

**The In-between Stage: A Study of Female Adolescence
In Twentieth Century American Women's Fiction**

A dissertation submitted to the
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The requirements for the award of the degree of

Master of Philosophy
In
English

By

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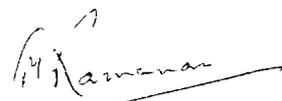
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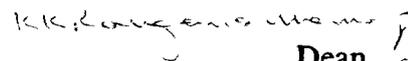
This is to certify that Ms. Shikha Bhatia worked under my supervision for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English. Her dissertation entitled "The In-Between Stage: A Study of Female Adolescence in Twentieth Century American Women's Fiction" represents her own independent work at the University of Hyderabad and has not been submitted for a degree or diploma elsewhere.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this dissertation entitled "The In-Between Stage: A Study of Female Adolescence in Twentieth Century American Women's Fiction" submitted for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English to the University of Hyderabad is the result of *bona fide* research carried out by me under the supervision of Professor Sudhakar Marathe. It has not been submitted either in part or in full for any degree or diploma to this or any other University.

Place: Hyderabad

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Shikha.
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FOR AMAN

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For the sake of convenience the names of the novels used as primary texts in this thesis have been abbreviated to the following:

NAME OF THE NOVEL	ABBREVIATED FORM
<u>THE PAINTED ROOM:</u>	PR
<u>THE BONNEY FAMILY:</u>	BF
<u>THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING:</u>	MDW
<u>SUMMER:</u>	SU
<u>THE MOUNTAIN LION:</u>	ML
<u>THE BELL JAR:</u>	BJ
<u>OLD MORTALITY:</u>	OM.

Preface

It's no wonder we can't understand the grown-ups because we've never been grown up ourselves. But they have been children and I don't see why they can't understand us. [Emphasis mine]

The Story Girl L. M. Montgomery [183].

The above statement about the child-adult relationship applies equally, if not more, to the adolescent, with regard to whom a large part of adult society appears to be the victim of a strange forgetfulness. Although most adults have themselves experienced serious, awkward and therefore memorable problems in growing up, they conveniently erase them from their memory once they are grown up or push them so far back as to be inaccessible. Seldom do adults stop to cast a backward glance at the growing-up pains they experienced. This reluctance to look backward has resulted in a general silence around the subject of growing up and in particular about the period of change from childhood to adulthood. When their children cross the threshold of childhood and enter adolescence, they exclaim in surprise and, at times, in sheer helplessness, "We never behaved like this!" This general reluctance to take stock of adolescence vitiates the adult's own ability to understand this crucial phase in the history of each individual; therefore, even when adults perceive the necessity to reach out to adolescents, such attempts are generally frustrated.

And yet the necessity to reach out has become even more

pressing in today's complex society, which to adolescents appears to be quite directionless on account of its very complexity, far too often leaving the adolescent amazed, without useful points of reference in childhood and as yet without dependable reference points in adulthood. The responsibility of reaching out and extending a sympathetic hand obviously rests upon adults. For they have passed through the adolescent phase and may be expected to understand its travails.

This thesis on female adolescence, as portrayed in some early mid-twentieth century American fiction, attempts to draw attention to one side of the problem, and to highlight the necessity of reviving forgotten memories by looking at some significant aspects of female adolescence. Naturally, we shall not be able to examine male adolescence, or adolescence in other cultures or at other times. However, the subject of adolescent experience per se has received scant critical attention. Therefore, a significant, if limited, beginning has to be made. Such is the motivation of this study. If it empowers the adult to achieve an understanding of the adolescent or, at least, creates a desire to understand adolescence and succeeds in indicating where a beginning could be made, the effort would have been worthwhile. If it provides an inkling of such understanding by its analysis of representations of adolescence in fiction, the thesis would have achieved its aim. For the essential problem for the adolescent is as simple, as obvious, as stark, and maddening or aggravating as the exasperation in the epigraph above suggests.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The present thesis studies The Phenomenon of White Middle-class Female Adolescence in a selection of twentieth-century American women's fiction. The beginnings of my interest in the area can be traced back to my own post-graduate student days. Reworking a paper titled "Familial Loyalties and Conflicts" on a story written by James Baldwin titled "Sonny's Blues" (1965), I became aware of one crucial fact in the story which I had not noticed in my earlier readings. It was the age of Sonny, the chief protagonist in the story, who was in his teens. This simple fact provided me with a new insight and radically changed the paper. I realised that the conflict in the story was a generational conflict arising from the difference in the ages of the two brothers. As this link between age, character and predicament became foregrounded, I began to read new texts and rethink texts I had already read on these or similar lines. In due course, I discovered another fact, that while in one way or another character does dominate most narratives, very few works of fiction deal with the adolescent character as such.

The importance which I personally attached to my adolescent years also led me to notice that literature had almost completely avoided focusing attention upon the experiences of this age group. I consciously began to look for novels that

portrayed the experience of adolescents at the best-stocked library in Hyderabad--The American Studies Research Centre. On the basis of my personal knowledge of this phenomenon, the first two books that I classified as novels of adolescence were Jean Stafford's The Mountain Lion (1947) and Carson McCullers' The Member Of The Wedding (1946). But the difficulty in locating novels on the subject of female adolescence has persisted through the course of this research. The difficulty was compounded by the complexity of adolescence itself, which precludes any single satisfactory definition. As a consequence of this problem, it became difficult to define the novel of adolescence itself.

Hence, this introductory chapter begins with a general account of adolescence in terms of the stages of human life. But general discussions tend to homogenise and iron out the very differences between various adolescent groups and their specific concerns which are likely to enlighten us. That is why the subject of study in this thesis focuses upon one single group, the middle-class female adolescent. Therefore, the later part of the first section of the introduction focuses on the gendered connotations of female adolescence. The second section attempts to construct a working definition of the novel of adolescence. The third section explains the aim and scope of this thesis in greater detail.

I

Definitions are helpful starting points for any discussion. But this thesis avoids the use of any terminological and cut-and-dried definitions for adolescence because they are reductive of the complexity of adolescence and contradictory to the very aim of a thesis written with the explicit purpose of foregrounding the complexity of the phenomenon. Instead, this section attempts to provide a framework of the stages of human life for a broad initial discussion of adolescence as a physiological, psychological and socio-cultural phenomenon (see Chapter 2 below) and its implications for the growing girl in particular.

In modern society, human life is perceived in terms of three broad stages: childhood, which includes infancy and childhood; adolescence, about which confusion reigns supreme; and adulthood, which also includes old age (the complexities of which we are only beginning to be made aware of). Roughly, for the purpose of our study, childhood is seen as a period between one and nine years, adolescence as a period between nine (the beginning of gradual physical change) and nineteen (the end of the teen years), and adulthood (the later part of which includes old age) as the period beyond nineteen years.

Among these three stages of human life, the difference between childhood and adulthood is immense. The most strikingly obvious difference between the child and the adult is, first, the physiological difference. Children are small, fragile and vulnerable in comparison to adults and depend upon adults for their

needs. This dependent-provider relationship between children and adults, already a long one in our species, is a particularly protracted one in modern society, not only because of the difference between the physiologies of childhood and adulthood but also because this difference has been heavily institutionalised. The social institutions governing childhood and adulthood, constructed and organised around these basic differences, help in maintaining a status quo in the dependent-provider relationship between children and adults far longer than is strictly necessary.¹ A comparison of the ages of graduating into adulthood in pre-modern society and modern society will clearly reveal this facet of our subject. The social bodies chiefly responsible for the institutionalisation of differences and the creation of the two distinct worlds of childhood and adulthood are the family, the school and the work-place. To take one instance, the work-place divides childhood completely and distinctly from adulthood, it being generally assumed by middle-class people at least that a school prepares the child for the work-place and the child is not meant to enter the work-place until it has reached adulthood. But, as we know from life, children and adolescents from lower classes in most societies even today go to work, are even obliged to go to work and shoulder burdens of adulthood very early indeed. While in the present thesis class differences may not be a major focus (our subject here being the middle-class mainly), we can see that depending upon class factors the adolescent may already be an adult in many ways even if it is not socially recognized.

The protective environs of a middle-class school, so

different from the eventual work-place, and the "school of hard knocks" create a hiatus between childhood and adulthood and prolong the child's dependency on the adult. Eventually, in keeping with his role as provider, the male adult has to earn a livelihood at the work-place which is exacting and ruthlessly competitive, a world relatively different from school. These institutions have increasingly widened the gap between the adult and childhood worlds to such an extent as to necessitate a gradual initiation of the child into the adult world. This process of initiating the child into the adult world occurs during adolescence, the intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood. Besides this significant intermediary function, other aspects of adolescence such as the physical and psychological also require careful study.

Triggered, or at least clearly identified, by the onset of puberty, adolescence marks the beginning of internal and external change in the physiological state and status of the child. The details of these changes are well-known and therefore need not be elaborated upon. In fact, physical maturation gives the adolescent the same sexual ability as an adult, as it awakens and stirs the hitherto dormant sexual instincts. This awakening also foregrounds or emphasises the heightened awareness of sexuality, which may either be homosexual or heterosexual in nature. (But the phenomenon of adolescence is so complicated that, so as to allow us to manage this preliminary analysis, homosexuality has been reluctantly left out from this study). In practice, despite being sexually almost an adult, the adolescent is socially prohibited, except within extremely narrow limits,

from exercising this newly awakened sexuality. There is a serious and physiologically unnatural time-lag between the awakening and the gratification of sexual desire. The actual period and nature of this time-lag is variable and dependent upon socio-cultural and gender factors, but it has lengthened with "progress" and modernisation.

The physical changes which herald adolescence also create a sense of discontinuity from the earlier child-like identity and may evoke feelings of loss and bewilderment. Since a new adult identity is still in the process of being formed, the adolescent is, a good deal of the time, seriously in a state of limbo--no longer a child and not yet an adult. The adolescent at times partakes of both child and adult identities, resulting in the part-child, part-adult image of the adolescent in adult eyes and a confusing, disorienting quality to all but peer relationships. The lack of a distinct adult or child identity psychologically bewilders and disorients the adolescent. The bewilderment reflects itself in the way the adolescent finds himself tossed to and fro between the child and the adult world, in his behaviour and the behaviour expected of him. The adolescent may perceive himself to be grown-up and still not have a personality consistent with being (or being considered) grown-up. Or disturbed by the suddenness and enormity of physical changes, the adolescent may continue to cling to child-like behaviour. Indeed he or she may frequently shuttle between these states.

This psychological bewilderment is compounded by an irregularity, even unpredictability, in the responses of the adult world to him: The adult may continue to perceive and treat the

adolescent as a child in certain matters such as the exercise of sexuality and yet treat him as an adult in certain others. The adolescent's anxiety with regard to the uncertainty of social status, coupled with the lack of a uniform pattern in the adult response and treatment, renders self-definition as well as any kind of consistent behaviour difficult. Yet both are necessary and constantly demanded in the adolescent years.

The need for self-definition transfigures the relationship between parents and the adolescent, may even bring the adolescent into conflict with the adult world in the crucial context of the family or the school. Parents are no longer the demigods of childhood who can do nothing wrong. Instead, parental values may come in for ruthless scrutiny and stringent criticism. The adolescent questions the hierarchy of the parent-child relationship, challenges it, protests against it, almost certainly resents it, and may press for greater democratisation of this relationship. At any rate a sense of oppression does usually accompany the bewilderment of the adolescent. Adults may perceive the demand for democratisation as a threat to their authority over the adolescent. Even in a situation where self-definition (an individual ordering of values and priorities) by the adolescent is not viewed as a threat, the adolescent may come into conflict with adult society for not conforming to adult values in their entirety. Not infrequently, in the need to carve out an individual identity, the adolescent relinquishes the parent as the primary object of love, as a source of care, as a guiding spirit.

The need to struggle to achieve a distinct identity emo-

tionally distances the adolescent from adult society and may result in increasing reliance on the peer group, members of which are also themselves undergoing similar changes and bewilderment. The peer group provides the adolescent, distanced from both the childhood world and the adult world, with a sense of community, companionship and comfort. But it is possible that the adolescent may feel out of step with the peer group too, and be an outsider even in the adolescent community. This could happen for a variety of reasons such as the reticence, shyness, self-consciousness of the adolescent, a disagreement with peer values themselves. And, of course, the ways and means adopted by each adolescent to confront, manage or escape the predicament may also be different. In such a situation, adolescence becomes an even more trying state to negotiate.

The crisis and confusion are (by and large at least apparently) resolved with the adolescent's entry into adulthood. But it is difficult to prescribe an upper age limit to adolescence, an age at which we can say with complete certainty that the state has ended. That is why in this thesis, for convenience, the upper limit is taken to be the end of the teen years. But the upper limit may be even earlier, say fourteen, fifteen or sixteen, and in a few cases higher than nineteen. The upper limit of adolescence, or the readiness to enter adulthood is influenced by a number of factors such as class, gender and family values, and environment, not to mention contemporary social norms which reach the growing individual via the many media. By force of circumstance, a lower class adolescent may begin to work far earlier than an adolescent from the middle-class. Since, in social terms,

adulthood is primarily defined in terms of employment, the adolescent from the working class has already entered adulthood when he or she secures work. But the adolescent state of mind may, indeed usually does, persist. Thus there are no fixed markers to indicate the end of adolescence and the entry into adulthood. This indefinable border between these states of human development also makes adolescence a genuinely perplexing and aggravating phenomenon for both adolescent and adult.

Thus we can appreciate the difficulty in understanding this stage of human life. Furthermore, the discussion of adolescence in general terms obscures the considerable differences between the growing-up processes of adolescent boys and adolescent girls. For the adolescent, growing up also necessarily signifies a process of growing into specifically male or female adulthood, for not merely biology but social value structures too do tend to enforce this gender distinction. Future adult roles are conceived in terms of gender stereotypes and stereotypical notions of masculinity (such as independence, aggression, competitiveness) and femininity (such as sweetness, dependence, passivity, docility, fragility). These stereotypes most powerfully, almost irresistibly, influence and affect the processes of growing up. These conceptions of masculinity and femininity, designed to maintain the status quo in patriarchal cultures, where the man occupies a primary and the woman a secondary status, are particularly confusing, disabling and demoralising for the female adolescent.

The stereotyping of male and female roles results in "given" distinctions between boys and girls from childhood onwards and is

reflected in the different toys, dress-codes, games, postures etc., of boys and girls, but in relation to adolescence these stereotypes appear less binding. During childhood, various responses are acceptable in girls ranging from the very feminine to the athletic tomboyish, well portrayed in Louisa May Alcott's novel Little Women (1868) in the characters of the ultra-feminine Amy and the tomboyish Jo. But eventually Jo has to grow out of the unfeminine tomboyishness of her childhood years and learn to adhere to conventional, socially approved notions of femininity. That is to say, the stereotypes themselves are redefined but crossing of type-boundaries is just as taboo in adolescence.

Puberty, signifying the onset of adolescence, establishes a physical kinship between the adolescent girl and the adult woman.² Expectations of the behaviour of girls change during adolescence because it is seen as a time of preparation for womanhood in accordance with which "the young adolescent girl must begin to evolve a feminine self-conception that accepts the functions and future responsibilities for her mature body" [Bardwick and Douvan: 572]. Puberty does not merely herald or anticipate fast approaching womanhood. It also intensifies the preparation for future responsibilities and constraints, which are in a patriarchal culture largely predetermined (the girl must finally accept the feminine role of being a wife and mother).

During adolescence the process of identity formation is governed not only by the complex factors of physical growth reviewed so far but also by these predetermined notions of femininity. Therefore, the adolescent girl's attempt to achieve self-definition is thwarted by the roles already envisioned for

her by others and become hard convention in her whole society. During adolescence the acquisition of culturally, socially, and conventionally determined notions of femininity is taken by all others to be the central task of the female adolescent. This predicament most unfairly, in a one-sided manner, defines her self within her society. The female adolescent who rebels or attempts to resist this cultural determination of her identity (which will be the focus of chapter three below) and indoctrination into the feminine vocation, faces a tortorous as well as uphill task in negotiating her adolescence.

The notions of femininity, inculcated to ensure the success of the girl in her future heterosexual, reproductive, secondary roles, result in sexualising her identity to an extreme, to the exclusion of nearly all other aspects of her self. Yet the high premium placed by society on virginity and the real fear of unauthorised pregnancy prevent the expression and articulation of her awakening or awakened adolescent self both sexually and in other ways. The restrictions placed on the boy's sexuality are not as rigid as those imposed on female adolescent sexuality. Not only is the male actually granted a freedom to exercise his sexuality, but unlike the female adolescent, he does not have to fear the repercussions of pregnancy. Thus his later dominant, freer role is already prefigured in the liberties he enjoys even as an adolescent.

Consequently, for the adolescent girl puberty signifies not only a loss of childhood and a certain degree of freedom associated with it but also a coming to terms with the fact that she is adolescent and female and therefore must not truly acquire a

distinctly, freely expressive individual personality. Unlike the male adolescent, she is a multiply marginalised figure: her adolescent situation places her on the margins of both the child and the adult worlds; the fact that she is a female places greater restrictions on her even as an adolescent; she is asked to behave like a woman before becoming one and yet without any genuine scope in physical, psychological, emotional or imaginative terms; her dress, bearing, conduct, manners, movements are all closely scrutinised, monitored, and moulded or curbed to fit this peculiarly restricted state. Puberty, thus, seems to seal the fate of the female adolescent, whereas despite the psychological crisis at the time of puberty, the male adolescent seems to have a less difficult, at least less complicated and cramping, time of growing up--he not only awaits the onset of masculinity but is allowed a foretaste of some of the privileges of full masculine status.

Even when the female adolescent grows out of her adolescence she, therefore, will be expected to occupy only the marginal status thus constructed in relation to the male adult. Her status is, therefore, initiated during adolescence and is expected to become her permanently circumscribed condition. There is no alternative, therefore, but to consider female adolescence as a uniquely, specially, gravely and drastically significant phenomenon in human development. With this significance thus looming large and crying out to be noticed (and balanced), the present thesis has chosen to focus on the female adolescence novel in modern America as a specific case for study.

2

The present thesis focuses on the novel of female adolescence, which may not be a sub-genre in terms of narrative technique as such and yet insists upon constituting itself into a distinct category precisely because it focuses attention on the disturbing construction of female adolescence. Often such novels are merely confused or conflated with either the bildungsroman or initiation narratives or they are subsumed within the even looser category of young-adult novels.³ By delineating the essential features of each type and identifying differences between them, we shall attempt here to establish further the need to recognise the novel of adolescence as a distinct and different group in socio-cultural, developmental and discriminating terms at least.

The reason for the confusion between such types of fiction is a lack of systematic study of inter-generic differences. For the similarities or overlaps are allowed to obscure the female subject since literary typology seems to recognise only narrative taxonomy and refuses to make classes of sub-genres according to the specific subject studied and represented by a piece of fiction. Furthermore, on account of a general neglect of adolescence per se, and consequently of the novel of adolescence as a distinct area of critical study, there has been a tendency to overlook significant differences between these sub-genres.

Witham W. Tusker's The Adolescent In The American Novel

[1920- 1960] (1964), which is in many ways an important and pioneering critical study of adolescence in literature, also reveals such a tendency by failing to distinguish between these types. For instance, the appendix to Tusker's study provides a chronological list of six hundred novels. These have all been classified as novels of adolescence. But a number of novels such as Margaret Deland's An Old Chester Secret (1920), Floyd Dell's Mooncalf (1920), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's This Side Of Paradise (1920) could be strictly categorised as bildungsroman novels. For they evince a standard feature of the genre, the portrayal of development of the protagonist from birth to maturity. They do not concentrate only or specifically on the adolescent stage in the life of their characters. Another set of novels included in the list does present adolescent characters but these novels do not deal with the specific concerns of the adolescent either. For instance, Erskine Caldwell's Tobacco Road (1932)⁴ presents adolescent characters but the focus of the novel is not on the adolescence of these characters. By addressing such issues of classification, we shall attempt to set the novel of adolescence apart from other related sub-genres like the bildungsroman, the initiation novel and the young-adult novel.

Let us look at the bildungsroman first. The characteristics of the term are derived from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister (1795-96) and the eighteenth-century notion of the bildung. Bildung signifies inner-determined self-development based on a specific bildungsdee; all aspects of the self are formed so as to fulfill one preconceived goal. Bildungsroman as a term broadly applies to a category of fiction that unfolds the physical, emotional, intel-

lectual, and moral development of the protagonist through the entire period from childhood to maturity. The typical thematic and structural features of the genre are as follows: it focuses on the growth and development of one single character who is a representative individual in the context of a well defined social order; since the development of eventual adult selfhood is the primary concern, it portrays a search for meaningful existence and authentic values within a society, which may or may not facilitate the development of inner capacities; in this context society is viewed not only as a part of the school of life but also as a 'space' where the protagonist's idealism and beliefs collide with and are modified by social realities. This last property--of curbing personal development--is especially true of the woman's bildungsroman. In Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction Anis Pratt and Barbara White state--

The novel of development portrays a world in which the young woman hero is destined for disappointment. The vitality and hopefulness characterising the adolescent hero's attitude towards her future here meet and conflict with the expectations and dictates of surrounding society, every element of her desired world, freedom to come and go, allegiance to nature, meaningful work, exercise of intellect and use of erotic capability inevitably clashes with patriarchal norms....The collision between the hero's evolving self and society's imposed identity appears

consistently throughout the history of woman's fiction. [29]

By and large, the bildungsroman follows a linear and chronological pattern or structure, in keeping with the larger progressive design of revealing the development of the protagonist from birth to adulthood. The story is, further, narrated from the adult point of view, whether it be in the first or the third person, which creates a distance between the narrator and the protagonist. Nor does the bildungsroman attempt to create three distinct stages of struggle or predicament corresponding to the three stages of human life. In a bildungsroman the ultimate goal dominates absolutely.

The other generic category often confused with the novel of adolescence is the initiation story. In "The Female Initiation Theme In American Fiction" Elaine Ginsberg defines the initiation narrative as follows--

The archetypal pattern of the initiation story, in the broadest sense, presents an innocent young person inexperienced in the ways of the world and uncertain of his role in the world, who, through some experience or series of experiences awakens from his innocence and approaches or perhaps even crosses the threshold of adulthood, maturity, and self-awareness. [27]

From this broad definition it may become evident that the initiation story and the bildungsroman have many thematic elements in

common. Both focus on a single character and an increased self-awareness on the part of that character. In female initiation narratives, as in the bildungsroman, this self-awareness is linked to an awakening consciousness of the limited and confined nature of the characters' social roles.

"Despite this improvement in all kinds of knowledge gained and in the potential roles offered, there still seems to be a more restricted world for the young girl to enter than for the male initiate, as if the approach of womanhood is somehow regrettable" [Ginsberg 1975, 31]. Despite the similarities between the bildungsroman and the initiation novel, there are a number of significant differences between them as well. The initiation story lacks the specificity of age which sets the bildungsroman protagonist apart. Unlike the bildungsroman, the innocence-to-experience motif employed in these novels does not necessarily coincide with the progression from childhood to maturity. Hence the initiate can either be a child, an adolescent or even an adult. For instance, Katherine Anne Porter's "The Grave" (1934) is the initiation story of a nine-year old girl Miranda. But in certain other initiation stories the initiation may herald the protagonist's arrival into the adult world. Sherwood Anderson's "I Want to Know Why" (1921) is such a story. The bildungsroman and the initiation narrative can be differentiated also in terms of their length. Unlike the bildungsroman, the initiation narrative does not unfold the development of the character from childhood to maturity. Although in most such novels narrative time is not equal to lived time, most initiation narratives follow the principle of sequentiality but they are also briefer

than the expansive bildungsroman. In any case, in an initiation narrative, the focus is on the admission into the next category or stage of life, adulthood, and not on the state of adolescence.

Let us now turn to the third generic category which is usually confused with the novel of adolescence, the young-adult novel. Unlike the bildungsroman or the initiation novel and like the novel of adolescence, it is difficult to define the young-adult novel. It could be defined in terms of the intended audience for such novels. Novels written for the adolescent audience may be of great variety, for instance, detective fiction, mystery, romance of many kinds including historical romance, science fiction and coming-of-age novels. Another criterion for the definition of young-adult novels could be that they deal with the specific concerns of the adolescent. Novels written by Mary Stolz and Judy Blume serve as good examples of this type of young-adult novel. This last sub-category can be classified under both the young-adult novel and novel of adolescence depending upon the concentration on and the intensity of the inner experience of adolescence.

One particular kind of novel of adolescence, that which deals with the concerns of the adolescent, and which is also addressed to the adolescent audience, has now been identified. One more type is the novel of adolescence written for adults. Compared to the adolescence novel written for the adolescent audience, the adolescence novel written for the adult audience has a more complicated plot structure, sophisticated use of symbols--for instance, the bell jar in Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar (1963)--greater intellectual exploration, a wider linguistic-

stylistic range, and a slower pace. The novel of adolescence written for adults is far more likely to deal with the inner life of the character, whereas the novel of adolescent written for adolescents is more likely to be an event-based or action-packed narrative.

Another type of novel which could be treated as a novel of adolescence is that in which adolescence forms a significant part of the narrative and yet not the true subject of it. For instance, in Agnes Smedley's Daughter Of The Earth (1929) the protagonist's adolescence is a small yet a very significant part of the narrative. Our argument in this thesis focuses on the last two types, i.e., novels written for the adult audience and novels in which adolescence forms a significant part and excludes the first from its purview of study. The reasons for the exclusion rests in the motivation behind the study, which is to equip the adult with a better understanding of the concerns of the (female) adolescent. The choice of novels of adolescence written for the adult is dictated by the fact that adults are more likely to read books written for them.

Let us now identify some of the more significant features of the novels of adolescence which will qualify for study in this thesis. In such a novel the protagonist is an adolescent. But the mere presence of an adolescent protagonist does not qualify it for description as novel of adolescence. It must deal with the specific concerns of the adolescent (some of which have been highlighted earlier in the general discussion of adolescence). Such a novel must deal seriously with one or more of the essential aspects of adolescence (physical, psychological, emotional,

imaginative or sociological). The narrative must be written from a non-adult perspective even if the narrator is an adult--or at least with sympathetic representation of the adolescent's viewpoint. It must take serious account of the half-child, half-adult status of the adolescent and not treat the adolescent as either of the habitual abominations witnessed by us all--a grown-up child or a childish adult. Verisimilitude or authenticity particularly regarding adolescence and adolescent character is hence the keynote of the novel of adolescence selected for discussion. Further, these novels do not trivialise adolescence either by an attitude of over-sentimentalism or condescension. In "The Adolescent Hero--A Trend In Modern Fiction" James William Johnson states: "He [meaning the writer] tends to view the transitional period following childhood as a serious and meaningful experience, a critical time in life which, if thoroughly explored, can produce moving and important literature" [4].

Similarities and distinctions between the novel of adolescence and the bildungsroman and initiation novel must be noticed before we can proceed to examine the novel of adolescence itself. All employ youthful protagonists. Novels of female adolescence like the woman's bildungsroman and female initiation novel hint at the limited world which the female adolescent will inherit. "No matter what happens when the young girl grows up, she 'is still only a woman' a member of a group defined as socially inferior" [White: 19]. But unlike a novel of adolescence, the bildungsroman and the initiation novel are written from the adult perspective. In a bildungsroman and in an initiation novel the protagonist may merely pass through adolescence, en route to

the ultimate objective of adulthood. However, we shall also consider such bildungsroman and initiation narratives where the protagonist's adolescence has been dealt with significantly as novels of adolescence.

The bildungsroman does, however, differ from the novel of adolescence in terms of development of plot. Most bildungsroman depict the growth of the protagonist as a progressive development from stage a to b to c. The plot follows the same chronological pattern. On account of the nature of adolescence as a half-child half-adult, the plot of the novel of adolescence, on the other hand, may not reveal a strictly linear chronological development. The adolescent may move to and fro between stage a and b, or make a move to another stage.⁶ As in our focal texts adolescence is the subject, and not merely a passing stage in a more general, larger scheme of development, we shall take up novels which deal with adolescence significantly. These distinctions make it clear that the novel of adolescence, whether it is to be considered a distinct genre or not, definitely has its own distinctive identity and should be recognised as such.

3

These criteria of identification of novels of adolescence have been employed in selecting the texts for study in this thesis. While the present study focuses on novels of white female adolescence written by white American women writers between the 1920s and 1960s, the hope is that any insights

obtained may be extended by others to the study of adolescence in other times, communities, classes and cultures. Here, a restricted body of texts has been adopted for the following reasons:

1) The experience of growing up, as already pointed out, is radically different for the male and female adolescent and therefore attention needs to be focused on the distinctive nature of these states. Female adolescence as a distinct state has received scant attention from literary critics. With the exception of Barbara Anne White's study Growing Up Female (1985) no literary study seems to have devoted itself exclusively to criticism of the female adolescent phenomenon. This imbalance needs to be corrected.

2) The focus on the white adolescent experience in the thesis arises from the fact that the first such novels I myself read were novels of white female adolescence and these interested me enough to work on this project. Another reason which has influenced the decision to restrict the choice of novels to a particular group of adolescents is the awareness that female adolescence is a broad term, which obscures differences of class, race, etc., among various female adolescent groups. Each group has its own special and specific problems to which attention needs to be paid. Therefore an attempt has been made in this thesis to highlight the problems of the white middle-class female adolescent.

3) The choice has also been restricted to women writers in order to study the literary representation of female adolescence by women themselves. Among the novels written by women writers the choice has been restricted, in a sense, to "feminist" texts. The

definition of the term feminist in Toril Moi's "Feminist, Female and Feminine" has been useful in identifying feminist texts. In the essay Moi argues that the fact of being female does not guarantee a feminist approach. For instance, Mills and Boon romances are written by women yet they cannot be called feminist. Moi sees feminist as a political practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy. It is felt that without such a well-directed approach to the predicament of adolescence, a meaningful study of it may not be possible.

4) The decision to study novels between 1920-1960 derives from the recent history of the feminist struggle. In the 1960s, a growing realisation of existing social inequalities between men and women led to the second feminist struggle. It is not unlikely that novels of female adolescence written between 1920s and 1960s, the period between the first and the second feminist movement, could reveal reasons for the rise of the second feminist movement. The sub-text in these novels is a patriarchal order not always subtly, but always powerfully influencing the growing up process from girlhood to womanhood. The feminists of the sixties themselves spent their adolescence in pre-sixties America, experienced this milieu first-hand, and probably their struggle against patriarchy was also a response to this.

The second reason for not going beyond 1960 is that there are many differences between fiction of this period and the fiction written during the second feminist movement in America. The sexual revolution, emergence of teen cults, the so called permissive age, and the recognition of adolescence as a distinct economic group here resulted in significant changes in the nature

of female adolescence in post-sixties America as well as in the approach to it. However, it must be stated that in a project of limited scope as this, justice could not have been done to all these significant and self-conscious changes and the underlying similarities between the pre-sixties and post-sixties adolescence in America.

The seven novels on which this thesis focuses therefore are Edith Wharton's Summer (1917), Ruth Suckow's The Bonney Family (1928), Margaret Wilson's The Painted Room (1928), Carson McCullers' Member Of The Wedding (1946), Jean Stafford's The Mountain Lion (1947), Katherine Anne Porter's Old Mortality (1939) and Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar (1963). The choice of these texts is motivated by the fact that they portray adolescence significantly, substantially, sensitively, elaborately, and from within, as it were. During the course of this study I realised that these were the same novels used, no matter how inadequately, by earlier critics to discuss female adolescence. The repeated use of the same novels by critics leads to an interesting conclusion: that there are very few novels which genuinely deal with female adolescence. And that, in turn, justifies the focus of the present study.

The thesis has a four-chapter division. The next chapter, Chapter 2, titled "Theoretical Concerns", surveys some of the most significant twentieth-century psychological, anthropological and sociological theories of adolescence and adopts a feminist perspective to evaluate them for their neglect of the female adolescent. It also addresses the issue of the construction of a literary history of adolescence. It points to the fact that no

definite yardstick exists to map the area of female adolescence. It considers three important critical studies of literature on adolescence and argues that they have sidelined the central issue. It suggests a synthetic theoretical approach to the female adolescent phenomenon.

Chapter 3, "Resisting Femininity: A Study of Female Adolescent Concerns" discusses the seven novels which are the primary sources for this thesis through the themes of loneliness, sexuality, peer group membership, relationship with parents, dreams (or aspirations) and resolutions, all of which constitute the concern of the adolescent protagonists in these novels.

The fourth and concluding chapter, "Is there anybody out there...?" briefly sums up the findings of the earlier chapters to argue for the inclusion of adolescence, neglected even by feminists, within the feminist agenda. It argues that the inclusion would benefit both female adolescents and feminists by filling one significant gap in the configuration of the female. The study of female adolescence by feminists, it is hoped, will provide additional insights into the processes by which a person becomes a woman in a patriarchal society. The acceptance of feminism in academic circles, one hopes, will ensure that an interest in the distinctive nature of female adolescence would be noticed and given serious consideration.

Notes

(1) An argument on similar lines has been developed by John Holt into a full length study titled Escape From Childhood: The Needs and Rights of Children [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954]. Holt argues that childhood is not the happy, edenic state that it is generally thought to be. Instead childhood is a traumatic period for the child because as it has been artificially prolonged by modern society.

(2) For an argument on similar lines see Sue Llewyn and Kate Osborne's Women's Lives [London: Routledge, 1990]. Also see Simone De Beauvoir's The Second Sex [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977] especially the chapter titled "The Young Girl" [351-392].

(3) The young-adult novel is also referred to as the teen-novel, the juvenile novel and the adolescent novel. The chapter avoids the use of the terms teen-novel and the juvenile novel as they convey a certain condescension towards adolescent literature. The chapter also avoids the use of the term adolescent novel as it can be confused with the adolescence novel (the focus of study in this thesis).

(4) My knowledge of these texts come from Witham. W. Tusker's The Adolescent In The American Novel (1920-60) [New York: Ungar, 1964]. Hence no bibliographical details have been provided for these texts.

(5) For a more detailed dilenation of the characteristic features of the bildungsroman see Marianne Hirsche's "The Novel of Formation as Genre: "Between Great Expectations and Lost

Illusions". Genre X11. [1979]: 293-311.

(6) The point has been explicated in Barbara Anne White's book Growing Up Female [Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985]. In the introductory chapter "The American Novel of Adolescence" White states: "Plot elements from the Bildungsroman may be put to a different use; for instance, the journey, which in the bildungsroman is a vehicle for vertical development, may become in the novel of adolescence an oscillation from side to side. Instead of progressing from A to B, the hero vacillates between A and A' and never gets to B or perhaps, rejects the idea of B" [13].

Chapter 2

Theoretical Concerns

In this chapter we shall explore the theoretical backgrounds to adolescence. We shall present three non-literary approaches, psychological, anthropological and sociological, which are in conflict with each other. The study will also examine the reflection of the same conflict in literary history, a field traditionally viewed as separate from them. The chapter is divided into six sections. Sections one, two and three present three of the most significant twentieth-century psychological, anthropological and sociological approaches to adolescence. These three approaches provide varied perspectives on adolescence, which we require to establish a general background for our subject of study.

The psychological theorists study the psychological changes that occur during adolescence; the anthropological theorists study adolescence in two to them unfamiliar societies in order to compare and contrast the adolescent phenomenon across societies and for a better understanding of the adolescent phenomenon in each. The socio-historical theorists study adolescence against particular socio-temporal back-drops. These three approaches are, consequently, considerably different from each other, as they make available a variety of viewpoints towards adolescence. For instance, psychologists construe adolescence as a universal and

timeless phenomenon, while the anthropological and sociological theorists maintain that adolescence is a construct of modern industrial class society. Conceptually, therefore, adolescence has become a site of conflict between universalist and constructionist arguments.

As a consequence of the conflict between these approaches, an either/or opposition has come to dominate the field of adolescent studies. This chapter, by presenting the arguments of various such theorists, attempts to determine whether adolescence can be considered a universal phenomenon or whether it needs to be specifically treated as a construction of modern industrial class society, or indeed whether both views require correction and supplement from other view points. After presenting these various arguments, in the fourth section we shall point out the lacunae in them and also introduce the feminist approach to adolescence as a mode of critique of earlier theories for their male bias. In the fifth section we shall, through a study of three literary histories, trace the reflection of the either/or conflict in them. Finally, in the sixth section, I shall attempt to define a personal approach to adolescence which steers clear of the either/or approach. It is based on the perception that a wholehearted endorsement of any one such particular theory suggests an exclusivity which would be dangerously narrow and reductive given the complexity of the phenomenon of adolescence. The personal approach has been used to point out the reasons for greater visibility of the female adolescent in the twentieth century.

1

In this section we shall briefly evaluate points which demand comparison among the psychological theories of G. S. Hall, Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson. Mainly we shall look at Hall's view of adolescence as a "storm and stress" period, Freud's view of psycho-sexual aspects of adolescent development, and Erikson's view in which the primary concern is with identity crisis and identity formation during adolescence. It is important to do this, because such views definitely foreground adolescence and provide us with invaluable insights into that phenomenon. The similarity underlying the ostensible differences among these theories is a shared conception of adolescence as a universal fact. This universalist stance is worth contesting from the point of view of the anthropological and socio-historical approaches which we shall discuss in a later section. Let us begin here with a discussion of the psychological theories.

The pioneering twentieth-century psychological theorist of adolescence, G. S. Hall,¹ wrote two volumes in 1904 titled Adolescence, its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education. Hall held that each individual's development recapitulates in miniature, as it were, the development of the human race itself. Influenced by the progressive, Darwinian evolutionary model, Hall believed that the experiential history of the human species has become part of the genetic structure of each individual. That is, through infancy, childhood, youth, and adolescence the individual

relives the development of the human race from early animal-like primitivism, through a period of savagery, to the more recent civilized ways of life that characterise maturity.

During the first stage, the period of infancy, which for him includes the first four years of life, the child re-enacts the animal stage of the human race before bipedalism. Childhood, the second stage, begins at the fourth year and lasts till the eighth year. Hall's observation of children's games such as hide-and-seek, cowboys-and-Indians, the use of toy weapons, and so on led him to identify the period of childhood with that epoch of cultural history when hunting and fishing were the primary activities of the race. The third stage or youth, the years between eight and twelve, includes the period that is commonly known to us as pre-adolescence. During this stage the individual recapitulates the "humdrum life of savagery" [qtd. in Muuss 1982, 33].

Adolescence, the fourth stage that particularly interests us here, begins with the onset of puberty (about twelve to thirteen years of age) and continues until full adult status has been attained by the individual. In terms of Hall's recapitulation theory, adolescence corresponds to a stage when the human race was in a turbulent stage of transforming itself from a half savage state to a civilized state. Hall uses the German terms *Sturm* and *Drang* (storm and stress) to indicate the turbulent nature of this period.

From the modern stand point Hall's useful, even important theory of recapitulation of racial-genetic history may appear antiquated, but even today the words "storm and stress" and their various synonyms--turbulent, difficult, etc.--commonly assist

even ordinary discussions or attempts to understand adolescence itself. However, Hall's theory is definitely limited. Hall assumed that development is brought about by physiological factors; he also assumed that physiological factors are genetically determined, and that internal maturational forces predominantly control and direct development, growth and behaviour. There is little room in this theory for the influence of environmental-social-cultural forces, because Hall held that the experience of "storm and stress" is intrinsic to adolescence, not a matter of moulding by external forces. Socio-historical and anthropological scholars challenged Hall's view that society, culture and class did not influence adolescent development. For instance, the anthropologist Margaret Mead's book Coming of Age in Samoa (1961), written in response to Hall, takes issue with his theorisation of "storm and stress" as a purely intrinsic feature of adolescent development. [We shall discuss Mead's own view in the later section on the anthropological approach to adolescence.]

Like his contemporary Hall, Sigmund Freud also considered adolescence a difficult phase. He did not do so in terms of the recapitulation theory but rather on account of the 'fresh wave of sexual repression' which follows immediately after the sexual maturation of the body. Freud's psychoanalytic theory, especially that part of it which concerns psycho-sexual development of human (male and female) sexuality, contributed significantly to an understanding of the sexual aspects of adolescent development which did not really figure in Hall's approach. Freud's view of the stages of human sexual development was proposed in Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1910). The final essay in the

series titled "The Transformations of Puberty" focuses on adolescent sexuality in both males and females. According to Freud, as commonly understood, adolescence is not a period of sudden 'sexual awakening'. Instead, adolescent sexuality is inextricably linked to and yet different from the preceding stages of infantile sexual development. Freud's essay "Femininity" (1933) also discusses the constitution of the female subject in terms of penis-envy. Significantly, Freud's views on female adolescent sexuality in "The Transformations of Puberty" acquire greater meaning in the light of this essay. Freud himself mentions the relation between the two essays in "The Transformations of Puberty".

According to Freud, pubertal sexuality forms part of the human psycho-sexual development. It is preceded by four other stages, the oral, anal, phallic and sexual latency stages. During the first year of life, the oral region is the primary source of sexual pleasure. In this stage the child derives pleasure from activities such as sucking and drinking. The second stage is the anal stage, during which the anal region becomes the new erogenous zone. The shift from the oral to the anal region is a result of toilet training as a consequence of which the child derives pleasure from anal sensations of retention and release. The third stage is the phallic stage, during which the child becomes interested in his or her sex organs. Up to this stage the child is unaware of any distinction between the two sexes. Freud states in Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, "It is self evident to a male child that a genital like his own is to be attributed to everyone he knows" [195] and that this energetical-

ly maintained conviction "is only abandoned after severe internal struggles (the castration complex)" [195]. Upon noticing that the boy's genitals are formed differently from their own, little girls "are overcome by envy for the penis--an envy culminating in the wish, which is so important in its consequence, to be boys themselves" [195]. But masculinity or femininity for Freud did not rest merely in possession of a masculine or a feminine body. Rather, they were dependent upon the successful negotiation of the Oedipal complex. [We shall dwell upon this in some detail in a later part of this section which discusses the constitution of the feminine subject.]

The next stage is the sexual-latency stage during which the sexual instincts are dormant. This is followed by puberty. As a result of the maturation of the body during puberty the dormant sexual instincts are reawakened. The pubertal sexual instinct differs from the childhood sexual instinct. According to Freud,

The sexual instinct has hitherto been predominantly auto-erotic; it now finds a sexual object. Its activity has hitherto been derived from a number of separate instincts and erotogenic zones which, independently of one another, have pursued a certain sort of pleasure in their sexual aim. Now, however, a new sexual aim appears, and all the component instincts combine to attain it, while the erotogenic zones become subordinated to the primacy of the genital zone. [207]

The sexual aim, now perceived as a conscious sexual aim, acquires a greater intensity on account of the physical maturation of the body. The new sexual aim imparts different functions to the two sexes, consequent to which the sexual development of the male and the female differs greatly.

There are specific problems with Freud's approach. For instance, since childhood auto-erotic activity of the erotogenic zones is the same in both sexes, Freud concluded, influentially and yet very doubtfully, that sexuality of little girls is of a wholly masculine character. The leading erotogenic zone in female children is located at the clitoris and is thus homologous to the masculine genital zone of the glans penis. According to Freud--

If we are to understand how a little girl turns into a woman we must follow the further vicissitudes of this excitability of the clitoris. Puberty, which brings about so great an accession of libido in boys, is marked in girls by a fresh wave of repression, in which it is precisely clitoridnal sexuality that is affected. [220]

The sexuality of the girl, which has hitherto been of a masculine nature, now undergoes a change. The leading erotogenic zone shifts from the clitoris to the vaginal orifice. This transference is helpful in understanding the essence of femininity.

Freud defined femininity in terms of penis-envy. This concept is inextricably linked to the Oedipal and the castration complexes. According to Freud, in the pre-Oedipal stage the girl

is closely attached to her mother. During this stage she is unaware of her own sex and does not perceive herself as different from boys. In possession of her clitoris, the girl feels self-sufficient. The sight of the male genital organ makes the girl a victim of penis-envy, makes her aware of the lack in herself and breaks the pre-Oedipal unity with her mother, as she blames the mother for her lack of the male organ. The discovery that she is thus castrated makes the girl turn to her father. This transference of affection from the mother to the father, according to Freud, is motivated by a wish for the penis which the mother has denied her and which she now expects from her father. This castration complex is also the beginning of the Oedipal Complex in girls.

The Oedipal Complex, according to Freud, may continue indefinitely in the case of girls. For unlike boys, they do not fear castration from their father. The indeterminate duration of the Oedipal complex in girls affects the formation of their super-ego. The super-ego or the sense of conscience and morality remains weak in girls because their Oedipal complex is not resolved to the same extent as the boys'. The process of becoming a feminine subject is completed during puberty when the girl affects a transference from the clitoris to the vaginal orifice as the primary organ of sexual pleasure. A failure to affect this transference adversely affects the acquisition of femininity.

This theorisation of the female subject in terms of penis-envy has generated an intense controversy. Feminists have questioned Freud's theorisation of female subjecthood in terms of envy arising from lack of the male organ. They have accused Freud

of ignoring the cultural privileges of being born male which actually induce an envy for the male organ. We shall discuss this in some detail in the section which evaluates the theory from a feminist perspective.

In the psychological theories of adolescence of both Hall and Freud the influence of environmental and social factors on the development remained largely unaccounted for. In contrast, Erikson's² theory of adolescence takes environmental and social forces into account, thus significantly modifying the previous theories. He thus presents a new theory of psycho-social development. The core concept of Erikson's theory of adolescence is the acquisition of an ego-identity as a consequence of which identity crisis becomes the most outstanding characteristic of adolescence. Erikson believed that adolescence cannot be studied in isolation but must be linked to other stages of human development. His theory proceeds according to the "epi-genetic" principle of development. The term, borrowed from embryology, means "that anything that grows has a ground plan, and out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of social ascendancy until all parts have risen to form a functional whole" [qtd in Muuss 1982, 92].

In accordance with this epi-genetic model, Erikson divides human development into eight stages, of which identity formation in adolescence is the fifth stage. Each of the eight developmental stages is characterized by conflict between opposed forces. The four childhood stages that precede adolescence are: trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, and industry versus inferiority. According to

Erikson, if the conflict is resolved in a constructive, satisfactory manner, the positive of the two qualities (for instance, trust) becomes part of the ego and further healthy development is enhanced. However, if the conflict persists or is resolved unsatisfactorily, the negative quality (for instance, mistrust) is incorporated into the personality structure. In such a case the negative quality will interfere with further development and may manifest itself in psychopathology.

Erikson characterises adolescence as the period in the human life cycle during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion. Identity is not readily given to the individual by society, nor does it appear as a maturational phenomenon when the time has come, as do secondary sex characteristics but must be acquired through sustained individual effort. Identity achievement means that the adolescent assesses personal strengths and weaknesses and determines how he/she wants to deal with them.

The process of identity formation becomes difficult at the onset of pubescence which, according to Erikson, is characterised by the rapidity of body growth, genital maturity and sexual awareness. These physiological changes are qualitatively quite different from those experienced during childhood. Thus an element of discontinuity from previous stages of development may be experienced by a person during early adolescence. This experience may also precipitate a psychological crisis that revolves around the issue of identity formation. For adolescent acquisition of definite identity, which Erikson defines as the establishment and

re-establishment of sameness with one's previous experiences and a conscious attempt to make the future a part of the one's personal life plan, is the most significant task of adolescence. These are significantly useful advances on earlier theories.

Erikson's characterisation of adolescence as a period of identity crisis, however, also has universalist overtones. The recognition of the influence of environmental factors on formation of identity in Erikson's theory is only partial. For Erikson fails to distinguish between cultures and presents the crisis of identity-formation during adolescence as if it were the same everywhere and every time. Erikson's theory makes no significant distinction in the very different cultural influences which operate on male and female adolescents. It also fails to take stock of the marked and crucial differences between male and female experiences of adolescence.

It should become clear from the discussion in this section that the universalist approach or the universalising tendency of the psychological theorists more or less disregards the influence of environmental factors, social practices and cultural influences on adolescence and in some ways falls short of accounting for differences between male and female adolescence. Anthropological and socio-historical theorists do question the universalist approach and attempt to rectify it, as we shall see in the next two sections of the present chapter. But in their attempts at rectification, by and large, they themselves go too far and significantly ignore the psychological factors. These two approaches will be discussed in the following two sections.

2

The work of cultural anthropologists constitutes a serious challenge to the universalist approach of the psychological theorists. The variability of adolescent phenomena was revealed by cultural anthropologists in their study of the social structure and cultural practices of different societies. A pioneering cultural-anthropological contribution to adolescent studies is Margaret Mead's Coming of Age in Samoa (1961), an outcome of field work undertaken to understand adolescence in non-Western, non-industrial Samoan society with the specific aim of using these findings for a better understanding of the adolescent phenomenon in America.

Mead adopts Hall's definition of adolescence as a "storm and stress" period at the beginning of her study. Her observations of primitive, pre-industrial Samoan society where adolescence is not apparently stressful led her to conclude that the "storm and stress" are not intrinsic to adolescence but are culture-specific. Mead believed that the particular mode in which modern American society is organised is responsible for the turbulent nature of adolescence. In order to prove her point, Mead examines the nature of adolescence in pre-industrial Samoan society.

According to Mead, the transition from childhood to adulthood is affected smoothly in Samoa and there is no intermediate stage that might require being recognised distinctly as adolescence. Unlike American society, in Samoan society, there are no

marked differences between the two worlds of the child and the adult; the child is aware of what his/her role as an adult will be from an early age. The onset of puberty signifies a physical preparedness for the assumption of the adult role. Hence, as soon as the child achieves puberty he or she is treated as an adult.

In sharp contrast, in complexly (or at least differently) organized American society a rigid distinction is maintained between the child and the adult worlds. At the onset of puberty the segregation of the child and adult world hinders a smooth transition from childhood to adulthood. Puberty in American society, unlike Samoan society, brings sharp discontinuities from earlier experiences. A new set of expectations and roles is foisted on the adolescent making adolescence a difficult "storm and stress" period. Citing the example of Samoan Society, Mead states that the distinction between the child and the adult is a feature unique to industrial societies and concludes that adolescence is a construct of the advanced industrial West.

Mead's research has been rightly acclaimed as important. Yet a fundamental flaw in Mead's research on Samoa is that it is based on the narrow or limiting definition of adolescence as a "storm and stress" period, which she applies without modification to the Samoan society. On finding that Hall's definition of adolescence as a "storm and stress" period is alien to Samoan society, Mead concludes that adolescence is a Western phenomenon. Mead's work suffers from the typical anthropological limitation of trying to fit other societies into their own predetermined criteria instead of allowing the criteria to evolve from

the data gathered in the course of the study. The exclusion of other naturally, evolving criteria and definitions from Mead's study certainly makes her conclusions questionable.

3

Socio-historical theorists, unlike anthropologists, perceive adolescence as a historically variable phenomenon rather than a universal one. They also believe, however, that adolescence is a relatively recent phenomenon, a construction of industrial class society. The most influential study in the field is Centuries of Childhood (1962) by Phillipe Aries, which we shall take stock of. In this section we shall also discuss Joseph F. Kett's Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present (1977). This study also pursues a socio-historical method to arrive at the conclusion that adolescence as we understand it today is a twentieth-century phenomenon.

Centuries of Childhood (1962) focuses primarily on childhood but it has significant implications for the study of adolescence. Aries argues that the concept of childhood was absent from medieval society. Subsequent to a brief period of dependency (during infancy), children were treated as miniature adults. The concept of adolescence amounted to the concept of miniature adulthood. If children were treated as adults the concept of adolescence was also non-existent. At best, adolescence was not perceived or treated differently. Aries cites evidence from eclectic sources to prove the concept of miniature adulthood.

The concept of miniature adulthood reflects itself in the art and iconography of the medieval world, where children are portrayed as scaled down adults.

Linguistically, there were few words to denote childhood. Citing an example from the chapter on ages of man from a Latin text translated into French as Le Grand Proprietaire de toutes chose (1556), Aries states that in this text human life was divided into seven stages corresponding to the seven planets: infancy, pureritia, adolescence, youth, senectitude, old age and senies.³ The French recognised only three stages--childhood, youth and old age. Since youth signified the prime of life, clearly there was no room in this scheme for adolescence.

Changes in the status of children may be noticed from the fifteenth or sixteenth century onwards but seem to have really taken root only in the seventeenth century. The reasons for the change in status is a growing body of opinion, among moralists and pedagogues, that children were fragile creatures of god and needed to be safeguarded.

The changes can be first noticed in the dress of the period. Earlier, as soon as the child was out of his swaddling clothes it was attired in adult clothes. But in the seventeenth century the child's clothes were distinguished from the adult's by two broad ribbons fastened to the robe behind each shoulder and hanging down the back. However, this change pertained only to the dress of the male child; the female child continued to be dressed as an adult woman. Aries states--

This specialization of the dress of children

especially of little boys, in a society in which clothes and outward appearances had considerable importance bear witness to the change which had taken place in the general attitude towards children. [129]

Changes also occurred in the structure of children's play. Most games played were common to all ages and classes but in the late seventeenth century this shared sphere was vacated by the upper class adults and left to children and the lower classes, thus implicitly confirming the "low" status accorded to both.

The most significant change occurred in the structures of schooling. The medieval school was characterised by simultaneity, the mixing of ages, and a lack of grading. The school was housed in a single room where students of all ages were mixed together. This system was gradually replaced by a more discriminating system of education. First, the levels of learning of children were adjudged and the classes were divided on the basis of equivalent or comparable intellectual capacity, into groups within the same classroom. Second, each group was assigned a teacher. Eventually, each group was assigned a different room. This system took into account the age of the growing-up individual and smaller children were separated from older ones. Aries states--

The separation of the classes [of pupils] therefore revealed a realisation of the special nature of childhood and youth and the idea that within that childhood or youth a variety of categories

existed. [187] .

The realisation that childhood included a number of categories gave birth to the idea of adolescence and the beginnings of recognition of adolescence can be traced to an age based division of students in the school.

Now Aries' account of the evolution of childhood and adolescence is naturally limited to certain strata of society and also to one predictable gender. Only the middle class could afford to send their male children to school--

There is accordingly a remarkable synchronism between the modern age group and the social group: both originated at the same time, in the eighteenth century, in the same milieu--the middle-class. [336]

Similarly, the benefits of schooling were denied to women till the late nineteenth century,

Without a proper educational system, the girls were confused with the women at an early age just as the boys had formerly been confused with men.... [58]

Aries' work has had wide-spread influence on the field of adolescent studies. He is the most quoted theorist in attempts to prove that adolescence is a constructed phenomenon. But Aries' study does not recognise the psychological aspects of adolescence, and has come in for criticism in this regard. It has

also been criticised from within the discipline by other socio-historical theorists like Ross W. Beales who believe that the concept of miniature adulthood is exaggerated. These differing points of view have been discussed in the section on the critique of the theories.

Like Aries, Joseph F. Kett in Rites of Passage: 1790 to the Present (1977) also argues for recognition of the historical variability of adolescence. Kett locates adolescence in the twentieth century, as a primarily middle class phenomenon in Europe and a consequence of the industrial revolution in post-civil war America. The experience of youth in nineteenth-century pre-industrial America differed radically from their twentieth-century counterparts. Kett points out one striking difference in the introduction to his work that young people in the 1970s, compared to their predecessors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are essentially consumers rather than producers.

The fact that young people were producers rather than consumers in the centuries preceding the twentieth leads Kett to type the developmental stages of life in terms of 'statuses' --dependency, semi-dependency and independence. Dependency or complete reliance on parents was not a prolonged state in nineteenth-century industrial America. Dependency began at birth and ended before puberty, after which the child was fully incorporated into the labour force. Semi-dependency describes the status of youth between ten and twenty-one in the nineteenth century and was a combination of both dependence and independence with the balance tilted in favour of semi-independence. During these years, young people who left home experienced greater freedom and

acquired newer responsibilities. The next stage was independence and no clear and distinct barrier divided semi-dependency from independence.

According to Kett, Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present (1977), "In the twentieth century a combination of technological advanced prolonged education has contributed to stretching out the period of dependency" [144]. As America grew into being a technologically advanced society, the best paid jobs were opening up in the white collar sector of the economy. Formal education up to the age of fourteen and preferably up to sixteen or eighteen became a prerequisite for securing white collar jobs. This prolonged the child's period of dependence among that class of people which could afford to forego the monetary or other returns from the labour of their children. Education and class factors were also operative in the nineteenth-century. But since education was sporadic and young people from all classes left home to work, unlike the twentieth-century, there was no radical difference in this regard between the experiences of youth who came from different classes. The economic changes of the nineteenth-century demanded that families eager for their children to rise in the world take steps that would segregate them from the world of casual labor and dead-end jobs in factories. Thus, according to Kett, a coalition of new economic forces unleashed by the industrial revolution led to the creation of the adolescent phenomenon in the twentieth century.

By linking the creation of the adolescent phenomenon with the industrial revolution, Kett proves that twentieth-century adolescence is more prolonged than adolescence in the nineteenth-

century. Despite the cogency of his argument that the social determinants of adolescence varied from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, Kett's study suffers from certain difficulties. The most obvious one is the division of life stages in terms of work. According to him, the adult and the adolescent in twentieth century are defined solely in terms of their work and non-work status. Adolescence then becomes the sole prerogative of the middle class which can afford this non-working status for its children. There are some other important aspects of Kett's arguments which we need to note here. In terms of age, Kett's description of dependency, semi-dependency and independency approximate childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Yet, Kett denies this connection. Dependency in the early nineteenth century was briefer than the period of childhood and semi-dependency lasted longer than present day adolescence does. His category includes characteristics fundamentally different from our present day adolescence. For instance, since society required its children to leave home for work the children enjoyed a greater degree of independence than their counterparts in the twentieth-century. The limitations in Kett's study come from the complete disregard of the psychological aspects of adolescence which we shall take up in the next section.

4

In this section the approaches are subjected to a three fold critique:

First, on account of their insularity from each other, the three approaches outlined above, the psychological, anthropological and socio-historical, remain segregated and preclude a fuller understanding of adolescence. Each approach can be criticised from the perspective of the other. For instance, compared to the anthropological and sociological theories, the psychological theories undermine the socio-economic determinants and are guilty of essentialising adolescence as an ahistorical category. Similarly, from the point of view of Freudian psychoanalysis, anthropological and sociological theories reduce psychology to biology, i.e., they recognise pubescence but refuse to grant recognition to the effects of maturational changes on the unconscious. In "Freud and Lacan" (1984) Althusser argued that psychoanalysis is a special discipline--

History, 'sociology' or anthropology have no business here, and this is no surprise for they deal with society and therefore with culture, i.e, with what is no longer this small animal [this small biological being] which only becomes human-sexual [a human child] by crossing the infinite divide that separates life from humanity, the biological from the historical, 'nature from culture'. [158]

The insularity of these approaches places adolescence in an irretrievable impasse of either universalism or constructionism, forcing us to accept a particular approach over the other, thus

diffusing our understanding of the phenomenon. Such pitfalls of exclusivity can be avoided by adopting a more synthetic theoretical approach. The 'how' of it has been discussed in a later section with my personal approach to adolescence.

Second, socio-historical theories which argue that adolescence is a construction have been countered by other socio-historical studies, thus further confusing the field of adolescent studies. Both the socio-historical approaches present empirical evidence to back their claims, leaving us entrapped in a maze of claims and counter claims.

R. W. Beales in "In Search of the Historical Child: Miniature Childhood and Youth in Colonial New England" contests the wide-spread view that the colonial Americans regarded their children as miniature adults and recognised no stage of development like the twentieth-century adolescence. Beales claims that, "notions of miniature adulthood and the absence of adolescence in colonial New America are, at best, exaggerations" [Beales 1975, 379]. Language, law and religion confirm that far from regarding children as miniature adults New Englanders were aware of their immaturities.

The law discriminated between children, post-adolescent youth and adults by ascribing punishment on the basis of the age of the accused. For instance, the laws of Massachusetts and neighboring Plymouth colony respectively established the age of fourteen and sixteen as the age of discretion in the case of slander. "Massachusetts children over sixteen and of sufficient understanding were to be executed if they cursed or struck their parents" [Beales 1975, 392]. Likewise, a stubborn, rebellious

son risked capital punishment if only he was old enough for it under the law.

A further proof, that childhood was recognised as different from adulthood is the language New Englanders used to describe the ages of man. Colonial New Englanders included both children and youth in the "ages of man", with youth extending from the early teens to well into the twenties. For instance, when Gilbert Tennent preached in Boston in 1741 he used four familiar chronological definitions in addressing his audience: " 'old' and aged Persons"; "middle-ag'd People of thirty Years old and upwards"; "my younger Brethren of fourteen Years and upwards"; and little Children of six Years old and upwards" [Beales 1975. 383].

Distinctions between children and adults were also made in the religious life of the Puritans. Children were discouraged from participation in the sacrament of communion, for it required a degree of knowledge of the scriptures which children could not achieve. In fact, the age at which children could receive communion generated a great deal of debate in New England churches. In 1643 Mather discussed the problem of how long could children be counted under-age. "Till what age shall they [children] enter into Covenant with their Parents whether sixteen twenty-one or sixty?" [Beales: 388]. Mather concluded that it was impossible to have any set age patterns of maturity.

Having proved the existence of the concept of childhood in colonial New England, Beales now questions the second contention made by theorists of miniature adulthood, i.e., that the idea of adolescence was non-existent in early New England. He adopts a twentieth-century sociological definition of adolescence, a

period from dependent childhood to self-sufficient adulthood, to prove that adolescence was a part of the ages of man in the nineteenth century and that the transition from the dependence of childhood to the self sufficiency of adulthood was not made suddenly in early New England.

Beales refers to Philip J. Greven Jr's study of the first generations in Andover, Massachusetts. It documents the slowness with which sons achieved economic independence. The key to independence was land and fathers often retained legal possession till their deaths. Hence, the sons rarely achieved economic independence even in their twenties.

Another sensitive register of adulthood is marriage. This was recognised in colonial America. The laws made distinctions between married and unmarried people. In Plymouth a married man under the age of twenty-four could vote in military concerns but a single man under twenty-four could not. From such varied data Beales creates a picture of prolonged adolescence in Colonial New England.

To return to our problems with theories of adolescence, our third point is that the approaches outlined above are subject to a critique from the feminist perspective on the female adolescent figure. The perspective critiques these theories for their neglect of the female adolescent and for their bias against the female adolescent.

In the "Introduction" to his book Rites of Passage (1977) Joseph F. Kett states:

About whom does one write? I have derived some aid

who have written about youth have worn blinders. Whether in 1800 or 1850 or 1900 or 1975 they have focused on certain types of young people whose experiences they thought were especially significant. I have fastened on a similar pair of blinders.... In effect I have sought to locate the kind of young person about whom people were talking and to understand the relationship between perception and experience at different points of time. The principle of selection has created some biases in the attention accorded to different social groups. At most periods for example, and particularly in the three decades after 1890, social comment focused more on young men than on young women. [3]

Kett's statement reveals that his study is one among a series of studies which have overlooked female adolescence. The bias against the female adolescent is evident in Hall's chapter on the adolescent girl. A large part of it is devoted to the discussion of the necessity of education for the adolescent girl. Hall believed that women were biologically the weaker sex and education would weaken them by diverting their energy from their reproductive roles.

Freud's theory of femininity and female sexuality is unacceptable to feminists also because of its postulation of female inferiority and has evoked considerable debate in feminist circles. The popularisation of Freud's theories through psychiatric

practices--part of common cultural knowledge in America, as is evident in the common American obsession with the 'shrink', requires us to seriously reckon with Freud's theory of female sexuality and femininity which define the girl and the woman in terms of a lack and are widely deployed to understand psychological ailments of the female adolescent in the twentieth century. The theory is hence subject to a detailed feminist scrutiny. I have taken into account the views of Karen Horney, Melanie Klein, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Kate Millet, who severely critique Freud. I begin with a brief overview of the feminist critique.

Karen Horney tried to counter Freud's postulation of female inferiority by arguing that women's reproductive roles constituted their physiological superiority and that the lack of a penis did not affect women in any way, on the contrary it was envy of woman's biological processes that drove men to set up cultural values which devalued women. Melanie Klein⁴, on the other hand countered the theory of penis-envy with her theory of breast envy in men. Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex (1949) seriously questions Freud's theory of penis-envy. According to her the reasons for the girl's penis-envy was not an actual lack of the phallus but lack of the cultural value attached to such an organ. The possession of the phallus gave the boy access to the outer world whereas its lack in women disadvantaged them. The girl becomes a victim of the envy of the penis as she becomes aware of the advantages, which the possession of such an organ granted to males.

The second wave of feminists also dismissed Freud. Primary

among them were Betty Friedan and Kate Millett. Betty Friedan in The Feminine Mystique (1962) held Freudian theories guilty of perpetuating the mystique of femininity that had flourished in America since the 1940s. In Sexual Politics (1969) Kate Millet ridiculed Freud's theories. Pointing out how invidious is his use of such terms as the boy's superior equipment and her inferior clitoris, she accused Freud of a gross male supremacist bias. Why anyway, asks Millet, would girls assume that the penis is superior to the clitoris, that bigger is better? Why is it not a trauma that one sex has breasts and the other does not? [182]. Kate Millet also argues that the young girl's fears do not center on her castration but on rape--a far likelier possibility.

The early feminist argument against Freud suffers from similar limitations of the socio-historical and anthropological theories in their challenge of the psychological theories of adolescence, i.e., they deny the unconscious. But the theorisation of femininity in terms of lack and inferiority cannot be accepted by feminists resisting cultural definitions which disadvantage women. Freud's definition of femininity definitely makes him an arch-misogynist in the eyes of the second wave of feminists in America. This creates the possibility of a permanent estrangement between the two discourses. A Lacanian⁵ reading of Freud has been used by later feminists (the French school) to prevent a permanent divorce of feminism and psychoanalysis. But this has generated further controversies resulting in a morass of theoretical abstractions, taking the issue further away from the actual discussions on femininity and female sexuality, and perhaps also farther from adolescence as actually

experienced by females. In the next section we shall discuss the problems of universalism and constructionism which has, in turn, beset the literary history of adolescence.

5

In this section we shall analyse the problems in writing a literary history of adolescence which stem from the opposition between universalism and constructionism through a study of three critical studies in literature. Let us begin with three significant statements:

A third fact and one which is not so easily explained, is that important novels dealing with adolescent males are far more numerous and far more frank than those dealing with adolescent females. Over ninety per cent of the best novels on adolescence are centered on boys
[Tusker 1964, 18]

When the question of why these facts were ignored and how they were now to be understood were raised, history became more than a search for facts. Since new visions of history depend on the perspectives and questions of the historian, making woman visible was not simply a matter of unearthing new facts; it was a matter of advancing

new interpretations which not only offered new readings of politics, but of the changing significance of families and sexualities. [Scott 1996, 3]

If women were indeed without a great literary tradition, much could be said for the advisability of creating one, for the positive influence it could provide for women and women's literary tradition. [Spender 1993, 33]

In our context, the central question which a literary historian faces is: "How to write a literary history of female adolescence?" For the notion of female adolescence as a singular, stable category is challenged by its being in part a cultural phenomenon. The variability of cultural conditions denies female adolescence stable and fixed meanings. The historical variability of female adolescence and lack of research on the actual nature of variation, are problems central to the task of writing a literary history of adolescence. For they make unavailable useful yardsticks to identify female adolescence. In such a case, what yardsticks should a historian use to identify female adolescence and how should the historian evolve such yardsticks? These questions have not been broached by literary critics studying adolescence. The studies are beset by the problem of conflict between universalism and constructionism and do not conclusively prove whether adolescence is ubiquitous or a twentieth-century theme in literature.

Literary studies of adolescence can be broadly classified

into two categories. First, those which advance the view that adolescence is a ubiquitous idea in literature; second, those which argue that adolescence is an idea which occurs solely in twentieth century literature. Both these studies suffer from serious limitations and are subject to criticism in light of the questions that we have raised above. Literary studies that fall within the first category do not suggest any criteria, for instance, to identify literature of adolescence in other centuries. A twentieth-century view of adolescence is imposed upon the past by such studies to identify literature of adolescence. The second category of literary studies suffers from lack of historical research on the shifting nature of female adolescence. On being aware and informed of only the twentieth-century notion of adolescence, it concludes that, adolescence is the domain of twentieth century literature exclusively.

A study of Patricia Meyer Spacks' The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth in Adult Imagination (1981), Witham William Tusker's The Adolescent in American Novel 1920-60 [1964] and Barbara Anne White's Growing Up Female [1985] will help in explicating the point further. Spacks' book belongs to the first category of approach to adolescence which is the view of that adolescence is a ubiquitous idea in literature. Tusker's and White's studies belong to the second category, which are of the view that adolescence is a theme found solely in twentieth-century literature.

The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth in Adult Imagination traces the development of adolescence as an idea in literature between mid-eighteenth and mid-twentieth century. With the exception of Salinger's Catcher in the Rye (1951), this study focuses

on British texts. Strictly, such a study, being oriented towards British texts, should not form part of our present argument. But Spacks' study has been influential and widely acclaimed and it serves as a good example of the neglect of earlier adolescence literature in explicating the criterion evolved for identifying novels of adolescence mentioned earlier. A brief overview of the first two chapters, "Exploration Becoming Growth and Pain" and "Nobody's Power" will suffice for the purpose.

"Exploration Becoming Growth and Pain" is the introductory chapter to Spacks' study. In this chapter Spacks describes "adolescence as a phenomenon presenting difficulties of definition" and also refers to the "historical, semantic and referential perplexities of adolescence" [7]. But Spacks does not engage with these "historical, referential and semantic perplexities of adolescence. Apart from quoting Lawrence Stone and Samuel Johnson's⁶ definition of adolescence, Spacks' study does not significantly engage with the perplexities referred to earlier. Instead Spacks uses these quotes and her definition of adolescence as a period designating; the time of life "when the individual has developed full sexual capacity but has not assumed a full adult role in the society" [7] as a yardstick for study. Though the quotes from Samuel Johnson and Lawrence Stone do prove to some extent that adolescence is a ubiquitous idea, the concept has not been fully explored and Spacks falls back on a definition which by her own admission is "conveniently vague" [7].

Spacks second chapter titled "Nobody's Power" analyses three texts: Samuel Richardson's Pamela (1740), Elizabeth Gaskell's Wives and Daughters (1866) and Doris Lessing's Martha

Quest (1952). Each text belongs to a different century, the eighteenth, the nineteenth and the twentieth. It studies the relationship between the adolescent girl and her sexuality. The basis of selection of these novels as narratives of adolescence is, however, not clear. To take one instance, Richardson's Pamela can be characterised as either a woman or as an adolescent girl. On what basis does Spacks choose to study Pamela as a novel of the adolescent girl? Spacks' study provides no answers to the question. Spacks' method obliges her to abstract the history of the adolescent girl from texts whose basis of selection as novels of adolescence is itself not clear. To be fair, Spacks could not have individually bridged the historical gap. But since our discussion considers the problem of writing of literary history, Spacks treatment of the subject does come in for criticism.

Tusker's The Adolescent in the American novel 1920-60 has an introduction titled "Literary and Cultural Backgrounds". It attempts to trace the literary antecedents of the novel of adolescence--.lm11.rm60In order to appreciate the trends in the treatment of specific problems in the novels published since 1920 one should know something of this sort published before 1920, both in this country and abroad, and should know something of the trends in literature and culture which affected novels published before 1920 as well as the trends affecting later novels. [7]

The terminology in which Tusker's statement is couched, "one must know something about the novels "of this sort"", side-steps the question of how to identify novels of this sort. It also

reiterates a twentieth-century pattern of the novel of adolescence as paradigmatic. But Tusker's introductory chapter places greater emphasis on the second part of the claimed purpose, "should know something of the trends and culture". This literary and cultural background of adolescence is subsumed within a framework of American literary movements. Tusker traces the different literary movements from the genteel tradition of the period from 1870-1920 to naturalism in 1920s to psychological symbolism in 1930s and 1960s in order to reveal varying attitudes towards the presentation of adolescents in literature. Although helpful, such a delineation hardly provides the reader with the background the title of the introductory chapter claims to provide. Moreover Tusker attributes the reasons for the rise of the novel of adolescence in the twentieth century primarily to the growth of naturalism and the development of psychology as a science in the twentieth century. Beyond these two factors Tusker really does not explicate the reasons for the emergence of the novel of adolescence in the twentieth century.

The rest of Tusker's study is divided into five chapters in which six hundred twentieth-century novels of adolescence have been classified in the order of importance into five areas in which adolescents face the most difficult problems of adjustment.

The third study which we shall examine here is White's Growing Up female: A Study of Adolescent Girlhood in America. It devotes itself exclusively to the study of the female adolescent figure in the twentieth century American literature. In "Introduction to the American novel of Adolescence", White draws heavily upon Aries' Centuries of Childhood and Joseph F. Kett's

Rites Of Passage (the arguments of the two theorists have been summarised in section 3) to prove that female adolescence is a twentieth-century construct and that the novel of female adolescence is an offshoot of this development. In the absence of historical research on female adolescence, White's conclusions are unconvincing.

The three literary studies examined here reveal the lack of yardsticks to define female adolescence. Is adolescence a ubiquitous idea in literature as Spacks claims or is it a twentieth-century development as Tusker and White claim? The absence of any definite yardsticks leaves both claims questionable. How then does a literary critic proceed in writing a history of female adolescence? How do we begin to fill the gaps that have been identified? Can yardsticks to identify female adolescence be developed and, will not the yardsticks suffer from the problems identified above? Should every century have its own yardstick?--But this yardstick may not be true for the varying semantics of adolescence within each century.

As a student looking at female adolescence, we may not be able to offer any definite answers to the questions raised above, only a few suggestions that may help in solving the problems which beset the literary history of adolescence.

Changes in physiological status herald adolescence, and can serve as good indicators to identify novels of female adolescence. The absence of fiction on physical aspects of female adolescence renders the historian's task difficult. While the silence has been widely noted (the epigraph cited from Tusker at the beginning of the section) few efforts have been made to

identify reasons for the silence. Looking for the reasons for the silence could provide valuable insights into significant cultural attitudes towards adolescence.

My contention is that discussion of physical aspects of puberty is inextricably linked with female adolescent sexuality, which was, till recently, a taboo topic in literature. The reception of certain other texts dealing with woman's sexuality would help in explicating the point further. Susannah Rowson's Charlotte Temple (1794) is a story of a simple, trusting fifteen year old girl's seduction and subsequent abandonment. Lydia Maria Child in the Mother's Book (1831) writes--

I dare say [it] was written with the best intentions; yet I believe that the work does so much harm to girls of fourteen and fifteen. [qtd. in Baym 1978, 52]

Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (1850) was considered an immoral book. Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899) was banned for explicitly dealing with the subject of woman's sexuality. Nina Baym, In Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870 (1978), states that woman's sexuality was perceived as a threat to the heroine's independence by most women novelists. For these women novelists sexual liberation meant freedom from sex and hence the novelists did not portray woman's sexual lives.

The absence of physical aspects of adolescence, the one reliable yardstick to identify novels of adolescence, indicates two possibilities: first, either there are no novels of female

adolescence in previous centuries; second, or novels of adolescence have neglected the physical aspects and focused on the social and cultural aspects of female adolescence. The only way to identify novels of the latter kind would be to undertake research on identifying the meanings of female adolescence, in other centuries. Only with help from such work will we be able to say with certainty whether adolescence has been a ubiquitous idea in literature or whether it is purely a twentieth-century theme. This is a task for the history of all literature and cannot be broached here.

In the next section we shall delineate a personal approach to the phenomenon of adolescence in the twentieth-century to identify a way in which certain aspects of the phenomenon can at least be explored in the primary material of this dissertation--novels of female adolescence by twentieth century women writers in America.

6

There being so many problems and shortcomings in the otherwise helpful approaches to adolescence which we have considered before, it becomes necessary to arrive at a composite view which may hopefully, improve the possibility of conducting a worthwhile study of the subject. One way of reading the conflict between the three approaches to adolescence (the psychological, socio-historical and the anthropological) is to view it as a conflict over the physical historical dating of adolescence. The

psychological theories believe that adolescence has always existed, whereas the other theories attribute the birth of adolescence to a particular socio-historical period. Can this seemingly irreconcilable difference be resolved? In postulating a synthetic theoretical approach I have made an attempt at resolution of these differences. The dynamics of the method I propose have been discussed below.

The three theoretical approaches recognise the physical facts of pubescence. It is hard to deny that these physiological changes (however well prepared the child is for his adult role) do require a brief period of inner adjustment. To begin with I would like to define adolescence as this brief period of inner adjustment to the physiological and related changes of pubescence. This necessity for a brief period of inner adjustment is universal, although the nature of the adjustment may vary in different social and historical periods and cultural conditions vary according to gender and class factors. My contention is that over the centuries this period of inner adjustment has been artificially prolonged on account of various social factors which had no direct bearing on the pubescent but have come to influence adolescence. This prolongation has given the adolescent a greater visibility than before. In my view, this theorisation of the history of adolescence as a history of increasing prolongation of the period of adjustment succeeds in integrating the various approaches as it does not exclude any approach to adolescence. The psychology of adolescence is not denied by the shifting socio-historical semantics of adolescence or vice-versa. My personal approach, therefore, postulates adolescence as a

physiological, psychological, socio-cultural and historically variable phenomenon which has probably always existed in human history no matter how briefly or whether it was noticed as such or not.

This approach will apply just as well to both male and female adolescence. But since this thesis specifically focuses on white middle-class female adolescence in twentieth-century American Women's literature, let us pursue the possible reasons for the greater visibility and prolongation of female adolescence in the twentieth-century. The reasons for this visibility are inextricably linked to the social history of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The industrial revolution in the eighteenth-century and the women's movement in the nineteenth gave women a new prominence. The female adolescent also shared in this process. At least three significant phenomena affected adolescence. The industrial revolution responsible for the shift from the country to the city resulted in significant changes in the structure of the family. The family unit underwent a nuclearisation. This diminution in family size resulted in greater attention to the child, whether male or female.

On account of the technological advancement ushered in by the industrial revolution medical conditions underwent improvement resulting in significant changes in the condition of women. The life expectancy of women in America increased from 40 to ⁷ 51 years between 1850 to 1900. An increase in the life span resulted in postponement of the age of marriage and consequent prolongation of the adolescence of women.

Certain other changes also affected the female adolescent

indirectly. Better health care for women during the time of pregnancy and child-birth increased chances of survival of the child. The earlier uncertainty of the life of the child, one of the chief reasons for high birth rates, was removed. Between 1804 and 1900 the birth rate fell from 7 children per family to 3.56 children. Increasing awareness and availability of birth control and contraceptive devices led to a decline in the number of children per family, which meant that each child received greater care and attention. This new child-centredness of the family inevitably gave greater visibility to the adolescent.

The Women's movement, which can trace its origins to Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth-century, argued from its very inception for the prolongation of adolescence. Concerned with the denial of the benefits of rationality of eighteenth-century Enlightenment to women, Mary Wollstonecraft in Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1789) argued for the education of girls in order to prevent the atrophy of their intellects. In effect Wollstonecraft was arguing for prolonging the age of girlhood. Hers was a lone voice but in the nineteenth century the demand was taken up and voiced by a significant number of women in America.

The battle for equal education, especially college education, was won after an intense debate by American women in the 1870s when three colleges--Vassar, Smith and Wellesley--opened their doors to women. This was a beginning. But by the twentieth century most colleges admitted women students. This was a significant move, for it meant that the period of adolescence was prolonged even further for some women.

Unlike the twentieth-century in which feminists view reproductive roles as tyrannical and binding the women activists of the nineteenth century were conscious of their role as nurturers, which led to the emergence of the cult of domesticity in nineteenth century America. This idealisation of the domestic was a response to the ruthless exploitative capitalistic world outside. These women envisioned their public roles as extensions of domestic roles. They formed clubs to discuss their roles as home keepers, child rearers and reformers. An important issue of discussion was the extent of outdoor activity permissible to the female child and adolescent, even where the form as such was not in use. By late nineteenth century the view that a girl should not be confined to household tasks as that had an adverse effect on their womanhood was gaining ground. This gave the female adolescent a new kind of visibility.

Dress reform in the nineteenth-century gave the adolescent one more new kind of freedom. This may appear to be a trivial change, but the debate it initiated in the nineteenth century is revelatory of the fact that the issue was important to the society of that period. Women activists saw the corset as a symbol of confinement and advocated dress reform. These attempts were at first ridiculed by most people but towards the end of the twentieth century more comfortable clothing has definitely become the norm giving the female adolescent far greater freedom of movement. The suffragette movement through its success in the early part of the twentieth century also set a legal definition of the adult woman, adding to the effect of all the factors we

have considered so far.

These are some of the changes that have prolonged the adolescence of the white middle-class girl and given her a greater visibility in the twentieth century. This newly acquired recognition and prominence of the adolescent female is definitely reflected in the literature of the twentieth-century in America.

In the next chapter we shall focus attention on seven twentieth century novels of middle-class female adolescence by white women writers. These narratives constitute a rich and important source in understanding the distinctive nature of middle-class female adolescence. We shall make an attempt, through an in-depth study of thematic similarities among these novels, to share the richness of these works in delineating the distinctive nature of female adolescence.

Notes

1) Hall 's theory of adolescence has been paraphrased from Rolf Edward Muuss's useful study Theories of Adolescence [New York: Random, 1982].

(2) Erikson's views on adolescence have been paraphrased from Muuss Theories of Adolescence [New York: Random, 1982].

(3) In the *Le Grand Propetaire de toutes chose*, infancy is defined as the period upto seven years of age; pueritia seven to fourteen; adolescence begins at fourteen but the age upto which it lasts was a matter of controversy. According to some scholars the adolescent stage lasts till twenty-one years whereas others believed that it lasted till twenty-eight. Adolescence was followed by youth, the prime of life, and lasted till fort-five to fifty. Senectitude is defined as the half-way period between youth and old-age. In this stage the person is not old but has passed his youth. After this age follows old-age which lasts until death. The last part of old-age is called senies.

(4) Melanie Klien's and Karen Horney's views have been paraphrased from Hazel Rowley and Elizabeth Grosz article "Psychoanalysis and Feminism" in Feminist Knowledge Critique and Construct [London: Routledge, 1990].

(5) Lacan, like Freud does not see masculinity or femininity in terms of the prescence or absceence of the anatomical organ.

In so far as the subject has the phallus he is masculine. In so far as the subject is the phallus she is feminine. The phallus is understood by Lacan not as an organ but as a signifier, the key signifier of the symbolic order. Like the linguistic signifier which acquires meaning only through a system of differences, the boy's possession of the phallus acquires meaning in the light of its absence in the girl. Like the signifier itself it is the presence of an absence. It is only through the other that a woman can be affirmed as having the phallus. Hence Lacan removes the question of biology to place it in the field of signification: the subject's sexual identity is the effect of its position in the symbolic order.

Lacan reformulated the Oedipal and the pre-Oedipal in terms of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The imaginary refers to the Pre-Oedipal stage. In the Imaginary stage the child perceives himself as part of the mother and there is no sense of a separate self, the self is always alienated in the other. The Oedipal crisis represents the entry into the Symbolic order. In the Oedipal crisis the father forbids the child further access to the other's body. The phallus representing The Law Of The Father thus comes to signify separation and loss to the child. The loss or lack suffered is the first repression and the primary repression. This primary repression thus opens up the unconscious. In the Imaginary there is no Unconscious since there is no lack. The entry into the Symbolic Order is linked to the acquisition of language as the child gives up its claim to Imaginary identity as a speaking subject and learns to differentiate between 'I', 'you', 'he/she' etc. For Lacan the subject comes into existence

only by virtue of entry into the Symbolic order represented by the phallus which Lacan calls the Law Of The Father. Lacan through his formulation of the Oedipal in terms of the Imaginary and the Symbolic provides an alternative reading of Freud's theory of penis-envy as one becomes a subject only by entry into the patriarchal structures, a theory useful to feminists as it explains the primacy of patriarchy. For a more detailed account see Juliet Mitchell's Psychoanalysis and Feminism [New York: Pantheon, 1974]. Also see Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudiennes [London: Macmillan, 1982].

(6) Samuel Johnson defined puberty as; "the time of life in which the two sexes begin first to be acquainted. Lawrence Stone defined adolescence as a period beginning at fourteen, uncertain as to termination. [qtd in Spacks: 7, 1981]

(7) This statistical information and the figures quoted further have been taken from Lois W. Banner's Women in Modern America: A Brief History. [San-Diego: Harcourt, 1984].

CHAPTER 3

Resisting Femininity

A Study of Female Adolescent Concerns

Maturity is a pyrrhic victory.

[anon]

The distinctive nature of growing-up female as well as adolescent in a patriarchal culture were briefly discussed in the introductory chapter. We further saw in the previous chapter, that major areas of neglect exist even in theoretical considerations of the phenomenon. In this chapter we shall resume and extend the discussion of the dual bind of being female and adolescent in a white middle-class social milieu through a focussed and detailed study of the thematic similarities in certain select twentieth century novels of adolescence. The novels chosen for discussion are: Summer (1917), The Painted Room (1928), The Bonney Family (1928), Member Of the Wedding (1946), Old Mortality (1934), The Mountain Lion (1947) and The Bell Jar (1963) (hence-forward referred to in their abbreviated form as SU, PR, BF, MOW, OM, ML and BJ).

Narratives of female adolescence, states The Encyclopedia of American Women Writers--

reveal a common theme of the loss of childhood freedom and the closing in of repressive sexual and social mores of the 'feminine mystique' as

these protagonists realise that unlike their brothers or male peers, their experience of life will shrink rather than grow as they pass into adulthood and face the inevitable expectation that they marry and become mothers. [12]

This concept of the "feminine mystique" is a patriarchal construct which defines woman as someone passive and subservient who finds fulfilment through wifedom and motherhood. This concept is central to an understanding of adolescence as it forms the background for ideological conflict in novels of adolescence which we shall analyse in this chapter. The part-woman identity of the female adolescent signifies that she has to learn to be what society thinks a "complete" woman should be. Thus, in the eyes of all who swallow their assignment of roles to women, their adolescence is purely a period of acculturation into their future role as adult women.

Adult society organised around rigid patriarchal lines exerts pressure and forces the female adolescent to conform to predetermined stereotypes of the feminine. This pressure is clearly antithetical to and conflicts with the task of individual identity formation. The pressures to conform to conventional stereotypes prevent the emergence of an autonomous individual identity. This restrictive, often damaging, socialisation of identity is reflected in the novels in the attitudes of the peer group which usually endorses and enforces the traditional, stereotypical notions of femininity. But the central adolescent protagonists of these novels resist the pressures to conform to

these restrictive stereotypes. Their resistance takes many forms, the particular mode of resistance being influenced by the age and the peculiar circumstances of the character.

In MOW and ML, for instance, Molly and Frankie who have just entered adolescence defy the restricting femininity by continuing to cling to the world of childhood, which symbolises freedom. In BF and SU the protagonists, in their mid-adolescence, are aware that there is no going back to childhood. Their resistance against their acculturation lies in refusing to accept the values thrust upon them. Sarah in BF asserts her identity by refusing to live up to the feminine ideal of 'cuteness'. Sixteen year old Charity in SU defies the conventions of the town by having a sexual relationship with an outsider. Nineteen year old Martha in PR challenges sexual mores that regulate female sexuality by having a sexual relationship with a married man. In BJ nineteen year old Esther, on the threshold of womanhood, constantly questions the double standards applied to the male and the female. Unable to withstand the pressures of fast approaching womanhood Esther takes a self-destructive route towards insanity. In DM, Miranda's elopement is a gesture of rebelliousness against the institutions of the family and the convent which curbs her freedom. But Miranda soon realises that marriage is not liberatory either. In each novel the adolescent protagonist feels, resents and attempts to resist the pressures of conforming to the stereotypical image of the feminine exerted by adult society.

There is a similarity in the realisation of pressures and the aim to achieve selfhood underlying these various forms of protest by the adolescent protagonists of these novels. They

quest for an autonomous individual identity which is free from the patriarchal constructions of femininity. Although femininity has essentially not been treated as a monolithic concept in these novels, there is an underlying similarity in the pressures, the adolescent must bear that attempt to make her accept her biology as her destiny. The adolescent who resists and rebels against her future secondary status is an isolated figure in each of these novels. Her resistance brings her into conflict with the adult world which imposes these values on her. She is alienated from the peer group which has, essentially, accepted these values. The alienation of the protagonists in these novels from adult as well as peer society, especially the latter, is a hard fact of adolescence. It has been effectively used by novelists to highlight the gravity of the problem of being female and adolescent in a patriarchal culture.

In this chapter the themes we consider have been selected with the aim of highlighting the problems of protagonists who resist the stereotypes of femininity in their adolescent years. The chapter has five themes which have been covered in four sections in the following logical order: relationship with parents; relationship with peers; sexuality; loneliness; and aspirations and resolutions. The resistance of the protagonists is first reflected in the questioning of parental and familial values which endorse the traditional notions of femininity highlighted above. These protagonists are in conflict not only with their parents but also with their peers who despite rebellious overt behaviour, subscribe to the same adult values. A large part of the problem with the peer group is linked to sexu-

ality. As a consequence of being on the fringe of both the child and the adult world the protagonists are friendless and consequently victims of acute loneliness. The last theme examines the resolution of the multiple problems faced by the protagonists in the light of their own aspirations for their future. Each theme employs four to five novels to support the argument but, in analysing them, an attempt has also been made to resist collapsing the differences between the novels. And it is hoped that these themes will be seen as both taken into account and inadequately studied by the various approaches to female adolescence which we examine in the opening chapter of the present thesis. We shall begin with the female adolescents' relationship with their parents.

1

Adolescence is a period of transition from dependence to independence. A necessary requisite to this transition is that the adolescent eventually wean herself away from the family sufficiently to be able to carve a distinct identity for herself. This requirement frames the relationship between parent and adolescent, whether it is necessarily fulfilled or not. The adolescent's move towards individuation is also a move towards dismantling the existing hierarchical and hegemonic structures which exist within a family between parent and child and which may well have been biologically and otherwise desirable up to that point. This threat of dislocation especially unsettles the

parent. His or her authority as a parent derives strength from constructing the child as a dependent. The parent himself or herself rarely prepares for the child's transition by initiating the dislocation process. With the child pressing for greater independence and the adult trying to maintain power over the child, severe reconfiguration of relationships necessarily takes place in many cases of adolescence. Such a reconfiguration generally makes the parent insecure (the situation of parents of adolescents will make an absorbing study in itself). But it is far more frequently traumatic, painful and conflictual for the adolescent. The struggle for independence is especially hard for female adolescents as the family itself is deeply implicated in patriarchal practices, as we have seen already.

Adopting such practices comes naturally to parents, for they appear profitable to the parent as they have the sanction of society to retain their authority. In our discussion of BJ, MOW, BF and PR we shall attempt to show that this is true of both mothers and fathers. Incidentally, with the exception of BF and PR, in our illustrative novels, the protagonists have single parents. The single parent, who also wields the authority of the other absent parent, feels even more threatened by the adolescent demanding her right to be herself. The parent then deploys all available tools to suppress such a demand. The tools of age, experience, knowing the world, and habitual parental authority sanctioned by society, church and law, are the most obvious ones. Other covert tools such as control over money, a pretence of being an understanding parent, emotional blackmail, calculated neglect or continued treatment of the adolescent as a child may

also be deployed. The use of such tools and the reasons for using them may be largely unconscious. An explicit enumeration of such tools of control, however, is hardly an overstatement; most adults who try hard enough will recall a combination of such devices from their own adolescent years. Therefore to unearth the subterranean nature of such tools is a necessary task for us.

The power play may be subtle in Bell Jar but it cannot be missed. The conflict has not been explicitly identified but it can be reconstructed from significant comments by Esther, the protagonist of the novel. The core of the conflict between Esther and her mother is their different ideological convictions of a woman's place in society. There is no direct verbal confrontation between them on these points. But the conflict figures as an ongoing inner struggle in Esther's mind and in it the mother's influence looms large. The lack of verbal conflict, the silence itself indicates, even emphasises, the distance between mother and daughter.

Early widowhood and subsequent financial crisis make hard won sub-urban, middle-class values dear to Esther's mother. Continuation of this secure middle-class world can be permanently ensured only by a transference of its values to the next generation. But Esther resists this socialisation into middle-class values internalised by her mother which she is pressurised to accept without demur.

The resistance takes place in two very significant ways. Esther questions middle-class notions of feminine and the social roles assigned to women and she defies the pressing need for security by choosing to be a writer, an obviously insecure non-

middle-class profession. The decision to be a writer is frowned upon in the sub-urban, middle-class milieu where women are valued in their auxiliary, subordinate roles as housewives or expected to pursue conventional careers such as a secretarial job or nursing (an extension of their subordinate roles from the private into the public sphere). Her mother, with the middle class mode of thinking deeply ingrained, expects Esther to adopt these values. Though she does not directly stop or inhibit Esther from pursuing her career, she makes her disapproval felt. Esther reports:

My mother kept telling me nobody wanted a plain English major. But an English major who knew shorthand would be something else again. Everybody would want her, she would be in demand among all the up and coming young men and she would transcribe letter after thrilling letter. The trouble was I hated the idea of serving men in any way. I wanted to dictate my own thrilling letter. [82]

The mother's reasons for goading Esther into secretaryship and significantly into serving men, and for disapproving her choice to be a writer are worldly--the fear of lack of material security. She would prefer to have Esther married to Buddy Willard, although he is hypocritical, chauvinistic and insensitive to Esther's inner needs. Marriage or secretaryship are confirmed and approved means to obtain material security. Her mother urges her towards comfort and security (symbolised by

secretarial career or marriage) rather than freedom. Therefore, the conflict between mother and daughter is more than a conflict of life styles, it is a conflict between the subservient, dependent role of a conforming life of wife and, a non-conformist independent one as a poet, it is a conflict between drastically different world views. For the self-assertive woman can overturn middle class, patriarchal values, cause instability, upset the proverbial apple-cart.

The very knowledge of her mother's disapprobation exerts pressure upon Esther to perform as expected. She herself cannot fail, for failure would signify that her mother is right and would involve the abdication of her aspirations in favour of the middle-class principle of the feminine. The conflict between mother and daughter, which is never verbalised, is revealed in other ways as well. For instance, Esther wishes that Jay Cee, the editor to whom she is apprenticed in New York, who is a successful career woman in the competitive world of publishing were her mother. During her stay in the asylum Esther confides to her psychiatrist Dr. Nolan the hatred she feels for her mother. This articulation of hatred bottled up for so long releases her from the burdens of silence. Dr. Nolan becomes the mother figure and helps her to overcome her anger against her mother. With the help of the surrogate mother (the doctor) Esther recovers to resume her journey towards selfhood away from the middle-class notions of the feminine held by her mother.

In Member of the Wedding, twelve year old Frankie, unprepared for the physical changes heralding adolescence and unwilling to accept her emerging femininity, clings to the world of

childhood. A significant prop of this childhood world is the room she shares with her father. But Frankie's father, on noticing the onset of pubertal growth, assigns Frankie a separate room:

'Who is this great big long-legged, twelve-year-old blunderbuss who still wants to sleep with her old Papa'. And she was too big to sleep with her father anymore. She had to sleep in her upstairs room alone. [23]

The father's gesture, an oblique recognition of Frankie's femininity, also affirms the loss of the desirable protective, familiar, safe environs of her childhood world. The gesture therefore alienates Frankie physically and emotionally from her father: "She began to have a grudge against her father and they looked at each other in a slant-eyed way" [23]. That her father is an only parent and a male one complicates matters too. In this case we can begin to see how questionable attitudes to and treatment of adolescents cause serious problems for all, how males are quite thoroughly unprepared to deal with the situation as a result of their own inadequate socialisation.

Apart from the gesture of assigning her a separate room, Frankie's father maintains a rigid silence on the changes she is undergoing. The silence enhances Frankie's confusions. It is Bernice, the house-keeper, who attempts to explain to Frankie the implications of these changes. But Bernice's attempts are a poor substitute for the understanding and comfort from the parent required to assuage Frankie's fears about her own growth. Her

father's silence makes Frankie take longer in coming to terms with her adolescent self. The silence also renders him a peripheral, shadowy figure in her adolescent years and prevents Frankie from confiding her fears or her misgivings to him. As a consequence Frankie's father is quite unaware of the inner emotional anguish and loneliness which have resulted from his well meaning gesture.

In any case the father's recognition of Frankie's adolescent self is, limited to allotment of physical space, "a room of her own". The recognition, however, does not grant Frankie the right to make decisions and she is still expected to acquiesce to his authority. The allotment of space, though well-intended is itself an arbitrary act. Later also his attitudes towards her reflect the same arbitrariness. When Frankie wants to buy the dress for the wedding from a shop different from the one they usually patronise, he does not let her do so. Similarly when Frankie confides in him a desire to leave the town he does not pay any attention. Frankie's father hears but does not listen, a common failing of most parents of adolescents. The fuss which Frankie creates at the wedding is seen as a mere public humiliation and is not understood in terms of Frankie's own experience and view-point. Thus the relationship between Frankie and the father remains distant, incomprehensible, unhelpful, unsympathetic and she does not get the sense of protection and care she so badly needs in her confused critical years of growth.

The novel Painted Room contrasts two ways of bringing up adolescents. While one section of the story informs us of Emily's upbringing, the other tells us the way Emily brought up her own

daughter. Emily's upbringing shows the forbidding authoritarian nature of adult power over the adolescent. Denied freedom in her adolescence, Emily is reduced to a mere object in the hands of her aunt, who pushes her around to suit her caprices. The overarching nature of adult power controls every facet of her life. It closes the door of communication between parent and child and forces Emily into submissiveness. Emily's sensitive nature resents the repeated humiliation which the controls cast upon her and she longs to escape. Impatient to be free of her aunt's restrictive tutelage, Emily takes the only escape-route open to her. She marries Bob. The marriage made not out of choice but out of desperation, becomes another way in which life encases her.

As a parent of a female adolescent, in turn, Emily brings the knowledge of her adolescent suffering, which had compelled her into a marriage of convenience, to bear upon her daughter, Martha's upbringing. Having faced a deprived girlhood herself, she avows to be a liberal, accommodating and understanding parent and adopts the child's rather than the adult point of view in the process of bringing up Martha. Hence she is able to grant Martha the space and freedom requisite in every adolescent's growth. Emily's attitude is supportive, seen from her defence of Martha when she quarrels with Bob, her father. As a result of the way Emily brings her up which does not thwart her individuality, Martha grows up to be a happy, confident girl to whom life offers a wide array of choices (in bold contrast to Emily's own adolescence).

Although Martha has been provided freedom by her parents,

this freedom becomes problematic when she evinces a sexual interest in a married man, Richard Quinn. As an individual, Martha has absolute right over her mind, heart, and her body. On the basis of this right, Martha demands the socially unacceptable freedom exercise to sexuality outside marriage. This demand throws open another aspect of what is unknown territory to the adolescent, hearsay experience versus first hand experience in matters like sex. Martha's parents through their greater experience in life know that Richard Quinn's motives are insincere. They try to explain this to Martha but she is convinced that Richard Quinn's motives are above reproach. In this case, as an adolescent, Martha is unwilling to listen to anyone and can learn only from her own experience or even mistakes in life. Clearly, the price or cost of freedom is beyond the adolescent's powers of anticipation and calculation. But Bob and Emily cannot grant her the freedom to experiment. For it may, in their eyes, harm her. Nor are they able to show her what they see of the future. [We can see in cases like this why innocence and experience and other related themes like the price of knowledge are shared by other types of fiction which we discussed earlier in Chapter 1]

The right that Martha demands also problematises the notion of upbringing. The reader wonders whether Martha has voiced the demand because Emily is a liberal parent and Martha does not feel threatened by her. Would she have dared to voice such a demand had Emily's aunt brought her up? Of course plenty of adolescents do that too in real life, or even take matters into their own hands, as does Martha here. The novel depicts the contrasts between two modes of upbringing, the traditional and repressive-

ly strict approach like Emily's aunt's and a liberal one like Emily's and raises questions regarding the correct mode of upbringing which should be adopted by parents of adolescent girls.

Mountain Lion shares certain similarities with PR and it also portrays, in turn, the upbringing of both mother (Mrs. Fawcett) and her daughter Molly. Mrs. Fawcett's adolescence, like Emily's is typical, rendered difficult by parental insensitivity towards her needs. But unlike Emily who learns from her adolescent experience and allows its knowledge to have a positive influence on the upbringing of her daughter, Mrs. Fawcett's adolescence has an entirely negative impact on Molly. In her adolescence Mrs. Fawcett is deprived of the refinement of her genteel background due to her father's death and her mother's subsequent marriage to Grandpa Kenyon, a crude rancher. Accustomed to a genteel environment, in the environs of the crude male world of the ranch, she suffers its deprivations intensely till rescued by Mr. Fawcett. Therefore, after her own marriage, Mrs. Fawcett recreates in her own home the environment which she had found wanting in her step-father's home. She also, more importantly, desires to inculcate in her children the genteel refined ways represented by her father Grandpa Bonney, whose portrait looms large in the center hall (symbolising the extent of his influence). But unlike Emily, Mrs. Fawcett's troubled adolescence, does not make her an accommodative, understanding parent who adopts a child-centered rather than an adult-centered approach in the upbringing of her children. Instead the deprivation suffered in her adolescence make her self-centered. Fear-

ing the loss of the genteel environment she wants to ensure its 'advantages' will accrue to her children by imposing its values on them. This is not unlike Esther's mother in BJ who desires to ensure middle-class security by passing it on to her daughter.

The refinement of genteel society implicitly enforces the stereotypical conventions of femininity. For instance, Molly is forbidden from 'climbing trees', 'own bicycles or roller skates', and her pastimes are limited to playing board games, the painting of water colours, and poetry recitation, as rough games remind her mother of the ranch and are unfeminine. But even as a child Molly finds the impositions of the prim and proper genteel world restrictive. In defiance of this restrictiveness, along with Ralph, Molly, celebrates the world of Grandpa Kenyon--a world symbolising not only the rugged primeval West in contrast to the oppressively feminine environs of home, but also a sort of freedom to be oneself which is enticing for them and hated by their mother. Molly's relationship with her mother is strained as even in appearance and intelligence she does not approximate to her mother's notions of femininity. With buck teeth, spectacles and straight hair, Molly does not conform to the image of the blonde blue-eyed beauty (significant conventional characteristic of femininity). Her mother prefers the two beautiful older daughters Leah and Rachel who have dutifully learnt the decorous lessons of refinement and femininity. Molly and Ralph are neglected, often left to their own resources, which is a mixed blessing at the threshold of adolescence. A statement by Mrs. Fawcett in the novel made during the course of Molly and Ralph's impending visit to the ranch proves this: " she [the mother] was

secretly glad to be rid of her volatile two in the summer and to bask in the sunny dispositions and pretty faces of the two older children" [121]. During her childhood, although aware of her mother's neglect and the pressures of femininity to which she must acquiesce to win maternal approval Molly, does not quite experience it as she has Ralph to fall back on. But the mother's neglect has serious consequences in her adolescent years.

The Grandfather's ranch offers an obviously attractive refuge to Molly and her brother. But it is a heavily male-oriented environment and on the visit to the ranch Molly finds that she does not fit there, although Ralph has found himself comfortable in it. The ranch thus drives an emotional wedge between Ralph and Molly. At this point isolated in the masculine world of the ranch, Molly faces the same pressures as her mother during her girlhood. But she is not able to tell her mother of her unhappiness she experiences at the ranch. For it would mean that she would have to accept her mother's narrow world of femininity. And even at that age Molly clearly understands this. So we see that Molly's reasons for not confiding are similar to Esther's.

Furthermore the visits to the ranch improve Ralph's health and appearance but Molly remains the same. On account of his improved looks, Ralph is accepted by his mother but Molly continues to be a victim of parental dislike and neglect. Her mother thinks of her as a hopeless case. "The depths of the child were unfathomable to Mrs. Fawcett and at times she was really afraid for her. Somehow time did not soften her and make her have thoughts and feelings like other children" [123]. The neglect is

evident in Mrs. Fawcett's decision to leave Molly, an adolescent now, for a year in the same masculine world of the ranch intolerable to her in her own adolescence. Molly's protestations at the decision are ignored. The arbitrary decision's dire consequences become obvious when Molly, unsocialised into the world of the ranch, helpless, friendless, without a confidant, and in a turmoil within, is accidentally killed. Her death raises the question whether, had she not been neglected by the mother, she would have lived, and lived a far better life.

The parent-adolescent relationship in Bonney Family is stronger than those depicted in the novels considered so far except the PR. The parents in BF provide the children with a sense of home, comfort and stability. But in this apparently 'secure' environment, where the children are generally well cared for, Sarah experiences a subtle parental neglect of her needs. Outwardly there is nothing to pinpoint this neglect. The Bonney's are understanding parents and both Sarah and Warren can share their problems with them. But compared to Sarah, Warren receives greater parental love and understanding. Sarah experiences the parental preference for Warren several times during her adolescence. To cite one such instance, her mother's unresponsiveness to Sarah's avid interest in Dickens. At this point Sarah realises: "It was different when Warren told things" [9]. Similarly, when Sarah voices her doubts on joining the Christian Endeavor her mother is surprised as she had expected Warren and not Sarah to express doubts regarding the efficacy of religion. Though Sarah is not compelled to join the Endeavor, she experiences pangs of 'bitter loneliness' for her inability to share

her inner thoughts with her mother.

Sarah's reliable and dependable nature makes everyone at home take her for granted. But she receives very little real appreciation for what she does for that is supposed to be her responsibility anyway, the natural fulfilment of expectation from her. On a trip to Morning Sun, Sarah exchanges her sleeping space with her sister though it will deprive her of the company of her own friends. Reprimanded by her mother Wilma replies casually that it is easier for Sarah to do the hard things. Wilma's attitude is shared by other members of the family. Although Sarah's mother relies on her in times of crisis, she is not expressive or demonstrative in thanking her. Similarly her father is also reticent about his affections for her.

The death of her mother catapults Sarah into the role of a substitute mother and house-wife. Incidentally, such roles are forced upon many an adolescent of either sex by quirks of circumstances. At this point the roles between the daughter and father are reversed. It is Sarah who parents her father and supports his second marriage. So Sarah's growing-up may not show any external disturbance in her dealings with her parents but the relationship is one of expected role-fulfilment and not of the growth of potential and inclinations in her deeper nature.

This analysis of parent-adolescent relationships in the five novels reveals the tenuous nature of the emotional bond between the adolescent and the parent. It is hardly surprising that the adolescents suffer severely on this account. The adolescents are either victims of parental neglect as in MOU, or relentless pressures to perform as in BJ, or the victims of expectation of

role-fulfilment as in BE, or unfavourable comparison and discrimination from other siblings as in ML, or a combination of these factors. The notions of femininity endorsed and enforced by the parent and the adolescent's demand for freedom from its constricting effects underscore the varying parent-child relations. For instance in MDW the acknowledgement of Frankie's femininity by her father signifies the loss of childhood freedom. Similarly Molly's relations with her mother are strained on account of her refusal to accept the restrictiveness of narrow conventions of femininity endorsed by the mother, for they impinge on her freedom. Esther's discord with her mother also stems from a refusal to accept the middle-class model of femininity in favour of an independent life. Martha and Sarah in PR and BE appear to have different sets of problems with their parents but Sarah is taken for granted by the family precisely because she is a girl and the temporary rift between Martha and her mother occurs because she demands freedom from the social mores which advocate chastity, an important constituent of the principle of femininity held by her mother. The conflict deprives the adolescents of parental understanding, even results in terrible consequences such as death in ML and insanity in BJ. These consequences should make us aware of the vulnerability of the adolescent, and also lead to the recognition of the fact that negotiation and not imposition should characterise parent-adolescent relationships. Authoritarianism on the part of the parent, however well-intended only seem to result in creating distances, at times unbridgeable, between the parent and the adolescent. The adolescent deprived of support within the family may turn to her peers but the same

conflict between conventional notions of femininity and the adolescents demand for freedom affects the adolescents relations with the peers.

2

Adolescence places a young female on the margins of childhood and adult worlds. The peer group provides, or at least seems to offer the adolescent, who lacks reference points in either childhood or adulthood, with a sense of community, an alternate world. The adolescent undergoing significant physiological changes naturally turns to the peer group, which is also undergoing similar changes, for reassurance, support and comfort, for community of thought and aspiration, hope and a language of her own in which to deal with the confusing, frustrating world.

But the peer group is not entirely and always a safe haven of fellow-sufferers in whose companionship the adolescent can derive comfort. It also exerts certain pressures which can marginalise, hurt, isolate and alienate the adolescent. Cruelty or inability to understand peers is certainly not a monopoly of adults. Some of the novels selected for discussion, here MOW, SU, ML, BF, PR, do depict the peer group in a negative light. The peer group is portrayed as a tight-knit community with its own rigid norms--intolerant, discriminatory and punishing towards those who do not meet the norms,-- being as conventional about them in the short run as the adult is in the long run. In these novels the normative behaviour that the peer group advocates or

expects echoes similar constraining adult values, especially the same prescriptive notions of femininity that the female adolescent is trying to escape. The peer group's avid interest and preoccupation with physical appearance and beauty, are aimed at cultivating a femininity that would appeal to the male adolescent gaze, and ensure heterosexual attraction and success in the near future. Popularity in the eyes of the male adolescent is the recipe for being a successful member of the peer group, the minimum and desirable qualification for membership. Also, apart from being popular the adolescent has to consciously project that she is unconscious of her success, or "cool" to use a current term. However, the line one is expected to toe is very thin. Any attempt to flaunt her success endangers her homosocial friendships. For she is then perceived as a threat by other girls. In BJ, for instance Doreen oozes a strong conscious sex appeal and is distrusted by her peers. For the adolescent peer group is as much a society as any other, as much subject to group phenomenon or patterns of group psychology.

A study of social compulsions which result in the adoption of these values by the peer group would be of interest. But, as the focus of this chapter is on the resisting adolescent protagonist, we must reluctantly leave this promising field and focus on the relationship of the female adolescent protagonists with their peers.

The protagonists of these novels are uncomfortable with these notions of femininity and the confining, conventional roles of women as home-makers or at the most supplementary income earners, and means of both sexual and non-sexual gratification of

males, towards which they are pushed. For these offend their individuality and thwart their ambitions. Unlike the peer group these protagonists refuse to comply with these notions of femininity, as a consequence of which they are isolated and deprived of peer support. The adolescent protagonists of these novels are dually marginalised. They are on the margins of the childhood and adult worlds as well as on the margins of their own community. Painfully aware of their exclusion, they resent the pressure exerted by the group to collectivise their identity and yet secretly yearn for acceptance of their individuality, for approval by the peer group.

Here we shall attempt a brief over-view of the novels in question with regard to the relationship of the adolescent vis-a-vis the peer group. In each novel, a particular aspect of the peer group has been dwelt upon. For instance BF contrasts the outcome of the adolescent boy's and girl's outsider status vis-a-vis the peer group. For Sarah an acceptance of peer values means accepting the debilitating stereotypes of femininity, whereas the stereotypes of masculinity are not necessarily disempowering and therefore they are acceptable to Warren. In MDW, Frankie Addams is exiled from the 'club' on account of her unwillingness to accept her budding sexuality (equivalent to femininity in the novel). The peer group's conservative value-structure is portrayed in PR. In PR the protagonist Martha is initially a member of her peer group but her relationship with a married man in defiance of conventional notions of peer morality mars her relationship with the peer group. The class constitution of the peer group is portrayed in SU. In BJ the heroine is

excluded from her peer group on account of her devotion to her intellectual capacities which are considered unfeminine by both adults and adolescents alike.

The first text that we shall examine in some detail is the Bonney Family. In BF the peer group is depicted as comprising various cliques. The clique which dominates, wields power, and is most popular is the clique of 'handsome' boys and 'cute' girls. These notions of 'handsome' and 'cute', the criteria for success in the peer group by emphasising physical attractiveness, also reinforce dominant cultural stereotypes. The cute girl is not only attractive but fragile, delicate, passive and not overly intelligent. Any other quality or talent is of secondary importance to physical appearance and is not even considered if the person is not good looking. The peer group is ruthless in the imposition of these criteria and this causes considerable agony to adolescents who fail to meet them, filling them with deep sense of rejection and isolation. The novel dwells on the relationship of two such adolescents with the peer group (the older Bonney children, Sarah and Warren). The novel also contrasts the responses and outcome of their exclusion from the group. During the period of his exclusion, Warren bitterly rails against the arbitrary standards adopted by the peer group but becomes acquiescent and even champions them once he has been accepted by the clique that matters most. But Sarah, who never faces an out and out exclusion because of her readiness to be of general help to others, refuses to accept and perpetuate the discriminatory standards of handsomeness and cuteness as these physical attributes form cultural stereotypes which confine girls severe-

ly.

Warren, a bony, gangly and awkward adolescent is excluded from the peer group on account of his physical appearance which renders him unpopular with the girls, who laugh and snigger at him. Left out of the reckoning as a potential date partner, he is without anyone to escort at parties or is forced to escort unattractive girls. Warren is attracted and repulsed by the narrow standards of the peer group. Intellectually inclined, Warren despises them for their lack of scholarly interests and for their single-minded focus upon physicality, good looks and sexual appeal. But at the same time he is attracted to the glitter of this circle, the power its members enjoy and the easy confidence they exude.

Warren experiences a constant struggle between scholarly aloofness (a mask for damaged pride) and an acute and intense desire to be part of this very group. But the latter proves to be far stronger with Warren, despite the repeated humiliations that he suffers at the hands of the peer group. This is because Warren's masculine status is directly dependent upon his successful entry into the peer group. The lack of success would constitute "a confession, a want of failure" of his masculinity. Warren's entry into the peer group signifies the social acceptance of his masculinity. By subscribing to such notions Warren loses his sensitivity, especially towards Sarah, but gains peer approval and respect. Here, the notion of masculinity does not preclude intellectuality, but assigns it secondary importance. Hence, Warren does not entirely have to give up on his future plans, merely to make some adjustments.

Sarah, like Warren, faces problems with her peer group. Her plain, homely looks exclude her from the peer group as she does not fit into the image of the 'cute' girl who has feminine charm, coquettish manners and a delicate air about her. This image of cuteness presumes that the girl is passive, docile (qualities that attract boys) and will succeed in sexualising her identity. Sarah finds this consensual standard of 'cuteness' an affront to her individuality. She neither sees her present life as synonymous with the sole role of a successful date partner nor does she see her future only as a wife. An acceptance of this standard of cuteness would mean living not on her terms but for an arbitrary image and a standard alien to her notion of her own self.

Like Warren, Sarah is on the margins of the peer group. At the picnic on her last day at Morning Sun, her friends Geraldine and Martha desert her for the boys. Sarah is not asked to join: "How mean girls were when the boys came round--they didn't care what they did. Sarah hated it. She couldn't see why they were that way for the sake of two boys" [60]. The codes of behaviour, tacitly understood and widely employed in the presence of boys by the girls, differ starkly from their normal behaviour. Sarah refuses to turn on a certain kind of false charm or dress in a particular way to make boys feel her appeal, for it would mean being untrue to her self and silently reducing herself to be a mere date partner.

As a result Sarah is never asked out on dates. She knows that she does not belong to the "crowd". In her Freshman years Sarah works hard for her class. She takes up the responsibility

for organising committees, class events and is respected for her abilities and hard work. But she is never asked out on dates, for these qualities pale in front of the all powerful image of the other cute girl. In fact Sarah's organisational skills, her ability to take decisions and independent action are considered unfeminine. She is tolerated but not accepted by the peer group: "The girls liked her, she just didn't belong to them. They laughed tolerantly at her queerness and then added as if repentantly: Sarah's a grand girl though. She's a whole lot better than the people who laugh at her" [177].

Like Warren, Sarah desires to be a part of the peer group:

She liked the boys in her class too. But from the class meetings she attended with such ardor, she had to tramp home alone. She wanted the boys but she expected the boys to like her just as she was. None of the grand boys seemed to do that. [177-178].

But unlike Warren, however, Sarah refuses to compromise her individuality. Sarah's resistance against this acculturation stems from a love of freedom and an intuitive knowledge of the disempowering effects of the 'cute' image. Subscribing to this image would mean defining and casting herself in stereotypes of femininity which effectively imply a life-long secondary status. Warren's masculinity grants him access to the world whereas, Sarah would be denied freedom if she were to emulate the 'cute' image, the embodiment of femininity. Sarah continues to remain

outside, and decides to traverse the difficult years without peer comfort. Though lonely, the struggle helps Sarah to retain her freedom, in contrast to other girls such as Warren's wife who find themselves bound in their conventional adult female roles.

In BJ as in BF heterosexual success determines the status within the peer group. A brief but telling comment on the changes in the attitudes of the peer group towards Esther is revealed when Buddy Willard begins to date her:

When she heard that I was going to the Yale Junior Prom she treated me with amazement and respect. Oddly enough, things changed in the house after that [the first date]. The seniors on my floor started speaking to me and every now and then one of them would answer the phone quite spontaneously and nobody made any more nasty loud remarks outside my door about people wasting their golden college days with their noses stuck in a book.
[66-67]

Esther's comment reveals the attitudes of the peer group towards her prior to the invitation to Yale Junior Prom. Esther's peers at college privilege heterosexual success, being 'desired' by 'desirable' males over success at intellectual pursuits. The model, of successful femininity which the peers subscribe to is the educated suburban upper middle-class housewife. Since education is the key word, college is the hunting ground for future heterosexual partners and not for "wasting their golden college

days with their noses stuck in a book". Intellectual pursuits are labeled unfeminine and take a back-seat. Intellectually inclined with straight A's throughout her college career, Esther obviously does not abide by the image of the feminine. Since appearance not intellectual accomplishment, is the demonstration of feminine desirability and worth, Esther is on the margins of the peer group. The peer group makes its displeasure felt by nettling her in minor ways such as referring loudly to Esther as a 'book-worm', expecting her to attend to their telephone calls, etc.

Esther's intellectual inclination is not only an outcome of natural ability but is also a form of rebellion against the stereotyping of femininity as an educated woman who yet only becomes sub-urban housewife. This is antithetical to her goal of independence and she resists the pressure to be like the other girls. But it results in her becoming dangerously lonely in her adolescent years.

Like Sarah and Esther, twelve year old Frankie in MOW is on the margins of her peer group. But Frankie's reasons for exclusion, although related, are different from Sarah's. Sarah and Esther resist a sexualisation of their identity but not sexuality per se, whereas Frankie rejects knowledge of sexuality itself. Mentally unprepared to cope with the rapidity of physical change at the onset of adolescence, and desirous of retaining the security of her childhood world, unlike her peers Frankie refuses to accept the sexual significance of the change. An acceptance of sexuality would mean accepting the loss of childhood and the beginnings of femininity, which she is unprepared for.

The peer group is referred to as the 'club'. The importance

of the peer group and Frankie's relationship with it is emphasised in the first few lines of the text: "She belonged to no club and was member of nothing in the world" [1]. Frankie's non-member status results from her refusal to allow the sexual meaning underlying the physical change to take over her whole life. Closely linked to this reason is also a desire to mentally cling to the world of childhood. Frankie initially had been a "younger member of the crowd" [10] of girls who formed the club but was later excluded from the club. The ostensible reason is that "she smelt bad" [11] but the real reason is Frankie's refusal to accept sexuality as the ruling principle of life. "They were talking nasty lies about married people. When I think of Aunt Pet and Uncle Ustace. And my own father! The nasty lies! I don't know what kind of fool they take me for" [11]. This constitutes the central problem with the club. She finds it difficult to accept the added burden of sexual knowledge as it also means an acknowledgement and acceptance of her own budding femininity. Frankie's tomboyishness not only symbolises childhood but also her desire for what might be called an androgynous self which will enable her to escape the disempowering effects of femininity.

The other members of the club, unlike Frankie, have adjusted to the immediate changes heralding adolescence. But Frankie as a non-member is not invited to the Saturday night parties of these girls. At this point of time a healthy relationship with her peer group could have provided emotional succour by excising the nameless fears and misconceptions about her growth which crowd her mind. For instance, the sudden increase in height

makes Frankie think she is turning into a freak, her unspecified sin with Barney McKean in the garage has transformed her into a criminal. Her early physical growth and her inability to come to terms with its real significance becomes the primary reason for her turning away from the peer group.

The next novel we shall discuss is Summer. Charity's relationship with the peer group is sketchily described in the novel nor does the peer group exist as a distinct entity here. But the relationship can be adequately constructed on the basis of constant reference to difference made between Charity and the town girls. Although, unlike Sarah or Frankie, Charity is not actually excluded from the peer group, she maintains a distance from the other town-girls who are comfortable with the parochial, narrow, monotonous, small town existence. Charity desires to escape it and see the outside world. But in the novel a desire to escape from the confines of the town to the glitter of the city is loaded with several layers of meaning and is a powerful device of constructing notions of femininity to which the adolescent heroine is expected to adhere. The girl who goes to the city is the "fallen" girl and later becomes a prostitute, as in the case of Julia Hawes. The good girl stays at home (the town) happy in the stability of its narrow confines. The town-girls accept this notion of the good girl. But this is unacceptable to Charity who "hates" the town. An active interaction with her peers would entail her further entrenchment in the small town existence and its narrow definitions of femininity, which Charity wants to escape. She does not want her life to follow the pattern of other town girls who will eventually get married and be

"comfortable" in their limited existence. In MOW Frankie too wants to leave the town but unlike Charity this desire is not the primary reason for her exclusion from the group of her peers, nor is the concept of femininity linked to staying in the same town. Similarly in PR Martha does leave town, but she has a more specific goal than mere escape from home.

Apart from a desire to escape from the town Charity's relationship with the peer group is influenced by her peculiar status in the town to which she belongs and does not belong at the same time. She is from the mountain, a colony of derelicts outside civilisation, but at the same time she is the ward of Lawyer Royall, the most influential man in the town of North Dormer. This peculiar combination neither makes her an insider nor quite an outsider. This knowledge influences her relations with the peer group. As an outsider, the uncertainty of her status prevents Charity from forming intimate relationships. Conscious of her 'low' origins and fearful of possible insulting references to it prevents her from mingling too freely with the girls of the town. At the same time, the knowledge of being Lawyer Royall's ward places Charity in a superior position to the town girls. The humility combined with fierce pride does not allow Charity to have an intimate relationship with anyone including members of the peer group. Hence, Charity's social location is also responsible for distance from her peers.

Unlike Sarah, Esther, Frankie and Charity, Martha in PR is initially popular with her peers, preferring their company to her studies. In fact, the 'painted room' (a room which Martha furnishes) in the novel is called the "adolescent playhouse" [76]

as it is constantly bustling with the activity and laughter of young people. But Martha's involvement with a married man in defiance of the conventional notions of morality strains not only her relationship with her family but also that with her peers and she becomes the subject of 'gossip' among them.

The relationship with Quinn places her outside the peer group as it transgresses the conventional morality of the peer group. Quinn is definitely not the right man for Martha but the peer group disapproves not only on this count but also because a relationship between a girl and a married man challenges their conventional morality. With the exception of Johnny, most members of the peer group cast sly aspersions on her character. At the least whiff of scandal they are ready to condemn her for her failure to adhere to the image of the good girl.

In these five novels (BE, BJ, MOU, SU and PR) the portrayal of the peer group is contrary to the general understanding of peer culture as iconoclastic, rebellious, unconventional and defiant. These novels reveal the peer group as a conservative entity, intolerant and tyrannical in punishment against any deviations from its norms. The portrayal of the peer group, it could be argued, as a conservative entity, is an effective technique to highlight the problems of adolescents. But the attitudes of the peer group are also indicative of the fact that patriarchy prospers and promulgates its doctrines through young people themselves which makes the study of adolescence even more imperative (see Chapter 4). The adolescents in the novel who resist these conventions are on the margins of the peer group, because they are more independent, desirous of greater freedom,

honest about such ideas and hopes. Thus if they do not buy peer company at great cost to themselves they are friendless and lonely, and such is in fact a true reflection of cruel reality. In the next section we shall examine the effects of loneliness in the life of the adolescent protagonists.

3

In the previous sections we discussed the strained relationships between the adolescent protagonists and their parents and the peer group. The primary reason for the estrangement between them was a refusal on the part of the adolescent protagonists to accept traditional notions of 'femininity' to which their parents and immediate peers subscribe. The refusal to accept these traditional notions of the feminine not only strains relationships between the adolescent, her parents and peers, but also results in making the adolescent years lonely when trust, confidence, sympathy and understanding in these relationships are all most sorely needed. As a consequence, the inner thoughts and feelings of the adolescent protagonist remain unshared and make the adolescent years of the protagonists even more difficult than they have to be.

I would like to argue, that in some novels such as BE and BJ, however, though intensely traumatic while it lasts, the loneliness is instrumental in the formation of these adolescent protagonists as independent agents in carving out their future destinies. The loneliness of the adolescent years results in

these protagonists who are more determinedly aware of what they want from life, being eventually alone in their adulthood but not necessarily lonely. Thus it seems to demolish the self-esteem and self-reliance of some characters while it strengthens the self-esteem and self-reliance of others. In other novels such as SU loneliness is a permanent condition. In ML Molly's misanthropic isolation ends in her death. MOW is the only novel in which the adolescent protagonist is successful in overcoming her loneliness. For a better understanding of how loneliness characterises the adolescent years of the protagonists, we shall take up each novel, beginning with MOW, and study it in terms of the condition of the protagonist in this respect.

In Member of the Wedding twelve year old Frankie Addams' unpreparedness for her emerging femininity is one of the factors responsible for her loneliness. The physical changes, naturally enough, result in the loss of physical kinship with her own child-image, and disqualify Frankie for membership of the world of childhood symbolising security and stability. Her inability to walk underneath the thick arbor, which other twelve year olds do without difficulty indicates the loss of her childhood world. The changes also thrust Frankie into circumstances where knowledge of her femininity is being pressed upon her. Bewildered by and unprepared for this knowledge Frankie refuses to accept it and finds herself in the peripheral, lonely domain between the child and the adolescent society. This non-belonging is responsible for the loneliness she experiences.

Frankie's feeling of alienation is enhanced as she is a single parent child. In the crucial growing-up years Frankie does

not have a mother who can explain the changes arising from the emergence of femininity and counsel her when she is bewildered and frightened by them. Frankie's father fails to or is unable to inform her of the meaning of these physical changes. He does not equip her psychologically to face the processes of growth, as we have already seen. His silence, her effective banishment to a room of her own and her inwardness cause the most damaging isolation an adolescent can experience.

Also Frankie has no friends to turn to. Her best friend Evelyn Owen has left town. Frankie is not a member of the club in the neighbourhood either. The club comprises older adolescent girls who have accepted their femininity and who are already partially initiated into the mysteries of sex. But Frankie is unable to accept her sexuality as to her it signifies a permanent loss of childhood and the acceptance of femininity. She withdraws from the other adolescents who could have offered her the much needed support and helped her to come to terms with her new adolescent self.

Frankie's tomboyish attire is suggestive of her alienation from the feminine world of adolescence. She persists in being tomboyish for she apprehends that the outside world is dominantly a male world. Her desire to be a soldier in the war is unfulfilled because she is too young--and of course because she is a girl. Even her resolve to donate blood remains a dream as the Red Cross does not accept her donation. No wonder then that

Frankie felt mad with the Red Cross and left out of everything. The war and the world were too fast

and big and strange. To think about the world for very long made her afraid. She was not afraid of Germans or bombs or Japanese. She was afraid because in the war they would not include her [emphasis added] and the world seemed somehow separate from herself. [22]

Frankie's desire to be a "member of the wedding" stems from her loneliness and indicates the desire to recover the sense of belonging that she has lost, even if it means a return to her childhood self, in the care of two adults. It is also a desire to be a part of the togetherness they represent. The engaged couple irradiate a sense of happiness and togetherness in stark contrast to the loneliness she experiences. Frankie desires to share this feeling of happiness and togetherness by belonging to them-

They are the we of me. Yesterday and all the twelve years of her life, she had only been Frankie. She was an I person who had to walk around and do things by herself. All other people had a we to claim, all others except her But the old Frankie had no we to claim.... Now all this was suddenly over with and changed. [41]

The impossible desire to be part of the unity symbolised by her brother and his wife's marriage ultimately offsets Frankie's loneliness and also makes her more accepting of her emerging femininity. This is reflected in Frankie changing her name to the

more feminine Frances Jasmine Addams. The orange organdy dress that she buys for the wedding also suggests the forward movement towards the acceptance of her femininity. The sense of belonging also makes her leave the kitchen where she had taken refuge from the world, and effectively isolated herself. But Frankie's desire to be a 'member of the wedding' remains unfulfilled. The married couple leave her behind. Frankie returns to the town once again lonely, but this loneliness does not last. Her friendship with Mary Little John at last ends the feeling that everybody had left her and gone.

Like MOW, Mountain Lion also explores the loneliness experienced by Molly, the protagonist, in the early stages of adolescence. Like Frankie, Molly's isolation also arises from a refusal to accept her femininity. In ML the process of growth from childhood to adolescence results in loss, separation and genuine loneliness.

During her childhood years Molly's unprepossessing physical appearance creates a distance between her and the other children (peers and siblings). Her mother also prefers the elder daughters and discriminates against her on account of her physical appearance. But Molly's deep bond of togetherness with her brother Ralph compensates for the lack of friends and her mother's neglect. There are many reasons for the deep bond between brother and sisters: they are close to each other in age, physically alike, both are thin and pallid, have runny noses, buck teeth and near sighted eyes, lack friends and are neglected by their mother. The bond between them, strengthened by the similarity in their physical condition, provides Molly with a

sense of security, comfort and companionship with Ralph and buffers her from the loneliness which could have resulted from all the serious lacks in her life.

The sense of companionship provided by their togetherness in childhood is shattered in their adolescent years, as Ralph leaves behind the world of childhood and accepts his masculinity to the detriment of their close bond, whereas Molly refuses to accept her emerging femininity and continues to cling to the world of childhood. The division between Ralph and Molly takes place, as we have seen before, at Uncle Claude's ranch, which is a masculine world of action marked by the brute forces of horse and gun. Eager to be accepted as a member of this masculine world, Ralph takes on its challenges. Initially Molly also tries to prove herself in the same way and win appreciation but Uncle Claude shows less patience in teaching her than in teaching Ralph. Aware of this rejection Molly retires to the domestic spaces of the ranch while Ralph inhabits the outer world. This separation in their environments creates a physical distance and a rift between them and results in long periods of intense, even nightmarish loneliness for Molly.

The different physical spaces that Molly and Ralph inhabit create other distorting differences. By virtue of Molly leading an indoor life, she can no longer retain a kinship in physical likeness with Ralph. Thus in physical terms more than puberty is at work here to aggravate the effects of their movement apart. On account of his strenuous outdoor work and activity Ralph's body has filled out and he no longer needs his glasses. Molly, on the other hand, remains the same gawky child. Other differ-

ences also begin to set in. Ralph, by virtue of working on the ranch, gains knowledge of sexuality and accepts it. Indeed we are told of this, for instance, in witnessing the birth of a mare. Acceptance of sexuality indicates acceptance of masculinity in his case. Ralph wishes to share this sexual knowledge with her but Molly refuses to listen for it would also mean accepting the biological differences between her and Ralph. The small difference in their ages now begin to underline the effects of all these changes

The increasing differences between Molly and Ralph create a rift between them. Although they are together on the ranch, Molly does not derive any sense of companionship from their togetherness. Apart from her bond with Ralph, Molly has no other person in the world to turn to for companionship. But Ralph has now acquired membership in the world of the ranch which excludes Molly as she is female. The rift between Molly and Ralph which results in her feeling lonely is initially limited to the ranch. Away from the ranch, Molly and Ralph still combine forces and present a united front against the oppressive environment at home. But soon the rift begins to affect their lives at home too. Molly's mother soon begins to accept Ralph on account of his bettered physical appearance and Molly finds herself absolutely alone both at home and at the ranch. Both environments perpetuate the same notions of femininity though in different ways. The ranch does not accept Molly because she is feminine, whereas at home Molly is not accepted as she is not feminine enough.

The final rift occurs when Ralph, filled with incestuous thoughts for one of his older sisters, turns to Molly, the

secure companion of his childhood. But Molly, who resists knowledge of sexuality, becomes permanently estranged from Ralph by this very act of his. Molly's refusal to accept sexuality makes the rift unbridgeable. She is now all alone and becomes a bitter misanthrope. Terrified by Ralph's sexuality, Molly refuses to accept her own emerging sexuality and this further estranges her. She begins to think of her body as a box eventually estranging herself from her own self, as can be seen when Molly includes herself in her hate-list of people. Increasingly bitter, completely isolated and showing no signs of adjustment, bizarrely imagining an unreal world in which to continue living undisturbed, Molly has nowhere to go, no place where she can be happy with her condition or with her own self. There is something almost inevitable in her finally being killed by an accidental shot from Ralph's gun. This happens significantly just at a time when he is attempting to prove his masculinity by single-handedly killing a mountain lion. One can see the episode as symbolising the consequence of the girl's refusal to accept her womanly status. It is as if a girl who challenges patriarchal impositions of femininity will be hunted down.

In ML Molly's loneliness results in her death. The novel Bell Jar explores similarly dire repercussions of loneliness in the adolescent years which result in a brief spell of self-destructive madness symbolic of Esther's complete isolation from the world. Her loneliness is an outcome of her strained relationship with her mother, her peers and the undermining of her romantic aspirations in her relationship with Buddy Willard. But underlying these various factors responsible for her loneliness

is Esther's unconventional questioning and unwillingness to accept traditional notions of femininity. Unlike Molly in ML, however, towards the end Esther is alone yet not lonely.

Esther's family situation and a strained relationship with her mother are initially responsible for her loneliness. Her father's early demise and a strained financial situation at home make Esther's widowed mother push her harder as she sees Esther's success as a vindication of her own struggle. But Esther's plans for herself come into conflict with her mother's plans for her. Her mother, as we have seen before, values safety and security, and is constantly pushing Esther to learn typing and shorthand which are essential requirements for a feminine secretarial career. Esther declines this route. For to her it means being confined to 'serving a man instead of serving herself'. The conflict between Esther and her mother, and their estrangement, stem from a fundamental difference in their thinking and world-view.

The differences, combined with her mother's disapproval of her choice of career as a writer, not only distances Esther from her mother but also places immense pressure on her to do well, as failure would mean admitting that her mother was right. Esther, therefore, cannot even share her anxieties, misgivings and uncertainties over her career with her mother. It is this lack of her mother's support that makes Esther's adolescent years lonely.

Disillusionment regarding her romantic aspirations from a growing realisation of Buddy's insensitivity and endorsement of the same social norms which she finds discriminatory, contribute to Esther's increasing loneliness. Buddy's insensitivity towards

Esther's chosen career as a poet is reflected in his callous remark on a poem being "a piece of dust" [62]. But the final estrangement occurs when Buddy, after having pretended to be sexually inexperienced and innocent, admits that he is not a virgin. She is not able to digest his sexual double standards. The relationship sours when Esther discovers that Buddy, who had appreciated her intelligence during the initial period of wooing, now expects her to suppress it and play the secondary role of a subservient girlfriend and in future play second fiddle to him as his wife. This is an affront to her intelligence and academic brilliance. Thus, Esther does not find any companionship or support within this relationship either and feels once again alienated and isolated.

Esther's questioning of social mores and patriarchal norms which evolve different sets of behaviour for men and women is also responsible for her loneliness. The peer group has accepted these values and is socialised into a view of femininity perpetuated by these values. Esther's views are not shared by others in the peer group. Her college mates calmly accept the fact that Buddy Willard is not a virgin while Esther is seething at the disclosure. This too shows that she is all alone in her struggle.

Esther's one month long stay in New York is the crowning period of her loneliness. Here Esther is a total stranger and has no one to turn to. Her insulated existence has not prepared her for the pressures of the big city. The taste of a new life—the new clothes and the free lunches suggest a life which Esther yearns for but does not fit into. The feeling of being an

outsider deprives her of the only way out which had seemed likely, that of her choosing to be an editor and a poet. But academic brilliance is not enough to survive in New York and Esther's faith in her abilities is shaken. The loneliness and the feelings of confusion enhance each other. She feels that she is a misfit in New York but she knows that she does not fit into the suburban existence back at home either.

The only thing she is certain of is her writing. But her manuscript is rejected, and that shakes her faith and she is forced to stay with her mother. While her other acquaintances are busy with summer jobs, she is confined at home. Unable to cope with her loneliness, Esther seeks suicide as a way out. She is subsequently treated for insanity. Her mad deliriousness is an outpouring of confusions that have plagued her. The mad-house, a symbol of Esther's complete isolation from the world, is also instrumental in her recovery, however. It offers a space where Esther is not alone but is a member of the community of other unsettled people. The norms here are starkly different from the outside world. Unlike that world, where emotions are bottled up, here they are given a free rein. In the outside world Esther is under pressure to alienate herself from her own self. The outer Esther, reacting and responding to the outside world, is sharply demarcated from the inner Esther who reacts and responds differently in conditions where her inner world seems to have a sort of validity. This duality of the outer/inner, public/private worlds collapses in the asylum. For it does not recognise the conventions of decorum and propriety that govern the people in the outside world. The breakdown of distinctions helps her in let-

ting herself go, become free from her inner doubts and uncertainties. Till now she had repressed them but now that they are released, she is able to reconcile and accept her different selves. This helps her to face the world. Towards the end Esther is alone but not a victim of acute loneliness and its concomitant pressures because now she has come to terms with herself. That, however, does not cancel or obliterate the turmoil she experiences as an adolescent, and we are obliged to reflect that it could and should have been avoided in the first place.

As in BJ, the loneliness experienced by the protagonist in Bonney Family eventually contributes to her freedom from all bonds and empowers her to carve out her own destiny. Despite having a close-knit family (unlike the other protagonists who have fractured families), Sarah is lonely. Her outward calm, placidity, methodical thoroughness, her willingness to help others and the calm assumption of responsibilities which others shirk, are qualities which make her family take her for granted. Her self-reliance makes others assume her to be above common needs and agonies and this results in her subtle neglect. Sarah's memories of her father's care of her at the time when she had cut her foot will clarify the point

When she had cut her foot with the rake, dad had carried her into the house and hung over her with tears in his eyes, feeling it almost as she did, not just taking it for granted [emphasis added] that she would be alright because she was Sarah.

[40]

These lines reveal her father's concern but they also show that such attention was a rare experience for her.

Sarah's difference from the members of her peer group is also responsible for her loneliness. Though she takes an active part in peer group activities, she still remains an outsider. As on the picnic, Martha and Geraldine, her friends, leave her for the boys. Her refusal to subdue her independent spirit in order to be with the boys creates a gulf between herself and her friends. "They would be in 'the crowd' and she would be out of it" [62]. The same sense of not belonging reasserts itself during her years at the academy as a freshman. As a member of various class committees, Sarah willingly undertakes the responsibilities assigned to her and diligently fulfils them. But still she experiences a "queer old secret loneliness creeping back and settling with cold bitter drops in her heart" [177]. She realises that she has only been tolerated not accepted.

Her mother's death, as we have seen, merely intensifies Sarah's loneliness. She abdicates her ambition and her desires for her own self in order to become a second mother to her siblings and devote herself to taking care of her father. Her naturally giving and/or maternal disposition lets no one suspect her own pain, sacrifice, isolation. Her agreeing to her father's decision to remarry drives a final wedge between her and the family. The father's marriage physically and emotionally distances all the family members. Sarah and Warren fall out at her attempt to explain her support for her father's decision. "She

never could tell Warren what she meant, she resented his impatience with her. Because she wasn't a pretty girl--his idea of what a woman should be--he never thought she was worth listening to" [158]. Though permanent barriers had been created for others as well, every other member of her family had somebody else to turn to. Sarah certainly feels this--

Underneath everything else was the dark inarticulate pain of the old knowledge that she had been the least loved and least cherished of all the three children. She was alone again with that.
[272]

Sarah's loneliness in the adolescent years has been extremely painful but this loneliness teaches her to rely only on herself. The loneliness and the sense of non belonging does push Sarah outside her family and to the margins of the peer group. But this lack of membership of such institutions becomes a positive factor. It gives her immense scope and space, in which to grow, to become somebody larger than the typical woman. It is liberatory, it has "both driven her out and set her free" [296]. Hence loneliness allows her to achieve a self-individuating womanhood, as she herself points out --"I can spread over as much territory as I please" [296]. Not every adolescent's experience of marginalisation and alienation has such a positive outcome.

In Summer, unlike BJ and BF, the loneliness experienced by Charity becomes a condition which permanently defines her life. Her status as an adopted child sets her apart in the town, her name itself a perpetual reminder of her origins and status. We

have already seen that this awareness of her origins and her fierce pride prevent Charity from mingling too freely with other inhabitants of the town. The inhabitants also create barriers by expecting her to be everlastingly grateful to Lawyer Royall for his goodness in adopting her and for their acceptance of this fact. Charity is viewed more as a good deed well performed by Lawyer Royall than as a person with feelings: "My child you should never cease to remember that it was Mr. Royall who bought you down from the town" [6]. Charity is seen by the town as the "other". This creates a distance between Charity and the town folk which results in a lack of companionship which is in turn responsible for her acute loneliness during her adolescent years. Charity's statement, "How I hate everything", which occurs twice very early in the novel, indicates a lack of connectedness to her immediate environment.

Displaced early from the surrounding of her origins, Charity belongs neither to the mountain people nor to the community of her birth. She displays a complete lack of interest in the mountain till her momentous confrontation with Royall at Nettleton when he abuses her for being there with Lucius. The confrontation with her guardian creates in her a desire to meet her real parents. But the desire is nipped in the bud by Lucius and her effort to move to the Mountain is abandoned in his favour. On her second visit to the Mountain, at the time of her pregnancy, she arrives only to find her mother dead. The overnight stay makes her aware of her outsider status even at "home". It makes her conscious of her different upbringing and results in a realization that just as she is viewed as the "other" in Nettleton,

the Mountain is the other to her. If there is nobody in North Dormer with whom she can share her thoughts, there is nobody at the Mountain either. Being a product of what one might call cultural miscegenation, she does not belong to either community. The Mountain, mentally available before her visit as a place to escape to, closes upon her when she pays an actual visit.

The town, North Dormer, in which Charity resides is itself an 'other' to the rest of the world. The monotony and sameness of the village and the lack of opportunity, combined with her existing feelings of being apart from the town, create a yearning within Charity to get away. The yearning is deepened by her visit to Nettleton, the "modern community", which leaves her dissatisfied with the unceasingly humdrum nature of her existence. "The initiation had showed her that North Dormer was a small place and developed in her a thirst for information...." [6]. Charity craves for the actively glamorous life of the outside world. The craving reveals the difference between her and the town folk who are satisfied with and have accepted the nature of life at North Dormer. This uniqueness is also responsible for her loneliness. More importantly it reemphasizes her feeling of being torn between two worlds unlike the double displacement normally experienced by a person on account of miscegenation.

The feelings of dislocation and loneliness are briefly dispelled in her relationship with Lucius, who for a time represents the outside world. The sexual liaison becomes also a liaison with that world. By possessing Lucius, Charity thinks she possesses that world. For her Lucius' love also symbolizes the appreciation of a person she has longed for from the outside

world. As he enters the relationship he is aware that Charity comes from the community of outlaws on the Mountain. The relationship reaffirms her faith in herself and keeps in abeyance the pain of not belonging, of being lonely.

The relationship temporarily helps her to recover from her loneliness but her loneliness does return as a permanent condition. Her marriage to Lawyer Royall crowns it. Though she is not physically alone any more and has found support for her as yet unborn child, her near incestuous marriage with her surrogate father after her initially repulsing his sexual advances intensifies her lonely condition. The novel ends with Charity returning to the lonely scenario from which she had longed to escape. And this time she is lonelier than ever. She is confined to a marriage in which there is no companionship. In the course of the novel Charity grows from adolescence into womanhood. In her adolescence she had longed to overcome her loneliness but her experience of motherhood would now only add to her loneliness. Unlike the adolescent heroine of BJ, her loneliness does not set her free.

In the novels we have used as illustration, the loneliness results from the protagonists' dissension from normative, prescriptive notions of femininity thrust upon them as model by parents and peers. Their dissent--motivated by a desire to develop an autonomous identity, free from the hampering effects of femininity--places them in conflict with adult and peer society both. Their questioning of and demand for freedom from the narrow stereotypes of femininity result in dually marginalising these protagonists from adult and adolescent society. The

resolution of the conflict between the adolescents' visions for the future and the dominant social norms of womanhood. Most of the novels that we examine here, with the exception of SU, are open-ended; there the protagonists do seem to win respite from the forces of convention and tradition. In the sustained battle against tradition, however, the ultimate fate of the protagonists remains uncertain. Let us examine each novel in terms of the protagonists' imaginings of the future and determination, so that we may arrive at a better understanding of the conflict between desire for autonomy and assignment of conventional roles to the protagonists by tradition.

At the age of twelve, Frankie, (MOW) feels 'left-out' as she belongs neither to the childhood world nor to the adult world. Her 'non-member' status and alienation from the immediate social sphere create in Frankie a yearning to be part of the larger world community and lead a more active life. This is indicated by her desire to be a part of the war as either a soldier or at least a blood-donor. But her youth and gender thwart even these yearnings.

Frankie's desire for an active life are contrasted sharply with the complacent life of her town. The sameness of the sleepy old town, its monotonous routine, unchanging nature, and faithful adherence to its set ways and apparent indifference to the events of the outside world such as the war, dissatisfy Frankie. As an inhabitant of the town, her only connection with the outside world is the radio which ceaselessly plays in the kitchen through the entire summer. She desires a more active, eventful life but in a town where the only exciting event is the

Chatahoochee Exposition, the possibility of fulfilment of an active life is definitely remote.

Frankie's tomboyishness, symbolic of a denial of femininity, stems from her anxiety that she will be denied participation in the characteristically male world outside. Her desire for an androgynous universe reflects a desire to overcome the restrictive limitations of gender which hamper her efforts at obtaining active membership and participation in the outside world. Frankie's dream of an androgynous universe arises not only from being denied participation, as a soldier or blood donor, in the outside world but also from the personal experience of what it means to be a woman. Motherless Frankie observes from close quarters the four-times married house-keeper Bernice, who lives from husband to husband and earns a livelihood from house-keeping. Frankie intuits Bernice's misery in the male-dominated world. To her even the older girls who are already initiated into the mysteries of sex seem subservient to the men. For their sexuality signifies reconciling to this subordinate position, and she is not willing to do that.

Frankie's desire to be a member of the wedding is also a way of fulfilling her yearning to see the outside world. As a member of the wedding Frankie would be able to travel and see the outside world. But her yearning is frustrated. Jarvice and Janice leave her behind and she is forced to return to the town from which she had sought escape. Her subsequent flight, her escape from home is only a symbolic gesture of protest against being left behind--

It would be better to be in a jail where you can bang the walls than in a jail you could not see. The world was too far away and there was no way any more that she could be included. [158]

But Frankie is too young to venture out alone and her yearnings are consigned to the waiting room of adolescence.

Towards the end of the book her friendship with Mary Little John, who has lived outside the town and therefore represents the outside world, helps Frankie in reviving her dream of seeing the outside world. Despite the revival of yearnings, the novel is open-ended as their fulfilment yet remains a question. At the end of the novel, Frankie is only thirteen. Will the pattern of hope and disillusionment in the initial part of the novel be repeated? Is the revival transitory in nature? The words of Bernice, a much older woman, linger in our minds--

We all of us somehow caught. We born this way or that way and we don't know why. But we caught anyhow. I born Bernice. You born Frankie. John Henry born John Henry. And maybe she wants to widen and bust free. But no matter what we do we still caught. We is me and you is you. We each of us somehow caught all by ourselves. [119; emphasis added]

Bernice's bleak picture of human entrapment forebodes a grim future for Frankie. Will Frankie's biological destiny entrap her and prevent the fulfilment of her yearning? Will her social

destiny parallel this result? Probably even the narrator did not have an answer.

Through twelve year old Frankie MOW explores the conflict between convention and individual aspiration at the beginnings of adolescence. Bell Jar illustrates the pressure to abdicate individual aspirations in favour of social conventions of femininity on the adolescent girl at the very threshold of womanhood. At the age of nineteen, Esther is faced with the choice of a career (symbolising independence, individual freedom and space) or marriage with Buddy Willard. Undecided about her choice of career, Esther is under increasing pressure to conform to traditional notions of femininity, be it in her relationship with Buddy Willard, her peer group or her mother. All three subscribe to a notion of femininity which conflicts with Esther's desire for individual autonomy and space.

Esther aspires to be a writer. But Buddy Willard views female aspiration as a joke, evident through his insensitive belittling of her career as a poet (see section 3). He also believes that a woman's true vocation is that of a home keeper--

I also remembered Buddy Willard saying in his sinister knowing way that after I had children, I would feel differently, I wouldn't like to write poems any more. So I began to think that maybe it was true that when you are married and have children it was like being brainwashed and after that you went about numb as a slave in some private totalitarian state [94; emphasis added].

For Esther marriage to Buddy Willard entails an abdication of individual aspiration and an enslavement to the auxiliary traditional role of a woman.

She encounters similar attitudes in her peer group and her mother. Both believe in a notion of femininity which is not very different from Buddy Willard's. The girls who constitute the peer group are conditioned into a view of femininity where appearance, not accomplishment, demonstrates female desirability and worth. Similarly Esther's mother sees Esther's choice of career as contradictory to her own notions of femininity. She constantly urges Esther to pursue a more feminised profession. But desirous of autonomy Esther abhors the idea of serving men in any way. Her mother also endorses another characteristic notion of femininity, chastity. She sends cut-outs of articles from the Reader's Digest which advocate the principle of female purity. Esther's reaction to these articles written from the male point of view represents her defiance of stereotypes: "Now one thing that this article didn't seem to consider was how the girl felt" [89; emphasis added].

She is torn between her yearnings for an autonomous self and the pressures to conform; the resulting conflict takes a heavy toll reflected in Esther's downward journey towards insanity. She herself employs the symbol of the bell jar "stewing in my own sour air" to define her condition. The bell jar is symbolic of enclosure and confinement gradually creeping in on Esther. And in her case of course it symbolises patriarchal enclosure. Esther does recover eventually, but the conflict is

yet unsettled: "I had hoped at my departure I would feel sure and knowledgeable about everything lying ahead--after all I had been 'analysed'. Instead all I could see were questions" [275]. The lack of definite answers (as in the case of Frankie in MOW) reveals the on-going nature of the conflict, between aspirations for autonomy and societal dictates.

Sarah in Bonney Family is in a situation similar to those of Frankie and Esther. Her aspirations for independence also collide with patriarchal expectations. As we have seen, Sarah is expected to emulate the alluring, cute, flirtatious 'damsel in distress' model of femininity advocated by the peer group. Since the image entails a significant, crippling compromise of individuality in favour of socially acceptable notions of femininity, Sarah refuses to abide by it. Since she does not attempt to emulate the image of the 'cute' girl and is instead a reliable, uncomplaining and conscientious worker, her family places her into another stereotype the narrow, conventional idea of the 'homely', domesticated girl. Within the family, among the four children, it is expected that Sarah will render maximum help with house-work. Besides, she is taken for granted by the members of the family. For instance, Sarah, rather than Warren, is commanded by their mother to get popcorn to entertain Warren's friends when both are just as eagerly listening to a discussion among them. This apparently trivial incident indicates that it is expected that Sarah, the female adolescent, must sacrifice her desires for the family, instead of Warren (the male adolescent). In another instance, Sarah is recalled from a temporary teaching stint at Corinth to attend to her ailing mother. After her

mother's death she naturally keeps house for her father till he gets married again. Though Sarah does not resent such demands, familial expectations frustrate the realisation of Sarah's aspirations.

Her father's second marriage frees Sarah from smothering familial expectations to pursue her aspiration of individual self-fulfilment--

Her strength had been accumulating within her almost untouched, the strength it was no use trying to drown or deny, or even to try to throw away upon other people, on her own family. Now it seemed to her that she had got that strength free at last, with pain and blind struggle and outward necessity, from the something narrow and concentrated that most women had--even Mrs. Paulson, even mother... something hidden and poignant and intimate for what was wide and overflowing and unbounded..... She thought exultantly, 'I can spread over as much territory as I please'. [296; emphasis added]

Though Sarah does win her freedom in the end, as in MOW and BJ, the success of her quest for self-fulfilment, for a future which will provide her with the "territory" to become what she wants to be, remains uncertain and unknown.

In Old Mortality, as in BF, the familial bonds maintain a rigid stranglehold over Miranda's aspirations of autonomy.

Miranda yearns to break free from her family which romanticises traditional views of femininity through stories of the past recounted in brilliant detail to Miranda and her sister. The story of Amy, the arch-Southern belle from the family is central to this past. Her looks, unrivaled beauty, her beaux, the number of "conquests" she made, the hearts she broke and her final marriage to Gabriel constitute the diet of stories fed to Miranda in her childhood years. She questions the truth of these stories which celebrate femininity. Amy's words, recounted by Miranda's grandmother, reveal that Amy has little choice but to enact to perfection the role predetermined for her by her family: "'And if I am to be the heroine of this novel why not make the most of it'" [189]. Amy's circumscribed life had made her a victim rather than a heroine. The idealisation of femininity is exposed during Miranda's meeting with Uncle Gabriel, painted by the family as a passionate lover who in reality is an alcoholic with uncouth manners.

Miranda experiments with various plans for her future in the story. That her plans change has to be read in the context of her gradually acquired awareness of the discrepancy between sentimentalisation of femininity and a dawning realisation of the real meaning of being female. This happens through a felt experience of confinement at the convent where she goes. In her childhood years Miranda had desired to be a 'belle' like Amy but on realisation of her own lack of beauty and the fact that being a 'belle' entails an acceptance of merely conventional views of femininity, she abandons the plan. Subsequently, during her adolescent years, Miranda decides to be a jockey, a flamboyant,

unconventional career for a woman. This aspiration could be dismissed as a hangover of her childhood self but it is motivated by a defiance of her "immured" [6] existence in the convent. The convent is a "world of shining bare floors and insipid wholesome food and cold-water; their world of poverty, chastity, early to bed and early to rise, of sharp little rules and tittle-tattle" [205]. The convent acculturates girls into their future roles of 'pure, chaste, and passive' women and it aims to thwart or subdue the independent spirit of young girls.

Miranda rebels against the stranglehold of both family and convent by eloping. But, as we have seen, her marriage is a form of escape and the elopement symbolises a running away. By doing so Miranda only succeeds in exchanging one set of bonds for another and her aspiration for freedom remains unrealised. With this dawning realisation, Miranda resolutely resolves to liberate herself from all bonds including marriage.

She would have no more bonds that smothered her in love and hatred. She knew now why she had run away to marriage, and she was not going to stay in any place with anyone that threatened to forbid her to make her own discoveries and said 'No' to her. [220; emphasis added]

On achieving womanhood, like Sarah in BE who is denied the opportunity to discover herself in her childhood and adolescent years, Miranda uses her adult status to venture on a journey of self discovery. As in the other novels, the success of such a venture remains a question.

Unlike other novels which end at the beginning of the quest for self-determination, in SU Charity is forced to abdicate her dreams. Charity has no definite plans for her future. But her amorphous plans come from her discontentment with her way of life and derive force from her hatred of the constricting small-town existence from which she desires to escape. The town is described as "a weather-beaten, sun-burnt village of the hills abandoned by men, left apart by railway, trolley, telegraph and all the forces that give life to modern communities" [6]. But a desire to be a part of the 'modern community' is a challenge to the set ways of the town which upholds its fidelity to tradition and sameness as a virtue in the era of what is considered degenerate modernity. Notions of good femininity, as always, imply an acceptance of tradition. The younger generation is expected to adhere to these values. But Charity defies the limitations placed on her by the town through her liaison with Lucius Harney, a non-inhabitant and a representative of the outside world. The affair with Lucius is liberatory as her conversations with him enable her to apprehend the wider, outside world vicariously. But this liberation does not last long. Lucius himself abandons her carrying his child.

Charity's options are limited (and at least we can see that they are also offensive). With no formal education she can terminate the pregnancy, or keep the baby and face social stigma, or become a prostitute. With such few options Charity is forced to accept her guardian's offer of marriage despite an earlier rejection of his advances. The marriage does save her from a

life of prostitution and penury. But it also conclusively seals the fate of her aspirations. The half-incestuous marriage is a life-long imprisonment. Also Charity's rescue by Lawyer Royall from a likely life of prostitution and poverty ensures her eternal indebtedness to him. Any thought of rebellion in the future would brand her as an ingrate.

Charity's aspiration had been to escape from the narrow, monotonous and constraining existence of the town. With her marriage she is bound to it permanently. At the end Charity's desire has got nowhere. The novel had commenced with her standing on the door step and it ends with her returning to the same doorstep--this time for ever: "Late that evening in the cold autumnal moonlight they drove up to the door of the red house" [216]. The marriage definitely saves Charity from prostitution and a stigmatised life but compared to her dream of escape and flight the marriage is a permanent entrapment.

The adolescent's demand for autonomy to achieve a self-individuating womanhood conflicts with auxiliary, subordinate roles prescribed by a male-dominated culture to women. On account of questioning imminent future adult role of matrimony, which dulls their initiative and denies them the freedom to develop their potential, the protagonists find themselves outside peer and adult society. The outsider status grants the protagonists (with the exception of Charity who on account of her circumstances is forced to marry) to set out on a journey of self-discovery. But the narrators of these novels do not portray the end of the journey. Will these dissenting adolescents succeed in defying patriarchy, thus remains an unanswered question...?

5

By means of the overview of parent-child relationships, peer group, sexuality, loneliness and aspirations and resolutions, five areas in which adolescent protagonists face great difficulty of adjustment, the present chapter has attempted to prove that these problems are linked to the patriarchal constructions of femininity which influence and affect the process of growth during adolescence. Stereotypes of femininity threaten the process of individual identity formation itself by a wholesale and degrading denial of freedom to the adolescent during adolescence which is widely recognised as an individuation process. The question of freedom, to be and become oneself, a basic requisite for the formation of identity, underscores all these five themes relating to female adolescence.

In this chapter we have focussed on the female adolescent whose condition reflects a struggle for freedom from confining stereotypes in order to carve her own distinct identity. The resistance of the adolescent against an acculturation of identity in confining stereotypes is reflected in the adolescents' struggle to realise their aspiration for an autonomous self. But the overarching power of patriarchal convention constantly and remorselessly manifests itself through the insidious stranglehold it establishes over crucial institutions such as the family and the peer group (and by implication the school) which govern

the adolescent's life. These institutions participate (through an enforcement of patriarchal norms) and are implicated in the patriarchal process (by endorsement of these norms). The enormous power of patriarchy can be measured by the heavy costs of adolescence in terms of alienation from parents, peers and even their own emerging sexuality that the protagonists pay.

The relationship of the adolescent with her parents is strained by her demand for freedom to carve out a distinct self-identity, instead of adhering to stereotyped roles predetermined by patriarchy. The demand for freedom alienates her from her family and divests her of parental support and guidance, especially when it is most needed in the crucial growing-up years. The adolescent's relation with the peer group is also estranged on account of her refusal to acquiesce in a sexualisation of identity. As a consequence she is deprived of peer support. She is a dual misfit--being denied full participation in adult society, being denied full participation in peer society as well. The adolescent's response of negating her own emerging sexuality also arises from the fear of sexual objectification, a real fear restrictive to her identity. The collision between the adolescent's need for freedom to achieve an individual identity and the powerful dictates of patriarchy result in socially alienating her, condemning her to "a jail she cannot see"

Despite the heavy price the protagonists pay, the aspiration for autonomy may not be fulfilled. This failure is reflected in the open-ended nature of the resolution of their problems in the novels we have studied (with the exception of SU). Their protagonists cross the threshold of adolescence with the refusal to

conform to patriarchal expectations of femininity. The refusal might free the protagonists from bonds of confining relationships (OM, BJ and BE). But the ultimate success of the quest for an individual identity remains uncertain and unknown. Even after apparently acquiring the requisite freedom from convention to make her own identity, the female adolescent (in comparison to the male adolescent whose masculine status seems to grant him freedom to create his individual identity) she is still in a marginalised position. The female adolescent who struggles, thus succeeds in overcoming only a part of the multiple marginality faced by her. Those who do not struggle do not achieve even this doubtful success. At the same time, they cannot be blamed for giving in to such horrendously pervasive and powerful forces.

The arrival of adolescence is, thus, hardly elevating for the female adolescent. To her, adolescence is concomitant with the loss of childhood freedom and the simultaneous capitulation to pressures to conform to patriarchal norms. Most adolescents, as seen in the characterisation of the peer group in the novels, become conforming individuals. The protagonists who resist or attempt to subvert patriarchal stereotypes pay enormous, often crippling costs on the difficult and tortuous journey en route adulthood. Crossing the threshold of adolescence is indeed a 'pyrrhic victory' for females.

In this chapter we have discussed such crucial adolescent issues as are reflected in our fictional examples. We have attempted to simultaneously define the exact nature of the concept of femininity. But, strangely enough, the woman's movement, the recent and significant efforts of feminism, seem to have almost

completely ignored those forces which have contributed to the prominence and greater visibility of adolescence in the twentieth century. Feminist theorisations seem to have paid scant attention to the travails of the female adolescent. In the next chapter, therefore, as also the concluding chapter of this thesis, we shall examine possible reasons for the neglect of adolescence by feminists. and try to make a case for adolescence as a befitting and necessary subject for feminism in particular. However, it will hardly do if only feminists or women become aware of this enormous problem in modern society.

Chapter 4

Is there anybody out there...?

The present chapter, the conclusion to our thesis, is divided into two sections both of which in different ways hope to echo the anguished cry of female adolescence to be noticed, to be taken seriously, to be helped, allowed the freedom necessary for the growth of full-fledged and self-respecting identity. Section one attempts to map the itinerary of this thesis by attempting to review and reiterate the findings made en route. Section two focuses on future work that could be undertaken by arguing for the inclusion of an analysis of female adolescence within feminism.

1

We embarked on the project, as shown, in the first chapter (Introduction) with the motivation to establish and redress the neglect suffered by the female adolescent. But prior to venturing out, the terms female adolescence and adolescence novel, significant signposts in the journey, had to be clearly demarcated. Adolescence (in our study referring to middle-class female adolescence for reasons of providing a clear direction to the journey) was defined as the period between the ages of nine and

nineteen. Here we discussed adolescence as a physical, psychological and sociological state and as a time of great change. We also focused upon the gendered connotations of adolescence in order to distinguish female adolescence from male adolescence. The point mooted here was that in a predominantly male-dominated culture the female adolescent finds herself in the double bind of being female and adolescent as stereotypes of femininity are imposed on her from the onset of puberty. Therefore, even after crossing the threshold of adolescence, unlike the male adolescent, the female adolescent continues to occupy a marginal position. In the introductory chapter this understanding of adolescence was brought to bear upon her struggle to make for herself a distinct identity as seen in adolescence literature, whose boundaries criss-cross with other generic categories such as the bildungsroman, the initiation novel and the young-adult novel. This was our second step towards launching our study.

The second chapter (Theoretical Concerns) surveyed the territory mapped by significant psychological, anthropological and socio-historical approaches to adolescence. These approaches are divided over whether adolescence is a universal phenomenon or a construction of modern industrial class society. The survey helped us in evolving our own approach to adolescence as a universal but not an ahistorical phenomenon. This synthetic theoretical approach takes into account the arguments of both universalist and constructionist arguments on adolescence. The chapter also highlighted and established the relative neglect of the female adolescent through the implicit bias of these theo-

retical approaches in favour of the male adolescent, which further pressed upon us the necessity of undertaking a study of this unchartered territory. The chapter also reflected on the difficulty in writing the literary history of adolescence in the light of the prevailing neglect and absence of data on the contexts of adolescence in previous centuries.

The third chapter, (Resisting Femininity: A Study of Adolescent Concerns), made a serious attempt to redress the neglect established in the earlier chapter by focusing on some significant concerns of the white-middle class female adolescent caught in the bind of adolescence and femininity. In order to highlight this bind we focused on the adolescent protagonists who challenge stereotypical, narrow, disabling and totalitarian conventions of femininity. The adolescents who resist and oppose these conventions enter into a conflict with adult society (for instance, parents who uphold these values). They are in a similar conflictual position with their own peers who, despite their apparent rebelliousness, unquestioningly acquiesce in and adhere to these values. The non-acceptance of these values makes the individual female adolescent a dual misfit. She is on the outside, 'out of step' with adult as well as adolescent society. The outsider status is responsible for acute loneliness, in certain cases leading to a complete break-down of self-confidence, self-respect, happiness, support-structures, not at all infrequently causing traumatic harm to the female adolescent. The chapter also analysed the aspirations of individual adolescents, these protagonists, vis-a-vis their unresolved situation. The chapter attempted in this manner to highlight the predicament of the female

adolescent whose problems remain unnoticed, whose protests and cries for herself are unheard of, whose very identity-crisis is neglected. What is surprising in this neglect is that even feminists have by and large ignored the troubles of the female adolescent. The next section, therefore, aims to highlight the probable reasons for the neglect of adolescence by feminists and it also points to the reasons as to why feminists should undertake such a study.

2

A woman is made not born.

Simone de Beauvoir The Second Sex (1949)

This adolescence is a disease and twenty years from now
everybody will be talking about it

Doris Lessing Martha Quest (1952)

Insights gained from the reading of feminist texts and theory have helped in framing this project. This can be seen from the very choice of the topic of female adolescence, the choice of novels we analysed, the motivation to redress the neglect of female adolescence by pointing to the lacunae in adolescent theory, literary history and criticism, and finally the effort to establish the relative neglect of female adolescence (compared to male adolescence) in twentieth-century litera-

ture itself. The approach adopted, viewing adolescence from a perspective of multiple marginality, has also been derived from the insights gained from feminist theory. But ironically the feminist approach, whose insights have been so helpful in the conception of the present project, has not looked at adolescence per se.¹ This concluding chapter calls for the inclusion of adolescence, relatively unexplored by feminists, within the feminist agenda. This call for inclusion raises several fundamental questions. In this era of many feminisms it is difficult to identify one feminism to focus upon and a universally acceptable feminist agenda. That raises the question, To who should we address this demand. Is such a call valid? Is female adolescence an appropriate subject for feminism, and if it is why has it been neglected? Will the inclusion of the study of female adolescence within the feminist agenda benefit the female adolescent? This chapter attempts to answer the questions raised above.

First, the question of inclusion of adolescence as a proper subject of study for the many feminisms. Our argument here is that adolescence needs to be considered by all feminists irrespective of their specific allegiances or ideological problems such- as Anglo-American, Marxist, Post-Structuralist, Psychoanalytic, French Feminists etc. This expectation is in keeping with our larger argument (delineated in Chapter 1) that adolescence is a universal phenomenon. But it does not deny the fact that the social semantics of adolescence differs from culture to culture and will require a certain culture-specific focus in each case. It is merely being argued here that all feminists must take a close look at the phenomenon as it occurs in their cul-

ture. This call or demand can hardly be limited to white middle-class female adolescence (the focus of our limited study in this thesis) but extends to all adolescent groups. It is obvious, however, that our arguments for inclusion of adolescence in feminist study will henceforth stem from the specific area of our study.

Let us here discuss some of the reasons why this subject has not featured as a strong feminist concern. The general cultural perception of adolescent resistance, protest, or rebelliousness as merely an intrinsic feature of adolescence has worked against the interest of the adolescent. This understanding of resistance phenomena makes room for the adult world to conveniently peg every act of rebellion to the bewilderment of the new-founded adolescent state. This understanding ignores both content and cause of adolescent rebellion and the truth in its allegations against the adult world and the basis of its questioning. Adolescent resistance or dissent is thus co-opted in the smokescreen of general understanding of adolescence as a difficult yet perfectly 'natural' and passing phase. While it cannot be denied that adolescence is a difficult phase (as seen even in our analysis in the preceding chapters), their problems are not intrinsic to adolescence alone. Feminists, being part of adult society, have probably inherited this general cultural understanding of adolescent problems and hence ignored them.

The primary reason for the relative neglect of the phenomenon is that feminism focuses its attention mainly on the adult woman. Feminists have averred that the institutions of marriage and family are patriarchal structures which are oppressive

towards women. In accordance with this conviction some feminists called for an abolition of the institution of family itself. The adolescent, by virtue of being a part of the family unit is implicated in the patriarchal process of oppression. But by aiming to dismantle the institution of the family itself the feminists were apparently unaware that they would be unable to consider adolescent problems as stemming from the same familial structure. Thus, the female adolescent might as well not be a co-victim of patriarchy along with the woman but implicated in the patriarchal process of oppression.

This can be illustrated through a brief overview of the writings of some well-known feminists such as Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millett and Betty Friedan. Shulamith Firestone in The Dialectic of Sex (1971) argues for the abolition of the family and childhood. Drawing upon Aries's argument on childhood (delineated in Chapter 2) and Marxist theorisation concerning the family, Firestone argues that childhood is a social invention and that the concept developed as an adjunct to the patriarchal bourgeois family. The nuclearisation and the child centredness of the patriarchal bourgeois family are oppressive to women as they define women solely in terms of their child-bearing and nurturing capacity, binding them in their reproductive roles:

The development of the modern family meant the break-down of a large, integrated society into small self-centered units. The child within these conjugal limits now became important; for he was the product of that unit, the reason for its

maintenance. It became desirable to keep one's children at home as long as possible, to bind them psychologically, financially and emotionally to the family until such time as they were ready to create a new family unit. For this purpose the age of childhood was created. (Later extensions were added, such as adolescence, or in twentieth-century American terms, 'teenagerdom', 'collegiate youth' and 'young adulthood'). [86]

Firestone argues that childhood is an artificial category, an outcome of the modern family, and is equally oppressive to the child. The concept of childhood renders the child physically and economically dependent on adults, a condition which is virtually "hell" for the child, "who is repressed every minute" [103]. Firestone envisions artificial reproduction and cybernetic socialism as a solution for women's liberation. Here the state of pregnancy itself is eliminated. Children are artificially produced and distributed equally among adults. The abolition of the family hence liberates the woman from the bonds of parenthood and the child from a childhood that is 'hell'. Although one could agree with Firestone thus far, that childhood is oppressive to the child and that feminism should consider the problems of the child, the solution that she offers is an extreme one and is impractical. The abolition of the family which would succeed in liberating women from the tyranny of reproductive roles and as a corollary liberate childhood from the tyranny of parents is articulated from an adult woman's point of view. Children have to

be reared. Adolescents do require adult support. Hence the family unit needs to be restructured rather than abandoned or abolished. At any rate, whether the family as we know it exists or not the functions of rearing and supporting cannot be abolished. Also Firestone equates the adolescent with the child and sees adolescence as a mere extension of childhood. Therefore, the call for abolition of the family and severing the physical reproductive relationship between child and adult also affects the relationship between adolescence and feminism. By catering to and articulating the needs of the adult woman such theories of feminism have grossly and essentially overlooked the needs of another group of female entities with similar problems.

Firestone's advocacy of the abolition of childhood was echoed by other feminist critics such as Kate Millett and Germaine Greer. Millett also argued for freeing women from their roles as nurturers by a collective professionalisation of child-rearing. Germaine Greer's solution was--the founding of a baby farm in Italy where the children of the adult community would be housed and visited from time to time by mothers and fathers, taking time off from their busy schedules in North America to fly to Calabria. The need for revisioning alternative family structures implicit in such extreme proposals cannot be denied. But the alternate family structures envisioned by these feminists sever ties between children (and by extension, adolescents) and adults thus excluding them from the purview of consideration by feminism. By turning their back on adolescents the feminist is in effect ignoring the 'future woman'.

In our attempt to highlight the distinctive nature of

female adolescence, we have seen that it is trapped in a simultaneous double bind, being subject to the experience of adolescence as well as femininity within oppressive patriarchy. Adolescence excludes the female from both childhood and adult worlds -- leaving her on the margins of both. This outsider status, not experienced by the male adolescent is in fact the permanent status of females beyond childhood. By virtue of being female, even after she outgrows her adolescence, she continues to occupy a marginal position. Adverse cultural images of femininity influence female adolescence as much as economic and other kinds of secondary status. Feminism cannot afford to ignore this aspect of the phenomenon of female existence.

Patriarchal forces do not begin to operate upon a grown-up woman alone; they inform child rearing and nurturing practices. The forces intensify at the onset of puberty, the recognition of the beginnings of womanhood. New codes and forms of behaviour are prescribed for the adolescent girl, their aim being to prepare her for her future role of a woman in a patriarchal society. Stereotypical notions of femininity, the passive, docile subservient woman is the goal held out to her, indeed imposed upon her. By its neglect of female adolescence feminism ends up neglecting a crucial aspect of every woman's history--'what makes and shapes the adult woman.

Another reason why adolescence simply must be accounted for by feminists is that the female adolescent also presents a likely site for resistance to this cultural acculturation (as seen in Chapter 3). By battling against the stereotypical notions of femininity the adolescent is in effect battling for her

individual rights. Her refusal to conform, the modes of resistance deployed, the success of the modes of subversion are not just a befitting subject for feminism but an essential part of the agenda. Even if the 'rebellion' is not totally successful, the struggling adolescent would benefit from the support of feminism.

These reasons are augmented by the lack of a history and tradition in literature of adequate analysis of female adolescence. This lack is one of the major problems which besets the field of female adolescent studies. Feminist literary historians have undertaken the task of addressing the neglects in the history of women and women's groups, because by the power of tradition history denies the deprived, marginalised groups any power to change their predicament. The benefits of a study of the history of female adolescence will help in bringing into focus, forcing upon everyone's attention, the neglect of the female adolescent. Since adolescence is the process of being shaped into womanhood a history of adolescence has, one would have thought, an obvious bearing on women and women's issues. The feminist movement which in the last twenty years has focused attention on addressing the neglect of women by history, ideally now needs to turn its attention to the female adolescent.

But the general lack of recorded historical and literary sources of information about and analysis of female adolescence, and difficulty in identifying a few of them that do exist, call for an expansion of the resource base. The necessity of such expansion also demands a revision of our definitions of literary history, or at least the data to be included in it. Traditional-

ly, a good deal of literary history has been a merely descriptive and linear account of famous authors and their works, based on the assumption that texts can be studied in isolation. Recent literary developments, especially feminist literary studies, have challenged such notions of literature and literary history. Literature can no longer be viewed as a special enclave free from the play of social ideologies but a cultural product which is shaped by and in turn shapes social ideologies. Literary history has to revise its traditional stance and view literature as a culture specific product. Hence, a literary study of adolescence has to take into account the social history of female adolescence. In fact, in this case the latter may have to precede the former for a truly synthetic history of female adolescence. This could be done by using and working with non-canonical sources such as the following :

- a) Diaries and letters written by women. Diaries are private, personal records of subjective inner responses. It is possible that girls have recorded events of their adolescent lives, their feelings, their emotions, in their diaries, which then must be read. Letters could constitute another source of knowledge about the adolescence of girls. Carol Smith Rosenberg's "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America" is a rare study of adolescent friendships through the letters written by adolescent girls to each other. Obviously more such work needs to be done in this line of study.
- b) Other historical data may be revelatory as well. For instance, medical prescriptions and case records could form another source of information. What were the ailments from which growing girls

suffered commonly? What was the advice given by the doctors? How were such ailments treated? Martha H. Verbrugge in "Women and Medicine in Nineteenth Century America" (1976) states, "Distinctive theories, treatments and institutions for women have existed through much of history. Trying to understand these developments gives a look at the general character of medicine and society" [Signs: 959]. A few such studies already exist, such as Rosenberg's "Puberty to Menopause: The Cycle of Femininity in Nineteenth Century America" (1976).

c) Another possible source of information and action could be laws. How did laws differentiate between younger and older people? What was the legal basis of adulthood? Were laws different for the young and the old? And the female young? Why were these laws different? At what age was a woman legally considered an adult? A few such studies pertaining to the laws and male adolescents already exist. Ross W Beales' "In search of the Historical child: Miniature Adulthood and Youth in Colonial New England" (1957) refers to property laws to prove the existence of male adolescence and challenge studies like Centuries of Childhood by Phillipe Aries.

d) Conduct and Advice books directed at women or younger women constitute another possible source. What were the behavioural norms prescribed for young women? What social ideology regarding female adolescence do these norms or texts reveal? Conduct and advice books written for young women are implicitly related to sexuality and sexual norms for women. Armstrong states in The Ideology of Conduct (1987) "Conduct books for women . . . strive to reproduce if not always to revise the culturally approved

forms of desire" [1].

An intertwining of social and literary histories of female adolescence, arrived at by appropriate use of data would set in motion the process of writing the history of female adolescence. This process of writing will also be a process of righting the neglect of the female adolescent.

Feminism is enlisted in the political practice of changing adult gender relations in a patriarchal culture. But gender is not an operative category restricted in application solely to adulthood. Patriarchy succeeds in its intentions by focusing their operation upon the non-adult, especially the adolescent who represents the next generation of adult women. There is a pressing need for feminism to expand its domain to include this perpetuating pattern and address the concerns of the adolescent. The inclusion would benefit both feminism and the adolescent. By addressing the concerns of the female adolescent and through its interaction with female adolescent groups feminism can succeed in consciousness raising from the pre-adult state and the adolescent in turn would benefit from the support the feminist movement extends in voicing and articulating its central issues and concerns. Certain instances of such interactions have already occurred in the post-sixties era, for instance the sexual revolution. The pros and cons of the movement one might state are debatable but the emphasis here is on the interaction between adolescence and feminism.

Gender has become an important and serious concern in departments of English in recent years. Literary feminist critics after years of battling with the establishment have now been

given legitimacy by most departments and do not feel the need to justify their work. The work they do is now accepted and taken seriously. Adolescent studies, an otherwise neglected area deserves comparable attention and serious consideration. The present thesis written under the aegis of an English department is one such study. But this is only the first hesitant, initial exploratory step, the childhood stage of adolescent studies, as it were, and not the final word. There is a long way to go till adolescent studies achieve "maturity". For this further research is required.

Is there anybody out there...?

(1) Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977] has analysed female adolescence in the chapter titled "The Young Girl" [351-392] but the focus of Beauvoir's study is not female adolescence (our argument in this chapter).

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