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MIDDLEMARCH, THE RAINBOW AND WOMEN IN LOVE

CERTAIN YOUNG WOMEN CONFRONTING THEIR DESTINY:

A

RECONSIDERATION OF

MIDDLEMARCH, THE RAINBOW AND WOMEN IN LOVE

IN

THE LIGHT OF RECENT FEMINIST CRITICISM

By

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ABSTRACT

Concurrent with the resurgence of interest in feminism over the past twenty years has been a reconsideration of the portrayal of women in literature and an attempt to define a self-consciously feminist aesthetic. The first chapter of this thesis attempts to provide an over-view of the theoretical questions being raised by feminists about literature. The three subsequent chapters re-examine the search for self-identity in George Eliot's Middlemarch and D.H. Lawrence's The Rainbow and Women in Love in the light of feminist critiques of the novels.

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'The common pursuit of true judgement': that is how the critic should see his business, and what it should be for him. His perceptions and judgements are his, or they are nothing; but, whether or not he has consciously addressed himself to co-operative labour, they are inevitably collaborative. Collaboration may take the form of disagreement, and one is grateful to the critic whom one has found worth disagreeing with.

- F.R. Leavis

I took my power in my hand
And went against the world
'Twas not so much as David had
But I was twice as bold--
I aimed my pebble-- but myself
Was all the one that fell
Was it Goliath was too large
Or was myself too small?

Emily Dickenson

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Chapter One

The recent revival of feminism, in the wake of the cultural revolution of the 1960's, has surpassed the familiar call for equal rights and legal reforms and has moved purposefully into the cultural realm. This has resulted in the attempt to create a self-consciously feminist approach to literature. Such an approach encourages the reader and critic to develop a new awareness of the treatment of women in literature and of the way in which scholars have responded to this treatment.

It was not until 1928 that Virginia Woolf produced what we might consider to be the first attempt at feminist criticism. In A Room of One's Own she embarked upon a discussion of the problems which may face a woman writer. At this time, however, there was no widespread established consciousness of the oppression of women which could provide a context for the feminist perspective. As a result, the full significance of Woolf's work went unrecognised. The contemporary situation offers a striking contrast. Feminists are endeavouring to correct what they consider to be the sexist conditioning that has restricted their lives. The co-editors of The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook put the case thus:

... the most profound aspect of our oppression has been the exclusion of female experience as an element in sha-

ping our culture. As we strive to discover and assert ourselves we are learning that the perceptions of reality, the modes of consciousness, the political and aesthetic values that have been represented to us as "universal" are, in fact, very one-sided expressions of human experience-- male experience, to be blunt.¹

The contention is that, to date, our culture has evolved almost exclusively according to the dictates of men.

It is in this context that feminist criticism has begun to emerge, as part of an attempt to open up subject areas that have hitherto been considered from a male, or at least non-feminist, perspective.

Historians, sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists, as well as literary critics, are investigating the specific role women have within each discipline. The expansion in education over the past one hundred years has led to an increase in the number of women attending colleges of education or universities. Many universities and colleges, particularly in the United States, have introduced courses in women's studies.² The outcome of these changes and developments is that those women who are interested in their roles and position in society have the educational background to analyse, theorise about and interpret women's experience in society. The first concrete move towards establishing a forum for feminist critics was the inauguration of the Modern Language Association's Commission on the Status of Women in 1970. Since then new organisations such as Women's Caucus for the Modern Languages, The Con-

temporary Cultural Studies Women's Studies Group, and the International Institute of Women's Studies have been formed. At the same time, feminist publications have increased in number, with the appearance of Women's Studies Quarterly, Room of One's Own, Female Studies, Aphra and Women's Studies Newsletter.

On the whole, feminist literary criticism and scholarship have been empirical and have given rise to little theory and abstraction. Arlyn Diamond and Lee Edwards declare that:

By asking new questions, providing new contexts, scrutinising new material, we hope to provide a criticism that will be fresh, accurate, compelling and suggestive.³

It is true that theoretical eclecticism, empiricism and individualism may offer advantages in being flexible, creative and open to new ideas, but there is also a negative effect. The absence of an established, comprehensive critical method reduces the validity of feminist criticism in the eyes of the academics. They declare that feminist criticism is a partisan approach. Feminists consider this reaction to be a manifestation of sexist bias and fear. Lee Edwards and Arlyn Diamond note that:

The suspicion that feminist criticism is parochial and negative is rooted in a misplaced fear that those writers we profess to admire will somehow be diminished if we look too closely at what they are really saying about women-- or men, or society, or the relationships among them.⁴

They go on to claim that the essays they present in their anthology "demonstrate the contrary is true, that Chaucer, Shakespeare, Defoe, Richardson, and Melville are finally more and not less humane than we have perhaps been willing to think them."⁴ Indeed, it may well be questioned whether any critical approach has any "firm basis". P. Hobsbaum declares:

All existing theories of art are fallacious. It is impossible to suggest a Subjectivist theory which does not bring in the concept of a shared satisfaction and so imply some general standard; Equally, it is impossible to suggest an Absolutist theory which is truly objective: the 'standard' necessarily is one envisaged by an individual sensibility.⁵

Since the late 1960's there has been a considerable production of books concerned with women in literature. These works represent a variety of approaches, not necessarily feminist. Certain ones, such as Elizabeth Hardwick's Seduction and Betrayal and Patricia Beer's Reader, I Married Him, are feminist only in the sense that they examine female works and characters, while Vineta Colby's book, Yesterday's Woman, offers a study of domestic realism in the nineteenth century. Other critics direct their attention to a greater range of material in an attempt to trace sociological or psychological facts about women and women writers. Such is the approach adopted by Elaine Showalter in A Literature of Their Own and Jenni Calder in Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction. Indeed, the critical perspec-

tives range almost as broadly as the theoretical positions of different feminists. Given such theoretical eclecticism, how might we define feminist literary criticism? Evidently, in attempting to come to terms with it we cannot avoid becoming involved with fundamental questions such as: What is literature? What is the function of criticism and what purpose does it serve? What is the relationship between art and society? Such questions have, of course, been the subject of literary debate for years and will continue to be so. In her introduction to Critics of Consciousness: The Existential Structures of Literature, Sarah Lawall

notes:

We are trained to look upon each work as an object to be studied and appreciated for itself. Moreover, we are trained in certain analytical methods that are objective, easy to use, and invariably productive.⁶

Such an approach to criticism has its roots in the critical theory expounded by Matthew Arnold, who advocated that the critic should:

... try and approach the truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, nor persist in pressing forward on any one side, with violence and self-will-- it is only thus, it seems to me, that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious goddess whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline.⁷

It would evidently be a difficult task to reconcile the demand for objective criticism, where the critic remains "disinterested" and outside the work he is analysing, with the approach of feminist criticism, which is often avowedly

subjective and polemical. Certain critics of women writers or of women in literature have attempted to remain objective in the traditional manner, and are careful not to approach the question of women's achievement or position in society. Vineta Colby, for example, is noticeably uncritical of the society that made women writers resort to eccentricity in order to survive.⁸

The feminist criticism which began to appear in the 1970's moved away from an objective approach and became explicitly "feminist" in its stance. Much of this criticism is written with a consciousness which reflects involvement in one of the various groups of the current Women's Movement. This fact, of course, raises questions about the function criticism is serving and the motives for writing it.

Numerous attempts have been made to define the aim and methodology of feminist criticism. Susan Kopplemann-Cornillon's Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives (1972) was the first collection of essays by feminist critics to appear. It becomes clear, however, on studying these articles and essays, that the critical debate over the concerns, function and approach of feminist criticism of literary texts has but begun.

It is possible to broadly categorise the different approaches advocated by feminist critics. The earliest trend, and thus the most clearly developed, is criticism which focuses upon the roles assigned to women in fiction.

This approach is consequent upon the discoveries made by women in consciousness-raising groups in the late 1960's. Feminists began to claim that women are conditioned to hold a certain image of themselves by the society in which they live. The result of this, they declare, is that women unconsciously adopt the male way of seeing things:

Everyday on T.V. and in newspapers, in magazines and at the cinema, in the street and the underground, we see and hear many similar verbal and visual images of women. Usually we take them for granted. They are part of our lives. They appear natural. They appear inert not just because we are accustomed to the various media and do not see their processes of production, but because those are the images we are socialised into categorising women in terms of.⁹

Literature and the media are seen as powerful forces in shaping women's ideas of themselves through the images presented. Hence, women began to analyse literature and the media in order to expose what they considered to be the distorted, limited, unfulfilling roles women are frequently assigned. Such an approach to the criticism of literature is in itself a form of consciousness-raising, considered educative and imperative if women are to avoid falling into the roles society has prepared for them. Mary Ellman's book Thinking about Women finds an intricate, mythological pattern of stereotyping in the works of American writers. She advances the thesis that literature commonly attributes certain characteristics to women which she labels "formlessness", "passivity", "instability", "confinement", "piety",

"materiality", "spirituality", "irrationality", "compliance" and "incorrigibility".¹⁰ In her paper "Sexist Images of Women in Literature", Mary Anne Ferguson comments that these paradoxical characteristics:

...reflect an age old ambivalence about women; they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. Throughout Western literature these and other characteristics connected with them-- talkativeness, nagging, deceitfulness, pettiness, lust-- have been clustered around characters taken by readers to reflect reality. These stereotypes also create reality by serving as models of what real women should become... One common aspect of almost all the stereotypes is that women are seen primarily in their relationships to men, to such an extent that these relationships define women.¹¹

Angered, then, by the sexism which they believe to have permeated every area of culture, particularly literature, feminists aim to expose the humiliating roles that they claim have been assigned to women in literature and life.

Having identified feminine stereotypes in literature, the next step for the feminist critic has been to attempt to account for the proliferation of such images. In her book Sexual Politics, Kate Millett sets out to discuss the political use of literary stereotypes and to describe their effects on female consciousness. In the course of her study she identifies the "de-humanised" examples of womanhood in the novels of Henry Miller and Norman Mailer as an indication of antifemale attitudes underlying the relationship between the sexes. Cynthia Griffin Wolff contends that fe-

male stereotypes are "conveniences to the resolution of masculine dilemmas." She suggests that the proliferation of female characters in literature is ultimately deluding, because they never appear as they are or as they would define themselves:

... characterisations of women are dominated by what one might call the male voice. The definitions of woman's most serious problems and the proposed solutions to these problems are really, though often covertly, tailored to meet the needs of fundamentally male problems.¹²

A second type of critical approach which feminists have adopted is the reconsideration of criticism of the past. Feminists feel justified in contesting scholarly objectivity. Arlyn Diamond and Lee Edwards put the case thus:

The anger that our critics feel finds in their essays its proper target: not the literature itself but the misconceptions of past critics, the received evaluations about literature which, rooted in bias, have for too long passed for disinterested impartiality. Thus many essays begin necessarily, by clearing away false visions before they can articulate what is truly new.¹³

During the nineteenth century the works of women writers were viewed at best condescendingly. Carol Ohmann's study of the reception of Wuthering Heights demonstrates this. The book received great critical acclaim under its masculine pseudonym. Once the author's identity was revealed, however, the criticism became derogatory. In her paper "The Anti-Feminist Bias in Traditional Criticism",¹⁵ Katherine M. Rogers notes that bias, though perhaps of a

different kind, has not disappeared in the twentieth century. She indicates several forms of bias-- including an imperiousness to the feminist awareness, a refusal to recognise it, and open irritation on the part of some critics that women are now finding a voice in literary criticism. A critic of Joseph Andrews is quoted as saying that Lady Booby shows "female irrationality", but the same critic does not characterise Parson Trulliber's similar irrationality as masculine. Rogers concludes that antifeminist bias in present day criticism is still widespread.

The allegedly biased critical treatment of female writers and female characters is termed "phallic criticism", "The Ovarian Theory of Literature", and "The Biological Putdown".¹⁶ Mary Ellmann claims that phallic criticism treats books by women "...as though they themselves were women, and criticism embarks at its happiest, upon an intellectual measuring of busts and hips."¹⁷ Kimberly Snow responds thus:

The Biological Put-down, in which women characters and authors are seen only in biological terms, is a perennial favourite in criticism. For example, one critic divides Faulkner's women into cows and bitches and another relates the poems of Emily Dickenson to her menstrual cycles. Male characters and authors, however, are not reduced to their biological functions or characteristics. No one divides Faulkner's men into studs or geldings, nor do they relate Carlyle's work to his indigestion, although the evidence is certainly there.¹⁸

Feminists also tend to reject psychoanalytical theory based on Freud's theory of sexual biology. Freudian theory asserts that woman has no choice; her emotional development is determined by biological assets apportioned to the sexes at birth, and both men and women move with little choice through a series of 'phases'. Feminists believe that Freud's theory produces an over-all view of the female as weak and inferior to the male, and as such represents a defense of the status quo-- patriarchal society. Germaine Greer declares, "Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. It had no mother."¹⁹ She goes on to say that this has resulted in a double standard: behaviour which is considered normal and desirable for men is thought to be neurotic or even psychotic in women. Phyllis Chesler in Women and Madness states that the normal woman, as often defined by psychologists, is content with passivity and limited authenticity.²⁰ The longing for material success, competitiveness, and aggressiveness are considered to be masculine characteristics and are discouraged in women.

The political and philosophical aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis have been analysed by Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, and Betty Friedan.²¹ Along with Kate Millett, they appear to believe that:

As regards the sexual revolution's goal of liberating female humanity from its traditional subordination, the Freudian position came to be pressed into the service of a strongly counter-revolutionary attitude.

Although the most unfortunate effects of vulgar Freudianism far exceed the intentions of Freud himself, its anti-feminism was not without foundation in Freud's own work.²²

One of the few feminists to defend Freud is Juliet Mitchell. In Psychoanalysis and Feminism she suggests that it is "post-Freudian empiricism" rather than Freud's original theories that denigrates women. She maintains that "Freud partook of the social mores and ideology of his time whilst he developed a science that could overthrow them." Freudian theory, she declares, "is not a recommendation for a patriarchal society, but an analysis of one."²³ To summarise, according to most feminist critics, phallic criticism and psychoanalytical criticism, adopt traditional assumptions about femininity as the norm from which to assess female writers and characters. The conclusions which are drawn as a result are often dissatisfying. Antony Burgess declares that he cannot bear to read Jane Austen because she is too feminine, yet he is critical of George Eliot for achieving a successful "male impersonation" and Ivy Compton-Burnett for writing "sexless" literature--²⁴ obviously this is a case of women being "damned if they do and damned if they don't".²⁵

In her work La Deuxieme Sexe, Simone de Beauvoir attempts to redress misinterpretations of the female nature. She opposes biological, psychological and economic definitions of women;

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.²⁶

The formative influence in civilisation is considered by feminists to be unequivocally male. Virginia Woolf notes that it is the "masculine values which prevail... And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction":

This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room. A scene in a battle field is more important than a scene in a shop-- everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists.²⁷

To sum up feminist feeling: 'Women are generally the 'other,' and feminist criticism is, as Marcia Landy puts it:

... one among several critiques of literature and criticism which have at their core the inclusion of views of oppressed groups, that probe the mythology about women and other minority groups perpetuated in the stereotypes and attitudes which are a mirror of prevailing fantasies and conscious social norms.²⁸

We have summarised, then, the prime complaints that feminists level against literature and criticism. Where do we go from here? Do we need to move on from an attempt to dispose of sexist bias in criticism? Does the school of New Criticism not provide a basis for unbiased criticism? Feminists claim that it does not. Lilian Robinson, Elise Vogel and

Fraya Katz-Stoker all condemn New Criticism and its attempt to deny any relationship between art and the material, political world.²⁹ Robinson and Vogel argue for a critical perspective which is aware that all works of art contain, either implicitly or explicitly, an ideology or assumption about men and women in society involving notions of class and economics. These two critics are what we might refer to as marxist-feminists in that they adapt the literary theories of such critics as Lukacs and Lucien Goldmann to fit their perspective on sexism and capitalism. In their article "Modernism and History";³⁰ they claim that attitudes to women in bourgeois literature reflect ruling class ideology, as do attitudes to the working class and to blacks.

Given the diversity of the critical approaches outlined so far, we can only deduce that feminist criticism is still in an early stage of evolution. For the moment it is important to recognise that our sense of what feminist literary criticism is has been influenced not only by large and tentative theoretical statements by such critics as Annette Kolodney, Annis Pratt and Lillian Robinson, but also by those critics who have not waited for questions of theory to be resolved and who have gone about analysing works from what they believe to be a feminist standpoint. There is evidently a need to investigate further, to clarify and to focus. I now propose to consider some of the feminist criticism which has appeared on two authors of different

periods and different sexes, in order to determine in what ways it enhances or distorts our perception of the author's achievement. By doing so we may arrive at a clearer perception of the useful or useless directions into which feminist literary criticism may lead us.

Since the publication of Kate Millett's Sexual Politics in 1970, the novel has been the focus of much feminist criticism. For the majority of feminist critics, reading a novel appears to be a disturbing experience. Confused by her inclination to enjoy the novel on the one hand and by her newly-raised consciousness on the other, the feminist critic frequently reacts by rejecting the novel.³¹

What are the feminist critic's expectations of a novel? I suggested earlier that a frequent activity of the feminist critic has been to draw attention to the feminine stereotypes to be found in fiction. The fully human, they argue, is identified with the male, while the female is seen mythically, allegorically, symbolically, but never realistically, as a fully-rounded, complex human being. Whether she be denigrated or idealised, woman's meaning is fixed in relation to the more fully developed male characters. This is, of course, a serious charge against the novel, which has so often been judged, appropriately or not, by its realism:

The majority of readers in the last two hundred years have found in the novel

the literary form which most clearly satisfies their wishes for close correspondence between life and art.³²

If we consider the accusation in relation to certain women characters portrayed by Dickens-- the idealistic woman (Agnes), the childish, superficial woman (Dora)-- we must admit that there is some truth in the charge. It may be argued that one can easily find such stereotypes among male characters. Feminists acknowledge this, but believe that masculine stereotypes are not analogous to the stereotypes of women. Cynthia Griffin Wolff insists that:

Whereas the characterisation of women is distorted to meet masculine needs and the feminine stereotype becomes a useful justification for male behavior of one sort or another, the stereotypes of men do not serve this function for women... men may appear stereotypically in literature, but when they do, the stereotype is usually a fantasied solution to an essentially masculine problem. The supremacy of the male remains unchallenged.³³

Whatever conclusion we come to about stereotypes, the question is raised as to whether we should look to literature to provide models. Feminist critics call for a literature which provides better models for women-- a literature that will show women who are active rather than docile, aggressive and ambitious rather than retiring and submissive, as successful in forging their way through the world as heroes are, rather than content to be chosen by successful men.³⁴ They desire to see other alternatives open to women than the extreme poles of courtship, marriage, and children or dis-

grace, suffering and death. The relationship of myths, stereotypes and fictions to reality is not simple. However subtle and true feminist criticism may be in discerning the disparity between female stereotypes and real female experience, its desire for more admirable or more liberated women in literature often betrays it into asserting or implying that female stereotypes have been designed to suppress women.³⁵ It is imperative to remember, however, that reality is one of the raw materials out of which myth, stereotypes, and fictions are created. The novel does not show us merely what we ought to be; it does that, but if this is all that it achieves then it becomes polemic, fantasy or utopia. It is my contention that many feminist literary critics risk sacrificing literature to polemic because they are often blind to the subtle shades and tones with which literature is coloured.

The most familiar example of how literature can be distorted for the sake of feminine polemic is Kate Millett's reading of George Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer and Henry Miller. In The Prisoner of Sex, Norman Mailer accuses Millett of wrenching the text to suit her case, of omitting qualifying phrases, lifting quotations and scenes out of context and even once of misquoting in order to underline a political point.³⁶ Indeed, angered by what she perceives, Millett does not allow for any distinction between the novelist and the protagonist, between the vision

of life expounded by the novel's central character and the vision of life implicit in the novel as a whole. This is surely dangerous ground, for, as D.H. Lawrence says in his essay "The Novel":

So, if a character in a novel wants two wives or three or thirty: well, that is true of that man, at that time, in that circumstance. It may be true of other men, elsewhere and elsewhere. But to infer that all men at all times want two, three or thirty wives; or that the novelist himself is advocating polygamy; is just imbecility.³⁷

I would suggest, and hope to illustrate, that few feminist critics take this into account, nor do they make any clear distinction between fictional formula and historical or social truth. They also uniformly resist making any judgment about literature on the basis of style or structure; they insist on social and political effects. But the opinion that literature tacitly endorses what it portrays cannot be easily dismissed. Cynthia Griffin Wolff notes a danger here:

The final irony is, of course, that Nature often imitates art. When a society gives its sanction, even its praise, to stereotyped images of womanhood, the women who live in that society form their self-images accordingly. A stereotype may become, by a sort of perversity, an image of reality that even women seek to perpetuate.³⁸

The function of the artist, according to the feminist critic, is to see beyond the norm, to show the rare and precious possibilities of breaking out of the stereotype. In demanding such qualities in a novel, do not feminist critics risk putting the novel into similar shackles as those placed

on the eighteenth century novel, which was created for a readership which insisted less on reality than on an ideal of behavior?³⁹ By George Eliot's time the novel had reached a stage where it no longer had to apologise for mirroring the world. Certain feminist critics risk distorting attempts at realism in their call for aspiring, successful female characters. The insistence that literature show woman as more than a bride, wife and mother cannot be rigidly applied to novels written when most women were brides, wives, or mothers, if the criterion underlying the novel is realism.

Two novelists who have particularly been the subject of negative feminist criticism are George Eliot and D.H. Lawrence. George Eliot disappoints many feminist critics because they believe that she does not adequately support the feminist cause,⁴⁰ while D.H. Lawrence has been increasingly subject to the charge of being the archetypal male chauvinist. Simone de Beauvoir declares, "Lawrence believes passionately in the supremacy of the male." In her view Lawrence's novels celebrate the "male as supreme and cast the female as alien and subordinate."⁴¹ Feminists appear to find their expectant feminism disappointed by George Eliot's Middlemarch and by Lawrence's novels, The Rainbow and Women in Love. This is surely surprising, given that the novels are concerned with a woman character seeking fulfilment. We know that George Eliot was sympathetic to

the feminist cause, and what more could a liberationist want than a positive treatment of "woman becoming individual, self-responsible, taking her own initiative"⁴² which is the avowed theme of The Rainbow? The principal problem is raised, however, by the endings of Middlemarch and The Rainbow. Critics, and not only feminist ones,⁴³ claim that the conclusions of the novels are dissatisfying since they are not prepared for by what has gone before. Feminists are particularly indignant about Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw, and they find it no easier to accept the visionary ending of The Rainbow and Ursula's final contented surrender to a "vaster power", and her readiness to "hail" the man it might send to her. Lawrence's sequel to The Rainbow, Women in Love, is criticised even more stringently by feminist critics, many of whom consider the novel to be Lawrence's most hostile attack on women.

The purpose of my discussion will be to consider whether there is any justification for the discontent with Middlemarch, The Rainbow and Women in Love, voiced by feminist critics. I propose to consider the attitudes towards women which appear to emerge from the text; to compare these attitudes with the findings of feminist critics, and to show, at the same time, that the endings of Middlemarch and The Rainbow are fitting conclusions to the works. My aim will be to examine the structure, characterisation, narrative technique, themes, language, imagery, and social milieu of

the novels, in more detail than most feminists care to, and to move towards a reappraisal of the protagonists' search for self-identity.

Chapter Two

The nineteenth century is an obviously attractive period for feminist investigation, for it was the period that produced the great British women novelists-- Jane Austen, the Brontes, Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot -- and coined such terms as "the new woman" and the "woman question". The Victorian attitude towards woman has been attacked by many feminist critics. Simone de Beauvoir accuses Victorian England of having "isolated woman in the home"¹, while Kate Millett has criticised the Victorian idealisation of marriage as "candy-coated sexual politics".² Numerous studies have focused upon the degree to which fact and fiction conformed to the nineteenth century expectations of women. In general, the conclusion arrived at in such studies has been that the novels of the nineteenth century portray woman's role and society's expectations of her with fidelity and historical accuracy. I would suggest that this is particularly true of Middlemarch, a fact frequently overlooked or understated by feminist critics. Before attempting to assess whether feminist discontent with Middlemarch is justified, it is therefore instructive to consider the position of women in the society at the time George Eliot was writing.

Prior to and at the beginning of the nineteenth century the ideal had been the "perfect wife". The "perfect

wife" was an active participant in the family, her prime duty being to bear children. In the lower classes she was expected to provide indirect economic support through the care of her children, cooking and the making of clothes. The ideal to which this model gave way had, in contrast, little connection with any functional or responsible role in society--the "perfect lady".³ This ideal was most fully developed in the upper-middle class. Before marriage a girl was brought up to be innocent and sexually ignorant. The predominant ideology of the age maintained that women had little sexual feeling at all, although family affections and the desire for motherhood were innate. Morally the young lady was left untested and kept under a watchful eye at home. Once married the perfect lady did not work; she had servants. Her status was entirely dependent upon the economic position of her father and then of her husband: "In her most perfect form the perfect lady combined total sexual innocence, conspicuous consumption and the worship of the family hearth."⁴

Throughout the Victorian period the model of the "perfect lady" as an ideal of femininity was tenacious and all pervasive, in spite of its distance from the objective situations of countless women. The cornerstone of society was, of course, the family. The lady's only functions were marriage, procreation or ornament. Her education was designed to bring out her natural submission to authority and her innate maternal instincts. Young ladies were trained

to have no opinions, lest they seem to be too formed or too definite for a young man's taste, thereby making themselves an unmarketable commodity. Wanda Frauken Noff describes the young lady's preparation for marriage thus:

To get ready for the marriage market a girl was trained like a race-horse. Her education consisted of showy accomplishments designed to ensnare the young men. The three R's of this deadly equipment were music, drawing, and French, administered by a governess at home... or, by mistresses in an inferior boarding school. Miss Pinkerton's academy described in Vanity Fair was probably typical of the more ambitious girls' school.⁵

The school to which Wanda Frauken Noff refers aimed to produce pupils who embodied the following ideals:

In music, in dancing, in orthography, in every variety of embroidery and needlework, she will be found to have realised her friends' fondest wishes. In geography there is still much to be desired; and a careful and undeviating use of the black-board for four hours daily during the next three years, is recommended as necessary to the acquirement of that dignified deportment and carriage, so requisite for every young lady of fashion.⁶

In 1872 a magazine writer lamented

...the hopeless inadequacy of most of the ladies' schools where only accomplishments to increase a girl's attractions before marriage are taught; at present it is almost a misfortune for women to have aspirations and culture higher than the ordinary level; most women have not yet arrived at the point of realising their ignorance and subserviency, and many are merely gilt drawing-room ornaments.⁷

The popular ideal of women is perhaps best revealed in Dr. Gregory's Legacy to My Daughters (1774), which was acclaimed

with such enthusiasm that it was reprinted at intervals throughout the next hundred years.⁸ Dr. Gregory's admonitions have been summarised as enjoining upon women the virtues of long-suffering, humility, modesty, chastity and the necessity to suppress any evidence of wit, good sense and learning.⁹ With regard to intelligence Dr. Gregory warns:

Wit is the most dangerous talent you possess. It must be guarded with great discretion and good nature, otherwise it will create you many enemies... Be even cautious in displaying your good sense. It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of the company. But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding...¹⁰

To summarise, women were educated to believe that they were, on the one hand, morally superior to men in their lack of sexual drive, and, on the other hand, inferior because of their weaker natures. The chaste woman was seen as exerting an all-pervasive moral influence within the home. The woman who disturbed this family circle, be she prostitute, adulteress or divorcee, threatened society's very fabric. Those who did not live up to the expected standard were usually sufficiently conditioned to feel pangs of guilt, if not the overwhelming remorse of Little Emily.

How then might a Victorian lady break away from the model of the "perfect lady"? In fact the "perfect lady" gave way to the "perfect woman" or the "new woman", who worked, sought education and fought for legal and political

rights. She was the product of social and economic changes, and in part the result of the courageous efforts of individual women who suffered social ostracism for their beliefs. One of the most famous of such women was Mary Wollstonecraft, who rejected the nineteenth century call for female ignorance and innocence, virtue and mindless submission:

Into what inconsistencies do men fall when they argue without the compass of principles. Women, weak women, are compared with angels; yet, a superior order of beings should be supposed to possess more intellect than man; or in what does their superiority consist? In the same strain, to drop the sneer, they are allowed to possess more goodness of heart, piety and benevolence. I doubt the fact... unless ignorance be allowed to be the mother of devotion; for I am firmly persuaded that, on average, the proportion between virtue and knowledge is more upon a par than is commonly granted.¹¹

However, her voice was really lost amid prevailing doctrines, and one must be careful not to overstress the influence of her writings. After the troubles in France, with the cries for rights ending in bloodshed and tyranny, few English people wished to engage in controversy over a book entitled A Vindication of the Rights of Women. The majority of people tended to support Queen Victoria in her declaration:

We are anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of "Women's Rights" with all its attendant horrors, on which the poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety.¹²

The stereotyped view of women is reflected in literature. In Frail Vessels, Hazel Mews correlates the fact that

women novelists of any re_nown first appeared during the years of the revolutionary disturbances at the beginning of the nineteenth century. She comments that:

...It seems at least probable that the upheaval in the old ways of thought in the minds of women should provide some release of power for works of the imagination, the response of the women writers matching the dynamic of the transitional changes that confronted them.¹³

Raymond Williams asserts that in the nineteenth century the work of women writers was invaluable in keeping alive the move towards rights for women. However, though this may be true, it is important to recognise that this did not open up the way for a feminine tradition in novel writing; for the mode of society was still overtly masculine and any female production had necessarily to conform to the requirements of this society. Male publishers, critics and editors had to be catered to. We assume that this is the reason why Eliot chose to adopt a male pseudonym. M. Springer suggests that Eliot upheld the values of masculine society:

Even the leading feminine intellects of the day, George Eliot and Harriet Martineau, to name two, refused to support the drive for suffrage, some even preferring to believe what science, literature and tradition told them: women were 'lesser men', 'blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain' as Tennyson says in Locksley Hall. Lacking in education, denied experience, the sheltered woman came to fear an alternative freedom, and kept the circular effects of repression in motion. When any author or politician dared to tamper with the locks on her own cell, she often responded with a protective fit of morality, giving us further proof

that the women themselves were true believers, effectively helping to keep the myth and the reality closely alligned.¹⁴

George Eliot has frequently been accused of avoiding the "woman question". Kate Millett declares:

George Eliot lived the revolution... but she did not write of it. She is stuck with the Ruskinian service ethic and the pervasive Victorian fantasy of the good woman who goes down to Samaria and rescues the fallen man-- nurse, guide, mother, adjunct of the race.¹⁵

Indeed, George Eliot did tend to distance herself from any overt commitment to the question of liberation for women which was coming to the fore in the eighteen-sixties. Her relationship with George Henry Lewes, a married man, perhaps the most famous free union of the period, was emblematic of the emergence of a new radicalism. In the light of this, feminists were puzzled as to why she did not give herself wholeheartedly to the woman's cause. In a letter to Sarah Hennel she even seems to question the wisdom of giving women the vote. She wrote to Sarah Hennel to scold her "for undertaking to canvass on the woman's suffrage question". She asked; "Why should you burthen yourself in that way, for an extremely doubtful good?"¹⁶ In general she seems to have been happy to leave the political front to those with decided political opinions, though her guarded opinion of the feminist cause is clear. She wrote: "... I am inclined to hope for much good from the serious presentation of women's claims before Parliament" (Letters, IV, 366).

It is in her novels that Eliot gives dramatic validity to her conception of the role of woman in society. It seems surprising, therefore, that George Eliot has found few friends amongst feminist critics, particularly since her novels The Mill on the Floss, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda are all concerned with heroines striving for the fullest realisation of their potential.

A survey of criticism on Middlemarch from its first appearance to the present day reveals that though the feminist theme in the novel has been noted, its importance has generally been overlooked or discounted. An early reviewer who did recognise the importance of the theme was R.H. Hutton, who declared that Middlemarch was "a pictorial indictment of modern society for the crippling conditions it imposes on men and women, especially women of high enthusiasm."¹⁷ In general, however, few reviewers noted any feminist theme in Middlemarch. Frederick Napier Broome wrote that "a certain school may think that Dorothea's story involves some special impeachment of the female lot" and commented:

We do not think this is at all intended, and if it be intended it is certainly not justified. George Eliot gives us a noble portrait and an affecting history of a woman who nearly spoilt her life by attempting to rise above her opportunities, but her failure and mistakes are not due to the fact of her being a woman, but are simply those which belong to the common lot of human life.¹⁸

Broome goes on to state that Dorothea does not, in fact,

represent a female character at all. He considers her to be a masculine type, since "unsatisfied ambitions are masculine rather than feminine ills". Later critics, such as Leavis, accuse Eliot of "unqualified identification"¹⁹ with her heroine. Indeed, certain of Eliot's heroines do speak of the humiliations of women with a bitterness which it is tempting to assume is derived directly from Eliot's own experience:

You are not a woman. You may try-- but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut-out-- ... that is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed recipe.²⁰

Writing in 1974, John Halperin diagnoses Dorothea's case in a way that feminists would surely interpret as displaying male bias: "What she [Dorothea] really needs as an object of devotion is a genuine husband and a family". This is "her discovery of her own nature and her real needs as a woman and a wife". He goes on to compare Dorothea with Amelia Sedley, and to call George Eliot "no feminist".²¹ Recent feminist critics have made the following responses to Middlemarch. Anthea Zemen, in a recent publication, offers perhaps the most unfavourable criticism to date of the novel:

... we are asked to believe in the importance and nobility of a girl who seldom

succeeds in doing anything of the remotest practical use; whose physical and social myopia means that she sees nothing in the world as others see it; who is naturally beautiful; almost totally uneducated; has uninteresting worries about established religion; entertains a school-girl dream of helping a great scholar with his work; marries the wretch; helps by her mere presence to fret him into an early grave; and then, as a finale, succumbs to the natural desires of youth and persuades the best looking, most impernicious, young man in the book to marry her, with the noble and generous offer that 'I will learn what everything costs'. Her uninspiring history is mixed together with a reasonably workman-like study of country-town society, none of whose members George Eliot is particularly fond of, and all of whom she patronises-- naturally enough, as she was an egregious intellectual snob, and would have hated a simple life in the country. It is an outrageous book. George Eliot's flatterers maintained that Dorothea was the image of her author; she would have been closer to that image if George Eliot had given her more brain and less beauty. George Eliot was a remarkably plain woman.²²

Obviously this represents an extreme and uncritical account of Middlemarch; it is a slap-dash, broadside attack on the novel which is frequently referred to as Eliot's finest work. It does, however, raise certain points which other feminist critics have attended to, particularly in the final phrases of the quotation. The prime objection levelled by many feminists is that George Eliot did not allow Dorothea Brooke to do what George Eliot did in real life: translate, publish, refuse to marry until middle age, live an independent existence as a spinster, and finally live openly with a man whom she could not marry. Lee Edwards has perhaps expressed the feminist critics' resentment most articulately

in her essay "Women, Energy and Middlemarch". She considers the ending to be a "cop-out". Alluding to critics who object to Will Ladislaw as a fitting choice for Dorothea, she says:

The objection is not that Dorothea should have married Will but that she should have married anybody at all, that she should ultimately be denied the opportunity given to Will to find her own paths and forge her energies into some new mold... We could perhaps have had this vision if the author had held the mirror to reflect not only the world both she and Dorothea knew and left behind but also that one she forced into existence when she stopped being Mary Ann Evans and became George Eliot instead. In Middlemarch, however, George Eliot refuses this option and accepts a safety not entirely celebrated but rather tinged with resignation, ambivalently regarded.²³

Edwards' verdict is that Eliot saw Dorothea's energies as "hostile to the community she loves" for:

Middlemarch and its environs are a closed world whose survival depends on the continuing life of values cherished by the author. Her fidelity to these values, however, prevents George Eliot from arriving at a radical solution-- or, indeed, any solution-- to the problems of female energy the book proposes.²⁴

The conclusion Edwards arrives at is that she must reject the novel on the grounds of Eliot's self-betrayal.

Kate Millett dismisses George Eliot more briefly than does Edwards. She is angry with Eliot on grounds similar to those of Edwards:

Dorothea's predicament in Middlemarch is an eloquent plea that a fine mind be allowed an occupation; but it goes no further than

a petition. She married Will Ladislaw and can expect no more of life than the discovery of a good companion who she can serve as secretary. ²⁵

The main source of the indignation expressed by feminist critics about Middlemarch is Eliot's failure to bestow upon Dorothea the freedom she herself achieved. We might argue, however, that Eliot did not allow Dorothea to do what she herself had done, not because she cherished the values of Middlemarch, as Lee Edwards suggests, but because she was a genius and Dorothea was not. "Miss Brooke", is any girl of unusual aspiration who must fit that aspiration into the structures that already exist, and "this petty medium of Middlemarch" is such a structure. Surely, George Eliot's descriptive adjective indicates a critical judgement rather than a love of Middlemarch? While Eliot might defy Middlemarch and pay for it with rejection by family and social exile, hundreds of girls did not have the talent or the courage to move out of the medium. Dorothea is surely such a girl. She is not the idealised figure of unmitigated self-identification Leavis suggests, nor is Middlemarch intended to be the feminist tract many feminist critics seem to demand. It is not a didactic work in which the heroine's frustrations are attributed solely to society; rather, the heroine has certain faults which contribute to her frustration. I propose that ultimately we should read Middlemarch in the light of Eliot's own balanced view that some frustrations are imposed by society, while some failures are the result of in-

dividual flaws:

First Gent. Our deeds are fetters that we
forge ourselves.

Second Gent. Ay, truly: But I think it is the
world that brings the iron.²⁶

In chapter one of this study it was suggested that feminist critics call for a literature that portrays woman as successful in forging ahead in the "man's world". From the criticism put forward by Lee Edwards and Kate Millett it is evident that this is the history they wish to find enunciated in Middlemarch. Their expectant feminism is disappointed, however, and leads to their rejection of the novel; for in their attempt to impose a perspective on the novel they overlook the intended direction and ultimate meaning of the work. Eliot points to her aim in the "Prelude" to Middlemarch:

Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity... Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognisable deed. (M, pp. 3-4)

Here we have Eliot's clearest statement of her fidelity to the actual and her intention to fulfil her duty as a novelist and "give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind".²⁷

In the first edition of Middlemarch, 1871-2, this

theme is taken up again in the "Finale", where Dorothea's mistakes are attributed to a society which "smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age". Reviewers²⁸ pointed out, however, that *Middlemarch* did not smile; certainly Celia, Mrs. Cadwallader, Sir James Chettam and Mr. Brooke did not. Eliot took note and changed the paragraph. Specific criticism of social pressure towards marriage and of poor education gave way to a general complaint against "the conditions of an imperfect social state" which makes no mention of women. Barbara Hardy would most probably find this change appropriate, as she suggests that the integration of Eliot's earlier project, "Miss Brooke", with Lydgate's story affects our response to Dorothea's situation:

Any suggestion of a feminist response is controlled and extended by the complex plot, which puts Dorothea in her place as an example less of a feminine problem than of the frustrations of the human condition.²⁹

Similarly, Donald Stone declares that "Eliot's theme is not so much the deprivations of women as it is the everyday tragedies of the human condition."³⁰ I would suggest that Hardy and Stone are correct in discerning the theme of Middlemarch to be the frustrations of the human condition. At the same time, I believe that feminists need not be disappointed if they are willing to recognise that Eliot's work attempts to embrace a wider perspective than the purely feminist one which critics such as Edwards seek to impose

upon it. Feminists will find that Eliot was extremely alert and sympathetic to the situation of women, if they divert their focus from the conclusion of the novel and concentrate instead upon the comments Eliot makes about the "woman question" through characterisation, authorial commentary and implicitly in the outcome of events. It will thus be apparent that though critics such as Stone and Hardy are justified in interpreting the novel as a study of the "everyday tragedies of the human condition", they do, in stressing this, underestimate the importance of the feminist elements of the novel.

The situation of the woman is frequently referred to in Middlemarch. In fact, in the early part of the novel, when we are forming our opinion of Dorothea, narrative commentary acts as a kind of refrain, as if to ensure that the message is not missed by readers. This also serves to draw attention to the larger principles of value behind apparently mundane events. In the following passage the narrator focuses upon three themes which are of major importance in a consideration of the status of women in nineteenth century life and fiction:

... if there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude. Meanwhile the indefiniteness remains and the limitations of variation are really much wider than one would imagine from the sameness of women's coiffure and the favourite love stories in prose and verse. (M, p.4)

To be female is to be associated with a degree of incompetence, inadequacy and ineffectuality. Tied to this, is the belief that woman's incompetence is most apparent in the social milieu where she must try to relate to other human beings. There is an implied recognition on Eliot's part, that a prevailing stereotype of woman exists and that this stereotype is both superficial and distorted. Despite the "sameness of women's coiffure" and their standardised portrayal in literature, there is a wide area of "indefiniteness", of incertitude and variation; and, Eliot implies, this area which defies "scientific certitude" is a potentially meaningful one.

In her recognition of the female stereotype, Eliot is calling attention, as she often does in the course of the novel, to the historical reality of the strong and pervasive codes women were expected to follow in nineteenth century Britain.* We learn much about what the prevalent expectations of women were from what the characters in Middlemarch say: Sir James Chettam is treated satirically, rather than with the usual sympathy, when he expounds his traditional view of the sexes: "A man's mind-- what there is of it-- has always the advantage of being masculine,... and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality." (M, p. 16) His view is comparable to that of Mr. Brooke, who is unable to under-

*She does not, as M. Springer suggests, "prefer to believe what science, literature and tradition tell her about women."³¹ She is most alert to the constricting influence of conventional notions about women.

stand women except in terms of generalised sexist stereotypes: "'Young ladies don't understand political economy, you know....' (M, p. 12) 'I cannot let young ladies meddle with my documents. Young ladies are too flighty.'" (M, p.14) Similarly, Mrs. Garth articulates a conventional belief that the female sex was "framed to be entirely subordinate" (M, p. 179). On the other hand, a character such as Letty Garth appears to exist in the novel in order that the feminist theme may be simply stated from time to time. Letty, however, is but a child, and it seems improbable that "her feeling of superiority" (M, p. 609) could last in a society which holds no expectations of women nor gives credit to them even when it is due. In the "Finale", for example, we learn that Middlemarch attributes Fred's book on farming to Mary because people are sure that Fred is above turnips and mangelwurze. On the other hand, Fred is given credit for Mary's book drawn from Plutarch, because Middlemarch believes that the higher accomplishment must be the male's. According to Mr. Broke the female intellect "runs underground, like the rivers of Greece" (M, p. 33) to come out in sons. Given that males are considered to be superior to females, it is no surprise that Mary is happy to bring forth male children only.

The plot of Middlemarch makes the limited view of women at least partly responsible for the problems that beset the characters. Lydgate, for example, considers it "one

of the prettiest attitudes of the feminine mind to adore a man's pre-eminence without too precise a knowledge of what it consisted in". (M, p.197). He is attracted to this trait in Rosamond, and relies on the "innate submission of the goose" (m, p. 261). What Lydgate does not realise is that because Rosamond does not question why he has earned a prestigious position-- through his work-- she is consequently unable to comprehend why his research takes precedence over the more desirable tasks of earning a good living and giving dinner parties. This, of course, contributes significantly to the rift between them. Similarly, Casaubon's unhappiness is in part the result of his conventional view of what a wife should be. Dorothea cannot accept such a role:

But he deliberately incurred the hindrance [of courtship], having made up his mind that it was now time for him to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship, to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labour with the play of female fancy, and to secure in this, his culminating age, the solace of female tendance for his declining years. (M, p. 46)

Mr. Casaubon's expectations of Dorothea correspond to the stereotyped view of women which we noted earlier in the chapter:

The eighteenth century education of girls intended to produce bodily and mental debility. The vital principle is that the girl is to be brought up as a companion for man, not, however, a companion who will share in his serious occupations and strengthen him in his daily work, but a companion who shall never offend his vanity by any display of knowledge or wisdom.³²

Both unsuccessful marriages in the novel-- Dorothea's to Casaubon and Lydgate's to Rosamond-- fail, at least partly because of the influence of the traditional male view of women. It is important to note, however, that they are also undertaken for the wrong reasons by the women, whose situation in nineteenth century society, as we noted earlier, demanded that they find satisfaction for their ambitions through men.

Rosamond's ambitions are trivial; and in many ways she typifies the nineteenth century "perfect lady". She has been educated at Mrs. Lemon's school, the equivalent of Miss Pinkerton's academy, and learnt there such arts as "getting into and out of a carriage". Lee Edwards complains that "it is usual to see Rosamond as simply the typical nineteenth century heroine exposed by the persistent hostility of George Eliot's vision."³³ She criticises Eliot for finding Rosamond's strength of will and energy destructive, and concludes that, as in her portrayal of Dorothea, Eliot finds no channel for these energies because they threaten Middlemarch's values which are "cherished by the author". Surely, however, Edwards misses the point. She is attempting to read a novel which is very different from the one written by Eliot. Eliot's concern was to show the contemporary situation as it was, rather than as it ought to be. Hence, in her characterisation of Rosamond she is presenting us with a product of nineteenth century society. Eliot makes

it apparent that Rosamond's temperament is the result of her upbringing, and she surely demonstrates some feelings of sympathy towards her, rather than hostility. In the scene where Dorothea visits Rosamond after seeing her with Will Ladislaw, Rosamond is seen breaking away from self and demonstrating fellow feeling:

Rosamond, taken hold by an emotion stronger than her own-- hurried along in a new movement which gave all things some new, awful, undefined aspect-- could find no words, but involuntarily she put her lips to Dorothea's forehead, which was very near her, and then for a minute the two women clasped each other as if they had been in a shipwreck. (M, p. 584)

It is interesting that the central moment of many of Eliot's characters' lives is when feelings of altruism conquer egoism. Thus, we see Mrs. Bulstrode rejecting caps and collars and sharing her husband's disgrace. This enlargement is to be noted in the male characters also-- Casaubon and Bulstrode. It is thus, that characters such as Rosamond whom we would readily despise are explored and revealed so completely that we are unable to despise them. Eliot extends sympathy towards Rosamond in the way she does towards Dorothea. The ultimate question we must pose in relation to both characters, in the light of Lee Edwards' allegations, is: are they capable of leading the liberated existence feminist critics wish to impose upon them? This question is particularly important with regard to Dorothea, for our conclusion influences our ultimate assessment of the novel. This is a question I pro-

pose to bear in mind as I consider the portrayal of Dorothea.

In the "Prelude" to Middlemarch the impossibility of Dorothea attaining satisfaction is clearly blamed on her social situation: "a passionate, ideal nature" demands an "epic life"; "a certain spiritual grandeur" is "ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity" (M, p. 3) provided for women in nineteenth century England. Here Eliot shows herself to be alert to and critical of the constricting influence of society, just as she reveals and is unable to condone traditional notions about women. At the beginning of the novel, however, we are made aware of Dorothea's faults; she is often the object of the author's irony. Society is not to be blamed totally for the course her life takes; her own opinions, actions and ignorance are to some extent the cause of her troubles. When Dorothea is first introduced into the novel she appears to have a strong sense of self-identity. We see this in her condescending attitude towards Celia over her mother's jewels and in her reaction to Sir James' offer of a horse. When Sir James urges: "Every young lady ought to be a perfect horsewoman, that she may accompany her husband", Dorothea confidently asserts:

You see how widely we differ, Sir James. I have made up my mind that I ought not to be a perfect horsewoman, and so I should never correspond to your pattern of a lady.' Dorothea looked straight before her, and spoke with cold brusquerie, very much with the air of a handsome boy, in amusing con-

trast with the solicitous amiability of her admirer. (M, p.16)

Despite the positive self-image Dorothea apparently displays, she does, in fact, have a very negative image of herself as inadequate and unfulfilled. Her reaction to Sir James is the result of frustrated religious ardour. While she has fixed notions about the roles she will not adopt in society, she retains extremely "child-like views" which Eliot frequently draws to our attention, either by direct authorial comment or through comments made by the characters. In the light of this we should reject Lee Edwards' interpretation that Eliot is "struggling to contain the energy, force the new wine back into old bottles"³⁴ in her portrayal of Dorothea. Rather, she is concerned to show a young girl endowed with unusual ambition straining towards self-identity. The interest of the novel lies in the struggle Dorothea experiences and the myriad influences upon the course of her struggle, rather than in the question whether she is finally able to achieve her ambitions.

Eliot introduces Dorothea as a young lady who is "enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seems to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it" (M, p.6). This description of Dorothea prophetically charts the complex process of her search for self-definition. As a young unmarried woman, Dorothea courts a sort of martyrdom: her

refusal to fulfill the conventional stereotyped roles of Middlemarch society renders her vulnerable to social criticism. Her decision to marry Casaubon is a personal abjuring of martyrdom, for she hopes to find self-fulfilment and happiness in marriage. Ironically, this is the very quarter in which Dorothea incurs real martyrdom; the duties of married life to Casaubon threaten to annihilate her sense of selfhood. In the first half of the novel Dorothea is subject to the author's irony; "Riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way and always looked forward to renouncing it." (M, p.7). Her desire to see herself as good is greater than her concern for others; she catches herself regretting the prosperity of Lowick, which will leave her very little charity work to do. She is guilty of the same self-centredness as Maggie Tulliver, and for the same reason: "that toy-box history of the world adapted to young ladies had failed her" (M, p.63). As Bernard Paris states: "her subjective approach... was not the result of a basically egoistic nature; it was the product of her frustration."³⁵ She is unable to fulfill the expectations society has of her; to do so it would be necessary to combine "girlish instruction" comparable to "the nibblings and judgments of a discursive mouse" with some endowment of "stupidity and conceit":

She might have thought that a Christian young

lady of good fortune should find her ideal of life in village charities, patronage of the humbler clergy, the perusal of 'Female Scripture Characters'... and the care of her soul over her embroidery with a background of prospective marriage to a man who, if less strict than herself, as being involved in affairs religiously inexplicable, might be prayed for and seasonably exhorted. From such contentment poor Dorothea was shut out. (M, p.21)

This cramping narrowness of a woman's prospects is frequently conveyed in images of enclosure and compression-- in Dorothea's dissatisfaction with the "walled-in maze of paths that led no whither"-- "so heavily did the world weigh on her in spite of her independent energy." (M, p.21). When she rejects the narrow conventions to find room for her energy, her problem is reversed-- there is too much space, her goals suffer from hazy outline:

For a long while she had been oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind like a thick summer haze over all her desire to make her life greatly effective. What could she do? What ought she to do? (M, p.20)

Energy that has no impact is squashed or redirected. Dorothea speaks "with more energy than is expected". Mr. Brooke's comment: "Young ladies don't understand political economy" comes like "an extinguisher over all her lights". (M, pp.12-13). She has too much spark, however, to be totally extinguished, and she therefore grasps at the closest object of enthusiasm-- Mr Casaubon and his work. For Dorothea, Casaubon's marriage proposal takes on the aspect of a "winged messenger". He will give Dorothea the room she

needs whilst saving her from the haze of her own indefiniteness. With him she feels she can do something. It is Middlemarch which has created the situation where a dry pedant can appear to an ardent young woman, who has seen nothing better, as an angel of vocation and of the education that fosters that vocation.

Dorothea looks to Mr. Casaubon in her search for identity. She is blind to the fact that Casaubon's preconceptions about a wife's role are as traditional as those of Sir James. Marriage to Casaubon results in the virtual annihilation of Dorothea's identity:

She was always trying to be what her husband wished, and never able to repose on his delight in what she was. The thing that she liked, that she spontaneously cared to have, seemed to be always excluded from her life; for if it was only granted and not shared by her husband it might well have been denied.
(M, p.348)

During her marriage to Casaubon she assumes the functionalised existence he expects of her, despite her occasional recognition of her subservience. Such an existence isolates her from society and forces her once ardent social concerns into the background. Earlier we saw her scorn the idea that "a young lady of fortune should find her ideal of life in village charities, patronage of the humbler clergy, the perusal of 'Female Scripture Characters'..." (M, p.21). But now as a married woman Dorothea's social awareness is even more limited than the stereotyped ideal she had former-

ly rejected.

Dorothea seldom left home without her husband, but she did occasionally drive into Middlemarch alone, on little errands of shopping or charity such as occur to every lady of wealth when she lives within three miles of a town. (M, p. 315)

B. Hardy is correct in noting that after her marriage to Casaubon Dorothea is no longer the object of Eliot's irony. Casaubon's "dead hand" is ironically the very means by which Dorothea regains her sense of self-esteem. She is freed from the imprisonment of devoting herself to Casaubon's work by his death, which occurs before she has made any promise to him. His egoistic desire to control her life by the codicil to his will frees her from any emotional tie to his memory. Dorothea realises that she has never really known the man she so dutifully served, and for whom she abnegated herself:

The grasp had slipped away. Bound by a pledge given from the depths of her pity, she would have been capable of undertaking a toil which her judgement whispered was vain for all uses except that consecration of faithfulness which is a supreme use. But now her judgement, instead of being controlled by dutiful devotion, was made active by the embittering discovery that in her past union there had lurked the hidden alienation of secrecy and suspicion. The living, suffering man was no longer before her to awaken her pity: there remained only the retrospect of painful subjection to a husband whose thoughts had been lower than she had believed... (M, p.362)

At last Dorothea realises the perversity of the man who had led her to conceive of herself as ignorant, unfulfilled and

personally insignificant. Dorothea has been liberated from the "strain and conflict of self-repression".

As I pointed out earlier, feminist critics are disappointed by what Dorothea does with her new-found freedom. They believe that because Eliot ends the novel with a second marriage which is more promising than the first one, she must mean it to be the final solution, in keeping with Victorian readers' demands. I would suggest that there are several explanations to be considered before identifying George Eliot's beliefs with the conclusion of the narrative. Indeed, Eliot's ironies at the expense of marriage in the third volume of "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" indicate that she did not necessarily believe that marriage was always the desirable consummation. Earlier, I commented that feminist critics tend to shy away from the close examination of literary texts. As a result, they do not appear to recognise that writers are often dictated to by the demands of their readers or by fictional formulae. Jean Kennard suggests that the conclusion of Middlemarch is unsatisfactory because of the sexism implicit in its fictional structure.³⁶ This is the result, she believes, of the sexist fictional formula according to which the novel is constructed. She names this formula the convention of the two suitors. The growth of the woman is marked by her choice of the right suitor over the wrong suitor. The heroine's personality and development are thus defined through comparison with two male

characters. This convention works well for Jane Austen, but in Middlemarch we are faced with the dangers inherent in it. The problem is that many readers feel that Will Ladislaw is not an adequate match for Dorothea. Kennard argues that the novel invites us to believe that Dorothea is of a nobility and ardour which should not be satisfied by Will. She believes that the conclusion of the novel is therefore sexist, for the structure and imagery of the novel encourage us to see Dorothea's marriage to Will as the fulfilment of her dreams. Kennard concludes: "The qualities we have been invited to admire... have been sacrificed to structural neatness."³⁶ If Kennard is correct in her interpretation, then we could argue that the "sexist" ending of the novel is the result of the fictional convention at work, rather than of Eliot's "tacit approval" of the marriage. If this is so we might well wish that she had broken with the convention. I feel, however, that Kennard is imposing a structural formula on the novel which was not envisaged by Eliot. Surely, we might reverse the argument and suggest that Eliot is breaking convention in her refusal to offer her readers the satisfactory "happy ending". I would agree with Joan Bennett when she says that if the reader feels dissatisfaction with the conclusion of events, it is because George Eliot did so too.³⁸ Eliot repeats in the final phrase of her novel the belief which she set forth in the "Prelude": "Middlemarch is an imperfect society which is incapable of producing another

Theresa or Antigone because the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is forever gone" (M, p.612). The tone of the final paragraphs of the novel, which Lee Edwards objects to as casting Dorothea in the wake of her husband's course, is charged with Eliot's characteristic ruefulness at the fate of large human desire. The finality of "forever" indicates her awareness of nineteenth century limitations on women and heroic actions generally. At the very beginning of the novel we are told that such a society offers only two alternatives to women: "vague ideals and the common yearning of womanhood" (M, p. 3). These two alternatives are represented in Dorothea's marriages. The first proves to be disastrous; the second in contrast appears to be happy but it is still a compromise. Eliot is at pains to point this out:

Certainly these determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. (M, p.612)

In the light of this it would surely seem that Eliot sees Dorothea's second marriage as being as responsible as the first for preventing her from reaching the heights of a St. Theresa. I would question, however, along with Dorothea, whether she could ever have risen to the stature of a great Theresa, even given the right social milieu. Dorothea admits as she looks forward to her marriage to Ladislaw:

"I might have done something better, if I had been better. But this is what I am going to do." (M, p 601). Having accepted this compromise, Dorothea goes on to diffuse goodness in a different way, by helping Ladislaw. Ladislaw could be seen, therefore, as fulfilling Eliot's purpose in that he is a deficient character who is to undergo regeneration through the influence of his wife. This is not to say that Will makes no contribution to the relationship. As J.M. Lüecke points out:

In addition to his "smallness" complementing her "largeness", his easier manner and artistic nature complement her ascetic bent and active sense of duty, at the same time that their sensibilities are so mutually acute. In many ways Ladislaw's sensitivity, quick perception, and "glibness of speech" counterbalance her problem with "optics" so that her greatness was eventually channeled to a practical use through him. She might have had no outlet if her husband was able to stand on his own strength, or if he had not been able to provide a corrective lens.³⁹

Any discussion of the scope and satisfaction of Dorothea's final lot should refer to her husband's work as well as to his character. Michael York Mason is correct in saying that critics have not paid sufficient attention to Middlemarch as an historical novel that evokes the past in relation to the present.⁴⁰ Though the Reform Bill is defeated in Middlemarch, the historical perspective shows this to be but temporary. To locate the novel in anti-reform times is therefore to locate it in relation to the ultimate passage of the Reform Bill. Dorothea, in aiding Ladislaw in his work for

the passage of this bill, (M, p.611) contributes to a movement which is not ultimately defeated. This, we might consider to be analogous to St. Theresa's reform of a religious order and therefore just as worthy of being seen as "a far resonant action". To understand this is part of the necessary equipment with which the reader must be furnished in order to read the novel in the right light. Eliot did rank the passage of the Reform Bill as one of the momentous events of the period.⁴¹

Thus, to what extent does Dorothea's marriage represent the failure of her aspirations? Need feminists be disappointed by the outcome of events? Any sorrow George Eliot feels for Dorothea's situation is balanced by her recognition that:

...Women can do much good for other women (and men) to come. My impression of the good there is in all unselfish efforts is continually strengthened. Doubtless many a ship is drowned on expeditions of discovery or rescue and precious freights lie buried. But there was the good of manning and furnishing the ship with a great purpose before it set out. (Letters VI, pp.97-100; 290)

In making Dorothea's fate the willing support of her husband's active life, Eliot celebrates the many Theresas whose deeds went unrecognised, who were unable to transcend circumstances and whose cultural milieu provided no outlet for their talents. Eliot understood clearly the limitations placed on men and women; unlike many feminist critics, however, she did not define liberation for women as intellec-

tual and economic independence and separate fulfilment. Those who search for this in her novels will certainly be disappointed. Eliot sought instead to extend such a definition to include fellowship between man and woman. Her pity for the lot of frustrated human beings transcends her anger, and she is thus able to objectively explore and keep firmly to the "sad facts". To show the heroine triumphing and transcending her social position would be to endanger realism in the novel. Indeed, Eliot commends Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft for not idealising women, as feminist critics would have Eliot do. What argues a need for women's emancipation is their present debasement, she says, not their excellence in all virtues.⁴²

I would suggest the following final analysis of Dorothea's position. In the course of the novel Dorothea has moved towards self-realisation. Her mature self-image is a benevolent, humane one, freed from the self-centred egoism she displayed early in the novel. She no longer sees herself as inadequate, dependent on the resources of others for self-fulfilment. She concerns herself with the problem of filling the Lowick living, and enriches the life of the Farebrother family through her decision. She supports Lydgate by believing in his innocence when all society suspects or condemns him. Overcoming her personal torment, she visits Rosamond to offer advice. Her story may not close with the fulfilment of the great aspirations of her youth, but

her willingness to marry Will shows her mature strength of character. She is confident enough to marry a man whose potential is as yet unrealised. Her belief that she can make him happy shows that she feels that she has much to give. Finally, the fullness of Dorothea's nature is stressed in the "Finale" by a comparison between her strength and that of a river:

Her full nature, like that river of which
Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in
channels which had no great name on the
earth. But the effect of her being on
those around her was incalculably diffusive.
(M, p.613)

Middlemarch, we might conclude, represents a moderate mid-Victorian reaction to the movement for women's freedom.

It is the result of Eliot's desire to accommodate within the traditional ethic the need for the changes which were coming about. She created a heroine whose intellectual and emotional vitality must be understood as a major contribution to the re-evaluation which had begun of the nature and role of women in society. It exposes the hollowness of contemporary notions of women, while satirising, at the same time, male-oriented conventions in marriage and law. Surely feminists need not feel betrayed by George Eliot.

Chapter Three

Throughout his work Lawrence is particularly concerned with the problem of how the individual can find satisfaction within the complex structure of relationships existing between two people in an increasingly mechanistic society. The most important relationship for Lawrence is that between a man and a woman-- "the via media to being, for man and woman, is love, and love alone."¹ This is not to say that he advocates the philosophy that the sexual relationship results in a unity between the two halves of a whole. For Lawrence such a union violates the independent self and amounts to a kind of death for the individual. Similarly, he decries relationships which impose an ideal on either partner, or which reduce one person to the implement of the other. He calls for an intimate relationship which nevertheless preserves the independence of each person. In searching for the ultimate human relationship Lawrence is inevitably led to consider the position both in society and in relation to males. He declares in "Give Her a Pattern" that the greatest disadvantage for females is that "they must always go on trying to adapt themselves to men's theories of women."² He is as aware as feminist critics are of the stereotypes of womanhood invented by men: the virgin mother, Dante's chaste Beatrice, Petrarch's Laura, the

courtly and romantic images of woman as idealised spiritual beauty, Dickens' childwives, the nurse, the secretary, and "the eternal secret ideal of men-- the prostitute". The paradox is that "as soon as a woman has really lived up to the man's pattern, the man dislikes her for it".³

Despite Lawrence's insistence on reciprocal relationships and his horror of imposed stereotypes, he is often described as being, in R.P. Draper's words, "among the most conservative of reactionaries in his attitude towards women."⁴ Lawrence's works have provoked many feminist critics to anger. They regard Lawrence's conscious effort to discover the form of true mutuality as tainted from the beginning with his bias of masculine supremacy. Simone de Beauvoir offers one of the first versions of this argument in The Second Sex. She states that "Lawrence believes passionately in the supremacy of the male",⁵ and goes on to say that he disseminates traditional masculine conceptions of woman as lover, wife, mother, cook, which leave no room for personal fulfilment. Lawrence's novels, in de Beauvoir's view, celebrate the male as supreme and the female as alien and subordinate. She sums up Lawrence's novels as essentially "guide books for women" which instruct them in the catechism of "true" femininity. In recent years forceful attacks have extended Simone de Beauvoir's views. Kate Millett includes Lawrence with Freud, Henry Miller and Norman Mailer as arch-opponents of the feminist cause. She declares that Lawrence's theories

of sexuality are guided by the nineteenth century doctrine: "sex is for the man". Lawrence's knowledge of Freud was "sketchy" but, Millett remarks, "...he appears to be well acquainted with the theories of female passivity and male activity and doubtless found them very convenient."⁶ In Millett's view "the male/female relationships portrayed by Lawrence can only be interpreted as master/slave relationships and are reflective of the author's deep-seated homosexuality and misogyny. Barbara Hardy begins her essay from a similar stance, before moving to a more qualified vision:

It is easy to see Lawrence as the enemy. He is hard on women. He creates saints and monsters as he sheds and fails to shed his Oedipal sicknesses, admitting, denying, and re-admitting his mother's stranglehold, asking her to free him by dying, then succumbing to the seductiveness of that last sacrifice. He criticises and harangues women for coming too close, for becoming too personal, for wanting to be loved, for having too much mind, for having too much cunt.⁷

Rosalind Miles declares, "Even in his best fiction Lawrence never overcame a deep anti-feminism...."⁸ Even Norman Mailer writes that "in all Lawrence's books there are unmistakable tendencies towards the absolute domination of women by men, mystical worship of the male will."⁹ Any reader who is in sympathy with the feminist cause must concede much that Lawrence's critics charge him with. It cannot be denied that Lawrence believes, at least in principle, that there is a significant psychological difference between men and women.¹⁰ He is often unrestrained in his condemnation of

characters who deny their essential masculinity or femininity. His animosity towards some women characters does occasionally verge on sadism. In stories such as The Fox and "The Woman who Rode Away", Lawrence portrays the "unfeminine" woman who is killed or brought to the brink of death, while in "The Princess" an emotionally sterile, wilful, "unfeminine" woman is subjected to repeated rape. We can find manifold examples of anti-feminist comments made by characters-- one of the most radical being Annable's comment upon the peacock in The White Peacock: "the miserable brute has dirtied the angel. A woman to the end I tell you."¹¹ It is imperative to remember, however, that the fate which befalls a character is not necessarily an indication of the author's indictment of him, nor do the comments made by characters necessarily echo their creator's attitude. To regard Lawrence as a writer whose ideas are anathema for any self-respecting woman or man is to misunderstand the general tendency of his fiction. In exploring the difficulties of achieving the satisfactory relationship Lawrence posed a number of alternatives that have been understandably painful for women to consider. Many of his men, such as Cipriano in The Plumed Serpent, argue that a woman should accept a passive role. But it is probable that for every instance of a Lawrentian heroine submitting one could find examples of that same heroine doubting, fighting, winning. For every example of a hero domineering over his partner one could most probably find cases where he

honours her. Indeed, there are only a few instances where some kind of balance is achieved by men and women. Close study of both the destructive and satisfactory male/female relationships suggests that Lawrence was extraordinarily sensitive to the problems of women. His work in fact is, at least in part, an attempt to describe the crippling effect of male domination over the female and the economic and social handicaps under which women labour.

Let us now turn our attention to The Rainbow, which, as suggested earlier, has been the subject of negative feminist criticism, just as Middlemarch has, and for similar reasons. Why "liberated" women have found D.H. Lawrence infuriating puzzles those critics of The Rainbow who interpret Ursula's role in the novel as Lawrence's exploration of the value of self-realization, independence and individualism. As with Middlemarch, however, critics have condemned the ending of the novel, declaring that it is totally unprepared for by the development of events. They are particularly disturbed by Ursula's final surrender to a "vaster power" and her willingness to "hail" the man who might be sent to her. In her discussion of The Rainbow, Kate Millett comments that:

It celebrates the pastoral life in terms of fertility-- never the phallic fertility of the later period, but the power of the womb. Every event, whether it be falling in love or attaining maturity, is described in terms of fertility, gestation, parturition, and birth.¹²

She goes on to say that "the early sections of The Rainbow show a curious absorption in the myth of the eternal feminine, the earth mother, and constitute a veritable hymn to the feminine mystique."¹³ Such a declaration would appear to constitute a dramatic turn in argument from that conveyed in sections I and II of Millett's discussion of Lawrence's novels,¹⁴ where she accuses him of being "the evangelist of 'phallic consciousness'". She acknowledges Lawrence's apparent approval in the first half of the novel of the dominance which Lydia and Anna exert. Unlike Miriam and Lady Chatterly, Lydia and Anna "initiate sexual activity on their own terms and timing."¹⁵ Millett also concedes that:

So entirely do women predominate in the book that all Oedipal relationships of parent and child are a series of father-daughter romances. All masculine attempts to play lord and master and fall back upon patriarchal prerogative, the very stuff of Lawrence's later work, are subjected to ridicule in The Rainbow.¹⁶

We might well begin to question how Millett is going to maintain her thesis that Lawrence is an anti-feminist writer, which she began to develop in discussing Lady Chatterley's Lover and Sons and Lovers. It is important to note, however, that her discussion of The Rainbow begins by declaring that the novel is the "most atypical" of Lawrence's work. Having conceded that Lawrence's treatment of women appears to be more favourable than in previous novels, Millett now launches her attack, suggesting that the early sections of the novel are an elaborate trap to capture the unsuspecting female

reader's assent:

It is only when he gets to Ursula that Lawrence begins to lose rapport with his characters and distort the glowing sympathy which so distinguishes the first half of the novel. Ursula is too close to him; she is a rival.¹⁷

I would suggest that this embodies a one-sided and polemical view of Lawrence which fails to acknowledge his objectivity. We might well ask, however, why Lawrence takes so long to introduce his protagonist, whose thoughts, emotions, conflicts, and psychic development take up the latter half of the novel. Are the early sections of the novel, as Kate Millet believes, merely bait for the unconscious female reader? Such a view fails to recognise the importance of the early chapters of the novel in relation to Ursula's experience. In tracing three generations of the Brangwen family, Lawrence is able, among other things, to evoke the social, economic, and religious background behind Ursula's liberationist tendencies. Relationships within the three generations are revealed through descriptions of conflict and increasing male/female tension. The conflict is tied directly to the increased industrialisation and urbanisation of England, where personal relationships are becoming increasingly difficult as individuals move from the farm to the town and are touched more and more by technological progress. The opening pages of the novel introduce us to the Brangwen women, who, facing outwards, are images of Victorian aspiration. The women seek to fulfill their "range of motion" by sear-

ching for "knowledge", "education", and "experience". Lydia is partially subdued by convention, and past experience of suffering, her restlessness emerging in outward signs of melancholy and frustration, while Anna is wild, lacks direction and is self-consuming. Only in Ursula do aspirations become ultimately directed and civilised. The striving and failure of the early generations prepares us for the ultimate focus of the novel upon the education of Ursula, through whom the preceding and partial impulses are carried to completion.

Anna is a primitive version of Ursula. Rather than coming to terms with self and life, however, she backs off and remains unconscious to the end of the full meaning of her experience. Her fulfillment is motherhood and domesticity, something which Ursula rejects at this stage. I suggested earlier that Lawrence was preoccupied with male-female relationships; however, in The Rainbow, as in Sons and Lovers, he simultaneously makes a study of the parent-child relationship. It is interesting that Adrienne Rich, in her book Of Woman Born, laments that the relationship between mothers and daughters is "the great unwritten story" in art; it is a relationship which has generally been "minimised and trivialised" in favour of the father-son relationship.¹⁸ If we felt the need to justify the inclusion of the early sections of the novel, we might well suggest that in his study of the three generations of the Brangwen family, Lawrence

is, among other things, evoking the complexity of feelings which may exist between mother and daughter. Indeed, Ursula's movement towards maturity is partly dependent upon her coming to terms with her mother so that she can make a full commitment to life.

From an early age Ursula is seen attempting to break the tie with her mother. The marriage between Anna and Will has become a matriarchy. We are told that Anna felt "like the earth, mother of everything",¹⁹ Her commitment to her children is unbalanced. It is a commitment Ursula hates: "How Ursula resented it, how she fought against the close, physical, limited life of herded domesticity!" (R, p.354). As she grows older she finds it "very burdensome... that she was the eldest of the family." (R, p.261). This early maternal role disturbs her: "How she hated always to represent the little Brangwen club. She could never be herself, no, she was always Ursula-Gudrun-Theresa-Catherine" (R, pp.262). The domestic situation is a "nightmare":

When she later saw a Reubens picture with storms of naked babies, and found this was called 'Fecundity', she shuddered, and the word became abhorrent to her. She knew as a child what it was to live amid storms of babies, in the heat and swelter of fecundity. And as a child, she was against her mother, passionately against her mother, she craved for some spirituality and stateliness. (R, p. 264-65).

In order to escape the constricting atmosphere of her home Ursula turns to her grandmother:

...for the eldest child, the peace of the

grandmother's bedroom was exquisite. Here Ursula came as to a hushed, paradisaal land, here her own existence became simple and exquisite to her as if she were a flower.
(R, p.254)

She loves to listen to tales from her grandmother's past; and it is here that we note the beginning of Ursula's visionary nature, which develops into a bid for freedom from the everyday life of the Brangwen household. Lawrence explains how "...the grandmother's sayings and stories accumulated with mystic significance, and became a sort of Bible to the child." (R, p.260.) The use of the word "mystic" is significant, for it helps to shed light on the confusion which Ursula experiences in religious matters. The chapter "The Widening Circle" is central to an understanding of Ursula's development so far. Lawrence stresses several more times how Ursula dislikes being the eldest with all the responsibility. Release, however, seems to be in sight when she goes to the grammar school in Nottingham. Lawrence emphasises how:

...even as a girl of twelve she was glad to burst the narrow boundary of Cossethay, where only limited people lived. Outside was all vastness, and a throng of real, proud people whom she would love. (R, p.264)

For a time then, "she was happy"-- "A Latin verb was virgin soil to her: she sniffed a new odour in it." (R, p.269).

However, her dream is shattered as she becomes oppressed by the restrictions of the educational system. She goes through a period of rebellion which leaves her "chastened" and

"washed out". She is left with a "fear and dislike of authority" which remains with her and determines her reaction to life. Having described the reason for Ursula's rejection of her home background and her lack of fulfillment at school, Lawrence is now able to focus upon Ursula's religious frustrations. It is here that we can chart the beginning of Ursula's confusion and dissatisfaction. The religion she has been raised to accept fails in its rainbow role of asserting the eternal and dynamic relationship between the individual and the cosmos, the infinite and the finite, which Ursula longs to acknowledge. Ursula's religious beliefs are an essential factor in the process through which she is defining herself in relation to others and to the universe as a whole. In studying Ursula's development as a liberated woman, by focusing on her religious dilemma, I feel that not only will we recognise the appropriateness of the conclusion of The Rainbow, but we will also come to a better understanding of the meaning of the conclusion and the factors which lie behind the liberationist tendencies of the discontented modern woman. I hope thereby to show that Lawrence is more sensitive to the female situation than most feminists acknowledge. Just as George Eliot sought to sympathetically portray the restrictions imposed on women, so Lawrence is presenting the factors which arouse liberationist tendencies, rather than the triumph of these tendencies.

Lawrence focuses our attention upon the Brangwens'

concept of religion. We are told that "the Brangwens shrank from applying their religion to their immediate actions. They wanted a sense of the eternal and the immortal, not a list of rules for everyday conduct." (R, p.274). This attitude is intrinsic to Ursula's attitude to religion. In contrast to her mother who "would have nothing extra-human. She never really subscribed, all her life, to Brangwen's mystical passion." (R, p.275), Ursula is very much a Brangwen, longing for the "visionary world," for a Jesus who is not of this world. "She was enemy of those who insisted on the humanity of Christ" (R, p.274). It is important to notice how Lawrence stresses yet again that Ursula longs to reject her constricting family background. This serves to underline the point that her visionary or daydream nature is the natural consequence of her childhood frustrations: "She was always in revolt against babies and muddled domesticity. To her, Jesus was beautifully remote" (R, p.275). On Sundays, Ursula feels that this visionary world comes to pass:

She heard the long hush, she knew the marriage of dark and light was taking place. In church, the Voice sounded, re-echoing not from this world, as if the church itself were a shell that still spoke the language of creation. (R, p.275).

Ursula's favourite book in the Bible is Genesis and particularly the passage which describes how "the Sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair." This passage is, of course, a version of the mating of sky and earth. Ursula's greatest wish is to experience this herself:

Over this Ursula was stirred as by a call from far off. In those days, would not the Sons of God have found her fair, would she not have been taken to wife by one of the Sons of God? (R, p.276).

What Ursula does not understand is that as a myth this experience is available to her, it is eternally potential, something beyond time. The Old Testament has, however, explained myths away by historicising them, presenting them as unique occurrences. The phrase "in those days" situates the incident in time. Ursula does not recognise, as Lawrence does, that myths cannot be applied literally. It is instructive to consider Lawrence's comments on the difference between myth and allegory in his later review of Carter's "Dragon of the Apocalypse":

We can expound... but we can only look a little silly... Myth lives on beyond explanation, for it describes a profound experience of the human body and soul, an experience which is never exhausted and never will be exhausted, for it is being felt and suffered now, and it will be felt and suffered while man remains man. You may explain the myths away: but it only means you go on suffering blindly, stupidly, "in the unconscious," instead of healthily and with imaginative comprehension playing upon the suffering.²⁰

It is because Ursula's inherited religion has explained myths away that she suffers so much. The problem is exemplified in the description of the celebration of Christmas in the Brangwen family. Lawrence's purpose is to show how the event which Christians commemorate at Christmas is really a mythic one, a recurring event rather than an historical one.

In the sensations of the Brangwens regeneration does take place:

The expectation grew more tense. The star was risen into the sky, the songs, the carols were ready to hail it. The star was the sign in the sky. Earth too should give a sign. As evening drew on, hearts beat fast with anticipation, hands were full of ready gifts. There were the tremulously expectant words of the church service, the night was past and the morning was come, the gifts were given and received, joy and peace made a flapping of wings in each heart... the Peace of the World had dawned. (R, p.279).

Lawrence has shown that the mythic event has occurred, the rebirth of the cosmos is an "experience which is never exhausted". Having done so, he now focuses upon the Brangwens' reaction to the event:

It was bitter, though, that Christmas day, as it drew on to evening, and night, became a sort of bank holiday, flat and stale... Alas, that Christmas was only a domestic feast, a feast of sweetmeats and toys! Why did not the grownups also exchange their everyday hearts, and give way to ecstasy? ...Where was the fiery heart of joy, now the coming was fulfilled; where was the star, the Magi's transport, the thrill of new being that shook the earth? (R, pp.279-80)

The "thrill of the new being" has gone because the Incarnation of God has been interpreted as a unique occurrence, because the physical joy has been allegorised into something spiritual, and therefore the fulfillment has been pushed into a remote and unearthly future. Ursula has therefore been misdirected, and consequently does not recognise that myths are eternal, not to be placed in time. Because daily life

appears to be directionless and rather haphazard, the need arises to establish one's own direction, to make something of oneself. The New Testament in turn frustrates Ursula's religious yearnings because it is allegorical. The physical world is subordinated to the role of moral and didactic argument. Ursula, for example, responds emotionally to the image of Christ gathering his beloved to him:

So He must gather her body to His breast, that was strong with a broad bone, and which sounded with the beating of the heart, and which was warm with the life of which He partook, the life of the running blood. (R, p.286).

Her intellect, however tells her that this is not the designed impact of the passage:

Vaguely she knew that Christ meant something else; that in the vision-world He spoke of Jerusalem, something that did not exist in the everyday world. It was not the houses and factories He would hold in His bosom: nor the householders nor factory-workers nor poor people: but something that had no part in the weekday world, nor seen nor touched with weekday hands and eyes. (R, p.286).

Thus, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament is satisfying to Ursula.

After this explanation of the Brangwen religion Lawrence returns the focus to Ursula and her quest for self-realisation. We are told that she "became aware of herself as a separate entity in the midst of an unseparate obscurity ... she must go somewhere, she must become something" (R, p. 283). Thus, self-consciousness, a feeling of isolation and

a sense of the inconsequential and ragged nature of life are related attitudes; and Lawrence stresses that they are symptomatic of blindness rather than of insight, by describing them as a "cloud" which has gathered over Ursula. He suggests, furthermore, that this feeling of self-responsibility is something bequeathed to her: "This was torment, indeed, to inherit the responsibility of one's life." Ursula's quest for self-realisation, then, is a burden placed upon her not by Lawrence but by her heritage-- by the discontentedness and centrifugal aspirations of her maternal ancestors and by the failure of her culture's religion to connect the temporal with the eternal and to dispel the "cloud" which renders the universe an "obscurity". It is important to note, therefore, that Ursula is not presented as a stereotyped liberationist, as Kate Millett suggests.²¹ Rather, her situation is sensitively evoked by Lawrence and her every move in her search for independence is presented as a laceration of her intensely reticent nature: "In coming out and earning her living she had made a strong, cruel move towards freeing herself" (R, p.406). The move is cruel, not because of the suffering she experiences at the hands of others, but because, "she had paid a great price out of her own soul."

After his description of the Brangwen religion, Lawrence returns the focus to Ursula as she turns to the "man's world". This is neither a voluntary nor a happy decision:

her liberationist tendencies are consequent upon her religious frustrations. The religion she has been raised to accept fails in its rainbow role of asserting the eternal and dynamic relationship between the individual and the universe, the finite and the infinite which Ursula longs to acknowledge. The cause of her dissatisfaction has been located. Her liberationist tendencies are the direct result of her dissatisfaction and confusion. The early sections of The Rainbow are therefore intrinsic to our understanding of Ursula's nature and aspirations. They should not be passed over as Lawrence's feigned approval of female aspirations, as Kate Millett leads us to believe.

Ursula now meets Anton, and not surprisingly her relationship with him constitutes her attempt to assert her independence and overcome her longing for a godly lover. It will be a way for her to achieve separateness and individuality: "She lay hold of him for her dreams. Here was one such as those Sons of God who saw the daughters of men, that they were fair." Critics have seized upon the portrayal of this stage of Ursula's life as overtly anti-feminist. Deborah Core declares that Ursula is portrayed as a

...vampire who sucks out Skrebensky's vital soul during sex. After one encounter his 'core' is gone. He is progressively reduced by her, fearful of death and Ursula which are linked in his mind.²²

Kate Millett attributes the breakdown of Skrebensky to Lawrence's anxious desire to teach "a lesson how monstrous the

new woman can be."²³ Without question Ursula is a modern woman. She does cut herself free from the Christianity of her parents and reject the stifling seclusion of family life. She later defies both traditional and paternal authority by taking a position in a school and achieving freedom from sexual inhibition. She is, however, no monster. Lawrence sympathetically portrays her as a modern, but confused, liberated woman in search of identity: "How to act, that was the question? Whither to go, how to become oneself." While I would agree with Kate Millett, in certain instances, that Lawrence portrays the modern intellectual woman as corrupt (for example, Hermione, Winifred Inger), I would also point out that it is equally true to say that he attributes the same quality to the modern intellectual man, as one might note in the depiction of Gerald, of Ursula's Uncle Tom, or Anton Skrebensky. Such men are not sterile because of Lawrence's "class hatred", as Millett suggests,²⁴ in commenting that Lawrence is eager to "execute" Skrebensky because he is an "aristocrat, colonialist and snob"-- rather, Lawrence is seeking to make the point that such men have fallen prey to the values which modern society holds up as supremely masculine. They strive for power to control, to dominate, to succeed at whatever social level; in the world of politics, business, or personal relationships. Ursula takes Anton's military bearing for strength of identity. In her attraction to him she is repeating her mother's attraction to

his titled Polish father, and Tom's love of a Polish landowner's daughter. She mistakes him for one of the Sons of God:

He was no son of Adam. Adam was servile. Had not Adam been driven cringing out of his native place, had not the human race been a beggar ever since, seeking its own being? But Anton Skrebensky could not beg. He was in possession of himself, of that, and no more. Other people could not really give him anything nor take anything from him. His soul stood alone. (R, p.292).

As Gudrun does later with Gerald, Ursula fails to recognise that Anton's rigidity masks his inner sterility. The episode with the barge family alerts Ursula to the contrast between the bargeman's flexible male confidence and Skrebensky's insecure conventionality. Skrebensky, we realise, is a man who is dead to "his own intrinsic life", his self lies in the established order of things. He is capable of existing in only one dimension and can understand only the physical passion of love. He cannot, therefore, be a satisfactory male partner for Ursula; this inadequacy brings out the destructive side of her nature. Skrebensky cannot lead her into the "unknown" and fulfill her: for she believes that "the human soul at its maximum wants a sense of the infinite." (R, p.303).

Under the moon Ursula does discover her own "maximum self"; but in the process she annihilates Anton and the lover in herself. The writing in this scene is spasmodic and jerky and captures the frictional sexuality of the male

and female wills in conflict. Lawrence is objective in his treatment of the incident. The repetition of the word "and" captures Skrebensky's jerky, awkward movements as he is sexually aroused, yet frightened:

His will was set and straining with all its tension to encompass him and compel her. If he could only compel her. He seemed to be annihilated. She was cold and hard and compact of brilliance as the moon itself, and beyond him, never to be grasped or known. If he could only set a bond and compel her! (R, p.320).

At this stage we surely feel our sympathies leaning towards Ursula, who "submitted". However, as the struggle continues Ursula's soul "crystallised with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation. So she held him there annihilated. She had triumphed: he was not any more." Quoted out of context this does appear to represent Ursula as overbearing and monster-like. When considered in the artistic context, however, such scenes or statements, which sound alienating in the abstract, often contain elements which thoroughly transvalue the interpretation lent them by polemicists such as Kate Millett. In the case of this incident, it is important to note that both sides of the struggle have been conveyed with equal force. Skrebensky, in his fearful assertiveness, is as forceful as Ursula:

He must weave himself round her, enclose her in a net of shadow, of darkness, so she would be like a bright creature gleaming in a net of shadows, caught. Then he would have her, he would enjoy her. How he would enjoy her, when she was caught. (R, p.320).

We realise that the relationship between Ursula and Anton could never be satisfying. This is confirmed by a comment made by Lawrence in Apocalypse:

To yield entirely to love would be to be absorbed, which is the death of the individual: for the individual must hold his own or he ceases to be free and individual... And the modern man or woman cannot conceive of himself, herself, save as an individual. And the individual in man or woman is bound to kill, at last, the lover in himself or herself.²⁵

Applying this to the relationship between Ursula and Anton, Ursula does not "yield entirely to love", rather, she moves towards defining herself as an individual. But, as the final lines of the above quotation foretell, in "annihilating him" she "bruised herself". The "nothingness" that she experiences after her "triumph" is the void which surrounds the individual.

Following this, Ursula turns for the last time to the Bible and to the story of Noah, "but Ursula was not moved by the history this morning." (R, p.325). As before, she approaches the story as history rather than as myth, and in doing so comes to the conclusion that it is a tale of politics and materialism. She decides that the Bible is history and not the vision world to which she feels a tie. Having looked at it from a larger perspective she now feels freed from it: "Whatever God was, He was, and there was no need for her to trouble about Him. She felt she had now all licence." (R, p.326). "Licence" is, of course, not liberty,

nor is Ursula's rejection of the Bible as narrative political history the final answer. But the episode marks the beginning of a third phase in the questioning of her heritage, which is given expression in the philosophy of religion which she formulates under the influence of Winifred Inger.

Lawrence's treatment of the relationship between Winifred and Ursula has been declared unsympathetic. Barbara Hardy comments that:

He [Lawrence] yearns after touch and tenderness in male friendship but finds lesbianism repulsive.²⁶

Deborah Core similarly suggests that Lawrence shows "disdain for female alliances" and "the essential deadness of them"²⁷ while Simone de Beauvoir argues that Lawrence has "a horror of lesbians".²⁸ Kate Millett is particularly indignant about Lawrence's treatment of this relationship:

Winifred Inger illustrates even more clearly the dangers of feminism. Lawrence has recourse here to adjectives such as "corruption" and entitles the chapter where it occurs as "Shame"... To make his contempt perfectly clear, Lawrence marries Winifred off to an industrialist, declaring that both are mere idolators of machinery; the match is so unlikely it can only serve as punishment.²⁹

I would suggest that Kate Millett is wrong to conclude that the title "Shame" is indicative that Lawrence is anti-homosexual in his views. It is characteristic of Kate Millett to assume that Lawrence is the voice behind every statement in the text. It is imperative to get the voice of the novel right. "Shame" is the feeling Ursula experiences rather than

Lawrence's value judgement of the relationship. The "shame", if any, is surely in Winifred's marriage to Tom. I would argue that Lawrence's portrayal of Winifred is sufficiently objective for it not to matter what his personal bias towards the modern intellectual woman may be. It is no doubt true that he considers homosexuality as a kind of perversion, but this does not mean to say that he is unsympathetic to the possible reasons for its existence in Winifred's case. Winifred's homosexuality is attributed to social pressures, as I will show, and it is not therefore necessarily an indictment of feminism, as Kate Millett believes.

At first Winifred is sympathetically portrayed: "She was a beautiful woman of twenty-eight, a fearless seeming clean type of modern girl whose very independence betrays her sorrow... yet there was an infinite poignancy about her, a great pathos about her lonely proudly closed mouth" (R, p.336). Her relationship with Ursula is subtly and sensitively evoked. Lawrence's writing becomes soft and sensuous in rhythm:

Now, ah now, she was swimming in the same water with her dear mistress. The girl moved her limbs voluptuously, and swam by herself, deliciously, yet with a craving of unsatisfaction. She wanted to touch the other, to touch her, to feel her. (R, p.338).

This is followed by a release of energy: "The bodies of the two women touched, heaved against each other for a moment, then were separate." (R, p.338). Lawrence's reporting is objective; his emphasis is upon the emotion rather than upon the fact that they are women. He evokes the real and deep

emotion of the relationship, mainly from Ursula's point of view, in contrast to the dry, mechanical relationship between Tom and Winifred. The attraction is not only a sexual one, however. Winifred enlarges Ursula's experience in a number of ways; humanising religion, discussing philosophy, introducing her to the woman's movement. At the same time she is confused: "It was a strange world the girl was swept into, like a chaos, like the end of the world. She was too young to understand it all. Yet the inoculation passed into her, through her love for her mistress." (R, p.343). The whole incident shows us that Ursula is not yet independent. She is easily influenced by Winifred, who "wanted to bring Ursula to her position of thought". (R, p.341). The episode is perhaps a necessary phase for Ursula, who is still groping towards maturity. Winifred suggests to Ursula that religion is merely the projection of man's aspirations and needs. Consequently, Ursula is "brought to the conclusion that human desire is the criterion of all truth and all good. Truth does not lie beyond humanity, but it is one of the products of the human mind and feeling." Therefore, "there is really nothing to fear" (R, p.342) because there is nothing beyond man to be afraid of. "Gradually it dawned upon Ursula that all religion she knew was but a particular clothing to a human aspiration" (R, p.341). Ursula's new religion will be based on the principle of separateness, on "knowing herself different from and separate from the great, conflicting uni-

verse that was not herself." (R, p.343).

Ursula predictably tires of Winifred, who is described as "masculine" and "clumsy". Again, it is important to be aware that the description of the school mistress is presented through Ursula's eyes and is not necessarily Lawrence's indictment of such a woman. It is not Winifred's femaleness that finally disturbs Ursula or Lawrence, it is the way her intellectuality subverts her femaleness. Ursula rejects Winifred and her Uncle Tom, whom she once loved, because she sees them, in her coming maturity, as associated with the machine. She recognises that Winifred is spiritually void, full of negation towards life. The blame for this is placed on industrial society. The "real mistress" of Tom and Winifred "was the machine":

Brangwen had reached the age when he wanted children. Neither marriage nor the domestic establishment meant anything to him. He wanted to propagate himself. He had the instinct of growing inertia... He would let the machine carry him... As for Winifred, she was an educated woman, and of the same sort as himself. She would make a good companion. She was his mate. (R, p.352).

I would suggest, then, that rather than displaying anti-feminist bias in this section of the novel, Lawrence is displaying a keen awareness of the influence that industrial society may have upon the individual and his personal relationships.

Whereas the first three chapters devoted to Ursula's education were replete with Biblical issues, in the next

three there is a conspicuous absence of Biblical allusions. In these last three chapters Ursula is now attempting to live according to her own credo.

After passing her matriculation exam Ursula returns to Cossethay. "Now she had come home to face that empty period between school and possible marriage" (R, p.353). She must conform, like Dorothea, to an established feminine pattern. The primary battle between Anna and Ursula continues: "Mrs. Brangwen was so complacent, so utterly fulfilled in her breeding... How Ursula resented it, how she fought against the close, limited life of herded domesticity!" (R, p.354). Finally she writes to her schoolmistress, who advises her to teach:

I shall be pleased to see one of my girls win her own economic independence, which means so much more than it seems. I shall be glad indeed to know that one more of my girls has provided herself the means of freedom to choose for herself. (R, p.358).

Thus, Ursula enters the "man's world" where she attempts to put her theory of personality and self-sufficiency into practice. She becomes a teacher, financially independent and equal rather than subordinate to men. In her teaching she tries the personal approach. This fails and she is forced to adjust to the demands of the system. The prison imagery which dominates Lawrence's description of St. Philip's is symbolic of Ursula's subjugation to the will of a mechanistic and impersonal society. However, there is ambivalence in Ursula's attitude towards her teaching position. While she

suffers greatly because she must deny the personal self so important to her, she is proud of the self-awareness and social independence she is gaining. Even though she realises that she possesses only a meagre social self in an institution where "the real was all outside her", she does develop an internal reality of her own. Although her individual soul must be kept at work, it does have "its growth elsewhere", for she dreams of a time when she will get to "the somewhere inside her." Also, despite the fact that she must "brutalise" herself by becoming an instrument of tyranny towards her scholars, she is nonetheless proving that she can hold her place in a man's world and thus overcome the traditional limitations placed upon her sex. In submitting temporarily to the will of Mr. Harby and his institution, Ursula is assuring herself economically of a college education. Ursula considers her experience to be a qualified success. The portrayal of this phase of her life is not therefore one of a woman who fails at work, nor is there a "current of bitter animosity which runs throughout Lawrence's description of Ursula's invasion of the 'mysteriously man's world'"³⁰ as Kate Millett believes. What we are shown is the variety of forces from family to administration, which may make it difficult for a woman, or indeed any sensitive person, to succeed in teaching. If anything, Ursula's suffering, both at school and later at university, are points in her favour; she does not adapt well to a corrupt society.

During her period at St. Philip's Ursula strikes up another friendship with a woman-- Maggie Schofield. Ursula is drawn to Maggie because of her ability to handle the difficult work situation without becoming corrupted by it. Maggie becomes Ursula's new model: "Ursula envied and admired Maggie. She herself had still to get what Maggie had got" (R, p. 391). The friendship between the girls is sensitively evoked by Lawrence, and those who claim that he is an anti-feminist writer would do well to consider his portrayal of this and other female relationships. I suggested earlier that Lawrence was one of the first writers to investigate the possibilities of the mother-daughter relationship. Virginia Woolf remarked that in literature "so much has been left out, unattempted... I tried to remember any case in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends."³¹ It was noted earlier that the relationship between Winifred and Ursula was sympathetically portrayed, and this is also true of the Ursula-Maggie friendship. The latter is a far healthier relationship, however. Ursula and Maggie are not engaged in a power struggle, as has been the case in Ursula's previous relationships. Also, rather than being totally drawn to Maggie's point of view, Ursula is capable of taking her own stand on issues. This is an indication that Ursula is becoming more mature. She and Maggie agree on the importance of freedom, but Ursula believes that Maggie's concentration on the movement for suffrage is limiting: "To Ursula

the vote was never a reality. She had within her the strange, passionate knowledge of religion and living far transcending the limits of the automatic system that contained the vote" (R, p.406).

Ursula has begun to realise her aspirations: "She had a standing ground now apart from her parents" (R, p.370). At the same time, however, she becomes aware of the meaninglessness of her success and of the need for a different way to realise oneself. Despite her material success,

She felt that somewhere, in something, she was not free. And she wanted to be. She was in revolt... For once she were free she could get somewhere. Ah, the wonderful, real somewhere that was beyond her, the somewhere that she felt deep, deep inside her. (R, p.406).

As earlier, when "she was dissatisfied but not fit as yet to criticise", so now "her fundamental organic knowledge had as yet to take form and rise to utterance" (R, p.406). Ursula rejects the suffragette movement because she seeks freedom that is more natural and complete than the vote could give. She rejects marriage with Anthony Schofield because the natural fulfilment he offers her would not give her freedom either. He offers her rootedness without transcendence. She was, she realises, "a traveller on the face of the earth, and he was an isolated creature living in the fulfillment of his own senses" (R, p.417). So far Ursula has only appeared to learn what she is not: "She was full of rejection, of refusal... That which she was positively, was dark and unrevealed" (R, p.437).

Armed with this new-found awareness, Ursula goes to college only to find that it is very little different from the schoolroom:

It pretended to exist by the religious virtue of knowledge. But the religious virtue of knowledge was become a flunkey to the god of material success. (R, p.435).

Kate Millett, quoting the sentence, "she would take her degree, and she would, ah, she would perhaps be a big woman and lead a movement" (R, p.407), declares that Lawrence "ridicules [Ursula's] ambitions.. Lawrence causes her to fail her final examinations, go down in defeat without her coveted B.A., and end her life a contented housekeeper."³² Surely, however, this misinterprets the facts. Lawrence certainly does not "cause" Ursula to fail her exams, nor, as we will see in discussing Women in Love, does Ursula simply accept life as a "contented housekeeper". Indeed, throughout The Rainbow, we have seen her explicitly rejecting her own mother as a female model. Also, "ridicules" quite misses Lawrence's tone. Learning was to have been a new religion and fulfillment for Ursula. Now, "she was sick of this long service at the inner commercial shrine". Yet what else was there? Was life all this and this only? Everywhere, everything was debased to the same service" (R, p.435). It is in this mood that she meets Dr. Frankstone, another "scientific" woman, a doctor of physics, who denies that there is any "special mystery to life" and argues that life is no more than a purposeless, accidental "complexity of physical and

chemical activities." (R, p.440). Having already expanded her sense of identity to encompass the darkness-- "That which she was, positively was dark and unrevealed... It was like a seed buried in dry ash" (R, p.437), Ursula only has to articulate her observations from her biology studies in order to answer Dr. Frankstone's sterile theory. Ursula's inspirational vision through a microscope makes her realise the foolishness of claiming that "beyond our light and order there is nothing" (R, p.440). She has a glimpse of something working entirely apart from the human purpose of the human world. She concludes from her study of unicellular organisms that the mystery of life is the mystery of identity. Life is distinguished from non-life in appearing from the start as an organism "intended to be itself" (R, p.441). She decides that self is "a being infinite. Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity" (R, p.441). Thus inspired, Ursula leaves her microscope, rejects her books and runs to meet Skrebensky, "the new life, the reality." Again the relationship is a failure. Ursula expects a sexual union which will help her to transcend herself in "oneness with the infinite" life force outside her. Skrebensky is, however, the desecrated product of the "man's world" and cannot withstand the demanding intensity of a relationship with Ursula. Skrebensky is not, of course, "executed", as Kate Millett suggests-- he simply marries a conventional, less assertive woman and

goes off to India as a colonial administrator. Nor is Ursula a "monster"-- she is a modern woman who has freed herself from the constraints of the past but has fallen victim to the equally limiting forces of the present.

Ursula is left with a choice "between being Mrs. Skrebensky or being Ursula Brangwen, spinster, schoolmistress" (R, p.474). It appears that we are going to be offered the despairing closure of many realist novels; the choice of marriage or a career:

She [Ursula] had failed in her examination: she had gone down: she had not taken her degree. It was a blow to her... 'It doesn't matter,' he said. 'What are the odds, whether you are a Bachelor of Arts or not, according to the London University? All you know, you know, and if you are Mrs. Skrebensky the B.A. is meaningless. (R, p.474).

The implication is that as Mrs. Skrebensky Ursula would be fulfilled. Ursula rejects the offer of marriage, however; and Lawrence takes us beyond the conventional conclusion of novels which close with a suitable marriage-- as in works by such authors as Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and in certain novels by Eliot. The Rainbow gropes towards another ending:

She hated most of all entering the bondage of teaching once more. Very heartily she detested it. Yet at the thought of marriage and living with Skrebensky amid the European population in India, her soul was locked and would not budge. She had very little feeling about it; only there was a deadlock. (R, p.474).

Discovering that she is pregnant, Ursula relents, not knowing that Anton is to marry another woman. In a mood of false

self-abnegation, she writes a self-critical letter to Skrebensky. She believes she is disciplining herself as her mother did:

She had been wrong, she had been arrogant and wicked, wanting that other thing, that fantastic freedom, that illusory, conceited fulfilment which she had imagined she could not have with Skrebensky. Who was she to be ... wanting some fantastic fulfilment in her life? Was it not enough that she had her man, her children, her place of shelter under the sun? Was it not enough for her, as it had been enough for her mother? She would marry and love her husband and fill her place simply. That was the ideal. (R, p.485).

Ursula convinces herself that in accepting this role, "At least she was a woman" (R, p.486). In the light of her earlier experiences and her yearning for "something unknown" we realise that this is a decision of self-abnegation, a form of self-destruction. It is in this mood that Ursula meets the horses. In their article on The Rainbow, Ordelle Hill and Potter-Woodbery declare that "Ursula Brangwen, through her recognition of the masculine force of the horse, admits the defeat of her hope for independent fulfillment."³³ I would agree that the horses might be seen as Ursula's recognition of the male principle, particularly in the light of Lawrence's description of the horses' psychological meaning in Fantasia of the Unconscious.³⁴ I do not concur, however, with Hill's and Woodbery's opinion that the episode leads to "the defeat of her [Ursula's] hope for independent fulfillment." Rather, I would suggest that Ursula's encounter with the horses is the first of three steps that she takes towards

enlightenment. In order to fully understand the meaning of the incident, we need to go back to the conclusions which Ursula had drawn at college. It was noted earlier that her biological studies encouraged her to conclude that "Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme gleaming triumph of infinity" (R, p.441). Following this she returns to Skrebensky and decides that she is "no mere Ursula Brangwen. She was Woman, she was the whole of Woman in the human order. All containing, universal, how should she be limited to individuality?" (R, p.444). Ursula is labouring under a misconception which Lawrence discusses in his essay "Democracy":

...when you have extended your consciousness, even to infinity, what then? Do you really become God? When in your understanding you embrace everything, then surely you are divine? But no! With a nasty bump you have to come down and realise that, in spite of your infinite comprehension, you are not really any other than you were before: not a bit more divine or superhuman or enlarged. Your consciousness is not you: that is the sad lesson you learn in your superhuman flight of infinite understanding.³⁵

Ursula's error, then, lies in her belief that the individual can become commensurate with the cosmos. In his essay "Life," Lawrence observes:

There is an arrival in us from the unknown, from the primal unknown whence all creation issues. Did we call for this arrival, did we summon the new being, did we command the new creation of ourselves, the new fulfilment? We did not, it is not of us. We are not created of ourselves.³⁶

In the final chapter of The Rainbow Ursula does not

attain this knowledge of herself and her relationship to the cosmos. She writes to Skrebensky telling him that she will marry him. "She was aware, however, of a gathering restiveness, a tumult impending within her. She tried to run away from it...." She feels "the seething rising to madness within her" (R, p.486) and believes that "she must beat her way back through all this fluctuation, back to stability and security" (R, p.487). It is interesting to relate Lawrence's comments in his essay, "The Reality of Peace" to Ursula's psychological state:

...so much free will have we: if life comes to us like a potentiality of transcendence, we must yield our ultimate will to the unknown impulse or remain outside, abide alone, like the corn of wheat, outside the river of life.... So much free will there is. There is the free will to choose between submitting the will, and so becoming a spark in a great tendency, or withholding the will, curling up within the will, and so remaining outside, exempt from life or death.³⁷

Skrebensky cannot give way to the irrational side of his nature. We see him "struggling amid an ashen-dry, cold world of rigidity, dead walls and mechanical traffic, and creeping, spectre-like people" (R, p.457). This is no doubt partly the result of his impending failure with Ursula. In contrast, we see Ursula, in her encounter with the horses, acknowledging the presence of "something else". The only real evidence of the objective presence of the horses is the fact that Ursula finally escapes by physical means. She climbs a tree. We can never be sure that the horses are

actually menacing her. Even with the horses there, however, the scene is hallucinatory, a nightmare, as Ursula becomes aware of the horses without and within. They are a power over which she has no control. They are a force which will destroy her stability. The opportunity is there for her "to pass out to the high-road and the ordered world of men" (R, p.489)-- to marriage or teaching. The horses confuse her, however--- there is something else-- "that something she had longed for." In hesitating and not taking the path back to stability, Ursula has given way to her irrational impulse, "and the weight came down upon her, to the moment of extinction." "It was the crisis" (R, p.489). Ursula has acknowledged the presence of the horses and through an act of will, climbing a tree, she finally defeats them. The scene is reminiscent of the Noah story. The high-flown language evokes the atmosphere of the flood-- "great veils of rain swinging with slow, floating waves across the landscape"-- "the vast booming overhead vibrated down..." -- "Like circles of lightning came the flash of hoofs out of the powerful flanks " (R, p.488). The horses come to symbolically re-enact the history of the world as first they threaten Ursula, just as the clouds threaten before a storm, block her way back to her old self, as the waters washed away the old world, and finally overtake her and fill her with apprehension about the future. It is the crisis, the flood, the end of the world, the end of the old self. One person will

be saved-- Noah. Ursula is a Noah figure. "She lay still a long time... in her fine isolation... As she sat there, spent, time and the flux of change passed away from her, she lay as if unconscious upon the bed of the stream, unalterable and passive, sunk to the bottom of all change" (R, p.490). Suddenly, she becomes aware of voices-- it is the colliers, whom Lawrence never forgets, "tramping heavily up the wet road"(R, p.490). The "crisis" is general, not particular to Ursula. Ursula has come through. As she staggers home she feels that she will find "the bottom of all things". During her illness, "amid the ache of delirium, she had a dull firmness of being, a sense of permanency... like the stone at the bottom of the river... Her soul lay still and permanent, full of pain, but itself forever" (R, p.490). The old self has been destroyed, and she has sunk to the depths from which she can be reborn. In her delirium she claims freedom from her family, from Anton, from society and tradition in a way no other Brangwen has done before. When she returns to consciousness the news that she has lost Skrebensky and his child only serves to confirm her break with the past which she has already accomplished psychologically. Like "acorns in February", with "shells burst and discarded and the kernel issued naked to put itself forth", so Ursula is "the naked, clear kernel thrusting forth the clear, powerful shoot, and the world was a bygone winter, discarded, her mother and father and Anton, and college and all her friends,

all cast-off like a year that has gone by, whilst the kernel was free and naked and striving to take new root, to create a new knowledge of Eternity in the flux of Time" (R, p.493). The second step Ursula takes towards enlightenment about her relation to the cosmos is initiated by a letter from Anton. She comes to the realisation that:

It was not for her to create, but to recognise a man created by God. The man should come from the infinite and she should hail him. She was glad she had nothing to do with his creation. She was glad that this lay within the scope of that vaster power in which she rested at last. The man would come out of Eternity to which she herself belonged. (R, p.494).

In being prepared to "hail" the man, Ursula is not bowing down to the male principle, nor is she accepting defeat. Rather, she is discovering what we might call "joyous independence", a state Lawrence sanctions in his essay "Life":

At no moment can man create himself. He can but submit to the creator, to the primal unknown out of which issues the all. At every moment we issue like a balanced flame from the primal unknown. We are not self-contained or self-accomplished. At every moment we derive from the unknown.³⁸

In order to fulfill the innate identity Lawrence attributes to us we must obey the will of our creator, as expressed through our own deeper desires. Ursula's final vision of the rainbow signifies that she has come to an understanding of her relation to the cosmos. She realises that the rainbow is a mythic one and as such can span time and place, for, while it is real, it is also an echo from the past. As a

mythical rainbow it has relevance now for Ursula, just as it was a sign of the new covenant for Noah. Thus, Ursula's religious frustrations have been appeased. She has learnt to connect the temporal with the eternal, to relate the history of the world to her own personal history, to link the eternal with her "weekday" world. No longer is the story of Noah "history" to her, it has mythic significance and as such is relevant to her now. Lawrence has traced Ursula's movement from a confused adolescent, to a woman who is self-aware, "fit to criticise". We have witnessed her development from a time when she was "dissatisfied, but not fit as yet to criticise" to a stage where "her fundamental knowledge had as yet to take form and rise to utterance-- and there remained always the want she could put no name to"... "she could not understand what it all was", through to a final ability to articulate her "fundamental, organic Knowledge".³⁹

Just as Dorothea, recovering from her "irremediable grief", recognises her position in relation to the outside world, so Ursula becomes aware of the world carrying on despite her personal crisis. As she looks out at the miners and their lives she is filled with despair until she becomes aware of the rainbow which she interprets as a sign of hope-- a sign that society and personality must be reborn:

And the rainbow stood on the earth. She knew that the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world's corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their

spirit, that they would cast off their horny covering of disintegration, that new, clean, naked bodies would issue to a new germination, to a new growth, rising to the light and the wind and the clean rain of heaven. She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the work built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven. (R, pp.495-6).

Ursula looks at the church tower as earlier Brangwens did, and we are reminded that she has maintained continuity while increasing her self-consciousness and freedom, even in the face of the industrial world. Indeed, the implication throughout the novel has been that Ursula would move beyond earlier Brangwens in conscious knowledge, social achievement, and religious experience.

An exploration of Ursula's development as a liberated woman beginning with her religious dilemma, and respecting Lawrence's frequent warnings that she is confused, enables us to recognise the appropriateness of the conclusion to the novel and the factors which lie behind Ursula's liberationist tendencies. We have seen Ursula explicitly reject the role of "contented housewife" which Kate Millett envisages she will accept. She has in fact got to the verge of marriage and has moved beyond it, and indeed Ursula's whole being has seemed to scorn any notion of male supremacy. Surely any feminist critic should be ready to applaud such character development.

Chapter Four

Ursula's "voyage of discovery" is continued in Women in Love, supposedly the sequel to The Rainbow. Kate Millett declares that this is the first of Lawrence's novels to be "addressed directly to sexual politics". She goes on to say that the novel

...resumes the campaign against the modern woman, represented by Hermione and Gudrun. Ursula shall be saved by becoming Birkin's wife and echo. The other two women are not only damned but the enemy.¹

As so often happens in Sexual Politics, Kate Millett, in ostensibly summarising the factual evidence of Lawrence's work, is actually tipping the balance to accommodate her own theory. Women in Love demands close analysis of the text if we are to come to terms with Lawrence's philosophy. It is only thus that we might appreciate the significance of the conflicts and torments that his characters experience, and realise that the novel is much more than a forum for Lawrentian polemic against women. Having noted this, however, I would agree that in Women in Love, the background women are subjected to closer and more biting scrutiny than were Winifred Inger and Dr. Frankstone in The Rainbow. It is also true that such women, particularly Hermione, are more vehemently rejected. In fact, Hermione, Birkin's lover, is perhaps Lawrence's most hostile portrait of a woman. She is obsessed with a passion for polemics and is cerebral to a

fatal extreme, to the extent that she thinks up her emotions. It may be true that Lawrence shows little sympathy in his presentation of her, but Hermione is more than a vehicle for Lawrence's dogma. Her position in the early chapters of the novel suggests that she is important to the plot. In fact she epitomises a state which must be surmounted by any individual who wishes to achieve success in a relationship. As the novel progresses we realise that her defects are shared to some extent by all the characters. It is interesting to note also that she shows significant insight into the difficulties experienced by certain characters. Although her behavior is often loathsome, Hermione is also a victim and as such should claim our sympathy. Lawrence, however, leaves little room for this. She is described as "a woman of the new school, full of intellectuality, and heavy with nerve worn consciousness." She is accepted in the world of culture and intellect "and seeks to put herself beyond reach of the world's judgement."² Yet, of course, her vulnerability is an indication of insecurity-- and Lawrence points this out by telling us that "she always felt vulnerable... it was a lack of robust self, she had no natural sufficiency, there was a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her" (WL, p.18). Hermione sums up her own problem during the discussion with Birkin in Ursula's classroom:

'It is the mind', she said, 'and that is death.' She raised her eyes slowly to him: 'Isn't the mind-- ' she said, with the convulsed movement of her body, 'isn't it our

death? Doesn't it destroy all our spontaneity, all our instincts?' (WL, p.44).

Lawrence, then, underlines Hermione's problem; he is sensitive to the cause of it. His indictment, it could be argued, is not against any particular quality which he labels female, rather, the point is that Hermione has put her mind to bad uses, as have other characters in the novel. It is not that she lacks sensuality; the trouble is that she cannot release it from the ideas she has learnt to consider important. Ultimately, we might deduce that Lawrence's harsh and explicit judgement of Hermione is levelled against her intellectuality. Lawrence is anti-intellectual rather than anti-feminist, for Hermione's deficiency is evidently related to her tendency to intellectualise: "And all the while the pensive, tortured woman piled up her own defences of aesthetic knowledge, and culture, and world-visions, and disinterestedness" (WL, p.18). It is imperative to recognise that Lawrence relates Hermione's character to her class culture, which is very clearly placed in the novel.

It is important to be aware from the beginning that Women in Love sets out to explore "death in the mind", and Hermione provides an object lesson in how the mind can kill. Two characters who share Hermione's characteristics, but to a lesser extent, are Gerald and Gudrun. Gudrun Brangwen, Ursula's sister, presents a more complex character. She is beautiful and emits a sense of superiority. Her aloofness is, however, largely a mask for the split between body and

mind. Her sang-froid is willed rather than felt. The opening chapter of the novel shows a side of Gudrun that she never outgrows-- a detachment which cuts her off from others and prevents her from self-expression. In contrast to Hermione she does crave for a more satisfying existence: "Nothing materialises! Every thing withers in the bud." (WL, p.9). Yet she does not know how to change things because, unlike Ursula she has no special goal or deeper inner need to motivate her. Birkin correctly analyses her failure as the result of a delimited and reduced consciousness, springing from her tight self-control-- "she won't give herself away-- she's always on the defensive" (WL, p.105). In suppressing her true feelings Gudrun denies herself any fulfilment. Her passions, like Hermione's in the paper-weight scene, build up and are eventually released in destructiveness, "disintegrating the vital organic body of life" (WL, p.508). Gudrun's relationship with Gerald is predictably disastrous. From the start they are engaged in a power struggle. Gudrun can be satisfied only with dominance or complete submission. Gerald, however, although he exerts total mastery over his workers, shows less strength of character in personal relationships. A paradigm of his relationship with Gudrun is to be noted in the scene where he allows Gudrun to row him home:

By her tone he could tell she wanted to have him in the boat to herself, and that she was subtly gratified that she should have power over them both. He gave himself, in a strange, electric submission. (WL, p.197).

Kate Millett declares that:

Gudrun is made the villain of the piece and Gerald's death is blamed on her, despite Lawrence's equally strong desire to have Gerald execute her as the hateful New Woman and his rival for the love of the blond beast.³

Indeed, Lawrence's portrayal of Gudrun is far from complimentary; but he portrays Gerald in no more favourable a light. Millett believes that Lawrence is venting his anger against the ruling classes in his characterisation of Gerald. It seems to me, however, more plausible to suggest that Lawrence's intention is that we should see Gerald as Gudrun's masculine parallel. Nevertheless, I do believe that there is some justification for feminist discontent over Lawrence's treatment of Gudrun. In his portrayal of the Gudrun-Gerald relationship Lawrence does appear to be making a more explicit indictment of female dominance than he did in the Skrebensky-Ursula relationship-- Gerald's death, as compared with Skrebensky's return to a conservative existence. In addition to this, the final chapters of the novel seem to be severely critical of Gudrun, and her decline, along with that of Hermione, is set in contrast to Ursula's growth through her relationship with Birkin. However, in spite of this, are we really justified in inferring Lawrence's attitude towards women, or more precisely towards emancipated, bohemian women, from his portrait of Gudrun? It must surely be argued that, as with Hermione, Lawrence's deprecation of Gudrun is for the "fatal split between will and feeling" that she ex-

hibits rather than for any trait he would describe as specifically female. Kate Millett's point that Gudrun is held responsible for Gerald's death also needs qualifying. Could it not be argued that Gerald invites his own destruction? Birkin tells Gerald that

It takes two people to make a murder: a murderer and a murderee. And a murderee is a man who is murderable. And a man who is murderable is a man who in a profound if hidden lust desires to be murdered. (WL, p.36).

Lawrence stresses throughout the novel Gerald's tendency towards death and destruction. This is underlined by the suggestion that Gerald's killing of his brother was no accident: without an unconscious wish to kill, one cannot pull the trigger of "the emptiest gun in the world" while someone is looking down the barrel. Lawrence also suggests early in the novel that Gerald has an unconscious will to be killed: Birkin declares: "You seem to have a lurking desire to have your gizzard slit, and imagine every man has his knife up his sleeve for you." (WL, p.37). This is re-emphasised in Gerald's final moment of consciousness: "He was bound to be murdered, he could see it. This was the moment when death was uplifted, and there was no escape... He could feel the blow descending, he knew he was murdered." (WL, p.533). Even as he succumbs to his desire for death, however, Gerald persists in denying his own self-destructiveness by seeing himself as the victim. It is true, nevertheless, that though Lawrence makes us feel that Gerald is inviting his own death,

he paradoxically also wants to live. It is our recognition of this fact that leads us to feel sympathy for him, which we do not feel for Gudrun at the end of the novel.

If anyone does diagnose the problem between Gerald and Gudrun it is Birkin, in his observation that "When the stream of synthetic creation lapses, we find ourselves part of the inverse process, the blood of destructive creation." (WL, p.193). Noting that Birkin's diagnosis is correct, and the fact that Lawrence acknowledges that the novel was to some extent autobiographical, critics have tended to assume that Birkin is Lawrence's ideal man and spokesman, and that as a result there is no authorial distance.⁴ It is true that Birkin's values and those implicit in the text often coincide. His attitudes and observations are often confirmed by the events of the novel-- Gerald's fate, Hermione's limitations-- so that in retrospect much of what he says does seem to have validity. It is imperative, however, to pay close attention to Lawrence's narrative technique in Women in Love, in order to avoid the ready assumption that Lawrence is in agreement with everything that Birkin says.

Women in Love is a dramatic narrative in which narrative commentary does not predominate, the story being told in the third person from a relatively limited viewpoint. Close study of the text reveals, however, that a detached narrator is in fact firmly in control of the reader's responses. This detached narrator is implicit from the beginning in the fre-

quent and rapid changes in narrative focus and point of view, and his presence is felt in the cold, aloof tone of certain narrative passages. It is in this way that Lawrence effectively mocks his alter-ego, Birkin, even while Birkin is moving towards his most Lawrentian theories. Birkin is the subject of his author's irony from the beginning. The description of him at the wedding in chapter one exemplifies this:

He affected to be quite ordinary, perfectly and marvellously commonplace. And he did it so well, taking the tone of his surroundings, adjusting himself quickly to his interlocutor and his circumstances, that he achieved a verisimilitude of ordinary commonplaceness that usually propitiated his onlookers for the moment, disarmed them from attacking his singleness. (WL, p.22).

Birkin is often vehemently criticised by other characters. Gudrun holds fast to the opinion that she and Ursula express in the chapter "Moony":

...he simply cannot hear. His own voice is so loud.'
 'Yes. He cries you down.'
 'He cries you down,' repeated Gudrun. 'And by mere force of violence. And of course it is hopeless. Nobody is convinced by violence. It makes talking to him impossible-- and living with him I should think would be more than impossible.' (WL, p.297).

Birkin's behavior in this particular scene does not perhaps warrant such an attack, but the criticism is supported by what the reader sees of Birkin's behavior in other contexts. This is exemplified when he criticises Hermione in Ursula's classroom. His just accusation of Hermione's "bullying

will" is ironic, for Birkin is guilty of just this himself. Lawrence is therefore criticising Birkin's willfulness, and it is thus that we might refute Kate Millett's claim that Lawrence glorifies the male for possessing qualities which he denounces in the female. Lawrence abhors willfulness, both in males and females. It is also interesting to note that Birkin does acknowledge the truth in certain criticisms levelled against him. When Ursula criticises him: "You-- you are the Sunday school teacher-- You-- you preacher", we are told "The amount of truth that was in this made him stiff and unheeding of her" (WL, p.283). Though it may be true, therefore, that Birkin is a Lawrence-figure, it is important to be aware that he is not just Lawrence pontificating. Kate Millett declares that Birkin's surface assertions are betrayed over and over by the obvious contradictions between preachment and practice.⁵ This is surely the point Lawrence wishes to underline about the discrepancy between talk and action, between theory and practice. Millett states that Ursula "accepts Birkin as her husband and leader".⁶ She suggests that their relationship is an insulting version of the sleeping beauty myth and goes on to lament Ursula's resignation from her teaching post and the fact that she abandons her aspirations of success in the "man's world". In defence of Lawrence, however, we might say that though Birkin may be Ursula's "prince", in the Tom-Lydia relationship roles are reversed-- Tom is the "sleeping prince". It is

true that Ursula resigns her job and aspirations, but Millett neglects to note that Birkin does the same thing. Of course Ursula does not accept Birkin as a superior male and act the submissive, uncritical inferior. Rather, she accepts Birkin's wisdom only with qualifications, and she remains skeptical of some of his tenets to the end. In certain scenes she seems to be less the student and more the teacher, and at times gives voice to Lawrence's beliefs just as much as Birkin does. Indeed, the two of them, through the dialectic of their relationship, are testing out and exploring Lawrence's ideas. It is interesting to note that the novel in fact ends on a note of disagreement between them.

I now propose to focus upon several scenes from Women in Love which are frequently seized upon as demonstrative of Lawrence's anti-feminist bias: I refer to the scene with Gerald and the horse, the "Mino" episode and the "Moony" chapter. My premise is that by paying close attention to the text and particularly to the narratorial comments, it will become evident that the indictment of Lawrence's attitude to women, as displayed in these scenes, is often misplaced. Kate Millett interprets the episode portraying Gerald's treatment of the horse as evidence that Gerald is an "unimaginative fellow who tries to control women with the old nostrums of money and physical force." Birkin she sees as "a far more sophisticated type who employs psychological warfare."⁷ She goes on to say that Birkin finds Gerald's

behavior "agreeable". Surely, however, the episode is symbolic and is intended to represent a trespass against life, rather than Lawrence's belief that the woman must be brought under rein. The scene reverberates through the novel in conjunction with other episodes as a misuse of power. Both the novel and Birkin reject Gerald's abuse of the horse. Birkin tells Ursula specifically that he agrees that the "Wille zur Macht is a base and petty thing" (WL, p.167), and his behavior confirms this. This scene is linked to the one where Birkin proposes his theory of a relationship on a stellar plane. It is interesting to link this scene to Lawrence's sequence of poems Look We Have Come Through, in which he analyses his relationship with Frieda. Certain of these poems such as "Song of a Man Who is Not Loved", "Mutilation" and "Humiliation" articulate the unhappiness Lawrence experiences when he and Frieda are apart; his fear of losing her and his frustrated recognition of his dependence upon her. In "Wedlock" he pleads "Nourish me, and endure me, I am only of you/I am your issue".⁸ Such unhealthy dependency gives rise to feelings of ambivalence, as is acknowledged in "Both sides of the Medal"-- since passion imprisons one human in the "orbit" of another, feelings of hatred are liable to arise. However, one of the final poems of the collection, "Manifesto", suggests that Lawrence can at last envision an escape from the pain which issues from over-dependence. He criticises Frieda for what he considers to be her failure to acknowledge him as

something apart from herself. He calls for a new kind of conjunction of two "pure, isolated, complete"⁹ beings. Lawrence's theories in this poem are echoed in Birkin's star-equilibrium philosophy in Women in Love. As he lies "sick and unmoved, in pure opposition to everything" Birkin considers sex as a threat to his integrity: "... he wanted to be single in himself, the woman single in herself" (WL, p.223). He longs to replace the "merging, the clutching, the mingling of love" with a new kind of conjunction "where man had being and woman had being, two pure beings, each constituting the freedom of the other balancing each other like two poles of one force, like two angels or two demons" (WL, p.224). It is difficult, however, to envisage such a union for Birkin, who "wanted to be free, not under the compulsion of any need for unification." He attributes his dread of sex to what he considers to be the universal trait of possessiveness:

~~But it seemed to him, woman was always so~~
 horrible and clutching, she had such a lust
 for possession, to own, to control, to be
 dominant. Everything must be referred back
 to her, to Woman, the Great Mother of every-
 thing, out of whom proceeded everything and
 to whom everything must finally be rendered
 up. (WL, p.224).

Millett interprets the alternative Birkin proposes-- "an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings:-- as the stars balance each other" (WL, p.164), as "the denial of personality in the woman" and sees Ursula as posing "docile leading questions to him".¹⁰ Surely, however, Ursula is far from passive. While it is true that Birkin regards the traditional

concept of love as an instrument of female possessiveness, Ursula suspects that the alternative he advocates may simply be a cover for male domination. She is not impressed by Birkin's idea of marriage when it is explained to her in abstract terms, and the practical example Birkin offers repulses her. As she challenges Birkin, she shows herself to be an alert and assertive young woman:

'Oh, it makes me so cross, the assumption of male superiority! And it is such a lie! One wouldn't mind if there were any justification for it.' (WL, p.167).

Indeed, throughout the scene she undercuts Birkin's intensity and emerges as the more assured character:

'You don't trust yourself. You don't fully believe yourself what you are saying. You don't really want this conjunction, otherwise you wouldn't talk so much about it, you'd get it.' (WL, p.170).

Birkin's apparent approval of the bullying Mino would seem to justify Ursula's insistence that the relationship he seeks resembles not balanced stars but a planet and a satellite. We are aware, however, that, as is often the case, Birkin is overstating his beliefs. This can be attributed to his unstable emotional situation and to the force of his doctrines. If we separate his doctrine from its overstated presentation, it does seem that his main point is to stress the importance of commitment. We might also note an element of self-parody in Birkin's defence of Mino's attempt "to bring this female cat into a pure stable equilibrium, a transcendent and abiding rapport with the single male" (WL, p.167), for Birkin responds

to Ursula's attack with "frustration and amusement and irritation and admiration and love." (WL, p.167). We must get the tone of the novel and its characters right. It is interesting to note that in this seeming advocacy of masculine domination, Ursula is given the last word. In the light of this, it might be suggested that Lawrence has not fully synthesised his conviction that masculine domination is ordained by natural law. Such a theory is easily threatened by the woman who does not find it natural to submit. It seems, however, that Lawrence is gradually moving towards the view expounded in later works such as The Plumed Serpent and "The Woman Who Rode Away", where women are the embodiment of all Lawrence hates in Western civilisation, while men are considered to be the salvi mundi.

The novel now focuses upon Birkin as he goes through a learning process similar to the one experienced by Ursula in The Rainbow. After the scene where Birkin throws rocks at the moon's reflection, he finally becomes self-critical enough to recognise some of the inconsistencies in his preaching:

He thought he had been wrong, perhaps. Perhaps he had been wrong to go to her with an idea of what he wanted. Was it really only an idea, or was it the interpretation of a profound yearning? If the latter, how was it he was always talking about the sensual fulfilment? The two did not agree very well.
(WL, p.285).

His egoism, like Gerald's, has arisen from a split between body and mind. Now he begins to realise that there is another way to freedom:

There was the paradisaal entry into pure, single being, the individual soul taking precedence over love and desire for union, stronger than any pangs of emotion, a lovely state of free proud singleness, which accepted the obligation of the permanent connexion with others, and with the other, submits to the yoke and leash of love, but never forfeits its own proud individual singleness, even while it loves and yields. (WL, p.287).

This is reminiscent of Ursula's conclusion after her experience with the horses. Birkin recognises the need to relate his religious yearnings to the real world. In the light of this, it is surely wrong to conclude that Lawrence educated Ursula in The Rainbow merely to make her a fit mate for Birkin, as Millett suggests. Rather, I would suggest that it is Birkin who has to be enlightened; for Ursula precedes him as a result of her rebirth at the end of The Rainbow. It is thus that we see Birkin undergoing a learning process very similar to the one experienced by Ursula. We witness Birkin slowly re-
 -jecting his past, just as Ursula did. He repudiates his avant-garde London friends and then Hermione, until he becomes aware of a different road to freedom as quoted above. It is interesting to note a correlation at this point between George Eliot and Lawrence. Just as George Eliot moves her focus from Dorothea to Lydgate, so Lawrence has progressed from Ursula to Birkin. We might also correlate the fact that Ursula, like Dorothea, rebels against limitations which are oppressive to both sexes. On the other hand, there is a difference between Lawrence's technique and that of George Eliot. While the lat-

ter maintains a balance between the plight of women and men in Middlemarch, Lawrence appears to upset the balance in Women in Love by becoming more involved with the situation of the male, to the extent in fact that the novel might well have been retitled Men in Love. However, it could also be argued that Lawrence is merely restoring the balance after The Rainbow, where there was greater concentration upon women characters and uncomplimentary characterisation of male characters, such as Will Brangwen and Skrebensky. Nevertheless, it is difficult to overcome the impression that the Ursula we meet in Women in Love is a less introspective, less intellectual, indeed, less intriguing heroine than the Ursula of The Rainbow.

Both Ursula and Birkin move towards a clearer conception of how they can achieve the "right" relationship in the chapter entitled "Moony". Again, this is a chapter which might well be interpreted as illustrating Lawrence's anti-feminist bias. The chapter opens with Ursula "hard and indifferent, isolated in herself" as she was in The Rainbow. (R, p.320). The moon is again a symbol of her self-consciousness. Many critics suggest that in stoning the reflection of the moon, Birkin is stoning an image of Ursula's identity, that he is attacking her possessiveness. I would agree, however, with Colin Clarke's interpretation that Birkin is attacking Ursula's separated ego, rather than any particular feminine quality. Clarke suggests that the fluidly "ragged rose" is

a model of the fluid, indefinitely outlined self Ursula must attain, of an individuality open to connection.¹¹ Both Ursula and Birkin appear to recognise the significance of the stoning, for they now renew their search to achieve a successful relationship.

It is in the chapter entitled "Excuse" that Ursula and Birkin attain consummation. Their rebirth takes place at the inn. Though the scene features a sort of phallicism when Ursula kneels at Birkin's feet it should not be considered as proof that she is bowing to male supremacy; rather, we should recognise that in this scene and the one that follows, in the wood, Ursula and Birkin are ridding themselves of all self-conscious inhibitions-- only by searching out the seat of shame, "at the back and base of the loins", can they finally find that "deepest life-force, the darkest, deepest, strangest life-source of the human body" and know "the palpable revelation of living otherness" (WL, p.354). Each appears to fulfill the other's dream; he as one of "those Sons of God" Ursula desires in The Rainbow, and she as "a flower luminousness" (WL, p.352) emitting the golden light Birkin longs for in the moon scene when he asks Ursula for "that golden light which is you" (WL, p.281)-- change, in other words, from the silver moonlight of separation to the golden light of connection. Later we are told, using the same imagery, that "she was herself, pure and silvery, she belonged only to the oneness with Birkin (WL, p.). The descriptive adjectives

"pure and silvery" suggest the moon image and signify Ursula's separateness of self, but a self without the perverse energy of will.

What accounts for the successful reconstitution of self achieved by Birkin and Ursula? Ursula perhaps answers the question for us in her conversation with Gudrun near the end of the novel. She and Birkin have decided to move on to Italy. Gudrun interprets this as Ursula's decision to drop out of modern society, and argues that Ursula should realise that "'the only thing to do with the world is to see it through'" (WL, p.493). Ursula replies that "'One can see it through in one's soul, long enough before it sees itself through in actuality. And then, when one has seen one's soul, one is something else!'" In other words, we can forestall disintegration by living it through imaginatively, by absorbing it into consciousness and curing it through understanding.

~~Thus, Ursula reaches and copes with the stone-like bottom of~~ all things after her psychic encounter with the horses. Gudrun, on the other hand, has to live through in actuality "the rock bottom of all life" (WL, p.480) that she finds in Loerke. Imagination is the saving power. Gudrun rejects this, saying: "'You can't suddenly fly off onto a new planet, because you think you can see to the end of this'" (WL, p.493). Ursula's response is that "'One has a sort of other self, that belongs to a new planet, not to this. You've got to hop off.'" It is by attaining this new conception of self, by giving way to

the impulses of their innermost being, that Ursula and Birkin have achieved some degree of satisfaction in their relationship. Ursula has not escaped Gudrun's fate by submission to Birkin, as Kate Millett suggests, but rather, by finding with Birkin "this star-equilibrium which alone is freedom... She was next to him and hung in a pure rest, as a star is hung, balanced unthinkably" (WL, p.360). They appear to have achieved a balance: "She was to him what he was to her, the immemorial magnificence of mystic, palpable, real otherness" (WL, p.361). It must be admitted, however, that despite the optimism implied in the outcome of the Ursula-Birkin relationship, there is something unsatisfactory about the conclusion of the novel, and particularly Birkin's announcement that he cannot be truly happy without an additional relationship with a man. Kate Millett decides that there is a double standard at work in the novel:

... The wife is allowed no other distractions, either hetero- or homosexual, while the male ego is permitted to enjoy himself in both these directions. While deploring marital infidelity, Lawrence did not consider love between males adulterous.

The old rivalry of wife and mistress might have been transformed under feminist pressures into an entente, and Lawrence has a bitter dread of female alliances of any kind. The most feasible explanation of his hatred for female homosexuality or even friendship seems to be political distrust. Again there is a double standard, for male homosexuality and friendship are one of the great interests of Lawrence's life. Females are pitted against each other... Hermione, Birkin's former mistress, and Ursula, his new one, are prevented from forming any dangerous female alliances by what Lawrence

rather hopefully assures us of the natural repugnance of women toward each other.¹²

The observation about the lack of rapport between female characters in the novel is legitimate. In The Rainbow we noted Lawrence's sensitive understanding of female alliances; but in Women in Love all such friendships appear to be denied. Gudrun and Ursula part and Hermione and Ursula draw together only in their battle against Birkin. We might well ask, however, what evidence exists in the text for Kate Millett's contention that "the male ego is permitted to enjoy himself" in both hetero- and homosexual relationships. Also, surely homosexuality and friendship are not necessarily to be equated, as Millett implies. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to assume that the relationship Birkin longs for with Gerald would be a homosexual one. I agree with Graham Hough when he suggests that Lawrence does not face up to the homosexual elements in the chapter "Gladitorial".¹³ Earlier versions of the first chapter of the novel indicate more open acknowledgement of homosexual feelings. It is not necessary to pursue this question, however. Whether the additional relationship Birkin feels in need of be a homosexual one or mere friendship, the point is that he has moved away from the declaration he made early in the novel that in the absence of religious or social faith, a perfect union with a woman is the only thing which can give meaning to life: "It seems to me there remains only this perfect union with a woman-- sort

of ultimate marriage-- and there isn't anything else" (WL, p.64). By the end of the novel Birkin believes that he can only be happy with a supplementary union with Gerald. The reasoning behind this would appear to be that Gerald's friendship would protect Birkin from "absorption" by Ursula. Such an impression is derived from the fact that in the final page of the novel our thoughts are returned to the "Gladitorial" scene in which, intentionally or otherwise, Lawrence suggests a connection between Ursula's possessiveness and Birkin's desire for a masculine communion, by the juxtaposition of his account of Ursula's determination to "quaff" Birkin "to the dregs" with the opening of "Gladitorial", the chapter which depicts Birkin's closest approach to the union he longs for with Gerald. The novel ends with Birkin suggesting that marriage to Ursula is to some extent a compromise:

'Having you, I can live all my life without anybody else, any other sheer intimacy. But to make it complete, really happy, I wanted eternal union with a man too: another kind of love.' (WL, p.541).

After Women in Love Lawrence becomes more pessimistic about the type of existence Birkin accepts. In Fantasia of the Unconscious he declares that when man "makes woman, or the woman and child, the great centre of life and of live significance, he falls into the beginnings of despair."¹⁴ Although it may be true that in his later novels and essays Lawrence's attitude towards women is explicitly anti-feminist, I would claim that his treatment of women in both The Rainbow and

Women in Love, is, for the most part, sufficiently *dramatic* for his personal bias not to pose any significant problem. I would suggest that in general his women characters, particularly in The Rainbow, show greater certainty of self than do the male characters, several of whom often appear inadequate and pathetic. Kate Millett is mistaken in assuming that Lawrence's message is an unequivocal proclamation of male supremacy. This is not to say that Lawrence is unconcerned about the male principle; it was a problem which occupied him throughout his life, but the message which evolves from The Rainbow and Women in Love is surely not the one Millett derives:

... the world will only be put to right when the male reassumes his mastery over the female in that total psychological and sensual domination which alone can offer her the "fulfillment" of her nature.¹⁵

I would suggest that Kate Millett's definition of ~~revolution differs radically from that envisioned by Lawrence,~~ and in recognising this it becomes apparent why Millett finds Lawrence's works insulting to women. Millett defines liberation for women as a re-distribution of cultural spoils; women should have a fair share of opportunity and success. She defines culture as essentially masculine. For her the aim of revolution is to open up new areas of experience for women. Thus, Millett is moved to declare that Ursula's failure and suffering in teaching are the result of Lawrence's ridicule of his protagonist's attempts to make her way in the "man's

world". In short, Millett believes, as did some feminist critics of Middlemarch, that if an author neglects to bestow success or identity upon his female characters, then he is insulting them. It is my contention, however, that Lawrence is concerned with advocating a very different form of revolution. For Lawrence, cultural spoils are meaningless. What he calls for is a revolution in consciousness: only by curing the sickness in our souls can we cure the sickness in society. Modern society assumes that truth is yielded by mental/rational perception. Lawrence, on the other hand, seeks the truth in our intuitive, irrational, sensual perceptions. Millett is right; Lawrence does find the modern intellectual woman corrupt, but he is equally critical of the modern intellectual man. The way out, according to Lawrence, is to nurture what Alan Friedmann refers to as the "underself",¹⁶ which involves rejecting security and self-protection and above all the urge to control the universe. ~~We must recognise our "otherness"~~ move to "the sill of the unknown".

My individualism is really an illusion. I am part of the great whole, and can never escape. But I can deny my connections, especially those related to money, and re-establish the living organic connections, with the cosmos, the sun and earth, with mankind and nation and family.¹⁷

Thus, while I would agree that Lawrence is concerned with sexual politics in his novels, I would suggest that for him sexual politics is not the war of the sexes, nor a philosophy of male chauvinism, but an investigation of the relationship

between sex and class, of the relationship between man and his universe. Bearing this in mind I would therefore suggest a different reading of Lawrence's novels.

I suggested earlier that Kate Millett tips the balance to make Lawrence's work accommodate her own ideology. Lawrence has been criticised from many different standpoints, but no art can ever yield its full meaning unless justice is done to the way in which the artist reflects the complexities of his culture, irrespective of any ideological positions which can be extrapolated from his work. Kate Millett tends to ignore the social milieu of Lawrence's novels, a grave error, for Lawrence's work is, above all, concerned with attaining satisfaction as an individual in industrial society.

Lawrence's novels reveal relationships through descriptions of conflict and tension. The conflict is linked directly to the increased urbanisation and industrialisation of England. The suggestion is that it is the machine and not any inherent difference between the sexes that makes it impossible for man and woman to live in peace. This is explicit in the fact that the rural Brangwens in The Rainbow have relatively stable relationships, while the urbanised generations of the family have more difficulty in achieving a balance. Indeed, many of the problems encountered by Lawrence's characters can ultimately be traced to social and economic influences.

If there is a centre to Lawrence's rather decentralised novels, The Rainbow and Women in Love, it is the plight

of the colliers. Lawrence never forgets them; he lived through their years of crisis¹⁸ during the late 1800's, and the issues and imagery associated with the mine reverberate throughout his fiction and are the core of his oeuvre. At the beginning of Women in Love Lawrence moves from his discussion of the chasm which Ursula and Gudrun feel confronts them, to focus upon the mines. As the book evolves, the collieries become the major symbol for a dead or dying civilization, an example of how vitality and intimacy have been replaced by mechanism. That Lawrence is making a correlation between the socio-economic and human relationships is evident from the fact that his focus frequently switches from the study of a character's traits or behaviour to the situation of the miner and the collieries. This is to be noted in The Rainbow immediately after the breakdown of the Ursula/Winifred relationship. We are told that the "real mistress" of Tom and Winifred was "the machine". ~~Tom is the manager in a mi-~~ning town where the miners have only the identity given to them by their economic function. The workers have lost their identities and vitality, just as Winifred and Tom have lost theirs through an analogous loss of connection; through the displacement of life into their heads. Ursula's Uncle Tom becomes a symbol of the system, and of the world Ursula rejects, and as such is condemned just as much as is Winifred. It is interesting that Lawrence makes a rare comment in the first person here: "No more would she subscribe to the great

colliery, to the great machine which has taken us all captive" (R, p.350). Thus, in this section of the novel, Lawrence is surely drawing a parallel between the quality of personal relationships and that of the social milieu, rather than being guilty of anti-feminist bias. His interest lies in homosexual relationships within industrial society rather than with homosexuality per se.

This pattern is repeated throughout The Rainbow and Women in Love. We see it in the link made between personal experience and the social world after Ursula's encounter with the horses when she suddenly becomes aware of the miners "burned alive", and again when she sees the vision of the rainbow (R, pp.490 & 495). Similarly, after the scene depicting Gerald's treatment of the horse, Lawrence focuses upon two miners, and we cannot avoid drawing parallels between them and Gerald (WL, pp.128-29). Gerald's destruction is explicitly linked to his social situation: he is no longer needed; the machines run themselves-- his will has played itself out. These represent only a few of numerous instances where character, personal experience and environment are explicitly correlated. It is surely essential, for this reason, to be aware of the social milieu in any consideration of the novel. Kate Millett's partisan approach consistently ignores all socio-economic elements in the novels, or explains them in terms of Lawrence's male egoism.

In stressing the importance of the sociological ap-

proach to Lawrence's work, I am not suggesting that this should be the definitive method of criticising The Rainbow and Women in Love. Indeed, I suggested earlier that it is important to be alert to the narrative technique adopted by an author in order to be aware of the way in which our responses are directed. Again, I believe that Kate Millett's approach ignores such matters, and she therefore fails to recognise that Lawrence is reluctant to endorse anything his characters say. Lawrence's texts lend themselves to many different critical approaches; psychoanalytical, linguistic, structuralist, sociological, and no one of these approaches can be exhaustive in itself. It is imperative to be aware of the interconnected determinants in Lawrence's work, to be as alert to as many different possibilities of interpretation as possible. Kate Millett's approach to literature is as partisan as Lawrence's depiction of life is multifarious. In ignoring this multifariousness, Millett seriously jeopardises the quality of her understanding.

Epilogue

What, in summary, are the limitations of the criticism practised by such critics as Kate Millett? Is it possible to suggest ways in which a feminist ideology might be applied to the works of Eliot and Lawrence without ultimately denigrating the power of their works?

I would suggest that just as Kate Millett believes that the theory expounded by Virginia Woolf was in advance of her practice, in her novels, so Millett's practice of literary criticism is in advance of any comprehensively defined feminist aesthetic. Evidently, as feminists, such critics as Millett and Edwards will bring to their readings the attitudes and ideology of a raised female consciousness. The feminist critic must be wary, however, of using literary materials to make a specific political point if, in doing so, she finds herself re-writing the text or ignoring aspects of the plot or characterisation, or over-simplifying the actual to fit the political thesis. Because Kate Millett's commitment to literary criticism is one-sided and because her scholarship is directed toward interested ends, she is often guilty of writing polemic rather than literary criticism.

I would suggest that one of the principle flaws of Millett's approach to literature is her inability to correlate sociological and aesthetic judgements. In order that feminist literary criticism might not remain a minor, isolated

and polemical perspective, feminists must integrate their insights into a broader analysis. They must confront the larger political, historical and aesthetic questions in a more systematic way.

Perhaps the most difficult task before the feminist critic is that of finding a way of talking about and appraising the works of authors whose attitudes towards women or espousal of conventions do not parallel her own expectations. Disappointing though it may be, art and politics may not always co-incide in the ways we would like. Feminist critics would do well to remember, in their consideration of works whose resolution of conflicts they find distasteful, that anachronistic readings of texts should be avoided, for, as Richard Hoggart points out:

Literature is a bearer of the meanings within a culture. It helps to re-create what it felt like to believe those things, to assume the experience demanded and carried those kind of values. It dramatises how it feels on the pulses to live out those kind of values and, in particular, what stresses and tensions come from that living out.¹

I would, finally, suggest that both Eliot and Lawrence are concerned, in their novels, with the factors which engender liberationist impulses rather than with the reconciliation of these impulses. Their novels scrutinise, with a great deal of insight, the condition of individual men and women subjected to the inter-connected determinants of sexuality and society.

Notes on Chapter One

1. Kirsten Grimstad and Susan Rennie, The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975) p. i.
2. Such courses are offered at one hundred twelve United States institutions for higher learning; about a third grant degrees.
3. Arlyn Diamond and Lee Edwards, The Authority of Experience (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977) p. xiv.
4. Diamond and Edwards, p. xiii.
5. Philip Hobsbaum, A Theory of Communication (London: McMillan and Co., 1970) p. xiii.
6. Sarah Lawall, Critics of Consciousness: the existential structures of literature (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968) p. vii.
7. Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1964) p. 3.
8. Vinetta Colby, Yesterday's Woman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974)

9. Women's Studies Group, University of Birmingham, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies; Stencilled Occasional Paper, Images of Women in the Media, Nov. 1974, sp. no. 3.
10. Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968)
11. Mary Anne Ferguson, "Sexist Images of Women in Literature", Female Studies V, p. 77.
12. Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "A Mirror for Men: Stereotypes of Women in Literature," Massachusetts Review, Vol. 13, 1972. p. 207
13. Diamond and Edwards, p. xii.
14. Carol Ohmann, "Emily Bronte in the Hands of Male Critics",

Midwest Quarterly 32, May 1971. p. 909.

15. Katherine M. Rogers, "The Antifeminist Bias in Traditional Criticism", ERIC, ed. 101. 362, 1974.
16. Respectively by Mary Ellmann in Thinking about Women; by Cynthia Ozick in "Women and Creativity: The Demise of the Dancing Dog", in Women in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness, ed. Vivian Gomick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: Basic Books, 1971) pp. 307-322, and by K. Snow, in "Images of Women in American Literature", Aphra 2, Winter 1970, pp. 56-68.
17. Ellmann, p. 29.
18. K. Snow, p. 67.
19. Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970) p.139.
20. Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Avon, 1972)
21. Simone de Beauvoir, La Deuxième Sexe (New York: Random House, 1968); Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (New York: Bantam Books, 1970); Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963)
22. Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Aylesbury, Bucks: Hazel Watson and Viney Ltd., 1971) p. 178.
23. Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women (New York: Random House, 1973) p. xvi.
24. Ellmann, p. 40.
25. See note 11.
26. Simone de Beauvoir, p. 145.
27. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (Middlesex: Penguin, 1928) p. 23.
28. Marcia Landy, "The Silent Woman: Towards a Feminist Critique" in The Authority of Experience, pp. 16-27.
29. Fraya Katz-Stoker shows the limitations of New Criticism for feminists in "The Other Criticism: Feminism Versus Formalism", in Susan Koppel-Cornillon, Images

- of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1972) pp. 313-325. Lillian Robinson and Elise Vogel also criticise Formalism in "Modernism and History", Koppelman-Cornillon, pp. 278-305.
30. Koppelman-Cornillon, pp. 278-305.
31. Lee Edwards, "Women, Energy and Middlemarch", Massachusetts Review, Vol. 13, 1972 p. 238. "Middlemarch.... can no longer be one of the books of my life."
32. Irving Howe, quoted in Geoffrey Wagner, Five for Freedom: A Study of Feminism in Fiction (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972) p. 49.
33. Cynthia Griffin Wolff, p. 217.
34. Wendy Martin declares in "The Feminine Mystique in American Fiction", Female Studies II, ed. Howe, p. 33: that a literary work should provide a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are "self-actualizing, whose identities are not dependent on men."
35. L. Robinson seems to suggest this; see note 31.
36. Norman Mailer, The Prisoner of Sex (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971.) pp. 93-160.
37. D.H. Lawrence, "The Novel", Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Press, 1963) p. 112.
38. Cynthia Griffin Wolff, p. 207.
39. The Prefaces to Moll Flanders, Pendennis and Oliver Twist show how the realities of vice and crime could not be portrayed without insisting that the representation of vice punished would be a moral deterrent.
40. Lee Edwards, "Women, Energy and Middlemarch"; Kate Millet, Sexual Politics, p. 139; Patricia Beer, Reader, I Married Him: A Study of the Women Characters of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot (London: MacMillan, 1974) p. 181.
41. Simone de Beauvoir, p. 204.

42. See The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Viking Press, 1967) I, pp. 272-274.
43. Two strong objections to the conclusion of The Rainbow are raised by F.R. Leavis, D.H. Lawrence: Novelist (New York: 1956) p. 172, and Graham Hough, The Dark Sun: A Study of D.H. Lawrence (London: 1956) p. 71

Objections to the conclusion of Middlemarch are expounded by A. Kettle, Introduction to the English Novel (New York: 1960) I, p. 180; F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (New York: 1954) p. 96; Quentin Anderson, "George Eliot in Middlemarch" in Discussions on George Eliot, ed. Richard Stang (Boston: 1960) p. 93.

Notes on Chapter Two

1. Simone de Beauvoir, La Deuxième Sexe (New York: Random House, 1968) p.204.
2. Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Aylesbury, Bucks: Hazel Watson and Viney Ltd., 1971) p. 139.
3. The "perfect lady" is a phrase defined by C. Willett Cunnington, see Feminist Attitudes in Nineteenth Century Britain (New York: MacMillan Co., 1936)

In The Princess, Tennyson puts it thus: "No angel, but a dearer being all dipt/ In angel instincts, breathing Paradise."
4. Patricia Thompson, The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) p. 10.
5. W.F. Noff, Victorian Working Women (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929) p. 190.
6. W.N. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, ed. G.K. Tillotson (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co. Riverside Press, 1903) p. 12.
7. C. Willett Cunnington, pp. 227-228.
8. P. Thompson, p. 10.

9. Thompson, p. 10.
10. Dr. Gregory, "A Father's Legacy to his Daughters", quoted in John Langdon-Davies, A Short History of Women (New York: Viking Press, 1927) p. 33.
11. Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, ed. Charles W. Hagelman, Jr. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1967) p. 93-94.
12. Queen Victoria, quoted in M. Springer, "Angels and Other Women in Victorian Literature", What Manner of Women, Essays on English and American Life and Literature, ed. M. Springer (New York: New York University Press, 1977) p. 125.
13. Hazel Mews, Frail Vessels: Women's Role in Women's Novels from Fanny Burney to George Eliot (London: Athlone

Press, 1969) p. 5-6.

14. M. Springer, p. 126. It should be noted that in fact it is the speaker, and not Tennyson, who comments here on the situation of women.
15. K. Millett, p. 126.
16. G.S. Haight, ed., The George Eliot Letters, VII Vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954) IV, p. 390. All future references bracketed in the text and abbreviated as Letters.
17. R.H. Hutton, review of Middlemarch, British Quarterly Review, 57, 1873. pp. 407-429.
18. F. Napier Broome, quoted in The Times, March 7, 1873, pp. 3-4, reprinted in John Holmstrom and Laurence Lerner, eds., George Eliot and Her Readers: A Selection of Contemporary Reviews (London: Bodley Head, 1966) pp. 108-109.
19. F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (New York: Doubleday, 1954) p.65.
20. George Eliot, Daniel Deronda (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960) p.193.
21. J. Halperin, Egoism and Self Discovery in the Victorian Novel (New York: Burt Franklin, 1974) p. 161

22. Anthea Zeman, Presumptuous Girls (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1978) p. 59.
23. Lee Edwards, "Women, Energy and Middlemarch", Massachusetts Review Vol. 13, 1972, p. 235.
24. Edwards, p. 237.
25. Edwards, p. 139.
26. George Eliot, Middlemarch (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Riverside Press, 1968) p. 25. All future references bracketed in the text and abbreviated as M.
27. George Eliot, as quoted in Geoffrey Wagner, Five for Freedom: A Study of Feminism in Fiction (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972) p. 55.

Notes on Chapter Three

1. D.H. Lawrence, "Study of Thomas Hardy" in Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Edward D. McDonald (New York: Viking Prsss, 1936) p.410.
2. _____, "Give Her a Pattern" in Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D.H. Lawrence, ed. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (New York: Viking Press, 1968) p.535.
3. _____, Phoenix II, p.536.
4. R.P. Draper, D.H. Lawrence (New York: Twayne Publisners, 1964) pp.138-39.
5. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Bantam Books, 1961) p.204.
6. Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Aylesbury: Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd., 1971) p.240.
7. Barbara Hardy, "Lawrence and Women" in D.H. Lawrence, Novelist, Poet, Prophet, ed. Stephen Spender (New York: Harper and Row, 1958) p.90.
8. Rosalind Miles, The Fiction of Sex: Themes and Functions of Sex Difference in the Modern Novel (London: Vision Press Ltd., 1974) p.18.

9. Norman Mailer, "The Prisoner of Sex"; Harper's Magazine (March, 1971) p.70.
10. "We are all wrong when we say there is no vital difference between the sexes. There is every difference. Every bit, every cell in a boy is male, every cell is female in a woman and must remain so. Woman can never feel or know as men do. And in the reverse men can never feel and know, dynamically, as women do. Man, acting in the passive or feminine polarity, is still man, and he doesn't have one single unmanly feeling. And women, when they speak and write, utter not one single word that men have not taught them. Men learn their feelings from women, women learn their mental consciousness from men. And so it will ever be. Meanwhile, women live forever by feeling, and men live forever from an inherent sense of purpose." D.H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious (New York: Viking Press, 1976) pp.137-38.

11. _____, The White Peacock. (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971)
p.175.
12. Kate Millett, pp.257-58.
13. _____, p.258.
14. _____, pp.237-57.
15. _____, p.258.
16. _____, p.259.
17. _____, p.259.
18. Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (New York: W.W. Norton and
Co., 1976) p.225.
19. D.H. Lawrence, The Rainbow (Middlesex: Penguin, 1976) p.
208. All future references bracketted in the text
and abbreviated as R.
20. _____, "The Dragon of the Apocalypse by F. Carter", in
Phoenix, p.296.
21. Kate Millett, p.260.
22. Deborah Core, "Love Between Women" in D.H. Lawrence Re-
view, Vol. II no. 2 (Summer 1978) p.124.
23. Kate Millett, p.262.
24. _____, p.262.
25. D.H. Lawrence, Apocalypse (New York: Viking Press, 1966)
p.196.
26. Barbara Hardy, p.90.
27. Deborah Core, p.123.
28. Simone de Beauvoir, p.240.
29. Kate Millett, p.261.
30. _____, p.260.
31. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York: Harbinger,
1957) p.86.
32. Kate Millett, p.262.

33. Ordelle G. Hill and Potter Woodbery, "Ursula Brangwen and The Rainbow: Christian Saint or Pagan Goddess?" in D.H. Lawrence Review, Vol. IV (Fall, 1971) pp274-79.
 34. D.H. Lawrence, Fantasia, p.199.
 35. _____, "Democracy" in Phoenix, p.706.
 36. _____, "Life" in Phoenix, p.696.
 37. _____, "The Reality of Peace" in Phoenix, p.688.
 38. _____, "Life", p.695.
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Notes on Chapter Four

1. Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Aylesbury: Hazell Watson and Viney, 1971) p.263.
2. D.H. Lawrence, Women in Love (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971) p.17. All future references bracketted in the text and abbreviated as WL.
3. Kate Millett, p.267.
4. "This novel pretends only to be a record of the writer's own desires, aspirations, struggles; in a word, a record of the profoundest experiences in the self". "Foreword to Women in Love" in Phoenix II, Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D.H. Lawrence, ed. Harry T. Moore, (New York: Viking Press, 1968) pp.275-76.
5. Kate Millett, p.263.
6. _____, p.268.
7. _____, p.263.
8. D.H. Lawrence, "Wedlock" in The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence, 2 Vols., ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts (London: Heinemann, 1964) Vol. I, pp.245-48.

9. _____, "Manifesto" in Poems, Vol. I, pp.262-68.
10. Kate Millett, p.264.
11. Colin Clarke, River of Dissolution (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) pp.100-104.
12. Kate Millett, p.266.
13. G. Hough, The Dark Sun (New York: Macmillan Co., 1956) p.85.
14. D.H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious (New York: Viking Press, 1976) p.143.
15. Kate Millett, p.242.
16. Allen Friedman, Turn of the Novel (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1966) chapter six.

17. D.H. Lawrence, Apocalypse (New York: Viking Press, 1966) p.200.
 18. The crisis came to a head with the end of the butty system. See "Nottingham and the Mining Country" in Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Edward D. McDonald (New York: Viking Press, 1936) pp.133-140.
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Note on Epilogue

1. Richard Hoggart, as quoted in University of Birmingham examination paper, first year B.A. Honours English Literature: "Methods and Contexts of Literary Study", March 1974.

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