

‘Cracking up’: Female Identity Decentredness in Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook*

لامركزية الهوية النسوية في رواية المفكرة الذهبية لدوريس ليسينغ

Imane Hadj HENNI* , Hassiba Benbouali university of Chlef, Algeria
imanehadjhenni@live.fr

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Abstract:

The present research paper studies the theme of identity decentredness in Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook*. It analyses the novel’s protagonist’s disintegrated identity and consciousness through the study of the postmodernist fragmentary narrative techniques and also the hotchpotch of themes the author tried a hand on. The paper challenges modernist association of the subject with coherence and unity and, in turn, supports postmodern theoretical views on fragmentation, division, and compartmentalisation of the human identity. The analysis traces first the decentredness of the female identity by relating it to the fragmentary structure of the novel and the fragmentary techniques that characterises it and then moves to the analysis of sexism and racism, focusing mainly on ways to subvert the two discourses successively through sex war and postcolonial hybridity. The paper dwells upon some postmodern and postcolonial theoretical

Key Words: Identity Fragmentation, Feminism, Sexism, Racism. Hybridity.

ملخص:

تدرس هذه الورقة البحثية موضوع لامركزية الهوية في رواية المفكرة الذهبية لدوريس ليسينغ Doris Lessing ، حيث تحلل الدراسة هوية بطل الرواية المفككة ووعيه من خلال دراسة تقنيات السرد الجزأ لما بعد الحداثة وأيضاً الموضوعات الشائكة التي حاول المؤلف معالجتها. تركز الدراسة على الارتباط الحداثي للموضوع بالتماسك والوحدة ، وتدعم بدورها وجهات النظر النظرية لما بعد الحداثة حول تجزئة الهوية الإنسانية وتقسيمها وتجزئتها. ينطلق التحليل أولاً من لامركزية الهوية الأنثوية من خلال ربطها بالبنية الجزأة للرواية والتقنيات الجزأة التي تميزها، ثم ينتقل إلى تحليل التمييز الجنسي والعنصرية ، مع التركيز بشكل أساسي على طرق تخريب الخطابين على التوالي من خلال الجنس. الحرب والتهجين ما بعد الاستعمار. تركز الورقة البحثية على بعض الأطراف

Imane Hadj HENNI

النظرية لما بعد الحداثة وما بعد الاستعمار التي تدعم التعددية وتتحدى الإيديولوجيات العنصرية الغربية للنزعة المركزية الذكورية، والتسلسل الهرمي للمعارضة والعلاقات بين المركز والأطراف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تجزئة الهوية ، النسوية ، التمييز على أساس الجنس ، العنصرية . الهجينة.

* L’auteur expéditeur

1. Introduction

We are living in a world of instable beliefs and principles over which we can exercise no control or authority in so far revision, flexibility, and change are its defining characteristics and moments. The individual finds himself enrolled in doctrines of thought and behaviors that rob his true self and coerce him either to assimilate the permanent phenomenon or remain on the margin. Indeed, issues about identity, naming, self-definition and the conflict between the self and the socio-cultural influences are important subject-matters amid the colossal overwhelming changes characteristic of contemporary societies and cultures. Following Doris Lessing’s declaration in her 1971 preface to her *The Golden Notebook* that ‘fragmentation’ is a major theme of the novel, the present paper studies the fragmentation of the female identity by relating it to the text’s fragmented structure and also the racist discourses it lets slip. It looks into the way the notion of individual identity, as a whole, and female identity, in particular, have fallen preys to disintegration and cracking up in response to the postwar British society’s socio-cultural changes and aesthetic breakthrough.

Theoretical Background

The theme of identity has been a major issue in the discourses of literature and psychology and has been a subject of study form any philosophies and schools of thought. Alain Badiou(2007) pinpoints to the volatility and the instable nature of the subject (the human), suggesting that “in very different ways, between the years 30’s and 60’s, the philosophers elaborated the idea that the reality of an individual, his constitution as a subject, is entirely modifiable” (qtd.in Bernea, 2013, P. 83) Similarly in the same context, Michel Foucault (1989) defines the subject as an emporium that holds “the accumulation of contents, the width of experiences” and as a “mode of being which accommodates that dimension - always open, never finally delimited constantly traversed”(P. 351) . Here then, the subject is conceptualized as a being in a continuous process of apprehension, revision and transformation.

Still, throughout the ages, the concept of identity keeps altering to adapt to the changes of the times and the updates of historical contexts and progress. In the middle ages, as reflected in the era’s overall culture and literature, the meaning of the human identity was tightly related to one’s function or order in society (the hierarchical feudal division of society into three important social and economic classes; kings, vassals , and serfs) and was completely overshadowed by religious thought. Douglas Kellner (1992)suggests that in traditional pre-modern societies like the Middle Ages, in so far the beginning of modernity is associated with Renaissance, the concept of identity is viewed as being fixed and finds meaning in society’s definition and norms. He writes:

According to anthropological folklore, in traditional societies, one's identity was fixed, solid, and stable. Identity was a function of predefined social roles and a traditional system of myths which provided orientation and religious sanctions to one's place ' in the world, while rigorously circumscribing the realm of thought and behavior. One was born and died a member of one's clan, a member of a fixed kinship system, and a member of one's tribe or group with one's life trajectory fixed in advance. In pre-modern societies, identity was unproblematic and not subject to reflection or discussion. Individuals did not undergo identity crises, or radically modify their identity. One was a hunter and a member of the tribe and that was that. (p. 141)

In the Renaissance, the issue of identity takes another dimension with the rise of secularism and humanism. Renaissance artistic and cultural breakthrough champions the individual spirit, the dignity of man and his God-like powers and thus, a burgeoning vision and definition of the individual comes on the surface. Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century, the initiation of the project of modernity through enlightenment's universal reason has negatively affected the notion of the subject. With its emphasis on universalism and homogeneity, the 'meta-narratives' of modernity, to use Francois Lyotard's term, has been biased in orientation and approach as other cultures and races, other than white European ones, are not affected by the project. On this issue, Mihaela Dumitrescu (2000) writes:

Modernism, otherwise so obsessive about subjectivity in all its forms, has failed to give a satisfactory answer to the question "what is the 'I', and what exactly makes it what it is?" Such a failure is easy to understand if we take a broader perspective and consider the ideological, social framework (modernity), not just its strictly aesthetic correlate (modernism). The very paradigm of modernity relies heavily on the idea of universal reason and of social progress achievable through advances in knowledge, as illustrated by the "grand narratives" (or "*grands récits*", Jean-François Lyotard's terms) of the Western world...the metanarratives of modernity have one major flaw: they aim – along the lines of the Enlightenment and of Western philosophical traditions – to define a generic human nature and destiny without taking into account the individual, the particular, the local, the different, the Other.(p. 11)

In this understanding, the project of modernity confines definition and power to the white European male subject. This favoritism excludes basic defining elements of human identity including race, ethnicity, class and sex and views the human subject as unified and coherent. Still, as far as the modernist period is concerned, referring to modernism as a literary and aesthetic movement, it subscribes and is even inseparable from the project of modernity as it mourns the ordered belief systems and structures brought down by industry and technology in the modern age.

The postmodern turn has been momentous in the re-evaluation and redefinition of the subject and the theme of identity as a whole. In his book entitled, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean Francois Lyotard (1984) defines postmodernism as "an incredulity towards meta-narratives" (xxiv) referring to the collapse of the *Grands récits* that used to account for the world prior to postmodernity. As such, Postmodernism, against the overarching modern 'Meta-narratives,' set the terms for individual 'mini-narratives' and encouraged multiplicity, plurality and hybridity. Following this line of thought, the postmodern tolerates difference, otherness and defends more heterogeneous rather than homogeneous identities. Indeed, identity in the postmodern era should be analyzed or considered in the context of worldly phenomena and experiences. The subject becomes the manifestation or the embodiment of the postmodern instability and change, turning into a decentred subject reflecting the decentredness characteristic of the world around him and the different experiences and phenomena which contradict with each other. Viewed from this perspective, the old traditional stable self is relegated to the background and another

fragmented self takes its turn to play its story on the stage of postmodernity. On this issue, Mihaela Dumitrescu (2000) writes:

the postmodern notion of identity is one that decenters the individual, causing a shift from sheer subjectivity to an almost total loss of subjectivity. The decentred subject is perceived as multifaceted and contradictory; hence, identity is no longer viewed as singular and stable, but rather as plural and mutable, and ultimately impossible to grasp through the usual exercise of reason. (pp. 11-2)

Discussion

2. Doris Lessing and the Theme of Identity in the Postmodern Era

Doris Lessing is a British Nobel prize feminist and postmodern writer whose inspiring works have impressed both critics and readers. Her early novels basically addressed colonial culture, the relationships between men and women, and women’s place in society (Burt, 2009, p. 463).

These include *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *Marha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), *Landlocked* (1965) and *The Four-Gated City* (1969) which altogether make up *The children of Violence* series, written in a conventional narrative form (James, 2010, P. 83).

Later on, Lessing has experimented with postmodernist techniques of writing as in *The Golden Notebook* and has also written space and science fiction novels such as *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, (1974), *Shikasta*, (1979) and *Mara and Dann* (1999). Lessing’s literary career has been progressively refined and developed with her enrollment in the ideologies of communism and her protest against the apartheid as well as her involvement in the English working class of the fifties. Throughout her writing career, Lessing explored a variety of themes and issues among which colonialism and sexism do surface. In this context, Darshana Goswami (2011) suggests that Lessing touches upon “the lives of women—their psychology, politics, work, relationship to men and their children, and their change of vision as they age” (p. 6).

Many post Second World War continental and American novels such as Christa Wolf’s *Cassandra* (1983), John Fowles’s *French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969), Simone De Beauvoir’s *Femme Romane* (1967), Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (1963) and others targeted women’s wrestling with self-definition and identity fragmentation under oppressive social norms and strives to offer alternatives for empowerment and emancipation. Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook*, published in 1969, portrays British postwar woman’s fragmented identity and discloses her failed attempts at self definition and naming in a fragmentary disordered postmodern world. The novel is Lessing’s masterwork that ushered her to the world of fame and guaranteed her a Nobel Prize for literature. With its density and length, the novel was built upon a postmodern narrative structure that in turn laid bare the complexity of the theme it tackles. Though the text’s primary focus is the author’s burden with patriarchy and women’s difficulty with motherhood, writing and self-definition, it explores many twentieth century worldly phenomena, including the two World Wars, the Cold War, the Witch Hunt in the USA in the age of McCarthyism, Communism in the Soviet Union, among

others. As such, *The Golden Notebook* embraces personal human concerns and also dwells upon world's chaos and disorder typical of the late twentieth century.

Clearly, as it has been explained above, fragmentation, chaos, and disintegration are characteristic traits of contemporary postmodern societies and identities. The postmodern turnover in politics, economy and culture has shaken the order and the homogeneity typical of modern societies and has fathered in its place disintegration and plurality. As such, the individual experiences a pathological disconnection and fails to have strong hold on the self amid the flood of images and, to use Jean Baudrillard's words, the proliferation of 'simulation' and 'simulacra'. In the same context, in his analysis of the cultural change in the postmodern era, Frederick Jameson(1991)foregrounds the 'death of the subject' and the dissolution of individualism. Indeed, Jameson proposes two clarifications on the issue ; the first one suggests that "individualism or a personal identity is a thing of the past, "which thrived only "in the classic age of competitive capitalism, in the emergence of the bourgeoisie as the hegemonic social class", and the second confirms that the idea of individualism is one of the stories of the Grands Récits created by modernity to "persuade people that they 'had' individual subjects and possessed this unique personal identity" (p. 6).

3.Lessing's Postmodern Literary Techniques in *The Golden Notebook: Fragmented Identity Associated with the Fragmented Structure*

The Golden Notebook is set in a fragmented chaotic world, containing a plethora of ambivalent views and concerns which are all structured through fragmented techniques that include discontinuous narratives, flashbacks, and multiple narration. The realist novel with its propensity to objectively portray reality in a chronological sequence and faithfulness to the fact seems to be unsuitable to convey all the many-sided ideas the novel tries to convey. Dissatisfied with tradition and old forms of expression, Lessing fragments her novel structurally by incorporating different modernist and postmodernist narrative techniques and thematically by embracing a surfeit of concerns and issues. The plot of *The Golden Notebook* revolves around the Anna Wulf the writer, who suffers from a writing block and experiences a disintegrated identity. Anna Wulf, throughout the novel, grapples with identity fragmentation and self definition. She occupies herself with multifaceted relationships and roles over which she fails to work out power and control; she plays the role of a mother for her daughter , Janet, of a lover to Michael, of a faithful friend to Molly, of a political activist interested in communism and in putting an end to 'the color bar' in Africa and , ultimately, a writer in quest of a solution for her writing block. She herself confesses:

About the communist party, I swing from fear and hatred of it to a desperate clinging to it. Out of a need to protect it and look after it do you understand that: and Janet, I at times resent her existence violently because she prevents me doing many things I want to do, and love her at the same time. And Molly I can hate her one hour for her bossiness and protectiveness and love her the

next. And Michael -it’s the same thing. So we can obviously confine ourselves to one of my relationships and be dealing with my whole personality. (p. 176)¹

By seeing and experiencing things from different angles, vacillating between different extremities, Anna gives us an example of a postmodern subject tormented by the offers that postmodern society grants at large and turns into a locus that holds and embraces multiple experiences and views. Anna believes that one cannot confine himself/herself into one single experience or relationship and that, as Linda Hutcheon(1995) suggests, “there are only truths in the plural and never one truth” (p. 108).

Like Lessing the writer, Anna the writer repudiates and displaces the traditional established Western paradigms of representation by new innovative techniques which celebrate refraction and heterogeneity over orderliness and homogeneity. Frustrated with her first novel, *The Frontiers of War*, written in traditional form, and which she describes as “a layering nostalgia, a longing for license, for freedom, for the jungle, for formlessness” (P. 53), Anna decides at once “to leave the safety of the myth” (p. 346) and to “separate in [herself] what is old and cyclic, the recurring history, the myth, from what is new, what [she feels] or [thinks] that might be new” (p. 348). She separates her everyday concerns and experiences in four disjoined notebooks—the black which revolves around the intra-and inter patterns of bigotry and discrimination Anna denounces and fights while living in Africa as a colonial subject; the red which tells about Anna’s involvement with communism and her criticism of its cheating dishonest policies; the yellow narrates Anna’s relationship with man and her experiences of love and betrayal; the blue, in a form of a diary, records Anna’s struggle with language’s inability to reflect reality and the process of writing as a whole. These four notebooks are joined together in another notebook entitled the golden notebook, Anna’s written book and Lessing’s novel’s title, and they are also interspersed with a realist narrative entitled *Free Women*, a short realist novel in form of sections which records Anna’s and (her friend) Molly’s experiences with love, marriage and children.

The four different novels together with the free women sections are structured through different narratorial and authorial point of views which epitomize Michal Bakhtin’s ‘polyphony’ and also solidify the fragmentation characteristic of the novel and the protagonist’s consciousness.²Free women sections, written in a traditional structural form, are narrated by the third person point of view, displaying the narrator’s rationality and the narrative’s chronological order. The black, the red, the blue and the golden notebooks are all put into the first point of view, Anna’s subjective voice recording her scrawled ideas, fragmented thought and inner torments. Still, the yellow notebook resorts to the third person point of view to narrate the story of Ella, Anna’s fictional character.

The Golden Notebook also makes use of flashbacks and doubles which heightens the fragmentary nature of the novel and the protagonist. The opening of the black notebook reveals Anna Wulf as a successful writer living on the auspices of her first novel, *The Frontiers of the War* and as mother concerned with her daughter, Janet. Yet, as we leaf through the book, we see Anna sliding back in time, from the present to the time of the British Empire in Africa, to reveal her firsthand experience with bigotry and racism. By regressing

back in time, the black notebook distorts the notebook's chronological order and attests to the fragmentation that characterizes the protagonist as she attempts to cope with the racist bitter memories she experienced. The author's use of double is evident in the yellow notebook. The notebook records Anna's story of Ella, who in turn writes a novel, entitled *The Shadow of the Third*. Many characteristics reveal that Anna is Ella and vice versa and, may be, the shadow in Ella's novel's title signifies Anna's. Still, like Anna, Ella is a writer and a divorced mother and lives in her friend's apartment. Anna herself confuses between the two, revealing at times that they are one person, and at others to be different. She writes:

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

Then, apart from narration, the novel also reveals multiple authorial view points, beginning first with Lessing herself as the real author of the *The Golden Notebook*, and within it there is a fictitious author, AnnnaWulf who has written , *The Frontiers of War*, and also another fictitious author, who is Anna's fictitious narrator, writing another story entitled *The Shadow of the Third*.

The author's choice for multiple narratorial and authorial view points in the text, and even in the postmodern context, is significant as it subverts the traditional dominant voice of the omniscient narrator which represents truth or reality in an objective manner and from one single perspective. The multiplicity of views analyses reality from different perspectives and suggests that truth exists in the plural and not in a single form. More important than this, through these multiple view points, Lessing recovers and grants authority to the female voices silenced to be heard and narrate their stories. Still, in the final part, Anna lets aside the four notebooks and records events in *The Golden Notebook* which again foster fragmentation and disintegration. In a rotation cycle, the end of the novel reveals that Anna's next novel will start with a sentence already used in the beginning of the first free women section. As such, by turning back to the same sentence, Anna rejects to turn into one coherent entity but again opts for fragmentation. Indeed, this creates a kind of confusion for the reader and emphasizes the pathological disconnection and self fragmentation the protagonist experiences. Anna understands that the way to wholeness and coherence is almost impossible as the subject goes through different opposing experiences and lays claim to different views and ideas. As such, she prefers dividing things rather than bringing them together into one coherent entity, as an alternative, to achieve wholeness and sanity. She writes: "I've reached the stage where I look at people and say – he or she, they are whole at all because they've chosen to block offat this stage or that. People stay sane by blocking off, bylimiting themselves" (P. 345).

4. Identity Fragmentation and Gender in *The Golden Notebook*

Self definition and naming for the protagonist in the novel is also met and confronted with gender discrimination. The text reveals a sexist world that make "all conceptual organizations", to use Helene Cixouswords, "subject to man" (1994, P. 38) and define

women, as Anna suggests, “in terms of relationships with men” (P. 26) and ‘the boys of the top’ (P. 210). Patriarchy associates women’s function and role in the novel with procreation and physical gratification: they are confined to the narrow function of domesticity and perfectly epitomize what Betty Friedan calls the ‘feminine mystique’. Indeed, the novel’s female figures including Molly, Marion, Janet, Ella, Anna, Maryrose and others play the roles of the caring mothers, the submissive brides and lovers, while their male counterparts intimidate the mundersocial dealings like marriage, friendship and extra-marital relationships. Richard, Molly ex-husband whom she “had married out of a need for security ' and even respectability” (P. 7) treats his second wife, Marion, “like a housewife or a hostess, but never as a human being” (P. 20) and uses her, as Molly Suggests, to entertain (his) business friends and organize posh dinner parties and all that nonsense” (P. 25); Mr. De Silva, “a friend to Molly whom Anna meets in Molly London house” (P. 364) wants to love a woman once in(his) life without having to give something back in return” and he abandons the girl he , allegedly, falls in love with simply because “she kept spoiling it by responding”, and he “had to send her away, because she kept being in love with me.” Another man, B.B. , De Silva’s friend, betrays his wife because, as De Silva suggests , his “marriage has never been sexually satisfactory” (P. 366). Still, Michael lived with Anna “for five years” (P. 44) but “he had left her shortly afterwards” (P. 46). Moreover, in justifying his break up with her mother, Ella’s father’s confesses that her mother “was a good wife. But ... all that sort of thing was left completely out of her ... Yes, sex, when I couldn’t stick it, I went out and bought myself a woman” (P. 407). Similarly, in another instance in the novel, Willi encourages Maryrose to “go to bed with one of [the men]”, explaining that There’s no better cure for an infatuation than that” and doing it or not, she will finally have to “marry someone for the sake of marrying,” to be “be one of these dissatisfied matrons we see all around us” (P. 81). Still, in Anna’s thirteenth short story of “a man of about fifty” is described as a “child, dependent on is always ringing up some woman to do something for him. Outwardly a dapper, ironic intelligent man ,making an impression on younger women for a week or so. He has these affairs with girls or much younger women, then returns to the older women who fulfill the function of kindly nannies or nursemaids” (P. 391).

Nevertheless, in the opening of *The Golden Notebook* Anna suggests to Molly that “the point is that as far as I can see everything’s cracking up” (P. 3). Anna’s claim does not only pin down the disorder and chaos layered everywhere in the current world, but it also refers to the dissolution and disintegration of the social conventions and individual subjectivities in the postwar era. The novel’s foregrounding of this type of cracking up is also significant in step with the novel’s larger preoccupation with the celebration of diversity and difference and also the refusal to coerce and melt into wholeness as the two women defy the indoctrinating social roles assigned to women. Anna and Molly, as shown in the novel, are examples of two modern free women who celebrate free sexual life, engage in political activism and human rights defense, and in particular, grapple with patriarchy and society for emancipation and naming through libertinism and sexuality. Molly is a divorced mother living in her apartment with her son and Anna is also a divorced mother and a writer working on her writing block. Dissatisfied with what Lessing calls “the housewife’s disease,”(P. 245) that includes household chores, ,children’s care, loveless marriages, unfulfilling sexual life, Lessing’s women, and in the vanguard, Molly and Anna, infringe society’s norms to lead ‘bohemian ’

life styles; they enter into relationships with different men and celebrate sexuality as an empowering strategy to transcend victimization .

5. Racism and the Struggle for Self-definition in *The Golden Notebook*

Colonialism and race-based discrimination have their share in women's struggle with self definition and naming in *The Golden Notebook*. As clearly shown in the black notebook, the colonial institution fosters center-periphery patterns, sexism and class discourses that altogether favor the white European male colonizer and relegate others categories such as the blacks, the colonized, and women into the margin of society. Anna's novel, *The Frontiers of War*, set in Africa and included in the black note book, inquires into the postcolonial identity and how race and colonialism contribute in the disintegration of the subject and his unified self. More important than this, these racial patterns target more women of color who suffer a double blow; colonialism and sexism. In the entries to the black notebook, Anna regresses back in time to the years she spent in Africa during World War Second to reveal her deep loathing for the whole fake colonial project meant to civilize third world countries of Africa. There, Anna joins a communist cell which consisted of a group of British white colonials who waste money and time in nightly entertainment in hotels, while their black counterparts are forced to take the most disadvantaged jobs. Members of the group pretend to promote the ideas of democracy, fight the color bar and end the suffering of the oppressed groups in the continent. Yet, they fail to live up to people's aspirations and betray their primary mission in the country. Jackson, the native cook working in the Mashopi Hotel for the Boothby, has been fired from his work in the hotel because he has been in a friendship relationship with a white man, Paul. Also, Jackson's wife has been exploited and later abandoned by another white man, George Hounslow. Jackson and his wife among others are the scapegoats of colonialism and racism in Africa.

Against the racist patters of sexism and colonialism, postmodern theories bring home all the minority groups of societies including, women, blacks, and sexually deviant people as gays and. Unlike the meta-narrative of modernity which have been elitist, racist and biased, postmodern approaches celebrate heterogeneity, difference and were a "hail to the edges" (Hutcheon, 1995,P. 58). As such, by sliding away from otherness to difference, homogeneity to heterogeneity, postmodern theories subvert the Western binary dualities that have been the basis of power and definition for ages and of which the novel is conscious.

Lessing and even Anna call for the acceptance of the Other and the alien. Both writers are aware of the processes of oppression the colonized and the oppressed figures undergo under colonialism and race discrimination patterns, and in particular, the relegation of women of color into the background of history and society. The author's highlighting the theme of the diaspora, revealed in the references to the "soldier in Cuba, the soldier in Algeria... the British conscript, pressed into war in Egypt... the student in Budapest, throwing a home-made bomb at a great black Russian tank... (and)a peasant, somewhere in China, marching in a procession millions strong" (P. 432), together with the different racial identities the characters in the novel take, including, in the vanguard, Anna as an English African born woman, Michael as an East European ex-revolutionary, Saul, Cy Maitland, Nelson, and Milt as Americans. Lessing evokes Homi Bhabha's idea of the 'third space of Enunciation' and pinpoints to hybridity, a postcolonial term that, in accordance of postmodern heterogeneous

views on truth and reality, encourages diversity and multiplicity. In her book entitled *Post-colonial Women Writers: New Perspectives*, Sunita Sinha (2008) defines hybridity as “the creation of new trans-cultural forms, the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures and the cross fertilization of cultures”(P. 4) The definition stresses forms of interculturality, and acculturation between the colonized and colonizing cultures, and at the same time considers hybridity as an empowering tool that subverts “the binary categories of the past, and develop new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth”(Ashcroft et al., 1995, P. 135). In this understanding, hybridity erases boundaries between peoples and nations, and cultures amalgamate into each other to give birth to heterogeneous experiences for people living in different spots of the world; “listening to reggae, watch(ing) a western, eat(ing) McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wear(ing) Paris perfume in Tokyo and “retro” clothes in Hong Kong” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 76).

In the world of *The Golden Notebook*, the idea of hybridity and the acceptance of the other and difference are at the heart of the novel. Ella, in the yellow notebook, decides that to have strong hold on the self, she has to resort to man for assistance and regeneration. Though she is aware of sexism and the patriarchal oppression inflicted upon women, she also believes in the co-existence and the necessity of erasing the boundaries that create difference and hierarchies between the two sexes. Similarly, in the blue notebook, Anna manages to overcome her writing block by accepting and integrating the ideas Saul, an American writer who provides her with the first words to start her new novel. Anna also, from an English perspective, helps Saul to overcome his writing block and provides him with another sentence to start his own novel. Their discussion goes as follows:

'I'm going to give you the first sentence then. There are the two women you are, Anna. Write down: The two women were alone in the London flat.'
'You want me to begin a novel with The two women were alone in the London flat?'
'Why say it like that? Write it, Anna.' I wrote it.
'You want me to give you the first sentence of your novel?'
'Let's hear it.'
'On a dry hillside in Algeria, the soldier watched the moonlight glinting on his rifle.'
He smiled. 'I could write that, you couldn't.'
'Then write it.' (P. 459)

This mutual exchange of sentences lay claim to the co-existence of the two authors' cultures, the acceptance of the other, the absorption of the his ideas, and more than these, the understanding of life in flux and ramification. Anna, through this act, embraces her and the other's multiple identities and celebrates diversity and heterogeneity and refuses universalism and wholeness.

6. Conclusion

In *The Golden Notebook*, Doris Lessing has delved into the personal through her exploration of individual human concerns such as love, identity crisis, friendship, motherhood and marriage, but she has also bothered about the universe and the different crises that hit in the

mid-twentieth century. The paper has investigated the female identity fragmentation in contemporary society by looking into the way the human identity, as a whole, and the female identity, in particular, cracks up in response to the colossal changes in the socio-cultural sphere of the times. The paper has established a connection between the protagonist's fragmentary self of and the author's choice for fragmentary narrative structure. Moreover, the paper has considered sexism and racism as and rocetric discourses that settle difference and inequality between men and women, together with people of color and other race. Nevertheless, the paper has looked for ways to subvert these discourses and turn oppression into empowerment through ending sex war and considering postcolonial hybridity as a form of trans-cultural breakthrough rather than weakness, supporting, in the process, the plethora of stories and truths postmodernity claims.

Notes

¹Lessing, Doris (*The Golden Notebook*, London: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008)176. All the subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

²AS EMPLOYED IN NARRATIVE THEORY, THE TERM POLYPHONY DERIVES FROM THE WORK OF MIKHAIL BAKHTIN AND DESCRIBES TEXTS AND UTTERANCES IN WHICH MORE THAN ONE VOICE CAN BE DEPLOYED BY THE AUTHOR. BAKHTIN'S MOST EXTENDED DISCUSSION OF NARRATIVE POLYPHONY COMES IN HIS STUDY OF DOSTOEVSKI, WHOM HE CONSIDERS AS THE AVATAR OF THE POLYPHONIC NOVEL. (HERMAN & JAHN, 2005, P. 4333).

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