

Exploring Imaginative Realms: Doris Lessing's Sci-Fi Narratives and Text-World Techniques in the Memoire of a Survivor and Briefing for a Descent into hell

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Doris Lessing's narrative techniques for depicting fictional realms in her science fiction stories. Focusing on two pivotal works, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* and *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, we examine how Lessing employs World-Building Elements and Function-Advancing Propositions, as defined by Gavin's Text-World Theory, to represent imaginary text-worlds and develop the discourse in her science fiction stories. Our analysis reveals Lessing's adept use of supernatural world-building elements, such as one-eyed giants, giant fishes, and armies of angels, to establish the backdrop of her narratives. Additionally, she utilizes unreal, transtemporal, and extraterrestrial actions-such as passing through walls and temporal excursions-to propel the narrative and enrich its discourse. The temporal and spatial elements remain ambiguous and unknown, with narrative progression primarily occurring through mental and relational processes. This examination contributes to understanding Lessing's skill in representing imaginary worlds to convey contemporary issues through narrative techniques.

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1. Introduction

Doris Lessing (1919–2013) stands out as one of the most prolific female writers of the 20th century, known for her engagement with the social and political landscape of her time through fiction. Many of her text-building elements, including characters (enactors) and settings, were inspired by her real-life experiences, particularly her formative years in Zimbabwe. In some cases, the characters she developed closely resembled individuals from her actual life, and at times, she incorporated versions of herself into her fictional portrayals. Consequently, numerous critics viewed her works as autobiographical. Lessing believed that writers have a responsibility to represent the issues of their time. She stated, "Writing acts as a shelter because it gives freedom and serves as a refuge" (Greene, 1994, p. 42). Her environment and the people in her life, including her parents, her second husband, Gottfried Lessing, Dr. R.D. Laing, and Idris Shah, profoundly shaped her mindset and significantly influenced her literary works. Many of her novels reflect aspects of these relationships as well as her exposure to various intellectual and philosophical movements.

In 1970, Lessing encountered Idris Shah, a teacher of Sufism, whose works often employed imaginary stories in a quest format. This exposure profoundly influenced her narrative style, leading to a shift in her storytelling approach. From this point forward, science fiction became a prominent aspect of Lessing's works, often adopting a quest format that reflected contemporary societal conditions and her evolving concerns. During this period, Lessing produced notable works such as *The Memoirs of a Survivor* and *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, in which she sought to depict the various crises faced by individuals and society during the Cold War era in Europe.

These crises encompassed economic, social, political, and cultural challenges, affecting people from all walks of life and spanning different ages and genders. Lessing adeptly portrayed the involvement of diverse individuals in her works. For example, in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, first published in 1971, the central character is an educated, middle-aged man of social standing with a wife and two children. Discovered disoriented and unaware of his own identity in London's main square, he is taken into police custody and later hospitalized as an unidentified patient. Similarly, *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, first published in 1974, features a teenage girl brought to the narrator's house by an unknown man. This girl represents a generation struggling with the frustrations of a collapsing society, striving to navigate its uncertainties and forge a different future.

By incorporating supernatural elements and employing unreal actions in science fiction stories, Lessing invites her readers into imaginary worlds where the constraints of real systematic structures fade away. The present

study seeks to explore the two mentioned novels, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* and *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, to understand how Lessing crafted these fictional worlds and employed narrative techniques to develop the imaginative discourse of the stories. To achieve this goal, Gavin's Text-World theory will be applied to examine Lessing's narrative techniques in utilizing world-building elements and function-advancing propositions at the text-world level of the novels. Various studies have investigated these two novels from different perspectives, and an overview of these perspectives follows.

2. A Brief Note of Previous Works

Various critics and scholars have studied Lessing's storytelling methods from different perspectives, including Hite (1989), Krasniqi (2013), Schlueter (1974), Sprague (1987), and Uzundemir (1996). Lessing's science fiction works, particularly *The Memoirs of a Survivor* and *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, have been analyzed from multiple angles, offering valuable insights that inform the perspective of the present study. For instance, Fishburn, in her book *The Unexpected Universe of Doris Lessing: A Study in Narrative Technique*, argues that "Lessing's science fiction works grapple with the challenge of confronting unfamiliar and alien realities, attempting to comprehend them within the framework of our existing knowledge of the universe" (Fishburn, 1985, p. 56). She examines how Lessing engages readers' imagination and cognition through dialectical processes before returning them to the real world through the narrator. Furthermore, by analyzing the role of the narrator in Lessing's science fiction novels, Fishburn illustrates how Lessing critiques social structures and employs narrative strategies to convey critical viewpoints and advance the storyline. In essence, Fishburn posits that "Lessing utilized science fiction conventions and imagination as a tool for criticizing realism" (Fishburn, 1985, p. 78).

In addition to her analysis of Lessing's works in *The Unexpected Universe of Doris Lessing: A Study in Narrative Technique*, Fishburn explored *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* in a separate study published in *Science Fiction Studies*. In this work, she examines whether the novel should be classified as science fiction or psychological literature and considers the appropriate critical lens for its study (Fishburn, 1988). While acknowledging the debate over its categorization, Fishburn leans toward interpreting the novel as having a psychological orientation, influenced by Dr. R.D. Laing's writings on schizophrenia. Overall, she characterizes *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* as a complex work that resists easy genre classification. More broadly, Fishburn argues that "Lessing sought alternative forms of narrating realism that would allow her to uphold her artistic commitment to society" (Fishburn, 1988, p. 51).

Arntsen, in her thesis *Turning Her Life into Fiction*, examines the role of consciousness in Sufism, describing it as “a mystic philosophy that aims to attain harmony with the spirit of the absolute being” (Arntsen, 2008, p. 17). She argues that *The Memoirs of a Survivor* is ambiguous because “the city does not exist in reality but rather symbolizes the human mind” (p. 20). According to Arntsen, the narrator embarks on a spiritual journey, and the events occurring behind the wall represent both the collective and individual self. Her study provides a psychological interpretation of the novel, suggesting that “different characters in the novel represent various aspects of the narrator’s psyche” (p. 70). She further contends that the novel can be analyzed through multiple lenses, including fictional, autobiographical, spiritual, and psychological aspects. Arntsen concludes that “the reliability of the narrator may be questioned since Lessing has used an internal focalizer rather than an external one” (p. 104). Consequently, readers must rely on the narrator’s recollection of events as presented in her memoirs. While Arntsen’s research offers a comprehensive study of the narrator’s role in Lessing’s science fiction works, other narrative patterns remain unexplored. Nonetheless, her research serves as a valuable resource for scholars and students seeking an in-depth analysis of narrative techniques in Lessing’s fiction.

In her article *Doris Lessing’s Narrative Technique as a Means of Artistic Creation*, Czarnecka (2016) examines the use of multiple voices in narrating *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, a dystopian novel by Doris Lessing. Applying Mieke Bal’s narrative theory, she analyzes three key concepts: narrative, narrative text, and narrative levels. Czarnecka seeks to demonstrate how Lessing employs narrative strategies to unify disparate voices into a cohesive whole. She argues that Lessing constructs the narrative through opposing perspectives before ultimately merging them, describing this process as “the narrative of conflict and reconciliation” and emphasizing “the stylistic effect of disintegration followed by fusion into unity achieved by the writer” (p. 40). Furthermore, Czarnecka examines various narrative elements, including the “perceptible narrator, character-bound narrator, external narrator, focalization, focalizer, and character-bound focalizer,” which contribute to the novel’s complex narrative structure (p. 45). She concludes that “although the readers are presented with a long narrative, which is expected in life writing, the technique of presenting the personal language situation of characters, flavored by distinctive idiosyncrasies of their speech as well as shifts in focalization, creates the effect of a multiplicity of voices speaking” (p. 50).

Clare (1984), in her study *Doris Lessing and Women’s Appropriation of Science Fiction*, examines the concept of self-definition and explores various

interpretations and references to it. She asserts that “each individual's imagination is self-defining” and emphasizes that women’s imaginative capacities evolve due to the challenges they face as women (p. 15). According to Clare, this development occurs because of women’s advancements in other fields. She states, “Lessing’s imagination is the result of her improvement” (p. 27). Moreover, Clare highlights that female imagination differs from male imagination, as both environmental and individual factors shape its nature. She explores the role of gender in fiction, comparing the works of female and male writers. She argues that “female imagination is modern” and that “technology and communication influence their imagination in literary and artistic productions” (p. 89).

Each of the aforementioned critical works has illuminated the researcher's mindset, guiding and refining the methodology of her present study. Considering that the majority of existing studies adopt structural approaches, the researcher was motivated to embark on a cognitive study to unravel Doris Lessing’s narrative techniques. This study specifically focuses on how these techniques contribute to the development of discourse in her science fiction works. The Text-World theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing literary works at various levels, particularly emphasizing the text-world level. This level involves the examination of world-building elements and the function-advancing propositions of the story. Further insights into the application of this theoretical framework in this research are expounded upon in the subsequent section.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study employs Text World Theory (TWT) as the analytical framework to explore the ways in which Doris Lessing constructs fictional worlds in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. Originally developed by Werth (1999) and later refined by Gavins (2007), TWT provides a cognitive-linguistic approach to literary analysis, offering insights into how narratives create mental representations that shape readers' understanding of a text. This approach assumes that meaning in a literary work is not simply derived from the words on the page but emerges dynamically as readers mentally construct fictional worlds based on textual cues and their own cognitive frameworks.

Gavins (2007) structures this theory around three levels: the Discourse-World, the Text-World, and Sub-Worlds. The discourse-world encompasses the immediate context in which the text is produced and interpreted, including the background knowledge, assumptions, and experiences of both the writer and the reader (Gavins, 2016). The text-world, which is the primary focus of this study, represents the mental model constructed by readers based on linguistic input, forming the fictional world in which the narrative unfolds. The sub-worlds refer

to departures from the main text-world, including hypothetical, dreamed, or remembered worlds that exist within the narrative.

Within the text-world level, meaning is shaped by two key components: world-building elements and function-advancing propositions, both of which are central to the construction and progression of narrative discourse. World-building elements establish the foundational structure of the fictional world, encompassing time, space, characters, and objects (Gavins, 2007, p. 32). These elements define the temporal and spatial dimensions of the narrative, provide the setting in which events unfold, and determine the roles of the characters who inhabit these worlds. The coherence and immersion of the fictional world depend on the way these elements interact and are presented to the reader.

In contrast, function-advancing propositions serve as the driving force of the narrative, facilitating movement within the text-world by introducing actions, events, and cognitive processes. These propositions ensure narrative progression, allowing world-building elements to interact dynamically rather than remain static. According to Gavins (2007), function-advancing processes take different forms, including material processes (physical actions), mental processes (thoughts, perceptions, and emotions), existential processes (the presence or introduction of new elements into the text-world), and relational processes (connections between concepts, people, and events). Together, these processes enable the text-world to evolve, shifting perspectives, modifying spatial and temporal settings, and allowing for the emergence of sub-worlds that enrich the narrative complexity.

Applying TWT to Lessing's speculative fiction, this study examines how the author manipulates world-building elements to construct immersive, conceptually rich, and often fragmented realities. In both *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, Lessing challenges conventional narrative structures by presenting disjointed temporalities, surreal spatial arrangements, and psychologically intricate characterizations that defy straightforward interpretation. By analyzing the interplay between world-building elements and function-advancing propositions, this research aims to uncover the mechanisms through which Lessing crafts her speculative universes, engaging the reader in a cognitively complex process of world construction.

Ultimately, this theoretical framework provides the necessary tools to explore how Lessing's narrative techniques contribute to the immersive quality of her fiction, highlighting the cognitive and linguistic strategies she employs to build and develop fictional realities. Through this approach, the study seeks to contribute to broader discussions on world-building in speculative fiction, the cognitive dimensions of literary interpretation, and the role of language in shaping narrative perception.

4. Discussion

The two novels under consideration—*Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*—are pivotal in Doris Lessing's exploration of human consciousness, freedom, and societal breakdown. These works exemplify Lessing's venture into speculative fiction, where she employs extraordinary world-building elements and supernatural occurrences to craft immersive, imaginative worlds. At the same time, they act as vehicles for her criticism of contemporary issues, from psychiatry and psychological control to societal collapse and authoritarianism.

Briefing for a Descent into Hell marks a significant departure from Lessing's earlier work and is deeply influenced by her exposure to Sufi thought through her acquaintance with Idris Shah. The novel focuses on the disintegration of Professor Charles Watkins' mental state, offering a unique exploration of the inner workings of the human psyche. The central narrative revolves around Watkins's battle with amnesia, confusion, and a sense of personal disintegration. Lessing constructs an imaginary world where monstrous creatures, flying ships, and otherworldly phenomena exist, creating a space for the exploration of the subconscious mind and human freedom. In this surreal setting, world-building elements such as "one-eyed monsters" and "peculiar creatures" play crucial roles, reinforcing the themes of psychological fragmentation and the suppression of the human mind by the external forces of psychiatry. Lessing critiques psychiatry's reliance on extreme measures such as electric shock therapy and strong medication, which, in her view, stifle the imagination and prevent the human mind from engaging in a deeper, more liberating exploration of its unconscious. The fantastical world that Lessing constructs serves not only as a metaphor for the inner turmoil experienced by the protagonist but also as a critique of systems that undermine personal freedom and self-awareness.

Similarly, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* blends autobiographical elements with dystopian fiction, creating a world that is simultaneously both imagined and reflective of contemporary societal concerns. The story unfolds in an unnamed city that has descended into chaos following the collapse of a corrupt, authoritarian government. The society depicted is rife with violence, immorality, and disorder, populated by displaced individuals, criminals, and outcasts. The narrator, whose identity shifts between that of a young woman named Emily and a middle-aged woman, serves as both the observer and participant in this crumbling world. Through this fragmented perspective, Lessing explores the collapse of societal norms and the emergence of new, unpredictable realities. Supernatural world-building elements, such as Emily's semi-dog, semi-cat pet and the mysterious ability to "cross the wall," reflect Lessing's interest in Sufi concepts of transformation, boundaries, and the exploration of the unknown. These elements not only evoke a sense of dystopia but also open the door to

imaginative possibilities, where the boundaries between utopia and dystopia are fluid, highlighting the unpredictable nature of the future.

Through the lens of world-building, Lessing's incorporation of fantastical and supernatural elements in both novels can be seen as a deliberate attempt to engage readers in a deeper exploration of psychological and societal themes. The creation of extraordinary worlds allows her to transcend the limitations of traditional narrative structures and confront complex issues, such as the restriction of personal freedom by both psychiatric systems and oppressive societal regimes. In *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, the imaginary world is a projection of Watkins's fractured psyche, while in *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, the chaotic world reflects the disintegration of social and political structures. In both works, the characters' interactions with these worlds propel the narrative forward, employing function-advancing propositions that challenge conventional reality and allow for a broader reflection on human existence.

Lessing's works, particularly during this period, show a marked shift toward incorporating elements of Sufism and psychological introspection into her literary style. Her connection to Idris Shah's teachings becomes evident in the unconventional narrative techniques employed in these texts, where the boundaries between reality and imagination blur, offering a space for exploration beyond traditional storytelling. These techniques, grounded in the text-world level of analysis, emphasize Lessing's capacity to create worlds that are not merely settings for her stories, but active participants in shaping the themes and critiques embedded within her narratives. In *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, the imaginary worlds serve as vehicles for exploring complex issues of freedom, identity, and societal decay, while simultaneously challenging the conventions of narrative and genre.

4.1- Text-World Techniques

The two novels *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* fall within Doris Lessing's realm of science fiction, a genre that allows her to explore complex philosophical, psychological, and sociopolitical themes through supernatural and speculative world-building elements. These elements are not mere fantastical components; they play a significant role in developing the narrative discourse and revealing the inner workings of the characters' minds and societies. Gavins' categorization of world-building elements into time, location, enactor, and object provides an effective framework for analyzing how Lessing manipulates the world-texts in her novels. Within this framework, Lessing uses supernatural occurrences and unreal world-building components to construct a multilayered narrative that explores the tension between reality and imagination.

4.1.1- World-Building Elements

In *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, the protagonist, Dr. Charles Watkins, is initially depicted as an enactor trapped within a mental state of amnesia. The story begins with the disorienting experiences of a man who has lost all recollection of his identity and background. This state of forgetfulness and confusion serves as the catalyst for his journey through various supernatural experiences, including traveling across vast distances via a flying ship and encountering fantastical beings like angels, a one-eyed giant, and otherworldly creatures such as a spaceship and a fly ship. These experiences symbolize the disintegration of boundaries between the mind and the external world, where the protagonist's mental and emotional turmoil manifests in surreal and extraordinary scenarios. The setting of these events exists in a world apart from the real world, offering the reader a glimpse into an alternate reality constructed entirely by the protagonist's fractured consciousness.

Once the protagonist's identity is revealed through the discovery of his wallet, the text-world undergoes a transition. This pivotal moment shifts the narrative from the imaginary text-world back into the real world, reintroducing Dr. Watkins as a well-established university professor. However, even with the revelation of his identity, the boundary between the real and the imaginary worlds remains fluid. As the narrative progresses, the world-building elements transition between these realms, blurring the line between subjective experiences and external reality. The enactors' roles evolve as the protagonist's family and colleagues provide crucial information through letters and medical histories. These objects—letters, medical reports—become instruments that not only inform the reader about Dr. Watkins' past but also propel the narrative forward, changing the discourse's direction. For example, the letter from his student Rosemary Baines introduces a new text-world that delves into Dr. Watkins' past, shifting the narrative backward to explore his previous life and relationships.

The use of letters and medical histories highlights how Lessing employs objects within the world-text to bridge these different text-worlds. The medical reports and letters do not simply serve as narrative devices; they actively facilitate the transition between worlds, creating a layered narrative structure. They also underscore the theme of knowledge—both self-knowledge and external knowledge—and the ways in which memory and identity are reconstructed through the lens of other people's perceptions.

In contrast, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* adopts a different approach to world-building by focusing on the experiences of an unnamed narrator who lives in an unnamed, chaotic city. The narrator, who inhabits an apartment that serves as a boundary between two worlds—one real and one imagined—embarks on a journey of survival, where her perceptions are shaped by the experiences of those around her and her own ability to “see beyond” the physical world. When Emily,

a mysterious girl, is brought into the narrator's life, she introduces a new dynamic into the narrative. Emily's presence serves as an anchor for the development of new text-worlds, particularly as the narrator "crosses the wall" that separates the two worlds. The act of crossing the wall is a symbolic gesture representing the narrator's ability to traverse the boundaries between different levels of consciousness and understanding.

Emily's story, revealed through her encounters with the narrator and through glimpses into her past, serves as a key to unlocking new worlds within the narrative. The wall becomes an essential world-building element, symbolizing both physical and metaphorical boundaries. The narrator's supernatural ability to transcend these boundaries allows the reader to explore the tension between the concrete, material world and the abstract, imaginative realm. The shifting perspectives between these two worlds reveal the complexities of survival, identity, and human connection in a world that is on the brink of collapse.

Another key world-building element in *The Memoirs of a Survivor* is the introduction of characters such as the feral children and the hybrid pet Hugo. These characters, along with the city's disintegration, emphasize the chaotic and dystopian nature of the world Lessing creates. The city, dislocated from any specific time and place, becomes a metaphor for the post-crisis world, where society is fractured and humanity's future uncertain. The temporal and spatial dimensions of the city are intentionally vague, reinforcing the sense of an impending disaster whose cause remains unspecified. This ambiguity serves to heighten the novel's speculative nature, allowing readers to interpret the text-world in different ways.

The use of the hybrid creature Hugo adds another layer of complexity to the world-building, symbolizing the breakdown of traditional boundaries between species, nature, and technology. Lessing's portrayal of Hugo is an exploration of the intersection between the natural and the unnatural, a central theme in the novel that ties into the broader narrative about human survival in a fragmented world. Hugo's existence raises questions about the evolution of life forms in a post-crisis world, echoing Lessing's concerns about the human condition in the face of environmental and societal collapse.

In both novels, Lessing employs supernatural world-building elements not only to advance the narrative but also to engage with deeper philosophical questions. In *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, the protagonist's journey through the imaginary world reflects the disorientation of the self, the search for meaning in a world where identity is unstable and fragmented. In *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, the crossing of boundaries between worlds represents the struggle to find connection and meaning in a fragmented and dystopian society. Through the strategic use of world-building elements, Lessing constructs narratives that

challenge the reader's understanding of reality and imagination, identity and survival, and the role of human agency in shaping the world.

4.1.2- Function-Advancing Propositions

Briefing for a Descent into Hell initiates with two medical reports that Lessing employs to construct a text world containing essential information for establishing the primary discourse. This discourse evolves through material and existential processes as the main enactor's situation is described. The reader learns that the main enactor hallucinates, and prescribed drugs have no impact on his recovery. The narrative then takes an abrupt turn, transitioning from the hospital's represented world to a vastly different one, immersing the reader in a strange world with supernatural world-building elements, such as a flying ship. Traveling by spaceship across continents, oceans, rivers, and forests without limitations, and encountering new scenes and experiences, are actions that advance the discourse through mental and relational processes. These processes unfold in the mind of the unknown patient, as Lessing guides the reader into the main enactor's mind, displaying an imaginary world where humans are free to experience supernatural things without restrictions. Fictional world-building elements, such as monsters, giants, talking fish, and the sun whose light dances, form the backdrop of the novel's imaginary world created by Lessing in the mind of her main enactor and shared with her readers. Interrupting the reader's immersion in the imaginary world and disengaging her from the mind of the unknown patient, the return of the medical reports brings her back to the real world.

Given that much of the story unfolds within the mind of the primary enactor, Dr. Watkins, and the represented text world is an imaginary realm constructed through supernatural elements and actions, mental and relational processes advance propositions that drive the development of the story's discourse. According to Gavins (2007), "the relational process propels supernatural elements because they exist outside real-time and place" (p. 110). Additionally, the enactor's situation is depicted through letters and reports, which further emphasize the role of the existential process in advancing the discourse of the novel. As the story is imaginary, and readers are immersed in the mental flow of the enactor, the dominant processes are relational and mental, as previously discussed.

Continuing the narrative, the represented world abruptly transitions from the hospital to a new and distinctly different realm—an imaginary world centered around a spaceship journey. The narrator is the previously unidentified patient introduced in the earlier reports, and he recounts a fictional world that features supernatural elements, such as flying ships. The presented world is captivating to the extent that the reader becomes fully engrossed, momentarily forgetting

about the individual who was discovered and admitted to the hospital. This immersion persists until a medical report, authored by Dr. Y and detailing the patient's condition, brings the reader's attention back to the hospital setting.

Hanging the reader between the patient's mental imagination and the hospital setting is one of Lessing's techniques to advance the discourse of the story. In other words, the insertion of the medical reports amidst the narrator's fictional narration plays with the mind of both the narrator and the reader, as they are abruptly transported from one text world to another. Essentially, these reports and dialogues, interjected within the narrative, extract the reader from the imaginary realm and place them back into the real world of the hospital. These textual elements play a vital role in presenting Dr. Watkins' character and informing the reader about him. The act of presenting Dr. Watkins' situation and providing information about him is achieved through existential processes.

These processes involve describing the enactor (Dr. Watkins) and identifying his specific situation within the discourse. By employing existential processes, the narrative advances as the reader gains a deeper understanding of Dr. Watkins' background, current circumstances, and his role within the story. Given that the story is predominantly imaginary and the reader is immersed in the mental flow of the enactor, the dominant processes employed are relational and mental. These processes shape and develop the fictional world and the thoughts and experiences of the enactor. However, it's important to note that the material process, although not as dominant, still plays a role in advancing the discourse. Certain actions and events within the narrative have an impact on the development of the story. These actions can range from physical movements to significant events that propel the plot forward.

The Memoirs of a Survivor begins with the narrator's flow of mind. She vividly describes her imaginative visions, encompassing the city, streets, flats, people, and sea creatures like dolphins and whales, alongside bizarre fish exhibiting striking scarlet and green colors. Shocked by the unsettling state of society, the narrator attempts to verify the unusual situation by seeking confirmation from others. The narrator, positioned near her flat's window, perceives the city and society's situation, functioning as a sensor engaging the reader in her mental activity. Since the opening text-world is a mental monologue conveyed through fictional and fanciful world-building elements, accompanied by verbs like 'remember,' 'think,' and 'know,' reflecting the narrator's sensory and mental activity, the narrative unfolds primarily through mental function propositions. The narrator of *The Memoirs of a Survivor* intentionally withholds personal information about herself, leaving the reader unaware of her name, interests, past, or physical appearance. Instead, we must infer details about her character from the text world. This ambiguity is a prominent characteristic of Lessing's science fiction novels, including this one.

Additionally, the novel maintains an air of uncertainty regarding the time and location in which the story takes place. The name of the city remains unclear, but what is evident is that it is a collapsed and chaotic environment, compelling people to flee. By deliberately keeping the reader in suspense and advancing the imaginary world she presents, the narrator builds intrigue and engages the reader in the narrative.

Furthermore, the narrator discloses her ability to pass through walls, a result of her maturity that empowers her imagination. She metaphorically illustrates passing through the wall by breaking a chick's eggshell, asserting that understanding and surpassing limitations commence with a small crack, akin to a chick breaking its shell and freeing itself from confinement. Passing the wall, as well as Emily's entrance are events that switch the text-world and advance the story discourse. By bringing Emily into the story, new text-worlds open in the discourse. She becomes one of the intentional enactors who participate in the discourse and plays a role in advancing it in material processes because she acts based on what she likes without attention to external forces. The narrator acts as a journalist in her narrative; she illustrates Emily as soon as she knows her better, and conveys to the reader.

As the story progresses, the narrator unveils additional layers, particularly details about her living space. Descriptions of her apartment's physical condition, location, and architecture, along with depictions of insecurity, food shortages, and life's essentials, convey the crises afflicting the city. The narrator meticulously paints a picture of the collapsed city in the reader's mind, featuring violent gangs, urban chaos, and disillusioned inhabitants. Although the city remains unidentified, it symbolizes a post-war society thrown off its normal equilibrium. Hence, describing imaginative world-building elements, such as the furnished rooms beyond the wall and Emily's family, gives rise to a fictional text-world through both relational and existential processes. This world is constructed by transcending the wall and entering the narrator's mind, allowing for the development of the discourse through mental processes. Consequently, the reader becomes immersed in a new imaginary text world, maintaining a static movement status while following the story's progression. So, despite the narrator's depiction of her observations through the existential process, the unknown time and location are portrayed using relational processes. While the discourse is constructed through material and existential processes, the advancing processes are predominantly relational and mental. The unknown time and location, coupled with imaginative world-building elements and actions, contribute to the narrative's imaginative nature. In essence, the represented discourse constitutes a world with unknown elements and unreal actions, an outcome of the experienced disaster by the frustrated and distressed individuals, of whom the narrator is one.

5. Conclusion

In both *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, Lessing masterfully develops the discourse through the interplay of relational, mental, and existential processes. The nature of these novels is deeply imaginative, drawing the reader into worlds that transcend conventional boundaries of time, space, and reality. The relational process is crucial for advancing the narrative, particularly through supernatural elements like the flying spaceship in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* and the wall-crossing event in *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. These elements are more than just fantastical devices; they symbolize the existence of alternative worlds that reflect the characters' inner experiences and psychological states.

In both texts, the frequent shifts between the real and imaginary worlds effectively keep the reader engaged, allowing Lessing to explore deeper themes related to societal collapse, trauma, and healing. The interruptions in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*—through medical reports and letters—ground the reader back in the mundane reality, juxtaposing the extraordinary events occurring in the mind of Dr. Watkins. In contrast, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* uses physical transitions, like the act of crossing the wall, to create shifts in narrative space, introducing new dimensions to the text-world. These world-building elements, often blending the supernatural with the psychological, allow Lessing to address contemporary societal issues in an abstract yet relatable way. The imaginative structures of both novels, propelled largely by mental and relational processes, offer a form of escape and healing for the characters, and for the reader as well, inviting them to question the nature of reality and perception.

Through her detailed descriptions of imaginary environments and the supernatural occurrences within them, Lessing encourages readers to visualize the otherwise intangible, making the discourse of the novels vivid and immersive. This strategy, which alternates between the real and unreal, not only advances the plot but also enhances the thematic depth of the works. The existential process, particularly through the characters' interactions with their environments, further serves to deepen the reader's understanding of their struggles, both external and internal.

By writing in this way, Lessing draws on the power of imagination as a tool for addressing the emotional and societal issues of her time. Her later works, infused with a Sufistic sensibility, offer imaginative realms that act as both a refuge and a means of grappling with the complexities of life. Through these mental and relational processes, Lessing's fiction opens new doors for exploration, offering both an escape and a commentary on the human condition in a fractured world.

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