The Journey to Dialogic Self in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and *The Diary of a Good Neighbour*

Doris Lessing'in *The Golden Notebook* ve *The Diary of a Good Neigbour* Adlı Romanlarında Diyalojik Benliğe Yolculuk

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Abstract
The Golden Notebook (1962) and *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) by Doris Lessing are two novels providing insight into the perceptions of their protagonists, Anna and Janna, regarding life and self. When approached from the dialogic standpoint of Russian linguist and literary theorist Mikhail M. Bakhtin, both novels are notable with respect to the conflicts they issue between the self as a monologic outcome of life experiences, and the necessity felt for moving towards a dialogic conceptualization of self, and hence, of life. While addressing the one-sided observation an individual performs in the way she understands her self and surroundings, the novels carry a scrutinizing aspect to the psychological and social impacts of this monologic demeanor. This paper reveals how, in Lessing's two novels, Bakhtin's dialogic principle, and based on this, a concept of dialogic self is applicable. Analyzing the protagonists' relations with their selves, it argues that their monologic interactions with the self and the world evolve into living, dialogic ones fed by their new perceptions.
Keywords: Doris Lessing, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, dialogic principle, self

Öz
Doris Lessing'in *The Golden Notebook* (1962) ve *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) isimli romanları, ana karakterleri Anna ve Janna'nın hayata ve benliğe yönelik algılarına ışık tutarlar. Rus dilbilimci ve edebi kuramcı Mikhail M. Bakhtin'in diyalojik bakış açısından bakıldığı zaman, her iki roman da hayat deneyimlerinin monolojik bir sonucu olarak gelişen benlik ile, diyalojik olarak oluşturulan bir benliğe, dolayısıyla da hayata geçiş için duyulan ihtiyaç arasındaki çatışmalara değinmeleri bakımından dikkat çeker. Romanlar, bireyin benliğini ve çevresini anlama yöntemindeki tek taraflı gözleme değinirken, bu monolojik tutumun psikolojik ve sosyal sonuçlarını eleştiren bir yöne de sahiptirler. Bu çalışma, Lessing'in bu iki romanında, Bakhtin'in diyalojik prensibine dayanan diyalojik benlik kavramının nasıl mümkün olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Ana karakterlerin kendi benlikleriyle ilişkilerini analiz ederken, benlikle ve dünyayla kurmuş oldukları monolojik etkileşimin, yeni algılarından beslenerek, yaşayan, diyalojik bir türe dönüştüğünü savunmaktadır.
Anahtar sözcükler: Doris Lessing, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, diyalojik prensip, benlik

Introduction

As a cultural theoretician, literary critic and linguistic researcher, Russian philosopher Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975) gave utmost importance to see

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into the nature of existence. He evaluated language, literature, and communication within the frame of the "dialogical principle", asserting that every articulation takes part in a dialogue larger than itself, existing beyond time and space. Being open-ended, bouncing back to the past and expanding into the future (1986b, p. 170), this dialogue involves numerous individual, cultural and discursive voices which continually evolve, defy, mirror, and embrace meanings. Bakhtin's dialogical principle applies to the areas of sociology and even psychology, too, in that it enables an examination of human connections on individual and cultural levels. It contributes to the discourse of the self as well since there is not a fixed discourse that coins a single definition or perception of the self.

The link between language and the world is another matter of investigation for Bakhtin. His concept of dialogism suggests that speech consists of a huge inner organization, and when a text employs this property at the highest level, it is regarded as a literary text. In this respect, literature and life lived are not separate or on opposing grounds; rather, there are only differing types of speech units. Literary texts are not to be considered as remote platforms involving languages different from other types of writing, whether they be scientific or daily; however, the variety is in their discourses. Understanding the characters in a work of fiction from the lens of dialogism introduces a way to see the constituents of an individual, i.e., thoughts, approaches, and emotions in an unfolded manner. This study explores the concept of the self based on Bakhtin's dialogic principle in Doris Lessing's two novels, *The Golden Notebook* and *The Diary of a Good Neighbour*. The protagonists, Janna and Anna undergo a transformation which takes them from passively accepting how they have been conditioned to constitute their selves to actively generating new information.

The shift from a conceptualization of living that esteems spending, oblivion, and ignorance of feelings to one that desires to connect, communicate, and feel is a matter Doris Lessing brings to the table in *The Diary of a Good Neighbour***,** a novel about the life of an aged woman, Maudie, from the eyes of a younger woman, Janna. Upon highlighting the significance of establishing a dialogic self, the paper pursues the traces of co-creativity in Janna's speeches and attitude towards Maudie. Juxtaposing Maudie's world, enclosed with economizing and saving, and Janna's world, too much focused on spending up, the novel sews a patchwork of two distinct types of selves that can move in coherence, without subduing one another. Their exchange of notions as well as emotions enables Janna to disfigure her concept of old age and living, and earns her a new, dialogic sense of self. Similarly, in *The Golden Notebook*, Anna, a writer suffering from an inspirational block in her authorship, turns her fragmented notions of life and writing into a collective set of her reflections as a result of embracing her dialogic self. She re-gains the motivation to write, or even a new sort of mindset that delivers her a dynamic perception of feeling motivated. This experience is culminated in her interaction with Saul, a man who deeply touches on her emotions she had previously taken to sleep. In these two novels, Lessing situates her protagonists on a journey, starting with a monologic perception of their selves and ending with an open-ended ground of existing which receive the

influence of the other(s). The reader, hence, is invited to recognize the before and after versions of the selves these characters possess. As fictional texts, these novels serve to proclaim the meaning of self from a dialogic dimension and dislocate any fixed presumption by creating a new mode of existing.

Dialogism as a Framework for Self

Mikhail Bakhtin is renowned with his impact on various fields of knowledge and ideas regarding history, philosophy, and language, which makes it hard to situate him in a single area of research. He argues that his analysis is "not a linguistic, philological, literary or any other particular kind of analysis. … Our study is … on the borders of all the aforementioned disciplines, at their junctures and points of intersection" (in Holquist, 2002, p. 13). His conceptualization of dialogism is based not on separation, borders, and differences, but on the intersection of these. This attitude of him keeps him close to studying pragmatics and epistemology. Languages are, in this case, perfect devices that people use during construction, de-construction, and re-construction of established ideas and structures.

While investigating the connectedness between self and life, Bakhtin claims that there exists a breach between one's mind and the world, but this argument is not led by the eighteenth-century notion that there is no existence except what is perceived by the mind. Dialogic perspective is based on the premise that perceiving the self and perceiving the world do not give identical results; this can easily be understood as the answer to the discordance among the many layers of identity which the self entertains. Bakhtin's reflections on the dialogic principle aim to provide the ways through which one knows the existence of something, and these ways are definitely not targeted at singularity. The bulk of his research is full with arguments against a fixed mood of existence, knowledge, and self. Dialogically speaking, the sense of the conscious in a self exists within its relation to the other. However, this mode of existence is not a reference to polarizing the other against the self, or does not attempt to bind the contrasts together in order to establish a more supreme sense of identity. Indeed, existence of others forms the self. The dialogic self is the fractional connection between one's self and everything which is not that self. In this case, the self in Bakhtin's dialogism is a variable, rather than a fixated entity. It is merely a relation in which the operation of all relationships, including the relationship with oneself, can be conceived. When evaluated within a dialogic frame, this relationship also opens the door to discovering the artificiality of all dual constructs; "self/other is a relation of simultaneity" (Holquist, 2002, p. 18). Importantly, a dialogic self is not a double-edged structure; it is the plurality in a person's perception. This plurality reveals itself within several differentiations between the classifications made by the self and the ones appealing to any other apart from the self. At first glance, such a way to observe and understand life may seem like serving as just a different form of duality, but it is not since the dialogic self adds the variables of circumstance and association which totally relieve the self from emerging as a combination of poles apart. Bakhtinian dialogism suggests that life abounds in meanings, in other words,

"heteroglossia" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 263), and it is improbable to reduce the multiplicity of such an enormous organism into a united term or concept. In his explanation of what is real, Bakhtin again states that self and other are not to be considered as separate poles; rather, they are positioned to assist each other in establishing differentiation. Hence the existence of self is bound with the existence of other, a combination out of which a sophisticated differentiation emerges. At this point, a self is never merely a self: it contains (it)self, any other thing except (it)self, and their connection.

For Bakhtin, the journey towards a dialogic self comprises of four interdependent stages (1986b, p. 159). Firstly, a sign in the physical environment is noticed. This sign, either a word, a phrase, or a person, has both a physical and a psychological aspect in that it stands as a necessity for the next stages to operate in human perception. Secondly, the person establishes the sign as familiar or unfamiliar to herself. The third stage is the instant when she conceives that this sign is important in the context it lives; this context may be present at that moment, or it may be one to come at a further time and space. The fourth stage is the dialogic conceptualization of self where the person allows the messages reflected upon herself through another self. In the process of her structuration, such a self will constantly be dialogic and evolving. In his article "Response to a Question from Novy Mir," Bakhtin informs that subjects' perceptions of themselves, and their ability to see themselves from the outside just as one sees another, are significant aspects of the dialogue (1986a, p. 8). This is imperative because only through this position of a dialogue can new possibilities be brought into being (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 55). Subjects, or people, do exist in the same place at the same time, but they hold distinct viewpoints about the object outside of them, or the other. Indeed, a communication between the selves never equates with their homogenous mixture. At this point, Bakhtin states: "he would see and know only what I already see and know, he would repeat in himself the inescapable closed circle of my own life; let him rather remain outside me" (in Bialostosky, 2016, p. 24). The self, idiosyncratic as she stands, activates her skill to respond. People can perceive matters in their own ways, which grants them that unique and specific ability to respond, and this ability is presumed in several ways (Bakhtin, 1990, pp. l-2).

Self as a Monologue

A dialogic concept of the self stands in opposition to the one operating with a single form of construct while ostracizing other probable varieties, which is monologic in Bakhtin's terms. A monologic self is led by a single, unified perspective, and not flexible enough to break into the dominant voice within. Meanwhile, it is possible for a dialogue to be monologic in human communication, but this is threatening because it kills other voices, suppresses the potentials kept there, and even refuses them. On the other hand, a monologue may be dialogic only by itself. Bakhtin's approach denotes that any positive or negative stereotyping is basically monologic due to delimitation of

the possibilities other than themselves. In this case, stating that an individual's life perspective is a fixated entity is monologic.

For Bakhtin, monologue is an illusionary construct. He positions any monologic construct as a subsidiary to the dialogic nature of the self; it is only there to prove the mechanism of a dialogue. At this point, V. N. Volosinov declares that "the monologic utterance is, after all, already an abstraction. … Each monument [here referred to as monologic utterance] carries on the work of its predecessors, polemicizing with them, expecting active, responsive understanding, and anticipating such understanding in return" (1986, p. 72). These utterances, which form the basis of communication, arrive at, and depart from, a dialogic frame of existence.

In his essay "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences", Bakhtin refers to ideologies which host the factors separating meaning systems from one another. There has been, for Bakhtin, a conflict ongoing between these factors and ones that try gathering these systems back. A monologic stance in this context is the point where the self is kept separate from other various meanings. When monologic, self is only able to reveal herself to the world and make psychological remarks about her existence. Another monologic act would be, perhaps, to generate knowledge and ideas that are not genuinely connected with one's self. This is similar to how a monologic writer characterizes a protagonist with no credit given to his/her utterances, ideas, or world view.

Another indicator of a monologic self is singularity in the perception of meaning and existence. For Bakhtin, from a philosophical standpoint, the only "singular" entity is consciousness, involving diverse ideas and meanings, on both individual and collective levels. Differing selves are transmitters of reality, and this is the only way knowledge of one's self and the world can be obtained. Therefore, reality, on the condition that it exists, is constituted by the consciousness of different selves. The self must be a listener to varying notions all at the same time, contribute her own perception and beliefs to them, and come up with an adjoined version of reality (1986b, pp. 114,163).

Anna and the Dialogic Self in *The Golden Notebook*

The Golden Notebook (1962) is a novel consisting of four notebooks kept by the protagonist, Anna Wulf. These black, red, yellow, and blue notebooks, later crossing on the way and bringing out the necessity of a single, final notebook named as the Golden notebook, are Anna's written records of experiences at different settings. From a formal perspective, these separate notebooks also signify a disconnected nature in the novel's structure, which opens the gate to a dialogic journey between Lessing and the reader, and furthermore, between the reader and the characters. The novel has a polyphonic structure in the Bakhtinian sense of narrative theory (Barnes, 2015, p. 138). Again, due to Bakhtin's argument in "Art and Answerability" that form and ideology go parallel to each other in a novel, one can suggest that the novel's divisional structure serves as a platform for the characters to perform in a dialogic manner.

Before establishing a dialogic connection with the self, essentially embodied by the novel's structure consisting of fragmented narratives embodied by notebooks, Anna's perception of her self, and life in general, has been monologic. Lessing relates to her monologic case as a "block" she undergoes as a writer. She obsessively tries to maintain an objective style of writing. She makes occasional references to switching on intelligence (Lessing, 1999, p. 274), and switching off imagination (p. 17) in the novel. She is conscious of the fact that otherwise what she does would be no different than telling a story, not the truth (p. 77). Anything that leads to feeling the depths of emotions also causes a new story to emerge. "And yet it is so powerful, that nostalgia, that I can only write this, a few sentences at a time. Nothing is more powerful than this . . . willingness, a longing to become part of dissolution. This emotion is one of the strongest reasons why wars continue" (p. 77). Emotions, for Anna, blur the way to truth; they even cause people to make wars and destroy each other. In other words, she is anxious about "feeling" since it would forfend her bond with truth, her safe zone. Like Janna in *The Diary*, she struggles to keep her connection with emotions loose.

Concentrating on an objective style of writing, Anna sets her mind on noting down her daily experiences, and so creating a prose based on truth. However, she is dissatisfied by the result again: "I expected a terse record of facts to present some sort of a pattern when I read it over, but this sort of record is as false as the account of what happened on 15th September, 1954, which I read now embarrassed because of its emotionalism. . ." (p. 411). She even tries putting an end to her act of writing, and collects articles from newspapers to use in the notebooks as representatives of objective pieces of writing.

Apart from her obsession with objectivity, her most obvious monologic trait, Anna underrates art's capacity to lead a shift in people's perspectives in general, and she herself dreams of a greater phenomenon to make a change. Indeed, the art she looks down on here is the one she creates- she is so detached from her creative potential that she makes devaluating mentions of it whenever she can. Regarding the novel of her time as involving the aspects of journalism, she expresses her "suffer[ing] torments of dissatisfaction and incompletion because of [her] inability to enter those areas of life [her] way of living, education, sex, politics, class bar [her] from" (p. 68). Anna implicitly refers to the fragmentation society Britain goes through in the 1950s. She does not feel herself capable enough to generate such "philosophical" writings as to impact people deeply; hence, she is demotivated about being a novelist, and thinks of getting involved with some other worldly task which could benefit the masses.

Meanwhile, Anna's efforts to isolate herself from emotions pay off: she experiences several dark moments which she records on the notebooks. She writes down seeing herself as two people: one standing, and the other, lying, whose "blood and brains" scattered on the pavement (p. 284). While this can be read as traces of personality disorder and insanity, it also hints how Anna splits her identity through ostracizing her intrinsic feelings. Since she perceives words

to be stronger when they are written down than they indeed are, such dark imaginations get more and more violent in her head.

In her monologic posture, Anna associates blockages people put on themselves with sanity and consciousness, thinking that "the essence of living now, fully, not blocking off to what goes on, is conflict" (p. 468); therefore, limiting oneself is the only way to live within the borders of a normal life. This is also the way she herself attempts to live life. She is not able to enjoy her emotions since she constantly shuts them off. At this point, her psychotherapist she calls as Mother Sugar advises her to return to her writing activity since that could make huge impact on the homecoming of her emotions. Meanwhile, Anna breaks up with her married lover Michael, which adds on her detached, split identity. While giving out the impression of a woman desiring a fulfilling married life, she starts getting into sexual intercourses with several men, contributing more to her devastation.

The breaking point in Anna's self-conceptualization emerges when she meets Saul Green, her tenant-to-be, towards the end of the novel. This is also Anna's stepping into the first stage towards the dialogic self. Saul is an American writer who appears to have a psychological disorder showing itself through mental breakdowns. Her initial feeling is everything about him being "jarring, discordant" (p. 547). She says:

> So I went down to the kitchen, leaving him to follow if he wanted. … He was examining me. I have never in my life been subjected to as brutal a sexual inspection as that one. There was no humour in it, no warmth. … It was so frank that I said: 'I hope I pass,' but he gave his abrupt offended laugh again and said: 'Fine, fine'-in other words, he was either unconscious he had been making a list of my vital statistics, or he was too prudish to acknowledge it. … I was uncomfortable with him, I didn't know why, something in his manner. (p. 497)

Anna finds Saul rough, sensing an individual's embodiment of self with no filter included. Obviously, in this second stage, Anna establishes Saul as a sign quite unfamiliar to her self. He throws scrutinizing glances at her when he feels like it, does not display any bashfulness or particular care in his communication with Anna. Such a straightforward exposition of the self subconsciously arouses her, because now, she is exposed to the other side of the valley, parts of her she repressed and pushed to the furthest edges in her monologic perception of the world. Saul's direct manner, self-centered as it is, may also indicate what role he is to fill in the following part of the story: contrary to Anna's obsession with an objective manner of reflecting on experiences, Saul is totally subjective and idiosyncratic.

Saul's idiosyncrasy appalls Anna as they start spending time together. In an instant when he uses "I" language too often, she feels herself shot with bullets (p. 487); he does exactly the thing she carefully refrains from. On the other hand, his selection of words and topics is not sustainable, which astonishes Anna. The man who she met on the first day and undressed her with his eyes, and the man

advising her about marriage right now are the same, though they appear like two totally different people (p. 487). Anna concludes that Saul increases her anxiety with this casualness. He disturbs the patterns she anticipates in a communication.

The time Anna and Saul are involved in a dialogic connection also coincides with the process when Anna sees serial dreams. In one, she sees herself as a male-female dwarf, and Saul, as her mate. She describes how friendly they appeared, and how these "two half-human creatures celebrat[ed] destruction" (p. 518), while at the same time being in love. This dream giving her "a terrible joy" (p. 518) is, obviously, the messenger of the persona Anna is evolving into due to her encounter with Saul; she gets prepared to salute her evils, recognize her forlorn parts, get them together, and step into the dialogic realm. By the reconciliation of her dispersed aspects could she rout that fruitful author out of her self.

The third stage in Anna's dialogic self is initiated by the emotions Saul's existence arouses in her. These emotions begin filling Anna in, the strongest of which is jealousy. Saul is not a man who would promise a loyal relationship with Anna; he regularly visits other women, sleeps with them, and Anna develops an irresistible anger towards it. The feelings she undergoes are not familiar to her; they argue, and at the end of the argument, Saul claims that Anna is using him for the purpose of being happy since she desires a fulfilling relationship and implicitly demands it from Saul. This moment is another instance of Saul's mirroring Anna back to her self. She has been detached from her feelings for so long, now she is invited to reciprocate with Saul, and sew the missing parts of the patchwork back to the whole. After the argument, they go for a coffee and have some chat over topics such as politics and Saul's life in America. Despite the devastating feelings she has been experiencing, she is apparently a few steps closer to her dialogic convergence. Causes that trigger Anna's jealousy do not end for sure, and they culminate in "switching on" Anna's receptor points. During this time, they continue getting intimate, having sex, then detaching due to Anna's jealousy, grief and anger at several occasions. All these help to peel many layers of Anna's monologic posture, and open her to a dialogic expansion. Also, at the end of one sexual intercourse where Saul acts hostile to the degree of violence, Anna says she feels "freed forever by being hurt by him in this way" (p. 582), perceiving the intercourse as a genuine experience of a heartbeat. In other words, she recognizes and affirms Saul's presence is the context he lives.

Saul's contribution to Anna's journey towards the dialogic self perhaps becomes most obvious as he urges her on keeping a single notebook, which is the Golden notebook. He questions Anna on why she keeps four separate notebooks as a writer, and Anna makes her mind on having a single notebook by stating that she "will pack away the four notebooks" and start keeping "a new notebook, all of [herself] in one book" (p. 607). This moment is the breaking point in her perception of life, writing, and everything she had previously been distanced to; moreover, she starts allowing the outer messages given to her self by another, which declares the last step to the Bakhtinian dialogic self . She is about to rejoice in the togetherness, the harmony, the merge of her emotions; they will exist all

at once for the constitution of the dialogic self. She will convey her experiences together with the chaos they emerge from, and gather them on a common platform to mingle without transforming into one another. As Mona Knapp suggests, the Golden notebook operates like a means of compounding what Anna has gone through during her journey in the previous notebooks (p. 54); but further to that, it is an occasion for Anna to fully embrace her self. With Saul's impact on her, and his suggestion of the first line of her novel to come, *Free Women*, she succeeds at putting together a cumulation of her own experiences and the novel's fictional characterization, which is another indicative of the new, dialogic Anna. In this way, the novel she left aside unfinished at the beginning of *The Notebook* is one step closer to completion. Regarding her relationship with Saul, it is now obvious that she employs different aspects of her self while interacting with him; in an instance of jealousy, while he tries to refute he has slept with another woman, she says: "I did not believe him, but the Anna in his arms believed him, even while I watched the two of us playing out these roles, incredulous that we were capable of such melodrama" (p. 612). What she describes as "incredulous" is, indeed, the expansion of perspectives, and the ability in seeing the possibilities, which she is newly introduced to. With respect to Saul's position, it should be noted that he functions as a mere figure in Anna's dialogic evolution. He is portrayed as a character unlikely to change; he is, indeed, the trigger for Anna's process.

Janna's Journey to Dialogic Self in *The Diary of a Good Neighbour*

As a fictional text, *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) employs a plot in which widespread social attitudes are entrenched. The novel issues the companionship flourishing between Janna and an elderly woman, Maudie, despite their differing educational, social and personal backgrounds. Janna's dialogic evolution is narrated in concordance with the companionship she develops with the elderly woman. Among the novel's motifs are illness and isolating oneself, depressing childhood memories, anger toward the husband, and feeling of filth, since Maudie is constantly kept in the house. Barbara Frey Waxman considers this novel as a *reifungsroman,* which issues the protagonist's "ripening and maturing in an emotional and philosophical way" (1985, p. 319). The connection emerging between Janna and Maudie changes the perception of old age as the load into some gift Janna acquires in return for looking after the very old (Lessing, 1983, p. 66).

As a middle-aged woman and the editor of a women's magazine, Janna defines herself as a stylish female proud of her expertise in fashion. She expresses herself further in this case:

> Mother used to say what I spent on my face and my clothes would feed a family. True. It's no good pretending I regret that. It sometimes seems to me now it was the best thing in my life that – going into the office in the morning, knowing how I looked. … Well, I've that if nothing else. I used to buy three, four dresses a week. I used to wear them once or twice, then into jumble. (p. 15)

Janna identifies herself within a culture that magnifies consumption, and builds up a fast style of living. At a point in her life, she gives up "disposable" fashion and starts following a "classical-expensive" fashion, finding it more effectual in the world of consumption. Instead of spending effort for establishing genuine connections with people, she pleases herself by investing her resources in her physical looks. Indeed, too much concentration on the appearance enables a space where she ensures her personal mastery. This is also the space where she protects herself from the emotional pain she would undergo upon losing her mother and husband due to illness. Janna is quite similar to Anna in that both avoid feeling their emotions to the fullest. She is so assertive in this respect that a "madly expensive" dress can be "a bulwark against chaos" (p. 102). She starts keeping a diary even though she seems not to be emotionally devoured by their death. She also writes down her projections in everyday life.

By the time Joyce, one of her colleagues, quits job, Janna decides to pick a part-time position by leaving her full-time editorship. This is also the time when Janna develops a friendship with Maudie, refrains from the giant fashion market as she lessens the density of her activity at the magazine and detaches herself from frequent shopping. As she meets the elderly protagonist, the direction of her focus completely changes and she depicts the meeting moment as she has seen "an old witch", an "old creature" (p. 12). Janna's meeting Maudie corresponds to the time when she undergoes the first and second stages of the dialogic formation of self in an instant. Janna's and Anna's journeys to the dialogic self differ in that Janna's start at the beginning of *The Diary* and sprawls over the plot, whereas Anna starts taking steps into the dialogic recognition towards the end of *The Notebook*.

The huge difference between Janna's and Maudie's individual concentrations is remarkable when they first get together. While Janna shops some make-up products to polish her physical appearance, Maudie is seen buying aspirin since she suffers from chronical pain and tries to relieve herself. In order to complete her purchase, she needs to ask for Janna's support. Following this, the reader feels the vast space between the worlds of these two characters as Janna accompanies Maudie to her flat and happens to see the harsh living conditions in which Maudie survives. The amount of dust and rubbish in the house shocks her. There are also old newspapers, clothes and "everything you can think of" (p. 23) scattered all around. This aspect of Maudie as a saver and piler of all things she possesses is so alien to Janna; she is accustomed to investing, spending and then disposing, which could also be noted as reflective of her self. While Janna takes shelter in remaining a fast consumer, it transpires in exactly the opposite way on Maudie's side; she feels secure as she saves her clothes and goods despite the dirt accumulating with them. She even takes the clothes Janna throws into the wastebasket because of the excrement on them back out. Her house, with the collection of dirt and waste in it, also operates as the macrocosm in which her body, the microcosm, keeps the illnesses and filth to itself, and seems to prolong the distance between the two characters even further. It is not wrong to say that at this stage, Janna's perception would be monologic, cultivated only through her own lens and established set of concepts. The breaking point eventuates with

Janna's re-conceptualization of waste, which also foreshadows the third step to the Bakhtinian self. The initial reflections reaching her from Maudie's world unfold as she says: "I thought of how [me and my colleagues at the magazine] wrote about decor and furniture and colours – how taste changed, how we all threw things out and got bored with everything" (p. 22). Stepping onto the dialogic bridge, she starts to feel the differences between the constructs of the two age groups; this happens only because she perceives Maudie's existence in the context she lives.

As Janna and Maudie get to know each other on a deeper level, Janna starts exploring the other through her self, where she gets into stages resonating with the steps of the dialogic perception. Her previous self had not discovered much about the elderly people. Currently, however, she can spot them anytime, anywhere, as she states: "I thought how I rushed along the pavements every day and had never seen Mrs. Fowler, but she lived near me, and suddenly I looked up and down the streets and saw-old women. Old men too, but mostly old women" (p. 13). Her interaction with Maudie opens the gate to conceiving life from the dimension of transience. A fundamental fact of life, human mortality was a thing Janna had not wished to contemplate on before, as proven by her inanimate reaction against the two deaths she witnessed in her family. Janna bears down on the fact that she will get as old as Maudie some day, and this is the next moment on her way to weave a dialogic net with her self. Now she is on the fourth stage towards her dialogic self, ready to let the messages conveyed through Maudie's presence in. She does not observe old age as the last step of a decline anymore; rather, she starts seeing a certain value attached to the elderly, a meaning beyond grouping, categorizing, or separating. Maudie's old age, hence, is nothing but a point in time, full of experiences.

Janna's acquaintance with Maudie does not solely mean the unintentional union of two women; it means their meeting, clash, getting close, and lastly, upon the dialogue generated by two differing backgrounds, the dialogic evolution of the self. Living life in two different mindsets, they bring their own social, economic, and moral attitudes to the fore. Lessing accredits Maudie as the factor on Janna's dialogic self formation. Her work experience as a milliner inspires Janna since she has keen interest in fashion. She feeds her thoughts with Maudie's experiences and turns them into inspiring references in her journal writing. She even forms the entry part of her diary with Maudie's, and then, several other characters' viewpoints. The reader witnesses Maudie's frequent narrations to Janna about the story with her husband and how she has been struggling with her poor finances since then. Both sadly and courageously, she confesses those days were the worst for her, and people were quite far from empathizing with her. Learning that she encountered comments such as: "Why don't you sell your locket, if you're so poor. … Have you got personal belongings, we can't keep people who have their own resources" (p. 98), the reader, too, gets into the harsh realm where Maudie led her life, and just as Janna does, understands the reason why Maudie is distressed as she currently is. Janna takes another step towards the dialogic self when, being a 49-year-old and thinking as a 90-year-old woman, she voids the Anglo-American polarization of the young and the elderly

(Waxman, 1990, p. 62). Instead of communicating via monologic patterns, the new interaction between the two women provides Janna with the unique, organic exchange of meanings required in her evolution.

Janna is, in a way, compelled to evaluate Maudie's perspective of life. Her entrance to the world of this elderly woman brings about the birth of possibilities through which she, someone different from Maudie but in an active connection with her, will be able to help her. She is aware that Maudie mostly dislikes her, finding her uncaring, cruel (p. 120). Janna acknowledges the elderly woman in the social setting she belongs to. Her emotions, which she prefers dismissing in many aspects of her life, are deeply influenced. However, she does not let her own limits possess the stage and mix with Maudie's. Lessing portrays both women naked, with all their humane traits, errors and monologic postures. They, specifically Janna, then tend to show a considerable improvement from where they started. Janna does not hesitate to make mistakes, learn from them, and give another try. As this relationship continues on the basis of receiving and giving, Janna's observation of Maudie naturally penetrates her monologic being.

Janna's exposure to the physical conditions of the elderly woman is, undoubtedly, the trigger to her softening the rules through which she conceptualized her self. While, in her previous mindset, her mere focus was the welfare of her own self and body, now she gets to do both the physical and the emotional work required to remedy an old body and honor her living. The young woman, keen on her style and looks, comes to the point of searching for woods in a trash container to burn at Maudie's fireplace. At the later stage of her life, she gets creative in her profession and writes novels with romantic and sociological themes, carrying the traces of her new self created by Maudie's existence. Janna's interest in her shortly turns into a feeling of responsibility toward her. This is evident when she undertakes giving Maudie a bath following her illness. She takes care of washing her "private parts" while the water dribbles down her body. Then, she takes her out of the bath and dresses her, first trying to find clean clothes. Meanwhile, Maudie is shameful and totally reflective of how humiliated she feels with all this sickness, poverty and elderliness. At this point, Janna is pretty careful about not hurting her (p. 63). This reveals that Janna has fully embraced a concept of the other, the elderly, as integral with her self. She even starts to muse over her own body image and compare it with the inescapable, predestined reality of a human, ageing:

> I have only to break a bone the size of a chicken's rib, I have only to slip once on my bathroom floor, … at any moment, fate may strike me with one of a hundred illnesses, or accidents … and there you are, I shall be grounded … solitude, that great gift, is dependent on health … and now I greet each day with … what a marvellous, precious thing, that I don't need anyone to assist me through this day, I can do it all myself. (pp. 174–175)

This can be interpreted as Janna's perception of the body getting close to another. They are two bodies of the same kind now; the only factor separating them from each other is "temporality" since "Maudie's body is Jane's future self" (Pickard, 2021, p. 122).

From this time on, life slows down for Janna. Values and emotions she had previously suppressed in the guise of busy work life start coming to the surface. Opening her self up to new details through Maudie causes her blockage of not being able to lament the two deaths she witnessed to get dissolved as well; she now feels that she suppressed her own pain throughout the past years, and they are now ready to be felt, seen, and honored, enabling her spiritual wisdom. Such a deepening in a person's world was ensured only through her approach to the other outside of her self, reaching an understanding of that other without totally leaving her own skill of judgment behind, and concluding that the notion of disgust juxtaposed with an elderly body exists side by side with its grace. This situation is "both repugnant and holy" (p. 20). Her mind is preoccupied by this new perspective now. She says that she "could learn real slow full enjoyment from the very old, who sit on a bench and watch people passing, watch a leaf balancing on the kerb's edge"; she watches "[a] shopping basket belong[ing] to a girl who has a child in it [and] is in love with the child. . . watched by old people who smile with them" (p. 174). Encountering with Maudie's filthy body and all the fresh meanings entering her world earns Janna what was previously missing, which later on will affect her individual relationships with her workmates and nieces, or her areas of interest.

In another instance, Maudie feels anxious about the possibility that she will be made to abandon her house due to its extremely poor conditions and her health risk. So, she stubbornly argues for her freedom in decision-making. Janna assists her in this process with her new, dialogic form of the self. While the old woman is blaming herself for not being able to keep the house neat and tidy anymore because of her bad health, for instance, Janna looks around, and thinks how beautifully this old woman managed to preserve some objects and photos from her past (p. 211). Therefore, it is correct to state that Janna has developed a dialogic sense of self, also leading to her dialogic connection with Maudie. Like Saul in *The Notebook*, Maudie is observed as the assisting figure in the formation of Janna's dialogic self. Both Saul and Maudie are functional characters in that they serve to initiate a period of change with their existence.

In *The Diary*, what Lessing suggests with the character of Janna, just as she does in *The Notebook* with Anna, is not an idea of a compound unity but a union within the self, in which divisions simultaneously partake. It would be spot-on, in this case, to claim that Bakhtin's dialogism is taken out of the realm of language and performed by Anna and Janna in their identity transformation. Just as language in Bakhtinian terms is supposed to be a dialogic bridge between human and the world, the bridge these women set between their selves and attitude to the elderly and authorship is set up as dialogic. This bridge is built with exchanges, reciprocities, conflicts, and feelings, which are all real and alive.

Conclusion

It could be noted, then, under the light of Bakhtin's dialogic perspective, that the conceptualization of an established self and the creation of a dialogic relation both within self and to the other are on opposite grounds to one another. Traditional discourses of self, with all fixed beliefs, codes and norms, are

monologic, while a receptive, living concept of self is dialogic. Both novels may even pinpoint various meanings of self in various reading settings since readers re-produce meanings as their selves are, from a Bakhtinian point of view, always in the melting pot due to changing dynamics of their lives and perceptions. As Bakhtin suggests, dialogues are constantly on the way of re-production and the last word can never be said (1986b, p. 170).

The expression of oneself is limitless just as a dialogue is; it exceeds time and space. Temporality and contingency are what generate the dialogic perception. When two given polarities are juxtaposed, they do not carry out the good-and-bad, proper-and-improper traits; they both serve in and contribute to the open-ended meaning of a being, an utterance, or a sign. In this multiplicity may one recognize the real, dialogic constitution. Similar to Bakhtin, Lessing rejects a style incorporating different ideas in a single basket; on the other hand, she is supportive of an interactive web of exchanges. Both novels embody this with the perception of life the two protagonists consequently adopt; unity in their dialogic journeys is a concept no more than the gathering of infinite singularities and the creation of a phantasmal integrity. The reflection of this integrity becomes visible when, in *The Diary*, Janna sees her future self upon looking at Maudie, and in *The Notebook*, Anna decides to keep the last notebook, which is able to involve many fragments and which brings the novel to end in an unexpected manner. Both novels end with the merge of the several aspects of the self, the former with Janna's expansion toward a more caring mindset regarding life and the elderly, and the latter, with Anna's progress into a more sophisticated way of perceiving life, literature and pencraft. Though in different scenarios, both women leave their monologic postures behind, lay their claim on their forlorn pieces, and keep on their life journey.

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