

**G. Eliot, Forster and Lawrence (3)**  
**The Sisters : A Study of *Middlemarch*,  
*Howards End* and *Women in Love***  
**( I )**

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要約

G. エリオット、フォースター、ロレンス（3）  
「姉妹」の小説  
(*Middlemarch, Howards End, Women in Love* の比較)  
I

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この三人の小説家の比較研究シリーズ、前二回は総論と方法論。今回から、それぞれの主要作である三つの小説に的を絞って、作品研究を行う。

共通の柱である「姉妹」のイメージを中心に、それぞれの小説はいかに展開されていくか。イメージそのものが、異なった姉妹の性格づけや考え方、生き方と、その間の葛藤をはらみ、しかも共通の親、社会環境、教育、歴史上の位置などの問題を抱えて、伝統と個人の追求に格好の場を与えている。しかも、この姉妹、いずれの小説においても、ギリシャ悲劇『アンティゴネ』の場合と同様、理想主義と現実主義、個人の意志の追求と社会への順応、常識、という相反する立場の主張と相克を余儀なくされ、それぞれの社会がもつ本質的問題を浮彫りにする「運命」を担う。

ただ、この「姉妹」のイメージの面白さは、彼女らが単なる鏡、社会を映し出す手段であるにとどまらず、その意識そのものが激しい葛藤を介して思わぬ変貌をとげることにある。あるいは微妙な、あるいは意表をついた、その展開は一定の性格づけや論理の枠を超える小説の可能性、言わゆる男性論理にはまらないスタイルの方向を示唆している。

今回は第一章。三つの小説の冒頭部分を中心に、姉妹のイメージとその小説中の役割が、いかに提示されるかを比較、分析する。彼女らの像を描く三つの小説の手法には、意識的と思われる共通性と、その異なった展開が見られる。さらに、姉妹の周辺を形づくるイメージ間にもパラレリズムが広がっており、それらの絡みあいの中で小説は展開されていく。

George Eliot, Forster, and Lawrence—the styles of their novels seem to differ so much. Yet there is one major common characteristic: the looseness or inconsistency of the pattern which allows for the dramatic and sometimes inconceivable development of characters and their relationship. This may not be an acknowledged fact especially with George Eliot. But once we start comparing specific novels and discussing parallel scenes and parallel plots, the similarity of their ambiguous and disruptive elements shall be recognized.

I shall take up *Middlemarch*, *Howards End* and *Women in Love*, but before I start, it may be worthwhile listening to what the authors say about the pattern of their novel. Writing on the novel in general, Forster makes a characteristic distinction between the rigid “pattern” (for instance, in Henry James) and “rhythm”:

That then is the disadvantage of a rigid pattern. It may externalize the atmosphere, spring naturally from the plot, but it shuts the doors on life and leaves the novelist doing exercises, generally in the drawing-room. . . . the novel is not capable of as much artistic development as the drama: its humanity or the grossness of its material (use whichever phrase you like) hinder it. To most readers of fiction the sensation from a pattern is not intense enough to justify the sacrifices that made it . . .

Rhythm is sometimes quite easy. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for instance, starts with the rhythm “diddidy dum”, which we can all hear and tap to. But the symphony as a whole has also a rhythm—due mainly to the relation between its movements—which some people can hear but no one can tap to. . . . What a literary man wants to say, though, is that the first kind of rhythm, the diddidy dum, can be found in certain novels and may give them beauty. And the other rhythm, the difficult one—the rhythm of the Fifth Symphony as a whole—I cannot quote you any parallels for that in fiction, yet it may be present.<sup>1</sup>

When Forster says he cannot quote any parallels for the second kind of rhythm, we can be sure that he had the idea in mind when he wrote *Howards End*, where Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is actually performed, with characters showing different reactions to it: Aunt Juley tapping to “diddidy dum”, Helen deeply moved and leaving the Hall without a word. . . . He stresses the difficulty both on the part of the author and on the part of the reader to compose or realize the second rhythm, and even the first kind of rhythm or phrase may not be as easy as he says, because its function in fiction is “not to be there all the time like a pattern, but by its lovely waxing and waning to fill us with surprise and freshness and hope”.<sup>2</sup> Forster was not the man to boast of his own novels, but we can still read behind these words his strong conviction that his novel should have a loose and intermittent ordering of a few images or phrases and also a subtle but dynamic overall

structure working behind it.

In order to emphasize the need for a loose structure, he makes a distinction between drama and fiction, just as Margaret in his novel distinguishes between drama and life; and he wants to avoid being "the novelist doing exercises, generally in the drawing-room". But he does not deny that there is a dramatic element in his novel, and the comparison with *Antigone* shows the significant role which drama plays for the "rhythm" in *Howards End*. His little joke about drawing-room exercises, too, is not so simple as it seems. Unlike *Middlemarch* and *Women in Love*, both of which open with the drawing-room scene where the sisters initiate a dialogue, *Howards End* begins with Helen's letters to her sister, in which Helen observes from her window the Wilcoxes doing their "exercises" outside in the garden, and the sight of them, together with the gently sauntering Mrs. Wilcox, impress Helen as "not life but a play". Forster's satiric humour is not single-edged. Forster's novel, too, has a pattern or "artistic development" of a sort, and the tension between the wish to pursue artistic development and the tendency to distract or destroy it paradoxically forms a larger, more complex pattern.

The idea of a loose pattern also reminds us of Lawrence's famous claim about his novel:

You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable *ego*—of the character. There is another *ego*, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same radically unchanged element. . . . Again I say, don't look for the development of the novel to follow the lines of certain characters: the characters fall into the form of some other rhythmic form, as when one draws a fiddle-bow across a fine tray delicately sanded, the sand takes lines unknown.<sup>3</sup>

Again, we must not too readily accept what the novelist says. He emphasizes certain points—that his characters do not stay in their fixed frame of character nor follow its conscious development—at the cost of individual characters and their consciousness which, in truth, play a large role in realizing "allotropic states" and "some other rhythmic form" in his novel. Certainly the characters and consciousness which are crucial to this form are flexible, almost violently so. The reader, too, is expected to have a flexible mind, sensitive enough to be interrupted and to accept intrusions from areas with which it is not familiar. But this should not blind us to the significance of such tough and pliable minds. I would also like to suggest that in the novel there is an overall intentional scheme of 'development-interruption-new development', as well as the aesthetic "lines unknown" on the delicate surface of the sand, which depends on the local and structural sensitivity (the instinct of "rhythm") of the artist as he goes on. In fact, they come out as one form and are hard to distinguish, but that doesn't alter the fact that they are both there.

The letter above was addressed to Edward Garnett who was getting the manuscript of *The Wedding Ring* (which started as *The Sisters* and later became *Women in Love*) as

Lawrence produced it : Garnett had commented on its form as “shaky” and had criticized the psychological inconsistency of the characters. The ring of the word against the context of Lawrence’s letter and the violence I suggested in Lawrence’s style would immediately remind us of certain scenes in *Women in Love*. Birkin, throwing stones again and again at the reflection of the moon upon the pond, as the whole water-surface is shaken and covered with scattering and gathering shapes, with Ursula watching the scene, is one of the key scenes central to the structure of the novel. Another is the scene at Breadalby where Hermione organizes and watches a creative dance by three women in the style of a Russian ballet, whose intense atmosphere is suddenly broken again by Hermione’s suggestion and diverted by some gay Hungarian music, and everybody except Hermione joins in the “convulsive, rag-time sort of dancing”. Particularly Birkin dancing with irresponsible gaiety is called “a changer” by the Italian Contessa. The function of such scenes is not only local but more conspicuously structural. The characteristic feature of such scenes is the mixture of Continental, Cosmopolitan, Mythological (Diana, Ruth, etc.) and primary or natural images (night, the moon, water, a stone, a chameleon, etc.) which seem to work against each other and against the modern British culture. This is the characteristic of the novel as a whole, and it is the characteristic of *Howards End* and *Middlemarch* as well. The juxtaposition of different elements and different images gives the central structure of those novels, and the image of the sisters forms the kernel of the mixture. It is, therefore, essential to discuss those images in relation to the sisters.

George Eliot does not overtly discuss the inconsistent structure of her novels, and yet she quite radically changes her style from one novel to the next, never repeating the same pattern. The outstanding feature of *Middlemarch* is the variety and cosmopolitan element of its major characters, in conflict with the cultural bonds of the local community. She does admit to the loose control which she attempted to exercise over her work, relying heavily upon her sensitivity and intimation of the form that was slowly coming out. Quoting her words, Hilda Hulme says :

‘When a subject has begun to grow in me’, she [Eliot] writes to Alexander Main, ‘I suffer terribly until it has wrought itself out—become a complete organism’, and later in the same letter, ‘Nothing mars the receptivity more than eager construction, as I know to my own cost’ : submission to the nature of the material, in life as well as in novel-writing, is evidently reckoned of greater value than over-confident efforts at quickly won control. It is scarcely necessary to emphasize the importance of imagery for the writer who believes in this way that intellectual growth rests largely on the acquiring of intuitive knowledge and who counts herself most fully successful when ‘the emotion which stirred [her] in writing is repeated in the mind of the reader’.<sup>4</sup>

It is the relationship, the tension, inside a person’s perception that interrupts and distorts its progressive development, and we should recognize that the distortion,

changes in the relationship between the sisters, is one way of externalizing that tension inside a person. The relationship between the Brooke sisters has a symbolic meaning which changes from time to time and which effectively emphasizes or diverts Dorothea's mind into new courses of thought and activity. The sisters' relationship is a clue to Dorothea's state of mind, and Dorothea's inner conflict is an extension of the sometimes manifest but often repressed tension between the sisters.

At the same time, we cannot read the novels without realizing that the drama of tension and interplay between the sisters derives its force from their vulnerability to the world outside their own and, in that sense, partly depends upon the images of the man's world which sharpen their sense of estrangement. Essentially, they are observers and interpreters of the man's world, and they face its burden primarily through their relationship or confrontation with men. In *Howards End*, Mr. Wilcox retorts to Margaret :

You, with your sheltered life, and refined pursuits, and friends, and books, you and your sister, and women like you—I say, how can you guess the temptations that lie round a man? (*HE*, p. 242)

The retort applies to anybody, man or woman, who is sheltered and surrounded with refinements and knowledge—ministers, gentry, intellectuals, artists. . .

Awareness of that weakness or distance from the outer world produces the images of deception and self-consciousness—particularly in the characters of Casaubon, Lydgate, Hermione, and even Birkin. The sisters themselves partly represent this quality, but they become poignantly aware of it through their relationship with men of outstanding quality : not only self-conscious intellectuals but the men who directly face the reality of actual money-bound society : Mr. Wilcox, Gerald Crich, Leonard Bast, Ladislav and perhaps Lydgate in his downfall and shame. They represent the world which the sisters do not know, so they are at first respected, even idealized by the sisters. The amount of deception involved in this myth of business and poverty, when revealed, turns out to be the burden which crashes their life. The sisters' sharpened awareness, together with other forces inside them, eventually make them confront their limitation and take a decisive action which destroys their old frame of mind and brings them a new sort of understanding. This *somehow* saves them from the fabric of deception and self-consciousness for which the seemingly great characters have to pay in the end.

This is a necessary preparation for understanding the discontinuous and complex development which is the common characteristic of the three novels. It is there that structural parallels should be sought and compared. It is there that individual forms and images find their distinctive meaning.

### **I. Drawing Images : The Opening Scenes**

Let us begin with the beginning chapters of the three novels. Comparison between them and also with *Antigone* reveals their strikingly common structure of thought and perception, as well as the differences which individual minds develop out of the universal and national problem. The apparent form, the order, of the first few chapters in each

novel varies slightly, but it is more fruitful to focus on the parallel chapters than to compare the texts automatically chapter by chapter. We shall start with the discussion of Chapter I, Book I ("Miss Brooke") of *Middlemarch*, though it is preceded by "Prelude" which is closely associated with it, and compare it with the relevant sections of *Antigone*, *Women in Love*, and *Howards End*. In so doing, we shall find ourselves interpreting and developing the implication of each scene in the larger structure of related scenes and chapters.

The opening chapter of *Middlemarch* is dedicated to the portrait—or more accurately, the image-making—of the two sisters. Half of the chapter is a long, purely narrative description of the sisters' looks, dresses, behaviour, beliefs, characters, and their source: the hereditary strain of Puritan energy, their aristocratic background, their orphaned state, their rather liberal 'laissez-faire' uncle who has given them a certain freedom as well as, at least for Dorothea, some impatience and social ambitions, their education which has been "at once narrow and promiscuous", first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family, their considerable inheritance. . . . Also presented is the rural opinion about the sisters and the idea of women in general in the provincial society of a particular time (about forty years before the novel was written) which appears in conjunction with particular views of politics, religion, and money:

She [Dorothea] was regarded as an heiress; for not only had the sisters seven hundred a-year each from their parents, but if Dorothea married and had a son, that son would inherit Mr. Brooke's estate, presumably worth about three thousand a-year—a rental which seemed wealth to provincial families, still discussing Mr. Peel's late conduct on the Catholic Questions, innocent of future gold-fields, and of that gorgeous plutocracy which has so nobly exalted the necessities of genteel life.

And how should Dorothea not marry? —a girl so handsome and with such prospects? Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers. A young lady of some birth and fortune, who knelt suddenly down on a brick floor by the side of a sick labourer and prayed fervidly as if she thought herself living in the time of the Apostles—who had strange whims of fasting like a Papist, and of sitting up at night to read old theological books! Such a wife might waken you some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy and the keeping of saddle-horses: a man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such a fellowship. Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. (*M*, pp. 2-3)<sup>5</sup>

The juxtaposition of the time of the Apostles and the time when provincial families were still discussing Mr. Peel's late conduct on the Catholic question, of "future gold-fields" or "plutocracy" and "fasting like a Papist", of the marital bed and "sitting up at night to read old theological books", of "some fine morning" and the dark prospect of having to give up saddle-horses . . . all this is supposed to highlight the absurdity of Dorothea's conduct in society. Yet, lying beneath the male's "Natural" shunning of such a wife is the absurdity of linking the desirability of a woman with the desirability of her income, though it is an absurdity that society does not or will not recognize. It is, after all, *her* income (though in those days the husbands assumed rights over it) that she would think of applying to her new scheme, and yet the discomfort of having to part with (or even of thinking about parting with) his saddle-horses would spoil the whole fine morning for the man. His reaction was prompted by what everybody else did or expected of a woman and was, therefore, natural and right. Who is more absurd, Dorothea or society? And yet, a second look would reveal that even Dorothea at least sometimes thought of things in terms of money—how she could apply her income to a better cause, to improve society, and was impatiently waiting to reach the age when she could have command of her inheritance.

Dorothea has another element which conflicts with her Puritan image—her enjoyment of horse-riding "in a pagan sensuous way" which makes her eyes and cheeks "glow with mingled pleasure". She allows herself this "indulgence. . . in spite of conscientious qualms", though she looks forward to renouncing it. There is a natural association between her riding and the "saddle-horses" which "you"(an ordinary husband with a social position to maintain) would like to keep and might have to give up, like her. What almost prevents us from recognizing this association is the unspoken understanding that there is a clear difference between Dorothea's genuine sensual pleasure, totally innocent and unworldly, and an ordinary man's wish to keep saddle-horses which involves money and social status, rather than physical pleasure, though that is present as well. But there is an association all the same, and Dorothea does think or has to think in terms of money in order to take effective action in the society of her time. This ambiguity in Dorothea's image becomes enmeshed, as the novel proceeds, with the social mechanism of sex and money which forces different individuals to struggle or fail in confusion and decay.

If we try to put Dorothea with her modern problem back into the Apostles' time or into Antigone's clothes, her image would resist its restriction. The effect of historical juxtaposition seems to be, by revealing similarities and differences, both uplifting and ironic, stimulating and disturbing. Though the first chapter apparently and primarily draws the image of the Brooke sisters, especially Dorothea, in a particular time and environment, the image is continually pulled towards the universal problem of the woman whose ideal nature "demands" an epic life, and towards the woman-saint of "three hundred years ago" whose story is sympathetically told in "Prelude". In the childhood-story of St. Theresa, too, where the little girl walked forth one morning hand-in-hand with her still smaller brother to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors",

. . . domestic reality met them in the shape of uncles, and turned



them back from their great resolve. (*M*, xiii)

And behind this story of St. Theresa is the older myth of Antigone, in which a harsher reality appears in the shape of the uncle Creon, the embodiment of the stern social code against the individual interpretation of what is most important at the crisis of life.

And the opening paragraph of the first chapter, indeed, comes close to the basic description of the two sisters in Sophocles' *Antigone*: both sisters share a similar aristocratic pride, the more or less plain dress, and the equivalent religious feeling of the time, but Celia (like Ismene) infuses them "with that common-sense which is able to accept momentous doctrines without any eccentric agitation", while Dorothea (like Antigone) is "enamoured of intensity and greatness. . . likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it". Antigone does not make retractions, though her action does produce martyrdom in an unexpected quarter, Creon's son and later his mother. Moreover, the mere concern for the choice between the plain dress and "guimp and artificial protrusions of drapery" (which was fashionable at the time in *Middlemarch*) tends to trivialize Dorothea's actions in the light of Antigone's passionate concern for the unburied body of her brother. In such an extremity, what does it matter whether she wears "artificial protrusions of drapery" or not, though aesthetically that would interfere with the image of the heroine who has a passion beyond the common reality. Dorothea is hemmed in within the surroundings of money and fashion, already at a distance from the world of extremity, and it is only by distancing herself, as it were aesthetically, from the concern for money and fashion that she is able to rise beyond the common run of reality. Likewise, Celia (unlike Ismene) is secure in a comfortable life with no emotional disturbance except for "a shade of coquetry" in the arrangement of her similarly plain dress, her natural instinct, though she "mildly acquiesced in all her sister's sentiments". Unlike Ismene, Celia does not share the deep tragic feeling of her sister. Finally, it is not Creon, the stern and ambitious uncle who gradually deprives Oedipus's children of their royal rights under the name of guardianship, but the "bachelor uncle and guardian trying in this way [by giving them an education first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family] to remedy the disadvantages of their orphaned condition" who presides over the sisters.

It is not a mere matter of coincidence that there are many parallels between the first chapter of *Middlemarch* and the Prologue of *Antigone*. The parallels, which also involve contrasts between the texts, develop and multiply as the paragraphs and chapters progress. As we read *Middlemarch* with the consciousness of *Antigone* behind it, what we observe is the dialogue between the texts, involving continuity and differences in history, culture, and society, which becomes an intrinsic part of the dramatic structure of the novel. Moreover, *Middlemarch*, by having such a communication with *Antigone* in the text, becomes a model for Forster and Lawrence to take over and develop in their novels. We shall see this better if we analyze how the dramatic structure works already within the first chapter of *Middlemarch* itself.

In particular the implication of 'uncertainty' and 'inconsistency', which envelops Mr. Brooke, Ismene, and even Dorothea, is subtly woven into their description and develops

in their relationship against the background of the Greek tragedy. The uncertainty in Dorothea's action implied in her "retractions" as well as the uncle's uncertainties in his plan of education for his nieces "at once narrow and promiscuous" become more explicit in the next two paragraphs. His "too rambling habit of mind", his conclusions which were "as difficult to predict as the weather", his "benevolent intentions" coupled with his wish to "spend as little money as possible in carrying them out", his "most glutinously indefinite" mind. . . . They all contribute to turning "the hereditary strain of Puritan energy" in Dorothea "sometimes into impatience of her uncle's talk or his way of 'letting things be' on his estate, and making her long all the more for the time when she would be of age and have some command of money for generous schemes". What those generous schemes are or might be is not explained, and judging from the later description of her posture "in the pretty sitting-room which divided the bedrooms of the sisters, bent on finishing a plan for some buildings (a kind of work which she delighted in)" (*M*, p. 4), it is likely to be within the limits of the young ladies' innocent but ineffectual game of wish-fulfilment.

To draw a plan of buildings is to draw an ideal society in miniature. Within the same scene we are led to observe two or more kinds of drawing. Reading about Dorothea working on a plan, we see the image of Dorothea gradually being drawn, and also her plan of society which she is working on. Behind her social scheme is also an actual society, and the author by and by draws and develops the picture of Middlemarch, the provincial town, and its surrounding three estates which belong to Mr. Brooke, Sir James Chettam, and Mr. Casaubon. Her ideal picture clashes with the actual society when Dorothea tries to materialize her plans, first by urging her uncle and Sir James to make improvements in the cottages and management of their estate. She is often irritated by the society, which surrounds her, protects her, advises and gossips about her, by her uncle, and even by her admirer Sir James who has no social vision of his own but is willing to say "Yes" to whatever she says. One could argue that her impatience is caused not only by her uncle's "most glutinously indefinite" mind but also by her own inability to find a sphere of action for her great passions.

If it is action that matters, there does not seem to be much difference after all between Mr. Brooke's indefinite mind which was "lax about all his own interests except the retention of his snuff-box, concerning which he was watchful, suspicious, and greedy of clutch" (*M*, p.2) and Dorothea's curious inconsistency about renouncing or taking her share of her mother's jewellery. This latter inconsistency is revealed in the course of the dialogue between the sisters. At first, Dorothea is consistent :

"Well, dear, we should never wear them, you know." Dorothea spoke in a full cordial tone, half caressing, half explanatory. . . .

Celia coloured, and looked very grave. "I think, dear, we are wanting in respect to mamma's memory, to put them by and take no notice of them. And," she added, after hesitating a little, with a rising sob of mortification, "necklaces are quite usual now ; and Madame Poincon, who was stricter in some things even than you

are, used to wear ornaments. And Christians ganerally—surely there are women in heaven now who wore jewels.” Celia was conscious of some mental strength when she really applied herself to argument.

“You would like to wear them?” exclaimed Dorothea, an air of astonished discovery animating her whole person with a dramatic action which she had caught from that very Madame Poincon who wore the ornaments. “Of course, let us have them out.” . . . “There, Celia! you can wear that with your Indian muslin. But this cross you must wear with your dark dresses.”

Celia was trying not to smile with pleasure. “O Dodo, you must keep the cross yourself.”

“No, no, dear, no,” said Dorothea, putting up her hand with careless deprecation.

“Yes, indeed you must ; it would suit you—in your black dress, now,” said Celia, insistingly. “You *might* wear that.”

“Not for the world, not for the world. A cross is the last thing I would wear as a trinket.” Dorothea shuddered slightly.

“Then you would think it wicked in me to wear it,” said Celia, uneasily.

“No, dear, no,” said Dorothea, stroking her sister’s cheek. “Souls have complexions too : what will suit one will not suit another.”

“But you might like to keep it for mamma’s sake.”

“No, I have other things of mamma’s. . . . In fact, they are all yours, dear. We need discuss them no longer. There—take away your property.”

Celia felt a little hurt. There was a strong assumption of superiority in this Puritanic toleration, hardly less trying to the blond flesh of an unenthusiastic sister than a Puritanic persecution.

“But how can I wear ornaments if you, who are the elder sister, will never wear them?”

“Nay, Celia, that is too much to ask, that I should wear trinkets to keep you in countenance. If I were to put on such a necklace as that, I should feel as if I had been pirouetting. The world would go round with me, and I should not know how to walk.”

Celia had unclasped the necklace and drawn it off. “It would be a little tight for your neck ; something to lie down and hang would suit you better,” she said with some satisfaction. The complete unfitness of the necklace from all points of view for Dorothea, made Celia happier in taking it. (*M*, pp. 5–6)

Up to this point, the dialogue is carried on the balance of power more or less at Celia’s pace because, though she is occasionally hurt by her elder sister’s too ready assumption

of superiority and toleration, Celia knows and depends on Dorothea's consistently Puritan passion so that she, Celia, may get what she wants and still may be justified for her one-sided possessions. In fact, Celia is not greedy—at least does not wish to appear to be greedy. Her purpose is to have a reasonably fair deal with Dorothea (alternatively, to be fully convinced that Dorothea and the jewels are incompatible), while acquiring the best of what she wants, lest her conscience should be troubled for depriving her sister of what is so gratifying to herself. Dorothea's lack of self-interest is at once convenient and trying for Celia's purpose. It appears that things would be much easier for Celia if Dorothea's renunciation were not so extreme. Hence Celia's insistence on Dorothea's taking *something* always falls on the lesser beauties, a pearl cross rather than a necklace of purple amethysts set in exquisite gold work and, later, the "quiet" agates rather than the emeralds which suddenly attract Dorothea.

But the interesting little drama inside Celia's quivering heart and mind is suddenly swayed by the change of Dorothea's attitude when her eyes fall upon a fine emerald ring set with diamonds.

"How very beautiful these gems are!" said Dorothea, under a new current of feeling, as sudden as the gleam. "It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St. John. They look like fragments of heaven, I think that emerald is more beautiful than any of them."

"And there is a bracelet to match it," said Celia. "We did not notice this at first."

"They are lovely," said Dorothea, slipping the ring and bracelet on her finely-turned finger and wrist, and holding them towards the window on a level with her eyes. All the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy.

"You *would* like those, Dorothea," said Celia, rather falteringly, beginning to think with wonder that her sister showed some weakness, and also that emeralds suit her own complexion even better than purple amethysts. "You must keep that ring and bracelet—if nothing else. But see, these agates are very pretty—and quiet."

"Yes! I will keep these—this ring and bracelet," said Dorothea. Then, letting her hand fall on the table, she said in another tone—"Yet what miserable men find such things, and work at them, and sell them!" She paused again, and Celia thought that her sister was going to renounce the ornaments, as in consistency she ought to do.

"Yes, dear, I will keep these," said Dorothea, decidedly. "But take all the rest away, and the casket."

She took up her pencil without removing the jewels, and still looking at them. She thought of often having them by her, to feed

her eye at these little fountains of pure colour.

"Shall you wear them in company?" said Celia, who was watching her with real curiosity as to what she would do.

Dorothea glanced quickly at her sister. Across all her imaginative adornment of those whom she loved, there darted now and then a keen discernment, which was not without a scorching quality. If Miss Brooke ever attained perfect meekness, it would not be for lack of inward fire.

"Perhaps," she said, rather haughtily. "I cannot tell to what level I may sink." (*M*, pp. 6-7)

This is followed by Dorothea's inner questioning of "the purity of her own feeling and speech in the scene", and Celia's consciousness that "it was quite natural and justifiable that she should have asked that question" and "that Dorothea was inconsistent: either she should have taken her full share of the jewels, or, after what she had said, she should have renounced them altogether". Then come Dorothea's simple gesture of making up, and the narrative comment:

Dorothea saw that she had been wrong, and Celia pardoned her.

Since they could remember, there had been a mixture of criticism and awe in the attitude of Celia's mind towards her elder sister.

The younger had always worn a yoke; but is there any yoked creature without its private opinions? (*M*, p. 7)

Outwardly, at least to Celia, it is Dorothea's 'weakness' that she changes her mind about the jewels, and her sudden anger at Celia's implicit criticism is a further sign of this weakness. Dorothea's anger is not justified, and it is natural she should come to her senses and apologize. But the narrative implicitly questions if there is a deeper, somehow liberating, meaning to Dorothea's inconsistent action. It is clearly neither by the persuasion of Celia's logic nor in the further pursuit of her own principle that Dorothea suddenly changes her mind about the jewels. It is something totally alien to her principle that leaps in her body and mind, though she tries to justify this almost childish "delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy." Once this leap takes place, it is as if her whole being were conquered: she is blind to Celia's secret mortification, and even the thought of the dark social background behind the production of such beautiful objects does not detach her from them. Nothing can explain the strength of this instinctive feeling.

On the one hand, the reader is made to feel that Celia is quite right in pointing out Dorothea's inconsistency. But Dorothea does not explain, though she is quick enough to detect the sharp sting of her sister's question and then to realize the injustice of her harsh reaction. Paradoxically, it is Dorothea's inconsistency and her humility about it that makes us like her more. Dorothea is human, which does not mean simply that she has her weakness but that things do happen beyond her thoughts and that in such a case her instinct tells her, though she may not admit it even to herself, that she has to accept her inconsistency and let it take its course unknown. When she says, "I cannot tell to what

level I may sink", it is, on the surface of it, a sarcastic remark in response to Celia's criticism and also a sign of her own stubbornness, never to be swayed by others. On a deeper, unconscious level, it is a prophecy of her future.

Compared with *Antigone*, this scene shows Dorothea as being involved in action on a smaller scale, more narrowly hemmed-in by the social structure (as it were in the pretty sitting-room of her indefinitely liberal surroundings), and being uncertain and inconsistent; and yet, in ambiguously half acknowledging and accepting her inconsistency, she implies the possibility of going beyond (or 'below') the limit of Antigone's principle. Also, Celia is at once the embodiment of common sense, like Ismene, and something else—the critical voice which reveals her sister's inconsistency and blindness. Although Celia does not directly attack Dorothea's blindness here, the revelation of her inconsistency implies that her principle was partly based on ignorance or inexperience: to put it bluntly, it was only before actually seeing those fine gems that Dorothea could say, "Well, dear, we should never wear them, you know."

Both Celia's role and Ismene's role reflect the respective relationship they have with their sisters, and the meaning of all their actions develops through the relationship. Although Ismene, with her practical wisdom and sense of obedience to the State, serves as a critical voice against Antigone's passion in revolt (her revolt against the injustice done to the corpse of her brother), Ismene's main purpose is not to make a personal criticism but to stop Antigone's action and avoid the inevitable consequences. Ismene points out the futility and vanity of a woman's single-handed action against the powerful rule of society (Creon), which comes true when Creon immediately gives orders to stop the burial and arrest Antigone. More importantly, Ismene calls attention to the terrible consequences—Antigone's death, which Antigone feels herself strong enough to ignore, and the other deaths involved, whose possibility her mind is too preoccupied to see but which Ismene sees with a vague forboding fear, with something like a prophecy. The prophecy is fulfilled when it takes the unexpected form of Creon's son's suicide, followed by his mother's death and Creon's breakdown. Antigone knows at least the inevitability of her own death but chooses to ignore it and *not to see anything more*. This is her strength, which enables her to take her heroic action—but also causes her to make taunting remarks about Ismene's weaknesses, meekness, cowardice, and disloyalty as a sister to the dead. But what appears to be Antigone's "rudeness and cruelty" is due to her choice not to see anything more. This seems justified by the strength of her action, so that Ismene never criticizes Antigone for it. In Hasenclever's *Antigone*, Ismene clearly becomes an interpreter for her sister's action after she dies:

Thebans! Antigone is dead.

Come to her grave. She died for you!<sup>6</sup>

If we compare this, and Antigone's cruelty to her sister, with Celia's observation:

There was a strong assumption of superiority in this Puritanic toleration, hardly less trying to the blond flesh of an unenthusiastic sister than a Puritanic persecution, (*M*, p. 6)

we can see that between Antigone and Ismene there is a deeper level of understanding

than merely affectionate consideration or merely intellectual toleration. Despite the differences, they do see each other's position and choice and have a more stably-based relationship. Although neither Dorothea nor Celia seems aware of it, there is a comparative brittleness in the relationship between them, which is caused by the distance between their levels of consciousness. What is happening in the dark corner of Dorothea's mind is inaccessible to Celia partly because her own logic is too simple to grasp the subtle and complex workings of her sister's more intelligent and morally conscientious mind and also because Dorothea herself is not conscious of what will well up within her to determine her next action :

"Shall you wear them in company?" said Celia, who was watching her with real curiosity as to what she would do. (*M*, p. 7)

It is as much curiosity as sympathy or respect, that makes Celia watch Dorothea's movements. The relationship, from Dorothea's side, is like petting and toleration for a pussy-cat which is unable to reach her state of mind. From Celia's side, it is the curious "mixture of criticism and awe" : the watchful eye will not let go any inconsistency in her sister's movements. Since she doesn't know in advance what Dorothea will do, what comes through is childish half-hesitant excitement and suspense rather than malice or calm calculation, but all the same we get the feeling that the moment she finds any inconsistency in her sister, she is ready to pounce on it—in an innocent and harmless manner, to be sure.

Of course I am exaggerating. Just as Dorothea acknowledges her own inconsistency (that the fault, if any, was not in Celia but in Dorothea herself) and makes the conciliatory gesture of putting her cheek against her sister's arm caressingly, "Celia understood her action" (*M*, p. 7) and said no more. But what sort of understanding is it?

Dorothea saw that she had been in the wrong, and Celia pardoned her. (*M*, p. 7)

This is right according to Celia's range of thoughts. To ask her for more understanding is too much. And, after all, Dorothea should be thankful for being reminded of her blindness. Thus, underneath the sweet exchange and consideration for each other is the lurking chasm between the two minds, which Dorothea tries to bridge by adjusting her thoughts to her sister's mind but, even by so doing, helps to deepen the gap between them. The adjustment is one-sided. Every time Dorothea comes down to the level of Celia's mind to incorporate her thoughts, Dorothea grows but Celia does not. And there is a feeling of pain on both sides. Particularly, Dorothea, with her passions that she is not fully aware of, has to work them out and act at the same time, always by herself and vulnerable to her conflicts and inconsistencies. Unlike Antigone, she chooses to see.

Dorothea's uncertainties and impatience are partly caused by the society of her time. Celia with her "private opinions" and Dorothea with her passionate wish for the social good—they both lived in an age when :

the great safeguard of society and domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. (*M*, p. 3)

That is to say, no constructive opinion is acted on, and, therefore, opinions are never

definitely formed. The only accepted "private opinions" are of those who conform to this society, and, as will become apparent in case of Rosamond's relationship with Lydgate, these negate the action of any non-conforming idealist. In fact, George Eliot is sardonically suggesting that *all* ages are like this, implicitly questioning her own time, referring to the age of St. Theresa, and repeating the plot of Antigone's resistance to Creon's view.

\* \* \*

It is a similar kind of private opinion, in a different social context, that D. H. Lawrence raged against. In *Women in Love*, Gudrun Brangwen's defiantly uncommon dress in the sordid mining community is the sign of her revolt and vulnerability :

The path on which the sisters walked was black, trodden-in by the feet of the recurrent colliers, and bounded from the field by iron fences. . . . Now the two girls were going between some rows of dwellings, of the poorer sort. Women, their arms folded over their coarse aprons, standing gossiping at the end of their block, stared after the Brangwen sisters with that long, unwearying stare of aborigines; children called out names. . . . She [Gudrun] was aware of her grass-green stockings, her large, grass-green velour hat, her full, soft coat, of a strong blue colour. And she felt as if she were treading in the air, quite unstable, her heart was contracted, as if at any minute she might be precipitated to the ground. She was afraid.

She clung to Ursula, who, through long usage was inured to this violation of a dark, uncreated, hostile world. But all the time her heart was crying, as if in the midst of some ordeal: "I want to go back, I want to go away, I want not to know it, not to know that this exists." Yet she must go forward. . . . And together the two sisters approached the group of uneasy, watchful common people. They were chiefly women, colliers' wives of the more shiftless sort. They had watchful, underworld faces.

The two sisters held themselves tense, and went straight towards the gate. The women made way for them, but barely sufficient, as if grudging to yield ground. The sisters passed in silence through the stone gateway and up the steps, on the red carpet, a policeman estimating their progress.

"What price the stockings!" said a voice at the back of Godrun. A sudden fierce anger swept over the girl, violent and murderous. She would have liked them all to be annihilated, cleared away, so that the world was left clear for her. How she hated walking up the churchyard path, along the red carpet, continuing in motion, in their sight.



"I won't go into the church," she said suddenly, with such final decision that Ursula immediately halted, turned round, and branched off. . . . (WL, pp. 11-13)

Ugliness, poverty, lack of intelligence, lack of any aspiration, soulless routine work, and petty gossip characterize the community. Towards the sisters, who have, they know, grown up there and yet are a little beyond them, those people, particularly the women, under the cover of shiftlessness and grudging concessions hide the unwearying hostility which strikes them from the back, watching, estimating, and belittling them.

"What price. . . ?" colloqually means "What do you think about. . . ?" and generally shows sarcasm or contempt at some uncommon object rather than a wish to be told the exact price, but we could also say that Lawrence deliberately picked the expression because it implies the thought of money. The exclamation retains the implication of its original use in racing ("What odds. . . ?") and also more common contests (using cocks, frogs, mice, etc.) which all involve betting and evaluation in money-terms. This interpretation becomes more meaningful if we see the parallelism between this scene and the later scene where two labourers, young and old, estimate the value of the sisters walking past :

"What price that, eh? She'll do, won't she?"

"Which?" asked the young man, eagerly, with a laugh.

"Her with the red stockings. —What d'you say? —I'd give my week's wages for five minutes; —What! —just for five minutes."

(WL, p. 114)

In the second scene, it shows admiration, even humourous compliment, from the labourer's point of view that he thinks of offering his week's wages, but even so, the transaction would be a prostitution. Whether in admiration or in contempt, these people's thoughts are invariably expressed in money-terms. What they observe, be it Gudrun or her stockings which serve as a sort of labelling for her in both scenes, is never an individual but a nameless "that" or "her", bound within their limited vocabulary of "wages" and "gossip".

Of course that raises another question: Is this true only of the working classes? And the question does occur, often associated with the image of racing itself. Soon after the sisters branch off into the churchyard to escape the belittling eyes of those miners and their wives, the bride and then later the bride-groom arrive, and they spontaneously perform a "race" to the door of the church. Later, the wedding-guests have a half-mocking, half serious talk over nationality and "race" (in the other sense), Gerald insists that "a race" should "have its commercial aspect" in order to "make provision. . . against other families, other nations", and Hermione retorts.

. . . I think it is wrong to provoke a spirit of rivalry. It makes bad blood. (WL, p. 28)

After the meal, one of Gerald's brothers-in-law calls to the charming Jersey cattle, "Eh, my little beauty, eh my beauty!", because "They give the best milk you can have". And

Birkin, to hide his laughter, calls to the bridegroom, "Who won the race, Lupton?", reminding him of the scene at the church.

"The race?" he [the bridegroom] exclaimed. Then a rather thin smile came over his face. . . . "We got there together. At least she touched first, but I had my hand on her shoulder." (*WL*, p. 31)

The Jersey cattle which produces "the best milk", the bride who "touched first", the nation and the race with "its commercial aspect" . . . they all seem to come from the same common stock of attitudes, and people feed themselves at the same table of talk and sex. At the meal, Gerald is ready "on the scent of argument"—another reminder of the vocabulary of racing or hunting.

Also, in "Breadalby", the atmosphere of Derby (a possible pun) and horses of good breed is felt when "round the bushes came the tall form of Alexander Roddice, striding romantically like a Meredith hero who remembers Disraeli. . .":

He [Gerald] had come along with Alexander. Gerald was presented to everybody, was kept by Hermione for a few moments in full view, then he was led away, still by Hermione. (*WL*, p. 85)

It is like presenting the horses, led by the jocky, in full view of the audience who gather to bet on them. There is a striking similarity between this scene and the wedding procession which the sisters are going to observe in the opening chapter, the bride "demure on the arm of the bridegroom" who is emotionally "violated" by his exposure to the crowd, Hermione holding Birkin "by the arm" with "a rapt, triumphant look" on her face, and Gerald "fair, good-looking, healthy, with a great reserve of energy". The similarity extends, for that matter, to the viewing of the sisters by the crowd, who makes Gudrun feel "exposed" to the "violation of a dark, uncreated, hostile world". It even goes back to the first presentation of the sisters to the reader's view, in their drawing room, just before they set off on their walk to see the wedding.

Returning to the conversation at Breadalby, there is a barely perceptible reference to the actual time of the novel when Alexander mentions the resignation of the minister for Education "owing to adverse criticism", an event which is not explained but hints at the social agitations kept in the background of the novel.<sup>7</sup> Historians such as Samuel Hynes interprets the various controversies on education in this period as resulting from the defeat of Liberal ideals, the spread of the fear of the nationwide physical and mental deterioration, of social Darwinism, of the fall of the British Empire and the German Invasion. . . which started in the Edwardian Era and developed in the Georgian Era, culminating in the War. "The atmosphere of the House of Commons", as given here without specific detail, sounds similar to the aim of "education" which Gerald proposes in the ensuing conversation:

Gerald, on the brink of discussion, sniffed the air with delight and prepared for action. . . . "But isn't education really like gymnastics, isn't the end of education the production of a well-trained, vigorous, energetic mind?" (*WL*, p. 85)

The reference to "gymnastics" is something we should bear in mind when we read Helen's letter at the beginning of *Howards End*, the part which describes the Wilcoxes. In *Women in Love* itself, the spirit of "racing" envelops the society from top to bottom, from the House of Commons and the cultural milieu of Hermione Roddice to the gossiping men and women of the mining community. Lawrence himself seems, at times, to be even enjoying this "gymnastics" of writing which races through the novel, and yet there is an ominous feeling of serious problems under the surface. Gymnastics involves feats of agility, somersaults not only from top to bottom (socially) but also from past to present (historically), as is implied by the juxtaposition of different ages and social nuances which describe the architectural and geographical settings of Breadalby: it is "a Georgian house with Corinthian pillars, standing among the softer, greener hills of Derbyshire, not far from Cromford" (*WL*, p. 82). This is symbolic when we consider the novel's connection with *Antigone*, the Greek tragedy.

The horse itself appears again and again in *Women in Love*, but when we turn our eyes upon *Middlemarch*, there, too, we find scenes with the association of animals, racing and hunting:

... the little girl walking forth one morning hand-in-hand with her still smaller brother, to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors? Out they toddled from rugged Avila, wide-eyed and helpless-looking as two fawns, but with human hearts, already beating to a national idea; until domestic reality met them in the shape of uncles, and turned them back from their great resolve.  
("Prelude", *M*, xiii)

The child Theresa, too, had her races: she went on an adventure, hunting for "martyrdom", a willing victim to the fierce animals of the Moors, and was again hunted and caught by "domestic reality... in the shape of uncles". And this image of "uncles" and Dorothea's liberal-minded uncle, as I shall show through the study of the plot, is subtly mingled with the uncle Creon who hunts and puts Antigone to death.

The image of "race" and its association with "blood" becomes even more important when we compare this with Dorothea's mixed feelings towards "riding":

Most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback. . . when her eyes and cheeks glowed with mingled pleasure she looked very little like a devotee. . . she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and looked forward to renouncing it. (*M*, p. 3)

Compare this, for instance, with Hermione's claim that "it is wrong to provoke rivalry", and the implication of the latter's secularized but essentially "Puritan" spirituality becomes manifest. The enjoyment "in a pagan sensuous way" which raises the colour on Dorothea's cheek seems similar to the pleasure she finds in the emerald ring and bracelet because both stir up her blood and also her "conscientious qualms".

"Jewels" and "stockings", which are closely related to each other, are equally important images threading through *Women in Love*. The scenes which contain those images

reflect and reveal their meaning against the sisters' choice of jewels in the first chapter of *Middlemarch*. The "sisters" themselves become *the* most important image that holds the novel together and develops its meaning through its literary associations. Other images centre on the image of "sisters" and doubles, such as "the mirror", "clothes", "writing", "drawing", "stitching", "talking", "marriage", and the "room" or setting which envelops them. Individual images can work independently and produce other "doubles" and "sisters" in other characters, other settings. . . .

"Racing" is not the only image that connects *Women in Love* with *Middlemarch*, and also *Howards End*. Nor is it sufficient to demonstrate the network of related visions and meanings which links those works closely to each other. The reason why I spent several pages, at this stage, to quickly view the scenes of various "racing", in social, political, and sexual terms, is to show how a mere phrase, an apparently common expression such as "What price the stockings!", may hide a seed of social and literary heritage which will grow and develop its pattern through the whole novel.

But let us return to the sisters who quickly "branched off" from the view of the crowd. Gudrun does not "have to" go through the sordid paths of the small mining town. She does not "have to" go and "see" the wedding. She does not "have to" wear striking green hat and stockings. All these symbolize her choice as a free, artistic individual, emphasizing her difference from the crowd. Yet, when "a voice" (even without sexual identification) cries, "What price the stockings!", she is touched on the quick by its sarcastic sting. Although neither party is fully conscious of it, it may be only money that divides them, and, paradoxically, it may be the thought of money that binds them to each other. Gudrun's immediate reaction is to wish to murder them all, but, that being impossible, she determines to slip back and guard her own world. The decision is made on an irresistible impulse and is, therefore, final.

However, we have to look more closely at the ambiguity in Gudrun's apparently final decision to "branch off", walking in her defiant outfit side by side with Ursula in her self-consciously less conspicuous clothes and her uncertainty about it. During the walk, Gudrun's feelings have been divided. She has felt "she must go forward" though she wants "not to know this exists". Her deliberate action is to face the ugly world in her provocative fashion, as if ignoring or not acknowledging such a world exists, while tense with the fear and sense of hostility around her.

Let us first compare Gudrun's action with that of Hermione Roddice who with her wealth, social rank and intellectual associations "piled up her own defences of aesthetic knowledge, and culture, and world-visions, and disinterestedness" (*WL*, p. 17) to "make herself invulnerable, unassailable, beyond reach of the world's judgment" (*WL*, p. 16). Hermione, being "passionately interested in reform, her soul given up to the public cause", is a more direct descendant of Dorothea Brooke, but differs from Dorothea in being overburdened with self-consciousness and fear. Although both Hermione and Gudrun are conscious of the world's hostility, what distinguishes Gudrun is her deliberate choice of vulnerability and daring rather than of "defences", which are a sign of

cowardice and "deficiency" (the word repeatedly used of Hermione). When the wedding-guests arrive, we can compare Gudrun's "grass-green stockings, her large, grass-green velour hat" with Hermione's "enormous flat hat of pale yellow velvet, on which were streaks of ostrich feathers, natural and grey" (*WL*, p. 15) which gives her an impressive but macabre appearance. Hermione's hat is rich but "pale", apparently "natural" and yet "grey". It is "enormous" but "flat". There is possible connection between Hermione's hat and "the old hat" that comes to symbolize the idea of "nation" and "race" in the later conversation at the wedding party. What is the difference between the strong and the pale, the young and the old?

Hermione wants some idol like Birkin "to close up this deficiency", which is a sign of lack of confidence and inner-strength,

... and, in spite of all her vanity and securities, any common maid-servant of positive, robust temper could fling her down this bottomless pit of insufficiency, by the slightest movement of jeering or contempt. (*WL*, p. 17)

As things go, the crowd does not dare to fling her down, but it is Gudrun who is touched to the quick by the jeering "voice" from behind. But Gudrun has willed herself to meet the common people on equal terms, without such defences as Hermione's, so that in Chapter 18 she is prepared to grasp the violent rabbit Bismarck, without gloves, without asking for a man's help. Also in the famous Chapter 14 ("Water Party") she dances forward towards the Highland cattle with "their horns branching into the sky, pushing forward their muzzles inquisitively", with their eyes glittering and "their naked nostrils... full of shadow" (*WL*, p. 167). It is the battle of wills on any terms that Gudrun shows herself ready to fight, resisting or even forgetting the impulse to self-defence. Her difference from Hermione has not been clearly pointed out by the critics, but if we compare the two women, we can see Gudrun's deliberate choice of vulnerability and daring as an anti-intellectual, anti-class-conscious (in that sense, spiritually aristocratic) action. It is based both on some mysterious sense (like fate) that "she must go forward", and on passionate hatred against seeking defence outside oneself.

This being said, there is also that counteraction of slipping back and guarding her own world, which is the result of her vulnerability and, when it reaches a certain point, the overpowering passion of anger and revolt.

At the back of this action and counter-action, we see another set of eyes—those of Ursula—for it is "the two sisters" who hold themselves tense together, assuring and supporting each other. Here it seems as if Ursula is tougher and more assured towards Gudrun, and yet,

She [Ursula] was always forced to assent to Gudrun's pronouncements, even when she was not in accord altogether. (*WL*, p. 21)

If we remember that in *Middlemarch* Celia "mildly acquiesced in all her sister's sentiments" with much less enthusiasm and that despite the difference of their characters both can be said to have worked for the liberal idea of social betterment (as Celia with her

wifely influence made Sir James Chettam continue to carry out Dorothea's original plan of improving his farm), we can see that there is some similarity between the two novels. However, if we look closely at the relationship between Ursula and Gudrun, it becomes clear that their relationship is even more subtle and ambiguous than that described as:

... it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements. (*M*, p. 1)

Celia's character implies common sense and the simple observer. Dorothea's character implies idealism, active passion, superior attitude of tolerance and affectionate admiration. Those roles do not simply fit Ursula and Gudrun, despite the considerable similarity between the scenes. In *Women in Love*, the sisters' roles are not so clearly divided as in the earlier novel. Their roles mix and develop a subtle tension between them:

Ursula looked at her [Gudrun], and thought how amazingly beautiful she was, flushed with discomfiture. But she caused a constraint over Ursula's nature, a certain weariness. Ursula wished to be alone, freed from the tightness, the enclosure of Gudrun's presence. (*WL*, p. 13)

Right at the beginning of the novel, in the tighter enclosure of their drawing-room, they talk and work, drawing a sketch and stitching a piece of embroidery, and their talk about marriage puts an almost unbearable strain upon them:

They worked on in silence for some time, Gudrun's cheek was flushed with repressed emotion. She resented its having been called into being.

'Shall we go out and look at that wedding?' she asked at length, in a voice that was too casual.

'Yes!' cried Ursula, too eagerly, throwing aside her sewing and leaping up, as if to escape something, thus betraying the tension of the situation and causing a friction of dislike to go over Gudrun's nerves. (*WL*, pp. 10-11)

There is a much stronger interaction between the Brangwen sisters than between the Brooke sisters because Ursula and Gudrun are both vulnerable and aware of their vulnerability. While the relationship between Dorothea and Celia is rather one-sided, Ursula's consciousness and Gudrun's almost match each other, so that they both intensify and call attention to their tension to the extent of friction and dislike. It is this intimate interaction and friction rather than their characters that characterize their relationship.

Nevertheless, the sisters in the two novels have much in common, not only in the words and images associated with them but also in their settings, despite the disparity between the social backgrounds. This is true especially at the beginning of Chapter 1 ("Sisters") which we have been dealing with. Ursula and Gudrun have their conversation about marriage "in the window-bay of their father's house in Beldover". Certainly the house in Beldover is a sort of scarecrow, compared with the charmingly elegant

sitting-room of the aristocratic Brooke family. Yet it is significant that the Brangwen sisters converse "in the window-bay" rather than in the kitchen, as would be the case in the mining community, and that their hands are occupied with a sketch and a piece of embroidery rather than with housekeeping chores. Later the Brangwen parents are described in terms of curious social mixture: the mother is "such an aristocrat. . . by instinct", though oddly dressed and slip-shod, and the father looks "rather crumpled in his best suit, as if he were the father of a young family and had been holding the baby whilst his wife got dressed". (WL, pp. 175, 174) The parallelism is intentionally ironic, and the sisters' dialogue builds up a picture of marriage which is more sardonic than merely ironic.

"Ursula," said Gudrun, "don't you *really want* to get married?"

Ursula laid her embroidery in her lap and looked up. Her face was calm and considerate.

"I don't know," she replied. "It depends on how you mean."

Gudrun was slightly taken aback. She watched her sister for some moments.

"Well," she said ironically, "it usually means one thing!—But don't you think, anyhow, you'd be—" she darkened slightly—"in a better position than you are in now?"

A shadow came over Ursula's face.

"I might," she said. "But I'm not sure."

Again Gudrun paused, slightly irritated. She wanted to be quite definite.

"You don't think one needs the *experience* of having been married?" she asked.

"Do you think it need *be* an experience?" replied Ursula.

"Bound to be, in some way or other," said Gudrun, coolly.

"Possibly undesirable, but bound to be an experience of some sort."

"Not really," said Ursula. "More likely to be the end of experience."

Gudrun sat very still, to attend to this.

"Of course," she said, "there's *that* to consider."

This brought the conversation to a close. Gudrun, almost angrily, took up her rubber and began to rub out part of her drawing. Ursula stitched absorbedly.

"You wouldn't consider a good offer?" asked Gudrun.

"I think I've rejected several," said Ursula.

"*Really?*" Gudrun flushed dark. —"But anything really worth while? Have you *really?*"

"A thousand a year, and an awfully nice man. I liked him awfully," said Ursula.

"Really! But weren't you fearfully tempted?"

"In the abstract—but not in the concrete," said Ursula. "When it comes to the point, one isn't even tempted. —Oh, if I were tempted, I'd marry like a shot. —I'm only tempted *not* to." The faces of both sisters suddenly lit up with amusement.

"Isn't it an amazing thing," cried Gudrun, "how strong the temptation is, not to!"

They both laughed, looking at each other. In their hearts they were frightened. (*WL*, pp. 7–8)

First of all, what is striking is the devastatingly low key and the frankness with which Ursula speaks of marriage, as compared with *Middlemarch*. Though the general view of marriage in that provincial society is ironically portrayed, especially concerning money, people themselves do not see the irony, and neither Dorothea nor Celia has an ironical view of marriage. Dorothea, "with all her eagerness to know the truths of life", has the passionate desire to "save" such a learned man as Hooker by marrying him, "enduring" the odd habits and physical disadvantages of her husband (for instance, Milton's blindness) and helping him even with his work. She childishly thinks:

The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it. (*M*, p. 4)

Her view of marriage is markedly unworldly and childish, while Ursula and Gudrun's is prematurely old and matter-of-fact. The Brangwen sisters seem to have had negative experiences with men; therefore, though they are talking about the possibility of marriage as an "experience" to overcome the limitation and emptiness of their single life, they have no illusion about men, and consequently about marriage.

What Ursula mentions about the "good offer" she has had is very brief but all the more revealing. "A thousand a year"—a good income, first; "an awfully nice man"—amiability; "I liked him awfully"—personal and even sexual attraction. Those are the only things considered "worthwhile" in an offer, from a man, and they are not finally satisfactory to her. We remember that Dorothea was deeply annoyed at the signs that the "amiable baronet", Sir James, wished to marry her; and that she sought satisfaction in renouncing the physical or material advantages of a man as qualifying him to be her future husband. Ursula's inclinations are more down to earth and yet have something in common—the "temptation" to reject all those indiscriminately agreeable qualities. The repeated use of the word *awfully* in Ursula's speech, "... an awfully nice man. I liked him awfully," though apparently girlish, has the double entendre of exaggerated agreeableness and awfulness, and its syntactically close link with "a thousand a year" reveals the indiscriminate nature of all the relative values. Essentially, it does not make any difference, one man or another: the difference is only the different degrees of wealth, health, physical or personal charm. . . . The other side of this is that the woman herself is treated indiscriminately as part of the relative values, which we can find in Dorothea's



annoyance at Sir James's "pre-supposing too good an understanding with you, and agreeing with you even when you contradict him." (*M*, p. 18)

Dorothea's mind is too preoccupied with her own ideas to pursue and analyse the oppression :

The thought that he [Sir James] had made the mistake of paying his addresses to herself could not take shape : all her mental activity was used up in persuasions of another kind. (*M*, p. 18)

But Ursula, pondering on marriage as "the inevitable next step" (Gudrun's words), says :

I know. . . it seems like that when one thinks in the abstract. But really imagine it : imagine any man one knows, imagine him coming home to one every evening, and saying "Hello", and giving one a kiss—

and, after a blank pause, Gudrun assents in a narrowed voice :

Yes. . . . It's just impossible. The man makes it impossible. (*WL*, p. 9)

While Dorothea thinks of marriage only in the abstract and, therefore, is able to form the illusion of "such a learned man as Hooker" or Milton as "a sort of father" outside the pale of relative values, the Brangwen sisters are determined to bring their abstract ideas down to the concrete world. They seem to see through all the illusions, including the one of intellectual or spiritual enlightenment which leads Dorothea into the devastating mistake of marrying Mr. Casaubon. It is not 'a man' but "the man", placed in the relative values, that "makes it impossible" for Ursula and Gudrun to bind themselves in matrimony : it is the restriction to one fixed relative value. The commonness and familiarity of "Hello" and a kiss as a daily routine seems particularly fatal to them when they, despite their detached analysis of marriage and men, are almost desperately seeking a way out of their present limited experience.

"I was hoping now for a man to come along," Gudrun said, suddenly catching her underlip between her teeth and making a strange grimace, half sly smiling, half anguish.

Ursula was afraid.

"So you have come home, expecting him here?" she laughed.

"Oh my dear," cried Gudrun, strident, "I wouldn't go out of my way to look for him. But if there did happen to come along a highly attractive individual of sufficient means—well—" she tailed off ironically. Then she looked searchingly at Ursula, as if to probe her. "Don't you find yourself getting bored?" she asked of her sister. "Don't you find, that things fail to materialise? *Nothing materialises!* Everything withers in the bud." . . .

"It does frighten one," said Ursula, and again there was a pause.

"But do you hope to get anywhere by just marrying?"

"It seems to be the inevitable next step," said Gudrun. Ursula

pondered this, with a little bitterness. She was a class mistress herself, in Willey Green Grammar School, as she had been for some years.

"I know," she said, "it seems like that when one thinks in the abstract. But really imagine it. . . ." (WL, pp. 8-9)

The highly charged expression, "*Nothing materialises!*", reminds one of the fate of the "many Theresas" in *Middlemarch* ("Prelude") who found for themselves "perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity" and whose struggles "after all, to common eyes . . . seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness" (M, xiii). The frustrated aspiration causing impatience and boredom with their restrictive surroundings is also to be found in Dorothea, though she just manages to keep it under the surface because of her moral sense and good manners. To Dorothea, the restrictiveness of her home and education appears in its liberal indefiniteness and inconsistency, and she finds herself overprotected in wealth and generosity.

The Brangwen sisters are more exposed, their father being merely a "handicraft instructor in a school" at Beldover, and they themselves being "teachers in the Grammar School"—"Ursula a class mistress" at Beldover, and "Gudrun art mistress", having lived a studio life in London for several years. These quotations are the words which Rupert Birkin later uses to describe the sisters to Gerald Crich, and which, to the reader, present the second and simplified 'introduction' of the sisters merely according to their social status. Birkin ambivalently and half mockingly labels them thus, knowing the impact of their particular social position on a man of strong will and social achievement like Gerald. Gerald is duly piqued by the young women, especially Gudrun, who have newly crossed the class-border and are striving with their own hands (in this case, with education and art) to be independent in what seems to him a wholly malicious world. Since Birkin and Gerald are to become the sisters' lovers, their reactions to the sisters' ambiguous social position (active but vulnerable, neither high nor low) also give a foreboding introduction to the relationship of the two couples.

However, how much the sisters have achieved or can ever achieve is the problem bounded on one side by society and on the other by their own body. In vocation and intellectual or artistic achievement, Ursula and Gudrun have taken a more definite step into the world than Dorothea and the many Theresas whose "ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood"; however, Ursula and Gudrun are no nearer to any finally definite prospect than the others. Although Ursula and Gudrun endeavour to pull the "vague ideal" down to the reality of the concrete world (however meagre), they still find themselves torn between the ideal and "the common yearning of womanhood", and what they see between is only a chasm. "The common yearning of womanhood" itself is more materialistic, with its demand for "a highly attractive individual of sufficient means" and shows no sign of any genuine feeling about bearing children :

"Do you *really* want children, Ursula?" she asked coldly.

A dazzled, baffled look came on Ursula's face.

"One feels it is still beyond one," she said.

"Do you feel like that?" asked Gudrun. "I get no feeling whatever from the thought of bearing children."

Gudrun looked at Ursula with a mask-like, expressionless face.

Ursula knitted her brows.

"Perhaps it isn't genuine," she faltered. "Perhaps one doesn't really want them, in one's soul—only superficially."

A hardness came over Gudrun's face. She did not want to be too definite. (WL, p. 9)

One is struck by the rigidity and unnaturalness of discussing the "thought" of bearing children without the proper experience of it. But they feel they have to analyse the whole matter of marriage, and the classical, perhaps mythical, view of it inevitably involves child-bearing. To Ursula, who is searching for meaning and hope in marriage, child-bearing seems to offer fruitfulness of some kind beyond the limited experience of self, even beyond marriage itself, but again she seems doubtful. There is a verbal link between "bearing" children and everything "wither[ing] in the bud".

One is reminded of Dorothea's sense of isolation and faltering confidence in the face of Celia's "new sense of solidity and calm wisdom" since her baby was born :

"Where am I wrong, Kitty?" said Dorothea, quite meekly. She was almost ready now to think Celia wiser than herself, and was really wondering with some fear what her wrong notion was. Celia felt her advantage, and was determined to use it. . . . It seemed clear that where there was a baby, things were right enough, and that error, in general, was a mere lack of that central poising force. (M, p. 339)

No logic is necessary—in fact, applicable—to support Celia's confidence : her baby is the centre of her universe, and she need not see beyond the horizon, and can simply dismiss as "error" whatever does not come into that central force. Although it is easy to criticize its narrowness, it is impossible to refute its strength, self-sufficiency and, above all, the "remarkable" and "wonderful" charm *beyond* logic. The one left out of the experience feels an outsider, awkward, insufficient and impotent. One can associate Dorothea's feeling with George Eliot's. Neither she nor Lawrence had a child, and there is little genuine motherly feeling portrayed in Lawrence's writing. (True, there are Lydia Morel in *Sons and Lovers* and Lydia Lensky and Anna Brangwen in *The Rainbow*. However, the two Lydias are portrayed as half not being there, through the child's painful experience of knowing that he or she is not enough to support the mother. Nor is Anna convincingly developed as a mother, though we are told that she has children one after another, feeding the young, and finding satisfaction like a fertile animal.)

The same applies to Forster who was never married nor had a love affair with a

woman. It is interesting to note that at the end of *Howards End* Helen Schlegel becomes calm, bright and young with her child, while Margaret grows calmer and wiser but also old and sexless. That ending has much in common with the endings of *Middlemarch* and *Women in Love*. The point here is that Gudrun, facing Ursula's half-dubious acknowledgment of the mysterious nature of child-bearing, makes a determined gesture of confronting it with "a mask-like, expressionless face" which excludes vulnerability as well as susceptibility to the mysterious force. It is as if she is saying, 'As long as we do not *really* feel the mystery ourselves, what's the good of being half dubious and afraid about it. Let us not pretend, so that we are not so vulnerable and weak.' While Gudrun is more concerned with her strength and defence, Ursula is more concerned with the pursuit of truth. When Ursula, knitting her brows, tries to pursue the subject to its bare truth, Gudrun resents it. "She did not want to be too definite" because she is building her strength upon the thin ice of insensibility which hides her own doubt and fear. The mystic bond between mother and child is the strongest mystic element in what George Eliot called "the common womanhood", which both Ursula and Gudrun confront as outsiders, but from different motives.

Other bonds of "the common womanhood", related to this mystic force, are home, community, and parents. Gudrun's attitude towards them is similar to that towards the bond of motherhood :

"And how do you find home, now you have come back to it?" she  
[Ursula] asked.

Gudrun paused for some moments, coldly, before answering.  
Then, in a cold truthful voice, she said :

"I find myself completely out of it."

"And father?"

Gudrun looked at Ursula, almost with resentment, as if brought to  
bay.

"I haven't thought about him : I've refrained," she said coldly.

"Yes," wavered Ursula ; and the conversation was really at an end.

The sisters found themselves confronted by a void, a terrifying  
chasm, as if they had looked over the edge. (WL, p. 10)

Although *Middlemarch* was originally subtitled *A Study of Provincial Life* and strongly reflects George Eliot's attachment to (despite her isolation from) organic community life, the Brangwen sisters are almost deliberately cutting the ties one by one. When I say 'almost', I mean to register the tension between wanting to cut them and not wanting to cut them, wanting to 'define' their position clearly and not wanting to see "a void" clearly. Gudrun is trying (and she manages well) to procure her strength by taking the initiative of cutting off, rather than being the victim of being cut off. But her last stand is "father" under which is the utter void, which she simply refuses to confront. In the world where she finds "things fail to materialize", she is cutting out her own shape rather than being buried in the inorganic shapelessness. It is symbolic that as an artist she can only sculpt

small objects and that sometimes she “almost angrily, took up her rubber and began to rub out part of her drawing” during this conversation. The conversation itself moves on in hitches and pauses, counteracting and qualifying what has been built up.

This does not mean that Ursula is exempt from the pain and fear which pulls her back from confrontation with the void. What does characterize her, however, is her comparative selflessness, the ability to forget herself when trying to define herself and the life :

She lived a good deal by herself, to herself, working, passing on from day to day, and always thinking, trying to lay hold on life, to grasp it in her own understanding. Her active living was suspended, but underneath, in the darkness, something was coming to pass. If only she could break through the last integuments! She seemed to try and put her hands out, like an infant in the womb, and she could not, not yet. Still she had a strange prescience, an intimation of something yet to come. (*WL*, p. 10)

Although in a way Ursula is more vulnerable than Gudrun in not deliberately putting on her defence, in another way she is more self-sufficient in being able to live “a good deal by herself, to herself, working. . . thinking. . .” while “her active living was suspended”. Paradoxical as it may be, she can momentarily escape from herself when she is absorbed in working out the problem of herself. There is a sort of similarity between Dorothea's selflessness and Ursula's self-detachment, which is hardly ever recognized. It escapes recognition precisely because Lawrence gave it a twist and turned it into something quite different. Ursula does not ‘idealize’ in the vague way that Dorothea does. Instead, she is trying to define herself further and further against reality to form a clearer vision, painfully, but supported by the “strange prescience, an intimation of something yet to come.” The language is that of the pain and expectation of child-birth, again coming back to the image of mother and child.

As I have indicated before, here the sisters are more exposed to reality, the reality is more hostile, and they have had more experience than Dorothea in the opening chapter. And yet, when we come to think of it, it is only a matter of degree. The Brangwen sisters still retain a strong tone of inexperience—what Lawrence called “virginity” :

. . . both had the remote, virgin look of modern girls, sisters of Artemis rather than of Hebe. (*WL*, p. 8)

It is the fierce element of resistance and remoteness which does not mingle with anything that violates her mode of life and thinking. However, the passage quoted in the last paragraph shows that, inexperienced as they are, in trying to be honest and to see the truth, Ursula particularly (but also both of the sisters) escapes Dorothea's altruism but feels compelled to take in the mysterious force of Hebe, the goddess of youth, as a prescience. The vision is not developed but simply stated and, therefore, sounds unconvincing. But perhaps it is impossible to register it otherwise. The vision cannot be ‘grasped’ without the proper experience, and even then it cannot be explained. And it is

a “prescience”—a vision before the experience. The helplessly outstretched hands of the unborn baby doubled with the image of Ursula’s anguish, nevertheless, reaches the universal level of ‘inexperience’, which is the human predicament.

It is Lawrence’s unique gift to turn from the painful self-analysis (or turning the inside out) of ‘inexperience’ into the prescience of a mystic force similar to the physical sensation of child-birth and the vulnerable stretching of hands towards the light. At the same time, it is highly questionable whether that ‘light’ is identifiable with the mother or the breast. It is more likely that the hands are searching through living human tissues into something inhuman and transcendental—at least something which can guide them. Here comes in the ambivalence of the father-image. To Dorothea Brooke, “the really delightful marriage” seemed “that where your husband was a sort of *father*, and could *teach* you even Hebrew, if you wished it.” (my italics) Obviously, Ursula would not expect a leading hand so simply academic as that. But the implication of ‘father’ and ‘teacher’ remains in the image of the hands stretched towards the light.

This would explain why Gudrun looks “as if brought to bay” when she is questioned if she feels herself “completely out of” father as well as home. She says, “I haven’t thought about him: I’ve refrained,” but Ursula “wavers” when she says “Yes”. Their father has failed to be their leader and protector so completely as to later make them burst into laughter when they see their parents walking in front of them towards the “more or less public water-party” given by Mr. Crich, the owner of the big mines and father of Gerald Crich. Yet, if we remember *The Rainbow*, Ursula was her father’s girl, and Will Brangwen always felt the hot stirring of heart and anxiety as little Ursula toddled with outstretched hands towards him—he made haste to catch her in time, but the pain when he saw her fall flat on her face! Also the sharp pain Ursula felt when she was harshly blamed by him for the mess in his working-shed which she never intended in her childish rapture of playing in his sphere! These things are missing in *Women in Love* as if they belong entirely to the past, but they are still there as a hidden background behind a few phrases: Gudrun’s “I’ve refrained,” and that Ursula “wavered”. And ultimately they come out in Will’s violent response at the time when Birkin proposes to her and she accepts.

As we have seen so far, the opening chapter of *Women in Love* consists of two parts: (1) the dialogue between the sisters in their father’s house, and (2) their walk through Beldover, past the gossiping crowd of miners and their family, to see the wedding at the church. Several images connect the two parts, displaying both the private and the social aspects of the same theme (or themes). The major and apparent theme is ‘wedding’, which is also the major topic of the narrative in the first chapter of *Middlemarch*, the possibility of marriage for Dorothea and Celia. The minor theme is the futility or absence of the ‘father’ who should have provided Ursula and Gudrun with the meaning of ‘home’ both in its private and social context. Again, the absence of the father-figure and the search for one is the main cause which spurs Dorothea to a particular view of marriage.

'Money' and 'social status', which means the value of Dorothea and Celia in the marriage market of Middlemarch society, is here almost the only challenge that Ursula and Gudrun can find in marriage, and it is not enough to divert them from their "temptation not to" get married. The idea of 'breeding' or bearing a child, which is still something sacred in *Middlemarch*, is another challenge which is not sufficient to rouse the blood of Ursula and Gudrun. Yet their 'blood' runs hot when their 'virginity' or individual separateness is threatened by the ugly barrenness of the gossiping crowd, which breeds like rats, whose spite and desires are soiled with money, and which is still "a ghoulish replica of the real world".

What combines the image of 'money' with those of 'breeding' and 'blood' is the image of 'horse-racing', which can represent both an aspect of the aristocratic life and that of a beast. This image appears as a sort of language which describes first the sisters and then those who attend the wedding, first in the eyes of the crowd and then in those of the sisters, mixing and identifying different classes of people.

In *Middlemarch*, too, the image of horse-riding appears, but a more important image in its first chapter is that of the 'jewels' which the sisters divide between them. In *Women in Love*, jewels appear as such in the later chapters, "Breadalby" and "Excuse", but the vivid colors, starting with green, appear already in the first chapter and will turn up in various forms, associated with stockings, hats, eyes, light, and snow.

Finally, the image of 'sketching' and that of 'stitching' a piece of embroidery, the sisters' activities, imply their efforts at defining and combining on canvas the various individual images and visions of private and social life—the attempts ambiguously related to their professions of 'artist' (sculptor) and 'teacher'. They are more complex and developed versions of Dorothea's childish drawing of a 'plan' for buildings (social planning) and of her "very childlike ideas about marriage".

\* \* \*

The opening chapter of *Howards End* begins with a letter, or a quick succession of letters, though it is again a letter *between* the sisters. It differs in style from that of the dialogues between the sisters at the beginning of *Middlemarch* and *Women in Love*. Those dialogues take place in the respective drawing-room, and their tones, different as they are from each another, retain some sort of dramatic grandeur despite the irritating and belittling elements which bind the social and private life of the sisters.

But here is the beginning of *Howards End*:

One may as well begin with Helen's letters to her sister.

Howards End,  
Tuesday

Dearest Meg,

It isn't going to be what we expected. It is old and little, and altogether delightful—red brick. We can scarcely pack in as it is, and the dear knows what will happen when Paul (younger son) arrives tomorrow. From hall you go right or left into dining-room

or drawing-room. Hall itself is practically a room. You open another door in it, and there are the stairs going up in a sort of tunnel to the first floor. Three bedrooms in a row there, and three attics in a row above. That isn't all the house really, but it's all that one notices—nine windows as you look up from the front garden.

(*HE*, p. 1)<sup>8</sup>

With the famous unpretentious opening, "One may as well begin. . .", the narrator introduces the reader directly to the material as if it were not fiction but something which actually happened and which he is simply reporting. On the other hand, the letter puts the reader and 'Meg' (Margaret Schlegel) at a distance from the actual scene, also reporting through the persona Helen, thereby bringing the reader and Margaret closer to each other. Both of them are reading and interpreting the letter. The main difference would be, if we accept Helen's words as true, that both Margaret and Helen "expected" something which the reader did not. 'Expectation' is the key word here, and, therefore, we must also talk about the plot of the novel, how expectation is developed or withdrawn, fulfilled or disappointed. The word is repeated twice in the same letter—here and in the second paragraph:

I only wanted to show that it isn't the least what we expected.

(*Ibid.*)

There is also a hint that this report of Helen's may not be enough, that there may be a need for further additions and adjustments even about the facts of the house she presents: "That isn't all the house really, but it's all that one notices...." The unpretentiousness, the readiness to take back one's word and to accept a new understanding, the note of ambiguity and open endedness which even discourages the reader from forming a definite impression of anything which is being presented, "delightful" as it seems. . . . What does all this imply?

Helen is trying to adjust their (or at least her) expectation closer to reality. For the reader who has no initial knowledge or expectation, the letter is simply giving a new piece of information to build up a new expectation. Then the question is: is this new information, intended to remedy the partiality of the initial information, any less partial as it is presented by itself to the reader? And did Margaret really have the same expectation as Helen had before? And, anyway, is Helen any wiser now? "It isn't going to be what we expected"—could it not be quite different, unexpected, even from what she thinks she sees now? Could Margaret or the reader expect Helen to be telling the truth, or at any rate expect her to be consistent with what she is saying? In other words, isn't an expectation bound to be abandoned even though we inevitably form it one way or another?

These questions are implied by the way the ending of this letter, "Will write again on Thursday," is succeeded by Helen's second letter from *Howards End*, dated "Friday", by the way Helen changes her tone from one letter to another (in the first letter, she looks at the Wilcox family as a drama; in the second letter, she hilariously enjoys having her



views “knocked into pieces” by the “really strong” Mr. Wilcox ; and in her third letter, which consists of just two lines, she breaks the unexpected news of her being in love with Paul), by the way her rather exaggerated expression in the first letter (“the dear knows what will happen when Paul. . . arrives tomorrow”) turns out in the third letter to have been ironically prophetic, and finally by the way the whole thing is turned upside down when Aunt Juley goes on her self-imposed mission to represent the family and inspect the Wilcoxes for Margaret, only to make a fiasco and find out that the affair was over, that “it wasn’t anything” (in Helen’s words).

Before going into further detail, we must note that ‘expectation’ formed Dorothea’s strongest characteristic and also made her choose Casaubon :

Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there ; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects ; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. (*M*, p. 2)

Likewise, Helen is enamoured of the “great” assurance of Mr. Wilcox, who is a businessman and bases all his thoughts on facts, contrary to her own credo of spirituality and liberal socialism. She is rash in thinking she is in love with the whole Wilcox family. She provokes Paul in her vulnerable state. She keeps making retractions and adjustments of her views. (Speaking of her conversation with Mr. Wilcox, she even exalts in being *able* to make retractions.) Here the “martyrdom” which she brings about in an unexpected quarter would be that of the unfortunate Aunt Juley, who is warm-hearted and claims to be “practical”, whom Helen describes in her first letter as “how good. . . but what a bore”, and who “burst into tears” after having a clashing tirade with Charles (Paul’s elder brother whom she had mistaken for Paul) only to learn that the affair was over before they knew.

Only the morning after Paul kisses Helen (also after she sends her letter to announce her love), she sees from Paul’s frightened look that it had been a mistake, that it would be impossible to ‘expect’ inner assurance and responsibility inside his shell of manly looks. After she comes back to her house with Aunt Juley, Helen describes this to Margaret as follows :

Somehow, when that kind of man looks frightened it is too awful. It is all right for us to be frightened, or for men of another sort—father, for instance ; but for men like that ! When I saw all the others so placid, and Paul mad with terror in case I said the wrong thing. I felt for a moment that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs, and that if it fell I should find nothing behind it but panic and emptiness. (*HE*, p. 23)

This is another effort at interpretation and explanation, retraction of a distorted view before. But is it valid or even helpful? This thought of Helen's which she could not have formed so 'clearly' at the time, is entirely unknown to Margaret and Aunt Juley when Helen's crucial letter arrives, and her panicking telegraph to stop Margaret taking any action ("All over. Wish I had never written. Tell no one. —Helen.") arrives too late to prevent Aunt Juley from starting on her "mission".

Furthermore, if we compare the passage above with a passage from Helen's second letter, we can see how second and more serious "martyrdom" of Leonard Bast is incurred by the "retractions" (to use the terms in *Middlemarch*) of her thoughts:

They are the very happiest, jolliest family that you can imagine. I do really feel that we are making friends. The fun of it is that they think me a noodle, and say so—at least, Mr. Wilcox does—and when that happens, and one doesn't mind, it's a pretty sure test, isn't it? . . . Meg, shall we ever learn to talk less? I never felt so ashamed of myself in my life. I couldn't point to a time when men had been equal, not even to a time when the wish to be equal had made them happier in other ways. I couldn't say a word. I had just picked up the notion that equality is good from some book—probably from poetry, or you. Anyhow, it's been knocked into pieces, and, like all people who are really strong, Mr. Wilcox did it without hurting me. (*HE*, p. 3)

There may be a certain courage, even freedom of mind, in accepting that her bookish notion has been "knocked into pieces". But there is also a certain flippancy. She is not hurt because, apart from her intellectual pride, the bookish notion of "equality" does not concern her person. Like Dorothea and Celia, Margaret and Helen are protected in their social class, their inheritance, and their cultural and intellectual surroundings. Their father was a German liberal socialist, and they were always surrounded by books, talk, and what they often call "poetry"—all the ideal, beautiful things in life. Inside this protection, the sisters share an almost equal appreciation of ideals and understanding of each other, as Dorothea and Celia do not, by comparison. But when it comes to believing in equality outside this pale, Helen is easily worsted by the robustness of the man of the world, with his insistence on facts and factual happiness, and yet can comfortably say "one doesn't mind". Suddenly this robustness seems *the* thing to make life happy and jolly, at least not morbid and clogged in self-consciousness as she and other intellectuals are.

It is easy to detect Forster's self-criticism and criticism of intellectuals in general—particularly of what Furbank called "the Cambridge prejudice" against businessmen and civil servants. Helen says in her first letter, "Men like the Wilcoxes would do Tibby a power of good," (*HE*, p. 2) and Tibby, her brother, is a typical Oxford or Oxbridge undergraduate. It is not clear whether Forster meant Oxford to have a slightly different nuance from Cambridge, though the narrative points out that Oxford did not let him know

"young-manliness", failing to make him "more human". Oxford taught him to "hide his indifference to people", and so ironically it is Tibby who, with "the student's belief in experts", advises Margaret to consult Mr. Wilcox, once Helen starts behaving in strange manners. Margaret demurs for a while, but Tibby says:

Oh, you know best. But he [Mr. Wilcox] is practical. (*HE*, p. 277)

Tibby does not care for people enough to commit himself to one mind or another, so without qualms he can leave the matter in Mr. Wilcox's hands which he despises in theory or in his own limited world. In the end, even Margaret is reduced to taking his advice and violating the sanctity of the sisters' intimate, trustful relationship. At one time or another the Schlegels all show their weaknesses before the assurance of business minds.

However, that Helen's notion is fragile is one thing, and that Mr. Wilcox is "really strong" is another, and the sharp eye can detect her confusion there.

. . . she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects. . . . (*M*, p. 2)

It just so happens to be Mr. Wilcox, or the Wilcox family, rather than Mr. Casaubon that captivates her.

However, when the retraction of her former self becomes extreme—

When Charles said, "Why be so polite to servants? They don't understand it," she had not given the Schlegel retort of "If they don't understand it, I do." No; she had vowed to be less polite to servants in the future. "I am swathed in cant," she thought, "and it is good for me to be stripped of it." (*HE*, p. 22)

Then, her own personal values are in danger. She is tuned up to embracing her whole expectation in the person of Paul, who is "flushed with the triumph of getting through an examination, and ready to flirt with any pretty girl", and to letting him make love to her, only to discover the next morning the "emptiness" of her "expectation" in Paul's frightened looks. Although she talks of "panic and emptiness" in the Wilcox family, "just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs", it is also partly the emptiness of her own swelled-up expectation, and she did "panic" more than she admitted at the time. It is only now that she does mind seriously, and she starts taking extreme measures of retracting her steps again.

Leonard Bast arrives, the very picture of a man who has no social status but is striving to achieve culture and poetry in life, to be equal with his superiors. She takes up this pathetic figure and passionately seeks to put together the smashed ideal of 'equality' on top of 'poetry'. Again the expectation, and this time especially the reaction against her previous thwarted expectation, overwhelms her. From the way he reads books or listens to music, we are made aware that he does not get below the surface of culture; and he drags on with his foolish demoralized wife whom he is too disillusioned to care for or criticize but cannot find the spirit to desert because he feels responsible for her.

Apparently Margaret realizes this and stops helping them when their life tends to bring squalor into her own private life (when Leonard's wife discovers that Mr. Wilcox, now engaged to Margaret, was her former customer in her prostitution). Helen also seems to realize, but blames it all on Mr. Wilcox, and the businessmen's failure to provide opportunity for this kind of man. Blaming Mr. Wilcox, she pours her whole passion into this man and leads him on as she did Paul. Leonard sleeps with her before he realizes what is happening (and he never does altogether). In the morning she is gone, leaving a note "tender and hysterical in tone" which hurts him and gives him the fatal wound of remorse because he "saw nothing beyond his own sin." (*HE*, p. 313) Lacking scope, imagination, the faculty to remember the details of the situation and associate or speculate on them as Helen does, and also lacking the aggressiveness of the Wilcoxes to defend himself, he can never dream of blaming Helen. He had his own limited expectation—the last dream in his life that rested in the figure of Helen (with "her talent and her social position") whom he worshipped as a goddess. That he broke this image into pieces he could not bear nor excuse himself for. The health of his mind and body is gradually undermined, and when he comes to Howards End to "confess" to Margaret, yearning "to get clear of the tangle", he cannot survive the violence of Charles Wilcox, who rages against what he thinks is the defilement of their "property" and his mother's memory. Thus the story develops, step by step, showing how Helen does "seek martyrdom... make retractions, and then... incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it."

And that is not the end of martyrdom, either. Charles is convicted of murder and goes to prison. Mr. Wilcox's formidable front breaks down. Margaret takes care of him and of the shocked and pregnant Helen, as it were, the two invalids. Especially this part reminds one of *Antigone*, with Creon's son killing himself, his mother following him, and Creon himself collapsing because of these unexpected martyrdoms incurred by Antigone's death. Throughout, words like "mission", "sacrifice", "victim", "worship", "goddess", "sin", "confession", "forgive", "tomb", and of course "love" and "death" build up an associative structure linked with "martyrdom". It seems almost as if this novel consists of a plot of martyrdoms, a train of unexpected events which spring one from another because of the gap between expectation and reality, because 'expectation' can never be restored but is always the reaction of one thing or another like a seesaw game. The plot is a dominating feature and seems even more closely knit than that of *Middlemarch*.

But even here, something unexpected comes out of those 'martyrdoms':

Out of the turmoil and horror that had begun with Aunt Juley's illness and was not even to end with Leonard's death, it *seemed* impossible to Margaret that healthy life should re-emerge. Events succeeded in a logical, yet senseless, train. People lost their humanity, and took values as arbitrary as those in a pack of playing-cards. (*HE*, p. 327—my italics)

Helen smiled. "Oh, Meg, you are a person," she said. "Think of the racket and torture this time last year. But now I couldn't stop unhappy if I tried. What a change—and all through you!"

"Oh, we merely settled down. You and Henry learned to understand one another and forgive, all through the autumn and the winter." . . .

"You!" cried Helen. "You did it all, sweetest, though you're too stupid to see. Living here was your plan—I wanted you; he wanted you; and *everyone said* it was impossible, but *you knew*. . . ."

"You were both ill at the time," said Margaret. "I did the obvious things. I had two invalids to nurse. Here was a house, ready-furnished and empty. It was obvious. I *didn't know* myself it would turn into a permanent home. No doubt I have done a little towards straightening the tangle, but *things that I can't phrase* have helped me." (*HE*, pp. 336–7—my italics)

What "seemed impossible to Margaret" and what "everyone said . . . was impossible" at the time, in the course of time and due to Margaret's wise decisions, turns out to be a natural and "permanent" thing. Helen says it was Margaret, a special "person", and her special knowledge ("you knew") that made it possible. Margaret claims she "didn't know" but only "did obvious things", which were caring for the husband and the sister who needed nursing and using the house "ready-furnished and empty", and that "things that I can't phrase" have helped her. In her low-key words are expressed her affection for the people and the house, and the expectation (whether 'needs' or 'readiness') on the part of the other. Her note is on such a low key that it is almost indistinguishable from mere 'common sense' and 'practical' wisdom, but behind that we see the deep ebbing and flowing of her emotions and understanding which are connected with "things that I can't phrase". Things that cannot be put into words cannot be interpreted or explained, so they are free from expectations and falsifications. It is as if by minimizing the contours and emphasis of her emotions Margaret has been learning to be *with* these things, simply *acting* on what is obvious, and has thus escaped the expectation ("it seemed impossible") of herself and "everyone".

These "things", when it comes to naming them, can be only "the house", "the wych-elm", and "Mrs. Wilcox". Why they cannot also be Helen and Mr. Wilcox, though Margaret does mention here that they "learned to understand one another", is open to question. But at least what is "obvious" with what Margaret "can't phrase" behind it, matches what Helen noted in her first letter. Let me quote it more fully :

From hall you go right or left into dining-room or drawing-room.  
Hall itself is practically a room. You open another door in it, and  
there are the stairs going up in a sort of tunnel to the first floor.  
Three bed-rooms in a row there, and three attics in a row above.  
That isn't all the house really, but it's all *that one notices*—nine

windows as you look up from the front garden.

Then there's a very big wych-elm—to the left as you look up—leaning a little over the house, and standing on the boundary between the garden and meadow. I quite love that tree already. . . . I looked out earlier, and Mrs. Wilcox was already in the garden. She *evidently* loves it. *No wonder* she sometimes *looks* tired. She was watching the large red poppies come out. Then she walked off the lawn to the meadow, whose corner to the right I can just see. Trail, trail, went her long dress over the sopping grass and came back with her hands full of hay that was cut yesterday—I *suppose* for rabbits or something, as she kept on smelling it. . . . Later on I heard the noise of croquet balls, and looked out again, and it was Charles Wilcox practicing; they are keen on all games. Presently he started sneezing and had to stop. Then I hear more clicketing, and it is Mr. Wilcox practicing, and then, "a-tissue, a-tissue": he has to stop too. Then Evie comes out, and does some callisthenic exercises on a machine that is tacked on to a greengage tree—they put everything to use—and then she says "a-tissue", and in she goes. And finally Mrs. Wilcox reappears, trail, trail, still smelling hay and looking at the flowers. (*HE*, pp. 1-2—my italics)

There are two sides to the things which Helen is reporting on: the 'obvious' or apparent shape and use of things which she names, and what she cannot name. For instance, the hay in Mrs. Wilcox's hands, which Helen tries to identify as "I suppose for rabbits or something", sounds awkward and unsatisfactory. There is already something indescribable about Mrs. Wilcox's gesture, though Helen in a way interprets it as: "She evidently loves it [the garden, though really the whole place] ." What is still missing in these words or, if it is implied here, what neither Helen nor Margaret, nor any reader can gather at this stage becomes clearer when Mrs. Wilcox's gesture finds an equivalent parallel later in Helen's gesture:

Helen took up a bunch of grass. She looked at the sorrel, and the red and white and yellow clover, and the quaker grass, and the daisies, and the bents that composed it. She raised it to her face.

"Is it sweetening yet?" asked Margaret.

"No, only withered."

"It will sweeten tomorrow." (*HE*, p. 336)

Again, the gesture of smelling the grass is spontaneous, largely unconscious. The effort at attributing to it a certain purpose would spoil its beauty. Margaret asks a question as if the purpose were to see whether the grass is sweetening yet. But when Helen replies that it is only withered, Margaret does see something *beyond* the appearance of the thing—its potentiality, its promise, its future. . . . We can also say that Margaret's foresight is supported by her knowledge, Helen's knowledge, the reader's knowledge (all in different

manners and degrees), and particularly Mrs. Wilcox's knowledge of the turning of the four seasons in the field.

Talking of the house and foresight, one cannot tell from Helen's description of the rooms, Mrs. Wilcox, etc., that Mrs. Wilcox will die and the house will be empty (though Helen writes, "No wonder she sometimes looks tired,"); that the old Miss Avery will, without being asked, open up the stored luggage which belongs to the Schlegel family to furnish the empty house: that the pregnant Helen, who is anxious to fly even out of Margaret's sight, will remain "in the hall, going from bookcase to table. . . more like the old Helen, irresponsible and charming" (*HE*, p. 293); that the sisters will open "window after window, till the inside, too, was rustling to the spring" (p. 297); that they will spend the night together there; that Leonard Bast, too, will turn up the next morning; that Charles will take the sword hanging in the hall and kill him there; that Margaret will nurse Mr. Wilcox and Helen there and eventually become its legitimate inheritor; that Helen's baby will be "born in the central room of the nine" (p. 337). . . . Nobody, not even Mrs. Wilcox or Miss Avery, could have foreseen the future. But Miss Avery finds it natural and obvious to open the new Mrs. Wilcox's luggage to fill the empty house, saying, "The house is Mrs. Wilcox's, and she would not desire it to stand empty any longer." (p. 268) Mrs. Wilcox herself finds it natural and obvious, when she foresees her death, to leave the house to Margaret because her dear house obviously needs somebody to understand and care for it and let it be its natural self. (Miss Avery says later, "Yes, it should be a merry house enough.") So Mrs. Wilcox scribbles a will, which the Wilcoxes ignore.

When Helen sees the house for the first time, it is its natural self. Even Mr. Wilcox, Charles and Evie who "put everything to use" look part of the scene (Helen calls it "not life but a play"), though obviously their role is comical. Their unvarying contraction of hay-fever, in the light of what Margaret later says about the "wonderful powers" of the house, would explain why the Wilcoxes' jolly robustness has such a romantic power over Helen's fancy. Margaret's words are:

It kills what is dreadful and makes what is beautiful live. (*HE*,  
p. 297)

The Wilcoxes have a certain deficiency, living with the place. They are keen on turning everything to use, but they never care to see what the house really has been or needs to be. They, too, while Mrs. Wilcox is there with her passion for the house and her family, can form "the very happiest, jolliest family that you can imagine" in Helen's eyes, taking no advantage of her "steady unselfishness" (though, again, Mr. Wilcox in a way betrayed Mrs. Wilcox by having an occasional woman, like any other man of his kind).

Although the kiss between Paul and Helen takes place out of her disproportionate expectation or fancy and his willingness to take a chance adventure, as she later describes it to Margaret in "unsympathetic" words, there is also another side to it which belongs to the house and the place:

But the poetry of that kiss, the wonder of it, the magic that there

was in life for hours after it—*who can describe* that? . . . He had drawn her out of the house, where there was danger of surprise and light; he had led her by a path he knew, until they stood under the column of the vast wych-elm. A man in the darkness, he had whispered “I love you” when she was desiring love. In time slender personality faded, the scene that he had evoked endured. In all the variable years that followed she never saw the like of it again. (*HE*, pp. 22–3—my italics)

“The poetry”, “the wonder”, “the magic”, and “the scene that he had evoked” do not belong to his or her imagination alone but primarily to “the column of the vast wych-elm” and “the darkness” which are part of *Howards End*, the place which endured from the time long before Mrs. Wilcox until both Margaret and Helen come to live there with Mr. Wilcox. To Paul, it may have meant simply making *use* of the scene for a moment’s pleasure, but the evoked scene holds, at least for Helen, something more than the apparent scene, something which nobody can describe.

Something about the house which cannot be described, the spirit of the place, has the unpredictable power to draw people together for love or hate. It could cause Charles to kill Leonard Bast, though the real cause of his death, whether the weakness of his heart or the blow of the sword, is never named. The old teeth stuck in the elm tree imply its sinister side. But it could also heal Helen’s and Mr. Wilcox’s wounded hearts and fill the gap between them. The mystery is already there in Helen’s first letters, though it is almost impossible to recognize it as such without knowing the plot which develops from them. Already the basic facts are given—the setting of the house, the people who live there, and the sisters who cross their lives, Helen visiting and reporting on them and Margaret silently reading and interpreting her sister’s letters. The facts themselves, bare and sketchy, do not tell much. The lively and half-irresponsible, humorous and yet romantic tone of description tells us more about the narrator (Helen) and the special charm of the place, but nothing tells us exactly what is so special about it. Nor can we determine the validity of Helen’s reaction and observation against the reality of *Howards End* which is yet unknown. And yet, in spite of such thin ground—and perhaps all the more because of it—we are led to suppose that there is ‘something’ indescribable about this place and about what people do here. After several letters from Helen, we are given a shock and learn, like Margaret, that Helen’s love was perhaps all an illusion, that there is a dark hidden side to the life of the Wilcoxes behind what seemed a “delightful” scene. Shocks are repeated, as well as pleasant surprises and new expectations, both for Helen and for Margaret on various occasions. Throughout these changes, however, something subtle and moving about the simple primary picture of *Howards End* remains with us; it becomes more poignant as it goes through various levels of conflict and disillusion. In other words, the deep and mysterious meaning of *Howards End* *behind* “all that one notices” at one’s first view becomes revealed only when its superficial delightfulness and the manly and efficient ‘front’ of the Wilcoxes perish one by one.



This is why it is difficult to discuss the meaning of Helen's letters without referring to the plot at the same time. More than in the two other novels, the opening pages of *Howards End* are dependent upon its plot because their kernel meaning is hidden and indescribable : a mystery.

A glance at the first few pages can tell us that it is neither a detective story nor a traditional Gothic horror. Its unpretentious and simple tone contains optimism of life, openness of mind, poetic sensitivity, wit, immaturity, wisdom, youth and age, vivacity and fatigue, the beautiful and the comic, and, as if casually, the intimation of what is behind the apparent. It is much more than a narrow genre would permit. Still it is a mystery of a kind. It is to the unravelling of this mystery that both sisters give their hand from the beginning to the end of the book.

So we go back to the first few chapters to examine what kind of role Margaret plays there. First of all, she is there to read Helen's letters, to interpret them, to expect something from them, to adjust her own expectations, and to make judgments and decisions. The first chapter consists only of Helen's three letters, and the reader is expected to be almost identified with Margaret except that the letters give a few cues to the reader to imagine Margaret as a particular reader. In other words, Margaret is an almost invisible intermediary between Helen's letters and the reader, and the reader is continually reading, imagining Margaret and her thoughts, and feeding them back into reading.

From the way Helen addresses her letters ("Dearest Meg," "Dearest Meg," and "Dearest dearest Meg,"), their personal tone, the detail, unreflecting spontaneity and honesty, the way the reader's understanding is taken for granted, the half-earnest, half-mocking humorous tone even extended to the reader's anticipated criticism ("Men like the Wilcoxes would do Tibby a power of good. But you won't agree, and I'd better change the subject."), to the possible perplexity or boredom ("I inflict all this on you because you once said. . ."). . . we can imagine that there is a deep intimate understanding and mutual trust.

In fact, one of the paragraphs in the first letter begins with :

This long letter is because I'm writing before breakfast. (*HE*, p. 2)

It is utterly unpretentious and is followed by the observation of the Wilcox family outside from her window upstairs, which is given through Helen's mind in their simplest, quietest, open state. The words are similar to those at the beginning of a classical Japanese essay :

What a strange, demented feeling it gives me when I realize I have spent whole days before this inkstone, with nothing better to do, jotting down at random whatever nonsensical thoughts have entered my head.<sup>9</sup>

This is the ideal state for observation and meditation—to see things as they really are, without assumptions, prejudice or ostentation. Kenkoh Hohshi, the writer of this essay, was formerly a courtier, but when the emperor whom he served died, he left his position

and became a Buddhist priest. During the time of political strife between the emperors, noblemen, and the rising class of *samurai* leaders divided among themselves, Kenkoh continued to be respected as a poet and kept his allegiance to the old and fading tradition, with the sharp awareness of all the changes in the world and their momentariness. Helen's attitude is not so deep and burdened as that. It is half "amused", half enchanted, and also aided by the fact that she is writing to her sister, who tends to philosophize :

I inflict all this on you because once you said that life is sometimes life and sometimes only a drama, and one must distinguish tother from which, and up to now I have always put that down as "Meg's clever nonsense". But this morning, it really does seem not life but a play, and it did amuse me enormously to watch the W. s. (*HE*, p. 2)

What Margaret really meant by those words is not known yet, but they already play their own role as Helen associates them with her picture of the "amusing" drama in the garden before her eyes. She is literally in a higher position, watching the Wilcoxes, and she can watch at ease without the danger of getting involved or being watched. To a degree she can have a clearer picture of the Wilcoxes than they can, but her fragile picture breaks into pieces as she herself gets involved in her affair with Paul and the ensuing turmoil of misunderstanding and anger.

Yet, does it? The picture which Helen evokes does remain in the reader's mind, and later there is an indication that the picture remains in Helen's mind as well in spite of all the troubles that follow :

"This is Mr. Wilcox's house?" she [Helen] inquired.

"Surely you remember Howards End?"

"Remember? I who remember everything ! But it looks to be ours now." . . .

"Over here, Meg. Put it so that anyone sitting will see the lawn."

Margaret moved a chair. Helen sat down in it.

"Ye-es. The window's too high."

"Try a drawing-room chair."

"No, I don't like the drawing-room so much. The beam has been match-boarded. It would have been so beautiful otherwise."

"Helen, what a memory you have for some things ! You're perfectly right. It's a room that men have spoilt through trying to make it nice for women." . . .

"Ah, that greengage tree," cried Helen, as if the garden was also part of their childhood. "Why do I connect it with dumb-bells? And there come the chickens. The grass needs cutting." (*HE*, pp. 294-5)

Helen has her extraordinary memory of visual images, and the careful reader remembers, too, that Helen's first letter recorded Evie taking "some callisthenic exercises on a

machine that is tacked on to a greengage tree". At the time Helen reflected, "... they put everything to use. . .", which later turns into a criticism of the Wilcoxes: but the image of the exercise and of youth surrounds the tree and survives even after her reflection goes through changes and the details fade in her memory. Margaret shows a stronger tendency to reflection and judgment which recognizes the rights or wrongs of her sister's views and reassures her. Here again, Margaret's reflective nature and Helen's trust, together with the power of the place itself to survive, help the younger sister to grow "more like the old Helen, irresponsible and charming" (p. 293).

Logically, Margaret's faculty for reflection could cause differences and bring criticism of her sister as well as recognition and reassurance. True, they have a natural affection for each other, and they seem to share the spiritual but liberal and humanistic view of things. Again, we are somewhat reminded of Dorothea and Celia, but the sisters in *Howards End* share a much more liberal view, though not of a haphazard kind like Mr. Brooke's, because of the difference of the time and cultural surroundings. In Chapter 4, which could be still considered part of the opening because the chapters are short at the beginning, there is this passage:

A word on their origin. They were not "English to the backbone", as their aunt piously asserted. But, on the other hand, they were not "Germans of the dreadful sort". Their father had belonged to a type that was more prominent in Germany fifty years ago than now. He was not aggressive German, so dear to the English journalist, nor the domestic German, so dear to the English wit. If one classed him at all, it would be as the countryman of Hegel and Kant, as the idealist, inclined to be dreamy, whose Imperialism was the Imperialism of the air. Not that his life had been inactive. He had fought like blazes against Denmark, Austria, France. But he had fought without visualizing the results of victory. A hint of the truth broke on him after Sedan... another when he entered Paris, and saw the smashed windows of the Tuileries. Peace came—it was all very immense, one had turned into an Empire—but he knew that some quality had vanished for which not all Alsace-Lorraine could compensate him. Germany a commercial power, Germany a naval power, Germany with colonies there and a Forward Policy there, and legitimate aspirations in the other place, might appeal to others, and be fitly served by them; for his own part, he abstained from the fruits of victory, and naturalized himself in England. . . . He had obtained work at one of our provincial universities, and there married Poor Emily. . . and as she had money they proceeded to London and came to know a good many people. But his gaze was always fixed beyond the sea. It was his hope that the clouds of materialism obscuring the Fatherland would part in time. . . . It

was a unique education for the little girls. The haughty nephew would be at Wickham Place one day, bringing with him an even haughtier wife, both convinced that Germany would be appointed by God to govern the world. Aunt Juley would come the next day, convinced that the Great Britain had been appointed the same post by the same authority. . . . On one occasion they had met, and Margaret with clasped hands had implored them to argue the subject out in her presence. . . . "Papa . . . why will they not discuss the most clear question?" Her father, surveying the parties grimly, replied that he did not know. Putting her head on one side, Margaret then remarked: "To me one of the two things is very clear: either God does not know his own mind about England and Germany, or else these do not know the mind of God." A hateful little girl, but at thirteen she had grasped a dilemma that most people travel through life without perceiving. Her brain darted up and down; it grew pliant and strong. Her conclusion was, that any human being lies nearer to the unseen than any organization, and from this she never varied.

Helen advanced along the same lines, though with a more irresponsible tread. In character she resembled her sister, but she was pretty, and so apt to have a more amusing time. . . . the younger was rather apt to entice people, and, in enticing them, to be herself enticed: the elder went straight ahead, and accepted an occasional failure as part of the game. (*HE*, pp. 26–8)

Here the sisters' origin and upbringing is described in three steps, which are related to one another: (1) their mixed blood between the German father and the English mother (the mother died early, and the father died when the sisters were just old enough to look after themselves); (2) the history of their father whose idealistic spirit belonged to the Germany of fifty years ago (which roughly corresponds to the time George Eliot was writing *Middlemarch*, whose social setting was again placed forty years before) and who once fought in the war for German Imperialism and was utterly disillusioned with the results of victory: commercial, naval, and colonial powers of the Empire at the cost of "some quality" dear to himself; and (3) the sisters' unique education in the intellectual and cosmopolitan surroundings which made them not only aware of the contradictions in their German and English relatives' nationalistic ideas, which were just expanding during the apparently peaceful time before the War, but ready to grasp and pursue "dilemmas of life" without the inhibitions and prejudices which blind most people. The passage has many parallels with the historical consciousness, the idealistic tendency, the intellectual values, and the mixed, cosmopolitan elements of *Middlemarch*. The early death of both parents and, as a result, the sisters' relative independence on their independent means also characterize both novels. The difference, on the other hand, is not

a simple difference of years; it derives from the extent of the disillusion which their father experienced before he naturalized himself in England.

What does their father and his history mean to the sisters? He was not an inactive idealist but fought for an ideal and found at the victory that he had lost all the things he stood for. In that sense he belongs to the past. But *Howards End* is primarily not concerned with the Germany or fifty years before. It is now that matters, and it is no longer possible for the sisters to fight "without visualizing the results". The results are there, the "smashed" fragments of the beautiful old things (which may have been cleared but the memory remains) and the overbearing big materialistic powers of commercialism and Imperialism. It is not only that they are unable to believe in the glorified Empire (German or British) because of their father but that they are stranded between the two big nation powers, unable to find a real home for them—a place for them to take root and flourish in. Their father, respecting intellect and intellectual ideals, "abstained from the fruits of victory" and left his country to keep the purity of his intellect free from "stupidity", hoping "that the clouds of materialism obscuring the Fatherland would part in time"; but the sisters with their intellectual powers, youth, beauty, and personal charms had never taken root. Moreover, as their aunt sometimes reminds them, their father was able to live a refined London life and to know many people owing to his wife's wealth. Cultural and intellectual refinement does not stand by itself but is supported by money, as Margaret comes to recognize. That their father abstained from the power of money on the national scale does not solve the problem itself even in his own life.

He criticized his nephew's Pan-Germanism by saying:

You only care about the things that you can use, and therefore arrange them in the following order: money, supremely useful; intellect, rather useful; imagination, of no use at all. No... your Pan-Germanism is no more imaginative than is our Imperialism over here. It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness.... *That* is not imagination. No, it kills it.... Your poets too are dying, your philosophers, your musicians, to whom Europe has listened for two hundred years. Gone. Gone with the little courts that nurtured them—gone with Esterhaz and Weimar. (*HE*, p. 27)

But even he did not claim that imagination can stand by itself. It had to be "nurtured" by the "little" courts. For Margaret and Helen, it does not help to sentimentalize over Esterhaz and Weimar. The sisters are living in the world of commercial power, and yet their burden is to carry imagination, to "rekindle the light within". Here seems to lie the real problem left for them to solve, the "dilemmas of life" that go even deeper than the confrontation between two national powers which Margaret experienced as a child. In that sense, the sisters' predicament is shared by all those who cannot believe in the goodness of society and yet are striving to achieve the values within.

From this, the sisters' individual pursuits develop and diverge. Through the strug-

gle, her brain "grew pliant and strong"—with Margaret, the strength and pliancy of her mind is stressed. It is the mind which does not easily give up possibilities in the face of disappointment, fear, and temptations of reduction. The last ground she discovers is "that any human being lies nearer to the unseen than any organization". It is a belief in humanism and personal relationship—the particular credos that Forster himself stood for. The claim that it is *her* conclusion, in other words, that she did not inherit it but worked it out herself, is only partly true because it does not seem to differ from her father's belief in spiritual values and his preference for littleness over bigness. But at the same time we must pay attention to the particular phrase "*any* human being" and recognize the emphasis on diversity and the dilemmas which are kept willy-nilly in the human frame and are reduced to form any organization, good or bad. From this point of view, we can more readily sympathize with her longing for the human "grit" of the man who has fought with confidence in the materialistic world, the grit which was missing in her father who had abstained from its reality.

That Helen in her childhood and through adolescence shares Margaret's experience "though with a more irresponsible tread" forms a parallel to :

... Celia wore scarcely more trimmings ; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements. . . . (*M*, p. 1)

But when it comes to the next passages, it becomes apparent that the Schlegel sisters are different :

... Celia mildly acquiesced in all her sister's sentiments, only infusing them with that common-sense which is able to accept momentous doctrines without any eccentric agitation. (*M*, p. 2)

Since they could remember, there had been a mixture of criticism and awe in the attitude of Celia's mind towards her elder sister. (*M*, p. 7)

Margaret and Helen are much more like the identical twins of one egg. What is more, they are basically not critical of each other but they complement and support each other. That is because they share the 'experience' itself, not "acquiescing" or following with "awe". They are equals and stand on the same ground. However, the difference in their looks and temperaments later makes them follow different courses, and the key to this lies in Margaret's "pliant and strong" mind and Helen's "more irresponsible" mind which can have a good time with one thing and then jump for a substitute temptation without persevering in the pain of disillusion and defeat.

The problem is, first, that they stand on the same small ground between themselves where personal relations are supreme. But is it enough? Does it stand by itself? This is the question that Margaret comes to ask and that Helen more obscurely shares at first. In the fourth chapter Margaret says :

The truth is that there is a great outer life that you and I have never

touched—a life in which telegrams and anger count. Personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there. There love means marriage settlements; death, death duties. So far I'm clear. But here's my difficulty. This outer life, though obviously horrid, often seems the real one—there's grit in it. It does breed character. Do personal relations lead to sloppiness in the end?  
(*HE*, p. 25)

"Telegrams and anger" stand for the turmoil of different people's intentions, interests, crossing transactions, and the anger which follows Helen's third letter (telling of her love for Paul). Personal relations can have no part there, and Helen at the incident feels she does not belong. Neither does Margaret. But she feels that the life outside their small ground largely consists of that turmoil of businesses in which people struggle and fight. Her hunger for the outer life which, she thinks, can offer "grit" and "breed character" shows not only her admission of some quality missing in their basically "feminine" household but her frustration with the ineffective demureness of a man like her brother Tibby, a parasite, an intellectual who does not even pretend to have any influence upon society. Helen's more pronounced criticism of Tibby, her momentary glorification of the Wilcoxes and her affair with Paul are the signs that she has the same latent hunger which has to come out. She assents to Margaret:

Oh, Meg, that's what I felt, only not so clearly, when the Wilcoxes were so competent, and seemed to have their hands on all the ropes.  
(*HE*, p. 25)

But her assent comes in the past tense, which Margaret notices and questions:

"Don't you feel it now?"

"I remember Paul at breakfast," said Helen quietly. "I shall never forget him. He had nothing to fall back upon. I know that the personal relations are the real life, for ever and ever."

"Amen." (*Ibid.*)

Paul had nothing to fall back upon, but the sisters had their small personal ground to fall back upon. That was how Helen felt, and Margaret agrees that "the personal relations are the real life" and the most enduring thing. But Helen uses this to justify her superiority and her abstinence from actual life in society, while Margaret does not make such a reduction.

It is not easy to say whether the difference between the sisters is great or small. In effect, Margaret's hunger for the outer life remains, but only in so far as it serves the purpose of supporting personal relations, invigorating them and sharpening character. In that sense, her attitude towards the outer life seems to remain romantic and detached because her primary interest lies with personal relations.

Margaret's choice of Mr. Wilcox as her husband does not escape her tendency to romanticize a confident businessman, and Helen soon turns Leonard Bast into her substitute idol: the negative version of Mr. Wilcox: the man who is poor and ineffectual in society but is struggling with imagination to kindle "the light within". The tendency

to romanticize and glorify a certain type of man not only connects Margaret with Helen. It goes back to Dorothea and Casaubon and becomes a major point of conflict between men and women in *Women in Love*. In the next chapter, before following the conflict between the sisters along with the development of plot, I shall consider the meaning of such 'glorification' of man, the male-myth, as it is found in its most representative forms in the three novels.

#### Notes

1. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Arnold : London, 1974 ; first pub. , 1927), pp. 112-3.
2. *Ibid.* , p. 115.
3. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, II, p. 183.
4. Hilda Hulme, "The Language of the Novel : Imagery", *Middlemarch : Critical Approaches to the Novel*, ed. by Barbara Hardy (The Athlone Press : London, 1967), p. 107.
5. *M* stands for George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. by Bert G. Hornback, A Norton Critical Edition (Norton : New York, 1977).
6. Quoted in Steiner, *Antigone*, p. 146.
7. Notes to the Cambridge Edition lists 1916 and 1917 as possible dates for the resignation of the minister. For the general mood of the time starting from the Edwardian Era, see Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton Univ. Press : Princeton, N. J. , 1968).
8. *HE* stands for E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (Edward Arnold : London, 1973).
9. Kenkoh Yoshida, *Tsurezuregusa*, trans. by Donald Keene as *Essays in Idleness : The Tsurezuregusa of Kenkō* (Columbia Univ. Press : N. Y. , 1967), p. 3.

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