

## THE SUMMER OF EXPLORATION BEFORE RETURNING TO THE DARK<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*Doris Lessing, a Persian born British woman writer, regarded as one of the most important post-war writers in English literature. In her novel **The Summer Before The Dark** (1973), hailed as a modern feminist novel, she dealt with the pressures of social conformity, pain of aging and mental breakdown that a woman undergoes while searching for freedom, self awareness and questioning her domestic responsibilities. Kate Brown aged 45, the central character of the novel, sets on a psychological and imaginative journey, revealing the dilemma between fact and fiction, conscious and unconscious because of the alternation of her dreams with her experiences. Each experience, turning into an exploration, brings excitement into her life, helps her understand herself and confront with her past during the experience in summer before the dark in which Kate rejects the stereotypes of femininity believing that her conventional clothes do not fit her anymore. However, what Kate finds out about herself, in parallel with her dreams in which she sees “a wounded seal,” appalls her and brings her face to face with herself and her fears of aging, loneliness and death in the summer of exploration. Thus, this study aims to present, within the framework of a psychoanalytic criticism, the psychological journey of a woman who questions her experiences and explores her self-awareness in parallel with the dreams she has seen during the summer of exploration before returning to the dark.*

**Keywords:** Doris Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark*, dreams, experiences, exploration.

### KARANLIĞA GERİ DÖNMEDEN ÖNCEKİ KEŞİF YAZI

#### ÖZ

*İran doğumlu İngiliz asıllı Doris Lessing, İngiliz Edebiyatının en önemli savaş sonrası kadın yazarları arasında yer almaktadır. Doris Lessing'in modern feminist olarak kabul edilen beşinci romanı *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), kendi hayatında uyumu, özgürlüğü ve benliğini ararken, toplum baskısı karşısında,*

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yaşlanmanın verdiği acı ve psikolojik çöküntü yaşayan bir kadının hikâyesini ele almaktadır. Romanın 45 yaşında olan ana karakteri Kate Brown, deneyimleri ve rüyaları arasındaki gerçek ve kurgu ikilemi arasında gidip gelen psikolojik ve hayali bir yolculuğa çıkar. Bir keşfe dönüşen hayali yolculukta, her bir deneyimi Kate'in hayatına heyecan getirir ve onun karanlıktan önce ki yaz da geçmişiyle yüzleşerek kendi benliğini bulmasını sağlar. Bu yaz süresince, Kate artık geleneksel kıyafetlerin kendisine uymadığını inanarak tipik kadın rollerini reddeder. Fakat Kate şaşırtıcı bir şekilde rüyalarında gördüğü "yaralı fok" ile kendisi arasındaki benzerliği fark ederek kendisiyle yüzleşir ve o deneyim yazının sonunda korkularının yaşanmak, yalnızlık ve ölümden kaynaklandığını fark eder. Bu çalışma psikanalitik eleştiri çerçevesinde, karanlığa (monoton yaşama) geri dönmeden önceki keşif yazında, tecrübelerini sorgulayan ve gördüğü rüyalar sayesinde kendi benliğini keşfeden bir kadının psikolojik/hayali yolculuğunu sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Doris Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark*, rüyalar, deneyimler, keşif.

## I. Introduction

Doris Lessing, a Persian born British woman writer, regarded as one of the most important post-war writers in English literature. In her novel **The Summer Before The Dark** (1973), hailed as a modern feminist novel, she dealt with the pressures of social conformity, pain of aging and mental breakdown that a woman undergoes while searching for freedom, self-awareness and questioning her domestic responsibilities. Thus, this paper aims to present, within the framework of a psychoanalytic criticism, the psychological journey of a woman who questions her experiences and explores her self awareness in parallel with the dreams she has seen during the summer of exploration before returning to the dark.

Doris Lessing, in her fifth novel, *The Summer Before The Dark* presents a psychological journey of a woman whose life has been devoted to her beloved ones. Her life has been affected by her ambitions, wishes and fears that are stored in her unconscious. Sigmund Freud was the first psychoanalyst who laid the foundation for a new model of how human mind/unconscious worked in his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* published in 1900. Freud's work depends upon the notion of the unconscious, which is the part of the mind influencing strongly the human actions. In other words, it is the interaction of the conscious and the unconscious by which human beings shape themselves and their worlds. According to Freud the best way to discover the interaction of the conscious and the unconscious is through dreams because the hidden meaning symbolized during the dreaming period is a "substitute for other thought-process" (10). "Dream formation is based on a process of condensation" because dream thoughts are represented by means of one of the conceptualized elements (ibid. 172). The "dream condensations obtrude themselves in the dream content" which do not constitute the central point of

the dream thought (ibid 190) because “the individual element in the dream thought is not retained in the dream formation” regarding the impression of displacement (ibid. 191). “Conditionality the dream thought is represented by simultaneity in the dream content” (ibid. 217) but “appearance of fantastic absurdity is disguised” in dream formation (ibid. 221) because dreams employ symbolism or disguised representation of the unconscious world of individuals. Choice of symbols appear to be “enigmatic” (ibid. 231) because the “symbol in the dream content may be interpreted symbolically or in its proper meaning” regarding the conscious and the unconscious dichotomy (ibid. 232). Thus, Freud utters that the human psyche/mind is a “dichotomy consisting of the conscious and the unconscious where the hidden desires, ambitions, fears, passions and irrational thoughts were received and stored” (qdt. in Bressler, 89). Freud asserted that human beings unaware of the “presence of the unconscious” act consciously believing that “reasoning” and “analytical skills” are responsible for their behaviors (ibid. 89). However, it is the “unconscious that motivates most of the human actions through slips of tongue, dreams and irrational behaviours” (ibid. 89). Since the conscious and the unconscious are part of the same psyche, the unconscious with its hidden desires and repressed wishes affects the conscious in the form of inferiority feelings, guilt, irrational thoughts, and dreams. In fact, dreams, suppressed wishes and desires hidden in the unconscious are considered to be reflections of personal unconsciousness. The dreams, emotionally coloured ideas, affect the conscious in a symbolic way. The dreams of Lessing’s protagonist are reflections of the limitations of her conscious personality, and her personal unconscious that affects her conscious personality by focusing on the mechanical repetition of the “wounded seal” dream that makes “the story allegorical rather than symbolic because this dream has a didactic purpose for Lessing’s protagonist, Kate Brown” (Cederstrom, 161). In a series of fourteen dreams, Lessing’s protagonist carries a dying/wounded seal closer to the water/sea. The conscious is affected by the unconscious that shapes ones psychological growth, self-realization and psychic wholeness through the feeling of recognition of certain symbols, myths and the parallels in fantasies, fairy tales and dreams.

The series of dreams that Lessing’s protagonist has seen changes according to complication of her experiences pressed in her personal unconscious. For example, after a mental breakdown she has seen a longer and a complex dream. Apart from the recurring seal dream, the dream life of Lessing’s protagonist includes numerous animal images. For instance, she sees a dying turtle, lions, leopards and wolves jumping from cages and a brilliant bird. During her breakdown she, also sees the London theatre audience dressed-up as animals and sees her own face as resembling a sick monkey. “Most of these animal images appear in an inverse relationship to the presence of a conscious will” (Lefcowizt, 109) that has been unconsciously shaped. The seal

symbol that appears in seven dreams is significant in Kate's dream journey starting from conscious stereotypical selves toward an unconscious inner self exploration. Consciously, the seal dream symbolizes a helpless fish but unconsciously the slippery and smooth skin and featureless face of the seal image can be associated with a human fetus in the early stages of development. In other words, the seal is symbolizing a fetus, burden of maternal roles, a submerged private self and an individual soul that led the way to enlightenment and exploration during the dream/imaginary journey of Lessing's protagonist. In the dream/imaginative journey, the protagonist's personal unconscious is reflected and the protagonist's struggle to carry a dying/wounded seal to water/sea symbolizes the mechanical action of a "good mother archetype associated with warmth, nourishment, protection, fertility and growth" (Guerin, 160) However, since the story is an allegorical one there lies a double meaning under the wounded seal dream. On one side there is a "wounded seal" in need of nurturing of a mother archetype, and on the other side there is "a wounded woman's soul" that is in need of freedom from the burden of motherly nurturing and social conformity. The "dream life"/personal unconscious and the "conscious life"/ego of Lessing's protagonist intersect (Lefcowitz, 108) and the "collective unconscious life" helps her evaluate the confronted self of the past and present. Actually, Lessing's protagonist finds out about herself, in parallel with her dreams that present the limitations of her consciousness. The parallelism appalls the protagonist and brings her face to face with herself, her fears of aging, loneliness not being needed and breakdown in the summer of crisis. The protagonist's psychological and imaginative journey of self-exploration illustrates the dilemma between fact/experienced life and fiction/imagined life because of the go and come between dreams/dark and experiences/summer. Thus, the story of Lessing's protagonist becomes a story that can be interpreted at two levels because she sets out on her psychological and imaginative journey in summer, symbolizing enlightening and brightness. Ironically, during this "summer journey", through her dreams associated with night and darkness, she experiences a "winter journey". Thus, for Lessing's protagonist the "summer" before the dark is enlightening/bright, and the "dark" after the summer is associating winter/dullness symbolizing the last phase of life that is not dark but awakening for her because "darkness in its positive meaning associates wisdom according to Eastern thought" (Klein, 5).

Doris Lessing's middle-aged protagonist before returning to darkness/winter goes on a "psychic journey where she examines herself and her domestic responsibilities" (Myles, 11). The protagonist's psychic journey helps her "recognize the need of establishing concurrence and harmony between the materialistic and the spiritual sides of her personality" (ibid. 12). In fact, the journey of Lessing's protagonist is that of "separation and return" but her serial dreams follow an action of "rescue and protection" (Lefcowitz, 108). Actually,

the surface/conscious journey of Lessing's protagonist is a circular one because she returns home to London suburb of Blackheath but the inner/unconscious journey is a linear one because she does not see the recurring dream after her psychological journey ends in the summer of self exploration. During this summer Kate's both social and psychological confrontation with her past female roles and appearances make her reject the stereotypes of femininity believing that her conventional clothes do not fit her anymore. In fact, each rejection of stereotypes and experience, turning into an exploration, brings excitement into her life and helps her understand herself during the summer of exploration. In the mentioned summer, Lessing's protagonist is in the process of "trying on" ideas and attitudes, "like so many dresses off rack" (Lessing, 1) by trying to free herself from her maternal roles and stereotypes. Kate Brown tries to obtain self realization, find a psychic wholeness, psychological growth and personality that continued to develop throughout ones lifespan.

## **II. A Woman's Summer of Exploration**

Doris Lessing's novel, *The Summer Before The Dark* begins with a descriptive sentence; "A woman stood on her back step, arms folded, waiting" (Lessing, 1). This is a symbolic beginning because Lessing rather than directly naming her character, Kate Brown, addresses her as "a woman". Lessing's intention of starting her novel in such away can be explained as making a generalization referring to all women in Kate Brown's position. Indeed, Kate's story can be the story of any woman, whose life has been arranged by the social rules rather than her own choices. Suddenly, the confrontation with the facts of aging, loneliness and not being needed makes Kate realize that she has devoted her whole life to home, husband and children but has neglected her own desires, which drive a woman to think about her life for a certain moment or a summer as seen in Kate's case. Kate Brown has been caught up in the collectives of her community; therefore she is standing at the back steps rather than the front ones. In other words, the standing at the back steps symbolizes her position as a woman, who has generally been put in a position behind a man, and her neglected inner feelings have been kept hidden because of her social burdens. Everything in her life has been arranged according to her social roles; therefore, she has neglected her inner feelings. Kate waiting with her arms folded symbolizes a woman who had no chance of choice so her life is surrounded with the stereotypical roles. Therefore, Kate Brown is a beautiful wife and a protective mother stereotype but not an individual. In other words, Kate Brown a middle-aged, an upper-middle class, attractive, healthy woman has been an attractive and beautiful wife and a protective mother stereotype for twenty-five years. In the summer of crisis Kate tries to explore the meaning of being a self/individual rather than a stereotypical wife and a mother. Kate Brown, like many women of her generation, played the roles of being a loyal wife and protective mother because her discovery of self had remained hidden in her

unconscious till the summer of exploration. Suddenly, in the summer of exploration she realizes that her services are not needed anymore. An “emotional gulf opens up as Kate realizes she is being forsaken by the people she has built a life around serving” (Klein, 224). Thus, Kate Brown tries to find what concerns her as:

*a particular individual, rather than mirroring other people’s demands and perceptions through experiences, in a sense, the process by which one becomes a woman* (Robinson, 14).

Kate learns to place herself as a woman in the society rather than being placed in a house by the society as a wife and a mother. In fact, female experience never exists in “isolation from discursive and social constraints, but rather, unfolds precisely through women’s engagement in discourse and social systems, many of which in patriarchal cultures seek to devalue and silence women’s worlds and women’s words” (ibid. 30). Indeed, it was the patriarchal culture that silenced Kate and devalued her words, and did not give her the opportunity to express her inner feelings for twenty five years. However, Kate’s experiences forged a “link between representation and self-representation” (Robinson, 13) of the silenced stereotypical mother and wife. Each “new experience brought her closer to comprehending the complex implications of moving inexorably towards the end of life” (Klein, 225). Actually, experience is a twofold process through which one places oneself, and is placed by other forces and social systems. Kate tried to fit herself in a place, other than the place her social roles and impersonal forces had placed her in. Thus, she moves through a series of events and experiences that make her realize the facts in the summer of exploration. Kate’s attempts to make a new life take her from London to Istanbul and to Spain, and play an important role in her journey to self understanding. Lessing uses the third person narration to describe “Kate’s movement emphasizing that her life is one of the stereotypes” (Cederstrom, 155). Kate does not have the “experience to choose” and “imagination” (Lessing, 6) to perceive the series of events that occur in her life. Thus, the narrator tells the things Kate cannot perceive:

*Sometimes, if you are lucky, a process, or a stage, does get concentrated. It was going to turn out for Kate that summer would be such a shortened, heightened, concentrated time. . . By the time it was all over with, she would certainly not have chosen it for herself in advance, for she did not have the experience to choose, or the imagination.* (ibid. 5-6)

Kate lacked the imagination to see any alternatives because of her social roles. In other words, Kate had limited herself to fit all the stereotypes associated with her roles as wife and mother. Her appearance was appropriate for her position as “her husband’s wife and, as the mother of her children” (ibid. 7). Her dress, which came off the proper rack, her hair, her suburban home, which “she, the mother, would run,” (ibid. 9) were all consciously selected to fit

her social position. In fact, before the summer of exploration Kate Brown filled whatever role the society demanded from her without any rejection. Even in her job at Global Foods, Kate acted exactly as she did at home; “a nurse, or a nanny . . . A mother . . . a parrot with the ability to be sympathetic about minor and unimportant obsessions” (ibid. 29). At Global Foods, Kate realized that she has an existence behind the surface that others see:

*There she sat, Kate Brown, just as she had always been, her self, her mind, her awareness, watching the world from behind a facade only very slightly different from the one she had maintained since she was sixteen . . . This is what it must feel like to be an actor, an actress- how very taxing that must be, a sense of self kept burning behind so many different phantasms.* (ibid. 43-44)

Kate Brown sees both inner and outer world, the ego and the self, without depth. However, she has to learn to “look beyond the surface things in order to discover who and what she was before the external and the internal authorities that took hold of her” (Cederstrom, 155). Thus, Kate remembers the summer of 1948 when she was “Kate Ferreira, in her thin white embroidered linen dress fanning “herself with an embroidered silk fan” on the verandah of her grandfather’s house” (Lessing, 44) in Lourenço Marques. This particular scene helped her understand what she was before she became a wife and a mother. In her linen white dress, she was sexually attractive, full of energy and had certain goals but as a wife she had “lost contact with her own goals, objectives, and needs by sacrificing them for her husband and children” (ibid. 127). After such a realization Kate no longer wishes to live within the social stereotypes of wife and mother. As the exploration continues, Kate learns to accept new patterns but is not able to totally change in her selfhood. Kate’s self realization makes her understand that her domestic responsibilities have shaped her life. Actually, Kate continually recalls and examines elements from her past, and in her memory returns again and again to the summer of 1948, during her journey in the summer of 1973. As she compares her present self with the girl on the verandah, she recognizes how motherhood has changed her, and how it has become an obsession; darkening her life. Then during her trip to Turkey, Kate realizes that “the picture or image of herself as the warm centre of the family, the source of invisible emanation like the queen termite, was two three years out of date. The truth was that she had been starved for two years, three, more—at any rate, since the children had grown up.” (Myles, 49) Kate’s starvation had begun in 1970, three years before the summer of exploration, when her youngest son, Tim 16 years old, criticized her for her extremely protective behaviour as “smothering and destructive” (Lessing, 87). This was the first crisis in her life. She first felt disturbed because she had given her family the necessary affection and love but they had neglected her and wanted to be left alone. She gets frustrated and agrees with Mary Finchley’s statement: “Why should we scale ourselves down; children shouldn’t be allowed to be

tyrants.”(ibid. 8) However, for years her personality had been scaled by the needs of her family that caused a psychic starvation in Kate making her realize that “she had been set like a machine by twenty-odd years of being a wife and mother” (Lessing, 46), and for the first time in twenty-five years she found time to think of her self rather than thinking of the needs of her family. Thus, the physical freedom from her children allowed her to regain some mental freedom.

During the trip to Spain, Kate for the first time acts unfaithfully to her husband after her marriage. She has a sexual affair with a young man named, Jeffery Marton. Kate’s journey with Jeffrey is an escape from self-analysis, and this moral experience makes her realize the differences between the conventional attitudes and the reality of her situation. Jeffrey and Kate, as a couple have little to share. Jeffrey is a stereotype and when he gets ill, Kate immediately drifts into the role of a mother, once again. Jeffrey’s illness forces Kate into playing the mother role rather than a lover. Thus, she realizes that in their relation maternal affairs are more dominant than sexual ones. Kate plays two roles with Jeffrey; smiling, sexually knowledgeable woman and the healing mother. During this relation Kate begins to see that “motherhood becomes an obsessive fussing rather than a loving concern when it is carried on beyond the needs or desires of those who are mothered” (Cederstrom, 159-160). Kate’s exploration makes her question the relation between virtues and characteristics and she asks what will be left back of her when needs for maternal virtues end:

*But virtues? Really? Really virtues? If so, they had turned on her, had become enemies. Looking back from the condition of being an almost middle-aged wife and mother to her condition as a girl when she lived with Michael, it seemed to her that she had acquired not virtues but a form of dementia.* (Lessing, 92)

Parallel to Kate’s growing awareness of the obsessive social pattern of her motherhood and moral values, Kate begins to recognize an inner need in her dreams. Kate’s carrying the wounded seal to the water in her arms signifies her need to nurture her inner self in spite of the demand of the collective roles she plays. Kate’s inner self needs nurturing:

*While her body, her needs, her emotions – all of herself- had been turning like a sunflower after one man, all that time she had been holding in her hands something else, the something precious, offering it in vain to her husband, her children, to everyone she knew- but it had never been taken, had not been noticed. But this thing she had offered, without knowing she was doing it, which had been ignored by herself and by everyone else, was what was real in her.* (Lessing, 126)

The dream makes Kate understand that the inner self is nurtured not by the surface meaning of the social roles but by under the surface meaning of the roles played. In other words, one has to learn to see beyond the role she is playing in order to make a self evaluation of life. Kate Brown’s self evaluation



comes through her serial dreams in which Kate has returned “her seal to the inner-space sea of her unconscious, on which, rather than on temporary roles, the identity of the true self rests” (Pickering, 135) as her old age approaches.

Kate after leaving Jeffrey in Spain returns to England, to a hotel room in Bloomsbury. Kate’s insight occurs when she attends a play where she sees “people dressed up in personalities not their own” (Lessing, 152) At a play of Turgenyev, Kate free from her roles as Mrs. Brown applauds the actors, feeling justified, for “it was a farce and not at all a high class and sensitive comedy filled with truths about human nature. The things happening in the world were shaped in this play in a farcical way; A joke, like her own life. Farcical” (ibid.155). The collapse that Kate sees is the collapse of the social mask, the role, and the persona. Kate discovers that she was wearing masks and playing roles like the players. In fact, wearing masks received social approval but limited her self:

*Those actors were absolutely right. They didn’t allow themselves to be shut inside one set of features, one arrangement of hair, one manner of walking or talking, no, they changed about, were never the same. But she, Kate Brown, Michael’s wife, had allowed herself to be roundly slim redhead with sympathetic brown eyes for thirty years. (ibid. 161)*

Kate actually is a blank person because she does not show any “evidence of heightened ability to reflect her newly created and more inclusive sense of self based on the integration of her unconscious, through assimilation of the seal dream” (Cederstrom, 163). For the first time in the novel, Kate “through her past and present experiences and also with the help of the dreams, recognizes the necessity of harmony between material and spiritual facets of life” (Myles, 49).

Kate begins to assert a sense of self in her relationship with Maureen, but because Kate’s ability to perceive other people is limited, Kate never realizes anything about the “mechanism of projection” or about confronting oneself through one’s moral opposite. Mary Finchley, functions as a rather “mechanical shadow” (Cederstrom, 164) because Mary and Kate are totally different from each other. Mary’s unconventional attitudes toward love, marriage, and sex are juxtaposed with Kate’s conventional ones. Maureen later takes over Mary’s role and she becomes the opposite of Kate. In Maureen, Kate sees someone who is freer than her because Kate has mechanically suppressed herself for conventional values and Maureen has mechanically rejected all conventions. Actually, both Kate and Maureen are only reacting to forces outside in an opposite manner because neither of them has a sense of self and is free from conventional values. However, Kate through her relationships with Jeffrey and Maureen finds herself a “time and opportunity for self-reflection” (ibid. 164) Thus, Kate gains a new sense of awareness through her exterior experiences rather than her interior ones:

*Her experiences of the last months, her discoveries, her self-definition; what she hoped were strengths, were concentrated here – that she would walk into her home with her hair undressed, with her tied straight back for utility; rough and streaky, and the widening grey band showing like a statement of intent. (Lessing, 244)*

At the beginning of the novel Kate's hair and clothing were carefully chosen to suit her social stereotype as a wife and a mother; "The dress came off rail marked Jolie Madame, and . . . she wore shoes and stockings. Her hair . . . was done in large soft waves around her face . . ." (ibid., 7) However, at the end of the novel or the end of her psychological journey, her hair symbolizes her inner rebellion because the clothes, hair style, manners, posture, voice of Mrs. Brown have been changed:

*She had put on a 1930's evening dress of the kind that cut on the bias and fits closely. . . It was of black satin. She had cut her hair. She had cut it straight around at the level of her lobes. It was fastened down with slides and clips, but if she was conventionalized as siren to her neck, her head looked like a woman who has just come out of prison or boarding school. (ibid. 245)*

Towards the end of the novel Kate has moved away from her initial social stereotype to a different kind of social stereotype despite the masks she selected. In the final moment of her psychic victory Kate neither dissociates herself from her husband and children, nor deserts them; but she resolves to keep intact her own private self within the social and domestic framework. Kate, "never loses sight of reality which lies existing in a state of elevated consciousness in spite of her domestic and social discontentment as well as ideological disillusionment." (Myles, 50)

Kate Brown in the summer of exploration goes through a journey of self discovery partly left in the dark achieves little light before the coming of her old ages in summer of exploration. Kate manages to achieve more convincing individuality in the deepest layers of her unconscious. However, at the end of the novel: "No one noticed Kate with her suitcase. So she picked it up, let herself unobserved out of the flat, and made her way to the bus stop and so home" (ibid. 247). In that summer of exploration, Kate who encounters her unconscious self and gains new wisdom before returning home to her husband and children says, "I've made a discovery. Going back home, the way I'm going to make statements . . . my area of choice. (ibid. 244) At the beginning of the novel Kate Brown was standing at the back steps, her arms folded and waiting, but at the end she is on the front step, her arms unfolded and moving rather than waiting towards home, Blackheath, a suburb in London.

### **III. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the surface/conscious journey of Kate Brown is a circular one because after leaving her home she returns back but the inner/unconscious journey is a linear one because she does not see the recurring dream after her

psychological journey ends in the summer of self-exploration. Kate during this summer understands one has to learn to see beyond the role she is playing in order to make a self-evaluation of life because one's inner self is nurtured not by the surface meaning of the social roles but by the dreams that store the hidden desires and wishes. Therefore, Kate Brown's summer of self-exploration journey is circular on the surface because of Kate's return back to her home but linear on the dream phase because Kate after exploring her true self succeeds to become an individual and stops to see the serial dreams that touch upon both painful realities and female twist in her life. Briefly, the conventional Kate is intrigued by her dream life in which the recurring seal symbolizes her psychic needs and choices. Particularly, the seal dream presents the subjective survival of Kate who after the summer of self exploration decides to return home but with changes in her hair and clothes that denotes the self realization and fulfillment in Kate's new life. Namely, Kate's first appearance presents a contrast with her final appearance after her confrontation with her real self and inner being. At the end of the novel Kate moves into a more convincing individuality. Kate's basic self, her new relationship to the world and her new perspective on life have altered because Kate Brown has gone through a psychological journey that has helped her change physically in appearance and psychologically in attitude during **the summer of exploration before turning to the dark.**

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