kate faces can be positive because she can use her unconscious to go on with her life in a happier way, as Lessing herself postulates: “The unconscious can be what you make of it, good or bad, helpful or unhelpful. Our culture has made an enemy of the unconscious... other cultures have accepted the unconscious as a helpful force, and I think we should learn to see it in that way too...”



(Raskin 14). In the same line, as observed by Cristina Andreu, the novel, instead of highlighting the contrast that exists between both forms of experience, describes its gradual convergence (323). Moreover, this contrasts with the conclusion that the same author draws on “To Room Nineteen” as depicting a divided personality who depends only on reason or on emotion and whose fate is either madness or death, as was also the case in *The Grass is Singing* (211).

The dark in the title characterises the new Kate as the “dark continent”, to use a Freudian term (applied to female sexuality as something unknown). By leaving the artifice that makes her sexually attractive aside, Kate enters the dark when she does not accept a sexual identity imposed on her by the patriarchal system and no longer relies on established patterns. Rather than disappearing, by making herself invisible to others, Kate takes an even more active and personal role in the definition of her identity. She is a dark continent, since her inner transformation remains a mystery to outsiders, and therefore, her position in the social system is a matter of personal choice too. Moreover, keeping some private areas of herself unknown for the rest of her family is a token of the negative aspects of the mother archetype that were not present in her before. Reaching the ambivalent nature of the mother figure parallels her having combined conscious and subconscious and having completed her individuation process, with all its contradictions. In this sense, the last paragraph of the novel plays a meaningful part, as Berets explains: picking up her suitcase and walking out unobserved, Kate summarises the two main changes in herself. First, she is carrying her new self with her; second, she does not need the approval of others (Berets121).

My reading of the novel reverses Cederstrom previous—and also Jungian—approach, which presupposes a lack of introspective depth and archetypal power in the character, and classifies *The Summer Before the Dark* as one of the novels of failed

individuation (*Psyche* 151-167). The justification of this assumption is to be found in the last lines of the novel. According to Cederstrom, Kate is closing the door to introspection, which implies the failure of the individuation process (*Psyche* 167). Conversely, my interpretation of “the dark” allows for a reading of the end as the completion of a process of collapse that has taught Kate how she has to approach both her return to family life and her focus on the deepest layers of her consciousness (which are, at the same time, the two meanings of “the dark” in the title).

There is no polarity between the notions in the title, since, in Lacanian terms, one concept includes its opposite in some way or other. “The summer” and “the dark” are only two related terms. No “winter” is opposed to “summer”, no “light” appears contrary to “dark”. As there are no totalities, the dark does not have to be negative, it is only something unknown and, therefore, in constant evolution. My conclusion is that this title defines Kate’s progression entirely and, contrary to some interpretations, it is an optimistic one, since the dark, the future she has just built up for herself, is left open. It is unknown even to her because it is in constant definition, as is her identity, also according to the Lacanian and Kristevan interpretation of identity as unstable and changing.

This title is a transgression of the archetypes that, nevertheless, the author has incorporated in the plot. It reverses the traditional interpretation of the seasons, according to which all rebirth and renewal takes place in the seasons that go towards light, that is, spring and summer. By going in the opposite direction, from summer to the dark, Kate does not give herself up, but rather, she redefines how she is going to live her old age, the autumn of her life. Facing the years to come is experienced as a rebirth, making the dark appear as all the experiences that still lie ahead.



## 5. THE FIFTH CHILD, 1988.

### 5.1. Introduction.

According to D.A.N. Jones in *The New York Review of Books*, *The Fifth Child*, constitutes “a horror story of maternity and the nightmare of social collapse” (30-31). The aim of this chapter is to show how the novel can be read as a valid representation of a failure in the construction of identity; it dramatises the way in which the dreams and fantasies of the subconscious can destroy or fatally interrupt this identity-building process. *The Fifth Child* combines several elements and levels of significance: dreaming, imagination and a sense of female identity which is endangered and comes close to disappearing. Although no dream is thoroughly narrated in the novel, it constitutes a major contribution to how the subconscious and motherhood are related to each other. A better understanding of *The Fifth Child* will help us to comprehend both its specific role in the Lessing canon and its multi-layered treatment of identity as a form of troubled self-creation.

Harriet Lovatt’s identity quest is determined by her idealistic imagination, which leads her to a life devoted to nurture and care. With an originally inconsistent self, she relies on her dreams to decide on the role she wants to perform, and starts a process of creation of both a large family and of her own personality. Once the process is completed, she can be defined by all the positive features of the mother figure. As a turning point in the story, for some reason, Harriet is unable to love her fifth child and her entire life’s dream becomes a nightmare. Once again, it is her imagination which creates a monster out of her son Ben. In the end, Harriet’s own work results in destruction, leaving only the negative aspects of the mother archetype.

At this point, we need to recall Lessing's words that we saw in the introduction to this thesis (p. 5): "With a few symbols a dream can define the whole of one's life, and warn us of the future, too" (Raskin 14). Moreover, it is important to see that Lessing uses traditional narrative methods such as tales and fables "as a creative vehicle to examine the states of consciousness of the human soul" (Galín 23). With all these fantastic elements, this author endows *The Fifth Child*, with a dreamlike atmosphere in which reality and imagination merge. More than that, Lessing experiments with crossing boundaries, which results in "hybrid narratives and speculative fiction", as Roberta Rubenstein puts it ("Fantastic Children" 61) and which, contrary to Lessing's will, has brought about discussion on the category that she occupies as a writer: either realist or a fantasist.

The presence of the subconscious through dreams and imagination in this novel is not an isolated case, the same device is to be found in most of her narratives which discuss female identity. Consequently, *The Fifth Child* merits further analysis in this respect, since it is one of the novels—together with *Alfred and Emily*—that has raised the smallest amount of criticism of the five that constitute this study.

As Cederstrom notices, in the period in which the *Children of Violence* series was published (1952-69), Lessing's literary approach began to change from a Marxist-Realist philosophy to psychological, particularly Jungian, criticism (*Psyche* 4). This responds to a transition on her part from her political concern to a major focus on the world within and her growing familiarity with psychoanalysis. This renewed emphasis on inwardness brings about a concentration on a very specific thematic area in Lessing's canon: the construction of selfhood, or Jungian individuation, whereby the impulses from the unconscious are integrated in conscious life, and through which the self grows into a full, organic awareness, "a sense of oneness and firmness" (Hall and Nordby 47).

This definition has been chosen since it allows us to argue that *The Fifth Child* dramatises the difficulties, and eventually the impossibility of fulfilling this process because of a failure in this integration between the conscious and subconscious.

Jones explains how in Harriet's perceptions of her own child, even when she is still pregnant, reality merges with myth. She thinks of him as "weird" or "evil", and her dealing with such a child is related to several myths, for instance, "Parsiphaë kept her monster son, Minotaur, in a prison, to act as a sort of executioner. Jocasta exposed her accursed son, Oedipus, to die on a mountainside" (30). This originates from the character's dreams, during pregnancy, of laboratory-bred monsters and hybrids. It follows from this that Doris Lessing does not make it clear whether there is anything wrong with the child or, on the contrary, if Harriet is deluded, as Jones puts it. In an apparently realistic world, we get a sense of fatalism and unreality brought about by the fifth pregnancy. According to Isabel Anievas, Lessing chooses the conventions of the Gothic to build up a story of psychological terror around motherhood as a central female experience. Fear of intrusion of the Other is central to this story (Anievas 113).

Jones states the novel is full of examples of how reality and imagination merge, for instance, when the teacher says that Ben is "a funny little chap" (48) and Harriet is waiting for "the other conversation"—"the real one" (100). The matter of "normality" is belittled by the doctor telling Harriet that "The problem is not with Ben, but with you. You don't like him very much..." (103) In conclusion, the mother's dreams and expectations during pregnancy as well as the imaginative explanation she gives for her son's behaviour determine the mother-child relationship, the character's status as the mother in the family, as well as her entire identity. In this article we find, again, the sense that everything is relative: the mother role, the mother-child relationship, the mother's identity, the child's identity, even motherhood itself.

Socially speaking, if we want to contextualise such a child character as Ben at this historical moment, we must bear in mind Lionel Trilling's consideration that the family has traditionally been a narrative institution, as it has a tale to tell of how things began. The decreasing status of narration in a technological culture, in which updating and daily events are prioritised over a "narrative history" may be connected with the breakdown of family life and "revisions in the child's relation to [it]" (Trilling qtd. in Pifer 2). Ellen Pifer, then, argues that this breakdown, which intensified during the twentieth century, has produced "new and often devastating images of childhood in contemporary fiction" (2).

Apart from this, the appearance of such a character such as Ben at this given moment of history is not a matter of chance. As Pifer explains, in the eighteenth century there was a belief in original innocence with Rousseau's noble savage and this view of childhood innocence was later brought to poetry by Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge and also to the novel with Dickens, the Brontës, George Eliot and Mark Twain. From Freud's work onwards, the child's psyche was reinterpreted according to the sexual nature of children's experience, and the subconscious aspect of it was justified. Along with this, the family was seen as a neurotic experience of tensions. In literature, Henry James is a key name, since he transformed the image of the child, especially in *The Turn of the Screw*, with an ambivalence of its innocence, which runs parallel to Freud's theories. Half a century later, after two world wars, writers started emphasising the darker elements of childhood, although some looked back with nostalgia at the nineteenth-century conception (Pifer 20-25).

## 5.2. Construction of an identity based on imaginary ground.

*The Fifth Child* includes the two modes of artistic creation that Jung described. On the one hand, the psychological mode deals with the materials from human consciousness which constitute the waking life of a person (lessons of life, emotional shocks, crises and the like). The other mode is the visionary, which includes unfamiliar materials, beyond human understanding, obscure, originating in dreams, night-time fears and the darkest side of our mind (Jung "Psychology and Literature" 174). In a way, the novel includes both modes since there is a realistic side to it (corresponding to the factual life of the family), yet, the visionary mode seems prevalent.

Doris Lessing is not the only author in the novel. As a parallel to the double author in *The Golden Notebook* (Doris Lessing/Anna Wulf), another creator, Harriet, just as important as the writer, also starts a story by building up a family with both factual and unreal components, shaping life according to her own insight. The happiness she seeks by doing so is claimed to be her birthright, thereby showing her naivety (Pifer,145). Moreover, she is not only the creator who determines the existence of the family unit, but also the builder of her own identity.

Harriet's identity-building goes in two different directions: first, the construction of an identity based on the idealisation of traditional family; and second, the dependence on her mother role, which cancels out any other sphere in her life and imposes the most negative aspects of motherhood. The historical context of the plot must be borne in mind. Written in the nineteen eighties but set in the sixties and seventies, the plot coincides with the publication of Rich's *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), which makes a distinction between women's relation to their potential reproduction and their children (in Rich's terms, "experience"), and the



objective of keeping those potentialities under men's control ("institution"). By rejecting the normative concept of motherhood, this work focuses on the different experiences of women (either mothers or otherwise). As a result, the mother figure of Second Wave Feminism entails the acceptance of a diversity of "motherhoods". It was a productive period for feminist theorists and, therefore, many women (like the protagonist) started facing the mismatch between what they had been educated for and their real experience. This phenomenon was a step further against the reductive tendency to homogenise female identity by assuming a universal feminine desire for a child. Ruth Robbins adds that Harriet's is anachronistic (Robbins 98).

From this moment onwards, I will be discussing Harriet's development as a character. The very first time we see Harriet seems to suggest that she constitutes no independent self and she even blurs with the background, metaphorically becoming just a piece that perfectly fits in the jigsaw: "From across the room—if one saw her at all among so many eye-demanding people—Harriet was a pastel blur. As an Impressionist picture, or a trick photograph, she seemed a girl merged with her surroundings. She stood near a great vase of dried grasses and leaves and her dress was something flowery" (4). Impressionist painting highlighted the depiction of ephemeral moments in the way that the human eye sees them. Light and movement are prioritised over stability and concept. From that, we may infer that Harriet's image is a transitory one, this is how we see her at this given moment, and our impression exceeds any factual concept of her identity since it is quite inconsistent. In a way, Harriet's first appearance reproduces Kate's coming on stage in *The Summer Before the Dark*, since the fact that her name only appears after several pages of narrative also shows an endangered identity. The pastel blur in which Harriet is immersed when David first spots her is an image of vegetation which stands for the nature on which the young couple will rely, as

part of their hopes for the future. They completely put themselves in the hands of nature by rejecting “the Pill”, with the result of four children in six years and the final fifth pregnancy that will destroy all their beliefs.

Her first consciousness of an identity is expressed on a relational basis: she performs the Western concept of the virgin and is waiting to have her first sexual experience, “like a present wrapped up in layers of deliciously pretty paper, to be given, with discretion, to the right person” (5). However, she does not see herself as belonging to a given category (the virgin) but as a label that others impose on her according to her sexual and relational behaviour.

Although she is indifferent to the symbolism of virginity and its implications, she is consciously willing to embrace the maternal. Call it archetype (in Jungian terms) or institution (according to Adrienne Rich), what Harriet searches for is an idea, a theoretical construction with infinite representations. Put together, the roles that Harriet performs constitute the figure of highest idealisation of Western culture, that of the Holy Mother, which is paradoxical in itself: our civilization consecrates a representation of femininity absorbed by motherhood. However, this consecration responds to a motherhood which is just “the fantasy nurtured by the adult, man or woman, of a lost territory”. What is idealised here is the relationship to one’s own mother, an idealization of primary narcissism (Kristeva, “Stabat Mater” 161). Moreover, the clash between Harriet’s previous idea and later experience mirrors the juxtaposition in Kristeva’s “Stabat Mater” between the influence of the Virgin Mary as a cultural figure and the telling of her own experience of maternity. Both Kristeva and Lessing blur concepts: the former breaks rules by giving a personal approach to the essay (a supposedly objective genre) in “Stabat Matter”, in the same way as the latter crosses genre limits between fantasy and reality.

Harriet has interiorised the process she underwent as a child: after the primary identification with her mother, she was placed in the symbolic order in a way that perfectly matches the Lacanian definition that Felman provides: “‘a constellation of alliance’—the family, elementary social cell in which the combination of desire and a Law prohibiting desire is regulated, through a linguistic structure of exchange, into a repetitive process of replacement—of substitution—of symbolic objects (substitutes) of desire” (Lacan qtd. in Felman 104). With the adoption of social roles, she wants to perpetuate the family concept. The vital moment that Harriet is living contrasts with Kate Brown’s views in *The Summer Before the Dark* after the experience of what Harriet is seeking. Kate understands that language is unreliable and, therefore, social and family structures constitute theoretical constructions that do not have much to do with individuality. Kate’s perspective is what Harriet is going to reach at the end of the novel once she has matched her expectations with the reality of her own life. To sum up, Harriet’s chosen role as a mother is idealised, built upon a paradox, and is relational, which is not very consistent.

In *The Fifth Child*, buying a house outside London corresponds to the couple’s aim to escape the cultural changes that take place in the city and, therefore, stick to tradition. However, with the time and passage of events, the house keeps the mother separate from the public sphere. A Victorian house shows how the couple want to perpetuate a given lifestyle and the traditionally prescribed roles for women. From the moment the new couple take possession of the house, the chronology of events, rather than being a realistic one, is conveyed by a symbolic sense of time which adds to the mythical and fantastic atmosphere of the novel. The characters’ families go in and out of this house for all the festivities in the year (Christmas, Easter, Summer holidays), and

this ritualistic timing runs parallel to Harriet's regular pregnancies and deliveries, creating a folkloric narrative pace.

Imagination is also linked to the house as the number of rooms reproduces the huge and idealistic type of family they are planning when they buy it. Likewise, when Harriet gets pregnant for the second time, David states "There is something progenitive in that room, I swear it" (18). The house seems, therefore, to have a life of its own and be responsible for the events, which adds to the fantastic dimension of the novel. Moreover, the house works as a contemporary version of the spatial enclosure of the old Gothic: the monastery, the castle, the manor or the gloomy isolated house (Anievas 115). It is in this context that the angel in the house becomes a fairy-tale witch with Ben's presence (Raschke 13-16). At the end of the novel, the empty house is the image of Harriet's solitude and isolation.

Idealisation works as the Lovatt's defence against criticism of their unrealistic plans. David accuses his own mother of not being maternal like Harriet, thus reminding us of the Jungian archetype of the good mother. Harriet's supposed maternal instinct is soon accomplished and the four first pregnancies run very similarly, one after the other, bringing samples of reality into Harriet's mind, such as feeling uncomfortable and sick. Due to this unease, she plans to have a good interval between pregnancies, which she never achieves. After the third baby is born, both parents recognise that going on with their project is a matter of obstinacy. Finally, Harriet's idea of having a large family starts to shake when, obviously exhausted, having been up for the whole night because of Jane's teeth, she is bad-tempered with the children and then regrets it. This incident makes her fight her brother-in-law's criticism that "that's got to be it", "you've had four children in six years" (25).

Even though she starts facing reality, Harriet does not want to accept that her

former views of the family turned out to be totally unrealistic. Instead of acknowledging that experience has changed her mind, she believes her own fantasy and her only concession is that they are going to give it a rest for at least three years. She pretends that she will not give in to the mainstream ideas of modern society and adds that their choice is what everybody really wants, although “they have been brainwashed out of it” (27).

As Reilly argues, *The Golden Notebook* most strongly resists the concept of psychological and social uniformity that Harriet is trying to denounce at this point of the plot. Reilly deals with this behavioural uniformity as the ultimate goal of psychosurgery, with such techniques as lobotomy (18). Difference is a key word in this novel and, as early in the plot, some years before Ben’s birth (the embodiment of difference), we see that Harriet asks for the right to be different. Brainwashing and lobotomy are here two metaphors for the uniformity that society demands. This coincides with Harriet’s views on changing social trends. Lessing’s familiarity with mental health issues is made clear in both texts as well as in *Walking in the Shade*, the second part of her autobiography.

Harriet’s opinion places her as one of the last survivors of an earlier and more traditional ideology since, in a moment of great feminist debate, the bulk of the society had changed its mind regarding women and the family: “It had been hard preserving their belief in themselves when the spirit of the times, the greedy and selfish sixties, had been so ready to condemn them, to isolate, to diminish their best selves” (21). As a result, both Harriet and David deny the drawbacks of a large family by using fantasy again: “Often, when David and Harriet lay face to face, it seemed that doors in their breasts flew open, and what poured out was an intensity of relief, of thankfulness, that still astonished them both: patience for what seemed now such a very long time had not

been easy, after all” (21). Symbolically, a door stands for the transition from a state to another, a link between two worlds. The door is always open to a mystery and, therefore, puts together the familiar with the unknown. Moreover, it always has a dynamic sense because it invites the subject to cross it (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 855). It is in this moment of intimacy that Harriet turns to her imagination in order to maintain her identity as a part of a couple. Far from her motherly duties, she needs to feel her other roles as that of being a woman, but always in a relational sense: whenever she is not performing a mother role, she puts herself in the wife category.

As the role of lover occupies a minor part of her time and attention, at this point Harriet can be said to have acquired her mother identity: Harriet’s work, her family, gives her maternal authority. Being maternal (according to David), breastfeeding each new baby, talking about motherhood in terms of happiness, promoting family unity and calling it a “miracle”, allowing children into bed to cuddle and play games, being kept awake at night, Harriet performs all the positive aspects present in the mother archetype: the maternal, the feminine, wisdom, the spiritual beyond understanding, goodness, protection, nurture, growth, fertility and the like (Jung, *Archetypes* 82). The breast is a fundamental element in this conception since in almost all societies it illustrates the fertilising power of the Mother-Goddesses and therefore constitutes a symbol of life. Together with the concept of miracle in this definition, it gives that notion of mother a mystic dimension which Harriet is supposed to have assimilated.

#### 5.2.1. The good mother.

Together with this balance between dream and reality, Ben’s unplanned arrival involves a dramatic moment of creative crisis and a sudden change in Harriet’s identity. The mother’s attitude towards her fifth pregnancy is the clue to what will come later.

Just as she had laughed at herself for her size in the previous pregnancies, now she imagines that this new foetus is poisoning her. So far, Harriet had performed the archetype of the good mother while the negative implications of the mother figure only appeared with her reluctance to have another child, which Harriet does not overtly recognise. The womb has been compared to the alchemist's lab due to the transformations that take place inside (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1071): in this case, the chemical process that takes place is an exceptionally negative one or, at least it is supposed to be so, since the womb constitutes an unknown territory that can only be imagined.

With this modern tale, Lessing parodies and pays tribute to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the maternal anxiety, the unspoken fears that all mothers experience of producing a monster, even if they love and educate their child as well as they can (Pifer 130). As Rosemary Jackson sees it, the fantastic, rather than being a genre, constitutes a literary mode between the mimetic and the marvellous. In fairy tales, events are placed in imaginary realms and the reader is just a receiver. Conversely, the context of mimetic texts corresponds to the real world outside themselves. Fantastic narratives blur these two modes by claiming that what they are telling is real while breaking this claim by introducing the unreal; therefore, they continuously question reality (qtd. in Rubenstein, "Fantastic Children" 62). This is what happens in *The Fifth Child* from this moment onwards.

Robbins links the folklore and fairy story element in this text to the narrative voice, "which is deceptively simple and paratactic" as a way of making the plot archetypal rather than specific. Distance towards the main character is achieved and it does not allow the reader to feel any empathy towards the Lovatts or their child (Robbins 96). As a result, the incorporation of myth makes Harriet sink into the

negative features of an archetype, those of the Jungian mother, through such comments as “this savage thing inside her” (41), or by daydreaming, which includes such frightening scenes as hooves and claws cutting her flesh, or herself cutting her own stomach open with a kitchen knife to take the baby out. Mental rather than physical, her unease contrasts with her feeling, “the first little flutters, easily mistaken but then certain; the sensation that was as if a fish mouthed out a bubble” (35) experienced the previous four times. The fish is an important motif in this dream-like image since it illustrates fertility and procreation originally associated with the Mother-Goddess (Hall 24). The absence of this element in the fifth pregnancy suggests the negative attitude that the mother experiences and also the fact that Harriet does not match the traditional Mother-Goddess role but something much more obscure.

Doris Lessing explained how she got the idea of this fantastic character and plot. First, she learnt about an archaeologist who had met a seemingly Neanderthal girl. Second, she read a letter in a newspaper by a mother who was very much in Harriet’s situation: she had had several children before she bore a little girl who had ruined the family’s life. The woman spoke in terms of an evil, malicious creature who had been born wicked, but she longed for some kind of mother-child love when the child was asleep and did not react violently to her loving expressions (Tomalin 176). According to the author, when she recalled this story, in 1988, far from focusing on Ben’s character, her main concern was that of conveying how people would cope with such a phenomenon. Her conclusions are that Harriet’s failure in educating Ben, raising her other children and keeping the family united is not her choice. “Harriet could’ve behaved in any other way, and yet she destroyed her family” (Tomalin 176-177).



### **5.3. Destruction of identity and mismatch with reality.**

This child character interests us for two different reasons: first, to see how the complete process of dealing with this reality affects the construction and constant transformation of Harriet's identity; second, to determine how much of this experience is brought about by the character's imagination, as the realities of her life blur with the fantastic. The situation becomes a nightmare for the mother. She takes tranquillisers in order not to feel the baby, and engages herself in a battle against whom she calls "the enemy", threatening him with taking more pills. Curiously enough, the first sedative is prescribed for her since her own anxiety is considered to be the major problem. Absorbed by her own fantasy, which is at its height at night time, Harriet isolates herself from the rest of the world. She starts seeing her own changes and does not even recognise herself.

This runs parallel to the tale that David tells the children about a girl who observes her own reflexion in a pool of water and sees a fearful face instead of herself. Far from that being the father's intention, Harriet feels that her family is having a discussion about her. The importance of David's storytelling is that this event marks a turning point, since the plot is entering the realm of the fairy tale. With Ben's birth and childhood, an important inner change is on the verge of taking place.

Ben's abnormality starts the second phase of Harriet's internal development, which entails a process of destruction of all that she had previously built. Ben confines her in the mother role in ways that do not match her previous idealism. A new Harriet is born, since "in Lessing's ideal, while child and adult are certainly 'bound each to each', the relationship is both mutual and progressive: we see the child, in the process of becoming, giving birth to the woman she was meant to be" (Rege 6-7). Ben's birth is

described very differently from the four previous ones: it takes place in a hospital rather than on the big family bed, with no outburst of sentimental weeping by any family member and with no champagne. The whole moment is a fearful one. Harriet finally faces the real creature she had imagined, but she only feels pity for him, because she dislikes him so much. The description of Harriet's fifth delivery is nearer to the biological than the previous times. What comes out of the body shows the individual that subjectivity depends on ownership and control of one's own body. The abject and the improper are particularly relevant at childbirth, especially if it is experienced with no feeling of idealisation of the maternal.

Harriet's categorical statement that "We are going to call him Ben" stands out for its rotundity since she and David had not even discussed on a name, but it is rather a one-sided decision. As a name, "Ben" has a complex meaning that his mother clearly sees, as she remarks that "it suits him" (50). Benjamin was the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons and the meaning of this name has traditionally been related to being the youngest as well as the favourite. In some sense, Harriet's self-confidence in giving this name to her son shows her fear of the new creature, as she implies that she is not willing to have any more children (she had not even planned this one). Conversely, the fact that "Benjamin" bears an implication of being the favourite, adds to the ambiguity present throughout the novel: Ben is the monster that destroys Harriet's identity and family life, but he is also the child for whom the mother will sacrifice her entire life. Moreover, meaning "son" in Hebrew, as Meng-Tsun Hsieh points out (14), the choice of this name emphasises the fact that Harriet does not feel him as such.

In the Bible, we are told that Benjamin's mother, Rachel, died at childbirth, and as she was dying, she called her son Beno'ni ("Son of my sorrow"), but his father called him Benjamin (*Genesis* 35. 16-21). Rather than being gratuitous, this reference

emphasises the hard labour and pregnancy that Harriet undergoes, and suggests that the mother somehow “dies” when this child is born, since the identity she had worked so hard on will disappear.

The mother’s detachment from the newborn is shown by her giving up breastfeeding with no hesitation, as it is too painful, although she had always enjoyed it with her other babies. The importance of these events lies in Harriet’s rejection of the abject: she cancels out any flow of bodily substances between herself and her son and preserves the boundaries between both entities so as to retake control over her own body and therefore reaffirm herself as a subject. More than this, she aims at reassuring the distinction between self and Other so insecure in pregnancy and childbirth.

The consequences for the baby are that he is prematurely out of the *sein*, which results in the Lacanian weaning complex, and which causes the lack of sentimental bond between Harriet and her son. However, Ben does not seem to resent this lack of emotional tie between himself and his whole family personified by the mother figure. However, this gap between the child and the family does exist, thus complicating his entrance into the symbolic order.

### 5.3.1. The bad mother.

Tightly linked with the negative dimension of the mother in Harriet’s identity building, bottle-feeding constitutes much more than a plot detail since it is related to Melanie Klein’s idea of the good mother and the bad mother, which we saw in relation to the dream of the two babies in *The Golden Notebook*. Very significantly, these two notions depend on the modality of feeding chosen, and they either provide or deny

goodness, patience, maternal generosity and creative capacity through the breast (“the good primary object”) (Klein qtd. in Velasco 138-9).

The central issue in *The Fifth Child* is “a mother who cannot love her son because she fears him” and, as a result, “we wonder whether there is anything really wrong with the child or whether the woman is deluded” (Jones 30). The family name Lovatt (love-it) suggests that Harriet and David have not examined their capacity to love it, the unknown that nature has delivered (Pifer 130). With all these hints in mind, in the reading process, we keep wondering how much of Ben is objectively wrong. Several comments by doctors and specialists claim that he is “A normal healthy fine baby” (51), and “There’s obviously nothing much wrong with him” (55) or “He’s a hyperactive child” (63), which make Harriet furious as she seeks confirmation of Ben’s abnormality. Not being able to decide whether there is something wrong with Ben and, in this case, what is wrong, means that he remains the ultimate Other which cannot be known and cannot be represented (Anievas 121).

This, to a certain extent, is a matter of ignoring difference and keeping it close inside the family circle. In a harsh, cruel episode, David Lovatt is responsible for a clear example of wilful ignorance by stating “I was careful *not* to see” (87), when Harriet comes back from the institution where they had left Ben and justifies her having taken him back home by explaining the inhuman conditions in which he had been kept. According to Pifer, the author uses this deliberate denial of the truth to make readers recognise themselves in the wilful ignorance of such extreme phenomena as asylums, concentration camps and torture chambers around the world. Wilful ignorance may perpetrate inhumanity (Pifer 140-141).

Yet, it is the mother who is believed to have the problem: “The problem is not with Ben, but with you. You don’t like him very much” (103). Ben, therefore, suffers

from a problem of adjustment, according to the professionals, and the belief in Ben's monstrosity is kept inside the private sphere where the question "What was he?" (67) is constantly repeated. Only Dorothy—Harriet's mother—gives readers a hint that the degree of Ben's unusual nature may also depend on the family's parameters: "He may be normal for what he is. But he is not normal for what we are" (65). From this debate we realise that it is not only reality and fantasy that merge and blur but also the normal and the abnormal. In this precise instance of the plot, it is difficult to define normality and therefore, a parameter has to be set: the standards of a given family. Accordingly, Susan Watkins argues that the sequel to the novel, *Ben in the World*, shares some features with the neo-picaresque novel inasmuch as it exaggerates and parodies the opposition between nature and culture in order to show the fully cultural and linguistic construction of such notions as the natural, the animal and the freakish (Watkins 157).

Mica Hilson explains this ambiguity of normality with respect to Ben when he analyses the fact that the child is always defined and characterised through his mother's eyes. He differentiates this novel from others in which a mother suffers from a child in the "demonic child" genre, such as Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* and William March's *The Bad Seed*, and argues that in those narratives we see that the mother's suspicions are confirmed and she proves not to be paranoid, which is not the case in *The Fifth Child*. Harriet presents Ben as increasingly threatening but there are several anticlimactic sections of the novel running parallel to those terrifying depictions. This critic concludes that the matter has to be read with total scepticism as it may all be the product of Harriet's own judgments and neuroses (Hilson 18).

Much of the novel is about accepting difference. There is certainly something grotesque in Ben, but this condition springs from his mother's non-acceptance and subsequent fantasies. Ben may be exceptional, but Harriet enhances his faults and

considers his peculiarities negative. As a result, everybody sees him as fearful, he is called names like “the nasty little brute” (54), and treated without any love or tenderness. In *Ben in the World*, we see the story from Ben’s, rather than Harriet’s, viewpoint. Readers are surprised to see how he has feelings of his own and they might eventually come to like him. Something supernatural is also assumed in him as a grown-up, which his parents could not prevent from happening; however, as we see real emotion and goodness in the character, we must conclude that his brutal attitude and alienation when he lived at home were the result of his experience of the family as a hostile context of hatred and rejection.

While Doris Lessing’s novels of this period are clearly indebted to some aspects of the work of Jung, there are also elements of the relationship between Ben and his mother that can also be approached according to the Lacanian differentiation of the three realms a child belongs to. Remarkably enough, post-Lacanian feminism represented by such authors as Doltó, Vegetti and Tubert developed these notions at the same time as the publication of *The Fifth Child*. According to this trend, Ben occupies a place in his mother’s imagination and in her dreams even before his birth; a place that is very much conditioned by the fact that she did not want to have another child so soon. Then, during the pregnancy, there is a real baby (using the term “real” in its Lacanian sense) inside her body who progressively comes to match his mother’s previous representation, or image, of it. When Ben is born, his mother ought to constitute the first object of the child’s narcissistic attachment (an image of self-love) inaugurating a mirroring relationship, or the imaginary. In this case, it does not seem to conform to the mainstream: he cannot identify with his mother, there is no mirror relationship as he does not correspond to his mother’s expectations. Furthermore, Harriet’s decision to separate him from the *sein* makes him miss the dual perspective of the imaginary—that

of the narcissistic mirroring and the exchangeability of self and other—therefore, the primary relation to the mother becomes aberrant rather than normal.

Then, a problematic further step has to be taken: both mother and child need to enter the realm of the symbolic, the triangular perspective. However, the denial of the breast will make Ben's primary identification and the entrance of both in the symbolic order more difficult, as we will see. After the separation from the baby, the mother also has to follow the same process as a subject that is incomplete again (as happened when she herself was born and separated from her own mother) now bearing a new form of identity as a mother of this new-born child. At this point, when the child encounters the law of incest prohibition in the figure of the father, simultaneously to the creation of the linguistic unconscious and the social order, it seems quite peculiar in the case of Ben, as he does not seem to master language or understand social rules in his first years (Felman 104-105). Strictly speaking, Ben has not even achieved interiority and does not master the vocabulary that would express subjectivity. In fact, he constitutes his mother's masterpiece in the creative process that she undertook some years before, since her imagination actually breaks the boundaries of the symbolic order, endowing her son with an already fixed, stable identity from the outset, which he will not be able to overcome, and thus will force him to develop in an unnatural way.

As Ben grows up as a "freak", he starts to display violence, which results in the family's reaction against him. The key to the problem is that the rejection and isolation of Ben increases, but nobody takes the trouble of finding out or understanding the reasons for his behaviour. Nobody wonders if it is, for instance, just due to simple jealousy towards his brother, his mother's "real" baby. The story is explained with the same emotional detachment with which Harriet welcomes her baby into life. There is no judgement or emotional link towards Ben's experience of the world, just as there is no

affective implication between mother and child. Apart from the horrific events in the plot, the author builds up the sense of horror by implying that there is no right way of treating Ben (Robbins 96). The adults agree that Ben is destroying their family, and Harriet completes her transformation by becoming alien to her own life when she starts watching Ben “while her mother managed everything else” (65). Just as the project of a large family was called “the dream” at the beginning of the novel, days are said to be a long nightmare at this point (62).

Harriet’s identity crisis reaches its peak when she starts wondering whether Ben recognises her as his mother, since he has always been an “outsider”, even inside her womb. To put it in relational terms, having no Other to relate to as a mother, Harriet’s identity is endangered. Not identifying his mother as the first love object, Ben does not experience prohibition or socialisation and cannot enter the symbolic order in which basic processes take place (such as constructing language or incorporating mechanisms of repression), all of which only adds to his supposed monstrosity. With only her ‘monster’ son, her depressed son has left, and her other children are away at boarding school, motherhood has now become more of an obsession for Harriet, and her entire self-made identity is shattered.

It is not until the moment when Harriet reluctantly gives in to family pressure to put Ben into an institution that her sense of guilt appears when we hear her say “He’s our child” (74). Before that, although unattainable desires should normally be relegated to the subconscious, Harriet was fully aware of them. In her mind, with such a situation, the id (the lawless and amoral source of libido and psychic energy) works at its fullest, for instance, when she enters Ben’s bedroom, finds him on the window-sill with the window open and thinks that it is a pity to have come in to prevent him from falling. Her superego, the moral censoring agency, creates her sense of guilt, which, to a lesser



degree, is a tendency of all mothers but, in Harriet's case, only arises in the most extreme and horrific moments, after her destructive tendencies against Ben have been unearthed.

The institution turns out to be a "euthanasia" centre, where all types of "afflicted" children are waiting to die. Adding to the fantastic component of the novel, as mentioned before, this matches the familiar idea in folklore present in the myths of Parsiphaë and Jocasta that we saw before (Jones 30). Such myths, and the names that Ben is called throughout the novel ("goblin", "Dwarfey", "Hobbit", "Gremlin") are to be found in the collective unconscious that the mother shares with the rest of the adult characters, as clear allusions to fairy tale magic tradition. Language proves itself unreliable again here with the impossibility of naming what Ben really is. These names are mere attempts at describing his nature, but always fail.

Harriet's later decision to go and see Ben shows the reader again how her subconscious and maternal self are interrelated, since her determination comes as a result of a dream. Then, after a horror scene at the institution, the sight of her son waiting for death drugged on the floor in a room full of excrement, she takes him back home. By doing so, she places herself in the asymmetrical mother/woman dichotomy. As we have seen in all the chapters that form this thesis, defining an individual as a mother means deleting many other functions in the social system; significantly enough, Harriet accepts the fact that taking care of Ben will destroy the rest of the spheres that comprise her life. She ignores her mother's warning that she is neglecting her husband, and resigns herself to being treated like a criminal by her own family.

Once at home, Ben gives Harriet a taste of her own medicine: in the same way as she has provided the child with a monstrous identity, Ben will change the mother's initial self as the good mother into that of the phantom mother of psychoanalysis, who is

omnipotent since she gives life and can keep it. Ben will not die because his mother is determined to make him survive (Velasco 136). Other aspects of the phantom mother are made evident by her other children, such as the fear of being denied the most primary needs and being abandoned, which had already been announced by little Jane when Ben was taken to the institution: “Are you going to send us away, too?” (76). This will be the way that her “real” children will relate to her from now on, as they feel that “she had turned her back on them all and chosen to go off into alien country, with Ben” (89). Instead of experiencing the mother presence postulated by the Object Relations School as basic to the children’s early development, Luke, Helen, Jane and Paul have to deal with their mother’s absence. Such a lack is a Lacanian concept: these children constitute the subject that will forever long for the mother, the lost object of which they were a part in their very early childhood.

Harriet becomes a single parent to Ben, since David stays away from his responsibilities to him and concentrates on taking care of the other children. Trapped in the role that she had chosen so many years before, she falls into a sense of non-transcendence, of lacking a real project and of feeling the impossibility of exercising her own freedom. All of these factors fall squarely into Beauvoir’s idea of “immanence”. Being an extreme case, Harriet is not even free to choose to live through her children’s lives.

In a remarkable moment near the end of the novel, Harriet mentions the more children they could have had, still sticking to her fantasy, as if their dream was still possible. Instead of this, the disintegration of the family unit is what she gets: all its members are scattered as the older children impose their will to go to boarding schools and stay with grandparents for holidays and weekends. The smallest of the “real” children, Paul, needs professional help as a result of his mother’s absence, and he stays

at the psychiatrist's home most of the time to find company and comfort. Ben has already joined the gang that keeps him away. The moment comes when, after years of childrearing and care, Harriet stays alone at home for hours at a time. Harriet and David are distant from each other and they have to rely on imagination again to feel how "the ghosts of young Harriet and young David entwined and kissed" (112). Just like Kate Brown, Harriet and David need to go back to their genuine selves, when motherhood had not imposed itself on the protagonist's life, in order to recover their relationship as a couple.

In the final pages, Harriet feels that she is the destroyer of the family for having rescued Ben from death. She is trapped in an eternal sense of guilt which now goes in two directions: for having taken Ben to that institution on the one hand; and also for having taken him back to the family, on the other. After the destruction of her entire life's work, she believes that she has been punished for her idealistic plans and for having *decided* that they would be happy. But this is, again, part of her imagination, which rules her life. Even when reality is at its worst, she takes refuge in fantasy, as she is reluctant to sell the big house because, as David puts it, "she could not finally give up her dreams of the old life coming back" (119).

#### **5.4. The Jungian process of individuation and the archetypes.**

Let us now see how the characters in the novel relate to Harriet and affect the divisions of her mind, that is, the shadow, the anima/animus and the persona in her process of individuation and search for wholeness. The starting point for the search of her own identity is, in the case of Harriet, the same as with the rest of female figures that we have examined so far. Harriet acts as a persona in all the periods of her life until

she has her fifth child, Ben. First, as we have seen, her public social role as an unmarried woman embodies the Western cultural role of the virgin whose life consists in waiting until she arrives at a higher stage: marriage. Then, she takes the function of the mother. This incomplete identity, as it is only a social mask, is always praised by her husband David, since it conforms to the institution of motherhood, as defined by patriarchy.

According to this definition, the persona does not only operate in the individuation process, but it accompanies Harriet throughout her life, mediating between the ego and the external world. As I have explained, and using Lacanian terms, Harriet occupies a symbolic space in relation to the Other, which is constituted at the start by the family structure, language and convention; and later on by Ben. Accordingly, the subject is always defined in connection with this Other.

Nevertheless, when she gets pregnant for the first time, her relation to this family structure and conventions is not as solid as it used to be. Harriet is on her way to learning that her expectations were all but realistic and she needs to redefine her personality. In order to do so, she will have to meet other archetypes and start her individuation process.

First of all, she will have to face the darkest side of her personality projected onto someone of the same sex or personified in dreams. Since Harriet has been so thoroughly defined as a fantasist, the logical thing for her is to find this shadow figure in the world of imagination and fairy tale. It is precisely when she starts experiencing the rejection of her own reality and the need to redefine herself that David tells the tale to the children. It is then that Harriet reacts violently as she meets the hidden part of herself that she does not want to recognise. The tale, quite an intriguing one, is the one about a lost girl who sees herself reflected in a water pool. This image is easily

recognisable to Kate since it reproduces other episodes in Western literature, such as the myth of Narcissus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* Book III lines 406-436)<sup>24</sup> and Eve in Book 4 of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (lines 449-470)<sup>25</sup>, which are part of the collective unconscious. Therefore, Harriet reacts at once to this tale: "Stop—stop it! You are talking about me—this is what you are feeling about me!" (45). However, the girl does not represent what the family think about her, but rather what she thinks of herself.

The meaning of this mirror reflection as Kate's shadow lies in the reference that Lessing makes to *Metamorphoses*: the word "shadow" (*umbra, ae*) recalls the reflection that Narcissus sees, which has no substance but will stay with the character wherever he goes (lines 434-6). The girl by the pool refuses to see the negative parts of her identity as her own. That is, Harriet recognises and refuses a projection of herself (the girl) who, at the same time, refuses a projection of herself (the mirror image). Here we have, once again, the multiple mirror effect so typical in Lessing's literature, especially in *The Golden Notebook*. What Harriet refuses to acknowledge about herself is the fact that she does not even recognise her own image. She no longer identifies with the social mask that she created for herself, that of the mother, built upon her imagination and her desires. She finds it hard to accept the mismatch between her role and her own identity. At this point, the character does not even know who she is and, instead of adopting a positive and active attitude for her quest, she tries not to acknowledge her projection on this fairytale character, which clearly matches the definition of shadow.

It is quite remarkable that the mirror image which scares the girl is a fearful one, with "a nasty smile, not friendly" and "frightening eyes" (45). Harriet is also scared of herself and her unknown powers of creation. What she is afraid of is not quite the creature that is inside herself, but rather, the fact that she has been able to create it. In a

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<sup>24</sup> Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. London: Heinemann, 1971.

<sup>25</sup> Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. London: Longman, 1971.

word, she has become something as mysterious as the phantom mother of psychoanalysis. Harriet's inability to see this will have its consequences in her failed process of individuation, which has the acceptance of the negative parts of one's character as a requirement.

As it is David who introduces the dreamlike element that epitomises Harriet's shadow, we can also conclude that he himself embodies this archetype, which he shares with the protagonist of his tale<sup>26</sup>. David and Harriet shared the same views on life in their first years together; however, as events take place, they grow apart. At the beginning of the novel, Harriet and David are complementary; Harriet identifies with her shadow, David, and this allows her to achieve wholeness as she has creatively defined her identity.

From the moment that David introduces the girl by the pool, Harriet cannot consciously identify with her shadow any longer. There is no correspondence between them, as is exemplified by the fact that the girl who does not recognise her own mirror image. At the end of the story, then, the husband epitomises Harriet's realistic side: David is capable of keeping a distance from Ben as he grows up while Harriet keeps trying to socialise him and treat him like a normal child at times. David is in favour of taking Ben to the centre while Harriet still wonders whether he could lead a normal life; David has conformed to their circumstances while Harriet still talks about her former project of having a lot of children. At the end, "as far as he was concerned, Ben is Harriet's responsibility, and his was for the children—the real children" (90), since David has learnt that nothing can be done. Calling them "real" children reinforces the idea of a more realistic mood on the part of the father.

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<sup>26</sup> We must bear in mind that some interpretations of Jungian archetypes consider that the shadow is normally represented by someone of the same sex, though not necessarily always. In this line, when dealing with *The Grass is Singing*, I introduced Rubenstein's reading of Moses as Mary Turner's shadow, since this critic considers such archetype as a "generally same-sex mirror" (Rubenstein, *Novelistic Vision* 23) (See page 38 of this thesis).

The situation where we can see this most clearly is when Harriet tries to justify her bringing Ben back from the euthanasia centre by explaining the methods they were using and David answers “I thought that was the idea” (...) “I was careful not to see” “What did you suppose was going to happen? That they were going to turn him into some well-adjusted member of society and then everything would be lovely?” (87). This mismatch between them reinforces the idea that David epitomises the realistic and detached attitude which is also a part of Harriet; for instance, when the doctor asks if she wants him to drug Ben silly, “She was crying inwardly, Yes, yes, yes, that’s exactly what I want! But she said, “No, of course not” (63). This realism is an aspect that her shadow reveals and she refuses to acknowledge in herself, thus blocking the recognition of her inner qualities and the whole individuation process.

The animus is to be found in Ben (an individual of the opposite sex). In Ben she perceives everything inside herself: she has created Ben as Ben has created her. First, she imagined him and determined his monstrosity long before giving birth; later on, the son, with his particularities, created the mother and gave her a new place in the family, new perspectives on life, expectations, duties and relationships. Both of them are fearful as they have made each other as such: the mother created a frightening creature with her imagination, and by giving birth to this creature, she became frightening as well. Ben possesses the dual nature of the animus: the destructive and creative aspect, and he is loved and hated at the same time. He is a creator, because he devises a new role for his mother; but he is ultimately a destroyer, since he breaks the family, distances his parents, prevents the relatives from visiting them and, especially, cancels out all the idealisation upon which his mother had built her own self. Ben enacts the link between Harriet and her creative and destructive centres; therefore, her construction and later destruction of her own identity depends on the existence of her fifth child.

The anima/animus system is also dysfunctional with respect to Harriet. The mother should function as the anima for Ben, as he is expected to project himself on the mother in childhood. However, we see that he never looks to her for identification, he ignores her and he does not respond to the motherly attempts at petting him that she had made with her other children. The phase of primary narcissism does not even exist for him.

To finish with this section on archetypes, we need to look at the Jungian mother-complex in Harriet. Her identification with and dependence on her mother for help and guidance throughout her child-rearing years reflects “hypertrophy of the maternal element” in the daughter (Jung, *Archetypes* 87-88). This accounts for childbirth as the only goal of a woman: as a daughter, Harriet has processed the mother figure in a way that gives her this only aim in life. For this type of woman, even their own personality is unimportant since their own life is experienced through the lives of others, that is the reason why she refuses any chance of development apart from her persona as a mother. Maternal sacrifice is no real sacrifice at all for her because the mother makes her maternal instinct prevail. The positive aspect of this overdevelopment of the maternal instinct corresponds to the universal notion of glorification of the mother image, and which Kristeva so well characterised in “Stabat Mater”. One of the negative aspects of this complex is that, as we see by the end of the novel, the husband, as a mere instrument for procreation, is secondary to this type of woman. Even the woman’s own personality vanishes as life is lived through others and she identifies with her children, in this case, Ben, who seems to be her only child, according to her mother: ““You have five children,” Dorothy said. “Not one”” (69).



## 5.5. Conclusion.

At the beginning of this chapter, we saw the contrast between Harriet's view of motherhood as institution and the reality of experience. Parallel to this, we can argue that the novel shows how the efforts to stick to a lifestyle collide with the reality of individual experience. The fifth child has robbed Harriet of her idealistic views of life and has forced her to wake up from a dream. The process is painful, but she has gained the willingness to confront the alien rather than ignoring it.

As Harriet is left alone in the determination to face reality, the novel also raises the conflict between the needs of a family and those of a child who is inherently socially excluded. But these questions are left open since there is no single answer to the situation and, therefore, the "real" world starts to collapse, while the reader is still hesitating between fact and fantasy. We recognise the breakdown of family life and Ben's special needs as factual, but we still wonder how much of this abnormality has been created by Harriet's imagination.

In the Jungian sense, the association between the protagonist's psyche and the spaces she occupies constitutes a further aspect of her subconscious which adds to the definition of Harriet as a whole. In her process of individuation, Harriet is left alone and virtually abandoned by her husband and children. In creating her unified psyche with a link between conscious and unconscious, Harriet has to leave out her former idealistic views of the world and her total trust in nature, which was going to bring her happiness. She is, therefore, placed at some point between idealisation and reality, trying to resist a more realistic view of life that is offered by her husband, who plays the role of the shadow. Facing what life has reserved for her, she has had to adopt a more realistic approach since Ben's monstrosity—the product of her unconscious, fears and

nightmares—has no turning back. As a result, Harriet increasingly occupies an abject position, as she inhabits the boundaries between fact and fiction.

At the end of the novel there is no attempt to offer a panoramic account of the facts. We are left with Harriet's fragmented and limited view of the events, which has nothing to do with a narrative authority or omniscient discourse typical of the realistic novel. The readers, therefore, must decide whether they can trust the narrator since she explains the story from her own viewpoint (Anievas 123). This ending of the tale with its subjective focus, reinforces the fact that, apart from a modern horror tale, *The Fifth Child* constitutes a novel of the building of a female identity.

This novel is very close to a *Reifungsroman*. However, the coming to terms that this genre entails does not guarantee breaking free from dissatisfaction in the case of Harriet, as it did in relation to Kate in *The Summer Before the Dark*. Being a horror story, a part of Harriet's experience results from some kind of fatalism that she cannot control, or even some punishment for her previous innocent mentality.

All in all, the novel suggests the vital importance of preconceptions and the idealistic imagination in the process of creation of life, family and even identity. Harriet's fantasy leads her to fall into the negative side of her creativity, which in the end produces a mysterious and fearful creature (her own son) that turns her life upside down. The exploration of imagination and dreaming as factors configuring female identity is a common characteristic in Lessing's canon. In her first novel, *The Grass is Singing*, we see how Mary Turner lives in a world of fantasy, embarking on a marriage only because she identifies her desires with reality and imagining how it would be having a child. *The Golden Notebook* deals very much with imagination as a tool for the process of writing, but also in the creation of one's own identity, through elements such as personal diaries and the development of a critical self-consciousness. *The Summer*

*Before the Dark* is also remarkable since dreams guide the protagonist to the new identity she has to build after her functions as wife and mother appear to be obsolete. The main contribution of *The Fifth Child* in Lessing's work is the merging of reality and imagination in the text of the novel and in Harriet's subjectivity. By doing so, Lessing is crossing literary boundaries and achieving a literary mode that stands between two forms of fiction: the mimetic and the marvellous. The novel actually manages to blur the limits between the two, and to make a serious statement about the projection of fantasies over reality (Rubenstein 61-62).

After all this discussion about the character of Harriet, we should draw conclusions on the position she occupies in the complicated issue of motherhood in postmodern texts. This novel shares something with the postmodern male writing which differs from the assumed idealisation of the mother in female writing (Caesar 121). Harriet embodies the mother as the known entity belonging to the institution of motherhood, inscribed in patriarchy. Motherhood seems to constitute an exhausted topic as exemplified by the depiction of Kate. However, the mother in this novel is able to tell her own story, but not only that, she has even *created* her own story and constitutes a subject in her own right. However, she has a more passive role once her own creation turns against her. This creative power makes the mother frightening, powerful and mysterious, while she is such a well-known figure that she becomes clichéd and loses her power at the end. It is true, then, that the mother inhabits boundaries, as Caesar argues, and therefore becomes abject. However, the mother is not abject in the sense that she stands for a too familiar figure to be interesting in postmodern narratives, as Caesar states, but, on the contrary, the entire narrative debates the position she occupies. Rather than disappearing from the narrative, the mother focalises it.

What I have tried to argue is that we can read this novel as an exemplification of the collapse in the creation of identity: instead of integrating the subconscious into conscious life, the character's imagination dominates, and ultimately erases, the reality around her. In the process, I hope to have shown that Jungian and Lacanian categories can also prove useful in clarifying the main thematic areas of this novel (and, by extension, of female identity as a whole through Lessing's work). The novel ends with Harriet's vision of Ben's future life, as he finally takes leave of her. This is another dreamlike vision in which Harriet foresees her role as a mere spectator following her son's comings and goings, thus condemning herself to living vicariously. This point can best be understood as the start of her disappearance as a subject in her own right. As a prediction of her future life, this final day-dream reinforces Lessing's opinion at the beginning of this chapter: "With a few symbols a dream can define the whole of one's life, and warn us of the future, too" (Raskin 14).



## 6. ALFRED AND EMILY, 2008.

### 6.1. Introduction.

*Alfred and Emily* (2008) was announced as Doris Lessing's last work. It constitutes a literary experiment, built in two main parts, one fictional and one biographical, depicting Lessing's parents' life and an alternative existence had the First World War not taken place. The importance of this work has been highlighted by the critics since, for Lessing, it constitutes a coming to terms with the historical context which shaped her life (Pulda 3), and, most especially, with the mother figure. Giving her mother a happier existence, the author justifies and becomes reconciled with her. However, more important to my research is the fact that *Alfred and Emily* could be considered an intentional final statement on the construction of female identity. In this chapter I will be examining this concluding remark on the characters' personality-building in relation to motherhood.

There are a number of reasons to include this novel in the corpus of my study. First, if we analyse *The Grass is Singing*, Lessing's debut novel, it is worth considering *Alfred and Emily* to see which aspects are maintained, changed or lost, in identity-building throughout the author's lifework. This comparison between both works allows for inquiry into a possible development of the issues which are present throughout the author's career.

Second, including this novel means understanding Lessing's literary outcome as a perfect circle, since the leading character of her first novel, Mary Turner, seems to have been inspired by Lessing's mother, as we see her sharing many things in common with Lessing's former character in the biographical part of *Alfred and Emily*. More than

this, Lessing's final work seems to be a compendium of both her autobiography and her fiction: the contents of the memoir exactly correspond to a reiteration of events already narrated in *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949* (1994), or in essays such as "My Father" (which first appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph* in 1963), and "Impertinent Daughters" (in *Granta*, in 1984), or "How Things Were" (in *Time Bites*, 2005); in addition, the reader gets the impression of having found the biographical foundations for the author's fiction, especially *The Grass is Singing* (1949), *Martha Quest* (1952), and *The Golden Notebook* (1962).

A third reason for choosing *Alfred and Emily* is that it depicts an isolated and fragmented self which needs to be integrated, as in the rest of works we are examining. In both *Alfred and Emily* and *The Golden Notebook*, the process from fragmentation to integration runs parallel to the intermingling of fictional and biographical writing and the inclusion of several distinct forms of narration, which results in these two highly intertextual works. In the individuation process of Anna Wulf, the combination of fact and fiction, as well as the power of literary creation, was vital. According to Tiger, *Alfred and Emily* is a "New hybrid form which demonstrates how porous is the frontier between fact and fiction", which recreates many formal modes that Lessing used (and especially in *The Golden Notebook*, I would add) such as "fictive biography, autobiographical fiction, memoir, epigraph, foreword, afterword, author's note, preface and autobiography" (22). In the same way, *Alfred and Emily* consists of an authorial foreword, a novella called "Alfred and Emily: a novella", an explanation by the author in the form of notes, an encyclopedia entry and D.H. Lawrence's epigraph to the work's final section, all in the first part, plus a second biographical part entitled "Alfred and Emily; Two Lives". According to Molly Pulda, "Lessing revisits this theme of fragmentation in the service of integration" (4).

Before we start the analysis of this work, it is necessary to bear in mind that some criticism considers it lacks the depth of Lessing's previous work. As Virginia Tiger argues, for instance, the novel turns out to be confusing, since it is formed by a succession of different parts and formats, and she judges the novella as "not compelling" and the characters as "mimetically insubstantial" (23). It is, in general, much more plot-focused and does not include all the psychological implications and references to the subconscious. Moreover, it does not show the same level of intricate relationships in a universe of characters, which resulted in a panoramic vision of life in other of her works. These limitations may result in a less profound comment of this work in comparison to the rest of novels, as the narrative is more superficial as well. Moreover, the biographical basis of this hybrid text will allow for a psychoanalytical reading which depends on a biographical comment, which I will also provide.

## **6.2. Intertextuality/fact and fiction.**

The most obvious feature of *Alfred and Emily* is that it cannot be classified in terms of genre: it is neither a novel nor a biography; it is not even both. In the foreword, Lessing warns us that the first part is fiction: "If I could meet Alfred Tayler and Emily McVeagh now, as I have written them, as they might have been had the Great War not happened, I hope they would approve the lives I have given them" (viii). In addition, the fictional nature of the first part is clarified by an explanation of the real-life data upon which it is based, and it is entitled "PART ONE. Alfred and Emily: a novella".

The original idea of an alternative narrative for these two real-life characters is made clear from the start. However, boundaries are often crossed, which links the novella to the memoir, transforming Lessing's literary experiment into an indivisible ensemble. The two main characters, Alfred Tayler and Emily McVeagh, are alien to the



author since the main outcome of the fictional narrative is the fact that she would have never existed as a daughter to them both. However, continuous reference is made to the second part of the work to remind the reader that this fiction is based on its real-life counterpart<sup>27</sup>.

The most noticeable intertextual reference lies in the occasional naming of the main characters as “my father” or “my mother” in the novella, while they are mainly called “Alfred” and “Emily” since, in this specific text, they do not embody the author’s parents. Some of these references introduce real-life events as biographical data which comment on and reinforce what has been said fictionally, as well as blurring the borders between novel and memoir. For instance, when talking about the Royal Free, the fictional Emily (in this case called “Sister McVeagh) says “I was so hungry. We all were. I couldn’t even afford to buy a decent pocket handkerchief” (28), and immediately a remark appears that links both Emilys and gives credibility to the fiction: “‘The pay was so bad. I couldn’t even buy a pair of gloves’, said *my mother* to a girl who was usually out in the bush somewhere...” (my italics, 28). By doing so, the author also provides factual input to the character’s background.

At other times, the introduction of the mother and father characters responds to the purpose of contrasting the fictional and factual episode. When the fictional Emily gets engaged to Dr. Martin White, a contrast is made between the real-life event and an explanation on how Lessing’s mother and father got to know each other: “*In life*, my father’s appendix burst just before the battle of the Somme, saving him from being killed with the rest of his company. He was sent back to the trenches where shrapnel in his right leg saved him from the battle of Passchendale” (my italics 31). Likewise, the

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<sup>27</sup> From now on in this chapter, the two Emilys will be referred to as “the biographical Emily” and “the fictional Emily” for disambiguation. Accordingly, the same system will be applied to the two Alfreds.

comment on the fictional Emily and Alfred's being at the top of their life (24) is followed by an abrupt mention of the nostalgia of better past days and the reproaches between Lessing's parents in real life: "If only we could live our good years all over again', my mother would say, fiercely gathering those years into her arms and holding them safe, her eyes challenging her husband as if he were responsible for their end" (24).

The insertions of factual material into the fictional part are constant and often look like thoughtless slips of the pen which draw the characters nearer to their real-life models. For instance, when the fictional Alfred goes to see Emily and Daisy in their London flat while they are training as nurses and Mrs. Bruce, the landlady, does not approve of his being there, there is an intentionally confusing fusion between what the fictional Alfred thinks of Mrs. Bruce and the biographical Alfred's mentioning of Mrs. Grundy, a character of popular tradition, as a parenthetical remark which bonds the two Alfreds:

'Mrs. Grundy,' apostrophized my father, years and decades later. 'Mrs. Grundy,' an exemplary moral lady, is to be found in novels and memoirs of the time. Who was she? 'Mrs. Bruce was like my mother,' said Alfred even as an old man—well, as old as he got. 'Never say a nice thing if you can say a nasty one. Mrs. Grundy sees dirt and filth where anyone else sees a nice clean floor.' (26).

The interference of one domain into the other goes both ways. Just as the title for the first part is clarifying, the one for the second part is especially (and I would say, intentionally) misleading: "PART TWO. Alfred and Emily; Two Lives". Surprisingly enough, Lessing describes her parents' real life as "two lives", when it is precisely in the fictional part, rather than the memoir, where she gives them separate existences in order to make them happier than they really were. Moreover, in an interview published in 1987, when she was asked to explain why she had written about her father in a *Granta* memoir which, according to its title, was meant to be about her mother, Lessing answered: "Well, how can one write about them separately? Her life was, as they used

to say, devoted to his life” (Frick 156). Lessing might be suggesting that they did not have much in common although they shared their life. In fact, it is in the novella where both characters seem to develop like parallel lines, each one achieving their own goals, each in their own context. Therefore, we find some coherence between both progressions and Alfred and Emily seem to really contribute to each other’s identity in the fiction, as I will explain in the section on Emily’s individuation process<sup>28</sup>. In conclusion, entitling the part which shows how unhappy each member of the couple was “Two Lives” might suggest that they *should have* lived two different lives.

Apart from those intrusions of fact into the realm of fiction and vice versa, by compartmentalising each field in the two different texts that form the book, Lessing echoes the mechanics of her most successful work, in which Anna Wulf separates fact and fiction (or at least, what she labels as such) into four notebooks which will be integrated in a fifth. In quite a similar way, Emily McVeagh is not to be considered as two different characters, but rather as an identity who achieves individuation with the intertwining of the two story lines. Tiger describes the parallel between both works in terms of inner fragmentation by quoting the biographical part of the text where, in the characterization of Emily, “Nothing fits, as if she were not one woman but several” (*Alfred and Emily* 156). According to this critic, then, this sentence brings to mind *The Golden Notebook* when Anna Wulf is required to write about the two women that she is (Tiger 23).

The crossing of boundaries between both parts of *Alfred and Emily* constitutes a fictional recreation of real life in search of the protagonist’s progress. Moreover, it can be said from the start that these two works share the same fundamental direction: just as Anna Wulf was writing her life in the so-called diaries and explored a fictional

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<sup>28</sup> No distinction is made here between the fictional or the biographical Emily because I will interpret this individuation process as including both characters and integrating them into one.

recreation of reality in order to find her own reunification, Lessing—who also constitutes a character inasmuch as she is the daughter in the biographical part—invents her mother’s imaginary alternative identity, which complements it, for the sake of inner coherence and reintegration. Both Anna Wulf and Doris Lessing herself (in *Alfred and Emily*) provide a fictional context—the former, for herself; the latter, for her mother—in which the protagonist finds the conditions needed for the individuation process so that she can overcome her own internal fragmentation and take a step towards personal integration. As will be explained in the next section, such a process will necessarily entail the creation of several fictive characters who will undertake the role of the archetypes needed as projections in the search for the self.

### **6.3. The Individuation process.**

#### 6.3.1. The fragmented self.

The reason that has always been signalled for the underlying misery for Lessing’s parents is World War One; therefore, a happier life can only be described if the historic context is erased and transformed. Nevertheless, there are other circumstances in the happiness of these two characters that cannot be ignored. If the Great Unmentionable—as Lessing’s father bitterly called World War One<sup>29</sup>—had never broken out, the biographical Alfred would not have lost both his physical and psychological health, nor would his wife Emily have spent her entire life nursing him. Moreover, another decisive event would have never occurred, as they would have never met in the first place.

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<sup>29</sup>: “The Great Unmentionable, that’s what you called it” (*Martha Quest* 40).

In Lessing's biographical writing, there is a recurrent image when she describes her mother figure: the picture—rather than a character—of her mother's former love who had died in the war, and which inspired Lessing for the character of Dr. Martin-White. We must draw a conclusion on the normal course of events: Lessing's mother would have married her former lover, but she married Alfred instead; these events bring about a sensation that the biographical Emily did not live her true life but an alternative existence.

We can summarise Lessing's mother's experience as a life of family nurturing, homesickness and, above all, caring for her ill husband. The compensation in the novella is the elimination of such matters as family life, motherhood, and even Africa, to endow the fictional Emily with a restored identity, along with the removal of the war experience which shaped her biography. In addition, the need to release this character from the duties of care and nurture responds basically to the fact that the biographical Emily did not internally accept the requirements of the institutions of traditional marriage and motherhood. Going a step further, Lessing extrapolates this feeling to most women of that same generation and says that

All our mothers, looked at for their potential, were capable women (...) All, every one, bemoaned their lot like this: 'I should have been a singer... an actress... a great artist... a dress designer... a model... but I got married. I was too young to know what I was doing. Children finish you—they put an end to anything you could have been' (191).

As we can see, the biographical Emily's fall into "immanence" resides in her spending her life in the house with no other occupation than the duties of domesticity. She can even be considered the inspiration for Mary Turner when we see how she built the house and decorated it, making everything from dyed flour sacks and paraffin boxes in the way 'the settlers' did (157). However, even if the biographical Emily shares a socio-cultural and geographical context with Mary Turner, the real coincidence is to be found between the character of *The Grass is Singing* and the fictional Emily, with whom she

has no common background: both characters have the same mental conception of furnishing, as it is meant to fill all the spare time they have in their empty marriages:

Emily suddenly understood that she had not thought about anything but her house, or rather, William's house, for months—years? Curtains, wallpapers, the cover for a chair, a new dining-table, carpets, rugs had filled her mind, day and night. All her concentration, her energy, had gone into it, as if for an examination (*Alfred and Emily* 47).

Similarly,

With her own saved money, Mary bought flowered materials, and covered cushions and made curtains; bought a little linen, crockery, and some dress lengths (...) A month after she had arrived she walked through the house, and saw there was nothing more to be done (*The Grass is Singing* 61).

Just as the fictional Emily Martin-White feels the emptiness of her married life, Mary Turner, as her predecessor, takes up dress-making, sewing, embroidery and white-washing until she finds there is nothing else to be done and is left empty-handed. All in all, the result is a sudden desire for a child who never arrives, and is only matched by the fictional Emily's worry about not having managed to get pregnant. But, just like Mary, "Not having got pregnant was the least of it" (53). The want of a child involves, for both characters, a way of sublimating their energies and also a vehicle for the building of an identity that will never take place through motherhood and family life.

Running parallel to this lack of fulfillment, we can see how Lessing's mother is remembered for calling her little children to her and saying "poor Mummy, poor, poor Mummy", as it is depicted in the memoir (157). An exhausted mother, who has to be pitied and searches for the compassion of her own children, and makes them feel guilty for the lack of purpose in her life is also to be found elsewhere in Lessing's canon, most especially in the figure of Mary Turner's mother clinging to her for company in a barren life which, nevertheless, Mary reproduces in adulthood (*The Grass is Singing* 135).

One conclusion must be drawn here: "the real Emily McVeagh died soon after she landed on the farm" (192); however, an alternative identity for Lessing's mother

which could make her happier and ensure wholeness in the novella does not depend exclusively on either placing her in England, which she always longed for, or on marrying her to someone inspired upon her idealised first love; or even on freeing her from the ties of childrearing. Therefore, the distinction is not to be drawn between the biographical and the fictional Emily, since this character should be understood as a whole which is built in parallel throughout the novella and the memoir. The two Emilys need to be understood as what could be called “the fragmented Emily”, on the one hand, and “Emily who has undergone her own individuation process”, on the other. The former is to be found, both at the beginning of the fictional part and throughout the biography; the latter results from an individuation process which is completed by the end of the novella.

A first hint of the need for individuation is envisaged when the fictional Emily plans her music evenings as a way of filling her empty existence. Her utterance ‘I am going to have music evenings’ is highlighted, as she does not say ‘We shall have...’. Moreover, there is an important observation on this event: “The formidable machine of that energy of hers was behind that *I*. It was rescuing her” (55). Such insistence on the “I” suggests the need for individuation because it corresponds to the outcome of this process: the self is not only an indivisible unity but also—and most especially—a separate entity; therefore, the implicit contrast between “I” and “we” is vital (Jung, *Archetypes* 275). More than this, the passage shows that this process has to be accompanied by a life project. Fragmentation had already started when the fictional Emily gave up nursing.

In the biographical part and in the central chapters of the novella, Emily is not only a fragmented self, but if we analyze her in terms of Lacanian theory, we see that she opposes the Law of the Father. At the beginning, the young unmarried Emily is a

strong individual who fights for what she wants to become, therefore, we can assume that there was an initial intention of building her own identity. In both parts of this work we find a very young Emily who has to fight against her father in order to become a nurse; he had more ambitious plans for her. Achieving her own purpose is seen as heroic, as she explains, “He said I must not consider myself his daughter any longer” (9). Keeping herself outside the Lacanian Law of the Father does not only mean that she disobeys her father’s authority. Being a nurse meant not getting married, and, therefore, Emily would not perpetuate the family, but she would keep herself out of the social norms which have the triangular family as their basic unit. She escapes the structure that, according to Beauvoir, confines women into a restrictive model of perfection by repressing their real desires. The biographical Emily keeps her desired projects (nursing, teaching, being a pianist) at the back of her mind as a result of relegating her repressed desires to the subconscious, while the fictional Emily fights to keep these projects and fulfill them. The biographical Emily can never create her own identity, while the fictional one undergoes an individuation process which at the end will tell her who she really is.

But it is not only the symbolic realm which Emily refuses to enter. Later on in the novella, the fictional Emily finally decides to get married. This is a childless marriage which does not seem to contribute anything to her personality. On the contrary, she is always trying to fill the void with society and music evenings, as we have seen. Once she has become a widow, and coinciding with the preparation of Daisy’s wedding, we read:

Emily, alone in her big house, stared hard into her mirror and told herself that she was sad not because she wasn’t getting married but because she believed she had never been married, not really. She compared herself and William with Daisy and Rupert—‘But they are really fond of each other,’ whispered Emily, thinking that this was a stern face looking back at her (95).



The mirror motif appears again, as in so many other instances in Lessing's bibliography, the conclusion here is that the fictional Emily does not acknowledge the image of herself as a married woman. Although this has been a part of her life, she has failed at acquiring this identity, because the role of wife has proved to be only a social mask or persona. Moreover, and in contrast with the child who recognises himself in the mirror as a whole for the first time, the fictional Emily has not assumed some aspects of her identity and, as a result, perceives herself as fragmented. In a way, the mirror reflection allows her to define herself against the Other, performed by Daisy (the shadow figure who brings about the inner aspects that she cannot acknowledge in herself).

A further important aspect of the Lacanian mirror stage has to do with the baby discerning his similarity with the others and taking his place among them (as part of the intrusion complex). Contrarily, the fictional Emily only grasps the difference to Daisy as the image of the soon-to-be-married woman and, therefore, fails in achieving the feeling of unity that this identification, based on the "*imago*", should have provided. The significance of this lies in the fact that Daisy is meant to embody Emily's shadow in the Jungian individuation process, as I will argue.

#### **6.4. Archetypes.**

At a given point in the description of the biographical Emily, Lessing writes: "Now I look back and know that she had a bad breakdown, of everything she had been and was. That woman whimpering in her sickbed, 'Pity me, pity', it was not her" (159). Such a statement suggests several meanings. On the one hand, fragmentation entails a loss of identity when several roles or personae are required of her (remember that "Nothing fits, as if she were not one woman but several" (156)). On the other hand, a

blurring of fact and fiction becomes evident, as the biographical Emily does not seem to be herself and the fictional one is acknowledged as the description of Emily's genuine personality.

We have already seen how Anna Wulf creates a fictional social network where she integrates herself as a character in order to analyse her psychic insight. In the same way, the fictional Emily is embedded in a society where she can find her own projections in order to develop herself. The beginning of her individuation process takes place during her youth. It is marked by the appearance of her shadow figure, which is absent in her biographical counterpart. Lessing calls Daisy "shadow" from the start: "The two girls went to the fence, Emily with her shadow Daisy just behind her" (11), which, apart from the metaphorical meaning of Daisy always following Emily as if she was her shadow, could be interpreted as a hint of the Jungian substratum of this work.

Both of these characters are complementary from the start, as Daisy tries to emulate Emily and even envies her energy. Just as the fictional Emily is defined as strong, Daisy's is the image of frailty. They undertake the same career, although it is Emily who stands for the determination to bear its drawbacks, while Daisy performs the role of her follower. Daisy embodies the weakness that Emily had not shown when she felt confident to start her tough professional training at a young age, but which will undoubtedly emerge later on when she does not feel strong enough to face the void of her own life, at a moment when she does not have Daisy by herself in order to project her hidden qualities onto her.

Curiously enough, their complementarity is so complete that they can even swap roles: it is Daisy who stays in the profession and pursues professional success, thus embodying the fictional Emily's former self and vocation as a nurse. Her mother's

“little fairy” (14) has turned into a strict and fair examiner of nurses, while Emily has lost all the determination she had made evident when she had to confront her father. Walking away from Daisy into marriage could seem like an attempt to individuate herself (both by differentiating herself from her friend and also by providing a counterpart to Daisy’s professionally-focused view on life). Conversely, the process has the contrary effects and Emily’s personality becomes faded rather than strengthened: “Daisy and her old colleagues had remarked that Emily did not seem herself these days, and so had Mrs. Lane, Daisy’s mother” (50). The tenacity that Emily loses with married life remains in the shadow archetype that Daisy performs. As a result, determination constitutes a latent quality of Emily, which can only survive as projected onto Daisy while Emily has adopted the persona of the successful doctor’s wife.

As a shadow, Daisy also stands for some qualities that Emily does not overtly approve of and is not willing to recognise in herself, but which she can observe projected on her friend. For instance, she accuses Daisy of being harsh after she has sacked the teacher that had become pregnant. Such severity is said to be the result of Daisy’s long years examining the nurses-to-be on conduct and morals; however, Emily herself is not that different. Severity is not openly applied to the character of the fictional Emily, but the biographical Emily is described as unfeeling and accused of false sentimentality when in fact her tight lips and hard face showed harshness when something terrible had to be done (156). As the fictional character, Emily is based on the author’s remembrances of her own mother; so, a conclusion must be drawn that this negative personality aspect is to be found dormant in herself and only made evident as projected onto Daisy.

In the novella, Emily and Daisy had shared a flat during their years at the Royal Free, which parallels other doubles in Lessing’s canon, such as Anna-Molly or Ella-

Julia in *The Golden Notebook*, or Kate-Maureen in *The Summer Before the Dark*. Later on in life, going back to that flat with Daisy holds the same feeling that it had for Anna Wulf when she went to see Molly. “Emily felt she was escaping when she went to Daisy’s” (58) because she was leaving all the conventions imposed on her to fulfill a role. She was approaching her inner personality through her relationship with her shadow. This feeling of release does not only parallel Kate Brown’s leaving her family for a summer in order to meet her former self, but it also echoes Mary Turner’s failed getaway to her past life.

This passage about Mary Turner’s elopement from her husband in order to pursue wholeness directly leads us to the psychological relationship between the fictional Emily and William Martin-White. In exactly the same way as Mary and Dick, Emily does not find her masculine archetype in her husband as the relationship is utterly unproductive. William does not trigger any inner transformation in Emily, but quite the contrary: more than ever, Emily becomes a persona and she just performs a role during her married years. After her first stage as a housewife, and in need of saving herself from immanence, Emily emulates Mary Turner’s escape by thinking about going back to the Royal Free, which her husband refuses for convention’s sake. It is in this conventional basis of behaviour, especially illustrated by marriage, which she does not fit. The sensation is that of not belonging: “Her life since her splendid marriage was as if someone else had lived it” (48). Such detachment can only be matched by Kate Brown’s return home to watch her own life from the outside and her indifference towards it; or even Susan Rawling’s hiring a cleaning woman to ensure a time of confinement in the Mother’s Room first and a hotel, later (“To Room Nineteen”, 1963).

These initiatives do not compensate for the loss of her identity and, although her social life keeps her occupied, it does not start the inner transformation needed to

reintegrate herself. It is Mrs. Lane who remarks “I don’t like it. I don’t *see* her in that life. That’s not really Emily” (58). At this point, the protagonist is alien to herself, as she just performs different roles. As a mirror of the several women that the biographical Emily seems to be, the fictional Emily reveals a fragmented mental state during her marriage. Throughout the novella, there is a narrative debate between all the possible identities that she can adopt: “the old Emily” (52), “this Emily” (53), “Sister Mc Veagh” (56-57), or Mrs. Martin-White (58). Emily has become different personae which can shift from one another: she has different social identities for different social contexts. Being just a persona with no inner depth is incompatible with the unity required to achieve the self; as a result, a character performing different social masks is doubly fragmented. The fictional Emily’s diverse functions relating to her husband, her origins, her old nursing profession and high society indicate that time has come for inner transformation in the pursuit of a unitary identity.

In giving her mother an alternative and more fulfilling existence, the author first needs to depict a personal quest. Success in life is not linear and immediate, but it shows moments of disappointment and drawbacks instead. Moreover, Lessing does not propose an easy way out, but makes her heroine try and dismiss several life plans first. In the first place, and as there may have been some remorse at not having married her first love, this possibility is offered to the fictional Emily to show that not even in this case would she have been happier and unified. Some years after her husband’s death, she utters the following words: “I wouldn’t marry William now, whatever age I was” (120). Such a thought suggests that she has already understood that she needs to undertake an inner process that will lead her to her own identity.

In a way, the fictional Emily’s periodical visits to Daisy warn us of the fact that the archetypes she needs for individuation (shadow and animus) will not be enough

until she achieves a total return to her original (unmarried) self, as was the case for Kate Brown, the main character of *The Summer Before the Dark*. Significantly enough, once she is widowed and goes back to her older world, she is referred to as “a much earlier Emily”:

She went out into the lane, which had not changed, and she wandered along past clumps of daffodils and narcissi till she saw a big field, which she remembered. But it was full of noisy children running about, and then she saw a man she associated with cricket. Yes, that was Alfred Tayler and he was instructing what seemed like hundreds of children of various sizes, boys and girls, in the ways of cricket. Emily sat down, where she had before, under the oaks, to watch. It was all very noisy and energetic and when the cricket ball arrived near her feet, a much earlier Emily jumped up and threw the ball back towards the man, who caught it, with a laugh and a little bow (72).

A simultaneous encounter with her past context and with Alfred Tayler suggests that both elements will play an important part in her individuation process. As a character, Alfred is just a person who belongs to her past, but does not have much of an intimate relationship with her. As happened in *The Grass is Singing*, the husband does not always constitute the animus, but this archetype has to be found somewhere else. On the other hand, in the biographical part, being married to Alfred does not involve any endowment to Emily’s identity either; therefore, once again we see that Alfred and Emily can contribute to each other’s growth as separate people who live their lives independently from one another. Only after Alfred has been given a satisfying existence, and has been able to fulfill his objectives, is he able to become a whole individual, rather than being one half of a mutually-dependent couple, as he in fact was in real life. It is perhaps under these imaginary circumstances that he can work as a suitable animus.

The figure of Alfred, which comprises both the fictional and the biographical characters, performs both sides of the archetype: the constructive and destructive principles of identity building. In the biographical part, the husband only stands for suffering, the years they lived away from home, sickness and the traumatic war

memories. Moreover, marriage does not allow the biographical Emily to develop her inner projects, as individuation is not related to an institution but to internal growth, which is not possible in the efforts of constant care and nurture. Alfred prevents Emily's growth in the biographical part of this work, where Emily has acquired a persona without any inner development.

In the fictional part, Alfred parallels Emily in her dearest enterprise: storytelling. More than this, she sees him as an example to imitate. Although everybody in the educational world tries to emulate the Martin-White schools, the fictional Emily admires the Longerfield school, where Alfred belongs: "Emily felt that this school, the friendliness and ease of it, was what her schools were missing" (106). Therefore, in a way, the fictional Alfred epitomizes this quality that Emily lacks and they can be said to be complementary in a relation of mutual recognition and learning. More than this, it was Alfred who defended Emily's position in the crisis of the pregnant teacher and, in doing so, he calls her "Emily McVeagh" instead of "Emily Martin-White", thus rescuing her former identity, since he can be seen as assuming a synechdochial role: his very presence evokes Emily's place of origin. This former identity is, again, vital for the character's individuation.

At the end of the novella, we see that the fictional Emily has undergone some interior development, but no more than having realised that she has never known herself. The final pages of the alternative and happier life that Lessing made up for her mother are full of remorse at realizing the opportunities she has missed. Only after Alistair has died—the fictional Emily's close friend who she could have married for the second time—does Emily see how much she cared for him. She concludes, "Cedric, I am a very stupid woman and I have only just understood it" (136). The remark "She did

not know herself” (133) is only valid until she realises that she has never allowed herself to acknowledge her own desires.

After her individuation process, the fictional Emily has learnt a lesson that will reconcile her with her life, and which will start through a new understanding of her relationship with her own mother. Once she has reintegrated herself, she decides to deal with her mother figure and draw her own conclusions, as a vindication of the deepest and most original layers of her former identity:

Did she want to think about it? At least she must decide if she wanted to think about it. What she did not want was for grief to rush out the dark pit it lived in and fasten on her heart, as had happened with Alistair (137).

This consideration about the mother leads us to the following section of this chapter.

## **6.5. Motherhood and the mother archetype.**

*Alfred and Emily* constitutes a panoramic vision of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship. The multiplicity of perspectives echoes the general overview that *The Golden Notebook* offers. More than this, in *Alfred and Emily*, the subject transcends the novel itself, both biographically and textually, as we have seen. In this section we are going to see how motherhood and the mother archetype are depicted in *Alfred and Emily* by putting this final novel in connection with previous texts. The correspondences between different works will help us understand the character of Emily McVeagh in the two different parts of the novel-memoir and the building of her identity.

“Alfred and Emily; Two Lives” is the final outcome of several versions of the same discussion on Lessing’s parents. Habitual readers of Doris Lessing are already familiar with the matter once they reach her final work. On the way, several mother figures in the novels have been based upon Emily Tayler, which has resulted in the



issue of matrophobia, so much debated by the critics. In the *Children of Violence* series, the most autobiographical of her writings, Mrs. Quest, Martha's mother, is pictured as an intrusive and disruptive presence in Martha's development as a young woman. Similarly, in *The Grass is Singing*, a complicated relationship between mother and daughter, and Mary Turner's emotionally ambiguous view about the relationship between her mother and father, trigger her attitude towards marriage and family.

Apart from the novels, there are other non-fictional pieces of writing in Lessing's corpus which find their final explanation in her last work. In "My Father" (1994) we find the raw material for Alfred in *Alfred and Emily*, and also for Mr. Quest (deliberately called "Alfred" in the *Children of Violence* series). In this essay, under the warning that "Writing this article is difficult because it has to be 'true'" ("My Father" 89), we find an Alfred who was somehow "killed" in the First World War, as a first statement that true identity has to be found in the former self. Details are also given of the marriage and illness—both mental and physical—that govern the second main part of *Alfred and Emily*.

Although "My Father" and "Impertinent Daughters" were written with the purpose of truth, a third biographical essay, "How Things Were" (2004), is dealt with through fantasy, as a precedent to the fictional part of *Alfred and Emily*. In this essay, Sister McVeagh comes from the past to a twentieth century hospital and wishes she had had all the present-day technology. This is a vindication of Lessing's mother outside the institutions of marriage and motherhood, which culminates with *Alfred and Emily* when she is transformed into someone whole and independent. Significantly enough, Emily is called "Sister Mc Veagh" in this piece of writing, not only when the nursing profession is depicted, but also in the relationship with her daughter: "My mother, Sister McVeagh, countered my incredulity with 'You see, if you are nursing people, there are all those

germs about...” (222). By doing so, it seems as if Emily’s identity were much more than the role of the mother and, in effect, Lessing relies on her mother’s former identity for a more profound insight of herself.

The psychological importance of both the mother and father figures is present throughout Lessing’s works. The author justified this by arguing for the general presence of the parental figures in everybody’s subconscious, as an available resource when needed (“My Father” 89). In the highly autobiographical *Martha Quest* (1952), the same relation exists between the mother and the subconscious: “Her face fell in patient and sorrowful lines, the eternal mother, holding sleep and death in her twin hands like a sweet and poisonous cloud of forgetfulness—that was how Martha saw her, like a baneful figure in the nightmare in which she herself was caught” (38-39). As an influence exerted through both consciousness and unconsciousness, those figures allow for the individuation process and the building of the daughter’s own identity, which, at the same time and through several texts, biographically recreates the author’s inner development.

The logical process in the redefinition of the mother figure in *Alfred and Emily* goes from the justification of the biographical Emily’s personality in the second part, to her redemption at the end of the novella. This progress constitutes a step further which surpasses all the previous autobiographical writing dealing with the real-life Alfred and Emily Tyler. The starting point of this process, as I said before, is that of aversion for the mother. The author acknowledges it from the beginning, and also recognises, throughout the narrative, that her views on her mother and the reasons for writing about her have evolved through the years:

So much has been written about mothers and daughters, and some of it by me. That nothing has ever much changed is illustrated by the old saying, ‘She married to get away from her mother.’ *Martha Quest* was, I think, the first no-holds-barred account of a mother-and-daughter battle. It was cruel, that book. Would I do it now? But what I was doing was part of the trying to get free (*Alfred and Emily* 178).

During Lessing's youth, in the period of her building an identity, she saw her mother as follows: "I hated my mother (...) Those bundling, rough, unkind, impatient hands: I was afraid of them and of her, but more of her unconscious strengths" (*Alfred and Emily* 179). In this passage, Lessing identifies the negative aspects of the mother archetype (the unknown and fearful) in the figure of her own mother. Such biographical experience is the basis for many mother-children relationships in Lessing's novels.

The ambivalent nature of the mother archetype is often represented through myth and fairy tale, as the basis of Jungian psychoanalysis; therefore, along with the terrifying qualities of the wicked witch, the mother simultaneously shows the virtuous, magical and kindhearted nature of the fairy godmother. Recurring to myth and fantasy is vital to characterize the archetypes. This fantastic stratum, which nourishes the archetypes and underlies, most especially, *The Fifth Child* and Harriet's maternal role, is to be found in the biographical account of *Alfred and Emily* as part of the author's relationship with her mother as a child. In addition, the presence of her mother's former lover in the form of a photograph is quite remarkable, since he was perceived by young Doris as a fabled character, thus blurring reality and make-believe not only in the biographically-based part of Lessing's work but also in her real life experience, which, in turn, sustained her fiction.

The author recognises this mythical basis of the psyche and defends the capacity children have for fantasy:

I told her, not much older, that she was not my mother, who was in fact the Persian gardener (...). I knew, of course, that the gardener, being male, could not be my mother, but necessity somehow overruled this disability. And that brings me to the wonderful way children both know and do not know the facts, can believe in a fairy tale with one part of their minds and know it is not true with the other. It is a great, nourishing, saving ability, and if a child doesn't achieve this capacity, it may be in trouble (180).

I have already mentioned how the contradictory mother archetype is present throughout the biographical narrative of *Alfred and Emily*, but, curiously enough, the

other positive side of the mother archetype is introduced by another character in the novella. In Fiona we are able to glimpse the mystic dimension of the mother, the Mother-Goddess with her fecundity. As she is observed breastfeeding, Fiona becomes the “Good Mother” that M. Klein typified as nurturer and giver of patience, generosity and creativity. In contrast to other instances where breastfeeding appears in Lessing’s canon, here it is not characterised as something abject which threatens identity by crossing bodily boundaries (as was the case in Mary Turner’s observation of the native women lactating), but rather, it enhances her personality, since Emily admires Fiona’s nurturing capacity.

The mother archetype in the figure of Emily results in the mother-complex of the daughter (Lessing herself), which is introduced in the factual part of *Alfred and Emily*, and which had been previously anticipated in all her biographical essays, as well as under the character of Martha Quest. The most decisive hint of this complex appears in *Alfred and Emily*, when the narrator announces that she got married to get away from her mother (188), which fully coincides with one concrete feature of the daughter when the mother-complex results in resistance to the mother in the Jungian explanation (Jung, *Archetypes* 91). This need to escape was constant for Lessing even when she was a little child.

As we have already seen, the type of mother that the biographical Emily McVeagh embodies shows the “hypertrophy of the maternal element” also present in the character of Harriet Lovatt. In fact, in *Under My Skin* (1994), which functions here as a complement to the biographical part of *Alfred and Emily*, we discover that Sister McVeagh refused the honour of matronship at the early age of thirty-three and got married in order to have children (7). Marriage is also secondary, despite the reason that Lessing’s father stated for marrying Emily: “Marriages for affection are best” (*Under*

*My Skin*, 7). Moreover, in the explanation to the novella, we are told how, after the real-life Alfred had died, Emily's children told her to marry again, but she was not persuaded and thought it inconceivable, because she had to devote herself to her children (142). In the novella, in an attempt to grant the fictional Emily a happier old age, widowhood is overcome and Emily gets close to another man, Alistair, although only a special friendship results. In this case, and being childless, the fictional Emily cannot be said to discard marriage for the sake of the children as the biographical Emily does; conversely, she does not seek personal development by adopting a persona as a wife again, but she will complete an individuation process otherwise. This places her in opposition to the real Emily, Lessing's mother.

In the mother-complex, not only is Eros dispensable, but the mother's own personality is too: "my mother accepted that her fate was to be a mother and 'That was that'" (192). Consequently, the more unaware she is of her own personality, the more violent is her unconscious desire of power. In the case of the biographical Emily Tayler, it resulted in the difficulty in accepting the growth of her children and an incapacity to let them go. Lessing states: "If there was ever a woman who would have been happy to see her little daughter never leave fairy childhood behind, then it was my mother" (*Alfred and Emily* 237).

The influence of this type of mother results in the extinction of the maternal instinct in the daughter. In fact, there is no hint of this in the novel, but we can find a lack of interest in becoming a mother in other autobiographical works, or even in the character of Martha in the *Children of Violence* series. In *Under My Skin* (1994), both the author's unwillingness to have children, and the autobiographical basis of this issue in *Martha Quest* are overtly recognised:

This feeling of doom, of fatality, is a theme—perhaps the main one—in *Martha Quest*. It was what had made me, and from my earliest childhood, repeat and repeat, ‘I will *not*, I simply will not.’ And yet I had been swept along on some surface, or public, wave, ever since I had left the farm (and my typewriter) taking my fate in my hands, or so I thought, to become one of the town’s marriageable girls, then a wife, then a mother. (...) Decades later I met an elderly woman who had her first baby at the same time I had mine. We sometimes spent mornings together. ‘You were not maternal,’ she said to me, in 1982. I looked back at all that breezy competence and could only agree (*Under My Skin* 262).

In *Martha Quest* we see the fictional recreation of this phenomenon, as we are told how Martha loathed babies in her youth. Moreover, motherhood is seen as a burden by young Martha, who does not want to be like her own mother, or even become a mother at all: “...and the sight of her long and shapely legs made her remember the swollen bodies of the pregnant women she had seen, with shuddering anger, as at the sight of a cage designed for herself. Never, never, never, she swore to herself...” (80).

It is easy to see in Lessing’s autobiographical writings, as well as in the *Children of Violence* series, the resistance to maternal supremacy which Jung assumes to be the exemplification of the negative mother-complex. It causes the rejection of marriage by this type of daughter, or either a marriage which results in constant impatience and irritation due to the difficulties in all the instinctive processes involved (Jung, *Archetypes*, 90-91). There is quite a broad range of examples of this misery at not being able to comply with the requirements of married life. In *Under My Skin* (and fictionalised in *A Proper Marriage*, part two of *Children of Violence*), a complete account of the narrator’s attempts to get an abortion is given. In addition, as the pregnancy develops, nurture is pictured as exhausting and unfulfilling (*A Proper Marriage* 221). Moreover, the reader is constantly warned that she knew that her marriage was over, and that she was going to leave. The reason for Lessing’s divorce (and recreated by Martha’s situation) is summarised in “Impertinent Daughters” as utter dissatisfaction with this kind of life:

Then, suddenly, her daughter announced she was going to leave her husband and children. This was of course not possible. Such things were not done. But it was happening. She did not get on with Frank, said this terrible, painful, destructive girl—yet she had shown every sign of getting on with him for four years. She could not stand the life, she said; she hated everything about it (148).

The fictional Alfred's relationship with the mother is no better: "Alfred's mother was sitting with the spectators, and when people congratulated her on her brilliant son she looked discomforted, obviously feeling that it was the other son who should always be applauded" (7), which again corresponds to a biographical basis since the real Alfred Tayler is said to have disliked his mother a lot (*Under My Skin* 5).

In a structure similar to that which underlies *The Golden Notebook* with its multiple layers of reality and reiterative motifs, we find in the "Alfred and Emily: a Novella" a wide range of mother-children relationships which echo the difficult bond between Lessing and her mother. To start with, the fictional Emily is motherless and has a complicated tie with her stepmother, who is described as "unkind" (8); moreover, the only knowledge that she has about her real mother is based on what she has been told, which offers a picture of her mother as frivolous and irresponsible (136-137). Both matters are based on biographical material, as usual: firstly, the lack of affection and understanding that Emily McVeagh observed in her stepmother is mentioned in "Impertinent Daughters" (103) and, secondly, regarding Emily's real and unknown mother, we are told that:

'She was very pretty but all she cared about was horses and dancing.' This refrain tinkled through my mother's tales of her childhood, and it was years before it occurred to me, 'Wait a minute, that's her mother she's talking about.' She never used any other words than those, and they could not have been her words, since she did not remember her mother. (*Under My Skin*, 1)

The fact that this image of her mother could not be based on her own memories will be central to the conclusion to this chapter. This finds its explanation inside Lessing's literary production, specifically in her essay "Writing Autobiography" (2005), where she explains childhood memories in autobiographical material: there is the memory

itself—and the memory of routine that happened repeatedly—which is kept in the child’s mind and remains reliable. Apart from this, the author recognises the type of memory that Emily fosters about her mother, by saying that the less reliable memories are those that belong to childhood since, in fact, parents create those memories for their children by telling them about the past (“Writing Autobiography” 96).

The result of all this is Mrs. Lane’s role as a surrogate mother for both the fictional Emily (because she needs it) and also Alfred, who Mrs. Lane wishes was her own child. Not surprisingly, the fictional Alfred marries Betsy, because she resembled Mrs. Lane (29). According to Pulda, Mary Lane acts as the “narrative glue” between Alfred and Emily, who do not marry. Moreover, she represents an author figure like Lessing, who authorises the sibling-like bond. Therefore, Lessing is said to position herself as not quite “the parent of her parents”, but as the author of Emily and Alfred’s lateral connection. (Pulda, 5-6)

The character of Mary Lane entails more meaning and importance than this: although she replaces the mother figure that both the fictional Alfred and Emily long for, her relationship with her real daughter Daisy is complicated, in an echo of all the mother-children ties in the novel, thus suggesting that the mother complex is archetypal: “Mary and Daisy were not getting on—had they ever?” (133). Daisy, as shadow, reproduces, or rather, brings to life the difficult relationship that Emily has to her own mother, that is, to both her step-mother and to the negative idea she has of a mother, in constant conflict between imagination and reality.

The fictional part of *Alfred and Emily*, as I said before, in coming to terms with the mother goes beyond Lessing’s previous writing. The justification for the biographical Emily’s constant frustration and bad relationship with her daughter in the second part finds an alternative in which the main character can really develop her own



personality. However, this process goes in the opposite direction in the structure of the book: first we find the fictional novel of ripening and individuation and then we are faced with the real narrative which motivated such fiction.

In “Impertinent Daughters” we find that one of the reasons for Emily’s breakdown was having given up her dreams of becoming a concert pianist (105). Likewise, in *Alfred and Emily*, music appears as a former interest the biographical Emily gradually and reluctantly abandoned. In addition, to reinforce the fact that this was her initial personality, she is called by her unmarried name in this fragment: “Emily McVeagh, who had once been told by her music teachers that she could have a career as a concert pianist if she wanted” (272). In an echo of Beauvoir, desisting from one’s project is pictured as the reason for being split.

As Tiger puts it, “the greater gift Lessing gives Emily McVeagh is scope for her real-life counterpart’s formidable efficiency and fulfillments well beyond the limitations and frustrations of motherhood and marriage” (22). Not only this, but she also restores her mother’s former identity as a storyteller and, in the biographical part of *Alfred and Emily*, she states that she wants to remember “the real Emily McVeagh” (again, she is called by her maiden name) as an educator, who told her stories and bought her books (192). Again, it coincides with the description on the very first page of *Under My Skin* and is experienced as a paradox in another version of her biography, “Impertinent Daughters”: “It was my mother who introduced me to the world of literature, into which I was about to escape from her” (121).

All this matches Pulda’s statement that “In both fiction and memoir, Lessing rewrites her mother as a storyteller in order to pay tribute to her primary influence” (Pulda 7). By restoring this aspect of her personality, Lessing is giving her mother a life-project different from that of nursing, which she in fact accomplished, but which

also led her to the situation that destroyed her own individuality: marriage, nurturing and the nursing of her husband. Only by going back to her initial self and having a project of her own, is Emily McVeagh capable of building up her own identity. Consequently, it is only after the completion of individuation that she can accept her personal longings (with reference to Alistair) and think about her individual opinion on her dead mother regardless of social impositions and morality.

## **6.6. Conclusion.**

We could not start the conclusion to this chapter without stating that an interpretation of *Alfred and Emily*, as Lessing's premeditated last work, can be formulated just by referring to previous scenarios in the author's writing for contrast and parallelism. Therefore, this novel-memoir puts an end to and perfectly closes her literary career through its self-referentiality. Consequently, Lessing's production might be considered as a unit which "makes its own comment", as the goal was for *The Golden Notebook* (Preface to *The Golden Notebook*, 13). In the end, we do not only find the biographical input which inspired many previous characters and episodes, but it also brings about an ultimate version of all the previous autobiographical writing which dealt with her parents, reinterpreting and surpassing the boundaries of autobiography.

Reading *Alfred and Emily* allows for a subsequent reinterpretation of Lessing's literary production by incorporating, first, the new statement on the influence that the author's mother had on her, and, second, the final ability to reinterpret this figure. In short, the circular pattern of the author's career starts in Africa with a character—Mary Turner—based on the real Emily McVeagh, who has no identity of her own and whose only way out is an accepted death. It closes with the same character striving for

wholeness and being awarded an alternative, imaginary existence that saves her from immanence.

It could be argued that the fictional Emily is far from embodying the biographical one, as she is embedded in a completely different reality. However, to apply Lessing's notion of reality and fiction, we should bear in mind that "... fiction is better at 'the truth' than a factual record. Why this should be so is a very large subject and one I don't begin to understand." ("Writing Autobiography", 141) We can, therefore, conclude here that the fictional Emily reflects the author's real mother to a higher degree than her depiction in the memoir, as she is based on the real essence of the character. Nevertheless, as can be inferred from my own reasoning, both Emilys interact with each other and have to be seen as different aspects of the same identity.

Going back to the central issue of this thesis—the different interpretations of the mother archetype and the identity building of the characters who personify it—it can be argued that this work is not only a recreation, but also a redemption and vindication of the mother figure. In order to redeem her own mother, Lessing has had to eliminate from her any trace of motherhood and married life, since it is only once she has isolated an alternative independent Emily, who can concentrate on her own desires and needs, that she can have a clear identity of her own. Nevertheless, this work again shows that the mother is anything but abject in Lessing's narratives: it is the real Emily, the real author's mother, who motivates and creates the need for such fiction. As we have seen, Emily McVeagh had an influence on her daughter's life and personality through the mother-complex and its negative consequences on the daughter; thus, the mother is still necessary in literature, and her redemption is the origin of Lessing's need to fictionalise the mother figure.

Caesar's observation that Postmodernism is an age of surrogacy, which puts the mother in a difficult position (123), is partly shown in the novella. Surrogacy is experienced in the relationship that the main characters have with Mary Lane, but, rather than endangering the whole concept of motherhood, this phenomenon just enhances the need for the mother. By adopting this role—and embodying this archetype—Mrs. Lane fills the gap for a needed trustworthy mother figure.

Other secondary mother figures, Fiona and Ivy, are equally significant. We have already seen the consideration that the former deserves for all her talents, which also includes mothering. The latter, with her illegitimate motherhood, “nearly split the Martin-White Foundation down the middle” (137). In addition, her maternal image makes the fictional Emily react in such a way as to reevaluate the meaning of her own life. This process will start by reconsidering the prejudice that she has always kept about her own mother. Both Fiona and Ivy are distant from any abject position of the mother figure.

The need to redeem the mother figure is clear in this work, and it is very important to see how the real identity of the fictional Emily is restored through teaching and storytelling. In any case, creativity is the talent with which Emily is gifted: the same strength that made Anna Wulf rewrite her own self, created and destroyed Harriet Lovatt's mother identity, brought Mary Turner to her own salvation through death, and restored Kate Brown's identity as a young unmarried woman. This creativity, shown through a need for introspection, is what allows Emily's individuation process. On the one hand, she realises that she had to accept her own desires with respect to Alistair; on the other, she is determined to revisit her mother's image and draw her own conclusions.

With this growth of the fictional Emily's character, Lessing redeems her mother, who simultaneously redeems her own. By so doing, the author produces a chain of reevaluation of the mother figure at multiple levels which echoes the palimpsest-like structure of *The Golden Notebook*. A second, and no less important, meaning of Emily's coming to terms with her mother, is that Lessing herself asserts that she underwent her own individuation process through Emily's. This allows the author to make a final statement, once she has completed the understanding of her parents that she had acknowledged as a lifetime process, and with the personal development that it entails ("Impertinent Daughters" 101). Lessing, as well as all the characters under study in this thesis, faced her need for wholeness and personal development by means of her creative powers, and completed the process successfully.

The thesis that the mother has a dubious authority outside the institution of motherhood is rejected here. Mothers are not only necessary for narratives conceived out of reality: their individuation and identity-building are still the focus of postmodern narratives and, in addition, they prove necessary for the inner growth and reintegration processes of their daughters. *Alfred and Emily* proposes an identity which, according to its conception in the Lacanian and Kristevan tradition, is anything but stable. Emily McVeagh (as the ensemble of the fictional and the factual characters), in constant development, goes through different phases in the quest and, at the end, she conquers her own identity, which is exemplified by the new challenge that she proposes to herself: "At least she must decide if she wanted to think about it. What she did not want was for grief to rush out of the dark pit it lived in and fasten on her heart, as had happened with Alistair" (137). Emily does not reach a conclusion about her family origins, but learns that it is her job to elaborate her own opinion. Therefore, she will be continually revisiting her identity while she considers and reconsiders the central

matters of her life. The decisive discovery is first that she has the power to decide her own thoughts, and, second that she wants to exert this power.



## 7. CONCLUSION.

As I stated in the introduction, motherhood and the subconscious in the work of Doris Lessing can be approached without having to focus on the binary opposition identity/society, on the biography of Doris Lessing, or either on the influence of mothers on daughters. What I have analysed in this thesis is the building of identities of women according to their potential motherhood (rather than the building of their identity as daughters), and I have concentrated on psychological procedures rather than on the characters' fight against social pressure. Nevertheless, there is a constant overlap and merging between my approach and the one mentioned previously. As far as my corpus is concerned, only in *Alfred and Emily* has Lessing's biographical material been necessary for interpretation, as this work is the link between fact and fiction in her career. In the choice of the novels that form my thesis, I deliberately discarded the Martha Quest series since I wanted to focus on fictional rather than autobiographical writing.

Having analysed five of Lessing's works which belong to five different decades of her long literary production, in the final section of my thesis I am going to explain my findings. The conclusions will be drawn with respect to the theoretical framework and state of the question which is presented in my introduction, taking into account, first, the influence that the theoretical approaches of psychoanalysis and feminism have exerted on the novelist; and, second, the hypotheses outlined by some previous critics of her work. I have divided the conclusions thematically in four parts: first, I will deal with the conclusions related to the theoretical background; second, I will draw conclusions related to the previous criticism on the works of Doris Lessing; third, my own contribution will be highlighted and clarified; finally, possibilities for further research



will be suggested. The most significant section of this conclusions chapter is clearly the third part, since it constitutes a general overview of my findings.

## **7.1. Revisiting theoretical perspectives.**

### 7.1.1. Psychoanalysis.

Having examined the novels in depth, it is more than evident that they share the influence of psychoanalysis. Freudian psychoanalysis was, however, mainly discarded by the author, while much of later Jungian and Lacanian developments are common in Lessing's universe. Likewise, the feminist reinterpretations of psychoanalysis have also been decisive in the author's construction of female identities. Let us first reach some conclusions on the role that the theories of Jung and Lacan have performed in Lessing's canon. What Lessing explores through dreams, imagination and memories is closer to visionary, religious and magical traditions than to Freud's focus on psychology as an empirical science. The insistence on myth and cultural images that reveal themselves in the subconscious shows a clear Jungian influence. As a result, it is plausible to analyse the relationships between the female figures and the rest of characters as embodiments of Jungian archetypes, interacting with the main characters in their individuation process. As a typical feature of the Jungian approach, some of these archetypes reveal themselves in fantasies or dreams through symbolic depictions, such as the dwarf creature in *The Golden Notebook*, the seal in *The Summer Before the Dark*, or the girl in the tale that appears in *The Fifth Child*.

Apart from the animus, the shadow, the persona and the self, Lessing makes use of other images that Jung developed in his psychological theories as belonging to the collective unconscious, such as minor archetypal elements (water, the house and the

wise old man). This resource builds up the atmosphere for archetypal amplification, or for finding meaning in archaic mythological motifs, especially through subconscious visions. The most significant archetypal motifs in Lessing's work are the mother and the quest, as her characters, portrayed according to their position towards motherhood, are in constant personal development. The relevance of both of these archetypes in Lessing's work has been explored throughout my discussion of the novels in a way which ensures coherence with my initial aims.

In order to integrate those archetypal elements, Lessing combines the psychological and the visionary. Parallel to this, the two Jungian modes of perception (introversion and extraversion) acquire equal importance, and, in perfect accordance with Jungian postulates, it is only when the conscious and unconscious spheres are balanced that the female character achieves wholeness. Three of the characters undergo successful individuation: Kate Brown knows that her personal growth will not have finished until she has integrated her dream output into her everyday life; likewise, Anna Wulf psychoanalyses her real personality through the creation of different imaginative versions of her life; and, along the same lines, Emily is reintegrated once Lessing (both author and character) creates a complete identity from the factual and the fantastic. At the other end of the spectrum, we find Mary Turner, who makes her subconscious prevail with her fantasies about escaping, about motherhood and the figure of Moses, thus complicating—and finally impeding—her individuation. In the same sense, Harriet Lovatt builds up her own persona as a mother by relying on fantasies and idealisation, which in the end results in the destruction of the identity that she had previously constructed.

One of the major necessary elements for creating one's own identity, that of standing against the group mind, was not only defended by Lessing in her 1970s series

of lectures, but is also a significant component in her novels, thus adding to the Jungian impact on Lessing's career. This individual differentiation from the group is developed by cultivating learning about one's own dreams, choosing which of the group's ideas can also be said to be individual, and recalling childhood. Accordingly, the characters strive to dissociate themselves from others and focus on their individual personality, although not always in a conscious way. Anna Wulf re-analyses the communist doctrine after some years of affiliation, and Mary Turner is said not to belong to the community of the white settlers, of which she is supposed to be a member. Moreover, dream life has a significant depth and presence in such characters as Mary, Anna, Harriet and Kate; similarly, the earliest memories are recurrent in the lives of Mary, Anna, Kate and Emily.

All the female identities that Lessing explores in these novels have previous life experiences which no longer satisfy them, thus they find themselves facing the need for inner development. The characters in the present thesis reinterpret their previous beliefs and lifestyle, namely, marriage, the Communist Party, motherhood, and the idealisation which governed their existence. All in all, it clearly shows that, for Lessing, the inner quest is not about youth exclusively, but that, conversely, the search for identity continues and develops throughout a person's lifetime through the accumulation of experience. Accordingly, all these novels but *The Grass is Singing* can be classified under the name of *Reifungsroman*. Mary Turner is the only character who does not successfully react after a coming to terms with her past and, therefore, death awaits her as the only possible outcome.

The essential trait that characterises these identity-quest experiences as Jungian—rather than Freudian—is precisely the fact that the characters have futures, and, even though they are all mature characters, the focus is not on their past. Subsequently, most

of our female characters find a way out from neurosis and experience a final moment of breakthrough: Anna overcomes depression and her writer's block; Kate is able to state under which conditions she will return to her family and face old age; Harriet finds that a realistic focus is the clue to who she really is (although she does not act accordingly), and Emily is ready to reinterpret her life according to her own criteria, which will make her feel in control. In the case of Mary Turner, individuation is not completed, but this does not entail abjection, since there is still some kind of salvation from the non-definition of an existence between life and death. We can conclude from the first part of this section that the basic Lessingian narrative in terms of identity depends on the notion of the Jungian individuation process.

Just as the mother archetype is central to an understanding of the building of female identities, so is the mother-complex. This complex appears in different forms. It is salient to see how sometimes we are offered the mother-complex as one instance of how the mothers of the characters have influenced their daughters' personalities, and at others, it is these characters who are shown to cause the complex in their children. These two approaches contribute highly to our purposes. Mothers are daughters at the same time, and both types of influence contribute to the building of identity. Therefore, the relation between mother and child is essential for the creation of both the mother's and the child's identities. In this respect, the general presence of the mother-complex in the corpus confirms the strong influence of Jungian philosophy. The supreme example of this complex is resistance to the mother, which is a regular feature in the novels examined in this thesis. Significantly, we can see this resistance from three different angles, namely: the influence that the mother has inflicted upon one of the characters; the influence that one of her characters has on her children; and the presence of this complex in the author's life as a daughter. This resistance can be interpreted as a

biographical influence in an attempt, on behalf of the author, to analyse and recreate her own psyche<sup>30</sup>.

As a final conclusion on the prevalent influence of Jung on Lessing's works, we must consider the visionary, religious and magical traditions that they both share. The creative use which the author makes of the archetypal nature of the characters shows the failure of the dichotomy mother/woman. Conversely, mothers need to re-define their own identity by integrating several different aspects of their personality (to which their own creativity is central) and accepting their internal multiplicity.

In addition to the Jungian influence, Lacan's theories can also be seen as playing a part in Lessing's work: they complete the identity-building process. In this respect, there are two notions, central to Lacanian psychoanalysis, that are common in our five characters: first, the motif of looking into the mirror—as a reference to the mirror stage—and second, the acquisition of language and its unreliability. Significantly enough, all five novels include an episode where the female character looks into a mirror, which can be identified with the phenomenon of a child's first identification as an independent being which Lacan analyses as signalling the entrance to the symbolic. The mirror episode has different functions in the novels. It also implies various mental processes and inherent conflicts to this process through the different stages of identity-building.

Let us now draw some conclusions on the mirror motif. Mary Turner's looking at the mirror and seeing Moses behind her suggests that she identifies with her own image, but has to build an identity based on the fact that Moses is the Other. Anna's mirror scene also entails identification, but in her case, more elements are implied, as

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<sup>30</sup> Harriet is the only character who shows another aspect of the mother-complex: the "hypertrophy of the maternal element" (Jung, *Archetypes* 87), according to which, the daughter is only interested in having children and imitating her mother's maternal attitude. Accordingly, Harriet's marriage is secondary to her, as the husband constitutes a mere instrument to achieve her purposes; moreover, she identifies with her children.

she identifies with her image and associates it with a dream: that of a crocodile which embodies the result of all the bits and pieces which form the entire world. Anna, then, accepts that she is one and multiple at the same time. Kate's identification with the image in the mirror has other implications, as she associates it with the appearance of a sick monkey (with its archetypal connotations of wisdom), which represents a new, older and less attractive, image of herself. Her mirror image is what she will consciously defend as representative of herself when she has completed her inner quest.

Harriet and Emily reveal instances of non-identification with the mirror image. In the case of the former, the image reflection is not experienced by herself directly, but by a girl character introduced by her husband in a tale he tells their children. Harriet, however, immediately recognises this fantasy character as herself, but, curiously enough, what the girl sees in the reflection is a fearful image of her own face. This is the moment when Harriet realises the mismatch between her self-image (which she has idealised) and what she really is. Finally, Emily looks into the mirror, acknowledges her image, but finds out that she cannot identify with the married woman that Daisy stands for. She therefore acknowledges the need for an inner transformation.

There are two common threads in the five novels: first, irrespective of whether there is identification with one's own image or not, the mirror always gives an important indication to the forces at play in individuation. This is provided by showing an association between the subject and another entity which plays a central role in the character's identity building (either Moses, a crocodile, a monkey, the girl by the pool or Daisy), and some even embody the projection archetypes of the animus or the shadow. Second, in all cases, scrutinising the mirror brings about a decisive moment of revelation in the search for the self. Apart from this, in Lessing's works the mirror motif

functions as a bridge between reality, and dream, imagination, fairy tale and past memories.

Such a process depends very much on language, also central to Lacan. It proves to be unreliable in many ways. One of the problems in Mary Turner's self-definition lies in the fact that she cannot define Moses, her Other, through language, as he is an entity created by her own fantasies. Exactly the same happens with Harriet, who cannot define her son Ben. Neither is able to find their place under the Law of the Father, because of the unreliability of language in defining their Other; moreover, in the case of Harriet, the son's not recognising her as the mother figure cancels out her own definition as a separate subject. Naming also proves generally insufficient, especially in *The Golden Notebook* and *The Summer Before the Dark*, and finds its main exponent in the fact that "I", which designates the subject, cannot convey the complete meaning of identity. Moreover, Kate cannot explain her inner process through language, which goes together with the invalidation and re-definition of social norms and the nuclear family. The unreliability of language underlies *The Golden Notebook* and it runs parallel to the unreliability of the entire narration.

My main contribution to the subject of both the mirror motif and language is to argue that their presence shows how much the Lacanian influence can be read in the novels as part of Lessing's cultural context. The passage between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic has a special significance by complementing the Jungian individuation process depicted in these works. These three levels of the psyche are fundamental in the definition of the characters' personality and in the relationship they have with their children, since this bond also determines the mother's identity building. While the child is trying to place itself in society, with the entry into the symbolic order, the mother will also have to re-define herself, as a separate entity.

Another concept that stems from Freudian psychoanalysis, but is still present in the Lacanian development of this trend, is that of guilt, which depends on cultural and social requirements. As Freud saw it, this is an emotion that results from the struggle between the ego and the superego. Similarly, for Lacan, it is embedded in the symbolic order and the Law of the Father. Guilt is defined by Lessing, in the voice of her character Kate as “almost a definition of motherhood” (*The Summer Before the Dark*, 98). In consonance with Kate’s reflection, guilt underlies the mood of the mother characters at some time or other in their lives: Anna shows it either consciously or subconsciously, when Janet decides to go to boarding school or in the dream of the two babies; similarly, Harriet experiences it with Ben, especially in extreme situations that endanger her other children or even the fifth child himself.

#### 7.1.2. Feminism.

Another major cultural movement which also adds to the eminently Jungian layer of Lessing’s novels is feminism. Nevertheless, it is only related to the topic of my thesis inasmuch as it offers some outstanding reinterpretation and developments of psychoanalysis in terms of the construction of identity. Before we start to examine the conclusions related to feminist thought, we must take into account that some of its doctrines are contemporary, or even subsequent, to the author’s production; thus, we must assume that, rather than determining her literary outcome, this line of thought and the novels themselves are the products of the same cultural and philosophical context.

If we start with Beauvoir, we can see that, in fact, Lessing’s characters are split and risk a fall into immanence. Mary Turner, for example, has no project of her own, and only gains some kind of sense of identity when she keeps an objective in life, that is, when she takes charge of the farm. Likewise, Anna feels fragmented due to her



writer's block and cannot find her identity. Harriet is imprisoned in her own existence, living her life through her son, Ben; Kate realises that she has become redundant to her family; finally, the life of Emily McVeagh (in the biographical part of *Alfred and Emily*) is governed by immanence, which her fictional counterpart has to overcome. The conclusion on the complementary function that this notion exerts is always implied in the moment when the characters are acting as a persona or social mask, either because they have not completed their inner development or because they have not yet found the clues needed to pursue an integrated self. The persona in Lessing seems to be always defective due to a lack of vital goals and, more concretely, of creativity.

A second Beauvoirian notion is the characterisation of woman as an archetype of the oppressed consciousness which results, again, in the fall into immanence. In the novels I have studied, all the female characters have a rich subconscious life, but they strive to match it with the conscious as an essential requisite for their process of growth. Once the characters acknowledge that they need to develop a self, they rescue the subconscious materials, they analyse them and apply their inner processes to their performance. In the cases in which the subconscious tends to prevail and is not modified by the conscious mind, we find ourselves in the opposite dynamic, which has equally dramatic results, as is the case of Mary and Harriet. Mary's identity fades and vanishes, and Harriet's previously built identity is destroyed, since it does not match imagination with real-life experience. As a conclusion, both forms of imbalance are highly damaging: an oppressed consciousness entails immanence since it does not allow the subconscious contents to transcend, while a subconscious which dominates consciousness leads to inescapable destruction.

As I have shown, it is important to see how, as a result of the influence of Nancy Chodorow and the Object Relations School, all the female identities in these novels are

somehow relational; that is, they exist and define themselves in relation to others, normally their children or members of their household. This phenomenon is directly linked to the Lacanian and post-Lacanian psychoanalysis, which postulates that in the definition of a subject there is always an Other to which this subject is opposed.

One of the notions that Chodorow investigates, and which underlies Lessing's work, is the important role that the mother is given as opposed to the preceding system in which the father was the focus. However, the social change that she proposes, that of "shared parenthood", is not to be seen in the novels, since male and female roles still prevail—as in *The Summer Before the Dark*. Moreover, we see quite a range of mothers who perform the role of the single parent, as in *The Golden Notebook*. The only novel where we can see some kind of shared care is *The Fifth Child*, but the division of labour responds to the difficulty of having to deal with "the creature" (Ben), which forces the husband to undertake the whole of family supervision, excluding Harriet from the family. Summarising, then, we see that the essential social advance that Chodorow envisaged for women seems not to have been imagined by Lessing, who depicts the twentieth century society accordingly. This is significant for several reasons: first, mothers are still in charge of the main domestic chores, and thus Lessing portrays them as a picture of her times. Second, this situation allows for narratives which are fully devoted to the struggle between several contradictory social and psychological forces women experience. And, finally, due to the restrictions which prevent mothers from developing outside the household, they become outstanding figures which are not only valid in postmodern texts, but whose role in literature needs to be vindicated. Lessing covers this need by placing her mother characters at the core of her narratives.

Rich's distinction between motherhood as experience or as institution is crucial for understanding Doris Lessing's mother archetype. If the view on motherhood offered

by these novels were that of the institution, the Freudian theory of sublimation would have been validated, since sublimation, in a way, entails embracing what is normative: in this case, motherhood has been presented to women as a socially valued objective. Conversely, what these women try to achieve with their quest is wholeness: something more general and global, created by the multiple identities they perform, and including their sexual drives and identity. Female characters are said to possess a full sexual life, and to actively search for it. Sexual encounters are explained in the cases of Anna, Harriet and Kate, and their pregnancies are narrated as having been consciously planned (with the exception of Ben's). This means that contraception is (or is supposed to be) available for them, so they can live their sexuality freely.

The only character that could partly consider motherhood as sublimation is Harriet, since she in fact does enjoy sexuality, but she also sees motherhood as a socially accepted finality which she wants to achieve in order simply to perform her ideal persona. In her mind, sex goes together with motherhood. Significantly, she is somehow punished at the end for her naïve views on life, which suggests that sublimation is dysfunctional.

Harriet is very near the two other characters placed at the other end of the spectrum with reference to motherhood as sublimation: Mary and Emily. Significantly enough, both characters decide to have a baby without really wanting it, and neither of them achieves motherhood. In both cases, their sudden want of a child seems an attempt at sublimation in order to enter the mother category and adopt a social identity. Although Mary and Emily are quite similar in one fundamental aspect (the poor sex life in their marriage), there is something that makes Mary unique amongst the five female characters analysed here: her lack of a vital project. All these characters except Mary feel other desires apart from sexual ones: desires which are socially accepted,

individual, creative or professional. In general, they have overcome the need for sublimation through motherhood.

Kristeva, as one of the most influential post-Lacanian figures, also contributes a central notion to this thesis: the abject. Nurture and care constitute one of the main elements in the construction of the female identity; therefore, the potentially abject processes of childbirth and breastfeeding appear repeatedly in the novels as moments of revelation and profound ambivalence of feelings. Observing mothers breastfeed in *The Grass is Singing*, *Alfred and Emily*, and even in the *Children of Violence* pentalogy opens the debate between the abjection of non-separation, on the one hand, and the figure of “The Good Mother” (which Melanie Klein characterised) on the other.

Kristeva’s theories on the idealisation of motherhood in our society constitute an important contribution to Lessing’s writing. The clash between idealisation and reality is present especially in *The Fifth Child*. Even her most celebrated term, “jouissance”, is hardly seen: it is only perceived in some isolated mother-children night-time scenes of cuddling and storytelling in *The Golden Notebook*, in childcare scenes of *The Fifth Child* in which only Ben’s siblings are involved, and always before Ben’s arrival. It is also found in connection with Fiona in *Alfred and Emily*, where the mother role is depicted as springing from “other capacities” (113), that is, exclusively female power. At other times, motherhood has nothing to do with idealisation, pleasure or female power, but it is shown as contributing to an identity crisis. By putting motherhood in doubt as contributing to—or else hindering—female inner development, Lessing follows Kristeva’s path and shows the paradoxical cultural construction of motherhood on fantasy and idealisation, which places her characters in contradictory positions that may either lead, or contribute to, breakdown.

Having defended the tangible influence of such authors as Lacan and Kristeva on Lessing, it is hard to discern the relevance of another psychoanalytic and feminist figure in this literary work, Luce Irigaray; nevertheless, she plays a part in the cultural context in which Doris Lessing developed her career. The difficulty in linking Irigaray to the rest is the fact that she disagrees with Lacan and, most especially, with the mirror stage which stems from masculine presuppositions, and which places women as contrary to men. She disputes the definitions of symbolic order and the Law of the Father and vindicates the mother and woman role in itself, rather than being the opposite to man, and inferior to him. With her insistence on the feminism of difference, Irigaray cancels out the defence of equal conditions and rights through imitation of the masculine model which prevails in Western Culture.

One of the few arguments that Lessing adapts from the feminism of difference is the critique of the Law of the Father which condemns the restrictive model of perfection to which mothers are confined. Lessing depicts several women who, at some point or other, and in different ways, need to escape from this imposed role. The most intense debate takes place in *The Golden Notebook*, where Anna's fragmentation has very much to do with the mother/woman dichotomy, and where the solution lies in the acceptance of both roles when multiplicity is admitted. If we extrapolate this conflict to the rest of the novels, the conclusion is that motherhood should not necessarily be imposed as a restrictive category which devalues woman's potential. In general, after a long dialectic in each of the novels, motherhood is integrated into women's existence, as in the case of Anna and Kate.

Another of the few essential characteristics that Lessing adopts from this feminism of difference is the fact that, although women's identity is always contrasted with some Other, some type of female identity and subjectivity is accounted for. Along

the same lines, an implicit defence of contraception, very much in Irigaray's terms, is found in the novels, which frees women from being valued according to their role as mothers, as I have already mentioned. Being in command of how they want to relate to motherhood makes a major contribution to their self-definition. In contrast, the fictional Emily (who wants children but cannot decide on motherhood) starts a process of reunification only when she locates the aspects of her life that she can decide upon. The aspect of the feminism of difference which allows for a full individuation process is, therefore, the women's will as related to motherhood.

Lessing also illustrates Ferro's complaint that there is an identification between "woman" and "mother", in spite of the fact that "mother" is a much more restrictive category. By developing characters who undergo a reunification process, Lessing's fiction shows the rejection of the basic opposition in which "man" seems to be opposed to "mother": Anna Wulf fights to separate the woman and the mother when she has to define herself, until she finally finds out that one can include the other, and that the broader category "woman" has room for the multiplicity she embraces at the end. Similarly, Kate Brown goes from the restrictive mother-only category to a full woman identity after her individuation process. Harriet accepts her identity as a mother, especially when she rescues her child from the institution where he was confined, but this proves to be highly damaging to her individuation process. Emily McVeagh goes from her mother identity, in the autobiographical part of *Alfred and Emily*, to a fuller identity as a woman, which proves that not only motherhood can provide wholeness. In general, those characters embrace an identity which includes motherhood among many other aspects.

Similarly, Lessing rejects binary oppositions associated with motherhood. The author represents motherhood as a complex rather than unitary notion, which adds to the

variable and developing concept of identity. The importance of this is not only that it reasserts the visionary nature of Lessing's creativity. Motherhood, for Lessing, is understood later as the sum of different personal realities. Accordingly, from the nineteen fifties onwards, Lessing built a corpus which evidences the multiple forms of motherhood present in the second half of the twentieth century.

Following on, we can see that all our characters are anything but flat, since their characterisation is quite complex and depends on input at different levels of reality. They are defined through the conscious and unconscious, both in relation to the rest of characters and in isolation. They develop and show multiple contradictions. Anna tries different modes of perception and depiction of reality, and becomes subject and object at the same time in her diaries; moreover, according to Cornier Michael, Anna's shifts make her occupy both positions and neither (48). Mary is defined not only in terms of gender but also of class and race. Kate does not only rely on her dreams, but she combines them with real life data and past memories; moreover, as a symbolic title, *The Summer Before the Dark* offers a hint of this rejection of dichotomies. Finally, Emily is both an autobiographical and a fictional character, or even both at the same time.

Apart from sharing the sociological background that is contemporary to her writing, Doris Lessing can be said to anticipate some of the axioms that psychoanalysis and feminism developed later on in the 1990s. One of the main theories that these writers elaborated concerned post-Lacanian motherhood. In *The Grass is Singing*, back in 1950, with Mary Turner's sudden want of a baby (a fantasy which would never match reality if it were born), Lessing seems to prefigure Tubert's idea that in female subjectivity, becoming a mother implies an encounter between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic. Accordingly, during pregnancy, an imaginary representation of the

real child inside the womb has to be developed, and Lessing shows the failure of Mary's motherly capacities through her incapacity to bring the imaginary to life.

If Lessing anticipates this psychoanalytical argument in her first novel, she fully develops it in *The Fifth Child* (1988), whose publication coincides with the development of post-Lacanian postulates. The central concept of this novel is that of the discord between the imaginary and the real. The problem arises with the impossibility for the child to acquire language and adopt the Law of the Father, which inhibits the mother's completion of her own subjectivity. Consequently, this text could be taken as illustrating the whole of this post-Lacanian theory. Lessing seems to envisage here Tubert's later explanation of motherhood as not exclusively natural or cultural, but entailing the bodily and the psychic, the conscious and the subconscious (Tubert, *Deseo y representación* 156).

## **7.2. Observations on the main critical approaches.**

It is now time to contrast my findings with respect to the work of previous criticism in the areas of psychic growth and inner quest. I will take into account the two main critical approaches which I introduced right at the start in the "thesis structure" section: these are Roberta Rubenstein's *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing* (1979), and Lorelei Cederstrom's *Fine-Tuning the Feminine Psyche* (1990). The comparison between my findings and these two works will be dealt with in terms of the classification that the two authors make of Lessing's novels, since it runs parallel to their views on the personal development of the women characters. I am focussing on these two works because their main concern is identity building, but it is Cederstrom's which offers a more Jungian reading. It is essential to bear in mind, however, that only three out of the five works that form my study are present in these classifications: only



*The Grass is Singing*, *The Golden Notebook* and *The Summer Before the Dark* had been published at the time of Rubenstein's writing, and *The Fifth Child* was of recent publication when Cederstrom wrote. Nevertheless, it is worth considering how these authors approach the development of Lessing's narrative in order to contrast and understand my own.

In Rubenstein's introduction, she argues for the validity of a chronological classification by considering psychological coherence throughout the eleven novels that Lessing had published at the time. Whether this coherence and development was to be maintained can only be determined after analysing the novels that were to be published later on, which is precisely what I have tried to do. This thematic and psychological arrangement with its three categories ("Breaking Down, Breaking Out", "Breaking Through" and "Returning to the Center") does not contradict mine, since I also see the particularities that Rubenstein points out, especially in the case of Mary Turner. Nevertheless, although I have also dealt with the novels chronologically, I have not established a division into different stages. Moreover, the difference that my approach offers is a panoramic outlook of Lessing's work, since it also deals with the second half of Lessing's output, which had not been published at the time of Rubenstein's analysis.

Cederstrom comes closer to my approach, since her reading is eminently Jungian; however, her classification of the novels greatly differs from mine. I agree with Cederstrom's statement that "While Lessing's early works are more accurately termed novels than mythic narratives, there are some qualities of the latter present from the outset" (*Psyche* 7); one of these qualities is represented in the outcome of Mary's quest in *The Grass is Singing*. Similarly, the claim that Lessing explores the feeling of unity with life and the universe through psychic death and rebirth also seems plausible (*Psyche* 7-8).

However, the distinction that Cederstrom makes between the first (“accurately termed”) novels and the rest does not seem convincing to me after a Jungian reading of Lessing’s first work. Cederstrom grounds her distinction in terms of novels that are either influenced by the cosmic symbolism of D.H. Lawrence or by the Jungian myth and archetypes. As I see it, although Mary Turner’s development is, indeed, a product of her cultural and historical circumstances (which would make this novel fall into the first group), her melting with nature as a way of salvation from the abject gives her failed individuation process a sense of universality, since it does not seem to belong to any exclusive time and place. Moreover, in the chapter on *The Grass is Singing*, I have shown that a Jungian reading is completely feasible, although the Jungian symbols and structure of the mind are more present in later novels.

My analysis and Cederstrom’s diverge considerably in relation to *The Golden Notebook*: if we postulated a shift from the Lawretian to the Jungian influences in Lessing’s production, I would have marked *The Golden Notebook* as the turning point instead of *Landlocked*, which is a later novel. As follows from my analysis, Anna Wulf’s recreation of her own life at different levels of fiction to find her own individuation proves that this work is already eminently Jungian.

Regarding the different headings that Cederstrom establishes to classify Lessing’s novels, an important point is the fact that placing *The Grass is Singing* under the heading “The Feminine Denied” implies Mary’s failure of the individuation process, which Cederstrom confirms by stating that “Mary denies her feminine spirit, replacing it with a superficial masculine persona” (17). I do not share this critic’s reasons for Mary’s failed individuation. In my view, her process is not successful because of a general preponderance of her subconscious over the conscious, as well as a projection of her masculine self onto characters who embody dysfunctional animus archetypes.

Moreover, placing it among the novels about “the political” rather than “the personal” marks another difference.

I concur with Cederstrom’s section entitled “The Process of Individuation: Disintegration and Reintegration” that analyses only *The Golden Notebook*, since the novel constitutes the example of a character in an identity crisis, trying to come to terms with her fragmentation. Finally, I would not include *The Summer Before the Dark* in a category called “Failed Individuation” nor accept the term “satire” as valid for this novel. This position is completely contrary to my views. I would probably seem to be one of the “other critics [who] have taken a clue from Lessing’s preceding novels and have attempted to fit the story of Kate Brown into a Jungian pattern, to the detriment of Jung and Lessing” (Cederstrom, 151).

Another author who has been present throughout this thesis is Claire Sprague. Her approach, although not focused on psychoanalysis, has been very enlightening at certain points. With a structural perspective concentrated on character patterns, her work has been central to the depiction and understanding of Jungian system of projections, since it has provided my study with an analysis of doubles and repetitions to which a Jungian reading could be applied. This procedure, thus, validates my views on Sprague’s approach as close—or rather applicable—to Jungian psychology (which the author discarded), since the concept of “unity of opposites” that exists in Christian mystical tradition recurs in Jung’s works as “paired opposites.” (3). However, Sprague’s notion of multiplicity is central to this thesis. Such multiplicity can range from the representation of several mirroring characters, or different aspects of a single one, to the several representations of the identity of the mother. Multiplicity is the notion which stands both for the beginning and the end of the individuation process, and which represents the inner diversity of the mother concept, as we will see in the next section.

Doris Lessing not only anticipates many debates in the fields of psychoanalysis and feminism, but also certain discussions in the area of literary criticism. It was not until 1995 that Terry Caesar's article explained a dialectic that was present in the literary context of the time and which has been repeatedly mentioned throughout this thesis: that of the need for a mother figure in postmodern fictions. As we have seen in the previous chapters, a retrospective reading of the novels can be made by applying the questions that Caesar raised after most of Lessing's work had been already published and studied. Although the position that mothers occupy is an ambiguous one, they have their own voice. As we have already seen, in *The Golden Notebook*, women feel divided between being women and being mothers at the same time, and they do not seem to be exclusively mothers, nor whole individuals on their own right. However, Anna—and also all the characters who stand for the different parts of her personality—talk overtly about their own experience both as mothers and as women. This capacity for “telling their own story” was one of the main questions that Caesar tried to elucidate.

If we analyse Lessing's works, we can see that mothers are not just necessary presences. Mothers are not depicted only as influencing the protagonists because, as I have stressed throughout my thesis, Lessing's is not the narrative of the daughter, but that of the mother. Mothers may be essential to the construction of children's identity, as in the case of Janet and Tommy in *The Golden Notebook*, or Ben in *The Fifth Child*, but the identities that are explored in the five narratives are those of grown-up women who define themselves in relationship to their reproductive potential. Just before Terry Caesar's considerations that the mother character was in danger of becoming redundant were even stated, Lessing had already foreseen the vast field of exploration that they offered; and, going one step further, she could answer these inquiries, even turning this debate into one of the fundamental aspects of her work. Lessing can be seen as a

pioneer in this matter; but, more than this, she distanced herself from the mainstream narratives which presented a secondary (though dispensable) role for the mother, such as the case of Doctorow or Pynchon, who Caesar also discusses.

In these novels, mothers are always present to a greater or lesser extent. While Anna and Emily are motherless and Kate's mother is not regarded as relevant to the narrative, Mary's is so important that she embodies her shadow archetype, and Harriet's is strongly present in the plot. The individuation of the characters is always adapted to the proviso that they are mothers. Whenever a woman figure risks falling into abjection (as is the case of Mary and Harriet), such a character is not made abject because she occupies what Caesar calls "the exhausted mother position" (in Mary's case, she is neither a mother nor an abject figure at the end), but rather, because her attempts at reaching completion are inadequate, placing her in an undefined situation. Abjection and a failure in their individuation process may run parallel (with the exception of Mary), and this abjection does not depend on the characters' position as narrative voices, but rather, on the fact that they inhabit the boundaries between fact and fiction, since none has succeeded at unifying the conscious and the subconscious mind.

### **7.3. Female identity-building and the mother figure: final interpretations.**

The Jungian reading that I offer is based on previous studies which account for this influence on Doris Lessing, especially American scholarship (Sprague 3). However, one of the new contributions of my approach is the fact that I have established in each novel the pattern of archetypes that individuation implies (persona, animus/anima, shadow and self) according to their embodiment in different characters. Apart from this,

the building of female identity has been undertaken in the present thesis inasmuch as the characters selected are mothers (or some are potentially so).

As has already been explained, my initial intention in dealing with the novels in chronological order was that of undertaking a developmental approach. A chronological arrangement which includes the first and last works published by the author can be seen as drawing a perfect circle which symbolises her entire career. The first and the last novels have so many aspects in common that we can say that she started and finished at the same place. Nevertheless, this circularity does not mean a lack of development; on the contrary: Lessing's return to the start allows for a final statement of breakthrough and redemption.

As we saw in the chapter on *Alfred and Emily*, the autobiographical representation of Lessing's mother, Emily, is parallel to that of her first character Mary Turner. We can conclude, then, that Lessing's last character evokes the first one, or, at least, that the former was inspired by the latter, her mother. Both characters are at risk of falling into abjection; yet, by offering Emily a fictional counterpart, Lessing redeems both. Between the first character—who does not reach wholeness—and the last—who finally succeeds—there is a wide spectrum which ranges from more to less successful personal quests. Nevertheless, this variety cannot be said to respond to a chronological development, as the degrees of achievement do not seem to go in any given direction. As Mary and Emily can be said to embody beginning and end, the circle is broken when Lessing offers a breakthrough by giving an alternative life to her last character, which implies a clear psychological evolution of the female character as Lessing's final statement on the matter.

In some ways, Lessing's canon works as a palimpsest in which Mary Turner would be the hypotext that lies beneath, standing for the personal representation of the

woman in search of her identity, which Lessing associates with the figure of her own mother. From this first novel onwards, there are recurrent and periodical rewritings of this figure. Lessing's mother is not only represented through Mary Turner, but also through Mrs. Quest<sup>31</sup>, Susan Rawlings<sup>32</sup>, the mother who appears in several of the author's articles and in the two volumes of her autobiography. But it is not until the end of her career, with the direct depiction of her own mother under her real name, that Lessing finds the way to redeem her mother through the creation of a fictional character. The mother character (which is *her* mother) has to be understood as the ensemble of several rewritings.

This circle exists both at a macro-level and a micro-level, because each of the five novels also has a circular form in some way or other. In terms of plot, *The Grass is Singing* starts and ends with Mary's death. Structurally, the first sentence of *The Golden Notebook* implies a beginning and an ending, as Anna goes from fragmentation to reintegration, and back to multiplicity. Harriet's transformation also means a return, since she builds up an identity which proves inadequate and is destroyed. Kate needs to go back to her younger and purer self to understand what will be her future approach to life, which is also what Emily does.

Circularity also entails that, in the search for female subjectivity, many of the characters need to go back to a previous, purer, identity in order to find themselves. Mary's escape has a lot to do with the need to recover her persona as a single independent woman in town, as a means of building up a self. Similarly, in Kate's summer, a recurrent phenomenon is the past remembrances that make her identify with the young unmarried woman that she once was. Finally, the fictional Emily needs to go

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<sup>31</sup> The *Children of Violence* series.

<sup>32</sup> *To Room Nineteen*.

back to her origins in order to find the parts of herself that will start her process of individuation.

Circularity is, then, remarkable both in each of the novels and in the ensemble of Lessing's work. Rubenstein shares this view:

Though the concept of development implicit in a chronological or horizontal approach to Lessing's novels suggests a linear direction, the equally compelling pattern informing the novels—both singly and collectively—is circular. In the formal narrative design and the thematic organization of her works, “the end is the beginning”. (Rubenstein 7)

Rubenstein first began to consider this sequence of meaning in 1979. Now that the novelist's career has finished, it is clear that the tendency was maintained until the end. My own contribution, in fact, depends very much on the inclusion of *Alfred and Emily* in the corpus of the present thesis. A consideration of Lessing's final work also shows that the circularity of Lessing's career as a whole allows for philosophical and psychological advance.

There are a number of mother characters in Lessing's career. All of them suffer periods of disintegration and reintegration, and their development goes either way. In the depiction of this psychological process, the most outstanding work is clearly *The Golden Notebook*, with its frequent theorisation, reflection and processing of the character's development. The same aspects are to be found in Lessing's novels as regards identity-building and the mother figure—not only in different types of characters, but also in different types of literary modes and genres, even though the five works that are analysed in this thesis are all novels. To give some examples, *The Golden Notebook* is to be considered a mixture of genres because it combines journal writing with fiction, newspaper headlines and articles, letters, tale, cinema script, manuscripts and other formats. *Alfred and Emily*, with its autobiographical implications, and its two different parts (fiction and memoir), also sustains the patterns of identity creation that I



have developed throughout the thesis. The same can be applied to *The Fifth Child*, with its intertwining of the mimetic and the marvellous.

In dealing with their quest for wholeness, all characters share some ways of proceeding. Accordingly, one phenomenon which makes a huge contribution to the achievement of female identity in the novels is creativity. This is manifested in different ways but is a common trait which determines their individuation process and means that they take an active role on their development. Mary creates the imaginary figure of Moses, Anna writes her healing fiction, Kate conceives her own self-image, Harriet creates a family in order to grant herself an identity and discovers her creativity when she improvises children's tales. In addition, the last mother, Emily, achieves her subjectivity by means of Lessing's creativity, since the author redeems her by imagining an alternative existence. In a way, creativity is also the drive that Lessing uses to come to terms with her own mother and the mother archetype she depicts, thus allowing her to close her literary and personal circle.

The concept of detachment has appeared in the discussion, and it should be emphasised here as well. Moreover, this attitude, as shown by the characters under study, implies a certain willingness to achieve emotional distance. Detachment runs in the opposite direction of guilt, since it presupposes seeing the concept of the mother, and the normative feeling of guilt, from the outside. From the very start, Mary Turner shows this feeling not only towards motherhood, but all the patriarchal stereotypes that define her as a woman. This could have been a good start in her path towards achieving her own subjectivity, since it distinguishes her from the group. However, she finally gives in and tries to embrace an institution in which she will be only performing a role, thus failing in her personal development. The rest of the characters in these novels experience this feeling of detachment in other ways, since it is the characters who

deliberately detach themselves from the beings and notions which they perceive as harmful to their psychological unity. First, Anna makes an effort to observe her own life from the outside by fictionalising it, in order to achieve the distance she needs to analyse events. Similarly, at one point in the plot, Kate needs to go and see her own house from the outside. Her feeling of aloofness from her own life (governed by the institutions of motherhood and marriage) helps her to take decisions more clearly. Emily detaches herself from her past married life in the mirror scene, when she does not recognise herself as a wife. Only by leaving aside the feeling of frustration that her past married life gives her, will she be able to go ahead. Harriet also detaches herself from the endangering forces that affect her: as soon as she experiences fear for the monstrous creature that she has created, she wants to protect her individuality. This emotional detachment will fluctuate throughout the plot, and will not allow her to complete her individuation process. By analysing detachment, we can draw three main conclusions. First, it is present in the five novels, which justifies Perrakis' definition of it as a main concept in Lessing's fiction<sup>33</sup>. Second, it is decisive in the characters' construction of their own identity, as only those who free themselves from distracting obstacles will finally achieve selfhood. Third, detachment is always, in some way or other, directed towards the precepts of institutional motherhood and marriage.

It is clear then, that there is an interrelation between the notions of institution and persona on the one hand, and the experience and self on the other. This parallel shows that whenever the characters try to enter the institution of motherhood (or even marriage), they hide behind a mask and, therefore, only act as a persona according to the expected conventions. Conversely, undergoing individuation and achieving their own

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<sup>33</sup> See note 14 in this thesis.

self entails acknowledging their individual experience of motherhood, which is self-defining and valid for each of them.

The importance of multiplicity follows from this reasoning, too. In my interpretation of the Lessing canon, it is the main constituent of the mother figure (which is integrated by all the mother characters in the novels), and is also the final outcome of the individuation process. As we have seen, the characters who finally achieve a unified selfhood only do so by accepting this multiplicity, and the integration of their different parts; Anna Wulf is the main exponent. In making this statement, it is important to remember the distinction I established in the chapter on *The Golden Notebook*, specifying that Anna's initial state was that of fragmentation—with its negative connotations—while the final outcome is multiplicity, understood in fully positive terms.

The fact that a unified identity is multiple rather than singular leads us to the conclusion that it is not fixed. The complexities of identity cannot be explained in linear and binary terms because Lessing's leading figures are constructed in ways that parallel the Lacanian and Kristevan notion that the self is in constant flux, evolution and redefinition, because of the subject-object dichotomy. Throughout Lessing's work, lack of unity is a feature that can be accepted and integrated. None of the characters who have undergone individuation have arrived at a death point; conversely, they acknowledge the future possibilities for further development: Anna starts writing again, which restores her sanity; Kate faces old age on her own terms, and the fictional Emily starts anew with the redemption of her own mother figure, understanding that she is the only one to answer her own questions. Contrarily, the characters who do not achieve individuation end up either dead—in Mary's case—or in a void, or in a vicious circle which excludes any possibility of re-evaluation and change.

#### 7.4. Suggestions for further research.

It is hard to suggest options for further research when one writes a thesis on a canonical author such as Doris Lessing, especially when dealing with matters such as the psychoanalytical and feminist influence on her work. The psychological approach is one of the most widely explored, together with the approaches of aging studies, race and gender, especially in recent decades. However, having completed my research, it is clear that there are some loose ends with respect to the author, the psyche and identity, which need to be analysed further in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of all the intricacies of Lessing.

Concerning the matter of psychoanalysis and the building of identity, it would perhaps be worth going deeper into the depiction of male subjectivity in Lessing, although the author's work is essentially devoted to the female psyche. Rubenstein, Cederstrom and David Waterman (*Identity in Doris Lessing's Space Fiction*, 2006) devote a complete chapter in their research to Professor Charles Watkins, the protagonist of *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971). Lessing's portrayal of the male identity has been the subject of a few pieces of criticism, such as Earl Ingersoll's "Dystopia/Utopia in Doris Lessing's novel *The Marriage Between Zones Three, Four and Five*" (2011). Moreover, as has been clearly seen in the latest issues of the *Doris Lessing Studies*, since the publication of *Alfred and Emily*, the figure of Lessing's father has been recently studied by such critics as Molly Pulda, Nancy L. Paxton or Sun Hwa Park. Nevertheless, research on this issue has been relatively marginal up to now. A comparative study between male and female subjectivity in the works of Doris Lessing would be both enriching and clarifying. In addition, this growing interest in Lessing's

father figure coincides, both thematically and chronologically, with the emergence of “trauma studies” as a new trend, which mainly relates to traumatic experiences of war and conflict. This approach also offers a wide field for further research.

Other possibilities concern subjectivity from approaches other than the psychoanalytic one. One of the most recent perspectives is post-identity feminism, especially under the influence of Donna Haraway. This is a standpoint that has not yet been widely explored, and very rarely is she mentioned in the existing literature on Doris Lessing’s novels. Haraway’s “posthumanism” can be related to the character of Ben (*The Fifth Child*) in order to elucidate his significance<sup>34</sup>; moreover, the Cyborg Theory is applied to *The Cleft* in a thesis on Ecofeminism and literature<sup>35</sup>. However, it is worth investigating whether the concept of cyborg (part cybernetic machine, part living organism), which has been influential in some areas of gender studies, especially as far as nature, bodies and culture are concerned, can be also applied to Lessing’s works and her conception of identity. Apparently, then, such an approach may be applied to other genres that Lessing explored, such as space fiction and the fantastic, as the two pieces of criticism I have just mentioned certify. This approach deserves attention in the more realistic and psychological novels of Lessing’s canon.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Kerry Myler undertook her Ph.D. research based on Lessing’s engagement with R.D. Laing, which she developed in the article ‘Madness and Mothering in Doris Lessing’s *The Four-Gated City* (1969) in *Doris Lessing Studies*. She specifically focuses on narratives of motherhood in *The Four-Gated City* (1969) (very close to my object of investigation) in terms of Laingian anti-psychiatry and gendered embodiment. She argues that Lessing re-visits discourses on

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<sup>34</sup> Nayar, Pramod K. *Posthumanism*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Bilgen, Funda. *An Ecofeminist Approach to Atwood’s Surfacing, Lessing’s The Cleft and Winterson’s The Stone Gods*. A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University. 2008.

motherhood and madness from that approach. This particular trend is not widespread, although a Laingian reading of some of her novels might be coherent. All the novels I have dealt with explore both motherhood and breakdown in some way or other (even if in *The Grass is Singing* and in the fictional part of *Alfred and Emily* motherhood is subsidiary). These novels are open to analysis under the premises of anti-psychiatry. Moreover, Laing's starting point is "the divided self", a central topic for Lessing, and his definition of schizophrenia describes a strategy created by the subject in order to bear an unliveable situation. Laing's approach goes in the same direction as the Jungian approach to the archaic mind. Moreover, it could help to clarify some of Anna's mental processes in *The Golden Notebook*. Finally, the idea of healing, for Laing, consists of an inner voyage, which parallels very much the Jungian individuation process. It must be said that Laing had a psychoanalytic training in his youth and respected such Jungian notions as the collective unconscious.

Further research into the discipline of comparative literature would also be possible. The present study has dealt with universal issues which constitute major themes in different cultures, and are therefore present in literature transnationally: self-definition, motherhood, psychic disintegration and healing. Moreover, some of the central psychoanalytic themes and patterns are also common to different literary traditions. On several occasions, Marta Pessarrodona<sup>36</sup> has pointed out the similarities between the works of Doris Lessing and the Catalan writer Mercè Rodoreda. Sharing some views on their craft, both writers were, to a large extent, self-taught and anti-academic. They both created female figures with psychological depth which symbolically depicted the life of woman at different stages. Mercè Rodoreda has also been read as showing psychoanalytic influences, as explained in Joaquim Poch's *Dona i*

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<sup>36</sup> A Catalan poet, novelist and literary critic who has translated Doris Lessing, Susan Sontag and Erica Jong, among others, into Catalan.

*Psicoanàlisi a l'Obra de Mercè Rodoreda* (1987). Her use of myth and the archaic mode is most evident in *La Mort i la Primavera* (1986), where she pictures an alternative imaginary society very similar to the one created by Doris Lessing in *The Cleft* (2007). But these two authors do not only have common traits when their narrative explores the fantastic: Rodoreda's use of symbols often parallels Lessing's in her realistic writing, and they both adopt the mirror and water as recurrent images, thus suggesting a common Jungian and Lacanian background. These two women authors are contemporary and their respective masterpieces—*The Golden Notebook* and *La Plaça del Diamant*—even coincide in their year of publication (1962). Therefore, a comparative study could be done across national borders rather than time periods, which might eventually account for the universality of archetypes across cultures.

Just as a circular structure underlies each of the novels—echoing Lessing's development in the treatment of the mother archetype—the present study closes its own circle with this last section. Consequently, and in order to reproduce the author's progression, my findings should not only signify a return to the beginning by fulfilling my initial aims; more than this, I hope this thesis has offered some degree of analytical advance in terms of my contribution to the subject matter. Accepting multiplicity (both in the depiction of the mother archetype and as the final outcome of the individuation process) allows for this advance, which, in its turn, parallels Lessing's breaking of the circle, thus fostering the characters' breakthrough and the redemption of the mother figure.

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