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THE WOMAN AS ARTIST IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FICTION

The Ohio State University PH.D. 1979

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THE WOMAN AS ARTIST IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FICTION

DISSERTATION

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by
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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1979

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Dedicated to my parents, Arthur Boyd and Phyllis Stanfield, whose support made this dissertation possible.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The portrait-of-the-artist genre of fiction has flourished since the late eighteenth century and continues to thrive in the work of contemporary authors. This particular class of novel offers the writer a vehicle for autobiographical expression and, in turn, reflects the cultural milieu of which the author is a part. It is somewhat surprising, in view of the genre's popularity, that so few critical studies have been written on this branch of fiction. The depiction of the artist in these studies, as well as in more general studies dealing with the artist and his creations, like M. H. Abrams' The Mirror and the Lamp and Frank Kermode's The Romantic Image, has produced a general picture of the nature of the artist. Maurice Beebe, in the one book-length study concentrating on the traditions of the portrait of the artist in fiction, describes the alienated young man as "an easily recognized type. The person blessed (or cursed?) with 'artistic temperament' is always sensitive, usually introverted and self-centered, often passive, and sometimes so capable of abstracting himself mentally from the world around him that he appears absentminded or 'possessed'" (p. 5). This
characterization of the artist, one that Beebe maintains has not changed significantly since Joyce (p. 299), makes no allowance for the young woman as artist. Although Beebe does include a few female artists as characters, he nowhere suggests that there are differences between male and female artists in terms of artistic growth and maturity. This assumption is understandable in part because their patterns of development are in some respects similar, particularly in some pre-contemporary novels. It is perhaps more understandable because we traditionally have thought of the bildungsroman and kunstlerroman as novels of initiation in which the young boy struggles from childhood to maturity in an alien world and gradually comes to an understanding of his destiny as an artist. Until recently no critic has been concerned with analyzing the portrait of the artist as a young woman. 2

Women as artists have appeared in novels written by both men and women since the mid-nineteenth century, although women writers have tended to give their female artist-characters more central roles. 3 In the early modern period, roughly 1900 through 1929, the artist-heroines created by women novelists figure as forceful protagonists. These characters typically are strong-minded women who ultimately achieve success in their artistic fields. Olivia Lattimore in Mary Austin's A Woman of Genius (1912) leaves husband and home to achieve fame on the stage. Mary Johnston, a famous feminist herself, creates a successful writer in Hagar (1913). Thea
Kronborg, perhaps the best known artist-heroine of this period, becomes a famous singer in Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* (1915). The female as artist also becomes a vehicle for voicing the lesbianism of Radclyffe Hall in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). Her character, Stephen Gordon, is a woman who achieves success as a writer but not as a person. Virginia Woolf's androgynous character in *Orlando* (1928) grows from century to century as a poet. Woolf's other artist-heroine, Lily Briscoe, finishes her painting after resolving doubts about herself as a woman and as an artist. The success of these female characters parallels the positive attitude towards women in our culture during the latter phase of the first feminist movement.

During the 1930s, '40s and '50s in what Kate Millet has termed the counterrevolution, fewer novels with women as artists were written and even fewer have women protagonists whose art is a serious vocation. Most often these novels offer fictional portraits of the kind of missed opportunity and repression documented by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* (1954) is one of the most effective presentations of a defeated artist-heroine during this period; Gertie Nevels, a folk artist from Kentucky, is deprived of her art, her one source of relief, by a world she does not understand. In Victoria Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent* (1931), Lady Slane, the eighty-eight year old protagonist, recalls a life in which she had given
up her early desire to be a painter to satisfy the demands of her husband and family. Her hope as she nears death resides in her great-granddaughter, who has broken her engagement to a young man to be a musician. Alabama Beggs in Zelda Fitzgerald's autobiographical novel, Save Me the Waltz (1932), typifies the kind of woman who initially considers her only career to be marriage, but becomes frustrated and restless when her marriage does not offer complete fulfillment. Like Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899), she turns to art in middle age and finds it is too late to become a great artist. In Daisy Kenyon (1945) Elizabeth Janeway, later to become a well-known feminist, creates a woman whose career is subsumed by her love affairs with men and by her eventual marriage. Daisy's interest in art plays an insignificant role in the novel and gradually fades from her life as other issues assume greater importance. Rebecca West's The Fountain Overflows (1956) describes the life of a concert pianist who has given up her career for a domestic life. Her hope for the future lies in her two daughters, who receive music scholarships at the end of the novel.

During the 1960s and '70s the fictional character of the woman as artist has reemerged as an important figure and has captured the interest of contemporary women. This character sometimes appears as a painter or musician but most often as a writer. In contrast to female artistic models of the first feminist movement, this woman has the ability to
create rather than merely to perform. The contemporary artist-character also deviates from earlier models in other ways. The novelists of the first feminist movement portrayed women who achieved success as artists; the novelists of the next thirty years describe women who were defeated as artists because of responsibilities to home and family. The women novelists of the 1960s and '70s frequently focus their attention on areas of women's experience bypassed by earlier novelists, particularly on the difficulty of achieving fulfillment in both art and life. Perhaps the woman artist as a fictional character most poignantly expresses the conflicts experienced by contemporary women themselves. This would explain this character's frequent appearance in contemporary novels. Interestingly enough, while gains have been claimed for the feminist movement during this period, few women have written about characters who attain any real sense of liberation or freedom. Most often their characters are trapped in a world of constant conflict. Sylvia Plath's image of a bell jar dramatically characterizes this feeling of oppression.

In portraits of the artist as a young man, the young male is certainly also beset by conflict, but his struggles are measured in different terms from those of the young woman. Beebe claims that the artist is pulled in opposite directions, that he has two conflicting selves. The man desires fulfillment in experience or life itself, while his artist-self needs detachment from the demands of life (p. 13). Beebe writes
that the general pattern in the typical artist-novel "requires
that the hero test and reject the claims of love and life, of
God, home, and country, until nothing is left but his true
self and his consecration as artist" (p. 6). The young man
must isolate himself from life as well as draw upon it to
achieve his literary identity. For the young woman, however,
to draw upon life, as it has traditionally been prepared for
her, can be the end of her artistic career. "Life" for the
young woman has been defined almost entirely in terms of
sexual role. She often finds herself faced with a conflict
between her desire to be an artist and her identity as a
woman.

Although a direct correlation between art and life can-
not be assumed, insight into the character of the fictional
artist can be gained from examining the experiences of her
real-life counterparts. Katherine Anne Porter, speaking from
her experience as an artist, advised women on the conflict
between being fulfilled as artists and as women: "It is
madness for women to try and combine home and career--you get
older and tired and your faculties begin to draw in. I real-
ized I had to make a choice, I had to be an artist--which
means you work at a trade, whether it's writing or sitting at
a bench making shoes."5 Conflict then often results in a
choice between one or the other. This is seldom a major con-
cern in artist-novels with men as protagonists, for men vir-
tually never are faced with a choice between being fulfilled
as artists and as men. One critic notes that male artists in the visual arts, much like male artists in fiction, face no such choice in real life:

That achievement in the arts, as in any field of endeavor, demands struggle and sacrifice, no one would deny; . . . One has only to think of Delacroix, Courbet, Degas, Van Gogh, and Toulouse-Lautrec, who all gave up the distractions and obligations of family life, at least in part, so that they could pursue their artistic careers more singlemindedly; yet none of them was automatically denied the pleasures of sex and companionship on account of this choice--on the contrary! Nor did they ever feel that they had sacrificed their manhood or their sexual role in order to achieve professional fulfillment.6

One facet of sexual role that the female artist in contemporary literature often finds to be a major block to creativity is the restrictive nature of her traditional role as wife. It is not surprising, as Tillie Olsen writes in "Silences: When Writers Don't Write," that actual women artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were reluctant to marry:

In the last century, of the women whose achievements endure for us in one way or another nearly all never married (Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, Christina Rossetti, Emily Dickinson, Louisa May Alcott, Sarah Orne Jewett) or married late in their thirties (George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charlotte Brontë, Olive Schreiner). . . . In our century, until very recently, it has not been so different. Most did not marry (Lagerlöf, Cather, Glasgow, Gertrude Stein, Sitwell, Gabriela Mistral, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Charlotte Mew, Welty, Marianne Moore) or, if married, have been childless (Undset, Wharton, Woolf, Katherine
Marriage for fictional artists, as well as for those in actual life, is deadly to the woman's impetus to create. Virtually never does a contemporary female artist-character remain in a lasting relationship with a man, for the more permanent the relationship, the more her creativity is stifled. Although she may need the love and sex a man may offer, she avoids the marital union altogether or dissolves it. Olsen goes on to explain that women in past centuries have not created because of social circumstances, that they have never developed the "totality of self" necessary to produce enduring art. Instead, "women are traditionally trained to place others' needs first, to feel these needs as their own . . .; their sphere, their satisfaction to be in making it possible for others to use their abilities" (p. 107). Virginia Woolf characterizes woman's capacity for self-sacrifice as a phantom called "The Angel in the House." She describes this creature as follows:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it--in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others.8

It was this angel that she had to exorcize before she could write freely and without guilt.
The male artist's relation to woman, however, is quite the reverse of what the woman artist finds in marriage. The woman often becomes his muse, the object of his inspiration, the source of fertility to which he must return. Of man's necessity to return to the female, Beebe writes: "Although he may be destroyed by the search for fulfillment, he must go to Woman in order to create--just as a man can father children only through women--" (p. 18). This characterization of the artist necessarily excludes the woman as artist from the tradition, since woman does not go to woman in any biological sense to create. On a practical level woman has often assumed the responsibility for daily activities that have given the male artist the time necessary to create--an advantage seldom offered to the female artist. The lover, the husband, the male in her life seldom has given support of any sort in her pursuit of art. Adrienne Rich's comments on the difficulties faced by the contemporary female artist offer a parallel to the difficulties faced by her fictional counterpart:

Where woman has been a luxury for man, and has served as the painter's model and the poet's muse, but also as comforter, nurse, cook, bearer of his seed, secretarial assistant and copyist of manuscripts, man has played a quite different role for the female artist. . . . male judgment, along with the active discouraging and thwarting of her needs by a culture controlled by males, has created problems for the woman writer: problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival. 9
The woman artist finds motherhood even more demanding than wifehood. Much as she may love and need her children, they take great spans of her time away from her art. The endless interruptions and demands of small children chop her day into unrelated pieces. She must guiltily divide her time between her children and her art. Tillie Olsen explains what this burden is for the woman artist in actual life:

More than any human relationship, overwhelmingly more, motherhood means being instantly interruptible, responsive, responsible. Children need one now (and remember, in our society, the family must often be the center for love and health the outside world is not). The very fact that these are needs of love, not duty, that there is no one else to be responsible for these needs, gives them primacy. It is distraction, not meditation, that becomes habitual; interruption, not continuity; spasmodic, not constant toil. (pp. 108-09)

One is reminded of Sylvia Plath, who had to get up at 4:00 A.M. to write, during "that still blue almost eternal hour before the baby's cry." But because children have traditionally been under the care of the mother, few male artists see parenthood as a major obstacle to the production of art. This correspondence holds true for men on a fictional level, as well as in the real world. Ernest Pontifex in *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), for example, can out of principle give his children up as foster children, but such an act by a mother would be considered cold and unfeeling. It would be held as unthinkable by today's public for a mother to abandon her children for her art as it was for Nora to leave her home in *A Doll's House* in 1879.
The new sensitivity of the female novelists of the 1960s and '70s to biological role leads not only to a depiction of the woman artist as wife and mother but to the various concerns of women artists from adolescence to old age. This represents a shift in subject matter from all preceding artistic models. Contemporary women artists frequently write about spheres of experience that are woman's alone. No one artist-novel depicts all of the following concerns, but added together, they offer a fairly complete picture of the life of the female artist. As a young woman, the potential artist becomes concerned with the various aspects of her sexual identity, many of which deter her development as an artist. In early adolescence she grows conscious of the importance of her physical attractiveness. In "Women Who Are Writers in Our Century: One Out of Twelve," Tillie Olsen's second article on the subject of women authors, she offers a parallel in the real world to that found in fiction: "Self-doubt; seriousness questioned by the hours agonizing over appearance; concentration shredded into attracting, being attractive; the absorbing, real need and love for working with words felt as hypocritical self delusion, for what seems to (and is esteemed) is whether or not the phone rings for you, and how often." Virginity, menstruation, and sexual intercourse next engage the attention of the young artist. By exploring her sexuality, she can endanger her artistic career. Pregnancy, motherhood, or abortion—a choice only recently offered to most women—are
possibilities that can disrupt her concentration as an artist. Marriage, separation, and divorce are yet other deterrents to her production of art. She may, on the other hand, try to create art by detaching herself from a sexual role altogether, but she relinquishes a part of her humanity in the process. Numerous other conflicts, arising from the demands of the sexual role, can prevent her from achieving full success as an artist during her lifetime.

From her early life on, the woman artist is encouraged to doubt her ability to function beyond her role as a woman. This results in a lack of confidence and often a blockage of creative activities. Contemporary women artist-heroines differ significantly from earlier portraits of young men as artists. Although Stephen Dedalus faces many difficulties on his journey to becoming an artist, he experiences epiphanies along the way that lead to a sense of an assured literary identity and his mission as an artist. At the end of the portrait Dedalus is a young man confident in his own sense of destiny. He feels no innate inferiority because of his sexuality. Most women artists, however, lack such assurance. They are unable to escape the ingrained sexism that has pervaded our culture for centuries. This failure of the female artist to believe in her own capacities is perhaps best summed up in fiction in Lily Briscoe's initial inability to forget Charles Transley's taunt in To the Lighthouse (1927): "Women can't paint: women can't write."
The belief in woman's inability to create art derives from various sources. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries theories were being developed about woman's creative powers. One fact upon which there was general agreement by both men and women was that a woman's creative capacity was different from a man's. This attitude was sanctioned by religious, aesthetic, biological, and social assumptions about the nature of woman. From childhood most young girls in the Victorian period were taught to believe that they must submit to masculine guidance as punishment for Eve's sin. Their destiny was to be fulfilled in a sphere lower than men's. Helping to bolster this idea was the belief that woman did not possess the rational intelligence necessary to control her emotions and give form to self-expression. Her contributions to art, if they could even be called that, were little more than autobiography. If she were allowed to engage in strenuous activity, she could endanger her nervous system. The resulting affliction was one from which she might never recover (Pannill, p. 9). More recently, Phyllis Chesler in *Women and Madness* has demonstrated how this attitude has persisted throughout the twentieth century and the damage it has wrought on women of talent.

One explanation that was given for woman's inability to think abstractly was that her brain was five ounces smaller than man's. Consequently her intellectual development had been arrested (Pannill, pp. 2-3). She was primarily a
creature of feeling. Leading female critics of the day added support to this idea. Willa Cather wrote:

A woman has only one gift and out of the wealth of that one thing she must sing and move with song. An old Greek, who knew more of the world than Plato by a great deal, said that when Zeus made the world he gave to the horse swiftness and to the bull strength and to the fishes the power of swimming and to the birds wings and to man reason. When he came to woman he had nothing of that kind left to give, so he gave her the power of loving, as a weapon against all strength and steel and fire. Out of the fullness of that power a woman must do her work. They have tried other weapons, but they have used them awkwardly or at best only "fenced by the book." A woman can be great only in proportion as God put feeling in her.14

If a woman had undeniable genius, as in the case of George Eliot, she was simply classified as masculine.

Another common assumption was that women were created for procreation only. According to evolutionary theories, woman's function had become specialized for the good of the race (Pannill, p. 3). Her "specialized" biological role so restricted her experience that she could not produce great works of art (Pannill, p. 43), a charge often made against the works of Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf. The irony, of course, in this kind of thinking is that those who claimed her experience was too restricted were the ones who insisted that her life be limited. As a natural result of this belief in the narrowness of woman's existence, her natural sphere was assumed to be the home. She was encouraged to pursue the arts only insofar as they improved her character or the
quality of family life. She was expected to be a work of art rather than to produce one (Gillespie, "Virginia Woolf," p. 233). Art for a woman was only an accomplishment, not a vocation. This attitude is reflected in the fiction of the time. Madame Ratignolle in Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899) dutifully produces a child each year and pursues her music solely for the sake of her family. She offers a direct contrast to Mademoiselle Reisz, who seeks music as her life's work. When Lady Slane in Victoria Sackville-West's All Passion Spent (1931) asks her husband if he would object to her painting after marriage, he tells her that he certainly does not mind, that he regards "an elegant accomplishment most becoming in a woman." It is this emphasis on maintaining art and other professional activities on an amateur level for women that J. S. Mill in The Subjection of Women and Virginia Woolf in "A Room of One's Own" argue has suppressed the talents of women for centuries. If women, on the contrary, dedicated themselves to their art, they were believed to be using art only as a compensation for not being normal (Pan- nill, p. 37). With the advent of Freud, Otto Rank, and other modern psychologists, it was believed that woman's desire to create was not only abnormal, but unnatural competition with and envy of men.

The woman artist frequently appears in the recent literature written by women, perhaps, because she best characterizes contemporary women's attempt to overcome ingrained
attitudes of the past. The number of artist-figures is so great that only a few novels can be discussed in this study. My first principle of selection is that the artist must receive significant treatment in the novel; she cannot simply be a minor character. This consequently eliminates such novels as Mary McCarthy's *The Group* (1963), Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools* (1962), and Beverly Lowry's *Come Back Lolly Ray* (1977). The next principle of inclusion is that the woman be an artist in the conventional sense—she must be a performer or creator of works of art. Novels like Marge Piercy's *Small Changes* (1973) or Gail Godwin's *The Odd Woman* (1974), in which the heroines pursue academic careers, will not be considered. Finally, the works discussed must be fictional, no matter how thinly disguised. Straight autobiography will consequently be eliminated.

The limitations established in the preceding paragraph still leave a wide range of novels from which to choose. Most contemporary female novelists focus on the artist's division between art and life, but a few have their characters finally opt for one or the other. Hilary Stevens in May Sarton's *Mrs. Stevens hears the mermaids singing* (1965) is a female artist who seeks out a life of isolation in art with only brief encounters with the external world. Anna Wulf in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1963) finally opts to end her writing career after achieving a sense of wholeness by making all her notebooks into one golden notebook. These
two characters, who ultimately choose art or life, however, are the exceptions rather than the rule. Most contemporary women authors portray heroines who try to merge the two with varying degrees of success. One novel, which perhaps best characterizes a woman's attempt to balance her life and her art, is Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974). This book, as a representative of this class of novels, will serve as the final chapter for analysis in this study.
Footnotes


2 Two dissertations have been written on pre-contemporary women as artist-characters: Linda S. Pannill, "The Artist-Heroine in American Fiction, 1890-1920," Diss. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 1975; Diane F. Gillespie, "Female Artists as Characters and Creators: The Dual Concern with Feminine Role and Feminine Fiction in the Work of May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf," Diss. Alberta 1974. (I have been unable to obtain a copy of this dissertation.)


4 Pannill, pp. 94-95. The use of the actress or singer as the protagonist of these earlier novels was acceptable because this demonstrated women's inferiority. Stage performances were imitative rather than creative.


10 College English, 34 (1972), 9.


12 This concept still prevails in so-called "phallic criticism." Carol Ohmann in "Emily Brontë in the Hands of Male Critics," College English, 32 (1971), 906-913, demonstrates how such a noted critic as Mark Schorer attributes Emily Brontë's genius to unconscious forces over which she had no control.


CHAPTER TWO

The Woman as Artist: 1900-1930

In the first three decades of the twentieth century the woman artist as a character frequently appears in the fiction by many authors, both male and female. In fact, as Diane Gillespie's checklist of the female artist in British and American literature reveals, the number of artist-heroines in the fiction of women alone is far too great to discuss adequately in any one study. Consequently, this chapter will be limited primarily to the female küstlerromane, the novels in which a woman artist, whose art plays a significant role in her life, is the central protagonist. This restriction virtually eliminates all the novels written by men during this period; whatever interest the female artist held for the male authors of this time, she seldom became the focal point in the novel.

The one characteristic that these novels all have in common, a characteristic atypical of the literature of women in general, is the absolute success of the heroines. Each of these women achieves the utmost that she is capable of in her chosen field. The emphasis on successful heroines in several of the novels derives from their authors' need to illustrate a personal philosophy in fictional form—a need
fulfilled often at the expense of artistic worth. Mary Austin in *A Woman of Genius* (1912) and Mary Johnston in *Hagar* (1913) use their heroines as advocates for women's rights. Radclyffe Hall's purpose in dramatizing the story of her life in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) was "to speak on behalf of a misunderstood and misjudged minority," the homosexuals of her time.

Other female novelists of this period also create successful heroines but without an overt philosophical purpose. In *The Song of the Lark* (1915) Willa Cather's Thea Kronborg, the archetypal female artist-character of this period, becomes, through sheer will and determination, one of the greatest opera singers of her day. Cather's heroine, consequently, will serve as the primary model for the woman as artist in this chapter. Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), most commonly thought of as a parody of biography or an imaginative history of the Sackville family and England, is yet a *künstlerroman* with a successful female artist. In Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) Lily Briscoe is not the sole protagonist as in the other novels under discussion, but as an artist, she offers significant parallels and contrasts to the other heroines. Unlike the other female artist-characters of this period who feel confident in their artistic identity, she achieves success only after resolving inner doubts about herself as a woman and as an artist, a characteristic of many contemporary female artist-characters. In this respect she may be thought
of as a transitional figure who joins the earlier generation of artists with the later.

Of all the women authors of the time, Willa Cather was the most verbal proponent of a distinct separation of life and art for the artist. To her friend Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, Cather once remarked that the writer, if he/she wished to achieve greatness, had to renounce the pleasures of life: "'But to do this paradoxical thing, one must have the power to refuse most of the rest of life. Could you do it--give yourself, dedicate yourself to your art, you who love life and find human beings so fascinating? Are you perchance thinking of getting married?' She hesitated and I think just avoided a warning that art was all." In Cather's fiction the characters who give up art for life pay stiff penalties. Thea Kronborg in The Song of the Lark, whose character derives from the personalities of the opera singer Olive Fremstad and Cather herself, served as the vehicle through which Cather could dramatize many of her beliefs about art. In the 1932 Preface to The Song of the Lark Cather emphasizes the superiority of art to life for the artist: "Her [Thea's] artistic life is the only one in which she is happy or free, or even very real" (p. viii). When Thea's friend, Dr. Archie, asks her about her personal life, she declares that she has none: "My dear doctor, I don't have any. Your work becomes your personal life. You are not much good until it does." Thea even refuses to leave Germany, where
she is performing, to go to her mother on her deathbed, an act that critics often cite as the height of egotism. Faced with similar circumstances, Cather herself faithfully attended her mother, but in her heroine, she depicted the absolute superiority of art over life.

As a natural consequence of such dedication to art, the artist comes to regard her work as a religion. Cather, above all the other female authors of this time, treated the creation of art as holy, both in her criticism and in her fiction. While she was a student at the University of Nebraska, Cather began to write critical articles that represent her early formulations about art, those that are illustrated in The Song of the Lark. In one passage Cather describes the position of the artist in terms comparable to those in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, where Stephen Dedalus claims: "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (New York: Modern Library, 1928), p. 252. Cather, similarly, wrote: "An artist should not be vexed by human hobbies or human follies; he should be able to lift himself up into the clear firmament of creation where the world is not. He should be among men but not one of them, in the world but not of the world. Other men may think and reason and believe and argue, but he must create." Both Cather and Joyce elevate the artist to a godlike position.
In fact, for Cather the artist becomes a high priest who must adhere to rigid vows: "In the kingdom of art there is no God, but one God, and his service is so exacting that there are few men born of woman who are strong enough to take the vows" (as quoted in Slote, p. 417). The function of the writer, as an artist, is supremely important—he/she is a "translator" of God (Slote, p. 409).

Other female authors of this period, like Cather, describe art in religious language. The actors in Mary Austin's *A Woman of Genius* wear "spiritual garments," emphasizing their priestly function. The narrator of this novel tells us that the ultimate effect of art, for those who are receptive, is "blessedness" (p. 8). In *The Well of Loneliness* Radclyffe Hall describes Stephen Gordon's genius as "the holy fire of inspiration" and her work as her "holy of holies."15

The price the artist pays for his/her godlike service is great. He/she must sacrifice all in true dedication to art. For those unwilling to make such a sacrifice, the youthful Willa Cather, writing as a drama critic, evidenced a distinct scorn. Of the actress Mary Anderson, who retired from the stage to marry, Cather wrote: "With her, art was unconsciously a means, not an end; a stepping stone, not an altar. She was meant to be Mme. Navarro, not Juliet or Hermione. If all artists could end so it would be happy indeed for them, but sad, sad for art" (Slote, p. 158). Cather's
use of the word "altar" emphasizes the sacrificial, as well as priestly, role accorded the artist. Mary Austin, likewise, describes in terms of an altar the sacrifice her heroine has to make. The narrator of A Woman of Genius, Olivia Lattimore, tells her readers: "I have poured myself a libation on that altar [the altar of art]" (p. 446).

The symbol most frequently used to suggest the artist's separation from the world is a high place, often a tower. This source of isolation provides the heroine with a vital escape route from her environment, a place where she feels secure in her artistic identity. Unlike many contemporary female authors, who use enclosures, especially rooms, as symbols of entrapment or imprisonment, this generation of artists uses the tower as the symbol of a chosen isolation from the world. As a child, Thea acquires a room of her own, her "sunny cave" (p. 222), at the top of her house. This room offers her the kind of seclusion Virginia Woolf claimed was necessary for the development of the artist: "The acquisition of this room was the beginning of a new era in Thea's life. It was one of the most important things that ever happened to her. Hitherto, except in summer, when she could be out of doors, she had lived in constant turmoil; the family, the day school, the Sunday-School. The clamor about her drowned the voice within herself" (p. 58). In Panther Canyon, where Thea makes the most important discovery of her adult life, she builds a nest full of sun on a cliff (p. 298). Traditionally
the word "nest" suggests domesticity, but for Thea, this sanctuary is only a resting place where she gathers strength before she soars to the top of her profession. In Mary Johnston's Hagar the heroine, likewise, claims the highest and most isolated room in the school, labeled the "tower room" by the girls who lived there. Later, when Hagar has become a successful author, she chooses an apartment "high in air" (p. 325).

The tower or enclosure that provides physical security for the artist functions as a metaphor for the closely protected inner self as well. In the 1932 Preface to The Song of the Lark Cather writes that the free part of Thea "is kept shut up in the closet, along with the scores and wigs" (p. viii). The use of the word "closet" emphasizes the necessity for the artist to be locked away from the world. Olivia Lattimore in A Woman of Genius bitterly opposes the life forces that would rob her of her art. She describes herself as "seduously bricked up from within and battered from without" (p. 8). In Hagar the heroine is afforded protection from the world by the "armoured being within" (p. 162). During the narrative of Orlando the protagonist is assailed by various forces from the outside world, but the part of her nature that remains sensitive to the arts is described as "the cathedral tower which was her mind." 18

The single-minded dedication of these women to their art is reflected in their almost total lack of consciousness of
the female role. For them, art takes precedence over all heterosexual relations. If men exist at all in their lives, they serve only as vehicles to further the development of the women's art. These women consequently become wed to their art instead of to men. Willa Cather illustrates this basic concept in one of her critical articles:

"The further the world advances the more it becomes evident that an author's only safe course is to cling close to the skirts of his art, forsaking all others, and keep unto her as long as they two shall live (Slote, p. 407). Cather's use of the language of the traditional wedding ceremony reveals how closely the artist is bound to her art.

The absence of men in the lives of these heroines provides a striking contrast to many contemporary artist-characters who must choose between the men in their lives and their careers. This choice is one the heroines of the first generation virtually never have to make. If these women marry, they do so only after they have achieved their goals and at the end of the narrative, a convention that perhaps creates structural unity but often lacks plausibility in the context of these novels.

In The Song of the Lark the men who care for Thea exhibit no ego—their only goal is to act as stepping stones for Thea on her rise to fame. Thea's first suitor, Ray Kennedy, conveniently dies and leaves her six hundred dollars that he insists with his dying breath must be used to send Thea to
Chicago to study music. Later, Thea falls in love with Fred Ottenburg, but he is married to a woman whom he cannot divorce. Ottenburg's self-sacrifice often exceeds the bounds of the believable. As he urges Thea to go to Germany to study, he tells her: "Don't stop short of splendid things. I want them for you more than I want anything else, more than I want one splendid thing for myself" (p. 380). One critic finds the characters, like Ottenburg, who openly adores Thea, "either insipid or actively revolting in their abject spaniel-like devotion" (Randall, p. 47). Only in the Epilogue, which seems little more than an afterthought, do we find that some time later Thea has married Ottenburg, but this occurs only after she has fulfilled herself as an artist.

Similarly, the other artist-heroines of this period are not forced to choose between their roles as women and artists. Olivia Lattimore, unlike the other artist-characters, does in fact marry as a young woman, but her husband dies when she is faced with a choice between her life with him and her life on the stage. Her later love affair with Helmeth Garrett is broken off when she refuses to give up her career to raise his children; however, he chooses to end the relationship, not she. After one brief romance in her adolescence, Hagar Ashendyne remains untouched by her contact with men. Only at the end of the novel does she meet and agree to marry a submissive male who agrees to give up his career in South America to help her further hers. In Orlando the heroine marries
Shepherdine during the Victorian period, but he, like the other males in these novels, reappears only at the conclusion of the novel and only after Orlando has fulfilled herself as a poet. In Virginia Woolf's other artist-novel, *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay would like to see Lily marry Mr. Bankes, but there is no real question of Lily's ever becoming involved with a man.

These female characters' lack of involvement with men results naturally enough in a drastic reduction in childbearing. In fact, they show little interest in having children, which represents another contrast with many contemporary artist-heroines who either fear pregnancy or who are torn between their children and their careers. Only Olivia and Orlando give birth to children; however, Olivia's one child dies before it is a year old, while Orlando's is mentioned only in passing. Perhaps Virginia Woolf's own feelings about having children best characterizes the almost desperate need of these artist-characters to create art before children:

"And yet oddly enough I scarcely want children of my own now. This insatiable desire to write something before I die, this ravaging sense of the shortness and feverishness of life, make me cling, like a man on a rock, to my one anchor. I don't like the physicalness of having children of one's own."

In fact, several of the artist-heroines describe how their art has become their children. Hagar tells Ralph Coltsworth, a cousin who tries to force her to marry him: "My work
is my child" (p. 365). Stephen Gordon in The Well of Loneliness claims that her characters are like children: "Like infants they had sucked at her breasts of inspiration, and drawn from them blood, waxing wonderfully strong" (p. 214).

The narcissism, the desire to be physically attractive, that becomes a significant factor in the development of several contemporary artist-heroines is almost totally lacking in this first generation of women artists, perhaps because narcissism implies a consciousness of sexual role that these women simply do not possess. They tend to be plain-looking and care little about enhancing their appearance. Thea Kronborg's broad, Scandinavian face reveals strength and character but is not particularly attractive. Ellen Moers in Literary Women explains Thea's lack of beauty through the myth of Corrine: the prima donna did not have to be beautiful, just talented.21

The other female artist-characters are equally unattractive. Hagar refuses to spend time before her mirror as do the other girls at her school. She tells her friend that "'prinking and fixing up doesn't suit me'" (p. 60). Both she and Thea are so determined to reach their goals that they have little time for the typical preoccupations of adolescent girls. Stephen Gordon's masculine appearance and mannerisms are a cause of chagrin for both Stephen and her mother. Because of her lesbianism, Stephen simply cannot fit into the conventional female role. Lily Briscoe, as well, with "her little
Chinese eyes and puckered up face cannot fulfill herself in the typically feminine fashion established by Mrs. Ramsay.

Although these women artists may lack physical beauty, they possess a genius that surpasses that of those around them. Other characters in the novels who possess talent or admirable personality traits virtually always recognize their talent and frequently offer encouragement. Such external support, a kind of assistance seldom offered to contemporary female artist-characters, helps to make these women confident in their artistic identities. Thea Kronborg, above all others, receives encouragement from her home community. Thea's mother, unlike so many other artist-heroines' mothers, sees that her child is special and arranges for her to have time alone. The first section of the novel is entitled "Friends of Childhood" and emphasizes the individuals who help Thea. Professor Wunsch, Thea's drunken but talented music teacher, sums up a major theme in the novel when he tells her to pursue whatever she most desires: "'Nothing is far and nothing is near, if one desires. The world is little, people are little, human life is little. There is only one big thing--desire. And before it, when it is big, all is little'" (pp. 75-76). Even Ray Kennedy, the man who would like to marry Thea, realizes that "She wasn't meant for common men. She was like wedding cake, a thing to dream on" (p. 147). Dr. Archie, the physician who attends Thea as a child and
follows her career throughout the rest of her life, offers her words of encouragement when she feels most frustrated: "'You're going to Chicago some day, and do something with that fine voice of yours. You're going to be a number one musician and make us proud of you'" (p. 139). Once in Chicago, Thea begins music lessons with a man named Harsanyi who immediately recognizes her "richly gifted nature" (p. 174) and tells his wife: "'She will do nothing common. She is uncommon, in a common, common world'" (p. 212).

The other artist-heroines of this period, like Thea, receive encouragement from other talented characters who are capable of recognizing their innate abilities. Olivia Lattimore, who must at first battle the world to survive, is nevertheless given words of encouragement from the man believed to be the best modern actor of her time. He tells her: "'You will go far, little lady,' . . .'you will go farther and have to come back and pick up some dropped stitches, but in the end you will get where you are bound'" (p. 233). He then gives her his address and offers her his assistance whenever she needs it. Hagar, like Olivia, faces some opposition from the world, but Roger Michael, a talented woman author who visits Hagar's school, immediately recognizes what the more commonplace characters around her do not--that Hagar is different and has the potential for greatness. Stephen Gordon, who is often rejected by the world because of her lesbianism, is protected and cared for by her first real teacher, Miss
Puddleton.

Those who are attuned to the talent of these artists often see light, a source of their inner talent and genius, emanating from and being attracted to these women. Cather particularly develops an extensive pattern of light imagery in *The Song of the Lark*. Throughout the novel she indicates Thea's moments of intense feeling or reflection by sunlight or moonlight that pours down upon her, particularly on her yellow hair. As she leaves her hometown for the first time, Dr. Archie notices "her hair in a blaze of sunshine" (p. 157). Thea's inner being projects light outward as well. Harsanyi, her first music teacher in Chicago, describes her moments of illumination as light that "suddenly flashed out at him in that way" (p. 191). It seemed "as if a lamp had suddenly been turned up inside her" (p. 191). Her eyes, at moments of intense concentration, become "pin-points of cold, piercing light" (p. 178) that at the source are as "hard as a diamond drill-point" (p. 244).

This association with light is a pattern continued in the other artist-novels as well. Olivia Lattimore explains to the reader that through her "pours light and the fluid soul of Life" (p. 8). Repeatedly she refers to the force that propels her onward as her "Shining Destiny." Hagar, like Thea, is frequently surrounded by sun and moon light. Lights in the sky serve as symbols of what she hopes to attain, both as a writer and as a reformer. She thinks in images of
light that will clarify and brighten the way for humanity: "She thought visually with colour and light and form, luminous images parting the mist, rising in the great 'interior space'" (pp. 357-58). To another reformer, the convict she befriends as a child, she has remained, as he tells her, "lifted, moving above him in the clouds, beckoning, with a light about you" (p. 340). Orlando, too, projects light outward whether she is a male or a female. The Russian princess claims "that he was like a million-candled Christmas tree . . . hung with yellow globes; incandescent; enough to light a whole street by; . . . for what with his glowing cheeks, his dark curls, his black and crimson cloak, he looked as if he were burning with his own radiance, from a lamp lit within" (p. 54). As Orlando gazes at herself in the mirror, "she was like a fire, a burning bush, and the candle flames about her head were silver leaves" (p. 185).

Although these artist-heroines are often recognized by characters of merit, they nevertheless must battle the flat, conventional characters who refuse to acknowledge their artistic ability or its worth. This opposition is most frequently typified by the small, provincial towns in which the heroines grow up. Resistance to the development and expression of their genius often centers in their families or more specifically in a conventional female who acts as a contrast to the artist. As the heroine feels more and more repressed by the enmity she encounters in her hometown, she becomes less
a part of the community and eventually becomes the artist-as-exile, a convention of the ivory tower tradition extending back to Plato (Beebe, p. 22) but with one important difference: she is excommunicated not because she is an artist but because she refuses to be conventionally female.

Even Thea Kronborg, who receives help from her mother and several members of her neighborhood, eventually feels like an alien in Moonstone, the fictional version of Cather's own hometown, Red Cloud, Nebraska. Thea's sister particularly is ashamed of her preference for the Mexicans and eccentrics in the neighborhood and of her refusal to act like a proper young lady. The community as a whole rejects Thea as well—it prefers the voice of doll-like Lily Fisher to Thea's presentation of classical pieces. As a result of her treatment in this small, provincial town, Thea, like Cather herself, had to escape to achieve full development, a theme Dorothy Van Ghent finds so obsessive that it weakens the novel. Thea undergoes total rejection after an uncomfortable visit to her home, at which time she realizes that "Nothing that she would ever do in the world would seem important to them [her family], and nothing they would ever do would seem important to her" (p. 240).

The other artist-heroines of this generation equally must overcome the resistance they find in their families and home communities. Olivia Lattimore is the most bitter about her treatment by the public. At one point she compares
herself to the early Christian martyrs (pp. 6-7). She finds the first resistance to her wish to be an actress in her mother, who thought she had read too much (p. 12), and more strongly in her brother, who "permitted his pity to assuage his disgust at the persistence of so patent a silliness in me" (p. 13). Because of her early acceptance of the social and religious convictions of her hometown, Taylorville, she is drawn into marriage before she is ready. When she moves with her husband to Higgleston, she finds her existence as a woman even more limited. Life there "was organized on the basis that whatever a woman has of intelligence and worth, over and above the sum of such capacity in man, is to be excised as a superfluous growth, a monstrosity" (p. 218). Throughout the novel Pauline Mills, the epitome of Victorian domesticity, acts as Olivia's foil, much in the same fashion as Lily Fisher does for Thea.

Hagar grows up in a very conventional, aristocratic community in the South after the Civil War, a community greatly threatened by her "unladylike" desire to be an artist. Hagar's education at Mrs. LeGrand's School, where she is to acquire the manners and grace associated with southern gentility, characterizes the traditional, narrow-minded society she must overcome. Eventually she must distance herself from her own family in order to survive as a writer: "Her whole inner life was by now secret from them" (p. 121). Lily Briscoe, too, must go beyond her immediate surroundings, the
feminine and masculine orders established by Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay, to a unified vision of life before she can complete her painting.26

The one source that sustains these artist-characters in their battle against the world is their recognition at an early age of a second self. Unlike many contemporary artist-heroines, whose multiple selves produce paranoia and madness, these women find security in their inner voice. It furnishes them with an innate sense of their own talent and worth that follows them throughout life. They may be rejected by external forces, but inwardly they are confident in their artistic identity and need only the proper outlet to express it. Even as a child, Thea Kronborg knows she is different: "She knew, of course, that there was something about her that was different. But it was more like a friendly spirit than like anything that was a part of herself. She thought everything to it, and it answered her; happiness consisted of that backward and forward movement of herself" (p. 79). She refers to this second self as "a kind of warm sureness," a "companion" that makes people and things more interesting and beautiful (p. 79).

Olivia Lattimore, like Thea, is aware at an early age of her second self, which she repeatedly refers to as her "Genius," her "Gift." She is "all awash in the fluid stuff of it, . . . a shifty glittering flood" (p. 12). She informs the reader at the beginning of the novel that she thinks of
herself in two parts: "This is the story of the struggle between a Genius for Tragic Acting and the daughter of a County Clerk" (p. 5). Hagar, too, knows as a child that she is different: "Already her moments were distinguished, and each time she saw Gilead Balm she saw, and dimly knew that she saw, a different Gilead Balm" (p. 12). This second self is later referred to as her "inner eye," "her eternal self," "her subtle self." Like the other artist-heroines, Orlando is conscious of a force beyond herself: "At this point she felt that power . . . which had been reading over her shoulder, tell her to stop" (p. 265).

The dominant image used to describe the genius of the female artist, in addition to light, is a bird, a common image in contemporary fiction about women artists as well, but in this generation of authors, flying is a metaphor for the genius that leads to the fulfillment of their destinies, not for failure or forbidden experience as in Erica Jong. When Thea's music teacher in Chicago hears her voice for the first time, it "was like a wild bird that had flown into his studio . . . No one knew that it had come, or even that it existed; least of all the strange, crude girl in whose throat it beat its passionate wings" (p. 187). After all of her stifling experiences in Taylorville, Olivia Lattimore emerged "still with wings to spread and some disposition towards flying" (p. 115). Mary Austin describes the force behind her genius as "wings of power" (p. 284), as a power that descends
and perches on her heroine's spirit (p. 362). As Hagar's genius expands, Mary Johnston writes that "Her mind swept with wider wings" (p. 264).

Bird imagery also becomes for some heroines a symbol of their aspiration and the goals that they will attain. After seeing an eagle, Thea associates its flight with her striving towards art. Exhilarated, she remarks: "O eagle of eagles! Endeavor, achievement, desire, glorious striving of human art!" (p. 321). Throughout Orlando the heroine is in pursuit of the wild goose: "'Haunted!' ever since I was a child. There flies the wild goose. It flies past the window out to sea. Up I jumped ... and stretched after it. But the goose flies too fast!" (p. 313). However, on the last page Shelmerdine, after a long absence, leaps to the ground from an airplane and a wild goose springs up over his head (p. 329). This ending to the novel suggests that Orlando has attained happiness in her life as well as in her art.

The genius of these artist-heroines is often described as a force over which they have no control. The female authors of this period, in order to avoid the issue of whether a woman could actively create from within herself or not, attributed the genius of their heroines to a higher power (Pannill, p. 91). The female artist-character was merely the passive vehicle of a force beyond herself. Consequently the image frequently used to describe the woman artist is a vessel through which a liquid, the fluid of life, pours.
In *The Song of the Lark* Thea Kronborg realizes that "In singing, one made a vessel of one's throat and nostrils and held it on one's breath" (p. 304). Olivia Lattimore explains to the reader that "the essential fluid" flows through "the vessel of personality" (p. 6). For this "revitalizing fluid" she acts as "the vase, the cup" (p. 7).

This emphasis on the liquid quality of the female personality and mind, a concept that persists in the other artist-novels of this period as well, offers yet another contrast to the depiction of the artist-heroine in contemporary literature. Whereas recent female authors often center on the blockage or cessation of their heroines' creative powers, this first generation of women novelists stress the liquid flow of their heroines' minds. At eighteen years of age, the end of adolescence and a critical period for many contemporary female artist-characters, Hagar has a "fluid unimprisoned mind" (p. 68). Orlando's mind has the ability to "become a fluid that flowed round things and enclosed them completely" (p. 314). Lily Briscoe, during the moment at which she must begin painting, feels "as if some juice necessary for the lubrication of her faculties were spontaneously squirted" (p. 237).

Because their genius is a force over which they have no control, these artist-heroines are often absolved of many of the difficult choices contemporary female artist-characters frequently have to make. Thea is impelled towards her destiny.
Even though she would like to seek comfort and safety in her own country, she must go to Germany where her talent can be further developed: "Why was she going so far, when what she wanted was some familiar place to hide in?— . . . Why was she called upon to take such chances? Any safe, humdrum work that did not compromise her would be better" (pp. 380-81).

In A Woman of Genius Olivia Lattimore is controlled by a "possession" that takes her unaware (p. 6). Throughout her life she has little control over her actions because they are determined by an overwhelming force that acts as guide and mentor. When she is faced with a choice between her career and her husband, her genius takes charge: "I could no more dissever myself from that connection than I could voluntarily surrender my own breath; . . . It was not that I came to a decision about it; the whole matter appeared to lie in that region of finality that made the assumption of a decision ridiculous" (p. 247). As Lily Briscoe becomes less conscious of her surroundings and her self in To the Lighthouse, she falls "in with some rhythm which was dictated to her . . . by what she saw, . . . this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current" (pp. 237-38).

The other image patterns the women authors of this period use to describe the act of creation are comparable to those of the nineteenth-century romantic theorists who stressed the spontaneity involved in the production of art. In this tradition, as Meyer Abrams has discussed in The Mirror
and the Lamp, the artist is described as the vehicle for a force that projects itself outward. He/she is a lamp, a fountain, a parent giving birth to new creations. The images are organic ones of growth and expansion, never confinement.

The various examples of light imagery previously cited describe the genius of these women as lamps that project light outward. Thea's voice is furthermore compared to a fountain that shot up (p. 235), a white flower that opened at night (p. 301), a tree "bursting into bloom" (p. 478), and blossoming spring itself (p. 475). When Olivia acts on stage, she is charged with an energy that "flashed like sheet lightning" (p. 189). She envisions her art as "the flower, the bright, exotic blossom borne upon its upmost bough" (p. 479). For Hagar, writing is comparable to childbirth: "To write--to write--to produce, to lead forth, to give birth, to push out and farther on forever, to make a beautiful thing, . . . She saw her thought-children going up to heaven before her" (p. 211). Virginia Woolf uses the image of the fountain to describe the artistic capacity of both of her heroines. Orlando's creative powers are "warm fountains" (p. 113), while Lily's mind becomes "like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space" (p. 238), as she loses consciousness of her surroundings (p. 238).

Much like Stephen Dedalus, these artist-heroines experience epiphanies that reassure them of their artistic identities and propel them onward to fulfillment in their artistic
endeavors. Willa Cather particularly was interested in the concept of revelation. The title, *The Song of the Lark*, is often thought to be a reference to Thea's vocal abilities, but as Cather remarks, it refers instead to a young girl's awakening: "The book was named for a rather second-rate French painting in the Chicago Art Institute; a picture in which a little peasant girl, on her way to work in the fields at early morning, stops and looks up to listen to a lark. The title was meant to suggest a young girl's awakening to something beautiful" (Preface to the 1932 edition, p. vii). During the course of the novel Thea herself experiences several major epiphanies. After hearing her first concert, she vows to dedicate herself to art and forsake the world that would distract her from her art: "All these things and people were no longer remote and negligible; they had to be met, they were lined up against her, they were there to take something from her. Very well; they should never have it. They might trample her to death, but they should never have it" (p. 201). Thea experiences her most important revelation, similar to the one Cather experienced herself, in Panther Canyon where she makes a discovery about the nature of art itself and the part she plays in an ancient tradition: "What was any art but an effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to imprison for a moment the shining elusive element which is life itself" (p. 304).
Hagar, too, experiences an epiphany at the moment in which she realizes she is a writer: "She could write, she could tell stories, she could write books. . . . She could earn money" (p. 122). Virginia Woolf's heroines are well-known for their epiphanies. Morris Beja in "Matches Struck in the Dark: Virginia Woolf's Moments of Vision," details some of the revelations that form Lily's vision of her painting. Orlando, as well, experiences moments of revelation, although Woolf often parodies these in the same spirit in which the rest of the novel is written. At the moment in which Orlando discovers that it is 1928, "the clock ticked louder and louder until there was a terrific explosion right in her ear. Orlando leapt as if she had been violently struck on the head" (p. 298).

The epiphanies these women experience often serve as guideposts on their journeys through life. Unlike the often thwarted or unsuccessful journeys of many contemporary artist-characters, the journey or voyage in these novels represents a pushing forward to success and achievement. One of the songs Thea sings typifies her own determination to venture onward regardless of the risks: "But I prefer to steer my boat into the din of roaring breakers. Even if the journey is my last, I may find what I have never found before. Onward must I go, for I yearn for the wild sea. I long to fight my way through the angry waves, and to see how far, and how long I can make them carry me" (p. 270). At the end
of the novel, when she has achieved the ultimate in expres-
sion for a prima donna, she feels that "the closed roads
opened, the gates dropped" (p. 478).

The other artist-heroines, likewise, experience success-
ful journeys. As Hagar's mind develops during adolescence,
Mary Johnston writes that "the thinker within rose a step,
gained a foot on the infinite, mounting stair" (p. 110).
When Hagar discovers that she is a writer, she gains direction
and purpose in her life: "The right-angled turns in her road
of this life had not been many; this was one and a main one.
Suddenly, to herself, her life achieved purpose, direction.
It was as though a rudderless boat had been suddenly mended,
or a bewildered helmsman had seen the pole star" (p. 122).
Virginia Woolf uses images of traveling to describe her
heroines. Shelmerdine thinks Orlando is comparable to "a ship
in full sail coming with the sun on it proudly sweeping across
the Mediterranean from the South Seas" (p. 251). The image
of a tunnel or enclosure, from which contemporary heroines
often cannot escape, becomes a source of revelation for
Orlando: "The immensely long tunnel in which she seemed to
have been traveling for hundreds of years widened; the light
poured in; . . . And so for some seconds the light went on
becoming brighter and brighter, and she saw everything more
and more clearly" (p. 298). Lily Briscoe must risk traveling
down a road that continually becomes narrower in order to be
a successful painter: "It was an odd road to be walking, this
of painting. Out and out one went, further and further, until at last one seemed to be on a narrow plank, perfectly alone, over the sea" (p. 256). Before she can complete her painting, she must lose consciousness of herself and her surroundings by stepping into "the waters of annihilation" (p. 269).

The success of these artist-heroines, the one characteristic they all have in common, is perhaps attained without sufficient preparation. The full development of their craft is often achieved during years not discussed in the novels. We often see their struggles against the world but not their actual growth as artists. In *The Song of the Lark* ten years pass while Thea studies in Germany; she returns as one of the greatest opera singers of all time. In *A Woman of Genius* three seasons have passed and we find that Olivia Lattimore has risen from poverty to the pinnacle of her profession. She assures us: "I was a successful actress, there was no doubt whatever that I was a success" (p. 373). Hagar sends off her first story and it receives easy acceptance; eight years then pass and she is a famous author. In *The Well of Loneliness* two years go by and we find Stephen Gordon has written a "fine first novel." Over a period of several centuries Orlando works on her poem, "The Oak Tree," which eventually is in print and wins a prize. In *To the Lighthouse* ten years pass and Lily is then able to finish her painting.
The success of these heroines, however implausible in some cases, is nevertheless remarkable in its own right. The novels may be flawed artistically, but they present one of the most positive images of women in fiction to date. Such women, who set and accomplish their goals through desire and determination, have seldom been envisioned in fiction since that time.
Footnotes


2 As Gillespie notes, this characteristic in the fiction of men is inevitable to a certain extent, in that authors write out of their own experience (pp. 40-41).

3 Patricia Meyer Spacks in The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 319, has pointed out that women authors, whether successful themselves or not, have tended to create unsuccessful heroines.


7 Aunt Georgiana, for example, in "A Wagner Matinee" in Willa Cather's Collected Short Fiction (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1965), left her music career in Boston to marry a man who took her to the plains of Nebraska. After hearing a Wagner concert on a return visit to Boston, she sobs to her nephew: "'I don't want to go, Clark, I don't want to go!'" (p. 241).


9 Willa Cather, The Song of the Lark (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), p. 455. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

This tendency to elevate art to the status of religion, as Maurice Beebe in *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 13, notes, is typical of the artists in the Ivory Tower tradition.

Other critics, like David Stouck in *Willa Cather's Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 172, have also noted how art becomes a religion for Cather.


Mary Austin, *A Woman of Genius* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1912), p. 447. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (New York: Covici Friede, 1928), pp. 210 and 217. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

This symbol clearly links this generation of writers with Maurice Beebe's Ivory Tower tradition, but, as Linda Pannill in "The Artist-Heroine in American Fiction, 1890-1920," Diss. University of North Carolina 1975, points out, they do not fit into the tradition in the same way that male artists do. The men may create great art after they remove themselves to an ivory tower, but many of the women have never left it (p. 38). If they leave, they do so by the knight who rescues them and marries them, which is often fatal to their art (pp. 38-39), or they fall from the tower into social disgrace (p. 46).

Mary Johnston, *Hagar* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), p. 59. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.


Pannill explains that the absence of men in these women's lives had actually become a tradition by the time these authors were writing. Because the dependency of women was a commonly held assumption, female authors had to make their heroines take careers only by default, not choice (p. 88). In the absence of men they had no choice but to rely on their own resources.


22 Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World Inc., 1927), p. 29. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

23 Other critics, like E. K. Brown, have noted how a brilliance of light pervades this novel.

24 As Edward and Lillian Bloom explain, in many of her early stories Cather depicts the artist as hero and middle-class society as the villain (p. 273).


26 There are multiple interpretations of what that final brush stroke means, but most critics agree that Lily's vision is incomplete until that moment in the novel. Lisa Ruddick in *The Seen and the Unseen: Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse"* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977) cogently argues that Lily's final brush stroke is the merging of the two orders of vision that dominate the novel: the visionary, experienced by the women, and the factual, propounded by the males. The lighthouse, represented by the final stroke, acts as the symbol for synthesis since it symbolizes both the seen and the unseen worlds.

27 This means of evading a controversy over their heroines' creative powers also accounts in part for the large number of performing rather than creative artists. In performing, the woman artist was imitative, not consciously creative (Pannill, p. 94).


29 As E. K. Brown explains, in 1912 Cather made the first of many trips to the Southwest that formed "the principal emotional experience of Willa Cather's mature life" (p. xii).

CHAPTER THREE

Failed Artist-Heroines: 1920-1978

In many of the novels published from the 1920s through the 1970s, the female characters never reach their full potential as artists. During the three decades immediately after the first feminist movement, the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, the woman as artist is deterred from her development as an artist for various reasons, but primarily because of societally imposed obligations to family and home. The repressiveness of this period produced numerous fictional representations of unfulfilled artists, but perhaps the most poignant, as well as the one of greatest literary merit, is Harriette Arnow's narrative of a folk artist, Gertie Nevels, in The Dollmaker (1954). Arnow traces the uprooting of a Kentucky woman who is self-sufficient in her own world, but who finally must yield to the pressures of war-time Detroit. Her carving, or "whittlen foolishness," as she terms it, is the only means of self-expression for this physically immense, inarticulate woman. Even this small expression of her individuality, however, is soon swallowed up in the concept of "adjustment." She, like her children, must conform to the alien standards of Detroit or be destroyed.
When Gertie's husband, Clovis, goes for his army examination, she hopes to purchase a farm of her own in Kentucky, but her mother insists that a woman must follow her husband wherever he goes. Having little choice, Gertie dutifully begins the long trek to Detroit, where she finds that her world of green Kentucky bluegrass has been transformed into a world of grays. This loss of color parallels a loss in her ability to see and interpret the world around her. Her impaired vision is first symbolized by the steamy, smoke-covered windows of the train that carries her family to Detroit. This theme is developed further in the cab that transports them to their new home; its windows "were so coated with snow and frost that for all the view they gave them might have been steel." Instead of the lighted store windows and crowds of people she has come to expect, Gertie sees only "a few gray wind-battered shapes hurrying down dirty streets past dead-faced gray buildings" (pp. 166-67) on her first ride through the streets. The frost- and dirt-coated windows of her new apartment equally afford her no vision of the world outside. As it becomes evident that her sight in this new world is permanently marred, the images of grayness shift to those of blindness, corresponding to her feelings of helplessness. She compares herself to her neighbor, who is a "Samson with his hair grown long again--but blinded; a man like herself" (p. 185).
The reader's sense of Gertie's weakened vision is intensified by images of enclosures from which she cannot escape. Unlike the artist-heroines of the first three decades of this century, who seek enclosures as sources of protection, Gertie never feels free again after boarding the train to Detroit. The windows are "stout as for a prison" (p. 152) and the air "was like a stinking rotten dough pushed up her nose and down her throat" (p. 148). The train station in Cincinnati seems "smoothery crowded down below" (p. 149). The relief she hopes to find in her new home is quickly dispelled upon her arrival. As she steps from the cab, "the smell and taste of smoke chokes her" (p. 170). Once inside, she finds her apartment to be alarmingly small. Her kitchen seems like a closet, "smotheringly crowded with curious contrivances" (p. 171), her living room like a hallway (p. 171). She continually bumps into objects in a world that is too small for her great size.

What disturbs Gertie the most about the city is the dominance of the machine. Even before she leaves Kentucky she claims that Clovis would be "'better off in th' war than in one a them factories!'" (p. 97). After her introduction to life in the city, however, she comes to hate mechanization even more. She watches a massive train, like the one that carries her to the city, crush the life out of her youngest daughter. In her neighborhood the huge steel mill spews out its fiery mass, while a man, "puny-looking as a paper doll"
(p. 355), stands close by. This naturalistic sense of man as a small, vulnerable creature, able to be dwarfed by forces beyond his control, grows stronger as the novel progresses. The sounds of the city become ever more threatening. The long roaring "growl" of traffic, the "scream" of an airplane, and the blast of the steel mill "made Gertie think of some many-voiced beast out there, hungry, waiting for them all" (p. 577). Eventually, the machine encroaches upon her "whittlen," the one activity in the city from which she still receives genuine pleasure. Her husband insists that she use a mechanical saw and sander to produce her dolls, rather than wasting time and money carving them by hand. Although she finds the work monotonous and unfulfilling, she must submit to this distortion of her art in order to gain the money that could mean her family's survival. Joyce Carol Oates, summing up this attitude in the afterword to the novel, writes that "art is luxury, it has no place in the world of intense, daily, bitter struggle" (p. 605).

The center of her artistic endeavors throughout the novel becomes the heavy block of cherry wood sent to her from Kentucky. From the outset she is concerned about the shape that the face in the wood will take. At first Gertie likes to visualize a "laughing Christ," whose face conveys compassion and kindness, but soon after her arrival in the city she realizes that only the face of a suffering Christ, which can be taken from anyone in Detroit, or a Judas, which reflects
the betrayal of mankind, would be appropriate. Gradually the wood becomes her only source of comfort in an ever more painful reality. After her eldest son runs off, she turns from her forced labor on the dolls to the man in the wood who "could heal a little of the hurt and this hunger in her heart for Reuben" (p. 367). Similarly, she again turns to the wood after her daughter's death: "But the man in the wood was strong; he could pull her through the time" (p. 415). The block of wood becomes the object to which she can transfer her anguish: "Gradually, her own torture became instead the agony of the bowed head in the block of wood" (p. 444).

Like so many other female artists, both fictional and real, Gertie uses her art as a release from pain, not as a form of liberated creativity. While in Kentucky, she can turn to her carving as an occasional diversion from the demands of family life, but in the city, her need for escape becomes more intense. She seeks out the block of wood in reaction to the forces in her life over which she has no control, not as an artist acting upon spontaneous, creative impulse. Her art can become little more than a momentary liberation, and certainly never the central work in her life. The brief moments of solitude afforded her by her carving are soon intruded upon by the outer world. She can never ignore the needs of her family for long. At the end of the novel, during one of the most dramatic scenes, Gertie is forced to quarter the block of wood so that it can be sawed into many
boards for dolls. Thus her only release, her art, is lost in the sheer struggle to survive.

In the novels of the 1960s and '70s women artists, whose art is a serious vocation, emerge again as prominent figures. Nevertheless, for a significant portion of the female characters during this period, as well as during the three preceding decades, art remains little more than an avocation. The reason these women do not reach their full potential as artists is not primarily that they are trapped by societally imposed obligations to family and home, as in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. In fact, few of these women are married and virtually none has children. The main deterrents to their art are commitments, first of all, to the development of themselves as full human and sexual beings. This need is a general reflection of the concerns of many women in our culture, both fictional and real, during these two decades. The artist-characters that are portrayed in these novels need a concrete sense of self before they can develop an artistic identity. The process of self-discovery that this development requires frequently involves an exploration of what their past lives have been, particularly their relationships with parents, husbands, or lovers. These women must come to an understanding of their past lives, even though they may initially try to escape them, before they can face the future as human beings and artists.
Several novels of this period deal with childhood and adolescence as an explanation of an acute paranoia and/or madness that paralyzes the potential artist in adulthood. Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976) details the life of a young girl who is extremely fat and unattractive. Her attempt to escape her childhood and her mother's overriding, disapproving presence is only the beginning of many shifting roles that lead to her extreme paranoia. The premier female *bildungsroman* of the contemporary period, in which a young woman's development as an artist is arrested by madness, is Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963). Esther Greenwood, Plath's loosely autobiographical heroine, is the all-American girl in her youth. She earns straight "A's" in school, goes to an eastern women's college, spends her weekends at Yale with the all-American boy and plays editor for a fashion magazine during the summer of her third year in college—all of which leaves her divorced from herself and unable to write. At the end of her adolescence, Esther finds herself at the door of an adult world that has different expectations for her as a woman than it had for her as a girl. As Simone de Beauvoir writes,

> For the young woman, ... there is a contradiction between her status as a real human being and her vocation as a female. And just here is to be found the reason why adolescence is so difficult and decisive a moment. Up to this time she has been an autonomous individual; now she must renounce her sovereignty. Not only is she torn, like her brothers, though more painfully, between the past and the future, but in
addition a conflict breaks out between her original claim to be subject, active, free, and, on the other hand, her erotic urges and the social pressure to accept herself as passive object. ²

Unlike the artist-heroines of the first generation of the twentieth century, who possess second selves that propel them on to their own unique destinies, Esther has only two basic choices: she can either pursue the career for which she has been trained, which will allow for little, if any, heterosexual involvement, or she can become a traditional wife and mother, which will, in turn, limit her development as an artist. Her role models in the novel break down into these two stereotypes. She can emulate the solitary, career-oriented women like the efficient but unattractive editor, Jay Cee; the romance writer, Philomena Guinea, who is willing to pay for Esther's institutional care as long as a boy is not involved; or even her embittered mother, who urges her to learn a practical skill like shorthand so that she can support herself. Her only other alternative is to become a submissive wife like Buddy Willard's mother, whose remarks, such as "'What a man wants is a mate and what a woman wants is infinite security,’”³ make marriage seem more unattractive than being single. As a wife she would be expected to bear many children like Dodo Conway, whose first name certainly describes Plath's attitude toward this sort of prolific woman. Esther discovers no model that allows development for her both as an artist and as a woman. Her inability to face such a future
leads to her madness. Throughout the rest of the novel Esther tries to construct a unified self that will allow her to both create poetry and be a woman in her own right.

Several of the artist-characters explore the past through a physical journey that parallels an inner journey. The heroine in Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972) journeys back to her home in the Canadian wilderness to discover the heritage that will make her whole again. Nominally she goes in search of her missing father, but after undertaking her voyage, she discovers her real purpose: to become at one again with the part of herself that was nurtured by her parents and has been tainted by the effects of civilization. In the "civilized" world from which she has come, she is an illustrator. Her art, however, is as artificial as the culture in which she lives and is no real expression of herself. She must create the sorts of pictures that her publisher demands. Only as a child at home was she free to draw as she wished. As she reenters this environment, she finds that she can no longer draw the figures that her publisher requires. Her fingers become "stiff" as she pulls away from civilization and is drawn to her roots. The keys to her past are in clues left by her father and mother. She must dive deeply into the lake to search for the drawings left by her father. This begins her ritual rebirth. Her mother's gift, a picture the heroine had drawn in childhood, is another clue which helps to integrate her with her past. She must undergo a complete process
of purification, including an animalistic copulation in the woods, before she can gain a sense of herself as one.

Lillian, the jazz pianist in Anais Nin's *Seduction of the Minotaur* (1969), travels to Mexico on a journey into her interior landscape. In this novel Nin makes an implicit parallel between the symbolic resonances of improvisation, both in jazz and selfhood. As the title suggests, Nin is re-writing myth, which she accomplishes through the development of her character's improvised or created self. Rather than be devoured by the Minotaur, the monster which symbolizes both her imaginary and real fears, Lillian must face and then transcend her problems. Nin places a great deal of emphasis on Lillian's metaphorical, as well as literal, journey to self-discovery. Lillian has a "recurrent dream of a ship that could not reach the water, that sailed laboriously, pushed by her with great effort, through city streets." In the city of Golconda, where she begins to confront her past and herself, the ship begins to move more freely and she can continue her journey without great struggle. One major discovery she makes during the time she spends in rooms alone is that "she was not free. She was still in that underground city of her childhood" (p. 88). Lillian realizes that she cannot escape her past, even in this land of "forgetfulness." She must cope with her feelings of being unloved by her parents and what her relationship with her husband has been before she can return to the life she has left behind.
The primary concern of the preceding novelists has been with the discovery and development of their characters' humanity. Other contemporary female novelists, however, have been more directly influenced by the sexual revolution that characterizes the 1970s and consequently focus their efforts more on their characters' sexual development. The author most popularized by her treatment of sexuality during this period is Erica Jong, whose novels explore many issues of being female and Jewish in America, but are most revolutionary in their open expression of female fantasy. Jong's heroine, Isadora Wing, is a poet, but her relationships with the men in her life assume a greater importance than her art. In *Fear of Flying* (1973), Jong's first novel, Isadora is torn between the security offered by her marriage to Bennett Wing, a psychiatrist, and the seeming freedom and independence offered by another psychiatrist, Adrian Goodlove, whom she meets at a convention. Part of her attraction to Goodlove, his name obviously indicative of what he has to offer, is sexuality without commitment or emotion, comparable to the "zipless fuck" about which she fantasizes. Isadora's extreme guilt and paranoia in her adult life were fostered in her childhood by her mother, who claimed she could have been a great artist if she had not had children. She asserts that Isadora, like herself, must make a choice between having children and being an artist. Isadora's conflict reaches a climax in her romp across Europe with Goodlove. Her adventure,
a circular, convoluted journey, does not provide the sense of resolution that often accompanies many of the "straight-line" journeys. At the end of the novel, she is left at an impasse: neither her marriage as it has been nor sex without commitment offers her the true freedom she desires. In the sequel to Fear of Flying (1973), How to Save Your Own Life (1977), Isadora has achieved fame and notoriety, but her art alone has not made her happy. This novel deals primarily with her search for happiness outside of her achievements. She passes through a bad marriage, the death of a friend, and a lesbian affair, to a positive relationship with a younger man who helps her integrate her writing and her life.

One offshoot of the sexual revolution in the late 1960s and '70s has been the increase in the number of novels published with lesbian themes. Several contemporary women novelists portray female characters whose first concern is their lesbianism. The female narrator in Jane Rule's This Is Not for You (1970) is so totally immersed in an unsuccessful love affair with a woman who has recently joined a convent that her art has no significance in her life. Isabel Miller's Patience and Sarah (1969), set in 1816, depicts the life of a painter, Patience White, who must deal with the two main obstacles that confront most lesbians before they can develop fully as artists: their families and the outside world. Patience sees first-hand how conventional family life will destroy her desire to be an artist. She watches her overworked
sister-in-law, who will one day die from too-frequent childbearing, struggle to satisfy and care for her husband and children. Patience is quite sure this is not the life for her. When she meets Sarah Dowling, she sees the possibility of a wholly different sort of life. Although these women fulfill stereotyped masculine/feminine roles, there is no sense of a male dominance that often typifies conventional male/female relationships. The sense of one "belonging" solely to the other is absent, as Patience's thoughts reveal: "I began to wonder if what makes men walk so lord-like and speak so masterfully is having the love of women. If that was it, Sarah and I would make lords of each other."6 Neither ego subsumes the other. Because of family objections, Patience and Sarah must leave their native homes, but when they get to their new home in New York, there are suggestions that Patience will at last have the time and space to paint. Although this novel is set in a seemingly more oppressive time than now, it is more hopeful, and in most respects more sentimental, than many novels set in the contemporary period that deal with lesbian themes. Molly Bolt, for example, in Rita Mae Brown's Rubyfruit Jungle (1973) has, by the end of the novel, graduated from New York University the highest in her class and is determined to make films, but her lesbianism and femaleness continually work against her. At college she loses her scholarship because of her affair with another female student. Unlike Patience White, who finds a
satisfactory lover, Molly discovers that most of the other lesbians she meets stereotype themselves as "butch" or "femme" and will not accept her unless she labels herself as one or the other. She is even propositioned by an older lesbian who offers to pay for her schooling, but Molly refuses to be bought. Finally, Molly has entered a profession dominated by men. With such obstacles her chances of succeeding remain uncertain.

The novels in the 1960s and '70s in which the heroine's life is more important than her art may vary considerably in emphasis, but the pattern of imagery that their authors employ to characterize their lives is surprisingly similar. Virtually all these female artist-characters have divided, even multiple selves. These other selves contrast significantly with the second selves of the first generation of female artist-heroines. Rather than serving as sources of self-confidence, as they had in the first part of the century, these multiple selves symbolize the fragmentation and disorientation of these heroines. Esther Greenwood in The Bell Jar (1963) has become so separated from herself that she can no longer recognize her own face in the mirror: "The person in the mirror was paralyzed and too stupid to do a thing" (p. 121). Marjorie Perloff explains Esther's schizophrenia through Laingian psychology: she claims Esther is split between an outer self that conforms to what others expect of her and an inner voice that is in conflict with those
expectations. From the outset of Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972) there are suggestions that the heroine has separate selves. Anna, who reads palms, says the narrator must have a twin (p. 10). Later, when the heroine is about to dive in the water she sees "not my reflection but my shadow" (p. 165). The reappearing "shadow," a Jungian symbol for the other self, is suggestive of the part of herself from which she is divided. Until she can be reunited with this self she conceives of her body in separate parts: "I'd allowed myself to be cut in two. . . . I was nothing but a head, or, no, something minor like a severed thumb; numb" (p. 129).

Isadora Wing in *Fear of Flying* (1973) sees her life "split in two irreconcilable halves"--she can either be the wife and mother her husband wants, or she can be an artist, but never can she be both. The artist-character in *Lady Oracle* (1976) has so many selves that no one knows all of her: "I was more than double, I was triple, multiple, and now I could see that there was more than one life to come, there were many." She is the fat girl of her childhood, a poet, a romance writer, the wife of Arthur, and the lover of several men. She so desperately wants her lives to be separate from each other that she stages her own death in an effort to seal off her past.

Because these women feel so oppressed by their divided selves, they often conceive of life in terms of enclosures. The descending bell jar, surely one of the most dramatic and
well-known pictures of entrapment during this period, is only one of a series of images that suggest Esther Greenwood's state of mind. She sees childbirth, a future state that she fears so much, as "that long, blind, doorless and windowless corridor of pain" (p. 53). When she must return home with her mother for the summer, the car roof seems to close over her head "like the roof of a prison van" and the houses in the suburbs become "one bar after another in a large but escape-proof cage" (p. 94). As her feelings of oppression reach a crisis and she attempts suicide, her body becomes a "stupid cage" (p. 130) that traps her. The heroine in Surfacing (1972), likewise, feels imprisoned in herself: "At some point my neck must have closed over, pond freezing or a wound, shutting me into my head; . . . it was like being in a vase" (p. 126). She can have no freedom as long as she is out of touch with the part of herself that she has lost. In Nin's Seduction of the Minotaur (1961) the images of tombs, prisons, nuns' cells, and locked doors all suggest the heroine's feelings of entrapment. As long as she fails to confront her inner self, she feels trapped when she is in rooms alone: "When she took one last glance at the mirror, the screen door of her room seemed the locked door of a prison, the room an enclosure, only because she was a prisoner of anxiety" (p. 43). Jong's heroine, Isadora, in How to Save Your Own Life (1977) feels an even more intense paranoia when she is left alone in her "hotel-room torture chamber."
She fantasizes that she is "sinking into the grave . . . as surely as the Jews gassed at Auschwitz had" (p. 18). Joan Foster in Lady Oracle (1976) expresses her fears of entrapment through her various forms of writing. Her volume of poetry, the result of automatic writing, is filled with masks, suffering, and imprisonment. Her recognition of a "half-likeness" made her "uncomfortable" (p. 259). She describes the actual process of automatic writing as a journey down a narrow, endless passage (p. 248). In the last gothic romance she writes she actually becomes the wife of the villain, now portrayed as her actual husband, and finds herself trapped in a maze (p. 376).

The more extreme feelings of entrapment often shift to images of smothering or strangulation. As Esther Greenwood becomes more and more alienated from herself and the world around her, she feels as if she is "being stuffed farther and farther into a black, airless sack with no way out" (p. 105). Eventually she moves toward suicide because of the lack of air in the descending bell jar: "The air of the bell jar wadded round me and I couldn't stir" (p. 152). Isadora Wing describes childhood and marriage in images of strangulation. She tells her husband: "'You made me feel as if I were strangling to death'"; he claims, on the contrary, that her parents "choked" her (Fear of, p. 137). Even her writing offers her no relief. During periods of composition she goes into depressions and "hardly comes up for air" (Fear of,
When she is alone she imagines herself to be "a fish gasping on the bed" as phantom fishermen reel her "in from the ceiling" (*How to Save*, p. 19).

The insecurity that these artist-characters feel is often expressed as a fear of falling. The self-assured images of birds in flight of earlier artist-heroines give way to images of a rapid descent from a high place. When Esther Greenwood is not accepted for a summer writing course and must go home to live with her mother, she sees "a body . . . plummet into the gap" (p. 93). The heroine of *Surfacing* (1972) fantasizes that her imaginary marriage was "like jumping off a cliff. That was the feeling I had all the time I was married; in the air, going down, waiting for the smash at the bottom" (p. 55). Isadora Wing has a similar feeling after Adrian Goodlove leaves her and she is absolutely alone: "It was the most terrifying sensation I'd ever known in my life. Like teetering on the edge of the Grand Canyon and hoping you'd learn to fly before you hit bottom" (*Fear of*, p. 271).

Often the heroines express their inner fears of falling through their dreams. Isadora's childhood is transformed into a nightmarish world in her sleep. She watches herself in her parents' home as she runs "through the studio trap door and down the steps. Suddenly she falls, knowing she is going to die when she hits bottom" (*Fear of*, pp. 111-12). Her dreams of her adult life, similarly expressing an intense fear of
heights, are "full of elevators, platforms in space, enormously steep and slippery staircases, ziggurat temples ... mountains, towers, ruins" (Fear of, p. 289). It is not until she achieves a degree of freedom from her fears and paranoia that she can actually "fly" in How to Save Your Own Life (1977). In Lady Oracle (1976) Joan Foster has daydreams that date back to her younger years as a fat child. In one dream she can visualize a fat lady who falls over and over in slow motion from a tight rope (p. 279), or who in another is so light that she floats to the ceiling where she will be shot down (p. 305). In one of these fantasies her mother, who could save her, refuses to pay attention as she falls from a bridge that topples into a ravine (p. 68).

As a result of their experiences, many of the artist-heroines are left empty, paranoid, or mad. They must regain a sense of wholeness before they can reenter the world of which they form a part. This journey toward completeness often involves the ritualistic gesture of ridding themselves of their clothes, the symbols of their entire female socialization process. Esther Greenwood flings her fashion wardrobe off an apartment building in New York during her last night in an attempt to detach herself from the false image of her that those clothes represent. Joan Foster tries to obliterate her past life by burying her clothes under the house in which she is hiding in Italy: "I still felt as though I was getting rid of a body, the corpse of someone I'd killed" (p. 18). An
Italian, however, digs them up and returns them to her, sug­gesting that she cannot throw her past away so easily.

Some heroines not only take off their clothes but enter water as a cleansing element. Lillian in Seduction of the Minotaur (1961), whose clothes seem "ponderous and superfluous" (p. 8), feels "born anew" (p. 78) after swimming naked in the sea. The heroine of Surfacing (1972), likewise, goes through a ritual rebirth. Her clothing, first of all, must go because it is a symbol of the artificial and unnatural civilization that separates her from her past. She then must enter the water to free herself from her old, false image: "I dip my head beneath the water, washing my eyes. . . . When I am clean I come up out of the lake, leaving my false body floating on the surface, a cloth decoy" (p. 208).

These artist-heroines show varying degrees of success in becoming unified individuals. Esther Greenwood, seemingly cured of her madness, leaves the mental institution at the end of the novel. The heroine of Surfacing (1972) has reintegrated her personality in the wilds of Canada at the conclusion of the novel. Her future back in "civilization" is uncertain, but it is clear that she will confront her life differently. Towards the end of Seduction of the Minotaur (1961) the same line is repeated twice: "Lillian was journeying homeward" (pp. 95, 111), which suggests that her voyage into herself has been successful. At the end of Lady Oracle (1976) all of Joan's selves rapidly become one. The fat lady
descends upon her and Joan is absorbed into her. The chapter ends with the word "obliterated," which implies that the isolated self of her childhood no longer exists as a separate entity and is now part of her total personality. She resolves to quit writing gothic novels and to return to her real life and have her other selves revealed. Isadora Wing, by the end of two novels, has finally achieved a sense of wholeness through a fairly conventional relationship with a younger man. The poems she writes seem to be intended as evidence that this affair has given her renewal as an artist. This conclusion, perhaps the most optimistic for a woman artist during this period, is nonetheless the least believeable. Jong's seeming purpose throughout these novels has been to create a woman who is confident in her own sense of self, yet her heroine settles for a relationship not so different from the one she had with her original husband. Such an ending, while resolving the conflict between art and life for the female artist, is too simplistic for the complexities that are posed in the novels. Contemporary women authors are bound to seek solutions to the problems of their female artist-characters, but such solutions must be realistic if they are to be held credible.
Footnotes


3 The Bell Jar (1963; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 58. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

4 Surfacing (New York: Popular Library, 1972), p. 62. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

5 Seduction of the Minotaur (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1961), p. 5. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

6 Patience and Sarah (1969; rpt. Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1973), p. 34. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

7 "'A Ritual for Being Born Twice': Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar," Contemporary Literature, 13 (1972), 508.

8 Fear of Flying (New York: The New American Library, 1973), p. 157. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

9 Lady Oracle (New York: Avon Books, 1976), p. 274. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

10 How to Save Your Own Life (New York: The New American Library 1977, p. 16. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.
CHAPTER FOUR

May Sarton's Artist-Heroines

The woman artist has been a concern of May Sarton throughout her fiction, poetry, and journals. In her first novel, *The Single Hound* (1938), as well as in one of her most recent, *Crucial Conversations* (1975), she touches on issues pertinent to being both a woman and an artist. Until the publications of *Mrs. Stevens hears the mermaids singing* (1965), however, Sarton depicted her artist-heroines only at the beginning of their careers or at the end. Doro, the female poet in *The Single Hound*, is sixty-three at the outset of the novel, while Francoise in *The Bridge of Years* (1946), Joanna in *Joanna and Ulysses* (1963), and Cathy in *Kinds of Love* (1970) are too young at the end of these novels to have achieved significant development as artists. In most of her novels, Sarton seems reluctant to discuss fully the middle section of the female artist's life, the period when she reaches maturity. Sarton's reticence can be traced to several sources but primarily to the subject matter that such a novel would have to explore. In 1939, in reviewing a novel about a poet, Sarton remarked that the book ultimately fails because "it does not add to our understanding of poetic genius,
and I can see no other reason for writing a book about a poet than to do this."¹ Sarton delayed writing a novel about a woman artist's actual development, a development that would surely suggest autobiographical parallels, for precisely this reason: she could not add to our knowledge of a woman's poetic genius because of its connection to a highly controversial subject—lesbianism. Not until the deaths of her parents could she dare "to write Mrs. Stevens, to write a novel about a woman homosexual who is not a sex maniac, a drunkard, a drug-taker, or in any way repulsive; to portray a homosexual who is neither pitiable nor disgusting, without sentimentality."² She also felt it necessary to write several novels concerned with marriage and family life before Mrs. Stevens hears the mermaids singing³ so that she wouldn't be read "from a distorting angle of vision" (Journal, p. 91).

Sarton herself, like Hilary Sterns, regards poetry as her natural vehicle of expression (Journal, pp. 40-41), but she chose to write a novel so that her opinions would be clearly understood. Sarton's desire for clarity of expression is reflected in Hilary's tendency to deliver her opinions explicitly, rather than have them illustrated in the text itself.⁴ Although this means of rendering her notions about the woman artist makes the book imperfect as a work of art, it nevertheless seems to suit Sarton's purpose in this novel.

In *Mrs. Stevens*, then, Sarton gives her only fully developed treatment of the woman artist. The novel itself is
framed by sections in which Hilary Stevens, the seventy-year-old protagonist, comes in contact with a disturbed young homosexual, Mar Hemmer, with whom she closely identifies. The middle sections are devoted to an interview with a reporter, Peter Selversen, and a young woman writer, Jenny Hare, who strike chords in Hilary's past as they discuss each of her publications in chronological order. Through Hilary's flashbacks and her remarks to her interviewers, the reader is introduced to Hilary's background, as well as to her theories of art. Although this framework tends to be contrived, it forces Hilary to formalize many of her feelings about the female artist, particularly those about the muse. Sarton's depiction of an older woman also affords her certain advantages. Because most of Hilary's productive life is over, she can analyze it in full and reflect on it from a perspective that a younger woman in the middle of her career could not. As might be expected of a woman who grew up during the early decades of this century, Hilary adheres to many of the conventional notions about the female artist of that time. Nevertheless, Mrs. Stevens furnishes some revealing glimpses into the psyche of the female artist.

Sarton's statements about the female artist depend upon her definition of this woman as "aberrant" or unnatural. At one point in the novel, Hilary claims that all women like her are "'monsters . . . who have chosen to be something more and something less than women!'"5 Jane Rule
in *Lesbian Images* believes that by labeling herself a freak, Hilary may be forgiven "for all those indulgences in temperament, self-absorption, pride, and lust which in this culture are even more exclusively masculine territory than the stock market." The key to Hilary's thinking, however, is found in a deeper, more psychological source. During one of her discourses on the woman artist, she remarks: "'A woman is meant to create children not works of art—that's what she has been engined to do, so to speak. A man with talent does what is expected of him, makes his way, constructs, is an engineer, a composer, a builder of bridges. It's the natural order of things that he constructs objects outside himself and his family. The woman who does so is aberrant'" (p. 190).

This statement, which relies so heavily on biological determinism, reflects Sarton's acceptance of the psychological and cultural assumptions of the first half of the twentieth century, the time during which she grew to maturity. Even though Jenny Hare, the young female interviewer, asserts that Hilary was "moulded" before Freud, it is highly doubtful that Sarton was.

Hilary's "aberrant" development begins during her childhood, the period that, according to Freud, is crucial to the ultimate development of the adult. She is born into a Boston family in which feeling and physical affection of any sort are shunned. Her parents think she is overly emotional and attribute her tendency to express emotion openly to the same
strain in their family that had affected their talented but insane Great Aunt Ida. Hilary's mother, in particular, utterly refuses to show affection to her children. She denies the physical world as if it were somehow "disgusting" (p. 66). Because tenderness is shown only to those who are ill, Hilary feigns illness frequently as a child in an effort to get her mother's attention. Her mother's repression of feeling has a lasting effect on Hilary: she both fears emotion and feels guilt for it for the rest of her life (p. 63). Had she not eventually found a vent for her feelings in poetry, she could have been left a "cripple" (p. 67). Yet underneath her mother's external barrier Hilary senses an intensity of feeling. Her mother was the woman who was "'meant to be an artist who tried to do the right thing!'" (p. 193). This undercurrent of emotion, though carefully concealed, leaves a permanent imprint on Hilary's character. Her mother's inner powers had "'devastated'" her before she was eight and had "'marked'" her for a poet (p. 193).

During her childhood Hilary first expresses her desire to be a boy, partially because she believes her mother wanted a boy, but also because she can see that boys lead a more active, unrestrained life (p. 63). Such a desire in a young girl, according to Freud, is not unusual as long as this is only one step in her total development. However, he notes: "If a little girl persists in her first wish--to grow into a boy--in extreme cases she will end as a manifest homosexual,
and otherwise she will exhibit markedly masculine traits in the conduct of her later life, will choose a masculine voca-
tion, and so on. Hilary, in fact, never passes beyond this initial stage in her development. She tells Mar: "'I'm an old woman . . . But when I was your age, or a little younger maybe, I wanted to be a boy. Part of me just stayed back there . . . but it was (and is) that boy in me who wrote the poems'" (p. 217). Instead of abandoning her mother for her father and desiring a baby as a substitute for being a boy, which are, Freud contends, the next steps in the normal development of the young girl, Hilary thinks of her own talent as the "demanding baby" she must nourish (p. 156). It is this talent, this boy within, that is the active principle in her creation of poetry.

Hilary's rejection by her mother, a rejection she carries with her for the rest of her life, forces her to seek substitutes in the women around her. Her mother drove her "into the arms of governesses, teachers, strangers . . . (Sarton's ellipsis) anyone who provided escape from the tightly controlled shining surface, the prison--anyone who could let in a little air" (p. 65). This pattern, established early in childhood, follows Hilary through her adult life. She seeks a vent for her repressed feelings in the women she meets. During an encounter with a governess, Phillippa Munn, who acts as Hilary's first muse, she begins to learn in her adolescence how to channel her feelings into poetry. Much
like Hilary's mother, Phillippa is shocked by the intensity of Hilary's feeling for her. After continued rejection, Hilary writes a poem during a night of restlessness and is able to sleep for the first time in a week. Her art serves, first of all, as a release from pain. She asks for a room in which she can work alone and finds, like so many other young female artists, that in this room "the powerful electric current inside her was not being short-circuited any more" (p. 107). In a recent article Carolyn Heilbrun discusses why the desire for a room alone has always been so imperative for the young female: "It [the desire for a room alone] was the only possibility for the achievement of a self, if not a self visible to the world, then at least a self discoverable deep, deep inside the house, or some house, where no one else could come." This room is especially necessary for the woman whose private self is unacceptable to those around her.

Hilary's first novel, written five years after her experience with the governess, is a direct reflection of that experience. In retrospect she sees that the book is "superficial" (p. 94). During the course of the interview Hilary maintains that the process of creation for women is one of self-creation. Restating Hilary's conjectures, her male interviewer remarks: "'They [women] have to write from the whole of themselves, so the feminine genius is the genius of self-creation. The outer world will never be as crucial for its flowering as the inner world'" (p. 196). Hilary
elaborates further: she explains that women must create a "whole self" (p. 196); "'Woman's work,'" in fact, "'is always toward wholeness'" (p. 172). The idea of self-creation at first glance suggests a biological impossibility. However, this concept can best be explained by the psychology of Jung, an author Sarton refers to frequently in her journals and articles. Jung in his theory of the anima and animus, an archetypal parallel to Freud's belief that all humans are made up biologically of both masculine and feminine elements, asserts that every woman carries an image of the animus, the masculine principle, in her unconscious as a result of exposure to men over many generations. Deep within woman resides the masculine side of herself, the "boy." She may project this image upon the men she encounters in daily life or she may, as is the case with the female artist, identify more completely with her own animus, the result of which can be homosexuality.11 It is when this identification with the masculine element in herself is in balance with the feminine that Sarton feels the woman artist creates best. In Journal of a Solitude she writes that "every artist is androgynous, that it is the masculine in a woman and the feminine in a man that proves creative. . . . the ultrafeminine may be as off the beam as the ultramasculine and that people of the greatest creativity and force . . . come near the middle of the spectrum" (p. 141). In various portions of the novel Hilary defines "feminine" as a tendency towards the personal or
emotional, while "masculine" is a tendency towards detachment and control. Colette was one of the few women who "was not trapped by her senses. Most women are. There she showed the masculine side of her genius. She regarded herself . . . as an instrument for recording sensation, . . . but she kept her detachment" (p. 158). The greatest danger for women writers is to produce feeling without the proper vehicle to give it expression. This is, in fact, what had happened in Hilary's first novel. She had written from only one side of herself, the feminine or subjective side, and the result was "'self-intoxicated explosions'" (p. 95).

The public reaction to this novel, which was a "succès de scandale," forced Hilary to seek refuge in her marriage with Adrian Stevens. Yet she soon finds that she cannot hide from the essential part of her being: "Whether she ever published a word again or not she could not stop being the person she was" (p. 41). The longer she is married the more "caged" she begins to feel. As Hilary's feelings of imprisonment reach a peak, Sarton describes her imagination as a "starved, growing, fierce tiger . . . who was unappeased" (p. 48). The violence of this image suggests the need of her artistic self to reach expression. In Sarton's first novel, _The Single Hound_, published when Sarton herself was only twenty-six, she can conceive of a woman artist, Georgia Manning, who is both married and a painter, but this is a situation which Sarton never again depicts in her fiction. Joanna in _Joanna and_
Ulysses (1963) will become a painter, but she has definitely chosen not to marry. Christina Chapman in *Kinds of Love* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970) had wanted to be a painter as a young woman, but her marriage to a wealthy man ends her hope of being an artist. Her husband's life style demands that she only dabble at the arts: "He thought of my painting as a pleasant exercise . . . To take it seriously, to be a professional, would have been not done, would have meant losing one's amateur status" (p. 33). The one successful artist in the novel is Miss Erica Portland. Poppy White-law in *Crucial Conversations* (1975) chooses to leave her marriage after twenty-seven years to develop her talents as a sculptor, an unrealistic pursuit undoubtedly, but one she feels necessary to her survival as a person. Initially Sarton uses images of drowning to describe Poppy's oppression in her marriage, but ironically enough, this image shifts to the men she has comforted for so many years when she leaves home. In *Mrs. Stevens* Sarton illustrates the conflict between being married and an artist in Jenny Hare, the young woman interviewer who feels "conflicted, rent in two . . . most of the time" (p. 77). Jenny desperately wants to have both a family and a career, "to be a whole woman," but Hilary tells her that the fidelity that art requires cannot be given to other people as well: "'No, that fidelity, that giving is what the art demands, the art itself, at the expense of every human being'" (p. 156). Sarton, unlike most
female authors, explicitly denies, as Carolyn Heilbrun notes in the Introduction to the novel, "the woman with a spare hour stolen from the kitchen or nursery the deluding daydream of being an artist" (p. xvi). More than any other contemporary female author, Sarton refuses "life" in its conventional sense to the woman artist.

Sarton denies Jenny a traditionally domestic life, primarily because this sort of existence leaves the female artist exhausted. The novel itself surely implies that Hilary has been able to write beyond the middle of her life simply because she has not had to deal with the claims of family life. In her marriage to Adrian she feels caged "by the demands of housekeeping, by the late hours they kept, so she never woke up really fresh with the extra psychic energy at her command necessary for writing a single sentence" (pp. 42-43). The suggestion in all of Sarton's novels is that both the male and female artist must be able to withdraw, to lead the contemplative rather than the active life, but the implications are ultimately quite different for men and women. Paul Duchesne, the writer/philosopher in Sarton's The Bridge of Years (1946), walls himself up in a room for five weeks to write his book. This withdrawal is made possible by his energetic wife, Melanie, who runs the business, cares for the house and children, and does the gardening. Sarton does maintain that Melanie is an artist of life; that is, she creates and sustains the fabric of life itself in much the same
fashion as do Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Dalloway in the work of Virginia Woolf. However, these women, these "wives," are clearly not artists in any true sense because they are committed finally to the will of someone else. Female artists, as Hilary maintains, have no wives to deal with the daily distractions: "The imaginary man in her mind got up at six, never made his bed, did not care a hoot if there were a flower or not, and was at his desk as bright as a button, at dawn, with a whole clear day before him while some woman out of sight was making a delicious hot stew for his supper" (p. 36).

Hilary never has to make a choice between her art and Adrian because he dies suddenly in a sporting accident after three years of marriage. Dora in The Single Hound, Sarton's only other female artist who receives significant development, similarly never has to make such a choice because she falls in love with a married man who will not divorce his wife. The failure of Sarton's female characters to make such a decision is a continuation of a tradition of the artist-novels of the women authors of the first three decades of this century. In these novels, the husbands or lovers of the artist-characters conveniently die at appropriate junctures in the novels. But in this same tradition the female artist at the end of the narrative is allowed an implausible reunion with "life" as it has been conventionally defined for woman. After she is fulfilled as an artist, she is granted, as is Thea
Kronborg in Cather's *The Song of the Lark*, a husband and domestic life. Hilary, however, realizes that with the death of her husband she will never again know the kind of refuge she had found in her marriage: "She knew then that never again in her life would she find comfort, the perfect simple comfort of being held in the arms of Adrian. That phase of her life was over for good" (p. 49). The commitment to art must be lifelong.

After Adrian dies, Hilary suffers what her doctors refer to as a nervous breakdown. She is told, like the heroine of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper,* that she must not "move" for a year. Her first volume of poems, *From a Hospital Bed,* is written out of this painful experience. While she is in the hospital, she comes in contact with Nurse Gillespie, who acts as her muse. Although Sarton denies the woman artist "experience" in its conventional sense, she also maintains that this woman must be touched by "life" in the form of the muse in order to begin to create. As Dawn Holt Anderson writes, "None of the valuable relationships in Miss Sarton's books are of lifelong duration such as marriage and motherhood. All begin, enrich and then end." In *Mrs. Stevens* Hilary claims that her muse has always been a woman, a fairly common assumption when applied to the male artist, but radical in application to the female artist. The sex of the muse for the woman artist, in fact, has created a heated debate recently between Joanne Feit Diehl and her critics in
the 1978 Spring and Autumn issues of *Signs*. Perhaps it is because this issue has always been so controversial that we know so little about the muse for the female artist. In any case, virtually no other female author has named the muse for women in fiction, much less treated this theme in as much depth as Sarton. The implication in *Mrs. Stevens* is, as Jane Rule notes, that since the muse is "irrevocably female," the woman artist finds that "lesbian attachments are essential to her art" (p. 165). While this is true for Hilary Stevens, Sarton does not maintain that this is universal for all women artists. In *The Single Hound* Doro is inspired by a female friend, Clairette, but she is equally inspired by the picture of a clown that reminds her of the man she loves. What Sarton does seem to maintain is that men have seldom been the muse because they wish to possess the female, rather than enriching her life and moving on. Peter Selversen, the interviewer in *Mrs. Stevens*, explains this desire for possession best: "'A man wants a woman to be his woman, and not some art's woman'" (p. 81). Finally, as Sarton remarks in an interview with Paula Putney, "It doesn't matter what the relationship is . . . what matters is the quality of the relationship."14

Although men are never Hilary's muses, they do play a significant role in her growth as a poet. In her relationship with her husband she finds solace and comfort. Without Doctor Hallowell in the hospital, whose "two strong, life-giving male
hands" (p. 116) act as healing agents, Hilary could never have written her first volume of poems. His function is, as Hilary realizes, more important at this point in her life than that of the muse: "He had never lit her up as even the briefly contemplated Nurse Gillespie might have, but he did more, he nourished her" (p. 123). Later in her life, at a time in which her career is in a decline and she feels particularly devastated by a love affair, she meets the French critic, Luc Bernstein, who nurses her through this dark period. Finally, Hilary concludes: "'Women have moved and shaken me, but I have been nourished by men'" (p. 180).

The kind of love that Hilary feels for the men in her life, however, is not the sort that sets her poetic faculties in motion. Speaking of her relationship with her husband, she says that "'it was love on earth. It was all that can be'" (p. 123). Yet the passion she feels for each muse is love in a very special sense. The muse acts as the person of an "epiphany" (p. 125), the necessary vehicle whereby the communication with her inner self is set up. The image Sarton repeatedly uses to describe this situation is that of a machine or motor that needs the necessary fuel in order to operate. Love for the poet is not a permanent emotion; it acts as a catalyst, "as the waker of the dead, love as conflict, love as the mirage. Not love as peace or fulfillment, or lasting, faithful giving'" (p. 156). The muse makes her visit and departs. She "'opens up the dialogue with oneself
and goes her way" (p. 181). Sarton's emphasis on the necessity of conflict in love for the woman artist is radical in itself. According to tradition, women are not supposed to generate conflict, much less thrive on it. This notion surely contributes to Sarton's definition of the woman artist as "aberrant" or different.

The poet, then, is a lover in that her feeling is aroused, but not in the conventional sense, since "this lover cannot live out the experience as it is usually understood, for what the precipitation makes, the new substance, is poetry, not love" (p. 155). Often the muse is not even aware of the function she plays in the poet's life. A muse "who could understand" is "as rare an event as a conjunction of two planets who cross each other once in a thousand years" (p. 123). Miss Hornbeam in Sarton's *The Poet and the Donkey*, for example, does not realize how important she is to Andy Lightfoot's poetry and finally regards his attentions as a nuisance. For Hilary, there is only one muse, Willa MacPherson, the inspiration for her second volume of poems, who both understands and accepts her role in the act of creation. For weeks Hilary brings a sonnet for Willa to comment on each day. Their relationship continues on this basis for several months. Hilary, however, reaches the point at which she can "no longer accept that the Muse must not be involved except as a spectator" (p. 142). One night she pays Willa an unexpected visit and they become lovers. Although Hilary
experiences a sort of passion she will never again know, the physical consummation of their love totally devastates Willa and ends their relationship on all levels. In all of her novels Sarton maintains that while "sex is never wholly absent and may come into play" (p. 55), feeling, not sex, is the god (p. 149). In fact, sexual passion as an experience that is "lived out" can often be destructive, as in the incident with Willa. Mark Taylor in *The Single Hound* must learn that his need to possess Georgia Manning physically obscures his need to stand alone and know himself as a poet. His desire for possession can destroy his contemplative or poetic side.

Hilary comes in touch with several other muses during the course of her life, but she does not achieve the "harrowing balance of art against life" (p. 150) that makes the best poetry until later in her career. One of her muses, a musician who inspires the volume of poems entitled *Theme and Variations*, brings out Hilary's most lyrical, most sensuous side. After this volume, she writes *Dialogues*, a series of poems described as "dry," "argumentative," and "brittle." She explains that after *Theme and Variations*, she "'was tired of being so sensitive and feminine!'" (p. 159). Her muse in this case, Dorothea, has a mind that is "masculine, and the mind towered" (p. 163). She forces Hilary to draw more on her masculine side, to use her mind, which is as Hilary remarks, "a big mistake" (p. 171). Hilary maintains throughout the novel that the woman poet writes best when she focuses on
feeling and then finds the appropriate form for its expression. The woman artist cannot stand apart "paring her fingernails," as Stephen Dedalus suggests. Her poetry arises from intense personal feeling.

In her later volumes of poetry Hilary becomes a better poet, primarily because she gains a sense of place. In *Country Spells* she is inspired by Anne, whose presence is embodied in her house even after her death, but "'place as well as person was instrumental'" (p. 174). Not since adolescence, when she discovered she could write poetry for her governess in a room alone, had Hilary found a place which allows her to explore her feelings so freely. Sarton emphasizes this need for a place alone for the woman artist throughout her fiction and journals. Doro in *The Single Hound* has a room alone in which to contemplate her poetry. Joanna in *Joanna and Ulysses* must visit an island, the symbol of physical and mental isolation, before her creative abilities reach fruition. Sarton, herself, in her first journal, *Plant Dreaming Deep*, describes moving to a small village, Nelson, New Hampshire, primarily to be alone. In *Journal of a Solitude* she further explores her life in Nelson. More recently, she has devoted another journal, *House by the Sea*, to her new home along the coast that provides a room high up on the third floor in which to create.

After Hilary's brief stay in Anne's house, she realizes for the first time that she must stop "borrowing other
people's houses" and moves to the house she now lives in, the house of her own creation (p. 186). Almost simultaneous with her move to her new home is the death of her mother. In the privacy of her new abode Hilary can finally face feelings that have been sublimated since childhood. Until her mother's death, Hilary sought a means of open communication with her mother: "'Up to the very end, I waited for the miracle, for that epiphany which would open a final door between myself and my mother'" (p. 195). When her mother's physical presence no longer looms in the background, Hilary can begin at last to deal with her feelings in poetry. In her second-to-last volume of poems, written after her mother's death, Hilary, as her interviewer points out, uses the sea unconsciously as a symbol of her mother. This use of an archetype, an obvious reflection of Jung's influence on Sarton, is the vehicle by which Hilary makes her feelings concrete. By expressing these feelings openly, she attains freedom from emotions that have troubled her since she was a child. Only after Hilary has been released from her mother's domination and has a place to explore her feelings can she proceed to write the last, highly acclaimed volume of poems for which the interview has been arranged.

The concept of a "room of one's own" is certainly not unique to May Sarton, but she does expand upon its original meaning in her journals. The room/house is not just a symbol of protection from the outer world or a source of comfort, but
a symbol of her deeper self with which she must communicate in order to create. Sarton frequently refers to this communication as a "dialogue" that is set up between her selves. Only when she is alone do "'the house and I resume old conversations'" (Journal, p. 11). The house becomes a metaphor of her outer shell. When others visit her literal house she cannot explore her inner self. In fact, the "door" to this inner self can be locked, leaving the poet outside looking in. However, when she is in communion with her inner self and achieves the openness, the "nakedness," that is necessary for creativity, she "feels sometimes like a house with no walls" (Journal, p. 114). Yet Sarton realizes that life must seep in. The poet cannot live in isolation indefinitely. She may "shut herself up to write poems, but life is going to break down the wall" (House, p. 180).

But the room/house alone does not always afford the female artist the solitude that is necessary to creation. Hilary Stevens, as well as Sarton herself in reference to her own life, repeatedly remarks on the struggle to find time for her art. Even though Hilary lives alone, she has to "fight like a tiger for a moment's peace and quiet!" (p. 35). She has to "claw" her way "through to a piece of time" (p. 35). The image of the tiger, used also to describe her feelings of being caged in marriage, again suggests the violence of her struggle to find time for self-expression. Outside interferences "shatter" Hilary's composure with "great
booming sounds" (p. 60). The image of a bomb suggests the violent disruption in her psyche caused by forces external to herself. Encounters with other people become "collisions" for Hilary. She must deal with a "steady barrage of demands" (p. 18) before she can salvage some time for herself. She must answer many letters from friends and those who admire her books, suffer interruptions from uninvited visitors, deal with neighbors, and do daily chores. Sarton remarks in various contexts on the conflict or division in woman's nature. Woman's chief problem, she asserts, is that she has to be both Martha and Mary most of the time (House, p. 57).

In the poem "My Sisters, O My Sisters" she describes this conflict in terms of Eve and Mary:

To be Eve, the giver of knowledge, the lover;
To be Mary, the shield, the healer and the mother.
The balance is eternal whatever we may wish.¹⁶

Woman's chief difficulty is in trying to be fulfilled as both. Each is an "eternal" or undeniable part of her nature with which she must deal. Traditionally woman as life giver/self-sacrificer has been the more acceptable role, the role for which her cultural training prepares her, yet the woman artist must rely on Eve, the more active principle, in order to create. Woman's capacity for "mothering" can, in fact, be taken advantage of. She may become "mother" not only to her children, but to her husband as well (House, p. 261). The woman need not marry or bear children to be drawn into the mothering role. Joanna in Joanna and Ulysses is thirty years
old and has never had time to develop her talents as a painter. After her mother's death, she must act as nourisher for her father and brothers. She wears a "mask" all the time at home and at work to disguise her inner self. Not until she escapes the role of dutiful daughter can she explore her private, inner self.

Because she insists on time alone, apart from the demands of others, the woman artist may be regarded by the community as an eccentric or even a pariah. The concept of the artist as outcast, deriving from the romantic tradition, is certainly not unique to the twentieth century, but the reasoning behind the rejection of the female artist is different from the rationale for isolation of the male. She is often thought "unwomanly" or unnatural because of her actions. When Joanna in Joanna and Ulysses journeys to the island, her sole purpose to be alone, the islanders are perplexed. They assume that a young woman like her must be looking for a husband. The young Greek, to whom she wishes to give her donkey when her visit is over, believes at first that she must want him for a lover. Hilary, like Joanna, does not act appropriately on social occasions. When she speaks honestly about her self and in deference to no one at parties, her husband gives her troubled, hostile looks. As an older woman, Hilary simply refuses to go to cocktail parties. She remains, finally, an outsider to the community.
Solitude for the woman artist is not so much an escape from life as a confrontation with the inner self. She needs to be alone in order to make the crucial journey inward, a journey one critic finds overemphasized at the expense of character development in Sarton's work. Sarton uses the metaphor of the journey, as do the female authors of the first feminist movement in describing the growth of their artist-heroines, but she explores its meaning more deeply. Her voyage is not just a journey through life, but a journey into a deeper self—a self that cannot be called upon at will as in the case of the artist-characters of the first generation. Sarton's definition of this self derives primarily from Jung. Hilary repeatedly refers to her attempts to discover her Medusa image, her darker self, or what Jung refers to as the "shadow." Sarton speaks most explicitly about the nature of this other self in her journals. She calls it "her unregenerate, tormenting, and tormented self" (Journal, p. 12). Her search for this self requires a great struggle and exacts a tremendous price. In Journal of a Solitude Sarton quotes a passage from Jung in which he describes the difficulties inherent in the journey to find the self: "'The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well'" (p. 147). The image Sarton often uses to describe this exploration is that of a miner searching for wealth. The path to the riches, however, is not an easily traveled road. Similar to Adrienne
Rich in "Diving into the Wreck," she must break through "the rough rocky depths, to the matrix itself" (Journal, p. 12). It is significant that the reporters themselves must pass through a rocky landscape and by several abandoned quarries before they can at last reach Hilary's home. When at last she reaches the inner recesses, she describes her discoveries in images of rarely found minerals to suggest the richness of this inner self: "By making a work of art one is always refining, as if it were gold, getting down to the essence, you go through an awful lot of rocks and stuff to get these bits of gold which are finally the poem" (Putney, p. 4).

The journey inward for the woman artist often begins with her empathy with the natural world. The physical world appeals to the most elemental part of her nature, the part that she needs to be in touch with before she creates. Hilary maintains that "'Women do not thrive in cities'" (p. 175). She, like Sarton herself, has an almost obsessive need for flowers, to which she assigns human characteristics. She calls them "silent guests" (p. 36). Animals particularly, of which there is an abundance in Sarton's fiction and journals, perform an important function in the life of the artist and account for the touches of sentimentality in Sarton's work. By nourishing a creature of nature, the artist is made whole. Joanna in Joanna and Ulysses cares for a suffering donkey whose physical maladies mirror her inner
suffering. His name, Ulysses, in particular suggests that he, like Joanna, is a traveller seeking wholeness. In rescuing him, she rescues herself. Hilary has a cat and two turtles for which she cares. Sarton's journals are filled with references to her cats, her bird, and her dog. This sort of nourishing, however, which fulfills in part one side of woman's nature, is not the sort of lifelong commitment that a husband and children demand. Andy Lightfoot borrows a donkey, Whiffenpoof, in *The Poet and the Donkey* only for the summer, just as Joanna cares for Ulysses during her month-long stay. Unlike humans, animals require little to ease their suffering and give comfort in return. With animals an artist can finally still be alone. Joanna describes Ulysses as "'the ideal companion, not quite human-- . . . One is still quite alone . . . (Sarton's ellipsis) yet comforted'" (p. 102).

Because Sarton conceives of herself primarily as a poet, it is not surprising that her prose is richly metaphorical. Her identification with the natural world accounts for much of the imagery that surfaces in her journals and fiction. In fact, the whole of the world around her becomes a metaphor of her mind. At a time in which she cannot create, Sarton describes herself as "a sowing mix in which some random seeds may have been planted, but none have 'taken'" (*House*, p. 225). Her artist-characters think in images of the natural world as well. For Hilary, revising a poem is comparable to weeding
her garden: she "prunes the fat out of a poem, cutting, shaping, give it space to breathe in" (p. 52). Joanna feels her youth "rising up in her like sap into the branches of a battered tree" (p. 12). The sea particularly gives Sarton a means to describe her states of mind, as well as those of her characters, metaphorically. In an unproductive period of time, Sarton writes: "I hear no roar of the waves, feel no undertow dragging me under into the fertile unconscious world of creation" (Journal, p. 97). Hilary describes her moods in images of the tides as they ebb and flow. At one point she must ward off "the tide of depression which might begin to rise at any moment" (p. 57). Yet life can rise "like a wave" (p. 129) in her. After the reporters leave, the "bits and pieces of the interview sloshed about in her mind, flotsam and jetsam, not yet absorbed, not yet settled down" (p. 199). When the artist reaches the end of her journey inward, Sarton describes the culmination in imagery of light and electricity. Hilary notes that we learn most from the discovery of our subconscious self, "the mad one who weeps and roars in the subterranean caves: let this one out into the air and he brings the light with him, the light that has to be earned" (p. 170). In the adolescent Hilary a "massive electric current . . . connected, so that she felt all through her the explosion of a blaze of light" (p. 100). At this stage in her life she feels the power of a poet, but she
has no means of expression: "She had the sensation of being inhabited by powers she could not understand or control, a thick mass of electric energy with no outlet" (p. 98). She must learn to channel this energy into poetry. In an article entitled "The School of Babylon" Sarton explains that the poem is the device by "which this electric charge discharges itself."^9

The work of art that is the product of the inward journey for the female artist, however, is different from that of the male artist. Sarton maintains that the woman artist must draw upon her masculine side and the male on his feminine in order to create the greatest works of art. A female or male artist, who could achieve a balance of her/his faculties, would then seemingly be capable of producing whatever sort of art his/her particular talents tended towards. However, Sarton's adherence to the dichotomy between the masculine and feminine becomes so restrictive that she, as one critic notes, "manifests her own complicity in the traditional oppressions, reinforces and perpetuates damaging myths."^21 Whereas an androgynous theory of art should be liberating, it becomes in Sarton's hands oppressive. Female artists can produce only certain kinds of art, while men produce others. Hilary makes several statements that confirm this rigid dichotomy between male and female abilities: "'The women who have tried to be men have always lacked something'" (p. 112); "'Women writers cannot deal with
sex and get away with it'' (p. 157); "'Odd that there has been no great religious woman poet . . . (Sarton's ellipsis), that would have seemed to be one way out'" (p. 150).

Ultimately Hilary relegates woman's achievement to the realm of feeling and men's to that of ideas. She informs her interviewers that "'Neither the novel or the poem of ideas is woman's work'" (p. 171). In *Journal of a Solitude* Sarton clarifies the distinction between poetry and prose in reference to her own work: "The poem is primarily a dialogue with the self and the novel a dialogue with others. They come from entirely different modes of being. . . . I have written novels to find out what I thought about something and poems to find out what I felt about something" (p. 41). She further explains that "prose is earned" (p. 40), while "poetry comes as a gift from powers beyond my will" (p. 41). In *Mrs. Stevens* Hilary makes several references to herself as an "'instrument of powers which one does not altogether control'" (p. 158). She feels "pursued" by poems, "seized by poetry." Sarton describes the uncontrollable flowing forth of poems which ensues in images of fountains and floods. The woman artist, then, acts as a spring or well from which the poems "pour." The ultimate implication of these assertions is that the male artist, dependent upon his intelligence, is a conscious creator of art, while the female, dependent on her feelings, is not in control of her creative faculties—a common stereotype perpetuated in the work of both men and women.
Sarton dramatizes this philosophy in the final section of *Mrs. Stevens* that deals with Mar. Much as she uses the young interviewer/author, Jenny, to suggest the unresolved conflicts in woman, she uses Mar to illustrate the differences in the sorts of problems that the male and female artist must face. The novel is structured around the change in Hilary's point of view about Mar. In the first section of the novel she identifies with Mar as her alter ego. He is "a buried part of herself" (p. 214), "the young man she had dreamed of being" (p. 214). Yet by the end of the novel, Hilary recognizes that she and Mar, as well as their means of creativity, are ultimately very different: "His way would have to deal with gritty substance; the quarry as it was, not seen in a special light. He must not be bound to her wheel of boy and woman and the two married within her to make the poems. His poems would be cramped and distorted if he did not live out his life to the full, as a man. . . . He must have a whole life, grow up, marry" (p. 215). Hilary advises Mar to marry because the outer world is crucial to his flowering. Men interact with their world in order to create; women interact with themselves. Mar can and should live the normal life of the male, while Hilary remains forever an oddity.

The implications of *Mrs. Stevens* are ultimately not optimistic for the woman artist in general. Like the female authors of the first feminist movement, Sarton gives
precedence to art over life. But whereas these artist-characters see their talent as a gift, Hilary regards hers finally as a curse which she must "expiate" (p. 191). The woman artist, then, must pay for her abilities and she does this "'at the expense of herself as a woman'' (p. 191). Even though Hilary seems willing to have paid this price, she tells Mar in the closing pages of the novel: "'I think I would have liked to be a woman, simple and fruitful, a woman with many children, a great husband, . . . and no talent!'" (p. 219). Sarton offers little hope to future generations of women artists who wish to be fulfilled in life and art.
Footnotes


3 Hereinafter referred to as Mrs. Stevens.

4 Several critics, in fact, have charged that Mrs. Stevens reads more like a lecture on creativity than a novel. The reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement, 17 February 1966, p. 128, for example, writes: "There are too many oracular pronouncements of truths . . . and the moments of real fiction . . . occur too rarely." Similarly, the critic in the New Statesman, 71 (18 February 1966), 234, claims that Mrs. Stevens has the "distinguished look of novels that pack in more high seriousness than life."

5 Mrs. Stevens hears the mermaids singing (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), pp. 155-56. All subsequent references to this novel will be cited by page number in the text.


7 Other critics, such as Carolyn Heilbrun, have noticed the Freudian influence in Sarton's work.


10 Anais Nin, like Sarton, defines women's creative powers similarly: "Woman's creation far from being like man's must be exactly like her creation of children, that is it must come out of her own blood, englobed by her womb, nourished with her own milk" [as quoted in Ellen Peck Killoh, "The Woman Writer and the Element of Destruction," College English, 34 (1972), p. 35.]

12 See Chapter Two of this dissertation, pp. 7-9, for a fuller explanation of this tradition.


14 "Sister of the Mirage and Echo: An Interview with May Sarton," Contempora, 2, No. 3 (1972), 3.


17 Joanna and Ulysses (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963), p. 103. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated by page number in the text.

18 Carolyn Heilbrun in the introduction to Mrs. Stevens notes that Sarton was the first author to depict the outsider as a single woman (p. xxiii).


Doris Lessing's Artist-Heroine in *The Golden Notebook*

Unlike May Sarton, who is frequently concerned with the female artist in her fiction and journals, Doris Lessing has only one major artist-character in her canon. Yet this character, Anna Wulf, and her writer's block are central to the meaning of *The Golden Notebook* (1962). In this novel Lessing's intention, as she writes in the 1971 "Introduction" to *The Golden Notebook*, is to "give the ideological 'feel' of our mid-century"—a time during which major upheavals were occurring on all levels of existence. As a child Anna had been able to move outward from her room to the space above the continents, "naming" each object and thereby imposing an ordered pattern upon the universe. As an adult, however, Anna experiences a dissociation from her world even more extreme than that of Henry Adams in *The Education of Henry Adams* at the end of the last century. She is able to sustain her vision of a contained universe only with the greatest effort. The major cause of this upheaval, which both Lessing and Anna claim has changed the human psyche in ways too significant yet to comprehend, is the Bomb. Its potential for worldwide annihilation has created a reality too painful for Anna to accept at the beginning of *The Golden Notebook*.  

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Anna's inability to comprehend this new, terrifying reality leaves her split in the sense that R. D. Laing has defined in *The Divided Self*. These splits lead to her writer's block, which Lessing claims in the "Introduction" is central to her theme of "artist-as-exemplar" (p. xii). Lessing begins the narrative with Anna's frustration over her inability to write, traces her gradual descent into madness, and, finally, records her ascent into a wholeness that enables her to write again.

According to Laing, the schizoid or divided individual feels a "constant dread of all that is there, of being overwhelmed" that is "potentiated . . . by the need to keep the world at bay." Reality "threatening engulfment or implosion, is the persecutor" (Laing, p. 46). To protect his/her inner or "true" self from this external threat, the person creates a "false-self system" with which he/she confronts the world. The shut-up or inner self, locked inside the individual, ceases to interact with its world spontaneously and his/her imagination is left impoverished. As Laing explains, "In the absence of a spontaneous natural, creative, relationship with the world which is free from anxiety, the 'inner self' thus develops an overall sense of inner impoverishment" (Laing, p. 90). For the artist, this situation is fatal. The walls of his/her mind become more binding than those of any ivory tower. Artists, if they are to create, cannot be permanently detached from experience. The impoverishment of Anna's inner
The schizoid individual feels especially vulnerable around other people who might discover his/her inner self. Laing explains: "No one feels more 'vulnerable,' more liable to be exposed by the look of another person than the schizoid individual" (Laing, p. 76). This fear in The Golden Notebook is perhaps best represented by Anna's terror of Tommy, who seems to be able to penetrate to her inner self. She is terrified that he will be able to expose her real self by reading her notebooks. Yet the irony of the schizoid's situation is that he/she can become unlocked only by another person, usually a physician, who "recognizes the patient's total being, and accepts it, with no strings attached" (Laing, p. 165). In The Golden Notebook Anna and Saul perform this function for each other in the inner section entitled "The Golden Notebook," which makes, as Lessing claims in the "Introduction," "a central point" (p. x) of the novel. Whether this section is merely a projection of Anna's mind, as several critics contend, or closer to reality, it is during this experience that Saul and Anna reveal their inner selves to one another. It is this experience that brings them in contact with their world again and releases not only Anna from her writer's block, but Saul as well.

In Lessing's non-fiction prose and in various interviews she describes the destruction of the world at large in imagery of the apocalypse. She prophesies a terrible, final end to
the world as we know it. In the "Introduction" to The Golden Notebook she assures her readers of the imminence of this end: "I am so sure that everything we now take for granted is going to be utterly swept away in the next decade" (p. ix). In The Golden Notebook itself Lessing expresses her sense of the coming apocalypse in numerous ways. Images of explosions pervade the text on all levels. The random clippings on Anna's walls that emphasize a world bent on destruction reach their most dramatic sense of the apocalypse in her dreams, which contain, as Lessing remarks in an interview with Jonah Raskin, the essence of many of her experiences. In one particular dream Anna sees different countries below her stretched out on a fabric. Someone pulls a thread of the fabric and "everything suddenly bursts, explodes-- . . . The slowly turning world was slowly dissolving, disintegrating, and flying off into fragments drifting about, bouncing into each other and drifting away. The world had gone, and there was chaos" (p. 299). Lessing frequently uses the words "dissolve" and "disintegrate" to emphasize the total dissolution of the world as it now is.

Disintegration and collapse characterize the state of society in the cities as well. Ella, Anna's double, perceives her world as ugly, gray and terrifying. She must travel through London, which has become a symbol of human degradation: "Ahead of her the street of grey mean little houses crawled endlessly. The grey light of a late summer's evening
lowered a damp sky. For miles in all directions, this ungliness, this meanness. This was London--" (p. 176). The imagery of grayness and the word "crawling" emphasize the extent to which the city has become threatening for Ella. She would like to "'put a giant bulldozer over it all'" (p. 189) as Paul contends and build "the new Jerusalem" (p. 190). While England may appear to be "'all quiet and tame and suburban" on the surface, she feels that "'underneath it's poisonous. It's full of hatred and envy and people being lonely'" (p. 189). This description applies to American society as well, which is aptly demonstrated by the party Anna attends with the Americans. The men bicker at their wives while demanding at the same time to be coddled and mothered by them. The women can maintain control only on a surface level: "That quality I begin to recognize in American women--the surface competence, the assurance. And underneath the anxiety. They have a nervous, frightened look as if they were out in a space somewhere by themselves, pretending that they are not alone. They have the look of people alone, people isolated. But pretending not to be alone. They frighten me" (p. 487).

The threat of total annihilation of the macrocosm is mirrored in the microcosm or individual. Lessing describes the effect of this threat upon herself: "I feel as if the Bomb has gone off inside myself, and in people around me. That's what I mean by the cracking up. It's as if the
structure of the mind is being battered from inside. Some terrible new thing is happening" (Raskin, pp. 65-66). In this passage Lessing uses the bomb, the symbol of world destruction, as a metaphor for the force that is causing total disruption in the human mind during this period in history. Yet Lessing, like Yeats and other prophets of the apocalypse, sees the possibility of something positive arising from the destruction. Anna tells Mrs. Marks, her analyst, of a person she might have met at a party: "'Yes, there's a hint of something--there's a crack in that man's personality like a gap in a dam, and through that gap the future might pour in a different shape--terrible perhaps, or marvellous, but something new--'" (p. 473). However, both Lessing and Laing share the belief that it is only those individuals who are "cracked," who refuse to block themselves off now in whom this potential for the future lies. Anna tells Mrs. Marks that those who are "'cracked across . . . are keeping themselves open for something'" (p. 473). It is exactly this opening up to experience that Anna must undergo before she can create again.

The collapse of the novel, also mirrored in imagery of the apocalypse, is particularly critical for Anna since she is an author. She writes that the novel "has been claimed by the disintegration and the collapse" (p. 110). The novel, she feels, offers no more than a reflection of the fragmentation of the human mind: "The novel has become a function of the
fragmented society, the fragmented consciousness" (p. 61). That which interests her most, "a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order" (p. 61), she is incapable of writing. Lessing herself in her essay entitled "The Small Personal Voice" claims to admire the nineteenth-century novelists the most because inherent in their moral and ethical climate was a set of shared values from which arose an ordered vision of life. This moral vision, derived from commonly shared values, is what Anna's one published novel, *Frontiers of War*, lacked. The emotion that infused every page of this book, an emotion for which she still feels nostalgia when she writes, was, in fact, the exact opposite: "The emotion it came out of was something frightening, the unhealthy, feverish illicit excitement of wartime, a lying nostalgia, a longing for licence, for freedom, for the jungle, for formlessness" (p. 63). The feeling this book purveys is not one that unifies or fortifies life, but is rather a "'nostalgia for death'" (p. 287). Rather than creating for her readers "a new way of looking at life" (p. 61), Anna presents a desire for the end of it. She feels ashamed, as if she "had committed a crime" (p. 64) for allowing her readers to be fed unconsciously on this emotion. Because her writing is no more than a reflection of the chaos and desire for dissolution, she chooses to write no more.
Critical to Anna's own breakdown is the breakdown of language itself. As a writer, Anna has used the written word as her unit of expression. The increasing failure of language to carry any significance for Anna foreshadows her eventual descent into madness. She frequently remarks throughout her notebooks that words have become meaningless: "Words lose their meaning suddenly. I find myself listening to a sentence, a phrase, a group of words, as if they are in a foreign language--the gap between what they are supposed to mean, and what in fact they say seems unbridgeable" (p. 300); words have become "a series of meaningless sounds, like nursery talk" (p. 476). In the past words had a commonly understood symbolic value, but they can no longer carry the weight of experience. The representation of disintegration at its most basic level is "the thinning of language against the density of our experience" (p. 302). Anna's use of certain images describes this situation best. When she begins to think, her "mind starts spawning images which have nothing to do with the words, so that every word I see or hear seems like a small raft bobbing about on an enormous sea of images. So I can't write any longer" (p. 476). The "sea of images" in this case is experience itself, which engulfs the small, isolated raft or word. Words are no longer able to describe the forces bombarding the individual from all directions. When experience becomes too overwhelming for Anna, she simply closes herself off and writes no more.
Throughout the notebooks Anna's behavior demonstrates an alternating pattern: she seeks meaning in other people or in institutions external to herself and when meaning is not found, and the reality of her world impinges too heavily again, she seeks various means of escape. One such means is expressed in the beginning of the black notebook, the point at which Anna first begins to write in 1951. Anna's first words are as follows:

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black
dark, it is so dark
it is dark
there is a kind of darkness here
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Every time I sit down to write, and let my mind go easy, the words, It is so dark, or something to do with darkness. Terror. The terror of this city. Fear of being alone. (p. 56)

Later she refers to London as "this cold northern city" (p. 110). Laing notes that one of the complaints of the schizoid individual is that of feeling cold (Laing, p. 90). In a conscious effort to escape her present sense of the cold, Anna tries to think herself back to the time she spent in Africa, "back into that hot light . . . (Lessing's ellipsis) white light light closed eyes, the red light not on the eyeballs" (p. 56). Images of cold and darkness suggest the reality Anna tries to avoid at all costs. She had been able to "close" her eyes to the external world in Africa where, she notes repeatedly, she and her compatriots had lived in a "vacuum" (pp. 67, 74). Laing frequently uses the word "vacuum" to describe the individual who is cut off from his/her world. Anna uses this word in a broader sense to suggest the
communists in Africa at this time who operated independently of the black masses around them and had blocked themselves off to the truth of their situation. Anna tries to escape her present by re-creating through her memory of the past a time during which she had felt safe with her fellow communists. Her ability to recall this time begins to falter, however, as the years pass by.

Shortly after Anna's first entry in the black notebook she shifts to 1953 and records: "Spent all morning trying to remember myself back into sitting under the trees in the vlei near Mashopi. Failed" (p. 57). The more distant the experience in Africa becomes the more impossible it is for her to remember it. Not only does her memory begin to fail her, but she is no longer the person she was then. Looking back in retrospect, she thinks: "But I can't remember, it's all gone. And I get exasperated, trying to remember--it's like wrestling with an obstinate other-self who insists on its own kind of privacy" (p. 137). Her memory can no longer afford her the safety she felt then simply because she no longer possesses the same innocence: "I am appalled at how much I didn't notice, living inside the subjective highly-coloured mist" (p. 137). The word "mist," like "vacuum," suggests the creation of a world that is closed off from reality. With this realization Anna finds that she cannot escape by looking to her past.
After her experience in Africa, Anna looks outward to the British Communist Party as a means of containing and ordering the chaos she finds so threatening. She joins it because of "a need for wholeness, for an end to the split, divided, unsatisfactory way we all live" (p. 161). Yet she soon finds that the Communist Party is as split and compartmentalized as the individual on another level. She again uses the word "vacuum" (p. 343) to describe how the Party has blocked itself off from truths it chooses to ignore. Laing notes that the individual who is closed off feels empty, dead, dry (Laing, p. 90). Anna uses images that parallel Laing's to describe the state of the Communist Party: "A group of hardened, fossilised men" have created "the core of deadness, of dry thought" and turned the younger comrades, "the lively shoots of fresh life, . . . into dead sapless wood" (p. 344). One older comrade, who had at one time been open to experience, now has "his juices gone dry" (p. 344).

When Anna tries to comprehend the forces causing the Party's disintegration, to "think" about it, "her brain kept swimming into blankness" (p. 161). "Thinking," as opposed to blanking experience out, is used in all the notebooks as a metaphor for trying to cope with reality, while "swimming" suggests the resulting fruitless struggle for mental comprehension. Ultimately Anna's recognition of the "intellectual rottenness of the Party" (p. 348) forces her to search for an organizing force elsewhere.
Anna looks to her relations with men as a means of deadening her own fears and giving order to her life, but this sort of order provides only a temporary escape from an ever-threatening reality. The relationship her fictional double, Ella, has with Paul provides a reflection of her relationship with Michael. Shortly after Ella meets Paul, she feels "disconnected, or as if she floated on someone else's will--Paul's" (p. 203). In retrospect, Anna reflects on Paul's influence on Ella: "He destroyed in her the knowing, doubting, sophisticated Ella and again and again he put her intelligence to sleep, and with her willing connivance, so that she floated darkly on her love for him" (p. 211). The words "floating" and "sleeping" are used metaphorically in these passages to suggest the ways in which she has simply shut off her own thinking processes in her dependency on the will of the man she loves. She stops "hearing" remarks that would make her unhappy (p. 205) or force her to confront the truth of her situation--she chooses not to "think." When Paul is gone, however, "It was as if, between her and the groups of people, were a space of cold air, an emotional vacuum. The sensation was of physical cold, of physical isolation" (p. 315). The words "cold" and "vacuum" in this context again suggest the threatening reality from which she tries to close herself off. Ella no longer has a relationship with a man to provide a buffer between her and the chaos; she must face the world alone. Much like two of Lessing's other female
characters, Susan Rawlings in "To Room Nineteen" and Maureen Jeffries in "Between Men," who had at one time been artists, Ella finds that abandoning one's self to relationships with men is self-defeating and ultimately provides no inner comfort. In Lessing's fiction women must not allow their dependency on men to obscure their own development. In Anna's relationship with Saul in "The Golden Notebook" she makes essential gains toward her own independence. Even though she makes the ending of their affair, as one critic notes, "dependent on Saul's supposedly greater strength," she nevertheless is the one who chooses to end it, which is the sort of choice she has never had the courage to make until this time.

Before Anna reaches this point in her development, however, she continues to seek alternatives to her present situation. Death, an ultimate end to or escape from the pain she is feeling, is a theme that pervades the text on all levels. Ella, as Anna's alter ego, is particularly significant in developing this theme. The individual who is split into different selves, Laing notes, is only his/her "'self' in imagination or in games in front of a mirror" (Laing, p. 98). This statement parallels Anna's ability to allow her "self" to be expressed more freely in Ella, who is an imaginative creation locked away in a notebook not seen by others. Like Anna, Ella is a novelist. She compares the composition of the novel she is writing to "acting out scenes with an
invisible alter ego, or carrying on conversation with one's image in the looking-glass" (p. 175). The feelings of the major character in the novel that Ella is writing then suggest by implication Anna's deeper feelings once removed. The life of this character, even though he is a male, reveals parallels to Anna's: "The surface of his life, which was orderly and planned" contrasts with "the undercurrent of despair or madness or illogicalness" (p. 173). The main theme of the novel, as Ella perceives it, is suicide. This character, like Ella, and by implication like Anna, has a "dark need for death" (p. 173). For Ella, this desire for death is expressed in the scene in which she believes that the plane she is flying on will crash:

She had climbed into the aircraft as she would have climbed into a death-chamber; but thinking of the shrug given by the head mechanic: that was her feeling too. As the aeroplane began to vibrate, she thought: I'm going to die, very likely, and I'm pleased.

This discovery was not after the first moment, a shock. She had known it all the time: I'm so enormously exhausted, so utterly, basically tired, and in every fibre of myself, that to know I haven't got to go through living is like a reprieve. (pp. 316-17)

Death then becomes an escape, a reprieve from a reality that has become overwhelming. Ella has simply become exhausted with the effort to block out her world.

One less final alternative to death is sleep, a motif that is employed in all of the notebooks on a literal, as well as metaphorical level, to suggest the blocking out of pain.
A great deal of Anna's time in Africa is spent in sleep. She later refers to the times she and Michael spend sleeping together. Ella sleeps until the plane she believes is going to crash lands safely. Sleep as a means of escape reaches a climax for Anna when she realizes that Michael is leaving. After he calls one evening to let her know that he cannot come, she is forced to see the truth of her situation. She then becomes filled with terror: "I know that an awful black whirling chaos is just outside me, waiting to move into me. I must go to sleep quickly, before I become that chaos. I am trembling with misery and with tiredness. I fill a tumbler full of wine and drink it, quickly. Then I get into bed. My head is swimming with the wine" (p. 367). The imagery of this passage, touching on themes that recur throughout the narrative, describes the utter panic she hopes to block out in sleep. Reality is the "blackness" that tries to overtake her. She drinks alcohol here and elsewhere as a sedative that will force her to sleep. When she is least able to cope with the chaos, her mind begins to "swim."

One of Anna's last hopes for finding answers amid the chaos in her life is in psychoanalysis. Mother Sugar, as Anna refers to her analyst, uses archetypal patterns to provide a "sweetened" or more coherent explanation of human experience than seems evident to Anna. Mother Sugar's orderly vision of life, suggested by her tidy office and appearance, however, ultimately strikes Anna as inadequate for the
contemporary world—a world that has been so altered that the old patterns cannot categorize all facets of the individual's experience. As Anna remarks to Mrs. Marx, "'I'm convinced that there are whole areas of me made by the kind of experience women haven't had before'" (p. 471). Myth does provide the individual some comfort by "rescuing the formless into form" (p. 470), by "naming" a bit of the chaos and containing it. When he/she "'has separated himself [herself] from the experience'" (p. 471), much as an artist does when he/she creates art, and sets it in a universal or archetypal pattern, he/she "'is free of the individual pain'" (p. 471). Yet only those who remain open to this pain, who do not limit themselves or impose artificial patterns on their experience, will be able to comprehend the future. Recognizing this fact, Anna tells Mrs. Marx that she must abandon her "motherly" guidance and confront the world on its own terms: "'The ext stage is, surely, that I leave the safety of myth and Anna Wulf walks forward alone'" (p. 470). With this realization, Anna is moving ever closer to her descent into madness at which time she will open herself to experience on all levels. Soon after she declares her independence of Mrs. Marx, she closes both the black and red notebooks. The fiction of Ella, as well, is at an end; Anna will no longer confront reality once removed.

The pressures Anna feels exerted upon her before she reaches this point, however, force her to create various
personae, what Laing refers to as the schizoid individual's "false-self system," in order to protect her inner or "real" self from exposure. Often essential to one or more of her masks is her external appearance. By changing her clothes or hair style, she changes from one person to another while her inner self remains intact. On certain occasions she decides to be a "lady writer," which demands a particular kind of dress: "Decided I'd look like a 'lady writer.' I had a skirt, rather too long, and a badly fitting blouse. I put them on and some arty beads. And some long coral ear-rings. Looked the part. But felt enormously uncomfortable--as if I were inside the wrong skin" (p. 283). Although Anna realizes that she is portraying this role correctly, she nonetheless knows that it is only a "skin," a representation that is foreign to her real or inner self. While talking with the man who wants to produce her book for television, she writes: "Suddenly I feel as if I'm standing in the middle of a scene from a play that is the parody of something" (p. 288). Throughout the text there are references to occasions when reality seems like a play to Anna. Only at one point in her conversation with this producer, when her hysteria reaches the surface, does Anna's real self peek out. It is only this moment, when she was "hysterical and stupid" (p. 288), that she is not ashamed of later. Similarly, in a later interview with a woman who wants to adapt her book to
television, the "real" Anna surfaces only once and it is this moment, when "the comfortable surface of our acquaintanceship" is broken that she later regards as "the only honest moment in the evening" (p. 296).

Although Anna had looked to the Communist Party as the only organization open to the chaos of the contemporary world, she finds it to be blocked off and functionally dead. The roles which she and her comrades play indicate the degree to which the Party has stagnated. During one meeting at which Anna and her comrades are supposed to determine if two books will be published, she suddenly realizes that publication of these books will be automatic, regardless of how poorly they are written or how clearly she demonstrates their lack of quality. Such meetings are only part of an elaborate game she and the other communists play. While they discuss these books, Anna mentally remarks on Comrade Butte: "His tone is merely part of the game we play, the playing out of our roles. I am a 'successful bourgeois writer'; he the custodian of the purity of working-class values" (p. 346). She later realizes that her "role or function is to argue, to play the part of critic" (p. 347). This failure to spontaneously interact with their world, emphasized by the lifelessness inherent in the roles the communists play, ultimately forces Anna to reject this persona altogether.

Another role Anna/Ella plays is that of mistress. The men in her life define her as a woman essentially by her
physical attractiveness. When Anna realizes that Michael is coming, she consciously brushes her hair so that she will not look "boyish," a trait Michael finds offensive (p. 362). Paul berates Ella when she does not look "sexy": "'Ella, why do you insist on looking like a rather severe school-mistress? God knows, you're not remotely like that!'" (p. 218). After Paul leaves her, Ella believes that with a new set of clothes she can change her inner identity: "They were not the 'sexy' clothes Paul had urged on her, but they were different from any clothes she had worn before, and fitted her new personality, which was rather hard, casual, and indifferent" (p. 226). Yet she finds, much like Esther Greenwood in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Joan Foster in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*, that getting rid of a set of clothes does not automatically release her from a role she has played for so long. Ella has her hair cut and moves into a new flat, but she still dresses for Paul and waits at the window nightly for him to come. However, one of Ella's last stories, written shortly before the section about her ends, suggests that Ella is reaching the point at which she will not allow men to create roles for her. In this story a man creates a "new personality" in a woman who loves him. However, this personality "is not what she 'really' is. He has rejected her 'real' self. He has betrayed a real love and now loves a counterfeit. When she rejects him, she is preserving her real self, whom he has betrayed and rejected" (p. 460). The man in this case loves
a "counterfeit" personality of his own construction, a fabricated self that does not in any way represent the woman's real self. The emphasis on her need for self-preservation suggests by implication that Ella, too, wants to be accepted for her real self, not for a personality of someone's creation.

The last major role Anna employs before her descent into madness, the role that conflicts the most with being a mistress, is that of mother. Anna has depended on this personality to ward off her ever-increasing depression: "I have been very depressed. I have depended a great deal on that personality--Janet's mother" (p. 496). Even when she feels "flat, nervous, dead" inside, she can still be "calm, responsible, alive" (p. 496) for Janet. When Janet wishes to leave for boarding school, Anna panics because Janet is her last buffer against an imposing reality. With the persona of mother, Anna is forced to retain her "sane" self on a surface level for her own benefit, as well as Janet's: "It is true that with her I banish the Anna who is listless and frightened. But she must feel that Anna is there. And of course, the reason why I don't want her to go is that she is my normality. I have to be, with her, simple, responsible, affectionate, and so she anchors me in what is normal in myself" (p. 543). After Janet leaves and Saul moves in, however, the imagery shifts from being "anchored" to floating without a center of reference: "The flat is like a ship
floating on a dark sea, it seems to float, isolated from life, self-contained" (p. 583). The ship and darkness of the sea suggest their journey into madness. Lessing uses images of fogs and clouds to further emphasize the density of the meaninglessness that settles around Anna once she no longer has the persona of mother upon which to depend: "I was inside a shell of anxious tension that I could positively smell, like a stale fog of nervous exhaustion" (p. 582); she watches "the cloud of anxiety settle down like a dark fog. . . . I was thinking: In a month Janet will be home and this Anna will cease to exist" (p. 583).

Throughout all of the notebooks there are references to Anna's inner self that is locked inside her body. This self becomes particularly detached during sexual relations that embody no feeling. In this context sex becomes a symbol of the blocking off of feeling, the "freezing," that characterizes life on all levels in the contemporary world. In the yellow notebook Ella can consciously detach her "self" from her body as she begins her affair with Cy Maitland: "At this point, Ella detached herself from Ella, and stood to one side, watching and marvelling" (p. 323). As Anna's affair with Nelson in the blue notebook reaches an intense stage, she feels more and more distanced from her body: "A long way off I could see Anna, who belonged to a world of normality and warmth. I could see her but I could not remember what it was like to be alive, as she was" (p. 485). They both erect a
glass wall through which they can look out but through which their inner selves can never be touched: "I sat there and looked at him, in the same way as I look at the sane and happy Anna--he's out of reach, she's out of reach, moving beyond a glass wall. Oh, yes, I understand that glass wall certain kinds of Americans live behind, I understand it too well--don't touch me, for God's sake don't touch me, don't touch me because I'm afraid of feeling" (p. 485). Anna gradually realizes the necessity of opening herself to her feelings, regardless of how painful; her remark on the day Janet leaves and Saul moves in foreshadows the release that will occur in her relationship with Saul: "If what we feel is pain, then we must feel it, acknowledging that the alternative is death. Better anything than the shrewd, the calculated, the non-committal, the refusal of giving for fear of the consequences" (p. 546).

Essential to both Anna's and Saul's healing process is the presence of one other person to whom the inner self is revealed and thereby freed. According to Laing, this service is performed by the physician. In The Golden Notebook, however, Saul and Anna act as each other's therapists. In fact, Saul even claims that Anna is his analyst (p. 585). Both Anna and Saul have blocked themselves off from others. Until the composition of "The Golden Notebook" Anna has very consciously split herself into parts. In this fashion she never allows anyone to see her "real" self, the self that is
terrified of the world in which she lives. She stops writing because she does not want to reveal to anyone her fears of chaos and destruction. Saul, similarly, is split apart and has several personalities. He is described frequently in terms of the coldness he embodies: he exudes "loneliness, like a coldness around him" (p. 558); he is "a weight of inert dense cold flesh" (p. 562); "the cold was coming out of him, with the smell of his being afraid" (p. 563). Saul is a physical symbol of the fears, anger, and destructiveness that he has locked within himself but not expressed. Both Anna and he must experience and then release their innermost feelings before they can become whole and create again. As Lessing remarks in an interview, "Not until the cruelty and aggression come out and are acknowledged" can Anna "start creating again."²

While the schizoid individual longs to be whole through the help of some other person, he/she is equally terrified of the prospect of opening up to another. Laing writes: "Despite his longing to be loved for his 'real self' the schizophrenic is terrified of love. Any form of understanding threatens his whole defensive system" (Laing, p. 163). In the final section of the blue notebook and in "The Golden Notebook" the defensive system that both Saul and Anna display between moments of honest caring is described in the imagery of war. The flat shifts suddenly from being an "oasis of loving affection" to "a battleground" (pp. 576-77). They
battle with each other and within themselves. Anna hears Saul's feet moving above her "like armies" (p. 612). She is the spy who watches his every move (p. 631). She becomes the "enemy he had to shout down" (p. 629), as his mouth "shot out, spewed out, hot aggressive language, words like bullets" (p. 628). At moments when Saul feels most threatened by Anna's presence, when he feels that she is trying to cage him, he repeatedly shouts "I, I, I, I" (p. 628) at Anna "like a machine-gun ejaculating regularly" (p. 628), as if by the constant repetition of the first person singular he can protect his inner self from the threat posed by exposure to Anna.

As Anna and Saul gradually open up to one another, all the anger and cruelty that have been bottled up within them rush forth. Anna writes that "pure waves of hatred" (p. 577) come from Saul as he reaches a "new depth of spite" (p. 577). The words of a former schizophrenic, cited by Laing, explain why the schizophrenic's first emotional reaction is expressed as hate: "'Hate has to come first. The patient hates the doctor for opening the wound again and hates himself for allowing himself to be touched again!'" (pp. 166-67). This hate is acted out on the lowest of levels. Frequently Anna and Saul are described in images of animals who threaten each other: "Even the walls vibrate with hate, we circle around each other like two animals, the things we say to each other are so terrible that thinking about them afterwards I am shocked" (p. 577); Saul looks "like an alert threatening
animal" (p. 584); at times he seems a "violent young male
animal" (p. 585). When Anna is happy with Saul, she is a
"purring" female "creature," but when she is frightened, she
"cowers" on the floor, her terrors an "unimportant little
animal's" (p. 588).

The most basic level that their relationship is played
out on is the sexual. Several critics have noted that the
relationship that develops between Anna and Saul, that of the
jealous woman and deceiving rake, is stereotypical. However,
they fail to note the more significant point of this relation­
ship: for Anna and Saul sex becomes a vehicle for the ex­
pression of their inner feelings about many broader issues,
such as the war and destruction in their world. As Lessing
herself remarks in an interview with Florence Howe, "Deep
problems very often are expressed through sex." Anna her­
self realizes that their fights, particularly those dealing
with Saul's right to sleep with other women, are not actu­
ally about sex: "Don't you think it's odd, the issue we
choose to fight over? I don't give a damn who you sleep with
and you're not a man who punishes women sexually. So ob­
viously we are fighting about something else" (p. 578).
They use sex in this fashion until their internal destruc­
tiveness has reached full expression.

As Anna descends further into madness her "self" becomes
more and more detached from her body. Lessing uses images of
the disintegration of the walls of Anna's apartment, symbolic of the walls of her self, to suggest the collapse of her psyche. At first the walls of the flat seem to close in (p. 575). Eventually the walls seem to disintegrate completely: "The floor between me and the bed was bulging and heaving. The walls seemed to bulge inwards, then float out and away into space. For a moment I stood in space, the walls gone, as if I stood above ruined buildings. I knew I had to get to the bed, so I walked carefully over the heaving floor towards it, and lay down. But I, Anna, was not there" (p. 599). The disintegration of Anna's physical person serves as preparation for the various fantasies she experiences as she becomes mad.

In one of Anna's first fantasies, she falls asleep and is totally separated from her body. Other people out of her past enter her physical form: "I could see Anna's body lying on the bed. And into the room, one after another, came people I knew who stood at the foot of the bed, and seemed to try and fit themselves into Anna's body" (pp. 599-600). When Paul, who is dead, enters Anna she undergoes a struggle, "which was for my life" (p. 600). This fight is symbolic of her attempt to keep Paul, or any of the ghosts from her past, from possessing her present self. After Anna goes back into her body, she then experiences the lives of other people. First, she becomes an Algerian soldier, after which she dreams she is "flying again. The essence of the flying dream is joy,
joy in light, free movement" (p. 601). Images of flying in this novel, as well as in other artist-novels written by women, suggest the attainment of freedom. By going out of her self and into others, Anna begins to free the self that is locked within. After experiencing the feelings of the Algerian soldier, Anna becomes a Chinese peasant. When she awakens she realizes she has "been changed by the experience of being other people" (p. 602). The opening up of her "self" in her relationship with Saul allows her to open up further to others outside herself. She begins to empathize with their feelings and needs, a theme that is developed more fully in "The Golden Notebook."

Shortly after this dream Anna ends the blue notebook and buys a new, golden notebook. The first words that she writes in this notebook further develop a motif that was established in the first sentence Anna wrote in the black notebook: "It is so dark in this flat, so dark, it is as if darkness were the shape of cold" (p. 611). The cold, symbolic of the awful reality of Anna's world, becomes more menacing as it is personified as "a cold shape trying to press its way in" (p. 611). Up until this point Anna has been afraid to confront the cold, much less acknowledge it as a part of her existence. By the beginning of "The Golden Notebook," however, Anna is moving towards a comprehension of the cold and darkness. At first she turns on light but she "knew this was wrong, light was foreign to it, so I let the dark come back" (p. 611). In a
reversal of traditional symbolism, Anna can become whole only through an acceptance of the cold, the "devils" who inhabit her flat. By the end of "The Golden Notebook" she has recognized and finally made a truce with the dark forces in the world that she has tried for so long to escape: "It's not a question of fighting it, or disowning it, or of right or wrong, but simply knowing it is there, always" (p. 634).

In "The Golden Notebook" Saul is the key to Anna's ascent from madness to recovery. Her dreams, in which Saul plays various roles, prepare us for his insistence at the end that she write again. In these dreams Anna hears a voice, an "inner conscience or critic" (p. 621), that she later identifies with Saul. He claims that she performs the same function for him (p. 621). On one occasion Anna fantasizes that she is locked in a cage into which a tiger can leap at will, a situation that makes her ill with fear. As she falls asleep, she dreams she is lying just below the surface of water, but she yearns for the danger and oblivion of the depths below her: "Yet their danger was what pulled me down, I wanted the danger" (p. 615). She feels it would be much easier to simply give herself up to the water below than to face the tiger above her. The emotion that triggers this reaction, the one throughout the notebooks that characterizes her desire for death and dissolution, is exactly what the voice tells her to fight. It points out that she is "'sunk in subjectivity, yourself, your own needs'" (p. 614); it urges
her to fly, to struggle to the top of the cage. Only by facing her fears can she overcome them. When she reaches the top, she finds that the tiger, which she later realizes symbolizes Saul, is no longer frightening; it lies with its paw touching her foot. This scene suggests that Anna has finally overcome her fear of and reached a full acceptance of the one person to whom she has exposed her inner self, Saul. No longer fearing the tiger, she urges it to run and be free of the men who would cage it.

The controlling voice in Anna's dream then becomes a projectionist who runs films before her eyes. She sees various pictures from her past until the film becomes a "fusion; and instead of seeing separate scenes, people, faces, movements, glances, they were all together" (p. 634). The "fusion" in this case suggests that Anna is beginning to see the fragments of her dreams and experiences as a whole. The film then reveals a series of scenes in which the Algerian soldier and peasant she had become in one of her previous dreams, as well as a woman refusing to kill herself that may be suggestive of Anna herself, are struggling under adversity: "The film became immensely slow again, it became a series of moments where a peasant's hand bent to drop seed into earth, . . . or a man stood on a dry hillside in the moonlight, stood eternally, his rifle ready on his arm. Or a woman lay awake in the darkness, saying No, I won't kill myself, I won't, I won't" (p. 635). Before this time Anna had been locked
inside her self, her own subjectivity. This last film goes, as she remarks, "beyond my experience" (p. 635). She recognizes that others besides herself have suffered from the chaos of their world and instead of choosing death and defeat, they have continued on with "the small endurance that is bigger than anything" (p. 636). Earlier in the yellow notebook Ella had remarked: "I feel as if I had been born with a weight of fatigue on me, and I've been carrying it all my life. The only time I wasn't rolling a heavy weight up hill was when I was with Paul" (pp. 317-18). This allusion to the myth of Sisyphus and his endless, futile labor is counterbalanced in "The Golden Notebook" by a motif that is developed throughout the entire narrative: she and Saul choose to be boulder-pushers, "a group of people who push a boulder up the mountain. When they've got a few feet up, there's a war, or the wrong sort of revolution, and the boulder rolls down—not to the bottom, it always manages to end a few inches higher than when it started" (pp. 627-28). It is these few inches that give validity to their struggle. Saul then gives Anna the first sentence of her book, while she does the same for him. He refers to them as a "'team, we're the ones who haven't given in, who'll go on fighting'" (p. 642).

The sentence that Saul gives Anna, "The two women were alone in the London flat" (p. 639), becomes the first sentence of the section entitled "Free Women." Much critical debate has centered around who supposedly wrote this section. One
Another critic, Dennis Porter, believes that Saul gives Anna the "first sentence of the novel that Lessing writes in her stead." If Lessing, in fact, is held responsible for the authorship of "Free Women," then she was successful, as she has written in various contexts, in conveying her "sense of despair about writing a conventional novel." "Free Women: 5" particularly shows how inadequately the experience of "The Golden Notebook" is condensed into a conventional novel. Anna's experience with Saul, the central relationship of the entire narrative, is significantly reduced in importance. Now called Milt, he simply leaves after six days. Numerous critics have commented on the change in style in the "Free Women" sections. Holly King writes: "Their style is rather clumsy and old-fashioned." Joanne Craig notes that these sections are written "in a stiffly straightforward realistic style." The ending, in which Anna gives up writing and Molly marries, seems to be the most disappointing element of all. While providing a tidy sense of conclusion, it nevertheless is, as Lessing admits, "a bit grim" in tone.

If, however, Lessing intends us to believe that "Free Women" was written by Anna, as John L. Carey has convincingly demonstrated, then it is at best at cross purposes with the notebooks. If what Anna has learned in the notebooks is courage and endurance, it seems inconsistent, no matter how ironically it is treated, that she depicts women who are
giving up, who will not be boulder-pushers. At the end of "The Golden Notebook" we are left with a woman who has identified with her fellow strugglers. She is no longer locked inside herself and has overcome her writer's block. Her ability to write "Free Women" is proof of this. But her attitude finally about the world external to herself is not overly optimistic. She visualizes a scene with Mother Sugar and remarks: "'I don't think I'm prepared to give all that much reverence to that damned blade of grass, even now'" (p. 636). Being able to write again is certainly a personal victory for Anna, but she nevertheless still faces a chaotic reality that has no inherent sense of order. Anna lives in an age of change. The old forms are being destroyed, but new ones have yet to be established. As Alice Markow writes, "Society is in a state of transition; and while demythologizing is everywhere apparent and remythologizing is under way, the latter has not yet solidified." Anna has yet to find a vehicle for the expression of the novel of the future that she would like to write; her alternative, if she is to write at all, is a conventional novel, one that she treats ironically.

In the artist-novels written by women in modern literature, Lessing's holds a unique position. Her artist-heroine, Anna Wulf, reveals the extent to which the artist is dependent upon the life that feeds her imagination. She cannot totally block herself off from experience. Unlike Sarton's
artist-heroines, who ultimately choose art over life, Lessing's heroine must be immersed in her world, no matter how chaotic. At the end of "Free Women" the reader is led to believe that Anna Wulf has abandoned art altogether for life, but what most critics fail to notice is that the Anna Wulf of "Free Women" is as much a fictional representation as Ella of the yellow notebook. What actually will happen to the "real" Anna is left open-ended at the conclusion of "The Golden Notebook." Anna Wulf, unlike many failed artist-heroines, does overcome her writer's block, but her future remains unknown.
Footnotes

1 The Golden Notebook (1962; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1973), p. xi. All subsequent references to the "Introduction" or to The Golden Notebook itself will be indicated by parenthetical reference in the text. The inner section entitled "The Golden Notebook" will be indicated by quotation marks.

2 Marion Vlastos, in "Doris Lessing and R. D. Laing: Psycho-politics and Prophecy," PMLA, 91 (1976), 245-58, has also noted the numerous similarities between the thought of Lessing and Laing. However, her analysis deals with The Golden Notebook, not as an artist-novel, but as a transitional novel in Lessing's overall vision of madness as therapeutic for society as a whole.


4 Roberta Rubenstein in "Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook: The Meaning of Its Shape," American Imago, 32 (1975), 57, writes that while Saul is "more real in terms of Anna's experience than the 'real' Milt," he is "a projection of Anna's sickness." Patricia Halliday in "The Pursuit of Wholeness in the Work of Doris Lessing: Dualities, Multiplicities, and the Resolution of Patterns in Illumination," Diss. University of Minnesota, 1973, p. 35, claims that Milt is "objective" and Saul is "subjective." "Milt is experienced by Anna outside herself, and Saul is an experience within."


15 Raskin, "Doris Lessing at Stony Brook: An Interview," p. 75.


17 Marion Vlastos Libby in "Sex and the New Woman in The Golden Notebook," p. 118, claims that a distinction must be made between Anna's and Molly's choices. She believes that Anna must still be regarded as a "boulder-pusher." Anna may not have given up, but her dedication to a "marriage welfare centre" must be regarded ironically in light of the negative manner in which marriage has been treated throughout the novel.


19 One critic who does note this distinction between the "real" and fictional Anna is Marjorie J. Lightfoot in "'Fiction' vs. 'Reality': Clues and Conclusions in The Golden Notebook," Modern British Literature, 2 (1977), 185-86.
CHAPTER SIX

Margaret Laurence's Artist-Heroine in The Diviners

The majority of artist-heroines in modern fiction, in contrast to those of May Sarton and Doris Lessing, opt not just for an artistic career or a binding commitment to "life," but struggle, often at great personal sacrifice, for a merging of the two. Margaret Laurence's heroine in The Diviners (1974), Morag Gunn, is an excellent example of the contemporary female artist who is equally committed to art and to life. Although Morag lives alone like Hilary Stevens in Sarton's Mrs. Stevens hears the mermaids singing (1965) and suffers many of the same sorts of interruptions, such as the woman caller who insists on knowing an easy way to become a famous writer, Morag is nevertheless bound more inextricably to life through her relationship with her daughter Pique than is the childless Hilary. As Clara Thomas writes, "Pique is extremely important in The Diviners. At the center of Margaret Laurence's own consciousness is a strong feeling for the freedom of the individual personality, held in tension by an equally strong realization of the inevitable impinging, modification, damage, support, or enhancement of one personality by another." Even as a young girl Morag knows she will never be satisfied with being only an author or only a wife.
and mother. She tells her lifelong friend, Ella: "'I want to be glamorous and adored and get married and have kids. I still try to kid myself that I don't want that. But I do. I want all that. As well. All I want is everything.'" Ella herself and her sisters dramatize the difficulty of successfully maintaining both career and family. Ella, a publishing poet, faces a divorce before she can merge her art and her life. Her older sister Bernice, "ex-priestess of Beauty" (p. 174), chooses to be a mother of six; in contrast, Janine, her younger sister, produces plays and "resolutely, no children" (p. 174). Morag's daughter in this novel plays a significant role not only in the way she ties Morag to life, but in the part she plays in the theory of art that develops during the course of the novel. Pique is the inheritor of legends that she will one day turn into her own personal expression of art.

The Diviners is a female kunstlerroman in much the same structural tradition as David Copperfield. At the outset of the novel forty-seven year old Morag Gunn begins to reflect upon her life, moving chronologically through childhood to adulthood. The Diviners differs from David Copperfield in that most of the novel is rendered in third person rather than first, a narrative technique at which Laurence excels. She captures the personality of Morag at various ages through the idiom expressed in her speech. The few passages italicized in first person, indicating Morag's inner thoughts, eventually
become "unnecessary," as Leona Gom notes, "for Morag's thoughts are all along being tied into the action and the third-person narration, without loss of clarity or sense of contrivance." To further underscore the various stages in Morag's growth, Laurence divides the novel into five sections: "River of Now and Then," "The Nuisance Grounds," "Halls of Sion," "Rites of Passage," and "The Diviners."

The adult woman in each of the sections who reflects back on her life through a process of association has learned to deal with her life on several levels. When she looks into the mirror, she sees: "A tall woman, although not bizarrely so. Heavier than once, but not what you would call fat. Tanned, slightly leathery face. Admittedly strong and rather sharp features. Eyebrows which met in the middle and which she had ceased to pluck, thinking what the hell. Dark brown eyes, somewhat concealed (good) by heavy-framed glasses. Long, dead-straight hair, once black as tar, now quite evenly grey" (p. 23). This mirror image, one of several that Leona Gom points out in the novel, is of "a woman who has come to terms with her appearance, with her age; it is the image of a woman who prefers naturalness to cosmetic vanities, of a woman who has accepted herself" (Gom, "First Person," p. 244). Yet this acceptance of her appearance has occurred only after years of agonizing before the mirror. As young girls, both Ella and Morag fear that they will never "attain the status of high priestesses at Beauty's Altar" (p. 149). They can
never determine which lipstick to wear with which nail polish. As a young adult, Morag still fails to trust her own instincts. When she is told to wear more lipstick to a party, she immediately does so against her own feelings: "She dislikes and feels alienated from herself with a lot of makeup on. She has, however, minimal faith in her own judgement. After all, the women who are successful with men always plaster all this gloop on their faces" (p. 261). Only with time has Morag learned not to disguise herself with cosmetics and to accept herself for what she is. Although Morag has made many such significant realizations about herself, she has much yet to learn. Unlike David Copperfield, who seems to have reached a peak in maturity at the beginning of his story, Morag continues to learn during the course of the narrative.

In the first short section, "River of Now and Then," Laurence establishes many of the major themes to be explored in the rest of the novel. The title of the section itself is suggestive of a dominant motif. The river, symbolic of linear time, flows in both directions simultaneously: "The wind skimmed northward along the water, and the deep currents drew the river south. This was what Morag looked at every day, the river flowing both ways, and yet it never lost its ancient power for her, and it never ceased to be new" (p. 235). This dual nature of the river symbolizes the dual nature of time: the past flows into the future and the future looks
back to the past. Because the river flows both ways at once, it appears to be both moving and static at any particular point. Similarly, time seems to move constantly onward while appearing still at any moment in the present. Laurence in her work is preoccupied with the ways in which the present generations at that point of seeming stasis inherit the traditions of the past, modify them, and then pass them on to future generations. She is convinced that a nation finds its identity only by assimilating its past in its present: "It is only through defining what we ourselves are and writing deeply out of our own people, our own time, our own culture, our own history, that we will ever have a really strong sense of who we are." In The Diviners Morag describes her fear of the loss of tradition as "river-slaying," an activity that will result in the total destruction of the river or continuity of time: "Left to itself, the river would probably go on like this, flowing deep, for another million or so years. That would not be allowed to happen. In bygone days, Morag had once believed that nothing could be worse than killing a person. Now she perceived river-slaying as something worse. No wonder the kids felt themselves to be children of the apocalypse" (p. 4). The soon-to-be-extinct blue heron that flies up before Morag is another symbol of a past that will be obliterated by a too rapidly changing present: "Ancient-seeming, unaware of the planet's rocketing changes.
The sweeping serene wings of the thing, unknowing that it was speeding not only toward individual death but probably towards the death of its kind" (p. 292). Morag chooses to raise Pique in the wilderness where some of the old values still survive, rather than in the cities, the greatest symbols of cataclysmic change.

Another theme that is established early in the first section is that of the cycles of man as they reflect the cycles of nature. The novel begins in summer with the trees in bloom and ends in autumn as they are beginning to turn colors. Throughout the novel Laurence uses the seasons to help characterize Morag's stages in life. Her first encounter with Jules in the eleventh grade occurs during early spring when she and the trees have only begun to mature: "Early spring, and the air still has a bite in it despite the sun. . . . Maples and elms have not yet begun to bud, but out beyond town, in the valley, the pussywillows are making grey-furred beginnings" (p. 107). She is married to Brooke when spring has fully arrived. At the end of the novel Morag is moving into the autumn of her life.

The novel also begins with the swallows in full flight. As the novel progresses, the parent swallows, like Morag, become more protective of their young, "dive-bombing anyone who came within eyeshot of the nest" (p. 190). Yet the fledglings, like Pique at eighteen, are "fidgeting and flittering in the nest, wanting to fly" (p. 193). One of the
major lessons that Morag has yet to learn at the beginning of
the novel is to let Pique find her own way, to let her fly on
her own as the young swallows do. Each generation passes its
traditions on to the next and lets go. At the end of the
novel the swallows, like the geese she watches fly south for
the winter, suddenly disappear, perpetuating a cycle as
natural and inexplicable as those of man: "There were no
swallows. Yesterday the air had been filled with their swift­
ness. Now there were none. How did they know when to leave
and why did they migrate at once, every one of them? No
stragglers, no members of the clan who had an imperfect sense
of time and season. Here yesterday, gone today. There might
be a reason, but she would just as soon not know" (pp. 330-31).

In "River of Now and Then" the theme of divining is also
established. Royland, the old man who divines for water, is
symbolic of the various other characters who "divine" on
several different levels in the novel. Royland's actual eye­
sight is terrible, but "his work did not depend upon eyesight.
Some other kind of sight" (p. 4). Early in the novel Laurence
introduces the concept of sight on two levels, a double vision
that allows its possessor to see beyond outer appearances to
the deeper meanings held within. Morag describes Royland as
a "greybeard loon" (p. 21), a bird that, like the diviner or
seer, searches below the surface and is often thought to be
mad because of the strange sounds it makes. The ability of
the diviner, because it depends upon inner sight, is viewed
as a magical gift that must be accepted on faith. Royland is "Old Man River. The Shaman, Diviner" (p. 236). From the outset of the novel it is clear that Morag's gift is related to but different from Royland's: "Royland had said she didn't have the gift. She wasn't surprised. Her area was elsewhere. He was divining for water. What in the hell was she divining for?" (p. 83). Her gift, in contrast to his, is associated with the power of words: "I used to think words could do anything. Magic. Sorcery. Even miracle. But no, only occasionally" (p. 4). Much as the divining rod is the vehicle by which the diviner finds water, words are the tool by which the author creates art.

The first section also contains references to several snapshots of Morag as a child, each of which has its own caption. These photos, which she refers to as "totems" (p. 5), symbolize her link to her parents. Her mind is compared to an envelope in which the snapshots are securely locked, regardless of what happens to the actual prints (p. 5). This comparison suggests that Morag cannot cut herself off from her past, even if she wants to. As symbols, the snapshots are equally important "not for what they show but for what is hidden in them" (p. 6). These photos establish how the mind or perception takes a still-life scene and sees the reality below its surface. Her parents in the pictures "remain shadows. Two sepia shadows on an old snapshot, two barely moving shadows in my head, shadows whose few remaining
words and acts I have invented" (p. 15). The words "sepia" and "shadow" suggest memories that are so indistinct that she must re-create them if they are to exist at all. In fact, her memories of the first few snapshots are "totally invented" (p. 9). In this first section the initial "memorybank movie," a scene from the past that the mind plays back like a projector, occurs. This scene, unlike the majority of the snapshots, depends upon actual experience to some degree, but it is unclear even to what extent this memory is factual: "I don't even know how much of that memory really happened and how much of it I embroidered later on. I seem to remember it just like that, and yet, each time I think of it, are there new or different details?" (p. 15). It becomes evident early in the novel that there is no clear distinction between fact and fiction, that they are so interwoven that they cannot be separated.

In one of the photos, in which Louisa Gunn, Morag's mother, is pregnant, the theme of burial is introduced: "Morag Gunn is in this picture, concealed behind the ugliness of Louisa's cheap housedress, concealed in her mother's flesh, invisible. Morag is still buried alive, the first burial, still a little fish, connected unthinkingly with life, held to existence by a single thread" (p. 6). Morag conceives of herself as being buried alive at various times in her life. Images of burial are used throughout the novel to suggest that which lies hidden below appearances. The graves of Morag's
parents look like typical tombstones to anyone else, but to her they are a connection to a past that she never knew. In "The Nuisance Grounds," the title of the second section of the novel, the garbage dump becomes the burial site of unwanted fetuses, as well as many other secrets, that remain hidden from the untutored eye.

"The Nuisance Grounds" covers Morag's childhood with Christie and Prin Logan in Manawaka, the starting point for the protagonists in most of Laurence's other novels. During this period Morag's perception has yet to begin to grow, a necessary step in her development as an artist. As a child Morag is extremely myopic, which suggests her inability to see clearly on any level. On Hill Street where Christie and Prin reside there are a few sickly maples and virtually no grass. Christie's house, like others on this street, is

A square two-storey wooden box, once painted brown but when I knew it, no distinguishable colour . . . Front porch floored with splintered unsteady boards. The yard a junk heap, where a few carrots and petunias fought a losing battle against chickweed, lamb's quarters, creeping charlie, dandelions, couchgrass, old car axles, a decrepit black buggy with one wheel missing, pieces of iron and battered saucepans which might come in useful someday but never did, a broken babycarriage and two ruined armchairs with the springs hanging out and the upholstery torn and mildewed. (p. 24)

The richer inhabitants of Manawaka, in contrast to Christie, live in big brick houses with neat lawns and lush gardens. What Morag fails to see at this age is that the beautiful houses and gardens are beautiful only in appearance, that the
surface of a residence is no real indication of the character of its inhabitants. The occupants of these houses are no more insightful than Morag. They, too, judge only by the surface. Their spiritual blindness is suggested by their very houses: "The blinds are pulled down over the front windows of the houses, to keep out the heat. Cream-coloured blinds, all fringed with lace and tassels. The windows are the eyes, closed, and the blinds are the eyelids, all creamy, fringed with lacy lashes" (p. 31).

Morag as a child also fails to realize that the appearance of people can veil their inner reality. Prin, whose name ironically stands for Princess, is to Morag the "Big Fat Woman." Only later will Morag come to understand the hardships Prin has endured. In Christie Morag only sees the "Skinny Man" with crooked arms and legs and a lump in his throat that wobbles up and down when he speaks. He is the dirtiest man in town with the dirtiest job. He is the scavenger. Morag must learn that Christie, like the flies in the house that appear so ugly, can be beautiful upon closer scrutiny: "When she peers close, she can see that their wings are shining, both blue and green. Can they be beautiful and filthy?" (p. 33).

Christie, like the other diviners in the novel, has an inner vision that takes years for Morag to recognize. Through his shining blue eyes he sees deeper truths that remain unknown to the other townspeople. He is a visionary who seems
to be in a trance during periodic shaking fits often brought on by man's cruelty to his fellow man. He is the Old Testament prophet who drives a "chariot," according to the neighborhood children, and who rants the truth in mock-biblical language:

"By their garbage shall ye know them," Christie yells, like a preacher, a clowny preacher. "I swear, by the ridge of tears and by the valour of my ancestors, I say unto you, Morag Gunn, lass that by their bloody goddamn fucking garbage shall ye christly well know them. The ones who eat only out of tins. The ones who have to wrap the rye bottles in old newspapers to try to hide the fact that there are so goddamn many of them. The ones who have fourteen thousand pill bottles the week, now. The ones who will be chucking out the family albums the moment the grandmother goes to her ancestors. . . . They think muck's dirty. It's no more dirty than what's in their heads. 'Or mine. It's christly clean compared to some things. All right. I'll please them. I'll wade in it up to my ass. I could wade in shit, if I had to, without it hurting me." (pp. 32-33)

Because Christie takes the dirt away from the rich homes, they look beautiful, but Christie knows that only the surface of the houses, like that of those who live inside, is beautiful. He recognizes the nature of the human character: the real dirt exists in the hearts and minds of people where it cannot be seen. Through the garbage, Christie "divines" the inner dirt and hidden sins that the public does not see.

Christie is equally important to Morag in passing on the oral tradition that is part of her ancestry. He makes up stories to provide Morag with an heroic past, a tradition
which she sorely lacks. Christie gives these tales, which are true but certainly not factual, as a gift to Morag--diviner to diviner. From his tales of Piper Gunn, whose resolute determination enables his people to reach a new land, Morag can recognize the stern part of herself that she refers to as the "Black Celt," a trait Laurence attributes to herself as well. From this family line Morag gains a pride in the past that helps her to persevere in the present. Christie also connects Morag with her namesake, Morag Gunn, the wife of Piper Gunn, with whom Morag clearly identifies. Her ancestor supposedly had Morag's long black hair and strength of character. After Christie's first description of the original Morag Gunn, Morag creates her own version of this tale that links her "Celtic second sight" to this woman: "Morag was never afraid of anything in this whole wide world. Never. If they came to a forest, would this Morag there be scared? Not on your christly life. She would only laugh and say, Forests cannot hurt me because I have the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction" (p. 42). Morag's slight alteration of Christie's original tale characterizes the manner in which all the legends have been passed down. Christie, understanding this principle of alteration, recognizes a truth about these stories that Morag will come to understand only in time: "Well, d'you see, it was like the book says, but it wasn't like that, also. That is the strangeness" (p. 73). Christie sees the double nature
of truth—it is in part a fiction derived from the viewer's perception of the facts.

Lazarus Tonnerre also passes on to his son Jules the stories that are the river to his past. Jules, named after his grandfather, is linked by these tales to Rider Tonnerre and Riel, heroes of a glorious Métis past that has degenerated into an unbearable present. Lazarus, like Christie, feels free to embellish and change the legends to suit the occasion. As Jules tells Morag, "Well, my old man, he told me this about Rider Tonnerre, away back there, so long ago no one knows when, and Lazarus Tonnerre sure isn't the man to tell the same story twice, or maybe he just couldn't remember, because each time he told it, it would be kind of different" (p. 117). The substance of any of the tales ultimately depends upon the point of view of the teller. This essential quality of the oral tradition is perhaps best illustrated by the various versions of the story of Riel. To Lazarus, Riel was a tall man with visionary powers. To Christie, Riel was a short halfbreed who tried to overthrow the government. Morag notes that these two versions of the story of Riel also differ from the history that she has read in school. Both Christie and Lazarus illustrate in their telling of the tales what Morag will one day do in her creation of fiction: she will take the facts and alter them to render her own sense of the truth.
By the time Morag reaches the ninth grade, she has begun to write regularly in her classes. Up until this time no one has known of her desire to be a writer. Miss Melrose, her teacher, suggests that she submit one of her compositions to the school newspaper. She immediately runs to the restroom and hides in one of the lockable cubicles, a symbol frequently used in contemporary novels such as Marilyn French's *The Women's Room* (1977) to suggest the only safe place in an otherwise terrifying world. Morag thinks:

> What a terrible world it would be without lockable johns. The thought is funny, which is just as well, because she is crying her eyes out. For what? She is not sad. She has known for some time what she has to do, but never given the knowledge to any other person or thought that any person might suspect. Now it is as though a strong hand has been laid on her shoulders. Strong and friendly. But merciless.

Someone is walking over her grave. (pp. 99-100)

This passage touches on an important theme. The image of burial is used here again to suggest the part of herself that is hidden below the surface. The second self, so predominant in artist-novels, begins to make itself felt in an undeniable way. At this time in her life another significant event occurs. Morag is convinced by Miss Melrose to get glasses, which suggests that her literal sight is improving, but Morag is still a long distance from a clear perception of others or herself.

At the end of "The Nuisance Grounds" Morag is a young woman who is leaving for college. She tries to escape
Manawaka, Christie, and her past as fast as she can on what she believes to be the "night train to Everywhere" (p. 141). She meets a college professor, Brooke Skelton, whom she will marry. Because of her lack of vision, she sees only appearances at first. Later she associates Brooke with Prin's favorite hymn, a line from which the title of this section comes: "Those halls of Sion. The Prince is ever in them. What had Morag expected, those years ago, marrying Brooke? Those selfsame halls?" (p. 207). She had indeed married Brooke expecting her life to be ideal. She had failed to recognize the many warning signs of the trouble that would follow the marriage ceremony. He looks at her "from a great distance, behind his glasses" (p. 156) during one of their first conversations in his office. This passage symbolizes his inability to see Morag as she is. He is "chained forever to that image . . . which he must have and which must forever be distorted" (p. 211). In the beginning of their relationship Morag consciously contributes to Brooke's mistaken image of herself in order to be what he wants her to be rather than to be herself: "I will never let him see the Black Celt in me. Morag, shortly before marriage. It seemed an easy thing to undertake, then" (p. 186). Brooke similarly is adept at first in hiding parts of himself from Morag. Only in time does she come to see Brooke's actual character: "How is it that she once imagined him to be totally certain of himself? No one is, of course. But with Brooke, you have to get within
very close range before you can see it. His vulnerabilities are not on display" (p. 185). The first time Brooke kisses Morag he removes both of their glasses and remarks in humor: "'Life has many hazards for the not-fully-sighted--have you noticed?'' (p. 158). The irony in this line is unmistakable and sums up their relationship: both Brooke and Morag are blinded to each other's inner selves.

When Morag first plans her marriage to Brooke, he suggests that she no longer take classes at the university because she will be married to a professor who teaches there. At the time his remarks seem innocent, but gradually Morag realizes that he means for her to have no career of her own. He expects her to be an extension of himself: "All he really wants is that his wife should look decent, a credit to him" (p. 209). Brooke regards Morag more as his offspring or pet than a person in her own right. He refers to her repeatedly as "child" and "little one," expressions similar to those used by Torvald in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* to suggest his understanding of his relationship with his wife Nora. Brooke and Morag's sexual life similarly becomes a game in which Brooke will play only if Morag has been "a good girl" and put her diaphragm in first.

Brooke's tendency to regard Morag as a child is reflected in his attitude towards her writing. When he comes home one evening and dinner is not ready, he is concerned until he finds out that Morag has been busy with her novel: "'Is that
it? Heavens, I thought you'd been suddenly stricken with something serious" (p. 188). What he fails to recognize is that to Morag the abortion of her heroine, Lilac Stonehouse, in Spear of Innocence is as serious as life itself: "Odd—if you had a friend who had just aborted herself, causing chaos all round and not only to herself, no one would be surprised if you felt upset, anxious, shaken. It is no different with fiction—more so, maybe, because Morag has felt Lilac's feelings. The blood is no less real for being invisible to the external eye" (p. 188). Brooke will not acknowledge Morag's developing second sight, an ability that allows her to take incidents from her life and re-create them through her own feelings into a new fictional whole. Lilac Stonehouse, reminiscent of Eva Winkler from Morag's childhood, is yet a character of Morag's own creation, a character whose emotions Morag feels as her own: "Lilac has aborted herself in a way that Morag recalls from long ago. And yet it is not Eva for whom Morag experiences pain now—it is Lilac only, at this moment" (p. 187). When Morag's novel about Lilac is finally finished, Brooke offers to review it for her, but she tells him she has a kind of insight that he does not possess: "'I know you know a lot about novels. But I know something, as well. Different from reading or teaching'" (p. 213). Her rejection of Brooke as her father-figure only widens the rift that is developing between them.
Initially Morag tries to please Brooke by dressing and acting in accordance with his image of her. However, she eventually finds herself at odds with this exterior self that bears no resemblance to her inner self: "At this moment she hates it all, this external self who is at such variance with whatever or whoever remains inside the glossy painted shell. If anything remains. Her remains" (p. 203). The dominant image in this passage, that of a corpse inside a shell, emphasizes that her inner self is becoming continually more buried or hidden from sight. The apartment in which she lives with Brooke becomes a symbol of her isolation from her true self. She conceives of it first as an island or cave with no exit: "The apartment in Toronto seems more than ever like a desert island, or perhaps a cave, a well-lighted and beautifully appointed cave, but a cave just the same. Could one say cave if there were windows?" (p. 208). Upon reflection Morag decides the apartment is like a tower in which she is trapped: "A tower it certainly is, though. The lonely tower. Self-dramatization. Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your long hair" (p. 209). She even begins to let her hair grow against Brooke's wishes, a symbol of her desire to escape from the tower. Gradually she feels more and more distanced from her inner self, a feeling Laing attributes to those who are going mad: "The feeling of being separated from herself increases" (p. 215). She even begins to rant occasionally as Christie had done. As the marriage steadily worsens, she fears that
she will become completely isolated from her inner self, that she will go "blind inside" (p. 215) and be unable to write. The situation reaches a crisis when Brooke insults Jules, who is visiting with Morag for an afternoon. Morag follows Jules out the door to his room where their sexual union severs "inner chains which have kept her bound and separated from herself" (p. 222). Jules, another diviner in the novel, refers to himself as the "shaman," the magician who allows her to experience sex as a person in her own right, not as a child dutifully obeying her father. By responding to her own inner impulses, she can again become at one with herself.

After her experience with Jules, Morag knows that she must leave Brooke. She "chooses" to go, an important contrast to the many early twentieth century artist-heroines whose break with their husbands occurs passively with the men's death or desertion. "Rites of Passage," the title of the fourth section of the novel, suggests that Morag is undergoing the experiences that will lead to adulthood and maturity as an artist. At the end of "Halls of Sion" she begins, like so many folk heroes, a physical and metaphorical journey West to find herself. She rents a room in Kitsilano in a run-down rooming house very similar to Christie's old, unpainted house. Yet she now prefers this sort of housing to the "jazzy split-level houses in the west side of the city" (p. 240). This preference represents a significant step in Morag's growth:
she is beginning to see beyond surface appearances. Later, she will be able to see and value the inner qualities of her landlady, Fan Brady, whose flaming auburn ringlets and monkey-shaped face rival Christie's strange appearance.

Morag's journey differs from that of the typical male hero in one significant way: she is pregnant at the start. Soon after her arrival in Kitsilano, she must write articles for the local press in order to support herself and her child. In consequence she has no time for her fiction: "During the months when she is wrestling with these articles, she writes no fiction, nothing involved. Nothing" (p. 246). After the birth of her daughter Pique, she must write longhand at nights so she will not awaken the child. When Pique or she becomes ill, she not only ceases to write but feels the loneliness of the single parent:

When Pique is well, and Morag is writing, and there are sometimes people to talk to, then the fact that she is alone is bearable. Even the fact that she lives without a man except for occasional casual encounters which leave her emptier than she was before—even that can be survived, although with spates of rage or self-pity. But in the times of the threat of darkness—when Pique is sick, or when Morag herself is sick and wonders what would happen to Pique if anything fatal happened to herself, or when the money is seriously low and Morag, paralyzed with anxiety, cannot write—it is then that she feels the aloneness to be un-bearable" (p. 298).

A direct contrast is made between Morag, the female artist, and her lover, Dan McRaith, the male artist she meets in
the bookstore where she works in London. Although McRaith's actual home is in Crombruach with his wife and seven children, he maintains a room in London to which he goes "when the house at Crombruach becomes unbearably small and noisy" (p. 306). Morag, in contrast, cannot absolve herself of the responsibilities of her child and leave home for extended periods of time. While McRaith works at his art in the mornings and expects her in the afternoons, she must work at the bookstore in the morning and reserve her evenings for Pique, which leaves no time for her writing. Morag finds herself exhausted with the effort to balance her activities with her time: "Maybe I should be able to write evenings, late, so as not to inconvenience anyone? God-damn, why should I not inconvenience anyone? I couldn't write then, anyway. I am too bloody tired by then" (pp. 306-307). McRaith seldom stays long in London because he cannot paint away from Crombruach. While he claims he wants an independent woman like Morag, it becomes clear to her on her visit to his home that his dependency on his wife is essential to his art. McRaith's painting of Morag, in which her eyes are "frighteningly strong" (p. 310), emphasizes Morag's growing ability to see below the surface of people's characters, including McRaith's.

The most significant lesson Morag learns on her visit to Crombruach is that she does not need to make the journey to nearby Sutherland, the land of her ancestors, that she has been planning for many years. She tells McRaith: "'I thought
I would have to go. But I guess I don't, after all. . . . It has to do with Christie. The myths are my reality'' (p. 319). She realizes that the land of her ancestors is "Christie's real country. Where I was born" (p. 319). The actual existence of Sutherland is not as significant as the tales Christie has told about it. The myths are finally more real to Morag than fact because those are what she believes in. In a letter to Ella she describes a character in a later novel, Shadow of Eden: "The man who led them on that march, and on the trip by water to Red River, was young Archie Mac-Donald, but in my mind the piper who played them on will always be that giant of a man, Piper Gunn, who probably never lived in so-called real life but who lives forever. Christie knew things about inner truths that I am only just beginning to understand" (p. 341). The myths, unlike fact, never die and are continually expanded as they are passed from generation to generation. Morag's journey to find herself is a circular one leading back to Manawaka, the home and past she has so desperately tried to escape.

Throughout the novel Morag has imaginary conversations with Catharine Parr Traill, a pioneer woman in comparison to whom Morag feels inadequate. This woman had reared seven children, cultivated a vegetable garden, and written a book in which she named the wildflowers of that region. Morag's fenced-off patch, where once a vegetable garden had flourished, has become a haven for weeds about which her
neighbors, the new pioneers, continually chide her. She regards her patch "as a garden of amazing splendours, in which God did all the work. Catharine Parr Traill would have profoundly disagreed, likely" (p. 138). It takes Morag considerable time to realize that it is acceptable to just enjoy the beauty of the wildflowers, rather than studying or naming them. Eventually she decides to quit feeling guilty about not being an old or new pioneer: "I'm not built like you, Saint C., or these kids, either. I stand somewhere in between. And yet in my way I've worked damn hard, and I haven't done all I would've liked to do, but I haven't folded up like a paper fan, either. I'll never till those blasted fields, but this place is some kind of garden, nonetheless, even though it may be only a wildflower garden. It's needed, and not only by me. I'm about to quit worrying about not being either an old or new pioneer" (p. 332). Morag has finally realized that because her way of life is different from the conventional, it is nonetheless acceptable. Her wildflower garden, a metaphor used to suggest her home, is the place where she has labored to produce works of art instead of vegetables. Her garden, like those of Catharine Parr Traill and her neighbors, is also the site of growth and productivity. Yet because it is a "wildflower" garden it promotes more naturalness and beauty, if less overt usefulness, than the typical vegetable garden.
In the final section of the novel, entitled "The Diviners," Morag continues to learn lessons of importance. Throughout the novel she has questioned the act of divining itself. Royland's gift at least produces tangible results: "At least Royland knew he had been a true diviner. There were the wells, proof positive. Water. Real wet water. There to be felt and tasted" (p. 369). Morag divines by looking into her memories of the past and re-creating them. The exact means by which Morag produces the works of art that result from this act, however, are not wholly explicable. Sometimes, when the words begin to come to her, they rush "out in a spate so that her hand could not keep up with them. Odd feeling. Someone else dictating the words. Untrue, of course, but that was how it felt, the characters speaking. ... Possession or self-hypnosis" (p. 330). She ultimately must accept her gift as an impulse that must be acted out without rational explanation: "Morag's magic tricks were of a different order. She would never know whether they actually worked or not, or to what extent. That wasn't given to her to know. In a sense, it did not matter. The necessary doing of the thing--that mattered" (p. 369).

Morag learns an even more important lesson from Royland in this final section. Royland loses his ability to divine, comparable to Christie's "shrouded eyes" (p. 205) and loss of understanding as he grows older. Morag is more upset about this loss than Royland, who realizes: "People often lose it,
I mean the divining, when they get older" (p. 368). Royland tells her that her neighbor, A-Okay Smith, who is repeatedly referred to as "short-sighted," could learn "'if he can just get over wanting to explain it'" (p. 369). Morag suddenly knows what she was to learn from her mentor all along: "The inheritors. Was this, finally and at last, what Morag had always sensed she had to learn from the old man? She had known it all along, but not really known. The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn, to be given to someone else" (p. 369).

The inheritor of Morag's gift in a modified form will be her own descendant, her daughter Pique, whose life offers numerous similarities to Morag's. The photos of Pique as a child parallel those of her mother when she was a child. Pique's insistence on finding her own way by heading on a journey West furnishes a pattern similar to Morag's at her age. At times, however, Morag reads too much of her life into Pique's: "Morag had perhaps been talking not about Pique but about herself. She must not do that. No parallels. Dangerous" (p. 195). The daughter in this novel plays a more significant role than in a novel like The Golden Notebook because of her age. Pique is eighteen and beginning her own life as a woman. She represents not only the offspring of the mother but her replacement as well: "Time running out. Is that what is really going on, with me, now, with her? Pique, harbinger of my death, continuer of life" (p. 239).
Pique is also the child of Jules, who claims her in a way that reminds Morag of old Lazarus at the fire in which his daughter and grandchildren were burned to death: "They're mine, them, there. Lazarus at the fire. Lazarus, snarling his pain, a stranger in the place where he lived his whole life" (p. 277). Although Jules has not always been present in the rearing of his daughter, he nevertheless claims her as his descendant. He tells Morag: "'She's yours, all right. But she's mine, too''" (p. 277). Just as Jules grows to look more and more like his father as he grows older, Pique has many of her father's traits. She enjoys solitary singers singing their own songs. Just as Lazarus and Chr. tie pass their tales on to their children, Jules sings his songs for Pique and Morag tells her a version of the legends. Pique, in turn, would "create a fiction out of Jules, something both more and less true than himself, when she finally made a song for him" (p. 367). In this song Jules will live on, much as Lazarus will be forever risen from the dead in the song Jules has written about him.

In The Diviners Margaret Laurence demonstrates, more than any other contemporary author writing about artist-heroines, the extent to which children bind the artist to life. As Morag reflects, "The terrible vulnerability of parents, though, your life bound up so centrally with this other one" (p. 297). The artist not only creates art through a special gift but passes this gift on to various descendants.
The child, both part of the parent but new, takes the gift and creates its own personal expression of art, an expression that will be as rich and varied as the legends described in the novel.
Footnotes


2 Margaret Laurence, The Diviners (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), p. 147. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited by page number in the text.

3 Marge Piercy in an otherwise insightful review, "Gritty Places and Strong Women," The New York Times (1974), rpt. in Margaret Laurence, ed. William New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1977), p. 213, nevertheless is wrong in finding fault with The Diviners because "Morag never changes publishers, feels her agent is neglecting her, worries about the size of other writers' advances, or has any truck with universities." Laurence's overall interest in the artist is not the daily concerns she faces, but the universal process by which art is created out of myth.

4 These reflections, made up of segments entitled "Memorybank Movies," are actually the chapters of the novel Morag is writing during the course of the narrative, according to Leona M. Gom in "Laurence and the Use of Memory," Canadian Literature, 71 (1976), 51-52. Doris Lessing uses a similar technique in The Golden Notebook by having Anna Wulf write the sections entitled "Free Women."


7 For a fuller explanation of the oral tradition upon which The Diviners relies in part, see Chapter Two of Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

9 Ildiko de Papp Carrington in "'Tales in the Telling': The Diviners as Fiction about Fiction," Essays on Canadian Writing, 9 (1977-78), 154-169, gives a detailed account of the way in which Morag alters autobiographical elements to make up the five novels mentioned in The Diviners.

10 Clara Thomas in "The Wild Garden and the Manawaka World" (cited above) analyzes extensively the garden imagery in The Diviners.
CONCLUSION

Throughout the 1960s and '70s female writers have shown a strong interest in the woman as artist, an interest that seems likely to grow even stronger in the future as women write more and more about themselves. The range of this interest varies widely in scope and emphasis. Several women have written critical studies that analyze facets of the female artist's growth. Tillie Olsen in *Silences* (1978) explores in new depth a subject that has long concerned her--why writers do not write. Grace Stewart in *A New Mythos: The Novel of the Artist as Heroine 1877-1977* (1978) examines the burdens, both psychological and sociological, of the female artist working under the limitations imposed by patriarchal mythology.

One of the newest and most original treatments of the woman artist comes from the portrayal of this woman as a member of an ethnic and religious group, a subject area that has been largely neglected until recently. The struggle between art and life is frequently presented as oppressive in these groups because these women are often the last to be liberated from cultural assumptions about woman's role and place in society. Maureen Howard in *Facts of Life* (1978) writes a candid memoir of her growing up as an Irish Catholic in
Bridgeport, Connecticut. Gayle Jones in *Corregidora* (1975) writes a fictional portrait of a black woman who is a blues singer. Ursa, the heroine of this novel, must battle not only the memory of the slave master who fathered her grandmother and mother, but a husband who pushes her down the stairs when she refuses to discontinue her performances on stage. She is left sterile from the fall.

One of the most poignant novels outlining the life of a Jewish woman who wants to be an artist is Natalie L. M. Petesch's *The Odyssey of Katinou Kalokovich* (Tampa, Florida: United Sisters, 1974). This work of fiction offers a response to a complaint voiced by a critic in 1972 in an article entitled "Why Aren't We Writing about Ourselves?": "To be Jewish, and a woman, between the ages of, let's say, fifteen and fifty, is not uncommon. And yet it is interesting to observe, as I have recently discovered, that this not uncommon experience seems to be virtually unrecorded in modern fiction or poetry." In Petesch's novel the heroine, Kate, learns as a child that only the interests of the male children, like her younger brother Yasha, hold any importance in the Jewish family. Kate finds herself continually in conflict with her father, Jacob K., whom she paints as a tiger devouring her. To escape her father, Kate marries a young musician who will not take her interest in art seriously. Later, when she conceives a child by another man, she chooses to abort it illegally rather than give up her opportunity to
study art. When her mother dies, she returns home to care for her father and her siblings; however, she still refuses to give up her art. As she goes to prepare dinner at the end of the novel, she leaves her painting materials out for her family to see to clearly indicate her intent to pursue her painting: "She did not put away her easel and paints or hide the brushes flowering in the mason jar before Yasha and Jacob K. came home. She left it out for them to see" (p. 217). These last lines of the novel are certainly ambiguous; the odds against Kate are overwhelming, but she is still undefeated at the close of the novel.

As the '70s draw to a close, the one generalization that can perhaps be made about the artist-novels of this last decade, one that may point to a trend in the '80s, is that women authors are more frequently creating artist-heroines who not only refuse to give up their art because of demands from "life," but often use their art as a means of achieving a positive sense of self. This depiction perhaps parallels the gradual change in the attitude toward women that is occurring in our culture as women gain more and more rights. In Lois Gould's Final Analysis (1974) the female artist is a victim of her own masochistic tendencies, as well as the men with whom she must work and associate. When her lover, Dr. Foxx, offers her his cottage for the winter so that she can write her novel, she achieves a new sense of independence through an acceptance of herself and her abilities. When
she has nearly finished her novel in the spring and Dr. Foxx returns, she finds he is now able to say he loves her, words that are much easier to say to a woman who loves herself. Violet Clay in Gail Godwin's novel by that name attains success as an artist through the aid of another woman. After leaving her husband, Violet spends nine years alone in New York. At the end of this period she is painting covers for Gothic romances, an endeavor that belittles both her artistic abilities and her sense of self. When she meets Samantha, a woman who has endured and overcome great hardships, Violet has reached a low point in her life and career. After hearing the story of Sam's life, Violet paints her picture, which becomes the lead picture in an exhibition by women painters. This painting celebrates the freedom of the single woman and Violet's new sense of fulfillment as an artist.

Betty Webb Mace in You can have it when I'm through with it (1976) depicts a painter who is confident in her abilities as an artist and secure in the life she has chosen to live. Her conflicts come not from within but from an outer world unwilling to accept this capable, self-sufficient woman. If the novels of the last few years foreshadow the kinds of artist-characters we can expect in the generations to come, they may suggest that women authors, through a reflection of the characters they are creating, are reaching a realization of their own possibilities and destinies as artists.
Footnotes

1 This book, which offers obvious similarities to the topic of this dissertation, has long been on order for the Ohio State University Library but has not arrived as of yet.

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