

Narrative Techniques and Psychological Insights in Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook and Landlocked

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Studies in literature and Culture:
from Theory to Practice

2026, Vol. 1(2) 195-211

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doi:10.22091/SLIC.2026.15088.1026

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Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between narrative technique and psychological representation in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *Landlocked* (1965) through Text World Theory (TWT). Adopting a qualitative, interpretive approach, the study analyzes selected passages at the levels of the Discourse World, Text Worlds, and Sub-Worlds, focusing on world-building elements, function-advancing propositions, dialogue, narrative organization, and epistemic, deontic, and boulomaic constructions. The analysis demonstrates that Lessing constructs psychological experience through the interaction of characters' internal processes with their historical, social, political, and material environments. In *The Golden Notebook*, the fragmentation and interaction of multiple narrative domains contribute to the representation of Anna Wulf's fragmented personal, political, and psychological experience. In *Landlocked*, changes in physical and social environments accompany Martha Quest's ideological uncertainty and psychological conflict. The analysis further shows that Sub-Worlds represent characters' processes of knowing, doubting, obligation, and desire, making visible the tensions between immediate circumstances and projected possibilities. Although the two novels employ different narrative strategies, both connect psychological experience to changing external conditions. By applying TWT to Lessing's fiction, the study demonstrates how cognitive approaches can illuminate the relationship between narrative form and psychological representation and provides a systematic account of how narrative organization contributes to the construction of complex mental and emotional experience.

Keywords: Cognitive Literary Analysis, Existential Crises, Mental Frustration, Narrative Techniques, Post-War Context.

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How to cite this article:

Bahar Bahmani Komasi. "Narrative Techniques and Psychological Insights in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and *Landlocked*". *Studies in Literature and Culture*, vol.1, no.2, 2026, pp 195-211.

<https://doi.org/10.22091/slic.2026.15088.1026>.

*Received 15/04/2026; Received in revised form 20/06/2026; Accepted 25/08/2026; Published online 30/09/2026.

1. Introduction

This study examines the relationship between narrative technique and the representation of psychological experience in the fiction of Doris Lessing, with particular focus on *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *Landlocked* (1965). Writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, Lessing engaged deeply with questions of psychological fragmentation, emotional instability, and the pressures exerted by social and political upheaval. Critics have long recognized the centrality of these concerns in her work, often emphasizing themes of disillusionment, psychological conflict, and narrative fragmentation. Lessing's engagement with contemporary psychological thought—particularly the work of R. D. Laing—provided her with a conceptual framework for exploring the complexities of human consciousness. However, while previous scholarship has examined the thematic and structural dimensions of psychological fragmentation in her fiction, relatively little attention has been paid to how narrative form contributes to the representation of characters' mental experiences.

To address this gap, the present study adopts Text World Theory (Gavins) as its primary analytical framework. Rather than treating narrative fragmentation as merely a stylistic or formal feature, this study approaches it as a dynamic process of world-construction, in which discourse worlds, text worlds, and sub-worlds interact to model characters' psychological states. From this perspective, shifts between narrative layers are not simply structural devices, but enactments of cognitive and emotional instability. Through a comparative analysis of *The Golden Notebook* and *Landlocked*, this study examines how Lessing uses narrative techniques to represent the psychological experiences of her characters. Drawing on Text World Theory, it analyzes the Discourse World, Text World, and Sub-Worlds to explore how narrative organization represents characters' thoughts, emotions, desires, beliefs, and psychological conflicts. Particular attention is given to the ways in which shifts between different textual worlds and the use of fragmented and layered narrative structures contribute to the representation of characters' changing mental states. By applying a cognitive framework to Lessing's narrative techniques, this study complements existing thematic and formal approaches and demonstrates how Text World Theory can provide a more precise account of the relationship between narrative structure and psychological experience in Lessing's fiction.

2. Literature Review

The fiction of Doris Lessing has generated extensive critical attention, reflecting the thematic and formal complexity of her work. Scholars have approached her novels from diverse perspectives, including feminist critique, political analysis, autobiographical interpretation, and narrative structure. Central concerns in this body of scholarship include the representation of women's experiences, the impact of socio-political upheaval, and the formal experimentation that characterizes her major works.

The Golden Notebook (1962), in particular, has been widely examined for its fragmented structure and its exploration of psychological and social disintegration. Critics such as Molly Hite, Gayle Greene, and Claire Sprague have emphasized the novel's formal innovation, highlighting its layered narrative design and its departure from conventional realism. Hite, for instance, situates Lessing's narrative experimentation within a broader context of feminist writing, arguing that the use of multiple narrative strands enables the representation of diverse and often conflicting female voices. Similarly, Sprague's analysis of repetition and doubling foregrounds the structural complexity of the text, while Greene and others link narrative fragmentation to broader social and political crises. More recent studies have sought to connect narrative form with psychological experience. Paulina Kaminska, for example, interprets *The Golden Notebook* as a trauma narrative, arguing that its fragmented structure reflects the experience of mental breakdown in twentieth-century society. Likewise, Mamoto examines the relationship between narrative disintegration and the psychological states of the protagonists, suggesting that the novel's formal structure mirrors the characters' inner fragmentation. While these studies establish an important connection between form and psychology, they tend to treat fragmentation primarily as a thematic or representational feature, rather than as a cognitive process embedded in discourse.

Landlocked (1965), part of the *Children of Violence* series, has similarly been explored through autobiographical and developmental frameworks. Critics such as Kate Rowland and Sharon Teresa Dreger read the series as a form of autobiographical writing, emphasizing the alignment between Lessing's personal experiences and the narrative voice. Dreger, in particular, draws on the concept of the "divided self" to interpret the protagonist's psychological struggles, while Kapp highlights the influence of socio-political contexts on narrative form and ideology. These approaches underscore the importance of psychological and experiential dimensions in Lessing's work, yet they largely remain within biographical or thematic modes of analysis. Despite this substantial body of scholarship, relatively little attention has been paid to how narrative structures themselves function as cognitive mechanisms for representing psychological experience. In particular, the application of Text World Theory to Lessing's fiction remains underdeveloped. Existing studies have not fully explored how shifts between discourse worlds, text worlds, and sub-worlds actively construct and model characters' mental states.

This study addresses this gap by employing Text World Theory as a cognitive framework to examine the relationship between Lessing's narrative techniques and the psychological experiences of her characters. It investigates how different narrative levels, including the Text World and Sub-Worlds, represent characters' thoughts, emotions, desires, beliefs, and inner conflicts. By applying this framework, the study moves beyond approaches that focus primarily on fragmentation and narrative structure as formal or thematic features. Instead, it examines how Lessing's narrative techniques help construct and represent her characters' psychological

experiences. In this way, the study offers a cognitive perspective on the relationship between narrative form and psychological representation in Lessing's fiction.

3. Theoretical Framework: Text World Theory

This study employs Text World Theory (TWT) as a cognitive-linguistic framework for analyzing Doris Lessing's narrative techniques. First introduced by Paul Werth (1999) and further developed by Joanna Gavins (2007), TWT provides a structured approach to understanding how language constructs mental representations of reality in literary texts. The theory distinguishes three interrelated levels of meaning: the Discourse World, Text World, and Sub-Worlds, allowing a close examination of the cognitive dimensions embedded in narrative discourse. The Discourse World encompasses the context of communication between the narrator and the reader, including their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds (Gavins 87). In applying this concept to Lessing's novels, the study considers the broader post-war social and psychological context in which the narratives are constructed and received.

The Text World represents the storyworld constructed within the text itself. It consists of two main components: world-building elements and function-advancing propositions. World-building elements—time, place, characters, and objects—establish the narrative's spatial and temporal framework, while function-advancing propositions—comprising mental, material, existential, and relational processes—propel the narrative forward (Gavins 90–93). Applying this framework allows the study to examine how Lessing structures narrative worlds and organizes narrative events to represent the psychological tensions and existential struggles of her characters.

Sub-Worlds are mental spaces derived from the Text World that represent desires, hypothetical scenarios, and unrealized possibilities (Gavins 96). These are typically expressed through modal operators: boulemaic (desire/wish), deontic (obligation/permission), and epistemic (belief/knowledge). The analysis of Sub-Worlds therefore focuses on how characters' desires, obligations, beliefs, and hypothetical projections are constructed within the narrative and how these textual configurations contribute to the representation of their psychological experiences.

By applying TWT across these three levels, the study traces how changes in narrative worlds, world-building elements, and function-advancing propositions contribute to the representation of characters' psychological experiences. The analysis particularly examines how shifts in temporal and spatial settings, the introduction and development of characters, and the construction of mental, material, existential, and relational processes correspond to changes in characters' thoughts, emotions, perceptions, and psychological conflicts. This approach provides a systematic basis for comparing Lessing's narrative strategies in *The*

Golden Notebook and *Landlocked* and for examining how different forms of narrative world construction contribute to the representation of psychological experience.

4. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach to examine how narrative techniques contribute to the representation of psychological experience in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *Landlocked* (1965). The analysis is based on close reading of selected passages in which changes in narrative organization, textual worlds, and characters' mental and emotional experiences are particularly evident. Rather than treating narrative techniques as isolated formal features, the study examines their relationship to the construction of textual worlds and to the representation of characters' thoughts, emotions, perceptions, desires, beliefs, and psychological conflicts. The analysis proceeds through three interconnected stages corresponding to the three levels of Text World Theory:

- 1) **Discourse World Analysis:** The analysis first identifies the communicative and contextual conditions relevant to the interpretation of the selected passages. Attention is given to the historical, social, and cultural context of the novels, particularly the post-war conditions that inform the characters' experiences. This stage establishes the contextual assumptions necessary for interpreting the textual worlds constructed in each novel rather than treating the narrative events independently of their broader context.
- 2) **Text World Analysis:** The second stage examines how the selected passages construct and develop their textual worlds. The analysis identifies changes in world-building elements, including time, place, characters, and objects, and examines the function-advancing propositions through which narrative events and character experiences are presented. Particular attention is paid to changes in temporal and spatial settings, shifts in narrative perspective, fragmentation, and the movement between different narrative layers. These features are then examined in relation to the psychological experiences represented in the two novels.
- 3) **Sub-World Analysis:** The final stage examines the Sub-Worlds generated within the Text Worlds, focusing on bouletic, deontic, and epistemic modal constructions. The analysis traces how characters' desires, wishes, obligations, beliefs, assumptions, and hypothetical projections produce alternative or embedded mental spaces. These constructions are examined in relation to moments of psychological conflict, uncertainty, suppressed desires, and changing perceptions. The analysis therefore considers not only the content of characters' mental experiences but also the textual mechanisms through which those experiences are constructed.

The findings from these three stages are then compared across *The Golden Notebook* and *Landlocked* to identify similarities and differences in Lessing's use of narrative techniques to represent psychological experience. The comparison focuses on how the construction and modification of textual worlds correspond to changes in characters' mental and emotional states. In this way, TWT functions not simply as a descriptive framework but as an analytical procedure for tracing the relationship between narrative organization and psychological representation across the two novels.

5. Discussion

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and *Landlocked* reveal her intricate engagement with psychological and existential concerns through narrative techniques that reflect postwar disillusionment. In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna Wulf and her friend Molly negotiate personal freedom within patriarchal constraints, navigating societal expectations while seeking autonomy. Their experiences, set against a postwar context marked by political and social fragmentation, illustrate Lessing's focus on the psychological tensions inherent in a world undergoing rapid ideological and cultural change. By contrast, *Landlocked* explores the disorientation and frustration of white African immigrants after the collapse of European structures, highlighting the interplay between personal instability and societal collapse.

5.1. Discourse World

At the Discourse-World level, Text World Theory emphasizes the communicative context in which a narrative is produced and interpreted, including the social, historical, and cognitive knowledge shared by the author and reader (Gavins 87). In Lessing's fiction, this level is particularly significant because the narratives are situated within contexts shaped by her experiences in Africa and London and by her engagement with contemporary psychological thought, including existential and therapeutic approaches associated with R. D. Laing. These contexts provide the background knowledge through which the reader approaches the psychological and social tensions represented in the novels. Rather than functioning merely as biographical information, the discourse world helps establish the assumptions through which the characters' experiences and the narrative situations are interpreted.

In *The Golden Notebook*, the opening assertion, "the point is, that as far as I can see, everything is cracked up" (3), immediately establishes a discourse world characterized by instability and fragmentation. The expression "cracked up" operates beyond the description of an individual psychological condition: it establishes a broader interpretive context in which personal, social, and political forms of disorder become interconnected. The reader is therefore introduced to a world shaped by postwar disillusionment, Cold War anxieties, and tensions surrounding gender and social relations. The opening statement is particularly significant because it establishes a cognitive position from which the subsequent

fragmentation of Anna's experiences can be interpreted. The metaphor of "cracking" thus anticipates the novel's fragmented narrative organization while simultaneously linking psychological instability to the wider social conditions represented in the text.

A similar relationship between historical context and psychological experience emerges in *Landlocked*. The discourse world situates the reader within a postcolonial African setting marked by political and social upheaval and ideological disillusionment. Martha Quest's experience as a white immigrant navigating social instability is presented within a context of dislocation and changing social structures. Historical developments, including the disbandment of the Left Communist Party and the socioeconomic pressures of the postwar period, form part of the contextual knowledge through which Martha's experiences can be interpreted. The discourse world therefore provides a framework for understanding her uncertainty not simply as an individual psychological condition but as an experience shaped by political disillusionment, social displacement, and the destabilization of previously familiar structures.

The discourse-world perspective also draws attention to the social conditions surrounding female experience in both novels. The female protagonists encounter social expectations and patriarchal structures that restrict their autonomy, and these conditions form part of the contextual framework through which their psychological experiences are represented. In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna and Molly negotiate tensions involving personal freedom, motherhood, work, and social expectations. These concerns are not presented independently of their historical and cultural circumstances; rather, they become part of the broader context within which their thoughts, emotions, and conflicts are constructed. The discourse world consequently connects individual psychological experience with the social circumstances that inform its representation.

This contextual dimension is particularly important for understanding Lessing's use of psychologically oriented narrative techniques. In *The Golden Notebook*, cognitive reflections, internal deliberations, and shifts between different narrative modes require the reader to negotiate multiple perspectives on Anna's experience. The discourse world provides the contextual assumptions through which these shifts become meaningful rather than appearing as disconnected narrative fragments. Similarly, in *Landlocked*, Martha's episodic experiences of political and social uncertainty are interpreted against the historical circumstances surrounding her. Thus, the discourse world establishes the contextual conditions within which the subsequent Text Worlds and Sub-Worlds acquire psychological significance.

The Discourse-World analysis therefore establishes the contextual foundation for the examination of Lessing's narrative techniques at the subsequent TWT levels. In both novels, historical and social conditions are not treated as external background but as part of the interpretive context through which characters' psychological experiences are constructed and understood. At this level, the relationship between context and psychological representation

becomes visible: the instability of the surrounding social world provides the broader context within which Lessing constructs narratives of psychological uncertainty, fragmentation, and conflict. The analysis of the Text Worlds and Sub-Worlds can consequently examine how these contextual conditions are transformed into specific narrative structures and representations of characters' mental experiences.

5.2. Text-World: World-Building Elements and Function-Advancing Propositions

At the Text-World level, Text World Theory (Gavins 90–93) provides a framework for examining how narrative discourse constructs the storyworld through world-building elements and function-advancing propositions. World-building elements, such as time, place, characters, and objects, establish the spatial and temporal framework of the narrative, while function-advancing propositions—including mental, material, existential, and relational processes—develop events and states within that world. In *The Golden Notebook* and *Landlocked*, these elements work together to construct narrative environments in which external circumstances and characters' psychological experiences are closely interconnected.

In *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing employs multiple narrative domains that contribute to the construction of interconnected Text Worlds. The black, red, blue, and yellow notebooks organize different aspects of Anna Wulf's experience, with each section establishing its own combinations of characters, settings, events, and perspectives. The black notebook, for instance, contains Anna's fictional account, *The Frontiers of War*, in which fictional characters and events are related to her experiences in Africa. The red notebook focuses more directly on political engagement and ideological experience, while the blue notebook records Anna's personal and psychological experiences, and the yellow notebook develops her fictional treatment of personal relationships. The separation and subsequent interaction of these narrative domains construct a fragmented but interconnected representation of Anna's experience. The arrangement of these worlds therefore becomes a formal means through which different dimensions of her psychological and social experience are presented.

The organization of these narrative worlds is particularly significant because the boundaries between them are neither completely independent nor stable. Characters, experiences, and events from one narrative domain can inform the interpretation of another, requiring the reader to establish connections across the different textual representations. The black notebook's fictionalization of experiences associated with Anna's life, for example, creates a relationship between fictional narrative and autobiographical experience. Similarly, the political experiences represented in the red notebook intersect with the personal and psychological concerns developed elsewhere in the novel. Through this arrangement, Lessing makes fragmentation itself part of the narrative structure through which Anna's experience is represented. The reader must therefore reconstruct relationships among the different textual

domains rather than receiving Anna's psychological experience through a single continuous narrative.

Function-Advancing Propositions further contribute to the construction of psychological experience in *The Golden Notebook*. Mental processes are particularly significant in passages involving characters' thoughts, reflections, interpretations, and evaluations, through which narrative progression frequently occurs through acts of thinking as much as through physical events. When Anna and Molly discuss their lives, ambitions, relationships, and frustrations, for example, dialogue and reflection advance the narrative while simultaneously revealing their responses to personal and social constraints. Existential processes contribute to the representation of states of being and awareness, while relational processes establish relationships among characters and objects and help articulate tensions involving power, gender, and intimacy. Material processes, including Anna's writing and participation in political or social activities, provide concrete actions through which her mental and emotional experiences are situated within particular narrative circumstances. The interaction of these processes allows psychological experience to emerge through both internal reflection and observable action.

In *Landlocked*, Lessing's world-building elements similarly establish a close relationship between physical movement and psychological restlessness. Martha Quest's movement by bicycle between different locations, including the town, party meetings, her mother's house, and distant farms, repeatedly changes the spatial configuration of the narrative. These movements are not merely geographical transitions; they accompany changes in Martha's social relationships, political commitments, and emotional circumstances. The movement between locations therefore contributes to the representation of a protagonist whose sense of belonging and ideological certainty remains unstable. Spatial changes become particularly significant when they coincide with shifts in Martha's perceptions and attitudes, linking the external organization of the Text World to her changing psychological experience.

Objects also participate in the construction of Martha's Text Worlds. Typewriters, books, and party notices, for example, are incorporated into situations involving writing, political activity, communication, and intellectual engagement. Their significance derives not simply from their physical presence but from their relationships to the activities and circumstances in which Martha encounters them. Such objects help situate her within particular social and ideological environments and provide material points of connection between her external circumstances and internal concerns. World-building elements therefore contribute to psychological representation by placing Martha's thoughts and conflicts within concrete spatial, temporal, and material contexts.

Function-Advancing Propositions in *Landlocked* likewise reveal the relationship between external events and Martha's psychological experience. Material processes represent actions such as cycling to meetings, participating in political gatherings, and responding to familial

responsibilities, while mental processes present reflection, doubt, evaluation, and ethical deliberation. These processes become particularly significant when Martha considers her political commitments and the possibility of leaving Africa for London. Her movement through different physical and social environments is accompanied by changes in her understanding of political ideals and personal possibilities. Relational processes further establish tensions among Martha, her family, political associates, and the broader social structures within which she lives, while existential processes contribute to the representation of her awareness of social instability and ideological uncertainty. The combination of these processes allows psychological conflict to develop through the interaction of thought, action, social relations, and changing circumstances.

A comparison of the two novels shows that Lessing uses Text-World construction to connect psychological experience with the material and social environments in which it occurs. In *The Golden Notebook*, the division of Anna's experience among interconnected narrative domains produces a fragmented textual structure through which different aspects of consciousness are represented. In *Landlocked*, changes in physical location and social environment accompany Martha's ideological and psychological uncertainty. Although the two novels employ different organizational strategies, both construct narrative worlds in which external circumstances and internal experience remain closely connected. Dialogue, internal reflection, and narrative commentary further develop these worlds by providing access to characters' perceptions, evaluations, and emotional responses.

The Text-World analysis therefore demonstrates how Lessing's narrative techniques contribute to psychological representation through the organization of narrative environments and the processes that develop within them. World-building elements establish the spatial, temporal, social, and material conditions of characters' experiences, while function-advancing propositions represent the actions, states, relationships, and mental activities through which those experiences unfold. In both novels, psychological conflict is consequently constructed not as an isolated internal phenomenon but through the interaction of characters with the worlds they inhabit. This relationship between world construction and psychological experience provides the basis for the subsequent analysis of Sub-Worlds, where characters' desires, obligations, beliefs, and hypothetical projections are examined in greater detail.

5.3. Sub-Worlds: Unrealized Realms of Desire, Obligation, and Knowledge

At the Sub-World level, Text World Theory provides a framework for examining mental spaces that emerge from the characters' projections of knowledge, obligation, desire, and possibility (Gavins 96). In the two novels, these spaces are particularly significant because characters frequently move beyond the immediate circumstances of the Text World through acts of imagining, evaluating, anticipating, doubting, and wishing. The analysis therefore focuses on how epistemic, deontic, and boulomaic constructions create alternative or

projected states in relation to the characters' actual circumstances and how these constructions contribute to the representation of psychological conflict.

In *The Golden Notebook*, epistemic constructions are particularly important to Anna Wulf's representation because her experience is repeatedly organized around uncertainty, interpretation, and attempts to establish what can be known or understood. Expressions of thinking, knowing, doubt, and possibility create mental spaces in which Anna evaluates her personal experiences and political commitments. When she reflects on her political disillusionment or on the contradictions between her experiences and previously held beliefs, the narrative moves beyond the immediate events of the Text World and presents alternative states of knowledge and interpretation. The movement between greater and lesser degrees of certainty is therefore significant to the representation of Anna's psychological experience. Her attempts to understand her circumstances do not produce a stable position of knowledge; instead, they repeatedly generate further questioning and reconsideration.

These epistemic constructions are closely connected to the fragmented organization of Anna's experience across the notebooks. The different narrative domains provide different perspectives from which events and experiences can be reconsidered, while Anna's reflections continually reinterpret what has already occurred. As a result, psychological fragmentation is represented not only through the novel's formal division but also through the continual movement between what Anna knows, suspects, questions, and attempts to understand. The Sub-Worlds thus provide a means of representing uncertainty as an ongoing cognitive process rather than as a fixed psychological condition.

Deontic Sub-Worlds in *The Golden Notebook* reveal another dimension of Anna's psychological conflict by representing what she perceives herself as required or permitted to do. Constructions involving *must*, *should*, and related expressions of obligation establish projected states governed by social, moral, interpersonal, and political expectations. Anna's reflections on her career, relationships, motherhood, and political commitments repeatedly bring her personal desires into contact with perceived obligations. The resulting tension is significant because the obligation represented in the Sub-World does not necessarily correspond to an action that occurs in the Text World. Instead, it establishes an alternative state against which Anna evaluates her actual circumstances. Deontic constructions therefore make visible the psychological pressure produced by the discrepancy between what Anna believes she ought to do and what she actually wants or is able to do.

Molly's experiences similarly demonstrate how deontic constructions can connect individual psychological experience with social expectations. Her responses to personal and professional responsibilities reveal the negotiation between perceived duties and individual autonomy. In these instances, obligation operates not simply as an external social restriction but as an internalized expectation through which characters evaluate their own conduct. The

deontic Sub-World consequently contributes to the representation of psychological conflict by making the relationship between social prescription and individual choice linguistically visible.

Boulomaic Sub-Worlds further develop this conflict by representing desires, wishes, and unrealized possibilities. In Anna's experience, expressions of wanting, wishing, and imagining create projected states that differ from her immediate circumstances. Her aspirations for emotional stability, meaningful relationships, creative fulfillment, and greater coherence in her life establish possibilities that remain only partially or temporarily realized. The contrast between these desired states and the actual Text World produces a persistent tension between aspiration and experience. Boulomaic constructions are therefore important not simply because they reveal what Anna wants, but because they establish a cognitive distance between her present circumstances and the conditions she imagines as preferable.

In *Landlocked*, epistemic Sub-Worlds similarly contribute to the representation of Martha Quest's psychological uncertainty. Martha repeatedly evaluates the political and social circumstances surrounding her and attempts to determine the meaning of events that challenge her previously held assumptions. Expressions of thought, knowledge, doubt, and possibility construct mental spaces in which alternative interpretations of political and personal circumstances can be considered. Her ideological disillusionment is consequently represented not only through explicit political events but also through the cognitive processes by which she reassesses their meaning. The movement between certainty and uncertainty becomes part of the representation of Martha's changing psychological and ideological position.

Deontic Sub-Worlds in *Landlocked* represent Martha's perception of political, familial, and moral obligations. Constructions of what she *must* or *should* do establish expectations against which her actions and decisions can be evaluated. These projected obligations frequently come into tension with her personal wishes and developing doubts about political commitment. The resulting conflict between obligation and desire contributes to the representation of Martha's psychological uncertainty. Rather than presenting her decisions as simple choices, Lessing constructs them as negotiations among competing possibilities, expectations, and values.

Boulomaic Sub-Worlds are particularly significant when Martha considers alternative futures and the possibility of leaving Africa for London. The imagined possibility of departure establishes a projected world that contrasts with her existing circumstances. Her desire for freedom, intellectual fulfillment, and a different social environment therefore operates at the level of possibility before it becomes an actual course of action. The contrast between the actual Text World and these projected possibilities makes visible the psychological tension between attachment and escape, political commitment and personal autonomy, and existing circumstances and imagined alternatives. In this respect, the boulomaic Sub-World does not

merely express Martha's desire; it provides a textual structure through which the conflict between desire and reality can be represented.

A comparison of the two novels shows that Lessing uses Sub-Worlds to construct psychological experience through the interaction of knowledge, obligation, and desire. In *The Golden Notebook*, epistemic constructions are closely associated with Anna's attempts to interpret fragmented personal and political experience, while deontic and boulomaic constructions reveal tensions between perceived obligations and desired alternatives. In *Landlocked*, the same three types of projected mental spaces contribute to the representation of Martha's ideological uncertainty, social responsibilities, and desire for alternative possibilities. Although the particular circumstances of the protagonists differ, both novels repeatedly contrast characters' immediate circumstances with projected states of knowledge, obligation, or desire.

The Sub-World analysis therefore demonstrates how Lessing represents psychological conflict through movement between the actual circumstances of the Text World and alternative mental spaces constructed within it. Epistemic constructions represent processes of knowing, doubting, and interpreting; deontic constructions establish perceived obligations and restrictions; and boulomaic constructions project desires and unrealized possibilities. Their interaction allows psychological experience to emerge as a dynamic process of negotiation among what characters understand, what they believe they ought to do, and what they desire. Sub-Worlds thus extend the representation of psychological experience beyond observable action by making characters' projected possibilities and internal evaluations part of the narrative structure.

6. Results and Findings

The analysis of Doris Lessing's novels from 1956 to 1969, particularly *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *Landlocked* (1965), reveals a sustained relationship between narrative organization and the representation of psychological experience within post-war social and political contexts. In both novels, characters are represented as experiencing psychological frustration, existential uncertainty, and emotional conflict in response to changing social and ideological conditions. The analysis demonstrates that Lessing's representation of these experiences depends not only on the thematic content of the novels but also on the ways in which narrative worlds are constructed, developed, and reorganized. Her engagement with contemporary psychological thought, including the work of R. D. Laing, provides an important contextual dimension for understanding this relationship between psychological experience and narrative form.

A central finding of the study is that Lessing's narrative techniques are closely connected to the representation of characters' psychological experiences. The analysis of world-building elements—including temporal and spatial settings, characters, objects, and enactors—shows

that these elements establish the material and social environments within which psychological experiences develop. In both novels, settings and objects frequently interact with characters' actions, perceptions, and mental states, anchoring psychological experience in concrete narrative circumstances. In *The Golden Notebook*, the division of Anna Wulf's experiences across different narrative domains contributes to a fragmented representation of her personal, political, and psychological experiences. In *Landlocked*, changes in Martha Quest's physical and social environments accompany shifts in her ideological position and emotional circumstances. Thus, world-building contributes to psychological representation by connecting characters' internal experiences with the external worlds they inhabit.

Dialogue emerges as another significant narrative strategy for representing psychological complexity. In both novels, conversations reveal characters' thoughts, evaluations, motivations, frustrations, and responses to social circumstances while simultaneously advancing narrative events. In *The Golden Notebook*, exchanges between Anna and Molly expose tensions surrounding personal autonomy, relationships, work, and social expectations. Dialogue therefore functions simultaneously at the level of narrative progression and psychological representation, as characters articulate and negotiate conflicting positions. In *Landlocked*, conversations in political and familial contexts similarly reveal ideological uncertainty, interpersonal tensions, and competing social expectations. The analysis shows that dialogue contributes to the construction of Text Worlds by introducing actions, relationships, and mental processes through which characters' psychological experiences become narratively accessible.

The analysis of function-advancing propositions further demonstrates the importance of mental, existential, material, and relational processes in the representation of psychological experience. Mental processes are particularly significant in passages involving thought, reflection, interpretation, doubt, and evaluation, through which characters' internal experiences become part of the unfolding narrative. Existential processes contribute to the representation of states of being and awareness, situating psychological experience within particular circumstances. Material processes represent concrete actions and movements that provide the external context for characters' internal experiences, while relational processes establish connections among characters, objects, and social circumstances. The interaction of these processes frequently produces a tension between psychological activity and external limitation: characters may experience intense reflection and emotional conflict while remaining constrained in their material or social circumstances. This relationship between internal activity and external constraint is a recurring feature of the psychological representation in both novels.

The Sub-World analysis reveals that epistemic, deontic, and boulomaic constructions contribute in different ways to the representation of characters' psychological conflicts. Epistemic Sub-Worlds are particularly significant in both novels because characters repeatedly

engage in processes of knowing, doubting, interpreting, and reassessing their circumstances. In *The Golden Notebook*, these constructions are closely associated with Anna's attempts to understand contradictions within her personal and political experiences. In *Landlocked*, they contribute to Martha's ongoing reassessment of political commitments, social circumstances, and personal choices. Deontic Sub-Worlds, by contrast, make perceived obligations and restrictions visible, particularly where characters negotiate social, familial, moral, and political expectations. Boulomaic Sub-Worlds construct desired or imagined alternatives and are especially significant in passages where characters confront the gap between their actual circumstances and the possibilities they desire. Across both novels, the interaction of these Sub-Worlds demonstrates how knowledge, obligation, and desire participate in the construction of psychological conflict.

A comparison of the two novels further reveals both similarities and differences in Lessing's use of Text World structures. In *The Golden Notebook*, psychological fragmentation is closely associated with the division and interaction of different narrative domains, through which Anna's experiences are presented from multiple perspectives and in different forms. In *Landlocked*, psychological and ideological uncertainty is more closely connected to movement across changing physical, social, and political environments. Despite these differences, both novels construct a close relationship between characters' psychological experiences and the worlds in which those experiences occur. The findings therefore indicate that Lessing uses changes in narrative environments, processes, dialogue, and projected mental spaces to represent psychological experience as dynamic rather than static.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Lessing's narrative techniques—particularly her use of world-building elements, function-advancing propositions, dialogue, and Sub-World construction—play a significant role in representing psychological experience. The analysis shows that psychological conflict in *The Golden Notebook* and *Landlocked* is constructed through the interaction of internal processes with historical, social, political, and material circumstances. Text World Theory consequently provides a systematic framework for identifying how narrative organization contributes to psychological representation. Rather than treating psychological experience solely as a thematic concern, the findings demonstrate how it is embedded in the construction and development of narrative worlds across the two novels.

7. Conclusion

This study has examined the relationship between narrative technique and psychological representation in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *Landlocked* (1965) through the lens of Text World Theory. The analysis demonstrates that psychological experience in these novels is inseparable from the narrative forms through which it is constructed. Rather than presenting psychological conflict as an isolated inner condition, Lessing represents it

through characters' interactions with unstable social, political, historical, and material environments. Narrative form consequently becomes central to the representation of psychological uncertainty, frustration, disillusionment, and conflict.

The comparison of the two novels reveals different but related approaches to this representation. In *The Golden Notebook*, the fragmentation and interaction of multiple narrative domains correspond to the fragmented nature of Anna Wulf's personal, political, and psychological experience. The novel's shifting perspectives and narrative layers require the reader to negotiate relationships among different representations of experience. In *Landlocked*, psychological and ideological uncertainty is more closely associated with changes in Martha Quest's physical and social environments. Her movement through changing political and interpersonal circumstances contributes to the representation of an increasingly uncertain relationship between personal values, political commitments, and possible futures. Despite these differences, both novels connect psychological experience to changes in the worlds characters inhabit.

The study also shows that Lessing represents psychological conflict through the tension between immediate circumstances and projected possibilities. Characters interpret, question, evaluate, imagine, and reconsider their experiences rather than simply responding to external events. Their psychological lives therefore emerge as dynamic processes shaped by competing perceptions, obligations, desires, and possibilities. This interaction between internal experience and external circumstance is particularly significant in Lessing's treatment of post-war social and ideological disillusionment, where individual uncertainty is repeatedly connected to broader historical and social change.

By applying Text World Theory to these two novels, this study contributes to the understanding of how Lessing's narrative experimentation participates in the construction of psychological experience. The cognitive perspective adopted here demonstrates that the relationship between narrative form and psychology can be examined not only at the level of theme or characterization but also through the ways in which textual worlds are constructed, modified, and related to projected mental spaces. The study thus highlights the value of Text World Theory for investigating the cognitive dimensions of Lessing's fiction and, more broadly, for exploring how twentieth-century narrative forms represent complex mental and emotional experience.

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