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Andrea E. Lehman
Oberlin College

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The Child is Mother of the Woman:
Parenting and Self-Parenting
in Emma and Middlemarch

Andrea Lehman
Honors Essay
Spring 1983

The story of a heroine's maturation and growing autonomy, which originated with the novelists directly preceding Austen, blossomed in the nineteenth century. Margaret Anne Doody describes below the resulting pattern in women's fiction.

It is the story of a woman gifted with some talents and a deep capacity both for affection and responsibility who is to some important degree at odds with the world in which she finds herself... She desires to understand the world and to contribute something to it, but her abilities are often frustrated by poverty of education and incomplete experience... She is frequently an orphan or half-orphan, and parents or parent substitutes are inadequate or unsympathetic, overconventional or hostile. The heroine is often presented with the foil of a female character of her own age who is smaller-minded and, through greed or timidity, more willing to act a conventional female role. The heroine herself tries to be both just and generous, but her intentions are often balked by her own ignorance or defects, and by the nature of her world. She desires above all the love of a man who is her equal, but such love is very hard to come by. 1

Although the elements in Doody's paradigm seem very disjointed, they are, in practice, interrelated. In the two works to be examined, Emma and Middlemarch, one of those elements, insufficient parenting, has an enormous effect on the many other factors in each heroine's struggle.

Both Jane Austen and George Eliot are interested in the issue of parenting. Their interest does not stop, however, with pointing out the inadequacies of their heroines' parents and surrogate parents or of the expectations for the nineteenth century parent. Especially in Emma and Middlemarch, novels centering on women with great intelligence and potential for growth, Austen and Eliot show their heroine in many different "parent-child" relationships. As they mature, the nature of

these relationships changes. Parenting becomes not only each heroine's obstacle to maturity, but also, as a result of her capability to autonomously grow, her tool to attain it and the measure of her progress.

In order to examine the significance of "parent-child" relationships vis à vis the growing autonomy of Emma Woodhouse and Dorothea Brooke, we must first look at them as daughters in relation to parents, real or surrogate, ineffectual or influential. Next, to what extent do these two women act as counsellors and parents for siblings and friends, and how does their attitude to that role change? Last, both these novels feature heroines whose husbands or future husbands are much older than they are, and who assume parental roles with them. How does each heroine relate to this father/lover figure? Is he the cause or the catalyst of her maturation?

As I hope to show, the obstacles created by these various relationships ultimately enable our heroines to examine and accept their values and themselves. Each author explores the issue differently, however. Though Austen does not use the language and imagery of parenting, birth, and growth that Eliot does, she communicates her notion of parenting by concentrating on issues such as good judgment and compassion. In the end, they show that each heroine self-sufficiently creates and nurtures a self which is at least a partial realization of her great potential. In effect, she becomes maturely suited to parent as a consequence of becoming her own surrogate parent.

Heroine as Daughter

Emma Woodhouse does not receive adequate parenting. Her only surviving parent, "a nervous man, easily depressed,"² in no way prepares her for adult life. Mr. Woodhouse is too weak to be a good model of judgment for his daughter or a strong disciplinarian. His inability to parent her well seems to keep her a perpetually spoiled and unrestrained child. However, this very lack of restraint, which the narrator would first have us believe is Emma's great misfortune, proves to be her great advantage.

Mr. Woodhouse is not a good example for Emma to follow. He lives in an era when men were popularly considered naturally superior in reason and intellect, while women were thought more emotional and affectionate.³ Though we are told Mr. Woodhouse is "a most affectionate, indulgent father" (E 3), we do not see in him any real intelligence. His views about Mr. Perry, harmful draughts, and gruel are so ridiculous that we are quite content that Emma does not take after him. However, we are not content that Emma's vibrant mind receives no stimulation from him. "He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful" (E 5). Austen shows us the fallacy in the assumptions about the natural abilities of the sexes, and we lament that, at the beginning of the novel, Emma's energies remain either unchanneled or directed only to matchmaking.

Mr. Woodhouse does not effectively discipline Emma, for he considers her perfect (E 8). This lack of parental check enables her to matchmake, to behave rudely to Miss Bates, and to flirt openly with Frank Churchill. Without any opposition,

she has no opportunity to question her own actions and values. Yet although she is wilful and foolish, she is free to discover her mistakes and her responsibilities on her own.

Instead of being effectively guided by her father, Emma must, to a large degree, parent him. Her assumption of responsibility for him is confining to her but revealing to us. She must cater to his little wants, and, as mistress of the house, make up for his deficiencies as master (E 21-22, 156). However, as much as she treats him like a child, she maintains a sense of filial duty which Austen as well as her audience held dear. Through the course of the novel, Emma's sense of duty changes subtly. The narrator's early descriptions of Woodhouse as an inadequate companion and father whose "spirits required support" (E 5), emphasize Emma's burden. She grows to take her responsibility to him so seriously at the end of the book, that she is prepared to sacrifice the man she loves to it. That willingness to sacrifice, a result of "a very short parley with her own heart" (E 399), emphasizes the compassion which underlies her more mature parenting. Even we can respect such strong faithfulness.

Before we are too quick to give Emma credit for parenting herself, however, we must examine other potential parents. Her sister Isabella is her superior in nothing but age and certainly her inferior in intellect. That she is likened to Mr. Woodhouse (E 86) suggests that she cannot provide the parenting that Emma needs. Later, Austen shows Isabella's limitations.

Isabella, passing her life with those she doted on, full of their merits, blind to their faults, and always innocently busy, might have been a model of right feminine happiness [emph. added] (E 129).

That she "might have been," suggests that she is not a good model for Emma.⁴

Mrs. Weston, née Taylor, was Emma's governess. Though she is more intelligent and responsible than Mr. Woodhouse, she is not much more of an effective parent.

Even before Miss Taylor had ceased to hold the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked, highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own (E 3).

We respect Mrs. Weston for recognizing Emma's worth (E 35), but see that Knightley's witty assessment of their relationship is true, though we might disagree as to the qualities of a good wife.

You might not give Emma such a complete education as your powers would seem to promise; but you were receiving a very good education from her, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid... (E 34).

Ironically, the one person whom Knightley considers to have been an effective parent for Emma was her mother. To Knightley, the late Mrs. Woodhouse was "the only person able to cope with her [Emma] ... She inherits her mother's talents, and must have been under subjection to her" (E 33). Knightley believes, like many of his time, that the proper attitude of child to parent, as with wife and husband (see above), is one of subjection. What we see as Emma's great inheritance, her intellect, he can only see as her "misfortune" (E 33).⁵ Austen's irony is unmistakable in the whole exchange between Knightley and a very quick-witted Mrs. Weston (E 32-37). Our belief in Knightley's judgment begins to be shaken.

Those who doubt that Emma grows as a result of her liberty to explore and define herself and her world, get ammunition from the early narrator. "The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself..." (E 3). The narrator, however, is teasing us by assuming a voice very close to Knightley's. In the next paragraphs, the narrator ironically undercuts the notion of Emma's having "too much her own way" by concentrating on how stifled Emma is without an outlet for her energies, a recurring theme. Further along, in ways I shall later trace in some detail, the narrator repeatedly draws our attention to the progress Emma makes through her own meditations. So many of the narrator's and Knightley's opinions, judgments that we take to be true at the beginning of the novel, are undermined as it progresses. Emma will learn, on her own, the problems involved with getting her own way and thinking too well of herself.

Dorothea Brooke has been an orphan since she was twelve. When we first meet her, she is under the care of her weak and foolish Uncle Brooke. Like Woodhouse, Brooke is not a suitable model of maturity for our young heroine. Though he does not spoil Dorothea, as Emma's father does her, he neither disciplines her nor forces her to accept the values thought proper, by conventional standards, for a young woman. Though Eliot mocks Brooke's weakness, she does not lament the lack of discipline. Eliot's values are not those of society, and her energetic heroine is far from conventional. By providing Dorothea with weak parent figures, Eliot allows her to be "tried by the test

of freedom," a process we see is as necessary for Dorothea, as she sees it is for many others. ⁶

Brooke does not engage a companion for Celia and Dorothea, an omission which the community finds blameworthy (M 32). It is unlikely, however, that a female companion would provide Dorothea with the education she needs. Eliot mocks the popular notion of women's education and social conformity. Dorothea could "not be satisfied by a girlish instruction comparable to the nibblings and judgments of a discursive mouse" (M 50).

Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbors did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them (M 31).

Eliot's wit is so biting that we are not too unhappy to see Dorothea classed with the lunatics.

Brooke's reason for not finding a companion for his nieces also shows his true weakness as a model for Dorothea. "He himself dreaded so much the sort of superior woman likely to be available for such a position, that he allowed himself to be dissuaded by Dorothea's objections" (M 32). Brooke is so threatened by strong-minded women that he cannot successfully guide one. He defends himself against strong women, Dorothea (M 42) and Mrs. Cadwallader (M 78), by using the conventional view of the female sex. "Your sex is capricious, you know" (M 78). The irony is obvious. Coming from a man who is unable to alphabetize his documents (M 42), this generalization is ridiculous. By Dorothea's very presence, Eliot shows us it is untrue. Dorothea, like Emma, is mistress of the house and has considerable, though not unlimited (M 53), power over her more "flighty" guardian.

As with the question of a companion, Brooke makes but a feeble attempt to dissuade Dorothea from marrying Casaubon, though it is within his power to prevent it since she is under age. He then considers he has done his duty (M 68-69). Because he does not understand what Dorothea really needs, and because he thinks social standing is a major factor in marriage, he reckons Casaubon at least a respectable match. After mistakenly touting his own cleverness and that of his family, Brooke says, "I couldn't, as your guardian, have consented to a bad match. But Casaubon stands well: his position is good" (M 69). The irony is again unmistakable. Though his ignorance is his own doing, Brooke's views about "position" are those of his society. But neither good standing nor the sterile scholarliness that "lies a little in our [Brooke's] family" (M 69) makes Casaubon a good husband for Dorothea.

No other adult steps in to guide the idealistic Dorothea. Neighbors, like the Cadwalladers and the Chettams, pass judgment on her and her opinions (M 84-85), but they do not advise her until she has been married and widowed and is capable of making her own rational decisions.

Cadwallader does not understand that Casaubon will be an unhappy match for Dorothea; and he will not intervene to stop it, for she is not his daughter (M 93-96). Though Mrs. Cadwallader understands the consequences of marrying Casaubon, she can only act by prodding her husband to take action (M 95-96). Sir James, like Brooke, wants what is best for Dorothea (M 528) without understanding what that best is. He can do nothing to prevent Dorothea's first marriage, and reacts to the second with

snobbery and petulance (M 875). All these characters are limited, intellectually and emotionally. Governed by what is socially right, they cannot understand what is right for Dorothea. As she herself says to Celia, "you would have to feel with me, else you would never know" (M 880).

By the end of the novel, we are more amused than appalled by these "parent figures." Sir James's judgmental attitude and Brooke's lack of understanding, of both himself and Dorothea, are quite comical (M 874-75). We are free to acknowledge Brooke's innocuousness and his good heart (M 876), for Dorothea matures despite him. She builds up an ideal world that no parent disputes, has it shattered in her marriage with Casaubon, and must come to terms with reality. Her new growth and knowledge result from her own efforts, not those of a parent figure or of the community as a whole.

Heroine as Parent Figure

Both heroines assume the role of parent to other characters in their works, and both do so prematurely. Emma adopts Harriet Smith, "the natural daughter of somebody" (E 19), and begins to parent her irresponsibly. The actual consequences of her influence repeatedly intrude on her ideal, however, and she realizes the harm caused by her condescending interference. Her attitude changes gradually to one of more mature and rational understanding.

Emma's early motives for "parenting" Harriet include both selfishness and genuine concern. She wants to play Pygmalion by making Harriet over in her own image (E 20-21) and by manipulating her to achieve her own goals (E 45-50). She assumes the power

and attitude of a creator, condescending to her creation. "...Harriet would be loved as one to whom she could be useful" (E 23). That Harriet allows herself to be so used only increases Emma's condescension (E 51). Emma is too immature yet to harness her creative energy without overstepping her understanding of Harriet's potential.

Emma understands Harriet better than most others, however. Early in the novel, Emma gives us a remarkably good assessment of both Harriet's virtues and her flaws.(E 57-58). She argues that male society values Harriet's less important virtues, beauty and good temper, more than their worth. Austen juxtaposes Emma's astute argument with Knightley's unperceptive comment about Emma's reason, and in the process elicits our respect for Emma's good sense.

Knightley acts as a foil for Emma. We measure her growing understanding of Harriet against his, and see that he needs to learn as much as she does. Knightley interprets the nature of Harriet's friendship with Emma as follows:

I think her the very worst sort of companion that Emma could possibly have. She knows nothing herself, and looks upon Emma as knowing everything... How can Emma imagine she has anything to learn herself, while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority? And as for Harriet, I will venture to say that she cannot gain by the acquaintance... She will grow just refined enough to be uncomfortable with those among whom birth and circumstances have placed her home. I am much mistaken if Emma's doctrines give any strength of mind, or tend at all to make a girl adapt herself rationally to the varieties of her situation in life. They only give a little polish (E 34).

He, like Emma, wants to define the roles of others⁷, but his definition is also wrong. What he fails to realize until much later, is that both women do learn from each other.

Harriet acquires a better education from Emma, Austen implies, than the "reasonable quantity of accomplishments... sold at a reasonable price" (E 18-19) at Mrs. Goddard's. Though Emma leads Harriet astray in matters of marriage, she imbues in her enough good sense to eventually see the presumption in her interest in Knightley and to accept Robert Martin despite Emma's potential disapproval (E 443). Even Knightley, Emma's most severe critic, must eventually admit,

I am now very willing to grant you all Harriet's good qualities... I am convinced of her being an artless, amiable girl, with very good notions, very seriously good principles, and placing her happiness in the affections of domestic life. Much of this, I have no doubt, she may thank you for (E 436).

As the novel progresses, Emma too learns from their relationship. Each time she is forced to realize the sad results of her interference, she loses some of her immaturity. After each realization, Emma temporarily reverts to her old ways, but with a difference: she is wiser.

Emma's encouragement of Harriet's hopes for Mr. Elton is fervent. Her anger when those hopes are dashed are as much directed towards him as towards herself. She readjusts her outlook, and sets her sights on Frank Churchill, though she does not meddle as much as she did with Elton. Emma finally learns that it is Knightley whom Harriet desires, and she begins to resent her own creation. Harriet is no longer Emma's submissive "dear little modest Harriet" (E 51); she is a threat. As she realizes her culpability, Emma regrets "the worst of all her womanly follies---her wilful intimacy with Harriet Smith" (E 425). But when she hears of Harriet's engagement to Robert Martin,

she is freed from that resentment. She can forgive Harriet and begin upon a new, more mature relationship, more indicative of good sense and understanding. "The intimacy between her and Emma must sink; their friendship must change into a calmer sort of good-will..." (E 444).

Similarly, Emma must learn how to maturely wield the power she holds as mistress of Hartfield. Miss Bates, for example, is dependent on Hartfield generosity, like a child on a parent. Though Emma does not respect Miss Bates (E 140, 340), she must fulfil her responsibilities. Knightley's chastisement after the Box Hill incident stimulates Emma's own realizations (E 343-45). Through reflection, she understands her misdeeds and accepts her "parental" responsibility (E 346).

Understanding is the foundation of Emma's new mature attitude. In understanding and accepting others as they are, she is more able to accept both herself and her responsibility to them.

Like Emma, Dorothea plays the role of parent, but her parenting is more subtle than her predecessor's. Though she does not matchmake or teach her "daughters" accomplishments, Dorothea does advise, judge, and influence their values. As she grows, as her illusions about her world are shattered and she begins to come to terms with reality, her methods and motives for parenting change. Condescension and self-interest change gradually into a calmer, more selfless good will. Her maturer mothering is a product of her knowledge and power, not vice versa. Early in the novel, Dorothea, full of good intentions

and ardor, but no experience, finds ecstasy in self-denial. But self-denial does not allow growth. Only self-acceptance fosters the mature altruism that underlies nurturance.

Dorothea's central mothering relationship is with her sister Celia, one of the conventional foils Doody mentions above. She is not merely a comparison for Dorothea, however. She plays mother to her, and the relationship which at first seems static, becomes dynamic, demonstrating rather than preventing Dorothea's growth. Her growth seems at first more continuous than Emma's, which proceeds in fits and starts. Each of Emma's realizations, until the end of her novel, is followed by a temporary return to folly. Dorothea's growth is also punctuated by discrete steps. By looking at the three stages of the relationship of the two sisters, we see the eventual maturation of one and the stasis of the other.

Early in the novel, Dorothea patronizes her sister though she loves her dearly. In discussing their mother's jewels and the duty owed her, just as in the discussion of Sir James's Maltese puppy (M 53), "there was a strong assumption of superiority in this [Dorothea's] Puritanic toleration..." (M 35). But Celia is no Harriet Smith. Perceptive, she sees her sister's inconsistencies (M 37). Though a "yoked creature," she has "private opinions" (E 37) to which Dorothea is not yet ready to listen.

Celia is the only person who seriously attempts to dissuade Dorothea from marrying Casaubon. However, Celia's argument against Casaubon (M 42), based on looks and manners, is as one-sided and un insightful as Dorothea's for a man who "corresponds

to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology" (M 43). Though, ironically, community opinion holds that "the innocent-looking Celia was knowing and worldly-wise" (M 31), we cannot fail to see the truth in Dorothea's assessment that she "will look at human beings as if they were merely animals with a toilette, and never see [or look for] the great soul in a man's face" (M 43). We also see that, unlike Celia, Dorothea cannot accept her attraction to purely sensuous experience. In order to allow herself to keep the gems, she must "justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy" (M 36).

The intensity of her religious dispositions, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent: and with such a nature, struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency (M 51).

Dorothea is confined by both social opinion and her own ardor. She does not yet realize that part of what Celia implies is true, that Casaubon is not what Dorothea thinks. She reacts by patronizing Celia and discounting her very limited, though more socially accepted views.

As the novel progresses and Dorothea comes back from her honeymoon, the relationship between the sisters changes. Dorothea is shaken. Her response to art in Rome is the beginning of an acceptance of sensuous experience, and she begins to doubt her prior values. In her confusion, she becomes more tolerant of Celia and gives hearty congratulations for her engagement to Sir James, an act which takes on a new seriousness for Dorothea (M 310).

Dorothea thinks she begins to see Celia's superior judgment. Upon the arrival of the baby Buddha, the ironic symbol of perfect illumination, Celia immediately "has a new sense of her mental solidity and calm wisdom... [and Dorothea is] ...almost ready now to think Celia wiser than herself..." (M 531). The "almost" is central, however. The irony with which Eliot treats that wisdom is obvious (M 529-33), and we realize that it is not the goal to which Dorothea should aspire. Our belief in Celia's judgment and her understanding of her sister wanes, and we see the comedy as she tries to impress her values on her sister. "To remain in that momentous babe's presence with persistent disregard was a course that could not have been tolerated in a childless sister" (M 579).

By the end of the novel, Dorothea is finally able to embrace a source of wisdom better than Celia's maternity. She understands and accepts herself. "'It is quite true that I might be a wiser person, Celia,' said Dorothea, 'and that I might have done something better, if I had been better'" (M 880). In that entire scene between them (M 878-80), Eliot pits the two kinds of mothering against each other. Celia still feels she understands her sister and can convince her not to marry Ladislaw. Though she tries to play the chastising mother, she has as little power over Dorothea as she did originally. Her judgment is that of her husband, and she cannot control her own feelings or actions.

...He [James] thinks you are so wrong, Dodo. But you always were wrong; only I can't help loving you (M 879).

Dorothea, on the other hand, feels "tender gravity" and "gentle warmth" (M 879). As she pinches her sister's chin and refuses to tell Celia about how she and Will came to be engaged (M 880), we see a slight tinge of condescension, but this time it is

natural. We, like Dorothea, realize that Celia really cannot understand.

Dorothea's tender parenting extends even as far as Rosamond Vincy. Though she has every right to feel nothing but jealousy for her, Dorothea responds with warmth. Just as she had campaigned for new houses for tenants, she takes up Lydgate's cause ardently. While explaining her defense of him to his wife, Dorothea "clasped it [Rosamond's hand] with gentle motherliness" (M 851). In contrast, Rosamond is described immediately before as having "the rounded infantine mouth and cheek inevitably suggesting mildness and innocence... ."

Dorothea is no longer a confused young woman, unyielding and patronizing the sister who would influence her. In the process of maturing, she almost succumbs to believing in Celia's empty maternity. But she does not. Instead, she learns to trust her increasingly sound judgment. When she is sure of her own values, she can give others concern and advice without contempt. She consoles and defends the wronged with new vigor. Her power stems from herself, not a child, and with that power she can effectively "mother."

Heroine and the Father/Lover

George Knightley plays the role of both father and lover to Emma. In discussing their relationship, many feminist critics do Austen a great injustice. In her article, "Dwindling Into a Wife: a Jane Austen Heroine Grows Up," Carole O. Brown mistakenly writes:

Both Pride and Prejudice and Emma, then, are novels of passage in which a bright, clever, witty, self-assured girl settles down into marriage and womanhood, losing much of her brightness, wit and assurance in the process. Jane Austen upholds in these novels as in all her others, a single model of womanhood, with its virtues of passivity and submission, its acceptance of loss and limitation. 8

Jean Kennard propounds similar sentiments in her simplistic and misguided work, Victims of Convention. Maturity for a heroine is, according to Kennard, accepting the values of the "right suitor" (there are two in her convention), "...learning that her ideals are fantasies, that happiness lies in approximating the male reality and in denying much of what had seemed to be herself."⁹ Unfortunately, these are only two of the critics who see Emma's loss without seeing her growth.

There are basically two lines of argument which critics have taken to prove Emma's victimization. Both see Knightley's paternalism and Emma's humility as the key evidence to support them.

The first group, including Brown and Kennard, sees Emma as undergoing continuous reduction. Emma originally is a spoiled, but bright child with a completely ineffectual father, who is, as Edmund Wilson says, "a silly old woman..."¹⁰ Austen shows, true to nineteenth century conventions, that what Emma needs is a strong father figure. "The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation," the narrator observes, "were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself..." (E 3). Knightley provides the paternal guidance, and she has only to realize how very wrong she is and accept what he calls, "the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid..." (E 34). Her reward is marriage. According to Brown, Austen

merely reinforces the conventional ideal of womanhood. Only we are fully aware of Emma's great loss, for Austen "adjusted the structure of Emma to disguise as much as possible the losses that Emma undergoes, even though she chose not to articulate loss as a problem."¹¹

The other line of argument, the best example of which is Alison G. Sulloway's "Emma Woodhouse and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," is much more successful, though it too stops short of recognizing Emma's real growth. Austen demonstrates just how wonderful Emma's cleverness is as well as just how limited Knightley's paternalism is. Sulloway mentions throughout how ironically Austen treats Knightley and how much power she gives Emma in their frequent disagreements. Emma articulates quite well the limitations she feels as a woman, and Austen, like Wollstonecraft, laments those limits too. The ending of the novel, according to Sulloway, shows Austen's awareness of convention, literary as well as social. "The conventions of the novel then required a happy ending at the altar...and our hearts do yearn to accept the fairy-tale ending... But the persistent accumulative evidence with which the novelist supplies us suggests otherwise."¹² Like Angus Wilson, Sulloway sees Knightley as a paternalistic, supercilious bore who will only stifle Emma's intelligence in "an unhealthy 'sort of father daughter marriage... .'"¹³

The flaws in each group's analysis become apparent at different points in the novel. By looking at the development of the relationship between Emma and Knightley, we see the fallacies of the first group's arguments. These critics are

blind to Austen's subtleties. They do not see the marked difference between Austen's values and conventional values, that Austen shows more regret than mere "acceptance of loss and limitation."¹⁴ They see neither Emma's continuing strength nor her growing self-realization. They lament that she becomes a conventional picture of womanhood and that her freedom is an evil and not an opportunity. In Knightley, they see only his enormous fatherly influence over Emma and not his changing judgment. To them, he is the source and not the stimulus of Emma's change. To the discerning reader, that change is growth; though for each two steps Emma takes forward, she takes one back. It is a shame these critics can only see the latter.

By looking at the end of Emma, at her marriage with Knightley, we can see the flaws in the other line of argument. To a certain extent, these critics are right; there is not a real outlet for Emma's intelligence. But we must look at Emma in her time, and in that context she does achieve a degree of autonomy. We cannot ignore the change in Knightley or the very subtle shift in his role away from that of father towards that of lover and equal. Emma retains her wit to the end and has improved her judgment, but she does not finish growing. Much of her humility is attributable to the relative recency of her latest self-realization. Her humility is not that of defeat, but of readjustment. That Edmund Wilson and Marvin Mudrick can believe that Emma will resume her headstrong ways after marriage indicates the degree to which her humility does not seem final.¹⁵

In tracing the development of the relationship between Emma and Knightley, we must first look at their initial under-

standing of themselves and each other. "A very old and intimate friend of the family" (E 7), Knightley initially acts as a surrogate father, for he is Emma's only strong male advisor and model of maturity. We do admire him, for he is a reasonable man and obviously cares a great deal about the Woodhouses. However, as has already been mentioned, he does not have flawless judgment. Though we tend to trust his opinion of other characters, we find he is sadly mistaken about Emma. "Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse..." (E 8), but seeing her faults is not synonymous with understanding her. He does not appreciate her talents (E 33); in fact, Mrs. Weston must remind him of Emma's good sense (E 35).

Even from the beginning we are aware not only of Knightley's limitations, but also of the limitations of a father figure's influence. Is that, Austen asks us, what a young woman needs to mature? Sulloway thinks not. Knightley's

courteous yet imperious speech patterns and his entrance almost immediately after Austen's description of what Emma lacks (E 7), both indicate that he does not represent the equal partner she so badly needs for maturity. 16

He treats Emma with the exact same stifling paternalism with which she treats Harriet Smith.¹⁷ However, Knightley, like Emma, does lose much of that condescending attitude.

Emma is also introduced with skilful ambiguity. We recognize her wit and its lack of outlet, her loneliness, and her strength (E 3-6). She has "a disposition to think a little too well of herself" (E 3), and yet can half seriously jest that she is "a fanciful, troublesome creature" (E 8). We see

that she realizes quite a bit more about herself than she wants others to see (E 40). Emma has the potential to understand herself, but must spend the better part of the novel trying to fulfil it.

An interesting way to look at the dynamics of Knightley's and Emma's relationship is to look at their disagreements. These arguments serve two purposes: they are the sparks that ignite Emma's self-reflection, and they allow Emma to voice her discontent with Knightley's control and with her life.

In each case, the heroine is vainly trying to shake off a self-destroying code and to substitute for it a code of integrity and autonomy quite foreign to everybody else's assumptions about her needs and capacities as a woman, a code for which she has no living models, no theoretical paradigms, and no social or familial support. 18

The disagreements can be divided into three groups. Though the groupings themselves are somewhat arbitrary, they show the changes that both characters and their relationship undergo.

In the first section of the novel, Knightley assumes a patronizing air and Emma rebels. Her rebellion is both childish and justified: childish because she does not yet realize the truth in Knightley's criticism, and justified because she wants to be treated by him as the rational human being she is. In discounting her claim to making the Weston match, he asks, "where is your merit? What are you proud of? You made a lucky guess; and that is all that can be said" (E 10). But that is not all that can be said, for Emma goes beyond Knightley's narrow choices to define another role for herself, "a something between the do-nothing and the do-all" (E 10-11).

Emma's arguments do not excuse her behavior, but they do add to our comprehension of it. Though we absolutely agree with Knightley that Emma should not have dissuaded Harriet from marrying Robert Martin, we also agree with Emma's clever description of Harriet's merits and society's skewed values.

...Till it appears that men are much more philosophic on the subject of beauty than they are generally supposed, till they do fall in love with well-informed minds instead of handsome faces, a girl, with such loveliness as Harriet, has a certainty of being admired and sought after... (E 58).

Knightley does not understand. He thinks that she is "abusing the reason you have... Better be without sense than misapply it as you do" (E 58). We, like Emma herself (E 56), question his real understanding of her. Knightley's wisdom is marred by his fixity. His explanation of why he must always be right is: "I have still the advantage of you by sixteen years' experience, and by not being a pretty young woman and a spoiled child" (E 91-92). Emma quite naturally responds with sarcasm. However much we may see Emma's mistakes, we do not agree with Knightley's attitude. Had he not elsewhere shown admiration for Emma's mind, we would not be willing to see this man influence our bright young heroine. We too are Emma's parents, more able to excuse her faults than Knightley, looking out with a benevolent rather than a condescending eye.

Emma's first realization of her mistakes marks the second group of disagreements. She has built up Harriet's expectations for Mr. Elton only to have them dashed when he proposes to Emma herself (E 119-23). "She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things matchmaking no more" (E 126). Although this resolution will not hold, it is

the beginning of a pattern of self-reflection for Emma.

Concerning visiting the Bates:

She had many a hint from Mr. Knightley, and some from her own heart, as to her deficiency, but none were equal to counteract the persuasion of its being very disagreeable... But now she made the sudden resolution of not passing their door without going in... (E 140).

Similarly, about Jane Fairfax:

Why she did not like Jane Fairfax might be a difficult question to answer; Mr. Knightley had once told her it was because she saw in her the really accomplished young woman which she wanted to be thought herself; and though the accusation had been eagerly refuted at the time, there were moments of self-examination in which her conscience could not quite acquit her (E 150-51).

These self-realizations, obvious results of disagreements with Knightley, nevertheless show the extent to which Emma makes up her mind on her own. The process of self-reflection itself is vital. She is not yet mature enough to realize and admit she is wrong to Knightley, if she is wrong, or to alter her ways for very long. But she is beginning to admit her flaws to herself.

Though Emma is still the rebellious girl who takes an opinion opposite to her own just to disagree with Knightley (E 133), she uses it to prove a larger point. She stands up to Knightley who is "very fond of bending little minds" (E 136) in order to defend the dependent and captive. She proposes that Frank Churchill might not be able to come to Highbury because the Churchills pressure him to stay with them, and he feels too great a sense of duty to disobey. Knightley sees the mistake in this argument.

I can allow for the fears of the child, but not of the man. As he became rational, he ought to have roused himself, and shaken off all that was unworthy in their authority (E 136).

Ironically, it is the same argument that Emma propounds much later. The second time, the captive is herself (E 287). She is, as Sulloway points out, a woman and cannot go out nearly as freely as Knightley (E 287). His smile is what Sulloway calls "the primary classical response of the conventional mind when it is confronted with accurate but unwelcome ideas..."¹⁹ How much Knightley yet understands Emma is still unclear. His compliments to her judgment are still paternalistic. Earlier he says, "you are anxious for a compliment, so I will tell you that you have improved her [Harriet]. You have cured her of her schoolgirl's giggle; she really does you credit" (E 53). One hundred pages later, he has not changed. "You are not often deficient; not often deficient, either in manner or comprehension. I think you understand me, therefore" (E 154-55). His compliment is directed at getting her to comprehend his judgment.

In the last stage, Knightley begins to change. At the ball, Emma is at first angry that Knightley does not dance, that he is "classing himself with the husbands and fathers,... so young as he looked!" (E 297). But Knightley begins to shed his fatherly image. Though Emma is not sure of her good judgment, Knightley becomes more aware of it. He is finally able to acknowledge that he was wrong about Harriet Smith, just as Emma acknowledges that she was mistaken about Mr. Elton (E 302-3). His need to reprimand disappears. "I shall not scold you. I leave you to your own reflections" (E 302). It is a decision we cannot fail to applaud.

Knightley chastises Emma about her treatment of Miss Bates at Box Hill, but he realizes as he says it that "I must once more

speaking to you as I have been used to do; a privilege rather than endured than allowed" [emph. added] (E 343). Though he resumes his parental voice, there is a marked difference in this incident. He is right without question, and yet knows that he cannot continue to give her reprimands like this. "I will tell you truths while I can..." (E 344). Emma realizes her wrongdoing immediately and would maturely admit it to him, but she has no chance (E 345). What some would see as a diminished heroine who can no longer defend herself, can also be seen as a more grown-up Emma who knows not to rebel when she is wrong.

Knightley's change from father to lover continues right up to the end of the novel. Not only in his proposal (E 394-98), but also in his compromise in marriage, does he show himself no longer condescending. His agreement to live at Hartfield with Emma's father is indeed a sacrifice "of independence of hours and habits..." (E 412). Even Mrs. Weston recognizes what a sacrifice it is for a man of Knightley's class to give up being master in his own home (E 430).

Knightley is ready to have Emma call him George, a significant step in deformalizing their relationship (E 425), especially in the nineteenth century when it was quite natural for people to call their mates Mr. and Mrs. We are pleasantly surprised when he talks of their "having every right that equal worth can give, to be happy together" [emph. added] (E 427). Knightley may not be a liberated man by twentieth century standards, but he certainly does lose much of his paternalism. Acknowledging that growth might enable even some skeptical twentieth century feminists to see him as not quite so flat

and to come closer to accepting their marriage as a happy one.

The final question of growth, however, must concern Emma, and here Austen shows both success and compromise. Austen has shown us the growth of a very intelligent and energetic young woman at the same time that she has made very obvious the limitations on such a woman in society. Sulloway likens much of Austen to Wollstonecraft, but in the end, Austen is more conservative. Emma, unlike Wollstonecraft herself, continues to live a more conventional life. But that does not mean that she has become a conventional woman.

Brown points to passages that show Emma's diminution.

What had she to wish for? Nothing, but to grow more worthy of him, whose intentions and judgment had been ever so superior to her own. Nothing but that the lessons of her past folly might teach her humility and circumspection in future (E 437).

Austen, however, shows us both sides of the question. Knightley is ready to admit that Emma could have steered herself on the right course without him (E 424). Frank Churchill, whose new humility and awareness of his misdeeds give him more credibility, says to her, "you have no superior..." (E 440), referring to Knightley. Emma is able to think of Knightley as "such a partner in all those duties and cares to which time must be giving increase of melancholy!" (E 413).

One should not confuse Emma's humility with submissiveness. Though she treats her final setback more seriously than the others, there is no reason to feel that her basic assurance will not return in time; she has only lost her false assurance. "Serious she was, very serious, in her thankfulness and in her resolutions; and yet there was no preventing a laugh, sometimes

in the very midst of them" (E 437). Emma is still in the process of maturing, only just realizing all that she is. As she realizes Knightley's many virtues, she accepts him and is grateful to him. He recognizes her merits, and she has only to realize them once again to fully accept herself.

Any prediction about Emma and Knightley's future must, of course, be speculation. That Mudrick and Edmund Wilson differ so much from Angus Wilson and Sulloway in their prophecies is enough to convince us of what Austen herself says. "Some might think him, and others might think her, the most in luck" (E 431). We, finally, can accept their marriage with only slight regret for the limitations on a woman who is far from a heroine "no one but myself [Austen] will much like."²⁰

Dorothea's maturation, like Emma's, involves self-realization, self-acceptance, and the development of autonomy apart from a father figure. Like Emma's, Dorothea's growth is not smooth; she must endure setbacks in order to learn for herself what is right and wrong. Eliot's treatment of her heroine's struggle is very different from Austen's, however. Dorothea's choice between "father" and "equal" is more easily seen, for they are represented by separate characters, Casaubon and Ladislaw. Dorothea extricates herself from the authority of a father figure and in the process learns that she does not need one. She matures not only despite the lack of sound guidance, but also because of it, for she never fully bows to the judgment of another. Imagery of fertility, sensuality, and childbearing make us aware of Dorothea's growing ability to

parent herself as well as others. She goes beyond the need for "objects who could be dear to her, and to whom she could be dear" (M 516); she becomes dear to herself.

Many critics, especially Freudian critics like Dianne Sadoff, recognize that Dorothea's belief that "the really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father" (M 32), stems from her inadequate parenting. It stems, as well, from inadequate education and experience. Casaubon is indeed a father figure, not only in age, but also in action. Many characters comment on his lack of vitality. "He is no better than a mummy!" (M 81). "He has got no good red blood in his body" (M 96). She sees her labor for his research like that of a daughter (M 87-88). He sees in her "elements both solid and attractive, adapted to supply aid in graver labours and to cast a charm over vacant hours..." (M 66).

Until her marriage, Dorothea does not begin to realize that her idealism is flawed, but Eliot, like Austen, shows us from the very beginning the tension between Dorothea's true nature and her mistaken ideas.

Dorothea Brooke has energy, a strong mind, and great potential for growth. However, we are reminded of the uncertainty of reaching that potential in certain environments. In the "Prelude," we are warned,

Here and there a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind (M 26).

Still later we see,

We know what a masquerade all development is, and what effective shapes may be disguised in helpless

embryos.---In fact, the world is full of hopeful analogies and handsome dubious eggs called possibilities. Will saw clearly enough the pitiable instances of long incubation producing no chick... (M 109).

Yet accepting the warning, we cannot help but see the possibility for Dorothea's growth. A swan may still emerge from a dubious cygnet. Birth and development are very positive images; behind them lurks the power of creation.

Dorothea yearns for that generative power at the same time that she denies it. She feels passion, but cannot yet accept it. Celia is right; "she likes giving up" (M 41) activities like riding, in which she derives pleasure "in a pagan sensuous way..." (M 32). But she looks forward to the renunciation itself, and that self-denial is not healthy. Though she does not realize it, it is both her "self-indulgence" and her "self-mortification" (M 41).

In looking for a father/husband, Dorothea also both craves and denies her passion and generative power. Both denial and desire are unfortunate; the former because she denies part of herself, the latter because Casaubon cannot fulfil it.

Dorothea's lack of education and experience contributes to her self-denial.

For to Dorothea, after that toy-box history of the world adapted to young ladies which had made the chief part of her education, Mr. Casaubon's talk about his great book was full of new vistas...she was looking forward to higher initiation in ideas, as she was looking forward to marriage, and blending her dim conceptions of both [emph. added] (M 112).

Dorothea's sacrifice in order to gain knowledge is clear, and the word "initiation" reminds us of an earlier time she likens herself to a nun. After receiving Casaubon's proposal, "...she was a neophyte about to enter on a higher grade of initiation"

(M 67). Her new life seems sterile. Yet scarcely one page later, she betrays her desire for passion by creating it where it does not exist. In response to Casaubon's letter of proposal, she writes, "I am very grateful to you for loving me..." (M 68). But he makes no mention of love in his stuffy proposal (M 66-67); he only says that he wants to be "your husband and the earthly guardian of your welfare" (M 67).

Dorothea does not often admit her passion and her need for it in her marriage, but it is there.

Into this soul-hunger as yet all her youthful passion was poured; the union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path (M 51).

The irony is unmistakable. "Voluntary submission" is submission nonetheless. Her passion and her desire to be delivered will remain unrealized. Casaubon is incapable of feeling strong passion (M 87). He will stifle rather than foster hers; he will "keep the germinating grain away from the light" (M 44).

As Richard Ellman points out, Casaubon is nothing but darkness.²¹

We pity Dorothea for choosing Casaubon. According to Sadoff, we foresee her eventual liberation. In looking at Casaubon as Milton (M 87-88),

She unknowingly, as Casaubon points out, compares him to the blind, misogynist poet and herself to the rightly rebellious daughter. Dorothea's inflated metaphor of Casaubon-as-Milton prophesies what the ironic narrator and the reader already know; the failure of the marriage... . 22

From the time of her marriage to the time of her engagement to Will, Dorothea sheds her misguided idealism. She begins to realize her mistake in marrying Casaubon. Though we lament

that she seeks a father figure in a husband, we also lament that Casaubon is such an inadequate one.

From outward appearance, Casaubon looks as though he might be Dorothea's father, as the artist Naumann observes (M. 220). He acts quite old, though he is only "towards fifty" (M 45). Withered and passionless, he spends his time locked up inside the Vatican with his research, instead of explaining the treasures of Rome to Dorothea (M 224). He is jealous of Will, but it "is a sort of jealousy which needs very little fire; it is hardly a passion, but a blight bred in the cloudy, damp despondency of uneasy egoism" (M 243). "He always said 'my love', when his manner was the coldest" (M 257). He is not merely fatherly in a cold, disciplinarian fashion; he is sterile and cannot give Dorothea the husbandly affection she deserves. Barbara Hardy makes an excellent case for his impotence and the fact that their marriage is never consummated.²³ A man who looks at a child as "that copy of himself which seemed so urgently required of a man" (M 312), is hardly conscious of the beauty and power of creation.

Casaubon does not, however, fulfil Dorothea's expectations of a father any more than those of a husband. Instead of learning Latin and Greek as she had hoped (M 87), we find her marking crosses on Casaubon's manuscript for two hours (M 517). The wisdom that she gains, she does not get from Casaubon, whose "Key to All Mythologies" is as mistaken as was Dorothea's ideal concept of her life with him. Casaubon's Key is his child, that "copy of himself" (M 312) he so wants to leave behind. But it is a "theory which has already withered in the birth like an elfin child" (M 519). There is no possibility for birth in Casaubon.

As Emery rightly points out, "Dorothea, unlike Casaubon, does possess the desire and the energy to be born,"²⁴ but she must give birth to herself. Already in Rome she realizes that she is at a juncture "when some dear expectation dies, and some new motive is born..." and Dorothea is, like us, "taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity..."(M 243).

Dorothea reacts to Casaubon with pity. She nurses him and helps him tirelessly with his work. "She was always trying to be what her husband wished and never able to repose on his delight in what she was" (M 516).

Dorothea's concept of what she is herself begins to grow during her marriage to Casaubon. She starts to fulfil the prophesy of Milton's rebellious daughters by beginning to make judgments on her own and trust those judgments. She tries to persuade Casaubon to change his will to make amends for the injustice done his Aunt Julia (M 409), but to no avail. She feels "convinced that she was in the right and her husband in the wrong, but that she was helpless"(M 516). However, Dorothea is far from helpless, for she does not submit her will to his. Though she is finally ready to promise to do what Casaubon wants out of pity, she does not need to, for he dies first (M 524). We are relieved, for we know already what she writes after his death. "Do you not see now that I could not submit my soul to yours?" (M 583).

Dorothea begins to realize what she wants. "It was another or rather a fuller sort of companionship that poor Dorothea was hungering for, and the hunger had grown from the perpetual effort demanded by her married life" (M 516). Many critics

differ as to whether Will Ladislaw can give that sort of companionship. Many, including Hardy and Edwards²⁵, think he is too weak for Dorothea, that his sensuality is too undefined.

Emery's response to Hardy²⁶ and her defense of Will as partner for Dorothea is convincing.

It is true that the imagery presents Will as representing to Dorothea the way out of her dark tomb. But it is not a simple contrast of virility versus impotence which so marks him. He is an opportunity for Dorothea to approach the sexuality she has previously denied while maintaining some of her defenses and pared-down ideals. Dorothea's urge to rescue demands a needy object, not a trooper, and suggests a pattern of "rescue into love" in which Will is not only rescuer but also the object of rescue, and as such is an appropriate and psychologically plausible partner for Dorothea. 27

Their relationship begins with Will as the unknowing rescuer, for he opens Dorothea's eyes to the sensual experience of art in Rome and the sterility of Casaubon's work. Fairly soon, however, we become much more conscious of Will's need to be advised and Dorothea's need to save. He constantly asks for her opinion and will not act without her approval. She sees his unfortunate situation and loves him because of it. "If I love him too much it is because he has been used so ill..." (M 865).

Dorothea's desire to help him softens from a desire to give him money (M 409) to a more maternal and romantic feeling.

...She took the little oval picture in her palm and made a bed for it there, and leaned her cheek upon it, as if that would soothe the creature who had suffered unjust condemnation? She did not know then that it was Love who had come to her briefly as in a dream before awaking... (M 592).

Emery's claim that the image is more sexual than motherly²⁸ goes a little far, but that the image contains both is unmistakable. Will's petulance in the proposal scene (M 865-70)

is not new, and we are quite used to Dorothea's soothing effect on him. But Dorothea is not simply Will's mother. Also in the proposal scene, Dorothea becomes childlike (M 864, 870). It is a description which surprisingly does not startle us, for she is not childish. She is merely releasing the flood of emotions we have seen inside her all along. We remember Will's earlier comment, "You talk as if you had never known any youth... You have been brought up in some of those horrible notions that choose the sweetest women to devour---like Minotaurs" (M 253). We cannot help but see that, by the end of the novel, she has been released from the labyrinth whose image haunts her throughout the work. Dorothea, not Will, is Theseus, however, and once again Emery is right. "But essentially he Will is neither her child nor her father nor her own ego--- but a 'living man' who cannot be chosen out of self-denial or idealism."²⁹

We have seen Dorothea's self-realization and growing autonomy in her relationships with Brooke, Celia, and Casaubon. The culmination occurs in her night on the floor (M 844-48). The imagery of the neophyte at initiation has changed drastically, and the promise of the seed and the egg is finally realized. Her love for Will is "a very little seed which she had planted and kept alive since the days in Rome..." (M 844). Though she fears that that love is lost, she still has a dream so painfully maternal, we forget she is childless.

There were two images---two living forms that tore her heart in two, as if it had been the heart of a mother who seems to see her child divided by the sword, and presses one bleeding half to her breast while her gaze goes forth in agony towards the half which is carried away by the lying woman that has never known the mother's pang (M 844).

Dorothea obviously knows the mother's pang. The parable of Solomon is subverted; the mother does not prevent her child's death, and Dorothea's regret is almost unbearable. The bleeding baby is not only her love for Will, or Will himself, but as Emery points out, "it is also her own heart that is cut in two as she sobs like a 'despairing child.'" (M 844) She is both mother and child..."³⁰

Dorothea recovers though. The dream over, she decides to accept her pain (M 845). Verbs become reflexive. "She folded herself in the large chair" (M 847). She takes care of herself. "She rose, wrapped warm things around her, and seated herself..." (M 845). The world continues. When she looks beyond her own room to the world outside, she sees the same routine of life she had seen once before.

On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving--- perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining (M 846).

Dorothea can now identify with that "woman carrying her baby" and understand the "labour" of bringing forth and accepting her life as a part of the life around her. By the end of that chapter, she is not only ready to "see and save Rosamond" (M 848), she has saved herself.

Although we have mixed feelings about Dorothea's fate in the "Finale," we do realize that she has grown considerably by her own devices. Her final biological motherhood is the culmination of Eliot's depiction of Dorothea's creative power.

Eliot is sentimental. Biological motherhood is, to some extent, fulfilment in itself; but the issue is more complex. Dorothea is provided with weaker and more conventional foils, like Celia, whose own mothering is comic and whose estimation of Dorothea's is amusingly mistaken (M 895). Throughout the book, we see Dorothea's growing ability to parent more maturely, and, in the end, cannot agree with the "many" that she becomes "only...a wife and mother" [emph. added] (M 894). We can accept her compromise. Acknowledging that "those determining acts in her life were not ideally beautiful" (M 896), we still see that it was partly due to those hardships that she developed on her own. Through her strength, she gains our acceptance and respect as well as her own.

Both Emma and Middlemarch fit Doody's paradigm. Each is "the story of a woman gifted with some talents and a deep capacity for affection and responsibility."³¹ They grow from unsupervised daughters and premature parents to realize that capacity. Where these books do not quite fit the paradigm is in the last sentence. "She desires above all the love of a man who is her equal, but such love is very hard to come by."³²

Such love is indeed rare, but it is not, contrary to the opinions of critics like Kennard and Halperin³³, all that the heroines desire or need to fulfil them. For each novel takes us through the long and painful process of the heroine's self-education and growth. Each story is a young woman's bildungsroman.

Emma and Dorothea achieve different degrees of autonomy. Each looks for a channel for her energies in a world which is

unprepared to recognize and accomo^mdate such women. Though Eliot depicts in Dorothea a remarkableness and an epic dimension that Emma does not possess, Austen does show that her heroine shines compared to the other characters in the novel. We, like Knightley, come to appreciate that uncommon quality. Each heroine chooses marriage, and that choice shows the compromises necessary for bright women in an indifferent world, the possibility of a marriage of "equals" suggested by each author, and the extent to which each author was bound by social and literary conventions to end the novel "happily."

Emma's marriage is more conservative than Dorothea's, and Austen is a more conservative writer. In marrying Knightley, Emma reinforces the notion of class order which Dorothea forsakes by marrying Will Ladislaw. Austen's ending does not dwell as much on the regret of a life which "spent itself in channels which had no great name on earth" (M 896). Eliot, living in a more sentimental age, and more sentimental herself, endows her heroine with children, the most tangible manifestation of the process of birth and rebirth that permeates the novel.

The differences between the works are limitless and significant, but so are the similarities. In tracing the development of two bright heroines by looking at "parent-child" relationships, we see clearly the authors' emphases on a woman's potential for maturity and autonomy. "They seem idle and weak because they are growing" (M 108), but they emerge swans in a world full of ducks.

NOTES

- 1 Margaret Anne Doody, "George Eliot and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," Nineteenth-Century Fiction 35 (1980): 268.
- 2 Jane Austen, Emma (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 5. Hereafter, all page references from Emma will be cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated as "E."
- 3 Hannah More, Letters to Young Ladies (New York: Leavitt & Allen, ?), 13-14.
- 4 Alison G. Sulloway, "Emma Woodhouse and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," Wordsworth Circle 7 (1976): 328.
- 5 Sulloway: 329.
- 6 George Eliot, Middlemarch (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 107-8. Hereafter, all page reference from Middlemarch will be cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated as "M."
- 7 Sulloway: 325.
- 8 Carole O. Brown, "Dwindling Into a Wife: a Jane Austen Heroine Grows Up," International Journal of Women's Studies 5 (1982): 468.
- 9 Jean E. Kennard, Victims of Convention (Hamden, Conn.: Archeon Books, 1978), 14.
- 10 Edmund Wilson, "A Long Talk About Jane Austen," New Yorker 20 (1944): 69.
- 11 Brown: 468.
- 12 Sulloway: 332.
- 13 Angus Wilson, "The Neighborhood of Tombuctoo," Critical Essays, ed. Southam: 199, in Sulloway: 331-32.
- 14 Brown: 468.
- 15 Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen: Irony or Defense and Discovery (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952) and E. Wilson in Kennard, 40.
- 16 Sulloway: 327.
- 17 Ibid.: 324.
- 18 Ibid.: 321.
- 19 Ibid.: 324-25.
- 20 Jane Austen's Memoirs, (Oxford: 1926), ed. R. W. Chapman, 157 in Jane Austen's Letters (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952) xx2.
- 21 Richard Ellman, "Dorothea's Husbands," Golden Codgers: Biographical Speculations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973): 38.
- 22 Dianne F. Sadoff, Monsters of Affection (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 75.

NOTES

- ²³Barbara Hardy, The Appropriate Form: An Essay on the Novel (New York: Athlone Press, 1964), 115-21.
- ²⁴Laura Comer Emery, George Eliot's Creative Conflict (Berkeley: Univ. of Ca. Press, 1976), 163.
- ²⁵Hardy, 122-30 and Lee R. Edwards, "Women, Energy, and Middlemarch," Middlemarch, ed. Bert G. Hornback (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977): 689-90.
- ²⁶Emery, 184-85.
- ²⁷Ibid., 185.
- ²⁸Ibid., 173.
- ²⁹Ibid., 183.
- ³⁰Ibid., 166.
- ³¹Doody: 268.
- ³²Ibid.: 268.
- ³³Kennard, 14 and John Halperin, Egoism and Self-Discovery in the Victorian Novel (New York: Burt Franklin, 1974), 146, 151 in Kathleen Blake, "Middlemarch and the Woman Question" Nineteenth-Century Fiction 31 (1976): 285-86.

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Reading List For Oral Examination

Jane Austen

Pride and Prejudice
Persuasion

George Eliot

The Mill on the Floss
Daniel Deronda

"Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft"

Emily Bronte

Wuthering Heights

William Thackeray

Vanity Fair

Mary Wollstonecraft

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Sarah Ellis

The Mothers of England