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AMBIGUITY AND AMBIVALENCE AS STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLES

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Abstract: There is ambivalence and lack of finality in the structure of texts with representation of women. This paper studies the ambiguity of character delineation and ambivalence in the structure of feminist texts using Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* as an alibi. The ambiguity and ambivalence in *The Golden Notebook* is intended, deliberate and consciously artistic. The incommensurability of woman's experiences, her variety and contrariness, demand and deserve a higher order of conscious artistry. Ambiguity, as in the dilation of boundaries in the self, is, therefore, ineluctably intertwined with ambivalence in the form of texts that negotiates gender as a category of perception.

Keywords: Ambiguity, Amor, *Bildung*, C. S. Lewis, Feminism, Lessing, Patriarchy, Psyche, Psycho Analysis, Uroboric.

1. Introduction

The primary preoccupation of feminism in literature is to study how the identity of woman is inscribed in literature and in the various subsidiary discursive practices that it supports. It does explore how men and women as authors differ in their approach and depiction of women characters. The kind of destiny that a writer can envisage for the woman protagonist has far reaching implications because literature is not only mimetic but also didactic. A fiercely feminist author may not sometimes accord the

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same degree of independence she enjoyed to the heroine of her work; for instance Eliot could not bestow Dorothea in *Middlemarch* or Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* a kind of liberated life she herself led.

The concerns of feminist literary studies are not merely thematic but also structural. How and what women read and write, as well as the experience and meaning of that reading and writing are issues that are central to feminist literary debate. The differences in the writing of male and female authors extend also to these structural elements such as plot, imagery, denouement and, most importantly, language. Perusing these structural features of writing by woman, écriture feminine, will provide insight on the working of feminine imagination and expression. The French feminists, for instance, have postulated that the feminine semiotic involves repetitive, circular, intricate patterns rather than a single, linear dominant discourse.

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*[1] is one text that best fits the study of female imagination and female expression. The novel is exemplary at various levels: its meta-fictional, layered design illustrates psychological break down through thematic break ups. The layering of the text is in correspondence with the layering of the protagonist's search of self. *The Golden Notebook* ends where Anna Wulf begins to embark on the writing of *The Golden Notebook*. The lack of finality and ambivalence of the text originates from its authentic attempt at the representation of woman, which can at best be defined, paradoxically, as ambiguous. The quest of Anna is unique because it is one in which she realizes her nature more through negation than through affirmation. It is an enactment of the archetypal feminine quest, which is qualitatively very different from the conventional quest patterns.

2. Feminism and the Myth Amor and Psyche

Feminist thought, in its rapprochement with psychoanalysis, has almost unanimously agreed upon its two-pronged interventions of "both patriarchal myth-smashing and woman-identified myth-

[1]Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, London: Harper Perennial, 2007. Hereafter referred to as GN in the text.

making."[2] It seeks to subvert the rigid structures that inhere gender definitions and contend that femininity is indeed a construct fabricated by the collusions of patriarchy. Apuleius' tale of Amor and Psyche is a versatile trope to examine the myth of the feminine development of the psyche and the psychic development of the feminine. The complex reinterpretations of this myth by Erich Neumann's *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine – A Commentary on the Tale by Apuleius* and C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* are very remarkable as they recover certain nuances of the feminine experience lodged in this myth.

This myth is essentially a drama that is enacted within every woman who is in search of her authentic being and transcends the personal sphere. The essence of the myth lies in fully acknowledging and assuming the sublime beauty of the feminine self. The birth of the feminine psyche is a very critical moment in the dynamics of gender definitions and touches the very core of the myth. It marks the possibility of the human self having a divine nature inherent in it, and also of its capability to ascend to insurmountable heights of truth, beauty and wisdom.

The feminine, born (to be) beautiful, is, sooner than later, given as bride to death – death, here, symbolising an absolute and irreversible transformation in woman. 'Marriage as death' is a central archetype of the feminine mysteries. What may be, for the masculine, acquisition, satisfaction and victory, is, for the feminine, a destiny and a most profound transformation. The sojourn called life is one of constant flux, and mostly irreversible mutations for the feminine. Calling every marriage "an exposure on the mountain's summit in mortal loneliness, and a waiting for the male monster, to whom the bride is surrendered,"[3] Neumann succinctly comments on the symbolism of the mystical consummation and the 'death of the maiden' as:

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[2]Carolyne Larrington, ed., *The Feminist Companion to Mythology*, London: Pandora Press, 1992, 427.

[3]Erich Neumann, *Amor and Psyche: The Psychic Development of the Feminine – A Tale by Apuleius*, trans., Ralph Manheim, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956, 62.

> ... a truly mysterious bond between end and beginning, between ceasing to be and entering upon real life. To experience maidenhood, womanhood, and nascent motherhood in one, and in this transformation to plumb the depths of her own existence: this is given only to the woman, and only as long as it remains open to the archetypal background of life.[4]

From the un-rebelling accord and unquestioning acceptance of Psyche to her marriage / death sentence — as is true in the case of most women — we see a clairvoyance that knows of what is in store and a willingness to go through with it. This "participation mystique"[5] is integral to the feminine unconscious, the virtue that transforms playful brides to nurturing motherhood – the whole process akin to bashful buds blossoming into the fullness of fragrant flowerhood. There is no struggle, no protest, no defiance, no resistance – quite the contrary, in fact. The rite of passage is into "the slavery of the feminine in the patriarchate."[6] According to Neumann,

> ... the patriarchate represents a necessary transition stage even for feminine development, but "imprisonment in the patriarchate," "harem psychology," is a regression over against the matriarchal independence of womanhood. For this reason an essential and positive element is contained in the opposition of the matriarchal powers to the imprisonment of the feminine in the patriarchate as well as its servitude to the Eros-dragon, the paternal uroboros.[7]

What is most significant is that Psyche's "inherselfness" is "inviolable."[8] Psyche in Eros's palace exists in "a state of not-knowing and not-seeing."[9] In the tale, Psyche initially seems to accept the darkness she has wedded, the unconscious that envelops her, in total neglect of her individual consciousness. But, there is a gradual propensity from the unconscious towards a higher

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[4]Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 64.
[5]Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 85.
[6]Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 71.
[7]Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 132.
8Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 67.
9Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 70.

consciousness. The indoctrination of her sisters, who represent certain crucial facets of the feminine consciousness, and her own imperious drive toward light and knowledge, creates an ambivalence and opposition in Psyche. It makes her break the taboo set by Eros, making her come into conflict with him.

C. S. Lewis in his *Till We Have Faces* beautifully brings out the idea of individuation as entailing the separation from a group.[10] Till we (our individual psyche in its quest) have faces, till we get rid of our masks, till we find our selves, we cannot tear apart another's veil, fetch beauty and clarify another's face. The trajectory of feminine individuation is ineluctably conjoined with, what Nancy Chodorow calls, woman's "tendency … toward boundary confusion" and a lesser firming of ego boundaries than man because "the female "experiences herself … as a continuation or extension of … her mother in particular, and later of the world in general," moving then towards "boundary confusion and a lack of separateness from the world."[11] Self-reflexivity is crucial to the re-vision of the boundaries of selfhood and estimation its receding boundaries, to tackle its *adriftness*.

If 'masculine heroes' like Heracles and Perseus achieve ego stabilisation through endurance, for the feminine, it is realised through tolerance and adjustment because woman is repeatedly uprooted, conditioned and acclimatised. In the feminine, ego stability is constantly threatened by "the danger of distraction through "relatedness," through Eros,"[12] since, as Hélène Cixous puts it, "her unconscious is worldwide."[13] Briffault says that this

[10]C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces – A Myth Retold*, Great Britain: Collins, 1978, 315

[11]Alka Kumar, *Doris Lessing: Journey in Evolution*, New Delhi: Book Plus, 2001, 7.

[12]Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 113.

[13]Hélène Cixous, *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle e Courtivron, Amherst: University of Masachusetts Press, 1980, 259 cited in Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the body: Towards an Understanding of l'écriture Feminine," *Feminist Criticism and Social Change*, Judith Newton and Deborah Rosen, New York: International Publishers, 2004, 113.

"universal component of relatedness is so essential a part of the collective structure of the feminine psyche" that it serves "as the foundation of all humanity and culture."[14]

This is a remarkable aspect of the *difference*. In their theoretical alliance, postmodernism and feminism share the common concern of "the erosion of the self in the face of the rigid demarcation of the masculine Cartesian universe."[15] Feminism's prolific intellectual activity has only widened through the strategy of "the postmodern narrative of 'heteroglossia.'"[16] While what is normally sought is a certain closure or finality, a search for a single, unified, coherent structure and meaning – of both text and self – what we actually confront is "the density and reflexivity" of phenomenal text as well as "the opacity of the phenomenal world."[17] Like Lessing's Anna Wulf and Sartre's Roquetin, we see that an "erasure of subjectivity bring us no closer to truth."[18]

"Chaos and form are inextricably bound to one another in a dialectical process,"[19] comments Betsy Draine as she classifies *The Golden Notebook* as a postmodern novel. Lessing's Anna Wulf embodies this intimate journey of the self-exploration and self-discovery by juxtaposing the feminine expansion of the psyche and the psychic expansion of the feminine. Lessing captures this chaotic search for self-discovery in the most unusual form of the text.

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[14]Briffault, *The Mothers*, I, 151 ff. as cited in Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*, 113.

[15]Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, 39.

[16]Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism*, 39.

[17]Patrick McGee, *Telling the Other: The Question of Value in Modern and Postcolonial Writing*, Ithaca and London: Carmel University Press, 1992, 5.

[18]Jeannette King, *Doris Lessing*, London: Edward Arnold, 1989, 44.

[19]Betsy Draine, "Nostalgia and Irony: The Postmodern Order of the Golden Notebook," *Modern Fiction Studies: Special Issue – Doris Lessing*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Spring, Indiana: Department of English, Purdue University, 1980, 32.

3. ***The Golden Notebook***

The four coloured notebooks in *The Golden Notebook* reflect the four aspects of Anna's life, residual splinters of an experience that she can no longer reconcile with one another. The "Black Notebook" which exposes the hollowness of Anna's success as a published novelist, the "Red Notebook" that depicts her failure at political work, the "Yellow Notebook" which nullifies the efforts of her imagination, and the "Blue Notebook" which charts her struggle to revive her self-image – all try to superimpose some sort of form on Anna's fragmented consciousness. They suggest Anna's desperate attempts to rescue familiar patterns of living from the threats of chaos.

Every notebook of Anna is marked by the collapse of a phase, much like the end of scenes in the theatre of life. She is left clueless not knowing the context in which she needs to play her next part. As Draine observes:

> The drama of each notebook is her battle with "a lying nostalgia" – a yearning for the recovery of the stage illusion of moral certainty, innocence, unity, and peace. In effect, this is a desire for unreality and nonexistence. Although Anna's nostalgia for this moral sleep is acute, it is countered by an aspiration toward full, waking consciousness. In the battleground of each notebook, moreover, consciousness conquers, and Anna takes a victory, in existentialist terms. For her, as for Camus, "everything begins with consciousness and nothing is worth anything except through it." In Anna's case, full consciousness means facing up to the power of chaos and accepting its effect on her life.[20]

Each notebook is a learning process as Anna evaluates one or the other work of art in it. In the "Black Notebook," it is the Mashopi film, which is an adaptation of her novel, *Frontiers of War*. She sees how reality has been distorted in the film. This brings in a loss of confidence in the possibility of mimesis. If a film distorts reality, then the medium of writing, which is coloured with greater subjectivity, is surely more unreliable. This implies that the failure

[20]Draine, "Nostalgia and Irony," 33.

of the Mashopi film is emblematic of the failure of her "Black Notebook" – exposing the failure of memory and judgement; indeed, of perception itself. This makes her ashamed of the novel that had made her career.

"The Red Notebook," in its turn, makes Anna confront the starkness of her political illusions. As Betsy Draine remarks, Anna recognises that she and "her friends are tending the flame before a temple which the gods have deserted."[21] Most importantly, she becomes aware that a "slightly malicious tone, a cynical edge to a voice, can have developed inside ten years into a cancer that has destroyed a whole personality" (GN 81). In order to save herself from greater deception and further alienation, she quits the Party. In the "Red Notebook," Anna moves on, in her pursuit, to self-knowledge far enough to come close to realism. But, frustrated with the language-experience nexus, and confronted by a sense of loss, she closes the notebook.

In the "Yellow Notebook," dedicated to fiction, Anna works at her writer's block through fits of creativity. While the "Black Notebook" shatters her literary ideals, and the "Red Notebook" her political ideals, it is her ideal of love that gets destroyed in the "Yellow Notebook." Through Ella and Paul, Anna explores and mercilessly exposes the delusions that make love possible. She understands how she has had to recreate her self, time and again, in order to be accepted. This self-discovery is astounding.

In the "Blue Notebook," Anna resolves to keep a diary. By resorting to an objective approach, Anna creates a conflict within her own notions of art, and also contradicts her Jungian psychoanalyst, Mother Sugar. According to Mother Sugar, Anna's refusal to dive into the fullest depths of the subjective experience speaks through her dreams. In accepting this analysis of the processes of repression, Anna is, in fact, compromising by substituting the discourse of the erotic by the discourse of the psychotic – the language of psychoanalysis. Anna questions the Jungian model of archetype and individuation. "Afraid of being better at the cost of living inside myth and dreams," (GN 413).

[21]Draine, "Nostalgia and Irony," 37.

Anna refuses to fit her private experience to patterns that serve as ideals but denies her reality and her 'lived-experiences.' Like Roquentin in Sartre's *Nausea*, she slips purposely into the phenomenological method of describing her experiences in their immediate, raw state.

By trying to pin down her day to her diary, and achieve an erasure of subjectivity, she gets no closer to truth. This sharpened awareness creates in Anna a 'nausea' which is discomforting, like that of Roquentin's. This disgust is a legitimate emotion that accompanies an awareness of the distance between the real and the ideal, and discloses the nature of existence more clearly. The physical aspects of this existential revolt or nausea are very delicately captured by Lessing. Like her precursors, Camus and Sartre, Lessing was aware of the irony that is entrenched in the growth of consciousness, an irony that leads to blinding bitterness, cynicism and despair.

Whenever she feels despair, Anna condemns herself, and cuts off all her feelings and emotions. In her efforts to actualise the ideal, everything seems ugly to her. The lesson that she needs to learn is some kind of Spivakian 'strategic essentialism' – the will to reconcile incongruities. It is Saul Green who ultimately teaches her this lesson. The disgust with existence offers three distinct options; namely, nostalgia, cynicism, and action; the former two prove inadequate in the first two notebooks. Action bereft of meaning, as in the case of Camus' Sisyphus, seems a better alternative. In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna tells Saul:

> "No, I'm not for sainthood, I'm going to be a boulder-pusher."
>
> "What's that?"
>
> "There's a great black mountain. It's human stupidity. There are a group of people who push a boulder up the mountain. When they've got a few feet up there's a war, or the wrong sort of revolution, and the boulder rolls down – not to the bottom, it always manages to end a few inches higher than it started. So the group of people put their shoulders to the boulder and start pushing again. Meanwhile, at the top of the mountain stand a few great men. Sometimes they look down and nod and say:

> Good, the boulder-pushers are still on duty. But, meanwhile we are meditating about the nature of space, or what it will be like when the world is full of people who don't hate and fear and murder" (GN 544-5).

The echoes of Camus' Sisyphus is barely accidental. This Camuseque existential exhaustion is about "the struggle [which] implies a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair), a continual rejection (which must not be confused with renunciation), and a conscious dissatisfaction (which must not be compared to immature unrest)."[22] If Sisyphus is engaged in action devoid of meaning, Anna is engaged in action bereft of any personal meaning. She has her great men on the top of the mountain "discovering how to colonize Venus and to irrigate the moon" (GN 196). They know what she is doing and why she is at it: putting "all our energies, all our talents, into pushing a great boulder up a mountain. The boulder is the truth that the great men know by instinct" (GN 196). Against the dissolution of individuals and society into chaos, Anna wishes to posit an alternative. For this, she needs to participate in a new movement toward a new order that will grant new meanings which results in the dialectic of chaos and form. Critic Betsy Draine remarks:

> Lessing's novel continuously acknowledges chaos, nonetheless noting our human urge to impose willed forms on chaos, and demonstrates the need for the individual to establish an ambiguous relation to the two poles of chaos and order. The dynamic of the novel pushes the reader and the central character Anna Wulf toward a state of saving schizophrenia – a state that permits her commitment to practical goals, visionary ideals, art, work, altruism, social organization, logic, and order, while at the same time allowing her to acknowledge and even honour all that accompanies chaos – creation, destruction, randomness, power, potential, vitality, and emotion.[23]

In the "Red Notebook" that follows "Free Women 2," Anna sees a beautiful dream. She sees:

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[22]Draine, "Nostalgia and Irony," 40.

[23]Draine, "Nostalgia and Irony," 47-8.

> [an] enormous web of beautiful fabric stretched out. It was incredibly beautiful, covered all over with embroidered pictures. The pictures were illustrations of the myth of mankind … it is like a vision – time has gone and the whole history of man, the long history of mankind, is present in what I see now, and it is like a great soaring hymn of joy and triumph in which pain is a small lively counterpoint … This is a moment of unbearable happiness, the happiness seems to swell up, so that everything bursts, explodes – I was suddenly standing in peace, in silence … The world had gone, and there was chaos. I was alone in the chaos. And very clear in my ear a small voice said: Somebody pulled a thread of the fabric and it all dissolved. I woke up joyful, elated … the meaning had gone, leaving me indescribably happy …. (GN 270).

Before her breakdown, Anna eventually realises the sovereignty, which arises out of freedom from confined vision and self-deception. The day Janet, her daughter, joins the boarding school, Anna feels "listless and idle" (GN 480) as she need not live her day anymore with clock-work precision. Men seek relief from alienation through their relationship with women. But feminine ennui and alienation is profoundly more disturbing because women are conditioned to experience themselves only as the fulfilment of other people's needs. In the absence of their families' and friends' need of them, women seem to have no sense of self. In order to save sanity, Anna recollects and plays a mind-game that she used to enjoy as a child:

> First I created the room I sat in, object by object, 'naming' everything, bed, chair, curtains, till it was whole in my mind, then move out of the room, creating the house, then out of the house, slowly creating the street, then rise into the air, looking down on London, at the enormous sprawling wastes of London, but holding at the same time the room, and the house and the street in my mind, and then England, the shape of England in Britain, then the little group of islands lying against the continent, then slowly, slowly, I would create the world (but the point of 'the game' was to create the vastness while holding the bedroom, the house, the street in their littleness in my mind at

> the same time) until the point was reached where I moved into space, and watched the world, a sun-lit ball in the sky, turning and rolling beneath me. Then, having reached that point with stars around me, and the little earth turning underneath me, I'd try to imagine at the same time, a drop of water, swarming with life, or a green leaf…. I would concentrate on a single creature, a small coloured fish in a pool, or a single flower, or a moth, and try to create, to 'name' the being of the flower, the moth, the fish, slowly creating around it the forest, or the seapool, or the space of blowing night air that tilted my wings. And then, out, suddenly, from the smallness into space (GN 480-1).

The success of the game is in achieving "a simultaneous knowledge of vastness and of smallness" (GN 481). This was easy for Anna as a child. But, for the grown-up Anna, conditioned by social morality and hyper-individuality, the game is difficult and exhausting. Finally by the scripting of *The Golden Notebook*, Anna confronts the relativity of the values with which she has been presented and learns to transcend the knowledge of relativity by becoming responsible for her own set of revaluations. She eventually learns to recognise, tolerate, and transcend the innumerable versions of the truth. It is this charting of the growth in consciousness that makes *The Golden Notebook* a *modus vivendi* for woman. Anna grows to realize that there is more to her self than the myriad roles she gets to play: that there are "A hundred things to do, but only one thing to be" (GN 244).

Just as "meaning exists only in a shifting and unstable relationship to the webs of signification through which it comes into being,"[24] individuals are also in a process of *becoming* amidst mutual interactions and relationships. There is no single mode of existence for 'Identity' as much as it is not there for a literary work of art. McGee questions the rhetoric about the impossibility of 'telling the Other':

> Can a human who is constituted as "none," that is, not-One, behold or look at the Ones and see that what appears as central

[24]Paula M. L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-García, eds., *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2000, 5

> or "main" is in fact double? Can the not-One see how the One that was once proper or "meet" melts into its other, how One meets different "ones," or heterogeneity, and wants points or purposes or laws to rationalize and limit difference?[25]

These comments bring us to an anti-essentialist position that there is no elemental prototype of Woman. As Lacan says in *Encore*: "There is no such thing as *'la' femme* [woman], where the definite article stands for the universal. There is no such thing as *'la' femme* [woman] since of her essence … she is not all."[26] Thus, in order to prevent the feminist subculture from overturning its institutional positions, its linkage of gender, experience and expression must become more and more inclusive.

4. The Feminine *Bildung*

Any attempt to define a 'feminist text' is controversial, no doubt. But, undoubtedly, the presence of a feminine *bildung* or a psychic quest of the feminine can unveil the process of a 'growing-up female' in "enormous number of converging patterns of significance."[27] It is this feminine *bildung* that necessarily qualifies any text to be classified under the rubric of Women's Studies. *Bildung* or *Erziehung* refers to 'formation,' 'education,' or 'life search,' and is symbolic of the contemporary age which has matured enough to accommodate diversities. The spiritual crises such as the fear of cataclysm that jerks Anna to the verge to insanity also mediates her passage from innocence to "maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world."[28] However, critics converge in their opinion that for the

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[25]McGee, *Telling the Other*, 80.

[26]Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, book 20 of *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Encore* 1972-1973, ed. Jacques-Alan Miller, trans. Bruce Fink, New York and London: Norton, 1999cited in McGee, *Telling the Other*, 69.

[27]Northorp Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*, David Lodge ed., London: Longman, 1972, 427.

[28]M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Singapore: Heinle and Heinle, 1999, 193.

female 'hero,' the 'quest' is radically different from that of the male hero. The subject matter is the development of the protagonist's mind and character but with *difference* in the case of women characters. Peter Barry points out this specialty of the feminine *bildung* as follows:

> For the heroine, however, things are different, and an equivalent novel (like *Wuthering Heights*) about the growth to womanhood records a process of 'anxious self-denial', this being the 'ultimate product of a female education'.[29]

In order to achieve acceptability and femininity, woman subjects herself, consciously and unconsciously, to socialisation and conditioning, and this is an education in 'doubleness' and "'involves an actual doubling or fragmentation of her personality."[30] There is not only the "initiation ritual of imprisonment" in the form of marriage which "'inexorably locks her into a social system which denies her autonomy'," but also an "inevitable descent into self-rejection…self-starvation, madness, and death, 'a complex of psycho-neurotic symptoms that is almost associated with female feelings of powerlessness and rage'."[31]

Annis Pratt's *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (1981) is one of the seminal works that studied a wide range of novels to recognize the patterns that inhere in feminine quest. What she unravels is an "understanding of the profound differences between what society allows women and what it makes possible for men."[32] This transforms the traditional expectations of the quest pattern when applied to women. Gleaning evidence from hundreds of women novelists, Pratt concludes that even the most conservative among them "create narratives manifesting an acute tension between what any normal human being might desire and what a

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[29]Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, New Delhi: Viva Books, 2010, 129.

[30]Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 130.

31Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 130.

32Sydney Janet Kaplan, "Varieties of Feminist Criticism," *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn, ed., London and New York: Routledge, 1985, 47.

woman must become."[33] In woman's quest, as depicted especially in novels by women writers, the protagonist

> Instead of venturing out into the world…journeys within the self, finding restoration in the green world of nature. A male companion helps her, but he is neither the object of her search nor her reward for accomplishing it. Thus, once again, feminist critics find that writing by women is neither the same as nor opposite to men's writing, but differently structured, presumably because of women's different psyches and social experiences.[34]

If, for the male *Bildungsroman*, the identity crisis and its resolution happens in a known social world, the great concern for feminist critics in the female novel of development is that woman is apprenticed to social constraints in a hostile and strange world, a world in which men have succeeded in defining themselves as the norm. The sudden awakening of the female hero is not one that fits a linear male model of steady progress, that is, one that is necessarily uroboric in nature.

5. Conclusion

The uroboric, non-linear and ambivalent structure of a text such as Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* is deeply commensurate with the femininity of the protagonist. The ambiguity and ambivalence that mark the novel is intended, deliberate and consciously artistic. Vagueness is its virtue and verity, for it tries to reflect, represent, and reclaim something that is vastly complex and ambiguous. The incommensurability of woman's experiences, her variety and contrariness, demand and deserve a higher order of conscious artistry.

There is pronounced ambiguity that Lessing invests in the delineation of the character of Anna Wulf. Anna discovers that she is not every single thing that she thought herself to be. Her

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33Kaplan, "Varieties of Feminist Criticism," 47.

34Judith Kegan Gardiner, "Mind Mother: Psychoanalysis and Feminism," *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn, eds., London and New York: Routledge, 1985, 123-4.

discovery of her own self is that she cannot be defined or limited by the definitions of her roles, propaganda, belief systems and most importantly relations. Relations, being an overlap of selves, are not fixed; they are organic, varying and constantly evolving. The semiotic of the feminine self should then be one that is transformational, generative of a natural mode of communication that could be context-free and can permit plurality of signification. Ambiguity, as in the dilation of boundaries in the self, is, therefore, ineluctably intertwined with ambivalence in the form of texts that negotiates gender as a category of perception. A text like *The Golden Notebook* that succeeds in representing and expressing feminine identity is necessarily structured differently because of the difference that qualifies the feminine psyche.