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Constructing Autonomy in Crisis: Applying Berne's Transactional

Analysis to Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*

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Abstract

This qualitative and descriptive study investigates the themes of personal freedom and psychological growth in Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* to analyze this novel, the study applies Eric Berne's theory of transactional analysis, which emphasizes overcoming the influence of the past and embracing the present as a path to self-realization. Transactional analysis helps both individuals and fictional characters recognize internal barriers and pursue growth through authentic interactions with others. (Steiner, 1974) Unlike many psychological theories that concentrate solely on the internal psyche, this approach values real-world connections and social engagement. By focusing on the quality of interpersonal relationships as a measure of autonomy, this study offers a new perspective on Lessing's work, highlighting how her characters strive for emotional and psychological liberation.

Keywords: Autonomy, Awareness, Identity, Intimacy, Psychological Growth, Transactional Analysis

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بناء الاستقلالية الذاتية في وقت الازمات :تطبيق نظرية أريك بيرن على رواية مذكرات ناجية للروائية دوريس ليسينغ

م.م. ضمياء جليل عبد

كلية التربية المفتوحة كركوك

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة النوعية والوصفية موضوعات الحرية الشخصية والنمو النفسي في رواية "مذكرات ناجية" للروائية دوريس ليسينغ وتحليل الرواية تطبق الدراسة نظرية التحليل التبادلي لأريك بيرن . والتي تؤكد على أهمية التحرر من تأثيرات الماضي واحتضان الحاضر كطريق نحو تحقيق الذات . تساعد نظرية التحليل التبادلي كل من الافراد والشخصيات الأدبية على التعرف للعوائق الداخلية والسعي نحو الارتقاء الذات ي من خلال تفاعلات حقيقية مع الآخرين عكس العديد من النظريات النفسية التي تركز فقط على النفس الداخلية .تعلي هذه المقاربة من شأن العلاقات الواقعية والمشاركة الاجتماعية ومن خلال التركيز على جودة العلاقات بين الأشخاص كمقياس للاستقلالية .تقدم هذه الدراسة منظورا جديدا لعمل الكاتبة ليسينغ مظهرة كيف تسعى شخصياتها الأدبية الى التحرر العاطفي والنفسي .

الكلمات المفتاحية : الاستقلالية، الوعي، الهوية، الحميمية، الارتقاء الذاتي او النفسي، التحليل التبادلي

1. INTRODUCTION

Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis (TA), is a psychological theory that emphasizes the role of social interactions and internal ego states in shaping human behavior. TA identifies three ego states—Parent, Adult, and Child—which influence how individuals think, feel, and behave. Berne argues that many emotional issues stem from negative childhood experiences that form unconscious "life scripts," which continue to guide adult behavior unless consciously revised through a process called *redecision*. TA focuses on helping individuals achieve autonomy, defined as freedom from these outdated scripts, through three key capacities: awareness (living in the present), spontaneity (expressing authentic feelings), and intimacy (forming genuine emotional connections). Unlike other psychological theories, such as Freud's psychoanalysis or Rogers' humanistic approach,

TA uniquely integrates internal self-work with real-life social interactions, making it particularly effective for understanding personal development and change. This theoretical framework sets the stage for analyzing the psychological journeys of Doris Lessing's female character in *Memoirs of a Survivor* highlighting how she confronts and overcomes the mental patterns imposed by her past. Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) marks a pivotal shift in her literary trajectory, moving away from conventional realism toward a speculative and introspective narrative mode. Eschewing mainstream literary conventions, Lessing embraces experimental forms to illuminate the psychological and societal complexities of modern life. The novel's ambiguous genre—part dreamscape, part social commentary—has led to a range of interpretations. Some critics classify it as a dystopian ghost story. The original subtitle, "An Attempt at Autobiography," was ultimately omitted by the publisher. I was writing an autobiography in metaphors. Behind the wall, there are three kinds of things: memories, dreams, and the impersonal (Ingersoll, 1994, p. 174).

In interviews, Lessing revealed that the novel was an experiment in writing autobiography through metaphor and dream logic. She expressed surprise that readers often failed to recognize the autobiographical layers embedded in the narrative. The "dissolving wall" within the story is not a science-fiction device, but rather a metaphorical portal into the mind, akin to the rabbit hole in *Alice in Wonderland*. Through this symbolic threshold, the protagonist moves between the external world and an internal psychological landscape, blending memory, emotion, and metaphor to convey personal and collective truth.

The study examines how Transactional Analysis (TA), a theory formulated by Eric Berne, acts as a paradigm to analyze the psychological development of Lessing's characters. TA stresses reprogramming the mind, replacing negative feelings that stem from early-life experiences with addictive habits and negative beliefs with positive, life-enriching ones. In *Memoirs of a Survivor*, the central character Emily is transfigured in mind and spirit by a passage into a nether world where she encounters and ejects her own history of trauma in order to reclaim herself. Lessing's character come to find herself, resisting illusory freedoms and instead concentrating on personal consciousness, self-determination and emotional growth.

The following questions are addressed in this research:

1-How Self-development and *redecision* are depicted in Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*?

2-How the idea of living in present time is portrayed in Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*?

Previous investigations of Doris Lessing's works have been predominantly feminist, psychological, or spiritual in nature (Cousin& Ferns, 2010). By using Transactional Analysis, this research provides a new lens to consider internal psychological changes and external social interactions together. In contrast to theories that emphasize the

internal world, TA values person's active engagement with life as the core of autonomy. In doing so, the study offers a fuller appreciation of how Lessing's characters develop out of their relationships and their own choices.

The fundamental objective is to examine *Memoirs of a Survivor* in the light of Transactional Analysis as a form of psychoanalysis in order to reveal the protagonist's psychological journey towards individuation and to look at how the concepts of TA, such as spontaneity, awareness and intimacy, allow the heroine to reconstruct her fragmented Self. The study intends to show how Lessing's preoccupation with self-development in her creative work closely matches Berne's definition of psychological cure and self-reconstruction.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach. The research applies Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis (TA) as the main theoretical framework for conducting a textual examination of Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*.

2.1 Source Materials

The primary sources of this research are Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*. The analysis aims to explore themes such as the absence of autonomy and the means of achieving it, processes of mental reconstruction and personal development, and the concept of living in the present moment.

2.2 Instrumentation

This study employs textual analysis as the key research instrument, examining the selected novels to extract psychological and thematic insights aligned with the principles of transactional analysis.

2.3 Procedure

The research methodology involves a close reading of Lessing's novel through the lens of transactional analysis. This method allows the study to uncover the psychological challenges faced by the characters and the influence of these issues on their lives. Through this analytical process, the study arrives at its final interpretations and conclusions.

The selection of Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* is based on the researcher's informed preference, as the novel is highly relevant to the thematic concerns of the study. The analysis delves deeply into this text to trace the psychological and emotional development of the characters, highlighting various phases of individual growth.

2.4 Berne's Moral Theory

TA, as Berne's psychotherapy has come to be known, is based on the premise that people can realize their full existential potential. This theory, developed in the 1950s, revises classic psychoanalytic notions, emphasizing observable transactions—interactions, as seen between individuals or in terms of the internal ego states shaping these transactions. Unlike orthodox Freudian theory, TA focuses on consciousness, decision and personal responsibility, which is one of its major appeals (Berne, 1961).

Berne's theory is based on the concept of the ego states – Parent, Adult, Child. These are repeated ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. The Parent state is where learned behavior and values imposed by authority figures are stored. The child state is filled with emotions, reactions from early experiences. The Adult, the soundest and impartial state, processes information and decisions relative to the present. Transactions among these ego states are the vehicle of communication (Berne, 1961; Stewart & Joines, 1987).

2.5 Awareness, Spontaneity and Intimacy

In Berne's moral theory, consciousness is the basis of personal change. It is the capacity of the human to see in the present moment what is, free from the occurrences of yesterday or the ideas of other people. In the words of Berne (1964), "Awareness is the ability to see a coffeepot and to hear the birds sing in one's own way, and not the way one was taught." This realization signals an end to ingrained habits from childhood.

In therapeutic terms, the Adult can be activated through awareness, a space where there are no entanglements with judgments of the Parent or the stormy depth of the Child. This mindful engagement with the present is not just external but inward too: realizing what one is feeling, thinking, and sensing (Clark and Wilson 2021). Awareness gives a person centeredness and freedom to choose how to behave rather than simply reacting instinctively (Stewart & Joines, 1987; Harris, 1967).

In the Berne system, spontaneity equals the freedom to feel, think, and act in any given situation without being limited by past experience. It's the openness to feelings and reactions that are truthful and unconditioned. Berne (1964) stated that spontaneity is "freedom to play adult or child games, and to construct new games," and "freedom to say old things in new ways."

Spontaneity disrupts routine patterns set by life scripts (Steiner, 1974). It emerges most obviously from the Free Child ego state—where joy, creativity, playfulness, and uniqueness are expressed. With therapeutic relevance, spontaneity allows the individual to escape from programmed responses and engage authentically and freely in life. (Nguyen and Pate, 2023)

Intimacy is the reward of consciousness and freedom, a space where two or more individuals can fully connect based on openness and trust. According to Berne (1964), intimacy occurs when people "can say what they feel without people playing games or wearing masks." It requires empathy, vulnerability, and suspension of social roles.

Berne also observed that intimacy and spontaneity are often undermined by early parental injunctions and social conditioning (Berne, 1964; Steiner, 1974). Instead of open communication, individuals resort to "games" and defensive behaviors. In contrast, intimacy involves emotionally honest interactions—free of manipulation or fear—and becomes a foundation for healing and mutual growth (Harris, 1967).

Thus, for Berne, intimacy is not just a psychological state but a moral goal: to live relationally in truth, compassion, and awareness. It is the culmination of therapeutic work aimed at full autonomy and human connection (Berne, 1961; Stewart & Joines, 1987).

Awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy are the three ontogenetic ingredients of Berne's system. These elements are deeply interconnected and represent the individual's path toward authenticity, emotional maturity, and relational development. In psychotherapy, these abilities allow clients to transcend scripted behaviors and live with intention and consciousness (Berne, 1961; Berne, 1964; Steiner, 1974).

The primary goal of TA is to help people move out of the old decisions, and deciding how they want to respond, and having options. Such scripts subconsciously and automatically determine a person's actions, feelings, and choices for the rest of that person's life, and frequently results in dysfunction and incoherence. Berne stressed that each individual has the ability to think, make decisions, and live their life to the fullest. TA wants to enable individuals to recognize these early decisions, to identify the psychological transactions that maintain these decisions, and to make a new healthier decision – this process is known as *redecision*. In this process, others can rewrite their life script and move toward self-reconstruction.

According to Berne Autonomy occurs when someone is free from outmoded parental controls and prescribed roles. To achieve this, he describes three critical competencies: awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy. Consciousness enables one to live in the "here and now" with an unconditioned vision of reality. Spontaneous behavior allows a more genuine expression as well as free and unselfconscious emotional expression. Intimacy enables the capacity for real, where about, accepting, and non-defensive relationships with oneself and others. It presents the tools and a systematized approach to analyze those ego states (Parent, Adult, Child), transactions (communications exchanges), strokes (the social activities in which people. In other words, TA is about how to assist people in changing so that they become more self-aware, more emotionally authentic, and more attuned to others and how they can live more freely, consciously and meaningfully.

2.6 Life script

In Eric Berne's theory of Transactional Analysis (TA), the concept of the "life script" is one of the most pivotal and defining elements. A life script is an unconscious life plan formed in early childhood, influenced by parental figures and shaped by early experiences. Berne (1961) defined it as "an extensive unconscious life plan in which people construct their activities, lives and relationships" (p. 23). These early decisions, although often made under emotional pressure and limited understanding, persist into adulthood and can guide a person's beliefs, behaviors, and emotional responses throughout life.

According to Berne, the life script is constructed from three primary elements: the protocol, the script proper, and the adaptation. The protocol includes early childhood experiences and parental messages which serve as the emotional blueprint for later behaviors. The script proper represents how those decisions are unconsciously acted out in adult life. Finally, adaptation refers to how individuals adjust these early decisions to fit current realities (Berne, 1964, pp. 102–103).

A critical aspect of script theory is its connection to the "OK positions," which are internal beliefs about the self and others. These positions are: "I'm OK – You're OK," "I'm OK – You're not OK," "I'm not OK – You're OK," and "I'm not OK – You're not OK" (Berne, 1964, p. 123). The script a person writes is deeply affected by which of these positions they adopt in childhood. A child who consistently receives negative strokes from caregivers may adopt the belief "I'm not OK," which becomes encoded in their life script and impacts future relationships and self-esteem.

Berne believed that a person could live an entire life according to a script without being aware of it. The ultimate goal of Transactional Analysis is to uncover these unconscious scripts and revise them. This is achieved through a process called *rededication*, where the individual, using the Adult ego state, consciously evaluates and changes outdated or harmful decisions from childhood (Berne, 1972). The ability to change the life script is central to achieving autonomy, which includes the capacities for awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy (Berne, 1964, p. 161).

Thus, understanding the life script allows individuals to recognize that their current behaviors and emotional responses are not always rooted in present realities but are often echoes of childhood decisions. With this awareness, people can begin the process of rewriting their scripts and embracing a more conscious and liberated way of living.

3. LESSING'S *MEMOIRS OF A SURVIOR*: CONSTRUCTING AUTONOMY

3.1 Lack of Autonomy

Emily's lack of autonomy can be traced to her painful upbringing under authoritarian, emotionally unavailable parents. According to Eric Berne's theory of transactional analysis, children who are raised in environments of excessive criticism and conditional affection internalize a sense of inferiority. They develop restrictive life scripts that shape their future behavior. Emily exemplifies this phenomenon: she matures into a young woman plagued by low self-worth and unable to assert her needs or boundaries. Doris Lessing illustrates the absence of tenderness or affection in the relationship between the mother and her daughter, which deeply impacts Emily, leaving her desperate for love and physical comfort. This is clearly depicted in The cuddling scene When Emily asks her mother to cuddle her:

With a flattered laugh, the woman bent forward, offering herself. The little girl put her arms up around the woman's neck, and hung there. But she got no encouragement. 'Cuddle me,' she crooned... Then the woman raised her hands and put the child's arms away. (Lessing, 1974, p. 107).

The cuddling scene is a clear example of Emily's deep emotional pain caused by her mother's neglect. She yearns for love, kindness, and emotional connection. In a tender attempt to receive affection, she places her arm around her mother's neck, hoping to be cuddled. However, her mother appears indifferent to Emily's feelings and pushes her arm away.

This pattern of passivity is evident in her adult relationships. For example, she remains silent and compliant even when subjected to emotional neglect by her unfaithful boyfriend, Gerald. Conditioned to equate love with suffering, Emily has normalized mistreatment. Her early experiences have undermined her belief in her own value and stifled her ability to act independently.

3.1.1 Adapted Child and Inferiority

In Bern's theory, Emily embodies the role of the "Adapted Child"—a persona formed to secure parental approval by suppressing authentic needs and emotions. This adaptation leads to chronic self-doubt, emotional repression, and a perpetual sense of inadequacy. Rather than acting on her own desires, Emily conforms to others' expectations, which deepens her internal conflict and fuels emotional dependency. Alongside Emily's troubled bond with her mother, her father's emotional cruelty becomes apparent through a seemingly playful yet unsettling

"tickling game."

The soldier-like man sat with his knees apart, gripping between them the small girl who stood shrieking. On his face, under the moustache, was a small tight smile. He was 'tickling' the child. This was a 'game', the bedtime 'game'...The room seemed filled with a hot anguish, the fear of being held tight there, the need for being held and tortured, since this was how she pleased her captors. She shrieked: 'No... being explored... By this man. (Lessing, 1974, p. 102)

The father engages his innocent daughter Emily in a "tickling game", during which she is physically restrained on his knee and unable to free herself. Although Emily clearly does not want to participate, she eventually complies, recognizing that her "captor"—her father—derives satisfaction only when she partakes in the game. This reveals her tendency to conform to her parents' expectations in order to gain approval. Her behavior in this context is a clear example of the Adapted Child ego state, where she suppresses her discomfort and refrains from expressing her true feelings or saying no, despite the emotional and physical harm. On a personal level, her mother reinforces this pattern by assigning Emily caregiving responsibilities, saying, "It is your baby, Emily," which imposes adult-like duties on her inappropriately. Emily as a child is always suppressed by her parents, so she tries to do her best to satisfy them. That means, she behaves from "Adapted child state " rather than "Free child state ".

3.2 Attaining Autonomy

Emily's path toward autonomy is rooted in what Berne refers to as "mind reconstruction"—the deliberate reassessment and rewriting of internalized beliefs and emotional responses. By revisiting formative memories and challenging the limiting narratives she once accepted (Singh, 2022). Emily gradually replaces her self-defeating scripts with empowering ones. Transactional Analysis (TA), as proposed by Eric Berne, suggests that individuals unconsciously create life "scripts" in childhood based on parental messages. These scripts can be destructive but are reversible through awareness and *redecision*—a process of revisiting early scenes and forming new conclusions (Berne, 1964).

Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* presents this idea through Emily's journey. When Emily enters the "impersonal realm," she encounters a room full of old furniture and dust:

I saw that the place was filled with furniture. I knew these sofas, these chairs. But why? From what time in my life did they date? ...Everything I looked at would have to be replaced or mended or cleaned... It should be emptied, and what was in it now should be burned or thrown away. (*Memoirs of a Survivor*, p. 27)

This imagery symbolizes Emily's toxic childhood memories. She begins cleaning and restoring the place, signifying psychological reconstruction and *redecision*. In another scene, she struggles to remove dead leaves: "She was massing fallen leaves into heaps... the leaves gathered again around her feet... the whole world was thickly covered with the leaves." (*Memoirs of a Survivor*, p. 179) These leaves represent internalized negative messages ("negative strokes"). Emily's persistence reflects her desire to eliminate destructive patterns. A pivotal moment of healing occurs when Emily sees her mother as a wounded child: "I found her: a blonde blue-eyed child... Who else could it possibly be but Emily's mother... It was not Emily I took up... but her mother... At last finding comfort in my arms." (*Memoirs of a Survivor* p. 134)

This reveals that Emily, as an aware adult, can reinterpret her mother's cruelty as a result of inherited trauma, enabling forgiveness. Throughout the novel, Emily searches for a "luminous face," a metaphor for her authentic self. She says: "I walked from room to room... looking for their occupant... a strong soft presence, an intimate, whose face would be known to me..." (*Memoirs of a Survivor*, p. 109). Only after cleaning her mental space does she finally glimpse it. Time, like the mind, is shown as mendable. Similarly, the symbol of sunlight breaking through darkness emphasizes awareness: "The sun lighting a slant of air... the white paint where the flowery pattern... maintained its frail but stubborn being." (*Memoirs of a Survivor*, p. 51)

In summary, Lessing illustrates Emily's journey from unconscious victimhood to conscious autonomy, mirroring Berne's theory: by becoming aware of past influences and reinterpreting them, individuals can reclaim power over their lives.

3.2.1 Self-awareness

According to Berne's theory, awareness is the first capacity which is required in the process of autonomy. In this alternate world, Lessing allows Emily the chance to revisit and revise the harmful decisions she made in response to her parents' critical influence. The realm grants her autonomy—she can choose whether to clean, rearrange her environment, or move freely between different spaces. These choices reflect a world where nothing is fixed; everything can be reshaped. Representing her early childhood, this impersonal realm gives Emily the capacity to discard painful memories and create new ones. Her initial entry into this realm signals the beginning of this internal shift and the possibility for personal transformation.

In *Memoirs of a Survivor*, Doris Lessing reflects Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis by portraying how awareness and *redecision* can lead to psychological autonomy. Berne's theory posits that early life messages, especially from parents, shape the

individual's life script, which can either support or hinder personal development (Berne, 1964). These scripts, though rooted in childhood, are not permanent and can be changed through conscious awareness.

Emily, the protagonist, engages with a symbolic inner space representing her subconscious mind. There, she confronts painful childhood memories and gradually rebuilds her self-image. Her attempts to clean and organize the space reflect her desire to eliminate harmful beliefs and regain control over her inner world (Lessing, 1974). A pivotal transformation occurs when she reinterprets her mother's past cruelty with empathy, recognizing it as a result of generational trauma. This re-evaluation enables her to replace resentment with compassion, a core aspect of the *redecision* process (Stewart & Joines, 1987).

Emily's search for a luminous presence in the impersonal realm represents her pursuit of the authentic self. Lessing uses light imagery and the metaphor of repairing broken objects to highlight the reconstructive power of awareness. Ultimately, Emily regains her psychological autonomy by rejecting outdated life scripts and embracing self-awareness.

3.2.2 Spontaneity

Spontaneity can be considered as third capacity or key for attaining autonomy. We all communicate with each other from one of ego state (Parent, Child and Adult). Spontaneity means that individual is free to respond from any ego states he wants. In other words, he can express his feelings and attitude feeling. Spontaneity means option, the freedom to choose and express one's feelings from the assortment available (Parent feelings, Adult feelings and Child feelings). It means liberation from the compulsion to play games and have only the feeling one was taught to have" (Berne, *Game People Play* 102).

Spontaneity means the ability to express inner voice that means there is no place for repressed feelings. Berne argued that only confident person can behave spontaneously and the main reason for losing spontaneity is the feeling of inferiority. This feeling makes individual try to satisfy others rather than himself. This adaptation leads him to lose his spontaneity. The aim of TA is helping individuals to regain their confidence to be more spontaneous by practicing the process of self-reconstruction.

In *Memoirs of a Survivor*, Doris Lessing illustrates Emily's spontaneity in two key areas. The first is within the impersonal realm, where she attempts to replace old, worn-out furniture (symbolizing racket feelings) with new items (representing authentic emotions). The second is through her personal life, particularly in her relationship with Gerald. At first, Emily tolerates Gerald's conditional affection and his affairs with other women, even taking care of the wild underground children to win his approval. Eventually, she chooses to leave his home, no longer willing to accept betrayal. This decision reflects her reconnection with her authentic self — symbolized by her return to Hugo. When Gerald later tries to convince Emily to come back, she responds with emotional clarity and detachment. She tells him: And then you decided it was better to have the children than to have nothing, or to be patient and wait. You simply had to have a gang at all costs. You took them over... But they took you over... And you have to go along with it? (Lessing, 1974, p. 239)

In this moment, Emily is no longer silencing her inner voice. She expresses emotions that had once been suppressed and damaging to her spontaneity. She accuses Gerald of

being manipulated by the children, pointing out that his reasons for supporting them are weak — they already had food before coming to him. Gerald is startled by the change in her demeanor. Emily now speaks with confidence, no longer feeling inferior. Her restored self-assurance allows her to express herself freely, as she now sees herself as equal to Gerald and others.

Earlier in the novel, Hugo is portrayed as a symbol of Emily's true self. By choosing to return to him — and rejecting Gerald, who represents her inauthentic, conditioned emotions — she reclaims her spontaneity, a crucial step toward achieving autonomy. When Emily returns to the apartment where Hugo lives, the narrative states Hugo came and sat near her: 'You've really chosen me... Against him.'! (Lessing, 1974, p. 145)

Hugo's happiness reflects Emily's decision to follow her inner truth. By rewriting her life script, she adopts a healthier mindset — the "I'm OK, you're OK" position — and begins to view the world as a place of peace and possibility. This shift enables her to act more freely and authentically, fully embracing spontaneity and personal freedom. (Showalter, 1985)

3.2 3 Intimacy

According to Eric Berne, intimacy is the third essential component for achieving personal autonomy. It refers to the unconditional acceptance of both ourselves and others. An intimate person is someone whose heart is filled with love and contentment, leaving no room for anger or hatred. True intimacy involves two core aspects: being open to others and having the desire to merge with them.

Openness is reflected in how deeply others can affect us—the more impact someone has, the deeper the intimacy we share with them. This kind of closeness allows individuals to connect on a level where they can truly sense each other's inner experiences. The second aspect, the desire to merge, involves letting go of personal boundaries and resisting separation. In this process, the individual "I" transforms into a shared "we", symbolizing unity.

Intimacy, then, functions as a dissolver of boundaries, allowing one's awareness to blend with that of another. This deep connection fosters a better understanding of both oneself and others, promoting collaboration and harmony. From this perspective, Transactional Analysis offers profound value by helping individuals identify internal barriers, develop themselves, and ultimately reach self transcendence through personal reconstruction.

Doris Lessing explores the theme of intimacy in *Memoirs of a Survivor* primarily through Emily's evolving relationship with her mother. At the beginning of the novel, Emily harbors resentment towards her mother, believing she was unloved. However, over time, Emily comes to understand that her mother, too, suffered at the hands of cruel and unkind caregivers. This insight leads her to reassess her feelings, gradually transforming anger into compassion. In one pivotal moment within the dream-like world behind the wall, Emily sees her mother as a vulnerable child: "...a fair little girl... Finding comfort in my arms" (Lessing, 1974, p. 134).

This vision symbolizes Emily's emotional breakthrough, as she recognizes her mother's fragility and emotional wounds. Through this intimate understanding, Emily not only accepts her mother but also develops genuine love for her—an emotional shift that

marks a key step in her journey toward autonomy. Emily's growth in intimacy is also evident in her relationship with the feral children from the underground. Initially, she sees them as wild, uncivilized, and even dangerous. However, motivated partly by her concern for Gerald, she agrees to take care of them.

As Emily begins to purge her mind of negative, outdated scripts, she becomes more emotionally available and compassionate. She comes to understand that these children, though brutal, are products of neglect and abuse, and their behavior reflects their traumatic upbringing. Her initial irritation gives way to empathy, and she begins to form meaningful connections with them.

Lessing presents this emotional transformation as essential for entering the utopian world behind the wall—a world marked by harmony, peace, and emotional fulfillment. (Chodorow, 1999) This realm can only be accessed by those who have achieved awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy. As Emily fosters closeness with her mother, the children, and even with herself—symbolized through her care for Hugo—she also heals her relationships with her boyfriend, now able to approach him with emotional maturity. Her decision to not enter the new world alone, but instead bring her loved ones with her, underscores the interdependent nature of personal growth. Her journey is not solitary; it is communal, rooted in connection and care. This emotional culmination is symbolically represented in the “iron egg” scene: “Emily took Gerald by the hand, and with Hugo walked through the screen of the forest into...on the lawn... Stood Emily, Hugo, Gerald, her family.....” (*Memoirs of a Survivor*, 257).

Here, the iron egg stands as a metaphor for rebirth. Its hardness represents the difficulty of transformation, while its eventual cracking signifies the emotional and psychological breakthrough that Emily achieves. The presence of her loved ones in this moment suggests that intimacy—emotional closeness and acceptance—is what enables her to break through and become fully autonomous. According to Berne, every person is born with an “OK” position—“I’m OK, you’re OK”—but negative life experiences often distort this belief. The goal of personal growth is to cleanse the mind of these harmful scripts and recover one’s original, authentic self. Lessing’s depiction of Emily’s internal journey parallels this process. Through dreams and introspection, Emily begins a metaphorical cleaning—sweeping, mending, and rearranging—within the impersonal realm behind the wall. This symbolizes her attempt to reconstruct her mind and replace fear and anger with love, trust, and cooperation.

Another vivid representation of intimacy and healing appears in the scene where Emily and others collaborate to restore a damaged carpet: “I entered the room... The carpet glowed... I found a fragment and bent down to fit it.” (Lessing, 1974, p. 204).

Here, the act of collectively mending the carpet represents the shared effort of healing and renewal. Whereas Emily once pursued self-development in isolation, she now joins others in reconstructing a broken world. This scene powerfully illustrates how intimacy—trusting and cooperating with others—enables her to reach a more complete form of self-realization. By embracing love and forgiveness, Emily becomes capable of living a new, authentic life rooted in emotional connection.

3.2.4. The Autonomous Person

The central goal of Eric Berne’s theory is achieving autonomy—the ability to shape one’s own life and make independent choices, free from outdated scripts and unconscious patterns. An autonomous individual lives fully in the present, maintains self-awareness,

and is capable of forming genuine connections with others. According to Berne, autonomy is grounded in awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy.

In *Memoirs of a Survivor*, Doris Lessing illustrates how Emily attains autonomy by clearing her mind and creating a new vision for her life. Through this inner transformation, Emily is able to leave behind a deteriorating world and enter a new one—symbolized as a kind of paradise. This journey of self-development purifies her mind and spirit, restoring brightness to her face and enabling her to adopt the healthy psychological stance of “I’m OK, you’re OK.”

Lessing conveys Emily’s transformation through vivid natural imagery:

At the end of the wall, a stream ran through grass... The fish looked up as if hanging in air. Straying through room after room all open to the leaves and the sky, floored with the un poisoned grasses and flowers of the old world, I saw how extensive was this place, with no boundaries or end that I could find, much larger than I had ever understood (Lessing, 1974, p. 158).

In this scene, Emily experiences a natural world that is vibrant, clean, and full of life. She hears the peaceful sounds of bees and flowing water, in contrast to the earlier atmosphere filled with noise and suffering. The water is so pure that the fish beneath its surface seem to float in the air—emphasizing the clarity and transparency of Emily’s new perception. The open rooms and untainted vegetation reflect her internal clarity, a stark contrast to the earlier portrayal of decay and disconnection. By entering this paradise, Emily merges personal and impersonal realms, suggesting she has moved beyond her personal traumas and embraced a more integrated state of being. Her encounter with a gardener in this space further symbolizes her psychological balance and emotional regulation. The gardener channels water evenly through the garden, reflecting the harmony now present in Emily’s mind: “There was a gardener... I listened to water near my feet... Herbs and grasses growing nearby.” (Lessing, 1974, p. 215).

Earlier in the narrative, Emily and those around her faced extreme scarcity. But in this final vision, they discover a world filled with abundance and generosity. This transformation represents not just physical survival, but emotional and psychological renewal through conscious inner work: “Gardens beneath gardens, gardens above gardens: the food-giving surfaces of the earth doubled, trebled, endless—the plenty of it, the richness, the generosity” (Lessing, 1974, p. 158).

In this new world—symbolized by a flourishing, un poisoned garden—Emily’s success is clear. She has cleansed her mind of negativity and achieved a harmonious, autonomous self. This final stage in her journey marks her escape from the disintegrating world and her entry into a life grounded in psychological

4. CONCLUSION

This research paper has examined how self-development and the process of *redecision* are portrayed in Doris Lessing’s *The Memoirs of a Survivor* using Eric Berne’s Transactional Analysis as a theoretical framework. The novel demonstrates that self-development is not an inherited trait but a conscious process that involves recognizing and challenging the internalized negative beliefs formed in childhood—what Berne refers to as the “life script”. Emily, the protagonist, begins as a psychologically dependent individual shaped by negative strokes and emotional neglect from her parents. These early experiences leave her emotionally passive, lacking autonomy, and unable to

assert her needs in adult relationships. However, as the narrative progresses, Emily undergoes a process of *redecision* an intentional shift in mindset that allows her to question and revise the harmful decisions she unconsciously made in her early life. This transformation is initiated by her growing awareness of how the past continues to dominate her present. She then gradually practices spontaneity, expressing her feelings openly rather than repressing them, and embraces intimacy, forming genuine emotional connections that help dissolve psychological barriers.

These three elements: awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy are essential for achieving true autonomy and are central to her self-development. Furthermore, the novel emphasizes the importance of living in the present moment as a key to psychological liberation. Through the process of mind-reconstruction, Emily learns to detach from the negative influence of the past and begins to focus on the "here and now". This shift is portrayed not only through her inner transformation but also through her changing relationships and the clarity with which she views her own needs and identity. By discarding the outdated beliefs that once defined her, Emily gains the freedom to experience life authentically in the present. In conclusion, Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor* presents a powerful psychological journey that illustrates how *redecision* and present-moment awareness can lead to personal growth and self-liberation. Emily's story becomes a model of how individuals can transcend early psychological conditioning and reclaim their autonomy through intentional, internal change.

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