

NOTES:-

1. Alvin Sullivan, " The Memoirs of A Survivor : Lessing's Notes Towards A Supreme Fiction", Modern Fiction Studies , Vol. 26 , No .1 , 1980 , p.157 .
2. Nancy S . Hardin , " The Sufi Teaching Story and Doris Lessing ," Twentieth Century Literature , No . 23 , 1977 , p.318 .
3. Robert Taubman , " Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer" in The Pelican Guide to English Literature . Vol . 8 , The Present , Boris Ford (ed) , (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books , 1983), p. 237.
4. Betsy Draine , " Changing Frames : Doris Lessing The Memoirs of A Survivor ," Studies in the Novel , No. 11 , 1977, p.52.
5. Draine , p.53.
6. Doris Lessing , The Memoirs of A Survivor (New York: Alfred A . Knopf, 1975), p.5. All in - text page references are to this edition.
7. Sullivan, p. 158.
8. Jean E. Jost, " Doris Lessing's The Memoirs of A Survivor : A Study of Disintegration and Unification" The CEA Critic , Vol. 50 , No . (2-4), 1988 , p.47.
9. Bernard Buyffhuizen , " On the Writing of Future History : Beginning the Ending in Doris Lessing's The Memoirs of A Survivor" Modern Fiction Studies , Vol. 26 , No , 1 , 1980 , p. 151 .
10. Frederick R. Karl , A Reader's Guide to Contemporary English Novel , (New York :The Noonday Press , 1972) ,p. 297.
11. Michael L. Magie, " Doris Lessing and Romanticism." College English , No. 38 , 1977 , p.539.
12. Jost, p.50.
13. Hardin, p.319.
14. Draine, p.56.
15. Hardin, p.319.
16. Jost, p.63.
17. Sullivan, p.162.

This egg, unlike the sterile white one, is fertile, hatching, and giving birth to a goddess like figure. That figure seems to the narrator as "the fading of a spark on dark air - a glimpse: she turned her face just once to me, and all I can say is ... nothing at all" (p.213). In the last moments of the novel, Eden is at last recovered when the principal characters of the novel pass "out of this collapse little world into another order of world all together" (p.213).

Contemporary fiction, for Lessing, must reject traditional forms for those that can embody meaning with more complex self-awareness. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Lessing's position as a visionary novelist is now widely recognized, and she is trying her best to find new techniques to clothe the English novel to make it suitable for the spirit of the age. Like her characters who walk into the world behind the wall, Lessing wants to trespass the traditional forms and tread into new fictional realms untrodden before.

The narrator observes that "those children were ourselves" and they are rather the logical consequence of the brutal society. This chaos in the cultural external world broadens the breach of disintegration in the narrator's psyche⁽¹⁶⁾. Furthermore, disintegration is everywhere in the outer world as water in the narrator's building is turned off, and air cannot be breathed without filters. So, existence seems to be impossible in such a stifling world.

The last section in the novel is a section of departures. The first sentence asks "if everyone had gone, what were we Emily and Hugo and I - doing here ?" (p.202). The narrator comes to the conclusion that the physical world is an empty world and it offers nothing. Then she concludes:

It all came to an end, but I can't say when it was,
after Gerald joined us. We had been there, waiting
for winter to end, and we knew it was a long time,
but not as long as our weary senses told us: an
interminable time. (p.211)

The narrator seems to be rewarded for her waiting, for her patience, and for her willingness. The connection between the waiting and the transcendent world is presented here in a symbolic image. The white sterile egg mentioned in the beginning of the novel is replaced by a :

giant black egg of pockmarked iron but polished
and glossy around which, and reflected in the
shine, stood Emily, Hugo, Gerald, her officer
father. (p.212).

whom he felt a responsibility. They were living in the Underground, coming up in forays for food and supplies. Nothing new about that, either ... These "kids" then, were living like moles or rats in the earth, and Gerald felt he should do something about it and he wanted Emily's support and help. (p.170).

Visiting Gerald's building, the narrator remembers and mourns the previous era of order and stability, the once flowering city, becomes that "little thing glittering up there in emptiness, off to some place which no one looking up at it could get near these days except in imagination" (p.126). The narrator is rather fed up with the physical world in which she has been brought up. Looking from her window to the street, the narrator contemplates the "kids" and describes them as follows:

They were not a pack, either, but an assortment of individuals together only for the sake of the protection in numbers. They had no loyalty to each other, or, if so, a fitful and unpredictable loyalty. They would be hunting in a group one hour, and murdering one of their number the next. They ganged up on each other according to the impulse of the moment. There were no friendships among them, only minute - by - minute alliances, and they seemed to have no memory of what had happened even minutes before. (p.172).

the brass rods and left in heaps . The room might have been used as a butcher's shop: there were feathers, blood, bits of offal. I began cleaning it. (p.40) .

The narrator now is ready to confront the total disruption caused by the outer world in order to achieve transcendence . Staring at her living room wall paper which becomes transparent, she observes that this "was one of the moments when the two worlds were close together, when it was easy to remember that it was possible simply to walk through"

(p.45) The narrator, in fact , seems to seek in the imaginary world a reintegration of the psyche through close attention to the neglected world of dream and fantasy. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Attaining the other world is becoming easier, and the pull toward it is becoming stronger as the " wall beside me opened, reminding me again how easily and unexpectedly it could, and I was walking towards a door from which voices came" (p.86). That world seems to the narrator as a " brightly coloured world". In almost all of her later works, Lessing has focused in some way on the importance not only of recognizing , but also of maintaining moments of wakeful insights. ⁽¹⁵⁾ In The Memoirs of A Survivor, Lessing has incorporated the two, and makes them one whole.

The outer world continues in threatening and disturbing the narrator's life especially after the failure of Gerald's efforts to reorganize the children's life into familial pattern.

He wanted to talk about " a gang of new kids" for

fragmented psyche lost in the outside world ⁽¹²⁾. Drawing material from the external world on one hand and from the mental process on the other, Lessing suggests the possibilities of a single, whole experience ⁽¹³⁾. The outer world is so dominating and heavy that it makes the narrator realize that public and private worlds are coalescing "I understood that the events on the pavements and what went on between me and Emily might have a connection with what I saw on my visits behind the wall" (p.40). Lessing believes to face the chaos of the outer world; one must turn to oneself and open new rooms and new dimension.

Section three in the novel presents the threat of the outside world on the narrator by the arrival of "sixty young people" who camp opposite the narrator's apartment. Emily easily joins them and her response is seen in her comment "Apart from eating people, they are very nice, I think" (p.38). The narrator shows her dissatisfaction and fear of the new situation, and she believes that "watching them, we were examining our possibilities, our future" (p.27). Parallel to this confusion in the outer world, the inner world seems to the narrator as distressing. The once beautiful room, familiar to the narrator, becomes different and is described as :

The place looked as if savages had been in it; as if soldiers had bivouacked there. The chairs and sofas had been deliberately slashed and jabbed with bayonets or knives, stuffing was spewing out everywhere, brocade curtains had been ripped off

and Gerald become the leaders for physical survival , whereas the burden of spiritual salvation falls on the narrator's shoulders. The narrator usually finds her solace in the " world behind the wall" :

It was not until a few days later that I again stood, cigarette in hand in the mid - morning hours looking through drifting smoke at the sun light laid there on the wall, and I thought, Hello! I've been through there, of course I have. How did I manage to forget? And again the wall dissolved and I was through. (p.13)

If the outer world of the novel is a material realm, this second world is a purely mental one, as emphasized by the narrator's admission that the world took form only when " the mind followed suggestions" . In order to make this relation clear, the narrator consistently affirms the visionary function of the world behind the wall:

All kinds of emotions I had not felt along time came to life in me again, and I longed simply to walk through the wall and never come back. (p.23).

Yet the narrator thinks that " it would be irresponsible; it would mean turning my back on my responsibilities" (p.24) The narrator's responsibility now is the child Emily , her own alter ego. Emotionally the narrator feels pity and an inability to get beyond the guard Emily sets up. She seems to think that Emily is a projection of herself, and she is ready to accept this role. In doing so, the narrator begins to mend the

This foreshadowing sees the need to reject the external projection of the outer world, and turns toward internal growth. But it is not an easy job to leave the physical world behind. The narrator must patiently wait, looking quietly at the wall, aware of the wall paper pattern under the whitewashing paint, seeing flowers, leaves and birds, symbol of the natural Edenic world to be uncovered⁽⁸⁾. Staring at the wall is like waiting for an egg to hatch. This symbol of gestation looks forward to the arrival of the child Emily, and to the symbolic white and black eggs later in the novel. Both the psyche and the egg need their accurate time to get "out of the dark prison." (p.12).

The distinction between the inner world of the observer and the chaos of the street - the outer world - is a common metaphor in Lessing's writings⁽⁹⁾. Lessing has used flats and rooms as a kind of shelter to her characters to protect them from the evils of the outer world. Since Kafka and Proust, there has developed what may be termed a literature of enclosure: fiction in which breadth of space is of relatively little importance. Space "exists not as extension but only as a volume to be enclosed in a room, a house or even a city"⁽¹⁰⁾. So, to follow this argument we see the narrator in The Memoirs of A Survivor use her room as a kind of refuge from external onslaughts.

The outer world which deals with the catastrophe in the city is not only conventionally realistic but also determinedly materialistic in its assumptions⁽¹¹⁾. It is the task of the narrator's young friend Emily and Gerald to demonstrate this spirit through their daily life activities. Emily

understanding we describe in the word "realise", with its connotation of a gradual opening into comprehension. Such an opening, a growing, may be an affair of weeks, months, years. And of course one can "know" something, and not "know" it. (p.7).

Lessing then provides a spatial bracket for the inner world. It exists just behind the narrator's living - room wall "occupying the same space as or, rather overlapping with - the corridor" (p.8). The pull of this other world - inner world - is irresistible. In fact the narrator claims that:

I was feeling more and that my ordinary daytime life is irrelevant. Unimportant - that wall had become to me - but how can I put it? I was going to say, an obsession. That word implies that I am ready to betray the wall, what it stood for ... I was feeling as if the centre of gravity of my life had moved, balances had shifted somewhere, and I was beginning to believe - uncomfortably, still - that what went on behind the wall might be every bit as important as my ordinary life in that neat and comfortable, if shabby, flat. (p.11).

The novel starts with a full description of the realistic materialistic world - the outer world - but before the reader begins to settle in this world, he is presented with a second world - the inner mystic world of the narrator, in which the laws of time and space are suspended. Throughout the novel, the narrator protagonist negotiates frequent shifts between these two radically incompatible worlds ⁽⁵⁾. It is of the greatest importance to realize here the boundaries between the two worlds. Therefore, the outer world is fully established as a consistent world before the narrator's inner world is introduced "I was living in a block of flats, which was one of several such blocks. I was on the ground floor, at earth level" ⁽⁶⁾. It is worth mentioning here that the narrator is aware of the two worlds "I had abandoned all expectations of the ordinary for my inner world, my real life in that place. And as for the public, the outer world it had been a long time since that offered the normal". (pp.17 - 18) Furthermore, the narrator describes the two worlds as "two ways of life, two worlds, lay side by side, and closely connected "but" she did not expect the two worlds to link up ." (p. 25) These two worlds seem to the narrator as contiguous and it is difficult for her to deny any one of them ⁽⁷⁾. In presenting the first shift into the inner world, the narrator refers to the different levels on which she "known" her several realities:

The consciousness of that other life, developing there so close to them, hidden from me, was a slow thing coming precisely into category of

The Memoirs of A Survivor seems to belong to the genre of futurist fiction and it relies heavily on unconventional techniques ⁽⁴⁾.

The novel can be easily summerized as follows:

At sometime in future civilization declines and gangs of youth pillage everything and force older citizens to flee. In an area still operating lives the unnamed narrator and protagonist. The narrator, whose confined point of view dominates the novel, is a woman living isolated in an apartment block in North London. Suddenly a man appears in the narrator's apartment from nowhere, delivering Emily, a twelve year old girl, into her care. She both brings Emily up and simultaneously watches her growing up in the other dimension beyond the wall. A pet animal, the cat - dog Hugo appears on the scene to keep them company. As Emily grows to maturity she teams up with Gerald, a natural leader who collects around him a gang of abandoned children. Society is collapsing but life on the other side of the wall continues serne. Finally, the walls dissolve and the principal characters go through to their deliverance.

The Inner - Outer Worlds in Doris Lessing's The Memoirs of A Survivor

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Doris Lessing started as a realistic novelist, but the publication of The Golden Notebook (1962), marks a turning point in her career. In 1957 she had praised nineteenth - century realism as the highest form of literature but five years later she changed her previous attitude and abandoned her previous opinions because that form of the novel would not suit her to 'play' with time and memory ⁽¹⁾. In Briefing for a Descent into Hell (1971), The Summer before the Dark (1973), The Memoirs of A Survivor (1975), Shikasta (1979), The Sirian Experiment (1981), Lessing has been experimenting with techniques related to nonrealistic modes such as expressionism, fantasy, science fiction, and allegory. A Lessing novel or story often offers a world of practical reality on the one hand, while on the other her reader is projected into a world whose dimensions are more of those of The Arabian Nights or a dream as we are going to see in The Memoirs of A Survivor ⁽²⁾. Doris Lessing has given the disintegration of the self a close attention, and she sees it steadily as a kind of experience, and an end in itself. There are no over - tones or promises, and she is only "writing about human beings and how they can still operate under near - zero conditions" ⁽³⁾.

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