

The ‘Marginal Woman’ Anna in Doris Lessing’s the Golden Notebook

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Abstract: Doris Lessing is one of the most influential female writers in the history of English literature, and she also occupies an important position in the world literature. In 2007, Lessing’s novel *The Golden Notebook* won the Nobel Prize in Literature for “writing an epic of female experience”. Not only that, Lessing’s masterpiece has also been used as an independent textbook for women by millions of people around the world. Lessing boldly exposed the sensitive issues between race and gender; Moreover, she truly reflected the inequality and conflicts between colonists and African colonies, as well as between men and women. Lessing expressed her concern about the living conditions of marginalized women in society through the *Golden Notebook*, and hoped that through her work, she could call on people to protect and respect marginalized blacks, women, and the weak. This article analyzes the marginalization plight faced by Anna in the *Golden Notebook* from the perspective of marginal people. Combining the character and experience of the characters in the novel, this article will make a specific analysis of the marginalization of Anna in different aspects.

Keywords: Doris Lessing, Free Women, Marginalized People, Survival Plight, Capitalist Patriarchy

1. Introduction

Doris Lessing is one of the most influential female writers in the 20th century. Her creative time lasts for 60 years. In 2007, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for “writing an epic of female experience”. Lessing uses women as an entry point to show the full picture of society in the 20th century, as well as the deeper survival crisis encountered by individuals in the process of self-construction. It is true that the experiences of the female protagonists in Lessing’s writings together constitute a complete history of modern women’s struggles, writing modern women from the budding of free thought to adapting to independent survival, from attaching to the family to leaving resolutely, and also from physical liberation to spiritual liberation. Her masterpiece the *Golden Notebook* is used by millions of people around the world as an independent textbook for women[1].

Lessing’s works are inspired by her observation of life as well as her rich and bumpy life experience. The marginal experience and dual marginalized identities she had since childhood brought a huge psychological test to Lessing, while also had a profound impact on her writing. Her creation has obvious marginal nature, so almost all of her works show a unique marginal style. Her works not only involve marginal themes such as homosexuality and African black subjects, but also shape a large number of marginalized images, showing the characteristics of marginality in multiple levels such as space and social culture.

As Doris Lessing’s most important work in her mid-stage creation, *The Golden Notebook* is also the most influential one of her many works. The novel consists of five notebooks and the story “Free Women”. The black, red, yellow, and blue notebooks and “Free Women” are repeated four times in sequence, and finally a *Golden Notebook* is the end. The Black Notebook represents Anna’s creative life, The Red Notebook shows Anna’s political demands, the yellow one tells Anna’s emotional world, blue narrate Anna’s complex mental state, and the gold represents the “truth” Anna has been pursuing.

“Marginal people” is a broad conceptual category. The “marginal people” referred to by sociology are “unsocial people who are highly separated from social relations”. The theory of “marginal people” was born in the early twentieth century and matured in the 1930s. The concept of “marginal people” was first proposed by a German psychologist named Kurt Lewin (1890-1947). To elaborate on the concept of “marginal people”, we must first have a certain understanding of the “outsiders” proposed by the German sociologist and philosopher Simmel. The “outsiders” referred to by Simmel refers to

those who stay in a certain place for a short time in space, but are incompatible with the local society, so such outsiders are always in a state of vacillation. The “marginal people” who are rejected by the mainstream culture of society or who have always drifted away from the mainstream values are often in a turbulent age. Due to their spiritual beliefs, moral orientations, values, ways of thinking, etc., they are different from the mainstream culture. “Marginal people” are mostly at a disadvantage in society. Due to the disadvantaged position of “marginal people” in society is relative to mainstream social groups, they not only have no advantage in terms of quantity, but are also a weak group in terms of strength.

2. Chapter one Anna as new woman in marginalization

In *The Golden Notebook*, as a representative of “new women”, Anna has been divorced, so she has no chains of marriage. The divorce freed her from the cage of marriage. Professionally, Anna is a writer. Now she relies on the copyright fees in her popular novel *Frontier of War* to earn about 500 pounds every year. She does not rely on men to provide her with financial support. As a female writer, she is free to write what she wants. In addition, she also participates in progressive political activities. Generally, Anna is an intellectual with independent thinking and economic consciousness. Because of her free relationship with men, she is called a “new woman” and she gives up her traditional role as a housewife. Anna seems to get rid of the limitations of the concept of patriarchy. However, even though Anna gets rid of the shackles of marriage and gains financial independence, she still suffers from various difficulties in politics, gender relations and writing. In the long run, these “new women”, represented by Anna, gradually lose their subjective individuality and gradually move towards a dilemma of marginalization[2].

2.1 Double marginalization in colony and England

As the feminist movement reached its peak in the 1960s, women at the time began to recognize that they were independent individuals, rather than traditionally male housewives. They were fighting for equal rights with men in many aspects, even in the political field. Therefore, some women were liberated from family affairs and devoted themselves to public activities.

Anna is just one of the “new women” with political consciousness and beliefs. In 1950, she was attracted by the communist theory that helped ordinary people to change their difficult living conditions and low social status, so she joined the Communist Party of the African colonies, and began to participate in various political activities as a glorious communist. As a “new woman” with independent thinking, she once imposes all her political ideals on the Communist Party. Not only does she need this identity to help her realize her political ideals, but she also wants to get rid of the chaos she has fallen into. She hopes to use her own power to do something for the establishment of a just and ethical society deep in her heart. This idea comes from her experience in Africa. She has witnessed the oppression of African people and the serious racial problems in an unfair society. Since then, she has made up her mind to work hard to help them get free [3]. At first, she is very enthusiastic about studying Marxist theory and has discussions with other members of the organization on political issues in Africa. However, as the days pass, Anna gradually understands the true nature of this organization. It neither unites the African people nor has any impact on their liberation. This organization is mainly composed of white people and is not trusted by African revolutionaries at all, so they have never really established any effective connection between Africans and their members. Facing this nihilistic organization, Anna gradually becomes a marginal person outside the Communist Party.

With the belief to challenge reality again, Anna once again joined the political group-the Communist Party of England. In *The Red Notebook*, Anna described her confusion and suspicion of the British Communist Party. The purpose of her joining was to realize her political ideals, but found that the situation was the opposite. Party members did not conform to their original belief that they wanted to help people live a better life as well as eliminate poverty and injustice. Instead, Anna noticed that they even cheated on each other. For example, when Anna worked for the communist publisher John Butte, her contact with the publishing industry led her to learn a lesson on how the Communist Party ignored the truth. People were actually not interested in the facts, but only cared about how to fake the truth into what they wanted to see. Anna felt very disappointed and frustrated with the party, and once again wandered on the fringe of the Communist Party. Anna knew that the organization could not satisfy her “integrity” and the need for the integration of divided self.

Therefore, Anna’s political activities bring her more serious trauma, rather than a cure for mental breakdown. Faced with various obstacles, Anna realizes that in the past few years, the country had

undergone earth-shaking changes, full of tension and anxiety. It is easy to lose balance, but the British Communist Party cannot guide people to build an orderly new society. Even so, Anna is still unwilling to give up her political fantasy. Although Anna neither wants to get involved in this hypocritical political chaos, nor does she want to face the chaos of daily life. This is a sense of self-separation. On the one hand, Anna condemns the mistakes made by the British Communist Party in her notebook, but on the other hand, she is powerless. This ambivalent attitude towards the party strengthened Anna's dual character. She neither demonstrates the courage to face real life, nor the ability to grasp the chaotic nature of life. This sense of marginalization outside the two Communist Parties eventually forces her to give up political activities, but once again falls into a strong sense of frustration. Facing with the disillusionment of political disillusionment, she can only turn to the spiritual world.

2.2 Marginalization of sexual relations

Anna experiences a failed marriage and divorces after the birth of Max's daughter Janet. As a "new woman", Anna refuses to enslave men she doesn't love in her married life. Traditionally, a woman will never accept divorce easily because she believes that she should play the role of a docile housewife and take care of her husband and children. But Anna is different. She cannot bear the situation of most married women. She can directly reject Max's sexual demands and has the courage to get rid of her wrong marriage and pursue freedom. Anna believes that the most important factor between lovers should be mutual understanding and common interests. The natural combination of gender and emotion constitutes a perfect relationship. She puts herself on the edge of this marriage, so she firmly withdraws from the marriage with Max and takes the initiative to fight for her true love. Despite being financially independent, Anna still has a strong emotional attachment to men. After being single again, she begins to enjoy sex and participates in several relationships with different men to release feelings of loneliness, futility and disgust[4]. From the bottom of her heart, she feels that she needs a man who is strong enough and able to rely on. This tender and fragile emotion actually limits Anna's pursuit of true freedom, because it seems that it is difficult for Anna to gain emotional independence and live a single life.

In her relationship with the doctor Michael, Anna plays both a mother and an excellent writer, both critical and intellectual. However, this dual identity is what Michael hates most, because he believes that women should obey men and take care of the daily meals in the traditional way at home. In the novel, Michael treats Anna as an inferior person. He doesn't think Anna is an equal person because he doesn't recognize that women can succeed in society like men. He denies Anna's achievements and subjectivity in society. He always emphasizes his authority as a male and oppresses Anna in terms of sex, which affects her pursuit of independence. Although Michael brings her hurt or pain, Anna still wants to be by his side because she is too dependent on Michael emotionally, unable to leave him or imagine a single life without him. In this sense, Anna is no longer the "new woman" she originally calls herself, but a fragile woman. In this relationship, Anna loses her sense of self and the meaning of existence in her life, and is gradually marginalized. As a marginal person in the relationship between the sexes, Anna does not choose to fight but silently accepted. In her opinion, nothing is more important than Michael. As long as Michael doesn't give up on her, she is willing to make any sacrifices. However, compromise is never an effective way to maintain love and prevent tragedies. What Anna's efforts gains is not the happiness she dreams of, but the loss of Michael.

Anna doesn't realize that she is in a passive position in the interaction with her lover. Her blind feelings for Michael deprives her of her subjectivity and independence. Despite her abilities as a novelist, rationalist, and political activist, she still could not stop her obedience to Michael. Anna has realized her marginal position in love. This puts her in trouble, frustrated, and eventually crashes her. Although she is independent, she relies on men spiritually, and her life is controlled by men. Therefore, Anna loses her identity. Without an independent identity, Anna is just an accessory to a man, not a "new woman". The "new woman" represented by Anna wants to be independent, but she fails to achieve freedom. Although they get rid of the "cage" of marriage and gain financial independence, they could not get rid of the blind emotional feelings towards men, which would affect their subjectivity. On the contrary, men tend to control and oppress women mentally and physically. In love, women always lean towards men. There is too much domination and subordination between men and "new women". Under such circumstances, "new women" lose their subjectivity mentally and physically and become marginalized. Therefore, their attempts to get rid of the shackles of patriarchy and become independent women are unsuccessful. This means that women who are not spiritually independent cannot gain real freedom.

2.3 Marginalization of “split selves”

The society has gone through a historical period of drastic changes in the early 20th century, and material wealth has been greatly improved than ever before. However, the inherent contradiction between social production and private ownership is more acute than ever. In the bleak experience of the First World War, people lost their material wealth and spiritual support due to the collapse of the social economy and the destruction of traditional world politics. Therefore, with the diversification of beliefs, people gradually doubt the world and even themselves.

Due to the special historical environment at that time, modernist literature prospered due to various literary methods, which shows the inner hope of writers to rebuild the human world order, unite and alienate individuals and seek self-identity. As a female writer, Anna writes the novel *Frontier of War*, which tells the story of the racial state of Central Africa during World War II, with the purpose of exposing the racial problems in Africa. To her great disappointment, the essence of this novel is distorted and regarded as a love story. It can be seen that the film producer neglects the artistic value and only adapts her novel to meet the needs of the film market. In the end, Anna couldn't control her depression and broke out. “What is it for? Should I respond to any these in spoil for TV or films. All I need to do is say to myself: you are right to write. It's just ugly and humiliating you should just keep out of it”. (Doris Lessing, 2011:467) All in all, Anna is confused by the truth and cannot adapt to the materialization of the world.

Anna cannot write normally; Moreover, her creativity and ability in writing are hindered. Her problem is to doubt the relationship between the novel and reality, and even doubt the hypothesis between women and gender, which cannot maintain the reliability of women. She concludes that the relationship between men and women is inherently unequal, and the conflict between family and occupation is huge. *The Blue Notebook*, a diary, reflects the abyss of suffering between her ideal and reality and the process of mental breakdown: the fear of death and destruction. In the end, Anna tries to record four different notebooks to avoid becoming insane, even though her career is a mess.

For “new women”, they must maintain a balance between ideals, career and family. In *De Beauvoir's* words, if a woman wants to keep their balance, paying the price and making concessions and sacrifices is the key. Taking responsibility and struggling in conflict is a necessary process to eliminate resistance in the pursuit of patriarchal society.

Anna hasn't realized that the irrationality that emerges in her writing is subconscious, which constitutes a basic part of life. No matter how hard she tries, it seems that she would inevitably get rid of nihilism and irrational emotions. However, her belief in rationalism and her inner irrationalism fight fiercely, which on the one hand strengthen her sense of frustration and despair. As a writer, words use to be the only way for her to show confidence and create a better life. It is also the most powerful tool to help her overcome confusion and maintain self-improvement. However, when she realizes that language can no longer be used as a medium to express her true voice, her writing ideal is broken, and she is on the verge of collapse. Perhaps for her, the solution is to divert her attention to other objects.

3. Chapter two causes of the marginal women's plights

In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna as a type of “new women” trapped in a dilemma of marginalization. There are two causes of the marginal women's plights. The first one is the oppression of women by the patriarchy. In the patriarchal society, the status of women is very low, and they generally lose the right to speak. These women have become accustomed to the oppression from the patriarchal culture, so they cannot confirm their identities, resulting in a lack of identity. Once they lose the right to speak, these women will gradually lose their self-awareness in silence. The combined effect of lack of self-consciousness and lack of identity will completely push women to the edge. The second one is conflict between Anna's thought and era.

3.1 Oppression of patriarchy

In a patriarchal society, men occupies the supreme position, that is to say, men hold most of the important positions in the upper class. Constrain women in all aspects of life, such as politics, marriage, economics, and social status. According to this, not only “new women” but also traditional housewives are facing marginalization, and the external reason that makes them fall into the predicament of marginalization is the oppression of patriarchy. Although Anna is not bound by marriage, her male

attitude towards sex still makes her lose subjectivity and be marginalized. Madsen (2007) gives a definition of patriarchy. "Patriarchy is a culture that privileges men and masculine and a political system that places that power in hands of men." (Madsen, 2007: VI). In other words, in a patriarchal society, men belong to the public society, and they hold absolute rights and rule this society. On the contrary, women belong to a private society. Under the influence of the patriarchal culture, they are the objects to be ruled, without any power.

The dilemma of women being marginalized in a patriarchal society was caused by the patriarchal phenomenon in society at that time. In a patriarchal society, men treat women as foils, and they believe that women's existence is to prove and highlight the abilities and status of men. Since then, women have been labeled as submissive, negative, and weak. This social status quo of male superiority to female inferiority is taken for granted, and has been extended and expanded in various social activities. However, these unequal customs and concepts not only oppress women physically, they also harm women mentally. Over time, some women have internalized the concept of patriarchy, and they began to think that their value depends on how much time they spend taking care of their families and children. According to the definition in *The Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology*, the term internalization means "the incorporation into the self of the attitudes and standards of others" (Sutherland, 1995: 230). Internalizing the social demands for wives and mothers, women "constantly recognize their willingness to sacrifice themselves, to become the passive acquiescent givers" (Whittaker, 1988: 70). In other words, these women themselves agree and accept this fact. However, whether they are traditional women or "free women", they are not marginalized from birth, but the cruel patriarchal society makes them marginalized.

As a representative of "new women", Anna is different from traditional women, she is full of rebellious and challenging spirit. She didn't care about the strange perspective of society, she bravely got rid of the unfortunate marriage, and obtained a stable income by publishing the book she wrote. Although Anna has regained her right to speak and independence as a woman, she still lost her subjectivity in the face of love and sex. For Anna, in this patriarchal society, it is the men's attitude towards sex that marginalizes Anna. Although Anna has become a "new woman", this does not mean that Anna has escaped the oppression of a patriarchal society. As a "free woman", Anna's sex life is too free and open, leading to her becoming the focus of discussion by some traditional women in society. Traditional housewives believe that "free women" are unscrupulous and without self-discipline, while men believe that "free women" are sexually hungry and easy to obtain. Patriarchal culture affects and restricts women's sexual freedom to a certain extent. Men consider themselves to be the subject of sex, and they only regard women as a tool to satisfy their sexual desires. However, for women, they believe that body and soul are inseparable, that is, sex is a combination of body and spirit. It is not difficult to see that women are dependent on men in sex, they fall into love unconsciously, and then give up their subjectivity.

All in all, although Anna got rid of the shackles of marriage and traditional concepts as well as achieved freedom in economics and marriage, the influence of patriarchy on her has not disappeared. Anna's emotional dependence on men made her lose her subjectivity unconsciously. Although "free women" like Anna have gained independence and freedom, they still yearn for true love. It is precisely because of this that their love for men will always be transformed into service to men. In contrast, men become the main body in this relationship, not only physically, but also spiritually mastering and controlling women. Despite Anna's efforts to pursue freedom and maintain independence, under the oppression of patriarchy, she still lost her subjectivity and became a marginal person in the relationship between men and women.

3.2 Conflict between Anna's thought and the era

The capitalist patriarchal society that Anna lived in is the external cause of her marginalization. At the same time, there are other internal reasons that make her fall into the predicament of marginalization. As a "new woman" in contemporary society, Anna's thinking goes far beyond the development of the times. She pursues freedom and she has the courage to get rid of the shackles of marriage. Unlike other traditional housewives, Anna is independent and subjective. However, even though Anna calls herself a "free woman", she has not been truly free.

First of all, Anna has her own thoughts on politics. As a progressive woman, in order to become a faithful woman, Anna actively participates in communist activities. With the hope of finding a destination in politics, she volunteered to join the Communist Party and began her political career. Anna supports social change and attempts to seek fair social forces. Not only that, Anna also actively

participated in various political activities within the organization, paying attention to the social system and the trend of the world situation. The Black Notebook records the main content of Anna's representative work *Frontiers of War*. This notebook records in detail Anna's early political life as a communist. In the same faction with Anna, there are other six people with different identities from different places. Their splintered faction holds weekly meetings in the Gainsborough hotel. The content is usually to analyze the international situation and discuss how to change the African colony. Although it seems that Anna enjoys the same political rights as men in the group, the reality is that Anna and another woman named Maryrose have no right to speak. The other men in the same group just treated the two women as beautiful ornaments or sexual objects. It is not difficult to see that women who only participate in political activities on the surface cannot be politically equal to men.

In fact, the pursuit of love, freedom, and equality is the real reason for Anna to approach the left. However, the Communist Party ultimately failed to lead Anna, who was ideologically advanced, to freedom and out of marginalization. On the contrary, Anna's political ideals were shattered, and she was confused about her identity.

Anna has a very strong sense of self. She does not want to be bound by traditional marriage, so she is divorced and has a stable source of income through writing. Beauvoir once mentioned: Economic independence is the basic element of women's road to freedom. In other words, only when women stop relying on men and obtain financial guarantees can they begin to pursue their subjectivity and freedom. This means that in contemporary society, Anna no longer needs to rely on men to survive, let alone seek financial help from men. These changes and differences made Anna a "free woman".

Under the capitalist patriarchy, women are regarded as sexual objects. For these women, their sex lives are not satisfied, not only because they cannot experience the same happiness and enjoyment as men, but also because of the oppression and disappointment brought to them by the patriarchy. Anna realized that men only regarded them as sexual objects, and she was unwilling to accept this reality and become marginalized sexual objects. So in order to break this oppression and marginalization, they must change this state of inequality between men and women. Anna is a woman who dares to pursue happiness and freedom. Her thoughts are advanced and independent, so she bravely refuses sexual demands.

However, economic independence does not mean spiritual independence. Anna is a woman with a foundation of freedom, but she is not truly free. Economic independence is the basic factor for women's freedom, but not all factors. "Free women" like Anna have not changed their consciousness of taking lovers as their principals, so they are not absolutely free.

Under the influence of patriarchal culture, men generally believe that women should be nurtured and educated by men. It is precisely because women have no economic advantage that they are always marginalized in society and family. However, in order to gain the dignity as women, some women with advanced ideas have constantly awakened their self-awareness and have begun to take a path of resistance to the patriarchal culture.

In summary, it is not difficult to see that in a society dominated by a patriarchal culture, women face marginalization in all aspects. In order to resist this oppression or change the destiny of women, Anna took action as a "new woman", trying to improve her status and rights in politics, economy and sex.

4. Chapter three marginal women's existence and freedom

4.1 The unification of Anna's spiritual world

As a representative of the "new women" in the capitalist patriarchal society, Anna did not realize true freedom. On the contrary, Anna's spiritual world was severely hurt, disappointed with the Communist Party, disillusioned with love, and obstacles to writing as a writer. Faced with the unsatisfactory aspects of life, Anna gradually began to break down emotionally and even split her personality. The appearance of Saul and his departure can be said to have promoted Anna's self-unification and integration to a certain extent.

Anna once chose to participate in the protest movement of the left-wing liberals in Africa, after which Anna joined the British Communist Party with confidence. However, things did not go as smoothly as Anna thought. After joining the Communist Party for a while, Anna found that neither the left-wing liberals nor the British Communist Party could help her realize her political aspirations. Anna

felt very disappointed and helpless, her political ideals were disillusioned. In addition, she finally realized the powerlessness of women in political life and the marginalized status of women that she could not change. In the end, Anna chose to withdraw from the Communist Party. Since then, Anna has spent a long time thinking and adjusting her mentality. She understands how small she is in society, not to mention that society will undergo qualitative changes due to her efforts. Therefore, Anna chose another way to realize her social value. Anna no longer yearns for the grand blueprint that cannot be realized. On the contrary, she started to be down-to-earth and tried to integrate into the most basic life of the British from small things. After experiencing so many difficulties and twists, Anna decided to join the Labour Party and do her best to serve the society and people. This wise decision not only helped Anna escape the predicament of being marginalized by the colony and Britain, but also gave Anna a chance to fight again. Of course, Anna seized this opportunity to change herself, that is, from the previously unrealistic dreams to the down-to-earth action now. Anna reached a consensus with her own heart. Her firm ideals and beliefs made her shoulder the responsibility of changing society. She did not choose to give up her political ideals. Instead, she re-entered the political society as a volunteer. Anna truly got rid of the marginalization dilemma she faced between the colony and Britain; moreover, through self-healing and self-integration, Anna realized her life value and meaning.

Secondly, although Anna has left her unhappy marriage and gained financial independence and freedom, she still relies heavily on men when facing sex problem. Obviously, this contradicts the “free” life that Anna is pursuing. It is not difficult to see that this is also the main cause of Anna’s schizophrenia. However, the appearance of Saul changed Anna’s life again. Saul Green is an American expatriate and writer. He came to England and lived in Anna’s apartment. The relationship between Saul and Anna is very complicated. They tortured each other, yet they love each other. In other words, they were in pain and in love. Although Anna and Saul were dissatisfied with each other, after getting along for a while, they slowly began to understand each other and gave each other enough space and freedom. In this way, Anna and Saul finally found the best mode for their to get along in this love.

“I felt towards him as if he were my brother, as if, like a brother, it wouldn’t matter how we strayed from each other, how far apart we were, we would always be flesh of one flesh, and think each other’s thoughts.”(Doris Lessing, 2011:461)

In this love, Saul helps Anna find her true self deep in her heart. Through the way of getting along with Saul, Anna seems to have found a positive and optimistic attitude to face the departure of her lover. Anna’s mind is no longer split, she has a new definition of love and sex. In fact, Anna and Saul realized mutual rescue, Anna realized the inner self-integration with Saul’s help, Saul also redefines love under the influence of Anna. Not only that, Anna learned how to transform love into a more lasting family relationship, she realized that love is to give freedom rather than mutual restraint and control. To a certain extent, Anna has already understood the meaning of a true “free woman”. Her maturity and progress in the relationship between the sexes has turned the marginalized Anna into an independent Anna. What’s more, she has taken another step forward on the road to becoming a true “free woman”.

Thirdly, after Anna finished her first but also the only novel *Frontier of War*, Anna suffered from writing obstacles. The main reason is that Anna realizes that her works cannot change the chaotic social status quo and the divided self. Anna once naively believed that as long as she had the right to speak, she could speak for the people of the lower class and expose the inequality and oppression of women in this patriarchal society. However, things did not develop as Anna thought. Faced with the huge gap between reality and ideals, Anna realized her powerlessness. Therefore, Anna suffers from a writing disorder and she decides not to write anything.

Just when Anna was struggling with her inner self, Saul appeared in Anna’s apartment. The appearance of Saul not only regained Anna’s confidence in love, but also helped Anna overcome writing barriers. Apart from the love relationship with Anna, Saul often encourages Anna to rewrite to help her overcome obstacles. No matter what time or occasion, Saul often irritated Anna. “You’ve got to start writing again.” “You’re going to write that book, you’re going to write it, you’re going to finish it.” Anna smiled helplessly. She didn’t understand Saul’s behavior. When she asked why, Saul said, “Because if you can do it, then I can.” (Doris Lessing, 2011:459) In this way, Saul wrote the opening chapter of her next novel for Anna: “The two women were alone in the London flat.” (Doris Lessing, 2011:459) At the same time, this sentence is also the opening sentence of *The Golden Notebook*. It can be seen that Anna has overcome her own writing barriers. More than that, she no longer loses confidence and avoids herself because of the complicated social status quo. Anna’s divided inner world has begun to integrate again, and she is no longer the marginal one of her inner self. It can be said that Anna broke through the chaotic self and finally achieved freedom and liberation by overcoming these

difficulties.

4.2 The significance of marginal women's pursuit of freedom

Women's identity and status in society indicate the necessity of women's pursuit of freedom and women's liberation. The only prerequisite for real and complete independence and freedom is that women must achieve economic independence. Perhaps in the eyes of men, women's pursuit of freedom is stupid and blind. But in fact freedom and liberation will bring great benefits to women.

The fundamental purpose of women's liberation is to actively participate in all aspects of society through the efforts of women, and strive to realize their self-worth, so that they are no longer restrained and oppressed by men, and to break the unequal relationship between men and women. To achieve true freedom requires the awakening of women's self-awareness, because they need to fight for women's identity and voice. Women need to do their utmost to fight for the right to participate and speak in different activities in society. Only when they make independent and subjective remarks can they be seen and approved by others in the society. In this way, women can go one step further from gaining freedom and liberation. However, even if women are aware of their existence as individuals, they can still choose their own marriage and life. In other words, women should never try to build a world dominated by women. On the contrary, women should live in harmony with men and build a harmonious coexistence society. Not only that, women should take action actively and optimistically to change their marginalized situation, so that they can realize their self-worth in a true sense. Of course, no one's life will be smooth sailing, and the road to freedom must be very bumpy. Although women look positive and full of power when they gain financial independence and have some voice, they actually carry a heavy burden, and sometimes they feel anxious and conceited. Nevertheless, they did not give up the goal of becoming truly "free women". With the persistence of women and the progress of society, women's rights in society have gradually expanded. For example, they are allowed to participate in political and economic activities. It can be seen that as long as women have goals and work hard towards their goals, they can definitely achieve true freedom.

In *The Golden Notebook*, under the influence of the patriarchal society, Anna has all experienced a process of confusion, splitting and self-integration. In other words, she has found her own true free direction in life. It is not difficult to see that in the context of a patriarchal society, it is difficult for women to achieve absolute and comprehensive freedom, because their freedom is actually given to them by men to a certain extent. In other words, the marginalized situation of women makes it impossible for these women to be equal to men in terms of society, power, and status. However, although women's ability to achieve women's liberation is limited, the pursuit of true freedom and existential value of these marginal women still has profound significance. There is no doubt that the oppression of patriarchy cannot prevent women from breaking through their status quo and doing their best to fight for women's independence and liberation.

Known as the "new woman", Anna also returned to life in the traditional sense at the end of the novel. She did not blindly pursue unrealistic freedom. Not only that, Anna has restarted a new relationship, but this does not mean that she has compromised with the patriarchal culture. At the same time, it does not mean that Anna has given up the pursuit of freedom and women's liberation. On the contrary, after experiencing internal division and integration, Anna has a deep understanding of the nature of true freedom and can do her best under the patriarchal system to fight for the realization of the desire for women's liberation. Anna has the courage to use her power to challenge the male-dominated society; What's more, she realizes that men and women should not be each other's enemies, on the contrary, the two sexes should live in harmony and win-win cooperation. In fact, this concept of win-win cooperation between the sexes can not only narrow the gap between men and women, but is also the fundamental driving force for women to achieve liberation and independence. It can also be said that the harmonious coexistence of the relationship between the sexes was exactly what society needed for sustained and stable development at that time. Although independent women like Anna were greatly restricted and restrained under the management and oppression of the patriarchy, it is undeniable that these women who have the courage to pursue true freedom have become role models for the later women's liberation movement.

It is undeniable that these marginal women have taken a big step on the road of women's liberation, and we can say that their choices are progressive. In fact, whether in the old society or now, when we do anything, the process is far more important than the result. Because when we work hard to pursue results, we have already made breakthroughs and gained experience and toughening. Therefore, although the patriarchal society restricts women's pursuit of true freedom, every step they have made

for women's liberation deserves praise and encouragement. Because they change the status quo of inequality between men and women through their own active efforts, they follow their inner self-awareness to fight for women's liberation. The author Lessing portrays the subjective and independent "new woman" Anna under the patriarchy, reflecting to the wider society the status quo that women are generally marginalized. At the same time, Lessing expressed her concern and thinking about women through a large number of descriptions of the plight and oppression of marginal women. More than that, Lessing also hopes to awaken women's inner self-awareness through her works, and call on women to bravely fight for their voice and identity.

5. Conclusion

The Golden Notebook describes the predicament of marginalization faced by the "new women" represented by Anna. Not only that, it also reveals the situation of marginalized women who lose themselves in the society of patriarchal culture and lack subjectivity and independence. As a "new woman" in the patriarchal society, the brave Anna broke free from the shackles of marriage and became a single mother. Additionally, Anna gained a steady income through her only novel, *Frontier of War*. However, the economically independent Anna did not realize true freedom. Anna's political career was not smooth either. She realized that neither the left-wing movement nor the Communist Party could achieve true freedom. For multiple reasons, Anna's mental breakdown began. What's more, she even suffered from writing problems.

However, the external reason that makes her fall into the predicament of marginalization is the oppression of patriarchy. As a representative of "new women", Anna is different from traditional women, she is rebellious and challenging. Although Anna has regained her right to speak and independence as a woman, she still lose her subjectivity in the face of love and sex. For Anna, in this patriarchal society, it is the men's attitude towards sex that marginalizes Anna. In addition, there are other internal reasons that make her fall into the predicament of marginalization. In contemporary society, Anna's thinking goes far beyond the development of the times; she pursues freedom. Moreover, she has the courage to get rid of the shackles of marriage. However, even though Anna calls herself a "free woman", she has not been truly free.

In summary, The Golden Notebook describes the marginalization of women and the oppression of men in a patriarchal society. It is emphasized that if women want to escape the predicament of marginalization, they must bravely pursue freedom and establish their own independence and subjectivity. In fact, if men and women can help each other and respect each other, it is only a matter of time before the establishment of a harmonious society of equality between men and women.

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