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Crossing the gender line: Female novelists and their male voices

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The Ohio State University, 1988
CROSSING THE GENDER LINE:
FEMALE NOVELISTS AND THEIR MALE VOICES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By
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* * * * *

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To my daughter, Maya, who was with me throughout the entire period of work on this dissertation, even though she was only born a few weeks after its completion. I hope she will always enjoy the freedom to stretch her imagination to its limits and beyond.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Barbara H. Rigney for her constant encouragement and guidance throughout this period of research. Thanks are due to Dr. Morris Beja and Dr. Arnold Shapiro, members of my dissertation committee, for their insightful and constructive comments on this study. I thank my mother and late father for always encouraging me to be productive in any field that would give me a sense of fulfillment, and also my uncle, Joseph M. Budin, for sharing with me from my childhood upward a great love and respect for language. Finally, I thank my husband, Lawrence, for all the love and enthusiastic support he has always shown me, no matter what project has absorbed my interest, and for always seeing me through to its completion.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

That the "great books" written in the English language have been written by both men and women is, to borrow a phrase from the author of *Pride and Prejudice*, "a truth universally acknowledged." But between the novels written by men and those written by women there are often differences, one of which is of particular interest to this study. If we consider the gender of the central characters in fictional works universally acknowledged as great, we see that male authors have traditionally created memorable fictional personages of either sex. Daniel Defoe imagined a world through the eyes of a shipwrecked Robinson Crusoe, but also through the eyes of a Moll Flanders. Thomas Hardy produced Jude Fawley, but he also gave us Tess Durbeyfield. Henry James created Lambert Strether, but also the intriguing Isabel Archer. And so on. On the other hand, when we consider the great novels written by women, our first and strongest association is with a list of female protagonists only: Jane Eyre, Emma Woodhouse, Dorothea Brooke, Maggie Tulliver, Clarissa Dalloway, and more contemporarily, Sula Peace. To the second part of this
comparison there are, of course, exceptions: several of George Eliot's novels contradict the rule. We have Adam Bede, Felix Holt, Silas Marner, and Daniel Deronda, for example. For the most part, however, many more male than female writers have been willing to write novels which force them to see the world through the eyes of a member of the opposite sex.

Virginia Woolf wrote:

Women do not write books about men—a fact that I could not help welcoming with relief, for if I had first to read all that men have written about women, then all that women have written about men, the aloe that flowers once in a hundred years would flower twice before I could set pen to paper (46).

Woolf's irony here is clear. Of course women do write books about men, as her own books prove. Novels are about humanity; therefore, women cannot write books about women without also writing about men. What Woolf meant was that for various reasons women hesitated to pose as authorities on men the way men thought they could be authorities on women. Women have had to be much more cautious when writing about men, and as a result have hesitated to create a male protagonist, feeling more comfortable when expressing themselves in the more familiar voice of a female. However, women have included in their fictional worlds many arresting male characters who are crucial to and enhance the action of the novel, and in spite of hesitations, some women writers have even produced novels in which a male plays the central
role.

In probing more deeply the doubts women have suffered concerning the question of gender and narrative point of view, one finds an interesting analogy between the reluctance to assume a fictional male guise and another sort of hesitation. Patricia Meyer Spacks tries to justify the exclusion of black writers from her exploration of female writers, *The Female Imagination*, by quoting Phyllis Chesler, a white female psychologist. Chesler feels unable to theorize about black (or Third World) psychology because she has not lived a black experience. As Alice Walker rightly points out, however, Spacks should feel similarly hesitant about exploring the experiences of the Brontes, never having lived in nineteenth-century Yorkshire (Walker 130). The reluctance on the part of women writers, whether of criticism or of fiction, to deal literarily with experiences other than their own extends itself, obviously, beyond the difficulties of writing about the experiences of women unlike themselves. What are the reasons for the scarcity of women writers willing to write a novel from inside the consciousness of a male? It is interesting to note first the apologies and the explanations offered for a job poorly done, in the case of a female writer who undertakes the "disguise" and feels (or is made to feel) that she has failed. Also revealing are the analyses of the problems and insecurities encountered by a writer who has tried on the
male consciousness and been successful. Charlotte Bronte provides an example of the former type of female experience in this general caveat:

In delineating male character, I labour under disadvantages; intuition and theory will not adequately supply the place of observation and experience. When I write about women, I am sure of my ground—in the other case I am not so sure (Shorter 30).

More contemporary writers echo the hesitation heard in Bronte's letter, although they are more confident and perhaps more successful than she in their attempts to write from the male point of view. Toni Morrison admits to finding the task difficult; of her male protagonist in Song of Solomon she says:

...I had to think of becoming a whole person in masculine terms, so there were craft problems. I couldn't use the metaphors I'd used in describing women. I needed something that suggested dominion—a different kind of drive... (Watkins 48).

And Margaret Atwood, too, acknowledges feelings about taking on a male persona which initially echo those of Bronte:

Throwing your mind is easier to do if you're throwing it into a character who has a few things in common with you, which may be why I've written more pages from a female character's point of view than from a male's. But male characters are more of a challenge, and now that I'm middle-aged and less lazy I'll undoubtedly try a few more of them. If writing novels—and reading them—have any redeeming social value, it's probably that they force you to imagine what it's like to be somebody else (Atwood 429-30).
Thus Atwood firmly establishes the logical importance of trying on the male costume despite misgivings.

Bronte, Morrison, and Atwood all contribute partial answers to the question of why more women writers haven't written novels from a male point of view, but there are other complexities to be examined in explaining the female reluctance to penetrate a male consciousness. Individual psychological inhibitions form a great part of the problem, but societally-imposed warnings existing before the fact and unfair criticism coming after it are other important factors. Part of this study will explore the nature of the criticism levelled at female-created male characters, criticism which may have something to do with actual and imagined inability on the part of women writers to take on the male voice. I will examine sexist assumptions about what men and women are and what men and women think they know about one another, and how this "knowledge" transfers itself to fiction and criticism. In addition, I will explore in detail seven male characters from fiction by women, six of whom are protagonists; the seventh, Mr. Ramsay from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, is not a protagonist in the manner of the men of the other six novels, but Woolf penetrates his consciousness to the extent that he emerges as a very highly developed character, allowing her to use him to make a significant statement about manhood as she sees it. An analysis of the strengths
and weaknesses of these male characters should help to illuminate the reasons for the success (or, in the case of Charlotte Bronte's *The Professor*, the failure) of the novels they inhabit. The major objective of such an analysis is to show that the fictional men created by female writers can contribute as fully as their women to a greater understanding of how women view human roles and relationships in a world they share with men, and therefore emphasize the significant achievements of the female writers who have transported their imaginations to the other gender.

In the last ten years or so, much effort has been invested in examining the fate of the female character in the hands of both male and female writers. While critics such as Ellen Moers, Patricia Meyer Spacks, Herbert Marder, Carolyn Heilbrun, and Elaine Showalter, to name only a small number, have looked at females as creators of fiction, others, like Anne Taylor, Joanna Russ, and Judith Fetterley (again, to do justice only to a few) have reexamined the treatment of the female literary character from a feminist perspective. To my knowledge, only one critic, Jane Miller, has done a book-length study of female-created male characters, entitled *Women Writing About Men*. Her purpose, she states in the introduction, is to show that "men are to be found in women's novels as they are to be found in women's heads and histories: equivocally" (3). I find that what Miller has really chosen to look at in her study is not
the male characters created by women per se, but at the women writers themselves. She is concerned, as she says, with the fact that women have become entangled in a vague communal "we," living a dual life (as writers but also simply as people) of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion in a male-dominated world. The stories women tell reflect this confusion. The male characters a woman creates in fiction are a part of an attempt to tell her own story, and to connect in that way with her female readers. Miller states that her study grows partly out of a desire to describe her own experience as a woman and as a reader. "My book will be a disappointment," she writes, "...for anyone hoping for a gallery neatly hung with the portraits women have painted of men" (3). What Miller has provided is a very good overview of the general treatment women writers have given to issues: the prospect of marriage to a man and the fact that for a long time it was the only "adventure" open to a fictional heroine; the way heroines must deal with fathers and other figures of authority; the simultaneous sibling love and rivalry between a heroine and her brother or brother surrogate; the painful clash between a mother and a son. Miller also offers some of the views of male critics regarding the characterization of the males in women's writing; this is helpful in that it illuminates certain male prejudices--those very prejudices which contribute to the confusing duality with which a woman writer must contend. I
find Miller's study interesting and valuable, but I also sense that a closer look at specific male portraits is necessary. If one goal of feminist criticism is to cover the vast number of works by women (much of which is still being uncovered from past obscurity), then surely the fictional men women have created can shed as much light as their fictional women do on how female artists perceive the world, in terms both critical and imaginative, and it is certainly worthwhile to analyze the male characters themselves more fully.

One always has to make choices when trying to limit the scope of a study to any manageable length. In this case, I decided to choose writers whose works, when taken together, would show some historical movement in terms of a gradual liberating process for women writers interested in exploring the male consciousness in fiction. I selected seven novels which represent roughly three time periods: the nineteenth century, the beginning of the twentieth, and the latter half of the twentieth. The reason for this historical breakdown was to enable me to determine what changes, if any, have taken place between the beginning of the last century and the end of the present one in terms of the frequency with which women have attempted close identifications with male characters and in terms of the quality of the portraits themselves. Reynolds Price gives a historical context in his essay "Men, Creating Women" that shows more men than
women engaging in literary portraits of the opposite sex from the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods through the end of the nineteenth century. Now, too, it seems to Price, women are far less likely to attempt the crossover than are men. However, Emily Ellison and Jane B. Hill, the editors of Our Mutual Room, a collection of excerpts from novels that exhibit such crossover writing, have found the opposite to be the case. "These days," they observe, "women do seem more inclined than men to enter into the experiences of their opposites" (iv).

For an examination of the qualitative changes in the depiction of males by women writers from the mid-1800's to the present, I chose novelists who loom very large within their respective eras: Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Toni Morrison, and Anne Tyler. The two nineteenth-century writers are interesting in that they both possessed a well-documented self-consciousness about their sex, choosing to be identified as males in their vocation even before taking on the male persona through their fiction. The fact that their male characters were heavily criticized as males makes these writers interesting studies as well. Charlotte Bronte's The Professor centers on and is narrated in the first person by William Crimsworth, a hard-working and morally upright young teacher. Helene Moglen feels that Bronte chooses to use a male narrator in this early novel because she is "still bound to the ambivalent
attitudes of adolescence and accepts automatically the male point of view as the 'official' perspective" (88) that she had displayed in her juvenilia. Crimsworth, however, turns out to be Bronte's "transitional hero," a hybrid character who serves as a bridge between her identification with a male persona and her growing commitment to a female consciousness. Moglen feels that Crimsworth is "at times feminized: almost androgynous" (88). Norman Sherry takes this view of the feminized male further and faults Bronte's weakness in presenting a man's mentality and a man's world as one of the reasons for the novel's failure.

George Eliot creates a number of interesting male characters, among them Adam Bede and Daniel Deronda, heroes whose novels are named for them although they share the stage with other strong central characters in the double-plots for which Eliot is known. Both of these characters have received criticism for not being "manly" enough. For Leslie Stephen, Adam Bede is by far the more acceptable male of the two; however, while the carpenter is "a thorough man" because of his physical strength and attractiveness to women, Stephen feels he shows too much "Christian compassion" to Arthur Donnithorne to be considered wholly masculine. In Daniel Deronda's character, Stephen claims, there is far too much of the feminine, although Eliot tells us that Deronda combined "a feminine affectionateness with masculine inflexibility." Stephen's general sense is that
although George Eliot succeeded greatly in some male portraits (such as that of Tom Tulliver), her men "were often simply women in disguise" (Haight 141). In this same vein there are a number of Victorian critics who agree with him.

Virginia Woolf was an obvious choice, both as a writer who represents the early twentieth-century transition from a Victorian to a modern outlook, and as a woman writer contending with changing attitudes regarding women and their place in society. Woolf's male characters were not attacked as consistently as were those of Eliot; what attracted me to an examination of Septimus Warren Smith and Mr. Ramsay was rather Woolf's treatment of the relations between women and men and her theories on androgyne. I wanted to look at how her philosophical visions find expression in fictional representations of the male-female struggle specifically by analyzing her important male characters. Clarissa Dalloway, the central character of Mrs. Dalloway, is actually one half of a split consciousness, Septimus Warren Smith being her alter ego. As Nancy Topping Bazin points out, Woolf uses this split between male and female vision to explore the meaning of life and sanity, death and insanity (103). Septimus is made androgynous: highly sensitive to poetry and to natural beauty, extremely emotional, and ultimately powerless, he is contrasted with "manly" men like Richard Dalloway and Sir William Bradshaw. In To the Lighthouse
Woolf once again juxtaposes male and female vision, this time in the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, portraits based on Woolf's own parents. The depiction of Mr. Ramsay illuminates Woolf's conscious attempt to lay to rest unresolved feelings about her father, and about men in general, making him a central male well worth analysis.

While Bernard of *The Waves* would also have been worth examination, I opted to leave him out of this particular study since he is the highly complex product of Woolf's accumulated experience from all the time she spent working out the nature of male and female vision. Here I preferred to focus on the more basic conceptions of masculinity with which Woolf was dealing in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*.

Toni Morrison is one of the novelists I chose to represent the late twentieth century because she shares the modern view held by some feminist thinkers who say that we need a balance between the best of what is male and the best of what is female. It is a balance that has to be nurtured; "the female who produces the female who produces the female," writes Morrison (345), is a situation to be guarded against. *Song of Solomon* is indicative of her desire not to exclude the male from the thinking and writing of black women, and its hero, Milkman Dead, one of the most compelling of all of Morrison's male characters, is an interesting study of how a woman writer views the interior
of a black American male character coming to terms with the enormous conflicts of his particular experience. Milkman struggles with strange distortions of the Oedipal anxiety, with racism both white and black, with the women besides his mother who figure in his life, and finally, with his own attempt to find his roots and define a self. Morrison deals with these same problems in other novels through her well-known female characters—Pecola Breedlove, Sula Peace, Nel Green—but here she climbs into a male skin and remains there, using what she learned from the briefer excursions into male character in her earlier novels with figures such as Cholly Breedlove, Jude, and Ajax, trying to find the language through which a man would describe and define his experience. Milkman is certainly as successful a fictional creation as Sula Peace or Pecola Breedlove. In the previous novels, male characters were subordinate to female characters; they were usually extremely exaggerated and served mainly as disruptions to the heroines, destroyers of their dreams and obstacles to their happiness. But here Morrison explores the nature of male identity, male friendship, and male desires through two very well-developed characters, Milkman Dead and his friend Guitar Bains.

Anne Tyler shares Morrison's conviction that female writers of fiction must not restrict themselves to the depiction of women only, and according to Ellison and Hill, "Of the women writers in contemporary American fiction, no
one has been more successful at writing from the opposite
gender point of view than Anne Tyler" (v). With Tyler's
male portraits comes a new look at the fact that men can be
as full of fears and as vulnerable as women, and Tyler
implies that those aspects of their psyches should be fully
understood and accepted. In a novel in which the
inscrutability of the true artist is the central theme,
Tyler chooses to filter the world through the experience of
a male artist. Celestial Navigation is split into several
sections, each with its own narrator, Jeremy's sections
figuring among those of his sister Amanda, his wife Mary,
and the various female boarders who live in his rooming
house. Tyler's very unusual technique allows the reader to
get an external view of Jeremy through the eyes of the women
who surround him even though their sections are narrated in
the first person, while Jeremy's sections, narrated in the
third person, reveal the internal perspective. In this
novel it is primarily the women who hold very conventional
views about men and male roles in the world in general,
whereas Jeremy defines experience through the language of a
highly personal and artistic consciousness which is
unrelated to the world of "real" people with its notions of
male and female heroism.

Taken together, the male characters of Bronte, Eliot,
Woolf, Morrison, and Tyler show a gradual loosening of the
constraints imposed on a woman writer's attempt to imagine
how a man sees himself and the world. Bronte and Eliot were caught in a bind because, while they knew that what was expected of them was a musclebound, unemotional "manly" sort of male character, they could not betray their own personal visions of men. They ended up avoiding stereotypes and creating versions of manhood they felt were realistic, while their critics lambasted them for falsifying ideas of masculinity. Moving out of the Victorian straitjacket that dictated what men should be, Virginia Woolf was able to turn the rigid rules back upon themselves and show what men should not be as well. From Woolf it is not too great a leap to Morrison and Tyler, who develop a sympathy for the male character, seeing him as a victim of the exhausting role society has commanded him to play, someone who suffers from not being allowed to live inside his true identity. This movement toward freedom for the female writer points to an optimistic future, one in which artists will be less sexually territorial, allowing their work to become a way for women and men to know each other more intimately through a greater understanding of one another's fiction.
CHAPTER II
Charlotte Bronte's The Professor: Impersonating the Male

In 1846 Charlotte Bronte wrote her first novel, The Professor. Critics overwhelmingly agree that it is a weak novel, full of the imperfections one would expect of a young inexperienced writer (Sherry, 1970; Moglen, 1984; Miller, 1986). In spite of its many problems, however, The Professor is interesting in that it represents an important transitional stage in Bronte's artistic and psychological outlook, and its specific point of interest for this study is the male protagonist/narrator William Crimsworth. The Professor grows out of Bronte's juvenile writings, stories filled with romantic love that is Byronic, adulterous, and sadomasochistic. The young Bronte herself was fascinated by what seemed to her to be male strength: the men of early stories like "Mina Laury," "Caroline Vernon," and "Henry Hastings" are cruel and domineering, while the women adore and submit to them with a childlike yearning for love and approval which is not forthcoming. By the time Bronte had begun work on The Professor, she was seeking a way to limit the power of the all-dominant male.
She also felt it was in her interest as a writer to substitute "realism" for the outpouring of sensation and passion that had set the tone for her romantic stories. In the Preface to *The Professor* she writes of the change in outlook from her earlier stories to this new one:

I had not indeed published anything before I commenced *The Professor*, but in many a crude effort, destroyed almost as soon as composed, I have got over any such taste as I might once have had for ornamented and redundant composition, and come to prefer what was plain and homely (xiii).

Moreover, her hero in this new novel was to be, in keeping with the plain and homely, markedly average and unexciting:

I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs—that he should never get a shilling he had not earned—that no sudden turns should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station; that whatever small competency he might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow; that, before he could find so much as an arbour to sit down in, he should master at least half the ascent of "the Hill of Difficulty;" that he should not even marry a beautiful girl or a lady of rank. As Adam's son he should share Adam's doom, and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment (xiii-xiv).

Bronte followed her own guidelines here to an extent; it is to be noted, however, that everyday Adams probably would not have benefitted from even those uplifting turns, sudden or otherwise, that William Crimsworth does indeed enjoy and that Bronte fails to integrate fully into the story: the weakly supported interest Yorke Hunsden finds in Crimsworth, sufficient to motivate all the help he offers (albeit with a meanness of spirit that strangely undercuts the benevolence of the gesture); the very fortuitous stumbling upon Frances
Henri, who has almost been given up for lost, in the cemetery; and the knitting together of the act of bravery Crimsworth performs to save a drowning boy and his later request for help from the boy's father in obtaining a job, which is immediately fulfilled. Contrived as these turns of plot may be, Bronte does succeed in creating, according to her own wishes, an unromantic hero, one whose faults lie not only, as Norman Sherry argues, in Bronte's inability "to portray a man's mentality and a man's world" (47), but rather in an overall unsuccessful attempt to bring any of the characters in the novel to life.

In the Introduction to this study we read the apology penned by Charlotte Bronte for her inadequacy as a woman trying to portray a man in fiction, an apology written as if to anticipate some of the predictable charges to be made against her male characters as males. Certainly the doubts Bronte entertains in her letter to James Taylor manifest themselves in the shaky characterization of William Crimsworth who, as several critics point out, is at best underdeveloped. Helene Moglen is justified in emphasizing Crimsworth's stagnation:

Although the plot seems to follow the traditional formula of the education of the hero, Crimsworth's growth is not organic. He achieves complacency rather than wisdom. Life seems to happen to him. He has only been moved through time and space... While Crimsworth's identity crisis has theoretically yielded maturity, while his achieved status has defined him unalterably as male--still, Bronte's art has not made him human. The reader who is informed of his development is aware of external change rather than organic process (85, 97).
Norman Sherry agrees that Crimsworth "does not develop through vicissitude or fortune" (49). Clearly these faults are attributable to Bronte's attempt to speak through a male character with whom she fails to identify completely, but there is also reason to believe that the author was as yet unable to achieve a satisfactory understanding of any of her characters. The characterizations of Edward Crimsworth, Yorke Hunsden, and Frances Henri also display weaknesses which have to do not with their gender in particular but with their humanity in general.

Let us deal first with Crimsworth's troubles as a strong male character on the grounds that Bronte, as she herself notes, lacks sufficient experience of the male world to enable her to know her hero thoroughly. Jane Miller indicts Crimsworth on the basis of his wooden performance: "Manly tricks with his lapels, his often announced scorn for womanly behavior and his capacity to meet it 'stony cold and hard' may well merit charges of bad acting. There is no question that Villette, which tells a similar story from a woman's point of view, is a far better novel" (15). Instances of this self-conscious impersonation of the male, as Norman Sherry points out, can be found in the dialogues between Crimsworth and Hunsden, where the sentences are never anything but brusque, giving the false impression that males communicate only in this very limited way. Monsieur Pelet's wisecracking, with its thinly veiled lewdness, is
another example of Bronte's attempt to convey the tone of male conversation and is hardly more satisfying; it weakens Pelet's character by portraying him as a one-dimensional villain. The characterization of Edward Crimsworth suffers in much the same way from the unrelenting cruelty in his speech. The physical struggle between Hunsden and Crimsworth after the former has met Frances is another example of stiff and unconvincing male behavior:

"Just let go my collar, Hunsden."
On the contrary, he swayed me to and fro; so I grappled him round the waist. It was dark; the street lonely and lampless. We had then a tug for it; and after we had both rolled on the pavement, and with difficulty picked ourselves up, we agreed to walk on more soberly (255).

The reader finds it difficult to suppress a smile at the suddenness of this tussle (it occurs quite unexpectedly as Hunsden and Crimsworth come out onto the street after having spent a long and extremely civil afternoon together with Frances). The wording is physically graphic ("he swayed me to and fro"; "I grappled him round the waist"; "we had both rolled on the pavement") but nothing of the mental accompaniment to these actions is presented, leaving a peculiar gap which is certainly not remedied when the two pick themselves up and agree "to walk on more soberly" without further explanation. There is no question that George Eliot did a more convincing job in her depiction of the much more clearly motivated fight between two central male characters in Adam Bede. The emotion underlying and
triggering the fights in both novels is jealousy; however, Hunsden's envy is never brought out for the reader in any convincing way, while Adam's is clearly analyzed throughout the entire episode, as well as beforehand and afterwards. Moreover, George Eliot enriches the high emotional tone by blending it with Adam's firm moral scruples, consciousness of the identity of his rival, and begrudging loyalty to him as a friend and a superior despite the fact that he has carelessly taken and abused that which Adam cherishes. Arthur and Adam are both clearly drawn as opponents; they share a relationship and carry emotional burdens that have been carefully presented to the reader before the fight. Crimsworth, on the other hand, responds woodenly to Hunsden's attack here (as he does throughout to Hunsden's nagging), and his part in the struggle is puppet-like; having less reason to fight Hunsden than Hunsden has to fight him (and that is little enough), he enters into the swaying and grappling almost passively. Once the need for his purely instinctive attempt to defend himself is exhausted, he can calmly resume his stroll with his rival as well as the conversation they had begun before Hunsden "collared" him. There follows some rather defensive talk and a lukewarm parting, and later, when Hunsden and Crimsworth come together again, their relationship is in no way different as a result of the few moments of schoolboy wrestling and harsh words. Not so with Adam Bede and Arthur
More to the point, perhaps, in examining William Crimsworth's performance as a male, and what I believe is really behind Norman Sherry's charge that Bronte fails to understand a man's mentality and world, is the character's androgyny. Helene Moglen makes a good case for Charlotte Bronte's "feminized male" as the prototype for her later female heroes, one who represents the beginning of her reexamination of what a novelistic hero(ine) could be:

We assume that Bronte chose to use a male narrator (in The Professor) for reasons similar to those which had dictated the same decision for her in the past: that she is still bound to the ambivalent attitudes of adolescence and accepts automatically the male point of view as the "official" perspective. Never having encountered a "heroine" in her personal, cultural or political experience, or, for that matter, in literature--it was difficult for her to conceive of any woman as the focus of a work of fiction... . Therefore the inconsistency of her (early female) characterizations, and particularly the ambiguous treatment of Crimsworth, must not simply be accepted as indications of artistic incompetence... . William Crimsworth is her transitional hero: a bridge between her identification with a male persona and her commitment to a female "voice" (88).

Moglen points out Crimsworth's heightened sensibility (what she calls his propensity for "feeling"), his identification with his mother, and his position at the beginning of the story as totally devoid of status and power. All of these characteristics, mocked as they are by Crimsworth's brother, by Hunsden, and even to a certain extent by Pelet (Crimsworth's weakness, according to Pelet, is his sentimentality), make him woman-like according to
nineteenth-century norms (though Moglen doesn't cite this period distinction). As a matter of fact, William Crimsworth, deprived for a time of a way to support himself, greatly resembles Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe in his orphaned and lonely state. Like his female successors, he feels physically unattractive, defensive, and morally upright. He himself reveals some confusion as to his own sexual identity when he describes himself as looking "weary, solitary, kept down like some desolate tutor or governess" (20). He especially resembles Jane in that they both crave tenderness and kindness and are instantly won by what they perceive to be warm interest coming from another person. Crimsworth "falls in love" with Mlle. Reuter when he mistakenly believes her to be interested in him. At a dance given by his brother, Crimsworth is made to feel unmanly by Hunsden, first by the latter's incisive (and rude) comments regarding Crimsworth's wallflower status, and then by his peacock-like display in strutting over to a young woman and confidently asking her to dance while Crimsworth looks on. More importantly, Crimsworth's own lack of self-image (fuelled by lack of the money and status which equal masculine power in his society) causes him to assume that he has no redeeming male virtues that would render him attractive to women. Contemplating his first meeting with Mlle. Reuter, he betrays these self-doubts:

I remember very well that before quitting my chamber, I held a brief debate with myself as to whether I should
change my ordinary attire for something smarter. At last I concluded it would be a waste of labour. "Doubtless," thought I, "she is some stiff old maid; for though the daughter of Madame Reuter, she may well number upwards of forty winters; besides, if it were otherwise, if she be both young and pretty, I am not handsome, and no dressing can make me so, therefore I'll go as I am." And off I started, cursorily glancing sideways as I passed the toilet-table, surmounted by a looking-glass: a thin irregular face I saw, with sunk, dark eyes under a large, square forehead, complexion destitute of bloom or attraction; something young, but not youthful, no object to win a lady's love, no butt for the shafts of Cupid (76).

Crimsworth moves from this sensitive lack of confidence regarding his sexuality, which many readers may find unmasculine in him, to a level of arrogance regarding his power as a male. Following his "success" with Zoraide Reuter, he gains quite a bit of confidence in himself, enough to carry him with an astonishing degree of reasonableness, through the disappointment of finding out shortly thereafter that he has been deceived, another instance of unconvincing characterization. "But Zoraide Reuter?" he says to himself. "Of course her defection had cut me to the quick? That sting must have gone too deep for any consolations of philosophy to be available in curing its smart? Not at all... Reason was my physician; she began by proving that the prize I had missed was of little value..."

(115). In this passage and in others like it, one begins to see a difference rather than a similarity between Crimsworth and Jane and Lucy. "Altogether," writes Ellen Moers, "Bronte's hero has a very good hold on his passions and his imagination--something which distinguishes him from the
Bronte heroines" (79). The admixture of insecurity on the one hand and ability to rationalize away emotional pain on the other indicates a vacillation between two conventional characteristics, one belonging to women, the other to men, and contributes in this case to the sense of Moglen and others that Crimsworth is androgynous, embodying the negative traits of both sexes. From this point in the novel Crimsworth begins to swell with pride at being able to repulse Mlle. Reuter at every opportunity, and he has many, since the directress happens to become attracted to him in spite of herself. Ultimately, Crimsworth will move from his vision of himself as a "lean cormorant" to that of a sensual pasha, enjoying Mlle. Reuter's fawning and coquetry, her new treatment of him as "the great Mogul." In this newfound sense of himself as desirable male, Crimsworth moves toward Frances Henri, the type of woman he describes in his ideological discussions with other men and with himself about women.

The movement from insecure and passive to strong and domineering can be considered part of the development Bronte had in mind for her hero; undercutting it, however, and rendering Crimsworth unbelievable is his innate sense of superiority which comes through in spite of the moments of hesitation and self-doubt. From the beginning Crimsworth betrays a sense of himself as possessing higher values than other men, especially regarding women. His brother's wife
is not to his liking, for example:

She (Mrs. Crimsworth) spoke with a kind of lisp, not disagreeable, but childish. I soon saw that there was more than girlish—a somewhat infantine expression in her by no means small features; this lisp and expression were, I have no doubt, a charm in Edward's eyes, and would be so to those of most men, but they were not to mine (9).

Crimsworth clearly values intellect over such feminine charms as white necks, blue eyes, and fresh cheeks. He possesses, in fact, a low opinion of most women, considering them to be dolls or fools, in spite of his own admissions of not being worthy of women in general. His "sketches" of his female students convey nothing but complete contempt. This makes for an odd discrepancy in his character. "Women are women," he reflects at one point, "and always do business like women; men mechanically put a date and address to their communications" (169). He is upset here because a woman he respects, Frances Henri, has sent him a message but has not given him any clue as to where to locate her. Moreover, Bronte's own admiration for strong men comes through finally when Crimsworth reflects on his feelings for Frances, and it is clear that the author, as much as she may have identified with Crimsworth at the beginning in his insecurity, knows that she cannot allow him to remain alone and powerless nor completely without conventional male values. What a man and a woman should be, respectively, emerges in the relationship between Frances and Crimsworth. The latter, in his role as Frances' schoolmaster, and in his gradual evolution into the
dominant male, experiences the need to assume a traditional
male control over the woman in their love relationship:

And, as I spoke, a pang, new to me, shot across my
heart: it was a pang of mortification at the humility
of my position, and the inadequacy of my means; while
with that pang was born a strong desire to do more,
earn more, be more, possess more; and in the increased
possessions, my roused and eager spirit panted to
include the home I had never had, the wife I inwardly
vowed to win (182).

It is important to Crimsworth that he win and possess
Frances Henri, "over whose expression I had such influence";
it is a source of frustration to him that, lacking the
financial means, he cannot do so. Shortly thereafter
Frances finds a job, but it still never crosses Crimsworth's
mind that he might now marry her, since he himself still has
no source of income. There can be no relinquishing of the
master-pupil relationship they have established between
them, even in marriage. It is important to Crimsworth that
he retain his ability to "hold her under a potent spell...
seal her lips, and veil her bright countenance with
diffidence," to "know that few could rule her" as he does
(208). In the following passage containing Crimsworth's
reflections, we are offered a sample of his feelings
regarding the role of the man in a relationship with his
wife:

There is something flattering to a man's strength,
something consonant to his honourable pride, in the
idea of becoming the providence of what he loves—
feeding and clothing it, as God does the lilies of the
field (236).

Bronte cannot, however, ignore her concern for female
independence; hence the ambivalence in her characterizations. Frances' "rebellion" is not as deeply felt as Jane Eyre's will be in the subsequent novel, but in her significant speeches about resisting the position of idle wife Bronte allows her to raise some of the important issues surrounding independence for women she will examine more expansively later in Jane Eyre and Villette. Meanwhile, in The Professor Bronte cannot see the rebellion to its end; even though Crimsworth quickly realizes the truth of his fiancee's words, and agrees that it would be better for her if she were occupied in the profession to which she aspires, Bronte still cannot resist relating Crimsworth's delight at the idea of possessing two wives. His daytime wife is "Madame the directress, a stately and elegant woman, bearing much anxious thought on her large brow; much calculated dignity in her serious mien" (263). At night his career woman reverts, in a heavily sentimental and embarrassingly silly two or three pages' worth of description, back into his "own little lace-mender," whose joy it is "to make me still master in all things."

Crimsworth uses elf imagery to describe this little night wife just as Rochester does in alluding to Jane, only in the latter case Jane chafes within her fairy costume and disposes of it in the course of the action. Frances, on the other hand, seems to thrive in her dual role.

Much of the unevenness in the treatment of Crimsworth
and subsequently of Frances is the result of the fact that this transitional novel grows out of multiple purposes. On one level it is a novel with an interesting male character and a compelling love story at the center. On another it is the story of how "good" people rise, even in their average and unexciting lives devoid of money, good looks, and other imposing qualities that usually make people social successes, to a level of well-deserved happiness and comfort. Bronte's insistence on fulfilling these objectives through the use of a first-person male narrator/protagonist reveals yet another purpose: to "put on the knowledge with the power" of a male consciousness and from this position to view the corresponding position of women. Perhaps Bronte's underlying aim, what lies veiled behind Crimsworth's initial naivete about women and his gradual learning process and acceptance of the "right" woman, is an analysis of female power—or what there is of it in Bronte's world. Crimsworth, far from being a deliberate study of masculinity, is a vehicle through which Bronte can examine women; and what better set of eyes than that of a man who embodied her own values about the female sex. Crimsworth shares Bronte's disdain for pretty but vacuous women, and acts as her spokesman in defense of the small, plain but intelligent female. Initially, Crimsworth is uninitiated: he has a very incomplete view of Woman as "something vague, slight, gauzy, glittering" (97). He learns, however, that
female character is in fact "a palpable substance enough, very hard too sometimes, and often heavy; there was metal in it, both lead and iron" (97). He goes on with his sketches of the manipulative, coquettish, often ugly and stupid girls who are his students, to abandon notions of "earthly angels and human flowers" that romantics mistakenly try to pass off as female. Part of Crimsworth's disgust with his students comes from religious and national prejudice, but his real objective in condemning all this womanhood is clear enough: the girls fail, as Mrs. Edward Crimsworth failed, to come up to his standards for what women should be. All of these females, joined later by Mlle. Reuter, constitute what William Crimsworth dislikes, what he distrusts in women, as evidenced by his words to Hunsden in response to a challenge that the women of the town of X __ did not like him:

"I seldom spoke to them—they were nothing to me. I considered them only as something to be glanced at from a distance; their dresses and faces were often pleasing enough to the eye; but I could not understand their conversation, nor even read their countenance. When I caught snatches of what they said, I could never make much of it; and the play of their lips and eyes did not help me at all" (214).

Crimsworth is more successful at reading and interpreting the lips and eyes of the three beauties in the front row at school, but this leads him only to a deeper distrust of pretty women. Hunsden tries to attribute Crimsworth's condescension to sour grapes, but Bronte herself is clearly on Crimsworth's side: he emerges the winner, his prize the small and unbeautiful (Bronte-like) Frances Henri, who is
far superior to any other woman in the novel. Crimsworth's victory becomes abundantly clear in the long paragraph in which Crimsworth "discovers" the beauty in Frances and represents for Bronte her conviction (or at least her hope) that a woman of intellectual and moral substance will gradually be perceived as sexually desirable in spite of a lack of physical beauty.

I know not whether Frances was really much altered since the time I first saw her; but, as I looked at her now, I felt that she was singularly changed for me; the sad eye, the pale cheek, the dejected and joyless countenance I remembered as her early attributes, were quite gone, and now I saw a face dressed in graces; smile, dimple, and rosy tint, rounded its contours and brightened its hues. I had been accustomed to nurse a flattering idea that my strong attachment to her proved some particular perspicacity in my nature; she was not handsome, she was not rich, she was not even accomplished, yet she was my life's treasure; I must then be a man of peculiar discernment. To-night my eyes opened on the mistake I had made; I began to suspect that it was only my tastes which were unique, not my power of discovering and appreciating the superiority of moral worth over physical charms. For me Frances had physical charms... (237-8).

Though Crimsworth says the "mental points had been the first to interest me, and they still retained the strongest hold on my preference," he has come to see the beauty of Frances' inner self reflected in the outer. That Frances Henri has not literally thrived and become beautiful under Crimsworth's devoted gaze is confirmed by Hunsden, who, after meeting her, states that when he marries he must have "straighter and more harmonious features, to say nothing of a nobler and better developed shape than that perverse, ill-thriven child can boast" (256). It is rather the
affirmation of Bronte's wishful thinking—that a "real" man will perceive the beauty of a radiant female soul—that William Crimsworth is in love with Frances Henri's external as well as internal self. She will repeat this affirmation with Rochester and Jane, and again with Paul Emanuel and Lucy Snowe.

The real problem with the character of William Crimsworth, and clearly one of the reasons for the novel's failure, is not so much that Bronte has made him a man and not a woman, but that she has not made him very likable, or, as Moglen argues, very believable. It is the opinion of a number of critics that George Eliot's Adam Bede is a prig at the beginning of his story, and in fact several of the minor characters in the novel concur. He does, however, grow and change as the story unfolds, and learns to recognize that he has been over-proud. He adjusts his nature accordingly and believably. Daniel Deronda has also been labelled a prig because of his righteousness and his tendency to moralize, and we shall return to this issue later. William Crimsworth is far more deserving of the epithet than either of Eliot's heroes; he is, as we have seen, conceited enough to hold himself above others and pretends to be a complete master of his emotions. He never errs, and is always able to justify his behavior. The rather stiff scenes in which he struggles with an allegorized Prudence or Conscience always end as personal victories for him. The awkward use of allegory was
a weakness that Bronte never quite overcame; it is present in *Jane Eyre* as well as in *Villette*. Ironically, however, perhaps these scenes in *The Professor* would serve to humanize Crimsworth if it weren't for the fact that they seem so contrived, not to mention so external to Crimsworth himself: "Decorum now repressed, and Policy masked it, but Opportunity would be too strong for either of these—Temptation would shiver their restraints" (196). Crimsworth does show incredible restraint, especially with Hunsden, who is constantly badgering and insulting him. Again, we are to ascribe Crimsworth's ability to oppose Hunsden by not bowing to him (refusing, for instance, to say thank you for the good turns Hunsden has done him) to that same unpleasant superior streak in Crimsworth. One would think that Hunsden's note to Crimsworth, which he attaches to the portrait of the latter's mother, would be enough to explode whatever frail bonds there exist in this "friendship":

"There is a sort of stupid pleasure in giving a child sweets, a fool his bells, a dog a bone. You are repaid by seeing the child besmear his face with sugar; by witnessing how the fool's ecstasy makes a greater fool of him than ever; by watching the dog's nature come out over his bone. In giving William Crimsworth his mother's picture, I give him sweets, bells, and bone all in one; what grieves me is, that I cannot behold the result; I would have added five shillings more to my bid if the auctioneer could only have promised me that pleasure " (220).

No matter that Hunsden has just paid out of his own pocket to salvage something he knows would be of great value to Crimsworth; has he not gone too far here? Perhaps we are to
take his initial harassment of Crimsworth for the desire on the part of one friend to motivate the other into changing his life for the better, even though this is slightly far-fetched since Hunsden has no particular reason for being concerned for Crimsworth, and does not even betray any liking for him. However, there seems to be no reason for Hunsden's continued insults, nor is there any reason for Crimsworth's continued toleration of them or of Hunsden himself, a character less likable than Crimsworth. Bronte never intimates that Crimsworth feels at all indebted to this odd benefactor. After reading the rude message, it is true, Crimsworth finally shows some anger; he shoves the portrait under the bed, resolving not to look at it till he is calmer. "My pleasure," he says, "was now poisoned by pain," and he even frames a nasty comment to be directed at Hunsden should he come into the room at that moment, which he does not. However, at their next meeting, no angry epithets are hurled at Hunsden by Crimsworth; on the contrary, before they have even spoken, Crimsworth asks Frances if he may introduce her to Hunsden, and later Hunsden resumes his provocative manner with Crimsworth which the latter absorbs with his usual satisfaction in playing the stoic and somewhat cynical victim. The insulting message is never brought up, nor is the portrait. Bronte's mistaken sense that men talk to one another in this strained manner may account for the stilted, overly blunt, and
emotionally hollow language in these instances. As for tolerating the relationship with Hunsden, Crimsworth apparently gains adequate fulfillment in this relationship through being always the winner, always the one wielding that hidden ace: "I enjoyed the surprise I should give; I enjoyed the triumph of my practise over his theory" (243). A slender base indeed for a friendship; one wonders what either of these two men see in one another.

Crimsworth's bigotry does not render him more likable than does the snide, gloating nature of his "friendship" with Hunsden. A remark he makes regarding the lax morals of the Catholic girls he teaches can be seen as heavily ironic to a modern reader:

I know nothing of the arcana of the Roman Catholic religion, and I am not a bigot in matters of theology, but I suspect the root of this precocious impurity, so obvious, so general in Popish countries, is to be found in the discipline, if not the doctrines of the Church of Rome (99).

The disclaimer "I am not a bigot" does little to diminish the prejudice that motivates this comment, especially since it is not the only one that betrays Crimsworth's contempt for Catholics. His attitude toward the Flemish is no kinder. He harps relentlessly on their physical appearance and their dullness in the most unflattering language; he mentions, for instance, "a band of very vulgar, inferior-looking Flamandes, including two or three examples of that deformity of person and imbecility of intellect whose frequency in the Low Countries would seem to furnish proof
that the climate is such to induce degeneracy of the human mind and body" (102). The males under Crimsworth's tutelage do not fare much better than the females in his description of them, but he expends more time and effort in maligning the latter. To Crimsworth's mind, only the English Protestant really rates, but he manages to find fault even with the girls in the school who meet this description, with the exception of two or three. This bigotry on Crimsworth's part reflects that of his creator, who reveals similar attitudes in the characters of her other novels as well, but in this male character who has no other redeeming qualities, the snobbery is a more serious detraction.

Were William Crimsworth to develop from a naive and narrow weakling into an individual of widened sensibilities and sophistication, The Professor would be a much better novel, though very different. His insecurities render him "effeminate" in nineteenth-century terms, while his holier-than-thou attitude and prejudices allow him to assume a more traditional stance of male superiority over others, and especially over women. Instead of the humbled yet enriched character we find, for example, at the close of Adam Bede, we end our reading of The Professor with the same William Crimsworth with whom we began, changed only in that his initial innate and unrealized sense of belonging to a higher order of humanity has taken a concrete external form: he is now a husband, a confirmed master with a secure job, a
submissively playful wife, and a son who will very likely take after him, all of which give him greater opportunity to lord it over his friend Yorke Hunsden who, for all his snickering, ends up an old bachelor clinging to his own impossible ideals.

While there are many weaknesses in The Professor that are not dealt with here, characterization is certainly one of them. Bronte herself may have considered male characterization specifically to be a large part of the problem, and as is evident from the fact that the protagonists of her subsequent novels are all female, must have succumbed to the self-doubts regarding the creation of viable male characters that she expressed in her letter to James Taylor written three years after the completion of The Professor. Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe share experiences and feelings in common with William Crimsworth, but emerge more lifelike, more sympathetic, because of their more passionate struggle to confront a true self and carve out a niche in society for that newly discovered self. Bronte obviously improved as a writer between The Professor and the later novels, but one step toward this development was clearly the reexamination of her assumption that she could say something more profound about humanity, and especially about women, by adopting the male point of view. It was both easier and more honest for Charlotte Bronte to explore her own experience through the medium of Lucy Snowe than through
William Crimsworth; this is one of the reasons, as Jane Miller asserts, that *Villette* is a far better novel than its prototype, *The Professor*. However, *The Professor* did not reach a large audience, and therefore Bronte's hesitations and failures in the case of this first novel and this attempt to describe experience from inside a male consciousness were not, as we shall see, reason enough to prevent other women writers from trying to do the same thing.
CHAPTER III

George Eliot's Adam Bede and Daniel Deronda:
A Woman's Heroes

No fictional male characters have been the target of as much criticism as those of George Eliot. Eliot, like Bronte, chose to hide her identity behind a male pseudonym, going further than Bronte did in selecting an unambiguously masculine name while Bronte used the more androgynous Currer Bell. Despite her male cover, however, the early readers of Eliot's Scenes From a Clerical Life and Adam Bede were already speculating as to the sex of the author (Haight 251, 252, 267, 269). Eliot herself was most concerned to preserve the secret of her female identity; when the news reached her that the publication of Adam Bede was to be delayed, she wrote to her publisher, John Blackwood:

I am very nervous about the preservation of the incognito, for I have reason to believe that some rumour of the authorship of C.S. has escaped from a member of my own family, who, however, could only speak on suspicion. This makes me anxious that the publication of 'Adam' should not be delayed longer than is necessary after the Christmas holidays, for I wish the book to be judged quite apart from its authorship (Haight 267).

Eliot's concern for her cover was justified. In a letter George Lewes wrote to Blackwood, he noted that
When *Jane Eyre* was finally known to be a woman's book the tone changed. Not that I believe in the possibility of anything adventitious permanently hurting a good book, but there is always something temporary in the success of a novel, and one may as well secure all adventitious aids (Haight 268).

Although *Adam Bede* was received with extremely positive reviews when it came out in early 1859, critics were sniffing at it suspiciously, not content to leave the matter of its author's sex alone and simply praise the book. On one hand, the first comment Eliot received applauded her title character, Adam, for his authenticity. It came from Richard Simpson, the brother of Blackwood's clerk and a cabinet-maker, who asserted that the author of *Adam Bede* "must have been bred to the business or at all events passed a great deal of time in the workshop listening to the men" (Haight 273). This is not that far from the truth: Eliot based her portrait of Adam Bede the carpenter on her father, who had been an overseer employed by the local squire and had performed all kinds of repair and maintenance work on his grounds. However, Thomas Carlyle refused to continue reading the copy of the novel that was sent him when this thought occurred to him: "I found out in the first two pages that it was a woman's writing--she supposed that in making a door, you last of all put in the panels!" (Haight 273). Jane Carlyle, on the other hand, loved the novel unconditionally, making no sign in a letter she wrote to Eliot that she suspected a woman's hand in the writing.

John Chapman, having discovered that George Eliot was indeed
a woman, ended his review of the novel in the *Westminster*

with this paragraph:

We speak of the author as of the masculine gender, but the deliberate appreciation of feminine feelings conveyed in this question—'What woman was ever satisfied with apparent neglect, even when she knows it is the mask of love?'—would alone suffice to make us skeptical as to whether George Eliot ever wrote it (Haight 278).

To Chapman's mind, the character of Hetty, who inspired the question posed above in the novel, could have been drawn by no one other than an author with "the intense feelings and sympathies of woman." Eneas Sweetland Dallas drew conclusions similar to those of Chapman in his review of *Adam Bede* in The Times, 12 April 1859. Although he praises Adam as a man of action who "speaks out in a strong, manly way," he goes on to speculate: "Nobody seems to know who is Mr. George Eliot, and when his previous work appeared it was surmised that he must be a lady, since none but a woman's hand could have painted those touching scenes of a clerical life" (Dallas 4).

From the moment George Eliot stepped forward and confirmed what many people already suspected or knew, that she was indeed a woman, attention was turned to her male characters. Male critics, those who were contemporaries of Eliot and those who came after her, have always had much to say, some of it positive but by far most of it negative, about these fictional portraits, especially those of Stephen Guest and Daniel Deronda. The consensus regarding George
Eliot's male characters is that they are most markedly a woman's creation. What this means should become clear as we look at some of these critical assessments in detail.

Many readers have been uncomfortable with the character of Will Ladislaw in Middlemarch. It is generally felt that he is poorly conceived and feebly executed. Henry James, astutely citing certain weaknesses, blames them on the fact that their perpetrator is a woman:

The dramatic current stagnates; it runs between hero and heroine almost a game of hair-splitting. Our dissatisfaction here is provoked in a great measure by the unsubstantial character of the hero. The figure of Will Ladislaw is a beautiful attempt, with many finely-completed points; but on the whole it seems to us a failure... It lacks sharpness of outline and depth of color... He is meant, indeed, to be a light creature...and a light creature certainly should not be heavily drawn. The author, who is evidently very fond of him, has found for him here and there some charming and elegant touches; but in spite of these he remains vague and impalpable to the end. He is, we may say, the one figure which a masculine intellect of the same power as George Eliot's would not have conceived with the same complacency; he is, in short, roughly speaking, a woman's man ("George Eliot's Middlemarch," 83-4).

James is disappointed that Eliot did not pair Dorothea with Lydgate instead of with the dilletante Ladislaw; Lydgate, in James's eyes, is a real man, "a vividly consistent, manly figure--powerful, ambitious, sagacious with the maximum rather than the minimum of egotism, strenuous, generous, fallible, and altogether human," and this, he adds, "seems to us high praise." It is easy to see how glibly James divides character traits (except for "strenuous," which he later applies to Dorothea) into masculine and feminine: to
be manly one must be powerful, ambitious, wise, and
egotistic, while a "woman's man" is charming and vague.
Woman's man or not, however, Ladislaw lacks "the
concentrated fervour essential in the man chosen by so nobly
strenuous a heroine" as Dorothea; in other words, Ladislaw
meets with the approval of one woman, his creator, but is
not up to the standards of another, her heroine. Is Eliot,
who is so fond of Ladislaw, less nobly strenuous than
Dorothea? Is she less a woman? Or is she, as a writer,
supposed to be manly herself and choose for her heroines a
hero that a man could appreciate? In spite of the confusion
in the language here, James may unconsciously be making a
point about a certain problem Eliot does indeed have to
confront when creating her heroes, to which we shall return
later.

In another article James makes an interesting
observation about the character of Adam Bede. He notes that
in those novels which bear the name of their heroes—Adam
Bede, Silas Marner, Felix Holt—the hero actually plays a
subordinate role. In the case of Adam Bede, he feels that
Adam himself is eclipsed by Hetty Sorrel, who is the true
heroine because of her great misfortune. If anyone else in
the book comes close to her in terms of centrality, argues
James, it is Arthur Donnithorne. Had Eliot ended the book
with Hetty's execution or even with her reprieve, Adam left
to his misery would have counted more. As it is, Adam's
sorrow is not sufficient for the situation, and his going on
to marry Dinah Morris belongs more to a sequel than to the
novel at hand. This problem is one of narrative structure;
the problem with Adam himself, in James's opinion, is that
morally he is "too good":

He is meant, I conceive, to be every inch a man; but,
to my mind, there are several inches wanting. He lacks
spontaneity and sensibility, he is too stiff-backed.
He lacks that supreme quality without which a man can
never be interesting to men,—the capacity to be
tempted. His nature is without richness or
responsiveness. I doubt not such men as he exist,
especially in the author's thrice-English Loamshire; I
profoundly doubt whether the central object of a novel
may successfully be a passionless creature ("The Novels

Adam, according to James, "has arrived at perfect
righteousness when the book opens; and it is impossible to
go beyond that." This is not completely true; Adam, unlike
Crimsworth, is made to recognize at least that he has been
overly proud, and must humble himself to the extent that
this one fault of puts him closer to his fellow creatures
than he may have thought. He does move, from being "a
little lifted up an' peppery-like" in the eyes of certain
townspeople, to a man who can understand and forgive
wholeheartedly the man who wronged him. Temptation does
play a part in Adam's story: he has been hard-pressed not
to take revenge on Arthur Donnithorne, something which, to
return to James's complaint, both men and women will find
interesting. But at least James does not blame Adam's
faults on the fact that George Eliot was a woman, unless
there is an implicit reference to her sex when he points out how in general her heroines eclipse her heroes.

To work out his assessment of Daniel Deronda, James brings three fictional characters together in a "conversation" about it: Theodora, who in the main likes the novel, Pulcheria, who finds in it much to complain about, and Constantius, who is able to see the points made by both women and function as a sort of mediator. Theodora offers the first opinion of Deronda himself by confessing that she is "consumed with a hopeless passion for him. He is the most irresistible man in the literature of fiction" ("Daniel Deronda: A Conversation," 100). To this Pulcheria replies, "He is not a man at all!", claiming that he is only a picture of idealized masculine beauty, and that "a picture is not a person." Constantius puts forward the view that there are in the novel figures based on observation and figures based upon convention; to the former category he consigns Gwendolen and Grandcourt, and to the latter Deronda, Mordecai, and Mirah, who are "hardly more than shadows." He goes on to frame the problem with Deronda in this way:

...there is something very fine in the author's feeling about Deronda. He is a very generous creation. He is, I think, a failure--a brilliant failure... The author meant to do things very handsomely for him; she meant, apparently, to make him a faultless human being ("Daniel Deronda: A Conversation," 103).

Here again James (via his mouthpiece Constantius) settles on the "too good" aspect shared by both Adam Bede and Daniel
Deronda, that quality which inspires Pulcheria to say of the latter, "She [George Eliot] made him a dreadful prig," to which Constantius is forced to agree. Theodora, however, intercedes at this point to observe a problem in Pulcheria's expectations of fictional men:

Pulcheria likes the little gentlemen in the French novels who take good care of their attitudes, which are always the same attitude, the attitude of "conquest," and of a conquest that tickles their vanity. Deronda has a contour that cuts straight through the middle of all that. He is made of a stuff that isn't dreamt of in their philosophy ("Daniel Deronda: A Conversation," 103).

The argument proceeds over Deronda's closeness to life with Pulcheria insisting that Deronda comes up short in comparison to a similar character created by Turgenev ("Inssaroff is a man; he stands up on his feet; we see him, hear him, and touch him") and Theodora defending him ("Deronda is in a manner an ideal character, if you will, but he seems to me triumphantly married to reality"). They then move on to discuss Deronda's didacticism. Pulcheria finds his propensity for giving moral advice to beautiful heroines dreary. Constantius, however, defends this quality in Deronda, allowing that he would be more ridiculous if he were allowed to be lovesick. "It is a very interesting situation," says Constantius,

that of a man with whom a beautiful woman in trouble falls in love, and yet whose affections are so preoccupied that the most he can do for her in return is to enter kindly and sympathetically into her position, pity her, and talk to her. George Eliot always gives us something that is strikingly and ironically characteristic of human life... ("Daniel
The one spot in the "conversation" where James allows his sexual prejudice to surface is where he has Constantius reply to Pulcheria's objection that Deronda's buying back Gwendolen's necklace for her was in bad taste. "Oh," says Constantius, "you must concede that; without it there would have been no story. A man writing of him, however, would certainly have made him more peccable. As George Eliot lets herself go about him, she becomes delightfully, almost touchingly feminine" ("Daniel Deronda: A Conversation," 106). Has any critic voiced a similar complaint regarding Thackeray's peccability when he has Dobbin redeem Amelia's piano? Does this literary move on his part render him touchingly feminine? Constantius is able to grasp finally, however, Eliot's purpose in characterizing Deronda as she does: to create a man who, in his quiet dignity and deep respect for humanity, inspires women to confide in him. Constantius most closely represents James's sense of the novel as being "full of the world" despite its occasional artlessness. To be sure, other critics have denounced the weakness both of the novel and of its title character, but most concur that Daniel Deronda and its hero contain a certain greatness as well. If Constantius' final assessment weren't enough to convince us of James's ultimate admiration for the novel, we'd have only to look at Portrait of a Lady, James's own attempt to emulate Eliot's novel. "Osmond so
plainly is Grandcourt," writes F. R. Leavis, "hardly disguised, that the general derivative relation of James's novel to George Eliot's becomes quite unquestionable" (1965, 248).

Sir Leslie Stephen's views on George Eliot's male characters betray a straightforwardly sexist bias. He, like James, has his preferences as to which males he'd like to see Eliot's heroines paired off with. And like James, he has some very Victorian notions regarding why Eliot was more a feminine than a masculine writer:

> The so-called masculine quality in George Eliot—her wide and calm intelligence—was certainly combined with a thoroughly feminine nature; and the more one reads her books and notes her real triumphs, the more strongly this comes out. The poetry and pathos which she seeks to reveal under commonplace surroundings is found chiefly in feminine hearts" (141).

Eliot's "triumphs" are, of course, her heroines, according to Stephen. He goes on to condemn all but a few of her male figures as feminized:

> That George Eliot succeeds remarkably in some male portraits, and notably in Tom Tulliver, is undeniable. Yet the men were often simply women in disguise. The piquancy, for example, of the famous character of Tito is greatly due to the fact that he is the voluptuous, selfish, but sensitive character, not unfamiliar in the fiction which deals with social intrigues, but generally presented to us in female costume. We are told of Daniel Deronda, upon whose character an extraordinary amount of analysis is expended, that he combined a feminine affectionateness with masculine inflexibility. To our perceptions, the feminine vein becomes decidedly the most prominent (102).

What is interesting here is something of a rather contradictory nature: Tito is remarked for being voluptuous
and selfish, while Deronda is never voluptuous and certainly never selfish, yet both are feminine (i.e., sensitive) and therefore worthy of Stephen's disdain. He joins such characters as Philip Wakem and Mr. Lyon to this list as well, then goes on to give equivocal praise to Adam Bede:

Adam Bede, indeed, to mention no one else, is a thorough man. He represents, it would seem, that ideal of masculine strength which Miss Bronte used with curious want of success to depict in Louis Moore—the firm arm, the offer of which (as we are told a propos of Maggie Tulliver and the offensive Stephen Guest) has in it "something strangely winning to most women." Yet if Adam Bede had shown less Christian forbearance to young Squire Donnithorne, we should have been more convinced that he was masculine fibre throughout (142).

If Adam Bede is too compassionate to be considered fully masculine, what hope has Daniel Deronda? Most of Leslie Stephen's contempt is reserved, however, for Stephen Guest. While, like James, Stephen objects to Dorothea's match with Ladislaw, he finds the one between Maggie and Stephen much more insulting. Guest is decidedly the poor work of a woman:

George Eliot did not herself understand what a mere hairdresser's block she was describing in Mr. Stephen Guest. He is another instance of her incapacity for portraying the opposite sex. No man could have introduced such a character without perceiving what an impression must be made on his readers (Leavis 40).

Stephen cannot excuse Eliot for what is essentially her inability to be masculine enough to produce lovers for her heroines that a male critic could approve. Even Leavis, who agrees that Guest is "unmistakably feminine," realizes that Leslie Stephen is imposing an unfair valuation in calling
him a "mere hairdresser's block" and refusing to admit that he is "sufficiently 'there' to give the drama a convincing force." Stephen himself knows that women's taste in lovers will differ from what men think it ought to be ("There is nothing contrary to experience in the supposition that the imagination of an impulsive young girl may transfigure a very second-rate young tradesman into a lover worthy of her"), but he cannot bring himself to accept that Eliot, though a woman herself, could share the illusion. Nor can he see that Eliot and Maggie are not necessarily one and the same. This "failure" on Eliot's part to choose a worthy lover for Maggie becomes the proof for Sir Leslie Stephen's final verdict: that Stephen Guest is "characteristic of a certain feminine incapacity for drawing really masculine heroes" (144).

Leslie Stephen is not alone in his view. William Ernest Henley, writing in 1890, calls Eliot's heroes "the governesses in revolt it pleased her to put forward as men" and "heroes of the divided skirt" (161). Specifically, Henley claims that

Deronda was an incarnation of women's rights; Tito an improper female in breeches; Silas Marner a good, perplexed old maid, of the kind whom it is said that they have "had a disappointment." And Lydgate alone had aught of the true male principle about him (161).

Finally, we again have equivocal praise coming from Lord David Cecil who, writing in 1935, begins by commending Eliot's ability to create a male world:
It is worth noting that she is one of the few women novelists whose characters include young men. Once again this is due to her intellectual approach... So that the fact that she has herself seen little of man's life does not incapacitate her from drawing it.

But then Cecil backs away from bestowing forthright approval on these male characters Eliot is able to see intellectually:

Over her official heroes, indeed, her hand did falter. All her learning and her conscientious impartiality could not make her wholly immune from the frailties of her sex; like every woman novelist she tends to draw heroes less from life, than in the image of her desire. Adam Bede is a little too manly and protecting to be human; Ladislaw, flinging himself down on the hearth-rug with an enchanting impetuosity, wilfully tossing back his charming curls, is a schoolgirl's dream, and a vulgar dream at that (204-5).

Jane Miller quotes Leslie Stephen's similar objection to Daniel Deronda as "not merely a feminine, but, one is inclined to say, a schoolgirl's hero. He is so sensitive and scrupulously delicate that he will not soil his hands by joining in the rough play of ordinary political and social reformers." Stephen, she presumes, would have preferred a schoolboy's hero (135), and so, we may presume, might have Henley.

As a few of the male critics suspected, what a woman writer may see as attractive in a male may differ from what a man may deem appropriate. I do not wish to argue here that Will Ladislaw is actually a substantially drawn fictional character with no imperfections, or whether Stephen Guest is coarse or not; however, several points ought to be clarified regarding women's heroes to uphold the
argument that they are different from but not necessarily inferior to those of men.

Both Carolyn Heilbrun and Joanna Russ have discussed the difficulties women writers face in contemplating new myths and new roles for the female character. "That women should not eschew any female model, literary or otherwise, which presents itself is, one hopes, too obvious to need repeated emphasis," says Heilbrun (1979, 140). But to widen the definition of a female model is difficult, as Joanna Russ makes very clear. Here are the stories to which she feels a female writer is limited, by societal norms and expectations, in contemplating a plot for her heroine:

How she lost him, how she got him, how she kept him, how she died for/with him. What else is there? A new pattern seems to have been developing in the last few years: female authors who do not wish to write Love Stories may instead write about heroines whose main action is to go mad--but How She Went Crazy will also lose its charm in time (10).

There is another alternative, according to Russ, though it is not much better:

A woman writer may, if she wishes, abandon female protagonists altogether and stick to male myths with male protagonists, but in doing so she falsifies herself and much of her own experience... . A woman who refuses to write about women ignores the whole experience of the female culture... . She falsifies her position both artistically and humanly... . She is a Self trying to pretend that she is a different Self, one for whom her own self is Other (10).

This is perhaps the falsification Charlotte Bronte discovered when she wrote The Professor; other women writers meet with the same conflict when they try to speak through a
male. Perhaps this is why Eliot found, and as Henry James
duly noted, that her Adam Bedes and Daniel Derondas could
only tell half of her story. It could be that these divided
novels, each part having its own hero or heroine, caused
part of the resentment felt by male critics which they
expressed by condemning what they took to be a half-baked
male character. F. R. Leavis goes so far as to suggest that
Daniel Deronda should be cut away entirely from the "real"
 novel, which ought to be called Gwendolen Harleth (Miller
23).

At any rate, George Eliot obviously felt obliged to
explore the female as well as the male experience; like
Bronte, she was still writing love stories, but she too took
advantage of the opportunity to view women through the lens
of male consciousness, thereby gaining another perspective.
And what she found was that her heroines were sexual as well
as moral and intellectual beings who were attracted in turn
to a certain male sexuality not present in Philip Wakem
(Leslie Stephen's choice for Maggie) or even in Lydgate
(Henry James's choice for Dorothea). Adam and Daniel are
not eclipsed by Hetty and Gwendolen; they are complementary
to them. What bothers James perhaps is the misleading
perspective offered by the titles of the novels. What may
bother the other critics concerning Eliot's "feminized
males" could be that very complementarity that makes Deronda
a perfect partner for Gwendolen (in terms of plot, not love)
and Adam a good one for Hetty (again, purely in narrative terms).

Virginia Woolf provides an interesting argument which helps to explain (as well as reject) her father's position regarding George Eliot's "weak men." She first observes that "those who fall foul of George Eliot do so on account of her heroines, who are in large part self-portraits and as such lead to self-consciousness, didacticism, and occasionally vulgarity on Eliot's part." Eliot, argues Woolf, was never quite comfortable with herself; hence the ambivalent female depictions in the novels. One easily perceives some self-consciousness when Eliot heroines become the mouthpiece for their author's most intensely personal self, though she tries to disguise them with beauty and/or wealth. Woolf cites Maggie Tulliver as exemplary of this tendency to "step forward in person," and relates the problems with Maggie to those Eliot encounters in portraying males:

The noble and beautiful girl who insisted on being born into The Mill on the Floss is the most obvious example of the ruin which a heroine can strew about her. Humour controls her and keeps her lovable so long as she is small and can be satisfied by eloping with the gipsies or hammering nails into her doll; but she develops; and before George Eliot knows what has happened she has a full-grown woman on her hands demanding what neither gipsies nor dolls, nor St. Ogg's itself is capable of giving her. First Philip Wakem is produced, and later Stephen Guest. The weakness of the one and the coarseness of the other have often been pointed out; but both, in their weakness and coarseness, illustrate not so much George Eliot's inability to draw the portrait of man, as the uncertainty, the infirmity, and the fumbling which
shook her hand when she had to conceive a fit male for a heroine (188).

If Adam, Will, Stephen, and Daniel are "women's men," to use James's label, then it is not because, as the male critics assert, women don't know men and therefore create female surrogates instead, but because, as Jane Miller argues, women create men as they observe them, interact with them, and understand them: "They are ourselves, our protectors, our representatives and our opportunities" (3). To this we might well add Margaret Atwood's comment, that "In both reading and writing, women are likely to know more about how men actually behave with women than men are" (425). Going back to Woolf, what she as well as Atwood allude to is that, although a woman writer may be at a slight disadvantage when it comes down to how men talk to other men when women are not present, or at what point a carpenter inserts the panels when putting together a door, they do know what a woman finds sexually attractive in a man. Atwood finds that this female sense of what constitutes male desirability is what men often feel to be insulting to their self-image and therefore to their sensibilities. Jane Miller elaborates on this point:

The fact that George Eliot, the writer and moralist these critics admire, is telling them that Maggie Tulliver longs to make love with Stephen Guest, that her predicament is that she desires a man she is not altogether able to trust, goes unheard. It is wrong of George Eliot to let their lovely Maggie so forget herself as to desire the body of a rich and handsome young man, who would nonetheless be just as much a persona non grata in Trinity Fellows' Garden as
Maggie would herself (156).

With George Eliot torn between wanting to please the male critics in her audience (as well as the males in general) and desiring to bring out the truth about women— that male beauty is attractive to them, other credentials not always withstanding— it is no wonder that her hand shook over Will Ladislaw, Daniel Deronda, and others. I have selected two of Eliot's central male characters for a closer examination of their weaknesses and their strengths.

In the following passage from *Adam Bede*, it seems that George Eliot is addressing an ironic aside to readers who have very limited visions of what "manly" ought to mean:

...Seth had learned to make himself, as Adam said, 'very handy in the housework,' that he might save his mother from too great weariness; on which ground I hope you will not think him unmanly, any more than you can have thought the gallant Colonel Bath unmanly when he made the gruel for his invalid sister (409).

As we have seen, sensitivity in a man, especially the kind that allows him to empathize with a woman, is reason to doubt a male character's masculinity as far as many male critics are concerned. In *Adam Bede*, Eliot sets up the figure of a sturdily built and morally upright young carpenter who possesses not only physical power and strength of moral character, but a degree of sensitivity as well— not as much as she will later allot to Daniel Deronda, but enough to render Adam Bede a sympathetic character who stands apart from most of the others in the novel in terms of a higher sensibility. Only Dinah Morris reaches his
level of feeling and intelligence, and it is with her that he is eventually paired. The fact is, however, that many critics find the character of Adam too good to be true, as the excerpts from Henry James in the previous section make evident. He is actually a more textured character than James will allow, and part of what might interest a modern reader about him lies in the kind of male character Eliot has made of him.

That Adam is presented as a positive character is undeniable: immediately we are struck with his rough good looks, his healthy code of ethics, and his common sense. But he is positive in a markedly masculine sense. He is first seen and heard as he is at work in the carpentry shop, singing a Christian hymn in a strong baritone voice as he swings his hammer. We are told that

(S)uch a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned muscular man nearly six feet high, with a back so flat and a head so well-poised that when he drew himself up to take a more distant survey of his work, he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the long supple hand, with its broad fingertips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name; but the jet-black hair, made the more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen glance of the dark eyes that shone from under strongly marked prominent and mobile eyebrows, indicated a mixture of Celtic blood. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humoured honest intelligence (6).

In the first two pages of the novel and in one paragraph Eliot has given us many of Adam's positive attributes, and
most of them contribute to a very conventional picture of masculinity. There is no "beauty," no delicacy here, like that we will later see in Daniel Deronda. Coming in the very next paragraph is the description of Adam's brother Seth, and the contrast between them provides the first hint of what James claims does not exist: the faults in Adam's character. Seth is of a masculine fiber much akin to his brother's, but it is a softened version. What Seth possesses that Adam will have to develop (though he isn't entirely devoid of it) is compassion and understanding of human frailty. In a significant one-sentence paragraph following Seth's physical description, Eliot tells us, "The idle tramps always felt sure they could get a copper from Seth; they scarcely ever spoke to Adam" (6). Adam understands the failings of others, but finds it hard to excuse them, being such a consistent, clear-thinking fellow himself. Adam lacks flexibility; severe with himself, he holds tenaciously to principles and is able to reason with himself to the point that these principles always control his own behavior despite moments of weakness. He expects nothing less of others, which is his one major fault, leading him to be hard and unforgiving. Just as Eliot uses the workshop as the obvious place in which to illustrate Adam's strength, she also allows it to function as the site of his foibles. Waxing a bit too righteous over the laughter aimed at his brother, Adam becomes physically
threatening in order to restore the situation to what he feels is its appropriate decorum. Seth, who can bend more easily and take things less seriously, is the one who tries to mediate congenially as Adam holds one of the workers in an "iron grasp":

"Let be, Addy, let be. Ben will be joking. Why, he's in the right to laugh at me—I canna help laughing at myself."

"I shan't lose him, till he promises to let the door alone," said Adam.

"Come, Ben, lad," said Seth, in a persuasive tone, "don't let's have a quarrel about it. You know Adam will have his way. You may's well try to turn a waggon in a narrow lane. Say you'll leave the door alone, and make an end on't" (7).

Ben agrees, but for Seth's sake, not Adam's. This first encounter between Adam's principles and his interactions with other people of less rigid ideas is a significant one: it looks forward to other conflicts, most markedly to the one between Adam and Arthur Donnithorne which belongs to a series of crucial events lying at the center of the novel's drama. There is, for instance, the skillful foreshadowing of their eventual fight presented with heavy irony in the chapter entitled "Links" in which Adam tells Arthur that he'll "never fight any man again, only when he behaves like a scoundrel" (142). Adam will be forced to modify his definition of scoundrel in due time. The picture of Adam given in the workshop altercation also prepares the reader for subsequent judgments of him by other characters. "He's a little lifted up an' peppery-like," says a Mr. Casson (16); "You're over-hasty and proud, and apt to set your
teeth against folks that don't square to your notions," he is told by Bartle Massey (208). Lisbeth, Adam's mother, comes as close as she ever does to criticizing her son when she says, "I know thee dost things as nobody else 'ud do, my lad. But thee't allays so hard upo' thy feyther, Adam" (37). Adam will come to recognize the truth in all of these accusations; he will regret the hardness of his nature and learn to forgive others. Herein lies George Eliot's philosophy regarding the "manly" nature Henry James and Leslie Stephen look for: a man can be too manly, meaning that he can embody an excess of those traits thought usually to belong to a masculine nature, and this excessive manliness can render him less human. If this over-manliness is what James was alluding to (though he wouldn't have used that term) in his fear that Adam is "passionless," then he was right. He was wrong, however, in believing that Adam never moves from this position in the novel.

Even before Adam comes to the events which change him and cause him to alter his too rigid set of rules, Eliot allows us glimpses into the possibilities of a greater flexibility in him. He is intelligent and reasonable much of the time, and his Christianity, which Leslie Stephen considered to be a weakness in his otherwise masculine fiber, enlightens him at various moments and allows him to loosen the tight hold he maintains on his usual code:

"Ah, I was always too hard," Adam said to himself. "It's a sore fault in me as I'm so hot and out o'
patience with people when they do wrong, and my heart
gets shut up against 'em, so as I can't bring myself to
forgive 'em" (172).

He is at his father's funeral here, and thinking
specifically about his hardness to his father. "It seems to
me now," he reflects, "if I was to find father home tonight,
I should behave different; but there's no knowing--perhaps
nothing 'ud be a lesson to us if it didn't come too late"
(172). In spite of the severity Adam displayed toward his
father when the latter was still alive (and this is always
rendered from inside of Adam's mind; the father and son are
never seen interacting together), the fact is counteracted
by the way he cherishes memories of Thias Bede in good
times, remembering with respect the way his father taught
him carpentry skills. A final confirmation of Adam's real
feelings regarding Thias (as well as his mother, who cannot
help but irritate him) is sounded by Dinah Morris, in whose
opinions we are tacitly instructed by Eliot to trust. In a
letter she writes to Seth, Dinah says of Adam:

The honour and love you bear him is nothing but meet,
for God has given him great gifts, and he uses them as
the patriarch Joseph did, who, when he was exalted to a
place of power and trust, yet yearned with tenderness
towards his parent and his younger brother (276).

An even more powerful recognition of Adam's virtues comes
earlier. Also spoken by Dinah, it is Eliot's attempt to
portray her strong but sensitive male image, and it seems to
point forward directly to the "new man" of the 1980's:

"It has been a very precious time to me," Dinah
went on, "last night and to-day--seeing two such good
sons as Adam and Seth Bede. They are so tender and thoughtful for their aged mother. And she has been telling me what Adam has done, for these many years, to help his father and brother; it's wonderful what a spirit of wisdom and knowledge he has, and how he's ready to use it all in behalf of them that are feeble. And I'm sure he has a loving spirit too. I've noticed it often among my own people around Snowfield, that the strong, skilful men are often the gentlest to the women and children; and it's pretty to see 'em carrying the little babies as if they were no heavier than little birds. And the babies always seem to like the strong arm best. I feel sure it would be so with Adam Bede..." (122).

Adam does indeed do a great deal of baby-toting and arm-offering. He is a great favorite with Totty Poyser, for instance, whom he is always lifting up and swinging around. He is not at all, however, a favorite with Hetty Sorrel who, despite the strong arms, finds little of interest in him. But George Eliot is not championing Hetty; her woman is Dinah, and it is Dinah, not Hetty, who deserves a man like Adam. In spite of Adam's hearty masculine kindesses to children and his respect and empathy for women, Eliot wavers momentarily in her depiction of him in these contexts, as if afraid he will be rendered unrealistic if he is too sympathetic. Therefore we have the scenes between Lisbeth Bede and her son in which, understandably, Adam finds it a little harder to be the perfect woman's man. More than once he tells his mother to leave him alone, in one instance so coldly that Eliot, thinly camouflaged behind her omniscient narrator, feels obliged to comment, "We are apt to be kinder to the brutes that love us than to the women who love us. Is it because the brutes are dumb?" (38). Adam does manage
to regain control of himself in these cases and always makes it up to his mother with a consoling word.

So we have in Adam Bede what is today almost a cliche—the strong yet sensitive male—something that male critics like to claim is the figment of a female author's daydream, much as the passionate yet ultimately submissive woman is what many feminist critics claim belongs to the fantasy world of some male writers. George Eliot did seem to favor this type of male for hero status, as is evidenced by her later magnification of his qualities in Daniel Deronda. However, some of the more convincing descriptions of Adam show a keen attempt to penetrate the romantic motivations of a man like him, and to show how weaknesses are mixed with strengths. Part of Eliot's explanation for how Adam could so blindly be misled as to the true nature of Hetty Sorrel comes from inside the consciousness of Adam himself. Most of Adam's love for Hetty is due to the effect of her outward beauty. He is able to rhapsodize on how like a flower or piece of fruit she is, never worrying about the more human qualities that also figure in her composition. In his raptures he is able to set aside hints of anything negative. But, as the narrator warns, "people who love downy peaches are apt not to think of the stone, and sometimes jar their teeth terribly against it" (131). Adam is so busy playing the part of lover that he becomes an incredibly good rationalizer and misreader of blushes and downcast
Adam's heart was too full to speak, and he thought Hetty knew all that was in it. She was not indifferent to his presence after all; she had blushed when she saw him, and then there was that touch of sadness about her which must surely mean love, since it was the opposite of her usual manner, which had often impressed him as indifference... It was to Adam the time that a man can least forget in after-life,—the time when he believes that the first woman he has ever loved betrays a slight something—a word, a tone, a glance, the quivering of a lip or an eyelid—that she is at least beginning to love in return. The sign is so slight, it is scarcely perceptible to the ear or eye—he could describe it to no one—it is a mere feather-touch, yet it seems to have changed his whole being, to have merged an uneasy yearning into a delicious unconsciousness of everything but the present moment (187).

This "delicious unconsciousness" has a way of setting in whenever Adam contemplates Hetty, preventing him from seeing the truth about her even up to her trial when the facts seem so clear to everyone else. Adam, who is so clear-sighted—perhaps too clear-sighted, unable to look past a flaw—when it comes to others, manages to miss Hetty's glaring weaknesses, translating even her crossness and impatience somehow into virtues. He is still prepared to offer her love and protection even after discovering she loves someone else: "How busy his thoughts were, as he walked home, in devising pitying excuses for her folly; in referring all her weaknesses to the sweet lovingness of her nature; in blaming Arthur, with less and less inclination to admit that his conduct might be extenuated too!" (273).

Eliot is at her best when she allows the narrator to speak on Adam's behalf, and she makes use of an effective
Possibly you think that Adam was not at all sagacious in his interpretations, and that it was altogether unbecoming in a sensible man to behave as he did—falling in love with a girl who really had nothing more than her beauty to recommend her, attributing imaginary virtues to her, even condescending to cleave to her after she had fallen in love with another man, waiting for her kind looks as a patient trembling dog waits for his master's eye to be turned upon him. But in so complex a thing as human nature, we must consider, it is hard to find rules without exceptions. Of course, I know that, as a rule, sensible men fall in love with the most sensible women of their acquaintance, see through all the pretty dejects of coquettish beauty, never imagine themselves loved when they are not loved, cease loving on all proper occasions, and marry the woman most fitted for them in every respect... But even to this rule an exception will occur now and then in the lapse of centuries, and my friend Adam was one. For my own part, however, I respect him none the less... (297).

Eliot goes on to justify the nonanalytical love of beauty, whether it belongs to a piece of music or to a woman's face. She claims for beauty "an expression beyond and far above the one woman's soul that it clothes," and she is not being ironic when she claims that it is due to Adam's strength and not his weakness that he is able to experience this kind of love.

Eliot accomplishes here with her protagonist Adam Bede something that Patricia Meyer Spacks claims both Eliot and Bronte have preserved almost exclusively for their heroines:

Charlotte Bronte's novels display a theoretical optimism not unlike George Eliot's. Despite their clear view of how women suffer, both authors seem to believe it possible for women to find emotional and moral satisfaction—not without difficulty, to be sure. But George Eliot reveals that men encounter similar—although by no means identical—difficulties in their struggles for fulfillment... and Charlotte Bronte, with
no apparent interest in the struggles of men, hints that the superior emotional capacity of women compensates for the difficulties of their lot (72). Spacks goes on to say that in general, "men, with easier opportunities for doing, possess acknowledged right to valid vocations, the right to function publicly, to compensate for inner misery by outer action directed toward important achievement and recognition" (232). But, she argues, in George Eliot a paradox emerges: in *Middlemarch* the male characters are dreamers, not doers, who don't take advantage of this male right to work out their frustrations through activities in the outside world. "However gratifying the ultimate consequences she (Eliot) allows," observes Spacks, citing Fred Vincy's happy marriage, Will's marriage and public success, "Eliot hints a rather patronizing view of men: given rich social possibility, they lack the individual capacity to use it; only when taken in hand by a good woman can they succeed" (233). The women (Mary Garth, Dorothea Brooke) are the ones who do rather than dream. But Spacks doesn't mention *Adam Bede*. In the earlier novel, it seems clear, Adam does make use of the male privilege to do; he takes great solace in his work, continuing to aspire toward achievement despite his misfortunes. "There's nothing but what's bearable as long as a man can work," he says... "The square o' four is sixteen, and you must lengthen your lever in proportion to your weight, is as true when a man's miserable as when he's happy; and the best o'
working is, it gives you a grip hold o' things outside your own lot" (99). But it is also Adam's integrity and strength of character that help him through misfortune, though he has perhaps too much of these for Henry James, who believes that he doesn't appear to suffer sufficiently in his disappointment over Hetty. At any rate, Eliot was indeed interested in how a man overcomes suffering, and in Adam she explores the options of a healthy, intelligent young man with opportunities both in the world where his work will help him toward fulfillment, and inside the self where a firm religious faith and a developing sense of tolerance for others will guide him toward happiness. It is interesting that both of these options are examined in the novel, and that Eliot doesn't leave Adam to his saws and planes and the sole prospect of taking over Jonathan Burge's business, as conventionally satisfying for a man as these things might be considered by some readers. Adam emerges at the end of the novel as a fully sympathetic male (even if the ending is a bit sentimentalized), one who is willing to make concessions. He is a man whose common sense and competence, in addition to his moral scruples, have been enriched with sensitivity and compassion. In *Daniel Deronda* Eliot will take her hero even farther, past mere concessions, to a complete empathy with others and remarkable dedication in his role of friend to women.

A nineteenth-century critic writes of Daniel Deronda:
That some clever critics should find the hero of George Eliot's last novel detestable is easily understood; that some should find him incredible proves no more than that clever critics...have not exhausted the geography of the habitable globe. If "knowledge of the world" consists chiefly in a power of estimating the average force of men's vulgar or selfish appetites, instincts, and interests, it must be admitted that the author of Middlemarch and Felix Holt is not deficient; but there is another knowledge of the world which she possesses, a knowledge which does not exclude from recognition the martyr, the hero, and the saint (Dowden 116).

Daniel Deronda is a male character about whom George Eliot refuses to be simplistic. He is complicated in many ways, his sexual identity figuring among the more outstanding complexities. We find, however, that in attempting to analyze Deronda on this level alone, we encounter great difficulty. Simply to say that he is another example of Eliot's inability to portray male character adequately is futile. We must address the criticism which complains of incompleteness, woodenness, or priggishness not only from the standpoint of Victorian discomfort with a hero's androgyny, but from a much more circumspect view of Eliot's objectives for the novel as a whole.

There exists, of course, critical commentary that aims itself exclusively at Deronda in terms of gender alone--his or that of his creator. F. R. Leavis finds him "a woman's creation" (1965, 82). Sir Leslie Stephen makes a similar complaint: "We are told of Daniel Deronda, upon whose character an extraordinary amount of analysis is expended, that he combined a feminine affectionateness with masculine
inflexibility" (141). Stephen adds that in his opinion, the feminine aspect is more prominent than the masculine. Leavis and Stephen return us, in Jane Miller's words, "to the irreducible difference between a man's hero, who would put achievement before love, and a woman's hero, who would be a rare and extraordinary man, prepared to love and hear her first" (153). The fact is, however, that George Eliot is hesitant to assign traits to masculine and feminine categories; whenever she does it, it is with qualification. Leslie Stephen paraphrases her description of Deronda as it suits him; what Eliot really said of Deronda in Chapter 28 is that he was "moved by an affectionateness such as we are apt to call feminine...while he had a certain inflexibility of judgement, an independence of opinion, held to be rightfully masculine (367, italics mine). Eliot's personal reluctance to assign a gender-specific label to character traits comes through again in Chapter 32 when she mentions Deronda's "plenteous, flexible sympathy" (412, italics mine). Obviously, Eliot does not see inflexibility as an exclusively male trait, or its opposite as purely feminine; in Deronda the two seem to coexist, rendering him neither wholly masculine nor entirely feminine, but human—or, if one prefers, androgynous. Leslie Stephen is greatly annoyed by this quality in Deronda. We have already seen his comment that Deronda is a "schoolgirl's hero," too sensitive and delicate to be a man and plunge into the thick of men's
issues like politics and social reform. Stephen felt that "In the Cambridge atmosphere of Deronda's day there was, I think, a certain element of rough commonsense which might have knocked some of her (Eliot's) hero's nonsense out of him" (Miller 154). Either Stephen neglected to tell Eliot about this facet of Cambridge life when he answered her request for information from him on that very subject, or else upon receiving it she chose to ignore it, desiring perhaps to preserve that part of Deronda's character which would have rejected rough commonsense in favor of what Leslie Stephen calls his "nonsense."

Another cause for the perceived absence of a definite conventional "masculinity" in Daniel Deronda is that, as Jane Miller suggests, George Eliot identified with her protagonist herself. "George Eliot admires Daniel Deronda for his beauty, his kindness, and for being the sort of tolerant, speculative and adventurous intellectual she was herself," writes Miller (129). Because she refused to see people only in terms of masculine or feminine, Eliot was able to identify with her male characters as easily as she could with her female ones, and perhaps with less self-consciousness. Eliot could even find a part of herself in a character as unlikely as Mr. Casaubon. In his biography of Eliot Gordon Haight reports:

(W)hen Harriet Beecher Stowe inquired whether Dorothea's marriage was like her own, George Eliot replied: 'Impossible to conceive of any creature less like Mr. Casaubon than my warm, enthusiastic husband...
I fear—that the-Casaubon-tints are not quite foreign to my own mental complexion. At any rate, I am very sorry for him.' When a young friend put the question direct: 'But from whom, then, did you draw Casaubon?' George Eliot, with a humorous solemnity, which was quite in earnest, nevertheless, pointed to her own heart (450).

Jane Miller also notes the significance of Deronda's role as a son in the novel. His intense sympathy for his mother before he meets her and the pain involved in his discovery of her contribute to that profound interest he possesses in the fate of women which reduces him in William Ernest Henley's eyes to "an incarnation of women's rights." Miller suggests that Deronda is "both Eliot's son and herself in the role of son. He is also...her hero" (130). This is a very interesting conjecture, since it differs from the expectation of Judith Kegan Gardiner, a feminist critic who in an article entitled "The Heroine as Her Author's Daughter" claims that

(They) formation of a female identity is central to female personality, then, and the task of creating an identity seems to differ for men and women in Western society. Moreover, the creation of literary identities tends to reflect the psychologies of their authors. I think it likely, therefore, that women novelists identify with their heroines. For the woman writer, her characters provide a way of creating and rejecting, of trying out various identities, and the most important of these will be formed on the mother-daughter line..." (249-50).

The woman author, having created this literary daughter, becomes a "mother" for her, experiencing her as a "cared-for child." The idea of George Eliot as Daniel Deronda's mother doesn't completely contradict Gardiner's theory; it does expand it, however, to include the mother-son relationship,
and in so doing suggests that a female author can identify with a hero/son as well as with a heroine/daughter. The idea is an interesting one as well in light of writers like Judith Arcana and Jane Lazarre, who write about their hopes for their own sons. This passage from Lazarre's book, *On Loving Men*, reflects what George Eliot may have had in mind when she created the character of Daniel Deronda:

> How do I integrate it all for my two boys? I want them to become men who are firmly grounded in their sexuality. I would like them to be proud lovers. I would like as much, however, for them to be seekers of emotional truths, anxious to nurture those they love... Can they be didactic and powerful in their sex and also be like women? (158)

I have no doubt that had George Eliot been aware of Lazarre's last question, she would have answered it in the affirmative, and if there is anything to Miller's suggestion that Eliot felt motherly toward Daniel Deronda, it is that she did wish him to be a seeker of emotional truths and a nurturer of others. He possesses the power as an educated gentleman to help better the lives of those around him, and he certainly shows no lack of didacticism, but he is also "like women" in his sensitivity to their position and to their feelings.

An area in which Deronda could be seen by traditionalists as less masculine is that of power over women. In this novel Eliot is very interested in exploring the male-female struggle for control, and she pits Deronda against the cold, serpent-like Grandcourt in order to
contrast two different kinds of power men can exert over women. Deronda's power over Gwendolen comes from his personal strengths: his superior knowledge of the world, his understanding of and sympathy for human nature, and his uncharacteristic willingness to give without asking anything in return. Grandcourt, on the other hand, achieves no ultimate triumph over Gwendolen, although she is as much in his power as she is in Deronda's. The source of Grandcourt's power is completely different: caring nothing for people, only for domination of them, he demands Gwendolen's absolute submission. This he manages to achieve superficially through an awful tyranny and manipulation. Grandcourt rules from a position of wealth, status, and a sense of how to wield these external signs of power with sadistic shrewdness in order to get what he wants. Deronda, on the other hand, whose external power base is much smaller by comparison, has only his personal attractions to offer, and these are offered quite unconsciously; there is no bullying, no interested motive, nothing underlying his actions but a desire to help. Deronda's position is the more powerful of the two finally: Gwendolen has rejected Grandcourt entirely while she has turned in complete dependence and trust toward Deronda. The latter is unique to her among men, because he had impressed her as being not her admirer but her superior: in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience, as one woman whose nature is an object of reverential belief may become a new conscience to a man (468).
Deronda's type of power over Gwendolen deviates from the norm widely accepted by the nineteenth century, deriving as it does from an identification with women rather than from a desire to rule them. With this deviation Eliot succeeds in undermining the position of the miller's wife, who on the day Gwendolen and Grandcourt are to be married tells her own daughter, "Oh, child, men's men: gentle or simple, they're much of a muchness" (400). She proceeds to describe Squire Pelton who used to whip his dogs in the presence of his wife in order to frighten her. No, Eliot seems to be saying by showing us Daniel Deronda, not all men have need of violence to assert their power; not all men even need to assert power.

The question, then, of whether or not we can believe in Deronda's masculinity, despite his sensitivity, sympathy, idealism, and refusal to indulge in "normal" male activities such as politicking or subjugating women, is no longer a relevant one if critics can agree that there is more than one way to be a man. What remain are questions regarding other weaknesses in Deronda's character that damage his credibility, and these are related to Eliot's wider objectives for the novel itself. A common complaint about Deronda is that he is idealized and simplified. It must be remembered that Eliot was attempting, among other things, to do something great for the Jews in writing Daniel Deronda. The Jewish part of the novel is written with an awareness of
the anti-Semitism prevalent at the time, and therefore with an eye to undermining it. Because, as she wrote to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Eliot was conscious of the Christian attitude toward Jews, and because she considered it impious and stupid, she "therefore felt urged to treat Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to" (Hardy 13). The result of this intention is that the Jewish characters in Daniel Deronda become simplified so that Eliot's values can be the more clearly stated. The Jews emerge as faultless (with the one exception of Mirah's father), rendered with such an obvious absence of irony that they lack vitality. Eliot overdoes it in attempting to portray the Jews in nothing but a complimentary light to evoke compassion, with the result that Henry James has Pulcheria say "that the Jews in general take themselves much less seriously than that... . George Eliot takes them as a person outside of Judaism--picturesquely" ("Daniel Deronda: A Conversation," 102). In contrast, the Christians in the novel are treated with far more realism, at times mildly satirized, at times violently criticized. Deronda himself, perhaps because he too will be revealed eventually as a Jew, suffers from idealization throughout the novel, even though he is not intended to be seen as narrowly typical of the Jewish people. Mordecai's ideas, which Deronda duly adopts, are radical and were not at all widely accepted by European Jews at the time. Nevertheless, Eliot allows no irony to
creep into her portrayal of Deronda (or of Mordecai or Mirah), as she does with Hans Meyrick and certainly with Gwendolen, and the result is a certain flatness to his character. As Barbara Hardy remarks, "Daniel is a very interesting result of imaginative effort straining and almost, but not quite, succeeding" (15). In the nineteenth century anti-Semitism on the part of readers may have contributed to a dislike of Deronda: why would an educated and privileged young English gentleman abandon all that Christianity has to offer in order to join forces with the resented Jews? But now, when these ideological hostilities have been reduced, or at least covered over, the criticism against Deronda centers mainly on the static nature of his literary representation.

Another cause for Deronda's one-dimensionality is that we almost never see him from the perspective of the other characters. Leslie Stephen is correct in saying that an extraordinary amount of analysis is expended on him; however, it is almost all analysis and always that of Eliot via her narrator. We are allowed to see Grandcourt from almost everyone's point of view: Gwendolen's, Deronda's, Lydia Glasher's, Mr. Gascoigne's, Mr. Lush's, even his dogs'. Whenever we do get a view of Deronda other than Eliot's, it is as idealized as the author's; take, for instance, the opinions of him held by Hans Meyrick and his sisters. Daniel Deronda suffers far more than Adam Bede for
being "too good." The fact that he has no vanity, as Pulcheria points out in James's "Conversation," does not leave room for much character development.

Deronda's didacticism, another weakness pointed out by James's relentless Pulcheria, proves to be problematic as well. His speeches to Gwendolen always emerge too readily, as if they had been prepared beforehand. They are long, inflated, and maddeningly self-righteous pieces of rhetoric at times, in spite of their undeniable truths. He displays in the following interchange a remarkable way of producing immediate answers out of what seems to be a very well-prepared code. Gwendolen has asked him "Do you never find fault with the world or with others?" to which he replies

'Oh, yes. When I am in a grumbling mood.'
'And hate people? Confess you hate them when they stand in your way--when their gain is your loss? That is your own phrase, you know.'
'We are often standing in each other's way when we can't help it. I think it is stupid to hate people on that ground.'
'But if they injure you and could have helped it?' said Gwendolen, with a hard intensity unaccountable in incidental talk like this.
Deronda wondered at her choice of subjects. A painful impression arrested his answer a moment, but at last he said, with a graver, deeper intonation, 'Why, then, after all, I prefer my place to theirs' (464-65).

Sometimes Deronda's little sermons do border on the priggishness Pulcheria finds disturbing, as in this passage where he is condemning gambling to Gwendolen:

'And besides, there is something revolting to me in raking a heap of money together, and internally chuckling over it, when others are feeling the loss of it. I should even call it base, if it were more than an exceptional lapse. There are enough inevitable
turns of fortune which force us to see that our gain is
another's loss:—that is one of the ugly aspects of
life. One would like to reduce it as much as one
could, not get amusement out of exaggerating it.'
Deronda's voice had gathered some indignation while he
was speaking (383).

It is one thing, and an acceptable thing, for Deronda to
function as role model or even, much to Pulcheria's disgust,
as "a lay father-confessor," to Gwendolen, to fill the role
of rescuer and protector of women. It is another thing,
however, for Eliot to overdress him in the costume of Prince
Camaralzaman. It is only at times, but occasionally Deronda
could be accused of overacting.

It is clear, however, that, as James's Constantius puts
it, Eliot "meant to do things very handsomely" for Deronda.
Barbara Hardy agrees, though she doesn't accept Constantius'
view that Eliot intended to make Deronda a faultless human
being. "It is possible," she says, "to list various
qualities in Deronda's make-up which show that George Eliot
was trying to make him complicated, moving, changing, aware
of the problems of being a model and a hero" (18). She
cites Deronda's jealousy of Hans, his chafing under the
wrong kind of admiration, his ambivalent feelings about
lower-class Jews, his lack of direction due to an excessive
openmindedness and willingness to sympathize with too many
causes. To this list we could add that reserve he feels
when it comes to opening up to other people:

Things went well with Daniel in his new world,
extcept that a boy with whom he was at once inclined to
strike up a close friendship talked to him a great deal
about his home and parents, and seemed to expect a like expansiveness in return. Daniel immediately shrank into reserve, and this experience remained a check on his naturally strong bent towards the formation of intimate friendships (213).

What makes this natural reserve especially interesting in light of how it complicates and enriches Deronda is that he himself sees how, combined with his inability to identify wholeheartedly with any one cause, it keeps him on the outside of the community. There is a loneliness in Deronda's hero status which he himself finds painful:

Still more he wanted to escape standing as a critic outside the activities of men, stiffened into the ridiculous attitude of self-assigned superiority (526).

Eliot makes a brilliant stroke when she humanizes Deronda with the following insight into his loneliness; it is perhaps the spot in the novel where she is best able to penetrate the consciousness of a male who is trying to do what males typically do--show strength--but who is also a human being with emotional needs:

Perhaps the ferment was all the stronger in Deronda's mind because he had never had a confidant to whom he could open himself on these delicate subjects. He had always been leaned upon instead of being invited to lean. Sometimes he had longed for the sort of friend to whom he might possibly unfold his experience: a young man like himself who sustained a private grief and was not too confident about his own career; speculative enough to understand every moral difficulty, yet socially susceptible, as he himself was, and having every outward sign of equality either in bodily or spiritual wrestling;--for he had found it impossible to reciprocate confidences with one who looked up to him (526-7).

The passage above reveals Eliot's understanding and acceptance of the limits of male strength and insight into a
vulnerability that probably would have elicited Sir Leslie Stephen's judgment of Deronda as a man who should have had this nonsense roughly knocked out of him at Cambridge.

That Eliot's attempt to portray a complicated, moving, changing hero did not succeed entirely must be attributed, not to her failure to conform to norms for masculine behavior in a fictional character, but to the problem she faced in trying to create a Jew, a character that would evoke snobbish and prejudiced responses from English readers, in anticipation of which she had to compensate by portraying her hero as a shining representative of a class of people she felt had been wrongly maligned. The result is that Daniel Deronda overplays his part of altruistic Jewish knight, rescuer of unhappy women, and deliverer of his people.

Woman-identified though he might be throughout the novel, Eliot finally releases Deronda into manhood. His achievements will take shape in the real world (though Eliot leaves undefined the exact nature of his mission to "the East" so that only one familiar with the events in Palestine in the nineteenth century can fill in the gap); his wife Mirah—as loving, submissive, and modest as Deronda's mother was not—will come along for the ride, having readily abandoned any aspirations she might have had toward an artistic career of her own. How sweetly and readily she accepts the criticism that her voice is too small for the
stage! There is the vaguely ominous note sounded by the
Princess Halm-Eberstein when she observes the resemblance
between her son and her father, the tyrannical Jew, "who
cared more about a grandson to come than he did about me"
(698). Deronda is what his grandfather would have wanted,
"a grandson who shall have a true Jewish heart." It was
Daniel Charisi's conviction that "every Jew should rear his
family as if he hoped that a Deliverer might spring from it"
(726), and his grandson, it appears, will fulfill this wish
quite adequately. However, as his mother notes, Daniel is a
softer version of old Charisi; there is also something of
his own father in him, and Ephraim was a gentle man devoted
to his wife's happiness. In any case, Deronda parts from
his mother for the last time feeling "like an older man"
(731), and as Jane Miller observes,

The son is at last freed from the mother and from the
disablingly feminine sympathies gathered from his
search for her throughout his childhood and his youth.
His mother's revelations—about herself, about his
Jewishness, and his destiny—expel him from her
influence, become a second birth. George Eliot has
held on to the hero who is most herself, but has, just
in time, launched him on his male destiny: an act
which repudiates the mother as it exoneration her (133).
Clarissa was suspended on one side of Brook Street; Sir John Buckhurst, the old Judge on the other, with the car between them (Sir John had laid down the law for years and liked a well-dressed woman)... (Mrs. Dalloway 24)

The old judge Sir John Buckhurst makes only this brief appearance in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, but he deserves more than our passing glimpse, for he represents the whole collection of authoritative patriarchs who figure throughout Woolf's fiction and non-fiction, ranging from the comparatively benign to the radically malevolent. Woolf's male characters were not greatly attacked by critics for lacking authenticity, and Woolf herself never expressed a specific fear that they would be, although she was consistently and profoundly anxious about the general critical reception of her work. She distrusted men as a rule, however, according to her nephew and biographer Quentin Bell, and her negative feelings are manifest in most of her depictions of men.

Males who abuse their positions of authority are the
focus of Three Guineas. In this lengthy and arduously footnoted essay, Woolf puts forward the premise that behind the evils of Western society stand males of the privileged classes, men who profit from the superiority they gain by keeping others down. She sees the family itself, with its father clearly in a position to dominate and dictate, as the prototype for the larger yet identical pattern that is found on the level of society itself. Woolf saw lawyers, judges, doctors, and politicians as "fathers in public, massed together in societies, in professions" (1838, 138). In A Room of One's Own, Woolf sees family dynamics as the seedbed for male abuse (of the female in particular). She speculates as to what probably would have happened to Shakespeare's sister, if he had had one: craving education and a literary career like her brother's, she is told to mend the stockings and mind the stew; opposing marriage to an undesirable man, she is beaten by her father. When she runs away from him, it is only to meet with further violence at the hands of males in the outside world. Seduced and impregnated by one of them, she has no recourse but to commit suicide. Several pages earlier Woolf refers to Trevelyan's History of England in which he shows how a woman's lot under the rule of men shows no improvement as she moves from daughter to wife: as "rebellious" daughter she was "liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room"; as wife she was subjected to a similar treatment,
since wife-beating "was a recognised right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low" (72). Most males in Virginia Woolf's writing, even those who appear at first harmless, belong to this class of tyrants. As she has Terence Hewet (an unusual male in The Voyage Out who adopts a female perspective) point out: "Consider what a bully the ordinary man is" (212).

Looked at one by one, the male characters in Virginia Woolf's fiction almost all serve to support Hewet's claim. Fathers, for instance, "are oppressive or ineffectual. In either case they manage to burden, demean or disappoint their women" writes Beverly Ann Schlack (53). After the death of her own father, Woolf wrote these words in her diary:

Father's birthday. He would have been 96, 96, yes, today; and could have been 96, like other people one has known; but mercifully was not. His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing; no books;--inconceivable (135).

It is therefore possible to imagine that it was Leslie Stephen's death that released Woolf from a certain degree of bondage, allowing her to create in her fiction a father like Mr. Ramsay, who bullies his wife and oppresses his children. Mr. Ramsay is portrayed with a great deal of complexity; while all the characters in To the Lighthouse acknowledge his tyranny, Cam and Mrs. Ramsay in particular also reverence him for his knowledge and his brave spirit. Cam is hopelessly torn between ambivalent feelings. She resents
the fact that she and James "had been forced; they had been bidden. He had borne them down once more with his gloom and his authority, making them do his bidding" (246); yet, in spite of her "compact" with James to resist their father to the end, she resents her brother as well for not suffering from "this pressure and division of feeling, this extraordinary temptation" (252-3).

For no one attracted her more; his hands were beautiful, and his feet, and his voice, and his words, and his haste, and his temper, and his oddity, and his saying straight out before everyone, we perish, each alone, and his remoteness (253).

And yet, Cam cannot help but remember her father's "crass blindness and tyranny," his way of saying "Submit to me." These things are impossible to reconcile, making it painful for Cam to resolve her feelings for her father, much as it was for Virginia Woolf herself, upon whose own father Mr. Ramsay is so clearly based.

Sons and brothers, too, evoke resentment in Woolf, as illustrated in the way Cam feels about James. Terence Hewet tells Rachel Vinrace in The Voyage Out that "the daughters have to give way to the sons; the sons have to be educated" (212). Later Woolf expands upon this theme with much more biting irony in Three Guineas when she talks about "Arthur's Education Fund," the pot into which the family money goes for the sake of sending the son to school while the daughter remains uneducated. Husbands prove problematical as well, as Beverly Ann Schlack has noted:
Woolf's lover-husband figures exhibit dual potentials for positive unity (through love and companionship) and negative tyranny. If the lover or husband resembles the father, he is the familiar tyrant; if he offers liberation from the primal tyrant he is a species of savior... (56)

Which one the husband will be, tyrant or savior, forms a primary dilemma in Night and Day and The Voyage Out, where the respective heroines worry over whether they will be able to maintain independence within marriage. Clarissa Dalloway seems to have solved the problem by marrying the simple and mostly innocuous Richard, who allows her that license in marriage so crucial to one's privacy while he also provides her with the physical means to fulfill her personal goals. However, even Richard displays signs of a tendency to rule: "No decent man ought to let his wife visit a deceased wife's sister" (113). Mr. Ramsay, whom I shall discuss in far more detail shortly, is an even clearer example of a despotic husband.

On the level of society itself, males are seen by Woolf as spreading tyranny even farther. In addition to judges like Sir John Buckhurst who lay down the law, there are lawyers, constables, and others who enforce it. There are policemen, like the one in Jacob's Room, whose "face is stiff from force of will, and lean from the efforts of keeping it so. When his right arm rises...not an ounce is diverted into sudden impulses, sentimental regrets, wire-drawn distinctions" (156). There is the policeman in Mrs. Dalloway who watches carefully to see that Moll Pratt
doesn't toss a bunch of roses into the street out of sheer harmless exuberance. Of Budge the constable with his nightstick in *Between the Acts*, Schlack writes: "It is Woolf's ultimate father figure; authority and tyranny, rules and regulations, domination and repression, the superego rampant (to say nothing of the phallic implications)—all combine in this extraordinary figure" (60). There are, moving on, other males who represent an inflexible and oppressive system of one kind or another: doctors like Holmes and Bradshaw in *Mrs. Dalloway*, whose real-life counterparts Woolf despised for their incompetence and arrogance; clergymen like Reverend Bax in *The Voyage Out* who combine religion and chauvinism; scholars like Hughling Elliot and William Pepper of *The Voyage Out*, Charles Tansley of *To the Lighthouse*, and Professor Brierly of *Mrs. Dalloway*, all of whom use their knowledge to try to prove themselves superior to others. In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf icily pokes fun at scholars and professors when she refers to the "seventieth study of Keats and his use of Miltonic inversion which old Professor Z and his like are now inditing" (94), or when she sees "Professor X rush for his measuring rods to prove himself 'superior'" (92). Politicians, too, receive scathing treatment in Woolf: men like Hugh Whitbread in *Mrs. Dalloway* are handled roughly, undercut mercilessly. The sexist scholar Charles Tansley himself ends up in politics, as ridiculous in his
politicking as he was in his scholarly pursuits. The sentence in *To the Lighthouse* that describes him as a politician denouncing something or condemning somebody echoes a similar one that reveals the probable irrelevance of his dissertation subject, "the influence of something upon somebody" (22).

Virginia Woolf experienced herself as very much the victim of men who take advantage of their powerful positions within a male-oriented system. Most painfully she felt oppressed by her own father, the moody and unpredictable Victorian patriarch who, in spite of being liberal-minded and generous in some areas, when it came to his daughters, was unfairly narrow in others. Though he allowed and encouraged Virginia and her sister Vanessa to pursue their artistic interests, for instance, he insisted on certain points of "decorum" (such as forbidding them, as women, to smoke cigarettes). They also had to fulfill certain household obligations which were rendered more difficult than necessary by Leslie Stephen's volatile temper and excessive demands. It is out of the struggle between the daughter to release herself from the father that two of Virginia Woolf's male characters are born: Mr. Ramsay of *To the Lighthouse* is the patriarchal tyrant modelled after Leslie Stephen, while Septimus Warren Smith of *Mrs. Dalloway* is, at least in part, a projection of Virginia Woolf herself who felt oppressed by a patriarchal world.
After reading the descriptions of Virginia Woolf's father in Quentin Bell's biography, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, one is left with no question that Mr. Ramsay of *To the Lighthouse* is a literary reproduction of Sir Leslie Stephen. However, for confirmation, should any still be needed once one has read about Stephen, we have the diary entry from May of 1925 in which Woolf clearly sets out her intention regarding the novel:

I'm now all on the strain to stop journalism and get on to *To the Lighthouse*. This is going to be fairly short; to have father's character done complete in it, and mother's; and St. Ives; and childhood; and all the usual things I try to put in--life, death, etc. But the centre is father's character, sitting in a boat, reciting *We perished, each alone*, while he crushes a dying mackerel (75).

The similarities between Leslie Stephen and his daughter's fictional recreation of him are almost too numerous to mention. Like Mr. Ramsay, Stephen was a great walker. Bell reports that "Leslie's favourite exercise was walking; he would sometimes go for what he called a 'potter,' covering thirty miles or so" (33). In the first section of *To the Lighthouse* Mr. Ramsay recalls how at "Andrew's age he used to walk about the country all day long, with nothing but a biscuit in his pocket," and then announces that tomorrow "he would be off for a day's walk if the weather held" (105). Both men are ambitious scholars, and Woolf captures both the pattern of her father's methodical mind and his work on the Dictionary of National Biography in Mr. Ramsay's internal monologue regarding his own mind and its intellectual
pursuits:

It was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters, one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say, the letter Q. He reached Q. Very few people in the whole of England ever reach Q... But after Q?... On then, on to R (53, 55).

Leslie Stephen, like Mr. Ramsay, possessed strange habits regarding social intercourse. He could remain completely silent throughout an entire dinner party, or might even simply get up and leave the room. Even worse, he was known to burst out with an impolite remark like "Why won't that young man go?" if he were bored by a guest (Bell 74). Mr. Ramsay, too, upsets his wife with his churlishness at her dinner party when he makes no secret of his annoyance with Mr. Carmichael for requesting more soup. Mr. Ramsay, like his real-life counterpart, recites poetry out loud and suffers from bouts of melancholy, self-reproach, and a sense of futility. The scene in which he comes to his wife, full of remorse for having been surly and asking for reassurance and pity, again likens him to Leslie Stephen. Bell writes of Stephen's similar behavior to his stepdaughter, Stella, after the death of his wife:

Stella was, indeed, his legitimate prop. She accepted her position without question. She was ready to comfort, to console, to order dinner, to buy coal or underclothes, to chaperon the girls, to keep the house running without alarming expense, to make all social arrangements and in particular to marshal the long procession of sympathising females who came to be closeted with Leslie, to listen, to condole and then,
emerging red-eyed and garrulous from his room, came
with more comfort, more tears and more advice for
Stella. All this was given to her as a duty and
tacitly accepted; but in that household and at that
season far more was required of her; she had to listen
to her stepfather's confessions and to absolve him
(41).

Bell writes that Stephen needed absolution for the
"differences" between himself and Julia: "He had not always
been kind, not always considerate; and at the memory of such
faults he had groaned and cried aloud" (41). In spite of
such selfish and melodramatic scenes, Woolf found that at
times she had to excuse her father because of those
qualities in him she admired; in a letter to her friend Vita
Sackville-West she wrote: "I have a great devotion for him
—what a disinterested man, how high-minded, how tender to
me, and fierce and intolerable" (Pippett 14). Like Cam in
To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf had to confront the
difficulty of being fair to her father while still remaining
faithful to her own vision.

It has been pointed out (Pippett 110) that Ridley
Ambrose of The Voyage Out recalls Leslie Stephen. This is
true; he also therefore serves as a prototype for Mr.
Ramsay. He must be teased out of a bad mood by his wife,
who must also cover up for his embarrassing outbursts, as he
(like Leslie Stephen) often says aloud exactly what he
thinks. Ambrose is a scholar, always preoccupied with his
books, and, like Leslie Stephen, objects to women smoking.
All three men, Leslie Stephen and his two literary
counterparts, in fact share quite a large degree of male chauvinism. Stephen did not believe in formally educating girls, and Woolf greatly resented his treatment of her as excessively delicate when he allowed no such mollycoddling of his sons. We have seen, in his views regarding George Eliot's male characters, that Leslie Stephen tolerated no hint of physical or emotional weakness in men:

Any tendency in his sons to be dreamy and impractical distressed him and must, he considered, be dealt with...not by brutal external disciplines and strict rules of formal conduct, but by an inner understanding of the ideal of true manliness. No sentimental humbug, of course; no sanctimonious self-righteousness—prigs are an abomination. Above all, no laziness, no faltering on the road to perfection (Pippett 11).

From this description of what Stephen considered "the ideal of true manliness," it becomes eminently clear why he objected to Daniel Deronda. Returning, however, to his expectations of women, it is clear that while Leslie Stephen allowed his daughters to pursue their respective interests as long as they were serious, he was still experienced by them as one whose masculine prejudices demanded concessions. After all, despite his encouragement and support of Vanessa's painting and Virginia's writing, the fact remains that he opposed giving women the vote.

Mr. Ramsay is blatantly a sexist, rivalled only by his disciple Charles Tansley, who derives great pleasure from proclaiming that "women can't write, women can't paint" (130). Mr. Ramsay, very similarly, likes to think that his wife is not clever, and he exaggerates her ignorance and
simplicity. He appreciates Minta Doyle for the same reason. Mr. Ramsay is incensed by his wife’s refusal to acknowledge hard fact (though this characteristic in her is exactly what he needs in order to achieve a balance in his life, a point to which we will return): "The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women’s minds enraged him" (50). He can’t bear that she allows herself to fly in the face of facts, teaches his children to hope for what is not possible. For her part, Mrs. Ramsay cannot understand the relentless pursuit of truth, even at the expense of other people’s feelings. This split is at the heart of their conflict, although they patch over it so well that at times their relationship becomes an object of envy to others. Cam, too, confirms for Mr. Ramsay his conviction that "women are always like that; the vagueness of their minds is hopeless; it was a thing he had never been able to understand; but so it was" (249). But these rigid views about what women are--always expressed with the underlying assumption that men are the complete opposite--cause Mr. Ramsay some difficulty. That he so deeply experiences the anxiety of standing at the edge of an abyss is the result of his inability to do what Mrs. Ramsay does: fabricate a more pleasant version of things and somehow fit it over the threatening aspects of reality; to create, in other words, an alternative world. This world is necessarily a more vaguely defined one; only Mrs. Ramsay can transform a
frightening animal skull into a bird's nest, a beautiful mountain, or a garden, because only she can tolerate vagueness, a blurring of boundaries. What Mr. Ramsay deeply regrets is that his clear sight of the real world prevents him from doing what he most wants to do, which is to protect Mrs. Ramsay from the void they both know is there. He is aware, in fact, that he makes things worse for her ("He was irritable—he was touchy. He had lost his temper over the Lighthouse," 99). And he stares "into the hedge, into its intricacy, its darkness," which in the passage that follows comes to align itself with the wedge-shaped core of darkness that is the essence of Mrs. Ramsay, the source of her strength and stability. It is she, ironically, who has the power to protect, and not her husband. Mr. Ramsay's world of fact and Mrs. Ramsay's world of vision translate themselves into a metaphor of sterility and fecundity:

Mrs. Ramsay...seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray,...and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare (58).

True to their respective images, Mr. Ramsay never notices the flowers in the garden, while Mrs. Ramsay, though near-sighted, never misses a blossom. The difference between the two types of vision is more than a matter of literal long- or short-sightedness, however; it is tied to something deeper, as Josephine O'Brien Schaefer makes clear, in the way women create a world of infinite possibilities as
opposed to the way men impose order and limit:

These different attitudes seriously alter the perspective of the minds in which they function. The man tends to grow unaware of the objects that are the basis of his constructs. He tends to become dry, weary, tied in knots from his constant sojourn in the area of the quintessential. Mr. Ramsay's insatiable appetite for sympathy, comfort, attention results from the unappeased whole man; for his intellectual occupations require a degree of specialization that necessarily starves his senses, his emotions. That fatal sterility, which has been so poorly understood by Virginia Woolf's critics, is not a permanent attribute of men, but an "occupational disease." From Virginia Woolf's middle-class view of masculine occupations (generations of lawyers, dons, civil servants), men's activities are peculiarly unrestorative (75-6).

There is no question that both attitudes, both kinds of vision, are valid and necessary—the ending of To the Lighthouse attests to that—but kept so firmly separate from one another, the male and female visions cannot interact to support one another. The unsuccessful interaction between the Ramsays is characterized by the fact that no matter how much sympathy and support Mrs. Ramsay showers over her husband ("...she assured him, beyond a shadow of a doubt, by her laugh, her poise, her competence...that it was real; the house was full; the garden blowing" (60), he never seems completely at rest, always returning to dip the brass beak into the fountain again, until the fountain is depleted. And Mrs. Ramsay, as we have seen, is often hurt rather than protected by the imposition of hard fact on her world of infinite possibilities. So the relationship between them is crisscrossed with admiration marred by pity, respect tainted by condescension; love within marriage is seen very
ambivalently at best. The worst relations, thinks Lily Briscoe, are between men and women (139).

Without a doubt Mr. Ramsay's worst characteristic has to do with that part of him which is missing and which he seeks to restore by demanding it from women. "And then, and then--this was one of those moments when an enormous need urged him, without being conscious what it was, to approach any woman, to force them, he did not care how, his need was so great, to give him what he wanted: sympathy" (225). This need manifests itself again and again: with Mrs. Ramsay when he wants her to tell him that she loves him or that he is in fact a great thinker, and with Lily, to whom he also turns for sympathy, when with his sighs he communicates to her that she must pity and reassure him: "Look at him, he seemed to be saying, look at me; and indeed, all the time he was feeling, Think of me, think of me" (227). The other characters notice this disability in Mr. Ramsay as well: William Bankes and Lily Briscoe find it "rather pitiable and distasteful" and wonder why "so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life" (70). Mrs. Ramsay recognizes and fulfills her husband's need: "Charles Tansley thought him the greatest metaphysician of all time, she said. But he must have more than that. He must have sympathy. He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life; was needed; not here only, but all over the world" (59). Although she meets his need by telling him what he
wants to hear, Mrs. Ramsay finds it disconcerting. She does not like that people should see Mr. Ramsay come to her so openly for reassurance, "for then people said he depended on her, when they must know that of the two he was infinitely the more important" (62). Lily and Cam both resent the way Mr. Ramsay approaches them so transparently for the same kind of support he asked of his wife. Lily always senses his nearness as a "bearing down," resents his tendency to dramatize his need for sympathy: "Would they never come, she asked, for she could not sustain this enormous weight of sorrow, support these heavy draperies of grief (he had assumed a pose of extreme decrepitude; he even tottered a little as he stood there) a moment longer" (277). Cam sees through what her father is doing when, in the boat on the way to the lighthouse, he determines to make her smile at him. "He clutched his fingers, and determined that his voice and his face and all the quick expressive gestures which had been at his command making people pity him and praise him all these years should subdue themselves" (250). Though he has chosen not to put into play his usual strategy, Mr. Ramsay's decision to say something simple rather, to ask about the puppy, is just as transparent as his usual approach. Should Cam give in and respond to her father's entreaty ("forgive me, care for me," 251), or should she remain loyal to her brother? At this point, caught between the needs of two men, she chooses to be
silent.

To find a way of resolving all the complexities of this male character was an extremely difficult task for Virginia Woolf. For all his acts of chauvinism in the novel, recognized by the women and resented by them, there are always parallel aspects of his character that draw women to him. Mrs. Ramsay reverences his greatness, Lily admires his boots which suddenly represent for her his charm—"an infinite pathos"—and Cam is attracted by his indomitable spirit and his power to protect her. In her ambivalence, so similar to Cam's, Woolf cannot choose to be silent. She must make some kind of statement about this multi-faceted male, so potentially charming and yet so alarmingly overbearing, that will sum up for her her feelings regarding her own father and men like him. Woolf allows this statement to be made by Lily Briscoe the artist, for whom it becomes an artistic problem. Lily has incorporated Mrs. Ramsay into her painting; but it is not yet complete.

And as if she had something she must share, yet could hardly leave her easel, so full her mind was of what she was thinking, of what she was seeing, Lily went past Mr. Carmichael holding her brush to the edge of the lawn. Where was that boat now? And Mr. Ramsay? She wanted him (300).

Meanwhile, a resolution has taken place in the boat carrying James, Cam, and Mr. Ramsay to the lighthouse. Amazingly, Mr. Ramsay has surprised his children, who expect at any moment one of his typical intimidating outbursts of anger or boredom or irritation, by becoming a simple fisherman
quietly slicing cheese and eating bread as the boat approaches its destination. Cam feels protected, James gratified by his father's praise. Mr. Ramsay does not ask of them anything in particular, though now they are ready to give it. He leads them bravely, with dignity, to the lighthouse, which has become a symbol of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay combined:

"It will rain," (James) remembered his father saying. "You won't be able to go to the Lighthouse."

The Lighthouse was then a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye, that opened suddenly, and softly in the evening. Now—

James looked at the Lighthouse. He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it?

No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing. The other Lighthouse was true too (276-7).

The visions of both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay have come together finally, each supporting the truth of the other. In spite of the detractions of each, they must be brought together to create both artistic unity and peace of mind. Lily has overcome her conflicts with Mrs. Ramsay and has captured her in art; now she must ignore what annoys her, what frightens her about the man, Mr. Ramsay, the "lion seeking whom he could devour" (233), and bring him too into her painting:

With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision (310).

When pulling her feelings about men together into one
male character, that character being based so completely on her own father, Virginia Woolf had to mitigate somewhat her portrayal of the archetypal tyrant. Quentin Bell captures Woolf's ambivalence as he describes the guilt she experienced after Stephen's death, guilt that helped to blur her negative feelings for him:

She had never done enough for him; he had been lonely and she had never told him how much she valued him. At night she dreamed that he was alive again and that she could say all the things that she had meant to say. When they went for walks she kept thinking that they would find him waiting for them when they got home. His faults were forgotten, his kindness, his quickness, his intelligence were not (87).

However, when Leslie Stephen himself is pushed to the background, Woolf shows us a much more harshly drawn picture of tyrants. Bringing herself into the foreground and allowing herself to identify with one of the male characters, she is able to show us in more detail the victim of tyranny. This she did in Mrs. Dalloway, the novel that precedes To the Lighthouse.

We have already mentioned the old judge Sir John Buckhurst in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway and how, abstracted, he is one representative of the male collective in Woolf's work. Although Sir John appears only fleetingly in one part of a sentence, he lives on within the other men who figure more often and more prominently in the novel. He is, in fact, along with Hugh Whitbread, Dr. Holmes, and most significantly Sir William Bradshaw, a representative of civilization, the "brute with the red nostrils," the
"monster grubbing at the roots," all that silences, oppresses, and eventually annihilates the individual. And he is always male. The image projected in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter encapsulates Virginia Woolf's notion of a sharp division in the world of which she writes. "Suspended" on one side of the street is Clarissa Dalloway with her flowers, her parties, her need to sustain life by bringing isolated people together without damaging their individual integrity; facing her is Sir John, with his life-deadening laws and judgments, one of a group of men who force people's souls. The car which separates them serves in Mrs. Dalloway as one of the central symbols of the sinister power and authority belonging to civilization and its institutions, those aspects of society which keep people divided. Lee Edwards captures the essence of the divided male and female vision in her study of heroism in Mrs. Dalloway:

Thus, in Mrs. Dalloway, wars; madness; the love of suffering and pain; adherence to a hierarchical, authoritarian set of abstract values and organizational modes are linked to death, and frequently, if not exclusively, to a particular notion of cultural "masculinity." Conversely, parties; roses; joy; and the celebration of the unforced diversity of life are interwoven and embodied in various female figures, particularly Clarissa (255).

It is the effort of Clarissa Dalloway to overcome division by giving parties that lies at the center of the novel; it is her struggle with the danger she perceives outside ("she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to
live even one day" (11)) as well as inside herself ("for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which...had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her spine; gave her physical pain..." (17)) that motivates her to make her offering, to open up her life to others and provide for them a haven where they can make human contact, in spite of a profound fear of being herself made vulnerable by this contact with penetration and destruction. "Why, after all, did she do these things," she asks herself at a moment of fear and doubt at her party;

Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders! Better anything, better brandish one's torch and hurl it to earth than taper and dwindle away... (255)

But Clarissa goes on giving parties, in spite of her own need for privacy, and also in spite of male opposition. She knows, for instance, that neither Richard nor Peter understand or appreciate her type of offering. Richard says he will not let her give these parties if they worry her ("it was a very odd thing how much Clarissa minded about her parties, he thought", 180). And Peter considers her party-giving trivial, calling her "the perfect hostess," thinking her a snob who enjoys imposing herself and hobnobbing with great names. Clarissa defends herself and her parties in this internal debate:

But suppose Peter said to her, "Yes, yes, but your parties--what's the sense of your parties?" all she could say was (and nobody could be expected to understand): They're an offering; which sounded horribly vague. But who was Peter to make out that
life was all plain sailing?— Peter always in love, always in love with the wrong woman? What's your love? she might say to him. And she knew his answer; how it is the most important thing in the world and no woman possibly understood it. Very well. But could any man understand what she meant either? about life? She could not imagine Peter or Richard taking the trouble to give a party for no reason whatever (184).

Here again, Clarissa stands suspended on one side of the street, Peter and Richard on the other. Separating them in this case is the difference between what men and women deem important. Peter compares the texture of his life to that of Clarissa's as he watches Clarissa and her maid prepare for the party:

And this has been going on all the time! he [Peter] thought; week after week; Clarissa's life; while I--he thought; and at once everything seemed to radiate from him; journeys; rides; quarrels; adventures; bridge parties; love affairs; work; work, work! (65)

Work is the male privilege, as was pointed out by Patricia Meyer Spacks in the previous section and by Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse ("He always had his work to fall back on," she muses, thinking of her husband, 91). It is also the male ideal. Peter can always turn to his accomplishments in the "real" world when he wants to regain his foothold in a conflict with Clarissa. Here he almost succeeds, pulling out his old horn-handled knife, in making Clarissa feel "frivolous; empty-minded; a mere silly chatterbox" (65). But she, too, is able to call up in her defense the things that are important to her--her husband, Elizabeth, her self--as she takes up her needle to "beat off the enemy." Peter and Clarissa retreat from one another; Peter, with his turn
for mechanics, withdraws into the world where he can admire the motor-cars, while Clarissa calls out after him, "Remember my party to-night!", her own talent for keeping people together barely acknowledged over the sound of the traffic into which Peter is advancing.

The reader cannot help being aware of the gap in understanding between men and women in Mrs. Dalloway. "Women," Peter thinks to himself, "don't know what passion is. They don't know the meaning of it to men" (121). And men, jealous of that pure, "completely disinterested" feeling women share with other women, blunder into the middle of it to break it up with their hostility, causing women to resent them as an unwanted intrusion. Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary: "If one could be friendly with women, what a pleasure—the relationship so secret and private compared with relations to men" (67). Quentin Bell also mentions this aspect of Virginia Woolf's personality in his biography:

What they (Virginia and Vanessa) really needed was a guide, not a tyrant but a friend, not a man but a woman—a woman with the tact, the imagination, the kindliness that could rob Mayfair of its terrors and make Kensington delightful (80).

Again in her diary Woolf writes that "the male atmosphere is disconcerting to me. Do they distrust one? despise one?" (12) When Peter intrudes on a special moment between Clarissa and Sally Seton, Clarissa feels "It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness!
It was shocking; it was horrible!" (53). The hostility caused by this lack of understanding and respect for what the other feels can bring men and women to the brink of emotional violence. The scene between Peter and Clarissa in which they both feel the need to arm themselves, Peter with his penknife, Clarissa with her needle, is full of battle imagery. Clarissa reminds Peter of the past and of his pain at being rejected by her; Peter counters by announcing that he is in love now with a woman in India, wounding Clarissa's ego momentarily. There is even a winner and a loser: Peter, conquered, bursts into tears, and a victorious Clarissa comforts him, suddenly feeling "extraordinarily at ease with him and lighthearted" (70).

In spite of the pronounced distinction Virginia Woolf makes between a male and a female vision, there does exist, she feels, a meeting place for the two at least among people who know each other well, even if it doesn't come close to what women are capable of achieving among themselves. As Jeremy Hawthorn notes, Woolf's "interest in androgyny, and her firm belief in the complementarity of masculine and feminine characteristics, should remind us that any discussion of sexuality in her novels should proceed with care and caution" (1975, 49). There is a way, for instance, for male and female to coexist in a pleasurable peace, as Richard and Clarissa do. Clarissa has rejected Peter because with him there would have been no privacy of the
soul; he would have demanded that they share everything; there would have been a threatened loss of self. On the other hand, with Richard, Clarissa has what she deems crucial in a relationship: "For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him" (10). Clarissa also needs Richard's "adorable, divine simplicity...which made him go and do the thing while she and Peter frittered their time away bickering" (182). This is not to say that nothing has been sacrificed in Clarissa's choosing Richard over Peter; very specifically, passion has been let go, and Clarissa has gone up to sleep alone in a little attic room, having "failed" Richard sexually several times. She also acknowledges a feeling of loss at being simply Mrs. Richard Dalloway. Yet Richard and Clarissa both find at moments that they are quite happy; they have achieved a level of togetherness where Richard knows Clarissa understands that he loves her without his saying so, where Clarissa is grateful to be able to "crouch like a bird" under Richard's protection yet be free enough to pursue the things that are important to her. Richard and Clarissa have achieved that complementarity that Woolf describes in A Room of One's Own when she discusses the creative process that produces a great work of fiction. What she says here can be applied as well to the creation of a workable marriage such as the one
Clarissa and Richard share:

Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the act of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated... . There must be freedom and there must be peace (181-2).

So between a man and a woman living together, day in day out, there can be understanding and acceptance; it seems that some separation is in fact crucial to the success of the relationship. However, on a larger social level, that of Woolf's "civilization," the split between a male and a female consciousness is much harder to reconcile, its effects much more devastating than an imagined struggle with a penknife and a needle. One who is caught in the destruction wrought by the division on this level is Septimus Warren Smith. With this character Woolf shows how the feminine sensibility, trivialized by the men of the British upper class when it is embodied in Clarissa with her celebration of human life, of nature, of poetry, and of communion, is brutally attacked in a man. The society inhabited by Clarissa and Septimus simply does not allow for reconciliation between the manly and the unmanly; so that a sensitive, gentle, poetry-loving male like Septimus who cannot cope with violence by keeping the proverbial stiff upper lip of the British gentleman is judged a complete failure and hounded until, paradoxically, he must commit suicide in order to preserve himself. Although Septimus is rightly seen by critics as the other side of Clarissa
Dalloway's personality, the insane half that goes hand in hand with the carefully balanced self she presents to the world, he is a fascinating study in his own right of what happens to a man who does not conform to societal expectations of him in the world of Mrs. Dalloway.

In order to comprehend what Woolf was trying to do with Septimus Warren Smith, we must first look closely at what males typically represent in the novel; in other words, we must see what Septimus is up against. There is a code in the English society of the Dalloways to which most of the men--Richard, Hugh Whitbread, Mr. Brewer, Dr. Holmes, and certainly Sir William Bradshaw--manage to adhere. The code demands that a man engage in activities that can be measured in the world: he must subdue others in the name of the Crown as a colonial magistrate in India; he must go to the House of Parliament and lay down laws to which others will be forced to submit; he must, in short, perform for England the services that will keep its economy going, its streets clear of vagrants, prostitutes, and other undesirables, and its citizens physically, intellectually, and emotionally healthy. He must, like Hugh, stoke the furnaces of governing bodies to keep them functioning, even if the job he actually performs is a small one. Small or not, it is a man's job. He must at times even sacrifice his life, like Evans or Lady Bexborough's son John, in the wars that are the ultimate expression of men's work. Such activities are
deemed so important that even some women cannot help being
drawn to them as well. Lady Bruton does her part, for
instance, to keep England's class system intact and its
streets free of rabble by lobbying for emigration. She is
all for politics and has no patience for women who hinder
their men from doing a man's work. Lady Bexborough operates
bazaars for the war effort. Mainly, however, it is up to
the men to exercise the authority over England and its
inhabitants that will maintain that all-important sense of
Proportion, without which life would fall into a shambles.
Their failure to see what a shambles they themselves make of
the world with their wars, their economics, and their
subjugation of whoever disagrees with them is a subject
Virginia Woolf expands upon in *Three Guineas*. In *Mrs.
Dalloway*, however, Woolf clearly intended to explore
specifically the primarily male "privilege" of violation.
In her diary she writes of "the peculiar repulsiveness of
those who dabble their fingers self-approvingly in the stuff
of others' souls... And more and more I come to loathe any
dominion of one over another; any leadership, any imposition
of the will" (9-10). Septimus Warren Smith fully represents
Woolf's attitude: he resents men like Holmes and Bradshaw
for their intrusiveness and determination to impose their
ideas on others.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf shows that there aren't too
many options for a man; most men do end up dabbling their
fingers in the souls of others. Even Lady Bruton reflects that "the difference between one man and another does not amount to much" (157). Moreover, any man who does not do his part consistently to fuel the fires of patriarchy is immediately suspect. What constitutes suspicious behavior on the part of a British male in the early part of the twentieth century? Peter Walsh himself gives cause for people in the Dalloway set to think him a failure, as he himself is aware as he sits with Clarissa the morning of her party:

And she would think me a failure, which I am in their sense, he thought; in the Dalloways' sense. Oh yes, he had no doubt about that; he was a failure, compared with all this—the inlaid table, the mounted paper-knife, the dolphin and the candlesticks, the chair-covers and the old valuable English tinted prints—he was a failure! (64-5)

And Clarissa, at times inevitably affected by the values of her class, inwardly corroborates Peter's fears. "What a waste! What a folly!" she thinks (68), responding to the announcement that Peter is in love followed by his description of Daisy. She enumerates his failures to herself: his dismissal from Oxford, his disastrous first marriage, now this new and awkward romance: in short, "his silly unconventionality, his weakness...at his age, how silly!" (69)

Not only has Peter failed to accomplish anything of value, but now, in his unconventional Socialism, he must turn to the very men who condemn him and who in turn evoke
his disdain, men like Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway, to solicit help in finding a position: "As for caring what they said of him—the Dalloways, the Whitbreads, and their set, he cared not a straw—not a straw (though it was true—he would have, some time or other, to see whether Richard couldn't help him to some job" (75). Peter's opinion of Hugh Whitbread is negative in the extreme: he is the greatest snob: living in a pompous house, performing his little job at Court—"a first-rate valet" (111). Peter and Sally agree that Hugh is "a perfect specimen of the public school type... No country but England could have produced him" (110). And it is infernally frustrating to Peter that it is from this prig who knows and does nothing of importance but who makes five or ten thousand a year that Peter himself might have to ask for a mediocre position that will bring him five hundred. Peter's feelings about Richard are a little more moderate: Richard is simply a sensible, down to earth sort of fellow, one who admittedly gets done things that need doing, who nevertheless shouldn't be taken seriously. Whitbread can phrase a letter to The Times for Lady Bruton and find Peter a job; Richard can bandage a dog's torn paw; but neither of them have "a spark of brilliance," a sense of poetry, a love of Shakespeare. What they do have is "a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit" (116), all the manly traits that Peter can only view
ambivalently at best, caught as he is between societal definitions of success and failure.

Peter, however, will survive in this society, as Septimus will not, because he is able to respect it to some degree. There is, for instance, the grudging admiration he feels when, upon seeing the young soldiers marching up Whitehall, he finds he can't keep up with them:

...and sure enough, on they marched, past him, past every one, in their steady way, as if one will worked legs and arms uniformly, and life, with its varieties, its irreclaimences, had been laid under a pavement of monuments and wreaths and drugged into a stiff yet staring corpse by discipline (77).

Peter admits that he does not want this stare for himself, but "One had to respect it; one might laugh; but one had to respect it, he thought".

Septimus Warren Smith numbered among these marching boys at one time; he was, in fact, one of the first to volunteer for the army. Romantic, sensitive, shy, a disappointed poet in love with Miss Isabel Pole who lectured him on Shakespeare, Septimus ironically goes to war to fight for his own vision of England: "Shakespeare's plays, and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square" (130). But Septimus is considered valuable by his society only in those ways we have already mentioned as meaningful for a man, because, after all, "London has swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith, thought nothing of fantastic Christian names like Septimus with which their parents have thought to distinguish them" (127). Poetry,
love, innocence—what good can these do in a war? Mr. Brewer, the managing clerk at Sibleys and Arrowsmiths where Septimus works, thinks very highly of Septimus, seeing ahead to the day when his young employee will rise to a position of importance in the company. There is, however, a problem: Septimus lacks the good, robust health of a young Englishman, needs to get out and play football according to Brewer, needs to eat more. But alas, Brewer’s hearty plans for Septimus have to be shelved on account of the war, which takes away all of his ablest young men. Ironically, however, the war finishes Mr. Brewer’s work for him:

There in the trenches the change which Mr. Brewer desired when he advised football was produced instantly; he [Septimus] developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name... But when Evans...was killed, just before the armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognizing that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him (130).

The irony with which Woolf treats Septimus’ "manliness" is superb; it makes a powerful statement about how dehumanizing a male-controlled civilization can be, how destructive to the very men it wants to glorify, by seeking more and more power at the cost of a human being’s identity. For, having lost his true identity in the war, Septimus returns to England broken and mad. Lee Edwards puts this succinctly:

Septimus represents the possibility of a heroism that might overturn Clarissa’s. As a young male outsider, he, not she, is the figure conventionally chosen to embrace the culture’s aspirations and lead society to the land of its desires. Septimus’ actual experience
of war makes him unable to bear successfully the weight society has laid upon him. In attempting to live out the heroism ordained by society, Septimus shatters his identity. Its fragments cohere only intermittently—in hideous shapes (262).

The terrible irony of Septimus' position is that, having "proven" himself manly in the war, having won his medals for bravery and so on, the madness with which he returns home unmans him again. Even Rezia, who loves him, finds him less than a man: "And it was cowardly," she tells herself, "for a man to say he would kill himself, but Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now" (33). To Rezia, "the most dreadful thing of all" is "to see a man like Septimus, who had fought, who was brave, crying" (213). Rezia cannot understand this "new" Septimus who won't play his part, refuses her sexually, won't look at "real" things, won't play cricket, that nice out-of-door game recommended by Dr. Holmes. After all, she thinks, many men have lost friends in the war! But in spite of her confusion, Rezia stays with Septimus, desperate to help him live. The real enemies, again, are other men. Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw are the upholders of the code for manly behavior, and they have ways of enforcing its tenets on those who deviate. Septimus releases his messages: "Men must not cut down trees"; "there is no crime"; love, universal love. The import of these messages, he feels, must be conveyed to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet. Instead of reaching these agencies, Septimus' truths are revealed to the doctors, who
are in fact members of a collective institution that contains within it the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and the responses of Holmes and Bradshaw represent what the responses of the larger bodies would be. Dr. Holmes ignores Septimus' pain entirely, insisting ludicrously that there is nothing wrong with him that a day of golf, two tablets of bromide, or porridge won't take care of. On a third visit, when Septimus refuses to see him, Holmes forces his way and zeroes in for the attack on Septimus' manhood:

"So you're in a funk," he said agreeably, sitting down by his patient's side. He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, foreigner, wasn't she? Didn't that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn't one owe perhaps a duty to one's wife? Wouldn't it be better to do something instead of lying in bed? (139)

Septimus feels deserted, the victim of human nature, and withdraws deeper into his madness. Desperate, Rezia makes an appointment with Sir William Bradshaw. With this character Woolf mercilessly chastises the whole male-dominated system, a system that tramples people to death, pummeling them until, defeated, they succumb to a sense of Proportion. Bradshaw's grey car represents the power and authority vested in him because he has made money from his ability to push others into the shape he desires, to tell Rezia and Septimus what they "must" do. Mrs. Bradshaw is an example of the ruin a man like her husband can effect: she has "gone under"; having modified her habits entirely to accommodate Sir William, she makes of the situation the best
she can, resigning herself to a "water-logged" identity and a pressure on the top of her head. Bradshaw's judgment falls on the Warren-Smiths unambiguously: Septimus is very, very ill and must go into a home. He will be separated from Rezia: "There was no alternative. It was a question of the law" (146). Bradshaw finds Septimus "distasteful" because to him, the picture is clear: Septimus has a brilliant career ahead of him which he has selfishly chosen to ignore; he is therefore not fit to be about; he must therefore be literally shut up, isolated, until he is ready to fulfill his obligations to the rest of society. These, according to Sir William, are

...family affection; honour; courage; and a brilliant career. All of these had in Sir William a resolute champion. If they failed him, he had to support police and the good of society, which, he remarked very quietly, would take care...that these unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by the lack of good blood, were held in control (154).

To emphasize the significance of Proportion and to express his power to enforce it on men like Septimus who, in refusing to worship it, fail to recognize their duty to society, Sir William Bradshaw goes through "a curious exercise with the arms, which he shot out, brought sharply back to his hip, to prove (if the patient was obstinate) that Sir William was master of his own actions, which the patient was not" (153). Virginia Woolf could not have painted a clearer picture of a Fascist paying homage to a totalitarian system.
Septimus is the tragic victim of a terminal confusion. He has been taught by the war how not to feel. When he convinces himself that he does not feel, he experiences a terrible guilt, as if he has committed a crime and must be brought to judgment. When he is brought to judgment before Sir William Bradshaw, he resists, knowing that in fact he has not lost the ability to feel (how could anyone capable of experiencing such indescribable excitement and such insufferable depression lack the ability to feel?), aware that he is confronting that monster called mankind who, once having caught him in his vulnerability, will never let him go. Perhaps Septimus' only crime is that he has deserted himself in trying to force himself into the mold of the indifferent soldier, and in grooving his way back, realizes that the way is now blocked by men like Holmes and Bradshaw. Rather than surrender himself to their code of manly behavior which doesn't suit him, he leaps to his death in an attempt to give the doctors (and the world) what he is sure they want—the annihilation of Septimus Warren Smith—and yet to preserve what Virginia Woolf spoke of in an essay entitled "On Being Ill": the last few square feet of "virgin forest," what remains of the "untrodden snowfield" in his soul.

Septimus serves in this novel one of Woolf's purposes: to question the meaning of sanity and insanity, life and death. If being sane means that one can pretend, as
Clarissa does, that roses help the slaughtered Armenians, that one should be able to ignore "the brutality that blared out on placards" and all the terrible catastrophes besetting humanity, then Septimus is not sane, for he feels himself alarmingly tied up with everything around him—the trees, the people whose sinister thoughts he thinks he can read, the fate of a band of lunatics being taken for an outing in the park. If to live means that one must submit to the code of a society which would send one into trenches where shells whistle past, every moment bringing a new threat of death, then Septimus cannot live. And finally, if to be a man means to adopt Sir William Bradshaw's sense of proportion, to be able to come through the experience of war without having been touched by its brutality, then Septimus is not a man, for though he has survived the war physically and has tried to abandon all feeling, he has been wounded emotionally. Moreover, there is no way for him to recuperate from this injury, because no one at home understands what has happened to him, except, perhaps, in an abstract way, Clarissa Dalloway.

In the last chapter we discussed Jane Miller's suggestion that George Eliot probably identified herself strongly with one of her male heroes, Daniel Deronda. In Mrs. Dalloway, too, it is fair to say that groping for a way to "give life and death, sanity and insanity," Virginia Woolf reached inside herself to come up with the character
of Septimus Warren Smith. Contemplating the novel that was already taking shape from its beginnings as a short story as early as October of 1922, Woolf wrote in her diary: "'Mrs. Dalloway' has branched into a book; and I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side—something like that. Septimus Smith? is that a good name?" (51) As she writes the novel, Woolf begins to question whether she is conveying reality truthfully, or whether she is simply writing essays about herself. There is no question that she felt the writing to be painful and difficult, especially the creation of Septimus: "Of course the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squirt so badly that I can hardly face spending the next weeks at it," she writes in her diary (56). Yet it also leaves her feeling "plunged deep in the richest strata of her mind" (68). She reports that she writes the mad scene in Regent's Park "by clinging as tight to fact as I can" (59). The death of Septimus causes her to experience "a low ebb," while she dreads rereading the parts of the novel that describe the madness.

To support the notion that the author and her male character in Mrs. Dalloway are closely identified, one can look into the novel itself. Septimus shares his creator's self-described tendency to become highly excited. A diary entry written by Woolf in 1923 reads:

The fresh breeze went brushing all the thick hedges which divided the gardens. Somehow, extraordinary
emotions possessed me. I forget now what. Often now I have to control my excitement—as if I were pushing through a screen; or as if something beat fiercely close to me (55).

Compare the passage below describing Septimus' very similar experience:

He had only to open his eyes; but a weight was on them; a fear. He strained; he pushed; he looked; he saw Regent's Park before him. Long streamers of sunlight fawned at his feet. The trees waved, brandished... . To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy (104).

Sanity and insanity do in fact exist side by side; it is often difficult to distinguish, for instance, as it is here, the profound joy elicited in a sane but highly sensitive individual, and the hysteria experienced by one who has lost touch with reality, though both reactions are elicited by simply witnessing a natural phenomenon.

In another diary entry, Virginia Woolf reveals her simultaneous love and fear of life, which, existing always so closely together, cannot help bringing about a mixture of opposite emotions:

...it's life itself, I think sometimes, for us in our generation so tragic—no newspaper placard without its shriek of agony from someone... . Unhappiness is everywhere... . And with it all how happy I am—if it weren't for my feeling that it's a strip of pavement over an abyss (28).

How similar to the first four lines above are Septimus' thoughts: "In the street vans roared past him; brutality blared out on placards; men were trapped in mines, women burnt alive..." (135-6). And yet Septimus too can question, in spite of the abyss, why he should kill himself when food
is pleasant, the sun hot. "Life was good" is one of his last thoughts before he flings himself to his death. He can move from feeling the thrill of the earth moving beneath him to the sudden terror of falling off the edge and drowning, much like Woolf herself.

That Woolf thoroughly understood her character and the nature of his madness is evident in the compelling descriptions of Septimus' experiences. Many biographical elements can be brought to serve as proof that the identification between author and character, especially in this area, is a strong one. Septimus displays extreme anxiety in public places; he has in his eyes "that look of apprehension...which makes complete strangers apprehensive too" (20). According to Leonard Woolf in *Beginning Again*, Virginia Woolf "had a curious shyness with strangers which often made them uncomfortably shy" (28). In addition, there is a clear paranoia. "It is I who am blocking the way," Septimus thinks as traffic comes to a standstill in a London street. "Was he not being looked at and pointed at..." (21). Leonard Woolf reports that his wife was unable to walk in the street anywhere without people stopping, staring at her, and nudging one another to look at her, seeing something in her "which they found ridiculous" (29). Whether it was her unusual style of dress or her way of shuffling along deeply preoccupied in thought, Virginia Woolf experienced this being pointed at as most disturbing.
She also hated being photographed. These anxieties, suggests Jeremy Hawthorn, seem to have been incorporated into Septimus' sense of persecution in the street (1975, 70-71).

Quentin Bell relates details of Virginia Woolf's breakdown after her father's death that parallel aspects of Septimus' madness:

In the breakdown that followed she entered into a period of nightmare in which the symptoms of the preceding months attained frantic intensity. Her mistrust of Vanessa, her grief for her father became maniacal, her nurses—she had three—became fiends. She heard voices urging her to acts of folly; she believed that they came from overeating and that she must starve herself. In this emergency the main burden fell upon Vanessa; but Vanessa was enormously helped by Violet Dickinson. She took Virginia to her house at Burnham Wood and it was there that she made her first attempt to commit suicide. She threw herself from a window, which, however, was not high enough from the ground to cause her serious harm. It was here too that she lay in bed, listening to the birds singing in Greek and imagining that King Edward VII lurked in the azaleas using the foulest possible language (89-90).

Septimus, we are told by Rezia, "saw things," such as an old woman's head in the middle of a fern. He sees a dog becoming a man, watches as the dead Evans appears from behind a tree. He hears Evans speaking to him, and also the dead singing behind rhododendron bushes. Birds speak to him in Greek as they did to Woolf. For Septimus, as for Woolf, exaltation and despair are often inextricably merged: "But he began to talk aloud, answering people, arguing, laughing, crying, getting very excited..." (101). Septimus feels that he knows all the secrets of the universe; though Dr. Holmes
and Dr. Bradshaw say that excitement is the worst thing for him (as Virginia Woolf's doctor told her as well), Septimus "waved his hands and cried out that he knew the truth! He knew everything!" (212) The truth he knows is that human beings are wicked: "He knew all their thoughts, he said; he knew everything. He knew the meaning of the world, he said" (100). Though Septimus is clearly paranoid and delusional, the "truth" he knows is the truth of the novel, and certainly part of Woolf's own vision. Rezia cannot at first understand why Septimus is so overwrought by the sight of Dr. Holmes; to her the physician is a nice man with four children who has invited her to tea and only wants to help. But at the end, Rezia comes to see what Septimus (and Woolf) have known all along, that Holmes is in fact human nature, the brute with the blood-red nostrils from whom one must try to escape. "So that was Dr. Holmes" Rezia realizes as she dozes off under the effects of the sedative given her after Septimus' suicide, understanding finally the connection between Bradshaw (to whom she took an instant dislike), Holmes, and all of the other dark forces represented by men. "Holmes was a powerfully built man" appears in parentheses as the doctor pushes Rezia aside in order to get to Septimus. We are apparently inside of Septimus' head when those words appear, but later Rezia too sees Holmes as a large outline standing dark against a window. "One of the triumphs of civilization" is the next line, but it is spoken
by Peter Walsh, who has been placed by Woolf in a spot where he can hear the bell of the ambulance as it carries off the body of Septimus. The irony of that line belongs, of course, to Woolf herself, and it is part of the truth of the novel: that big powerful men destroy life.

Septimus not only knows what Woolf knows about humanity; he also feels painfully responsible. He becomes prophet-like; he is the Lord "come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever wasted, suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer..." (37). He is the lord of men, "called forth...to hear the truth" (101). And yet he is also lost between prophecy and doom: "Now he had surrendered, now other people must help him. People must be sent for. He gave in" (136). Septimus experiences the terrible loneliness of the prophet, the alienation of the one who knows the truth; he feels too that he has been abandoned, and Woolf knows that he is right. Woolf and Septimus share the notion that there is an embrace in death, and therefore Clarissa Dalloway represents Woolf in understanding and accepting the suicide of a young man she has never met: "A thing there was that mattered, a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved" (280). Woolf also allows Rezia to understand, in one very brief, very simple sentence, what Septimus has done: "Rezia
ran to the window, she saw; she understood" (226-7).

That Woolf makes Septimus a male rather than a female character is significant. From her notes on the novel we learn that Woolf at first intended to have Clarissa Dalloway die; the shift to the sacrifice of a male character with "feminine" traits instead shows more pointedly the brutality of patriarchal oppression. That women suffer at the hands of men is so obvious that, unfortunately, it too often fails to elicit any kind of response. But to portray a man as the victim of other men as he pathetically tries to be one of them cannot fail to move readers, and, with Septimus Warren Smith, Woolf is able to make an exceptionally poignant statement about human cruelty, and about what was happening to her own life as well as to the lives of others as the result of that cruelty.

Moreover, Woolf uses Septimus, this special kind of male character, as a bridge between the divided worlds of male and female consciousness. The division, she feels, is at bottom a destructive one. Though some of her minor characters easily fall into one category or the other, her heroes--Clarissa, Septimus--are able to transcend them in one way or another. Clarissa, even while dedicated to "being a lady," attempts to overcome the barriers that separate people and perhaps in this way reform society. She brings women and men closer by simply gathering people together while still allowing to each his or her individual
identity. Septimus, on the other hand, fights a losing battle to retain his androgynous self; overcome by male pursuers, he embraces death as a way of eluding a category into which his identity will not fit. *Mrs. Dalloway* does not ultimately produce a solution in the form of a satisfactory reconciliation between the male and the female perspectives; but Woolf does show, through the use of an abused male character, how the unresolved division between masculine and feminine contributes to an oppression that does violence to all.
CHAPTER V

Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*:

*Man Learning to Fly*

With Toni Morrison we move into the latter half of the twentieth century. Even so, we can still hear echoes of those nineteenth-century doubts regarding a fictional male character created by a female. Vivian Garnick's criticism of the hero of *Song of Solomon*, however, comes not so obviously from a sexist bias external to the work itself as from a legitimate literary concern, that of truth in characterization:

It seems to me that the source of artistic trouble in *Song of Solomon* lies with Morrison's choice of Milkman as protagonist—instead of with one of the women in the book. Milkman never really comes to life; I, for one, never felt I got to know him from the inside out. On the other hand, Pilate and Hagar are extremely evocative figures, as are Milkman's mother and sisters. There are a few pages describing the blossoming love affair between First Corinthians and a traumatized handyman that are filled with such astonishing pain and beauty that a book dominated by such descriptions would have been a masterpiece. These pages turn on Morrison's sure, hard knowledge of the inside of that woman's life: the grotesque anguish beneath the surface of a stifled existence (41).

Garnick goes on to praise the description of Lena's angry speech to her brother, which reveals the "silent, festering heart of her life." She sums up her review of the novel by
saying that it does not "achieve wholeness because it suffers from a misdirected angle of vision" (41).

That Toni Morrison's female characters are brilliantly conceptualized and executed is unarguable. There is no doubt that had Morrison written a novel with First Corinthians at its center, it would have been a masterpiece. The same could be said for a novel about Ruth Dead, or Pilate, or Hagar. *Song of Solomon* is about all of these compelling women, to be sure, but the fact is that Morrison is not centering her attention on any of them in the novel, and there is a reason for it. Comments like Garnick's fail to absorb an important point: a writer has a specific aim in telling a story, and to realize it she or he must visualize a certain character going through a series of actions in order to arrive at a particular destination. Morrison's "angle of vision," far from being misdirected, is focused squarely on Milkman Dead: a black male who moves through a sterile, inert, and self-centered boyhood and adolescence to a manhood of greater sympathy and understanding.

In an interview, Morrison herself discusses her choice of Milkman as protagonist within the context of a deliberate line of development in her writing:

...it seems to me that from a book that focused on a pair of very young girls, to move to a pair of adult black women, and then to a black man, and finally to a black man and a black woman is evolutionary. One comes out of the other. The writing gets better, too... I am giving myself permission to write books that do not
depend on anyone's liking them, because what I want to do is write better. A writer does not always write in the ways others wish. The writer has to solve certain kinds of problems in writing. The way in which I handle elements within a story frame is important to me (McKay 417).

One thing Morrison chose to do in Song of Solomon was to enlarge her canvas, taking her characters out of the one small Ohio town where they had been lodged from the beginning of the novel to the end in The Bluest Eye and Sula, and letting them move within a larger area; in this case they move geographically from north to south. For this purpose, Morrison felt she needed a male protagonist: "I found that I had to leave the town in Song of Solomon because the book was driven by men," she tells McKay. "The rhythm of their lives is outward, adventuresome" (417). As Claudia Tate suggests in the introduction to Black Women Writers at Work, the black heroine, with certain exceptions like Sula Peace, seldom chooses the role of alienated outsider or lone adventurer in her quest for self-affirmation; though certainly concerned with this particular quest, she is nevertheless usually too tied down to her children, or to her friends, or to the community in which she lives, to make journeys across the country or to explore foreign territory. "The most memorable black heroes," says Tate, "are not generally encumbered with the weight of dependents or with strong ties to the community; as a result, they are either free to begin with or free themselves so as to travel light" (xx). It is partly this
freedom to make literal journeys that attracted Morrison to a male protagonist in *Song of Solomon*, and partly the fact that strong ties to a community rather than to vain desires for material wealth ("the shit that weighs you down") are precisely what a male protagonist would lack and therefore have to develop. The latter learning process contributes to a metaphorical journey complementary to the literal geographical odyssey.

But Morrison's major motivation for using *Milkman* as opposed to Pilate or First Corinthians becomes clear when she responds to McKay's question about "the special kind of knowledge that black women have always had." Morrison says that she has chosen to center in her first two novels on two subjects: that particular knowledge that women possess which typically has been discredited as old wives' tales of gossip, and the friendship between women that has been considered an impossible subject for a book, since "the world knows that women don't choose each other's acquaintanceship. They choose men first, then women as second choice" (McKay 428). She says that she has made women the focal point of books in order to find out what women's friendships are really all about, then adds:

And the same thing is true about why I wrote *Song of Solomon* the way I did. I chose the man to make that journey because I thought he had more to learn than a woman would have. I started with a man, and I was amazed at how little men taught one another in the book. I assumed that all men ever learn about being men they get from other men (428).
The presence in the novel of two sets of "teachers," then—the women and the men—serves to provide the two sets of information Milkman needs in order to become a complete human being. "And that kind of harmony," says Morrison, speaking of the lessons Milkman learns from Guitar combined with those he learns from Pilate, "is what makes it possible for him to do what he does toward the end of the book, and to do something important instead of figuring how he can live better and more comfortably, and easier" (McKay 429). Morrison could not have written *Song of Solomon* without filling the protagonist's slot with someone who lacked the special knowledge of women, and that someone had to be a man.

In tracing Milkman's journeys, the literal and the figurative alike, Morrison successfully creates a masterpiece of another kind: the portrait of black manhood, rife with frustrations, impeded by threatened identity, and beset by a relentless unfulfilled longing to fly. Milkman, like his sisters, lives a stifled existence from which he yearns to escape, and the anguish of that existence is felt as deeply as are the suffocation of First Corinthians, the rage of Lena, the "narrow but deep" passions of Ruth, and the despairing madness of Hagar. Pilate, Hagar, Milkman's mother and sisters, even Sweet, are all essential to the story of how Milkman deals with the obstacles that keep him from discovering his past and thus failing to live fully in
his present or envision a positive future; without these women Milkman would make no progress whatsoever. But Song of Solomon is definitely Milkman's story, and Morrison fully intended to write it from inside of Milkman himself, to explore his interactions with both the women and the men in the novel from his point of view, and to allow the revelations to belong primarily to him. As for Garnick's feeling that he does not "come to life," one could argue that he is alive from the moment we learn of his profound disappointment upon learning that he will never fly, a sensitively rendered emotional revelation that will become thematically more and more important as the story unfolds. That the other characters, females included, are also very much alive is only to Morrison's credit as a writer; it does not mean that one of their stories would have constituted more of a masterpiece than Milkman's.

Although Morrison realized that there would be special problems involved with writing from the viewpoint of a male character, she knew exactly what they were and how to conquer them. Discussing Song of Solomon in an interview with Mel Watkins, she said:

This book was different, men are more prominent. They interested me in a way I hadn't thought about before, almost as a species. I used what I knew, what I'd heard. But I had to think of becoming a whole person in masculine terms, so there were craft problems. I couldn't use the metaphors I'd used describing women. I needed something that suggested dominion—a different kind of drive. I think 'Song' is more expansive because of that; I had to loosen up. I could not create the same kind of enclosed world that I
had in previous books. Before it was as if I went into a room and shut the door in my books. I tried to pull the reader into that room. But I couldn't do that with Milkman. It's a feminine concept—things happening in a room, in houses. Men don't live in those houses, they really don't... So the forces were different in this book, I had to look outward (Watkins 50).

Morrison obviously knows what Carolyn Heilbrun pointed out several years earlier in Reinventing Womanhood: "We do not read of boys begging rooms of their own... The boy's sense of self is formed outside, where the world is, not inside, where the safety is" (1979, 182). And Morrison, knowing this, is able to "look outward." In a taped panel discussion in which she discusses "the ordeal of the woman writer" with Erica Jong and Marge Piercy, she talks about the appeal of any book, regardless of its alleged gender-specific subject or point of view, as long as it's about people:

Somebody asked me recently, "Do you think that your book [Sula] has any appeal for men?" And I'm not sure that I could answer the question, but I didn't write it for women only, and I remember spending a good deal of my time reading Hamlet and Socrates and Sophocles and all those people, and they were about Achilles, and they were about warriors, and I don't remember feeling that those books were not for me, because they were about people... (1975).

It is easy to see why, harboring this point of view, Morrison was able to look outward, to find her different metaphors for describing a man's experience: a son's blow to a father, a knife fight, a hunt, a peacock spreading its tail feathers. She has refused to bar herself from trying to understand the mysteries of male experience. She has
deliberately set out to write a novel about a man from a man's perspective, but what happens is what should always happen with a good book: the connections between people, men and women alike, are illuminated. Charles Scruggs makes this clear in taking issue with Jane Bakeman's 1981 article, "Failures of Love: Female Initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison":

In her fine article, Jane Bakeman makes the mistake of isolating the female characters of Song of Solomon from the men and their failures... I don't believe that the two sexes can be separated in Morrison's novels: if the women fail in their pursuits of love, these failures can be causally connected to the unfulfilled desires in the men (316, fn).

Morrison is fascinated by black men as well as by black women, and knows intimately what Scruggs points out above about the impact the experience of the one makes on that of the other. One of the images she finds extremely interesting and highly accessible in her attempt to understand and depict men is that of physical movement: "...black men travel, they split, they get on trains, they walk, they move," she says in the interview with Watkins (50). "It's a part of black life, a positive, majestic thing... ." In another interview with Morrison, Robert Stepto brings up the subject of black men in motion, to which Morrison responds:

...I think that one of the major differences between black men's work--the major black characters--and black women's work is precisely that. The big scene is the traveling Ulysses scene, for black men. They are moving. Trains--you hear those men talk about trains like they were their first lover--the names of trains,
the times of trains! And, boy, you know, they spread their seed all over the world. They are really moving! Perhaps it's because they don't have a land, they don't have dominion... that, it seems to me, is one of the monumental themes in black literature about men. That's what they do... . Curiosity, what's around the corner, what's across the hill, what's in the valley, what's down the track. Go find out what that is, you know! And in the process of finding, they are also making themselves... . It's very beautiful, it's very interesting... (486-87).

In both of these interviews, Morrison feels she must apologize for extolling what is in fact one of the major failings of black men: that they desert their wives and children in favor of perpetual motion. She has to admit, however, in the Stepto interview, that she nevertheless finds this self-claimed freedom to move "one of the most attractive features about male life": "But the fact that they would split in a minute just delights me. It's part of that whole business of breaking ground, doing the other thing" (487). The attraction of free male movement is so great for Morrison that she even extends it to one of her female protagonists, Sula, a woman who lives an experimental life and comes and goes as she pleases. Still, the fact that males taking flight has its repercussions is never ignored by Morrison. In Song of Solomon, where actual flight is a major metaphor for releasing oneself from the grips of an impossible existence, it is the men who fly, and Morrison makes clear just how painful this is for those left behind. "You just can't fly on off and leave a body" the ghost of Macon Dead I tells his daughter Pilate (148). Ryna
loses her mind when Solomon flies back to Africa. "Who'd he leave behind?" is Sweet's sobering question to Milkman when he exults to her about how "Solomon done fly, Solomon done gone/Solomon cut across the sky, Solomon gone home" (332). Sweet's question only takes on meaning for Milkman when, four pages later, he realizes what his desertion of Hagar has done: "He had hurt her, left her, and now she was dead" (336). In spite of its majesty, the flight of the black male has its price: "The fathers may soar," says Morrison, "they may triumph, they may leave, but the children know who they are; they remember, half in glory and half in accusation" (Watkins 50).

But movement and flight make up just one aspect, albeit an important one, of a total picture of black manhood for Morrison. She isn't interested in bringing to the page stereotypes of the black male, but full human beings, with as much insight as she can attain into their reasons for behaving the way they do. In comparing two male characters from Sula, she tells Robert Stepto:

When a man is whole himself, when he's touched the borders of his own life, and he's not proving something to somebody else--white men or other men and so on--then the threats of emasculation, the threats of castration, the threats of somebody taking over disappear. Ajax is strong enough. He's a terribly unemployed dude, who has interests of his own, whose mother neglected him, but nevertheless assumed all sorts of things about him that he lived up to... . So he had a different kind of upbringing. Now that, I think, is interesting; that part of it interested me a lot, so that when he would see a woman like Sula, who had been somewhere and had some rather different views about life and so on, he was not intimidated at all.
Whereas a man like Jude, who was doing a rather routine, macho thing, would split—you know, he was too threatened by all of that. Just the requirements of staying in the house and having to apologize to his wife were too much for him (480).

Cholly Breedlove of *The Bluest Eye* represents for Morrison "the man who is stretching...all the way within his own mind and within whatever his outline might be," something she sees as "the tremendous possibility for masculinity among black men" (Stepto 481). She sees Cholly and Ajax as very much alike, and speaks of Guitar and Milkman as their successors:

The book I'm writing now is about a man, and a lot of things that I learned by writing about Cholly and Ajax and Jude are at least points of departure, leaping-off places, for the work that I'm doing now. The focus is on two men. One is very much like Ajax and Cholly in his youth, so stylish and adventuresome and, I don't know, I think he's truly masculine in the sense of going out too far where you're not supposed to go and running toward confrontations rather than away from them. And risks—taking risks... . The other will learn to be a complete person, or at least have a notion of it... (Stepto 481).

Obviously, Morrison does not focus on Ajax and Cholly the way she does on Milkman. Through Ajax, Cholly, Jude, and even to a certain extent through Guitar she explores her impressions of masculinity: the risk-taking, the freedom to stretch and move, the tragic implications of being "the bad nigger"—charmingly adventuresome but irresponsible. She looks at the situation of the black man and offers explanations for why he is the way he is, although she is never distractingly pedantic. However, with Milkman, she will examine not only the reasons, some obvious, some not,
for common black male behavior patterns, but will go on to make Milkman "a complete person"; in other words, she will focus on his story and see him through from the beginning of his journey to the end.

In this novel, as in the others, Morrison brings out the desperate situation of the black man, not necessarily in order to justify his behavior, but to offer insight into it. Milkman, feeling trapped by everyone around him, asks Guitar what it is people want from him. Guitar's response:

"...they want your living life.
...It's the condition our condition is in.
Everybody wants the life of a black man. Everybody.
White men want us dead or quiet--which is the same as dead. White women, same thing. They want us, you know, 'universal,' human, no 'race consciousness.'
Tame, except in bed. They like a little racial loincloth in the bed. But outside the bed they want us to be individuals.... . And black women, they want your whole self. Love, they call it, and understanding. 'Why don't you understand' me?' What they mean is, Don't go anywhere where I ain't.... . They want your full attention. You can't even die unless it's about them. What good is a man's life if he can't even choose what to die for?" (724)

Guitar's speech is an expansion by Morrison into a sympathetic understanding of him that contrasts with Sula's ironic treatment of Jude in the earlier novel when the latter tries to win some pity for his sufferings as a black man under the heel of the whites. Jude responds to Nel's inquiry, "Bad day, honey?" by telling his wife and Sula of "some personal insult done him by a customer and his boss--a whiny tale that peaked somewhere between anger and a lapping desire for comfort. He ended it with the
observation that a Negro man had a hard row to hoe in this world" (103). It is clear to the readers of *Sula* that what Jude is saying is valid. As Anne Mickelson remarks, "Without sparing the black man's frequent abrogation of responsibility to women and children through desertion, she [Morrison] makes it clear that a determining factor for self-development and self-esteem—a man's work—is denied him" (134). Jude longs to throw away his waiter's tray, the symbol to him of a demeaning and unmanly job, and find employment on the construction crew of a tunnel. Ajax longs to fly airplanes but is not permitted to do so. Sula, however, offers not pity for Jude's frustrations, but this sarcastic assessment:

"I mean, I don't know what the fuss is about. I mean, everything in the world loves you. White men love you. They spend so much time worrying about your penis they forget their own. The only thing they want to is cut off a nigger's privates. And if that ain't love and respect I don't know what is. And white women? They chase you all to every corner of the earth, feel for you under every bed. I knew a white woman wouldn't leave the house after six o'clock for fear one of you would snatch her. Now ain't that love? They think rape soon'a they see you, and if they don't get the rape they looking for, they scream it anyway just so the search won't be in vain. Colored women worry themselves into bad health just trying to hang onto your cuffs. Even little children—white and black, boys and girls—spend all their childhood eating their hearts out 'cause they think you don't love them. And if that ain't enough, you love yourselves. Nothing in this world loves a black man more than another black man. You hear of solitary white men, but niggers? Can't stay away from one another a whole day. So. It looks to me like you the envy of the world" (103-4).

In spite of Sula's lack of pity and her implicit criticism, the point is made that black men do indeed have a hard row
to hoe. Jude's frustrations at not having a man's work are echoed in *Song of Solomon*, without any mockery whatsoever, when the men of Shalimar feel humiliated by Milkman's attitude toward them:

He hadn't bothered to say his name, nor ask theirs, had called them "them," and would certainly despise their days, which should have been spent harvesting their own crops, instead of waiting around the general store hoping a truck would come looking for mill hands or tobacco pickers in the flatlands that belonged to somebody else. His manner, his clothes were reminders that they had no crops of their own and no land to speak of either. Just vegetable gardens, which the women took care of, and chickens and pigs that the children took care of. He was telling them that they weren't men, that they relied on women and children for their food... (269).

There is no irony in the following passage either, in which the men in the barbershop discuss the tragedy of Emmett Till:

"He from the North," said Freddie. "Acting big down in Bilbo country. Who the hell he think is he?" "Thought he was a man, that's what," said Railroad Tommy. "Well, he thought wrong," Freddie said. "Ain't no black men in Bilbo country."
"He dead. A dead man ain't no man. A dead man is a corpse. That's all. A corpse."
"A living coward ain't a man either," said Porter (81).

As mentioned before, although Morrison acknowledges all that the black man has going against him, summed up in the exchanges between males at the barbershop where Hospital Tommy catalogues for Guitar and Milkman all the things they're never going to have, where men gather together to
name the atrocities they have suffered, she doesn't exonerate the irresponsibility that accompanies their deprivation and humiliation. She shares this refusal to "let the black man off the hook" with other black women writers. "Recent writing by black women," writes Audre Lorde, "seems to explore human concerns somewhat differently than do the men. These women refuse to blame racism entirely for every negative aspect of Black life. In fact, at times they hold Black men accountable" (267). Morrison certainly holds Milkman Dead accountable for his selfishness and passivity and lack of compassion for others. Racism is only a part of the problem; Milkman's home environment and his confusing class status—defined accurately by Michele Wallace out of her own experience as "that purgatory-like state between black and white that was being middle-class and black" (65)—contribute to it as well. But it is clear that Milkman has work to do on himself; even he realizes it. At this point one must take issue with Vivian Garnick's remark that one doesn't get to know Milkman from the inside out. Through allowing Milkman the capacity for learning to see himself clearly, and by allowing us to live through the entire learning process with him, to witness it through his eyes and mind, Morrison shows how a black male can transcend the limitations imposed on him by antagonistic outside forces and free himself, if not from those forces, then at least from the ugliness they plant within his own soul. It
is not clear at the end of Song of Solomon whether Milkman really "rides the air" or not; the important thing is that he has risen above the inhumanity he himself has exhibited—the selfishness, the materialism, the cruelty—and has learned to give. At Solomon's Leap he gives back to Pilate the song she has sung for him, repaying her for her guidance by giving her back the past he has recovered for them both, and he is willing to give up his life to Guitar, if that is what is required: "You want my life?... You need it? Here" (341). We are invited into the interior of Milkman's psyche (and on an abstract level into the psyche of all of the black males in the novel) when we learn of Milkman's disappointment upon discovering he cannot fly. This knowledge, says the narrator, caused him to lose all interest in himself and dulled his imagination. From this point on we are allowed to penetrate more deeply and listen to Milkman's interior monologues, becoming more and more familiar with his personal frustrations. Screaming at Pilate when he senses his identity has been ignored, Milkman reveals, from the inside, a facet of his personality we have not yet seen, the anger at feeling obliterated:

Even while he was screaming he wondered why he was suddenly so defensive—so possessive about his name. He had always hated that name, all of it, and until he and Guitar became friends, he had hated his nickname too. But in Guitar's mouth it sounded clever, grown up. Now he was behaving with this strange woman as though having the name was a matter of deep personal pride, as though she had tried to expel him from a very special group, in which he not only belonged, but had exclusive rights to (38).
With this recognition of his own anger, Milkman has taken the first steps of his odyssey toward manhood. Names are very important in Morrison's fiction, as they are in most Afro-American writing; they are the key to one's identity, as we have already seen in the passage in which the black men of Shalimar are offended when Milkman doesn't ask their names. Part of what Milkman must do in order to recover his family's past and discover who he is involves learning their names as well as learning to respect his own.

As a metaphor for Milkman's shortcomings, and to deepen our sense of his humanness, Morrison makes one of Milkman's legs shorter than the other, a disability of which he himself is painfully aware. The flaw can stand for numerous weaknesses. On one level it serves to bring out Milkman's concern with himself:

It wasn't a limp--not at all--just the suggestion of one, but it looked like an affected walk, the strut of a very young man trying to appear more sophisticated than he was. It bothered him and he acquired movements and habits to disguise what to him was a burning defect (62).

Milkman feels that, on one hand, his deformity identifies him with Franklin D. Roosevelt, but on the other hand, it causes him to fear his father, since Macon has no outward imperfections. The deformity also serves to highlight Milkman's vanity. He uses the "strut" caused by the limp to his advantage with women; he invents a new way of dancing to accommodate his mismatched legs and causes a sensation. Other men try to emulate his dance steps. The vanity
inherent in this performance expands into a larger and more destructive kind of sexual vanity. Milkman brags to other males about his treatment of Hagar as his "private honey pot" (91) and enjoys being her target for the attention it calls to his masculinity:

Hagar made him a star, a celebrity in the Blood Bank; it told men and other women that he was one bad dude, that he had the power to drive a woman out of her mind, to destroy her, and not because she hated him, or because he had done some unforgivable thing to her, but because he had fucked her and she was driven wild by the absence of his magnificent joint (304-5).

He enjoys strutting to the tune of the myth of the erotic black male, always looking for the next party. In turn, Morrison ties this form of vanity to Milkman's quest for the gold when she attenuates the action long enough for Guitar and Milkman to notice a peacock. The scene recalls Milkman's inability to fly and his limp as it underscores male vanity:

"Look--she's flying down." Milkman felt again his unrestrained joy at anything that could fly. "Some jive flying, but look at her strut."
"He."
"Huh?"
"He. That's a he. The male is the only one got that tail full of jewelry..."
"How come it can't fly no better than a chicken?"
Milkman asked.
"Too much tail. All that jewelry weighs it down. Like vanity. Can't nobody fly with all that shit. Wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down" (179-80).

It will take some time yet before Milkman will realize the implication of Guitar's words for him. The reader, however, will associate this real peacock with a symbolic one that
appears before Milkman's father in his youth under circumstances similar to those Milkman now confronts. Macon has just discovered the gold his son is presently pursuing:

"Gold," he whispered...
Life, safety, and luxury fanned out before him like the tail-spread of a peacock...(171).

In both cases, the fantasies evoked by the gold are entirely vain.

On another level, Milkman's limp works in with the fact that he is walking incorrectly, going in the wrong direction, or in no direction at all. There are numerous references to his uncomfortable sense that he is somehow going the wrong way. As a boy, "riding backward made him uneasy. It was like flying blind, and not knowing where he was going--just where he had been..." (31-2). Milkman at age twelve knows there is something significant about what lies behind him, but he doesn't yet know what it is, and this makes him uneasy. He concentrates obsessively about things behind him as if he has no future, and in a way he is assessing things correctly: there is no future unless one knows who one is and where one has come from. At this juncture Guitar steps in to liberate Milkman, to "take him to the woman who had as much to do with his future as she had with his past" (35). Once he has met Pilate, Milkman can start to hobble, albeit circuitously, toward the recovery of his past and the discovery of a self. It will take a long time and interactions with many different people
before he will be able to abandon his affected strut and
walk tall and straight in the knowledge of his real
identity.

In the interim, there is a scene in which Milkman
examines his reflection in the mirror and sees there the
lack of definition which makes him uncomfortable. Here is
another instance in which we are most certainly seeing
Milkman from the inside out, and again, his inability to get
from one place to another in a linear fashion is emphasized.

Milkman stood before his mirror and glanced, in
the low light of the wall lamp, at his reflection. He
was, as usual, unimpressed with what he saw. He had a
fine enough face. Eyes women complimented him on, a
firm jaw line, splendid teeth. Taken apart, it looked
all right. Even better than all right. But it lacked
coherence, a coming together of the features into a
total self. It was all very tentative, the way he
looked, like a man peeping around a corner or someplace
he is not supposed to be, trying to make up his mind
whether to go forward or to turn back. The decision he
made would be extremely important, but the way in which
he made it would be careless, haphazard, and uninformed
(70).

Moments later, Milkman's father tells him he has to be a
whole man, as if to reiterate the sense of incompleteness
Milkman already experiences. This confrontation with Macon
is surrounded by a great deal of misconception: Milkman
thinks that by intervening between his parents--hitting his
father in order to protect his helpless mother from him--he
is doing what a man is supposed to do ("Isn't that what men
did? Protected the frail and confronted the King of the
Mountain?", 75). And Milkman cannot understand what his
father's story has to do with being a whole man, though he
will understand it later. At this point, the story about why Macon is repulsed by his wife only serves to open up Milkman's memory wide enough for him to piece together why he is called "Milkman," a revelation as uncomfortable for him as the story of Ruth's relationship with her father. After hearing the story Milkman goes out for a walk, and once again finds himself confused and going in the wrong direction: "The street was even more crowded with people, all going the direction he was coming from. All walking hurriedly and bumping against him" (78). Later, when Guitar accuses him of lacking seriousness, Milkman gets angry and tries to turn things back on Guitar, charging him with making everything a matter of life and death. When Guitar says sarcastically, "Looks like everybody's going in the wrong direction but you, don't it?" (106), Milkman suddenly remembers the night after he hit his father, the night that nobody seemed to be going his way. Even so, Milkman still insists he knows where he's going--"wherever the party is." But he begins to ponder his existence in the light of what Guitar has pointed out, and continues to make his way awkwardly, still "limping," toward his past and toward his future.

There comes a point finally when Milkman stops limping. He has come south, ostensibly in pursuit of the cache of gold, but actually, though he doesn't know it at first, in search of his family's roots. In this section of the novel,
too, he makes only halting progress, impeded now not only by his two mismatched legs, but also by waterlogged and torn shoes. After a brutal struggle with nature, Milkman locates the cave in which his father and Pilate had discovered the gold, but he finds nothing there; bitter and disappointed, he "limped down the footpath, paying no attention to the direction he was going" (255). It is not until he rids himself of the trappings of his city existence—his clothes, his money, even his watch—and with them his city arrogance so offensive to the men of Shalimar, and not until he has proven himself in a series of male rituals—a knife-fight, a hunt—that he makes a real breakthrough. These rituals are Morrison's "different metaphors" for bringing to life the "whole person in masculine terms." Milkman must touch life, become involved in real things, even come near to dying, and then be able to abandon self-pity and to laugh at himself, to admit he was scared, before he can attain the real treasure: the sense of belonging to a community of black males who share a common language, a common cultural consciousness. For this treasure he has to give up "the cocoon that was 'personality'" (280), and admit, all in a rush, his parents' pain and Hagar's humiliation; he has to confront the fact that he has been vain and ignorant and self-centered. All this he does, as he gives in to the pain in his short leg and sinks down next to a tree trunk in the dark woods. Ultimately his reward is laughter and a sense
of renewed physical strength—the strength to discover his true destination and the right way to get there:

...he found himself exhilarated by simply walking the earth. Walking like he belonged on it; like his legs were stalks, tree trunks, a part of his body that extended down down into the rock and soil, and were comfortable there—on the earth and on the place where he walked. And he did not limp (284).

The image of stalk-like legs harks back to a similar image evoked by Macon Dead II as he fantasizes about identity and the importance of knowing one's real name:

Surely, he thought, he and his sister had some ancestor, some lithe young man with onyx skin and legs as straight as cane stalks, who had a name that was real... But who this lithe young man was, and where his cane-stalk legs carried him from or to, could never be known. No. Nor his name (17-18).

Macon is wrong. His son Milkman has inherited from this ancestor his strong legs, and as soon as he learns to use them properly he will make his way to the place from which the ancestor departed and discover his name—the name of his family—and where he belongs as a black male.

As we have seen, part of Milkman's maturation process is facilitated by lessons he learns from other men. He must learn to abandon certain stereotypical chauvinistic behavior he has picked up from them, like using and abandoning women as if they were "a wad of chewing gum," like expecting women to love him and care for him without ever thinking to make them so much as a cup of tea in return. He must learn to become involved in rather than evade confrontations; men can show him how to engage physically ("If you're in the
business of raising your fist at your father," Macon tells
him, "you better have some intelligence behind that fist the
next time you throw it," 70) and emotionally ("Guitar had
placed himself willingly and eagerly in a life cause that
would always provide him with a proximity to knife-cold
terror... Guitar could still create the sense of danger of
life lived on the cutting edge," 178). Guitar is not only
the key to Milkman's liberation in that he leads him to
Pilate; he is a mentor who galvanizes Milkman into action
and he is also, more importantly, a friend. Morrison's
treatment of the relationship between the two men displays
her awareness that friendship between males is not unlike
friendship between females. Compare the language of the
first passage below, taken from Sula, describing the
relationship between Sula and Nel, to the one following it
that relates Milkman's response to Guitar:

Damp-faced, Nel stepped back into the kitchen.
She felt new, soft and new. It had been the longest
time since she had had a rib-scraping laugh. She had
forgotten how deep and down it could be. So different
from the miscellaneous giggles and smiles she had
learned to be content with these past few years.
"O Lord, Sula. You haven't changed none" (98).

Milkman began to laugh. Guitar had done it again.
He'd come to the door sopping wet, ready to roll over
and die, and now he was laughing, spilling tea, and
choking out his reply... (115).

In both cases, whether the two friends are men or women,
they serve to fill for one another a need that is human:
they provide an emotional outlet not to be found elsewhere,
in this case an outlet for cleansing laughter.

But it is not only from the men that Milkman learns how to grow. Though it takes him longer to realize it, he is indebted to women as well, reinforcing Scruggs' observation that the females cannot be separated from the males in Morrison's novels. At first Milkman finds revolting what he hears from his mother and his sister Lena about their oppression. He can neither understand nor tolerate the fact that his mother was so starved sexually that she nursed him long past his babyhood; he reacts hostilely to Lena's accusations that he has been treated like royalty without ever really deserving it, and doesn't want to listen to how she has suffered deprivation herself because of it. It is only much later, having abandoned his personal sense of having been put upon, that he can identify with his mother's pain ("What might she have been like had her husband loved her?" he stops to ponder, 304). He feels silly for having hated his mother and his sisters, and remembers with shame Lena's allusion to his "hog's gut," the male organ that he uses to defile others. Simultaneously he regrets his ugly treatment of Hagar, who had loved him and guided him into his sexual awakening so freely and unselfishly that her gift had come to seem worthless to him. In his relationship with Sweet Milkman learns how a man should really treat a woman, an invaluable lesson, and in the time he spends with her, returning her kindesses to him one by one, he is able to
compensate, at least symbolically, for his cruel and unfair treatment of Hagar.

But Milkman's greatest debt of all is owed to Pilate who, as her name suggests, has been a real pilot for him, guiding him toward maturity and selfhood. In spite of all she has done for him, Milkman has not done one kindness in return, and worse, has done her an injustice by stealing from her. Milkman only rids himself of "the skin of shame" he tried to wash off the night of the burglary when he acknowledges that Pilate has given him the most important of gifts—his life—and repents of his careless underestimation of her and subsequent offenses.

To knock down an old black lady who had cooked him his first perfect egg, who had shown him the sky, the blue of it, which was like her mother's ribbons, so that from then on when he looked at it, it had no distance, no remoteness, but was intimate, familiar, like a room that he lived in, a place where he belonged. She had told him stories, sung him songs, fed him bananas, and corn bread and, on the first cold day of the year, hot nut soup. And if his mother was right, this old black lady...had brought him into the world when only a miracle could have (211).

Pilate's house was the first place Milkman had ever felt happy. In contrast to the Dead household where he lived, the house on Darling Street was a life-quickening place, a place from which Milkman could set out on his quest for a self that he never would have been able to find had it not been for Pilate. Milkman fails at first to recognize the magical power of Pilate's androgyny, though he sees that she is as tall as his father and strong enough to murder a man
who threatens her daughter. In the end, however, he realizes that Pilate too can fly like their ancestor Solomon, although unlike the man, she can do it without ever leaving the ground—in other words, without abandoning anyone.

Pilate's male-female qualities, however, are not the solution to all problems. She cannot, for instance, save Hagar's life. Something Toni Morrison has said in an essay entitled "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation," may help to explain Pilate's ultimate failure while it illuminates Morrison's views on the disadvantages of keeping male and female separate, in literature as well as in life:

In Song of Solomon Pilate is the ancestor. The difficulty that Hagar has is how far removed she is from the experience of her ancestor. Pilate had a dozen years of close, nurturing relationships with two males—her father and her brother. And that intimacy and support was in her and made her fierce and loving because she had that experience. Her daughter Reba had less of that and related to men in a very shallow way. Her daughter had even less of an association with men as a child, so that the progression is really a diminishing of their abilities because of the absence of men in a nourishing way in their lives. Pilate is the apogee of all that: of the best of that which is female and the best of that which is male, and that balance is disturbed if it is not reproduced. That is the disability we must be on guard against for the future—the female who reproduces the female who reproduces the female (344).

Song of Solomon is Morrison's attempt to guard against that disability, which is the point Vivian Garnick misses when she sighs longingly for one of the female characters to play the leading role in the novel. She misses the fact that a male, Milkman Dead, is the one who must learn to be a human
being—the best of that which is female and the best of that which is male—and that his triumph in the end is that he has achieved that goal. No one in Milkman's story is better suited to give back to Pilate all that she has given in loving people:

"Sing," she said. "Sing a little somethin for me."

Milkman knew no songs, and had no singing voice, but he couldn't ignore the urgency in her voice. Speaking the words without the least bit of a tune, he sang for the lady.

Milkman sings to Pilate the very song she has always sung, the song that held within it the key to her family's past and thus the key to Milkman's self-discovery: "Sugargirl don't leave me here/Cotton balls to choke me/Sugargirl don't leave me here/Buckra's arms to yoke me" (340). Milkman has rejected his father's advice in favor of Pilate's philosophy; in order to own yourself, you must strive not to own other people, but to love them.

In an interview with Jane Bakerman, Toni Morrison speaks the words that summarize her goals in writing novels that deal with people, men and women alike:

Beauty, love... actually, I think, all the time that I write, I'm writing about love or its absence... Although I don't start out that way.

I thought in The Bluest Eye, that I was writing about beauty, miracles, and self-images, about the way in which people can hurt each other about whether or not one is beautiful.

In Sula, I thought I was writing about good and evil and the purposes to which they are frequently put, the way in which the community can use them.

In this last book, The Song of Solomon [sic], about dominion (that book is about men, the leading characters are men). And I thought I was writing about
the way in which men do things or relate to one another.

But I think I still write about the same thing, which is how people relate to one another and miss it or hang onto it...or are tenacious about love (Bakerman 60).
CHAPTER VI
Anne Tyler's Celestial Navigation:
New Insights into the Male Hero

In choosing to write about Anne Tyler's 1974 novel, Celestial Navigation, I have jumped back in time three years from the publication of Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon, disrupting the chronological sequence of this study. The disruption, however, is justified: of all of the novelists I have examined, Anne Tyler seems to be the most concerned with pulling apart male stereotypes and presenting a whole new vision of the male hero. Tyler creates Jeremy Pauling, the shy and fearful artist of Celestial Navigation, in order to reveal new possibilities for male heroism, possibilities that have nothing to do with the overused and often implausible feats of dragon-slaying, maiden-rescuing, and other tasks conventionally assigned to male characters whose authors would have them be heroes. That Tyler's characterizations of men are accomplishing something significant for our time is suggested in the comment of Emily Ellison and Jane B. Hill, editors of Our Mutual Room, a collection of literary portraits of the opposite sex by contemporary writers. "Of the women writers in contemporary
fiction," they write, "no one has been more successful at writing from the opposite gender point of view than Anne Tyler" (v). Reynolds Price argues in his article, "Men, Creating Women," that both male and female writers who choose to write sensitively and penetratingly from the opposite gender point of view could contribute to a more profound understanding of human nature. It seems fitting, therefore, to end this analysis of women writing about men with a writer who is so deliberately and so successfully pointing us all in a new and positive literary direction for the future.

It is inevitable that Anne Tyler's male protagonists, all of whom display a tentativeness toward life, or even a profound fear of it, would excite comment. Larry McMurtry comes forward in a review of Tyler's Accidental Tourist, partly as a critic but mostly as an admirer:

The concept of an accidental tourist captures in a phrase something she has been saying all along, if not about life, at least about men: they are frequently accidental tourists in their own lives. Macon Leary sums up a long line of her males. Jake Simmes in Earthly Possessions is an accidental kidnapper. The lovable Morgan Gower of Morgan's Passing, an accidental obstetrician in the first scenes, is an accidental husband or lover in the rest of the book. Her men slump around like tired tourists—friendly, likable, but not all that engaged. Their characters, like their professions, seem accidental even though they come equipped with genealogies of Balzacian thoroughness. All of them have to be propelled through life by (at the very least) a brace of sharp, purposeful women--it usually takes not only a wife and a girlfriend but an indignant mother and one or more devoted sisters to keep these sluggish fellows moving. They poke around haphazardly, ever mild and perennially puzzled, in the foreign country called Life. If they see anything
worth seeing, it is usually because a determined woman...thrusts it under their noses and demands that they pay some attention. The fates of these families hinge on long struggles between semiattentive males and semiobsessed females. In her patient investigation of such struggles, Miss Tyler has produced a very satisfying body of fiction (36).

McMurtry's description of Tyler's male characters is to a degree quite accurate, at least up to the point where he finds them sluggish, haphazard, mild, and confused. It also sounds, from his final comment, as if he has managed to appreciate rather than to deprecate Tyler's attempt to depict men as lost and drifting, something male critics of Charlotte Bronte or George Eliot never could have done. Perhaps the comments regarding the "sharp purposeful women" whose job it is to keep the men moving could be seen as an expression of McMurty's discomfort with what other critics have called Tyler's weak and ineffective males, but this is hard to discern from the review. However, McMurty's idea that Tyler's male characters do not see anything "worth seeing" unless a determined woman forces them to do so cannot be applied to Jeremy Pauling. Jeremy sees plenty that is worth seeing; it is just that the whorls, shapes, clusters of color and flashes of light that he sees as an artist are not what other people see. They are not perhaps what the women in the novel accept as worth seeing, not his sister Amanda certainly, and not even his wife Mary or his boarder Olivia with any consistency. At least the first two of these women are purposeful about things in the real world
(Olivia certainly cannot be called purposeful), but this does not mean that what Jeremy sees when he travels his own world ought to be devalued. At any rate, the generally very positive tone of McMurtry's review indicates the possibility that we have arrived at a new age of widening sensibilities and tolerance, both on the part of the writer and on the part of the critic, regarding what male fictional heroes can be.

One key to Tyler's success in creating literary portraits of men lies in her emphasis on and attraction to becoming someone else through fiction-writing. In responding to questions posed by Laurie L. Brown, Tyler claims that for her, writing is "simply a way of living other lives... . Just about everything I've written has been based upon 'what if.' What if I led such-and-such a life instead of the one I do lead? What if that person I see standing at the bus stop were to go home and find out such-and-such happened?" (Brown 10-11) The ability to become so interested and imaginatively involved in the life of another person is a first step toward creating believable (even if eccentric) fictional characters; the next step involves blending the fictional character's imagined traits with the writer's own. The success of this step depends not so much on a conscious attempt at autobiography as it does on an unconscious melting into the character, with the result that some or many or all of the writer's
characteristics are reborn within that character. Anne Tyler succeeds in each of these critical steps with male and female characters alike because, as Mary Robertson notes, "Tyler never uses gender stereotypes; men can be nurturing as well as women, and woman can exhibit patriarchal attitudes" (132). I would add that Anne Tyler even deliberately distorts or reverses stereotypes. "Were women always stronger than men?" she has Jeremy ask quite genuinely (150). There is also this summary of Jeremy's impression of the difference between himself and Mary:

In the dark, where his thoughts seemed more significant than they did in the daytime, he decided that this was what made the difference between him and Mary. He saw virtue in acceptance of everything, small and large, while Mary saw virtue in the refusal to accept (161).

As many critics have pointed out, Tyler shares numerous characteristics with Jeremy Pauling, the most salient of these being the fact that they are both artists. Tyler creates art with words while Jeremy's medium is forms and colors in space, but Tyler has claimed that she always believed she'd be a visual artist herself rather than a writer ("Still Just Writing, 13). Frank Shelton has quoted Tyler as saying that Celestial Navigation is her favorite novel because Jeremy, who lives life from a distance, is the closest she has come to writing about herself (854). "Like her," notes Shelton, "Jeremy is an artist, but through him the author treats the dangers of living a detached life and indicates that engagement with others provides a necessary
balance to the distance the artist must maintain" (854). Doris Betts sees parallels between the choice that Jeremy, like Tyler, has to make between life and work—the question every artist has to face. While Jeremy struggles with the noise of the children, the demands made on him by his wife, and his need to shut himself away with his sculpture, Anne Tyler too finds the job of the artist working at home to be a struggle. In "Still Just Writing" she discusses at length the conflicts that arise, though unlike Jeremy she has found a way to "put up partitions" in her mind in order to keep her domestic and artistic lives separate. Moreover, Tyler, unlike Jeremy, has learned to extract from her family responsibilities a sense that she has "more of a self to speak from... My life seems more intricate" (9). Although Jeremy too seems to be enriched by the life going on around him and begins to incorporate it into his work, he also feels threatened by it and ends up rejecting it. He becomes quite upset when, asking Olivia if his work is unique, he is actually questioning whether there is too much of Mary in it. "I keep having the feeling that Mary is coloring things in some way," he says (212) of his newest piece, which of course contains not only Mary but all of the children as well. It is a large box with cubbyholes containing bits and pieces of the life the family has led for the past ten years. Finally Jeremy bursts out with "There's no one else in it, there's not a fragment, there's not a single other
person" (212). Jeremy has not learned, like Tyler, to put up effective partitions and to functional alternately on either side when appropriate. Tyler has said, "At the moment I don't have an outside job, though I've taught, worked in publishing, and done freelance writing. I enjoyed my jobs and learned a lot from them, though I did find it difficult to have as much uninterrupted time as I require for fiction writing. But when I do nothing but write, I can feel quite insular and cut off. I think it's crucial to find a balance" (Brown 12-13). The problem of how to strike this balance is one which Tyler explores through Jeremy, who also vacillates between his longing as an artist to be free and his need for human love and companionship.

Doris Betti sees an even stronger resemblance between Jeremy and Tyler in the way each "sees life in a series of brief flashes which arrest motion in midair" (Celestial Navigation 37). We are told early in the novel how Jeremy's "vision functioned: only in detail. Piece by piece. He had tried looking at the whole of things but it never worked out" (39). As an example of this way of seeing, Tyler describes an early drawing of Jeremy's showing, not an entire room, but a close-up of an electrical wall socket drawn in intensely detailed contrast to the slashes representing the floor and walls. Although Jeremy rarely leaves his house, he is nevertheless able to form a picture of the entire world from the snatches of detail he observes
from his studio window. This use of detailed parts arranged inside a frame, suggests Betts, can be compared to Tyler's developing literary method:

She remains a writer who selects her time entry points but heads towards magnitude, whose life is both private and domestic but who prefers not to teach writing courses much as Jeremy finds art students an ordeal. Nor will you hear Anne Tyler speaking at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association; she has said, "I will write my books and raise the children. Anything else just fritters me away... I hate leaving home" (Betts 31).

The last sentence, "I hate leaving home," provides what is perhaps the most interesting parallel between the writer and her protagonist. Tyler is apparently an intensely private person; like Jeremy, she perceives the outside world as an intrusion, and views any deviation from routine as a threat. In "Still Just Writing" she expands on this side of herself, and her fears are surprisingly similar to those of Jeremy:

The only real trouble that writing has ever brought me is an occasional sense of being invaded by the outside world... I know this makes me sound narrow, but in fact, I am narrow. I like routine and rituals and I hate leaving home; I have a sense of digging my heels in. I refuse to drive on freeways. I dread our annual vacation... As the outside world grows less dependable, I keep buttressing my inside world, where people go on meaning well and surprising other people with little touches of grace (15).

This excerpt from Tyler's essay calls to mind several passages from Celestial Navigation. Jeremy too senses dismay when, finally agreeing to go to Brian's gallery to see his own pieces on display, he realizes that rather than the empty showroom Brian led him to expect, the gallery is full of people. Jeremy feels that his privacy has been
compromised ("He felt like rushing up and flinging his arms out, shielding what he had made," 146), and that his very self has been violated. He begins to sense, in the curious eyes of the spectators in the gallery, that they expect him to behave the way he does, as if Brian has in fact exposed his "reputation": "He pulled his golf cap on with shaky fingers; he turned on his heel, making Mary run to catch up with him. Yet immediately he sensed that he had done something else that they expected. There was nothing he could do they would not expect. He stumbled across miles of treacherous carpet, trapped still in their image of him" (148). Jeremy represents perfectly here Tyler's own sense of "being invaded by the outside world." Tyler's reluctance to leave home is reflected in Jeremy, although most likely in exaggerated form, just as the fears she mentions are stretched to find representation in the following passage from the novel:

These are some of the things Jeremy Pauling dreaded: using the telephone, answering the doorbell, leaving his house, making purchases. Also wearing new clothes, standing in open spaces, meeting the eyes of a stranger, eating in the presence of others, turning on electrical appliances (76).

These fears may be forms, exaggerated in fiction, of Tyler's own feelings. She too dislikes some of the things life requires of one. She writes that she likes everything about adult life except "the paperwork--the income tax and protesting the Sears bill and renewing the Triple-A membership" ("Still Just Writing," 15). Jeremy's fears may
also call to mind a picture of the conventional Victorian lady, complete with the agoraphobia, anorexia, and other disorders resulting from a deliberately over-protected upbringing. But here they are, embodied in a man of the twentieth century! What could Tyler have been trying to do? She is certainly doing more than just projecting herself into a character who happens, arbitrarily, to be male. This is the question we must try to answer.

The central message Anne Tyler is transmitting regarding men is that they come in many varieties, and that this fact ought to be met with tolerance and understanding. In *Celestial Navigation* we see a selection of these varieties: there is Guy Tell, Mary's first husband, and there is John, the man Mary takes up with when she grows away from Guy. Both of these men represent a selfish, rather conventionally macho type of male. At first Guy and John appear to be opposites. Guy is only semi-literate, a gas station attendant who sports a tattoo, buys motorcycles on impulse, and has no sensitivity whatsoever to the needs of women and children; he is, in fact, repulsed by them. John, on the other hand, is more culturally refined, a level-headed and seemingly attentive lover who wears neat sweaters and takes pictures of Mary's little girl, Darcy. These differences between the two men, however, turn out to be superficial ones. Neither of them really cares about Mary's needs: Guy, failing to meet his wife's need for
recognition of herself as a woman, cannot tolerate her breast-feeding, refuses to consider having more children, and insists on treating the one he has like a doll. John similarly ignores Mary's needs by playing a game with her in which he leads her to believe that what he wants is what she is most willing to be: a conventional "womanly" woman, redolent of cinnamon, always ready to offer domestic warmth and comfort. Ultimately John rejects this real Mary, who, it turns out, isn't what he wanted at all. Tyler also gives us Brian O'Donnell, Jeremy's art agent, a nice enough man who is eager to step into the shoes of the chivalrous knight when it becomes clear that Mary has left Jeremy for an indefinite period of time. Tyler pits Jeremy against Brian, in fact, in order to examine a different version of heroism. The contrast is obvious in the fact that Brian is allowed to live out a scene that Jeremy can only imagine. In Jeremy's fantasy

he spent hours constructing reasons for her [Mary] to turn to him. He imagined fires and floods. He invented a sudden fever for her little girl. Mary Tell would panic and come pound on his door, carrying an antique silver candlestick. He would be a rock of strength for her. He would go to the doctor without a thought, no matter how many blocks from home it took him. He would keep watch beside the sickbed, a straight line of confidence for her to lean against (78).

Brian, however, is the one who transforms Jeremy's fantasy, which sounds like the plot of one of the Victorian romances his mother used to read him, into modern reality. When Rachel becomes sick with an ear infection from living in
Brian's unheated cabin by the lake, it is Brian who shows up just in time, and it is Brian who rushes them to the doctor in his air-conditioned car and carries Rachel up to the doctor's office, causing Mary to feel that she is "in good hands" (196).

But the other men in the novel--Guy, John, and Brian--all play a subordinate role to Jeremy. Just as there are all kinds of men, Tyler seems to be saying, there are also all kinds of male heroism, and it is Jeremy's type of heroism she is most interested in illuminating. Ellison and Hill suggest that "Jeremy Pauling turns out to be one of the most heroic male characters in contemporary American fiction" (vi). If he were less tentative, less fearful, the deeds he does perform would be less heroic. "For Mary Tell's sake he was slaying dragons," Tyler tells us, "and yet to keep her respect it was necessary that she never even guess it" (95). Herein lies the answer to the question of what Tyler is trying to do in creating a male character like Jeremy Pauling. Our society still demands of men that they be dragon-slayers, but Tyler insists that they, like anybody, can be terrified of dragons, and that society should extend to them the right to be so, rather than force them to hide their fear until it festers into a debilitating neurosis. Miss Vinton, the character in the novel who seems to understand Jeremy the best, puts it bluntly: "There are other kinds of heroes than the ones who swim through burning
oil" (127). It is also Miss Vinton who verbalizes Tyler's view that Jeremy's heroism lies paradoxically in the very fact that he is frightened: "One sad thing about this world is that the acts that take the most out of you are usually the ones that other people will never know about" (126).

The tragedy of Jeremy's situation is that he can never escape the expectations of others regarding his manhood. The novel begins just after the death of his mother who, early sensing that her son is weak and sickly, unwittingly nourishes these qualities in him by indulging and pampering him and encouraging his fears, many of which are simply reproductions of her own. A quiet, timid woman afraid of leaving so much as a dent on the surface of life, Mrs. Pauling has raised Jeremy to be, in his sister Amanda's words, "a mama's boy." Amanda resents the favoritism their mother showed toward Jeremy, making him special food, keeping him home from school for weeks at a time at the mere hint of a stomach ache, reading him Victorian novels when she claimed she had no time to read to his sisters; in short, indulging him in every way because, as she herself put it when Amanda demanded to know why Jeremy received special treatment, "Well, honey... you have to remember that Jeremy is a boy" (26). Amanda reflects on what this could mean: "I thought she meant that boys were more lovable, but maybe she was saying that they took more care. That they were weaker, or more accident-prone, or more likely to make
mistakes" (26). The instructions regarding Jeremy Mrs. Pauling leaves in her will sum up an attitude that in part causes Jeremy's problems: "Please take care of him. Please see to it that he doesn't just go to pieces... Please don't let anything happen to him" (28). As Miss Vinton later remarks, one can take too much care of another person; this is, in Miss Vinton's eyes, Mary's mistake when she tells Miss Vinton in a whisper, "Take care of Jeremy for me" (114). Miss Vinton concludes that Mary, like Mrs. Pauling, has been "too understanding" of Jeremy (128). In other words, Miss Vinton is the only one who realizes that in spite of the fact that Jeremy doesn't handle things the way most other men do, he is still an adult human being who does not need and surely cannot benefit from being treated like a child.

At the other extreme from Jeremy's mother is his sister Amanda. Amanda's section is littered with passages that reveal a wholly different set of expectations of males, expectations which suit Jeremy just as poorly as the idea that he is totally helpless in practical matters. Although on the first page of the novel Amanda says that long ago the family gave up expecting very much of him, it is clear that there is indeed a role Amanda does expect her brother to play. In spite of the fact that 38 year old Jeremy has never left home, Amanda argues that "still he is the last man in our family and you would think that in time of
tragedy he might pull himself together and take over a few of the responsibilities" (1). Disgusted with Jeremy's refusal or inability (Amanda is never sure which) to do the things other men do, like drive a car, Amanda tramps home through the rain from the train station with her sister Laura, again revealing her expectations of a man: "But some men can take things in hand even arriving by city bus, hailing another bus home again and seeing to it their sisters have seats and keeping watch over their bags" (2). At the end of the novel, Jeremy will in fact board a city bus, battling against a phobia Amanda will never understand, in order to get to Mary and the children who have left him and moved to a boatyard on the other side of town. He will do this not only to act out what he knows others expect of him and to try to prove to himself that he can do it; he will do it also out of love for his family and out of the courage he has developed from that love. The fact that his mission ultimately fails does not render him unmanly, and it does not diminish the heroism of the act itself.

Despite Amanda's begrudging acknowledgement of the truth, that her brother does not fit her idea of the manly man, she still refuses to give up hope entirely. "All that sustained me," she says on the way to the funeral home, "was that Jeremy would be waiting for us—a man, at least, whatever you might say" (4-5). Jeremy, predictably, is not waiting for them; he is sitting on the stairs at home where
his mother collapsed, a point from which he has barely moved since. Amanda's language reveals her revulsion at Jeremy, a man who can allow his sister to "knead and pull him like so much modelling clay until he was finally in a standing position" (16). She suspects that he might possess "some perverse, inner strength that keeps him an immovable lump in spite of all our nudges" (24), and calls him "a man without landmarks" (30). These last two judgments hold within them a truth that Amanda herself cannot know and doesn't even suspect: Jeremy does indeed have a certain inner strength which is highly unique and visible to no one except perhaps to Miss Vinton, a strength which propels him, even without the everyday landmarks others are used to. Jeremy, Miss Vinton tells us, sails by celestial navigation. Because Amanda cannot see what Jeremy sees, and because she has such rigid ideas about how people should behave (not only Jeremy but everyone else in the house), she proves to be a menace to Jeremy, who cannot bear violation, whether it is a violation of himself or a request that he violate someone else. His horror at the idea of having had to go through his mother's clothes after her death expresses this abhorrence, as does his reaction to Amanda's badgering him to go to the funeral home against his will. She begins by teasing: "You surely are not scared to come," she says. "Not a big grown man like you" (32). Despite Jeremy's obvious discomfort, which grows steadily worse, Amanda pulls
him along the street, farther and farther from the only place he feels secure, until he finally crumples on the sidewalk, leaving Amanda astounded. She herself has admitted that forcing Jeremy has always been counter-productive; nevertheless, she cannot seem to abandon the strategy altogether. Mary, on the other hand, senses that she overwhelms Jeremy and tries to compensate by pulling too far back from him. Neither of these extreme approaches is the right one for Jeremy, as Miss Vinton knows instinctively. She tells Amanda to let him be, a philosophy she holds dear for herself as well. It is a philosophy which turns out to be, if not the "right" one—there is no tidy resolution, as Frank Shelton points out, to the conflict between engagement and disengagement, sympathy and distance, in Anne Tyler's novels—then the one that leaves Jeremy comfortable, alone with Miss Vinton, at the end of the novel.

The heroism that Tyler allows Jeremy does not involve the predictable plot in which a man conquers terrible disabilities to become whole, but the heroism of a man who was more or less whole to begin with within his own world and according to his own rules, but tries nevertheless to adapt to someone else's. Failing simply because of the misunderstandings that are bound to prevail among people, even (and perhaps especially) between people who are married to one another, Jeremy returns, "peaceful but distant"
(249), to the world he knew originally, the world of his art in which he is free to travel by his own map. The ending is not a happy or an optimistic one, but it does offer the only possible resolution for a man like Jeremy. As Miss Vinton points out, not all heroes need to swim through burning oil. And not all men are made to be protectors of women, functioning consistently as straight lines of confidence, driving cars and sailing boats, providing and supplying and rescuing. It is sad that Jeremy cannot find some way of maintaining his artist's distance while overcoming the barriers caused by unnecessary fears, but in the world inhabited by Mary, Brian, and all the others, too much is asked of him at once. "Oh, if there were any god he believed in," he thinks, "it was gradualness! If people would only let him go at things his own way, step by step, never requiring these sudden leaps that seem to happen in the outside world!" (92)

But besides Miss Vinton, who believes with Jeremy that "everyone has a right to take his own leaps" (115), people unfortunately do not allow Jeremy this gradualness. First of all, there is the prevailing belief that Jeremy absorbs from a magazine article on famous Americans, that "a man could develop character by doing one thing he disliked every day of his life" (76). Jeremy copies this quotation onto an index card which he tacks to his windowsill, resolving to live by its suggestion, even though logically he feels he
should by now have the strongest character imaginable—almost everything he does, after all, is something he dislikes. He tries to go for walks but eventually succumbs to the overwhelming fear they evoke, never making any progress. Drawing from "wells of strength he did not even own," he tries to greet Mary Tell with a daily "good morning," knowing that she can never guess how much courage it takes for him to do so. But despite the feeling that he is constantly growing smaller rather than larger, he persists in his attempt to build character, knowing that the rules of courtship demand from a man that he be in total control; this he has learned from the novels his mother read him. One might laugh at Jeremy's exaggerated view of proposing—taking Mary for a ride in shiny black carriage, dancing across a ballroom floor, bringing candy and flowers, and finally getting down on his knees to pose the question—but the underlying principle is valid: it is a man's job to initiate and guide a courtship, even in our day when this is a difficult thing to admit. As Margaret Drabble's male protagonist in The Needle's Eye puts it:

It was so difficult to know, these days, as a man, what was expected of one: he had little sympathy with women who would moan at him from time to time that they found themselves living in a world without rules, because the one rule that seemed quite clearly to remain was the rule that instructed a man to make the first move (38).

Jeremy, therefore, feels he must force himself, for Mary's sake, for the sake of love and companionship, to do things he never would have considered otherwise, and he cannot go
about them gradually. The leaps required of him are finally mastered to the point where he can say to Mary, when it looks as if she is going to refuse his offer of marriage, "What hope do you have for a better life, if you keep on saying no to everything new?" These words, Tyler tells us, are really spoken for Jeremy himself, yet they have the desired effect: Mary consents to be his wife (at least for all practical purposes; they cannot officially marry because Guy has refused Mary a divorce). The entire proposal scene is one of several which most brilliantly reveal Jeremy's heroism.

It is not Jeremy's personal limitations alone that inhibit him and deepen the complexity of his situation. Mary Tell herself helps to stymie him because of her own ambivalence regarding what she expects of herself and of men. She quickly realizes that Jeremy does not function well with practical matters, and with her natural bent for taking care of things, briskly assumes control of all the details of domestic life. She fills the house with children, establishes a new order, handles all the telephone calls and service people, and takes care of the shopping and other everyday necessities, thinking that she will simply spare Jeremy all of these things he finds so perplexing and troublesome. She makes a supreme effort to seem less imposing, knowing how easy it is to overwhelm Jeremy. "Did he think I didn't know?" she muses. "I never spoke to him
without a sense of holding myself in check, trying to keep the reins in. I didn't want to dominate. When I talked to him with big, wide gestures, with power and energy flooding out of me, I saw how he quailed and then made himself stand firm. He was wishing that I would shrink a little" (181-82). Mary's problem is that there is a limit to how much she can shrink. She also feels strongly about correcting a mistake she perceives she has made in her own life by depending too entirely on men; she comes to the conclusion that "women should never leave any vacant spots for men to fill; they should form an unbroken circle on their own and enclose each child within it" (177). Mary has forgotten that this shutting out of men was the very grievance Guy expressed in his angry letter to her:

...what I couldn't take was this, you held my own baby daughter separate (sic) from me... you and her just lived your separate lives like I wasn't around. You froze me out. Don't you think I got feelings too? What do you think I been thinking all these years? Oh I don't count I'm just a man. You put me in mind of a black widow spider, soon as you got your child then a man isn't no more use to you (69).

In addition to the fact that Guy's letter appears early in the novel, we never develop much sympathy for him. However, the point he makes is admittedly a significant one; Mary has already begun to favor female bonding over her relationship with a man, and has shut Guy out of the circle she has created with her mother-in-law and her baby daughter. Much as we might sympathize with her at this point, we later find it harder, when we hear a similar
complaint from Jeremy, to admire Mary's desire for the support of women or even her wish to be completely independent. As admirable as her intentions may be, whether they are to protect Jeremy or to bolster her own sense of self, they end up causing pain as they do their part to shatter a human relationship. Jeremy is aware from the beginning of Mary's self-sufficiency, even when she herself doubts it. The first time he touches her, what he notices is that her hand is harder than his. He draws sobering conclusions about his chances of winning such a strong, energetic, and self-contained woman: "It was impossible that she would ever need anyone, especially not Jeremy" (78); "Mary Tell would never in a million years give a thought to a man like him" (86); "He could never keep up with a woman like that" (93).

In spite of these doubts, however, Jeremy does end up with Mary, but the problems between them, arising out of a mutual misreading of one another's needs, continue. Jeremy does need to feel needed, while Mary does her best not to impose any of her needs on him at all, forcing the situation to a crisis when she finally asks Miss Vinton to take her to the hospital to have her baby. She thinks that she is saving Jeremy from having to go through the ordeal again, thereby doing away with an important family ritual, one which in fact did mean a lot to Jeremy. What has happened is that Mary has begun to resent the fact that she is
"forced," because of all the children, to depend on Jeremy because, as she says, "He's not dependable" (126). Here Mary's deep ambivalence sets in; she begins to resent her role as sole emotional support of the family, as the one who must always initiate and control, failing to see that the situation is largely one of her own making. At the hospital she breaks down and tells Miss Vinton:

"I love him [Jeremy] more than I ever loved anyone, do you believe me? But sometimes I start falling in love with my doctor or even the children's doctor, they're both so sure of what they're doing. Even the furnace man, who knows exactly where the leak is, or the man who delivers my groceries. He whistles cheerful songs and slams that big box of groceries on my kitchen table" (127).

Miss Vinton sees the problem clearly: "Look," she wants to say to Mary, "the biggest thing you can do for him is to take him at face value" (122). Her intense respect for people's privacy (or her profound fear or distaste for coming too close to others) will not allow her to say this aloud to Mary, however, and when Mary reiterates her reason for not wanting Jeremy to come to the hospital ("It's so hard for him... I told him not to bother"), Miss Vinton can only muse to herself, "Some people take a terribly long time learning things" (123).

Again, Miss Vinton knows something about Jeremy that others cannot see. By "taking him at face value" she means that people ought to give him some credit for the things he does manage to do. If Jeremy has five times gotten into a car and gone to the hospital, despite his fear of leaving
home, then the act ought to be acknowledged for what it is, and not rejected on the basis of how hard it was for him to do it. "I know that Jeremy is supposed to be the weak one in that couple," says Miss Vinton, "but he might surprise some people: if you are scared of so many things, sometimes you turn out even stronger than ordinary men" (116-17). Miss Vinton is the one who, significantly, holds back from rushing to help Jeremy the way other women (his mother, Laura, Mary, and eventually Olivia) do.

While Jeremy might navigate using celestial rather than terrestrial landmarks, Miss Vinton is right in assuming that he deserves credit for being able to absorb what is happening in his life. Things may dawn on him more slowly than they do on others, but he does develop an increasing awareness of the fact that he is being underestimated and shut out by Mary. It occurs to him, in one of his characteristic visual epiphanies, that his children bear no physical resemblance to him. This seems natural to him at first, when he reflects on how Mary's pregnancies have always seemed to belong so exclusively to her.

But then he looked at Darcy—still blond and blue-eyed, nearly as tall as her mother now but with someone else's frail bones. Her father had not been eclipsed. Her father's genes must have been as recessive as Jeremy's, all pale and slight; yet they had won out. How come?

Looking at all of his children, he wonders where they could have gotten their fearlessness, their confident swaggers, their ability to shout and cheer and throw oranges without a
trace of self-consciousness. Then, when he observes the basement (where he is awkwardly participating in the placement of the old refrigerator to make room for a new one he has unintentionally won), lined with all the canned goods, tennis shoes, and barrels of laundry detergent Mary has set up in order to keep the household running, Jeremy senses, in addition to his claustrophobia, resentment toward Mary: "Was this necessary? He felt she was pointing something out to him: her role as supplier, feeder, caretaker. 'See how I give? And how I keep on giving—these are my reserves. I will always have more, you don't even have to ask. I will be waiting with a new shirt for you the minute the elbows wear through in the old one'" (143). More resentment follows. In the art gallery scene mentioned earlier, two separate events confirm Jeremy's sense that Mary underestimates him. First, on the way to the gallery, Jeremy becomes defensive when Mary points out and explains things to him that he in fact already knows about.

Did she imagine he was deaf and blind? "Look, there's a girl with a bush. Isn't it amazing? They call it 'natural.'" He had been seeing girls with bushes for years, in magazines and TV commercials and on the sidewalk before the bay window. He had probably seen more from that window than Mary saw on all her trips to stores and schools and obstetricians. He had observed the world steadily swelling and involuting, developing new twists and whorls and clusters like some complicated cell mass—first inch by inch, then faster, so that now it seemed that after the briefest holing-up in his studio he could come back to find everything changed: people stranger, cars more vicious-looking, even the quality of light altered in some undefinable
way. But he had kept up with things. He knew what was going on the world. Mary underestimated him (145).

After Jeremy has stumbled away in shock and anger from the spectators he did not expect to see in the gallery, Mary tries to comfort him, saying "Never you mind, Jeremy... There now" and kissing him on the cheek.

But she only troubled him more. Was it expected of him also that he would stand here being kissed like a child? He wiped away the damp equal-sign left by her lips, and he pulled his coat more tightly around him and trudged off toward the car (148).

The failure of a man and a woman--two people very different from one another, though not in predictable stereotyped ways--to cohere within a love relationship is a highly significant theme in *Celestial Navigation*. Anne Tyler takes a very dark view in this novel of the power of love to act as a unifying force. The very first section of the book, narrated by Amanda, concludes after she has hurt Jeremy, alienated Laura, and deepened her own sense of loneliness, with this bitter rationalization about love:

I didn't realize. I am not a cruel woman. I have never intentionally hurt a person in all my life. I said, "Laura, I didn't realize." But Laura just walked on with Jeremy, keeping him close to her, and I had to follow after. Nobody seemed to care whether I came or not. I walked six paces behind, all alone. Well, there are worse things than walking alone. Look at Jeremy, propped up on both sides, beloved son of Wilma Pauling. If that is what love does to you, isn't it possible that I am the most fortunate of us all? (34)

After reading Amanda's section, in which Tyler does a superb job of transcending the rigid old maid stereotype by allowing Amanda to reveal a very vulnerable inner self, no
reader would agree to consider her fortunate. Jeremy, too, doubts the power of love to smooth out all conflict:

He had waited for love like a man awaiting salvation. The secret, the hidden key. Was it love that failed Jeremy, or was it Jeremy who failed love? Was there anything to hope for after love? (153)

At first it seems that Jeremy and Mary have gained a lot in coming together. Mary has the type of home she wants, full of the challenge of children and the buzz of domestic activity. Jeremy slowly develops a little more courage; as we have seen, his love for Mary leads him to overcome his shyness with strangers enough to make emotional contact with her, and also to garner the strength to venture outside and away from his house, at least for the trips to the hospital after each of Mary's deliveries. And yet, as we have seen, things seem to fall apart in spite of these gains. Mary's competence and energy only contribute to an increasing sense on Jeremy's part that he is being overwhelmed, crowded out, his freedom compromised and his integrity threatened. Mary, too, senses that her potential for freedom has been limited. Sometimes, she tells Miss Vinton, she feels that "every new baby is another rope, tying me down like a tent. I don't have the option to leave any more" (126). And this in spite of the fact that she has what she always wanted ("I always promised myself I would have at least a dozen children when I grew up," 126). Mary herself characterizes the nature of the labyrinth in which she and Jeremy have become entangled in spite of their love
for one another:

He changed. I changed. He gathered some kind of stubborn, hidden strength while I became more easily touched by anything small and vulnerable--changes that each of us caused in the other, but they were exactly the ones that have separated us and that will keep us separate. If he calls me back he will be admitting a weakness. If I return unasked, I will be-bearing down upon him and plowing him under. If I weren't crying I would laugh (195).

It is obvious, then, that the stronger Jeremy becomes, the less he will need Mary; the more Mary perceives that he does not need her to mother him, the less satisfied she will be. Yet neither of them will be willing to relinquish those very qualities that get in the way of their being together.

What happens in fact is that Jeremy makes an attempt--his second attempt in the novel, and a clearly heroic one--to reach Mary and repair the damage that has been done. In his sudden desperate urge for freedom, the urge that inspires his sculpture of a man running and the completion of which causes him to "forget" his wedding date, he loses Mary, who recognizes that Jeremy cannot really want to be fully committed to her and as a result takes the children and leaves him. Left alone to drift, and encouraged by Olivia to lose touch with reality, Jeremy experiences a terrible sense of loneliness. He makes no real emotional contact with Olivia who is enthusiastically trying to get inside of him and understand his art. After Olivia leaves Jeremy, defeated finally in her struggle to penetrate and more or less threatened by Miss Vinton, Jeremy begins to
reflect honestly on his situation. He realizes he had loved Mary for the wrong reason, for a madonna-like image he had ascribed to her: a calm and stately demeanor that he imagined, with the help of the Victorian novels, that made her ageless and classical. This Mary, one invented to a great extent by Jeremy himself, just as Mary had invented the Jeremy who seemed a forty-year-old child, was the one he had concentrated on, instead of on the Mary behind whose words ("How's your supply of socks?") he had heard laughter at the mundanity of the subject. He remembers the pounding of her feet up the stairs, her tears and tempers—all the qualities that made her a real woman rather than a pale, oval-faced icon to be worshipped and feared. "No one is purely what they seem on the surface," Jeremy says to Olivia at one point (205). But it has taken him a long time to understand the relevance of these words to Mary.

Jeremy feels, as he did when he had contemplated ways of winning Mary Tell in the first place, that he must take action. "Being good was not enough," he concludes, realizing that the mistakes he made "were not evil deeds but errors of aimlessness, passivity, an echoing internal silence" (226). Again he tries to think of ways of winning Mary, and again his ideas take the form of romantic fantasy, the myth of the hero setting out on a brave adventure:

He had a vague longing to undertake some metaphysical task, to make some pilgrimage. In books a pilgrimage would pass through a fairytale landscape of round green hills and nameless rivers and pathless forests. He
knew of no such landscape in America... . Wasn't there anything in the world that was large scale any more? Wasn't there anything to lift him out of this stillness inside? ...he tried to find just one heroic undertaking that he could aim his life toward (226-27).

Jeremy eventually discovers his mission. He sets out on the bravest adventure of his life, one which demands of him that he do all the things he most fears doing: boarding a bus that will take him to a distant and completely unfamiliar part of town where he will have to deal with strangers and face the possibility of becoming lost forever. But before he can even embark on this trip, at the end of which he will find Mary and bring her back—the equivalent for him of a dragon-slaying—he must accomplish another difficult task. He goes into a store to look for gifts for his children and selects six "surprises," each one a little wrapped package the mystery of which pleases him. Feeling more confident, he proceeds to board the bus according to his careful plan, and as the unfamiliar scenery rushes by he bolsters his courage with his hopefulness at the thought of seeing Mary again and with the pride he feels in this journey.

Overcoming a few more hurdles, Jeremy finds the boatyard and the dismal cabin where Mary has been living. Although one thing after another diminishes his hopes, he tries desperately to retain his newfound sense of control. First, the fact that Mary is surviving here against all odds starts to chip away at his confidence; the old sense of not being needed is reinforced. Then the surprises he has
brought the children turn out to be disappointments: all six of them are cheap whistles. This brings on a barrage of tactful comments from Mary which Jeremy interprets as patronizing. Mary is again being overly careful with him. Left alone together, everything Mary and Jeremy say to one another is the wrong thing. Jeremy tells Mary his work is going better than ever before, a sign to her that he doesn't need her to come back. Mary tells Jeremy that she is "managing on her own now, not depending on a soul," which verifies for him that she has no place for him. Their ironic conversation culminates in an exchange about winterizing the cabin:

"Really, we're very comfortable. Also I'm planning to buy an oil stove," she told him. "That will help when it gets colder. And Darcy and I are winterizing the place ourselves, did you notice?"
"Um--"
"Sealing off the windows and everything."
He thought of the rolled-up newspapers. "Ah, yes," he said. "No, I know what winterizing is, I just thought--"
"We're doing a pretty good job, don't you think?"
"Yes."
"Most people would have to ask some man to do that."
"Oh. Well, I think I had better take care of it now," he said (240).

Every sentence in the exchange is a signal; everything is interpreted as having a hidden meaning. Mary's assessment of the impasse she and Jeremy have reached is eminently clear here: Jeremy needs to appear strong, to show he is capable of taking care of things without Mary's help, which means he will find no opportunity to ask her back. Mary
must let him perform his acts of manly competence, in turn leaving them no way out, for to let him know that she is just waiting for him to show a sign that he wants her back will be insulting to him. Jeremy proceeds to winterize the windows, determined "to take action at once. To surround her with efficiency and authority... He had to do a better job of it than she and Darcy could" (241). To make matters worse, Mary interprets Jeremy's actions, on his part simply the desire to show her he is competent to do a man's job, as his way of ensuring that she will be able to stay in this cabin, away from him, indefinitely.

Finally Jeremy finds himself in a most painful position. To complete his immersion in the male stereotype he has adopted, he sets out to air the sails on Brian's boat, a feat that takes a degree of skill and courage that no one, not Jeremy, nor Mary, nor the reader, believes Jeremy possesses. One of the children blurts out that airing the sails is something Mary has been asked to do but dislikes doing; therefore Jeremy has no option but to perform the rescue of the damsel-in-distress. As if the idea of getting onto the precarious dinghy doesn't bother him enough, the children insist on going with him, causing him to picture all kinds of terrible mishaps. But again, Jeremy has no recourse but to allow them on board because, as they tell him, "Mom always lets us." Fumbling with a knotted rope (which Darcy ends up loosening easily), Jeremy
suddenly hears Mary calling out in alarm and rushing toward the water. It is clear she does not trust him and doesn't want the children to go with him. There isn't a more painful interchange between them in the whole novel; it carries within it the full weight of the sadness of mismatched and unmet expectations between a man and a woman:

"Jeremy, I--please don't take the children."

He felt as if she had hit him in the stomach. While she gasped for breath he did too, clenching his end of the rope. "I'm sorry," Mary said. "It's just that I--well, I was just about to feed them. Why don't you leave them with me? You'll only be gone a little while."

Of course he shouldn't take them. He knew that too. But to have her stand there telling him that, saying she was willing for him to go himself but not to take the children! She thought his silence meant that he was simply being stubborn. "Or, I know what," she said, trying a new tone. "I'll come along. How will that be?" She smiled up at him. The children murmured encouragement. She laid a hand gently on his arm. "Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't it be better if we all went out together?"

"Get away from me," he said (245).

Jeremy, still fighting in spite of the defeat he has already suffered, pushes off in the dinghy, determined to complete his heroic feat. His knees tremble, the whole boat trembles, and he tries to call up the image of a Winslow Homer painting in order to try to remember which way the men in the dinghies had been pulling. "It would be just like him," he reflects, "to perform this entire task sitting backwards" (246). Finally arriving at his destination, Jeremy manages to raise the sails on Brian's ketch; with tears in his eyes, feeling completely isolated, he sits in the boat as it drifts in circles around its moorings, a
fitting image for the celestial sailor whose journey takes him in endless circles around bodies rather than in linear paths alongside them, and finally right around back to his original point of departure. And yet no one will deny the heroism in the fact that Jeremy has done one more thing he dislikes doing, one more thing he thought he could never do.

"Sad people are the only real ones," says Mary at one point early in the novel. "They can tell you the truth about things, they have always known that there is no one you can depend on forever and no change in your life, however great, that can keep you from being in the end what you were in the beginning: lost and lonely, sitting on an oilcloth watching the rest of the world do the butterfly stroke" (75). This is the truth at the heart of Celestial Navigation. In spite of Jeremy's attempts to "build character," to do the things he thinks men have to do, he is in the end what he was in the beginning, an artist who must live by his own rules and travel by his own landmarks, even if it means ending up lost and lonely. He will never be able to "take care of things," as Amanda puts it, and especially not if he lives with a woman who is so totally capable of taking care of things herself. In the beginning of the novel Jeremy tells Mary that he is a good man; later he thinks to himself that "at least he is a gentle man" (80). When he much later acknowledges that being good is not enough, we must question by whose standards being good
is not enough. The answer is: by the standards of our society, of which Mary Tell is a part; even though she acknowledges that "there are no heroes in real life," it is often hard for her to live with this fact. Most of us still seek heroes, and do not look far past the usual prototypes for heroism. What Anne Tyler is telling us about Jeremy is that in spite of his ultimate failure to conquer completely his often unexplainable fears, fears that men are not "supposed" to have, we must appreciate the courage of his struggle. We must call that courage heroism. We must also accept the truth spoken by Mrs. Jarrett, one of Jeremy's boarders, who was referring to everyone, men and women alike, when she said, "We do need someone to lean on" (108). The failure of the relationship between Jeremy and Mary results from the fact that each of them is uncomfortable with the thought of leaning on the other, a problem evolving out of the constantly changing sexual roles in our society.
CHAPTER VII
Conclusion

In the beginning of this study I alluded to the imbalance between the number of women writers who have created central male characters in fiction and the number of men writers who have created female characters. Reynolds Price, in an article entitled "Men, Creating Women," supports the view that female cross-gender writing has traditionally been much rarer than its male counterpart. He points out, using examples from the past, that while the enduring masterpieces in English of female portrayals by men make up an impressive roll—Shakespeare’s women who are too numerous to mention, Defoe's Moll Flanders, Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa, Hardy's Tess and Sue, James' Isabel Archer, Dreiser's Carrie—the lasting works by women which feature a central male are far fewer: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, Willa Cather's My Antonia. Price goes on to make the point that men, even using the third person rather than the first, have given us penetrating entries into the female consciousness, while Heathcliff, whose character is described from the outside by a female narrator, is the only real entry into
the male psyche that we have from a woman. The male characters of Jane Austen are never probed at all from the inside by their author; they are always seen from the outside by the women in the novels. "Of George Eliot's many substantial men," says Price, "none is revealed in the core of his erotic nature (as are Emma [Bovary], Anna, and Tess, to name three parallels)" (18).

Price's points regarding numbers is well-taken. His observation regarding the absence of sexuality in the exploration of male characters, at least up until the twentieth century, is interesting; however, of the examples of female sexual natures explored by males that he cites, two are from French and Russian literature, and the third is a product of very late Victorian England. Margaret Atwood notes that George Eliot, in spite of the conspicuous lack of sexual detail in any of her characterizations, "can make us understand not only how awful it is to be married to Mr. Casaubon, but how awful it is to be Mr. Casaubon" (422). She quips that female Victorian novelists had an advantage over their modern counterparts: "Sex was out," she writes, "so if they were creating a male character they could get away without trying to depict what sex felt like from a male point of view" (423). Moreover, Atwood offers an explanation for the imbalance between the number of males writing from the perspective of a female and the number of females writing from the male point of view:
Some of the first English novels were by women, the readership was preponderantly female, and even male novelists slanted their work accordingly. There are of course lots of exceptions, but on the whole we can say that the novel for almost two centuries had a decidedly female bias, which may account for the fact that many more male writers depicted female characters as central protagonists than the other way around (423).

Price, too, offers an explanation for the fact that there have traditionally been more male than female literary impersonators. He paraphrases the English critic David Cecil, who "suggests that the imbalance is owing to a fact of family organization" (18). Both boys and girls, the theory goes, are reared (or at least have been for generations) by women; during their formative years they are almost exclusively in the company of women: mothers, aunts, sisters, mothers' friends, grandmothers, and teachers (most of whom even to this day are female). The Western nuclear family arrangement has created a situation in which an adult male is absent between breakfast and dinner; therefore both boys and girls have a very clear perspective on women, but not on men, so that when they grow up to be writers, it is natural for them to project themselves into a female character. The only problem I can see with Price's basing his guess on Cecil's argument is that they both ignore the fact that men, in spite of the nearly exclusive exposure to women they share with girls during their formative years, seem to have no trouble creating successful male protagonists. Why should it be any easier for them to construct fictional images of masculinity, in the absence of
early male role models, than it is for women? How, in fact, do they become male at all? Price only makes a feeble reference to the fact that "boys, by genetic heritage, contain the vague but palpable psychic and physical components of masculinity" (18). He does go on, however, to cite a further barrier to the woman who wishes to write from the male point of view: "She has in the past notoriously been forbidden to work at anything less palpable than children and food, and even the courageous, visionary outriders (so frequently unmarried or lesbian) have been shouted off the reservation of male sensibility, especially off the preserve of male sexuality--so huge a force" (18).

The explanation centering on fear of being shouted (or laughed) off the reservation, or of being harshly criticized and left unread, seems to be a valid one for illuminating the fact that many women felt more comfortable with female protagonists than with male. To an extent, the lack of exposure to men can account for some of the hesitation on the part of nineteenth-century women to try and describe male experience. It certainly affected Charlotte Bronte, who wrote only one novel with a male protagonist and then felt obliged to apologize for it. George Eliot, however, strode ahead with no apparent misgivings when it came to male character; it was only certain irritated male critics who found her male portraits unconvincing. Virginia Woolf's attempts at male portrayal show a resistance to prescribed
norms (and therefore a resistance to the fear of not meeting them) in that they move toward exploring the androgyny of human character. Price makes an interesting comment regarding Woolf's male characters: "Despite the spectacular but scarcely probed gender reversal in Orlando, most of Virginia Woolf's men are translucent masks through which a cool soprano streams—though Mr. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse emits the convincing odor of male failure" (18). Price intends the first part of his comment as a negative criticism, as he includes it in a paragraph exemplifying how even the best women novelists have not focused on "men seen all round in English and American fiction" (18). I believe, however, that he misses the point about the androgyny of many of Virginia Woolf's men, which is surprising since later in the same article he goes on to make a strong argument for the importance of creative androgyny on the part of artists. Terence Hewet of The Voyage Out, for example, is a male character who might be said to fit Price's description of a thinly veiled female; he is a figure, like Mrs. Ramsay or Mrs. Dalloway, who possesses the artistic capability of bringing people together. This is a skill which in Woolf's writing generally belongs to women, but we should not be too surprised when we see her ascribe it to a man who, like Terence, shows sympathy toward women. As Nancy T. Bazin observes, Terence organizes a picnic and a dance "to challenge his ability to create out of disparate
individuals a unique entity, which, like a work of art, has a life of its own" (68). In The Waves, Woolf is able to create a firmly androgynous character in the male figure of Bernard, to whom critics (e.g., Bazin) have pointed as representative of Woolf herself. Bernard is the writer into whose hands Woolf places the conclusion of the novel.

Jeremy Hawthorn notes that Bernard effectively represents, in his ability to identify with the other characters, male and female alike, one of the aspects of literary modernism, "that the human individual is neither unitary nor internally consistent; but complex, contradictory and divided" (1983, ix). Hawthorn quotes Bernard himself, who claims: "I am not one person; I am many people." At times Bernard is not sure whether he is "man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny, or Rhoda--so strange is the contact of one with another" (The Waves 372).

There has been, since Woolf, a steady opening up of the territory to female writers who wish to explore the male consciousness in their fiction. Price acknowledges the success of Anne Tyler, Toni Morrison, Laurel Goldman, and Josephine Humphreys in penetrating the head and heart of a male and describing his experience (the erotic included) from the inside. He notes that more than childhood deprivation (i.e., the absence of males from whom to draw inferences about masculinity, later to be used in depicting men in fiction), it is the warning issued to women along
with the deprivation that causes their hesitation, the
warning that tells them: "Be women only; dare nothing more"
(20). He poses some very important questions which I
believe contemporary women writers are now beginning to
address:

Aren't all human beings, like other animals, possessed
of a born or trained comprehension of all the needs and
emotions of their species? Hasn't our most devastating
lie as parents and teachers been the stripping away in
infancy and childhood of our offspring's infinitely
complex set of entire human sympathies?... And hasn't
the accumulating pressure of the lie through crowded
millenniums, combined with the increasing threat of
unconventional sexuality, now resulted in the near
closing down of the gender gates in art? (20)

Price asserts that at present it seems that parental
and social pressure on children to deny their potential for
comprehending a broad sexuality, in addition to the role
confusion caused by the women's movement and the sexual
revolution, is encouraging writers to explore only what is
safe: human character as seen only from their own side of
the gender partition. This closes the door on the
imaginative act that would allow them into a deeper
understanding of all human nature. Price is not, however,
entirely without hope regarding cross-gender writing. He
himself has attempted it in Kate Vaiden, and, as we have
seen, has lauded Anne Tyler's Celestial Navigation, Toni
Morrison's Song of Solomon and Tar Baby, and Josephine
Humphrey's Dreams of Sleep as successful moves in this
direction.

Since they are somewhat liberated from those warnings
and threats to their integrity as women against which Bronte, Eliot, and even Woolf had to guard, perhaps writers like Morrison and Tyler feel freer to exercise an idea Samuel Richardson suggested regarding men and women writing of their opposites. "The two sexes," he asserted, "are too much considered as different species. He or she who soars above simplicity is most likely to understand the human heart best in either sex" (Moers 113).

I find it interesting that in three of the seven novels explored here, the female novelists choose to have their male protagonists examine their reflections in a mirror. In each case, the respective hero is displeased with what he sees, usually the recognition that there is something lacking. For William Crimsworth of The Professor, it is that he feels he is physically unappealing to women. Milkman Dead of Song of Solomon feels it is a sense of total coherence that he lacks. And Jeremy Pauling of Celestial Navigation laments his sagging muscles and soft skin, both symbolizing the absence of energy and initiative in his character. It is quite common for writers to utilize a mirror scene in order to give their readers a picture of a character, so common that one would rarely question the strategy. But is there a difference between a woman writer looking, with her heroine, into a mirror, and that same women writer looking into a mirror with her hero? In the first case, one might presume, the writer might be looking
at something closer to her own reflection, whereas in the second, she may have to exercise more imagination. None of the three scenes I have mentioned here seems contrived, however. As I ponder this question, I recall Richardson's words. These writers seem to have been able to look into a mirror and see there a form reflecting back to them perhaps some of the same insecurities they themselves possess, in spite of the fact that the form is male.

Erica Jong points out, in the conversation mentioned earlier among Jong, Toni Morrison, and Marge Piercy regarding the ordeal of the woman writer, that she has always identified with heroes or heroines in search of themselves:

I never thought of them as either being male or female. They were just young people in search of themselves... . It's true that there are certain areas of problems that are different, but if the person is human and alive, why shouldn't we [both men and women] relate to it? And unfortunately, the reviewers...are making it appear that there are not human struggles, but there's some sort of individual ghetto of emotion (1975).

Jong's words complement those of Richardson when applied to the act of creating a fictional character. On the other hand, Joyce Carol Oates has been quoted as saying that she falters when she tries to create a believable male character, because for her the male perspective restricts the angle of vision severely; too much feeling and self-awareness must be sacrificed (Taylor 6). What we, as writers and as critics, must aim for, and what certain writers among us have already accomplished, is a letting
down of those inhibitions regarding exploration of the opposite sex through fiction. As Toni Morrison says, "Writing has to do with the imagination. It's being willing to open a door or think the unthinkable, no matter how silly it may appear" (Tate xvii). What initially seems to us unthinkable—becoming, even for the purposes of writing fiction, a member of the opposite sex for a temporary period of time—is also something that can reap for us huge rewards. Reynolds Price sums up the nature of what we have to gain from cross-gender writing:

Men should excavate and explore, however painfully, their memories of early intimacy with women and attempt again to produce novels as whole as those of their mammoth and healing predecessors. More women should step through a door that is now wide open—a backward step, also painful but short, into the room of their oldest knowledge: total human sympathy. Failure for either would at worst be courageous. But the likelihood of new and usable modes of understanding is enormous—an understanding portable from the page into life (20).
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