The study of The Grass is Singing and The Golden Notebook has so far revealed that the basic dynamic of the action was the search for an equilibrium between rational, psychological and spiritual modes of consciousness in perceiving reality. In the early novel, Lessing focused on the ways in which the individual’s perception of reality is determined by the intellectual, social and material conditions of the time. Increasingly since The Golden Notebook she has elaborated on the necessity for retrieving the balance by developing an inward movement – a descent into the unconscious and a complementary ascent to spiritual dimensions of reality which can only be attained if one has learned to attend to all the faculties.

As a writer influenced by Sufism, Lessing sees that it is only in the fullest development and balancing of all available faculties that human beings can free themselves from mere predetermined repetition and so evade catastrophe. She envisions the future of the human race as catastrophic if we do not restore that balance of our faculties.¹ For her, the Sufi evolutionary methods provide the means that could help people transcend their limited cognitive capacity as a key to a fuller understanding of ‘reality’. Lessing thus shares Shah’s view that hope lies in such an evolution² and that ‘our future depends on it’.³

The clearest expression of that central theme is to be found in The Memoirs of a Survivor⁴ where the catastrophe is in its later stages, and the need for equilibrium therefore gains a further note of urgency. Published twelve years after The Golden Notebook, The Memoirs picks up on the crisis that ends the Martha Quest series and takes on the theme of equilibrium where the earlier work left off. The capacities which Anna and Martha have discovered towards the end of The Golden Notebook and The Children of Violence series respectively are in the main line of survival of the protagonist of Memoirs. Almost from the beginning of the novel, the middle-aged narrator penetrates the ‘walls’ which took Anna and Martha most
of *The Golden Notebook* and *The Children of Violence* series to break through.

The challenging task of the protagonist of *Memoirs*, then, is not the initial search for another mode of consciousness, but the even more 'difficult' effort of seeking connections between the rational and non-rational modes and retaining the hardly earned balance in her 'memory':

And this is my difficulty in describing that time: looking back now it is as if two ways of life, two lives, two worlds, lay side by side and closely connected. But then, one life excluded the other, and I did not expect the two worlds ever to link up. (25)

The difficulty lies in the fact that the two worlds belong to different time scales which seem to be mutually exclusive: 'the ordinary logical time-dominated world of everyday' (125), and the realm 'behind the wall' - 'a world where time did not exist' (157). The human mind, however, is able to adjust to several time-scales - although only with great difficulty - through the 'balancing' (109) process of memory. Memory becomes the crucial point where different time levels co-exist and interpenetrate. The linear mode of thinking, on the other hand, finds it difficult to assimilate different time scales. In *The Golden Notebook* it is 'the selective' memory which hinders Anna's understanding of reality and creates the 'lie'. Equally, Watkin's failure of memory in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* is related to the difficulties which the mind experiences in incorporating different time scales and his amnesia occurs because of his inability to incorporate more than one perspective. In contrast to *Briefing* where illumination once gained is later lost when Charles crosses back to the ordinary world, the protagonist of *Memoirs* 'survives', as the title indicates, by the agency of memory. The movement of the female protagonist between the two realms is suggestive of an individual who is in the process of establishing creative links between different levels of perception and who has thereby discovered a privileged mode of survival. *Memoirs* may also be seen as enlarging upon Kate's attempt to grasp flashes from the seal-dream in *The Summer Before the Dark*. Kate's inner enlightenment is confined to her sleep, but in *Memoirs*, the narrator learns how to integrate the perception of the inner realm by 'realising' (10) it in her waking consciousness.

Thus although the theme of equilibrium had been recurrent in *The