

Beyond Humanism: A Postmodernist Reading of Skepticism in *The Golden Notebook*

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Abstract

This paper examines the predominant research approaches to *The Golden Notebook* and argues that these approaches fail to reveal the novel’s core essence. Lessing was not merely a humanist preoccupied with marginalized or vulnerable groups. Rather, she consistently adopted a holistic mindset to question phenomena that people take for granted—nostalgia, the reliability of writing, and the status of science. She sought to inspire independent thinking rather than passive conformity.

Keywords: Doris Lessing, postmodernism, skepticism, *The Golden Notebook*

1. A Survey of Research on *The Golden Notebook*

Doris Lessing was born as the first child of Alfred Cook Taylor and Emily Maude Taylor Mcveagh who had lived through the horror of the World War I and attempted to make a fortune in Southern Rhodesia in Africa but failed. Yet Lessing has been impressed by the vegetation and animal life of the African veld which became the everlasting headspring of her profound and symbolic understanding of this territory. Lessing left school at an early age of 14 and taught herself by extensive reading, including the works of Tolstoy, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Turgenev and Chekhov. Although her literary preferences were clear—she deeply admired the nineteenth-century realists and once hailed the novel as literature's supreme form in 1957—her

own publication of *The Golden Notebook* in 1962 fundamentally challenged this perspective.

When she was 18, she ended the isolated farm life and began to work intermittently in Salisbury as a nurse maid, a telephone operator and an office clerk. During this period of time, she got to know politics which would immensely contribute to her later works. And she then temporarily joined a communist group with the lofty hope to obliterate racial prejudice after the break of her first 5-year marriage in 1943. Two years later, she married Gottfried Lessing, a Jewish–German exile and communist intellectual. This marriage ended 4 years later and she left the colony and moved to the colonial centre, London, to publish her first novel, *The Grass is Singing* which was an immediate success and won her a fair amount of celebrity. She then settled there and her fame has gained steadily ever since.

It took Lessing only 12 years since her first novel to reach the peak of her fame with the publication of *The Golden Notebook*. It has been setting off tremendous interpretations which are of gapping differences and some of them even offended the author Doris Lessing due to the grand deviation from her original intention. Generally speaking, the research on *The Golden Notebook* has been carried on through three aspects: the theme, the psychoanalysis and religion criticism of the novel and the form and the technique of it.

Controversy has been provoked over the theme of *The Golden Notebook* due to its involvement with a great deal of topics and “art”, “literature”, “politics”, “the individual and the collective” and “freedom” are usually referred themes discussed by the critics. Budhos then pointed out that “in terms of the research on the theme of freedom, two layers have been focused on: the conflict and connection between individualism and collectivism and that between individualism and communism and the attention paid to women’s living condition” (Zimmerman, 1989, p.12). Carey considered the theme as to discuss the relationship between art and making up. Lessing has verified that novel is a compound body composed of reality and invention, “life and art form a whole that cannot be separated” (Carey, 1974, p.31). Budhos

claimed that “in order to be free, Lessing’s characters chose to escape from the enclosure imposed by politics, society and psychology (Budhos, 1987, p.129).”

And for Lessing, the most unacceptable interpretation of *The Golden Notebook* might be to be regarded as the key text of feminist movement in spite of so many insistent voices; Showalter interprets the novel as “the work of essential feminist implications” (Showalter, 2004, p. 311). However, Lessing (1994) herself has long denied that *The Golden Notebook* was written for the liberation of women. She clarified that rather than the sex war, the theme of ‘breakdown’ was the point she aimed at in her novel. She questions the validity of grouping her and her work into feminism and the Women’s Liberation Movement by pointing out that the novel came out ten years earlier than the launching of the Movement.

When it was published in 1962, *The Golden Notebook* was at once hailed as the key document of women’s liberation movement and its author Doris Lessing later was given the title called uncompromising feminist more than a first frenzied critical response, the wave of terming *The Golden Notebook* as Feminism work lasts two decades and to the extent that Lessing believed that “nothing I said then could change that diagnosis”(Howe, 1973, p. 420); and in 1971 she wrote to retort that “nobody so much as noticed this central theme, because the book was instantly belittled ... as being about the sex war” (Lessing, 1994, p. xii).

However, such a loud and clear statement didn’t scare the fresh forces away and there were still some critics who ventured to insist on connecting *The Golden Notebook* with feminism, for example, Magali Michael the current Chair of the English Department at Duquesne University, argued that “a novel can be feminist in perspective and aims without centering thematically on specific movements such as Women’s Liberation or the sex war” (Michael, 1990, p. 69).

It has been established that *The Golden Notebook* should not be termed as a feminism work but a woman’s novel that contained feminine element as it revealed the illiberal condition

of women in their process of seeking freedom and it discussed sex experiences from the perspective of women, rather than men. The distinctive expression of a feminine consciousness thus made the other themes in the novel being ignored and many late researches focused on reversing this stubborn opinion. Irving Howe observed that Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* was not the one in which "every sentence leads a charge in the war of the sexes. The feminine element in *The Golden Notebook* does not become a self – contained universe of being (Howe, 1962, p.17-18)."

Besides the nutrition from the great realists' work, Idries Shah's book also made great contribution to Lessing's multi – layered representation of the characters' inner world. Nancy Shields Hardin published two books *Doris Lessing and the Sufi Way* and *The Sufi Teaching Story and Doris Lessing* to reveal the influence of Sufi teaching story casted on Lessing's creation. Shadia S. Fahim discriminate the elaborate ties between Lessing's novel and Jungian psychology and Laing psychoanalysis and Sufism in his book *Sufi Equilibrium and the Form of the Novel*. In this way, the heroin of *The Golden Notebook* Anna's illusion, psychology and consciousness were illustrated. *Doris Lessing and R. D. Laing: Psychopolitics and Prophecy* by Marion Vlastos was the book which explored the schizophrenia of Anna. All of these psychological and religious researches on *The Golden Notebook* deepened the cognition and understanding of the diversity and richness of Lessing's illustration of human being's experiences and consciousness.

Working over the form of a novel is to figure out the ultimate significance of the text. A study on *The Golden Notebook* which begins from the 1980s is relatively late compared with the above – mentioned studies. Theories used by the critics include narratology, meta – fiction theory and hyper – novel theory and they have been trying to find the conjunction point of the thematic connotation and the art form. The major research findings are Caryin Fuoroli's *Doris Lessing's "game": Referential Language and Fictional Form*, Rober Arelett's *The Dialectial*

Epic: Brecht and Lessing, Katherine Fishburn's *World in the Words: Doris Lessing as Meta — fictionist* and Semra Saracoglu's *A "New Form" Derived out of "Formlessness" in Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook*. And Chinese scholar Yang Hua's applying the cubism to the analysis of *The Golden Notebook*'s form is illuminating to some extent, but it still doesn't get to vital part of the form.

And *The Golden Notebook ———A Critical Study* edited by Tapan K. Ghosh in 2006 deserved mention because it was the only as well as the newest symposia dedicated solely to *The Golden Notebook* so far. The uniqueness of this book resided in its being able to collect five representative essays on *The Golden Notebook*. Rambhau M. Badobe's *From Chaos to Order* analyzed the whole process of Anna's integration from splitting. Reena Mitra's "A Wordless Statement" claimed that the form of *The Golden Notebook* mirrored the postmodernism consciousness. Rajyalakshimi Gopalan's *Doris Lessing's Political Aesthetic Vision in The Golden Notebook* proved Lessing's extraordinary ability on balancing the politics and aesthetics. R. P. Mahto's *The Golden Notebook: A Study in Humanism* revealed that Lessing's humanistic bosom was not limited to anti – colonialism but was a more universal, more macro and more comprehensive domain which contained all layers ranging from individual moral sense to the collective moral sense.

Mahto's essay also revealed that another major tendency was to study *The Golden Notebook* in the perspective of humanism. The main cause for this tendency was Lessing's concern for the disadvantaged groups, for example, the blacks and women. "She is a humanist at core, having a profound sympathy for the oppressed and the downtrodden (Ghosh, 2006, p.17)." As we know, to humanists, man is the center and man is omnipotent and man can be the master of his own will. Thus we may say, the premise of making a study on a literature work in a humanism perspective is the elevation of the author or the author's substitute's voice. Yet the humanism's exclusiveness and blind faith in men run counter to *The Golden Notebook*'s

inclusiveness and doubts towards men. Gillan Dooley's essay "Doris Lessing versus Her Readers: The Case of *The Golden Notebook*" was distinctive for his consideration of Lessing's paradoxical attitude towards the various criticism of *The Golden Notebook*. He also pointed out that Lessing was an author who strangely linked self – consciousness and short – sightedness together.

As we have discussed, both the feminists and humanists treat *The Golden Notebook*'s major theme as the right protection of disadvantaged groups which are to some extent equivalent to the notion of 'the other' in postmodernism. Yet as critical strategies, the radicalness and exclusiveness of feminism and humanism have been challenged by the all-embracing postmodernism. Actually many critics have noticed the postmodern sense in *The Golden Notebook* and came to view it as the novel in which Lessing realised the narrowness of realism and found out one way to go beyond it. And "in the 1980s, critics came to view *The Golden Notebook* as a transition into postmodernism (Ridout, 2004, pp. 161-162)."

It's well known that any attempt to define postmodernism would be an adventure since it "cannot be labeled or reduced merely to a period, historical condition, socio – political movement, philosophy, critical approach, or aesthetics but rather encompass all of these". (Michael, 1990, p.10) It's a plural entity and a product of and, simultaneously, contribute to the present global climate which is hard to grasp. It's used by different people for different particular aims. It can be regarded as an artistic tendency when people talk about art and it also can be treated as a social phenomenon when culture is the theme. Postmodernists' determinate breaking off with Western thought and their mild temperament towards 'the other' found echo in Lessing's preference of appropriate interests to the unknown and to any kinds of radical belief. She rejected megalomania and advocated wise self – judgment. Her deep concern for the possible negative consequences of people's blind confidence coincided with the postmodernists.

In all, both the theme and form of *The Golden Notebook* have been studied by a great deal of scholars and the research findings are assorted and insightful in one way or the other. And both the content and form of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* have been known for their touching on complexity and this novel has therefore caused a great deal of understanding divergence in critics, ordinary readers and even Lessing herself. Although certain people have willfully misused the novel for their own interests, the reputation of *The Golden Notebook* hasn't been affected; on the contrary, the meaning of novel has been growing in depth and width with the company of various interpretations.

2. The Skepticism in *The Golden Notebook*

Lessing once said that we are "in a condition of intelligent doubt about ourselves and our lives, a state of quiet, tentative, dispassionate curiosity. ...we will each one of us give up the flattering and comforting idea that we, only we, only I am right (Ridout, 2004, p.36)?" Indeed, Lessing has been keeping intelligent doubt in her mind all the time during the process of completing *The Golden Notebook* in which many things have been checked with her skeptical and detached eyes. In this section the skepticism of postmodernism and doubts in *The Golden Notebook* would be examined.

Lessing's reputation as a great author rests on her accurate grasp of general climate of people's ideas and she stated in the novel: "A very great number of people would say that it was irresponsible to spread disgust. Or anarchy. Or a feeling of confusion (Lessing, 1994, p.238)."

Yet, from the perspective of postmodernism, doubts in the novel motivated people to question what have been taken granted for a very long time and to take a second look at the details of their surroundings. Rather than being irresponsible, it's the author's responsibility to lead people to the complexity of life which unfortunately considered as chaos by the timid.

Lessing thought that "the nineteenth-century novelists had 'a kind of self – assurance

which I don't think any one of us has got' (Ridout, 2004, p.170).” Lessing expressed her doubts to the general life of the contemporary world and that's exactly the key issue which made *The Golden Notebook* postmodern. This section mainly focused on the author's doubts towards nostalgia, writing and fiction.

3. Doubts for Nostalgia

One of its characteristics is that postmodernism is skeptical to anything related to absolute truth, any attempts to establish commensurable utterance and any trying – on to interpret everything from a single and all – embracing angle. The agenda of the postmodernism is to overturn the traditional Western thought system which emphasized on certainty and to work to expose the arbitrariness of the Western humanism. Postmodernism tries to call everything certain and orderly into question by rendering doubts to the firmly established notions as author, reality, subject, writing, masculine, self, sanity, reason, presence and so on. In order to testify this point, Lessing's attitude towards 'nostalgia' in *The Golden Notebook* is to be discussed.

According to Gali Tayko, an Indian scholar, Lessing holds “the paradoxical sentiment of finding pleasure in loss” (Tayko, 1994, p.12). This thesis is opposed to Gali's opinion, because if *The Frontiers of War in The Golden Notebook* is the production of the 'pleasure in loss', then why Lessing's voice Anna constantly felt that she was a criminal and even suffered the writer's block after publishing this book.

Here, nostalgia is an emotional way of expressing the sorrow of exile and generally speaking, nostalgia refers to a kind of artificial perfection of the past times. In *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing's voice Anna repeatedly mentioned that nostalgia as the harmful emotion that carried through her once best seller *The Frontiers of War*: “I read this over today, for the

first time since I wrote it. It's full of nostalgia, every word loaded with it, although at the time I wrote it I thought I was being 'objective.' Nostalgia for what? I don't know. Because I'd rather die than have to live through any of that again. And the 'Anna' of that time is like an enemy, or like an old friend one has known too well and doesn't want to see (Lessing, 1994, p.145)."

Then we may say, the nostalgia in it refers to the glorification of her staying in Africa during the war time and is caused by the prevalence longing for going back to the old days. She was not conscious of this emotion when the ideas of this book came to her in Africa but found it out then. Deeply ashamed, she would rather the "Anna" of that time disappear and meanwhile regretted that she had spread this personal harmful emotion to readers at large. At any rate war was nothing good, yet the nostalgia in the book made the war become something worth having. She said: "Nothing is more powerful than this nihilism, an angry readiness to throw everything overboard, a willingness, a longing to become part of dissolution. This emotion is one of the strangest reasons why wars continue, and the people who read *Frontiers of War* will have had fed in them this emotion, even though they were not conscious of it. That is why I am ashamed and why I feel continually as if I have committed a crime (Lessing, 1994, p.64)."

The nostalgia prevented people from seeing the nature of war but sent people to fabrication of war hero dreams. Anna thus felt awful and she further pointed out that some TV series about airborne troops in war times also made the same mistake by activating people's drastic longing to become part of horrible wars.

We can see that Lessing has no pleasure towards nostalgia at all. In contrary, her attitude to nostalgia is rather postmodern in the way she reveals its true face. It's said that the premodern

is in favor of nostalgia while the postmodern is against that. The spontaneous longing to perfect the old days is actually the obsession to order or to something that can be grasped. Yet the postmodernists insist that the past is never better than the present, people should not prevent themselves from the present life by constantly retreating into the past and they should face chaos which actually always exists, no matter in the past or present.

Obviously, Lessing belongs to the postmodernists' camp on this issue. The Black Notebook offered raw materials for the novel *The Frontiers of War* and Lessing's voice Anna lately analyzed in the nothing common between these two, because the former was a document of her days in Africa while the latter had undergone the process of shaping and nostalgia was the key issue on which the novel depends. Although Molly had encouraged her to write again for many times, Anna declined that request because she was still trapped in the writer's block to which the unwillingness to spread nostalgia contributed a lot.

4. Doubts for Writing

If the exile's experience doesn't foster Lessing's nostalgia for home or the old days, it certainly encourages Lessing's intensive doubts for writing itself which is another concern of the postmodernists. For the exiles, when their attempts to infuse in different societies run into a blank wall, "writing itself becomes their new home" (Tayko, 1994, p.2). Because of the inherent lack of security, the temperament of exiles makes them feel uneasy at this new home; they keep asking questions about the reliability of it. The key point of being skeptical towards writing lies in its ability of representing truth. In *The Golden Notebook*, doubts have been paid to meaning of words, task of writers, reliability of language, and various writing forms' ability of representing truth. And here, we will mainly discuss the latter two.

5. Reliability of Language and Representation

“Postmodernism conceives of language as a network of signs whose meanings are always in the process of sliding and shifting (Michael, 1990, p.41).” The certainty of language has been broken when its role changed from a tool which conveys message to an entity that endures meticulous observation. When the language plays the role of messenger it never occurs to us that language hides any covert elements which may distort our understandings, however, the free and unrestrained days have gone when the postmodernists move the magnifier to it.

Although realists argue that reality can be represented directly, yet we can find that this viewpoint is based on the binary thinking pattern. It’s like taking a mirror against something and then asks which one is true. Modernists then claim that reality changes according to different people’s perspectives. These ideas seem sound to some extent, yet Roland Barthes knocks them down by saying that both realism and modernism are “far from being neutral” (Michael, 1990, p.39). We can say that the modernists still are trapped in the binary thinking mode and judging by appearance it has abandoned the dominant oppositions and given freedom to people to choose what they willingly believe, yet the truth is that they fabricate reality in a particular way of representation and the fact is that you are still constrained when you’re forced to choose between preset entities. In contrast, postmodernists keep the safe distance from being involved to questions like if reality exists or whether reality can be represented or not.

The more efficient way to solve the problem about reality and representation is to weaken the man-made attached radicalness and significance of them and to admit that once you obtain a piece of information, real or fictional, you have been involved in the process of accepting the representation which is culturally constructed. And actually the boundary between what’s real and what’s fictional is rather vague. When you say this is real and that is

fictional is actually for the sake of referential convenience, because the existing language can no longer fully manifest our rich experiences and when we have been getting used to something easy but untrue we have no intention to take efforts to get back to what's complex but closer to reality.

Another concern of postmodernism is representation. The advocates of Western metaphysics have always counterposed representation and reality as they think that reality exists outside of representation. And this notion has shaped irreconcilable binary oppositions like life and art, fact and fiction and truth and falsehood. But life is far more than two edges but composed of millions of intersections. This artificial opposition is to split the world into an unreal black or white situation.

Postmodernism insists that “concrete reality is always mediated by culturally constructed representations” and “things and events are always already represented” (Michael, 1990, p.39). What makes this notion so powerful and careful is that it doesn't radically counterpose or destroy anything but undermines these dichotomies' solidity and essentiality and greatly relieved the severe conflict between reality and fiction to the extent that the opposition loses its force and legitimizing power.

6. The Writing Forms' Ability of Representing Truth

Anna as the editor of *Free Women* and the four notebooks has been taking a skeptical attitude towards the truth of them when Michael reminded her of her habit of inventing stories about life and telling them to herself. Then although the former is a novel while the latter is the source, it's not enough to suggest that one is true and the other is not, since Anna herself is unable to distinguish between what she had invented and what she had known.

Anna as the author of the four notebooks has been bracketing horrible day dreams off

but keeping trifle things like buying tomatoes down, yet she could not help asking the reliability of doing it because she has been feeling that death was stronger than living and dreams were more real than the daily life. And furthermore, things taken down in the notebooks were what she could remember, but “How do I know that what I ‘remember’ was what was important (Lessing, 1994, p.137)?” Anna as author of *The Shadow of the Third* which was the parody of her own love life states that: “The trouble with this story is that it is written in terms of analysis of the laws of dissolution of the relationship between Paul and Ella. I don’t see any other way to write it. As soon as one has lived through something, it falls into a pattern. And the pattern of an affair, even one that has lasted five years and has been as close as a marriage, is seen in terms of what ends it. That is why all this is untrue. Because while living through something one doesn't think like that at all (Lessing, 1994, p.216).”

Lessing tried to tell us that the application of patterns to a story in your mind would exert unavoidable restriction to the story. In the case of the *Shadow of the Third*, the pattern is the ‘the laws of dissolution’ could not reveal the whole story. Because life is much more than dead patterns and cannot be generalized with analytical laws. And here the ‘pattern’ is, to some extent, equivalent to ‘form’. Comparison made between the *Shadow of the Third* and Anna’s love life may reveal the inability of representing formless life through formed novel. Novel is the generalization of one’s life and during the process one works on it one will select some materials and delete the others. The subjectivity of this process prevents people from getting the core of reality. Concrete and vivid sensations have gone while abstract and dead patterns have been left.

In the same vein, Anna as the creator of dozens of story outlines just left them as outlines, because she knew that they would also be untrue once they got written. Thus, Lessing left them to readers’ imagination and what would make these outlines meaningful were the readers’ personal life experiences. Anna as the author of *The Frontiers of War* was constantly

troubled by the lying nostalgia in it and she then refused all the TV agents and movie directors to stop the spread of it.

Lessing continued to enhance the intensity of her doubts towards writing through the realization in her dream that what she remembered was probably untrue when a nonexistent director argued that what he had filmed was exactly what was contained in the book. This dream was so powerful that even made her forget how “Maryrose moved her eyes, or how Paul laughed” (Lessing, 1994, p.502), which had come to her all the time like the heat of rock under the sun in Africa. Anna as the collector of newspaper clippings dealing with war, hydrogen bomb, reproductive technologies could not see the connection between the chaos and her life, although she later learnt to find new strength out of chaos.

Lessing thus conveyed her doubts for writing on different narrative levels. And all these levels showed that expressing experiences through writing was an illusion since all writing forms have their own “literary conventions that shape and distort the material they are supposed to ‘express’” (Ridout, 2004, p.166). There always would be something that couldn’t be pressed into a writing form. People used to think that diaries were the writing forms which may record truth because they provided private spaces in which people may write down everything they wanted.

Yet Lessing broke this illusion by pointing out that even the menstrual period in her private notebooks was untrue because it has interrupted her original plan which was true to her, not to mention those trifle things like buying potatoes and dressing Janet. None of these things may reveal truth, because when she was running the household what came into her mind may be the imagination of her death on the road with a dog eating her brains. These things would be falsified at the moment they got written for their being put into linear sequence and formed patterns.

The self – assurance of traditional of Western thought draws a line between truth and

fiction, art and life, professional and private, ...etc., but, in *The Golden Notebook*, the fragmentation of Anna into her various socially constructed roles and the fragmentation of the world in which she lives are interwoven. Jean Pickering claimed that “*The Golden Notebook* is the most complex formulation of the nature of art and the connection between art and experiences” (Pickering, 1990, p.85).

Anna’s casual shifts through all these texts undermined the significance of figuring out what is true and what is fictional. The boundaries between those dichotomies are blurred through the mingling of novel and diaries, art and mass culture, public and private life. The constant intertextuality of these texts rendered the meaning of the whole work “an endless process of difference and deferral that destabilizes the dichotomy between truth and fiction” (Michael, 1990, p.94). In a word, in *The Golden Notebook*, the facticity is no longer matters since all the representation only differs in fictional degree and the seeking of the certainty of meaning of a story is also futile since language itself is malleable.

7. Doubts for Science

In *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing expressed her doubts towards order by showing great concern to science which is the concealed form of order for its oppressiveness in making people believe in it without questioning. Both icy sperm technology and the invention of atom bomb are advanced in the technological history of human beings. Yet to Lessing, neither of them could prevent the split of the humankind but speed it. In her writing, Lessing described what she considered the harmful for the human beings brought about by science and technology.

8. Atomic War Caused the Inner Schism

“I feel as if the Bomb has gone off inside myself, and in people around me. That’s what I mean by the cracking up. It’s the structure of the mind is being battered from inside (Lessing, 1994, p.111).” In *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing’s doubtful attitude towards the Bomb was manifested in her newspaper clippings and her writer’s block. Nearly all of her notebooks were

unfinished and ended with a great deal of newspaper clippings concerned with horrible and painful news happened around the world, and the atom bomb was among the number. Her replacing personal life experiences with news has proved her doubt towards the significance of trivial diaries.

According to Sarah Henstra, Lessing suffered “the prophet’s dilemma: what she knows exceeds what she can say, to the extent that --- in Anna’s melancholic opinion --- nothing is worth saying at all (Henstra, 2007, p.7).” Here, what she knows in her mind is the future of a world afflicted with harmful scientific technologies, yet what she can say is limited by life experiences. Lessing (Anna) once told Saul that she often imagined that a Chinese or Russian peasant would come to ask her why she wrote those useless things but never did anything practical to help them.

As a highly concerning author, perhaps the most real experience to Doris Lessing during a nuclear age was the bomb. Yet, rather than shaping the materials in the newspaper clippings into narrations, she suffered the writer’s block. What she wanted to share with her readers was the doubts towards the Bomb but not her vicious and subjective criticism on it since the “concept of atomic war is becoming mundane, even popular, as in the case of a hairdresser’s 1950 description of what he calls his ‘H – Bomb Style’: the ‘H’ is for peroxide of hydrogen, used for coloring. The hair is dressed to rise in waves as from a bomb – burst, at the nape of the neck (Henstra, 2007, p.6).”

People have tried to forget the Bomb in various ways. In the case of The “H–Bomb Style”, people attempted to ease the horror of the Bomb in an ironical way which disclosed the human being’s ignorant contempt. The Japanese city Hiroshima wounded by the Bomb chose another way to forget it: to deliberately disappoint visitors who had intended to see the indelible mark left by the general annihilation through claiming that what made the Hiroshima city world – wide known was its oyster and never mentioned a word about the Bomb.

“Interrupting the ‘nuclear forgetting’ that cushions us from collective despair carries a certain weight of guilt that makes the prophet hesitate (Henstra, 2007, p.9).” Lessing thus chose to paste newspaper clippings about the Bomb rather than writing about it. Although Lessing didn’t propose suggestions to her doubts towards science, she did motivate people to question the absolute justifiable status of science.

9. Icy Sperm Technology Killed the Last Hope between Men and Women

Lessing once said that people got married for advantage. To a husband, a wife can share his general life feelings, runs the household, provides the womb for his sperm, gives birth to and raise his children and is also the one he might have legal sex. To a wife, a husband might be the money bag, the one who gives sperm and the one who might provide sexual pleasure when he is willing to be committed.

In *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing presented us several couples and neither of them could fulfill supposed obligations as husbands and wives. For Anna, Paul was expected to build a parental relationship with her daughter Janet, yet for Paul, Anna was just a sexy piece and he regarded Janet as his rival: he intentionally made love to Anna in the morning when she was supposed to dress Janet. Paul finally abandoned Anna and went back to his family which had a decent wife and several school children. For Molly, Richard was the one who had never made love to her after the birth of their son Tommy and then blamed Tommy’s inability on her. For Marion, all of Richard wanted from her was her caring for his children. Later, Marion thought why she still cared for the children when Richard no longer cared for her. And since she turned to drinking, rather than concerning about her, all Richard was thinking was how to get rid of her and find another nurse for his children.

Couples might hurt and hate each other in every possible way and for every possible reason, but children were still of critical importance in their life, for the sake of children, they may still need each other. Yet using the icy sperm technology made it possible to put an end to

the fragile connection between men and women. That's to say, mutual offspring may sometimes relieve the stubborn barrier between men and women. But the development of icy sperm technology broke the last linkage between men and women. When women are able to own children without the help of men, what else they may need from men. It has been testified that Lessing's attitude towards the relationship between men and women was not feminine. Rather than polarizing men and women, Lessing preferred the union of them: Anna and Saul wrote for each other the first sentence of their next novels. Compared with serious issues like atomic war, the conflict between men and women are of less importance. As boulder pushers, men and women should draw together to think about how to contribute to another lurch forward of the entire human beings. In a word, Lessing's doubts toward the icy sperm technology testified her standpoint on sex war and also challenged the authority of science of the Western world.

10. Conclusions

The Golden Notebook bears deep doubts towards authority, this thesis selected Lessing's doubts towards nostalgia, writing and science to illustrate this point. Nostalgia is defined as the artificial perfection of the past and in *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing clearly expressed her rejection to this harmful emotion which made Anna's successful novel *The Frontiers of War* untrue. Nostalgia leads people to blind faith in an unreal world in which order dominates and unnecessary pessimism for the present or future days where chaos exists. Postmodernism advocates living with chaos and open for the others for plurality is the nature of the world. And order only remains in illusion. Thus Lessing's attitude towards nostalgia was postmodern when she made Anna feel constantly ashamed about that *The Frontiers of War* which activates readers' the nostalgia for Africa in war time. Lessing pointed out that it was the very nostalgia caused the prevalence of nihilism and people's illusion for artificial order.

Writing as a research object for postmodernism has also been discussed by Lessing in *The Golden Notebook* in different levels. Doubts have been paid to meaning of words,

reliability of language, ability of representing truth of various writing forms and task of writers. *The Golden Notebook* was like an experimental vessel in which all these above-mentioned concretes mingled together and reaction generated. The outcome of this experiment shows that no form of writing can record truth, thus the significance of Western traditional dichotomy truth and fiction has been reduced. Meaning is no longer stable but grows and changes in the intertextuality of various texts.

To some extent, science is another form of totalitarianism for its assertion of being absolutely right. *The Golden Notebook* motivated people to think about the authority of science by revealing that the inner schism of modern people was caused by the atomic war and the barrier between men and women was partly formed by the icy sperm technology.

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