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MADNESS AND SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE
FEMINIST NOVEL: STUDIES OF CHARLOTTE
BRONTE, VIRGINIA WOOLF AND DORIS
LESSING.

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MADNESS AND SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE FEMINIST NOVEL:

STUDIES OF

CHARLOTTE BRONTE, VIRGINIA WOOLF AND

DORIS LESSING

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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by

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1977

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Morris Beja
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For my sister, Sandy,
who went alone into the dark,
and for my girls, Jules and Kris, hoping
they will know light.
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INTRODUCTION

The psychoanalytic approach to literary criticism is a well-established subject of inquiry. However, a greater part of the feminist movement has considered modern psychology to be both a product and a defense of the status-quo—a patriarchal society. *Madness and Sexual Politics* in *the Feminist Novel* attempts to reconcile feminism and psychology in the area of literary criticism, to find examples in the major works of three representative feminist writers of the relationship between madness and the female condition.

A dissatisfaction with the principles of psychology and psychiatry as exclusively representing male-defined values and standards is almost universal among feminists. "Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. It had no mother," writes Germaine Greer.¹ Such a parentage results, according to Greer and others, in a double standard for mental health: that which is considered normal and desirable behavior for men is thought to be neurotic or even
psychotic for women. The "normal" woman, according to Phyllis Chesler in Women and Madness, is often defined by psychologists as the unemployed housewife, content with passivity and limited authenticity. In a society which values competition, material success, aggressiveness—characteristics considered to be essentially "masculine" and therefore discouraged in women—femininity becomes a negative quality. Thus, Chesler asserts, psychotherapy reflects a society which devalues women and socializes them to devalue themselves.

A majority of feminist writers, psychologists and philosophers have held Freud culpable for psychology's treatment of women. A series of authorities, beginning with psychiatrist Karen Horney in the 1920's, have concerned themselves with a refutation of such Freudian theories as the female castration complex and the vaginal orgasm. Karen Horney's followers in this area include such modern feminists as Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex, Shulamith Firestone in The Dialectics of Sex, Betty Friedan in The Feminine Mystique and Kate Millett in Sexual Politics, to name a few, all of whom have devoted major portions of their works to castigations of Freud.
Millett, for example, sees Freud as "beyond question the strongest individual counterrevolutionary force in the ideology of sexual politics" during his period.4

The techniques employed by post-Freudian psychologists in the therapeutic process are also considered by many feminists to be damaging to women's self images. Chesler, in an article entitled "Patient and Patriarch: Women in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship," maintains that analytic techniques are often autocratic, paternalistic, and coercive:

Freud believed that the psychoanalyst-patient relationship must be that of 'a superior and a subordinate.' The psychotherapist has been seen--by his critics as well as his patients--as a surrogate parent (father or mother), savior, lover, expert, and teacher--all roles that foster 'submission, dependency, and infantalism' in the patient; roles that imply the therapist's omni-scient and benevolent superiority and the patient's inferiority.5

Chesler further states that psychotherapy reinforces the rigidity of sex roles as seen in social institutions like marriage. Both psychotherapy and marriage, she writes,
...are based on a woman's helplessness and dependency on a stronger male authority figure; both may, in fact be viewed as reenactments of a little girl's relation to her father in a patriarchal society; both control and oppress women similarly--yet, at the same time, are the two safest havens for women in a society that offers them no others.°

Psychologist Naomi Weisstein regards such traditional psychotherapeutic methods and theories as strangling and deflecting any positive achievements toward understanding psychosis in women: "It then goes without saying that present psychology is less than worthless in contributing to a vision which could truly liberate--men as well as women." 7

The feminist feud with Freud, however, is more basic than a disagreement over the issues of female sexuality or therapeutic technique would indicate. The real quarrel is one of fundamental ideology: Freud's deterministic philosophy, what Weisstein terms "the fundamentalist myth of sex organ causality," 8 is perceived as invalidating social and cultural explanations for psychosis. Feminists see madness as a political event, not as an anatomical inevitability. Female insanity, they argue, can, in a majority of cases, be explained by the oppression of women in a
power-structured, male-supremacist society. According to Kate Millett:

"When in any group of persons, the ego is subjected to such invidious versions of itself through social beliefs, ideology, and tradition, the effect is bound to be pernicious. This coupled with the persistent though frequently subtle denigrations women encounter daily through personal contacts, the impressions gathered from the images and the media about them, and the discrimination in matters of behavior, employment, and education which they endure, should make it no very special cause for surprise that women develop group characteristics common to those who suffer minority status and a marginal existence."  

Chesler's statement is equally strong: she describes madness in women as "an intense experience of female biological, sexual, and cultural castration, and a doomed search for potency."

Thus Freud's deterministic theories are denied in favor of what might be termed existential ones. The negative experience of women is seen as a cultural phenomenon rather than as an immutable given. Ideally, existential psychology would affirm women as individuals rather than as a category, and would thus define them as capable of social actuality and the assertion of liberty.

The novels under consideration in the following
chapters do accomplish such an affirmation. Bronte, Woolf and Lessing all depict insanity in relation to sexual politics and state that madness, to a greater or lesser degree, is connected to the female condition. Each novel presents a criticism of a patriarchal political and social system, a universe dominated by masculine energy, which, in itself, manifests a kind of collusive madness in the form of war or sexual oppression and is thereby seen as threatening to feminine psychological survival. And, each depicts a female protagonist who, in spite of such oppression, achieves a superior sanity and at least a relative liberty in the assertion of a self.

The language and the ideology of orthodox psychology are useless for such a feminist analysis. However, one of the counter-ideologies which does apply is that of R. D. Laing. Laing, to be sure, cannot be seen essentially as a feminist, having written less about women than most other psychologists and then depicting them primarily as destructive mothers. Yet, his revolutionary approach to both philosophy and psychology can provide at least the terminology, the framework, necessary for feminist protest. Laing's approach,
which might be termed one of radical humanism, includes the conviction that psychosis, whether in women or in men, is an understandable or even a "sane" response to life in a destructive society. Schizophrenia, Laing says, "is a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation." Lessing's Martha Quest-Hesse and Woolf's Septimus Warren Smith, in particular, provide literary examples in support of the validity of such a contention.

Laing's views on Freud, while more flattering than those held by most feminists, nevertheless recognize a limitation:

Freud was a hero. He descended to the 'Underworld' and met there stark terrors. He carried with him his theory as a Medusa's head which turned these terrors to stone. We who follow Freud have the benefit of the knowledge he brought back with him and conveyed to us. He survived. We must see if we now can survive without using a theory that is in some measure an instrument of defense.

Perhaps even more useful in a feminist analysis is Laing's treatment of schizophrenia as, at least partly, a revolt against the claustrophobic element of the nuclear family. Much like Woolf in Three Guineas, Laing sees the family as a microcosm,
reflecting the patriarchal and ultimately fascist attitudes prevalent in society as a whole. Throughout his works, Laing attacks the family on political and social grounds, maintaining that parents often destroy their children with possessiveness, with hate masked as love. Women, too, according to Laing, suffer limitations within the family unit, which purports to provide both their self definition and their rationale. The family, then, is seen by Laing as well as by many feminists as a seat of authoritarianism and as an agent of human and sexual repression.

Individuals, whether women or men, are, for Laing, existential entities. Society, however, tends to categorize them into dehumanized and oppositional stereotypes like sane and insane, black and white, male and female. Particularly in the later and more radical The Politics of Experience, Laing echoes many feminists in his plea for the restoration of the "whole" person, the undivided self.

The idea behind the doppelgänger, the image of which is so pervasive and important in the novels to be discussed in the following chapters, is perhaps less what Otto Rank saw as an insurance against the
destruction of the ego and the denial of death, than it is a recognition of the tragedy of one's own self as divided. According to Laing:

The others have become instilled in our hearts, and we call them ourselves. Each person, not being himself either to himself or the other, just as the other is not himself to himself or to us, in being another neither recognizes himself in the other, nor the other in himself. Hence, being at least a double absence, haunted by the ghost of his own murdered self, no wonder modern man is addicted to other persons, and the more addicted, the less satisfied, the more lonely.

Also, as will be explored in the following chapters, Laing's opposition and antipathy to traditional psychotherapeutic techniques reinforces the feminist argument. Laing virtually redefines the analyst-patient relationship:

Psychotherapy consists in the paring away of all that stands between us, the props, masks, roles, lies, defenses, anxieties, projections and interjections, in short, all the carryovers from the past, transference and countertransference, that we use by habit and collusion, wittingly or unwittingly, as our currency for relationships... Of course, such techniques in the hands of a man who has not unremitting concern and respect for the patient could be disastrous.

The disaster in the works of Bronte, Woolf and Lessing inevitably lies in the encounter with the male authority figure, whether lover, husband, father or psychiatrist,
who decides the question of sanity and who then assumes the power to incarcerate and to destroy. In Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the villain is Sir William Bradshaw, the famed psychiatrist who sees all mental illness as a mere "lack of proportion" and who so tragically mishandles Septimus Warren Smith's breakdown. His remedy is to lock people up, thus robbing them of political and existential rights. He is depicted in military images, represented as a kind of warrior, a personification of tyranny. His only slightly less caricatured parallel is found in Lessing's *The Four-Gated City* in the character of the ironically-named Dr. Lamb, who represents power itself and whose very humanity is in question. In Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, the minister of God is the surrogate psychiatrist. Such hypocrites as the Reverend Brocklehurst and St. John Rivers are equally as insensitive and equally as powerful as the modern physicians depicted by Lessing and Woolf.

Thus, all three of the novelists to be discussed present studies of alienated female consciousnesses in opposition to a male society or to individual male authority figures. Each protagonist rejects the
father figure and, to varying degrees, embarks on a search for the metaphoric mother. It is significant that both Clarissa Dalloway and Jane Eyre are motherless (as were Woolf and Bronte), and that Martha Quest-Hesse has an ineffectual and geographically-removed mother. Adrienne Rich, in Of Woman Born, sees all women as psychologically crippled, disinherited and culturally bereft because they have been denied the love of strong figures of their own sex.  

Just as Laing perceives the psychotic personality to be a victim of oppression in search of a lost and divided self, so Woolf and Lessing, in particular, see their schizophrenic characters as at least quasi-religious figures—saints or savants. Lessing writes, "it is through madness and its variants" that truth must be sought. Woolf's mad Septimus becomes, in fact, a Christ figure. Even in Jane Eyre, that product of pre-modern psychology, the mad woman is somehow justified in her hatred and violence: she is a scapegoat rather than a force for evil. Chesler, like Laing, Bronte, Woolf and Lessing, endows the schizophrenic with mythic significance:
Perhaps the angry and weeping women in mental asylums are Amazons returned to earth these many centuries later, each conducting a private and half-remembered search for her mother-land—a search we call madness.¹⁸

A description of three such searches—for the mother within the self, for the feminist consciousness of a sense of self-worth—is the subject of the following chapters.
NOTES


2 Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc.).


6 Ibid., p. 373.


8 Ibid., p. 273.

9 Millett, p. 55.

10 Chesler, Women and Madness, p. 31.


NOTES, cont.


16 Ibid., pp. 46-47.


...the lunatic asylum is yellow.

On the first floor there were
women sitting, sewing;
they looked at us sadly, gently,
answered questions.

On the second floor there were
women crouching, thrashing,
tearing off their clothes, screaming;
to us they paid little attention.

On the third floor
I went through a glass-panelled
door into a different kind of room.
It was a hill, with boulders, trees, no houses.

...the air
was about to tell me
all kinds of answers.

from Margaret Atwood's
"Visit to Toronto with
Companions," The Journals
of Susanna Moodie
In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.¹

Charlotte Bronte presents this vision of desexed and dehumanized insanity in Jane Eyre as Bertha Mason, Rochester's lunatic wife. For ten years, she has been hidden and confined in a den-like room in the attic of Thornfield Hall, where she paces and snarls and howls her tragic and preternatural laugh. Her form is grotesque; her eyes are "red balls," her face "bloated" and "purple" (p. 71, vol. II). Madness has caused this metamorphosis from human into animal, for Bertha was once "the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty" (p. 86, vol. II).

Critical interpretations of Bertha's symbolic functions in Jane Eyre are varied and sometimes contradictory. For traditional critics who see the novel as a form of religious allegory, the mad woman represents
the evil in Rochester's soul from which he must be purified by purgatorial fires and the ministrations of a devout woman in the archetypal pattern of sin, suffering and redemption. In Freudian terms, Bertha is the evil mother-figure who prevents Jane's sexual union with the father-like Rochester, or she is seen to embody the id-like aspects of Rochester's psyche for which he suffers symbolic castration, blindness being the punishment for sexual crime since Oedipus.

However, Bertha is as much a doppelganger for Jane as for Rochester: she serves as a distorted mirror image of Jane's own dangerous propensities toward "passion," Bronte's frequent euphemism for sexuality. Bertha embodies the moral example which is the core of Bronte's novel—in a society which itself exhibits a form of psychosis in its oppression of women, the price paid for love and sexual commitment is insanity and death, the loss of self. Female ontological security and psychological survival in a patriarchal Victorian age, Bronte maintains, can be achieved only through a strong feminist consciousness and the affirmation of such inter-dependent values as
chastity and independence.

Many modern psychologists, like R. D. Laing, state that societies themselves can manifest symptoms of psychosis. The Victorian social system, as described by Helene Moglen in her biography of Bronte, reflects a collusive madness in its sexual politics:

The advent of industrialization and growth of the middle class was accompanied by a more diffuse yet more virulent form of patriarchy than any that had existed before. As men became uniquely responsible for the support of the family, women became 'possessions,' identified with their 'master's' wealth. The status of the male owner derived from the extent of his woman's leisure time and the degree of her emotional and physical dependence upon him. Sexual relationships followed a similar pattern of dominance and submission. Male power was affirmed through an egoistic, aggressive, even violent sexuality. Female sexuality was passive and self-denying. The woman, by wilfully defining herself as 'the exploited,' as 'victim,' by seeing herself as she was reflected in the male's perception of her, achieved the only kind of control available to her. Mutuality was extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.
All male characters in *Jane Eyre*, to a greater or lesser extent depending on their area of influence, are agents of such a sexually oppressive system. John Reed, the Reverend Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John Rivers, each of whom is dominant in one of the successive landscapes which make up the novel's progress, become a single symbol of tyranny as they share a common conscious or subconscious desire to render Jane an object, a Bertha, something less than a human being. Bronte indicates that, were Jane to succumb, to allow her will to be usurped, she as a sexual and human identity would cease to exist, just as Bertha Mason has ceased to exist in both human and sexual terms.

Jane first learns the meaning of female powerlessness from her guardian's son who is also her cousin, John Reed. Like most of Bronte's male characters, he is the sole masculine member in a female community, the members of which accept the role of self-abnegation deemed "rational" for women by society, and they accordingly pamper and indulge their male relative. Jane, for a time, grudgingly
assumes the traditional role, as John summons her to receive punishment for an imagined crime:

Habitually obedient to John, I came up to his chair; he spent some three minutes in thrusting out his tongue at me as far as he could without damaging the roots; I knew he would soon strike, and while dreading the blow, I mused on the disgusting and ugly appearance of him who would presently deal it... (p. 5, vol. I).

But Jane is not always "rational" and must retaliate against such obvious sexual threats: "Wicked and cruel boy!...You are like a murderer--you are like a slave driver--you are like the Roman emperors!" (p. 6, vol. I). She bloodies John's nose and is punished, just as Bertha is later to be punished for analogous acts of revenge, by confinement. During her imprisonment in "the red room," significantly the color associated with passion and of her oppressor's blood, Jane experiences a "species of fit" (p. 16, vol. I), a temporary madness and loss of consciousness. Moglen describes this episode as one in which "the principle of irrationality is given concrete form," and in which Jane "loses her sense of the boundaries of her identity." Mrs. Reed tells Jane that she can be liberated only "on the condition
of perfect submission and stillness" (p. 16, vol. I); that is, on the condition of "sane" behavior.

Rev. Brocklehurst is also a lone male oppressor in a female society, that of Lowood Institution. Jane's first impression of him is one of tremendous phallic impact: he is "a black pillar...a straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug; the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital" (p. 34, vol. I). For the second time, Bronte associates male sexuality with cruelty and even death. But, unlike John Reed, who only seems to Jane to be a murderer, Brocklehurst is in fact guilty of the murder by neglect of numbers of his charges at the school. He starves their bodies, chastizes their souls with threats of damnation and hellfire, symbolically desexes them by cutting their hair, and generally forces them into submission. Jane escapes the contagious typhoid which kills many of the debilitated inmates of Lowood by a self-imposed isolation in the surrounding woods and valleys.
An analogous withdrawal, and also self-imposed, will again save Jane from annihilation, this time psychological, in the next phase of the novel. Thornfield Hall is dominated by the Byronic figure of Rochester, again, the only male in residence. In spite of the facts that Rochester is at times gratuitously cruel in his attempts to provoke Jane's jealousy, that he lies on a number of occasions, and that he is attempting the social and religious crime of bigamy, Jane is profoundly tempted to surrender her very self to the magnetism, the sexuality, the male charisma that is Rochester. Bronte has frequently indicated that Jane's longing for love is so intense as to be self-destructive. Jane has confided to her Lowood friend, Helen Burns:

...if others don't love me, I would rather die than live--I cannot bear to be solitary and hated, Helen. Look here: to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest,...(pp. 84-85, vol. I).

Bronte's own letter to the beloved Monsieur Heger bespeaks a painfully similar state of emotion:
I know that you will be irritated when you read this letter. You will say once more that I am hysterical (or neurotic)—that I have black thoughts, etc. So be it, monsieur, I do not seek to justify myself; I submit to every sort of reproach. All I know is, that I cannot, that I will not, resign myself to lose wholly the friendship of my master. I would rather suffer the greatest physical pain than always have my heart lacerated by smarting regrets. If my master withdraws his friendship from me entirely I shall be altogether without hope; if he gives me a little—just a little—I shall be satisfied—happy; I shall have a reason for living on, for working.

Monsieur, the poor have not need of much to sustain them—they ask only for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. But if they are refused the crumbs they die of hunger.9

Similar images of hunger and starvation recur throughout Jane Eyre. Margot Peters, in Charlotte Bronte: Style in the Novel, sees such references as indicative of Jane's sexual and emotional deprivation.10 Frequent references to cold and the desire for warmth might well serve the same function. But, the fire that is Rochester's passion, and Jane's as well, becomes volcanic in its intensity: like Brocklehurst's hellfire, it consumes rather than warms and is thus perceived by Bronte as ultimately dangerous.
Bronte's frequent use of fire symbolism to represent passion and sexuality also has relevance in the area of psychology. R. D. Laing has written in *The Divided Self* that ontologically insecure people are in constant dread of what he calls "engulfment," the sense that one may lose one's self in the identity of another. This fear, writes Laing, is often expressed in images of both burning and drowning: "Some psychotics say in the acute phase that they are on fire, that their bodies are being burned up...(they) will be engulfed by the fire or the water, and either way be destroyed." It is significant that both Brocklehurst and St. John Rivers threaten Jane with the fires of damnation, that Helen Burns dies an early and sacrificial death, and that Rochester frequently invites Jane to sit with him by the fire where both his touch and his glance burn like coals. Bertha Mason dies as the result of a conflagration she herself has set. Drowning, too, is a concern of Jane's: "...the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire; I felt no standing; I came into deep waters: the
floods overflowed me" (p. 75, vol. II). Among Jane's paintings displayed to Rochester, presumably revelations of her inner feelings, is one in which "a drowned corpse glanced through the green water" (p. 159, vol. II).

It becomes increasingly apparent that what Bronte fears for Jane is that marriage with Rochester will not be a union of equals, but rather a loss of self, an engulfment, in the identity of another, just as it was for Bertha Mason. Laing describes a similar fear which he, again, attributes to the psychotic personality:

...if one experiences the other as a free agent, one is open to the possibility of experiencing oneself as an object of his experience and thereby of feeling one's own subjectivity drained away. One is threatened with the possibility of becoming no more than a thing in the world of the other, without any life for oneself, without any being for oneself. In terms of such anxiety, the very act of experiencing the other as a person is felt as virtually suicidal.12

Jane's extreme sense of ontological insecurity, however, need not necessarily be labeled psychotic, as it is surely justified by Rochester's behavior
during their courtship period. On hearing from Rochester that she is to become "Jane Rochester," to lose her very name, Jane states, "The feeling, the announcement sent through me, was something stronger than was consistent with joy—something that smote and stunned: it was, I think, almost fear" (p. 24, vol. II). Rochester becomes progressively more possessive, less cognizant of Jane as a human being with individual tastes and preferences. Despite Jane's remonstrances, he insists on extravagant gifts which serve to emphasize her economic powerlessness: "The more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation" (p. 38, vol. II).

The image of the slave, notable in Jane's encounter with John Reed, recurs frequently in her relationship with Rochester: "I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched..." (p. 38, vol. II). Rochester threatens in response to Jane's withdrawal: "...it is your time now, little tyrant, but it will be mine presently: and
once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I'll just—figuratively speaking—attach you to a chain, like this..." (p. 40, vol. II). In the next chapters, Jane will witness Rochester seizing a violent Bertha and binding her with rope.

And, as in Jane's encounters with John Reed and Brocklehurst, Bronte again makes the association of sex and literal death. Rochester's love song to Jane intimates they will die together. Jane replies, "What did he mean by such a pagan idea? I had no intention of dying with him—he might depend on that" (p. 43, vol. II). Bertha's fate will confirm Jane's fear: Rochester paradoxically becomes both rescuer and killer as, in his very efforts to save Bertha, he precipitates her suicidal leap into the flames.

Virginia Woolf, too, saw Rochester as a figure of devastation, attributing his characterization to Bronte's own personal suffering. Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own*:
The portrait of Rochester is drawn in the dark. We feel the influence of fear in it; just as we constantly feel an acidity (in Bronte) which is the result of oppression, a buried suffering smouldering beneath her passion, a rancour which contracts these books, splendid as they are, with a spasm of pain.¹³

Bronte fears for Jane's psychological survival as she apparently feared for her own, as is indicated in a letter written to her friend, Ellen Nussey:

My good girl, 'une grande passion' is 'une grande folie'...no young lady should fall in love till the offer has been made, accepted--the marriage ceremony performed and the first half year of wedded life has passed away--a woman may then begin to love, but with great precaution--very coldly--very moderately--very rationally--if she ever loves so much that a harsh word or a cold look from her husband cuts her to the heart--she is a fool--if ever she loves so much that her husband's will is her law--and that she has got into the habit of watching his looks in order that she may anticipate his wishes, she will soon be a neglected fool.¹⁴

It is possible that Rochester's need to reduce Jane to the state of object indicates an insecurity of his own. Jane's very virginity and inexperience are perhaps the qualities which most attract Rochester because he perceives them to be those most opposite to Bertha's. Bertha's sexuality, her capacity for
passion, apparently presented Rochester with real difficulties. Bertha possessed, Rochester tells Jane, "neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners." She was "coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile" (p. 87, vol. II). "Her vices sprang up fast and rank," and she demonstrated "giant propensities," being "intemperate and unchaste." Her nature was "the most gross, impure, depraved I ever saw" (p. 88, vol. II). Rochester comes to despise Bertha's very geographical origin, its lush, tropical refulgence being associated with her sexual personality.

Adrienne Rich, in an article entitled "Jane Eyre: Temptations of a Motherless Woman," provides a possible explanation for Rochester's attitude toward his wife:

...the 19th century loose woman might have sexual feelings, but the 19th century wife did not and must not. Rochester's loathing of Bertha is described repeatedly in terms of her physical strength and her violent will—both unacceptable qualities in the 19th century female, raised to the nth degree and embodied in a monster.15

Rochester further inadvertently reveals what might
be seen as his own sexual inadequacy as he explains to Jane his chain of mistresses: "I tried dissipation—never debauchery: that I hated, and hate" (p. 96, vol. II). M'glen's psychosexual analysis of the Byronic hero in general is illuminating in Rochester's case: "Always intrinsically connected to man's insecurity concerning his own sexuality, the fear of women is particularly pronounced in the psychology of the Byronic hero whose need to prove his masculinity by sexual conquest drives him to extremes of behavior."16

To preserve his own sexual identity, Rochester must rob Jane of hers. He insists on associating Jane with the supernatural, rather than with the natural, i.e., the sexual. He refers to her repeatedly as "angel," "fairy," "elf," "spirit," and tells little Adele that he will take Mademoiselle to the moon and feed her on manna. Even Adele can see that Jane is "far better as she is" (p. 35, vol. II). Rochester also emphasizes the contrast between Jane and Bertha, the purity of one and what he sees as the results of gross sexuality in the other, as
he calls upon assembled wedding guests to witness his justification for bigamy:

That is my wife... And this is what I wished to have... This young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout... look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder--this face with that mask--this form with that bulk... (pp. 71-72, vol. II).

Bertha, at this point however, can hardly be seen as a sexual being, her very sexual identity having been lost with her claim to humanity. Jane later accuses Rochester: "you are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate--with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel--she cannot help being mad." Rochester counters, "If you were mad, do you think I should hate you?" and Jane responds, "I do indeed, sir" (p. 81, vol. II).

Nearly as complex and dangerous as Rochester is St. John Rivers, the clergyman-master of Moor's End, yet another female community. St. John's masculine attractiveness, like Rochester's, poses a temptation for a sexually-deprived Jane:
I can imagine the possibility of conceiving an inevitable, strange, torturing kind of love for him: because he is so talented; and there is often a certain grandeur in his look, manner, and conversation (p. 235, vol. II).

But she also knows, from previous experience and from intuition, that love threatens the self:

In that case, my lot would become unspeakably wretched. He would not want me to love him; and if I showed the feeling, he would make me sensible that it was a superfluity...It is better, therefore, for the insignificant to keep out of his way; lest, in his progress, he should trample them down (pp. 235-236, vol. II).

St. John, like his predecessors, is seen as a potential murderer, both of the mind and of the body. On a literal level, St. John seeks to lead Jane to a missionary life in India, a place of such extreme climate, Jane feels, as to assure her an early death: "God did not give me my life to throw away," she tells St. John, "and to do as you wish me would, I begin to think, be almost equivalent to committing suicide" (p. 232, vol. II).

At the same time that he wishes to burn her body in India, St. John wishes to freeze her soul by denying her physical love. In his stern Calvinism, reminiscent of Brocklehurst's, St. John would deny
Jane's sexual and human self by binding her in a loveless and presumably sexless marriage. "Would it not be strange," Jane asks herself, "to be chained for life to a man who regarded one but as a useful tool?" (p. 235, vol. II). As the predominant image for Rochester is fire, so St. John is associated with ice—both extremes threaten death or the loss of identity, sexual and psychological.

The slave image becomes associated with St. John as it has with other male characters. "His kiss was like a seal affixed to my fetters," Jane says (p. 211, vol. II). And, again: "By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind" (p. 210, vol. II). St. John, like Rochester, is seen in fact as threatening the self with engulfment:

I was tempted to cease struggling with him—to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own. I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been once before, in a different way, by another. I was a fool both times (p. 238, vol. II).

Pushed to the extreme by St. John's insistence on marriage, Jane cries out, "If I were to marry you,
you would kill me. You are killing me now" (p. 230, vol. II). St. John, reflecting his society's attitude that woman's role is to surrender to the male will, reproves Jane: Your words are such as ought not to be used—they are violent, unfeminine..." (p. 230, vol. II).

These very charges are those brought repeatedly against Bertha Mason. Critics have frequently seen her as "unfeminine"—as either androgynous or as a kind of parody of masculinity. Terry Eagleton in his study of the Brontes, for example, sees Bertha partly as a projection of Jane's psyche, yet, "since Bertha is masculine, black-visaged and almost the same height as her husband, she appears also as a repulsive symbol of Rochester's sexual drive."¹⁷ Moglen, for another, describes Bertha in this way: "...an androgynous figure, she is also the violent lover who destroys the integrity of the self; who offers the corruption of sexual knowledge and power—essentially male in its opposition to purity and innocence."¹⁸

Certainly Bertha's violent behavior—rendering male antagonists with her very teeth—can be called
"unfeminine." She has not, however, been masculinized, but rather de-sexed altogether, symbolically castrated in the same way that Jane's sexual self has been repeatedly threatened by Rochester and others. Bertha's opposition to "purity and innocence," too, is questionable. It is worthy of note that she attacks only male figures, never her female keeper, Grace Poole, or Jane, though she enters Jane's room and leans above her sleeping form. It is on this night that Bertha tears Jane's wedding veil, which Jane herself has said is a symbol of "nothing save Fairfax Rochester's pride" (p. 54, vol. II). Finally, Bertha is the agent for Rochester's purification as well as his fall.

Perhaps Bertha's madness quite literally has a method, and, as Grace Poole has said, "it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft" (p. 71, vol. II). She behaves in such an "unfeminine" manner as many "feminine" people, like Jane herself, might find possible only in fantasy. Perhaps Bronte even suggests, with the depiction of the ebony crucifix on the cabinet door which hides the entrance
to Bertha's den, an identification with the scapegoat aspect of the dying Christ (p. 272, vol. I).

But, such an identification for Bertha is, at best, tenuous and possibly subconscious on Bronte's part. The figure of Bertha is, after all, a warning and not a model. A more sympathetic view of Bertha than Bronte's and a reinterpretation of her insanity occur in a novel by Jean Rhys entitled *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Rhys has rewritten the mad sequences from *Jane Eyre* from Bertha's point of view, allowing her to tell her own story from the account of her childhood in the West Indies through her marriage to Rochester and her eventual breakdown and confinement at Thornfield Hall. Rhys' Bertha, unlike Bronte's, is delicate in her appearance and feminine in her behavior. Even the name "Bertha," declared to be solely Rochester's appellation for her, is changed to the more musical "Antionette." Rhys also dismisses the allegations made by Bronte's Rochester that Bertha's insanity is hereditary, and provides excellent alternative causes for both Antionette's and her mother's psychoses. The mother has suffered a series of
atrocities during a native uprising; Antionette has undergone Rochester's prudish and cruel rejection of her passion for him. Rhys' Rochester is the unmitigated villain as he consciously inflicts the most insidious forms of mental torture.

In her imprisonment at Thornfield Hall, Antionette is more pathetic than bestial, her periods of violence clouded by amnesia so that we never see her at her worst. She becomes more and more the lost child, the wronged innocent. Her fault, however, is the same as that of Bronte's Bertha--she has unreservedly surrendered to her passion for Rochester. Rhys' character, then, shares with Bronte's this basic similarity: they are both vehicles for the essentially feminist message that, whatever the sexual ethos, there is a danger of the loss of self when self love and self preservation become secondary to love for another.

In Bronte's novel, a wall, after all, is all that separates Jane from Bertha in the setting for one of Bronte's most overtly feminist and didactic
statements. Jane, like her double, paces the third floor of Thornfield Hall, longing for some unnameable form of liberty, experiencing a "restlessness" which would be deemed improper, even irrational, for the Victorian woman:

Who blames me? Many no doubt; and I shall be called discontented. I could not help it: the restlessness was in my nature: it agitated me to pain sometimes. Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards...

It is vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making purses and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (pp. 138-139, vol. I).
The next lines, which so disturbed Virginia Woolf in her reading of *Jane Eyre* and left her at a loss for explanation,\(^19\) describe the laugh of the lunatic in close proximity: "the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha! which, when first heard, had thrilled me" (p. 139, vol. I). Bertha, herself one of the "millions fermenting rebellion," longing for "action," and quite obviously suffering from "too rigid a restraint," perhaps laughs, along with Bronte herself, at Jane's naive understatement.

It is a similar kind of undefined restlessness as that Jane experiences which precipitates the temporary insanity of Lucy Snowe, the protagonist of Bronte's *Villette*, a novel which Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* describes as "too subversive to be popular."\(^20\) Lucy is alone in a girls' school when she begins to experience extreme depression, "the conviction that fate was of stone, and Hope a false idol--blind, bloodless, and of granite core."\(^21\) Terrible dreams, Lucy says, "wring my whole frame with unknown anguish" and provide "a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity." Such dreams lead her
to the realization that "my mind has suffered somewhat too much; a malady is growing upon it—what shall I do? How shall I keep well?" Lucy, like Jane, does keep well, but only by an exertion of will and an affirmation of the self as indomitable. Kate Millett describes her in this way: "In Lucy one may perceive what effects her life in a male-supremacist society has upon the psyche of a woman. She is bitter and she is honest; a neurotic revolutionary full of conflict, back-sliding, anger, terrible self-doubt, and an unconquerable determination to win through."23

Like Lucy, and like Bertha, Jane is, when driven, capable of "unfeminine" outbursts of temper and even of violence, and in these acts, at least partly, lie her survival. The Victorian adjuration to the female, "suffer and be still," is, to Bronte's mind, yet another weapon of patriarchal domination. Jane has, after all, punched John Reed, and she has told the subservient Helen Burns:

If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way: they would never feel afraid,
and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse. When we are struck at without reason, we should strike back again very hard! I am sure we should—so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again (p. 69, vol. I).

The adult Jane has hardly changed:

I know no medium. I never in my life have known any medium in my dealings with positive, hard characters, antagonistic to my own, between absolute submission and determined revolt. I have always faithfully observed the one, up to the very moment of bursting, sometimes with volcanic vehemence, into the other...(p. 214, vol. II).

Laing's observations on the feelings of the ontologically threatened person are perhaps relevant here. Hate, says Laing, can be a less disturbing relationship than love because it is somehow less engulfing. Liking a person, Laing writes in The Divided Self, can be equal to being like that person, or even being the same as that person, thus with losing one's own identity. Hating and being hated may therefore be interpreted as less threatening to the sense of self. 24

Margot Peters, in her biography, remarks on Bronte's own capacity for intense resentment and hatred. Peters quotes Bronte's self description
written in a letter to Ellen Nussey: "I am a hearty hater."\(^{25}\) Certainly, within the scope of her novel, Bronte is capable of great vengeance. In order to preserve Jane's self from annihilation, Bronte annihilates the oppressors, systematically and thoroughly. John Reed dies, a suicide, as a result of his own excesses; Brocklehurst is socially discredited and disappears; and St. John, at the novel's end, is soon to find his martyrdom in death. These characters have been rendered strawmen by Jane's assertion of self.

Perhaps the greatest victory is that achieved over Rochester. Jane clearly surpasses her statement (which is also something of a threat) made earlier in the novel:

'I have as much soul as you, and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you...it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are!' (pp. 17-18, vol. II).

Such a claim to equality, addressed in the Victorian age to a male and a male employer at that, is surely insurrection.
Ultimately, however, as Jane seeks out Rochester in the final chapters to find his house in ruins, his body crippled and blinded, his worst fears realized in the depletion of his powers of masculinity, she finds herself his superior rather than his equal. Rochester has leaned on Jane before: at their first meeting when he falls from his horse, later when Bertha sets fire to his bed, and at other intervals of crisis. Now he must formally avow his dependence, "just as if a royal eagle, chained to a perch should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor" (p. 266, vol. II).

Moglen maintains that, like Bronte's own blinded father whom she nursed as she wrote *Jane Eyre*, Rochester, at the end of the novel, is in need of a mother—not a lover. Jane can assume the role of what Moglen terms "the virginal daughter who has been magically transformed—without the mediation of sexual contact—into the noble figure of the nurturing mother." 26

Carolyn Heilbrun in *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* provides a purely political interpretation of Rochester's fall:
Jane Eyre's demand for autonomy or some measure of freedom echoes politically in the cries of all powerless individuals whether the victims of industrialization, racial discrimination or political disenfranchisement. So we today begin to see that Rochester undergoes, not sexual mutilation as the Freudians claim, but the inevitable sufferings necessary when those in power are forced to release some of their power to those who previously had none.27

Whether sexual, political or psychological, it is a terrible and virtually divine justice which Bronte calls down upon Rochester. "My master" has become "my Edward" and Jane can aggressively announce, "Reader, I married him" (p. 279, vol. II).

More important than the victories over the male oppressors, and more difficult for Bronte, is the annihilation of the insane doppelganger, the potential Jane-as-victim. She must be done away with both physically and as a shadow in the mind. Metaphors associating passion with madness, both of which Bronte sees as a loss of self and sexual identity, recur throughout the novel. Early in her relationship with Rochester, Jane warns herself:

...it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it; and if
discovered and responded to, must lead, ignis-fatuus-like, into miry wilds whence there is no extrication (p. 205, vol. I).

In a world so dangerous to the sanity, so oppressive to the sense of self, one means of survival lies in being inaccessible; and chastity is a form of inaccessibility. Jane thus rejects the temptation to become Rochester's mistress:

I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now... If I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane—quite insane with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs. Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by; there I plant my foot (pp. 102-103, vol. II).

Peters describes Jane's chastity as "the source of that self-esteem which can keep her alive." Jane celebrates her own physical and psychological survival:

...let me ask myself one question— which is better?—to have surrendered to temptation; listened to passion; made no painful effort—no struggle;—but to have sunk down in the silken snare; fallen asleep on the flowers covering it...Whether is it better, I ask, to be a slave in a fool's paradise at Marseilles—fevered with delusive bliss one hour—suffocating with the bitterest tears of remorse and shame the next—or to be a village school-mistress, free and honest, in a breezy
mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?
    Yes; I feel now that I was right when I adhered to principle and law, and scorned and crushed the insane promptings of a frenzied moment (pp. 159-160, vol. II).

Chastity, which Bronte often euphemizes as the "unmined treasure" of the body, and sanity, the mind's treasure, thus become synonomous.

In thus asserting chastity and self, rejecting the self-abnegating role traditional for women, Jane also rejects the authority of the male power structure. She seeks, throughout the novel, another kind of authority— that of the female. Adrienne Rich has suggested that Jane Eyre is the story of a search for a literal mother:

Many of the great mothers have not been biological. The novel Jane Eyre ...can be read as a woman-pilgrim's progress along a path of classic female temptation, in which the motherless Jane time after time finds women who protect, solace, teach, challenge, and nourish her in self-respect. For centuries, daughters have been strengthened and energized by nonbiological mothers, who have combined a care for the practical values of survival with an incitement toward further horizons, a compassion for vulnerability with an insistence on our buried strengths. It is precisely this that has allowed us to survive...
The fact that Bronte, like Jane, was motherless lends a poignancy to this search for an actual, literal mother figure. However, unlike Rich, I feel that, within the scope of the novel, such a search is doomed to disappointment. There is hardly a female character in Jane's acquaintance who has not conformed in some way to social expectations for the female. Mrs. Reed, whose energies are consumed in pampering her son, rejects Jane and chooses to assume the role of evil step-mother rather than provide Jane with the nurturing love she longs for. On the occasion of Mrs. Reed's death, later in the novel, Jane reveals: "Many a time, as a little child, I should have been glad to love you if you would have let me" (p. 311, vol. I). Jane finds some grudging affection, motivated undoubtedly by pity, in the person of Bessie, the maid, whose song of "The Poor Orphan Child," however, serves only to confirm Jane's sense of loss. At Lowood Institution, Jane seeks love and tenderness with Helen Burns, but Helen is solipsistically caught up in her own vision of Christian stoicism and dies a martyr of self-denial, an act which Jane's strong survival instincts would never permit her to
emulate. Miss Temple, the beloved teacher, also, in effect, abandons Jane when she leaves Lowood to marry a respectable clergyman. Diana and Mary Rivers, the sisters of St. John, arrive on the scene only after they are no longer needed as mother figures, and they, too, marry and are lost to Jane.

The only mother available to Jane is thus a metaphoric mother, virtually a cosmic force, who lives both in the universe and in the self. Jane sees her clearly for the first time on the night of her abortive wedding to Rochester. She lies alone in her room at Thornfield, as desperately unhappy as she had been in the red room at Gateshead, where there also occurred revelations of a quasi-supernatural nature. Now Jane communicates with the moon itself:

She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud; a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—

'My daughter, flee temptation!'

'Mother, I will' (p. 105, vol. II).
The moon here undoubtedly represents, in accordance with long literary tradition, primarily chastity. Yet Bronte's images are never quite so simple. For example, a similar moon often precedes the apparition of the nun in *Villette* whose mysterious life had included some sin, presumably sexual, against her vows. Perhaps Bronte would be more in accord with the Jungian psychologist, M. Esther Harding, who devotes her study, *Woman's Mysteries*, to an analysis of the moon-mother in ancient and modern cultures. Various moon goddesses, says Harding, have represented fertility as well as chastity; they are universally auto-erotic, "one-in-themselves," belonging only to themselves. If we can assume such a complexity for Bronte's image, it is possible to conclude that the moon-mother is the voice of the feminist consciousness, a kind of inner voice of sanity which, unlike the traditional patriarchal God to whom Jane frequently pays lip service, affirms self-respect and not self-denial, sexual or otherwise.

Again, as Jane wanders the moors in flight from Rochester, she finds affinity with the cosmic mother
rather than with the male God. This time the mother-goddess is represented by the earth rather than by the moon:

I have no relative but the universal mother, nature: I will seek her breast and ask repose...Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I, who from man could anticipate only mistrust, rejection, insult, clung to her with filial fondness. To-night, at least, I would be her guest—as I was her child; my mother would lodge me without money and without price (pp. 111-112, vol. II).

Jane is thus so absorbed in her own search for the mother that she at least subconsciously rejects the role of motherhood for herself as being yet another threat to autonomy. Though the novel abounds in images of pregnancy and conception, as Peters has pointed out in Style in the Novel, Bronte spares but one line for the birth of Jane's own child. We know only that it is a male child who has inherited Rochester's black eyes. Jane's attitude toward Adele has been one of professional indulgence rather than sincere affection, and, shortly after Jane's marriage to Rochester, Adele is unceremoniously shipped off to school. Also reflective of Jane's reticence to assume the role of mother herself is her recurring dream
of the wailing infant which clings to her neck, strangles her at times, poses a terrifying responsibility in the form of a burden which she is not permitted to lay down, and always forbodes disaster. That which at least partly contributes to Lucy Snowe's mental crisis in *Villette* is her onerous duty as sole caretaker of an idiot child. Moglen attributes such feelings of obvious antipathy to the fact that Bronte's own mother died very probably as the result of excessive child bearing.\(^2\) Ironically, Bronte herself was to die of complications of pregnancy.

Thus, Jane wishes only to be a mother to herself, and the authority she has sought in the moon and in the earth is after all but the mother within. Jane, at a moment of severe temptation, asks herself, "Who in the world cares for you?" Her immediate recognition is, "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself" (p. 102, vol. II). The female self, for Bronte, is an idea of psychological order; its preservation lies in the sanity of the feminist consciousness.
NOTES


7 Ibid., p. 110.

8 Ibid., p. 111.


12 Ibid., p. 49.
NOTES, cont.


16 Moglen, p. 128.


18 Moglen, pp. 126-127.

19 Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 72.


22 Ibid., p. 200.

23 Millett, p. 192.

24 Laing, The Divided Self, p. 47.


26 Moglen, p. 143.


NOTES, cont.


32 Moglen, p. 21.
Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness,
Tis the majority
In this, as all, prevails.
Assent, and you are sane;
Demur,—you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain.

Emily Dickinson
"I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side," wrote Virginia Woolf of her projected novel, Mrs. Dalloway. Unlike Bronte's clear-cut distinction between sanity and psychosis in a society in which psychological survival is at least a desirable possibility, Woolf's dividing line is an extremely fine one, obscured in a world in which insanity may well be a "sane" alternative.

Like Bronte, and like Lessing, to be explored in the next chapter, Woolf juxtaposes her "sane" character to an insane doppelganger: Clarissa Dalloway represents the "normally" alienated person who functions in her society, but whose other and perhaps better self is the madman Septimus Warren Smith. As has been noted in most critical studies of Mrs. Dalloway, the two characters are structurally linked by a series of words and phrases which pervade the interior monologues of both. Sea, waves, drowning,
fire, trees, flowers, "fear no more..." are all recurring images for both characters. Although they never meet, their paths through the physical world cross throughout the novel. On another level, the basis of their connection would also seem to be the experiences of both, differing only in degree of intensity, in the subjective realms of anxiety, isolation, ontological insecurity, and, finally, of psychosis and mysticism.

On the first page of *Mrs. Dalloway*, we are told that Clarissa, as a girl, was often preoccupied with the feeling that "something awful was about to happen." Her sense of nameless anxiety and her feelings of isolation become thematic in the novel: "She had a perpetual sense...of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day" (p. 11). For Septimus, the dread of impending disaster is even more intense: "The world has raised its whip; where will it descend?" (p. 20). There is always, in the consciousness of Septimus, "something tremendous about to happen" (p. 104).
Given Woolf's presentation of the world, she might well see these anxieties as justified, as projections of minds which are hyper-perceptive of a bizarre reality. As in the foregoing chapter, the ideas of R. D. Laing serve to illuminate the nature of this reality. In *The Politics of Experience*, for example, Laing quotes a phrase from Heidegger which echoes Woolf's Septimus: "the Dreadful has already happened;" that is, society itself has become a composition of individuals who are what Laing calls "sane-schizoids," people alienated from their own inner selves and therefore isolated from each other as well. Woolf, like Bronte, sees sexual oppression as symptomatic of the illness of such a society. Thus, although many critics describe Clarissa and Septimus as linked by a common attribute of androgyny, they may also be seen, in their relationship to society, as essentially "feminine" in that both are, to varying extents, victimized by a male-supremacist system.

While Bronte portrays the individual male as negative authority figure, Woolf, in *Mrs. Dalloway* and even more obviously in later works, depicts a
universalized vision of virility manifesting itself, ultimately, as fascism. Its victims are those members of humanity who are powerless, "feminine" men as well as women. Woolf describes her "mental picture" in *Three Guineas*, published as Hitler was moving through Europe:

> It is the figure of a man; some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility, the perfect type of which all others are imperfect adumbrations. He is a man certainly. His eyes are glazed; his eyes glare. His body, which is braced in an unnatural position, is tightly cased in a uniform. Upon the breast of that uniform are sewn several medals and other mystic symbols. His hand is upon the sword. He is called in German and Italian Fuhrer or Duce; in our own language Tyrant or Dictator. And behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies—men, women and children.⁴

It now seems amusing to note that E. M. Forster described *Three Guineas* as "cantankerous" and Woolf's feminism as "old fashioned," but his evaluation of her attitude toward society was accurate if patronizing:

> She was convinced that society is man-made, that the chief occupations of men are the shedding of blood, the making of money, the giving of orders, and the wearing of uniforms, and that none of these occupations is admirable.⁶
Woolf maintains throughout Three Guineas that the public world is but a reflection of the private world, that the system which approves tyranny of women in the home will also condone the tyranny of humanity in general. Thus, Woolf sees no distinction between feminism and humanism.

War, as a weapon of tyranny and as a manifestation of that "quintessence of virility," is an ominous presence in all Woolf's novels, including Mrs. Dalloway. Septimus is diagnosed as suffering from "deferred shell shock," his very mind being a casualty of war. Alex Zwerdling, in an article entitled "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System," interprets Septimus' condition as "a psychic wound from which he has no wish to recover because it is a badge of honor in a society that identifies composure with mental health." But society itself in Mrs. Dalloway does not reflect any real composure, but is rather an active and malignant force. Woolf states in her diary, "I want to criticize the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense."
Woolf's personification of this social system is the famed psychiatrist, Sir William Bradshaw, a warrior against the forces of irrationality and a hero to his countrymen:

"Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion... insisting that these prophetic Christs and Christesses, who prophesied the end of the world, or the advent of God, should drink milk in bed, as Sir William ordered; Sir William with his thirty years' experience of these kinds of cases, and his infallible instinct, this is madness, this sense; in fact, his sense of proportion (pp. 150-151).

Naked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless received the impress of Sir William's will. He swooped, he devoured, he shut people up (p. 154).

Thus, for both Woolf and Septimus, Sir William is the powerful representative of the masculine aspect of human nature, "the brute with the red nostrils" (p. 223). Clarissa, too, imagines what destruction might occur if Sir William were to have access to the mind, the authority to penetrate the self. She muses on Septimus' suicide of which she has just been informed, and she intuits just how tragically Bradshaw
has mishandled Septimus' condition:

Or there were the poets and thinkers. Suppose he had had that passion, and had gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor yet to her obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage--forcing your soul, that was it--if this young man had gone to him, and Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that? (p. 261).

Sir William's phallic, threatening presence recalls Bronte's characterization of the Reverend Brocklehurst and, to some extent, her depiction of St. John Rivers. All three figures are presented as excessively masculine, yet all are, paradoxically, "without sex," forbidding childbirth and natural sexual expression in others. All are cold, inhuman themselves--and thus terrifying. Brocklehurst and Sir William are tyrants. Brocklehurst's long, accusing finger becomes, in the case of Sir William, a gesture prophetically like the fascist salute. His patients cower as:

...they learnt the extent of their transgressions; huddled up in arm-chairs, they watched him go through, for their benefit, a curious exercise
with the arms, which he shot out, brought sharply back to his hip, to prove (if the patient was obstinate) that Sir William was master of his own actions, which the patient was not. There some weakly broke down; sobbed, submitted; others inspired by Heaven knows what intemperate madness, called Sir William to his face a damnable humbug; questioned, even more impiously, life itself. Why live? they demanded. Sir William replied that life was good (p. 153).

Society in Mrs. Dalloway produces many such examples of excessive dominance, though not all are so pervasively powerful as Sir William, and not all are men. Miss Kilman, for example, is essentially masculine. As her name indicates, she seeks to annihilate the individualized self of others with her fanatic political and religious proselytizing and with her possessive lesbian yearnings. Her obscene pleasure in grossly fingering and sucking the very marrow from a chocolate eclair indicates her will to treat persons in a similar fashion. Clarissa perceives her in threatening sexual terms as "one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants" (pp. 16-17).
Individuals are not the only assailants in Woolf’s dangerous universe; at times the very atmosphere of London becomes profoundly threatening. Septimus stands helplessly watching as:

In the street, vans roared past him; brutality blared out on placards; men were trapped in mines; women burnt alive; and once a maimed file of lunatics being exercised or displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laughed aloud), ambled and nodded and grinned past him, in the Tottenham Court Road, each half apologetically, yet triumphantly, inflicting his helpless woe. And would he go mad? (pp. 135-136).

The world is thus perceived by both Clarissa and Septimus as threatening to one's individuality, one's sense of self. There are, however, defensive mechanisms which can be adopted to preserve the sense of self, to achieve a measure of ontological security. When taken to their logical conclusions, they represent insanity, as in the case of Septimus. But Clarissa, too, though to a less drastic extent, employs the same methods.

Because the apprehension of their surroundings is so sensitive, so painful, both Clarissa and Septimus, on an unconscious or even a conscious level,
refuse to "feel." They perceive themselves as empty, lacking, for example, in the ability to relate to other people. Although Clarissa is not only a part but a very center of society, she rejects close personal contacts. Other women "confess" to Clarissa, but never Clarissa to them. She "...could see what she lacked...it was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together" (p. 46). She observes, "There was an emptiness about the heart of life" (p. 45).

Septimus, even more consistently and intensely, repeats that he cannot feel, that he is empty; he wishes himself a shell of a whole person. "His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step into the pit" (p. 136).

Laing's definition of schizophrenia, explored in The Divided Self, applies quite clearly to Septimus and, to a degree, to Clarissa as well:

The term schizoid refers to an individual the totality of whose experience is split in two main ways: in the first place, there is a rent in his relationship with
his world, and, in the second, there is
a disruption of his relationship with him-
self. Such a person is not able to exper-
ience himself 'together with' others or
'at home in' the world, but, on the con-
try, he experiences himself in despair-
ing aloneness and isolation...9

What Woolf perceives in Mrs. Dalloway and what Laird
is later to plead in The Politics of Experience is
that, if the world is in truth inhospitable, un-
home-like, then perhaps withdrawal from that world
is a sane and reasonable method of self preservation.

That social institution in which the self is
most vulnerable because most intimate with another
is, of course, marriage. Given Woolf's frequent
connection of private and public tyranny, it is not
surprising, for example, that the public tyrant,
Sir William Bradshaw, most especially does not spare
his own wife, who, however, has proved a willing
victim:

But conversion, fastidious Goddess,
lives blood better than brick, and
feasts most subtly on the human will.
For example, Lady Bradshaw. Fifteen
years ago she had gone under. It was
nothing you could put your finger on;
there had been no scene, no snap; only
the slow sinking, water-logged, of her
will into his. Sweet was her smile,
swift her submission...(p. 152).
Clarissa refuses such victimization. Her early suitor, Peter Walsh, has posed a similar if more subtle threat to psychological security. Very like Mr. Ramsay, the often-tyrannical husband in *To the Lighthouse* whose military-like boots become a symbol of negative masculinity, Peter is also excessively masculine as evidenced by his ever-present, phallic pen-knife. Clarissa reaffirms her rejection of Peter and her reasons for marrying Richard Dalloway instead:

So she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still making out that she had been right—and she had too—not to marry him. For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in and day out in the same house; which Richard gave her and she him...But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced (p. 10).

Later in the novel, Clarissa again considers:

And there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect, thought Clarissa, watching him open the door; for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self-respect—something, after all, priceless (p. 181).
Such privacy is a paramount value for all Woolf's sympathetic, i.e., "feminine" characters. Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse, we begin to feel, dies for the lack of it. Septimus, ultimately, commits suicide to achieve it. Woolf wrote in an essay entitled "On Being Ill":

We do not know our own souls, let alone the souls of others. Human beings do not go hand in hand the whole stretch of the way. There is a virgin forest in each; a snowfield where even the print of birds' feet is unknown. Here we go alone, and like it better so. Always to have sympathy, always to be accompanied, always to be understood would be intolerable.

Even marriage to Richard, however, who permits Clarissa this precious privacy and agrees that she sleep alone, is not without danger: "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown...this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (p. 14). A similar fear, that of losing one's identity with one's name in marriage, is also expressed in Jane Eyre and, as we will see, preoccupies Lessing in The Four-Gated City.

Woolf, like Bronte, sees a necessity to protect the self by withdrawing, by being inaccessible, in
the area of sexual relationships. Clarissa, like Jane Eyre, is frequently depicted as virginal, even nun-like, and, like Jane, she is ambivalent, longing for love and yet rejecting it because of its dangers. Clarissa perceives clearly that she has left the sexual, fertile life for the tower, where security is possible but where isolation and death are juxtaposed images:

It was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun. The door had shut, and there among the dust of fallen plaster and the litter of birds' nests, how distant the view had looked, and the sounds came thin and chill... (p. 70).

(Surely, the inaccessible lighthouse in To the Lighthouse represents a similar, longed-for isolation for Mrs. Ramsay.)

Sex and love, for both Septimus and Clarissa as for Jane Eyre, threaten a violation of the inner self which one must struggle to keep intact. Clarissa agonizes to herself:

...love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul... Love destroyed too. Everything that was fine, everything that was true went. Horrible passion!... Degrading passion! (p. 192).
Septimus, even more than Clarissa, is appalled by:

...the getting of children, the sordidity of the mouth and the belly!...

Love between man and woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The busi­ness of copulation was filth to him before the end (p. 134).

Hate, as in the case of Jane Eyre, becomes for Clarissa and Septimus a less threatening, less engulfing emotion than love. Clarissa, for example, finds great satisfaction in her antipathy for Miss Kilman: "She hated her: she loved her. It was enemies one wanted, not friends" (p. 266). Septimus is endowed with a great ability to love all of humanity in spite of or even because of its faults, but he also senses that "the secret signal which one generation passes, under disguise, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair" (p. 134). In his madness, Septimus perceives that "human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness" (p. 135).

Even Septimus's wife, Rezia, who is the essence of positive femininity, surrounding herself with
the feminine symbol of flowers in her hat-making trade, is not exempt from Stpeimus' hatred. She inadvertently condemns herself to loneliness and isolation from her husband by her insistence on a "normal" marriage, which for her includes children and sexual attention. She repeatedly "interrupts" (always a negative term in Woolf's novels), and thus destroys his visions by forcing him to see a reality he rejects. She rarely allows him the privacy which it costs him his sanity to achieve. Her ultimate betrayal is her allegiance with the doctors. Only too late does Rezia recognize Holmes and Bradshaw for the villains Woolf intends to portray. Always before fearful and bird-like, it is only in her last-minute attempt to protect Septimus from Holmes' violent entrance that she becomes strong and heroic, appearing then to Septimus as "a flowering tree," through the branches of which "looked out the face of a lawgiver, who had reached a sanctuary where she feared no one..." (p. 224). After Septimus' death, Rezia comes to fully understand his visions as she, too, enters "into some garden" (p. 227). She, like Septimus, hears and feels "rain falling, whisperings, stirrings among
the dry corn, the caress of the sea..." (p. 228).

The withdrawal from sexual relationships on the part of both Clarissa and Septimus has been explained by numerous critics, among whom is Nancy Topping Bazin in *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*, as a result of guilt due to repressed homosexual tendencies. Such tendencies do, of course, exist in both characters, but are more clearly explainable by the fact that each wishes to withdraw from what is perceived as a negative, masculine world in which the self can be theoretically violated sexually and psychologically, and to enter a feminine world of flower images and security. Clarissa, for example, is struck by "the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally. It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could only exist between women" (p. 50). Jane Eyre's search for the metaphoric mother involves a similar search for integrity rather than homosexual gratification. Certainly, a longing for immersion in the female world of Mrs. Ramsay is Lily Briscoe's object in *To the Lighthouse*. 
For Clarissa, however, such contacts are fleeting; there is always the male world to interrupt, to "embitter her moment of happiness... It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness!" (p. 53).

In *Jane Eyre*, the price of sexual commitment is the loss of self in madness or death. Sexual love and passion are also dangerous in *Mrs. Dalloway*, but madness becomes a kind of refuge for the self rather than its loss. Septimus is, in a great sense, ultimately more victorious in his preservation of self than is Clarissa, who senses her relative failure: "A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved" (p. 230).

The majority of Woolf scholars are in direct opposition to such a view. Jeremy Hawthorn, in *Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, sees both Clarissa and Septimus as "impoverished" by what he terms sexual failure. By cutting herself off from Peter Walsh, Hawthorn maintains, Clarissa "may have caused the death of her soul." In general,
Hawthorn perceives the great fault in *Mrs. Dalloway* as the lack of resolution to the sexual conflict and other problems: "we are led in this novel into the heart of the experience of human alienation, but we are not shown the way out, the way forward."\(^{14}\) What especially mars Hawthorn's work is his naive mistaking of symptom for cause and his failure to see that, short of social revolution or even the very regeneration of humanity itself, there simply is no way forward. In a male-supremacist society like that Woolf depicts, female ontology is in fact threatened. According to Laing, "A firm sense of one's own autonomous identity is required in order that one may be related as one human being to another."\(^{15}\) When that sense of identity is continually threatened by social institutions as well as by individuals, its preservation reasonably lies in a withdrawal from danger.

Laing's theory that the ontologically threatened person experiences a sense of engulfment, or fear of the loss of one's identity in the identity of another,\(^ {16}\) applies to Woolf's novel as it does to Bronte's.
The images of burning and drowning, which appear so frequently in *Jane Eyre* and which Laing would see as expressive of this sense of engulfment, also recur throughout *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa interrogates herself: "Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders!" (p. 255). For Septimus, such feelings occur with even greater frequency:

Then there were the visions. He was drowned, he used to say, lying on a cliff with the gulls screaming over him. He would look over the edge of the sofa down into the sea...And he would lie listening until suddenly he would cry that he was falling, down, down into the flames! (p. 213).

The sense of engulfment, according to Laing, can be compounded by a fear of what he terms "implosion." If the ontologically threatened person feels the self as a vacuum, as empty, then he or she perceives a danger that reality or the world may impinge, rush in to fill that vacuum and overwhelm the self. Laing describes implosion as "the experience of the world as liable at any moment to crash in and obliterate a vacuum."17 Both Septimus and Clarissa
share an extreme sensitivity to their physical surroundings, which can sometimes become so exciting as to threaten implosion. Woolf describes Septimus' experience as "this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames" (p. 21). The perception of physical beauty is often a terrifying experience to Septimus because it might somehow overwhelm him, drive him more deeply into madness:

Happily Rezia put her hand with a tremendous weight on his knee so that he was weighted down, transfixed, or the excitement of the elm trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave, like plumes on horses' heads, feathers on ladies', so proudly they rose and fell, so superbly, would have sent him mad. But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more (p. 32).

Clarissa shares Septimus' sensitivity to beauty, as do all Woolf's feminine characters. Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse, for example, sees and experiences flowers, flying rooks, the sea, in a way of which Mr. Ramsay is incapable. Clarissa's experiences,
like Mrs. Ramsay's, are exciting and revelatory, but they are less intense than those of Septimus. The sense of implosion, so familiar to Septimus, is certainly represented in the following description, although to Clarissa the experience is momentary, a flash or an epiphany rendered sexually, an insight into the nature of androgyny which holds no terror:

...yet she could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl, of a woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape, some folly. And whether it was pity, or their beauty, or that she was older, or some accident—like a faint scent, or a violin next door (so strange is the power of sounds at certain moments), she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and the world came closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment (pp. 46-47).

Clarissa's revelatory moments are, elusively, only moments, their "inner meaning almost expressed," but
not completely. During these brief experiences, however, time itself may be said to be non-existent for Clarissa. Morris Beja, in *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, writes that, during Woolf's many renderings of epiphanies,

...her characters feel that they are in some sort of timeless state—that time does not exist, or that it has been suspended, or that they have escaped it and are outside of it... The sense of timelessness would in fact be very much like that of living in eternity, or in a world in which all time is contemporaneous.18

Finally, however, like that of all "sane" people, Clarissa's escape from time is only temporary. She is ultimately a victim of masculine society's creation, real or objective time, as, throughout the novel, she heeds the ringing of Big Ben--itself a phallic image--prepares for her party to be held that evening, and attempts to deal with her fear of death.

What is only a momentary experience for Clarissa is, in essence, an eternity for Septimus. His psychosis involves the suspension of objective time; rather he lives continually in totally subjective time. Like Laing's patients described in *The Politics of Experience*, Septimus experiences what Laing calls "eonic time" as opposed to "mundane time":19 Septimus
is free of the limitations imposed by objective time and thus more open to subjective or revelatory experiences, the consciousness of the inner self. For Septimus, Woolf writes, "the word 'time' split its husk; poured its riches over him" (p. 105).

Woolf sees such acute subjectivity as painful to endure, but as essentially creative rather than destructive. Mad people know things, Woolf intimates, which nominally sane people cannot know; they grapple with monsters of the mind that sane people suppress. Laing goes even further in stating that psychosis can itself be a source of art. In The Politics of Experience, he quotes Jean Cocteau:

"The creative breath comes from 'a zone of man where man cannot descend, even if Virgil were to lead him, for Virgil would not go down there.'"20 The descent into madness, says Laing, is akin to a mythical journey from which one can return with a special knowledge and ability:

From the point of view of a man alienated from its source, creation arises from despair and ends in failure. But such a man has not trodden the path to the end of time, the end of space, the end of darkness, and the end of light. He does not know that where it all ends, there it all begins.21
Only when one loses what Laing calls "the Alpha and Omega" can one really begin to write, and then, says Laing, "...there is no end to it, words, words, words." 22

We can also theorize that perhaps Woolf's own periodic mental illness sometimes provided the impetus for her writing, in spite of the fact that the process of writing itself was often agonizing for her. About the composition of Mrs. Dalloway, she writes in her diary: "the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squirt so badly that I can hardly face spending the next weeks at it...do I write essay about myself?" 23

Certainly, Septimus' madness requires that he both talk and write to exhaustion. He prepares voluminous notes addressed to humanity. He identifies himself with Dante, being on a similar journey through the hell of his own mind, and with Shakespeare, with whom, Woolf tells us, Septimus had associated England itself before the war. In his ecstatic apprehension of nature, Septimus is the poet in possession of the meaning of beauty and truth:
Long streamers of sunlight fawned at his feet. The trees waved, brandished. We welcome, the world seemed to say; we accept; we create. Beauty, the world seemed to say...To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy...and the sun spotting now this leaf, now that, in mockery, dazzling it with soft gold in pure good temper; and now and again some chime...tinkling divinely on the grass stalks—all of this, calm and reasonable as it was, made out of ordinary things as it was, was the truth now; beauty, that was the truth now. Beauty was everywhere...(p. 104).

Clarissa, although to a lesser extent, shares this creative force. Her home, with its calm and dignified atmosphere of efficient perfection, all her creation, takes on a religious significance:

She felt like a nun who has left the world and feels fold round her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions...It was her life, and, bending her head over the hall table, she bowed beneath the influence, felt blessed and purified (p. 42).

Clarissa's parties, artistic creations in their own right in their combining or unifying of people, are "an offering" (p. 185), becoming associated with a kind of Eastern religious theory of transcendent unity:
Clarissa had a theory in those days...
It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction; not knowing people; not being known. For how could they know each other? You met every day; then not for six months or years. It was unsatisfactory, they agreed, how little one knew people. But she said, sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; and she tapped the back of the seat, but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her, or anyone, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter—even trees or barns. It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, to be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death...perhaps—perhaps (pp. 231-232).

Thus, Clarissa, like Jane Eyre although on a more conscious level, rejects the traditional, patriarchal religion for some more universalized yet subjective concept. It is difficult, however, to see Clarissa, as does Jean O. Love in Worlds in Consciousness, as herself a unity, a kind of Eastern goddess, "a Brahma-like or Kama-like deity."24 Rather, she shares
with many of Woolf's other female and feminine characters what Beja refers to as "a vaguely 'religious' quality."\(^{25}\)

Clarissa, then, being essentially "sane," apprehends the mystical only through her experiencing of the momentary epiphany. Septimus, on the other hand, to both his terror and joy, lives in a kind of constant epiphany. The validly mystical experience, Woolf implies, is finally linked to the insane experience.

James Haremore, in *The World Without a Self*, sees Woolf's epiphanies as "a sacrifice of the ego," connected with a loss of self in death. Haremore, in fact, describes Woolf's entire literary style involving the effacement of the author as indicative of her own death wish.\(^{26}\) It is also possible, however, that Woolf does not see the mystical experience, insanity, or even death as a loss of self. Through his very alienation from the more general psychosis of society, Septimus is open to an illumination, a supra-consciousness, which is at least partly a recognition of the self rather than its loss. He dies, "holding his treasure" (p. 281), while others
spend their lives "feeling the impossibility of
reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them"
(p. 281).

It is Septimus' visions which provide him with
the content of the messages he scribbles so furiously
and directs to humanity:

"Men must not cut down trees. There is
a God. (He noted such revelations on
the backs of envelopes.) Change the
world. No one kills from hatred. Make
it known (he wrote it down) (p. 35)."

Septimus becomes, in his own mind at least, a messiah
burdened with the necessity to free humankind from
its suffering and delusion. He is the vegetation
god in his association with trees, "the leaves being
connected by millions of fibres with his own body"
(p. 32), and with flowers, which "grew through
his flesh" (p. 103). He is the prophet:

...raising his hand like some colossal
figure who has lamented the fate of man
for ages in the desert alone with his
hands pressed to his forehead, furrows
of despair on his cheeks...the giant
mourner...the millions lamented; for
ages they had sorrowed. He would turn
round, he would tell them in a few
moments, only a few moments more, of
this relief, of this joy, of this
astonishing revelation (p. 105)."
He is T. S. Eliot's drowned sailor, marooned on a rock: "I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive" (p. 104). Finally, Septimus is Christ the scapegoat:

...the voice which no communicated with him who was the greatest of mankind, Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever unwasted, suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer...(p. 37).

Aaron Fleishman, in Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading, writes of Septimus: "The role of Christ figure or lamb of God comes to him not merely out of religious hysteria or personal megalomania, but from his sense of himself as a sacrificial object who affirms the collective existence by separating or sacrificing himself." Septimus' suicide is thus not the mere escape which Sir William Bradshaw thinks it to be, but rather is almost lovingly conceived as an act of martyrdom. Septimus does not want to die, but society demands his sacrifice. "The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes" (p. 140). As he sits on the window sill, contemplating the jump to the pavement below,
Septimus finally capitulates: "I'll give it you!" (p. 226), he says—and jumps.

Laing might well interpret Septimus' suicide as embued with religious significance. Laing writes in *The Politics of Experience*, "There are sudden, apparently inexplicable suicides that must be understood as the dawn of a hope so horrible and harrowing that it is unendurable." For Woolf, unlike Septimus, suicide cannot accomplish the renewal of mankind, but she does endow Septimus' death with symbolic significance: it serves to effect the spiritual regeneration of Clarissa. On being told of Septimus' suicide at her party, Clarissa vicariously dies as well:

Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground, through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness (p. 280).

Clariissa's symbolic death, then, allows her to reaffirm her life: "She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it, thrown it away...He made
her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun" (p. 283).

Clarissa's desire for unity, not at the expense of self, is achieved: "There was an embrace in death" (p. 281). Certainly, it is a living, vital, renewed Clarissa who returns to her party, capable of generating in Peter Walsh a "terror," an "ecstasy," an "extraordinary excitement." "It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was" (p. 296).

It is also interesting to note that Septimus also serves as a scapegoat for Clarissa on a more literal level as well. According to Woolf's introduction to Mrs. Dalloway, which appears in the Modern Library edition, the creation of Septimus was an afterthought; Clarissa herself was originally to have died at the novel's conclusion.

Septimus' death, I think, cannot be seen in the same light as Bertha Mason's death in Jane Eyre, though both characters are scapegoats. Harvena Richter, in The Inward Voyage, might better be analyzing Bronte's use of the doppelganger than Woolf's when she maintains that Septimus represents "the irrational, uncontrolled unconscious," the bad self, as opposed to Clarissa's "controlled, rational conscious."
First, it would be unflattering to Clarissa, in Woolf's terms, to see her as so very rational, a quality better associated with such characters as Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* or even with Sir William Bradshaw, characters who cling to logic in an illogical world, who insist on "proportion" when no such proportion is possible.

Septimus, then, is, in a real sense, Clarissa's better self. The agony of madness and the loss of life are a terrible price, but Septimus, more than Clarissa, has achieved a sense of self, an integrity, in the face of those who would rob him of such assets. There is nobility in his defiance of the William Bradshaws, who have insisted that "Life was good" (p. 153). Septimus also knows that "Life was good" (p. 226), as he indicates just before he jumps to his death—but not on Bradshaw's terms. Therefore, he has "thrown it away" (p. 282). "Death was defiance" (p. 280). Thus, what Bronte only dares to hint in her association of Bertha Mason and the crucified Christ, Woolf, like Lessing to follow, and like Laing, has affirmed: the psychotic personality is apotheosized.
Laing, like Woolf, rebels against society's views and treatment of such an almost sacred individual as the psychotic personality is thus seen to become. If, as Laing perceives it, psychosis is a voyage into inner time and space, the result of which is the emergence of an at least quasi-religious figure, if not a saint, then the physician who attends that journey and watches over the traveller ought to assume a religious role as well. He must become what Laing calls "the true physician priest." Laing does not label himself a psychiatrist, but rather "a specialist, God help me, in inner time and space." Instead of the "degradation ceremonial" of the psychiatric examination, Laing suggests, there should be substituted a kind of initiation ceremony to guide the voyager through his journey and to help him back again. Perhaps, Laing says, "we will learn to accord to so called schizophrenics who have come back to us, perhaps after years, no less respect than the often no less lost explorers of the Renaissance." The figure of Septimus as scapegoat, as victim of society's own illnesses called war, oppression and insensitivity,
serves well to illustrate the real meaning of the word "schizophrenia," which, Laing says, literally translates "broken-hearted." And, writes Laing, "even broken hearts have been known to mend if we have the heart to let them." 33

Woolf, too, opposes the authority of professional power. For her, it is a political and philosophical atrocity that Sir William Bradshaw has the right to "shut people up" and to violate the sacred area of the mind. As E. M. Forster wrote of Woolf, "she was always civilized and sane on the subject of madness." 34 Woolf, like Laing, indicates that insanity, after all, may be the only escape from society's own state of schizophrenia called normality. Sanity and insanity, then, are designated as opposites only by a society, largely masculine in its assumption of power, whose own "sanity" depends on such distinctions.
NOTES


6 Ibid., pp. 22-23.


NOTES, cont.

13 Ibid., p. 35.
14 Ibid., p. 94.
15 Laing, *The Divided Self*, p. 45.
16 Ibid., p. 46.
17 Ibid., p. 47.
20 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
21 Ibid., p. 25.
22 Ibid., p. 137.
25 Beja, p. 122.
NOTES, cont.


31 Ibid., p. 39.

32 Ibid., p. 90.

33 Ibid., p. 90.

34 Porster, p. 17.
The country beneath
the earth has a green sun
and the rivers flow backwards,

the trees and rocks are the same
as they are here, but shifted.
Those who live there are always hungry;

from them you can learn
wisdom and great power,
if you can descend and return safely.

... 

from Margaret Atwood's "Procedures
for Underground"
But the most frightening thing about them was this: that they walked and moved and went about their lives in a condition of sleepwalking; they were not aware of themselves, of other people, of what went on around them...they stood with the masses of pelt hanging around their faces, and the slits in their faces stretched in the sounds they made to communicate, or as they emitted a series of loud noisy breaths which was a way of indicating surprise or a need to release tension...each seemed locked in an invisible cage which prevented him from experiencing his fellow's thoughts, or lives, or needs. They were essentially isolated, shut in, enclosed inside their hideously defective bodies, behind their dreaming drugged eyes, above all; inside a net of wants and needs that made it impossible for them to think of anything else.

These lines do not depict, as might be expected, the insanity of a grotesque and subhuman Bertha Mason; nor do they describe that troop of pathetic lunatics being marched through the streets of London to the horror of Septimus Warren Smith.
in Mrs. Dalloway. Rather, this is a description of the "normal" members of society, the majority of humanity, as perceived by what can be termed the "psychotic" mind, that which for Doris Lessing in The Four-Gated City is the only mind sufficiently sensitive to apprehend reality objectively.

Lessing's rendition of this reality, apparent in the entire Children of Violence series of which The Four-Gated City is the culmination, is a world that Bronte, for all her sense of evil, could hardly have conceived; it is the world of Clarissa Dalloway's worst apprehensions now fully and socially realized. Truth, for Lessing, is first presented in The Four-Gated City as that nightmare vision of post-World War II London seen by the self-proclaimed hysteric, Martha Quest-Hesse. "Martha the traveller" (p. 80) homelessly walks the streets, finding her way across great pits left by exploded bombs and through crowds of depressed and poverty-stricken humanity. The entire world seems to her to be numb, blinded. Martha alone perceives her own plight and the plight of others as she observes,
"there's something wrong with me that I do see what's going on as ugly, as if I were the only person awake and everyone else is in a kind of bad dream, but they couldn't see that they were" (p. 68). Society seems oblivious to the fact that it is oppressed, that war is an unbelievable atrocity, that there are "a number of events, or processes, in this or that part of the world, whose common quality was horror--and a senseless horror...this barbarism, this savagery was simply not possible" (p. 193).

Martha is later in the novel to meet a few other characters, like her employer and lover, the author Mark Coldridge, who are also aware that political and philosophical oppression--which includes racism, sexism, any sort of "ism" which manipulates power--is responsible for unspeakable acts perpetrated on human beings and on the physical world in which they live. But Mark must discipline himself to learn what Martha, in her acute state of perception, already intuits; he must constantly remind himself of reality by filling an entire
room with maps and headlines, the physical evidence of truth:

On the walls multiplied the charts of the death factories, the poison factories, the factories that made instruments for the control of the mind: the maps of Hunger, Poverty, Riot and the rest; the atlases of poisoned air and poisoned earth and the places where bombs had been exploded under the sea, where atomic waste was sunk into the sea, where ships discharged filthy oil into the sea, where inland waters were dead or dying (p. 379).

Thus there is a kind of reverse progression from Bronte to Lessing: the individual "he" as enemy in Bronte's novel and the more universalized "He" as the quality of negative masculinity in Woolf's, become, in The Four-Gated City, an even more ominous because less easily identifiable "They," responsible for the fact that the entire world is war-torn, physically and morally diseased, and, ultimately, by the end of the novel, to destroy itself through germ warfare.

Lessing, like Woolf, sees "normality" or the adjustment to such a state of affairs as itself a form of madness. A similar definition of normality
is professed by R. D. Laing, who Lessing has referred to as "a peg," a "key authority figure."²

In *The Politics of Experience*, Laing writes:
"Only by the most outrageous violation of ourselves have we achieved our capacity to live in relative adjustment to a civilization apparently driven to its own destruction."³

Artha can specifically identify the particular form of madness which afflicts all of society as she becomes increasingly aware that the state of normality is one of schizophrenia, of alienation; it is "a condition of disparateness," the separate parts of the mind "working individually, by themselves, not joining..." (p. 61). Human beings, by definition, are mad, according to Lessing, because the human brain itself is "a machine which works in division; it is composed of parts which function in compartments locked off from each other; or 'your right hand does not know what your left hand is doing'" (p. 496). In her critical biography of Lessing, Dorothy Brewster quotes Lessing's childhood memory of her father, sitting in a chair, looking
out over the vast Rhodesian landscape and periodically shaking his fist at the sky and shouting, "Mad--everyone--everywhere!" 1

Laing's description of schizophrenia corresponds to Lessing's: he sees it as, first, an alienation from the self which leads to an alienation from other people as well, and this condition, Laing states, is virtually universal. We live, he writes, "in an age of darkness." 2 Lessing, too, sees the world as "a country where people could not communicate across the dark that separates them" (p. 79). Communication of any kind, verbal or sexual, is almost an impossibility in Lessing's novel, the whole of which might be seen to serve as a negative answer, at least for this time, to Laing's terrifying question: "Is love possible?" 3

Lessing describes sex, for example, as an act in which people temporarily "plug into" each other (p. 471). "Passion," that term which has such reality and meaning in the works of Bronte and Woolf, which so permeates the consciousness and inspires such dread in the earlier works, hardly
exists as a concept in Lessing's world. "We don't understand the first thing about what goes on," she writes, "not the first thing. 'Make love,' 'make sex,' 'orgasms,' 'climaxes'—it was all nonsense, words, sounds, invented by half-animals who understood nothing at all" (p. 470).

The single scene in The Four-Jated City which might be considered at all erotic is that enacted between Martha and Jack, who is a kind of sexual athlete and who, later in the novel, will completely pervert sexual relationships by seducing women into prostitution. Even in this scene, however, sex cannot really be considered a form of communication, the participants being locked into their own purely subjective experiences, meeting needs that are solely individual, getting from each other a compensation for personal traumas of the past. Jack has suffered terribly in the war, and now one woman serves as well as another to feed his terrible hunger for experience, for life.

Martha and Mark Coldridge also have a sexual relationship, primarily because it is convenient
and serves as an outlet for the extreme pressures each is under. Mark can go from a series of pre-marital relationships to his wife, Lynda, to Martha to the brainless Rita—and it is all the same. No confrontation, no announcement precedes the end of his affair with Martha, who calmly accepts her rejection and goes on to other non-descript relationships: "When it's a question of survival, sex the uncontrollable can be controlled. And therefore had Martha joined that band of women who have affairs because men have ceased to be explorations into unknown possibilities" (p. 287).

Love is only a word; the reality is subjective need, and sex itself, says Martha, is a force "as impersonal as thunder or lightning" (p. 470). One is reminded of that African scene in Lessing's The Golden Notebook in which millions upon millions of copulating grasshoppers, indifferent as to their partners, frenziedly and blindly fulfill the dictates of some mad god called nature.

Martha also sees marriage as a part of this universal mockery: "The truth was, she feared marriage, looking at it from outside now, unable
to believe that she had ever been in it. What an institution! What an absurd arrangement...! (p. 236).

Marriage is such an appalling situation for Martha because she sees it, like all other human relationships, as based on subjective need, selfish concerns, the use of one person by another. Women, as well as men, self-centeredly seek some impossible fulfillment. Martha recognizes and rejects this tendency toward subjectivity in herself as well as in others:

But to herself she was able to say precisely what she feared. It was the rebirth of the woman in love.

If one is with a man, 'in love,' or in the condition of loving, then there comes to life that hungry, never-to-be-fed, never-at-peace woman who needs and wants and must have. That creature had come into existence with Mark. She would come into existence again. For the unappeasable hungers and the cravings are part, not of the casual affair, or of friendly sex, but of marriage and the 'serious' love. God forbid.

...when a woman has reached that point when she allies part of herself with the man who will feed that poor craving bitch in every woman, then enough, it's time to move on (pp. 286-287).
In her short story, "To Room Nineteen," Lessing theorizes that even a "perfect" marriage, based supposedly on intelligence and mutual respect, can become merely an animal-like struggle to meet subjective desires. In this case, the husband wins, and the wife, her needs completely unmet, kills herself.

Like Woolf, Lessing sees the horrors of the public world reflected in the private world of marriage. Society in Lessing's work is no more capable of permitting the reality of Martha's dream of "the Golden Age" in which a man, woman and beautiful children join hands and walk "in a high place under a blue sky" (p. 59), than it is of attaining the Utopia of the ordered and peaceful "four-gated city."

Perhaps, however, it is the very depersonalization of sex which, for Lessing, contributes to the possibilities of psychological survival in a mad world. As chastity and inaccessibility operate to protect the self from annihilation in the works of Bronte and Woolf, so Lessing sees numerous sexual
experiences as precluding the possibility of total engulfment in the one. Janet Sydney Kaplan, in an article entitled "The Limits of Consciousness in the Novels of Doris Lessing," states that Martha fears the loss of ego in the sexual relationship. However, if the self is not extended and made vulnerable in sex, if "the craving bitch" is suppressed, if sex is kept impersonal, "casual," "friendly" (impossible concepts for either Woolf or Bronte), then the self is protected as efficiently as if there were no sex act at all. Such a character as Sally-Sarah, in loving a husband who is totally immersed in such abstractions as science and communism at the expense of personal relationships, is tragic because she does extend the self. Like the wife in "To Room Nineteen," Sally-Sarah ends by committing suicide. Women who survive at least physically include the promiscuous Jill who most often has no notion of the identity of the father of the current child she is bearing.

If the term "love" must be qualified out of existence in Lessing's world, so must words like
"hate," which emotion becomes merely another aspect of the normal state of alienation, providing none of the gratification or purgative functions so necessary in the novels of Bronte and Woolf. Jack explains and Kartha concurs:

'You say all your life I hate, I love. But then you discover hatred is a sort of wavelength you can tune into. After all, it's always there, hatred is simply part of the world, like one of the colours of the rainbow. You can go into it, as if it were a place' (p. 57).

"Love" and "hate," then, because each implies an object, have a limited meaning. They are words empty of significance. All human feeling can, in essence, be reduced to subjectivity, which Lessing sees as synonymous with alienation. However, as Lessing indicates in her introduction to The Golden Notebook, to recognize this subjectivity as inherent in the human condition, as universal, is ultimately to break through the barriers which it erects:

The way to deal with the problem of 'subjectivity,' that shocking business of being preoccupied with the tiny individual who is at the same time caught up in such an explosion of terrible and marvelous possibilities, is to see him as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal,
the subjective, making the personal
general, as indeed life always does,
transforming a private experience... 
into something much larger: grow-
ing up is after all only the under-
standing that one's unique and incred-
ible experience is what everyone shares.

In the author's notes, appended to The Four-jated
City, Lessing describes her novel as a bildungsroman.

Leah, then, "grows up" because she comes to see
her own schizophrenia and subjectivity projected into
the world at large. Only through the recognition
of one's own madness as a reflection of the world's
madness, can a higher state of sanity be achieved.

Conscious madness, as opposed to the world's un-
conscious madness, is the way to truth itself for
Lessing:

Perhaps it was because if society
is so organized, or rather has so
grown, that it will not admit what
one knows to be true, will not admit
it, that is, except as it comes out
perverted, through madness, then it
is through madness and its variants
it must be sought after (p. 357).

"Madness" and "sanity" thus become more meaningless
terms, their significance merely a matter of per-
ception: "Better mad, if the price for not being
mad is to be a lump of lethargy that will use any
kind of stratagem so as to remain a lump, remain nonperceptive and heavy" (p. 484).

Laing, particularly in his later works, similarly maintains that there is a positive function for what society terms madness; that it is not "what we need to be cured of, but that it is itself a natural way of healing our own appalling state of alienation called normality." Normality, for Laing and for Lessing, is the negative and truly insane state, because it implies the clinging to uncertain certainties and the dependence on a reality that is, in fact, unreal. To go mad in a positive sense is to give up all certainty, according to Laing and Lessing, to lose the distinction between the real and the not real, between the self and the not-self. Laing and Lessing both indicate that the result of going mad in this sense may well be the emergence of a state of mind far saner than that understood by the normal world. Similarly, Woolf's Septimus in Mrs. Dalloway is a "saner" person than his evil physician.

Martha Quest is perhaps named for her search for this superior sanity, which she begins through
a virtually self-conscious and planned inducement of hysteria, a state which she describes as "a rehearsal":

When you get to a new place in yourself, when you are going to break into something new, then it sometimes is presented to you like that: giggling and tears and hysteria. It's a thing you'll understand properly one day--being tested out. First you have to accept them like that, silly and giggly... (p. 69).

Hysteria thus is a rehearsal for the madness which will lead to enlightenment:

Yes--hysteria. This country, the country or sea, of sound, the wavelength where the voices babble and rage and sing and laugh, and music and war sounds and the bird song and every conceivable sound go together, was approached, at least for her, or at least at this time, through hysteria. Very well then, she would be hysterical (p. 49).

Martha also experiments with the possibilities of surrendering identity, of obscuring the distinction between the self and the not-self, not through a loss of self in the sexual experience, as Kaplan suggests, but in the more easily controlled area of her own mind. She recognizes that she has always, since childhood, maintained "as an act of survival," a second personality, a false aspect of
the self, a "parody" called "Matty" (p. 5). Now she can clinically observe her own schizophrenia: she can "call strange identities into being with a switch of clothes or a change of voice—until one felt like an empty space without boundaries and it did not matter what name one gave a stranger who asked: "What is your name? Who are you?" (p. 17).

Name and identity, so inextricably connected in the works of both Bronte and Woolf that the loss of one in marriage threatens the loss of the other, are also important links in Lessing's novel. Sally-Sarah, for example, is really just "Sarah," but her husband's family, seeking to disguise her Jewish background, re-names her "Sally." Perhaps her inability to herself control whether she is Sally or Sarah is another contributing factor to her suicide. For Martha, however, this connection between name and identity is part of the rehearsal, a crucial factor in the experiment of surrendering identity, so serious that she refers to it as her "work":

As for 'Hesse,' it was a name acquired like a bracelet from a man who had it in his possession to be given to a woman in front of lawyers at the time of the signing of the marriage contract. But who then was she, behind the banalities of the day?...but really, there she was: she was, nothing to do with Martha, or any other name she might have attached to her...(p. 36).

Thus, madness and the loss of identity, those states which Jane Eyre and Clarissa Galloway struggle to avoid, Martha actively seeks to confront. She realizes that she can move almost at will from "inside the empty space of self" into "ordinary living" in which the self "seemed a very far country" (p. 8). She experiments in this way because, paradoxically, only through the loss of self is it possible to find the self:

Sometimes she felt like a person who wakes up in a strange city, not knowing who he, she, is. There she sat, herself. Her name was Martha, a convenient label to attach to her sense of herself. Sometimes she got up and looked into the mirror, in an urgency of need to see a reflection of that presence called, for no particular reason, Martha. She had dark eyes. She smiled, or frowned. Once, bringing to the mirror a mood of seething anxiety, she saw a dishevelled panic-struck creature biting its nails. She
watched this creature, who was in an agony of fear. Who watched? (p. 215).

Martha's question is not fully answered until she meets Lynda Coldridge, who will, by example, guide Martha from hysteria into the insane experience where the true identity of the self is to be discovered. Perhaps it is in much the same way that Woolf perceives Septimus to have kept or even to have gained his "treasure" of the self in madness. Lynda also echoes Septimus' claim to superior knowledge, expressed in the urgent messages he directs to humanity. Throughout Lessing's novel, Lynda repeats: "I know things." Part of what she knows is that all people are really at least two people: "Sometimes you are more the one that watches, and sometimes that one gets far off and you are more the one that is watched" (p. 216). Martha, too, becomes aware of "the somebody in you who always watches what goes on, who is always apart" (p. 223).

As Bronte's Bertha can be seen as Jane Eyre's mad, bad self, so Lynda can be seen as Martha's mad, good self. She serves as both guide and
doppelgänger. Martha feels this identification even before she meets Lynda:

...she had not met Lynda, save through improbably beautiful photographs, but she knew her, oh yes, very well, though she and Martha were not alike, and could not be, since Martha was not 'ill' and in the hands of the doctors. But for a large variety of reasons, Lynda Coldridge, who was in a very expensive mental hospital because she could not stand being Mark's wife, and Francis's mother, came too close to Martha. Which was why Martha had to leave this house and soon (p. 109).

Martha cannot, however, simply leave, being held, at least partly, by this mysterious affinity with the insane Lynda. Because Lynda cannot "stand being Mark's wife" and refuses sexual intimacy with him, Martha assumes Lynda's role and becomes Mark's surrogate wife, sleeping with him, caring for his son and nephew, managing his house, providing him with ideas for his novels and plays. When Mark turns his attentions from Martha, she moves into Lynda's apartment in the basement, where their relationship as doubles is further emphasized, where Martha comes to realize that she is "in love" with Lynda as "with a part of herself she had never
even been introduced to— even caught a glimpse of" (p. 351). As Martha enters Lynda's mad world, both physically and emotionally, she sometimes wonders where she ends and where Lynda begins. In describing the chaos of sound which is a part of her insane experience, Martha asks, "is it in Lynda's head or in mine? (p. 473). At that point in their shared experience at which the world seems the furthest removed, Lynda and Martha together perform a kind of ritual, like a communion, Lynda kneeling on the floor and, animal-like, lapping milk from a broken saucer, and Martha drinking "symbolically" from the same saucer (p. 455).

The character of Lynda could well be seen as a parody of Bronte's Bertha, not only in her function as doppelgänger, but in other areas as well. Both Lynda and Bertha are women of great former beauty, now ravaged by madness. Bertha, however, is bloated and gigantized, while Lynda has shrunk into "a creature all bone, with yellowish-smelling flesh, with great anxious globes of water tinted blue stuck in its face" (p. 492). Bertha is dark;
Lynda is pale blonde. Bertha's laughter is maniacal and blood-chilling; Lynda's uncontrollable "giggling" is equally maniacal, but sad rather than grotesque. Bertha is violent against selected others; Lynda is only violent against herself as she deprives her emaciated body of food and repeatedly pounds her head against the walls. Lynda lives in the basement, a location perhaps more appropriate as a symbolic hell than the attic room in which Bertha is confined. Lynda gropes at the walls of her room, not seeking escape as Bertha does, but rather exploring them as symbolically representing the walls of her own mind. Bertha represents passion and sexual excess; Lynda is chaste, the imaginary Guru of the vision she shares with Bertha having told her that "the Great Mother" has chosen her as "one of her daughters who had been freed of the tyrannies of the flesh—lust, he said" (p. 475).

Bertha enters Jane's room to tear the wedding veil, her motive, Rochester suggests, being the desecration of the memory of her own bridal days. Lynda enters her husband's room on a similar errand,
the destruction of her own beautiful photograph. Bertha paces and creeps in her confinement; Lynda shares a similar need for constant and seemingly motiveless movement. In a scene strikingly similar to those depicted in yet another story about a mad woman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Lynda arranges her allotted space:

...around the walls there was a clear space or runway, as if there were a second invisible wall against which a table, chairs, bookcases, were arranged, a yard or so inside the visible wall. And again, all around the walls to the height of about five feet the paper had an irregularly smudged and rusty look, which turned out to be the bloodstains from Lynda's bitten finger ends (pp. 461-462).

The most important similarity between Bronte's and Lessing's mad characters is their common function as scapegoat, a role which Lynda consciously recognizes as her own (p. 493). Because she is powerless and female, she, like Bertha, suffers for the sins of both father and husband. Lynda's father, frustrated in his attempts at remarriage by his daughter's strange behavior toward his intended wife, "handed her bound and helpless to
the doctors, where she had struggled and fought and been bludgeoned into silence by drugs and injections, held down by nurses and dragged screaming to have electric shocks" (p. 495). Mark, in contrast to Lynda's father and to Bronte's Rochester, appears patient and devoted, but in reality, one suspects, he is enjoying his role as long-suffering martyr; he has played it before with other "neurotic" problem women and will assume it again with Martha and others as well. Perhaps Lynda is perceptive rather than ungrateful when she echoes Jane Eyre's cry to St. John Rivers: "Leave me alone...You're killing me" (p. 181). Mark, after all, is a part of normal society, and therefore ill-equipped to understand Lynda. He, like her father, eventually turns her over "into the hands of the doctors."

As Marion Vlastos states in an article entitled "Doris Lessing and R. D. Laing: Psychopolitics and Prophecy," Lynda is also a scapegoat in the sense that she is "a victim of society's mistrust of the strange and the acutely sensitive." The same
description applies to Woolf's Septimus. Too, Lessing's ironically-named Dr. Lamb, Lynda's psychiatrist, is a symbolic representation of that mistrusting society, in much the same way that Sir William Bradshaw represents the negative elements in Woolf's world. Like Bradshaw, Dr. Lamb is emotionless, courteous, sexless, and professional. He echoes Bradshaw's very words as he promises Martha that, after her analysis, she will see her problems "in proportion" (p. 235). He appears to Martha "like a character in a play who wore a mask which said, 'I am Wisdom'" (p. 223). Lynda screams that he is the devil, and Martha perceives with horror that he is the incarnation of power itself:

There was nobody ever, who could approach Dr. Lamb without a certain kind of tremor. When he spoke to law courts, or advised policemen, or sat in judgement about this sick person or that: when a mortally confused human being sat before him, what Dr. Lamb said was the truth...Dr. Lamb, whether benign, cruel, a secret lover of power, or a man gifted with insight, was always in a position of strength. Because it was he who knew--society had said he did--everything that could be known about the human soul...
The central fact here was that nobody approached Dr. Lamb unless he had to. In approaching Dr. Lamb one approached power. It was hard to think of a power like it, in its inclusiveness, its arbitrariness, its freedom to behave as it wished, without checks from other places or powers (pp. 305-306).

Sir William Bradshaw humiliates his patients by forcing them to drink milk in bed, but Dr. Lamb's medications are far more potent. Lessing, like Laing and a growing number of other modern psychologists, is opposed to many of the traditional therapeutic treatments, including the use of drugs to simulate normality. Lynda is most pathetic when she has lost control of her illness because of her addiction to and dependence on medications. Both drugs and shock treatments are, in Lessing's mind, no more than torture devices, methods used to punish and control.

Lessing also shares Laing's views regarding the dangers of the traditional analyst-patient relationship. Laing writes:

"Psychotherapy must remain an obstinate attempt of two people to recover the wholeness of being human through the relationship between them.

Any technique concerned with the other without the self, with behavior"
to the exclusion of experience, with
the relationship to the neglect of the
persons in relation, with the indivi-
duals to the exclusion of their re-
relationship, and most of all, with an
object-to-be-changed rather than a
person-to-be-accepted, simply perpetuates
the disease it purports to cure. 12

Lessing, too, rejects the idea of the analyst as
authority figure and sees it as disastrous when
"the patient became dependent on the doctor and
was unable to free himself..." (p. 533).

Lessing, also like Laing, deplores the existence
of mental hospitals, those institutions which, Laing
says, imprison the insane person, leaving him or
her "bereft of his civil liberties... invalidated
as a human being." 13 Lessing describes the politics
of mental illness:

Some years before, an act of Par-
liament had been passed, which had
taken bars off windows, unlocked
doors, made strait jackets and padded
cells things of the past, created
hospitals that were civilized. Well,
not quite. Because, for this bit of
legal well-wishing to work, it needed
that a great deal of money should be
spent on new buildings, doctors, nurses.
This money was not being spent. (It
was being spent on war, the central
fact of our time which is taken for
granted.)
Inside dozens of mental hospitals scattered up and down the country, built like prisons, were many thousands of people who had been strait-jacketed, forcibly fed, kept in padded cells, beaten (in fact, the central fact, had had their wills broken), and were now derelict, 'deteriorated' (p. 303).

Normal people perpetrate such obscenities, not out of gratuituous cruelty, according to Lessing, but out of fear that prevents their recognition of themselves as mad and out of the suspicion that the "insane" person possesses a superior sanity:

They are so susceptible to flattery that anything may be done with them, provided they are not allowed to suspect their inferiority. For they are so vain that they would certainly kill or imprison or maim any being they suspect of being better endowed than themselves (p. 432).

Thus, Lynda repeatedly warns Martha never to tell "them" what she knows.

Insane women of today, writes Lessing, are like the witches of former centuries, tortured because they have superior capacities. Virginia Woolf, too, frequently makes a connection in her non-fiction works between the witches of history,
the wise women, and present-day victims of mental illness. She writes in *A Room of One's Own*:

...any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty.  

Bertha Mason or even Jane Eyre herself with her presentiments, her prophetic dreams, her affinity with both nature and the supernatural, may be more witch-like than Lynda and Martha, yet Lessing's characters, through their mutual experiencing of insanity, do delve into the occult and emerge with what Lessing calls a "new sort of understanding" (p. 357).  

Yet in their own inner experience this was a time of possibility. It was as if doors kept opening in their brains just far enough to admit a new sensation, or a glimmer of something—and though they closed again, something was left behind... they understood what it meant that 'scales should fall from one's eyes'—scales had fallen (p. 356).
"Madness," according to Laing, "need not be all breakdown. It may also be breakthrough. It is potentially liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death."\textsuperscript{15}

Certainly, what Martha feels when she comes up from the basement, after many days of sharing an intense and often terrifying experience with Lynda, is what Dante must have felt as he exited from hell, or what Woolf's Septimus experiences in his most ecstatic visions: a sense of resurrection, of rebirth. Each moment, for Martha, becomes an epiphany, a miracle:

The words kept dropping into the listening space that was Martha's mind. She knew that if a person were to take one word, and listen; or a pebble or a jewel and look at it; the word, the stone, would give up, in the end, its own meaning and the meaning of everything (p. 470).

Laing says that "our social realities are so ugly if seen in the light of exiled truth."\textsuperscript{16} Just as Martha has perceived through her hysteria the ugliness of reality and of humanity, so she also deeply experiences, through the "light of exiled truth," the physical beauty of the world. Like Septimus, she can perceive the universe as magnificent.
The sky hangs above her "an explosion of golden light" (p. 482), and the world, like her resurrected self, seems new:

The day was fresh and the world newly painted. She stood on a pavement looking at a sky where soft white clouds were lit with sunlight. She wanted to cry because it was so beautiful. How long since she had looked, but really looked, at the sky, so beautiful even if it was held up by tall buildings? She stood gazing up, up, until her eyes seemed absorbed in the crystalline substance of the sky with its blocks of clouds like snowbanks, she seemed to be streaming out through her eyes into the skies...(pp. 478-479).

There are, however, also the nightmare aspects of the insane experience to be dealt with. For Martha, as for Septimus, there is the fear of losing control, the necessity to close one's eyes so that the visions do not become too beautiful, too terrifying. For Lynda and Martha, there is also the "sound barrier" to be got through, a barrage of noise which becomes excruciating and must, eventually, be sorted out and made rational. The "radio" in one's head is tuned simultaneously to a hundred stations, and one must fight to gain
control.

Worst of all the mad experiences is the confrontation with what Lessing calls the "self-hater," that evil in the schizophrenic self which balances or sometimes annihilates the good. Lynda, having lost control and having been victimized by drugs and doctors, is never able successfully to combat the "self-hater," but Martha, free of impediments, eventually goes on alone to conquer it.

It is during this particular battle that Martha most clearly recognizes that the self is the microcosm and that it is, like the world, divided between victim and tormentor: Martha herself is both "the ragged bit of refuse (me) pushed into the gas chamber and the uniformed woman (me) who pushed" (p. 510). Woolf's Septimus perhaps experiences a similar confrontation: He feels himself guilty of terrible crimes against humanity while, at the same time, he sees himself as Christ. Lessing's description of Martha's recognition of the "self-hater" is equally paradoxical and equally embued with religious significance:
From the moment when Pontius Pilate washed his hands to the time when she, Martha, who was also the Devil, prepared to be bound on the Cross, because of the frightfulness of her crimes, she was as it were whipped through the ritual by the hating scourging tongue of the Devil who was her self, her hating, self-hating self (p. 522).

Recognition of and confrontation with the "self-hater" are, according to Lessing, prerequisites for knowledge of the divided self and the first steps to making it whole.

The state of insanity, then, is divided between the regions of joy and beauty, poetry and religion, and the regions of terror. Normal adult people, Lessing says, never experience these extremes of feeling because they fear any disturbance of complacency. Martha, however, strives to recall and to re-attain the sensitivity and perception, the extremes of feeling, which she recalls as a part of childhood:

The first intimations of this capacity had been in childhood, just before sleep or on awakening: a faint flash of colour, a couple of pictures perhaps, or a fragment of music, or some words, or her name called in warning or reminder:
Remember, remember. Well, a great many people experienced this, but being well-ordered, well-trained, docile, obedient people, they heard the doctors or the priests say—whatever the current dogma ordered and that was that: they were prepared to bury the evidence of their own senses, they ran away. And like any neglected faculty, it fell into disuse, it atrophied (p. 484).

Lessing's very romantic idea is that children are thus somehow in touch with something mystical with which adults have lost contact. Laing, throughout The Politics of Experience, maintains a similar notion: "As adults, we have forgotten most of our childhood, not only its contents but its flavor; as men of the world, we hardly know of the existence of the inner world...."17

Both Martha and Lynda are loved by children and have a strange ability to communicate with them beyond what is possible for normal adults. Lynda, during some of her worst periods in the basement, shuts out the adult world, but admits her nephew and, later, her son. They understand her and she them, but because of her preference for the company of children, the doctors pronounce her behavior regressive.
Although Martha acts as a surrogate mother to Lynda's son, she has, before the novel begins, abandoned her own daughter. A possible reason for this action is that her relationship with her own mother has been so devastatingly disappointing, so guilt-ridden and non-loving. Yet Martha longs for maternal love. In a state of depression, dreading the approaching visit of her mother, Martha weeps "while a small girl wept with her, mama, mama, why are you so cold, so unkind, why did you never love me?" (p. 221) Martha anticipates this visit in a state, virtually, of emotional prostration, yet she provides for Mr. Lamb only the formulaic reasons for her feelings: "My mother was a woman who hated her own sexuality and she hated mine too" (p. 230).

Laing, like Lessing, sees children as irreparably damaged in the mother-child relationship, which, in modern society, he says, is one of violence and devastation:

Children are not yet fools, but we shall turn them into imbeciles like ourselves with high I.Q.'s if possible. From the moment of birth, when the Stone Age baby confronts the twentieth
century mother, the baby is subjected to these forces of violence, called love, as its mother and father and their parents and their parents before them, have been. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of its potentialities, and on the whole this enterprise is successful. By the time the new human being is fifteen or so, we are left with a being like ourselves, a half-crazed creature more or less adjusted to a mad world.18

With Laing's statement in mind, it is perhaps easier to understand Martha's explanation for abandoning her child: "When I left my little girl, Caroline, do you know what I was thinking? I thought, I'm setting you free, I thought, I'm setting you free..." (p. 66).

Martha, like Jane Eyre, is unsuccessful in her search for mother-love, but unlike Jane, Martha has a great capacity to assume the maternal role herself, at least with others than her own child. Martha's relationship with Mark, for example, is distinguished by a "protective compassion"; she would like to surround both him and herself with "invisible arms, vast, peaceful, maternal" (p. 468). Martha's feeling for Lynda is less a lesbian-oriented love than a longing to
mother: "This unknown person in Martha adored Lynda, worshipped her, wished to wrap her long soft hair around her hands, said, Poor little child, poor little girl, why don't you let me look after you?" (p. 252).

Perhaps disinterested, non-possessive maternal love is the only kind of love possible in Lessing's world; it may, in fact, provide at least a relative salvation for all of humanity. Martha's nurturing instincts finally permit her to assume the mother role to hundreds of special children who survive the earth's devastation at the end of the novel. Martha knows that these "freak" children, some anomalies born after the apocalyptic event, are really supra-normal, highly sensitive and, like "mad" persons, able to "see" and to "hear" things. They are, possibly, to provide the rebirth of the world; they can, potentially, create a new world, one which might not sink into darkness and schizophrenia, but might remain whole, perceptive, un-divided, like that world ruled by the gods and goddesses of Lessing's Briefing for a Descent into
Hell. Laing, too, sees the world's hope in children:

...each time a new baby is born there is a possibility of reprieve. Each child is a new being, a potential prophet, a new spiritual prince, a new spark of light precipitated into the outer darkness. Who are we to decide it is hopeless?

Martha herself does not live to see any such hope fulfilled. The Edenic return possible for Jane Eyre and the self-affirmation possible for Clarissa, are not probabilities in Lessing's bleaker world. Near the end of the novel, Martha is an old woman alone; however, her hysteria is calmed, her self fully discovered and recognized, if not healed:

She walked beside the river while the music thudded, feeling herself as a heavy impervious lump that, like a planet doomed always to be dark on one side, had vision in front only, a myopic search-light, blind except for the tiny three-dimensional path open immediately before her eyes in which, the outline of a tree, a rose, emerged, then submerged in the dark. She thought, with the dove's voices of her solitude: Where? But where. How? Who? No, but where, where...Then silence and the birth of a repetition: Where? Here. Here? Here, where else, you fool, you poor fool, where else has it been, ever... (p. 559).
Hysteria, after all, is literally a suffering in the womb. In helping to give birth to a potentially better world, Martha is left with, at least, a knowledge, a vision, which consoles.
NOTES


5 Laing, Politics of Experience, p. 99.

6 Ibid., p. 3.


10 Kaplan, p. 546.

11 Vlastos, p. 249.

12 Laing, Politics of Experience, p. 31.

13 Ibid., p. 32.


15 Laing, Politics of Experience, p. 84.
NOTES, cont.

16 Ibid., p. 93.
17 Ibid., p. xiii.
18 Ibid., p. 8.
19 Ibid., p. 36.
The novels in this discussion are treated as studies of alienated female consciousnesses in opposition to a male-defined society or to individual male authority figures. What is also implied, however, especially in the case of Woolf's Septimus Warren Smith, is that men, too, can be driven to alienation and madness by any sort of system, political or social, which demands adherence to arbitrarily-established roles and thus denies individual liberty. The point that I have tried to make, quite simply, is that women are more obviously victims and thus are perhaps more often consciously aware of oppression and of its effects on the psyche. For women, oppression is not only a theoretical moral concern, but also an established fact of history.

There is no novel in this selection in which women want to live in a world without men. The
message of each author, whether subtly indicated as in the case of Bronte, poetically rendered as in Woolf's novel, or didactically proclaimed as in Lessing's works, is that a freer, better society for both men and women could, perhaps, be achieved through love that is not possession and tolerance that is not self-denial.
WORKS CONSULTED

TEXTS


PSYCHOLOGY AND FEMINISM


PSYCHOLOGY AND FEMINISM, cont.


CRITICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF BRONTE


CRITICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF BRONTE, cont.


CRITICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF WOOLF


CRITICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF WOOLF, cont.


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CRITICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF LESSING


