GENDER AND POWER: A CRITIQUE OF D.H. LAWRENCE AND DORIS LESSING

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DECLARATION

I, Anitha Ramesh. K, hereby declare that this thesis entitled *Gender and Power: A Critique of D.H. Lawrence and Doris Lessing* has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

Calicut
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Gender and Power: A Critique of D.H Lawrence and Doris Lessing* submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a record of bonafide research carried out by the candidate under my supervision and that no part of the thesis has been submitted for any degree before.

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Dr. P.P. Raveendran

PREFACE

This study uses gender as a category of analysis because it is a ubiquitous feature of culture. The template of gender would disclose aspects of culture previously ignored. Gender relations involve the structuring of social practices around sex and sexuality. Culture naturalizes and sets forth as normative certain hegemonic practices through powerful discourses. To understand gender as a construct, one must be able to "misread" such normative discourses which articulate their interests through a process of naturalization. Such naturalization ignores the inequalities implicit in gender relations. Power structures construct 'reality' through a politics of exclusion. What is real or not real, true or not true, is shaped by these structures. Narrative is the form in which we receive reality. It is not just that stories help us understand the world, stories are how the world is presented to us. In other words, reality comes to us in the shape of stories Fictional narratives are discursive productions and thus a site of political struggle involving gendered relations of power. Such representations are unstable and continually self-deconstructing since they are embroiled in practices of power and resistance. They foreground patterns of masculinities and femininities which are part of the cultural dynamic and hence subject to change.

The focus of this study is on the ways in which gender is implicated in the fictional representations of D.H. Lawrence and Doris Lessing. The choice of a male writer and a female writer was made on the premise that the author-subjects, being differently constituted within culture, would manifest these differences in their narratives. How far would the values of a patriarchally inscribed language enable these writers to address the larger questions of the day in their fiction? What constrains would their positionality as subjects in a patriarchal society put on them. How do they resist the hegemonic patterns of culture? These questions are explored in this comparative study.

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I dedicate this humble work to the memory of my late father A.K. Ramesh.

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INTRODUCTION

In the poststructuralist scenario, terms have become slippery, fluid and thoroughly engaged in the dynamics of cultural changes. What D.H. Lawrence said of the novel – "If you try to nail anything down in the novel, either it kills the novel or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail" - could be applied to the whole symbolic realm ("Morality and the Novel" 119). The old stable world is no more. The cultural problematic involves grappling with a language that refuses to be pinned down.

In recent times, the term "criticism" has been relegated to a subaltern status in the wake of the more sophisticated and dominant term "theory." Criticism is considered too limiting in its concern with "defining, classifying, analysing, interpreting and evaluating works of literature" (Abrams, *Glossary* 39). It assumes the truth value of literature and sees the function of criticism as a reaching out to these universal claims. Criticism, here, becomes disinterested and void of any political motivation. In this context, the theory of literature is a set of general principles governing literary exegesis. Criticism is thus a liberal humanist project aiming at a transcendental signified, Truth. The more trendy term "theory" sweeps all of culture into its all-encompassing fold. Theory, with its interdisciplinary, analytical, speculative and reflexive "critique of common sense, of concepts taken as natural could assist in the task of making sense of things," in literature and other discursive practices (Culler, *Literary Theory* 15).

Given such a sweeping task, it is no wonder that theory is valorized in present day debates on literature. The primacy of theory is one of the salient features of our times. It has "come to be foregrounded as a central and dominant issue, so that it becomes incumbent on every critic to 'theorize' his or her position and practice." Theory, now, "designates an account of the general conditions that determine all meaning and interpretation," pertaining not only to "verbal language, but also to psychosexual and sociocultural signifying systems" with the result that "the pursuit of literary criticism is conceived to be integral with all the other pursuits traditionally distinguished as 'human sciences', and to be inseparable from consideration of the general nature of human consciousness and 'subjectivity' and also from reference to all forms of social and cultural phenomena" (Abrams, *Glossary* 259). To Terry Eagleton, the "disciplinary indeterminacy" of theory indicates

> ...that our classical ways of carving up knowledge are now, for hard historical reasons, in deep trouble... The emergence of theory suggests that, for good historical reasons, what had become known as the humanities could no longer carry on in their customary shape. This was all to the good, since the humanities had too often proclaimed a spurious disinterestedness, preached 'universal' values which were all too socially specific, repressed the material basis of those values, absurdly overrated the importance of 'culture' and fostered a jealously elitist conception of it.
>
> (*Literary Theory* 207)

Edward Said also sees in this "disciplinary indeterminacy" the future of the critical function which he believes to be "exercised in the traffic between cultures, discourses and disciplines, rather than in the appropriation, systemization, management, and professionalization of any one domain" (*Reflections on Exile* 170).

In "The Function of Literary Theory at the Present Time," J. Hillis Miller points out a "massive shift in literary study since 1979 away from the 'intrinsic', rhetorical study of literature towards the study of the 'extrinsic' relations of literature, its placement within psychological, historical, or sociological contexts" (102). This boils down to a shift away from the focus on language per se, its nature and powers, to a focus on language in its relation to the materiality of history leading to a tremendous appeal for psychologistic and sociological theories of literature. The disdain and impatience of young Marxists and Foucauldians for a study of literature cut off from history and politics is a well-known fact. Paraphrasing Paul de Man, Miller says that " 'the task of literary criticism in the coming years' will be mediation between the rhetorical study of literature, of which 'deconstruction' is by far the most rigorous in recent times, and the now so irresistibly attractive study of the extrinsic relations of literature" (104). Since extrinsic relations themselves are intrinsic to the text, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic, like most such binary oppositions, turn out to be false and misleading. As Miller goes on to add, both Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida scrupulously account for the referential, historical, social, and political effects of literature, though opponents of the rhetorical study of literature continue to misrepresent their work as ahistorical and apolitical. The present study also attempts a mediation between the intrinsic and extrinsic

elements or the text and the context. Edward Said posits such a goal for criticism: "... ideally, then, intrinsic goals, such as more complete interpretations of X or Y genre or author, might be connected to such extrinsic aims as a change in or enhancement of society. Rarely, however, are connections of such scope and range made"(171). Feminist criticism, in recent times, has been working along these lines especially in the area of gender theory.

Redefinition of literary theory so as to make it responsive to gender and cultural differences between male and female readers and writers has long been on the agenda of feminist criticism. Such a redefinition places at the forefront of its argument the impact of theory upon social and political attitudes. As a social institution, literature inscribes within itself power relations in the form of literary conventions which reify the encodings of those same relations in the culture at large. As Annette Kolodny says, "what is important about a fiction is not whether it ends in a death or a marriage, but what the symbolic demands of that particular conventional ending imply about the values and beliefs of the world that engendered it" ("Dancing through the Minefield" 147). In the same essay she goes on to add that reading being a socialized and learned activity, competence for which is gained in the academies, what readers (feminists) engage with "are not texts but paradigms which perpetuate the norm" (153). In order to read against the norm, new interpretive strategies are required. As an overdetermined cultural product that encodes and disseminates different cultural value systems, literature is vulnerable to plural readings depending on the theoretical framework applied to it. In their creation of fictions, writers also inscribe the same signifying codes that pervade social interactions, re-presenting in

fiction the rituals and symbols that make up social practices. Literature is thus a "discursive practice" ideologically complicit with social conventions. Literature is also a "mediating, moulding force in society," structuring our sense of the world, since every time a code is invoked it is also reinforced and reinscribed (Hawkes 56). Developing new analytical models with its alternate foci of critical attention could serve a feminist critic well by liberating new significances because different features of the text are chosen and new and different questions are asked of it. Kolodny's "playful pluralism," responsive to the possibilities of multiple critical schools and methods, seems quite an attractive proposition. Elaine Showalter's dissenting opinion on this, in her attempt to create a monolithic conceptual model for feminist criticism, does not make sense, as in the final analysis her cultural model would need to be responsive to different critical schools.

Barbara Christian, in a strong denunciation of the new perspective on theory, points out the academic hegemony of theory implied in the "race for theory." Theory has become a commodity ensuring admission into the academic ivory-tower. It is no longer concerned so much with works of literature as with the texts of other critics. The language it creates "mystifies rather than clarifies" women's condition "making it possible for a few people who know that particular language to control the critical scene" (73). In spite of her objection to elitist theory, Christian hastens to disengage herself from "neutral humanists who see literature as pure expression and will not admit to the obvious control of its production, value and distribution by those who have power" (72). Her grouse is against critics who have killed the author and supplanted themselves in the vacated space, producing texts "as disembodied as

angels" (73). She is echoing the theory / anti-theory dichotomy that has persisted in feminist criticism where anti-theory translates as "authority of experience." Partaking of the hierarchical binary opposition referred to by Helene Cixous in "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks / Ways Out / Forays," theory reads as impersonal, public, objective and male and experience as personal, private, subjective and female. As Mary Eagleton points out, "To look for some pure, experiential, non-theoretical space is utopian... an untheorized politics of personal experience may never get beyond subjectivism" (6). For Christian, occupying a middle position between theorists and anti-theorists, theory is literary criticism, a response to the writer whose writing might disappear if there is no response to it (77). Her objection to theory is based on its "monolithism" which obscures variety and multiplicity in the overarching rubric of sexism or racism. Since, as Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak put it, theory would have to ground itself in a "strategic essentialism" to counter the play of constructivism, it would mask heterogeneity in its homogenizing zeal. The attack on dominant academia notwithstanding, of which Virginia Woolf was the first proponent followed by Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly and Marguerite Duras, an engagement or dialogue with the male theoretical establishment is necessary if one were to sharpen one's tools of criticism. This becomes all the more imperative when one considers Edward and Shirley Ardner's model of intersecting circles appropriated by Showalter for her own cultural model. The circle of dominant male experience and the circle of muted female experience overlap over a large and significant area precluding mutual influences ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness"

347). Feminist appropriations of androcentric theories have served feminist critics well enough all this time, though isolated cries for separatism are still heard.

A brief overview of feminist criticism thus far would not be out of place here to situate this gender-based study in its proper critical context. Appropriating M.H. Abrams's tropes of the mirror and the lamp in his influential study of the mimetic and expressive impulses in literary criticism for feminist analysis, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar distinguish between two kinds of feminist literary criticism: the mirror, which, for a number of feminist critics "becomes a space in which to capture the shifting historical images of gendered reality," and the lamp, which, for other feminist critics becomes the emblem of the artist's gendered subjectivity retaining its romantic energy. The former involves criticism of misogynistic characterizations of women, recovery and re-evaluation of lost writers, in short, "the mirroring – the transcription – of a knowable history constituted by real authors, real readers and objectively verifiable cultural conditions." ("The Mirror and the Vamp" 145). In the latter criticism, the brilliance of the heroic poet serves

> ...as a paradigm for the critic's expressive autonomy as well as for rebelliously anti-rational and anti-hierarchical impulses that have been repressed but not erased by patriarchal culture. But because such impulses are associated with the alienated, the dispossessed, and the marginalized – all of which can be represented by the 'feminine' – Abrams's lamp, figuratively speaking, metamorphoses at the hands of these critics into a vamp,

> both a fatal seductress and a ferociously 'Undead' figure.... Whether they seek to liberate the power of the feminine from the constraints of patriarchal discourse, strive to reverse or dissolve the binary oppositions of culture / nature, man / woman... or struggle to annihilate the hegemony of the 'phallocentric' subject and the "phallocentrism" of the very idea of history, these theorists implicitly define the function of criticism at the present time as a defiantly inspired and demonically sensual attack on – indeed, a seduction and betrayal of – patriarchal systems of thought. (145)

By the substitution of a phoneme in the minimal pair "lamp" and "vamp," a whole new and subtle significance is added on to the expressionist revolutionary energy of the romantic author. Gilbert and Gubar identify the two modes of criticism pointed out by Showalter – "feminist critique" and "gynocriticism" and considered to develop sequentially – with Abrams's classical rationalist "mirror," thus making them empiricist projects. Feminist critique concentrates on stereotyped representations of women in male-authored texts. A host of Anglo-American feminist critics have aligned themselves to this project. Judith Fetterly requires female readers to resist the male authored texts, which would allow them to perceive the patriarchal designs of such masculinist texts. Carolyn Heilburn traces healing images of androgyny in a range of texts by men as well as women. Nina Auerbach finds a powerful female community in Henry James' *The Bostonians*. The

gynocritical project, concerned with the exploration of the "psychodynamics of female creativity" and "with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women" is the impetus behind Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, Patricia Meyer Spacks's *The Female Imagination* and Gilbert and Gubar's *The Mad Woman in the Attic*. Gynocriticism, according to Showalter, "has focussed on the multiple signifying systems of female literary traditions and intertexualities" ("A Criticism of Our Own" 363). Gynocritics work within the humanist paradigm of empiricist or mirror criticism, judging literary products by the qualities of the canon, shaped by the dominant ideology, but ascribing valorized status to the feminine. This only perpetuates the dominant codes. There is also a danger here that feminist political desire might tend to falsify aspects of reality as much as masculinist ideology has. Here, reality is used in the liberal humanist sense as something objective out there. As Gilbert and Gubar warn, "when the mirror of description becomes a tool of prescription, its surface clouds so that – because as Blake put it, 'the eye altering alters all' – the critic can perceive in it only what she wants to see" ("The Mirror and the Vamp"151). This desire, that becomes a problematic issue for mirror critics, is a source of power and a subject of analysis for the vamp critics. To rescue the "feminine" from patriarchal constraints, they call for an ecriture feminine that would inscribe the body of female desire.

To confront the hierarchical binary oppositions of patriarchal culture, they seek to excavate the subordinate or repressed terms (the body, the pre-Oedipal, nature, night, woman) arguing for a "space" of the maternal "semiotic chore" (Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 29). To dispense with binaries altogether, they seek to

bestow upon the repressed terms the gift of fluidity and multiplicity, declaring with Luce Irigaray's *This Sex which is Not One* that woman is indefinitely other in herself so that another meaning could always be seen weaving itself. Finally, to rescue feminist criticism from an author-centered empiricism, they consider sexuality as a writing effect of the text and not as works signed by biologically determined females (Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* 124). Steeped in European philosophy, Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis, the intellectual elitism of the French feminists, according to the vamp critics, has distanced them from actual feminist literary criticism, as the Anglo-American feminist critic observes, in spite of their political commitment, "French feminist critics have preferred to work on problems of textual, linguistic, semiotic or psychoanalytic theory, or to produce texts where poetry and theory intermingle in a challenge to established demarcations of genre" (*Sexual/Textual Politics* 95).

Sketching out the histories of Anglo-American feminist literary criticism over the past twenty five years, in "A Criticism of Our Own," Showalter identifies several phases: an "androgynous poetics" denying the uniqueness of a female literary consciousness and advocating a single universal standard of critical judgement before the Women's Liberation Movement, a "feminist critique" of male culture and a "Female Aesthetic" (again universal) celebrating women's culture in the 1960's, the new phase of gynocritics in the 1970's, the "gynesic' or poststructuralist feminist criticism dealing with the "feminine" in philosophy, language and psychoanalysis in the late 1970's and now, gender theory. The androgynist position, according to Showalter, was articulated by Mary Ellman in *Thinking about Women* in 1969 and by

Carolyn Heilburn in *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* in 1973 which argued against sexual polarization and the prison of gender. This concept of genderless imagination was rejected by most feminist critics since the 1970's. The "Female Aesthetic" goes to the other extreme of a universal realm, a unique female consciousness and a unique literary tradition. It celebrated an intuitive female critical consciousness in the interpretation of women's texts. The "Female Aesthetic" also experimented with efforts to inscribe a female idiom in critical discourse. Generally they affirmed womanhood as a positive factor in literary experience. Unfortunately, with its emphasis on the importance of female biological experience it came dangerously close to sexist essentialism. French feminist writing of the same period also, though taking a radically different intellectual route concentrated on "women's style as a writing effect of rupture and subversion in avant-garde literature, available to both men and women, but connected or analogous to female sexual morphology." As mentioned above, the French critique of phallocentrism, via the different methods of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva explored the "possibility of a concentric feminine discourse" ("A Criticism" 63). In so far as the "Female Aesthetic" suggested that only women were qualified to read women's texts, feminist criticism ran the risk of ghettoization. The essentialism of the universal female subject and the female imagination was, in the final analysis, open to charges of racism and indifference to class.

Gynocriticism was an effort to resolve some of these problems. This project identified women's writing as a central subject of feminist criticism but rejected the concept of an essential female identity and style. In an earlier essay, "Feminist

Criticism in the Wilderness," Showalter had conceived women's writing and feminist criticism as a "double voiced discourse embodying both the 'muted' and the 'dominant'" (350). Significantly, this anticipates her move towards gender theory, incorporating the feminine and the masculine, which she articulates in the text she edits, *Speaking of Gender,* in 1989. In studying women's writing, feminists have challenged and revised the prevailing style of critical discourse. Gynocriticism has generated a vast critical literature on individual women writers, on female literary tradition and books on gender and genre. Under the influence of Gilbert and Gubar's phenomenal work *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, the theoretical programme of gynocritics by the 1980's had been marked by increasing attention to the "analysis of female talent grappling with a male tradition," both in literature and criticism, a project that defined both the female literary text and the feminist critical text as the sum of its "acts of revision, appropriation, and subversion" and its "differences of genre, structure, voice and plot" (Abel 2). Criticism of the complicity between the feminist critical talent and the male critical tradition became acute at this time.

The next phase in the history of feminist critical theory focused on what Alice Jardine termed "gynesis," the work of a new group of Franco-American feminist critics influenced by French feminists. Jardine explains gynesis as

> ... the putting into discourse of 'Woman' as that process diagnosed in France as intrinsic to the condition of modernity; indeed, the valorization of the feminine, woman, and her obligatory, that is historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to new and necessary modes of

> thinking, writing, speaking. (qtd. in Mary Eagleton, Introduction 9)

Whereas Anglo-American feminism centres on "women," on the politics of their shared experience, French interest converges on "woman" as writing effect, a mode of writing which "unsettles fixed meanings" (10). It aims at destabilizing the order that oppresses women. Gynesis questions realism as a literary form and insists on reality as a construct. The well-known disagreement between Toril Moi and Elaine Showalter with regard to Virginia Woolf could be seen as a debate between realism and modernism (*Sexual/ Textual Politics*). Also, Moi's gynetic critique of Showalter's gynocritical reading of Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* provides a paradigm for both modes of criticism. Moi takes issue with Showalter on several scores. Showalter finds fault with Woolf for her flight into androgyny which she sees as a flight away from a "troubled feminism" for her use of parody, exaggeration and multiple view-point, and for resorting to different personae to voice the narrative "I" resulting in frequently recurring shifts and changes of subject position leaving the critic with no single unified position but a multiplicity of perspectives to grapple with. Showalter adds that Woolf refuses to reveal her own experience fully and clearly but disguises and parodies it in the text. In her elusive, teasing way, Woolf "plays with her audience, refusing to be entirely serious, denying any earnest or subversive intention." "For Showalter, the only way a feminist can read the book properly is by remaining 'detached' from its narrative strategies." Showalter can see no "unifying angle of vision" and hence a lack of political commitment (Moi 2-3). Moi takes issue with Showalter's reading of Woolf within a liberal humanist

paradigm which assumes an objective reality which has to be faithfully represented. Overlooking Woolf's subversion of the notion of unitary self, the central concept of western male humanism, Showalter parades the patriarchal ideology of the concept of a seamlessly unified self commonly called "Man." Such an integrated phallic self, according to Moi, seeks to remove from itself all conflicts, ambiguities, complexities and disruptions that foreground the sexuality of the text. To Moi, distancing oneself from the narrative strategies of the text is tantamount to a reductive act of "passive 'feminine' reflection of an unproblematically 'given', 'masculine' world or self" (8). Pitting Showalter's criticism of Woolf against her own valorisation of Woolf's subversive writing effect, Moi opposes her gynetic mode against Showalter's gynocritical mode.

In the gynocritical paradigm, author, character and reader unite in an exploration of what it means to be female. When the feminist project participates in the Enlightenment project of establishing the truth of woman, it becomes incompatible with postmodernism. Undermining the very notion of female subjectivity, celebrating the death of the author, the gynetic project also raised a number of problems - the problem of agency being the foremost. Toril Moi, in an interview, explained Barthes's "death of the author" thus:

> It is often assumed that he holds that the author no longer has any impact at all on the text, which is not the case. For Barthes, in that essay, the author still provides one strand in the weave of the text, one voice among the multiplicity of voices in the text. His point is that the author no longer can

> be the only source of meaning, the origin of all sense in the text. As such, the author has been dethroned; I doubt that we've killed her off entirely. 'The Death of the Author' signals the death of the author as a metaphysical principle of interpretation. (Payne 103)

Moi's view of authorial discourse as one strand amongst a network of other discourses suggests a Foucauldian paradigm. Gilbert and Gubar have recorded Showalter's disaffection with the "death of the author" concept. According to them, for Showalter "to ignore the significance and signature of the author... would be to perpetuate patriarchy's traditional erasure of female reality" ("The Mirror and the Vamp" 147).

Parallels between gynocritics and gynetic critics and the mirror critics and vamp critics are now obvious. The vamp critics or gynetic critics work on a set of assumptions about literature, society and criticism, very different from those of the mirror critics or gynocritics. More radical and romantic than her counterpart, the vamp critic also believes in refraction of social conditions in literature but unlike the mirror critics she does not suppose interpretation of literary texts as the primary transformative activity in which the critic ought to engage. Substituting prescription for description, she works outside established structures, refusing to accept what she sees as hegemonic categories represented by the words "author," "history," "canon," "genre," "nationality," "class" and "race." For her the meaning of meaning is always already fictive and any attempts to comprehend the boundless indeterminacy of language necessarily replicates and is complicitous with patriarchal control. The

concept of the author participates in a monolithic intentionality which favours the critical use of biography which again is a yielding to a phallocratic ideal. The process of participating in canon formation would mean engaging in a normative model of greatness. To attend to generic conventions would limit the free play of the critical imagination. Finally she sees "woman" as a transcultural, transhistorical construct. Not rejecting authorial authority completely, they see the writing subject as a complex heterogenous force but rooted in a long historical reality of patriarchal culture. They do not completely reject maternal reality as that would weaken the force of their political criticism. Though diverse in their interests, Gilbert and Gubar see them working in tandem, in their prescription for an effective feminist criticism for "the vamp's range depends on evidence collected by and in mirrors."

> If the mirror and vamp critics could unite in seeking both the truth and the strangeness of female – and male – authored literary works, such terms as "author," "history," "canon," "genre"... might take on new meanings. All these categories would still exist in the ways the mirror critics claim they do, but their multiple and conflicting energies might be released, as the vamps would have them be. (158)

This is similar to the kind of conflation put forward by Hillis Miller when he asked for a mediation between the extrinsic and intrinsic study of literature referred to in the earlier part of this chapter, though not from a feminist perspective. By placing feminist criticism in the context of a predominantly patriarchal history of ideas, feminists align themselves with structures and traditions that have been

oppressive to them. At the same time, without the context of patriarchal materiality, feminist theory will lose continuity with the modes of thought it seeks to disrupt. To quote Gilbert and Gubar once more, "feminism's problem might then be that, as Virginia Woolf feared in *Three Guineas*, if women enter the public sphere they simply acquiesce in masculinist activities, but if they remain privatized they forego the opportunity to transform patriarchal hierarchies" (165). Cultural discernment and transformation can be effected only by a continuous critical dialogue between feminist theory and dominant intellectual traditions. Also, the future can be reinvented only if we engage with the past in the light of the present. The mirror mode attempts engagement with the past, the vamp mode takes on the task of reinvention.

The most recent and rapidly growing mode of feminist criticism is gender theory. Showalter points out how, "within feminist scholarship, the term gender is used to mean the social, cultural, and psychological construct imposed upon biological sexual difference" ("A Criticism" 67). Gender being a fundamental social variable in all human experience, it serves well as a basis for cultural studies. From the perspective of gender theory, the object of feminist criticism undergoes another transformation. Whereas gynocritics placed emphasis on women's writing and gynesis on the signification of "the feminine," "gender theory explores ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system" (67-8). The sex / gender system as defined by Gayle Rubin is "a set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (106). Although the meanings vary within

each culture, a sex-gender system is always intimately interconnected with political and economic factors in each society. Since gender stands for constructedness of sexual relations, the question of who or what constructs gender becomes relevant. After Foucault, it is common knowledge that power discourses construct gender through construction of knowledges posited as truth. The problematic of agency, in the absence of a subject, will be looked into later in this chapter. Being constructed, gender relations are fluid; they have no fixed essence. To Jane Flax, gender relations are constituent elements in every aspect of human experience and so a fundamental goal of feminist theory is to analyze gender relations. Distinguishing between gender theory and feminist theory, Flax feels that by studying gender, a critical distance could be gained. Such a critical distance could help clear a space for revaluation and alteration of existing gender arrangements (171). Speaking from within the frame-work of postmodern philosophy, Flax aligns feminist theory to the terrain of postmodern philosophy for two reasons – because it rejects all grand narratives which have excluded female experience and also because it rejects transcendental knowledge, following which, knowledge through female experience becomes equally valid. Deconstructing notions of Reason, Knowledge and Self, the "naturalizing" effects of gender arrangements are revealed. Since there are no absolutes, there is no objective basis for truth claims. In such a scenario power relations alone will determine the outcome of competing truth claims. Though a daunting prospect for the powerless, such relations contain within themselves the impetus for resistance. A gender-based study would look into the ways in which our thinking and experience of the world are implicated in existing power/knowledge relationships.

The problematics of gender relations is the single most important advance in feminist theory, according to the theorist Jane Flax (174). The introduction of the term "gender" into the vocabularies of critical and cultural theory has been motivated primarily by the necessity of surpassing reductionist accounts of femininity and masculinity as coterminous with an individual's biological sex, and of stressing their socio-political determination. It has since become the focus of hectic activity, being one of the most restless terms in the English language. Gender is used not to mark differences between men and women but differences between cultural conceptions of men and women – conceptions which are assumed to be "natural" to them. Femininity and masculinity are culturally sanctioned female and male traits respectively. Gender thus refers to the social organisation of the relationship between the sexes. The notion of gender as sexual difference has been central to the feminist cultural critique of representation, the rereading of cultural images and narratives, the question of theories of subjectivity and textuality, of reading, writing and spectatorship. Feminist interventions so far have been grounded in the notion of gender as sexual difference leading to the creation of gendered spaces like Women's Studies, women's caucuses and so on. But this idea has now become a liability to feminist thought as it keeps feminist thinking bound to patriarchal discourses and within the conceptual frame of universal sex opposition, thus curbing its radical epistemological potential. The radical potential Teresa de Lauretis sees in a subjectivity constituted in gender, not sexual difference alone, is a subject who goes "across languages and cultural representation; a subject engendered in the experiencing of race and class, as well as sexual relations; a subject, therefore, not

unified but rather multiple, and not so much divided as contradicted" ("The Technology of Gender" 714).

In grammar, gender is understood to be a way of classifying phenomena, a socially agreed upon system of differentiating between masculine, feminine and neuter rather than an objective description of inherent traits. In the dictionary it also means sex, that is, whether one is sexually male or female. The fact that gender, in one of its meanings, is a grammatical category in every language implies that all speech is necessarily talk about gender with the masculine as the linguistic norm. The masculine form is generic and universal and the feminine form is the masculine form marked by a suffix or some other variant. Monique Wittig, in "The Mark of Gender" has observed that language is the site of a covert struggle for gender meanings: "The universal has been, and is, continually at every moment, appropriated by men" (66). Teresa de Lauretis maintains that gender is the "representation of a relation," that is, "gender constructs a relation between one entity and other entities, which are previously constituted as a class, and the relation is one of belonging..." (716). Here class is to be understood as a group of individuals bound together by social determinants and interests. Thus, for De Lauretis, gender represents not an individual but a relation, a social relation. Joan Scott also maintains that gender stressed "the relational aspect of normative definitions of femininity" ("Gender as a Category of Analysis" 153).

The construction of gender is also effected by its deconstruction, that is, by any discourse, feminist or otherwise that would discard it as ideological misrepresentation. De Lauretis, taking after Foucault's theory of sexuality as a

"technology of sex" proposes to see construction of gender relations as a "technology of gender", as both "representation and a self-representation, and as the product of various social technologies such as cinema, of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life" (714). Gender, far from being a property of bodies or as originally existent in human beings is thus a set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations by the deployment of a complex political technology. Such a stance goes beyond Foucault because his critical understanding of the technology of sex did not take into account the conflicting investments of men and women in the discourses and practices of sexuality which means that Foucault's theory excludes but does not preclude gender. Another point of disagreement for feminists is with Foucault's view of power as productive which elides the sense of oppressiveness of power as it is imbricated in institutionally controlled knowledges. Though power is productive of knowledges, meanings, and values, it seems obvious enough that we have to make distinctions between the positive effects and the oppressive effects of power production. Thus De Lauretis sees within the construction of gender within a socially heterogeneous field of institutionalised discourses, "the terms of a different construction of gender... in the margins of hegemonic discourses", in "the space-off, of its representations" (719). For De Lauretis, the representation of gender becomes "a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of those discourses." The movement between them "is not that of a dialectic... or of difference, but is the tension of contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronomy" (720). This "space off" is reminiscent

of Foucault's "reverse" discourse by which he refers to the discourse of homosexuality (*The History of Sexuality* 101).

Judith Butler's work has been highly influential in affecting a redefinition of traditional approaches to gender and sexuality. In *Gender Trouble,* Butler argues that gender is performative. This implies that a person's gendered identity is produced through performance or role-play. Repetition plays a vital part in this process, for it is by performing certain acts repeatedly that an individual acquires an apparently coherent identity. Repetition involves naturalization of ideologies culturally sanctioned by the power structures of society. A gender role is neither natural nor optional: that is, there is no relationship between one's body and one's gender. There can be a "masculine" female or a "feminine" male. Gender, to Butler, is an "identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (140, original emphasis). Gender, thus, is a process of becoming rather than an ontological state of being. In this space of becoming, Butler suggests a potential for disruption, for radical social transformation or "gender trouble," equivalent to the "space-off" of De Lauretis. Elsewhere, Butler points out how "gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex" ("Subjects of Sex" 280). Calling the category of "the subject" into question, *Gender Trouble* troubles feminist political interest. Though the prospect of multiple subject positions is attractive in its radical anti-essentialism, without at least a temporary grounding, how could an analysis be made of the subject author or subject character?

The paradigm of gender has exposed the power-play behind the writing of history, literary conventions that attribute "value" to a literary work, thereby creating the canon, the feminization of certain genres and themes and the perpetuation of cultural values through art. Gender as a category of analysis would look into both female experience and male experience, dominant and marginalized. Other categories of experience like race, class would also fall within the ambit of gender experiences. Joan Scott calls for a paradigmatic gender analysis of the relationship between male and female experience not only in the past but also connecting past history and current historical practice ("Gender as a Useful Category" 155). She stresses relational analysis especially because gender has worked as a "synonym for women" in its simplest recent usage. Gender studies have replaced women's studies in titles of recent works presumably because 'gender' has a more neutral and objective sound than 'women,' thereby dissociating itself from the strident politics of feminism. 'Gender,' in including but not naming women, seems to pose no critical threat (156). According to Scott, the use of the term 'gender' is one aspect of the quest in feminist scholarship for academic legitimacy. 'Gender,' substituting for women, also suggests that information about women is necessarily information about men. Thus it is also used to designate social relations between the sexes. It rejects biological explanations that find the common denomination of muscular strength as cause for diverse forms of female subordination. 'Gender' refers to an exclusively social creation of idea about appropriating roles for men and women. Gender, for Scott is "a social category imposed on a sexed body" (156). The implication of a sexed subject as pre-existing its gendered representation is anathema to Butler for

whom even sex is already gendered since it can exist only in a social linguistic milieu. Nevertheless there is consensus in the use of 'gender' as an entire system of relationships that may include sex but is not directly determined by sex or sexuality. Gender refers to all areas covering human experience, be it sex, family, women or politics, nation or men. Indeed, the challenge to gender studies was to reconcile theory, which was framed earlier in general or universal terms, with looking into the specificities of experience, into the micropolitics of power relations. Thus a study based on gender, in its relational aspect, in its aspect as representation and repetition could look into how subjectivity, writing, and all other facets of human experience are fashioned by gendered power relations. When feminist discourse defines 'woman' as problematic, it ironically assumes 'man' as unproblematic and thus exempt from determination by gender relations. From the perspective of gender, both men and women are prisoners of gender. This study, dispensing with the 'why' as an irresolvable question based on universal generality seeks to show with historic specificity how gender is deployed in the service of power; how social structures persistently devalue the 'feminine' through construction of power discourses; how feminist resistance to this is structured; how, also, there is masculinist resistance to overwhelming norms of masculinity. All this is done in the context of a literary study. Literature, being part of the socio-cultural milieu, inscribes in it social power relations with all its normative gendered codes. By employing gender as a category of analysis, the asymmetrical structures of cultural power relations and also resistance to it are brought to light. According to Ruthven, gender has now become

recognized as "a crucial determinant in the production, circulation and consumption of literary discourse" (9).

Talking about gender in the sense explained above means talking about both men and women. Gender studies could thus have a more radical transformative impact, rescuing women's studies from ghettoization. To Flax, "for gender relations to be useful as a category of social analysis, we must be as socially self-critical as possible about the meanings usually attributed to those relations and the ways we think about them" (175). To Elaine Showalter, "the introduction of gender into the field of literary studies, marks a new phase in feminist criticism, an investigation of the ways that all reading and writing, by men as well as women, is marked by gender" (*Speaking of Gender* 2). Gender analysis as described so far, would also highlight other categories of difference such as race, class etc., that structure our lives and texts as social reality itself is gendered. As Cora Kaplan notes, "a feminist literary criticism that privileges gender in isolation from other forms of social determination offers us a similarly partial reading of the role played by sexual difference in literary discourse, a reading bled dry of its most troubling and contradictory meanings" (*Sea Changes* 148). Pointing to the varied emphasis of the proponents between "sexual difference" and "gender," Showalter explains that the former is the preferred rubric for poststructuralists following Lacan and Freud, and "gender" is the term used by materialist critics. Gender is not just about difference, which assumes that the sexes are separate but equal, but about power relations within masculinity and femininity in relation to dominant structures. Thus gender analyses focus both on writing by men and women. Myra Jehlen has asked for such an

approach in her call for a "radical comparitivism" which would be beneficial in that it would demonstrate "the contingency of the dominant male tradition as well" (83). Jehlen's essay marked the beginning of an interest in reading male texts, not as documents of sexism and misogyny, but as inscriptions of gender. In "Reading Ourselves," Patrocinio Schweickart identifies three distinctive features of a feminist theory of reading. It would, first of all, attend to the issue of gender, at the same time according privileged status to the experience and interests of women readers. Implicit in Schweickart's discussion is the recognition that in theories that overlook the issue of gender, the appearance of universality is almost always achieved through a concerted obliviousness to the female perspective. Finally, a feminist theory of reading would be conscious of the political dimensions of reading and writing, and of the political implications of the issue of gender. She stresses that the gender inscribed in the text is as crucial as the gender of the reader. She proposes a feminist "story" that has (at least) two chapters, the first concerned with women reading men's writing, the second with women reading women's writing. The comparative approach adopted in this study, privileges a feminist perspective to the issue of inscription of gender in D.H. Lawrence's and Doris Lessing's texts.

Exploring the various aspects of gender, as representing technologies of gender, as performativity of subject in process, as implicated in acts of reading, as denaturalisation of normativity, all involving power relations, it looks into reverse discourses that appear in the margins of dominant discourses both within male and female experience. The study also focuses on the deployment of masculinities and femininities in selected texts of D.H. Lawrence and Doris Lessing. The assumption

is that the grid of gender would enable exposure of the hierarchical and oppositional structures of world view; would help understand the discourses through which gender differences are encoded as cultural signs, would help in interrogating naturalized ideas and practices.

Susan Bordo puts paid to the scepticism which has reared its head in recent times about the use of gender as an analytical category in the face of other categories that cut across gender, when she insists that one cannot be simply "human" in a culture constructed by gender duality. All of culture, our language, intellectual history and social forms are "gendered" which makes gender-neutrality impossible (152). The following extract from the feminist philosopher Jean Grimshaw shows how gender never exhibits itself in pure form but only in the context of lives that are shaped by a multiplicity of influences, which cannot be neatly sorted out.

> The experience of gender, of being a man or a woman, inflects much if not all of people's lives.... But even if one is always a man or a woman, one is never just a man or a woman. One is young or old, sick or healthy, married or unmarried... and so forth. Gender, of course, inflects one's experience of these things, so the experience of any one of them may well be radically different according to whether one is a man or a woman. But it is also radically different according to whether one is, say, black or white or working class or middle class... Experience does not come neatly in segments, such that it is always possible to abstract what in

> one's experience is due to 'being a woman' from that which is due to 'being married', 'being middleclass and so forth'. (84-5)

The grid-like structure of gender relations encompasses all other categories of experience.

To talk about gender is to talk about power – so conjoined are these terms. Power is inscribed in the rituals and practices of gender. In order to understand relations of domination and subordination, one has to understand the nature of power, to see how it works. For this a usable theory of power is required. How is power conceived? What practices flow from these conceptions? A traditional conception of power, focusing primarily on access to resources and strategies of influence, with its underlying liberal philosophy, sees power as one of the essential characteristics of individuals. Here power is construed as an entity that can be categorized and delimited to individual motives. Power has also been conceived as the ability of persons to impose their will on others to get what they want. The Weberian sense of power understands it as the capacity to determine the behaviour of others in accordance with one's own. According to Weber, "power is the probability that an actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance" (152). Another angle to the idea of power is to see it as a potential for change. Power as possession and coercion has been the most widely used of the traditional conceptions of power. Apart from these individualistic assumptions in the theory of power, power has been described in its relational aspect. Here, the role of social structures in bringing about a conflict of interests, paving the

way for the exercise of power is emphasized. With the appearance of postmodernism and feminism, more radical, alternative conceptions of power followed with the "death of the subject."

The Foucauldian legacy in the realm of theories of power is formidable, though undergoing revaluation in recent times. Nevertheless, such revaluations mostly take off from his studies of the regimes of power/knowledge. Though Foucault remained ambivalent about the uniqueness of gendered power relations, feminist appropriations of his ideas about power, focusing particularly on the notion of resistance, show how they can be applied to a feminist project of identifying and resisting dominant discourses and promoting subjugated knowledges. By calling into question discourses that privilege men, feminists have shifted power imbalances that disadvantage women. Thus, despite his gender-blindness, Foucault's account of power can be helpful in theorising gender relations. The failure of Foucault to identify the centrality of gender in power relations has not deterred gender theorists from finding links between their own insights and Foucauldian thought, thus affording a critical dialogue. Foucault's work reflects male dominance but without presuming male superiority. He presents illuminating accounts of how power creates itself, which, to feminist readers reveals itself as patriarchal power, and the political uses that can be made of it. He examines how dominant discourses, through which power and knowledge are inextricably connected, are dispersed through the social and individual body; how these powerful discourses posit certain knowledges as truth. At the same time, as an ethicist, he understands power/knowledge to be a political dynamic and therefore, specific transformations as both desirable and

possible. Foucault suggests that, the fact that one is never outside power does not mean that we are totally trapped within the omniscient binary power structure. Power relations take multiple forms and we are all subject to normalizing judgements which are associated with particular forms of power/knowledge. Both acquiescence and resistance are inherent to power relations. Resistance is usually from the margins.

Disciplinary forms of power, in Foucault's conception, permeate the body politic and the literal body of the individual through knowledge regimes whose imperatives are inscribed on the body. Wherever power is infused across the range of disciplinary sites, there it simultaneously intersects with the force of resistance even at the most microscopic levels of existence. Resistance cannot defeat, overturn or suddenly transform disciplinary power. But it can resituate the problematic of power abuse, that is, it weakens the process of victimization and generates personal and political empowerment through acts of naming violations and refusing to collaborate with oppressors. Resistance is itself an exercise of power; a projection of alternate truths. Thus power becomes productive. Feminist resistance, in particular, begins with the body's refusal to be subordinated, an instinctual withdrawal from the patriarchal forces to which it is often violently subjected.

After this general overview of Foucault's ideas, entering the specific texts which set forth these ideas becomes imperative. Foucault's writings make use of two methods, the archaeological, belonging to the early phase and the genealogical, which comes later. Though elaboration of the theory of power (Foucault uses the phrase "analytics" of power, theory having a totalizing connotation to it) comes in

the later genealogical texts, even his first archaeological text, *Madness and Civilization*, has been about how the powerful concept of reason excludes unreason, passion and the body as deviant. Foucault claims that the conditions for the emergence of psychiatry and psychology as science were based on the silencing, exclusion and containment of madness by reason. Using a new and highly eclectic method – that of the archive, the forgotten document – he unearths the rules of formation and conditions of possibility of specific discourses or epistemes. Foucault's analyses make use of subjugated knowledges to understand the operations of power. The archaeological period in his work uses and attempts to explain an underlying concept of power that was to be clearly differentiated in his genealogical concerns.

In his paper, "Truth and Power", Foucault makes a number of critical objections to Marxism as theory and practice which he augments in *The History of Sexuality*. He objected to Marxism's totalizing, single version of history and also its indifference to detailed operations of power by focusing largely on global forms. He also opposed a commitment common to Marxism and psychoanalysis, a negative concept of power that power exists as a form of inhibition or repression. He regarded power as productive. Repression is, at best, a terminal form of power, power in its frustrated form. *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* best represent Foucault's genealogical method that he elaborates thus in "Truth and Power":

> One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis

> which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call geneology, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is neither transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. (59)

Geneology is thus a process of analysing and uncovering the historical relationship between truth, knowledge and power. In "Nietzsche, Geneology, History," Foucault points out that what distinguishes the "geneologist" as critical historian is the awareness that things have no secret essence, no hidden origins, no noumenal ground. Nietzsche challenged the pursuit of origins "because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession" (78). Geneology "rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal signification and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for 'origins" (77).

Geneology insists on a suspension of a normative framework but its rhetoric is politically charged. The lack of normative framework has made this mode the brunt of attack from critics who find it difficult to understand how a politically engaged critique of modern forms of power is possible without normative criteria. Nancy Fraser, for one, feels that "what Foucault needs and needs desperately are normative criteria for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable forms of power"

(qtd. in Riley, "Foucault and the Analysis of Power" 194). Here Fraser seems to be using traditional distinction of categories like legitimate and illegitimate which Foucault has been trying to demolish in his critique of dividing practices. What, for Foucault, is more important is showing the "how" of the operations of power and not classifying it on the basis of the normative standard. What is more important about Foucault's analysis of power for feminists is that it undercuts the liberal normative framework which has been oppressive for women. It also engages with the present; it begins with a recognition of current dangers. In his "Two Lectures," Foucault claims that geneology would not be possible without eliminating the "tyranny of globalizing discourse." Instead geneology aims at recovering subjugated or "illegitimate" knowledges (83). As Foucault explains, such knowledges are forms of experience that "have been disqualified as inadequate... or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down in the hierarchy..." (82).

The difference in the approach of Foucault from traditional approaches centre on contrasting conceptions of the human subject, since in modern philosophy it is a view of the status and capacities of the subject which defines the content of concepts of domination and freedom. The self-identical subject of humanism, capable of restraint in accordance with rational calculations is a necessary outcome of the drive for self-preservation in the face of the uncomprehended powers of nature which initially appear in mythical form. Yet under capitalism, the rise of instrumental reason culminates in a social order which thwarts its original purpose, the preservation of the subject. Foucault, in common with the majority of poststructuralists, moves in the opposite direction and proposes that subjects are

entirely constituted by operations of power. Dispensing with the ideal of the autonomous subject, Foucault seeks to establish, as Peter Dews notes, a direct, unequivocal relation between "subjectification" and "subjection" (84).

When, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault joined power and knowledge as "power-knowledge", his geneology had clearly revealed a different sort of relation between power and knowledge to our usual understanding. From the Baconian pragmatism of power as knowledge rightly conducted, through the Enlightenment idea of scientific rationality as the key to knowledge, power and progress, to the idea of power as opposed to knowledge by restricting and repressing the progress of inquiry, different operations of power have grounded itself on different premises. In post seventeenth century epistemology, analyses of power centered on the problem of legitimacy, grounding the exercise of power in theories of sovereignty, rights and law. When Foucault writes of power-knowledge, he is offering a radical critique of everything that has hitherto been written about the relation of power and knowledge.

By understanding power/knowledge as a field of struggles providing a grid of analysis for the actual ways power is deployed in our practices, it is freed from the traditional notion that knowledge can exist only where effects of power are suspended. Power and knowledge are co-constituting.

> We should admit that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another... these 'power-knowledge

> relations' are to be analysed, therefore not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to power systems, but on the contrary, the subject who knows, the object to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. (*Discipline and Punish* 27-8).

Knowledge cannot exist except through relations of power, and power makes possible and produces "regimes of truth." This modern form of power/knowledge Foucault calls "biopower." Biopower functions to achieve a regulated, rationalized society.

Counterposing the concept of discourse to the concept of ideology, Foucault focuses on an alternative theoretical model which replaces the humanist model of the individual subject with the idea of discourses as central in the nexus of relations of power. The concept of discourse enables us to understand how what is said has its own social and historical context and is a product of specific conditions of existence. Michele Barrett describes Foucault's analysis of discourse in The *Archaeology of Knowledge* as the production of "things" by "words": "Discourses are composed of signs, but they do more than designate things, for they are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' " (*The Politics of Truth* 30). Discourses produce discursive fields which work through normalizing techniques like exclusion, classification, prohibition and dividing practices. Power is exercised through the interplay of discourses. Foucault apprises us of how the earlier "juridicio

– discusive" model of power where power is a possession that is primarily repressive in its exercise and is couched in legitimate authority and is codified in law is replaced by a disciplinary model of power which works through a process of normalization producing "docile bodies," the dream of a totally rational, efficient and controlled society. Normalization is effected through surveillance, comparison, differentiation, hierarchization, homogenization and exclusion. As Foucault says, "the disciplinary mechanisms secreted a 'penalty of the norm', which is irreducible in its principles and functioning to the traditional penalty of the law" (*Discipline and Punish* 183). Within this discursive matrix the subject is a "reality fabricated by the specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline' " (194). Foucault goes on:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes,' it 'represses,' it 'censors,' it 'abstracts,' it 'masks,' it 'conceals.' In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (194)

This emphasis on normalization as opposed to violence represents a major advantage of the disciplinary model of power. Feminists have found in this model an explanation of how patriarchal powers invite collusion on the part of females by inciting desire, attaching individuals to specific identities and addressing real needs.

It is now well-known that, to Foucault, power has not operated primarily by denying sexual expression but by creating the forms that modern sexuality takes. The powerful discourse of sexuality produced our ways of understanding and taking up sexual practices. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault defines power as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" (1: 92). Its new methods, in contradiction to the juridicio – discursive power of sovereignty or law is "ensured not by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control... in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (89). It is in *The History of Sexuality* that he began to emphasize resistance. Resistances "are the odd term in relations of power, they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite" (96). Though the idea of resistance is encouraging to feminists, they find in Foucault's critique of modern humanism, a wholesale rejection of subjectivity and agency. Yet, Jana Sawicki, one of the strongest proponents of a Foucauldian feminism understands "Foucault's project itself as presupposing the existence of a critical subject, one capable of critical historical reflection, refusal and invention. This subject does not control the overall direction of history, but it is able to choose among the discourses and practices available to it and to use them creatively" (103). For Foucault, it is the "specific intellectual" rather than the "universal intellectual" of the Enlightenment legacy who represents the enlightened consciousness of a revolutionary subject. The "specific intellectual" operates "within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them ..." (qtd. in Sawicki 27).

After *The History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, the focus is no longer on power structures, rather the story of power is told from within, through technologies of the self. This shift of focus from the body to the self is the subject of the next two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. Here Foucault argues that in order to reach an adequate understanding of the modern subject, an analysis of techniques of domination must be counterbalanced by an analysis of techniques of the self. The subject as an object of knowledge is to be complemented by how the subject understands herself as subject. Foucault calls it techniques or practices of the self. The "desiring subject" assumes centre stage again; having now a freedom of choice, though limited. The individual chooses a mode of behaviour for his/her ethical conduct. The different aspects to the formation of the self as an ethical subject are incorporated by Foucault under the category techniques of the self or an aesthetics of existence.

> I am referring to what might be called the arts of existence: what I mean by the phrase are those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves....
>
> (*The Use of Pleasure* 10-11)

In the third volume of *The History of Sexuality*, *The Care of the Self*, the enquiry into the desiring subject gets more entrenched. Though Foucault posits a more rounded notion of the self, in interviews, says Lois McNay, Foucault emphasizes his disaffection with the notion of the sovereign founding subject.

> I believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject.... I believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices of subjection or in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation.
>
> (qtd. in *Foucault and Feminism* 61)

Hence the active subject's freedom is always determined by larger cultural constraints. McNay sees this not as a "refutation of his earlier attack on humanist systems of thought" but as an "attempt to attribute a degree of agency and self-determination to the individual without jettisoning his anti-essentialist view of the subject" (62). In *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault defines "this contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self", as "governmentality" (19). Through such practices of the self, an "aesthetics of existence" that gestures towards a creatively autonomous subject is conceived.

Feminism's relation with Foucault's theory has been complex. Foucault's geneologies describe how some of our ways of thinking and doing have served to dominate us; how individuals govern themselves through production of truth. Geneology, according to Jana Sawicki, is a form of resistance which would help liberation "from the oppressive effects of prevailing modes of self-understanding inherited through the humanist tradition" (26-27). This has been particularly useful to feminists striving to explore the manipulations of patriarchal power. On the other hand feminists like Nancy Hartsock and Barbara Christian have raised doubts about Foucault's structuralist critique of subjectivity and humanism which overshadows the emancipatory project of feminism. This criticism is targeted at disciplinary forms of

subjection which deprive feminism of any effective agency or sense of authority. However, the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality* and the idea of "technologies of the self" clear the space for including liberatory discourses.

Though Foucault's desexualised perspective did pose initial problems for a feminist critical engagement with him, parallels were identified as he was later appropriated for a feminist political project. A point of convergence has been established between Foucault's critique of metanarratives and the feminist disenchantment with phallocratic concepts of universal Reason and Autonomy opposed with nature, emotion and the feminine embodied condition. Such valorising has been revealed as partial and contingent. Foucault's concept of biopower and its normalising techniques have alerted feminists to the subtle manipulations of patriarchal power. At the same time Foucault's idea of history as discontinuous, according to Isaac D. Balbus, deprives feminism of the paradigm of totalizing patriarchy. Balbus also, from a psychoanalytic point of view, directs his dissatisfaction at Foucault's "deconstruction of the disingenuous discourse of the 'True'" for not engaging with the discourse of mothering. Though a paradigm case of 'True' discourse, deconstruction of the discourse of mothering, to the psychoanalyst, becomes a "male flight from maternal foundations" (110). Nevertheless, Balbus's elevation of the discourse of mothering to the status of a libertarian discourse would not find a consensus within feminism. In his call for a "concept of heterogeneous totality", of continuous but non-developmental history and a concept of embodied subjectivity, Balbus strikes the right note for a "non-authoritarian, potentially liberatory True discourse" (125). The idea of "embodied

subjectivity" is not such a drastic departure from Foucault's analytics of power, considering his later emphasis on "technologies of the self" and the desire of the subject. Loius Mc Nay, raising the problem of agency, sets forth

> A generative paradigm of subjectification and agency [which] helps to unpack such overplayed oppositions [of identity and non identity] by conceptualizing the coherence of the self as a simultaneity of identity and non-identity. Though a temporalization of the process of subjectification, the generative model suggests that the self has unity but it is the dynamic unity of progress in time.
>
> (*Gender and Agency* 18-19)

In other words, the embodied subject maintains a coherent sense of personal identity through a ceaseless incorporation of the non-identical, which is understood as a temporal flux. In this manner a temporal vantage point is established, within the ceaseless performativity of gender, fluid and dynamic, wherein the subject interprets itself in time. Such an idea of subjectivity augers well for a feminist project in that it would incorporate emancipatory practices of gender restructuring.

Since the subject constitutes or engenders itself through narrative, by translating knowing into telling, the issue of narrative representation assumes importance. Narrative involves the fashioning of "human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific" (Hayden White 5). Narrative to White is a "metacode, a human universal"

(6), which, arising as Barthes says, between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience into language, "ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straight forward copy of the events recounted" (qtd. in White 6). The impetus behind narrative is the universal need to order 'reality'. Freud in "Civilization and its Discontents" has apprised us of three impulses behind the drive towards civilization: the desire for cleanliness, order and beauty. Order, according to Freud is a compulsion to repeat (739). Representations are no more reflection of a pre-existing reality (mimetic) but is mediated through the subject narrating from within a specific cultural milieu. The concept of representation is also intimately connected with that of repetition - words acquire meaning only to the extent that they are capable of re-presentation (repetition) in different contexts. "Reality" is never transparent but is mediated through codes and conventions of culture, that is through discourses. So deeply ingrained are these norms that their constructed status is effaced through naturalization. The process of naturalization has been assiduously sustained by the dominant mode of representation, namely, that of realism. Realist techniques conceal the process of its production and presents itself as 'real' or natural or a faithful representation which, as Barthes has pointed out, is an impossibility as representation substitutes meaning for straight forward rendering of events. Representations are mediated through power/knowledge discursive fields which facilitate the perpetuation of dominant stereotypical modes. The world view invented by a particular culture legitimises itself through such 'disciplined' representations. When realism represses its constructedness, the main objective is to assert itself as an objective transparent depiction of the world in the name of

ideological stability. After Foucault, it is easier to understand the process of normalizing reality through exclusion, selective rendering and dividing practices. Doris Lessing, in *The Golden Notebook*, by foregrounding the constructed status of the realist mode shows how gender and power mediates realistic representation. Experimental texts like these subvert the codes of realism.

Realist representation functions through a correspondence between its own codes and the cultural codes of the reader. As Catherine Belsey, in *Critical Practice* asserts, "this necessary familiarity does not mean that realism can never surprise us. Of course it can do so through unexpected juxtapositions and complexities" (51). Nevertheless even these juxtapositions are assembled through codes known to the reader and so we experience it as realistic. But since the material agency of the text is indeterminate, it can be used for different purposes, at different times by different readers. Thus textual agency is always instrumental and historically specific and consequently not an essential or formal property of the text itself. In a gender-based study there is a danger of considering the formal properties of texts as essentially gendered. Rita Felski has warned us about this tendency:

> I suggest... that it is impossible to speak of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in any meaningful sense in the formal analysis of texts; the political value of literary texts from the standpoint of feminism can be determined only by an investigation of their social functions and effects in relation to the interests of women in a particular historical context, and not by attempting to deduce an abstract literary theory

> of 'masculine' and 'feminine', 'subversive' and 'reactionary' forms in isolation from the social conditions of their production. (*Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* 2)

By contextualising the literary texts and their authors, situating them in the historical literary contexts of modernism and post modernism, or the First World War and the Second World War, this study attempts to make a gender based study of the selected works of Doris Lessing and D.H. Lawrence.

The title of the study being *Gender and Power: A Critique of D.H. Lawrence and Doris Lessing*, this introduction has attempted to describe the complex networking of "gender" and "power" at length. What remains is to introduce the authors and their texts. The term "critique" is not meant in the sense of criticism as negative assessment or evaluation. It is used in the philosophical sense as examining the conditions of existence of a thing and calling into question the assumptions it is based on. As Foucault says of his own critique, "a critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept rest..." (qtd. in Sawicki 123). Calling into question the 'True' discourse of the humanist unified self, this comparative study seeks to show, how the category of gender would affect a change in the analysis of the texts; how the realist mode with its strategies of containment would work out differently for Lawrence and Lessing; how sexuality is represented in the two authors; in short how their aesthetics foregrounds a "sexual/textual politics" which highlights the asymmetry of gender representations.

In choosing D.H. Lawrence, castigated as a male chauvinist by many female readers, as the male counterpart to this gendered study and Doris Lessing, hailed as a feminist for her woman-centered novels, as its female counterpart, this reader was guided by certain similarities between the two. Both were exiles from their own cultures – Lawrence, from his own working class origins which he left behind as he donned the mantle of an artist and was admitted into the elitist literary circle of London; Lessing as she distanced herself from her Zimbabwean white settler roots to settle down to life in imperial England. The sense of abjection, of being at the same time both inside and outside their own cultures was a driving force in their writings which record this conflict of being cut off from their roots as well as being part of it. What Virginia Woolf sees in writers who have been denied privileges (she cites Lawrence as one) – their angry self consciousness – could be seen in exiles also: They have "in them some untamed ferocity perpetually at war with the accepted order of things" (*Common Reader* 62-3). Secondly, after having written autobiographical novels at the beginning of their careers, which apparently they wrote in order to make sense of their own life by alienating it into art, they space out gradually, until finally at the fag end of their careers they are seen to embrace other worlds, which for Lawrence is Australia, Mexico and Italy and for Lessing is fictional outerspace. It is as if from that vantage point, they could objectify their preoccupations to understand them better. Both Lawrence and Lessing portray strong women characters as intellectuals in their novels. Their predominant use of the realist mode is another point of convergence between them. This could be fuelled by their interest in Marxism and social realism, though both use it in different

ways as will soon be shown. In their later fiction, Lawrence shifts to modernist and Lessing to postmodernist modes.

Lawrence has been at the receiving end of feminist attacks for his predominantly sexist views. Calling Lawrence an "evangelist" of the "phallic consciousness", Kate Millet in her virulent attack castigates him for his "transformation of masculine ascendancy into a mystical religion." For her, "this is sexual politics in its most overpowering form" since it is marked by subtlety, "for it is through a feminine consciousness that his masculine message is conveyed" (*Sexual Politics* 238-39). Millet's work has been responsible for a massive shift in opinion on Lawrence as a misogynist. The subsequent defense of Lawrence by Norman Mailer in *The Prisoner of Sex* is also history now. Interestingly, Anais Nin, closer to Lawrences' own time has lauded the "feminine" in Lawrence's writing in her book *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* published in 1932. On the other hand, Simone de Beauvoir criticises Lawrence, saying that his only concern is to show women how to be mastered (249-54). Lydia Blanchard says that "to misread Lawrence is to forego one of our better opportunities for understanding why we are where we are" (443). Blanchard's 1974 essay on Lawrence advocates an approach which takes into account the way Lawrence explored a number of narrative possibilities for workable gender relations, no single one of which functions as a kind of last-word prescription (439). She sees Lawrence's work as "an attempt to describe the crippling results of male domination on female" (432). Hilary Simpson moves beyond approving and disapproving feminist readings of his theories and fiction to place Lawrence's formulations of gender difference and the relations

between men and women in its historical context. In her work, *D.H. Lawrence and Women*, Carol Dix highlights the importance of the female mode of being for Lawrence which is a central thought in Lawrence's study of Thomas Hardy: " 'I think the one thing to do, is for man to have courage to draw nearer to women... be altered by them,' " Lawrence says in one of his letters (qtd. in Dix 10). She shares with Nin and Blanchard the opinion that Lawrence is sympathetic towards women. Daleski in *The Forked Flame* joins these critics in finding in Lawrence a feminine perspective: "It is my contention that Lawrence, though believing intensely in himself as a male, was fundamentally identified with the female principle as he himself defines it in the essay on Hardy..." (13). Daleski, goes so far as to say that "Lawrence was a woman in a man's skin".

What most of these studies fail to make clear is that it is the female principle, which Lawrence aligns with nature, body, emotion, passivity and other devalued terms in the binary pair of Western metaphysics that he upholds and not the female as such in society. Most of his powerful representations of women, Mrs. Morel in *Sons and Lovers*, Ursula in *Women in Love* and Kate Leslic in *The Plumed Serpent* are all in the masculine mode. It is the male characters who represent the privileged creative female principle. Critics like Hilary Simpson, Cornelia Nixon and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar agree that some sympathy with the feminist movement of his time is apparent in Lawrence's work up through *The Rainbow*, but after that they see a "turn against women," more specifically against feminism. It would be more proper to say that throughout his career, Lawrence's attitude to women had been ambivalent, a stand typical of modernist times. The leadership fiction, including

Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo and *The Plumed Serpent* show an overt display of the male dynamic urge or the aesthetics of power. Lawrence frequently celebrates women as spiritual and intuitive outsiders to mainstream culture. Carol Siegal observes that Lawrence's women so often ride away because they are less suited by nature than men to conform to the dictates of our rational civilization.

In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, Lawrence asserts the idea suggested in much of his fiction that language is a barrier between men and women because mental understanding between them is an illusion: "We may speak the same verbal language, men and women. But whatever a man says, his meaning is something quite different and change when it passes through a woman's ears" (170). Nonetheless, he felt that a deeper nonverbal understanding existed and should be made to inform literature because, as Hilary Simpson points out, he "thought it crucial that female experience should find expression in the novel" (144). As his work shows and as he often stated, Lawrence was interested not only in instructing women through the medium of his fiction, but also in speaking for them, treating female concerns with the frankness and objectivity of one who observes rather than participates in the experiences of a group. Simpson has also noted that Lawrence used to constantly bring his writing to Jessie Chambers, to get her opinion of it (150). Parallel instances, in art, are also noteworthy: Paul Morel bringing his sketches for Miriam's review in *Sons and Lovers*.

Suffice to say that the part played by female experience as subject matter was of vital importance to Lawrence throughout his literary career. As Carolyn Heilburn has noted, "for a period of nearly fifty years such major writers as Ibsen, James,

Shaw, Lawrence, Forster were to find that, at the height of their powers, it was a woman hero who best met the requirements of their imaginations" (*Towards Androgyny* 49). Heilburn defines the "woman hero" as specifically the creation of male writers who found in the predicament of modern woman, in "the peculiar tension that exists between her apparent freedom and her actual relegation to a constrained destiny", a metaphor for a more general existential dilemma where the problems that the modern novelist is dealing with appear in a heightened form, or at least a form more appropriate for examination in art, in women's experience (93-4). In addition, the modern novel lays emphasis on inner psychological states, the unconscious, and in our sexual mythology these areas of experience are commonly 'feminine.' For a writer like Lawrence, hostile to masculine norms of rationality, abstraction and logic, the mythology of femininity based on intuition, the unconscious and emotion must have made the choice of a woman hero or writing about female experience, irresistible. The fact that literary creation is assumed to be a conscious masculine act which explores and masters the unconscious mass of life, the feminine, could also work in favour of this idea. One might say that it is the concept of femininity as "raw material" and masculinity as "shaping force" that lay behind his use of women. Lawrence has also cooperated with a woman, Mollie Skinner, in the writing of *The Boy in the Bush*. All this goes to show what was pointed out earlier in this chapter regarding Lawrence's great interest in the female principle of nature as raw material for his art. A variant of these ideas about Lawrence's use of female experience as subject matter in his text is John Middleton Murray's in *Son of Woman* where he considers it as an effect of Lawrence's

"hypersensitive masculinity": "To make [woman] subject again, to re-establish his own manhood – this is the secret purpose of *Women in Love*. In imagination, he has his desire. He creates a sexual mystery beyond the phallic, wherein he is the lord; and he makes the woman acknowledge the existence of this ultra phallic realm and his own lordship in it" (72).

Concurrent with Lawrence's exploitation of the female principle in art is his depiction of triumphant female sexuality, an intelligent woman's life built around sexual fulfilment. Female characters who experience life physically, like Ursula, Gudrun and Kate Leslie, find prominent place in his works. Lawrence saw the fundamental answer to personal problems in impersonal, although usually monogamous, sexual communion. Throughout his career, in such works as *The Ladybird, Women in Love, Kangaroo, The Plumed Serpent* and *The Man who Died*, Lawrence shows impersonal/universal love as a false value which leads to dangerously unhealthy repression of instincts. He often presents it as the opposite and enemy of impersonal sexual connectedness. Lawrence's attitude to sex is an offshoot of the sexual liberation of the Edwardian times. The two great pioneers of sex-psychology in England, Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis, combined a strong desire to free society from the oppressiveness of Victorian prudery with their championship of the women's movement. The boldness with which Lawrence explored female sexuality in his writings could be considered as his contribution to the liberation of women. He, thus, violated the establishment view of sexuality as purely for the procreation of children inside the institution of marriage.

An interesting point to note is that Lawrence's discussion of sex-psychology appeared in a book on Thomas Hardy who was attacked for his frank treatment of sex and his support of free love. In the *Study of Thomas Hardy* each individual is a complex mixture of male and female elements: "Every man comprises male and female in his being, the male always struggling for predominance. A woman likewise consists in male and female, with female predominant" (93). This concept of androgyny or bisexuality has drawn quite a few feminists to Lawrence's side. Declan Kiberd, for instance, finds androgyny in Lawrence's work, not just as a theme but as a crucial part of his narrative method. In one of his letters Lawrence has written, "I think the only resourcing of art, revivifying it, is to make it more the joint work of man and woman. I think the one thing to do, is for men to have courage to draw nearer to women, expose themselves to them and be altered by them: and for women to accept and admit men" (qtd. in Kiberd 136). Anais Nin has also pointed out the intuitional quality in Lawrence which might be described as androgynous (*An Unprofessional Study* 59). Like the child, it is the artist who for Lawrence maintains the androgynous state in adult life. Lawrence, in his works, seems to be seeking a redefinition of masculinity which is to be seen not as power but as a capacity. The character of Paul Morel immediately comes to mind. Many contemporary feminists have interpreted his androgyny as a sly front for a covert homosexuality. Instances of such a covert homosexuality can be culled from the texts in the form of Paul-Baxter Dawes, Lily-Aaron and Birkin-Gerald relationships. Lawrence perceives the sexual act as vitalizing. In the essay "The Lion and the Unicorn", he conceives the man-woman relationship as a polarity in tension figured

in the metaphor of the lion and the unicorn fighting for the crown, a metaphor for the complexity of art and life and the dualism of male and female principles which subsumes within itself life's dualities in dynamic conflict. What Lawrence, in effect, is advocating in *Study of Thomas Hardy* is a sensitive openness and receptiveness between men and women and the use of sexuality as a means of plumbing the unknown and the unconscious (which means intuitive depths and not the Freudian unconscious) as part of the vitalist individual fulfilment. The final emphasis is on balance or relatedness, the feeling that each sex is necessary to the other.

In *Study*, sexuality is presented as the highest vital form of human activity. The sexualization of all phenomena is extrapolated into a general philosophical principle here. The male, for Lawrence, exists in "doing" and the female in "being." His project seems to be to identify, protect and police the boundary between the sexes. His key focus is the relationship between the sexes. Gendered differences is not only the crux of our identities, it underpins everything in life. Reality is marked by a traditional binary structure of gender difference. Based on these gendered binaries which are outlined in *Study* everything acquires meaning within the essentialism of the male and female principles. Hilary Simpson argues:

> For Lawrence, everything is sexed; it is the fundamental division. The Hardy study is permeated with a sense of sex-designated opposites. Maleness comprises Knowledge, the Spirit, Motion, Love, the Hub, Doing, Separateness, Consciousness, Individuality, Timelessness, Thought and the religion of the Son; Femaleness is Nature, the Flesh,

> Stability, Law, the Axle, Being, Monism, Unconsciousness, Oneness, the Moment, Feeling, and the religion of the Father.(88)

Reality itself is gendered along these lines so that masculinized females would take on the traits of the male principle and vice versa. Incidentally, as Terry Eagleton has pointed out:

> Lawrence's dualistic is ridden with internal contradictions, for a significant biographical reason: his mother, symbol of primordial sensual unity, was in fact petty – bourgeois, and so also represented individuation, aspiring consciousness and active idealism in contrast to the mute, sensuous passivity of his working-class father. This partial inversion of his parents' sexual roles, as defined by Lawrence, contorts and intensifies the contradictions which his metaphysics tries to resolve. (*Criticism and Ideology* 159)

Eagleton elaborates in the footnote on this that this contortion is evident in the reversibility of some of Lawrence's symbolic representations, for example, that of the Father, conventionally a symbol of sensual phallic consciousness as identifiable with the female. It is evident that it is the female principle that Lawrence valorises and transposes on the male. For Lawrence since the dualities of life fall under the categories of abstract male and female principles and are not attached to the male or the female as such, the male individual or the female individual could project them.

"Father" could refer to the abstract female principle with traits like nature, creator and so on. What Lawrence has done is to essentialise traits pertaining to male and female principles. The essentialism of these traits relegates them to the patriarchal Symbolic order.

Lawrence's post-war work, *Fantasia* signifies a turn against the dominant maternal female, the feminine values of emotion and love and establishes a sexual hierarchy in place of his former emphasis on balance and relatedness. The bitterness of war finds its way into works like *Women in Love* and stories like "Tickets Please" and "The Fox". "Tickets Please" shows, men who are war-time rejects, "crippled" or "delicate", feminized by war, drivers and inspectors of tram cars, and girls, "fearless young hussies" who are the conductors of these trams – "they fear nobody and everybody fears them" (315). The story ends with all the "hussies" manhandling the inspector, John Thomas for his womanising tendencies, leaving him a pathetic bedraggled creature. In "The Fox" the sexual battle involves womanising of March, the masculinized aggressive female, by Henry the young soldier, the figurative fox. Both stories could be seen as projections of male authorial anxiety about the crises to masculinity triggered off by war. With the men at the front, women become active and take on male roles. Gender transactions in Lawrence's work during the war show how gender imbalances brought on by the war are corrected. Lawrence quickly rips off these "costumes of the mind," these "metaphorical transvestisms" as Sandra Gilbert calls them, either by presenting the consequences of transvestism as violent or by making a male protagonist take on the task of ripping off ("Costumes of Mind" 70). Lawrence shows how gender paradigms of dominance/submission are

dislocated with changes in social order and how the dominant order strives to right the balance. In this sense all the novels of Lawrence, with its pre-occupation with man-woman relationships focus on the centrality of gender and this is what is explored in the select novels studied here. Lawrence may not agree with this generalizing, but as he asserted in *Studies in Classic American Literature*: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it" (8).

D.H. Lawrence's influence on Doris Lessing has been pointed out by many critics. Mark Spilka in "Lessing and Lawrence: The Battle of Sexes", after noting the similarity of the opening scenes in *The Golden Notebook* and *Women in Love*, wherein "two uprooted women, alone and unobserved by men are talking about the nature of modern men and modern marriage and the predicament it poses for them", goes on to observe that "Lawrence, like other male writers cannot possibly imagine the extent and range of women's existence apart from their relations with men, not at least with the particularity and authority of a sensitive and widely experienced woman writer" (218, 220). Quoting Irving Howe on *The Golden Notebook*, Spilka reinforces his point: " 'My own curiosity, as a masculine outsider was enormous, for here, I felt, was the way intellectual women really talk to one another when they feel free and unobserved' " (qtd. in Spilka 220). Both Lessing and Lawrence stage the "battle of the sexes." The differences might be many, but in their autobiographical intensity and their preoccupation with some regional manifestation of the fate of a whole civilization in decline, they stand on common ground. Charles and Liebetrant Sarvan have also noted several resemblances between Lessing and

Lawrence. Lessing's description of the African veld and Lawrence's description of the Brangwen farm in *The Rainbow* are instances. Tabooed sexual attractions between Mary and Moses in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, and Connie and Mellors in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* as well as "The Prussian Officer" are other instances. Mary in *The Grass is Singing*, as well as the woman in Lawrence's "The Woman Who Rode Away" get away from the sterile materialism of their civilizations to take refuge in the darkness of the "other" – in Mary's case, the black servant Moses and in the woman's case, a primitive civilization – leading to their murders. Their deaths are imperative, the stories seem to say, if a new way of life, divested of such divisions, is to emerge.

Doris Lessing, a "code-breaker par excellence," as Katherine Fishburn maintains, has been concerned in virtually all her fiction with the problems of racism in southern colonial Africa, the physical and emotional relationships between men and women, the acute struggle of the "free woman" to survive and create for herself a meaningful life in a man's world, the left-wing movements to which idealistic young people owed their allegiance in the 1930's and 1940's and, especially in *The Golden Notebook*, the role of the novelist in contemporary society. Her intense commitment to humanism is obvious in her admiration for the nineteenth-century classics. Her deeper concern, evident in her compassionate handling of her first novel, *The Grass in Singing*, was with the human problem: as she says, " 'Colour prejudice is not our original fault, but only one aspect of the atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun'" This perception is reinforced by her vision of " 'Africa which gives

you the knowledge that man is a small creature, among other creatures, in a large landscape'" (qtd. in Thorpe 11). In the first volume of her autobiography *Under My Skin*, Lessing records the importance of war in shaping her consciousness: "I do know that to be born in the year 1919 when half of Europe was a graveyard, and people dying in millions all over the world – that was important" (8). She goes on to say that "We are all of us made by war, twisted and warped by war, but we seem to forget it" (10). Another formative influence on her career is her mother. About her relationship with her mother she says: "I was in nervous flight from her ever since I can remember anything, and from the age of fourteen I set myself obdurately against her in a kind of inner emigration from everything she represented" (15). This inner emigration is manifest in the physical journey from Africa to England. Both in Africa and England, she was an outsider, a mental exile, not belonging anywhere. This sense of rootlessness is translated on to her questing protagonists, Martha Quest, Anna Wulf, and Kate Somers, who obsessively seek a sense of identity in a world at odds with the individual. Being a nonconformist – "... all my life I've been the child who says the Emperor is naked" – makes it all the more difficult (17). She is also an exile as a woman in politics, and in the sense that she has always been interested more in off-centre discourses, subjugated knowledges, moving against the current, as it were. It is through her fiction that she tries to make sense of life. Commenting on the Mashopi incidents in *The Golden Notebook*, she says that "There is no doubt that fiction makes a better job of the truth" (314).

Born in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) to parents who were never financially successful, she had a solitary childhood and experienced physical

freedom on the farm. Her father, a war casualty, was a dreamer who became a cynic; her mother domineering and practical, but ineffective. Lorna Sage has noted that "the closest Lessing comes to spelling out the effect of a colonial family background in the making of a writer is...in her 1968 Afterword to Olive Schereiner's novel *The Story of an African Farm* (1885)":

> 'To the creation of a woman novelist seem to go certain psychological ingredients; at least, often enough to make it interesting.... One of them, a balance between father and mother where the practicality, the ordinary sense, cleverness, and worldly ambition is on the side of the mother; and the father's life is so weighted with dreams and ideas and imaginings that their joint life gets lost in what looks like a hopeless muddle and failure, but which holds a potentiality for something that must be recognized as better, on a different level, than what ordinary sense or cleverness can achieve.' (qtd. in Sage 22)

The "Children of Violence" series fictionalizes in the 1950's what Lessing had experienced in the 1930's. It imaginatively records Martha Quest's flight from her mother and her attempts to make sense of her life in a circumscribed society. Lessing attributes the impetus behind the later "space fiction" series "Canopus in Argos," to her star-gazer father with whom she used to sit and gaze into the dark sky studded with stars as a child in the veld and imagine other worlds out there. Like her parents who, according to Lessing, were "grail chasers of a very highly developed

sort," she is also in pursuit of a platonic image which is unattainable ("In Pursuit of the English" 439).

Lessing is a powerful writer committed to the lofty goal of changing human consciousness itself. As Marian Vlastos observes, "There would seem to be only two basic ways to attack a social problem – from the outside or the inside, by reforming the structure of society or by revolutionizing the consciousness of man" (245). These two processes work in tandem – change in society can be wrought by changing the consciousness of man. The narrative voice that weaves throughout her prolific fiction is that of an intense thinker who observes, explores and describes the contemporary world but whose ultimate sense of human life is that the individual, and indeed the human race, is meant to go beyond mere recognition of perceived reality and to struggle with visions of the possible. Her novels repeatedly suggest that changes in the way humans view themselves, their world, and their relationships with others are imperative if life on this planet is to survive. Although she is a self-proclaimed socially committed writer, she is not committed to Marxism or any other political philosophy, having given up Left politics as inadequate to bring about real changes in society. She is committed, instead, to other people – to being a positive "instrument of change" in their lives ("The Small Personal Voice" 10). In the main, her writing provides us with that intellectual resting point she so idealizes – "that point between philosophical extremes where, having defined the alternatives she leaves it to her readers to choose for themselves" (194).

Ruth Whittaker in "Doris Lessing and the Means of Change," attempts to trace the route Lessing's search has taken her. According to her, Lessing's fiction

begins by exploring personal and social relationships which are gradually revealed as inadequate and limiting. It then shifts perspective and takes a much more detached view of the human race, which Lessing sees as doomed unless we learn to evolve and change. Lessing claims that at the very least an artist must recognize that "one is a writer at all because one represents, makes articulate, is continuously and invisibly fed by, numbers of people who are inarticulate, to whom one belongs, to whom one is responsible ("The Small Personal Voice" 24). Her later fiction explores the nature and mechanisms of change and in this phase of her work there is a sense of urgency and frustration: either we learn to transcend our earth-bound limitations, or the race dies, physically or psychically. Lessing has been aptly called "Cassandra in a world under siege" by Margaret Drabble and like Cassandra, Lessing seems to be a lonely embattled figure on the contemporary scene. Like a cultural seismograph, she detects shifts in consciousness before they are manifest. Hence her work is at once prophetic and emblematic of society. She anticipates trends rather than caps it in a novel. *The Golden Notebook* (1962) in its encyclopaediac study of intellectual and political women preceded the Women's Liberation Movement. She is interested not in truth but in the nature of change. Whittaker detects two personae in her writings: a serene, detached voice that asks real questions and finds some answers, and the voice of an insecure child-like figure, moral and anxious about its identity. Lessing's fiction is a quest for ontological solutions and for identity.

Lessing's scope is wide. Her fictional explorations are multiple, multi-dimensional and overlapping, suggesting that no one view point is adequate or complete. This range is also reflected in her varied narrative forms, which include

realism, science fiction and dystopian fiction, fantasy, fable, transcultural postmodernism and experimental combinations of these. This heterogeneity of themes, techniques and perspective illustrates Lessing's overriding premise that truth and substance cannot easily be compartmentalized or assigned fluid labels. Existence is always a process, always in flux.

Lessing's position as an exile is a prominent aspect of her work, both in content and theme. This provides her with the marginality to see things objectively as if from space. The formative influences in Lessing's career include the wide expanses of the African veld, the solitary childhood (in this she resembled her nineteenth century forerunner as novelist of Southern Africa, Olive Schreiner) and her stint as a Left party worker which accounts for the dialectical thinking in her works. In "Going Home," Lessing gives a beautiful description of her house in the veld, made of indigenous materials, later overrun by the bush. Its organic image is deep and powerful. Mary Ann Singleton associates Lessing's images of the veld and the city with certain states of consciousness:

> For Lessing, The African veld is the unconscious physical world of nature that nourishes mankind with its unity but also inflicts its own mindless repetition and, in human terms, cruelty and indifference. The city is half-evolved consciousness, the destructive fragmentation of partial awareness. The ideal City is a hope for the future: the unified individual in a harmonious society. (280)

Though such an intellectual scheme on Lessing's work would go against its spirit, it helps towards an increased understanding of her oeuvre.

The early works offer a suggestion of utopia but as Lessing moves on to her space fiction, utopia becomes another space, in another socio-economic order which is used to critique the earth. Lessing's image of the City, the four-gated one of *Martha Quest* and *The Four-Gated City* which is continued in the cities in *Shikasta*, the first of her space fiction quintet, is in a way superimposed upon her picture of fragmented and violent society. The space fiction places its emphasis on message in favour of story. Here the narrator rises to prominence and the characters are subordinated to the voice of the narrator. Katherine Fishburn places Lessing's space fiction firmly within the Marxist tradition. Though Marxism does not give space to utopian fiction generally, Tom Kitwood argues that utopianism should be regarded as a " 'necessary part of any practical program of social change which draws its main insights from realist social analysis' " (qtd. in Fishburn, *The Unexpected Universe* 5). In "The Small Personal Voice," Lessing defended realism as the key to social change. As her explorations widened she included the irrational also as equally important in her epistemological search. Her study of Sufism in the early 1960's and her interest in R.D. Laing's psychology precede her interest in madness as a positive state of mind. Jean Pickering has spoken of Marxism and madness as the two faces of Doris Lessing's myth. Thus a juxtaposition of realism and fantasy becomes the staple of *The Summer Before the Dark, Briefing for a Descent into Hell, Memoirs of a Survivor* and to a lesser extent the earlier works like *The Four Gated City* and *The Golden Notebook*. Herbert Marder has noted the tension between empirical and

visionary realms in these novels. He singles out *Briefing* as a "borderline fantasy," a kind of novel which according to him "frequents a twilight zone where the estranged and the merely strange, the anti-natural and the unusual, the miraculous and the imaginary, merge into each other" (432). Indeed all the above novels record "descents into hell." Lessing's evolution as a novelist records her progress from orthodox communism towards feminism, irrationalism, Sufism, anti-psychiatry and cosmic mysticism. Her eclectic sense of fictional forms has led her from social realism to post modernism, mythological fantasy and space fiction.

Lessing's grandiose attempts at changing the structures of society and consciousness is predominantly done through exploration of female experiences. Most of her protagonists are females who struggle to make sense of patriarchal enclosures. They also pitch in their efforts to explore new areas of experience because as Anna Wulf says, "I'm convinced there are whole areas of me made by the kind of experience women haven't had before" (415). These experiences, according to Martha Quest in *A Proper Marriage*, have "to be given a form, placed in effect, understood, before it can be forgotten" (141). Art is an attempt at a unification of diverse experiences.

This study attempts a comparative reading of selected texts of D.H. Lawrence and Doris Lessing to find out the operations of gender in the ways in which these writers crystallize their experiences into narrative. Could the partisan biases of language work out a different writing experience for them? If so, in what ways? How does power operate in man-woman relationships? Given the same circumstances, does gender effect a different outcome for men and women in a patriarchal society?

This reader positions herself as an "oppositional reader," to expose crucial oppositions, key binaries such as masculine/feminine that govern the exercise of power. Legitimising a feminine and a masculine dimension of textuality, this critique seeks to show the cultural relations of power between male and female. Thus the first chapter titled "Patriarchy" makes an attempt to show how dominant structures have sought to define "woman," eliding her plurality and inscribing her into the cultural feminine of the various power discourses. This general chapter also touches upon the different strategies various feminists, consciously or unconsciously, have used to expose and defy the dominant modes and set up oppositional discourses. Chapter II titled "The Subject in Quest Narrative" makes a comparative reading of two bildungsroman narratives – one a series, "The Children of Violence" by Doris Lessing, and the other, *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence. The assumption is that there is a gendered outcome in these for the male and female protagonists. The bildungsroman form itself being part of the Enlightenment project, this reading offers a critique of the liberal humanist enterprise. Chapter III, titled "Male-Female Relationships in Narratives of Chaos" seeks to explore the possibilities of masculine and feminine ways of writing. Though the French feminists have a word, ecriture feminine for it, there is no word to counter it from the masculine point of view. A gendered reading of Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and Lawrence's *Women in Love*, is undertaken to explicate this issue. The whole study is situated within a feminist Foucauldian paradigm.

Before venturing into the study proper, a note on the problematic terms used. Feminism, feminine, masculine, female and feminist are slippery signifiers used

frequently in literary and cultural analyses to denote a variety of phenomena. 'Feminism,' as used here, encapsulates a variety of women's activities and articulations challenging patriarchy, which often conflict with each other but broadly conceived, relates to forms of social power traditionally denied to women. This is an ongoing process. The term 'feminine' refers to the cultural definitions of women within the patriarchal power discourses and 'masculine' opposes it as a privileged signifier within these same discourses. 'Female' refers to the biological fact of being a woman. 'Feminist' occupies a political position and is one, who, with a discerning eye deconstructs the nature/culture opposition between 'female' and 'feminine'. Though English has two objectives for 'Women' – 'female' and 'feminine', this distinction is lost on the French. They have only the word 'feminine' as objective for woman. Whether ecriture feminine refers to sex or gender is thus problematic.

CHAPTER 1

PATRIARCHY

> What are these ceremonies and why should we take part in them? What are these professions and why should we make money out of them? Where in short, is it leading us, the procession of the sons of educated men?
>
> (*Three Guineas* 63)

The anxiety of the intellectual who is able to stand apart and see things objectively is evident in these rhetorical questions posed by Virginia Woolf in the early part of the twentieth century. That she was far ahead of her time in her awareness of the problems faced by women is an undisputed fact. Patriarchal myths, crystallized and fallen into set patterns, make it impossible for anyone other than an acutely discerning individual to effect the demythification process. Mary Daly, in her journey of exorcism, to deliver women from the deep layers of demonic patterns embedded through cultural conditioning, uses the metaphor of Chinese foot binding to talk of the "mind bindings" which have mutilated women for thousands of years and which have to be stripped away layer after layer in the "a-mazing journey" to emancipation (*Gyn/Ecology* 8).

The term "patriarchy," though reductive because it attributes a universal status "woman" to women, is widely in use as the foundations for a specifically feminist investigation of gender relations. It has also been advanced as a theoretical explanation for the subordination of women by men. It offers itself as an account of

the history of sexual relations. Strictly speaking, patriarchy designates the "rule of the father," "father" being an overarching term for the universal male whose pervasive hegemony in society accords a secondary role for the female. Feminists have appropriated the term for their own use and to mean different things. Psychoanalytic feminists, particularly those who follow Lacan's structuralist interpretation of Freud, use patriarchy to refer to the rule of the father as the structuring principle of gendered entry into the social which occurs with the resolution of the Oedipus Complex. Entry into culture signifies entry into a symbolic order and under patriarchy the phallus is the most potent cultural symbol. It represents the separation of the child from the mother and the adoption of a gendered identity. Patriarchy is thus viewed as an ideological force or construct which has material, constraining effects on women. Sylvia Plath has represented the tyranny of this ideological force in the graphic metaphor of the bell jar. As the narrative voice in her novel says, "To the person in the bell jar, blank and stopped as a dead body, the world itself is a bad dream" (250). Socialist feminists argue against capitalist patriarchy. In this theory, the capitalist mode of production is structured by the patriarchal sexual division of labour. Radical feminists argue for a complete separation from patriarchal norms which can only have claustrophobic effects for women.

Obviously, patriarchy is a problematic term among theorists. Presenting women's relationship with men as invariably antagonistic, it treats their oppression in a transhistorical light, ignoring those occasions in history when the sexes have

worked together as allies. At the same time, by presenting women as a totality, a unified interest–group, it fails to take account of the social and economic differences dividing them. Another problem with the term is that it acquires different meanings in the different discourses and academic disciplines in which it plays a part. Psychoanalysts, sociologists and anthropologists all use it to mean different things. Nevertheless the term would serve for the purpose of analysing sexism within the different social discourses owing to its ubiquitous, pervading presence.

The term "patriarchy" was taken up by the sociologist Max Weber to describe a particular form of household organisation in which the father dominated other members of an extended kinship network and controlled the economic production of the household. Its resonance for feminism, however, rests on the theory, put forward by early radical feminism and in particular by American writers such as Kate Millet, of patriarchy as an over-arching category of male dominance. To Millett, "patriarchy as an institution is a social constant so deeply entrenched as to run through all other political, social, or economic forms, whether of caste or class, feudality or bureaucracy, just as it pervades all major religions..." (25). Our social order ensures sexual dominion through power structured relationships whereby women are controlled by men. Millett terms this "sexual politics" (23). She argues that our society, like all other civilizations, is a patriarchy in which the rule of women by men is over and above class stratification, more uniform and more enduring. Millet's theory of patriarchy resembles that of Shulamith Firestone in so far as it gives analytic primacy to male domination. Firestone, however, grounds her account more firmly in biological reproduction. The sexual-reproductive organization of society furnishes the basis for the oppression of women. According to her, by

revolutionising reproductive technology women can free themselves from the burden of their biologically determined oppression. Unfortunately her account of this determination itself falls into biologistic assumptions (20-21). Biological reductionism is an extremely dangerous one since it may lead to a glorification of supposedly female capacities and principles and a reassertion of separate spheres for women and men.

These dangers are not exclusive to radical feminist analysts of patriarchy. A general problem with the concept of patriarchy, as mentioned above is that it is redolent of a universal and trans-historical oppression. The concept could be better used to invoke a generality of male domination but within specific historical limits. Michele Barrett in *Women's Oppression Today* uses the concepts of patriarchy, reproduction and ideology in her Marxist feminist analysis of women's oppression within capitalism. To Chris Weedon "patriarchal" refers to "power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take many forms, from the sexual division of labour and the social organization of procreation to the internalised norms of femininity by which we live" (2). In patriarchal discourse the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male. The clearest expression of this is the generic use of the term "man" and "he" to encompass all of humankind. In social relations, women are relegated to the position of "other." Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. But in the case of women it always occupies a negative pole, inessential as opposed to the essential male. As Beauvoir says "...she is the other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another" (20). But this reciprocity has not facilitated the liberation of women, that is, women have not been able to

emancipate themselves using the two weapons they have over men – sexual desire and desire for offspring. In fact these two have paradoxically become weapons used by men to marginalize women. Women's destiny has been determined by psychological, physiological and economic sources which are overwhelmingly patriarchal. Through the imposition of the gendered stereotypes, of "masculinity" and "femininity," wherein the former term is privileged over the latter, patriarchal power has managed to enforce its hidden agenda.

Since "woman" is a patriarchal concept, Beauvoir argues that she "can be defined by her consciousness of her own femininity no more satisfactorily than by saying that she is a female, for she acquires this consciousness under circumstances dependent upon the society of which she is a member" (80). In her oft-quoted statement about how a woman is not born but becomes one, Beauvoir posits woman as a patriarchal construct. She asserts that a female human being does not necessarily become a woman unless she shares in that mysterious reality known as femininity. Femininity is thus a cultural construct which imposes certain social standards of womanliness on all biological women, in order to make them believe that the chosen standards for femininity are natural. By seeing woman as other to themselves, as not-men, men can read into femininity whatever qualities are needed to construct their sense of the masculine. So, a mythicized woman becomes the imaginary location of male dreams, idealizations and fears: throughout different cultures femininity is found to represent not only beauty, purity and goodness, but also evil, enchantment, corruption and death. Describing the relations between the three terms, "feminist," "female" and feminine," Toril Moi defines "feminist" as a political position, "femaleness" as a matter of biology and "femininity" as "a set of culturally defined

characteristics" ("Feminist, Female, Feminine" 109). In patriarchy femininity connotes marginality. Julia Kristeva sees femininity as a position, as "that which is marginalized by the patriarchal symbolic order" (qtd. in Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* 165). In so far as women are defined as marginal by patriarchy, their struggle can be theorized in the same way as any other struggle against a centralized power structure. Patriarchy has thus normalized or naturalized the concept of the eternal feminine through various myths of femininity. Feminism has taken up the challenge of dethroning these myths.

Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* is of the view that patriarchy is a "historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly two thousand five hundred years to its completion" (212). She traces the creation of patriarchy through seven stages: men appropriating women's sexual and reproductive capacity through complex processes involving abduction and slavery, the consequent control of offspring, law and legal strictures invented to perpetuate the patriarchal system with the advent of agriculture, growth of private property and monogamy, veneration and worship of females for their creative and fertile powers and exclusion of women from education and access to different kinds of knowledge. She takes us through the historical process by which patriarchy established itself. According to her, "this process was manifested in changes in kinship organisation and economic relations, in the establishment of religious and state bureaucracies, and in the shift in cosmogonies expressing the ascendancy of male god figures" (7). It is through control of women's sexuality and procreativity rather than economic means that patriarchy managed to assume ascendance. Women's sexual subordination was then institutionalised in the earliest law codes and enforced by the full power of the state.

For this women's cooperation was secured either by force or by economic dependency on the male head of the family or through bestowal of class privileges on conforming and dependant women of the upper classes and the artificially created division of women into respectable and not-respectable women. But women played active and respected roles in mediating between humans and gods as priestesses, seers, diviners, and healers. Metaphysical female power, especially the power to give life was worshipped by men and women in the form of powerful goddesses long after women were subordinated to men in most aspects of their life. The powerful goddesses were soon dethroned and replaced by a dominant male god in most Near Eastern societies following the establishment of a strong and imperialistic kinship. Gradually the function of controlling fertility, formerly entirely held by the goddesses was symbolised through the symbolic or actual mating of the male god or God-King with the Goddess or her priestess. Later sexuality and procreativity were split in the emergence of separate goddesses for each function. The emergence of Hebrew monotheism takes the form of an attack on the widespread cults of the various fertility goddesses. Female sexuality other than for procreative purposes then became associated with sin and evil. Thus their only access to God and the holy community was in their function as mothers. Lerner considers this symbolic devaluing of women in relation to the divine as one of the two founding metaphors of Western civilisation. The other founding metaphor was supplied by Aristotelian philosophy which assumed as a given that women are incomplete and damaged human beings.

The material bases of patriarchy described so far leaves it open to contestation. Engels' search for origins in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property*

and the State (1884) took him to the historical origins of the oppression of women which has influenced Lerner's work. Engels grounded his analysis around the changing nature of work, man's conquest of nature and his sophistication of techniques. The accumulation of private property and wealth led to the need to ensure paternity for inheritance claims. This led to monogamy. Thus in Engels' account, woman was the first slave. Monogamous marriage, inheritance and the first class oppression of women was, for Engels, coincident with civilization. Since it was the exclusion of women from productive wealth that made them subordinate to men, it is only by regaining their place in the productive process that women will regain their independence. Theoretically much criticism has been directed at the contradiction between Engels' main postulate of economic determinism on the one hand and his assumptions of a natural division of labour and a biologically determined sexuality on the other (Coward 1983). Criticism has also focused on Engels' attribution of a psychological impulse (the desire to transmit property exclusively to genetic offspring) behind inheritance. The bourgeois monogamous family thus becomes the economic agent by which the capitalist economic order is maintained. In bourgeois societies men own women in marriage as a result of women's economic dependence thereby securing and perpetuating their property. In the proletarian family, however, these conditions no longer hold; the male having lost his property is reduced to a wage labourer, and the women absorbed into production earn in their own right. The cult of domesticity that developed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has had degenerative effects on middle class women. Marriage, the rearing of children and the domestic unit became very important to the ethical foundations and material aspirations of the emerging

bourgeois and middle classes. This development provided the rationale for improving the legal and social position of women by extending their activities to include employment in fields which were seen to be synergous with their domestic duties. The Enlightenment concept of "man" employed in the doctrine of the rights of man made women also equal souls before god, sharing a common humanity and hence in principle their equal. Mary Wollstonecraft had set the tone for a feminist rebellion against the perpetuation of patriarchal authority in the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Nevertheless, being conditioned by the mindset of the times, she considered domesticity and child rearing as feminine duties. For this reason, she advocated socialisation and education for girls, who, with their enlightened minds would then be fit to perform their domestic duties. Female emancipation appealed to Unitarian reformers like John Stuart Mill who situated the various issues of the day about women's position in a general theory of patriarchy which sanctioned domination of women in the laws which regulate marriage and family life. Though Mill is committed to the principle of opening up employment for women and amending the system of education to equip them to benefit from it, he is ambivalent about it in practice as far as married women are concerned.

Heidi Hartmann defines patriarchy as "a set of social relations, which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them, which enable them to dominate women" (194). Patriarchy is thus the system of male oppression of women. Gayle Rubin argues that we should use the term "sex-gender system" to refer to that realm outside the economic system where gender stratification based on sex differences is produced and reproduced. Patriarchy is thus only one form, a male-dominated one, of the sex-gender system.

Rubin notes further that patriarchy should be reserved for pastoral nomadic societies as described in the Old Testament where male power was synonymous with fatherhood. To Rubin, the "sex-gender system" is "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (106). Hartmann, from a Marxist- feminist viewpoint, understands women's oppression in her dual systems theory as an effect of both patriarchy and capitalism. Juliet Mitchell sees the operation of patriarchy in the psychological realm and though she focuses on reproduction, sexuality and child rearing, she places them in the ideological realm thus giving it a trans-historical status.

The material base upon which patriarchy rests is contiguous with men's control over women's labour power. Men maintain this control by excluding women from access to some essential productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. Germain Greer describes this as "female eunuchry," a psychological castration, whereby female sexuality is restricted by patriarchal sanctions. The material bases of patriarchy are enforced through what Foucault terms "disciplining techniques" and Althusser names "Ideological state apparatuses" that work through institutions like religion, schools, offices, health centres, media, clubs, unions and so on. By assigning women to the private sphere and by imposing moral sanctions on her, the dominant culture ensures the morality of the family, the servicing of the male, and the consumption of commodities churned out by capitalism. The bourgeois ideology of femininity has had a tyrannizing effect on women. Nineteenth century bourgeois ideology argued that the true vocation of woman was motherhood, that women were too frail to do heavy work, that women's proper activity was to nurture

and create an atmosphere of shelter and comfort for her family. This ideology of domestic womanhood, woman as the "angel in the house," to use the terminology of Virginia Woolf, was propagated through conduct books as well as through literary genres like the novel, a proper leisure time read for the ideal bourgeois housewife. This ideology which conferred high social status on the "non-working" wife acted as a powerful force in the upwardly mobile desire of the working classes by presenting it as a bourgeois or petit bourgeois mode of life worthy of emulation. Bourgeois women were also bearers of middle class morality which set them apart from the proletarian women.

Patriarchy assumes psychological distinctions between the sexes to rest upon biological differences. The heavy muscularity of the male has been valorised through a value system that is patriarchal. In contemporary times cultural expectations about male gender identity encourage the male to develop aggressive impulses. Thus the basic division of temperamental trait is marshalled along the line of aggression or activity as male and passivity as female. All other traits are aligned to correspond with this distinction. The term female becomes derogatory because it imprisons woman in her passive femininity. Women still carry the biological burdens of their sex. The feeling that a woman's sexual functions are impure persists down to our times. Evidence of this is seen everywhere in literature, in myth, in primitive and civilized life. The event of menstruation is a clandestine affair and the psychosocial effect of the stigma attached has lasting consequences on the female ego. There is a large anthropological literature on menstrual taboo and the practice of isolation attached to it. Contemporary slang designates it as the "curse." One is reminded of the wrath of Draupadi in the epic of the *Mahabharata*, as she is physically and

publicly violated at the time of her "pollution" by the enemy faction of the family. It was the ultimate revenge that the Kauravas could unleash on the Pandavas whose wife Draupadi was.

Nearly all patriarchies enforce taboos against women touching ritual objects and food. In almost every patriarchal family group, the dominant male eats first and eats better and even when the sexes feed together, the male is served by the female. As the Other, woman is revered for her fecund powers and elevated to the status of Mother Goddess. But she remains subjected, owned, exploited like nature whose magical fertility she embodies. Woman's role is always nourishing not creative. In woman is incarnated the disturbing mysteries of nature and when man frees himself from nature, he escapes her hold. Herein lies the most likely explanation for man's urge towards culture and progress. Women were venerated only to the degree that man made himself the slave of his own fears. It was in terror not in love that he worshipped her. Hence he could achieve his destiny only by dethroning her; thus the myth of the revolution and overthrow of matriarchy by patriarchy and the corresponding change in customs, practices, Gods and myths. "There is a good principle, which has created order, light and man; and a bad principle which has created chaos, darkness and woman," so said Pythagoras (qtd. in Beauvoir 112). Feminists have now found in this chaos a source of empowering womanhood. "The laws of Manu defined woman as a vile being who should be held in slavery" (Beauvoir, 112). The Bible praises her for her virtue. Christianity respects the consecrated virgin and the chaste and obedient wife, in spite of its hatred of the flesh.

This ambivalent nature of the patriarchal attitude – misogyny and idealization of women – persists to this day. With the advent of private property, as described earlier, woman was dethroned and assigned the task of nurture. As long as private property lasts, marital infidelity on the part of the wife will be regarded as high treason, thus curbing her sexuality. The onset of Christian ideology set aside a secondary role for women as participants in worship and care of the sick and the poor. The Canon law admitted no other matrimonial regime than the dowry scheme which made women powerless. From feudal times to this day the married woman has been deliberately sacrificed to private property. The richer the husbands, the greater the dependence of the wife. One of the results of the honest woman's enslavement to family was the existence of prostitution. Maintained on the fringes of society, prostitution played an important part in society. Owing to the rise of the bourgeois family and rigorous monogamy, men looked for pleasure elsewhere. Thus the social order made prostitution necessary. Though inheritance laws changed and the law of divorce came into being in the west in the late eighteenth century, they did not effect much change as the women were too well entrenched in the family to feel any solidarity as a sex.

We have seen how patriarchy through myths, taboos and legislature consolidated its power status. The use of force by patriarchy is another means of ensuring dominance by capitalizing on woman's biological "frailty." Brutal customs in connection with femininity were perpetuated in the name of beauty, fidelity and morality. Daly has described in detail the psychological effects on women of cliterodectomy, sati and Chinese foot binding. The tribal custom of cliterodectomy involves genital mutilation to control women's sexuality. The chastity belt is its

western successor. Sati ensures exemplary servicing of the male through the threat of violent death, concomitant with the husband's death. The Chinese patriarchal ideal of beauty manifested in female foot binding, has been painful, traumatic and constraining for women though collusion to this custom has been achieved by perfect socialization. Sexual autonomy and illegitimacy were forcibly controlled through the death sentence in certain religions. Control of sexuality through the metaphorical force of abortion laws has in the past driven women to illegal abortions and death. In countries like India the predilection for a male child, which is a consequence of the dowry system apart from other practices, leads to female foeticide even in this age. Bride burning makes news even today in remote parts of India.

Rituals associated with virginity and defloration show how patriarchy has hedged and valorised virginity. Using the threat of violence and rape, it has circumscribed women's freedom. Even today we find feminists crying themselves hoarse for the freedom to breathe the night air. The threat of rape as a particular form of sexual violence is used as a deterrent to prevent transgression of feminine bounds. Though routinely presented in the media as individual deviance, it is a form of person to person violence deeply embedded in power inequalities and ideologies of male supremacy. As Connell puts it, "far from being a deviation from the social order, it is in a significant sense an enforcement of it" (107). This connection of violence in its ideology points to the multiple character of social power. The feelings of cruelty are linked and sexuality is often equated with evil and power. As objects of male desire, females have to put up with voyeurism, eve teasing and other such social and psychological problems. The commonest process in sexual ideology involves naturalizing social practices. Naturalization implies the cognitive

purification of the world of gender by excluding items that do not fit the social narrative. Heterosexual attraction is interpreted as "natural" and homosexual as "unnatural." The oppressive effects of gendered sexuality are experienced both by men and women.

Both psychoanalytic and anthropological discourses focus on the incest taboo as the common denominator for entry into social contract for individuals through the Oedipal crisis and for primitive communities through exchange of women. Incest taboo initiates the exchange of the phallus in psychoanalytical terms. The Oedipal crisis is precipitated thus: the children discover the differences between the sexes, and recognize that each child must become one or the other gender. They also discover the incest taboo, and that some sexuality is prohibited in this case, the mother is unavailable to either child because she belongs to the father. Lastly they discover that the two genders do not have the same sexual rights or futures. The boy renounces his mother for fear of castration and by this act affirms the relationship that has given the mother to the father and which will give him, if he becomes a man, a woman of his own. For this, his father affirms the phallus in his son and the boy exchanges his mother for the phallus. The girl is in a position of homosexuality vis-à-vis the mother. The rule of obligatory heterosexuality makes her turn away from her mother and to her father for fear of reprisal and because only he can give the phallus. It is only through him that she can enter the symbolic exchange system in which the phallus circulates. The father does not give her the phallus in the same way as he gives it to the boy. The phallus is affirmed, not given to the boy. The girl never gets the phallus. It passes through her. She recognises her castration and accedes to the

place of the woman in the phallic exchange network. She can get the phallus but only as a gift from a man. Thus goes the authoritative Freudian narrative.

The parallels between Freudian psychoanalysis and Levis Strauss' theories are striking. The Oedipal phase divides the sexes. The kinship system includes sets of rules governing sexuality. The Oedipal crisis is the assimilation of these rules and taboos. Compulsory heterosexuality is the product of kinship. The Oedipal phase constitutes heterosexual desire. Kinship rests on a radical difference between the rights of men and women. The Oedipal complex confers male rights upon the boy and forces the girl to accommodate herself to lesser rights. Thus goes Gayle Rubin's reading of the parallels between the two theories (Rubin 136). Both theories propound division between the sexes as the organising principle of culture. Devaluation of woman as the other is manifest in the two grand narratives. Femininity (the cultural construct of woman) is thus the result of a process of forcible theft of woman's sexuality by patriarchy. Deprived of what is hers, she is forced into subordination. Nancy Chodorow posits a sociological explanation of gender as resulting from imposed social training. Since the mother is the primary caretaker for all children, boys and girls acquire gender identities through separation and alignment with the mother. For boys this is a traumatic affair and so they build up strict ego boundaries in life whereas for girls ego boundaries are more fluid. The consequences of such socialization are played out in their entire lives. Shifting the onus of taking care of children on to the father will have a different outcome on their gender.

Biological essentialism has been the bedrock of most traditional thinking about women, used both to denigrate and idealize them, but always to justify the

existing power structures. Psychoanalysis offers a universal theory of the psychic construction of gender identity on the basis of repression. In doing so, it gives specific answers to the questions of how gendered subjectivity is acquired and also of how certain norms and values are internalised in the process. Freud has taken the brunt of feminist attack on account of his description of female subjectivity as inferiorized through internalisation of the power of the phallus. The attribution of penis envy to the female sex and the consequent devaluation of their own castrated self have been questioned by a host of feminist critics. Kate Millet has argued that this devaluation of their castrated selves by women is because of the social power and privilege symbolized by the phallus and not because of any perceived physical and sexual superiority (183). Beauvoir has taken issue with Freud's masculine model of development of gender identity. For Freud, according to Beauvoir, the norm is the boy and the girl is a deviation from it (68). Betty Frieden has criticized Freud for being a "prisoner of his own culture" in his myopic view of femininity and its development (93). He has attempted to give Victorian femininity a transhistorical status. Mitchell, on the other hand, identifies two aspects of Freudian theory as important to feminism: his account of sexuality as socially and not biologically constructed, and his theory of the unconscious. The stress in Freudian theory on the initial bisexuality of the child and the precarious psychic rather than biological nature of gender identity has encouraged many feminists to attempt to appropriate psychoanalysis for their own work. At one level Freudian theory marks a radical break with biological determinism by making the structures of psychic development the foundations of social organisation. This happens in the context of the nuclear family and, in normal development, leads to the acquisition by children of a

heterosexual gendered identity. Yet the degree to which structures of psycho-sexual development, which have a universal status in Freudian theory, can be seen as fully social is open to question, since they are neither historically nor culturally specific. It would be more accurate to ascribe to them a status similar in kind to that of biological sex as universal preconditions for social organisation. Nonetheless the insistence on the psychosexual rather than biological structuring of gender identity and on gender acquisition as a precarious process, constantly threatened by the return of the repressed means that gender identity is not fixed by psychoanalysis in the same way as it is in biological determinism. Gender identity is contained between fixed psychosexual structures which are the precondition for all subjectivity and which allow for the abnormal as well as the normal. However, in its claims to provide a universal theory, psychoanalysis reduces gender to an effect of pre-given, psychosexual processes and closes off questions of gender identity from history. If the resolution of the Oedipus complex involves identification with the father, that is, an active masculine identity for the boys, then for the girls the resolution involves the acquisition of a sense of inferiority. What is important here, according to Mitchell, in her attempts to appropriate Freud for feminism, is Freud's insistence that "femininity" and "masculinity" have no basis in biology but are constructed by the child's familial relationships. Thus the account of the Oedipal trouble and its resolution can be read as a description, not a prescription, of the social and psychic process whereby the power relations of patriarchal authority, symbolized in the father, reproduce themselves in each new generation as a subjective sense of the self is constructed. Only by understanding this process, Mitchell argues, can we begin to find ways of confronting and subverting the mechanism of internalised oppression.

The ahistoricism evident in the universality of the Oedipal triangle and the incest taboo both in Freud and Levi-Strauss has been heavily contested in feminist theories.

After Derrida and Cixous, ordering of reality through the classificatory process, with its hierarchical privileging and valuing of one term over the other in a binary opposition, is found by feminists to be the underlying reality behind all sexual oppression. Classification is effected through the marking of difference. Since classification is done only on the basis of consensus, culture as the standardised value of a community mediates the experience. Culture in the form of ritual, symbol and classification produces meaning. The dominant culture's constructions classify human population as male/female and thereon subsume other qualities like culture/nature, reason/emotion, active/passive and so on under the patriarchal umbrella. Classificatory systems provide order by applying the principle of difference to aspects of culture and dividing it into binaries to produce meaning. These binary oppositions are heavily imbricated in the patriarchal value system: each opposition can be analysed as a hierarchy where the feminine side is always seen as negative and powerless. For Cixous, taking after Derrida, western philosophy and literary thought have been caught up in this endless series of hierarchical binary opposition that always in the end come back to the fundamental opposition male/female as its underlying paradigm ("Sorties"). As Toril Moi says,

> Cixous goes on to locate death at work in this kind of thought. For one of the terms to acquire meaning... it must destroy the other. The 'couple' cannot be left intact: it becomes a general battlefield where the struggle for signifying supremacy is forever re-enacted. In the end,

> victory is equated with activity and defeat with passivity; under patriarchy, the male is always the victor.
>
> (*Sexual/Textual Politics*103)

Derrida has shown how power operates between the two terms of the binaries. There is an imbalance of power between the two terms. Cixous takes up this point, but focuses on gender divisions and argues that this power opposition underpins social divisions especially between man and woman. These oppositions have been attributed gendered value by culture. For Cixous these oppositions are culturally determined and not the basis of the underlying logic of thought. It is the gendered value conferred on the binaries that becomes a moot point in feminist theories.

The nature/culture divide, with women being equated with nature and men with culture has had harrowing effects on the female psyche. Though Levis-Strauss has attempted to cast the nature/culture contrast in a timeless, value-free model concerned with the working of the human mind, ideas about nature and culture are not value free. The "myth" of nature is a system of arbitrary signs which relies on a social consensus for meaning. Neither the concept of nature nor that of culture is "given" and they cannot be free from the biases of the culture in which the concepts were constructed. One category can transform into the other, with nature becoming culture, as structural models are dynamic and concerned with becoming and transforming, though again it is gendered within culture to a different degree. For example, the advent of more reliable contraceptives and the possibility of different technological means of reproduction change the nature of the constraints pregnancy and birth made on the woman. Sherry Ortner has put forward the reductionist argument that universal female subordination may be accounted for by the fact that

the woman's body seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life. The male, in contrast, owing to a lack of natural creative functions must assert his creativity externally, artificially, through the medium of technology and symbols (75). MacCormack, on the other hand, considers the statement that women are doomed by their biology to be natural not cultural, as a mythic statement (17).

Primitive societies equated nature with Mother Earth, and correspondingly to Mother Goddess and women by virtue of their lack of understanding about the mysteries of procreation and fertility. In the eighteenth century, nature was both part of the world which had not yet been penetrated and that part of the world which men understood, mastered and made their own. Scientific enquiry coupled with political discourse revealed the mysteries of nature and women, at the same time gendering it. Through the scientific unveiling of women, nature was revealed and understood. But women were also the repositories of passions which needed to be contained and controlled. By mid-eighteenth century, a well established bio-medical tradition observed and defined humans, hardening the conceptual division between essentially feminine and essentially masculine attributes. A biological determinism "explained" women, but men were defined by their social acts, an attitude of enquiry which persists in present-day literature on gender. This essentialist approach to femininity has thwarted women's potentialities. Definitions of male and female nature by patriarchy has entrenched men and women in certain fixed categories. Whereas men are aggressive, logical, autonomous and active, women are passive, emotional. Even among men a crisis in masculinity is sometimes reached when they find it difficult to live up to the designs of patriarchal classification. The opposition of sex and gender itself is within the larger categories of nature and culture. Sex role stereotyping has

assigned domestic service, reproduction and taking care of children, in short the private sphere, to women whereas the rest of human achievement in the public sphere has been given to the male.

Patriarchal metaphysics has conceived the binaries of reason/emotion also in a gendered manner. Within the western philosophical tradition emotions are usually considered as potentially or actually subversive of knowledge. From Plato to the present, with a few notable exceptions, reason rather than emotion has been regarded as the indispensable quality for acquiring knowledge. Typically, the rational has been contrasted with the emotional and this contrasted pair then has often been linked with other dichotomies. Reason has been associated with the mental, the cultural, the universal, the public and the male, whereas emotion has been associated with the irrational, the physical, the natural, the particular, the private and, of course, the female. The contrast between reason and emotion was sharpened in the west in the seventeenth century by redefining reason as a purely instrumental faculty. Reason was supposed to provide access to the order of reality. Thus reason had been linked to value. Modern science, however, separated the realms of nature and value: nature became an inanimate mechanism of no intrinsic worth and values were relocated in human beings. With this separation it became imperative for reason to be separated from value. The validity of logical inferences was thought to be independent of human attitudes and preferences. Thus reason became objective and universal. The modern redefinition of rationality required a corresponding re-conceptualization of emotion. This was achieved by portraying emotions as non-rational and also as irrational urges that swept the body like a storm. The prevalence of the usage of the word "passion" for emotion stresses how emotions are something that happened to or

were imposed upon an individual. Patriarchy has defined femininity by its propensity for emotional and irrational feelings, thus devaluing its claims to true knowledge. The epistemology associated with this new ontology rehabilitated sensory perception which had been devalued as a reliable source of knowledge. British empiricism succeeded by positivism depended on a rational knowledge successively and logically deduced from the raw material of senses and emotion. This became the paradigm of genuine knowledge. Senses and emotions remained the raw material, not the prime material, for knowledge. Alison. M. Jagger has attempted to construct alternate epistemological models which would be based on "how we understand the world and who we are as people. They would show how our emotional responses to the world change as we conceptualize it differently and how our changing emotional responses then stimulate us to new insights" (164). The recognition that emotions play a vital part in developing knowledge enlarges understanding of women's claimed epistemic advantage. It may then be seen that women's subversive insights owe much to their outlawed emotions, themselves appropriate responses to the situations of women's subordination. The claim that emotion is vital to systematic knowledge is in contrast to the conception provided by positivism. Jagger symbolises this mode of knowing by the "radical feminist metaphor of the upward spiral" (165). The subversive use of irrational emotions including madness in feminist texts manifest the privileging of emotion as one of the doors to knowledge.

Two contradictory impulses immanent in patriarchy's representation of women are misogyny and idealization. The ambiguity in the images of women propagated by patriarchy is revealed in the whore-Madonna, angel-witch and other such archetypes. The string of patriarchal goddesses, Virgin Mary, and Woolf's

"angel in the house," Eve, Medusa, Siren and the Furies are only some of them. Misogyny implicit in patriarchal ideology is revealed in numerous myths. The Pandora myth is one of the two important western archetypes which condemn the female through her sexuality and explain her position as her well deserved punishment for the primal sin under whose unfortunate consequences the race still labours. The myth of the Fall also perpetuates the same theme. This myth, central to the Judeo-Christian imagination, has a powerful hold over our imagination and is still the foundation of sexual attitudes. In *Gyn/Ecology*, Daly explains the patriarchal methods of mystification through the processes of erasure (the massacre of millions of women as witches is erased in patriarchal scholarship) and reversal of reproductive roles (Adam giving birth to Eve, Zeus to Athena). These patterns are embedded in culture and implanted in our souls. In Daly's radical feminist view, "patriarchy is the prevailing religion of the entire planet" (39). Witch burning was precipitated by patriarchal religions for fear of the threat of higher knowledge of spiritual wisdom and healing. The so-called pact of the witches with the devil was the ploy used to perpetuate this dastardly crime. Patriarchal idealization of women is manifested through Virgin Mary, the great teacher of purity, Helen of Troy, the epitome of feminine beauty, the Muse, the source of male creativity and so on. It is through repetitions of such myths of femininity, such paradigmatic models, that patriarchy acknowledges a certain "reality" to be true.

The whole of Aristotle's political philosophy is based on the assumption that one class of human beings – namely free males – should lead a life that he sees as self-satisfying and others as merely a means to this end. Two classes of human beings, slaves and women, were excluded by Aristotle from the full exercise of

human reason (64). In a paper, "Of the Distinction between the Beautiful and the Sublime in the Interrelations of the Two Sexes," Kent sharply differentiates between masculine and feminine traits, assigning qualities such as nobility, depth, and sublimity to men and the qualities of delicacy, beauty and modesty to women. Women may be capable of intellectual pursuits, but they must abstain from it, avers Kant. Like Aristotle, he excludes women from the philosophical ideal of moral worth (qtd. in Grimshaw 42-43). Simone de Beauvoir with her revolutionary thesis on the need for female emancipation posits the masculine ideals of independence and autonomy for women.

It is interesting to note that most of the feminine traits are deployed in contexts of powerlessness. Dale Spender has noted the semantic derogation of women, the male always appearing as the norm, exemplified by the generic use of man for human being and the male frame of reference used for concepts like sexuality. Theories are not value free. They arise in social contexts and out of particular human interests and concerns and cannot be understood in isolation of their contexts. The Victorian ideological conception about female nature saw the female brain as likely to come into conflict with the female uterus, that is, the uterus would suffer if the brain is used. Such beliefs about women helped to structure social relationships between men and women – sometimes infamously as in the rest cure confinement of women. Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *The Yellow Wallpaper* has fictionalised her life experience in the representation of the female protagonist who is advised "rest cure" by way of being confined to an upper storey nursery in the house without pen or paper by her physician husband. This is supposed to cure her neurosis

as her intellectual faculties would be rested. The narrative ends with the protagonist going completely mad.

Gerda Lerner has drawn attention to the fact that all history has excluded women from its activities. There has been no Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, or Industrial Revolution for women. (His)tory has elided women's version of its events. Enlightenment beliefs like the autonomy of the individual, grounding claims to authority in Reason, the idea of Universal truth which can be attained through the unfolding of Reason, freedom and science are alien to the female population. Lerner notes: "Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular, but because we have considered history only in male-centred terms" (qtd. in Showalter, "Feminist Criticism" 345). Power works through exclusionary tactics. Western metaphysics has designated the under-privileged term "emotion" as opposed to "reason" for women which is no wonder why she could not seek Enlightenment ideals. There are no romantic women poets in the dominant canon. The highly sophisticated genre of poetry has been denied her. One is reminded of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sacrifice of her career for the sake of her husband's. Physical frailty compounded by a feminine desire to let her husband achieve success has resulted in the fading away of this poet. Cora Kaplan, introducing Barrett Browning's epic *Aurora Leigh* has observed that despite the great achievement of this poem, critical opinion has preferred to represent its author as a lyric poet, remembering her particularly for her love poems to Robert Browning. Lyric and love poetry are more suitably feminine.

Human beings are "embodied" subjects. The body constitutes identity and is a medium through which messages of identity are transmitted. The body and its daily rituals are a medium of culture. It is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and enforced. The body may also operate as a metaphor for culture. Since our body is a direct locus of social control, what we eat, how we dress, how we behave are all controlled by culture which disciplines us into docile, regulated bodies. In civilization there has been a gradual negative view of plumpness and a positive evaluation of thinness. The male ideal of the hour-glass female body has subjected innumerable Victorian women to the agonies of donning the corset. Atwood in *Lady Oracle* explores how identity is mediated through corporeal inscription. Anorexia nervosa, bulimia, agoraphobia, hysteria and madness are effects of the disciplining techniques of patriarchy that work through voluntary or forced imposition. The anorectic's concern with mastery of appetite by willpower reflects a compulsive effort to live up to the dominant ideology's sanctions on the body. Anorexia signifies both a pathological flight from femininity (rounded figure) and an equally pathological adherence to canons of feminine beauty. Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor* has described physically frail women given to fainting fits as a metaphor for femininity in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature.

Quite a few feminist critics have taken up the issue of sexism and sex differences in language. Daly's radical attempt to create a new language for women is a well-known fact. She has attempted to "exorcise" the "deceptive perceptions... implanted through language – the all-pervasive language of myth, conveyed overtly and subliminally through religion, 'great art', literature, the dogmas of

professionalism, the media, grammar" (3). Gender difference in language becomes a key issue because it is through language that men and women are constituted as subjects. Not only are we born into a language that moulds us, but our knowledge or experience of the world is also articulated in language. For theorists like Lacan, our subjectivity comes into being through entry into language which occasions a shift from what Lacan calls the "imaginary" into the "symbolic." One's entry into language marks a fundamental alienation resulting from a split within the subject at the mirror-stage. The primitive union with the mother is ruptured when the child recognises its reflected image and identifies itself as a separate entity. This recognition is an identification with the imaginary, unitary and autonomous self. The mirror-stage is the initial step in the process of an individual's integration into the social system. It marks the child's entry into the symbolic order. Symbolically language stands in lieu of the absent mother. The symbolic order, that is, the order of the Name-of-the-Father, the order of language which allows inter-subjective communication, conveys the very values of the social system which it reflects, supports and encompasses. Language, thus, attains crucial importance as a signifying practice in and through which the subject is made into a social being. It is language that enables the speaker to posit herself as "I," as the subject of a sentence. It is in language that people constitute themselves as subjects. Lacan's theory of the subject as constructed in language confirms the decentring of the individual consciousness so that it can no longer be seen as the origin of meaning, knowledge and action since language is a system of differences with no positive terms. If the subject is "to participate in the society into which it is born, to be able to act deliberately within the social formation, the child must enter into the phallic symbolic order, the set of

signifying systems of culture of which the supreme example is language. The child who refuses to learn the language is 'sick,' unable to become a full member of the family and society" (Belsey, "Constructing the Subject" 596). After the initial first person singular pronoun identification, the child learns to recognise itself in a series of subject positions (he or she, boy or girl and so on). Subjectivity or identity is thus a network of subject positions. The subject is not only a centre of action, author of actions, but also a subjected being who has to submit to the authority of discourses that fix the identity of the subject. The subject is thus determined by his or her unalterable human nature, psychic formation and other discourses, all of which are gendered. How is it then possible to change social formation and transform ourselves? For Lacan, the unconscious, which comes into being with repression in the gap formed by the "I" of discourse, the subject of utterance, and the "I" who speaks, the subject of the enunciation, is a constant source of potential disruption of the symbolic order (597).

Given the social nature of identity formation, it is no wonder that women experience a split when they venture into the symbolic order because of their internalization of their supposed inadequacies. The girl's different relation to the phallus as signified is made clear by a continued taboo against her speech amongst men. Male privilege and freedom can now be seen by the adult female to be allied to the male use of public and symbolic language. In many cultures there is a strong taboo against women telling jokes. Women as a group in society are both produced and inhibited by contradictory discourses. They participate both in the liberal, humanist discourse of freedom, self-determination and rationality and at the same time in the specifically feminine discourse of submission, relative inadequacy and

irrational intuition. To locate a single, coherent, subject position within these contradictory discourses creates intolerable pressures. This situation can be faced either by withdrawing from the contradictions and from discourse itself or by becoming sick or otherwise by seeking a resolution of the contradictions in the discourses of feminism (598).

The political implications of language and its power to regulate human social relations by masking the power-play behind its constructions have long been noted. Speech and silence connote power and powerlessness respectively in patriarchy. Silence is a symbol of oppression while liberation is speaking out. Dale Spender has described women's alienation from language by virtue of it being a patriarchal construct. According to her, since men control meaning, they impose their worldview on everyone. Women, without the ability to symbolise their experience in the male language, either internalise male reality (alienation) or find themselves unable to say anything (silence). Language is our means of classifying and ordering the world, thus also our means of manipulating reality. The patriarchal order of language has interpreted the world in male terms, relegating women to the category of Other:

> It is a symbolic order into which we are born, and as we become members of society and begin to enter the meanings which the symbols represent, we also begin to structure the world so that those symbols are seen to be applicable; we enter into the meaning of patriarchal order and we help to give it substance, we help it come true.
>
> (Spender 4)

To cite an example of how women feel alienated when they use language, Spender takes the term 'motherhood' idealised by the patriarchal symbolic order. Since this word has been defined positively by the dominant order, women find it impossible to use the word in relation to the complex, positive and negative experience they may have of mothering. This clash between experience and language forces women into silence especially so when 'unhappy motherhood' becomes an oxymoron. The ability of language to powerfully enforce moral sanctions is evident in the prevalence of derogatory terms like 'prostitute' and 'spinster.' The fact that there is no masculine gender for both these words as well as the terms 'maiden' and 'virgin' also point a finger at the double standards of morality. The radical feminist Mary Daly has in *Gyn/Ecology* made attempts to reclaim language for women.

Classic realism, in its representation of a world of consistent subjects who are the origin of meaning, knowledge and action also positions the reader as the origin of understanding and action in accordance with that understanding. This mode assumes a transparent, one to one relationship, the "I" in romantic and post-romantic poetry is a kind of super-subject, experiencing life at a higher level of intensity than ordinary people. This transcendence of the subject is entirely overt in such works. In fiction, at the same time, truth is "shown" rather than "told" without authorial intrusion. In drama, the author is absent from the fictional world on stage. Thus the text effaces itself as text. Feminists have recorded their disjuncture with such texts. Unable to identify with the all knowing central self in such literary works but immasculated by patriarchal academic conditioning, theirs has been a difficult apprenticeship to literary academics. The "universal" experiences of "great literature" has now come into question. The creation of the Canon of literature has been perceived as a

subjective agenda involving male professors, journals and publishing houses. Judgement has never been value-free. Judith Fetterly, for instance, has recorded her inability to identify with the experience of the male subjects of "The Solitary Reaper" and "To His Coy Mistress." Poetry more than fiction and drama has been a male centred activity. The underlying paradigm in canonical literature is male experience.

Harold Bloom's patriarchal model of literary paternity posits the relationship between literary artists as an Oedipal tie between father and son. In this paradigm, a poet must engage in heroic warfare with his precursor as he can become a poet only by invalidating his poetic father. The female poet, having no precursors, does not seem to fit in anywhere. Manifestations of patriarchal power in literary history where women have been either ignored, devalued or undervalued have been explored by several critics. Elaine Showalter, Patricia Spacks and Ellen Moers have undertaken the arduous task of inventing a female tradition. The novel, a new genre was found to work better in the interests of the female. Female writers thrived during the early years of the novel's emergence because it was a new genre and was constantly being reinvented. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong argues that in the eighteenth century, the novel so fully discharged the ideological function of the courtesy book that it provided middle class society as a whole with a clear and powerful representation of what made a woman desirable. The domestic woman idealized by novels has ever since directly determined how real women imagine themselves to be. According to Armstrong's account, the bourgeois tradition of conduct books initiated a precise focus on the social position of women, thereby opening up a new discourse of female subjectivity which, towards the end of the

seventeenth century was taken over by the new genre of the novel (69). The idle woman idealised by bourgeois society thrived on the novel form and were voracious consumers of it. By centering gender, Armstrong revises Ian Watt's influential theory in *The Rise of the Novel* that the realist novel, represented primarily by Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, proved to be a crucial vehicle for disseminating middleclass values. For Watt, the subject of bourgeois ideology is implicitly a male subject; Crusoe, a hero of economic and Puritan individualism. Armstrong's thesis that the novel as a genre gave rise to the modern female subject of domesticity, thus explaining why the majority of the eighteenth century novels were written by men, points to the semantics of gender power within society (95). Armstrong also suggests that the model for the bourgeois subject, whether male or female, is fundamentally feminine, that the displacement of aristocratic by bourgeois values constituted a feminization of subjectivity.

Rehearsing the tale of what Raymond Williams has called the "long revolution," feminists from Mary Wollstonecraft onwards have been intent on revealing "the difference of view, the difference of standard" that has worked within the patriarchal tradition(Woolf, *Women and Writing* 160). As Mary Jacobus states, the problem confronting them is "the nature of women's access to culture and their entry into literary discourse" (49). In patriarchal societies, women writers experience a rift where language itself may re-inscribe the structures by which they are oppressed. Early in *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray calls the reader's attention to a female duplicity that is both common place and socially sanctioned.

> The best of women (I have heard my grandmother say) are hypocrites. We don't know how much they hide from us:

> how watchful when they seem most artless and confidential: how often those fraud smiles which they wear so easily are traps to cajole or elude or disarm. I don't mean in your mere coquettes but your domestic models, and paragons of female virtue. (208)

This kind of "female double discourse" of acquiescent duplicity was used to subversive effect by many of the nineteenth century women writers. Patricia Johnson has noted how in Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*, the narrator, Lucy Snowe, composes two letters to Graham Bretton, whose friendly, patronizing interest in her is opposed by her own emotional feelings. One letter is an impassioned outpouring of her feelings which she keeps to herself; the second, a properly reserved expression of friendly interest. Both letters are available to the reader. Lucy names her own spilt narrative strategy "heretic"{617}. Martha, the narrator, in Doris Lessing's *Martha Quest,* resorts to a similar strategy to cope with society's sanctions on women. She splits herself into Martha, her own inviolate self whose feelings are expressed in private and Matty, the social self.

Women's incitements to silence sometimes leads to neurosis or madness. Judith Butler uses the term "gender trouble" to define the break in performativity of gendered subjectivity. Anais Nin, in explaining how she got over her youthful diffidence and dumbness, has said that she came to be able to communicate so well through the process of writing her diary in which she struggled to discover her identity and to perfect her ability to express what she thought and felt (*A Woman Speaks*).That private forms like diaries, memoirs, letters etc. were more popular

genres amongst women in more conservative and restrictive societies is a cliché of feminist wisdom. Nin specifically asks women to turn to themselves "as a creative piece of work – not only in the arts but in the creation of our times" (1). This creativity is a constant interaction between individual life and the struggle with larger issues such as history whose victims individuals have become. In order not to be victimized it is imperative to live apart from it. In her space fiction Doris Lessing, in a method reminiscent of Carl Jung's individuation process, steps outside history to enter a new socio-economic order that offers a critique of the historical process. French feminist theorists like Helene Cixous have advocated that we find ways of writing that attempt to embody women's difference. As Soshana Felman sums up, "The challenge facing the woman today is nothing less than to reinvent language..." (18). Mary Daly in *Beyond God the Father*, has expounded the serious consequences of the male monopoly of naming as Adam gives names to God's creations in the cherished mythology of the Judeo-Christian world.

If one were to pick a decisive moment in English literature when female emancipation in terms of the search for the woman's new identity, becomes a literary fact of primary importance, we will have to settle on Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. This book could claim to mark the transition from men's woman to women's woman. This could be seen only in writing by women. In writing by men one finds scepticism and uncertainty in their depiction of the New Woman. In his *Study of Thomas Hardy*, D.H. Lawrence takes up the enigma of Sue Bridehead (*Jude the Obscure*) and says that "he [i.e. Hardy] has sympathy for her predicament, because he sees it shored up for her by history." He sees in Sue "one of the supremest products of our civilization" and "a product that well frightens us" (109). He asks

that society should have a place for Sue, who belongs "to the old woman-type of witch or prophetess." "Sue is the production of the long selection by man of the woman in whom the female is subordinated to the male principle" (108). This ambivalence in attitude towards the woman question is part of the whole of Lawrence's oeuvre. In relegating for Sue the identity of witch or prophetess and lauding it in the spirit of the privileged male, Lawrence is heralding the entry of the New Woman, of which Ibsen's Nora is a proto-type. In her *Sexual Politics*, which Toril Moi has described as a "powerful fist in the solar plexus of patriarchy," (Moi 26) Kate Millet has on the other hand noted Hardy's "nervousness" in his treatment of Sue in *Jude the Obscure* and put it down to the fact that he did not fully understand the combination of social and psychological forces at work in the New Woman. Millet's reading method starts from the premise that literature reflects the real world. Millet reveals the way in which Sue's sexuality is related to her feminist opposition to "a number of patriarchal institutions, principally marriage and the Church." Her tragedy lies in her inability to carry through the courage of her convictions. She desires sexual revolution but cannot believe in it. Millet also shows how Sue psychologically exhibits the self-hatred and contempt common to all oppressed groups. Like the majority of women in patriarchal society, they despise womanhood. The failure of Sue's rebellion is attributed to the fact that though it attacked patriarchy, it was not supported by any compensatory love or respect for women (131).

In her chapter on "Counter Revolution," Millet turns her sights on Lawrence. Her vilification of Lawrence depends to a large extent on her reading of Lawrence's reading of Freud. Millet is also concerned about the way in which misogyny in

Lawrence's text is expressed through force (the incident in *Sons and Lovers* where Paul throws his pencil at Miriam and its sexual connotations). According to Millet's thesis, this violence towards women proceeds inexorably till the late novels like *The Plumed Serpent*, and culminates in a sexual fascism that converts the earlier sacrificial humiliation into the murder of women. Lawrence's ambivalent attitude towards women and feminism is clear. One sees how feminism first enters *Sons and Lovers* in the form of the woman's guild to which Mrs. Morel belongs and in the depiction of Clara. But Clara's assertiveness and her physical presence, for Paul, are indications, not of her autonomy, but of her sexual energy. Paul's affirmative answer to Clara's comment that "you would much rather fight for a woman than let her fight for herself" goes this way:

> 'I would. When she fights for herself she seems like a dog before a looking glass, gone into a mad fury with its own shadow'.
>
> 'And you are looking glass?' She asked, with a curl of the lip.
>
> 'Or the shadow,' he replied. (290)

Paul, here, suggests that in setting themselves up against men, women gain nothing, since the lots of the two sexes are bound up with each other – man is woman's own shadow. Clara takes his reference to the mirror to mean that man is the mirror in which woman must seek her own true self.

The patriarchal ideology, especially when communicated through literary and critical discourse, has designated mad women as the outcastes of the establishment.

Critical oversights in the reading of canonical critics have been pointed out. Probably the best known example of phallic criticism is cited by Elaine Showalter from Irving Howe's praise for the opening scene of Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* when the hero Michael Henchard sells his wife and baby daughter at a country fair:

> To shake from one's wife; to discard that drooping rag of a woman, with her mute complaints and maddening passivity; to escape not by a slinking abandonment but through the public sale of her body to a stranger, as horses are sold at a fair; and thus to wrest, through sheer amoral wilfulness, a second chance out of life – it is with this stroke, so insidiously attractive to male fantasy, that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* begins.
>
> (qtd. in Showalter, "Towards a Feminist Poetics" 129)

As Showalter points out, "It is obvious that a woman unless she has been indoctrinated into being very deeply identified indeed with male culture, will have a different experience of this scene." However, not only has Howe completely ignored the likely response of women readers, he has also, as Showalter goes on to say, distorted Hardy's text, imposing on it his stereotyped image of the wife as wholly hampering and constricting. His commentary slides away from Hardy's text to articulate a recurring male myth that women trap men into an enclosing and suffocating domesticity, which in effect "castrates" their masculine energies and freedom. However, phallic criticism is not always characterized by a desire to escape from women as guardians of a constricting domestic order. In *The Resisting Reader,*

Judith Fetterley analyses a wide range of critical commentary on Henry James's *The Bostonians*. In the story an attachment between two female characters, Olive, an active campaigner for women's equality, and Verona, a younger and more conventionally "feminine" woman, is challenged and eventually vanquished by Ransom, Verona's male suitor. On reading male-authored criticism of this novel "one is struck by its relentless sameness," writes Fetterley. Lionel Trilling's description of the atmosphere of the novel as "suffused with a primitive fear," Fetterley says, could be applied with greater accuracy to the criticism of it (107-8). What the male critics fear much more than Olive's campaigning against specific inequalities is the attachment of the two women. Although the text itself offers no evidence of a sexual relationship between the two women, the male critics surveyed by Fetterley have no hesitation in assuming that Olive is a lesbian, and once this assumption is made, it seems the next obvious step for the phallic critics to define her feelings for Verona as unnatural, abnormal and perverted. This leads the phallic critics to their final melodramatic distortion of James's text, the projection of Ransom as a "knight in shining armor, the repository of all that is healthy, sane and good" (109). That male criticism consistently ignores the actual context of *The Bostonians* is, Fetterley argues, "one more proof of the subjectivity of that criticism and of its inherently political nature" (115). Male criticism operates on a double standard: it permits the indulgence of male fantasies of freedom and irresponsibility from the domestic order, while firmly outlawing the real threat to the patriarchal society posed by women's refusal of a heterosexual union as unnatural, immoral and perverted.

D.H. Lawrence's short novel *The Fox* also centers on a triangular relationship between two women and a man. The young hero, Henry, conquers his rival, Banford,

a querulous woman dependent on the greater energies of her beloved friend March, by the simple expedient of killing Banford: he literally crushes Banford's claims on March by felling a dead tree on her. The critic Julian Moynahan observes that the narrative is "unusually successful in bringing the reader's response into line with Lawrence's own visionary perspective... when Henry drops a dead tree on Banford the reader reflects that the boy has merely employed one dead thing to sweep another dead thing out of life's way" (199). Moynahan claims that the murder must be read as a triumph of life over death. The question here is whether Moynahan is imposing a heterosexual order as natural, moral and healthy against a dangerous challenge of woman-to-woman attachment? What is even more striking about Moynahan's commentary is the way in which it manages to impose a unitary moral interpretation on Lawrence's more open-ended story, simultaneously indulging male fantasies of escape while reaffirming the rightful "natural" order of heterosexuality. Henry liberates March from a "stuffy," entrapping domesticity, presumably only to replace her in a more subordinated but "healthy" domesticity as a wife. The women characters in Moynahan's interpretation are passive, simple objects to be hunted down by the man with the gun.

The depiction of madness in canonical literature also shows the masculine bias of patriarchy. Shoshana Felman has shown how in Balzac's story "Adieu," masculine reason schemes to capture and master, indeed metaphorically rape, the woman by the same token. Representation of the mad woman in male writing shows her as losing her femininity. In "Adieu," Philippe cries: "I could bear everything if only, in her madness, she had kept some semblance of femininity" (qtd. in Felman 146). Phyllis Chesler in *Women and Madness* notes that in our culture "the ethic of

mental health is masculine" (68-69). Hamlet's and Lear's madness occupy centre-stage in the canonized works. Male madness is either due to a tragic flaw in the character or destiny, thus effectively absolving the male individual of weakness. The tragic mad hero assumes superhuman proportions. Consider also the cult of poetic madness in the Romantic era. "Kubla Khan" presents the ideal of the Romantic poet whose magical powers invoke dread as he has drunk honeydew and the milk of paradise. Madness is an expected condition, part of the definition of what and how women are. To conform to the stereotype of "womanly" or "feminine" is to display those characteristics that distinguished women from men. The sex-role stereotype for women was a prescription for failure, for victimization and in extreme cases for severe mental illness. Chesler comments: "What we consider 'madness,' whether it appears in women or in men, is either the acting out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one's sex-role stereotype" (56).

Arguing for a "literature of their own", feminist critics have examined obscure, misinterpreted works by women writers and canonised them into a feminist tradition. Gilbert and Gubar have posited a whole tradition among female writers of creating "submerged meanings, meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible 'public' content of their works" so that works "are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning" (73). In the female tradition they find patterns of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles function as social surrogates for their docile selves. They also find anxious and obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia and claustrophobia in this tradition. Reading through these anxieties they realize that the writers are trapped in both the

literary and figurative senses, in homes of men and in literary constructs of men. They struggle to free themselves from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art and society. From serving for centuries "as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size," women have devised covert ways of dramatizing the inner life by the fantasies of money, mobility and power (Woolf, *A Room* 44).

Women have been squirming or basking (depending on cultural conditioning) under the mastery of the patriarchal gaze for long. In his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. His particular examples centre around the voyeuristic activities of children, their desire to see and make sure of the private and forbidden. Freud related the question of sexuality to that of visual representation. He describes the child's difficult journey into adult sexual life through scenarios where the boy refuses to believe the anatomical difference between the sexes when he sees it for the first time or when he witnesses a sexual act. Our cultural existence is a product of how we look at the world but it is also, ineluctably, a product of how the world looks at us; of how we look at the world but it is also, ineluctably, a product of how the world looks at us; of how it constructs us through its unremitting gaze. The concept of gaze describes a form of power associated with the eye and with the sense of sight. The gaze always probes and masters, it does not just look. It penetrates and objectifies the body. The power of the gaze is ancient, as is testified by folklore and mythology. In the domain of popular tradition, it manifests itself as the evil eye.

Classical mythology embodied it in the form of the Medusa. Foucault has apprised us of the power of the gaze in disciplining bodies in his description of the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*. Psychoanalytic critics like Laura Mulvey have examined the gaze in terms of gender relations, proceeding from the premise that its operations play a key part in the construction and perpetuation of sexual power structures. Sexuality is inextricably intertwined with power and power, in turn, is inseparable from the eye. Laura Mulvey has made a seminal contribution to contemporary debates on the discourse of the gaze in relation to psychoanalysis and sexuality through her examination of the politics of vision in mainstream cinema. This debate can be said to pivot on an asymmetrical distribution of power which inscribes woman as the image and man as the bearer of the look. The masculine gaze of the camera objectifies the female, renders her passive while perpetuating dominating, normalizing patriarchal norms through her. Objectification devalues the female into stereotypes of femininity. (432-33)

This chapter on patriarchy would not be complete without a note on masculinities. It has now become the norm to speak of masculinities in the plural and explore the fluctuating constitution of hegemonic and subordinate forms of masculinity. One of the hegemonic forms of masculinity lies in its objectifying, impersonal and universal rational posture. Masculinist ideology has appropriated intellectuality, muscularity, autonomy and decision-making, in fact the whole of the public sphere, for itself. The manly ideal or normative masculinity focuses on the perfectibility of the male body, an outward sign of moral superiority and the inner strength of character. The battle field is a typical example of the masculine arena. Literature has amply recorded the trauma of soldiers forced to the battle front in the

name of patriotism. The masculine idea was intimately connected to the growth of the commercial, industrial bourgeoisie. Rousseau is part of this tradition which equated an individual's moral well -being with his physical fitness, as is done in *Emile*. In this idea feminine traits had to be controlled as they pointed to weakness. Such an ideal has often led to a sort of crisis in masculinity. The Carlylean male ideal with its fantasy of male bonding is history now. In a rigidly divided world in which heterosexuality is the norm homosexuals are deviants. The male, whose experience of sexuality is feminine, suffers agonies in such a world. At the same time resistance is put up in the form of the desire and attempt to go beyond the regular confines of heteronormativity.

Femininities as well as masculinities (used in the plural taking into consideration different cultural categories) have undergone revisions and permutations. We have come a long way from Friedan's "feminine mystique" or Woolf's "angel in the house," oppressive tropes of femininity. Intense feminist activity has contributed to this in a large way. While femininity is almost always associated with femaleness, it has become a strategy to attribute feminine traits to the powerless or the weak as femininity connotes weakness: natives in the colonial era, the poor, inferior ethnic groups etc. have thus been feminized in culture. Homosexual cultures have their own rhetoric of "masculine" or "feminine" traits. Resistance to perceived social models of femininity and masculinity opens up new configurations pointing to the mutability and instability of gender. The tortuous journey of feminist criticism can be charted from feminist critique to gynocriticism to gender based studies involving both male and female experience. "Woman," the unproblematic "character" of masculinist stories about the world has become a matter of

interpretation. The essentialist and constructivist positions have thrown up an ongoing debate on the subtleties of power and powerlessness. Much of what the essentialists took to be signs of female nature were, in fact, attributes assigned to women in a patriarchal culture. The constructivist counter-paradigm embraces such categories as performativity, masquerade and imitation, which are seen as cultural processes generating gender identities that only appear to possess a pre-existing natural or material substance. Women can be just as "masculine" as men. Biological men might simply pretend to be masculine out of obedience to cultural codes. Butler has pointed out how all gender is "performative," an imitation of a cultural code that refers to no natural substance. Critiquing femininity and masculinity, feminist criticism has systematically brought to light the gender/power relations in patriarchy.

CHAPTER 2

THE SUBJECT IN THE QUEST NARRATIVE

The notion of a rational, self-reflective subject that has dominated western thought since the Enlightenment is based on the displacement and/or derogation of its "other." Here rationality is privileged over emotionality, spirituality over materiality, the objective over the subjective. Cartesian dualism of the mind and the body valorizes an abstract, pre-discursive subject at the centre of thought and accordingly, derogates the body as the site of all that is understood to be opposed to rational thinking. The Hegelian Spirit progresses self-consciously towards absolute knowledge. Frequently compared to a bildungsroman, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, charts the metaphysical journey of the Spirit from error to enlightenment and from there to increased self-knowledge in a movement characterized as dialectical. The mind/body opposition packs the concept of a stable, unified and rational subject by excluding the bodily realm and all that, by analogy, it is held to represent: emotion, desire, materiality, need and so on. Knowledge for such a subject is attained through exercise of the rational mind. Traditional western thought, then, fails to conceive of the knowing subject as gendered, historically particular, social, embodied, interested, emotional and rational, whose body, interests, emotions and reason are fundamentally constituted by particular historical contexts.

The quest narrative, a masculinist literary enterprise parading as a humanist discourse, has for its subject a male hero who moves teleologically. Its story usually ends with the completion (or failure) of the heroic task. The bildungsroman is one

such quest narrative. The plot of the bildungsroman is derived from the quest motif in which the narrative examines a regular course of development in the life of the individual – the dissonances and conflicts of life appear as the necessary transit points of the individual on his way to maturity and harmony. The highest happiness of humankind is the development of the individual as the unified and substantial form of human existence – a linear progression towards knowledge and social integration. M.H Abrams describes the genre as a novel of education in which the subject passes from childhood through varied experiences – and usually through a spiritual crisis – into maturity and the recognition of his identity and role in society (*Glossary* 112). In all the definitions, the subject is conceived as a humanist subject but who is essentially male. Knowledge is out there for the asking and is generated through rational contemplation. The teleological move is towards a reproduction of existing social structures and values in relation to class, gender and race. Thus the plot presupposes social options available only to men and describes human development exclusively in male terms. According to Lukacs, humanism, based on a congruity between the individual and the world he inhabits confirms the humanist premise that the individual can find "responses to the innermost demands of his soul in the structures of society" (133). This congruity is undercut when the individual is engendered. To foreground gender, which is the purpose of this study, would be to debunk the humanist claims. The subject of humanism is disembodied, ungendered, and unmarked by social and discursive differences, for, this subject exists prior to its insertion in discourses and social practices.

Displacing the male paradigm of the traditional bildungsroman with its rootedness in Enlightenment philosophy, feminist critics have foregrounded a female bildungsroman which contextualizes repressive environmental factors, pain, disillusionment and connectedness rather than individualism. Disruption of linear form and coherent identity is an essential feature of the genre (Feng). In her *Feminist Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, Patricia Waugh labels the female bildungsroman written during the sixties and seventies as "novels of liberation", coming straight from the tradition of liberal feminism (22). Here Waugh is criticizing the single-minded quest for an "essential" female selfhood, which often is merely modelled after the male version. Despite her anti-essentialist criticism of the liberal female bildungsroman, Waugh also points out that the pursuit of a unitary self is a necessary stage before an alternative constructivist view of the subject can be established (13). In this linear pursuit the female subject has to engage in a laborious struggle to construct a textual and historical subject. In *Alice Doesn't* Teresa de Lauretis defines "experience" as a continuous process by which subjectivity is constructed:

> For each person, therefore, subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world. On the contrary, it is the effect of that interaction which I call experience; and thus it is produced not by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective, engagement in the

> practices, discourses and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning and affect) to the events of the world.
>
> (159)

This theorized, revalued concept of experience reinstates subjectivity into discursive formation. The subject-in-process is thus gendered through a "stylised repetition of acts" (Butler, *Gender Trouble*140). The subversive potential lies in disrupting that repetition causing "gender trouble" which would pave the way for contesting the very epistemological bases of gender and thereby propel political and social change. The troubling fact about gender trouble is the way in which it fails to recognise the pain, alienation and crisis involved in disrupting the status quo.

In the texts of D.H. Lawrence and Doris Lessing can be detected a crisis in masculinity and femininity respectively for the main protagonists which is the focus of exploration in this chapter. The bildungsroman genre to which the "Children of Violence" series and *Sons and Lovers* belong, present themselves as texts wherein the engendering of the subject may be ideally explored. This genre, with its pretensions to a humanist project, deconstructs itself as a gendered project more suited for the representation of the inner life of the male subject. At the same time, in *Sons and Lovers*, we are confronted with Paul who as a feminised subject shaped by dominant discourses of class and gender, feels subjected to these discourses to such an extent that he offers resistance by way of aggressive masculine behaviour, especially in his relationships with women. On the other hand Martha, the hero of the "Children of Violence" series, is foregrounded as a masculinized subject who goes through the feminist phase of protest typical of the social context of second wave

feminism, violating the normalized code of society, but who finds her linear progress disrupted frequently by inscribed codes of gender. Refusing the imposition of the patriarchal gaze, Martha is seen attempting to exchange her sign status (silent bearer of meaning) for that of a manipulator of signs, thus threatening the disciplining culture which appears naturalized. In the process of inscribing themselves as subjects in the social discourse, Martha and Paul fall prey to repetitive patterns of repression and resistance thus proving Foucault's thesis that the central mechanisms of power are not just repressive but constitutive. Bakhtin's will to dialogism could be an empowering model here, as it shows how to undermine powerful (authoritative) discourses at the site of the carnivalized body, the self which masquerades in authoritative life. The opposition between the surveillant gaze and the disruptive voice constitutes the structure of these texts, in whose language could be located gendered voices. The quest narrative, culturally coded as masculine should produce a different outcome for a male subject and a female subject which will be explored here. The self is fashioned through the interplay of Bakhtinian polyphonic voices undercut by gender.

Doris Lessing herself has called the "Children of Violence" series a bildungsroman, thus linking her work to the nineteenth century realist tradition in which she was soaked. Angered at the unsympathetic reception accorded to the first two volumes of the "Children of Violence" series she writes: "Not one critic has understood what I thought should have been obvious from the first chapter where I was at pains to state the theme very clearly: that this is a study of the individual conscience in its relations with the collective" (The Small Personal Voice18). Here

Lessing is assuming the idea of society as a neutral area within which each individual is free to pursue her own development and her own advantage as a natural right. In the same essay she says: "Once a writer has a feeling of responsibility, as a human being, for the other human beings he (sic) influences, it seems to me he (sic) must become a humanist, and must feel himself (sic) as an instrument of change for good or for bad" (10). Yet a reading of "Children of Violence" finds faultlines within Lessing's humanist vision. By foregrounding these gaps, the textual effects that contradict her humanist enterprise are revealed. Her "individual conscience" is interrogated to disclose its gendered dimension. Like the "censored tales" of Mrs.Quest and Mrs. Van Rensberg which is the secret of their enduring friendship, it is precisely what is left out, what is silenced, that holds the key to the continued survival of the humanist notion (MQ 15). As Sally Robinson puts it, "Gender constantly presses against Lessing's texts and it does so in the form of a disturbance – a disturbance in the humanist ideology of a singular and unified identity that supports, and is supported by, the quest plot which ostensibly structure them"(30). The five novels which make the novel sequence "Children of Violence" – *Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage, A Ripple from the Storm, Landlocked* and *The Four-Gated City* – explore the resistances and collusions involving female subjectivity in process within the existing power structures.

"Children of Violence" traces the unfolding consciousness of Martha Quest in her interaction with the world, which is fictional Zambesia in East Africa to her death in London in the last novel of the series. While the cultural and narrative conventions of the bildungsroman serve to keep Martha in a position of passivity

within the historical milieu by constructing a male subject as the receiver of privileged knowledge, Martha at the same time sets up an oppositional discourse by breaking the sequence and exploding the fixed architecture of the master narrative which is intersected at frequent points by her own collusions with the power discourses. Martha's quest for an identity, and a collective in which the identity can reside, takes the form of a quasi-linear, teleological narrative. The quest narrative is mobilized by a desire to install its 'hero' as a unified subject of cultural and historical processes. Martha seeks to insert herself as a unified subject but finds her attempts thwarted by the cultural and narrative conventions.

Young Martha, when the novel *Martha Quest* opens, is driven by ambition for appropriation and aggrandizement. Constrained by the Victorian codes of the establishment, she focuses all her anti-establishment revulsion on one of its representatives, Mrs. Quest, her mother. The values Martha prize have been constructed in opposition to her mother and all the Victorian values she represents. Martha is seen to construct an identity for herself through paradoxes of sameness and difference from her mother who is the spokeswoman for all the social injunctions about what women should be. Martha's ideal, created by a reading of nineteenth century literary canon (Whitman, Thoreau to name a few) is the model of the integrated individual which in the course of her life she sees as a predominantly male paradigm because it does not help her in constructing an identity for herself.

Assuming that only a male character can stand for the full range of human experience, moving through action and quest to achievement or failure through a linear male quest, the text produces a masculinized female subject. Going along the

lines of the male paradigm, the text attempts to produce an autonomous, free thinking subject represented as an intellectual. Martha is grateful to books for her discerning powers. As the narrative voice says: "And from these books Martha has gained a clear picture of herself, from the outside"(18). Her claims to intellectuality rest on her "detached observer" status from where she subjects everything to ruthless analysis. After each book she asks the question, "What has it got to do with me?"(272). Books and her solitary veld childhood are the lodestones to her knowledge. Finding no role models in the heroines of the past, she discerns "a gap between herself and the past" (20). Subject to the normative stories effortlessly perpetuated and perpetually figured by adults, Martha counters their stories by flaunting Havelock Ellis whose story of sexuality she imagines has some revelatory powers to free her from the preceding generation's repression, homogeneity and conventionality. Martha looks at the purportedly shocking and potentially disrupting text – because she images "herself...in the only way she was equipped to" (7) – through the beguiling lens of the "literature that was her tradition"(2). She does not yet fully understand why stories which have most indelibly and insidiously shaped her consciousness, have been those life enhancing fictions told with mesmerizing repetition and reinscribed between the covers of books. As *Martha Quest* opens with Mrs. Quest and Mrs. Van Rensberg weaving stories of domesticity on one side and Mr. Quest and Mr. Van Rensberg churning out their own tales concerning public affairs on the other, Martha feels caught between these two discursive positions and responds with irritation that "they should have been saying the same things ever since she can remember." Martha is an unwilling and helpless participant in this life,

"these two currents" with their over-determined but seemingly natural, unbridgeable divisions of gender, class and race running "sleepily inside her" (10). Here Lessing throws into question all the stories that Martha has grown up with and which shaped her subjectivity, by foregrounding the nature of storytelling itself – inevitably a process of censorship and reconstruction. This, when scrutinized, reveals not only the disparity between lived experience and its representation, but also the common reliance on storytelling patterns deeply etched into cultural and individual consciousness through frequent repetition. Such stories play a significant role in the incessant process of cultural reproductions and consolidation of power. Martha, with her discerning sense, realizes that the reason why the literature she has read fails to delineate the pain and agony involved in growing up was not because such problems were not present during those times but that they were heavily censored tales. She then narrates a parody of such a tale with herself as subject which could be written along these lines omitting the pain and confusion. Even visionary moments are subject to this erasure, which Martha calls a "lying nostalgia," that erases the pain and foregrounds only ecstasy in recapitulation (74). In this way, stories of romance, the family, state politics and the past – all filtered through an unquestioned assumption of essential divisions between male and female, black and white, rich and poor – interlock and cohere into the narrative structure that ultimately will afford Martha – and Lessing – the resources for both acquiescence and revolt. It is this compulsion to make sense of reality through narrations that is foregrounded in *The Golden Notebook.* All of Lessing's heroes attempt to grasp reality by laying bare the fictions of life. It is in this sense that Katherine Fishburn calls Lessing a

metafictonist. As Fishburn argues, Lessing "has never truly been the realist (we) critics thought her. She has only masqueraded as one, an authorial Wulf in sheep's clothing" ("Wor(l)ds within Words"187). By setting up an opposition to the language of realism through her self-conscious narrator and analysing protagonist, Lessing offers a critique of the fictions of life. In her essay on the construction of identity, Joan W. Scott uses the interesting term "fantasy echo" to develop the idea of identity as constructed through imaginary repetition. Repetition here is not exact since an echo is an imperfect return of sound. The time lag also presents a gap or silence suggesting the potential for subversion. In this sense all of Lessing's works are re-workings or repetitions of ideas she was preoccupied with in the early works.

Martha's aversion to Victorian ideals of sexuality, morality and sentimentality is manifest in her rebellious behaviour. She cuts and shapes her dress to suit her newly forming feminine contours in opposition to her mother's dress code for herself which was designed to suppress her growing sexuality. She raves against her father's cowardly dreaminess and sentiments about war and heroism. The text maintains a critical view of Mrs. Quest's nostalgia for Victorian culture as utopian imaginary. In constructing a hegemonic imperial identity for themselves by surrounding herself with the relics of Victorian culture (the dusty piano, the delicate crockery etc.), she is, in effect, making a pathetic attempt to prevent herself from being sucked into the primitivism of the unrelenting African veld. Martha models herself in opposition to her nagging, interfering mother. She develops an affinity for the natives and the disadvantaged or powerless against this imperial power model represented by her mother and the British settler community of Africa. This is the desire that results in

her daydream in the veld of a "golden city, set foursquare" where no divisions prevailed and this ideal propels her towards Left politics later (21).

Martha leaves home in a bid for autonomy and self determination or as the family tales would have it, in search of adventure. Adventure is described by Sara Ruddick as a "quintessential mother-free notion" (qtd. in Huston 709). Adventure comes to disobedient daughters as the story of Red Riding Hood reveals. Most of the fairy tales present absence of mother, either through death or other means like running away as a prerequisite to adventure. The narrative has two strands - one pertaining to the social self Matty and the other to her thinking, evaluating, creating self, Martha. The narrative given from the point of view of Matty is ambitious, masculinized and linear, and it presents Mrs. Quest as the villain of the piece who evokes in Martha the feeling of "angry repudiation" which as Angela McRobbie says, has been the characteristic of second wave feminism. Martha has in Kristevan terms "abjected" her mother, which puts her in a position where her mother is both inside and outside her. Complete repudiation is not possible, and this would account for the patterns of resistance and collusion to historical forces that Martha repeatedly enacts. At the same time, the omniscient narrative, through infantilizing Mrs. Quest, seeks to emphasize her positionality as the victim of patriarchy: "...for the essence of Mrs. Quest was that she could never be censured for anything, she was so much of a victim. Victims cannot be blamed" (289). The name Martha Quest itself is an oxymoron in the sense that it brings together two contradictory ideas. Martha is reminiscent of the biblical character, Martha, sister of Lazarus and Mary and friend of Jesus, who is seen always as a down-to-earth domesticated woman, whereas Quest

reminds us of adventure relating to the ambitious hero of quest myth. Likewise Martha Quest blends her practical mother's and dreamer father's qualities within her. These two aspects of Martha's personality, with their subversive potential, split the narrative into two, undercutting the humanist vision and gendering it. Martha, constructed by the humanist stories of masculinity and femininity and the iconoclastic authors that she reads, tries to insert herself into the social script, simultaneously writing her own script.

The cultural and narrative conventions that keep women in a position of emotionalism and passivity, to which she has been subjected in her childhood, is consciously rejected by Martha as she chooses to align herself with subject positions encoded as masculine. Paralleling this are her unconscious desires for patriarchal womanhood. Gendered subjectivity disturbs the humanist ideal of a unified self. Split between masculine and feminine selves, Martha struggles to retain a sense of wholeness through intellection. Thus we see her holding herself in control and not giving in to emotions whatever the circumstances. She frequently denies her emotions to herself and others by wallowing in the myth of "dispassionate investigation" which is part of a positivist epistemology. The fact that emotion also, as much as reason, is vital to systematic knowledge becomes clear only to the mature Martha of *The Four-Gated City.* She seeks to find freedom in a realm apart from the Victorian feminine resources and sensibility. Lessing's aversion for emotionality is also manifested through Marjorie in *Landlocked*, who, ashamed of her tears and her tension, cautions herself for fear of changing into the sort of woman she had always despised (339). It is women, not men, who are the enemy and in defence against any

alliance with the women who fail, Martha aligns herself with men. Working against an admission of female resemblance is the mistrust of female irrationality, an irrationality that crops up in Lessing's fiction not only as eccentricity, or paralyzing neurosis, but as in *The Grass is Singing*, a craziness (Sukenick).

Immediately after her visionary moment, when in an effort to have it again as a keepsake, Martha tries to force it, she is overwhelmed by a "wave of nostalgia" which made her angry "for it was a longing for something that had never existed, an ecstasy, in short" (MQ 75). Martha tries to fight a certain kind of nostalgia, within which "nothing mattered very much" with a cool dispassionate eye that would give her an outsider's position – a position outside of feminine context (PM 207). Nostalgia reads as feminine compliance. Martha is critical of her own emotions. In *A Ripple from the Storm,* the narrative voice says:

> ... Martha watched in herself the growth of an extraordinary, unpleasant and upsetting emotion, a self-mockery, a self-parody, as if she both allowed herself an emotion she did not approve of, allowed it and enjoyed it, but at the same time cancelled it out by mockery. It's as if somewhere inside me there was a big sack of greasy tears and if a pin were stuck into me they'd spill out. (289- 290)

Hysteria is also an unwelcome sentiment. In *The Four-Gated City* as Martha yields to hysteria, a censuring voice within her makes clear its "dislike of Martha" (518). For many of Martha's emotions, there is a countering intelligence that ensures

detachment and a split between thinking and feeling. For Martha, rationality is personality; it is intelligence that gives one a sense of self and preserves some approximation of integration in the face of invading irrationalities: "She was a lighthouse of watchfulness; she was a being totally on the defensive" (LL 22). Mrs. Van, in *A Ripple from the Storm*, the only woman of any stature amongst the older women, decided early in her marriage that "it was emotion...she must ban from her life. Emotion was dangerous. It could destroy her" (250). Martha, in *Landlocked* refuses to weep: "anguish, the enemy appeared: but no, she was not going to weep, feel pain, suffer" (76). Any emotion had the power to topple the lighthouse of watchfulness, the force needed for dispassionate judgment and thus sabotage the effort, to construct a unified self. Paradoxically all effort at unification is in vain as Martha finds herself keeping her different selves or rooms separate. Even in the midst of her passionate involvement with Thomas in *Landlocked* it is only by adding a new separate room to accommodate Thomas that her rational mind adjusts to the different experience (122). Like Anna Wulf in *The Golden Notebook*, Martha is unable to integrate herself through her rational mind. She is seen as being tightly controlled even in the face of her father's illness and in the presence of Caroline who does not know she is her mother. She only "felt resentful that her father was ill... she felt resentful that at any moment it might be used as an emotional argument against her" (MQ 166). In analysing Martha's action of leaving her child without "wailing, weeping, the wringing of the hands that make it, almost, an act within nature," the narrative voice satirises the Victorian melodrama of sentimentality on the part of the woman in connection with the concept of nurture (LL 289). The repugnance for

emotion of any kind and the need for rational control over feelings work out as a narrative of active masculinised resistance that runs through the bildungsroman.

Complementarily the forces of conformity work through the text and the subject is forced into collusion with the dominant authoritarian discourses. This pattern of resistance and repetition as the subject ceaselessly works towards coherence manifests the operations of gender. Though the desire shaping the text is the construction of a wholesome identity, historical forces, through the many discourses networking through the subject, thwart it at every point even as the manifest desire of the subject is foregrounded as a masculine one. Contradictory feelings confront her in the presence of her husband: "The instinct to comply, to please, seemed to her more and more unpleasant and false. Yet she had to reassure and kiss him before he left if she was not to feel guilty and lacking as a woman..."(PM 264). Emulating a kind of Bovaryism, which works as an inversion of traditional mimetic properties, Martha, in applying books to actual experience and as a discursive product is so taken up by the romantic ideal that in the early parts of the bildungsroman she constantly sees herself as a heroine in a "romantic tradition of love" (MQ 249). One finds her colluding with the feminine ideal. These desires (derived from reading) inscribe themselves on boring cultural stereotypes. The writers who seem to have something to say to her are those poets who offer reassurance that she is a unique individual with a conscience free to reflect on the injustice that she sees around her, who foster the humanist illusion of the free subject. The role of a rebel that they offer thus in no way challenges the ideological bases of the social structure. For that humanist ideology in constructing a subject

prior to discourse prompts people to believe they are subjects – the "I" of their own discourse – who can freely act upon their own environment. But the subject is also the subject of – that is, subjected to – discourses and thus of the values and beliefs inscribed in it. Martha's reading, therefore contributes to the formulation of two, equally false or equally true, ideal images – the rebel and the romantic heroine. These two contradictory impulses gendered as masculine rebellion and feminine compliance, both positions sanctioned by hegemonic discourses, serve to morally exhaust her though she could do nothing about it since "the very condition of her revolt, her very existence had been that driving individualism..." (MQ 224).

Rebellion as a product of driving individualism is a staple of the female bildungsroman since women are both inside and outside of the dominant circle. Martha's flight from the farm, facilitated by her friend Joss Cohen who finds her a job releases her from the passivity of life at the farm "like the kiss of the prince in the fairy tales," shedding an ambiguous light on her reflection of women's conventional role (MQ 268). The text is full of such contradictory statements which again draws attention to the resistance/collusion pattern typical of the female bildungsroman. At the sports club in town to which she's drawn she finds her womanhood being confirmed by male response. She desires to be "claimed" and "possessed" by a man even while intellectually rejecting these attitudes and feeling totally alienated from her lovers. This deep-rooted desire to belong is embodied in the image of the dance: each dance she attends puts her "under a spell" making her feel at one with the other dancers physically and emotionally. Martha's disappointment in men repeatedly drives her back to books as more trustworthy guides to living. She is thus presented

with a repetitive pattern of choices between men and books. But this is hardly a choice as men and books can offer nothing more than a reaffirmation of those values which her other self rejects. Both belong to the symbolic order where she, like Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing,* cannot find a satisfactory place. To be accepted in the dominant order she must either accept a subordinate place as a woman, or identify with masculine values inscribed in the symbolic order itself. Martha, a free woman in every sense, experiments with sex and finds herself getting disgusted whenever she is assigned object status by the male gaze. Even as she falls in line with the codes of femininity, she finds herself torn apart by "...violent fluctuations of mood; it was as if half a dozen entirely different people inhabited her body, and they violently disliked each other, bound together by only one thing, a strong impulse of longing; anonymous, impersonal, formless like water" (MQ 196). Martha could not name or give shape to her desires or feelings. Patriarchal language is limited in this sense. In *A Proper Marriage,* Martha fights contradictory feelings of resentment because Douglas does not woo her in the romantic way. At the same time she wants to repudiate the capricious female in her. At this juncture she seeks "some pattern of words which would neatly and safely cage what she felt - isolate her emotions so that she could look at them from outside" (73). Incidentally, the narrative voice rejects neat labels like "neurotic" to describe women like Martha who are torn apart by contradictory feelings that would make any further thought on the subject unnecessary (38). Language serving patriarchy would not be able to decipher such feelings of the "wild zone" and so would package it into a conventional form in alignment with stereotyped notions about women. In *The Four-Gated City* she

speaks of this habit. Even with regard to food there's a reduction in Martha's voracious appetite as she colludes with control of social codes with regard to femininity: she "could not eat without feeling guilty" (MQ 150). When she finally decides to marry Douglas it is a rebellious act to assert herself as a desirous object to men. The desire in the narrative which is towards freedom is again thwarted as "outside forces" force her hand. What Martha calls "outside forces" are actually inscribed within her as a historical product. The narrative takes pains to describe the wedding as something Martha was completely at odds with:

> It was odd that Martha, who thought of the wedding ceremony as an unimportant formula that must be gone through for the sake of society, was also thinking of it as a door which would enclose Douglas and herself safely within romantic love... (MQ 308).

In considering marriage as a door, which would "enclose" them both "safely" in romantic love, the narrative foregrounds the ambiguous nature of the institution of marriage as enclosure (imprisonment) and freedom (ideal romance).The language used reinforces this ambiguity. Mrs. Quest comes to " 'dress the bride' " and tells Stella that Martha was " 'quite wild with happiness' "(330). Using quotation marks for all the cliched terms used in connection with the bride, the narrative subverts the romantic atmosphere of happiness and fulfilment and interrogates the institution of marriage. Martha is a textual tool in whose narrative can be discerned the rupture of patriarchal discourse as well as a reinstatement of it. This should be seen as peculiar function of a masculine genre appropriated by a feminist text. With every incident

Martha finds there is a gulf between what is expected of her and what she wants. An invisible wall separated them. The survivor in Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* manages to pass through the wall to make sense of herself.

In spite of a narcissistic urge never to spoil her body by pregnancy, she is sucked into a vortex of passivity by it. Like the people at the sports club whose bodies and faces are "contorted into poses required of them" whereas their eyes remained "serious, anxious, even pleadings," she is divided by a need to succumb to it and the other paradoxical need to resist it (MQ 212). Describing Martha as a protean subject who was "formless, graceless and unpredictable, a mere lump of clay" the text unfixes her identity and foregrounds her as a subject in process, subject to the vacillations of discursive power (PM 11). Martha's unkempt appearance suggests her change with marriage which had turned her into something else – "married, signed and sealed away from what she was convinced she was" – as an object of desire for patriarchal consumption (PM 14). While talking of abortion, the narrative makes a spatial displacement and juxtaposes Martha with a native woman with three children whom she sees as "something simple, accepting – whole" in contrast to her own protean image (PM 26). This juxtaposition serves to put in dialectical language the options available to Martha – feminine compliance or masculine rebellion which are no choices at all. It is similar to the terrible decision of choosing between town or farm, 'either/or', not 'both/and'. The text projects the ideal of 'both/and' on to nature with its "frank embrace between the lifting breast of the land and the deep blue warmth of the sky" (MQ 311). As in Lawrence, nature foregrounds unity and culture, division. As their car hurtles towards the farm, Martha

thinks that freedom, "that exquisite flight," lies only in the "free and reckless passage through warmed blue air" (MQ 312). The freedom of choice is a temporary mirage since all options are inscribed within the patriarchal context.

The text uses the image of a ferris wheel at the fair, which she can see outside her window to symbolise Martha's predicament. The mythic pattern of cyclicity capturing Martha within its nightmare of repetition is reinforced by another image – a perfect starry shaped flower buffeted by the wind, having no will of its own (PM33). The flower symbolises Martha's rootedness in patriarchal destiny. The perfection of the flower projecting its symmetry in four directions repeats the four gated city of Martha's vision and anticipates her ideal city in *The Four-Gated City* The moving ferris wheel is juxtaposed against the passivity of Martha watching it from the room. Repeated three times in different contexts, the ferris wheel at first is the great wheel whose lights mingled with the lights of the constellation and there is a sense of peace in its turning, at this juncture, when it is the force of destiny everyone is confronted with (PM32). In the next context it becomes "a damned wedding ring" figuring the destiny as one exclusively for women "whose great circle of dragging lights... continued to flicker through her sleep like a warnings." "Martha could not sleep while the wheel turned and churned out music" (38). At this point, Douglas who is preparing to join the war efforts finds it irritating when Martha clings to him for reassurance speaking in the ancient female voice which he found irritating. When Douglas returns after one year, Martha "saw, for the first time that season, the shape of the big wheel in the window. They must have set it up that morning. She suddenly wanted to cry" (271). The constricting enclosure of the world of marriage

repeats itself. In another scene, Lessing stretches the analogy of woman with nature to subversive lengths. In a fit of rebellion, angered by the husbands who banded together, Martha and Alice, fully pregnant, go out into the pouring rain completely naked and plunge into the long rough wells of saturated grass. Martha jumps into a big pothole brimming over with muddy water. Buried up to her knees in heavy mud, with the red water reaching nearly to her shoulder, she was at one with the earth, with nature. The frogspawn clinging on to a blade of grass and a frog watching her connect her own pregnant body to the creative power of nature. Empowered by this thought, they return, "free and comfortable in their minds, their bodies relaxed and tired; they did not care now that their men preferred other company to theirs" (55). This ritual purification in the rain had jerked them out of passivity, and empowered them, linking them with the archetypal Great Mother.

Reading domesticity as passivity in the cultural coding, Martha jettisons marriage and also her daughter in her onward quest. Martha steels herself to imagine that there was just a bond of responsibility between her daughter Caroline and herself. As she says, "the rhythm of Caroline's needs was in sharp discord with her own; she had justified herself, she did what was necessary, but it was her sense of duty which regulated her" (279). This is evident in the way Martha abruptly breaks her chain of anxious thought about the possibility of Caroline being ill: "Perhaps she was not eating well, perhaps she... Martha stopped herself..." (294). Several times in the text, Martha blanks out her thoughts about Caroline. Only through erasure can she cope with the loss of her daughter even though it was her own decision to leave her. The desire in the narrative being for freedom and autonomy for the main

protagonist, it provides justification for Martha's behaviour. The hysterical Douglas, feminised to a repulsive extent, is enough excuse for Martha to leave him. Only in the case of Caroline, the narrative maintains a judicious silence. *A Proper Marriage* disengages itself from what is considered proper. Mr. Maynard's comment on Martha's parentage beautifully sums up the imperative behind Martha's action as the revolutionary ideal of liberation: "I suppose with the French revolution for a father and the Russian revolution for a mother, you can very well dispense with a family" (380). The omniscient narrative describes Martha's quest as the quest for a "woman who combined a warm accepting femininity with being what Martha described vaguely but to her own satisfaction as a 'person'. She must look for her" (229). Ironically the patterns of resistance and repetition show the impossibility of combining both. When she relaxed and gave in to the joy of looking after Caroline, she felt it "would be a disloyalty and even a danger to herself. Cycles of guilt and defiance ruled her living..." (224). As Katherine Fishburn points out, *A Proper Marriage* "de(con)structs the fiction of wedded bliss that has managed to seduce even the sceptical and uncooperative Martha Quest" ("Wor(l)ds within Words" 193). The text juxtaposes the emptiness of Martha's marriage to the callow and insensitive Douglas Knowell to the more meaningful political activities of her leftist friend. Here too Martha relies on books rather than on "hand books," to explain the situation and takes consolation from the fact that her problems are the universal problems of women. While going through a dramatic monologue session with Caroline, she despairingly states how " '...you and I are just victims, my poor child, you can't help it, I can't help it, my mother couldn't help it, and her mother...' " (PM 227).

Though dependent on books, she sometimes could not find words to express the sense of fatality that engulfed her frequently, which led her to the conclusion that books could be lying: "Or do you suppose they didn't tell the truth, the novelists?" By discrediting these fictions of life in her own fiction, Lessing seems to be in the process of creating a new fiction "for a new kind of woman in the world" where women like Martha can find themselves (229). In foregrounding the destructive effects of all fictional constructs in life, Lessing, according to Fishburn is bent on a metafictional attack on the fictions of romance, marriage, motherhood, politics and so on which pose as humanist discourses. The narrative, by juxtaposing two images of motherhood, the flattering one of Madonna with the child against the "middle aged woman who had done nothing but produce two or three commonplace and tedious citizens in a world that was already too full of them" posits Martha as a discerning subject, an intellectual heroine who is nevertheless sucked into the whirlpool of patriarchal conditioning (PM 316). Trapped in a "doll's house" but highly conscious of the trap Martha escapes into the idealistic and "glamorous" world of Marxism.

Whichever way Martha turns, be it myths of romance or those of politics, she is doomed to disappointment as is evident in *A Ripple from the Storm*. Tearing herself away from the "egotism of maternity," Martha plunges into leftwing politics with full knowledge of its limitations (PM 279). At one of her first meetings with the Left, the narrative, focalizing on Martha muses:

> This incident, like every other, seemed to provide everyone here with the comforting sense of repetition, the safe, the

> familiar. These people, who all knew each other so well, who exchanged understanding glances... these people had been meeting once a month for years, to reassure themselves that their ideas were shared by enough others to make them valid.... Martha found herself succumbing to something rather like fear; the old fear as if nets were closing around her that particular terror of the very young.
>
> (216)

Here again is the dialectics of resistance and collusion. Plunging herself enthusiastically into Left activism, she felt that "for the first time in her life she had been offered an ideal to live for" (315). Lessing, here, invokes the familiar metalanguage of Marxism to make it abundantly clear how language systems seduce and isolate the heroine. *A Ripple from the Storm* reeks of Marxist jargon, as various "comrades" try to impose their vision of the future on a basically indifferent society. The left group to which Martha aligns herself in her attempts to follow her vision of a noble, creative, undivided world soon divides itself into idealistic intellectuals like Anton bent on analysing situations in a parodic manner and the more practical ones like Tommy and Piet. In a critique of the rhetoric of left politics, the narrative voice of Martha shutting her mind on the speeches, comments that "the shortest acquaintance with politics should be enough to teach anyone that listening to the words people use is the longest way around to an understanding of what is going on" (ARS 18).

Martha's take-off into left wing politics had its roots in two incidents she had in her childhood in the veld – one, a visionary moment of a cosmic unity with nature, which brought home the fact of "her smallness, the unimportance of humanity" (MQ 75) and the other of a daydream she had of a "noble city, set foursquare," inhabited by people of all kinds, uncorrupted by the divisive forces of society (21). These two ideal moments then become the standard by which other experiences are tested. Though rarely able to live up to the challenges presented by these experiences that have marked her permanently, Martha has knowledge of the potential for wholeness in the individual and in society many others are out of touch with. These moments act as touchstones to test the myriad experiences that encountered in life. Nancy Topping Bazin has examined the literary presence of epiphany in Lessing in comparison with its presence in D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce (87). While in the two earlier writers such moments mark the climax of the novel, in Lessing the revelatory experience triggers off an ideal which is then the yardstick for social experiences. The tension between life and art is temporarily resolved through these transitory moments. Such moments also foreshadow Lessing's later interest in Sufism. It is an agonising moment wherein Martha experiences the dissolution of all values and hierarchical order. All distinctions destroyed, "... she knew futility; that is, what was futile was her own idea of herself and her place in the chaos of matter" (MQ 75). Even though such moments require the total transformation of the individual out of the new knowledge acquired, existing powerful discourses prevent this to a large extent. The highlight of the revelation, then, is a consciousness of Martha's own imperfect nature, thus calling for a recurrence of it so that she can learn

and change. This divided consciousness of a whole self opposed to split selves helps the development of Martha and one sees her striving toward this whole, undivided ideal even in her pursuit of Left politics. Thus there is a linear progression which is constantly undercut by a spiral progression of consciousness evolving from the melting pot of social life.

Martha's marriage of convenience to Anton, the cold, tightly controlled, disciplined political analyst merges the two themes of romance and politics. It eventually peters out into an unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism. Martha is at first carried away by Anton's high sounding rhetoric of communism, which so ideally merged with her own ideals. It connected her with "those parts of her childhood she still owned, the moments of experience which seemed enduring and true; the moments of illumination and belief" (ARS 73). Martha now attempts to create order, a pattern out of the chaos of her thoughts by the magic wand of Marxism. She finds in political activity another mode of self representation and a romantic utopian ideal to live for. At the same time, the narrative presents the communists and their work ironically. All bombast and no real outcome seems to be the message conveyed. The text uses the device of critical realism to critique the political activities of the communists. Voices of dissent come from one of the airmen, a young Scotsman who considers the speeches "too high falutin" for him (ARS 75). The blacks still live in abject poverty buying "The Watchdog," the journal of the party, with money they can ill afford. Tommy offers another critique through his confused thoughts. He cannot comprehend the logic of reading books on communism about which he can understand little. Tommy's integrity makes him

uncomfortable about his racial thoughts when he is a member of the communist party. The gulf between theory and practice is emphasized when Anton dismisses the people at the coloured quarters because they have neither the strength of numbers nor economic strength to be reckoned as a political force. On analysis, the party agrees that since whites cannot make contact with blacks they would just sell "The Watchdog" in the coloured quarters once a week and nothing else. The text thus satirically presents the communists as just indulging in talk of revolution, while, at the same time, maintaining the status quo.

Two dreams Martha has at this time prophetically predict her disengagement with left politics. One is of her standing at the seaside water lapping about her, watching the ships pass her by and the other is of a giant lizard fossilized or petrified in rock. Both symbolize the deadlock into which she had fallen. The first flush of idealistic fervour has given way to a critical attitude. As Martha points out to Jasmine, they "talk and talk and analyse and make formulations, but what are we doing? What are we changing?" (ARS 118). She then resolves to keep herself "free and open, and try to think more, try not to drift into things" (ARS 222). Mrs. Van der Bylt is the only powerful woman character in the political arena and she is able to maintain her power status because she has managed to balance home front and political front. She puts on a masquerade of femininity with her husband and children and retains the tough exterior for her public space. Even the women of the left group are marginalized, playing second fiddle to men, leaving the decision making to them. Jasmine, in spite of years of serving the party, still remains at the fringes, as secretary or some such insignificant post. Marjorie, one of the party members, puts it

succinctly when she says: "As far as I can see when we get socialism we'll have to fight another revolution against men..." (317). Martha is still split between nostalgia for lost romance, tender loving companionship and a self-parody, that is, making it happen. Deceived into a romantic notion of the ideal through the ideology of literary fictions, Martha still searches for such a relationship. The string of failed relationships is an implicit commentary on happy endings. The realist mode of fiction offers a subversive critique of life's fictions, thus, in a narrow sense, making it metafictional. In this sense, as Fishburn states, "all women's writing is metafictional, because it all, in one respect or another, comments on the fictions we read or the fictions we live by("Wor(l)ds within Words"201) or as Miller says, "they are about the plots of literature itself, about the constraints the maxim places on rendering a female life in fiction" ("Emphasis Added" 356). Hence the constant futile search on the part of Martha for a pattern of words to cage some idea she has. The dialogic mode adopted within the realist tradition constantly questions, both thematically and formally, the tradition of relations, and undermines the concept of the unified, essential individual self which is central to philosophical humanism.

Landlocked and *The Four-Gated City*, the next two novels in the series, take that necessary step, going on a little further in questioning the capacity of the realist tradition to deal with the radical experiences of the female subject that lie outside the parameters of humanism. Martha's helplessness in bringing about social or personal change in tandem with her dream of the ideal city, a symbol of psychic integration, reflects a conflict of interest in the novelist herself. This could account for the appearance of *The Golden Notebook* at this juncture, that is, between *A Ripple from*

the Storm and *Landlocked* where a formal experiment is carried out to explore the link between empirical experience and its transmutation into art. A preoccupation with the non-rational areas of knowledge and experience is the resultant focus in the last volume of the series, which is already hinted at in the penultimate book of the "Children of Violence" quintet in the character of Thomas who becomes mad. In fact Thomas becomes a brooding presence over the last volume. Madness becomes more subversive than Marxism with its wide gulf between theory and practice. To Jean Pickering, Marxism and madness are the two faces of Lessing's myth since both imply group solidarity, initiation into a cult and religious aura of the future in their hands. This collective sense is aligned to the vision of the golden city. Madness serves as an insight into aspects of experiences not consciously realised in the normal world. This had been hinted at in the two ways of reading elaborated by the narrative view of Martha in the first volume:

> For there are two ways of reading: one of them deepens and intensifies what one already knows; from the other, one takes new facts, new views to weave into one's life. She was saturated with the first, and needed the second.
>
> (MQ 44)

Her need for the second is explored in the last book of the series as an epistemological search. Brief descents into the self become the staple of *The Golden Notebook* and *The Four-Gated City*. Lessing's preoccupation with madness, allowing her characters to wrestle with negative and positive shadow selves, doubles and surrogate selves signify her increasing disaffection with rational forms of knowledge

like Marxism as a means of bringing about change in the world. The female subject attempts to come to terms with the world by embracing both reason and unreason. The subjected self hides her visionary powers but is educated by it and makes use of it as a strategy for survival. Madness, thus, subverts the linear progression of the bildungsroman. Since Martha induces madness in herself through fasting and solitude, it becomes therapeutic and not traumatic as it used to be for the characters in nineteenth century novels. R.D. Laing's influence on Lessing is obvious here. The search for a unitary self is discarded and multiple selves are accepted. Martha of *The Four-Gated City* remembers the earlier Martha Quest:

> That girl, shrill, violent, cruel, cold, using any weapon fair or foul to survive, as she had had to do, as everyone's first task was to do, had been stripped off her, had gone away, was simply a character worn for a day or two, a week or two, a year, half a dozen years, by Gwen or Jill or anybody else. (387)

Personality is acknowledged as variable and layered here. Martha, who had once hated herself when she was Matty, comes to England after the war as a very different woman. Dismissing her earlier fears of the multiple selves inhabiting her body and the violently reactive Martha as a necessary phase in her personality, Martha has now accepted herself as a multifaceted person. The sixteen year old Martha who "was confused because she could see herself only in sections, because of the smallness of the mirror" (MQ 28) and who later, in Mamie's house sees a "vision of someone not herself" in a full length mirror for the first time has already acknowledged

unconsciously the impossibility of a unified self (107). The mature Martha does not fear her multiple selves. The earlier Martha who had conceived herself as a pre-discursive self, now understands herself as a discursive production. She deliberately experiments with different roles which she takes on with the change of a coat, clothes or speech. These roles never threaten to destroy her identity. She is closer to understanding and accepting the layers of the self than she has ever been. A very early analogical evidence of her new acceptance of layering appears when, in London, the ruined post- war city, Martha picks at the layers of papering in a bombed-out house. She counts thirteen layers and imagines the lives that chose, touched and lived with each layer.

Earlier in the series Martha uses the word 'repetition' to stand for fatality and in *Landlocked* names "the hound, repetition, her old enemy" (166). As Patricia Waugh comments, for feminism, rational explanations of the sources of women's oppression, explored through consciousness-raising had failed to elucidate the sources of the intransigence of desire, people's resistance to change, and their compulsion to repeat patterns of behaviour non-conducive to their well-being or happiness" (Feminist Fictions 36). Personal relationships cannot be altered simply by rationalization of the social structure. Traditional conceptions of subjectivity, which opposed reason and feeling, could not clearly explain this pattern of resistance and repetition. Despite Freud's work on sexuality and the unconscious undermining normative views of subjectivity, Freud ultimately denies any link between masculinity and femininity. Refusing to privilege psychoanalysis alone, Lessing shows Martha as a subject shaped by the discourses of colonialism, Marxism,

patriarchy and canonical literature. The unconscious and its desires are to be considered in the light of all these shaping discourses. Fearing the tyranny of family, Martha has rejected her parents and her daughter. Though never explained clearly, the act of leaving her daughter, Caroline, with Douglas, is meant to free Caroline from the tyranny of the mother, from a repetition of the Martha/May relationship. The maternal idea is clearly a cultural construct or "conspiracy." Martha's resistance to occupying a maternal subject position stems from the fact that authoritative representations which equate woman and mother delimit the range of positions available to female subjects in a multiplicity of ways. These representations reproduce gender normatively. Once a woman enters the cycle of reproduction, any other mode of production is closed off for her. In the first four novels of the series, female figures like Mamie and Maisie, both unambitious, unskilled, uncomplicated, fun-loving girls are surrogate selves of Martha, unacted parts of herself, all abjected, like she had done her mother. Such repetitions and doublings imply projections of the self which multiply from the parent couple of the series, Alfred and May Quest, according to Claire Sprague ("Without Contraries" 100). Sprague has also recorded the profusion of A names for men and M names for women, a fact that invites us to look beneath the conventional linear progression of the novels, to the uncanny mystery underlying them, which distorts the ordinary realistic surface of the novels (103). Subjugated knowledges like the anti-memoirs of Thomas, Dorothy and Martha signify chaos like the Notebooks of Anna Wulf and are reminders of the questionable truth of the shaped work. In this way the realistic mode is interrogated throughout the series.

In *Landlocked,* Martha, who had earlier rejected the "biology-is-destiny" theory of gender and sexuality, gives in to it in her affair with the farmer-intellectual, Thomas Stern in a Lawrentian manner. Her earlier marriages are now seen as "terrible crimes" and eroticism becomes a matter of moral law. Here Martha undergoes one of the most penetrating changes in the series. She becomes aware of herself, her mind, psyche and being first through another (Thomas) then through herself. As subject, and as object, she is made part of a particular, often overbearing and repetitive love that colours her view of the world without, while working upon her identity from within. Once again Martha positions herself as lack, as empty space, in relation to a man. The narrative exposes the irony of Martha's assumption that this is "natural" thus: "Of course her real nature had been put into cold storage for precisely this, but when what she had been waiting for happened at last, then she discovered that creature in her self whom she had cherished in patience, fighting and reluctant" (LL 124). Here Martha's "real nature" corresponds to the "creature in herself" the sexual Martha that Thomas calls into being; but the fact that Thomas creates this Martha suggests that her sexuality is not as "natural" as she might think. This contradiction draws Martha back from her belief in the natural complementarity of heterosexuality by suggesting that even something as seemingly "natural" as sexuality is subject to a particularly powerful form of social regulation. As in Butler's view, sex is always already gendered. Her marriage to Anton is an "open marriage," but Martha feels her affair with Thomas to be a transgression of social norms and feels it in her body. That is why she vomits when she remembers Anton, her husband (142). This reaction is a projection. It indicates that Martha has internalized social

sanctions against adultery and that the rhetoric of "free love" does not automatically carry with it the appropriate subjective response. Martha, here, experiences two contradictory subject positions: as a subject of the permissive discourse of sexuality and as a subject of the discourse of marriage. Her rational self understands the property relation in marriage as bourgeoisie and so false in her Marxist interpretive perspective but her imbrications in practices of discursive production affect her on a different level – what she would characterize as an "irrational" level. The contradictions between these two positions are projected on to the body and internalised as a conflict between "nature" and cultural laws in order that the "rational" Martha can retain a non-contradictory subjectivity. Nevertheless linear progression is disrupted in the willingness to keep an open mind against rigidity so that non-rational desires are also allowed free rein and leaves a foretaste of the acceptance of subjugated irrational knowledges and multifaceted personality in *The Four-Gated City*. Her relationship with Thomas has helped her to dissociate sex from love. Sex is natural whereas love is a cultural construct with its own constraints. It is in this sense that Martha considers being with Thomas to be "as natural as breathing" (269). The family, politics as well as female collectives bring nothing but disillusionment to Martha because a collective can maintain its homogeneity only through exclusion. Lessing seems to equate the collective with a static notion of humankind, bolstered by binary oppositions that exist in complementary relations. Even the female collective, by exclusion of coloured and black women, is seen as wanting. After Thomas's madness and death, Martha divorces Anton and leaves for England taking Thomas's eccentric manuscript, overlaid with insane notes, with her.

Transcendence and utopia are abiding images in the novel sequence. At the same time the narrative does not advocate a stance of silence and exile similar to that of Stephen Daedalus. Even in the first realistic volume, the impulse towards the collective, towards the discovery of an identity in relationship which would allow both connection and autonomy, is linked to a utopian desire which gradually displaces the narrative modes of realism with those of fantasy, dream and desire. The collective, in spite of failures, is always sought in different forms. As Chodorow has argued in *Reproduction of Mothering*, women's gender identity is strengthened by a relational view of self. In "The Small Personal Voice," Lessing says, "One sees man as the isolated individual unable to communicate, helpless and solitary; the other as collective man with a collective conscience. Somewhere between these two, I believe, is a resting point, a place of decision, hard to reach and precariously balanced" (15). Throughout the series "development" is a problematic notion for Martha. She does, though, live serially different aspects of her unformed (but already divided) personality taking charge at different times. Initially seeking her ideal of human community in left-wing party politics, she later experiments with sexuality as a way to an "impersonal sea" finally ending up in the basement of the Coldridge's loosely knit, bohemian household in *The Four-Gated City* with its blueprint for the future. As Anna Wulf, in *The Golden Notebook* notes, the only role available is the role of "boulder pusher" fighting to establish truths about a vast range of issues of which gender is only one:

> There's a great black mountain. It's human stupidity. There are a group of people who push a boulder up the mountain,

> When they've got a few feet up, there's a war, or the wrong sort of revolution, and the boulder rolls down – not to the bottom, it always manages to end a few inches higher than when it started. So the group of people put their shoulders to the boulders and start pushing again. (544)

Butler's gender as stylized acts of repetition takes meaningful force here. In the Preface to *The Golden Notebook* Lessing writes:

> The way to deal with the problem of 'subjectivity', that shocking business of being preoccupied with the tiny individual who is at the same time caught up in such an explosion of terrible and marvellous possibilities, is to see him (sic) as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general, as indeed life always does, transforming a private experience... into something larger: growing up is after all only the understanding that one's unique experience is what everyone shares.(13)

Lessing is concerned to set up dialogues between self and group, between 'natural' and social bodies, and these dialogues are spread over several works. She seems to be questing for that which Lois McNay describes in *Foucault and Feminism* when she says:

> In my view; a key task for feminists in future is... to explore, for example, how outlining basic normative standards need not necessarily threaten the autonomy of the individual; how individual difference is better protected in a social environment based on tolerance and certain collective standards, rather than on a laissez-faire individualism; how a politics of self-actualization need not lapse inevitably into introversion but may contribute to wider forms of progressive social change. (197)

At the end of the Preface to *The Golden Notebook*, Anna Wulf says, "And when a book's pattern and the shape of its inner life is as plain to the reader as it is to the author – then perhaps it is time to throw the book aside, as having had its day, and start again on something new" (21). Having explored Communism and learnt from it the realities of political power, Lessing moves on to explore how the non-rational may expand human kind's perception of itself. In *The Four-Gated City* Martha develops a radically new position. The stasis, thematic and formal, in *A Ripple from the Storm* gives way to an inward movement in *Landlocked,* accelerated to a large extent in *The Four-Gated City.* It is no longer a question of moving on, of achieving one's identity, but seeing oneself as part of a larger macrocosm. Ruth Whittaker finds in this novel, a concentric movement of the narrative rather than a linear one, "with Martha at the centre of three overlapping worlds: the outside world of politics and wars, the immediate community of the Coldridge family, and the inner world of her expanding consciousness, Doris Lessing shows how these three circles

affect one another..." (54). In fact the novel constructs a solid and specific historical reality which shows striking similarities to Lessing's account of her own arrival in London in her autobiographical work "In Pursuit of the English." Unlike the earlier novels, the narrator's perspective is that of an outsider standing on the margins, observing the "centre" of that civilization which gave birth to her own. The narrative thus achieves more of a critical distance. Entering the household of Mark Coldridge, a wealthy writer, as his secretary, she still remains an outsider. Apparently free from her own family, she is in a position to "diagnose" the condition of family life here. Martha is called upon to look after Mark's son Francis, because his mother Lynda is unable to take care of him, being mad. Another child, Paul, son of Mark's brother, is also entrusted in her care as his mother has killed herself. These "children of violence", deprived of normal childhood experiences are a symptom of the sickness of Europe. Earlier on, her relationship with Thomas, the Jew, had made Martha conscious of the relation between the violence of the times and her own deepest self: "Perhaps when Thomas and she touched each other, in that touch cried out the murdered flesh of the millions of Europe... it was all much too painful, and they had to separate" (LL 199). Having lived through two wars, one through her parents, "Martha was the essence of violence; she had been conceived, bred, fed, and reared on violence" (242). The challenging idea is that violence instead of being irrational, is a product of man's obsessive use of reason to differentiate and divide society. Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor* deals with this theme. Rationalism is clearly on trial here. The nightmarish vision of violence, in society which outwardly seems to be calm, is projected in the newspaper cuttings, maps and other evidence Mark selects

and sticks on his study walls and ceiling. He charts what is really happening, opposing his vision of "reality" to the myths created by powerful discourses. Lynda, the mad woman in the basement, is another symbol of society's gradual breakdown and insanity. Mark's collage, in its special orientation, interrogates the verisimilitude of the realist narrative. In this way the realist mode is undercut by juxtaposing the myths which "naturalize" the existing order with cultural constructs that subvert the status quo. The nature/culture divide dissolves and apparently becomes seamless.

Martha's role in the Coldridge household seems almost ludicrously remote from her idea of herself. In fact, Mark, his sick wife Lynda and the children expose her to what is most disturbing in the culture. In them, the rationalist, progressive, secular assumptions are brought to a destructive test. The unprivileged notions on the other side of the binary divide assume importance and are placed centre stage. The narrative becomes impersonal; a collective consciousness invades the narrative, unmediated by the fiction of a personal destiny. The sea imagery in *Landlocked* functions as an impersonal current which is continued when in *The Four-Gated City* Lynda and Martha connect with it through their inner space journey. In most of Lessing's fiction, such a space is perceived as an alternative to the egotism bred by an over-rationalized culture and is linked persistently to the socially constructed psychic capacities of women. The grasping after "wholeness" which Lessing had traced so ironically in Martha's relations with the sports club or with the communist group now acquires a saving impersonality. The old utopian dream of the city still remains in the imagination of Martha and Mark. Martha's awareness of her own permanent self remains elusive, but she comes closer to realizing it once she is able to objectively

review her past in terms of the present. Arriving in London, she sees herself as "a soft dark receptive intelligence" (FGC 48). To develop this intelligence, she has to go beyond ordinary experience which she learns through her relationship with Lynda. She pursues her search for identity through her descents into the unexplored self. The two women use their dreams and fantasies as maps to the territory that lies outside normal experience. Lynda's telepathic powers which had resulted in powerful discourses excluding her as aberrant are valorised. Martha and others have to struggle to recall what their waking selves, education and society reject as nonsense. Subjugated knowledges open the door to a fuller understanding of historical reality. Normative humanistic rhetoric which posits the achievement of a unified self as teleological closure in quest narrative gives way to an open ending. The four gates to the four houses where Martha stays - the restaurant at the beginning, the Coldridge house, Jack's house where girls go to be broken in for their future as prostitutes and Paul's house where derelicts, misfits, sexual cripples and the maimed congregate under Paul's protective wing – are themselves microcosms of English society, barriers that close off exits. The connecting link to all the enclosures is Martha. The houses are both integrative and disintegrative, representing opposing strains. Human relationships are all symbiotic. Lessing thus presents not the geometrical perfection of a circle indicating completion but "fours" indicating all directions, negating completion, baffling expansion, intensifying the enclosed quest. The content finally achieves a form that allows no exit, except through the apocalyptic vision of a new technological world which ends the novel and which looks forward to Lessing's later

"space fiction". Opposition to prevailing normative discourses allow no closure, no escape except by going into a new socio-economic order.

Martha's development in Mark's house follows definite stages. She begins to remember the times alone with herself when she had gained insight. She learns to protect her right to those times. She experiences motherhood and through children broadens and deepens her understanding of herself and the times in which she lives. Lessing implies that motherhood can provide opportunities for insight only when it is disinterested and non-possessive. She pays debts and relives past experiences that she had not integrated and understood. She confronts her mother and understands how she had struggled to create an identity different from her mother's. She decides to pursue her own inner growth instead of a relationship and thus frees herself from the mythology of sexual love: "She had to stop being this helpless creature who clung and needed" (FGC 287). Finally she gains visionary powers through exploration of madness with Lynda. The powers Martha develops come from experiencing events more deeply than others by plugging into currents of energy. The myth of the therapeutic effect of psychoanalysis is ruptured when the therapy sessions drain Martha of her energy and leave her lethargic. Lynda also was destroyed by the powerful discourses of psychology which excluded her powers as madness. On her own, with the knowledge she had gained from Lynda, Martha was able to confront the chaos within her. Personal madness is a metaphor for the world gone mad. Interestingly, Martha's mental breakdown, through which she achieves enlightenment, is something she deliberately submits herself to, alone in an empty flat, and with Lynda in her basement "hell". Hence this does not signify a rejection of

reason. Every ounce of analytical intelligence is required to survive frightening experiences. Detachment is necessary for self-analysis and social analysis. That the idea of a unified self is rejected is evident in the splitting of Martha into surrogate selves. Lessing herself has been splitting herself into several characters in the different novels, thus working out different aspects of her personality. Lessing confirms this in an interview when she says "that various aspects of myself were parcelled out between the different characters. They were a fairly interesting map of myself" (Bertelsen, "Interview" 109). This also emphasises a utopian vision of a collective mode of existence based on relational identity. Martha's two selves are projected on to the figures of Mark and Lynda, both functioning as her alter egos. The identification between Martha and Mark is articulated by Martha herself in her recognition that he is going through the same political crises, conversions and disillusionment as her younger self. (FGC193). In *Rereading Doris Lessing: Narrative Patterns of Doubling and Repetition* Claire Sprague has done an exhaustive study on the techniques of doubling, layering, repetition and juxtaposition in Lessing's works. Martha can thus posit "the permanent person in Paul, or Francis or anybody else" as well as "the details, fragments reflected off the faceted mirror that was one's personality, that responded all the time every second to... past selves, past voices, temporary visitors" (FGC 356). These roles never threaten her identity. On the other hand, they help her understand herself better. Mark is more than Martha's mirror. The two are defined as interchanging selves (187). Martha and Mark have a collaborative writing relationship. She talks through with him the material that is to become "A City in the Desert." Mark spends "hours talking to Martha in order

to find out what it was he thought" (293). *The Four-Gated City* also repeats a series of houses as new kinds of family structures (Sprague, *Rereading Doris Lessing* 98). The shadow world of the basement is opposed to the rationality of the roof. The ending of the novel proper has its own surprise. The house, about to dissolve, its occupants to disperse, Martha stands alone considering what was, what is, and what will be.

So the novel ends, at the edge of an unknown new beginning with Martha firmly and eternally conscious both of her dark and light sides as a human being, her built-in blindness and vision, her double human self. The novel suggests that it is time to be holistic, intuitive and spatial and to modify the one-sidedness symptomatic of patriarchal habits of thought. Society has reached the point where it is unable to understand experience through rational powers alone. All it can do is label and compartmentalize anything unknown or threatening, simply to stop the process of thought. Given such a social organization, "truth" can perhaps only be found in "madness," in the margins. The vision of an ideal future lies with individuals who are able to communicate without speech, refusing the symbolic mode, and also who are distinguished by what they share symbiotically rather than what differentiates them. This idea runs counter to the individualistic perspective of realism. Similarly, the process undergone by Martha – her "setting free into impersonality" (FGC 401) – involves the loss of what we normally conceive of as identity, the surrender of belief in individuality, in a unique subjectivity, whereas we expect the resolution of bildungsroman to provide the main protagonist with a highly developed sense of the self. "The Children of Violence" series as female bildungsroman deconstructs the

idea of a unified subject achieving autonomy through rational consciousness. It also subverts the idea of individualism, positing a sense of the subject in symbiotic relationship with a collective. Lessing ends the series by killing off Martha and the civilization whose story she has been telling in order to escape from the "damned cage" of rationality and compartmentalisation. The apocalyptic ending is inevitable considering the need for a completely restructured society modelled on the abiding image of the archetypal city which can emerge only after the present world is destroyed.

D.H Lawrence wrote in the context of modernism, when realism was considered reductive because of its inability to capture life in its wholeness. At the same time he used the realist mode, especially in his early writings. In 1913, when Lawrence was revising *Sons and Lovers*, Proust, Joyce and Mann were at work on their own novels of education. As Sanders has noted, each man was living in exile from his past, but Lawrence had travelled the farthest from home and so his exile was the most radical – from the working class mining community to teaching grammar to middle class boys in a South London suburb (21). For Lawrence, the very act of writing a novel on the development of an isolated artist hero divorced him from his father and his father's people. In *Sons and Lovers,* Lawrence is exploring an experience he has not fully understood. Being autobiographical, the text thus becomes a testing ground accommodating ambivalent attitudes towards male and female, nature and culture, materialism and spirituality, patriarchy and feminism, individualism and communalism, class identity and other problematic issues in the culture of the times. This may be due to the fact, as Raymond Williams suggested in

another context, that Lawrence's position in the question of social values is an amalgam of original and derived ideas. Since these ideas are worked out with particular intensity, it is very difficult to sort out (*Culture and Society* 199). Ideas are threshed out in typical power contexts, within relationships. Meanings are tangled in effects which accounts for the intricate valency of attitude and open responsiveness to complex lives which Lawrence treasured in the novel as a modern form. The deliberate uncertainty embedded in style and structure matches uncertainties about historical and intellectual development in both the author and the characters. The texts seek order or a pattern in culture but ironically this can be sought only by polarizing it against multiplicity, chaos or uncertainty.

In *Sons and Lovers,* though Lawrence uses the modernist technique of juxtaposition to certain effect along with symbolism, it eventually peters out into an interpretation subsumed within an overarching, humanist, patriarchal individualism. The Lawrentian spontaneity and vitalism becomes a masculinist endeavour at the expense of the cultural feminine. *Sons and Lovers,* in its engagement with gender issues through Paul's relationship with three women, as the following analysis will make clear, displays a gender-blindness, a patriarchal product, which works out as an inevitable follow-on to the vitalist enterprise. The manifestation of this blindness is in the translation of specific problems related to patriarchy into universal humanist problems, in the process blunting its cutting edge. Focusing on the subtext engenders a different reading, transforming Lawrence's vitalist individualism into egoistic individualism which is out to appropriate the best in life for the male protagonist. In his attempts to realize that range of living, human energy which the existing system

had narrowed and crippled, Lawrence posits his theory of vital individualism. In "Democracy," Lawrence states that the "quick of self," in any living being, is the basis of individuality:

> The living self has one purpose only: to come into its own fullness of being ....But this coming into full, spontaneous being is the most difficult thing of all ...The only thing man has to trust to in coming to himself is his desire and his impulse. But both desire and impulse tend to fall into mechanical automatism: to fall from spontaneous reality into dead or material reality....All education must tend against this fall; and all our efforts in all our life must be to preserve the soul free and spontaneous...the life activity must never be degraded into a fixed activity. (78-79)

In *Sons and Lovers,* no rational explanation is given by Paul for his rejection of Clara and Miriam except that it was not possible to go on. The killing of his mother also, although in the guise of euthanasia, was a ruthless impulse for which no rational account is given except what we can deduce from Paul's character, that he hated anything that hurt him. Working within the humanist tradition made it possible for Lawrence to consider the individual as an autonomous entity, a unified subject able to achieve "fullness of being". The emphasis is on spontaneous life activity against those rigidities of category and abstraction embodied in industrial society. As Raymond Williams puts it in *The Long Revolution,* "Individualism was a term of growth, from the rigidity of a society which, while securing, also restricted and

directed men's actual lives" (113). This is manifested in a sense of discontinuity between what we as individuals desire to do and what actually happens, leading to a sense of insecurity. The idea of an autonomous subject, who is part of the liberal tradition, following from Hobbes and Locke, has since been interrogated in the postmodern context. The post-Foucauldian subject is now acknowledged as the site of a network of discourses and hence a tool of power. As has been pointed out earlier in the study, power can be both repressive and productive. A pattern of resistance and repetition is the typical offshoot of operations of power-resistance to discourses identified as dominant and repeating the status quo through cultural and social conditioning. Foucault's subject, according to Sawicki is "neither entirely autonomous nor enslaved" (104). This has been recorded in the analysis of the development of Martha Quest wherein the pain, insecurity and uncertainty involved in the onward progress of life alternates with the exhilaration of a feminist rebellion. How the male subject's growth could work out differently from a female subject's, given the authoritative operations of patriarchy is explored here by looking into how gender is deployed in *Sons and Lovers.*

An individual, especially in an industrialised, capitalistic society, relates to the social milieu through his class. Obviously, class is not a face-to-face grouping but an abstraction like society. By virtue of common membership of a particular class, people act in certain common ways, though they do not belong to the same communities. Lawrence came from a culture in severe tension with English society, from whose working-class values, a critique of this society was made possible. By virtue of his affiliation to the working class values of his father, from which he

gradually becomes exiled through an alliance with the lower middle-class values of his mother, which again he transcends as he goes up the social ladder through his marriage to Frieda, a baroness and his membership to the esoteric values of the artistic community of the times, Lawrence displays a deeply personal disorientation with contemporary society. Eagleton calls him the archetypal modern exile, a label amply validated by his rootless, frustrated wanderings in Europe, America, Australia and New Mexico (*Exiles and Emigres* 191). Being an exile also from his own working-class origins, he suffers a split sense of alienation and alliance, which is the lot of any exile. *Sons and Lovers* could be read as his fictional reworking of this split. The artistic point of view has not erased the memory of the working class community; on the other hand, it is deeply implicated in the ambivalent attitudes present towards male and female, nature and culture and so on. In fact, class seems to be the touch stone for his identification of qualities into male and female principles which he has delineated in the *Study of Thomas Hardy*. Daleski has noted that dualism is the central feature of Lawrence's thought. In effect, Lawrence constructs the world on the model of male-female duality (31), though Hough considers it only to be an instance of this duality (225). This study gravitates towards Daleski's view in typical feminist fashion. The list of attributes associated with male and female, compiled by Daleski from its scattered exposition in the *Study* is long and confusing, with the female displaying qualities like Stability, Permanence, God the Father, Oneness, Being, Submission to Sensation, Feeling etc. and the male displaying Movement, Charge, God the Son, Multiplicity, Doing, Refusal of sensation, knowledge and so on (30). That the Father is an instance of the female principle is

paradoxical and idiosyncratic but apparently seems to carry the idea of origin or creativity. Clearly, Lawrence is hoisting patriarchal constructs on to the idea of man and woman but idealizing the female principle in a romantic carryover of the noble savage concept which, with the wisdom of hindsight (knowledge of father as a victim of the new culture's norms) coupled with the painful awareness of the rape of nature by culture in the form of industrialism, he considered as the paradigm for his vitalist theory. The female principle is not essentially related to the female but is a concept which informs the vital individual who, in Lawrence, is almost always a male. Lawrence seems to have been influenced by the patriarchal gendering in western metaphysics of nature with the feminine. Contrarily he depicts the female in culture as masculinized to a lesser or greater extent which as Hilary Simpson has argued convincingly in *D.H Lawrence and Feminism* is the result of a re-deployment of gender relations in the wake of the rise of the New Woman, a product of intense suffragist activity during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of twentieth century.

In *Sons and Lovers,* the working class father is shown as harbouring the qualities of the female principle of powerlessness, feminised by poverty, whereas the mother is equated with the male principle of power and masculinized as a dominating power in the family. The animal vitality of the father is juxtaposed against the refinement of the mother. We find in the text, thus, a mixing-up of genres, the working class novel conventions with its audacious realism and assault on bourgeois conventionality and hypocrisy countered by the middle class novel lashing out at the philistinism of the working class. The text also attempts to transcend the conflict by

the introduction of the pastoral genre in a typical nostalgic version of the organic community displaced by industrialization and occupying the fringes of society – the Willey farm with its dreaming woman protagonist, Miriam. A sense of alienation and alliance thus confuses Paul, the mixed-up central figure in the novel, through whose dominant perspective the whole narrative unfolds. A few early examples from the text will make this clear. His early identification with his mother at a young age is evident from Paul's programme for his future life:

> His ambitions as far as this world's gear went, was quietly to earn his thirty or thirty five shillings a week, somewhere near home, and then, when his father died, have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked, and live happily ever after. (79)

Paul's naive hopes project a simplistic humanist vision of life under simple conditions, his ambition building up in increments, until the death of his father (a trivial, casually wished-for event) would culminate in the clichéd "happily ever after." At fourteen years of age, this, then, is his stage of development – an idealization of and identification with his mother and a rejection of his father which amounts to a rejection of working class values and identification with middle class values. The text describes Paul as a "small and rather finely-made boy" who is normally "full of life, and warmth" until "any clog in his soul's quick running" made his face stupid and ugly (78). The eternal egoist went through "agonies of shrinking self-consciousness" and "suffered very much from the first contact with anything." Quite a "clever painter," he also "knew some French and German and mathematics,"

but "nothing he knew was of any commercial value." Preferring "making excursions into the country, or reading, or painting," to any other activities, he, according to his mother, "was not strong enough for heavy manual work" (79). His painful self-consciousness, his refinement, artistic learning and knowledge of privileged subjects put him firmly in his mother's sphere of ego-consciousness where economic necessity controls life, cut off from his father's blood consciousness. The industrial milieu in which he is mired is metaphorically described in the machine-like "quick-running" of his soul which showed up its ugly sabotaging form when thwarted. A conjunction of mechanisation and metaphysical concept manifest in the image points to the controlling power of industrialism.

Paul's sense of alienation/alliance is clarified in the following long extract where he goes to the library to look up in the newspaper for jobs advertised:

> He was supposed to be a queer, quiet child. Going up the sunny street of the little town, he felt as if all the folk he met said to themselves: 'he is going to the Co-op reading room to look in the papers for a place. He can't get a job. I suppose he's living on his mother.'....So he entered, full of shrinking and suffering when they looked up, seated himself at the table, and pretended to scan the news. He knew they would think, 'what does a lad of thirteen want in a reading room with a newspaper?' and he suffered.

> Then he looked wistfully out of the window. Already he was a prisoner of industrialism, Large sunflowers stared over the old red wall of the garden opposite, looking in their jolly way down on the women who were hurrying with something for dinner. The valley was full of corn, brightening in the sun. Two collieries, among the fields, waved their small white plumes of steam.... Already his heart went down. He was being taken into bondage. His freedom in the beloved home valley was going now.
>
> (79-80)

Paul knows the mining community's thoughts as if it were his own. This shows his affiliation to them. At the same time, his blankness and silence in their company signifies his inability to communicate with them, marking off boundaries of alienation. The passage, thus, describes a paradox: Paul's adolescent alienation from the working class community concurrent with his internalisation of many of its values. His self-image is poor when he sees himself through their eyes (he thinks his masculinity is compromised by "living on his mother"). The juxtaposition of nature and culture in the second paragraph again reveals Paul's working class-middle class split translated into male/female, nature/culture terms. The "large sunflowers" look "down" on the women busy in their culturally assigned role of domesticity. Here, nature as sunflower is valorised while culture in the form of feminine domestic drudgery is looked down upon. The power associated with gendered definitions is clear here. In defiance of the collieries blackening the landscape (incidentally here,

the fumes are white plumes of steam, signifying a kind of positive attitude to industrialization), the corn is brightening in the sun. Such images of nature (sunflowers and corn) signify natural creativity and are evoked frequently by Lawrence to symbolise life in all its wholeness or "being." While nature is valorised, culture is presented as a necessity. The need to come to terms with the nature/culture divide and following upon it, the working class/middle class divide, is implicit here. The words "bondage" and "prisoner" define Paul's relationship to the industrial and economic world of which his mother is an active part signifying his bondage to his mother and the middle class. Likewise his yearning to be like the mindless waggoner (whom he sees through the reading room window) echoes his as yet unconscious affinity with his father.

Paul's avowed separation from the middle class later in the novel offers another counter current subverting the narrative authority of the story as he says, "You know...I don't want to belong to the well-to-do middle class. I like my common people best. I belong to the common people" (225). Incidentally, this was only after he had gone several rungs up the social ladder when he could afford such sentiments. Graham Martin has noted how "Lawrence has constructed Paul's thinking about class by means of a binary opposition (middle class=ideas/working class=warmth) that persists through out his work" (86). Class assumes paradigmatic status that controls Paul's sexuality and relationships with others. His timidity and extreme rationalising renders the restrictive structures of society claustrophobic. During such times nature is his succour. As Martha takes refuge in the vast stretches of the veld, so Paul finds relief in nature's undemanding beauty. This is the

imperative behind his attraction towards Miriam and the Willey farm. The conflict in the house during Paul's formative years originates as a class conflict and assumes psychological proportions which leave a mark on the young minds. Her husband having failed to live up to her bourgeois ideal, Mrs. Moral seeks to realize her social aspirations through her sons which results in a crippling interdependence between mother and sons. The long hours of waiting at night for his father to come home signified a crucial phase in his growth which marked off a progressive estrangement from his father. These evenings become a common denominator of childhood experience where non-verbal communication binds the children to the mother. This single sentence speaks volumes about Walter Morel's alienation from his family: "The family life withdrew, shrank away, and became hushed as he entered" (38). To Gertrude's puritan bourgeois mind, his lack of intellectual talk, his lying about his financial status compounded by his drinking amounted to sins that could never be forgiven. The text, translates Mr. Morel's brutality, his lying, his indifference to economic problems into innate qualities rather than seeing them as effects of his working class conditioning. Living in the present, considering money as important only as far as present needs require, his simple mind takes each day as it comes.

On the other hand, Morel's warmth is highlighted in scenes where, on rare occasions, he is at one with the family, turning an ingenious hand at making things, with the children attendant upon him. This, in the midst of his violence against his wife presents a subversive subtext wherein Morel is seen as the victim of industrialization. Morel's callous individualism is repulsive but can be justified in terms of the brutal life in the pit to which he is subjected. The narrative also

foregrounds his positive qualities – the loving tenderness with which he brings the gift of coconut and gingerbread for his family, the tender concern for Paul when he is ill with bronchitis, his practical knowledge and vigour – all of which tilt the balance of sympathy in his favour. In fact his brutal behaviour is an aggressive reaction to the way his family alienates him: "Morel made the meal alone, brutally, He ate and drank more noisily than he had need. No one spoke to him" (38). Though the narrative authority labels him "an outsider" as "he had denied the God in him," he enters the life of his family when "he worked": "They united with him in the work, in the actual doing of something, when he was his real self again" (57). The attempt on the part of the text to naturalise his identity into real self – which is opposed against his unnatural violent self shows again the blindness to the social constraints of industrialization which brutalizes the man. The fact that "occasionally a man lurched past, almost as full as he could carry" shows drunkenness amongst the working-class as a normative fact (6). The dominant narrative consistently views the father through the mother's eyes. Morel "would dearly have loved the children to talk to him, but they could not" (56). The compulsive force behind their rejection of father is their mother. Sympathetic identification, on the part of Paul, with his father is evident when Paul relapses into his father's working class dialect whenever he is his spontaneous self, for example while he is making love to Clara. His sympathetic moves to help Baxter Dawes also signify a return to father. Gertrude Morel, unfortunately, does not invite the reader's sympathy. Though the children's point of view favours the mother, the narrative portrays her as a hard, acquisitive female. The fact that she is also subjected by the dominant discourses of class and puritan

morality, her class allegiance colouring her entire view of life does not receive adequate narrative attention. She is gendered masculine by economic necessity in the face of her husband's nonchalance with regard to the future. Here Mrs. Morel is masculinized through an equation of power with masculinity. This masculinization of power genders men and women in positions of power as masculine. By virtue of her elevation in position in the hierarchy of class she is the powerful figure in the family. Millet has pointed out how androcentric criticism has "come to see Mrs. Morel as a devouring maternal Vampire as well, smothering her son with affection past the years of his need of it..." (246). Chafing under the limited freedom which patriarchy allows women, but harbouring the lofty ambitions of her class, she can break out of the narrow bounds of her existence only through men. Her working class husband could not in any way help her out. Consequently she garners the support of her male children through whom she realizes many of her ambitions. Mrs. Morel's suffocating hold on Paul makes her a power to reckon with in his relations with other women. Rather than an Oedipal pull, it is actually Paul's class conditioning that affects his interactions with them. The first half of the novel faithfully presents the rich rhythm of life of the colliery community, its critical realistic representation showing the ambivalent attitude of the narrative. Shaped by the dominant power structures, Paul, at the same time, resists its powerful hold, in his identification with nature, the working class and his father's warmth. Simultaneously he colludes with his mother's ideas in his aversion for the violence, lack of education and crude behaviour of his father. As he grows older, he seeks autonomy from all restraining ties that would prove detrimental to the growth and maturation of his vital self.

If industrialism and class relations altered relationships in society, the New Woman heralded in by Modernism, of which Ibsen's Nora was a prototype, made relations between men and women more complex. Lawrence's treatment of women reflects the shifting gender relations in the modernist context. Simpson has devoted a full length study on this topic. She shows how Lawrence's work was informed by the intense feminist activity preceding the First World War and the anti-feminist reaction of the 1920s. Lawrence's treatises on sexual theory show a marked change in perspective between the *Study* (1914) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1921). The discrepancy between the idea of male and female principles in each human being in the former work and the notion of an absolute degree of masculinity in the concept of the phallic consciousness in the latter is explained by Simpson as historically determined. The war that divides both works had profound effects on notions of masculinity and femininity. It is to be seen as "the articulation of a whole society's inability to come to terms with the massive change in sexual ideology which the war had engendered" (Simpson15). This aspect will be taken up in the following chapter. Simpson identifies Clara with the militant feminism of the suffragists and Miriam with the romantic and spiritual side of the movement designated by the term "dreaming" or "Pre-Raphaelite" woman (SL 46). Miriam, to this reader, could be associated with Pre-Raphaelitism only in her devout intensity towards anything close to her heart. In her complexity and her independence, she is anything but dreaming. Her refusal of Paul's frequent proposals of marriage shows a split in flesh and spirit rather than a union. Simpson's reading could have been coloured by Paul's projection of his own image of Miriam in the story.

The New Woman, becoming a dominating power to reckon with, resulted in a crisis in masculinity. Thus in *Fantasia,* the phallus, in a reactionary manner, becomes the symbol to represent the full complexity of the new powerful masculinity. In this context it becomes imperative to construct alternative hegemonic masculinities. Though feminised to a large extent, Paul is in a position of power vis-à-vis the women in the text. Through a naturalized association between men and power, internalised by society, the text shows Paul appropriating power for himself as he is only shown in the company of females or men who are feminised (made powerless) by their membership to the working class. In the few scenes where he is in the company of powerful men he is speechless or shying away from view. *Sons and Lovers* could, in this light, be seen as Lawrence's attempt to construct an alternative masculinity, hegemonic all the same, but a deviant of the dominant construction of masculinity by patriarchy. His is a feminised (equated with gentleness and emotion) masculinity which attracts women to him: "There was about him a candour and gentleness which made the women trust him" (229). With Miriam he combines gentleness and aggression, rather intellectual aggression. With Clara he takes on an impersonal masculinity out to appropriate sexual favours. His attitude towards Miriam and Clara is influenced by patriarchal notions of "correct" femininity.

Mrs. Morel, in her work at the guild provides another image of the New Woman. The children respect her deeply for her intellectual work. Sometimes she even reads a paper:

> It seemed queer to the children to see their mother, who was always busy about the house, sitting writing in her

> rapid fashion, thinking, referring to books and writing again. They felt for her on such occasions the deepest respect. (47)

The narrative respect for Mrs. Morel stems from the way she balances patriarchal norms of domesticity with feminism. Clara, the next generation, on the other hand has rejected patriarchal constraints. She has left her husband because "he sort of degraded me. He wanted to bully me because he hadn't got me" (239). Paul finds her dressing dowdy. In comparison to the militant suffragist, Miriam, according to Paul, usually looked nice which clearly indicates Paul's prejudice against liberated women. Paul trivialises and reduces the larger issue of women's rights by describing a suffragist, Miss Bonford, highlighting her feminine quality as a "lovable little woman," while ignoring her cleverness (201). Miriam notices how Paul's feeling towards Clara are ambivalent:

> There was something he hankered after. She saw him, whenever they spoke of Clara Dawes, rouse and get slightly angry. He said he did not like her. Yet he was keen to know about her. Well, he should put himself to the test. (199)

Marianne Dekoven has pointed out that "Modernism through its complex deployment of gender reveals not only the centrality of femininity, but also, again, an irresolvable ambivalence towards radical cultural change at the heart of modernist formal innovation in the works of both male and female writers" (175). Reactive misogyny goes hand-in-hand with male modernist feminine identification and

support of the New Woman. Feminists were "committed to overthrowing the Victorian ideal of closeted, domesticated, desexualised, disenfranchised femininity as the male Modernists were bent on overthrowing its attendant cultural ideal of high moral insipidity" goes on Dekoven (177). The power of the maternal feminine comes closest to erupting into representation in Modernism. Thus the dialectic of embrace of the empowered feminine along with violent repudiation of it is precisely the structure underlying male, modernist misogyny. Something of this kind is reflected in Paul's approach to the women in the novel.

Paul's subject position is thus constructed around the ongoing discourses of class, empowered femininity and patriarchal misogyny subsumed within an overarching male individualism, part of the humanist tradition. Foucault's misgivings about modern humanism in his rejection of subjectivity and agency have been a topic of debate among critics. But as Sawicki has noted, "to focus on the ways in which the subject is in fact constituted and on the broader social and political forces that determine the parameters and possibilities of rational agency is not to deny agency. It does, however, point to its limits" (103). In a patriarchal society women would be more limited than men in achieving their desires. A statement of Foucault's, though not articulated in the context of gender, could be appropriated for our feminist purpose. This was made in an interview:

> What I am afraid of about humanism is that it presents a certain form of our ethics as a universal model for any kind of freedom. I think there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can

> imagine in humanism as it is dogmatically represented on every side of the political rainbow.
>
> ("Truth, Power, Self" 15)

The male privilege implicit in Lawrence's ideas of individualism is hidden in its evocation of itself as a universal model for human achievement. That Paul is able to disentangle himself from all ties under feeble pretexts shows to what extent the text attempts to justify his actions. The emancipatory project of feminism is blunted by foregrounding its protagonists, for example Clara, as sexually promiscuous and sensually appealing by subjecting her to the mastery of Paul's gaze. When asked by Mrs. Leivers whether she was satisfied with her life she says:

> 'So long as I can be free and independent'
>
> 'And you don't miss anything in your life?' asked Mrs. Leivers gently.
>
> 'I've put all that behind me.' (203)

This is followed by Paul's comment that she would find herself always "tumbling over the things" she has put behind her (203). By trivializing and refusing the efforts of female characters to establish identities oppositional to the hegemonic forces of patriarchy, the text attempts to appropriate autonomy and mastery for the male protagonist. Clara, as he tells his mother, "has nothing to lose", separated from her husband as she is and talking on platform. Her " 'life's nothing to her' " apparently because of the reasons suggested above (273)! She is "nice", "charming" and "not a bit deep"! In the sexual ideology of the times, female sexual desire is radical and

disruptive unless the female is portrayed as a "loose" woman. Patriarchal power thus controls female sexuality to such an extent that deviants are ostracised or considered fair game to play with. Masculine hegemony legitimises, sustains and expands its hegemonic status by generating such discourses. Paul's need for a sexual partner without any strings attached is the imperative behind this hegemonic discourse. The sexual act for him is very impersonal wherein the woman's identity is unimportant: "But then Clara was not there for him, only a woman, warm, something he loved and almost worshipped, there in the dark. But it was not Clara..." (307). Paul is at an age when he wants sex without any attachments or responsibilities. To legitimise his stand he weaves a discourse about sex as impersonal and women as too clinging and personal. His rejection of Miriam is validated by projecting her as too possessive for his own good. She would want to put him in her pocket and keep him there. At this juncture, the text, through Clara, identifies the "bloodhound quality" in Miriam (283). Paul defines love, to Clara thus:

> '... but love should give a sense of freedom, not of prison. Miriam made me feel tied up like a donkey to a stake. I must feed on her patch, and nowhere else. It's sickening!'(313)

Paul's ventriloquism, this way of throwing his own views of a person on to that person, is his strategy for justifying his actions. Early in his acquaintance with Clara, he looks at her hands and thinks: "As Paul looked at them he knew her. 'She is wanting somebody to take her hands - for all she is so contemptuous of us,' he said to himself " (237). He then woos Clara with his "knowledge" of her as he had wooed

Miriam "knowing" her also from his point of view. Guarding his freedom jealously, Paul dispenses with the women of his life after extracting the maximum use from them. Clara is sent back to the circle of patriarchal safety, to her husband, with whom he has struck, a friendship by then. Though Miriam is anticipating a teaching position soon, her work is undermined as patriarchal norms do not value women in the public sphere:

> 'I suppose work can be nearly everything to a man,' he [Paul] said, 'though it isn't to me. But a woman only works with a part of herself. The real and vital part is covered up'.
>
> 'But a man can give all himself to a work?' She asked.
>
> 'Yes, practically.'
>
> 'And a woman only the unimportant part of herself?'
>
> 'That's it'. (362)

Paul's perspective of Miriam in her independence clarifies his patriarchal stand further: 'She seemed old to him, older than Clara. Her bloom of youth had quickly gone. A sort of stiffness, almost of woodenness, had come upon her' (362). With all her independence, her "nervous hands" still had "the lack of confidence or repose, the almost hysterical look" (362). These two observations by Paul encapsulate the plight of the emancipated female in patriarchy – at once made physically unattractive and "hysterical". Female autonomy is circumscribed in a culture flaunting male hegemony.

As has been pointed out earlier, nostalgia for the organic community of pre-industrialized times is evident in the romantic idealization of the Willey farm and its inhabitants. The pastoral genre attempts to resolve class conflict through transcendence. Idealization seeks to mask real intentions. The textual strategy is to sublimate the conflict between father and mother, nature and culture, lower middle class and working class through adherence to an ideal self-contained organic community catching the rhythm of life in all its activities. The fact that this organic community, even though cut off from the mainstream to a large extent is also beset by the constraints and forces of mainstream culture is overlooked. Both Miriam and her mother feel the pressure of patriarchal conventions. Miriam, an actual misfit in this community is contrarily identified by Paul with nature. Throughout, the text uses flower imagery in relation to her. According to Sanders, this subjection of the human to impersonal nature recurs throughout *Sons and Lovers,* especially in the sexual encounters between the protagonists (55). Paul exalts Miriam and her mother Mrs Leivers to a spiritual level:

> The mother exalted everything – even a bit of house work – to the plane of a religious trust. Paul was first opening out from childhood into manhood. This atmosphere, where everything took a religious value, came with a subtle fascination to him. (129)

For Mrs. Leivers, it is precisely this religiosity which makes farm life bearable, by giving meaning to menial work and dignity to an existence which she considers brutal, for she is exhausted by the labour and repelled by the brutishness of her men

folk. Her mother transmits to Miriam her distaste for this life, together with her compensating religion. The religious sanctity that Miriam confers on natural things is an attempt to rationalise a painful social existence. Straitened circumstances are transformed into conditions of virtue, which is true of all Congregationalists. Miriam's frustration, a product of this background, whetted by education, is responsible for her behaviour causing irritation and confusion in Paul. In a typical case of double standards, Paul, who has no intention of sinking into the colliery life of his father, resents the fact that Miriam does not merge happily with farm life. We are told of her aversion for the natural facts of life – for example of seeing a mare in foal which is translated into the fact that she cannot accept her own sexuality. Miriam is actually rejecting a whole way of life which limits her prospects for upward mobility. Though the novel, superficially propounds a certain feminism in its portrayal of its women with independent aspirations, there is a disjuncture between this so called feminism and the evocation of female desire as is evident in the lives of Mrs. Leivers, Mrs. Morel, Miriam and Clara. All of them achieve stability only through compromise.

Miriam is described as a "romantic in her soul" who "in her own imagination" was "something of a princess turned into a swine girl." Her initial aloofness to Paul is recorded as her fear that

> .... this boy, who, nevertheless, looking something like a Walter Scott hero, who could paint and speak French, and knew what algebra meant, and who went by train to

> Nottingham everyday, might consider her simply as the swine-girl... (125)

She finds in Paul a realization of her own ambitions in life. Hence the romancing of the Walter Scott hero. Idealisation is affected by exalting certain ideas at the expense of others. Miriam, raising Paul to the level of an intellectual hero, does this by ignoring that other facet of his character, which is identified with his father and brutish brothers. Though earlier criticism had assigned the cause of Paul's break-up with Miriam to a Miriam-Mrs Morel identification, this reader feels that the conflict in their relationship stems from this misrecognition. In constructing identities for each other, both Paul and Miriam fail to take into account actual social circumstances. In the fictional landscape of idealism, the other structuring relations of society disappear. Paul's fantasy of Miriam as the "beggar maid" to his "King Cophetua" visualizes a romantic conclusion to their relationship through Miriam's loving submissiveness. Miriam becomes his muse, his inspiration: he "gained insight" from her whereby his "vision went deeper" (139). She feeds his ego and instils confidence in him. She submits to his intellectual mastery. Paul's interpretations about life "gave her a feeling of life again, and vivified things which had meant nothing to her" (133). He teaches her the privileged subjects. In this way Miriam is used to help Paul gain in confidence and stature so as to enable him to get on with the business of life.

When the need for something beyond the platonic relationship they had established arises for Paul, the first chord of discord rears its head. Paul has his first

sexual initiation also through Miriam. Paul's sexual timidity is covered up by displacing it on Miriam's frigidity:

> 'Don't you think we have been too fierce in our what they call purity?
> Don't you think that to be so much afraid and averse is a sort of dirtiness?'
> She looked at him with startled dark eyes.
> 'You recoiled away from anything of the sort, and I took the motion from you, and recoiled also, perhaps worse.'(245)

Miriam is blamed for his own lack of sexual initiative. It was Clara who jerked Paul out of his delusion by saying, "... she does not want any of your soul communion" (241). The fact that frigidity on her part could point a finger at patriarchal standards for female sexuality and femininity is ignored by the text. Even as the text valorises female deference to a male God, it also debunks it but again this debunking is done to favour the male protagonist in the name of his individualism. Paul is shocked towards the end when he breaks up with Miriam to find that she had been making a fool of him all along: "But it stuck in his throat that she had despised him whilst he thought she worshipped him.... All these years she had treated him as if he were a hero, and thought him secretly as an infant, a foolish child" (259-60). On the other hand, Miriam's point of view shows how she had discerned the quality of inconsistency in him long back and how she had prepared herself for this eventuality. It was a question of survival. Her pride would not let her show him that she was still

in his bondage. Her hatred of him (because of her bondage to him) was her weapon to resist his domination: "She had fought to keep herself free of him in the last issue, and she was free of him, even more than he of her" (258). The text thus legitimises Paul's rejection of Miriam by showing him up as the injured party. The hero is acquitted of any wrong doing and frees himself callously from the clinging female with the feeble excuse that "it's no good going on" (257). We already had a foretaste of Paul's ruthlessness in the face of any obstacle to his well being in the scene where, as a young boy, he sacrifices his sister's doll Arabella because he had broken its arm and caused Anne to cry. Arabella, being the guilty party causing him pain and anger and guilt, is removed (burned): "He seemed to hate the doll so intensely, because he had broken it" (53). Fearing Miriam's intense and powerful hold on his emotions, he dispenses with her as he had done Arabella and as he does Clara and even his mother. Paul's driving individualism strains against any dominance on the part of the females. In his overbearing manner Paul sets himself the masculine task of awakening the "dormant", "half-alive" women (276). The text emphasises his magnanimity in helping out females in need! Such textual justifications abound to show Paul, egoist that he is ("so it pleased him to talk to her about himself, like the simplest egoist" [274]), in a favourable light, validating all his actions. The narrative completes this picture of him in the way he, in the name of euthanasia, kills his mother in a conspiracy with Anne. The text does highlight the fact of Mrs. Morel's condition, a living corpse, but at the same time one wonders whether it would be possible for a son, so much a part of the mother, as if they were of one mind, to sever off a part of him which had become non-functional. Individualism calls for severance

from all personal entanglements which would smother the individual. Its dictum is impersonality.

In comparing the female bildungsroman of Lessing to the male bildungsroman of Lawrence, one sees many differences. Though the texts of both authors belong to this same genre, the fact of gender highlights a differential equation to the final outcome. Whereas Paul, having severed himself from all ties, achieves individual autonomy, Martha's definition of autonomy is through a symbiotic integration with like-minded people. Martha also has managed to cut herself off from the constraints of society but it involved intense soul searching, hysterical bouts and alienation. Martha's desire is for a symbiotic relationship with a man who would be a well-integrated personality. This, she finds in Thomas temporarily and later on in Mark. Paul's masculine hegemony works favourably for him, in that he is able to extract maximum advantage from any relationship before moving on. Equating masculinity with freedom, power, a job and decision making, Martha embarks on a masculine masquerade, taking control of her own life, wresting it from her mother's hands. At the same time Lessing naturalizes feminine qualities like domesticity, motherhood etc. and shows Martha as subjected to them "naturally" when she is hounded by the "nightmare of repetition." Repetition signifies subjection to naturalised feminine qualities. To shake herself free of the cultural feminine, Martha gives up her secretarial job (which involves playing second fiddle to male bosses), leaves her husband and child (the safe web of patriarchy) and takes on the world of politics. Politics is gendered masculine. Disillusioned by a political idealism which could not translate itself into pragmatic purposes as it dwindles into a

mechanical power-play, she leaves politics and embarks on a journey to post-war London, a society on the verge of disintegration. Refusing the imposed constructs of institutional power, which in its gendered condition would fail to provide an all-inclusive epistemological basis to life, she seeks to cut herself free from such institutional bindings. The earlier masculine masquerade, privileging all that is associated with male power, is given up in the effort to work towards a new social order, which would also include subjugated knowledges. As opposed to Paul's individualistic autonomy with its masculine power drive, Martha, by the last novel of the series, moves toward the idea of a large community as a family of like-minded subjects whose larger interests make them go beyond narrow institutional dicta which act as constraints. Personal relationships are controlled not by institutional power but by the persons themselves. The texts thus become gendered differently and subversively in their pre-occupation with the creation of a new social order free from patriarchal constraints where madness, telepathy, E.S.P, free relationships etc. abound. Unable to reside freely in a socio-political order where knowledge is gendered masculine, the text creates a new order, the imperative for which comes from the destruction of the old order, through violence considered to be engendered by rational knowledge. The creation of a "specific intellectual," as Foucault puts it, as the female protagonist, who can distance herself from the existing structures of society, thus making a critique of it is the textual strategy adopted by Lessing. In the text of D.H. Lawrence there is no such imperative as the existing pattern of society works in favour of the male protagonist who, as a successful male artist, is able to appropriate privileges for himself.

In Lessing's novels, except for Thomas, Mark and a few others, male characters tend to be ineffectual. Lawrence, however, presents male characters more sympathetically as is evident in the subtlety of delineation of Walter Morel and Baxter Dawes. Female characters, on the other hand, are clinging, devouring and possessive, working against the full development of the male figures. Lessing's female characters in the "Children of Violence" series possess determination, "privileged" knowledge and a strong yearning to create a new coherent order, be it through politics, or through a new integrated community. Both Lawrence and Lessing deploy nature as part of an essentially female ideal. At the same time nature, in the form of the veld and the mining countryside, also signifies wholeness of being. This is employed through juxtaposition with culture in the form of the fractured individual who desires wholeness of being. Nature acts as succour in a culture which is at odds with individual happiness. Lessing, in a radical about-turn, deploys nature, women and the irrational, all the devalued terms in the binary metaphysics of the Western world, in the service of power. Lawrence sees nature as the ideal but it is subjugated by culture, rational knowledge and masculine hegemony for him. In this way the texts deploy gender through different variables. The maturation of the female protagonist is fraught with pain, uncertainty and agonising soul searching which is tided over by maintaining a slowly built-up emotional detachment from culturally sanctioned relationships. The development of the male protagonist is not without anxiety, a kind of muscular anxiety, which is overcome by strategic deployment of gender.

CHAPTER 3

GENDER IN NARRATIVES OF CHAOS

Does sexual difference translate into textual difference? If it does, in what ways? Do the acts of revision, appropriation and subversion constitute a female-authored text? If language is "man-made," as Dale Spender has put it, how would it work for a female author? These questions are pursued here on the premise that the author-subject's gender and the interpretive strategy taken up by a feminist critic as an oppositional reader would make a difference to the text's meaning. A feminist reader would bring to bear upon the text certain codes and strategies which work in resistance to the dominant structures. The signature of the author does make a difference to the way the text is read. Here, this reader takes a stand similar to that of Nancy K. Miller in "The Text's Heroine: A Feminist Critic and her Fictions." This is in opposition to Peggy Kamuf's in "Writing Like a Woman." For Miller, a feminist reading concentrates on the author "as sexually gendered subject"; for Kamuf, a feminist reading lies in "looking behind the mask of the proper name." (286). Following Toril Moi's stand on the author as noted in the introductory chapter of this study, the author-subject is implicated as one of the controlling powers, along with other discourses, again mediated through the author, in the meanings the text could release. While making a gendered reading of a female authored text and a male-authored text, the feminist reader is alert to the subversive strategies in the female-authored text which sets itself up in inevitable opposition to the dominant conventions, whereas the male-authored text could be seen as maintaining the status

quo through appropriations and exploitation of the cultural feminine. As French novelist Christiane Rochefort put it, "a man's book is a book. A woman's book is a woman's book" (183). The norm being a masculine order appropriating a dominant position, a text written by a man does not require defining or elaboration. The text by a woman is the deviant whose status needs to be clarified.

Summing up her reflections on writing as a woman Rochefort says:

> Maybe you don't want to write about, but to write, period. And, of course, you don't want to obey this social order. So, you tend to react against it.... Has literature a sex? With dignity, I, and most of my sisters, we would answer: No. But. But. But, do we have the same experience? Do we have the same mental structures? The same obsessions? Death, for instance, is a specifically male obsession. As well as essential solitude. After all we don't belong to the same civilization. (186 original emphasis)

Note the uncertainty with regard to sexual difference in the text. Given the contexts of a male writer and a female writer in a gendered material world, gendering of the text could only be inevitable. Moreover, feminism's elaborations about women's writing preclude the fact of writing by women being different, in spite of charges of essentialism that would consequently follow. In the void left by the deconstruction of humanism as a gendered enterprise, women's writing offers a radical paradigm

shift. In place of men's castrated view of the world deprived of women's perspective, women's writing foregrounds women's vision. Marguerite Duras defines " 'feminine literature' " as

> an organic, translated writing... translated from blackness, from darkness. Women have been in darkness for centuries. They don't know themselves. Or only poorly. And when women write, they translate this darkness.... Men don't translate. They begin from a theoretical platform that is already in place, already elaborated. The writing of women is really translated from the unknown, like a new way of communicating rather than an already formed language. But to achieve that, we have to turn away from plagiarism. (174).

Julia Kristeva notes two extremes in the writing experiences of women – that of power and of denial. The experience of power valorizes phallic dominance and serves in the "virilization of women." The experience of denial flees from "everything considered 'phallic' to find refuge in the valorization of a silent underwater body, thus abdicating any entry into history." According to Kristeva, women's role in the writing process is to assume a "negative function: reject everything finite, definite, structured, loaded with meaning, in the existing state of society. Such an attitude places women on the side of the explosion of social codes with revolutionary moments" (Interview 166). Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* could be situated in the context of such a revolutionary moment in its "oscillation between

power and denial." As Elizabeth Abel put it, "female talent grappling with a male tradition translates sexual difference into literary differences of genre, structure, voice, and plot" (2).

Deconstructive criticism has alerted us to the notions of textual difference but the complexities of sexual difference, more pervasively engrained in our culture, have largely been confined to the edges of critical debate. Since the last decade or so, feminist critics have demonstrated how gender informs and complicates both the writing and reading of texts, in the structuring of literary texts and in the critical methods which would disclose traces of gender in its reading. A focus on sexual/textual politics would raise issues relating to larger political contexts in culture. At this juncture, a brief look into some of the critical approaches that map the shifting boundaries of sexual difference will be in order. The common unifying thread in all these approaches is not that of method but shared participation in a moment of inquiry.

Mary Jacobus, focussing on the woman writer's vexed relations to male literary culture in "The Question of Language: Men of Maxims and *The Mill on the Floss*," argues that the woman writer (and the feminist critic) can express her difference only through a posture critical of prevailing discourse. Since she has no alternative for prevailing discourse, however, the woman writer must inscribe her disaffection either through a deliberate mimicry that, by its very imitation, gestures towards unthinkable alternatives, or through metaphors of female desire. Such subversive imitation is advocated by Luce Irigaray also in her "This Sex which is Not One." It is this "mimetic" (Irigaray's term) or "flirtatious" relationship that

women have historically had to the language of the dominant culture that makes an oppositional reading difficult, argues Nancy Miller in "Emphasis Added". To Irigaray

> To play with mimesis is ... for a woman to try to recover the place of her exploitation by language without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It is to resubmit herself... to ideas – notably about her – elaborated in and through a masculine logic, but to 'bring out' by an effect of playful repetition what was to remain hidden: the recovery of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It is also to unveil the fact that if women mime so well they are not simply reabsorbed in this function. They also remain elsewhere.... (qtd. in Miller, "Emphasis Added" 343)

Miller takes this "elsewhere" as a form of "emphasis" in women's text – the operation of "gender trouble" for Judith Butler. Whereas reading a realist text involves "plausibility" (a term appropriated from Genette) which to Miller is "an effect of reading through a grid of concordance," reading a subversive text which foregrounds a playful repetition of reality involves seeking the "implausibilities" of the text – a "demaximisation" (exposing the approved maxims). Critical reaction to any given text is hermeneutically bound to a pre-existent text: the doxa of socialities (340). Freud, in "Creative Writers and Day dreaming" had located women's creativity in the impulse towards erotic wishes as opposed to men's creativity which he grounds in egoistic or ambitious desires as well as the erotic. Reworking Freud's

thesis, Miller locates the woman-writer's creativity in the impulse to power and erotic desires – only, the day-dream gets rewritten. This means that it engages with dominant discourses and also subverts it in a "playful repetition." Miller, here, is arguing that "the peculiar shape of the heroine's destiny in novels by women, the implausible twists of plot so common in these novels, is a form of insistence about the relation of women to writing: a comment on the stakes of difference within the theoretical indifference of literature itself." ("Emphasis Added"352). The "form of emphasis" pointed out earlier as peculiar to women's fiction, also referred to as "italicization" by Miller, is this rewriting which is incompatible with dominant structures. Lee Sukenick, in her essay "On Women and Fiction" describes the uncomfortable posture of all women writers, a posture which Miller terms "imposture," within and without the text. Connecting gender to the literary project Sukenick says: "Like the minority writer, the female writer exists within an inescapable condition of identity which distances her from the mainstream of the culture and forces her either to stress her separation from the masculine literary tradition or to pursue her resemblance to it" (qtd. in "Emphasis Added" 356). The attack on female plots and plausibilities is grounded in its deviation from so called truth, its lack of verisimilitude or plausibility. Such a reading points to blind spots which are both political and literary. It fails to see that the maxims that pass for the truth of human experience and the encoding of that experience in literature are organizations of the dominant culture. The relationship between such a reader and the text is a relationship of power involving a textual / sexual politics of reading.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gillman is a particularly useful text in understanding such a politics of reading. The main protagonist here is a woman, an aspiring writer, a sane mind entrapped in an insanity inducing situation. The gender of the woman makes a difference to how her situation is interpreted or diagnosed by her doctor husband in his doubly authoritative role. Her illness is diagnosed as due to the intellectual pursuits of reading and writing from which she is then debarred. Her husband insists on reading to her in spite of her protests that she does not like being read to. Being forced to write on the sly exhausts her and as a cure, the husband confines her in an upper-storey attic without pen or paper or books or visitors. The woman progressively becomes mad. She starts reading underlying patterns beneath the empirical reality of the yellow wallpaper in her room – that of a woman moving behind the barred (window bars) reflections of sunlight on the paper – actually herself. She tries to read a consistent pattern in it by repressing others, re-organising and regrouping past impressions into newer fully realized configurations within the changing contexts of day and night. Her obsessive quest for meaning finally ends with an identification of herself with the woman imprisoned in the wallpaper, upon which she starts tearing at the wall paper, creeping around the room on all fours to set the woman in the wall paper (herself) free. Her husband's misreading of her condition is what leads to her madness. In her efforts at demaximisation, the nineteenth century protagonist becomes mad. This story reveals the gender-inflected interpretative reading strategies responsible for such powerful misreadings. By including the category of gender in Harold Bloom's theory in *A Map of Misreading*, Annette Kolodny, in her reading of "A Yellow Wallpaper"

shows, the "meaning making role of the reader in the deciphering of texts with a recognition of the links between our 'reading' of texts and our 'reading' of the world and one another" ("A Map of Rereading" 55).

Patriarchal tradition has always relegated women to the role of objects of male creativity. Hence the tropes of blankness, passivity and silence with regard to women and writing. In a broader perspective on the burden of male influence, Susan Gubar in " 'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity," uses sexual metaphors in her documentation of the association of the female body with the empty page awaiting the male author's pen and then goes on to explore the impact of this equation on the female imagination. The continuity of life and art, biography and text, and the recurrent identification of writing with violation, with a process of "bleeding into print," reflects the woman writer's recognition that her body is the text. Yet as Gubar's reading of Isak Dinesan's "The Blank Page" suggests, apparent imitation can become appropriation and the empty page evolve into an emblem of resistance. The power struggle is repeated.

The French see the power of female creativity in the writing of the body which they call ecriture feminine. Their "demaximisation" is grounded in a practice by which the female body, with its peculiar drives and rhythms, inscribes itself in the text. Nancy K. Miller finds in ecriture feminine a "hope, if not a blueprint, for the future" ("Emphasis Added" 341). One of the proponents of such a writing, Helene Cixous, also states that "with a few rare exceptions, there has not yet been any writing that inscribes femininity" ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 248). The four representative proponents of ecriture feminine, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Helene

Cixous and Monique Wittig, in spite of the different modes of resistance they envision, share a common ground from which they take off – an analysis of Western culture as fundamentally oppressive, as phallogocentric. Instead of the female subject entering the symbolic through repression of the mother and acceptance of castration, there is an attempt to valorize the position of woman as difference through regression to the pre-Oedipal phase which involves an attachment to the maternal body by a complete rejection (though never entirely attainable) of everything representing the Law and the underlying phallic power – masculine discourse and social, familial, economic and political structures. This rejection often takes the form of opposition to psychoanalysis, logic, and philosophy, all of which are seen as masculine productions. Josette Feral maintains that

> even if criticism of these fields is well founded, their rejection is not, in so far as it deprives the woman of a whole intellectual arsenal which could eventually permit a grasp of the problem by giving her partial answers as well as tools for a conceptual approach. In addition, such a rejection tends to do away with woman as a subject constituted within the symbolic, which is the essential basis for any social contract. By refusing the symbolic, woman risks condemning herself to being even more marginal than she already is. ("Antigone or the Irony of the Tribe" 8)

Julie Kristeva takes up a similar stand. It involves an equilibrium between these two tendencies, but an equilibrium which would account for the otherness of

woman by giving a place and function to her difference within the constitution of the subject. The woman writer as semiotic subject (a return to the pleasures of pre-Oedipal identification with mother) and as hysteric (outside male-dominated discourse) occupy marginal positions. Kristeva sees liberatory potential in their marginal positions. Rather than attempting to formulate a new discourse, women should persist in challenging the prevailing discourses. The subject is always in the process of constitution. The semiotic and the symbolic are the two aspects of the Kristevan subject. This subject is always in process: "Because in social, sexual and symbolic experiences, being a woman has always provided a means to another end, to become something else: a subject in the making, a subject on trial" (Interview 167). The subject-in-process oscillates between the semiotic and symbolic, power and powerlessness. It involves the corporal and the psychic, and the social. Thus the semiotic and symbolic constitute the subject, whether masculine or feminine, and articulate its process. Such a subject, as opposed to the Cartesian subject, is defined by movement in a dialectic which opposes the semiotic and the symbolic even as it grounds them on one another. The symbolic is established only through the repression of the semiotic; as for the semiotic, it reemerges constantly in the symbolic, thus guaranteeing its permanent openness and its renewal. Thus, instead of refusing the symbolic under the pretext of feminism, the attempt should be to subvert the symbolic from the interior, to struggle against the repression of the maternal body, to let it reemerge in order to shatter the structuring forms of law. Woman's marginality is thus, to Kristeva, internal to the system, integrated in it. Kristeva's

subject-in-process is similar to Faucault's technologies of the self and Butler's stylized repetition of acts.

Irigaray's solution to the imposition of masculine discourses is a rediscovery of the locus of women's exploitation through mimeticism. This has been touched upon earlier. Both Kristeva and Irigaray stand for the same conception of the maternal body and the necessity for a return to the origin. Irigaray's focus on the physical bases for the difference between male and female does not involve an indifference to the symbolic. She offers as the starting point for a female self consciousness, the facts of women's bodies and women's sexual pleasure – "Woman has sex organs just about everywhere" – precisely because they have been so absent or so misrepresented in male discourse ("This Sex which is Not One" 103). At the same time she maintains that

> ... for woman to arrive at the point where she can enjoy her pleasure as a woman, a long detour by the analysis of the various systems of oppression which affect her is certainly necessary. By claiming to resort to pleasure alone as the solution to her problem, she runs the risk of missing the reconsideration of a social practice upon which her pleasure depends. (105)

Irigaray, as also Helene Cixous, link women's diffuse sexuality to women's language. If for Irigaray woman "goes off in all directions" in her language, making it impossible for men "to discern the coherence of any meaning" (103), for Cixous

"her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours" ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 259). Cixous is convinced that women's unconscious is totally different from men's, and that it is their psychosexual specificity that will empower women to overthrow masculinist ideologies and to create new female discourses. In her manifesto for ecriture feminine, "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous's woman writer writes in white ink, the milk of the mother as source for creativity. For Helene Cixous, female sexual pleasure ("jouissance") constitutes a potential disturbance to the phallogocentric order and a "woman text" – a text that inscribes this jouissance – is a return of the repressed feminine that with its energetic, joyful and transgressive "flying in language and making it fly" dislocates the repressive structures of that order ("The Laugh" 258). Cixous's work offers a practice of writing that aims to do this by posing plurality against unity; multitudes of meanings against single, fixed meanings; diffuseness against instrumentality; openness against closure. Kristeva's female praxis is marked by negativity. At the same time Kristeva does not distinguish the female impulse from other polymorphous manifestations of negativity and dissidence. In this respect she differs notably from Irigaray or Cixous whose primary concern is the inscription of the female in language and thought. Thus what all three critics have in common is their opposition of women's bodily experience (or in Kristeva's case, women's bodily effect as mothers) to the phallic symbolic patterns embedded in Western thought. Although Kristeva does not privilege women as the only possessors of prephallocentric discourse (she mainly concentrates on the feminine writing of Joyce, Artaud and so on), Irigaray and Cixous go further: if women are to discover and

express who they are, to bring to the surface what masculine history has repressed in them, they must begin with sexuality. And their sexuality begins with their bodies, with their genital and libidinal difference from men.

Ann Rosalind Jones expresses her reservation about ecriture feminine in "Writing the Body: L'Ecriture Feminine." Even though "To write from the body is to recreate the world" since "a powerful and alternate discourse seems possible," the concept of ecriture feminine is problematic (366). The charge of essentialism looms large. Since gender identity is a social construct and not an innate quality in men or women, developed in response to patriarchal structures, the concept of women's body as the source of self-knowledge remains suspect. Hence the female body seems hardly the best site to launch an attack on the forces that have alienated women from what their sexuality might become. To Jones, ecriture feminine ignores psycho-social realities in its preoccupation with the body. At the same time, it could be pointed out that by situating itself within symbolic structures, as mentioned above, and given the fact that the body is a site of powerful social inscriptions, ecriture feminine is not cut off from material circumstance. Jones' doubts on the efficacy of "writing the body" as a means of changing material circumstances of women could be baseless. In her unmasking of patriarchal fictions, Virginia Woolf equates the protection of cultural institutions with the safeguarding of the female body. Tillie Olsen in *Silences* similarly regards the female body as a necessary subject for the woman who desires to tell the truth in writing. The body is the site where the political and aesthetic interpret the material. Male control of women's bodies has always been the cornerstone of patriarchy. Women often play out their resistance to

this authority in sexual terms; as the appropriated objects of men, they seek to disturb the system of patriarchal control through acts of sexual defiance. Monique Wittig is suspicious both of the oppositional thinking that defines woman in terms of man and of the mythical-idealist strain in certain formulations of femininity. She considers that the first task is to dissociate "women", and "woman", the myth. For " 'woman' does not exist for us; it is only an imaginary formation, while 'women' the product of social relationship" (qtd. in Jones 370). Whether it is through a demythification process or the re-inscription of the female body into the material body of the world, French feminist thought works towards a redefinition of the world through the text. Being more concerned with the gender of the text than the gender of the writer, French theorists are not primarily interested in readings of women authors.

Doris Lessing, in *The Golden Notebook* seeks such a redefinition through the imaginative power of creative writing. As Alice Jardine explains: "Woman must be released from her metaphysical bondage and it is writing, as the locus of 'feminine operation' that can and does subvert the history of that metaphysics. The attributes of writing are the attributes of 'woman' – that which disturbs the Subject, the Dialectic, and Truth is feminine in its essence" ("Gynesis" 64). At the same time, this writing always takes place within and by means of a circumscribing and repressive phallocentric discourse to which its very existence stands as a challenge. Jacobus's concise description of how women's language works is instructive:

> The transgression of literary boundaries – moments when structures are shaken, when language refuses to lie down meekly, or the marginal is brought into sudden focus, or

> intelligibility itself refused – reveal not only the conditions of possibility within which women's writing exists, but what it would be like to revolutionise them. In the same way, the moment of desire (the moment when the writer most clearly installs herself in her writing) becomes a refusal of mastery, an opting for openness and possibility, which can in itself make women's writing a challenge to the literary structures it must necessarily inhabit.
>
> ("The Difference of View" 56)

These women writers are mad; non-conforming violators of reason, of the logos; they are also mad (angry) about the specific oppressions that have written women's historic condition. On the level of this double gesture, the feminist as writer, character, and even reader converge. They are the "vamps," who, captive in the structure of patriarchal metaphysics, occupy the same discursive space and share the same dilemmas, but challenge them. The woman as critic, writer and character, first breaks through this encapsulated and circumscribed self, in order to deconstruct the identity received from patriarchal culture, and at the same time to engage in the process of constructing a self. Although the appropriated woman speaks without a voice of her own, the very act of writing, of speech, signals her defiance and requires that she transgress the difference as constituted by patriarchy. She stages this defiance of mind and voice in her own body – the scene of her literal and metaphorical appropriation. Recently women have defied socio-sexual codes by becoming lesbians, remaining single or childless. Unfortunately, while women may

escape individual appropriation, they cannot escape collective appropriation. Nonetheless, personal defiance threatens the social and symbolic order even though they are powerless to destroy it. Anna Wulf of *The Golden Notebook* exemplifies such a position; Martha of "Children of Violence" also does this, though to a lesser extent. Thus, the autonomous individuality of a woman's writing is formed by engagement, the engagement of its denial of dependence – the denial of dependence on the logic of "reality," on the sociosexual codes, on the symbolic order in general. In short a paradigm shift is affected through an interrogation of systemic knowledge and the subject's position in relation to knowledge. Such a writing, with its oscillations between power and denial, its implausibilities, its oppositional paradigm, its playful mimicry, its subject in-process, its eruptions of the semiotic, its erotic impulses along with impulses to power – generally, a posture critical to dominant structures is the paradigm of ecriture feminine, inscriptions of femininity in writing by women adopted here. In designating such writing as characteristic of women, no essentialist claims are made. A workable essentialism is inevitable in any critical position taken up. At the same time, within this general paradigm of women's writing, pluralism is also taken into account considering the different contexts and locations of writing. For the purpose of this study such a workable definition of women's writing would suffice. The male-authored text being taken as the norm, no general definition for such a text is sought.

The focus of this chapter is on a comparative reading of D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* and Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, to highlight how gender operates in these texts. The rubric "narratives of chaos" has been given to the texts

as they foreground the chaos more or less typical of the post war scenario (World War I in the case of *Women in Love* and World War II in the case of *The Golden Note book*) in cultural and individual lives. They describe the transitional period between an old world order and a new one. The emphasis is on the author-subject and his/her work as a creative product. Both texts offer themselves as critiques of societal structures – *Women in Love* of an industrial capitalistic society and *The Golden Notebook* of a post-modern society. Both are explorations of decadent consciousness manifested in the fragmented life of the thwarted heroine in one and the pervading sense of decadence in the consciousness of the two couples in the other. Thematically they are similar in that the critique of socio economic order is affected through relationships between men and women. Both texts also tell the story of society mainly through two women protagonists – Ursula and Gudrun, the two sisters in *Women in Love* and Molly and Anna, the two friends in *The Golden Notebook*. The texts have similar beginnings – in both, the two women are alone in a house/flat engaged in a conversation which turns on the oddness of the times. The oddness highlights the fact that society is undergoing a transition with changing sociopolitical and economic structures which is refracted in the changing structures of gender and a final reorganization into new forms. Both texts use the realist mode with variations to project their preoccupations. Having pointed out the similarities, the ground has been laid to takeoff in the directions in which deviances occur: Lessing's as a feminist practice challenging the phallogocentricism of society and Lawrence's as a masculinist practice maintaining the status quo.

The Golden Notebook interrogates the phallogocentric order from within that order. Cast in the realist mode, it seeks to foreground itself as a construct by exposing what Teresa de Lauretis in "Technology of Gender" terms the "face off," that which is not there but suggested by the mainframe, that which is excluded. Power or "truth" works through exclusions. By bringing to light from darkness that which is excluded, the whole idea of "reality" and the realist text is subjected to questioning. As pointed out earlier, Marguerite Duras defines "feminine literature" as writing "translated from darkness." This act of exposure requires an author-subject. Anna Wulf, the main protagonist of *The Golden Notebook* is the author who writes both the realist text "Free Women" and what normally cannot be written, the "face off", the raw material of temporal experience, cast in the form of four notebooks – the Black, the Red, the Yellow and the Blue, out of which the realist text "Free Women," is fashioned. By revealing the plurality of experience and meaning and the difficulty of capturing all of this into the writing of the story of the two women, Molly and Anna, Anna poses the difficulty confronting every author subject, especially if she is a woman – of satisfactorily writing in a language that acts as its own erasure. The conventions of the realist text preordain its own "decapitation" or silencing in order to speak a certain "truth." In "Castration or Decapitation," Helene Cixous opens up the question of the repression of the feminine in culture by structures of masculinist language. The process of silencing the "woman text" is "decapitation" for Cixous. The fact that truth is always partial is emphasized. At the same time the notebooks themselves are interrogated and their claims to veracity cast in doubt by showing the workings of a "lying nostalgia" in the temporal gap between

the actual phenomena, the empirical experience and its grounding in narrative – what Joan W. Scott terms the "fantasy echo" mentioned in the earlier part of this study. The subversive potential of the time lag in the echo, even though a repetition, was pointed out. In her attempts to grasp the "truth" in all its integrity, Anna seeks to bridge the gap between experience and memory by repeating the same experiences narrated in the Black and Red notebooks, in the Blue Notebooks also which turns into a diary, a daily record of events. Finally, the Blue notebooks, in an attempt to efface the powerful influence of the author–subject and her "lying nostalgia" reduce itself to newspaper cuttings and stories by others pinned on to it. Foucault has pointed out how the past as it is recast in the present is an "effect" and "not a reason for nostalgia" ("Truth, Power, Self" 12). Lessing's preoccupation with this "lying nostalgia" has already been broached, in relation to Martha's experiences, especially the epiphanic moment in the veld. There, Martha had reflected upon the way the attempt at unity in the structure of "truth" excludes the pain and agony of the empirical experience through the operation of her "lying nostalgia." The inclusion of the category of gender to understand the ways in which such exclusions figure in narrative would be informative. Anna, like Alice in *Through the Looking Glass,* strives to look through the mimetic looking glass. We'll examine this in detail presently. But first, the plot and structure of *The Golden Notebook.*

The broad direct style of narrative which Lessing had taken up in *The Golden Notebook* is the legacy of the great nineteenth century novelists. The "Children of Violence" series follows this narrative pattern till the third volume after which Lessing interrupted the series to write *The Golden Notebook.* In this novel, she had

things to say that required a departure from the nineteenth century realist mode and she tried to find a shape that would contain them. Lessing herself has said in an interview published in 1964, about the book: " 'The point of that book was the relation of its parts to each other' " (qtd. in Carey 437). The novel has to serve the fragmented consciousness and society. Again, in a different context, Lessing says that the book is " 'an attempt to break a form, to break certain forms of consciousness and go beyond them.' " (qtd in Carey 437). To achieve this, Lessing takes recourse to a unique structure – by the fusion of form and content. In her Preface to *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing comments on the significance of the formal structure. A main premise was "that if the book were shaped in the right way it would make its own comment about the conventional novel... My major aim was to shape a book which would make its own comment, a wordless statement: to talk through the way it was shaped" (13). The oxymoron "wordless statement" points to the impossibility of capturing 'reality' as a whole in language. The conventional novel could present only partial truths, such partial truths being the effect of the relationship of power crisscrossing the "space off" between the author, the reader and the discourses of power sanctifying conventional reality. The phrase "wordless statement" straddles the borderline of language and silence. Linguistics has shown us that there is an irrevocable distance between sign and referent. Language leaps into existence out of silence. Once established, language systems strive to contain the arbitrariness that limits them. Language tends towards a fullness of meaning, but can never be more than a tenuous imposition on a meaningless world. Ultimately meaning can refer only to its own linguistic system. Authenticity of experience for

much of contemporary writing is felt to lie beyond language in silence. Self-reflective art shows how language creates a virtual world of meaning, exposes the coming into being of that meaning in the face of that silence. The artwork, properly speaking, offers not a study of the world but of how experience is filtered through the creating consciousness. The movement is from the chaos of experience to the narrative of meaning and order, mediated by the author subject. The filtering process involves strategies of power wherein gender is also implicated.

In its structure and story, *The Golden Notebook* expresses a powerful tension between chaos and order. As Betsy Draine puts it, "the complicated highly ordered super-structure of the novel is clearly at odds with the apparent disorder of the content within that structure" ("Nostalgia and Irony" 32). In the same vein, Herbert Marder also points out that "form generates its opposite: the orderly combination of elements which compose the body of the novel directs us to an end state which is 'formless', that is, unanalysable" ("The Paradox of Form" 50). Annis Pratt was the first critic to show how in this novel chaos and form are inextricably bound to one another in a dialectical process ("The Contrary Structure").

The central character of *The Golden Notebook*, Anna Wulf, is a novelist who has not published anything after her first book, a writer with a block. She is living off the proceeds of her book, "Frontiers of War," a novel on the racial situation in Central Africa during World War II. Having discovered the "lying nostalgia" behind the making of that novel, she is unable to write any more. Instead she keeps four note books which divide her life into four aspects. As Anna says: "I keep four notebooks, a black notebook, which is to do with Anna Wulf, the writer; a red

notebook, concerned with politics; a yellow notebook, in which I make stories out of my experience; and a blue notebook which tries to be a diary" (418). These notebooks are framed by a novel titled "Free Women" which is again not presented whole but is broken up by sections from the notebooks. In Anna's first line of dialogue, she declares, "As far as I can see, everything's cracking up" (25). The structure of *The Golden Notebook*, with its narrative framework surrounding fragments of four personal notebooks, is designed to emphasize this fragmentation, seen as the malady of the times. Anna separates four aspects of her life which she can no longer reconcile with one another in the coloured notebooks which serve as attempts to gain knowledge about herself. The "Free Women" is split up into "Free Women I" followed by the notebooks Black I, Red I, Yellow I and Blue I. In the same manner the other "Free Women" sections and notebook sections follow until Free Women 4 and its notebooks. Thereafter the small "The Golden Notebook" section followed by "Free Women 5." The framing novel "Free Women" works out as a conventional novel. The content of the novel resides in its form. The fact of fragmentation in the mind of the protagonist and the world at large is suggested by the broken up parts. These merge in the undifferentiated state of chaos in "The Golden Notebook" section and then assume conventional status again in the novel of plausibility, "Free Women." Out of the chaos, a new pattern emerges. The whole structure, according to Patrocinio P. Schweickart, following Derrida, is articulated in a double sense. The broken parts are hinged on to the others loosely. They also hinge (depend) on each other. As the hinge is not a rigid joint, each part enjoys relative autonomy. "As in the case of speech, the meaning of the novel is articulated

through the play of its hinged parts. The production of meaning is possible because the connectedness of the text does not cancel out its discontinuities" (268). "Free Women," through selection and exclusion from the raw material of the notebooks shapes itself into a realist novel. The fragmented notebooks finally unite through chaos in the inner golden notebook. From the inner golden notebook originate the first line of "Free Women" which starts *The Golden Notebook*.

Every one of Anna's notebooks starts as the curtain falls on the previous one. The drama of each notebook is her battle with a "lying nostalgia". While explaining the impetus behind the making of "Frontiers of War", Anna says:

> But the emotion it came out of was something frightening, the unhealthy, feverish, illicit excitement of wartime, a lying nostalgia, a longing for license, for freedom, for the jungle, for formlessness. It is so clear to me that I can't read that novel now without feeling ashamed, as if I were in a street naked. Yet no one else seems to see it. Not one of the reviewers saw it. Not one of my cultivated and literary friends saw it. It is an immoral novel because that terrible lying nostalgia lights every sentence. (77)

To write another novel, Anna would have to "deliberately whip up in myself that same emotion" (78). What Anna engages in here is "analysis after the event" (GN 210). Language leaps into the silence of the distance in time to shape into form empirical phenomena. This leap into the space of time by language is what Anna in

pejorative terms calls "lying nostalgia." "Lying nostalgia" thus translates as "a yearning for the recovery of the stage of illusion [life considered as theatre] of moral certainty, innocence, unity, and peace. In effect this is a desire for unreality and non existence" (Betsy Draine, "Nostalgia and Irony" 33). It is a nostalgia for absolutes – for Truth, Order, Form which works out as a hope that keeps life going. This nostalgia is a kind of naivete, an innocent yearning for form. The plot of each notebook concerns Anna's struggle to subdue her nostalgia for form and attain consciousness of chaos which is nostalgia for nihilism. The inner golden notebook fulfils nostalgia for nihilism out of which emerges a new form, "Free Women." The new pattern again gives rise to the same nostalgia ad infinitum. *The Golden Notebook*, thus, has an open format which refuses containment and which engages a dynamic unity of progress or regression in time. The process of subjectification is also involved in such a "generative paradigm" where the coherence of self is seen as "simultaneity of identity and non-identity". (Lois McNay, *Gender and Agency* 18-19). The idealistic element keeps humanity on the move or so the message seems to go. This negative dialectic is encapsulated by Paul in the yellow notebook, repeated by Anna in the inner golden notebook, in the image of the Sisyphian boulder pushers who are the elect few – the intellectuals. These intellectuals are to be differentiated from the "great men," the diviners who divine truth instinctively. The existentialist burden of the intellectuals is to roll the boulder of truth up the mountain which is the "stupidity of mankind," that is, getting the ignorant or innocent to accept truths. Lessing here seems to be dividing mankind into three in a hierarchical manner – the "great men" or diviners, the intellectuals and the innocent.

The oscillation between naive nostalgia for form and nostalgia for nihilism is a to-and-fro movement between power and denial which, as pointed out earlier, is Julia Kristeva's sketch of ecriture feminine. Form-making is a phallogocentric activity which contains the patriarchal subject within specific discursive matrices. Who represents the represented subject assumes importance here. Since it is Anna Wulf, the woman writer, who represents various surrogate selves of herself, there is a transgression of the subject/object notions of narrator and narrated, speaker and speech, writer and written, overturning the implicit claim to mastery that structures these relationships. Anna Wulf's is the critical intelligence that analyses, names and represents the subjects in the notebooks, the inner golden notebook and "Free Women." The power of representation is in her hands. On the other hand, this power is located within the phallogocentric matrix which makes its mastery dubious. The ambiguity of Anna's position is evident in her discovery that what she had written in her notebooks did not match with her memory. Using the blue notebook to record only facts, she tries "nailing Anna to the page" and shaping her to save each day from chaos (418). This attempt turns futile:

> Yet now I read those entries and feel nothing. I am increasingly afflicted by vertigo where words mean nothing. Words mean nothing. They have become, when I think, not the form into which experience is shaped, but a series of meaningless sounds, like nursery talk, and away to one side of experience. Or like the sound track of a film that has slipped its connection with the film. (418)

At this juncture, as Anna realizes the ineffectuality of language to convey experience, words seem to her "like the secretions of a caterpillar that are forced out in ribbons to harden in the air" (419). This failure to speak unmediated experience without getting encrustrated into dominant patterns signifies the ambiguous power of the female author-subject. The authority of the subject becomes slippery, sliding into different versions of truth as the inability to represent outside the symbolic order is made evident which is why Lessing foregrounds the process of reality-making in the novel to make a "wordless statement."

It is her rational powers that keep Anna sane, and in "Free Women 2" we learn that Anna has divided her life into four parts (corresponding to the four notebooks) or placed herself as a subject within four dominant discourses. The idea is that the component parts are more manageable than the whole and that eventually the parts can be reassembled to make an organized whole. The notebooks are Anna's attempts to rationally analyse herself. Within each notebook there is a pattern of opposition between nostalgia and awareness and pain and irony. In an analogous larger pattern, the first three notebooks, black, red and yellow, where awareness is bought at the cost of irony, are opposed by the blue notebook, where moral and emotional passions are reawakened. *The Golden Notebook* is the vehicle through which these antitheses are channeled into a dialectic. All the notebooks except the inner golden notebook are driven by nostalgia, by a yearning for an ideal order which is thwarted by the inability to grasp history as continuous. Different subject positions encoded within different discourses present different realities. The reader of *The Golden Notebook* is confronted by literary discourse, psychoanalytic

discourse, political discourse, and the discourse of sexual relationships. Anna, in attempting to nail Anna down, is frustrated by the machinations of language in constructing her as a marginalised subject always: a woman, an artist, an ex-colonial and left-wing in politics, finally taking up the subject position of a near-hysteric in all these discourses. It is at this point that the politics of denial sets in, releasing her from the rigidities of these various discourses to embrace the chaotic formlessness of temporary madness with Saul. The rational slides into the irrational. Chaos, silence and madness are the means by which the subjugated knowledges within the power relations of western metaphysics are brought centre stage. Foucault assigns two meanings to the term subjugated knowledges: "historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization" and "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their tasks or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (*Power/Knowledge* 81-82). The term "naïve" is used here in a different sense from the "naivete" mentioned earlier.

Anna and her friend Molly, the protagonists of the ironically titled conventional novel "Free Women," are "free" in so far as they are sufficiently independent of family, financial constraints, and social and moral institutions to be freely critical of these institutions. But that very independence, their position as outsiders, in effect silences them, or ensures that they are not listened to by others, to any purpose. The fact that both Molly and Anna approach Mother Sugar for psychotherapy reinforces the irony of their freedom. The power structures obviously

marginalize any attempts to destabilize them. Anna observes how, as soon as she starts living alone she becomes the target of male overtures whereas when she was living with Molly, she was left alone, presumably because society had named them lesbians. Anna lets out her rooms to men, sometimes even gays. Molly, a divorcee, leaves her son Tommy to go holidaying for a year. Such acts of defiance, couched in a normalizing rhetoric, as if they did not violate social codes are indulged in by Lessing or Anna Wulf, the author of "Free Women," with regard to their characters. The relationship between Anna and her daughter Janet is reminiscent of Martha's relations with her daughter, Caroline – one could call it a hinged relationship respecting connectivity and separation with none of the mutual imprisoning dependency which is the norm in a patriarchal order. Richard, an industrial magnate and Molly's ex-husband is always made the target of Anna's and Molly's attacks on capitalist patriarchy. Marion, Richard's present wife, has a symbiotic relationship with Anna and Molly. They support and help her as a victim of capitalist patriarchy. Richard's attempts to help decide Tommy's future come to nothing as Tommy is subjected to the opposing forces of capitalism and patriarchy and cannot decide one way or the other, what he wants to do with his life. Torn apart by conflict, Tommy attempts suicide but is only blinded. In his blindness, he gains the insight to get on with his life, in the arena of politics. The narrative seems to be putting the blame for Tommy's plight squarely on the system rather than on the mother.

Tommy's attempted suicide is precipitated by his reading of Anna's notebooks, which she had laid out openly on a trestle table in her room. Paradoxically, whereas here the notebooks are contained within the framework of

"Free Women," "Free Women" is the "summary and condensation" of the "mass of material" in the notebooks (GN 13). "Free Women" thus offers itself as a critique of realism in the transparency with which its origins are foregrounded. On examining the notebooks, Tommy finds that Anna has written "things in different kinds of handwriting" and bracketed off certain parts because certain feelings are considered more important and real than others. He asks: "What makes you decide that the madness and the cruelty isn't just as strong as the getting on with living?" (246). Entries which are not bracketed off are the real, ordinary things, according to Anna. The opposition real/unreal runs throughout the novel. The 'real' signifies the norm which implies participation in the "regime of truth." This participation ensures inclusion in the dominant order. Prevailing paradigms reflect and are reflected in the current regime of truth. Since "truth" holds no independent relationship to systems of power, what is foregrounded as "true" or "real" is the result of normalizing techniques of power relations. It results from the very power that inhabits knowledge itself. As Foucault explains: "It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time" (*Power/Knowledge* 133).

Construction of the subject in terms of "real" and "unreal" thus shows the operations of power relations. All of Anna's surrogate fictional selves, male and female, are constructed along gendered lines within the paradigm of real/unreal. Claire Sprague has noted how "the central character conflicts are not between Anna and her female doubles but between Anna and her male doubles. Anna sees herself

in her other female selves while she sees men as 'others' for almost the entire novel. The male doubles are connected with destructive powers whose existence in herself Anna evades or denies" (*Rereading Doris Lessing* 67). The "real" is the discourse of naivete indulged in by the subjects to align themselves to the dominant order. It is the naïve concept of unity. Thus Anna, throughout, seeks a "real man" who will "complete" her and she compulsively splits off those aspects of her own femininity which she believes does not correspond to masculine desire (for example, the rational, the non-maternal, the non-sexual). As the text narrates: "From the moment Ella meets Paul and loves him, from the moment she uses the word love, there is the birth of naivety" (197). Anna sees this naivety in her own relationship with Michael, though only with hindsight. In their naivete, Anna as well as her double Ella, had failed to see that their relationships with Michael and Paul were doomed. This is because

> Paul gave birth to Ella, the naive Ella. He destroyed in her the knowing, doubting, sophisticated Ella and again and again he put her intelligence to sleep, and with her willing connivance, so that she floated darkly on her love for him, or her naivety, which is another word for a spontaneous creative faith. (197)

Here, this naivete is a falling back on the mythical patterns of woman. This is a recreation of the romantic idea of the woman finding fulfillment and completion with a man.

Anna's notes for a new novel, "The Shadow of the Third," written in the yellow notebook describe the splitting process involved in constructing sexual identity. In this novel, Anna mercilessly exposes the self-deceptions and illusions that make Ella's love possible. At the moment when it becomes clear that Ella is self-deluded and destructive, Anna as narrator recoils from her creation. She breaks off the narrative and resumes it in the form of a prospectus for a novel. This distancing is crucial for the critical intelligence of Anna to understand better. The shadow figure is the "third" in Ella's relationship with her lover, Paul. Originally it is Paul's wife: Ella imagines her "in her own shadow, everything she is not" (193). Her fear of losing Paul's love creates in her a sense of lack which in turn creates a corresponding desire to change, to conform to his imaginary, shadowy ideal in order to regain his love and approval. She thus begins to hide her novel which he names "your treatise on suicide" from him, silencing part of herself, because it incurs his disapproval (195). He believes her too ignorant and naïve to write about suicide, to trespass in his area of psychiatry. He rejects personal experience and its discourse as an appropriate source and medium for writing about his professional domain, a domain in which he possesses "knowledge" and authority. This aspect of Ella's relationship provides Anna with an idea for a short story – a woman has a new personality created for her by her lover when she becomes everything he criticizes her for being, although she was none of these things. Finding he loves the creation she becomes, she realizes he has rejected her real self. Men are, throughout the notebooks depicted as naming and creating women, using language of the symbolic order to define and thus limit women. Since these women draw their sense of

identity from men, they are complicit in the process. Anna's statement that a woman's sexuality is "contained by a man, if he's a real man" is along these lines (401-02). At the end of every relationship, therefore, a woman has to "recover" herself, to revive the self that has been repressed in that particular relationship. At the end of her five-year affair with Michael, Anna has to use "the critical, thinking Anna," the side of her he liked least, to restore what she conceives of as her identity (297). Such technologies of the self are easily discernable within discourses. The desire to submit to "real" men is part of patriarchal subjectification, along with a subjection to the ways in which men "name" women or create them. "Real" men are men who fit in with patriarchal valorisation of certain values. For such "real" men, women fit into patriarchal patterns of submission. Hence the naivete. As Anna says:

> I am always amazed, in myself as in other women, at the strength of our need to bolster men up.... For the truth is, women have this deep instinctive need to build a man up as a man... What terrifies me is my willingness. It is what Mother Sugar would call 'the negative side' of the woman's need to placate, to submit. (425)

Anna's position as an oppositional critic is the feminist politics of the novel. As a writer and an intellectual she is able to alienate herself from dominant patterns to appraise them objectively. Her ability to objectify and see the different persona she had been – "that Anna, in that time, was such and such a person. And then, five years later, she was such and such" – keeps her open to the possibilities for change as a subject-in-process placed within historical time. As she says: "But I am conscious

of it. And being conscious of it means I shall leave it all behind me and become – but what?" (421). Since the language available is inscribed with patriarchal values, Anna can conceive a "real" woman only in opposition to a "real" man who is dominant to her passivity. Anna's firm exclusion of homosexuals from her definition of "real" men suggests an essentialist view of gender. At the same time Anna's and Ella's subjectivities are shown as social constructs which they know will not equip them for the kind of life they see themselves as living. Recognising the control of dominant social structures over women does not ensure change in these structures. Only at the microscopic level, at the individual level can this be done. Anna realizes that she "was stuck fast in an emotion common to women of our time, that can turn them bitter, or lesbian or solitary" (421).

The naïve desire or nostalgia for unity and order had been the driving force behind Anna's involvement with the Communist Party also which is recorded in the red notebook. Like any institution, the Communist Party also exists by absorbing or destroying its critics through an endless process of marginalisation. Their group identity is established at the expense of individual identity. The naïve yearning for integration is evident. Since, one part of the novel hinges on others, naivete can be traced to other parts also. In the red notebook one notices the theme of political naivete in Anna's reflections about whether she should join the party: "One reason not to, that I hate joining anything, which seems to me contemptible. The second reason, that my attitudes towards communism are such that I won't be able to say anything I believe to be true to any comrade I know, is surely decisive?" At the same time, in spite of all her doubts at joining "an organization that seems to be

dishonest," she joins. The deciding factors for Anna were the party's contact with the literary world and the enthusiasm and "friendliness of people working for a common end" (151). This theme is echoed in the entries three years after Stalin's death. Anna writes of the efforts to reform the C.P. from within by democratic means: "Stupid. Yet I was wrapped up in it for months, like hundreds of other normally intelligent people who have been involved in politics for years" (395). In spite of the "God that failed," the members of the C.P. hang on to it like a lifeline. When Anna finds herself stammering while refuting accusations about Stalinism, this linguistic dysfunction is the first indication of a withdrawal of such public loyalty (312). It is also a recognition that such an ideological discourse is distanced from Anna's own experience. Through a series of exclusions, as in any power relationship, they strive to buoy up the party even with the knowledge of its ineffectuality. As Comrade John puts it, "The reason why we don't leave the Party is that we can't bear to say goodbye to our ideals of a better world" (156).

The politics of exclusion can be deciphered in the discourse of psychoanalysis also. The dividing practices of this discourse, through its naming strategies, exclude the insane from the sane. Here, again, is an effort at naïve patterning to hold on to the image of sanity and order. Anna's sessions with Mother Sugar exemplify this. "Mother Sugar has been named thus as she sugar-coats reality. Mother Sugar naively believes in a transcendent order of patterns which could explain the conflicts in life. In the process of this patterning, she excludes whatever does not fit into the pallogocentric pattern. Anna attempts to explore the fullest depths of her subjectivity in her conversations with Mother Sugar but instead, what

she gets is another discourse, another "regime of truth." Her subjectivities as an artist, a woman, a mother, a lover and an intellectual are nailed into encrustrated patterns of the patriarchal order. Anna's "emotional troubles" are attributed to her "intellectualizing" (412). Her dreams crystallize into fixed myths about her repressed subjectivity in Mother Sugar's hands. Through psychoanalysis, she is forced back into myth, invited to "fish among the childish memories of an individual" and merge them with the "childhood of a people" (412). By identifying, naming and labelling chaotic experience as an aspect of human experience in general, the individual puts the experience away from him or herself, is freed from it. Mother Sugar analyses Anna's dreams and translates them into rational discourse, excluding the irrational, rendering them unproblematic. But Anna feels that rather than the translated, rational finished quality of her dreams, it is their irrational, "crude," "raw unfinished quality" that is "precisely what was valuable in it" and so she should hold fast to it (217). With this realization, Anna plans to "leave the safety of "myth" and "walk forward alone," "by myself, Anna Freeman" (416-17). She is "convinced that there are whole areas of me made by the kind of experience women haven't had before." She believed that she was "living the kind of life women never lived before." When Mother Sugar reminds her about the "great line of women stretching out behind her into the past," who have also lived as artists and independent women who insisted on sexual freedom, Anna points out the difference between them and her: "They didn't look at themselves as I do. They didn't feel as I do.... There is something new in the world" (415). This "something new" an "emphasis added" or an "implausibility" (Nancy Miller's terms), Anna explains as a

"crack" in a "personality like a gap in a dam, and through that gap the future might pour in a different shape-terrible perhaps, or marvelous, but something new" leading to the paradox of "formless works of art" (416). Anna's writer's block, for which neurosis she had approached Mother Sugar and which had been read by Mother Sugar as the result of an incapacity to live, is subversively re-interpreted by Anna as the inability to express the chaos of personal experience in the forms offered by tradition. Looking around Mother Sugar's room, Anna dismisses the art gallery-like, perfectly formed, finished quality of the art in the room, and decides that raw formlessness is more valuable (217). The inner golden notebook is the result. Anna thus rejects appropriation into phallogocentric discourses.

What Lessing, in the Preface to *The Golden Notebook* regarded as the shortcomings of the "conventional novel" – "how can this small neat thing be true when what I experienced was rough and apparently formless and unshaped?" – can be more broadly defined as the inadequacy of our meaning making systems which falsely render our over-determined sense of reality from a narrow perspective (13). Lessing's protagonists, Martha Quest and Anna Wulf are obsessively engaged in the meaning-making process, of narrativizing, of making stories to make sense of their experiences. Gayle Greene accurately identifies Lessing's problem as one concerning how to create a self-consciously subversive discourse out of signifying systems unavoidably "inscribed within the culture she would oppose" ("Doris Lessing's *Landlocked*: A New Kind of Knowledge" 82). For a writer committed to realism, the only way out was to foreground realism as a construct by parodying it endlessly and through irony, thus making its integrity problematic. *The Golden Notebook* could

also be considered as a metafictional comment on the realism of "The Children of Violence" series. *The Golden Notebook* comes out through the crack between *A Ripple from the Storm* and the last two novels of the series to make a "wordless statement" about the problematic of realism.

Anna's relentless pursuit of "truth" through repetitive parodic and ironic narratives results in the realization of the impossibility of truth within the binary logic of language. Truth is embroiled within the discourses of power/knowledge. Such discourses impose patterns through naming, labelling and defining. Anna Wulf records her experiences as a colonial and Left party worker in her Black notebook. If the novel, "Frontiers of War" is juxtaposed against its "face off," the Black notebook the problematics of representation and its general aspect could be highlighted. Throughout *The Golden Notebook* Anna is engaged in compulsive narration to make sense of life – a kind of neurosis which culminates in the cracking up in the inner golden notebook. As Michael tells Anna: "Ah, Anna, you make up stories about life and tell them to yourself, and you don't know what is true and what isn't" (296). This precipitates in the detailed recording of a day in Anna's life to avoid exclusion and selection in the blue notebook, which, with its long-winding inroads into minor details becomes unsatisfactory as a meaning-making process. Throughout the black notebook, Lessing shows the gap between what the characters Anna, Willie, Paul, Maryrose, George, and others believe in and what they do. Though they all believed in socialism, the dividing practices of the discourses they were subjected to make them capitulate to sexism, racism and class divisions. Willie believes that " 'there's sense in the old rules. They keep people out of trouble' " (122). His class

consciousness made him declare that "women in [Anna's] position needed extra dignity of behaviour." He maintained that "things are different for men and for women. They always have been and they very likely always will be" (122). George's clandestine affair with the native cook's wife puts paid to his socialist rhetoric. Paul, the RAF pilot, the great cynic who ruthlessly makes fun of Mrs. Boothby, the wife of the owner of the Mashopi hotel, for her racist behaviour towards her cook, where he is seen to be exposing false divisions between the whites and the blacks, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, is contrasted with the Paul of the pigeon-killing incident who makes a mad display of power over helpless victims (370). These same divisions are manifest in the experience and the writing of it as art form.

The effort to capture reality manifests the operation of memory in the space between the events and the recording of it in narrative. Anna visualizes the past as "in a slow motion film": "The moments I remember, all have the absolute assurance of a smile, a look, a gesture, in a painting or film" (115). Implicit is the idea that visual arts render reality more accurately. Though Lessing does not seem to believe in an absolute reality, she strives to bring in as much of the multifaceted reality as possible and this the non-verbal arts seem more capable of doing. Molly Hite has noted how Lessing's quarrel with realism and its discontents "has mimetic grounds, in that she dismissed the means of representation inhering in realist conventions as not representative enough: they could not accommodate the complex of events and issues that her experience let her to regard as most pressing" (484, emphasis added). In her chaotic state in the inner golden notebook, Anna's 'real' past life is projected

before her in 'reel' life by an invisible projectionist. Here false divisions collapse, the characters blend into one another and fluidity between boundaries becomes the norm.

The material of "Frontiers of War" is a translation of the visuals etched in memory, which are paradoxically recorded in the black note book as a novel. The moment Anna decided to write it is clear in her memory. The scene encapsulates George's caravan where he is in the company of the native cook's wife with whom he is having an affair and Paul, Jimmy and Willy talking in the background and "Paul's sudden young laugh." This is Anna's visual synopsis of the novel to be written and the feeling accompanying it is described as the "recklessness of infinite possibility, of danger, the secret ugly pulse of war itself, of the death we all wanted, for each other and for ourselves" (150). This is the nostalgia for nihilism that drives transgressive writing. At the same time such a nostalgia for formlessness succumbs to the nostalgia for naivete in its overriding impulse towards the power of form. Patrocinio Schweickart has drawn our attention to the utopian thrust in the dialectical logic of Lessing's novel and the idea of "the agency of the subject, the idea of articulation as human praxis" ("Reading a Wordless Statement"270). The motif of the third is the manifestation of the utopian ideal. It has already been noted how Ella projects on to a third – earlier Paul Tanner's wife, though later realizing that it is projection of herself – the idea of a perfect, healthy, self-sufficient self as a sort of protection against her fear of utter dependency on Paul. The motif of the third appears in the red note book too where it is pointed out how Stalin is spoken about in respectful terms when more than two members of the party are present and in a

cynical tone in the presence of two members. The motif of the third operates as part of the technologies of the subject, of survival in the public domain. It also operates as a hope, a utopian ideal for a new order. Such a utopian ideal motivates human praxis. Lessing has pointed out that the point is to keep hopefulness from regressing into nostalgia and nihilism, to "force ourselves into the effort of imagination necessary to become what we are capable of being" ("The Personal Voice" 12), because "if people can imagine something, there'll come a time when they'll achieve it" (GN 248). Michael L. Magie has observed that

> Lessing embodies the Romantic epistemology and ontology in two basic tropes, knowledge as fiction and being as fiction.... So she portrays in Anna Wulf a woman who desires to be an autonomous being, yet to line with others, and to have a knowledge of the world that is unshakeable, unified, complete, and pleasant, and yet true.... When Anna finds that her knowledge is not perfectly true and her self not perfectly autonomous, out of despair and fear she tries to turn this defeat into a triumph by asserting that she can invent truth and create herself. In this way Anna thinks and enacts the idea which her creator's art refuses to embody in its basic procedures. (536-37)

"Frontiers of War," Anna's story of gender and race antagonism in Africa during the war attempts a nihilistic transgression of race and gender boundaries. This is its utopian imperative. Unfortunately, as the novel concludes, romantic

jealousy, racial difference, and the war seemingly conspire to doom the lovers to their separate racial and gender-encoded fates. Unable to bear her loss of family and lover, Anna's native heroine sacrifices her body to men and to commodification, ironically choosing prostitution to express her independence. Peter, the ace pilot and hero, on the other hand, turns his eye to a greater purpose, the mythically glorious death that awaits him in war. Both are victims but the black woman's fate signifies an ignominious defeat for breaking sexual codes whereas the white male's fate is a praiseworthy and meaningful assertion of the heroic self. Peter, the idealistic hero is modelled partly on the cynical Paul of the black notebook and partly on George who is a married man carrying on an affair with a black woman. The naïve nostalgia for wholeness, for dissolution of gender and racial boundaries on the part of Anna Wulf, the author, creates the romantic ideology of the story. Though Anna at first calls the novel "immoral" for its lying nostalgia, its life-enhancing fictions, she later realizes that literature is not simply analysis after the event, of secondary importance, a falsification, but a means of making sense (77). They are metaphorical substitutes, statements of a loss which construct the "real" through the fantastic and the imaginary. They serve a performative function through repetition, parody and irony. The fate of the black woman is decided by Anna Wulf the writer, who, at that point of time could only visualize the fate of the heroine, doubly oppressed by race and gender, within the enclosure of patriarchy. Her therapeutic merging with chaos later, with Saul, equips her to write "Free Women." It serves as a hope, a blue print for an ecriture feminine. As Mother Sugar tells Anna, "it is possible after all that in order

to keep ourselves sane we will have to learn to rely on those blades of grass springing in a million years" (478).

The conflict behind her tragic toned stories reappear to the point of obsession in Anna's own life and in the fictional free-writing with which she tries to distance and come to terms with the plot of heterosexual romance. In the yellow notebook, the one devoted to fiction, Anna jots down brief plot synopses for numerous projects that she will never complete. With one parodic exception, all depict variations of the wounded-woman-in-love theme, which illuminate her own dysfunctional relationships with men, and imply the most muted of protests against gender-based asymmetries that invariably leave the woman diminished or destroyed. Anna's artistic crisis is not a block but a stutter, the inability to tell any story except of women victimized by their love for men and their own naive nostalgia for integration. Anna has to reject the role of victim, accept the ambiguities of her many selves and her complicity with the dominant discourses. She discovers that madness, dreams, and intuitive epiphanies – marginalized or discredited ways of knowing, that are subjugated knowledges – are as important and combine with rational analysis to form new ways of making sense of her writing and her life as a woman. Anna's epistemological breakthrough illustrates Donna Wilshire's claim that "no one manner of knowing" can suffice, that adequate knowledge "comes from many kinds of knowing working together or taking turns" (92).

Two things warn Anna of imminent chaos. The realization that her diary entries have become meaningless – "the words swim and have no sense" – is one pointer towards this. As Anna says, "I remain Anna because of a certain kind of

intelligence. This intelligence is dissolving and I am very frightened." The other is the recurrence of the "nightmare about destruction," as Anna had named it at Mother Sugar's insistence (419). The attempts to force patterns of happiness lead to chaos: "And out of the chaos, a new kind of strength" (411). In a 1984 interview, Lessing reproves her correspondent for presenting her with preclusive alternatives: "Why do you make it 'or, or, or?' It could be 'and, and, and'. You don't have to have an either/or..." (Stamberg 4). This difficult knowledge including rational and irrational, and real and unreal is the epistemological shift that Lessing affects in her novels. Hence the juxtaposition of reality and fantasy; a mixing of these genres. The transgression of divisions which such an epistemology envisages is the subversive politics of her novels. Charles Watkins in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* also emphasises the 'both/and' logic: "Why do you say or? And is more like it.... it isn't either/or at all, its and, and, and, and, and, and" (140). Charles inhabits, at least in part, a both/and world, a realm of existence free from the strictures of closed systems. The central theme of *The Golden Notebook*, as pointed out by Lessing in the Preface, is the theme of breakdown – "that sometime when people 'crack up' it is a way of self-healing of the inner self's dismissing false dichotomies and divisions" (8). Robert S. Ryf names it as a "movement beyond ideology" and sees it as the staple of the later works. *Memories of a Survivor* also juxtaposes rational consciousness with the irrational. Hugo, the mysterious cat-dog is a sign of both/and logic – it is neither a cat nor a dog but both cat and dog combining the human and non-human. Anna, in the blue notebook dismisses people who haven't experimented with themselves. What is most striking about her own self-experimenting is the

energy of her repudiations and above all her repudiation of her artistic creations. Anna runs through these on her internal projector in the inner golden notebook at the height of her "madness":

> The Mashopi film; the film about Paul and Anna; the film about Michael and Anna; the film about Ella and Julia; the film about Anna and Molly. They were all, so I saw now, conventionally, well-made films, as if they had been done in a studio; these films, which were everything I hated most, had been directed by me. The projectionist kept running these films very fast, and then pausing on the credits, and I could hear his jeering laugh at "Directed by Anna Wulf"... I shouted at the projectionst: 'But they aren't mine, I didn't make them'. At which the projectionist, almost bored with confidence, let the scenes vanish and waited for me to prove him wrong. And now it was terrible, because I was faced with the burden of recreating order out of the chaos that my life had become. Time had gone, and my memory did not exist, and I was unable to distinguish between what I had invented and what I had known, and I knew that what I had invented was all false. It was a whirl, an orderless dance, like the dance of the white butterflies in a shimmer of heat over the damp sandy vlei. (538)

The energy of negation is impressive. Saul Green's eruption of masculine egotism which Anna, in the blue notebook, had seen as his repeated assertion of privileged knowing, an opposition of maleness against femaleness, an act of male violence or war – "I, I, I, I, like a machine-gun ejaculating regularly" – dissolves and in the dissolution of ego boundaries, he becomes interchangeable with Milt of "Freewomen," and Paul Tanner of the yellow note book in Anna's mind (545). Running back in her mind the events of the past as if projected in a vision, it was like the "rehearsal for a play" (535). Her dream of Saul, Anna and the tiger, is used by Lessing for the play she wrote round about the same time, *Play with a Tiger,* which again exemplifies, like the "Free Women" a repetition in a different pattern. As Anna says, "Yet, I know that having made sure they [the events of the past] were still here, I would have to 'name' them in a different way, and that was why the controlling personality was forcing me back" (535). The breakdown when "knowing was an illumination," sans words, becomes a breakthrough looking forward to new performative patterns, parodies and subversive ironic renderings (549). Rather than make a "correct emphasis" as the projectionist asks, Anna realizes the importance of creativity, of narrativity, of the "emphasis added" in the reworking of old patterns, of renaming them as the only option available and not the idea of absolute truth (537). Wholeness of being becomes a myth; role-playing is recognized as the only reality available. The lines between fact and fiction, self and other are increasingly blurred.

The repetition of the word "odd" in the "Free Women" parts of *The Golden Notebook*, especially in the beginning, names and sets aside in a safe manner the state of chaos that society is in. Molly and Anna use this word a number of times as

an evasive tactic to avoid confrontation with chaos. But the fact of disorder is implicit in their past sessions with their psychoanalyst, in their "unnatural" relationships with Richard's wife Marion, with their children, in Tommy's relationship with Marion, his blinding, the "gay" tenants of Anna and so on. Such undercurrents of chaos also begin Lawrence's novel *Women in Love*. The two sisters Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen are also at odds with the society they live in. Like Lessing's pair, they are discussing men and marriage. Lawrence names them "sisters of Artemis rather than of Hebe," virgin huntresses rather than cup bearers (20). Lessing describes his pair as "free women," free of men and marriage but by interspersing the word "odd" in their discourse, she emphasizes the precariousness of their freedom. Both novels, whatever their differences, take their common point of departure from their concern with love and marriage as the accepted resolution of human lives and their extraordinary heroines – discerning intellectuals, women who teach, paint, write and perform – question the sufficiency of men and the acceptability of marriage. The women are liberated but the distance in time between the novels makes a difference. Gudrun dresses flamboyantly in bold contrasting colours, asserting the artist's freedom from mores and as part of a ruse to cow down the provincials. Molly is very careless and casual in her dressing. Both Lessing and Lawrence foreground liberated females who are intellectuals and artists. Whereas Lessing focalizes predominantly on female experiences, Lawrence concentrates on the experiences of male protagonists mainly. His creation of female characters lack intensity and depth when compared to Lessing's.

By presenting a society in a state of decadence, in transition from tradition to modernity, Lawrence sets the stage for a reworking of gender definitions. This state of decadence is manifest in the alienation between social groups, increased mobility and the consequent sense of rootlessness of individuals, decay of organized religion and the cultural death of god, the spread of education, the growth of cities, the advance of industry and the crises of war. The anti-romantic tone is strident. Male-female relationships take on a new turn. To Lawrence, the ills of modern man showed up in sexual relations. In *Women in Love*, Lawrence is committed to the exploration of relationships between men and women in a social context going through massive upheavals. The general tone is one of ambivalence, uncertainty and self-cancellation. The "radical indeterminacy" of the book's structure, symbolism and language has been pointed out by Gamini Salgado ("Taking a Nail for a Walk" 138). Frank Kermode has described the book as a set of "linked parables," a phrase which effectively captures the discrete, even disjointed, nature of its key episodes (73). The episodic structure, a volte-face from the organic structure of *Sons and Lovers*, serves to juxtapose incidents which reveal relationships in conflict, showing male-female tension in almost every conceivable manifestation. The conflict is directly tied to the increased industrialization and urbanization of England: it is the machine that makes it impossible for men and women to live together in peace. The pulsating, frictional, to and fro in relationships is described in a variety of combinations: in the relationships within families, in sexual encounters between adults, between man and woman, man and man, woman and woman, humans and animals and so on. In the essay, "The Crown," this frictional duality is represented

metaphorically through the fight between the Lion and the Unicorn for the crown which is the ideal. H.M. Daleski sees the work as Lawrence's attempt "to create 'supreme art', which will reconcile the 'law of the woman' and the 'law of the man' " (14).

Asking different questions from the perspective of gender would throw up different meanings. It is often said that feminist criticism of Lawrence began in 1969 with the publication of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, even though Simone de Beauvoir's reading preceded this by twenty-odd years and provided Millet with many of the key frames of analysis. Many feminist critiques have followed since then, *Women in Love* taking the brunt of attack of all Lawrence's works. In the Foreword to *Women in Love*, Lawrence describes art as the "struggle for verbal consciousness" (64). He asserts:

> This novel pretends only to be a record of the writer's own desire, aspirations, struggles; in a word, a record of the profoundest experiences in the self. Nothing that comes from the deep, passional soul is bad, or can be bad. So there is no apology to tender, unless to the soul itself. (64)

The defensive tone could have been the result of the adverse reception of the earlier book, *The Rainbow*. Being a record "of the writer's own desires, aspirations, struggles," a case for its uncertainty and indeterminacy is made. The novel describes a process. This accounts for the paradoxical status attributed to it by Salgado: "The passion for inclusiveness results in a language that is always hovering on the edge of

paradox and sometimes thrusts beyond it into contradiction" ("Taking the Nail" 138). An instance is the comparison of Hermione to "fallen angels restored, yet still subtly demoniacal" (WL 35). This ambivalent tone runs throughout the novel and could be an effect of the historical context. It could also be attributed to a lack of nerve on Lawrence's part to state his position clearly especially since he is primarily dealing with the living relations between men and women.

The episodes in the novel revolve around four main characters – the two sisters, Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen and Rupert Birkin, and Gerald Crich.

The narrative focus is on the "passionate struggle into conscious being" of the Lawrentrain prototype Rupert Birkin ("Foreword" 64). Accordingly the narrative privileges his point of view. Birkin's meditations on individuality and relationships between men and women in present day context are significant:

> The process of singling into individuality resulted into the great polarization of sex. The womanly drew to one side, the manly to the other... There is now to come the new day, when we are beings each of us, fulfilled in difference. The man is pure man, the woman pure woman, they are perfectly polarized. But there is no longer any of the horrible merging, mingling self-abnegation of love. There is only pure duality of polarization, each one free from any contamination of the other. (233)

This is Birkin's ideal of what a relationship should be like. The purity of the sexes is to be maintained "leaving two single beings constellated together like two stars" (233). In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, a later work, Lawrence attributes action and utterance to male and feeling and emotion to female (98). What he had set forth as male and female innate principles, which could be manifested in the male or the female in *The Study*, is now attributed to men and women respectively . The malady of the times is that

> Some men always yield to woman the creative positivity. And in certain periods, such as the present, the majority of men concur in regarding woman as the source of life, the first term in creation: Woman, the mother, the prime being.
>
> (*Fantasia* 98)

This results in a shifting of polarity. Now, "life, thought and activity all are devoted truly to the great end of woman, wife and mother" (99). Judith Ruderman reads Lawrence's oeuvre in terms of a governing psycho-term, the "Devouring Mother," and his love/hate relationship to what it implies. In *Women in Love*, Birkin reveals his obsessive fear of the Magna Mater thus:

> It filled him with almost insane fury, this calm assumption of the Magna Mater, that all was hers, because she had borne it. Man was hers because she had borne him. A Mater Dolorosa, she had borne him, a Magna Mater, she

> now claimed him again soul and body, sex, meaning, and all. He had a horror of the Magna Mater, she was detestable. (232)

The ideal star-equilibrium desired by Birkin is an effect of this fear. The text shows how abstract an ideal this is. The ideal marriage as a star polarity is counteracted by the stress on male dominance and female submission. The only successful relationship in the novel is that between Birkin and Ursula, in which Ursula takes on a submissive role. The text achieves this through the powerful discourses of the eternal feminine, as revealed in art, nature, the laws of the animal world and the myths of femininity. Hermione and Gudrun who exhibit the threatening (to the male) possessive will-to-power, the Magna Mater principle, are devalued by the force of narrative authority.

Eliseo Vivas rightly discerns the rudimentary form of *Women in Love* in "the account of the genesis and development of two contrasting love affairs – that of Birkin and Ursula and that of Gerald and Gudrun" (226). Though both relationships exhibit certain affinities – they begin at the same time, the two women involved are sisters – they end differently. The contrasting qualities of those involved lead one of them to a catastrophic ending and the other to a fair degree of fulfilment. Every incident, conversation or scene in the novel has a bearing on the development and success/failure of these two love affairs. The importance of such relationships for the structure of the novel is pointed out by Birkin.

> 'It seems to me there remains only this perfect union with a woman – a sort of ultimate marriage and there isn't anything else'.
>
> 'And you mean if there isn't the woman, there's nothing?' said Gerald.
>
> 'Pretty well that – seeing there's no God.' (75)

The absence of God is filled in with the religion of love.

The text attempts to show us the success of the Birkin–Ursula relationship and in order to do so it is set off against the failed unions of Birkin–Hermione and Gerald–Gudrun. The obsessive will–to–power of Gerald, Gudrun and Hermione, devalued by the text, leads to their failure. As for Birkin and Ursula, the text masks the will-to-power quality in Birkin's character by setting him off against the Lawrentian ideal of a submissive woman in Ursula. Birkin's dominating personality is given sanction by the ethic of preserving the integrity of the self. In order that we understand the reason for failed and successful relationships, a comprehensive idea is given of the personalities of these characters by strategically placing them in the social contexts in which they appear and also in certain critical situations and episodes from which the reader can draw certain assumptions. The backdrop of cultural disintegration provides legitimate grounds for the violence of drownings, head-bashings, mare-spurrings, rabbit slapping, pond-stonings and other sexual quarrels in and with nature. An objective view of the novel shows a montage of events unified by the common thread of violence and chaos. Attempts to escape this chaotic state of affairs and preserve a certain equilibrium are made by resorting to

symbolic action against a standard of wholeness, that of nature. The narrative draws the power for maintaining male supremacy from nature and instinctual feelings. Lawrence valorized the intuitive. His high praise of Cezanne is based on this. According to him, "Cezanne wanted to touch the world of substance once more with the intuitive touch, to be aware of it with the intuitive awareness, and to express it in intuitive terms" ("Introduction to these Paintings"156). "Intuitive" is aligned to nature and in the natural hierarchy of things, the female is submissive to the male.

The text also uses certain words and their synonyms repetitively to reinforce dominant ideas. In relation to characters, this is done in a subtle and manipulative manner. The wedding scene at the beginning introduces the main characters and prepares the ground for our reading of these characters accordingly. It is the wedding of Gerald Crich's sister Laura. Rupert Birkin is the best man and Hermione, one of the bridesmaids. Ursula and Gudrun watch the festivities from far. The narrative takes on multiple perspectives. Besides presenting Hermione as an "impressive" yet "repulsive" and "macabre" personality subjected by her passion for Birkin, the episode foregrounds the attraction Ursula and Gudrun feel towards Birkin and Gerald respectively (28). The omniscient point of view describes Hermione as "invulnerable... yet her soul was tortured, exposed" (29). From Hermione's point of view, "she always felt vulnerable.... She had no natural sufficiency, there was a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her" (29). The dominant narrative foregrounds her sense of insufficiency in spite of her social standing and privilege. This is attributed to her lack of inviolate individuality or 'being'. To fill up this deficiency, she craved for Rupert Birkin. Her "aesthetic knowledge" and "culture"

were, as the narrative runs, defences against this insufficiency. She made intense efforts to attract Birkin because "if only Birkin would form a close and abiding connection with her, she would be safe during this fretful voyage of life." On the other hand, Birkin, perversely, "wanted to break the holy communion that was between them" (30). Apocalyptic language is used to describe the devastation Hermione felt when Birkin failed to turn up: "It was beyond death, so utterly null, desert" (31). Note how the narrative points to a picture of a formidable lady of powerful social standing subjected to a man who fought her off. She is portrayed as the devouring Magna Mater prototype who sought to suck the life out of the hero. Birkin's attitude towards her is one of pity and revulsion. Hermione's triumphant look at Birkin's arrival is compared to "fallen angels restored, yet still subtly demoniacal" (35). Birkin, on the other hand, is described in a positive light: "His nature was clever and, he did not fit at all in the conventional occasion." He always ingratiated himself to his audience which "disarmed them from attacking his singleness" (33). Ursula was attracted to him, she "wanted to know him" (34). Nothing much is divulged about Gerald at this early stage except his "gleaming beauty, maleness" and the "lurking danger of his unsubdued temper." Gudrun's attraction for him is stated when she decides, "I shall know more of that man" (27). Here Gudrun's assertive individuality ("I shall know") is contrasted with Ursula's sensitive expectancy ("wanted to know"). Like Hermione, the text portrays Gudrun the artist as a woman, with a dominating personality. Ursula is submissive to Gudrun: "She was always forced to assent to Gudrun's pronouncements, even when she was not in accord altogether" (34). The stage is thus set for the devaluing of

confident and assertive women like Gudrun and Hermione. The failure of the Hermione-Birkin and Gudrun-Gerald relationships now has a cause – the possessiveness and assertiveness of these independent women. Ursula, though independent to a certain extent, having a job of her own as a school teacher, is not as forceful a personality as Gudrun and is slightly overwhelmed in her presence. The relative success of the Birkin-Ursula relationship has its roots in Ursula's diffident nature.

Having introduced Hermione in this manner, the narrative hurries to the scene which ends the Birkin–Hermione affair. Hermione has to be put out of the way for the Ursula–Birkin affair proposed as an ideal to flower. As Kate Millet states, "*Women in Love* presents us with the new man arrived in time to give Ursula her comeuppance and demote her back to wifely subjection" (262). Hermione's intellectuality and "lust for power" revolts Birkin. He accuses her of living in her own world of illusion like the lady of Shallot (56). He condemns her incessant quest for the "eternal apple" of knowledge (55). The final showdown between Birkin and Hermione takes place at her home, in Breadleby. Earlier, in a dialogue about liberty, Hermione's murderous reaction ("probably I should kill him") in the event of any violation of her freedom, sets the tone for her attack on Birkin. Birkin reacts violently to Hermione's statement about the equality in spirit of all men and women. He is willing to acknowledge not the equality but the otherness of every human being. Hermione, by this time, had had enough of Birkin's perversity and his attempts to thwart her advances. The feminist reader would feel that she is justified in bashing Birkin's head with a paper-weight. The narrative, from Hermione's point

of view, sees Birkin as an obstruction, a wall thwarting her: "... she must break him down before her, the awful obstruction of him who obstructed her life to the last. It must be done, or she must perish most horribly" (126). Any sympathy for Hermione is sidelined by juxtaposing her violent language against Birkin's compunction and regret for his behaviour: "He had been violent, cruel with poor Hermione" (125). He goes to Hermione's room to apologize and it is at this time, when his back was turned to her, that Hermione attacks the defenceless Birkin. Birkin's metamorphosis into the victim of female violence, should naturally elicit deserving sympathy for him. The narrative, very subtly, legitimises and sanctions its negative attitude to assertive, possessive women. In the same way that Hermione's violence seems out of proportion to the wrong done, Birkin's reaction to the head-bashing seems too mild. He even thought that "it was quite right of Hermione to want to kill him" (129). The barely conscious Birkin rushes off to the protective arms of Mother Nature. Naked, he wallows in the beauteous forms of nature:

> To lie down and roll in the sticky, cool young hyacinths, to lie on one's belly and over one's back with handfuls of fine wet grass, soft as a breath, soft and more delicate and more beautiful than the touch of any woman.... Nothing else would do, nothing else would satisfy, except the coolness and subtlety of vegetation traveling into one's blood. How fortunate he was, that there were this lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation, waiting for him, as he waited for it; how fulfilled he was, how happy! (129)

Note how the vegetation is "responsive" in contrast to the unyielding woman. At this point of time Nature replaces women in Birkin's scheme of things. Nature enriches him and the conflict in him dies: "This was his place, his marriage place. The world was extraneous" (130). Comparing himself to Alexander Selkirk in his pastoral solitude, he recoils in misanthropic revulsion. His dread of the modern, independent, intellectual woman is translated into a dread of mankind. Nature's soothing, harmonious presence combats culture's destructive harmony.

Nature, for Lawrence, provides the standard of wholeness. Lessing also echoes this attitude to nature. We have already seen Martha revelling in the rain and frogspawn and her epiphanic moment in the veld. Lawrence, in addition, also uses nature and its laws in the animal world to legitimise his attitude to women. The idea of the eternal feminine is privileged as part of his strategy to contain the cultural feminine. As he states in *Fantasia*: "Drive her back into her own true mode. Rip all her nice superimposed modern-woman and wonderful-creature garb off her. Reduce her once more to a naked Eve, and send the apple flying" (191). In fact Ursula is reduced to this state soon by Birkin's powerful intervention. Though he fails to convince her initially, eventually she succumbs. The intellectual knowledge that Birkin criticized in Hermione is the weapon he uses to influence Ursula. Though he talks of blood consciousness and drowning of knowledge in a "palpable body of darkness," all this rhetoric, paradoxically, is couched in an intellectual discourse (58). In the "Mino" chapter, Ursula seeks love from Birkin to cement their relationship. Birkin offers not love but something impersonal instead. She sees Birkin's desire for something more as mere lust for bullying and domination. Birkin

wants an equilibrium of two stars, not a mingling in the relationship. As if to illustrate this balance of opposites and reinforce this idea the focus shifts to Birkin's tomcat who proceeds to deal in an extremely male and lordly fashion with a fluffy little stray cat that wanders into the garden. The drama of male dominance having been enacted in the animal world, Ursula accuses Mino of being "a bully like all males." Birkin, on the other hand, advises Mino to "keep your male dignity, and your higher understanding" (176). When Ursula lashes out at this "assumption of male superiority" as a lie which cannot be justified, Birkin answers that the female wild cat "perceives that it is justified" (177).

Ursula compares this bullying to Gerald's bullying of the mare in the chapter, "Coaldust." Birkin justifies these actions in the name of desire to bring the female into a pure stable equilibrium with the male. Ursula is impatient with Birkin's starry equilibrium and rightly interprets that it is a female "satellite" that he is looking for. She suspects that Birkin has in mind a relationship in which the female is subject to the will of the male. In the chapter, "Coaldust," Ursula and Gudrun are witnesses to Gerald's ruthless will in action on the mare at the railway gate. This is another of those exhibitions of male superiority for the benefit of the gazing females. The scene in symbolic fashion also represents the relentless domination of the miners by the industrialist. As the colliery train passes, Gerald forces the mare to stand at the crossing in spite of its terror of the noisy train. The mare, the workers and women are symbolically reduced to mere instrumentality. The sexual overtones of the scene are strident: "... at last he brought her down, sank her down, and was bearing her back to the mark" (133). The man and horse "were sweating with violence," but he

"seemed calm as a ray of cold sunshine" (134). The repulsion of the mare's utter terror fails to affect Gerald. The bleeding mare, wounded by Gerald's spurs, horrifies Ursula and overwhelms Gudrun who faints. Both identify sympathetically with the horse. Later, Gerald justifies his action by stating that "it is the natural order" (164). The horse, like the wild stray cat, according to Birkin, submits to the "highest love -impulse: resign your will to the higher being." The whole argument culminates in Birkin's statement that "woman is the same as horses" and that "it's a dangerous thing to domesticate even horses, let alone women.... The dominant principle has some rare antagonists" (166). The implication is clear. Birkin's attempt to "domesticate" Hermione has come to naught and her antagonism to the "dominant principle" in Birkin is the reason for their failed affair. The mare scene anticipates the destructive future of the Gerald–Gudrun relationship.

In the chapter, "Diver," Gerald's masculine power is the object of the gaze of Gudrun and Ursula. Gudrun is awed by his masculine presence and the freedom (swimming naked) and mobility that it allowed him as opposed to a woman who is hindered by restrictions imposed on her (63). Eliseo Vivas reads irony in the situation. In his view, although Gudrun envies Gerald's freedom as she lacks it, it is "he who is in fact restricted because weak, and it is she who shows up his weakness and leads him to his death" (232). The androcentric reading puts the blame for his death on a woman. Vivas also has a point to make about the water symbolism. Water has been linked throughout history with fecundity and so are vegetation, woman and the moon. He also notes the irony of Gerald's death by water (he is frozen to death) in contrast to his powerful cleaving of water in the present context.

By the association of water with women and the moon, an eternal feminine archetype, women become responsible for the destruction of men. Incidentally Gerald's sister also dies by drowning. It is not water that is foregrounded as a symbol of destruction and death but women. If it is Gudrun's rejection of Gerald and her association with Loerke, the artist, that drives him to his death, why did not Hermione, rejected by Birkin, resort to the same means? In fact nothing much is heard of Hermione in the latter half of the text. She has served her purpose – and that is to show up what independence and intelligence can do to a woman. Vivas sees a pattern of animal quality of hardness and cruelty in the love relationships of many of Lawrence's fictional characters. He even likens it to a kind of mating found in certain kinds of insects in which the female kills the male after or even during the act. Extending this pattern to *Women in Love*, he asserts:

> This reinforces, in turn, our sense that, in *Women in Love*, the apparently strong industrial magnate turns out to be the weaker of the two and the woman knows it from the beginning. She finally sends Gerald to his death when she is done with him and finds her true mate in the German Sculptor, Loerke. Gudrun murders Gerald without premeditation, guile, or plan, in a more or less unconscious manner by forcing him to face the frozen emptiness of his soul. (252)

Lawrence's criticism of the devouring woman finds an ally in this masculinist reading.

At this juncture, the symbolism of the "Moony" chapter becomes clear. Birkin fears the independent, assertive woman. Rather than translate this fear in literal terms, Lawrence takes recourse to symbolism. Birkin stones the reflection of the moon in water. The moon, in culture, being the representation of the feminine archetype, this action could be read as a direct attack on women who are too possessive and want to put men in their pockets as Paul says of Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*. Walking late one evening in the direction of the mill where Birkin has his lodgings, Ursula feels a "great presence watching her, dodging her." She realizes that it is the "mysterious" moon, with its "white and deathly smile" and "sinister face" (283).The omniscient point of view, with a sparse use of such negative words, lays the ground for the violent stoning of the moon's reflection in water. Ursula "disliked it" for "some reason." Slowly and subtly the narrative transfers on to Ursula the masculine point of view which reaches its climax in the "Excurse" chapter when Ursula capitulates to Birkin. Soon Ursula sees Birkin wandering by the edge of the pond, throwing flowers into it and talking disconnectedly to himself. This episode takes place after Birkin's illness and his brief sojourn in France. Ursula and Birkin had not seen each other for some time. They had acknowledged their attraction for each other but had not agreed on the kind of relationship they wanted. Ursula wanted love but Birkin felt love was an emotion that would not allow them to retain their inviolate individuality. He wanted an impersonal conjunction as of two stars. Now, unobserved, Ursula watches Birkin furiously throwing stones at the reflection of the moon, breaking it into fragments and trying to drive it from the surface of the lake. This is a very powerful and characteristic piece of Laurentian

writing, both for its descriptive beauty and its symbolic force. The brilliant light of the moon "exploded on the water and was flying asunder in flakes of white and dangerous fire." The "quivering," "not yet violated moon" which kept "reasserting itself" increases his ire and he looks for more stones:

> And in a moment again, the broken light scattered in explosion over her face, dazzling her, and then, almost immediately, came the second shot. The moon leapt up white and burst through the air. Darts of bright light shot asunder, darkness swept over the centre. There was no moon, only a battlefield of broken lights and shadows, running close together. (285-86)

The savagery of Birkin's action seems unwarranted until the symbolic meaning is discerned as suggested earlier. The clue to the symbolism is given by Birkin when he hurls maledictions at the moon, calling her Cybele, "the accursed Syria Dea" (285). He is haunted by the primal woman image of white goddess. Eliseo Vivas identifies Cybele with the Greek goddess, Aphrodite:

> She was a terrible goddess, for she destroyed the sacred king who mated with her on a mountain top by tearing out his sexual organs. She was served by sodomitic priests who dressed as women, castrated themselves, and sought ecstasy in union with her. I take it therefore that Birkin is

> expressing the ancient and deep rooted fear some men have felt towards women. (260)

Earlier on in this study, it has been pointed out how Birkin identified Ursula and Hermione with qualities of the Great Mother. H.M. Daleski is of opinion that Lawrence's source for the Cybele image could have been James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* which he had read, as pointed out in Lawrence's letter to Bertrand Russell (168). Frazer also describes certain rites connected with Cybele which are destructive of the male. Birkin's ire at the moon as Cybele could point to his fear of independent women. He feared Hermione and broke up with her. He is also afraid of Ursula's hold on him. In the moon scene it is this fear and hatred of women and his possible dependency on them which would be a violation of his individual singleness that he displays.

The image of the bright moon on the darkness of the water could thus be interpreted as the female impinging on the individuality of the male. The smashing of the moon's reflection is then viewed as a clash of the opposites. The moon's reflection violates the purity of the dark waters and it is this contaminating image that Birkin attempts to obliterate. Apart from the esoteric mythology stated above, the moon in general is identified with the feminine. Maud Bodkin in *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* comments on how there is "in the background of the mind, some sense of the moon-image as related in man's imagination to the lives of women, and burdened with the obscure mingled feelings they excite" (291). In the altercation that follows the stoning of the moon, Birkin and Ursula again disagree on what precisely they want from their relationship. Ursula feels that Birkin wants her to be

his "thing," "never to criticize" him or "have anything to say" for herself which she refuses to be. Birkin, conversely, wants her to drop her "assertive will" (289). Ursula finally brings out a declaration of love from Birkin. The next day Birkin is confronted by the same impasse. What is the concept of an ideal relationship? Birkin believes that the regeneration of a society can only be accomplished by a new relation between individuals. The abandonment in love curtails the freedom of individuals. What Lawrence is specifically looking for is the freedom of the male. For this the woman has to submit, by dropping her assertive will. The "new" relationship, according to Kate Millet, "is in effect a denial of personality in the woman" (264).

The "Excurse" chapter exemplifies this perspective. The dominant narrative foregrounds this episode as crucial to show the means by which Birkin and Ursula achieve "polarity." Contrarily, it is Ursula's surrender that brings peace to their conflict. This episode takes place after Ursula leaves Birkin's house in a fit of jealousy over Hermione's assumption of familiarity in Birkin's house. Birkin comes to take her for a drive the next day as a sort of apology and offers her a gift of three beautiful rings which she accepts. When Birkin refuses her suggestion of having high tea on the pretext of saying goodbye to Hermione who was leaving, there ensues a violent quarrel with Ursula pouring invective on Birkin and finally throwing the rings at him. Throughout the exchange Ursula is shown as making a "degrading exhibition," according to Birkin (351). Her display of possessive jealousy is violent enough to put anyone off. When she throws the rings at him there is an "ugly, malevolent look" on her face and she turns away with a "sullen, rather ugly walk"

(353). The narrative shows Ursula through Birkin's consciousness which discredits her. The rings which are patriarchal masculine emblems of courtship circumscribing a woman's independence are spurned by Ursula as an attempt to "buy" her. She attempts to go beyond conventional gender stereotyping in her anger. Birkin picks those "little tokens of the reality of beauty" making his hands dirty (353). Birkin wants her to come back and she relents, which is surprisingly illogical after such a violent outburst. She offers him a "piece of purple-red bell-heather," a gift of natural beauty in contrast to his gifts of masculinity. Ursula is infantilized here as she "stood before him, hanging her head" and saying, "see what a flower I found you." His acceptance of the flower makes everything simple again and "she hid her face on his shoulder" (354). Ursula becomes all soft and yielding again. They go for a drive after the lovers' quarrel, and reach an inn where they spend time together in the parlour by the fire.

The conflict seems to have brought about a miraculous change in Ursula:

> It was if she were enchanted, and everything were metamorphosed. She recalled again the old magic of the Book of Genesis, where the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair. And he was one of these, one of these strange creatures from the beyond, looking down at her, and seeing she was fair. He stood on the hearthrug looking at her, at her face that was upturned like a flower, a fresh, luminous flower, glinting faintly golden with the dew of the first light. (357)

The ecstatic rhetoric here seems to take us back to ancient myths of masculinity and femininity. It is as if modernity had never reared its head. Nothing less than the scriptures sanction these myths. The "enchanted" ambience works magic to make anything possible. The floral imagery reinforces the delicacy and purity of the female. Ursula "kneels" before him in a submissive posture since Birkin has been transformed into a son of God whereas she is only one of the daughters of men. Ursula seems to be paying homage to an essential transcendent maleness. Lawrence is faithful here to his male and female principles. He relates Birkin to "the son" and the principle of "Love" and Ursula to a natural existence or "Law." The floral imagery with respect to Ursula reinforces this division. In Birkin, the masculine principle is dominant and in Ursula the feminine principle, in a whole male-female personality. The discovery of the son of God in Birkin and the daughter of men in Ursula is the discovery of individual singleness in both of them. The delight they take in each other's "pure presence" suggests that what we have here is the realisation of the hopes that are set out in Birkin's reflections on the relations of men and women (357). Lawrence repeatedly talks about the need to keep the sexes pure: "For the magic and the dynamism rest on otherness" (*Fantasia* 103, original emphasis). The elevation to "pure presence" thus seems to be a fall into essentialism where, in spite of Lawrence's theory of male and female principles being found in both men and women, the ideal is of the female being essentially feminine and vice versa. The metamorphosis achieved in the ideal relationship is the relegation of the female to the devalued poles of the patriarchal metaphysical binaries. The standard for Lawrence is always nature and what is natural lapses into essentialism. Having

discovered Birkin's ideal of a pure relationship through the supplication of the female, their pilgrimage is at an end. From here, the burden of the novel falls on the relationship of Gudrun and Gerald.

Gerald and Gudrun fail to achieve this kind of polarity and so their relationship is doomed, culminating in the death of Gerald. Birkin and Ursula marry and accept the responsibility of a permanent bond. Lawrence seems bent on showing us the reasons for the collapse of the Gerald–Gudrun relationship. Both are independent, self-assertive and exercise their will-to-power indiscriminately. Early on in their acquaintance, Gerald had detected "a dangerous hostile spirit" in her. Gudrun felt that a "bond was established between them": "...they were of the same kind, he and she, a sort of diabolic free-masonry subsisted between them" (145). Gudrun, through Gerald's masculine perspective is a "dangerous" spirit, "hostile" to the masculine world in her assumption of strength of personality. The fact that she taunts and teases men and defies them is made explicit in the scene where she dances before (the description of male gender is specific) some "wild Scotch bullocks" (196). Her free, uninhibited nature is foregrounded in her eurythmics, free dance movements. Ursula, in a "pathetic voice" airs her fear of the cattle who watched them with "dark, wicked eyes." Note the difference in their personalities. Gudrun's dare-devil antics make the cattle duck "their heads a little in sudden contraction from her, watching all the time as if hypnotized" (196). The narrative strives to put before us in symbolic guise, the destructive (to the men folk) elements in Gudrun's character. This is contrasted with Ursula's conventional behaviour. H.M. Daleski describes Gudrun's behaviour as stemming from a fierce self-assertion in the face of a menacing maleness: "Gudrun dances her desire for dominance, matching her will

against that of the bullocks and testing her power" (156). The stage is set for the destruction of Gerald by Gudrun, as the dominant point of view asserts. The fact that it is Gerald, with his preconceived notions about masculinity and femininity, who finds it difficult to cope with a woman of Gudrun's powerful nature, is obscured somewhere in the folds of the narrative. Gerald's patriarchal views about femininity have already been communicated powerfully through the mare scene.

In the middle of the dance before the cattle, Gerald appears and tries to drive them away. Subject now to the human male gaze of Gerald, Gudrun refuses to become an object and she subverts her subjection by striking at Gerald on the face. This action sets the tone for their violent relationship. Totally unyielding as opposed to Ursula, Gudrun is a threat to masculine dominance. The mare and the bullock scenes when set off against the scene in which Gerald and Gudrun collaborate against Gerald's sister Winifred's "great lusty rabbit" in a passion of sado-masochistic cruelty, complete the picture of frictional to and fro of dominance-subjugation which reaches no fruition in the Gerald–Gudrun relationship. The reason for the impasse is that both are dominant, powerful personalities. Unless one gives in, as seen in the other relationship, there can never be fulfilment. The relationship ends in the death of Gerald. In the rabbit scene, Winifred and Gudrun want to catch Bismarck, the rabbit, in order to draw him, because he looks splendid and fierce. Gudrun tries to catch him but he is very strong and starts lunging wildly and kicking in the air. Gudrun is having a hard time holding him when Gerald takes the rabbit from her. The beast lashes out at him also but Gerald brings his hand down on his neck. The rabbit emits an unearthly cry and is subdued but not before he had made vile, red scratches on both their arms. This display of animal violence

prefigures the animal passions that would be unleashed between them. When Gudrun comments that the rabbit is mad, Gerald responds, "That's what it is to be a rabbit" (280). For Lawrence everything boils down to essence which is the norm. Masculinity is thus in part the instrument of female-taming. Its goal is, to render woman as the satellite of man. In Gerald's case it is not achieved given Gudrun's refusal to submit.

In his study of *Women in Love*, George H. Ford refers to Horace Gregory's discussion of the African statues in the latter's work *Pilgrim of the Apocalypse*. The reference is to the statue of the West African woman which Birkin had seen at Halliday's house in London. The day after the "Moony" scene, he remembered this statuette, two feet high, of a "tall, slim elegant figure from West Africa." The sensuality of the figure with "face crushed like a beetle's" represented for Birkin the creative, instinctive quality which had been crushed by centuries of civilization (292). Gregory is of the opinion that Lawrence considered the statue as more important than his principal characters:

> She is positive, concrete, the perfect representation of life as opposed to the imperfect human beings surrounding her.... What the statue is made to represent is the normal essence of Gudrun and Ursula combined – their deviation from the statue's norm... is the perversion imposed upon them by their individual existence.
>
> (qtd. in Ford 27, original emphasis).

The sculptures and statues scattered throughout the novel are crystallized essences of femininity as Lawrence imagines them. Another wood carving from the West Pacific, seen in Halliday's flat shows a "woman sitting naked in a strange posture, and looking tortured, her abdomen stuck out" in child birth (92). Here is another instance of the essentialist representations of women in their procreative function. Gudrun's sculptor friend of continental origin, Loerke, for whom she ditches Gerald shows the sisters a photographic reproduction of one of his statuettes. It was of a naked young maiden, "just passing towards cruel womanhood" seated sideways on a "massive, magnificent stallion, rigid with pent-up power," "her face in her hands, as if in shame and grief, in a little abandon." She was "exposed naked on the naked flank of the horse" (484). The essentialist image of woman as victim is revealed in her vulnerable gesture of hiding her face. Her vulnerable femininity is set off against the powerful masculinity of the horse. In spite of Loerke's statement that his art has no reference to outside reality, Ursula refuses to accept this. She insists on her own definition of art as a reflection of life: "The horse is a picture of your own stock, stupid brutality, and the girl was a girl you loved and tortured and then ignored" (486). For her, "the world of art is only the truth about the real world" (487). When Loerke revealed that the girl who modelled for him was an art student, it reinforced Ursula's stand.

Lawrence's art thus foists certain essential values on women. Apart from citing the animal world and natural world to reinforce certain essentialistic traits in women, Lawrence uses dance also for this purpose. While the dance form is used as a social register representing upper class sophistication, the subject matter stresses

myths of femininity. In Breadleby, Hermione's home, Gudrun, Ursula and another guest, the Countess take on the roles of Naomi, Ruth and Orpah in their Russian ballet. Violation of such eternal traits on the part of women spells disaster for a man-woman relationship as seen in the failed affairs of Gerald and Gudrun and Birkin and Hermione. His touchstone of wholeness is nature in both its manifestations – human nature and nature. Frequent tangential movements into the animal and natural world are resorted to in order to explicate the norm. The norm is that of masculine power and feminine subjection. The sexual politics is played out in different contexts. Two minor women characters, Minette, Halliday's mistress and Mrs. Crich, Gerald's mother are not valorised since they show certain undesirable perversions. Minette is devalued morally. Gerald's moral condemnation of her as a harlot is significant.

> 'I liked her all right, for a couple of days', said Gerald. 'But a week of her would have turned me over. There's a certain smell, about the skin of those women, that in the end is sickening beyond words – even if you like it at first'.
> 'I know,' said Birkin. (116)

Gerald's propreitorial behaviour smacks of masculinist double standards. It is interesting to note how the narrative describes Minette before Gerald has had his pleasure. The narrative emphasises her innocence, and her flower-like delicacy of form (81). The dominant masculinist narrative thus stands on judgement of women who deviate from the so-called norm, which is a very patriarchal one. Gerald's mother, Mrs. Crich, has "recoiled away from this world of creeping democracy" in "passive antagonism" (251). In the opening chapter she is described as a "queer

unkempt figure" with untidy colourless hair and a "tense, unseeing predative look" (27). Unable to cope with the changed materialist system, she embodies a critique of the system subject to everyone's sympathy. She rejects the normative values attached to woman, motherhood and wifehood, and so is sidelined by the system. Ursula is reclaimed having subjected herself to the norm. The novel ends on an open note with Birkin yearning for another relationship – between man and man recurrent throughout the novel, and ending inconclusively.

CONCLUSION

In Martin Amis' novel *Money*, the hero John Self meets the novelist himself, that is, a character called Martin Amis. John Self asks this character what everybody asks novelists: " 'Hey', I said, 'when you [write], do you sort of make it up, or is it just, you know, like what happens?' " The Martin Amis character answers: " 'Neither' " (87-8).

The idea that novels are neither facts nor fictions, rather "factual fictions", as Lennard Davis puts it, highlights the importance of narrativity and its politics. The function of novels is to make sense of life through narration. Lawrence, in the essay "Why the Novel Matters" considers the novel as important because it could embrace the totality of human experience. Hence it is "the one bright book of life," though "books are not life" (124). Mikhail Bakhtin also echoes Lawrence in his consideration of the novel as a grand literary form capable of doing justice to the inherent polyphonies of life:

> The possibility of employing on the plane of a single work discourses of various types, with all their expressive capacities intact, without reducing them to a common denominator – this is one of the most characteristic features of prose. (200)

Since textual narrative representation is filtered through the consciousness of an author-subject, who is part of a phallocentric universe there is a politics involved

in its representation. Like any system, phallocentrism is driven by a desire to perpetuate itself. As Sandra Gilbert put it, "Every text can be seen as in some sense a political gesture and more specifically as a gesture determined by a complex of assumptions about male-female relations, assumptions we might call sexual poetics" ("What do Feminist Critics Want?"31). The complex construction of gender through power discourses which posit certain knowledges as truth inevitably gives way to resistances especially in the case of discerning subjects. The fact that the reality we perceive and actively take part in is a gendered one makes writers take up specific critical positions in relation to the cultures that nurtured their imaginations. The gender of the writer influences the way in which she/he comprehends the complexity of experiences confronting her/him. Accordingly strategies used for literary presentation also differ. This study has focused on how the two writers Doris Lessing and D.H. Lawrence, straddling two distinct periods, modernist and postmodernist, have transmuted their specific gendered experiences into art.

Working mainly within a Foucauldian feminist paradigm, this study has attempted to highlight the way gender operates in textual production. For this, a workable theory of gender and power was elaborated in the Introductory Chapter. Foucault's theory of power does not focus on gender though in his later works he did focus on technologies of the self and how the self responds to the power discourses. By bringing in the variable of gender to Foucauldian theory, the specific instances of response to the power/knowledge system on the part of the male and the female

subject was foregrounded. The idea of a unified subject of the liberal humanist project is revealed as a utopian ideal which is undercut by the subjection of the individual to power discourses. Subjectification and subjection work in tandem. Resistance to subjection is manifested in different ways for the gendered subjects.

To understand the operations of gender and power, Chapter One attempted to show the workings of patriarchy, that powerful system of male domination in its various aspects. Patriarchal power discourses have, through strategies of containment, metaphorically castrated the female in different ways. Myths of femininity have served to enclose the female in "dolls houses." The subtle workings of the power/knowledge system have ensured the complicity of the females in such myth-making. Valorisation of maidenhood and virginity, domesticity and virtue as exemplary qualities has served to circumscribe them in many ways. Language has perpetually worked against them, being couched in patriarchal values. Many of the grand narratives have elided their point of view. Literary canon and literary history have for ages ignored the works of women. History itself has failed to take account of the women's point of view. Feminists, with the advent of second-wave feminism, have revealed the duplicity and double standard of the patriarchal system in recent times. When viewed through the lens of gender the status of femininity as a construct of culture is easily discerned.

Lessing and Lawrence wrote in different cultural contexts – the postmodernist and modernist periods respectively. In the case of Lawrence this has affected his art in various ways. The rise of the New Woman during the modernist period led to an ambivalent attitude towards women which is seen in his depiction of

women characters. He created powerful women characters like Ursula, Gudrun, Hermione and Kate Leslie. Interestingly the strong women characters who show a will of their own are portrayed negatively as possessive and devouring. In *Women in Love* this is the fate of Gudrun and Hermione. Ursula, who aligns herself to many (not all) patriarchal sanctions, is shown in a positive light. Lawrence's feminized nature, given a domineering mother could be the reason for such an ambivalent attitude. Doris Lessing's protagonists are mainly women who are discerning intellectuals. Martha Quest, Anna Wulf, Kate Somers and Molly are strong characters who can stand on their own. They interrogated patriarchy and its assumptions. Lessing's male characters are generally insignificant.

The link between gender and genre has been noted since feminist studies in the area. The fact that nineteenth century women writers used diary, memoirs and journals and later novels to record their experiences is a well-known fact now. The novel of development (bildungsroman) a very masculine genre and part of the liberal humanist project, an outcome of the Enlightenment myth of rationality as deployed by Lessing and Lawrence was the subject of Chapter Two. This genre with its quest narrative brings about a different outcome for the questing subjects on account of their gender as well as the gender of the author-subjects. The "Children of Violence" bildungsroman traces the development of its protagonist Martha Quest. Literary conventions project the desire of this genre as achievement of individual autonomy. In Martha's case her development is fraught with pain, alienation and intense soul searching and hysterical bouts. Her mother who for her symbolises patriarchal values has to be rejected to enable her own development. She has to repeat patriarchal

norms of femininity so as to reject them later. She seeks symbiotic relationship with like-minded people. She even desires a relationship with a man who would be a well-integrated personality. Lessing presents Martha as a subject-in-process who goes through sexual relationships with a number of men. Lessing's frank portrayal of the sexuality of Martha is reminiscent of Lawrence. Rather than individuation, Martha seeks integration. Various relationships, mother-daughter, husband-wife and so on are shown as "hinged," attached but at the same time free to move. Autonomy lies in the freedom to follow desires and not in isolation. Martha dons the garb of masculinity in the early stages of her life to achieve freedom and power. She gives up this masquerade later. Her heightened sensitivity towards fellow human beings results in her becoming a mother-figure to many. Lessing is seen to present a dual femininity – a paradigm of femininity which embraces patriarchal norms in a playful masquerade and an oppositional femininity which seeks to resist these norms.

In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence takes us through the development of Paul Morel. Paul, a feminized character behaves aggressively towards women to mask his feminization. His treatment of Miriam and Clara exemplifies this. The patriarchal values he embraces influence his behaviour. He strives for autonomy in the name of vital individualism. Since the social order works favourably for the male individual, Paul removes any obstacle standing in his way effortlessly. No trauma is recorded in the process. Paul finally achieves individual autonomy shaking himself free of any binding relationship. The bildungsroman genre works differently on account of the gender of the subjects.

Nature is the standard of wholeness for both Lessing and Lawrence. For Lawrence it is opposed to culture which distorts. Lawrence's attitude towards nature is an offshoot of industrialization. The yearning for a peaceful pastoral organic community takes Paul frequently to Willey Farm. For Lessing also the natural order offers sustenance but the desire to oppose those cultural myths which the power/knowledge system labels "natural" is distinct. Living within a social order which is patriarchal she has to distinguish between the two. Nature for Lawrence connotes the female principle. In *Women in Love* Lawrence valorizes nature in the form of primitive art. This is his ideal of civilization with its spontaneity and blood consciousness. Frequently women are equated with nature in an essential manner through animals and flowers. The masculine hegemony in the animal world is the driving force behind such representation. For Lessing, nature provides the utopian ideal in a chaotic world.

Relations between men and women are portrayed differently in Lessing and Lawrence. Whereas Lessing seeks and achieves symbiotic relationships, Lawrence, though his ideal is also a balanced relationship of star polarity, is unable to achieve this ideal. Lawrence's male protagonists are too individuated to achieve this. They finally seek female subordination. While Lessing's protagonists, Anna and Martha, are integrated to communities of people, be it women or others, Lawrence's protagonists Paul, Birkin and Gerald are alienated from the community by their need to sustain their "vital individualism." Lawrence's successful depictions of man-woman relationships are only those in which the women subordinate themselves to

the men. In her representations of man-woman relationships, Lessing attempts to go beyond conventional circumscribed patterns.

Lawrence valorises the rational autonomous individual. Lessing privileges irrationality, madness and chaos. This is because she believed that order is maintained in society by a process of exclusion. What is excluded is subjugated knowledges which the mainstream devalues. For the female subject such devalued knowledges exhibit the power play inherent in their devaluation. Lessing's and Lawrence's conception of 'reality' thus differs. For them, mimesis is the only valid literary reality. But reality being gendered is an arbitrarily chosen order that allows mimesis to take place. Lessing has recorded Anna's problems with the realist mode in *The Golden Notebook*. Anna is unable to express all that she experiences in this mode. Hence her frequent forays into different genres, parody and diary entries and madness. Traditional notions of storytelling are thus critiqued by Lessing. She disrupts the notion of generic purity. The subject-in-process is haunted by the limitations of language in narrating experience authentically.

Lessing's concept of reality is all-inclusive. She effects an epistemological shift to 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'. The conventional classificatory mode of exclusion of one term to define another would not do for her understanding of reality. Symbolism affects a strategy of containment within universal terms. For Lawrence the language of symbolism works well since patriarchal language is couched in a masculine rhetoric. Feminine archetypes like the moon take the brunt of his symbolic fury as is seen in Chapter Three.

Lawrence's strict sense of morality is evident in his treatment of Minette in *Women in Love*. Writing in the context of modernism, and carrying the hangover of Victorian morality, this is only to be expected though the concern is only with women's morality. Lessing, writing in the postmodernist period, is seen to show a liberal attitude towards sex though she classifies homosexuality as deviant in opposing gays with real men. Thus both writers carry the burden of the mindset of their times. Lessing writes experimental fiction precisely because she belongs to the sixties. Lessing's interest in epistemological and ontological problems which she foregrounds in *The Golden Notebook* is an offshoot of her disengagement with the patriarchal order of reality. Lawrence's preoccupation is with personal time. Lessing, on the contrary, desires to overstep the temporal limits of an individual life and insert several historical periods.

The novel form has still not mined all its possibilities, all its knowledge and all its forms. New 'realities' demand new versions. Lessing moves on to what she calls "space fiction" in the latter part of her career to alienate herself from an oppressive socio-economic order for a greater understanding of historical reality. Lawrence had not exhausted his humanist dream by the end of his career. Lessing goes beyond the humanist paradigm to look into gendered subjectivities and how reality works differently for different people. As Milan Kundera says, "the novel's spirit is the spirit of complexity." Every novel seems to tell its readers that "things are not as simple as [they] think" (18). It is neither fact nor fiction but both fact and fiction. To make sense of our gendered lives, we have to compulsively engage in fiction-making.

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Abbreviations used:

Martha Quest	MQ
A Proper Marriage	PM
A Ripple from the Storm	ARS
Landlocked	LL
The Four-Gated City	FGC
The Golden Notebook	GN
Study of Thomas Hardy	Study
Fantasia of the Unconscious	Fantasia
Son and Lovers	SL
Women in Love	WL

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