



BETWEEN SPACES OF SILENCE AND VIOLENCE: RE-CRITIQUING DORIS LESSING'S ANNA WULF FROM *THE GOLDEN NOTE BOOK*

Anil Apral

(Lecturer, Dept. of English, L.V.D.College, Raichur)

ABSTRACT



Article Info:

Article Received 19/10/2015

Revised on: 29/11/2015

Accepted on: 27/12/2015

Doris Lessing, the Noble Prize winner, is known for having been a beacon of inspiration to a generation of feminists. Her *The Golden Note Book* hailed as the most important work that has left its mark upon the ideas of a whole generation of women. Her novels, short stories and essays have focused on a wide range of twentieth century issues and concerns, from the politics of race that she confronted in her early novels, to the politics of gender which lead to her adoption by the feminist movement. Lessing's works are viewed by many as auto-biographical since they are closely related to her own life. Violence on women not only is physical but also emotional. The present article deals with the portrayal or picturisation of emotional violence. Emotional violence is a violence perpetrated by finding with emotions of the individuals. Deeply rooted in the socio-political milieu of her time, Lessing was nevertheless well ahead of her generation in many respects. *The Golden Note Book* thus contains two strains. Politically it is a stark portrayal of communism, racial and sexual exploitation. Equally important, as these political actions are the innermost feelings of the characters and their actions.

Keywords: *Feminism, Psychological Studies, Women Empowerment, Political themes*

Citation:

APA Apral.A(2015) Between Spaces of Silence and Violence: Re-Critiquing Doris Lessing's Anna Wulf from *The Golden Note Book* *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL*, 2(4), 151-153.

MLA Apral,Anil "Between Spaces of Silence and Violence: Re-Critiquing Doris Lessing's Anna Wulf from *The Golden Note Book*" *Veda's journal of English Language and Literature-JOELL* 2.4(2015):151-153.



Doris Lessing holds a place of singular distinction in the history of post war English fiction. Described as 'the most fearless woman novelist in the world, unabashed, ex-communist and uncompromising feminist', Lessing holds a unique place among twentieth century women writers for the sheer number, variety and scope of her work. She was born in Perisa (present day Iran) to British parents in 1919, her family moved to Southern Africa where she spent her childhood on her father's farm in what was then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). When her second marriage ended in 1949, she moved to London, where her first novel, *The Grass is Singing*, was published in 1950. The book explores the complacency and shallowness of white colonial society in Southern Africa and established Lessing as a talented young novelist. Her novels, short stories and essays have focused on a wide range of twentieth century issues and concerns, from the politics of race that she confronted in her early novels set in Africa, to the politics of gender which lead to her adoption by the feminist movement, to the role of the family and the individual in society. Lessing's works are viewed by many as autobiographical since they are closely related to her own life.

Lessing is a writer in whose works the personal invariably merges with the political and the individual is seldom in-separable from the collective. Deeply rooted in the socio-political milieu of her time, she was nevertheless well ahead of her generation in many respects. *The Golden Notebook* thus contains two strains. Politically it is stark portrayal of communism, racial and sexual exploitation. Equally important, as these political actions are the innermost feelings of the characters and their actions.

The Golden Notebook published in 1962 presents the crisis of a divorced woman, Anna Freeman Wulf who stays with her young daughter. Break down is the central theme of the novel and it is reflected in the novel's unconventional structure which accentuates the fragmentation of the protagonist's consciousness and the consequent formlessness of her life and writing. Anna is a former communist and a deeply leftist writer who lives in post war London. A 'free woman' and an author of a

successful first novel which is about tragedy of color –bar in colonial Africa. She is battling a writer's block and the damaging chaos of life. The commercial success of the novel provides Anna, who is nearing forty with the measure of financial freedom that enables her to bring up her daughter do voluntary work for the British Communist Party and muse on her past. Anna is 'frozen' because she is afraid of death and destruction in the world. Anna's mental disorder mirrors the sickness of the world outside and largely contributes to her breakdown. Fragmentation plagues Anna both as a woman and as a writer. She suffers from a split within which is reflected in her contradictory attitudes to the people and things around her.

The novel presents a body of experience acquired at the crucial frontiers of modern life. It takes a close look at patriarchal gender arrangements which distort the quality of human relationships. It also deals with the crucial problems of freedom and responsibility, the predicament of the free women in the mid-twentieth century in terms of a novelistic structure which may be called 'postmodern'. Anna's fear of chaos and formlessness in her life and in the world has prompted her to record her experience in four colored Notebooks –*Black, Red, Yellow and Blue*. *The Black Notebook* addresses Anna's problems as a writer and records her African experience. *The Red Notebook* contains entries about her political life. *The Yellow Notebook* approaches Anna's relationship and emotions through the mode of fiction. And *the Blue Notebook* is a dairy of everyday events and it provides a factual account of Anna's disappointing love- affairs with men. Finally Anna recovers her mental health through erotic energy. Like D.H. Lawrence, Lessing views sexually as regenerative and she links her protagonist's healing to a sexual encounter which begins at a critical moment in her life. With her release from the inner split, Anna abandons her dependence on compartmentalization that occasioned the four separate notebooks and decides to 'put all of (herself) into one notebook'.

The four notebooks reflect four facets of Anna Wulf's life. She herself is the central consciousness. She finds it difficult to reconcile the contradictory aspects of her personality. For



example, her success as a novelist with the publication of *Frontiers of War*; her failure in political work registered in red notebook; her artistic difficulties as novelist suffering from a 'writer's block' her struggle to redefine her concept of self.

With these various threads of her story- her life- Anna weaves a shatteringly vivid tapestry of contemporary concerns. Never for a moment can you doubt the validity of her testament. Documentary precision combines with deep narrative art to reveal the truth of being an intelligent woman. Her conclusions are likely to be debated for generations. Margaret Reynolds aptly says thus: "*The Golden Notebook* comprises fragmented sections where Anna tries to come to terms with the different parts of her life, as mother, friend, writer, lover, politically-conscious being and person with an emotional life".

It provides a detached critique of Anna's attitudes about writer's block as expressed in 'Free women'. Offering self-conscious critical detachment, the novel shows Anna's ability to create lives within her, independent of any external factors. It serves as a logical outcome of Anna's quest for wholeness, freedom and identity. As Ruth Whittaker observes: "*The Golden Notebook* acts as a symbol of Anna's psychic integration, just as the previous four notebooks symbolized her feelings of disunity". This realization of her complete freedom to writing produces Anna's sense of responsibility to create 'free Women' in which she can ironically treat her former belief system. Therefore, through her 'unremitting self consciousness,' Anna reveals her 'complete freedom' and finds the ability to generate writing. Anna Wulf, the main character, is a novelist who experiences alienation and fragmentation of her consciousness in the disintegrated world.

The novel thus exemplifies the fragmentation of Anna's mind and personality, the problem of her blocked creativity, and the final psychic integration that restores the creative power in the protagonist. In this novel Ella and Paul represent two facets of Anna's personality. While Ella, Anna's autobiographical heroine, represents Anna's romantic and idealizing self, Paul represents her more conscious self- the disappointed idealist. Paul, a manipulative English man of the upper class, is a jealous of his mistress Ella and accuses her of

having illegal relations with other men. While having affair with Ella, Paul not only has his wife at home but also has another affair with a colleague Stephanie simultaneously. Even then he is jealous of Ella's affairs. With regard to his wife he is immune to her emotional needs. The husband here considers his wife as an instrument of delivering and nurturing babies. So he doesn't hesitate to have an affair with another woman. He wants Ella to be vigorous, healthy and chaste for him but cold to others. He even considers sexual pleasures as a male privilege and woman's claim to it arouse male anger. He doesn't believe in feminine sensuality. Thus here Simon de Beauvoir says: "it is the duplicity of the husband that dooms the wife to a misfortune of which he complains later that he is himself the victim. Just as he wants her to be at once warm and cool in bed, he requires her to be wholly his and yet no burden: he wishes her to establish him in fixed place on earth and to leave him free, to assume the monotonous daily round and nit to bore him, to be always at hand and never importunate; he wants to have her all to himself and not to belong to her; to live as one of the couple and to remain alone. Thus, she is betrayed from the day he marries her."

In the novel, marriage which is supposed to bring bliss to women turns into a trap, an institution of oppression and torment for women. It very ably projects the hypocrisy of men. Thus, the novelist gives an ideological feel of the mid century concept of woman. Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* hailed as the most important work that has left its mark upon the ideas and feelings of a whole generation of woman. Thus between spaces of silence and violence the novel explores the inner recesses of a true feminist, may be radical feminist.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook*, 50
- [2]. Lessing, Doris. *Alfred and Emily*. London: Fourth Edition, 2008
- [3]. Beauvoir, Simon de. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin,1983 .
- [4]. Reynolds, Margaret. *Lessing's The Golden Notebook*: MacMillan,1988
- [5]. Spivak, Gayatri C. *Ethics and Politics*: Fall-Winter,2002.
- [6]. Kumar Jeevan T, *Literatures in English* Ed.V.R.Badiger:New AgePublications,2009