

The Successful Bildungsroman: Transcending Culture

Introduction:

"Coming of age" continues to be a recurrent theme in fiction as writers seek to represent this archetypal experience known to all adults who have been transformed by it. The process of becoming an adult member of a particular culture has been described by psychologists and anthropologists, resulting in numerous outlines, theories, and definitions for adulthood. However, contemporary thought uncovers many problems in such descriptions of adulthood, arising from the values of the culture itself, which are in constant change, in prescribing what constitutes adulthood for that particular culture. Feminist scholarship, in turn, calls attention not only to the problem of culture but, more specifically, gender in prescribing what constitutes adulthood for both sexes.

Thus, nineteenth century cultural prescriptions for adulthood may not be comparable to what constitutes adulthood in the twentieth century and what constitutes adulthood for a female in the nineteenth century may not be comparable to what the same culture prescribes for males. To further complicate matters, psychological and literary theories evolving from a twentieth century mind-set can be inadequate measures for describing adulthood of another, earlier, culture. That these complications exist especially affects the literary field since both literature and its critics are products of a culture. Hence, literary

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Chancellor's Scholars Council  
of Pembroke State University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for Completion of  
the Chancellor's Scholars Program

---

by  
Amy Williams Killough

theories and definitions are culturally conditioned.

By analyzing the prototypes of initiation literature, such as Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, critics have sought to characterize the subgenre of literature known as the bildungsroman. Traditional twentieth century descriptions of the bildungsroman include those of Hugh Holman, Northrop Frye, and Jerome Buckley. Holman has defined the bildungsroman as a novel which "recounts the youth and young adulthood of a sensitive protagonist who is attempting to learn the nature of the world, discover its meaning and pattern, and acquire a philosophy of life and the art of living" (33). Frye has added that the novel's "chief interest" is the "human character as it manifests itself in society" (308).

Jerome Buckley has offered a more detailed outline for the typical bildungsroman. His description includes "a child of some sensibility" from the country, who frustrated by social and intellectual restraints, leaves this "repressive atmosphere" for options suggested to him by his education, but not available to him in his restricted environment. In the city, where his "real education begins," he prepares for a career and experiences "urban life." Here he has "at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting," which cause him "to reappraise his values." Once the hero has decided "the sort of accommodation" to society that he can realistically make, his initiation is complete and he can now "visit his old home" and "demonstrate ... his success ... and the wisdom of his choice" (Buckley 17-18).

Recent critics such as Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, editors of The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development, have pointed out that traditional analyses of the bildungsroman are gender inflected. They concede that analyses such as Buckley's are exclusively derived from novels which represent only male development and are thus limited in application to novels which describe only male development. "The sex of the protagonist," they assert, "modifies every aspect of a particular bildungsroman: its narrative structure, its implied psychology, its representation of social pressures" (Abel, Hirsch, Langland 5). They propose a broader definition allowing for gender differences.

Patterns such as Buckley's have guided literary critics for years in analyzing novels focusing on male protagonists. However, when applied to novels centering around female characters, particularly of the nineteenth century, the pattern does not fit. In fact, many novels centering around female development end with the death, suicide, or insanity of the female protagonist as in George Eliot's The Mill On The Floss and Kate Chopin's The Awakening. Because the journey of the female character deviates from standard patterns such as Buckley's, critics have presumed the females to be less successful at reaching adulthood. Buckley has failed to recognize that culture differentiates the patterns through which males and females come of age. Thus, patterns that describe male development are inadequate measurements for a female's "success" or "failure" in

attaining adulthood.

In a patriarchal culture which ranks masculine attributes over feminine ones, double standards for males and females result. An examination of the protagonist's "separation" from the family, which marks the beginning of Buckley's pattern, reveals many of the double standards produced by culture. Physical separation from the family which initiates the departure of Buckley's hero to the city is more difficult for women who, according to critics Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, do not "sever family ties as easily as men" (8). Restrictions placed upon females during the nineteenth century did not allow them to strike out for the city and make their way independently in the world. "Experiencing urban life" and the sexual encounters which accompany it, activities which comprise a crucial stage in the development of Buckley's hero, were forbidden to the nineteenth century female. While Huck Finn can "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" because he "can't stand it no more," the female protagonist was confined to her place, the domestic sphere. A journey into the world was possible only through marriage or the mere "exchange of one domestic sphere for another" (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 8). Thus in many novels a temporary retreat to the attic or closet replaces any long distance separation from the family.

Buckley's hero has the choice of accepting society's values and reintegrating himself into society or rejecting them for other ones, thus reaffirming the masculine values of autonomy and

separateness. The female protagonist has no other option but to reintegrate, having found that her identity lies in relationship. "Separation tugs against the longing for fusion," observe Abel Hirsch, and Langland, "and the heroine encounters the conviction that identity resides in intimate relationships especially those of early childhood" (11). A female character's failure to reintegrate into society results in rejection and isolation, and thus her death or insanity which ends numerous novels.

The discrepancies found between Buckley's pattern and the reality of female development reveal a need for re-vision of the traditional approaches to the bildungsroman. Carol Gilligan's and David McClelland's observations about the treatment of sex differences in the psychiatric field are applicable to the literary field as well and are pertinent to any complete description of the bildungsroman. Gilligan criticizes the difficulty our contemporary western culture has in recognizing difference "without saying better or worse" (14). Gilligan notes, commenting on McClelland's studies of sex differences:

Since there is a tendency to construct a single scale of measurement, and since that scale has generally been derived from and standardized on the basis of men's interpretations of research data drawn predominantly or exclusively from studies of males, psychologists "have tended to regard male behavior as the 'norm' and female behavior as some kind of deviation from that norm" [McClelland 81]. Thus, when women do not conform to the standards of psychological expectation, the conclusion has generally been that something is wrong with the women. (Gilligan 14)

Gilligan suggests that the conception of adulthood, as defined by a patriarchal culture, is "out of balance" because "the qualities deemed necessary for adulthood . . . are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self" (17). Thus, in patriarchal cultures, the resulting conception of "womanhood" often contradicts that of "adulthood" for males. In revising the criteria for the bildungsroman, critics should seek to restore the balance that is missing in the traditional theories. Only then, as Gilligan foresees, "will their vision encompass the experience of both sexes and their theories become correspondingly more fertile" (23).

Annis Pratt and Barbara White, in their treatment of the novel of development, describe the underlying theme of the bildungsroman as a quest of "the youthful self" for "selfhood rather than . . . social conformity" (37). Throughout much of the fiction by women they note a recurring tension, arising from culture, between "what any normal human being might desire and what a woman must become":

Women's fiction reflects an experience radically different from men's because our drive towards growth as persons is thwarted by our society's prescriptions concerning gender . . . . Our quests for being are thwarted on every side by what we are told to be and to do, which is different from what men are told to be and to do: when we seek an identity based on human personhood rather than on gender, we stumble about in a landscape whose signposts indicate

retreats from, rather than ways to, adulthood.  
(6)

If one assumes that "adulthood" for both sexes lies in the attainment of a responsible, authentic selfhood "through individual choice" then one must transcend patriarchal values which dictate that "a woman aspiring to selfhood is by definition selfish" in "deviating from norms of subservience to the dominant gender" (Pratt 6). Psychiatrist Carl Jung's most important contribution to psychology, Pratt observes, was "his recognition that a fully developed individual personality must transcend gender" and thus culture (10). If adulthood depends upon "totality of self," described by Pratt as "the greatest possible exercise of our capacities for significant work, intellectual growth, political action, creativity, emotional development, sexual expression, etc.," then women within the social construct of patriarchy are "supposed to be less than total selves" and thus less than "adults" (6).

Since the source of the controversy in seeking to describe the constituents for adulthood lies in the culture itself, a closer examination of this social force is a crucial prerequisite to approaching the bildungsroman. An important area for examination is the religious system of the culture, for here lie the values and beliefs that are designed to perpetuate and maintain that particular type of culture. Here also lies another important approach to the bildungsroman which has remained unexplored by critics.

Religion historian Mircea Eliade has uncovered in the history of primitive tribes various elements of initiation or "rites of passage," which appear crossculturally, indicating perhaps an archetypal source. "In the religious history of humanity we constantly find this theme," Eliade observes, "the initiate is he who knows" (Eliade 188-189). These rites of passage, which originate in the earliest societies and still echo throughout the novels of initiation, offer more suitable criteria for the coming of age for both sexes.

In primitive tribes the initiation process often took years with gradual revelations of the "mysteries" of human existence: death, sexuality, and the sacred. The elements of this sacred ritual, which occur throughout both the male and female bildungsroman include: a separation from the family, often into the forest, the darkness of which is symbolic of "death;" a period of isolation in a hut, which symbolizes a return to the womb for the purposes of rebirth (in many female initiations this hut is located by a river or stream, the primal waters of the womb); a series of ordeals and tests through which the initiate learns the traditions and values of the tribe, often accompanied by some sort of food and/or sleep deprivation; the appearance of a mentor figure(s) often followed by the learning of a new language and a new name; and, finally, a rebirth of the initiate into the society as a fully integrated and relating adult member who is aware of the mysteries.

Complementing Eliade's studies of the religious history of

primitive cultures, are the recent ones of Riane Eisler in The Chalice and the Blade which tell "a new story of our cultural origins" (Eisler xv). Freed from "the prevailing models of reality," which reflect the biases of a patriarchal culture, Eisler attempts a re-vision of human history and society from a "gender-holistic perspective" (xvii) in the same way in which Gilligan re-vises traditional psychological theories. While traditional anthropological studies conclude that human society has always been patriarchal or matriarchal, Eisler proposes another alternative supported by contemporary anthropological and historical studies: primitive societies based on the partnership, or linking, of both sexes rather than the domination, or ranking, of one over the other (xvii).

Eisler offers a new theory of cultural evolution, which I will describe in detail, called "Cultural Transformation Theory." This theory posits the belief that "underlying the great surface diversity of human culture are two basic models of society": the dominator model, symbolized by the blade, which divides and ranks "one half of humanity over the other," in either patriarchy or matriarchy, and the partnership model, symbolized by the chalice, which, integrates and links, rather than ranks, the two halves. The partnership society, Eisler observes, in which "diversity is not equated with either inferiority or superiority" tends to be more sexually equalitarian and peaceful and less hierarchic and authoritarian (xvii).

Focusing on this imbalance from a historical perspective,

most of Eisler's evidence is based on the religious systems of the societies. The balance maintained in the society of partnership is also reflected in its religious system wherein existed equal acknowledgement of and appreciation for both the masculine and feminine halves of the deity. This balance is lost in patriarchal or matriarchal religious systems where even the deity is subjected to a gender role prescribed by the culture. Hence, Eisler observes of the biblical patriarchy, "rather than being pure spirit and both mother and father," God is "explicitly male" (131).

According to Eisler's Cultural Transformation, the movement of humanity has always been towards this partnership society in which a balance of both the masculine and the feminine is maintained in all areas of life. Five thousand years ago this movement towards partnership, as seen in the earliest primitive societies, "veered off into a bloody . . . detour" towards the imbalanced dominator mode of society which ranked either the masculine or feminine over its complement (Eisler xviii). Under the influence of the dominator society, which has been primarily patriarchal, the feminine qualities such as caring, compassion, and nonviolence, which were once equally valued, according to Eisler, in partnership models, have been undervalued.

In order to perpetuate its structure, the patriarchy has subjugated within its religious system, the equally valuable feminine half of the deity and removed it from the divine level altogether. This absence of the feminine, according to Eisler,

is "the single most important statement about the kind of social order that the men . . . strove to establish and uphold" (94). What emerges from Eisler's study is that this relation between the masculine and feminine halves of humanity can affect the totality of a culture. This "fundamental of all human relations (without which the species could not go on)," Eisler notes, has a "profound effect" on every aspect of the culture, including what the culture prescribes for adulthood for both sexes (xix). Thus among the archetypal patterns that exist for humanity as a whole, such as "coming of age," Pratt observes within the social construct of the novel that "feminine archetypes of selfhood have been lost from culture and even consciousness," appearing only in fragments (11).

Eisler's re-vision of the history of humanity has serious implications for the future, regarding the direction in which humanity and its technology are moving under a dominator system, and its ultimate end: self-destruction. Eisler's theory that humanity originated in and strives towards a return to partnership reveals the tremendous potential that exists for human society and, more importantly, ways in which human beings can intervene:

The larger picture that emerges indicates that all the modern, post-Enlightenment movements for social justice, be they religious or secular, as well as the more recent feminist, peace, and ecology movements, are part of an underlying thrust for the transformation of a dominator to a partnership system. Beyond this, in our time of

unprecedentedly powerful technologies, these movements may be seen as part of our species' evolutionary thrust for survival. (xx)

Because the term "partnership" is inadequate for describing the linking of the male and female halves of humanity, Eisler proposes the term "gylany" to describe this evolutionary thrust, etymologically linking the Greek root words for woman and man (105). The crucial force of this evolutionary thrust, which Eisler calls "the Female Ethos," has emerged at different points throughout history to "inject a more gylanic worldview into the mainstream of society" (150). This "feminine" force, often repressed in patriarchal societies, must accompany gylanic ascendancy in order to restore the necessary balance. The most obvious example of this "Female Ethos" Eisler identifies as the feminist movement, "the most profoundly humanizing social movement of modern times" (150). Feminism is the only ideology in the history of cultural evolution that has challenged the hierarchal dominator model of human relations which must give way to partnership (Eisler 164).

The purpose of my limited study is to examine two traditional nineteenth century bildungsroman which center around female development, Susan Warner's The Wide, Wide World and Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. These two novels, published on different sides of the Atlantic and coinciding with the official birth of Feminism in 1848, provide a fertile basis for comparison and contrast regarding female development and its interplay with culture, especially in light of the studies of Gilligan, Pratt,

Eliade, and, particularly, Eisler. These novels represent "successful" attainment of adulthood in that both Ellen and Jane, the main protagonists, survive at the end and are integrated into their respective societies, but Ellen's "success" is relative to her society, whereas Jane's "success" transcends any historical context.

While many twentieth-century readers would dismiss the status which Ellen Montgomery attains at the end of The Wide, Wide World as that of an overgrown dependent child, they overlook that the constituents for womanhood during the nineteenth century served to reinforce and maintain the existing hierarchal social and religious structure: the patriarchy. Ellen's failure to meet the requirements for adulthood prescribed by a twentieth century culture, as opposed to those of womanhood in the nineteenth century, is more of a social commentary on the nineteenth century patriarchy and its failure to allow for women a development of self which "accompanies, rather than opposes, societal goals" (Pratt 6).

Jane Eyre, however, whose experiences in a patriarchal culture parallel many of Ellen's, attains a status that would be recognized as "adult" even in the 1980's. In contrast to The Wide, Wide World, the "female ethos" which emerges in Jane Eyre, anticipating the rise of feminism a year later, transcends the patriarchal social and religious values of the nineteenth century, embracing instead the very characteristics of Eisler's partnership or gylanic society. What I seek to demonstrate is

that Jane Eyre depicts a conception of adulthood in which the missing balance between the masculine and feminine is restored, the absence of which has left the traditional patriarchal vision of "human" development obscured and imbalanced for both sexes.

The Wide, Wide World: A Reinforcement of Culture

Susan Warner's The Wide, Wide World, which appeared in 1850, was the second best selling novel in America during the nineteenth century after Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. One of the reasons for the novel's market success was that it appealed to an audience who sought reinforcement of the patriarchal and religious values of the culture. "More than any other book of its time," notes Jane Tompkins in her Afterword to Warner's novel, "it embodies, uncompromisingly, the values of the Victorian era" (585). Novels such as The Wide, Wide World, which prescribed "submission to suffering and sadism as an appropriate way to prepare a young girl for life," became a popular way in the nineteenth century, Pratt notes, "of inculcating the norms of womanhood into young readers" (13). Ellen Montgomery's education in self-abnegation served as a guideline for a culture which sought stability and the assurance that if a particular set of guidelines were adhered to "God" would be benevolent and all would be right in the world.

Two years prior to the novel's appearance in the literary market, things had been all but right and secure in the patriarchal world. With the Declaration of Sentiments, adopted at Seneca Falls, New York in July 1848 at the first woman's rights convention, the patriarchy was seriously threatened. "Self-development is a higher duty than self-sacrifice," proclaimed



Elizabeth Cady Stanton criticizing what Gilligan calls "the cardinal sin in the ladder of feminine virtue that reached toward an ideal of perfect devotion and self-abnegation, in relation not only to God but to men" (129). The Declaration argues that in subjugating women, mere men had "usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself" in claiming rights belonging only to God. Thus to a culture whose social and religious hierarchal structure was being threatened, The Wide, Wide World and its reaffirmation of the patriarchy brought back stability and a Protestant revival.

The novel opens with little Ellen Montgomery at ten taking care of her invalid mother and preparing for an extended visit with her Aunt Fortune, during which time Mrs. Montgomery instructs Ellen in her Christian duties of self-denial and self sacrifice in a world without her mother. Because of her declining health, Mrs. Montgomery is being taken abroad by Capt. Montgomery, against her own silent protests, with Ellen being sent to live indefinitely with her father's spinster sister. After the poignant and abrupt separation from her mother, Ellen leaves the city for the country and Mis(s)Fortune, questioning her father's, and thus God's, purposes for separating her from her mother. Along the way Ellen is repeatedly mistreated and misjudged, yet her endurance is always strengthened and rewarded by nameless old gentlemen, vehicles through whom Warner "reassures" her readers that Ellen is receiving, as do other female characters, "valuable lessons in humility and stoicism" (Pratt 14).

Constantly wronged and mistreated by Aunt Fortune, Ellen learns submission and endurance from the daughter of the local parson, Alice Humphreys. With Alice as a companion, "older sister," and model who lives a dependant life rather than the relatively autonomous one Miss Fortune lives, Ellen's life becomes less dismal. Alice continues the Christian instruction of Ellen's mother, who dies not long after the journey abroad. In addition to Alice, Ellen acquires a "brother" John Humphreys who takes care of them both and who is also a parson like his father.

During the many years Ellen lives here she learns from Alice to become totally dependant upon John's guidance. In her relationship with John, which seems more parental than fraternal due to the age difference, Ellen repeatedly learns that she is powerless in the wide, wide world and needs protection from it. Any attempts of autonomy are thwarted, such as when Ellen rides her pony alone for the nearest doctor to aid Mr. Van Brunt after his accident and must be rescued by John after being accosted by the perverse Mr. Saunders.

After Alice's consumptive death, Ellen learns total dependence on her "brother" John. Towards the end of the novel Ellen is yet again sent to live with a new set of relatives, this time her mother's in Scotland. This separation from John is Ellen's ultimate trial, for her new relatives, frustrated by her solemnity and prudery, unsuccessfully try to usurp from within Ellen her Christian indoctrination. Ellen's resistance is once

again rewarded by a rescue from John, with the foreshadowing of their probable marriage.

Ellen's education in "obedience, self-sacrifice and faith" represents what Tompkins calls an "American Protestant bildungsroman" (184). The novel meets many of the standard requirements for the bildungsroman, yet Ellen's "success" in becoming an "adult" is totally relative to the historical context in which Warner wrote. The patriarchal prescriptions for "womanhood" during the nineteenth century demanded self-sacrifice and cause Ellen to remain in a childlike state totally self-less and dependent upon upon patriarchal figures, both heavenly and earthly, without whom she cannot function. As a result, in order to maintain total obedience to a patriarchal figure, there must be an absence of matriarchal figures, and throughout The Wide, Wide World there is the absence, often through death, of the mother.

The status that Ellen does attain by the end of the novel is that of "True Womanhood," described by Ann Douglas as the embodiment of virtues such as piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (21). From the models who exemplify this cult of Protestant femininity, Mrs. Montgomery and Alice, Ellen discovers her typically nineteenth century identity. Ellen also encounters and learns from the unacceptable models of femininity, Miss Fortune and Nancy Vawse, who both reject the restricting cultural definitions of femininity for independence at the price of Protestant Salvation.

Ellen's identity is also strongly influenced by numerous male figures whom many critics, such as Tompkins have overlooked. The numerous nameless old gentlemen who appear throughout Ellen's ordeals to rescue and advise her, and particularly John Humphreys, who functions as brother, father, and husband, serve to reinforce the patriarchal belief that females such as Ellen "must be rescued from" the wide, wide world (Douglas 63). While Tompkins and Nina Baym extensively treat the females in Ellen's life, they do not explore the hierarchal relationship maintained between Ellen and these men who reward her for dutiful obedience and resignation. Baym observes that "the men in this fiction are less important to the heroine's emotional life than the women" (39), yet Ellen's physical and emotional dependency upon the interventions, approbations, and expectations of these men result in her remaining in a childlike state in the eyes of twentieth century readers. Although The Wide, Wide World as a bildungsroman, promises the expectation that Ellen is learning to be adult, "there is the hidden agenda of norms," Pratt observes in many female bildungsroman, "where 'adult' means learning to be dependent, submissive, or 'nonadult'" (Pratt xx11).

Ellen's development serves as a prototype for nineteenth century females in that she totally accommodates herself to the values of the patriarchy. This makes her bildungs, or maturation, "successful" according to Buckley's definition. Unlike Huck Finn who can choose to reject society altogether and still survive, Ellen's acceptance, which is more or less forced

upon her by culture, Tompkins notes, shows how nineteenth century females can "survive, given that [they] can't" run away (175). While male protagonists such as Huck Finn and Stephen Daedalus can be alienated from their social identities like their female counterparts, as Pratt observes, the female "does not choose a life to one side of society after conscious deliberation on the subject; rather, she is radically alienated by gender-role norms from the very outset" (36). As a result, Ellen's initiation guided by John becomes, as it does for many female protagonists, "less a self-determined progression towards maturity than a regression from full participation in adult life" (Pratt 36).

The heroine's emerging sense of self as represented in nineteenth century American fiction, Baym observes, was "a social product, firmly and irrevocably embedded in a social construct that could destroy it but . . . also shaped it" (36). These heroines, she continues, could not "imagine the concept of self apart from society," (36). In many bildungsroman depicting female development, such as in The Wide, Wide World, Pratt notes that "the authors conceive of growing up female as a choice between auxiliary or secondary personhood, sacrificial victimization, madness, and death" (36).

Outside of the family, the main cultural influence upon the nineteenth century American female adolescent's developing identity was the Protestant Church (Welter 17). Instead of abandoning society, the female achieved integration into society through becoming a Christian, the most important rite of passage

for females's before marriage (Welter 18). Due to the hierarchal organization inherent in the Judeo-Christian mythology which depicts women as "dependent and secondary" to men, "intellectually inferior," and "less spiritually developed," girls such as Ellen internalized a self-image which encapsulated these qualities (Eisler 67). Thus Protestantism and its notion that "virtue for women lies in self-sacrifice" exacerbated the "power for women of the judgement of selfishness and the morality of self-abnegation that it implies" (Gilligan 131-132).

Barbara Welter calls the typically nineteenth century identity which was "clearly defined and urged upon the American girl from her earliest years," along with obedience and self-control, the "dutiful daughter" (4). The relationships between males and females as implied by this female role, which occur throughout Warner's novel, are characterized by a familial, and thus strictly nonsexual, relationship. Daughters owed total obedience to their fathers, and in turn received protection of their virtue. In the biblical patriarchy, Eisler observes that:

a woman who behaves as a sexually and economically free person is a threat to the entire social and economic fabric of a rigidly male-dominated society. Such behavior cannot be countenanced lest the entire social and economic system fall apart. Hence the "necessity" for the strongest social and religious condemnation and the most extreme punishment. (97)

Hence repressed sexuality is inevitable for the "dutiful daughter" and any sexual relationship seems incestuous in the The

Wide, Wide World.

When sexuality is repressed in nineteenth century females, outbursts of violent emotions often resulted. Even at ten, Ellen is characterized as "a child of very high spirit and violent passions" (Warner 63), much like her contemporary protagonist in the British bildungsroman, Jane Eyre. Most of the descriptions of Ellen's emotional state employ the word "violent," thus suggesting a need for control. The "closet," Tompkin's metaphor for the private spaces in which the female protagonist learns to restrict her rebellious outbursts (150), appears throughout many novels of female development. These enclosures afford the separation from the family, symbolic of the initial religious rite of passage outlined by Eliade. Ellen's sparsely furnished room represents a place of retreat where she is free to express, privately, her violent passions, if not her sexuality.

Ellen's inevitable separation from her mother, decreed by Captain Montgomery against the wishes of both, provides Ellen with the physical separation from the family as well as reflects the subordinate place of women in the patriarchy. Captain Montgomery hardly appears in the novel but, nonetheless, affects everyone's destiny. Powerless against patriarchal authority, Mrs. Montgomery sets the dutiful example for Ellen with the soothing reminder:

Remember, my darling, who it is that brings this sorrow upon us; though we must sorrow, we must not rebel (12).

With the gentle instruction that they must "bear patiently this evil," Mrs. Montgomery teaches Ellen that it is her "bounden duty" to develop self-sacrifice, self-control, submission, patience, and obedience not only to God, but to the male patriarchs whom God instructs. Thus Ellen and her mother bear patiently their roles as "two powerless women . . . struggling to accept the apparent injustice of two fathers, injustice from which they have no recourse" (Baym 145).

As a role model for womanhood, Mrs. Montgomery serves as the "angel" in the houses of Victorian fiction. Bearing every evil, obeying husband and God, she is the epitome of selflessness. Not unlike many of the angels of Victorian literature, Mrs. Montgomery attains the highest form of selflessness, death. Her love and nurturance strengthen Ellen nonetheless in her "duties," as seen in the ritual of Ellen's daily preparation of her mother's tea and toast. The "important business" of making the tea and toast, Ellen "loved . . . as one of the pleasantest in the course of the day" (13). This pleasure yielded to Ellen "the greatest satisfaction" knowing that "her hands made it taste better; her mother often said so" (13).

Once separated from her mother Ellen finds a similar model for womanhood in Alice Humphreys. Unjustly treated by her Aunt Fortune, Ellen learns from Alice that it is her "duty," nonetheless, to acknowledge herself in fault and ask for forgiveness. Whereas Mrs. Montgomery remains under the authority

of her husband, Alice also maintains, at twenty-four, a child-like dependence on her older brother John. Both Alice and Mrs. Montgomery equate obedience to these men with obedience to God. During John's temporary absence, Alice laments that she "can't get over [his] going away" (188-189). Consoled by neighbor Mrs. Vawse's advise, "there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," Alice painfully admits that she often forgets this when "the pressure of present pain is too much for all that faith and hope can do" (189).

From Alice's example, Ellen learns to tame her passions which were "always extreme," "by nature very strong, and by education very imperfectly controlled" (11). Both Mrs. Montgomery and Alice "steel" themselves to "fortitude and calmness" repressing any feminine emotional outbursts. "Fulfilling" her duties which "cost her a little self-denial" (245), Ellen learns gradually to fight "her evil tempers manfully" (319). "What cannot be cured . . . must be endured," the narrator assures the readers as Ellen and Alice learn "to be brave and bear . . . manfully" their trials. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," Alice reminds again, "We shan't be unhappy if we do our duty and love Him" (321). Even the natural expression of grief, which overwhelms Ellen after the death of her mother, is repressed as Ellen "made a manful effort to stifle the tears that were choking her . . . and she did succeed though with great difficulty in keeping them back" (355).

Ellen learns that like herself even Alice cannot stand alone

in the wide, wide world. Before their Heavenly Father, they were like "two children . . . difference of age seemed to be forgotten, and what suited one suited the other" (152). Inevitably, Alice, who embodies the "highly regarded quintessence of female virtue . . . literally too good for this world" (Welter 11), attains the epitome of selflessness: death, having groomed Ellen to take her place.

Throughout The Wide, Wide World there is a marked absence of "the mother" in both the lives of Ellen and Alice. "We are both motherless," Alice says to Ellen, "for the present at least -- both of us almost alone" (224). The love, nurturance, and strength embodied in "the mother" must be subverted to obedience to and dependence on an explicitly paternal God and his unexplainable ways which have deemed the removal of both mothers necessary. Even during the brief time Mrs. Montgomery is present, she ultimately serves, in her self-sacrifice, to transfer Ellen's dependence on her to the Heavenly Father. So devout is her self-sacrifice that she says to Ellen, "if losing your mother might be the means of finding you that better friend, I should be quite willing -- and glad go forever" (23). Alice serves a similar function, insisting, "Don't lean upon me, dear Ellen; remember you have a better friend than I always near you; trust in him; if I have done you any good, don't forget it was he who brought me to you" (166).

While Mrs. Montgomery and Alice provide Ellen with acceptable models of womanhood, Ellen also encounters the

unacceptable in the guise of Mis(s) Fortune, the hardened spinster, and Nancy Vawse, a female Huck Finn. Pratt describes the spinster in women's fiction as the "odd" woman who deviates from the patriarchal norms in that "she is not half of a couple and fulfills no set function within a nuclear family" (113). "She thus holds," continues Pratt, "the same position as the 'fallen woman' with regard to society: 'tainted' as her sexually active counterpart is 'ruined'" (113).

Indeed, while running her own farm, Fortune Emerson embodies more masculine qualities than feminine ones: she is independent, self-sufficient, and unemotional. When Ellen soils her white stockings with mud, Aunt Fortune simply dyes all but one pair brown because they would be more practical. This encounter with her aunt marks a loss of innocence for Ellen, who "seemed in imagination to see all her white things turning brown" (113).

Unlike Mrs. Montgomery and Alice, Fortune is the head of her house, at least during the first half of the novel. She is eventually rescued, however, from her fallen state through the patriarchal intervention of marriage to Mr. Van Brunt. Fortune Emerson's handiwork is immaculate and she never runs out of energy, preferring action, which "speaks louder than words," to passivity. In her obsession with power, Fortune unjustly and unfeelingly withholds letters from Ellen's mother and even the news of Mrs. Montgomery's death. Fortune is incapable of expressing the feminine qualities of loving and caring. The expression of any emotion, except for anger and impatience,

doesn't come easily for Fortune who is unaccustomed to assuming a maternal role.

Fortune's period of illness marks an important rite of passage during which time Ellen must take control of the domestic sphere. With Nancy's help, Ellen carried out the "charge" of running the household and endures the many "trials" of preparing dishes and making butter. Ellen's "reward for her faithful steadiness to duty" is her Aunt's hard earned trust and belief. Fortune now "treated her as one of the family," "one to be depended on" and "even owned that 'she believed she was an honest child and meant to do right,' --- a great deal from her" (383). Following her recovery, Fortune emerges with the strength to drive the menacing Ox, Timothy, out of the garden when fearful Ellen can't. Mis(s) Fortune "feared the face of neither man nor beast . . . and made such a show of fight" that Timothy marched away "fairly turned tail" (384).

It is immediately after this incident that Ellen, strengthened by her Aunt's autonomy, musters up the courage to ride her pony into the city alone for the doctor when the kind Mr. Van Brunt breaks his leg in the barn. "I'm sure I am doing right," she assures herself, "what is there to be afraid of . . . God will take care of me" (388). Although Ellen meets success in finding the doctor and ensuring his return to help Van Brunt, her naive assertion of freedom is stunted by her encounter with the wicked Mr. Saunders on her return home. Mr. Saunders, who shows up at both times in which Ellen attempts brave the wide

world alone, appears here in a scenario which affords Ellen an encounter with her sexuality, however repressed it is.

Pratt describes a recurring archetype in women's fiction as that of "the rape trauma," noting that the only means through which women can seek erotic freedom in a patriarchy is through rape, the "proffered . . . substitute" for the feminine Eros which is discouraged (24). "The event of 'rape' . . . in that it involves the violation of the self in its psychological and physical integrity" is "central to the young woman's experience," Pratt notes (24). This pattern of the "rejected male" pursuing the "unwilling woman" appears as far back as Greek mythology (25).

Ellen's encounter with Mr. Saunders who was "lolling under a tree" brought "her heart into her mouth" (396). The tone created by this scenario is all but violent and fearful but rather sexual and sadistic. "Passing his arm through the bridle" and leading Ellen and her pony down to the bushes, Mr. Saunders "cut off a long stout sapling" and "amused himself . . . with stripping off all the leaves and little twigs from his sapling" while Ellen watched "in an ecstasy of apprehension" (397). Saunders tries the "suppleness and toughness" of his switch in the air and prepares to "tickle" and "tease" the pony to see how well Ellen can "sit him" (397). Saunders merely "applies the switch lightly" to the pony's heels, an action which arouses both excitement and fear in Ellen.

This show of independence and encounter with sexuality,

however, ends for Ellen in the confirmation of her dependence on John, who rescues her in place of God, from the "bad" Mr. Saunders and the evils of the world. "You must ride no more alone," John reprimands her, "Promise me that you will not" (401). Immediately after this rescue and their return home, Ellen's new feelings of jealousy emerge over her "adopted brother" who "praises" and "corrects" her. When John leaves her to greet Alice on their arrival home, Ellen's eyes fill with tears because "Mr. John had forgotten the kiss he always gave her on going or coming" (403). Thus Ellen gives in to one desire without the "manful" control with which she represses all the others.

The other unacceptable model of femininity is exemplified by Nancy Vawse, a rebellious country urchin who serves as Ellen's antithesis: "regular bad girl." Ironically, Nancy the granddaughter of Mrs. Vawse, whom Tompkins describes as "the one completely happy, whole, and self-sufficient character" in the novel. Reminiscent of Huck, Nancy constantly rebels against all authority and comes and goes as she pleases. Climbing in and out of windows with endless trickery, she is described as a "wild cat" that is "smart and knows the ways" (358). Like Huck, Nancy dares to question God and the Bible, being wary of those who read the Bible because they must. Unlike Fortune, Nancy embodies some feminine qualities, however untamed they may be:

Bold and insolent as she sometimes was to others,

she regarded Ellen with a mixed notion of respect and protection which led her at once to shun doing anything that would grieve her, and to thrust her aside from every heavy or difficult job, taking the brunt herself. Nancy might well do this, for she was at least twice as strong as Ellen; but she would not have done it for everybody. (362)

While the religious beliefs held by Mrs. Montgomery and Alice, yet questioned by Nancy, are often seen by critics as "nothing but an opiate for the oppressed and a myth which served the rulers," Tompkins criticizes such readings as being "too simplistic" (162). She purports that "submission" in Warner's novel is never "submission to the will of a husband or father, though that is what it appears to be on the surface" (162). Instead, she interprets Ellen's submission as a "self-willed act of conquest of [her] own passions," mastery of herself, and "an assertion of autonomy" through which Ellen as "dutiful woman merges her own authority with God's" (162-163). Tompkins overlooks, however, that Ellen's "autonomy" is merely an internalization of her inferior position as prescribed by the patriarchy. The motivation for Ellen's submission lies not in approbation from God or even from within herself, but from John Humphreys.

Considering that the patriarchal figures are the only characters alive at the end of the novel, including Ellen who it seems is headed for the same predicament as other self-effacing Angels, it is no wonder that Ellen learns total dependence upon John. Throughout the novel Ellen is encouraged to seek "that

friend, "the Saviour," "the Shepherd," that had guided her mother and Alice to the world greater than the one Ellen had been left in. John serves many roles for Ellen: brother, "father" (considering the age difference), saviour, teacher, mentor, minister, and, ultimately, husband. Towards the end of the novel when Ellen is forbidden to pray by her newest set of relations, she disobeys. Her choice, however, is not from allegiance to a higher law of God, but to John. "I promised John," she says, "I will never break that promise!" (541). Hence, John's authority and approbation is likened to those of God:

John's was a higher style of kindness, that entered into all her innermost feelings and wants; and his was a higher style of authority too, that reached where theirs could never attain, an authority Ellen always felt it utterly impossible to dispute; it was sure to be exerted on the side of what was right; and she could better have borne hard words . . . than a glance of her brother's eye. (539)

The relationship between Ellen and John which culminates at the end of the novel is a hierarchal one which reinforces the position of women in the nineteenth century patriarchy. John constantly instills in Ellen the belief that she "is very, very weak, --- quite unable to keep [herself] right without constant help" (296). When Ellen braves the trials of her new relatives in Scotland who try to undermine her religious beliefs, she longs for John who "will help" and "lead" her "right" and whose "pleasant voice" and "eye of a thousand expressions" revealed



that "he was satisfied with her" (532).

Presumably the unnamed third thing John wants of Ellen on the last page is marriage, and "whatever it were, she was very sure she would do it!" (569). The Angel who lived in Mrs. Montgomery and Alice lives again in Ellen and "no fault could be found with her performance of duty" (547). Pratt observes that in many novels marriage is depicted as a "turning point in the hero's life" and a "primary tool for dulling a hero's initiative and restraining her maturation" (41). Ellen it seems does not need any more dulling or restraining through the exchange of marital vows; her relationship with John already mirrors "the dismal portraits of matrimony" in which the two "become 'one,' but only in the sense that the man was the 'one' --- his desires, needs, and interests subordinated hers" (Pratt 42). "I often launch out upon a sea where I dare not trust my own navigation," Ellen notes to John in Warner's unpublished concluding chapter which reveals their marriage, "and am fain to lower sail and come humbly back to the shore; but now I will take the pilot along . . . and sail every whither" (577).

The final paragraph describes not only the divine seed of selflessness and dependency which reflects Ellen's growth into womanhood but the hands of the patriarchy which has sown, cultivated, pruned, and shaped the womanhood that Ellen attains and without which she cannot live:

The seed so early sown in little Ellen's mind,

and so carefully tended by sundry hands, grew in course of time to all the fair structure and comely perfection it had bid fair to reach -- storms and winds that had visited it did but cause the root to take deeper hold; -- and at the point of its young maturity it happily fell again into those hands that had of all been most successful in its culture (569).

Jane Eyre: A Transcendancy of Culture

While the philosophical foundations for feminism were being concretized in Seneca Falls in 1848, on the other side of the globe another vehicle for the "female ethos" appeared in the form of a novel by Currer Bell. Unlike Warner's Wide, Wide World, which was readily received by a wide range reading audience, Jane Eyre received mixed reviews. Foreshadowing the feminist ideology put forth in the Declaration of Sentiments, Charlotte Bronte's novel reflected not so much a rejection of the patriarchal values as it did a transformation of them into an appreciation and merging of masculine and feminine qualities in the areas of self, marriage, and God.

Jane Eyre represents one of the few "successful" female bildungsroman that has emerged from Victorian literature because it does not end in suicide or insanity for the female protagonist as she struggles to create her identity in an often hostile environment. During the Victorian period, in which women were severely restrained by social conventions, individual growth for the female was a difficult undertaking. In many novels centering around female development, Hirsch observes that the protagonist "must frequently struggle to voice any aspirations whatsoever" with "social options . . . often so narrow that they preclude[d] explorations of her milieu" (7).

Whereas many female protagonists passively submit to being

molded and shaped by their culture without deviating from its norms for womanhood, Jane Eyre dares to be different, detaching herself from her culture and thus being critical of it and its prescriptions for womanhood. Jane is unique because she is able to voice her aspirations, evolve as an individual, and still survive in society without compromising either. The attitudes and beliefs which Jane adopts set a new trend for the Victorian heroines who were, as Duncan Crow has described, "content with the restricted drawingroom life that convention forced upon them" (67). Jane's situation was one that many middle class girls shared and, like Jane, "they resented the fact that they had passion, intellect, moral activity but occupied a place in society which prevented them from exercising any of the three" (Crow).

Rather than simply model the women around her and develop the qualities which they exhibit, Jane creates her identity through a process of accepting and rejecting for herself the various qualities which suit her all but conventional nature. In this way the novel, as Shirley Forster observes, "challenges contemporary sexual ideologies, arguing for revised notions of womanhood and womanly individuality" (87). From her relationships with the various women in her life, Jane "evaluates differing images of femaleness" and "achieves her own version of womanhood by measuring and defining herself against these models" (Forster 87). Jane tends to reject the angelic beings of femininity which populate her culture, at least for short life

times. Although her choices may seem fairly conventional to twentieth century readers, Jane, unlike Ellen, "demonstrates her radicalism," Forster notes, "in defying externally imposed definitions and creating her own identity" (87).

Many critics approach Jane Eyre according to the five spheres in which Jane lives her life: Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Marsh End, and Ferdean. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that in this "distinctively female bildungsroman" Jane meets the difficulties that "Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression: (at Gateshead), starvation (at Lowood), madness (at Thornfield), and coldness (at Marsh End)" (339). Charles Burkhardt notes that in each of these locations "Jane's independence and integrity are threatened but triumph" and she achieves "a climactic expression of her individuality" (67).

The novel opens with Jane at ten, an orphan living with her cousins and her Aunt Reed. Mistreated and unloved there, Jane soon leaves Gateshead for Lowood Institution where she receives her education and preparation for her future life as a governess. While living at Lowood, Jane meets Helen Burns, a fellow orphan whose passivity and selflessness results in her consumptive death. Both Jane and Helen are strengthened by Miss Temple, the judicious and benevolent governess who runs Lowood. After Miss Temple marries and leaves Lowood, Jane also prepares to leave the oppressive atmosphere, hiring out as a governess.

At Thornfield Hall, Jane becomes the governess of Adele

Varens, the ward of Edward Rochester. Gradually a relationship develops between Rochester and Jane based on their intellectual rapport and mutual respect for each other's ideas. Their relationship eventually leads to romance and their engagement despite the mysterious obstacles originating from the attic of Thornfield which foreshadow an impending doom for their marriage. On her wedding day Jane learns the secret of the attic: it is the dwelling place of Rochester's mad wife Bertha. Thus, Bertha prevents their marriage and Jane leaves Thornfield unwilling to become Rochester's mistress.

Under a new name, Jane is taken in by the Rivers family, Diana, Mary, and St. John, at Marsh End where she again acquires a teaching position. Simultaneously, Jane finds out that she has been made a wealthy heiress by her rich uncle and that the Rivers family, coincidentally, are her cousins. Gradually a relationship develops between Jane and St. John, a man of the cloth, in which he serves as her tutor in Hindi and other disciplines. St. John also proposes marriage to Jane, because she can serve him well in his mission work in India. However, after much ambivalence, Jane refuses this loveless union and leaves Marsh End to inquire of Rochester's outcome.

Jane returns to Thornfield only to find it burned to the ground and news of Bertha's death and Rochester's accident which has left him maimed and blinded. Jane finds Rochester at the secluded Ferdean, nurses him and immediately marries him. Not long after their marriage, Jane relates that Rochester regains

his sight and they are blessed with a son.

Jane's childhood state which begins the novel "assumes a part of ordinary significance," William Marshall observes (124). "The child is consistently alien," Marshall continues, "to the larger world which has set his [or her] standards" (124). This accurately describes Jane's situation with the Reeds as she endeavors "in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner --- something lighter, franker, more natural" like the other Reed children (5).

Jane's experience at Gateshead, the name of which evokes an image of passage, includes numerous separations, physical and emotional, from those around her. These separations are often described with womb-like imagery which reflect the primitive patterns of initiation described by Eliade. Indeed even Jane notes, "I can never get away from Gateshead till I am a woman" (366). At Gateshead, Jane frequently retreats to the windowseat behind the "protecting" "red moreen curtain," "shrined in double retirement," in "folds of scarlet drapery" (5).

Jane's unjust confinement in the "red-room," after standing up against the savagery of her cousin John, transforms the child into a wiser adolescent who is able to stand up to her Aunt Reed. In this enclosure, Jane releases her pent up rage over "John Reed's violent tyrannies, all his sisters' proud indifference, all his mother's aversions" and the injustice at Gateshead (11). Lee Edwards describes the Jane that emerges from the red-room as

an outcast and miserable, but notes, "misery . . . is insufficient to make her compromise her principles, give in to what she sees as tyranny and hypocritically endorse values and behavior she finds repugnant" (72).

Rather than simply enduring and accepting the injustices done to her, Jane dares to question "why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned?" Not only does Jane question this but she dares to defend herself to her Aunt:

You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so . . . you have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back --into the red-room . . . And that punishment you made me suffer because your wicked boy struck me . . . you are bad; hard hearted. (31)

After this reply Jane's "soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph," "as if an invisible bond had burst" (31). Thus Jane exhibits a moral authority described by Richard Benvenuto as "superior to that of the social powers which punish her" (634). "Jane is . . . right," Benvenuto continues, "the values that the Reeds would coerce her into accepting are wrong, because they are destructive of what Jane is by nature: frank, independent, and imaginative (634).

At Gateshead Jane learns that there are two types of girlhood, acceptable and unacceptable. According to the standards set by her Aunt Reed, Jane finds herself among the latter. The

house servant Bessie, the only person at Gateshead to reveal a maternal nature towards Jane, advises that she should "not think of herself on an equality with the Misses Reed" and that it is her "place to be humble . . . pleasant and useful" and make herself agreeable to them (10). Jane is "a little toad . . . who always looked as if she were watching everybody" compared to Miss Georgiana, "the little darling with her long curls" whose beauty and pink cheeks "seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault" (12).

Jane is different from both the Misses Reed in that she uses her intellect. A "caviller" and a "questioner", Jane spends all of her hours hidden behind the scarlet drapery reading books --- Gulliver's Travels and Bewicks's History of British Birds. When asked by Mr. Brocklehurst, the stoic custodian of Lowood, what she must do to avoid hell, Jane readily answers, "I must keep in good health and not die" (27). She appalls him further when she reveals her dislike for the Psalms because they "are not interesting," to which he responds, "That proves you have a wicked heart. and you must pray to God to change it" (28). Thus, as Kathleen Tillotson observes, "the savagery, reserve, sensitiveness and sharpwittedness that we are to know in Jane at eighteen are hers at ten" (303).

"Severed from Bessie and Gateshead" Jane is sent willingly off to Lowood Institution with feelings of mixed anticipation and regret at the prospect of soon having "another set of people to dread" (34). She arrives here wrongly condemned "a little

castaway: not a member of the true flock . . . an interloper and an alien" by Mr. Brocklehurst (57). "Lowood," describes Elaine Showalter, "represents sexual diminishment and repression" (17). Yet it is here, ironically, that Jane meets the two women most influential in her self-growth: Helen Burns and Miss Temple. With the mission of mortifying in its girls "the lusts of the flesh" and teaching them "to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety" (56), Lowood instructs them in "the chastity they will need for their future lives as poor teachers and governesses," producing as a result the "intensely spiritualized creature the Victorians idealized as the Angel in the House" (Showalter 117).

Showalter describes Helen, as the Angel of Lowood, "a tribute to the Lowood system: pious, intellectual, indifferent to her material surroundings, resigned to the abuse of her body, and inevitably, consumptive" (118). Karen Rowe notes that Helen "schools [Jane] in Christian submission and makes us perceive the underlying religious imperative which preaches that women must endure suffering and control aberrant passions with rigidly exercised morals and reason" (76). "Would you not be happier," Helen inquires of Jane, "if you tried to forget . . . the passionate emotions?" (396), chiding her for thinking "too much of the love of human beings" (405). Helen embodies "the creed of angelic womanhood" but this by itself cannot satisfy Jane's ardent sense of self" (Forster 88). "I was no Helen Burns," Jane resolves (57).

From Helen Jane learns the need for self-control and the importance of personal integrity, but Jane's passionate need for fulfillment in "this" life causes her to reject Helen's beliefs. Adrienne Rich notes that Helen's asceticism is "something impossible for Jane" (95). "I could not comprehend this doctrine of endurance," Jane says of Helen, "and still less could I understand or sympathize with the forbearance she expressed for her chastiser" (48).

Helen's death, which is the climax at Lowood, represents the only alternative for a woman choosing to live as Helen did. With "head, always drooping," Helen "lives in calm, looking to the end" (51) with "her sunken grey eye, like a reflection from the aspect of an angel" (59). Patiently awaiting death and braving the injustices at Lowood, Helen sighs, "Why, then, should we ever sink overwhelmed with distress, when life is so soon over, and death is so certain an entrance to happiness -- to glory?" (61). "By dying young, I shall escape great suffering," Helen whispers (71). There is a sense of victory for Jane when Helen dies in her arms, for as Showalter points out, "the harsh regime of Lowood is modified, its torments palliated . . . Helen is sacrificed to make way for Jane's fuller freedom" (118). Helen's "sad resignation" which gave Jane "an intolerable pain at the heart" was at last over. She was finally free.

Although Helen strengthens Jane at Lowood, with her "true courage," Jane learns from Helen that she herself is "no Angel, but a flesh-and-blood creature." Miss Temple, the head governess

at Lowood with "serenity in her air" and "refined propriety in her language" (63), however, serves as a model more suitable to Jane's nature and an important mentor. Miss Temple defends the "higher law" even if it means breaking the ones of Mr. Brocklehurst. When Jane is "charged with falsehood" by Brocklehurst, Miss Temple allows Jane to defend herself and then "publicly clears" Jane "from every imputation" (62). She provides love and nurturance for both Jane and Helen and offers them feasts likened to "nectar and ambrosia." "God bless you, my children," Miss Temple says embracing both Jane and Ellen at bedtime after a reading of Virgil (64). She "stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and latterly, companion," Jane notes of Miss Temple (73). From Miss Temple Jane internalizes:

something of her nature and much of her habits:  
more harmonious thoughts: what seemed better-  
regulated feelings had become the inmates of my  
mind. (73)

Jane loses her companion not, as with Helen, to death, but to marriage, a much more promising end.

The popularity of the governess with Victorian novelists, as depicted through both Miss Temple and Jane, was understandable considering that in 1851 there were no fewer than 24,770 governesses in England (Thomson 39). Yet governesses such as Jane Eyre had never been contemplated. Jane was "the Magna Charta of Governesses," Thomson notes:

She gave an uncomfortable jolt to all previous ideas of governesses . . . possessed to the full the spirit of independence . . . but [her] spirit came not through knowledge but . . . from a proper appreciation of her own value as an individual . . . She was a woman earning a living as a governess but not allowing her personality to be submerged. (46)

Such is Jane's role at Thornfield and the source of Rochester's attraction to her. Rochester makes it clear from the beginning of their relationship that he doesn't "wish to treat" Jane "like an inferior" (117). "I claim only such superiority," he continues, "as must result from twenty years' difference in age and a century's advance in experience" (117). Jane and Rochester meet at on an equal level: "I felt at times as if he were my relation," Jane describes, "rather than my master" (129). When Jane saves him from the burning bed, Rochester says to Jane in regards to his indebtedness, "Nothing else that has being would have been tolerable to me in the character of creditor for such an obligation: but you: it is different; ---I feel your benefits no burden, Jane" (133). Yet despite the productive foundations of their relationship, Jane begins to compromise her developing self to Rochester in a way which is counterproductive to her bildung:

My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for this creature: of whom I had made an idol. (241)

When Jane chooses to leave Rochester rather than live with him, it is not because of any societal pressures but because, she says, "I care for myself . . . I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man" (279). Out of her duty to her "self," Jane leaves Thornfield guided by the maternal imagery of the moon which appears recurrently throughout the novel shining her light and guiding Jane. Foreshadowing the forthcoming marriage after the omen of the splitting chestnut tree, the moon appears, "her disk . . . blood-red and half overcast," seeming to throw on Jane "one bewildered, dreary glance" (243). Before leaving Thornfield the moon appears again, yet, "not a moon, but a white human form" which spoke to Jane's spirit whispering in her heart, "My daughter, flee temptation!" (281). Jane responds, "Mother, I will" (281).

Having abandoned Rochester and the security of Thornfield, alone on the Heath, reminiscent of Lear, Jane is deprived of food and sleep, reminiscent of the rites of passage as noted by Eliade. During this scene, which Jane recounts in the present tense, she notes a recognition of her Mother: "I have no relative but the universal mother, Nature: I will seek her breast and ask repose" (284). This rediscovery of the maternal spirit, absent from the constricting Christian patriarchal system, strengthens and nourishes Jane. "Nature seemed to me benign," she felt, "I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I . . . clung to her with filial fondness . . . I would be her guest --- as I was her

foresees that were she to marry him and compromise her self he would "kill" her, as he was slowing doing already. She refuses to accept the same fate of the many selfless Angels of Victorian fiction. "God did not give me my life to throw away," she asserts, "to do as you wish would . . . be almost equivalent to committing suicide" (364).

Jane's return to Rochester is foreshadowed by the "full of moonlight." Hearing his call in the night when she was close to giving in to St. John commandments, Jane notes, "Down superstition . . . This is not thy deception, nor thy witchcraft: it is the work of nature. She was roused, and did ---no miracle ---but her best" (369-370). Upon finding Rochester again and contrasting him with St. John, Jane observes:

There was no harassing restraint, no repressing of glee and vivacity with him; for with him I was at perfect ease, because I knew I suited him: all I said or did seemed either to console or revive him. Delightful consciousness! It brought to life and light my whole nature: in his presence I thoroughly lived; and he lived in mine. (384)

Jane's marriage with Rochester, does not require her to compromise her developing sense of self. He is no longer "an idol" for Jane but an equal. "I love you better now," she tells him, "when I can be really useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence, when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector" (392). Thus, Rochester's newly acquired handicaps afford him a new vision of not only Jane but

of himself in roles differing from the ones prescribed by culture. Symbolic of the wounded and imbalanced patriarchy, Rochester, prior to his union with Jane, is blind. That Thornfield and its patriarchal legacy must be destroyed and transcended before their union is possible is symbolic as well. Jane's culmination of a selfhood, which embodies the development of both masculine and feminine potentials within herself, offers him the same potentials and, hence, he regains his vision and thus the balance within himself.



child: my mother would lodge me without money and without price" (285). This acknowledgement of the maternal deity does not replace the paternal God, but rather complements Him. During this same scene Jane notes of the masculine spirit, "I felt the might and strength of God . . . Sure was I of His efficiency to save what He had made" (285).

Strengthened by her Father in Heaven and Mother in Nature, Jane emerges at Marsh End into her new family of sisters, Diana and Mary, whose names allude to strong mythical feminine figures. The life these women lead centers around intellectual pursuits since this suits their common natures. Jane observes of St. John, however, representative of the patriarchal, and thus imbalanced, religious system: "Nature was not to him that treasury of delight it was to his sisters" (309). "I was sure," Jane continues, "St. John Rivers --- pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was --- had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding" (310). The "peace" Jane refers to suggests one of the undervalued feminine qualities characteristic of the partnership mode of life.

Taken back that "a woman would dare to speak so to a man" as Jane did, St. John can not comprehend the adulthood which Jane has attained. He pronounces her "original" with "something brave" in her spirit." Thus the experiences Jane shared with Rochester created within Jane a sense of self which "felt at home" in "discourse." Jane notes of herself:

I could never rest in communication with strong, discreet, and refined minds, whether male or female, till I had passed the outworks of conventional reserve, and crossed the threshold of confidence, and won a place by their heart's very hearthstone. (330)

With Jane having thus "taken" his "confidence by storm," St. John warns her that he is "a cold, hard man" whose guide is "Reason" rather than "Feeling" (330). Learning Hindi under him Jane observes him to be "very patient, very forebearing, and yet an exacting master: he expected me to do a great deal; and when I fulfilled his expectations, he, in his own way, fully testified his approbation" (350). Jane finds his "praise and notice" restraining however. "I fell under a freezing spell," she describes, "But I did not love my servitude" (350). Under St. John's restricting guidance Jane notes:

I daily wished more to please him: but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself to the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation. He wanted to train me to an elevation I could never reach. (351)

When St. John wants Jane to accompany him as his wife in his mission, she refuses, knowing she would be "forced to keep the fire of [her] nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry" (359). St. John, reflecting the expectations of selfless womanhood, describes Jane's refusal as "a track of selfish ease and barren obscurity" (360). Jane

Conclusion:

While Ellen Montgomery and Jane Eyre reach very different ends in terms of adulthood, they both share many similarities regarding their experiences. Jane's journey begins with there being "no possibility of taking a walk that day . . . since the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating" (5), foreshadowing the difficult journey to adulthood which both she and Ellen face. The dull and gloomy rain of the street on which Ellen Montgomery watches when The Wide, Wide World opens foreshadows similar prospects. They begin their development as orphans, "motherless" inevitably, yet Jane's development coincides with a rediscovery of her spiritual mother who provides her with nurturance and strength, complementing that provided by her heavenly father. Ellen's journey, however, begins with the loss of her mother and other feminine models who temporarily take her place, reinforcing the superior role of God and the patriarchy for caring for girls such as Ellen and Alice.

Rejecting the type of womanhood which Ellen faithfully strives to model, Jane is critical of the fatal prescriptions for womanhood which lead Helen, Alice, and Mrs. Montgomery to their inevitable deaths. Jane's conception of selfhood reflects similarly those described by Gilligan which arose in the 1970's questioning "the stoicism of self-denial" and replacing "the illusion of innocence with an awareness of choice" (149). Jane's

choice is to challenge the patriarchal injunction that it is a woman's duty to be self-sacrificing, recognizing that this duty not only includes care for others but for herself as well. Gilligan writes that "the interests of self" are legitimate and that fulfillment of the needs of self for women restore the balance which has been lost in self denial. Both are necessary.

Jane's final relationship with Rochester, in which they both complement each other and each other's needs, reflects Gilligan's description of a relationship of "dynamic interdependence" rather than one of "a bond of dependence" which characterizes her early relationship with him (149). Through the former type of relationship, "the notion of care expands from the paralyzing injunction not to hurt others," Gilligan observes, "to an injunction to act responsively toward self and others and thus sustain connection" (149). Ellen Montgomery never attains this.

Ellen's lack of mentor figures such as Miss Temple who teach of and reflect a state of being which treats self as well as other, rather than constant self abnegation, prevent her from attaining the same adulthood that Jane does. Rather than defending herself when she is wrongly and unjustly accused by her Aunt, Ellen learns from Alice that it is her "duty" to acknowledge fault within herself. Through Miss Temple, however, who challenges the unjust patriarchy, embodied by Brocklehurst, in publicly exonerating her when she is wrongly accused, Jane learns responsibility not only to others but to her sense of self.

In being conditioned to rely solely upon the patriarchy Ellen easily acquires dependence upon John. Their eventual marriage seems a logical and practical outcome, yet it is the very type of marriage Jane rejects. Both Johns, who are also men of the Church, offer Jane and Ellen similar lives of subservience. These men function not as Rochester, "a lover beholding his mistress," as Jane describes, but as a pastor "recalling . . . wandering sheep --- or better, of a guardian angel watching the soul for which he is responsible" (368).

Refusing the options of being the lost sheep or soul that needs guidance or salvation by any being other than her heavenly parents, Jane chooses a marriage based on "mutual attachment and care," "the apogee of separation in adolescence" which Gilligan notes is often missing in depictions of adult development for both sexes. The implications of Jane's bildung lie not only in her transcendence of cultural norms for adulthood but in her partnership with Rochester. Thus, Bronte's novel provides "a line of development" which Gilligan notes is "missing from current depictions of adult development": a description of "the progression of relationships toward a maturity of interdependence" (155), or what Eisler calls partnership.

## Bibliography

- Abel, Elizabeth, ed.; Hirsch, Marianne, ed.; and Langland, Elizabeth, ed. The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1983.
- Baym, Nina. Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Benvenuto, Richard. "The Child of Nature, the Child of Grace, and the Unresolved Conflict in Jane Eyre," Journal of English Literary History. 39 (1972): 620-628.
- Blake, Kathleen. Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: The Art of Self Postponement. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1983.
- Bronte, Charlotte. Jane Eyre, 1847. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971.
- Brown, Julia Prewitt. A Reader's Guide to the Nineteenth Century English Novel. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1985.
- Buckley, Jerome. Seasons of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Burkhart, Charles. Charlotte Bronte: A Psychosexual Study of Her Novels. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1973.
- Crow, Duncan. The Victorian Woman. New York: Stein and Day, 1972.
- Douglas, Ann. The Feminization of American Culture. New York: Knopf, 1977.
- Edwards, Lee R. Psyche As Hero: Female Heroism and Fictional Form. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1984.
- Eisler, Riane. The Chalice and The Blade. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987.
- Eliade, Mircea. The Sacred And The Profane. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1959.
- Ewbank, Inga-Stina. Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Bronte

- Sisters As Early-Victorian Female Novelists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Fishburn, Katherine. Women in Popular Culture: A Reference Guide. Westport, Connecticut, 1982.
- Forster, Shirley. Victorian Women's Fiction: Marriage, Freedom, and the Individual. Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1985.
- Frye, Northop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. 1957. Reprinted New York: Atheneum, 1969.
- Gilbert, Sandra, M. and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Gilligan, Carol. In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: 1982.
- Halbegger, Alfred. Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Holman, Hugh. A Handbook To Literature. Indianapolis, : The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1980. (1936, 1960, 1972).
- Kelley, Mary. Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America, 1820-1870. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Newton, Judith Lowder. Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981.
- Papashvily, Helen Waite. All The Happy Endings. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956.
- Marshall, William M. The World of the Victorian Novel. Cranbury: A.S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1968.
- Momberger, Phillip. "Self and World in the Works of Charlotte Bronte," Journal of English Literary History. 32 (1972): 349-369.
- Pratt, Annis. Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman," MS. 2 (October 1973): 68-71, 98, 106-107.

- Rowe, Karen E. "Fairy-born and human-bred: Jane Eyre's Education in Romance," in Abel, Elizabeth, ed.; Hirsch, Marianne, ed. Langland, Elizabeth, ed. The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. New Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1983.
- Saum, Lewis. The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America. Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Sullivan, Paula. "Fairy Tale Elements in Jane Eyre," Journal of Popular Culture. 12 (1978): 61-74.
- Thomson, Patricia. The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal 1837-1873. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978.
- Tillotson, Kathleen. Novels of the Eighteen-Forties. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Tompkins, Jane. Sensational Design: The Cultural Work of American Fiction. New York : Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Warner, Susan. The Wide, Wide World. 1850. New York : The Feminist Press, 1987.
- Welter, Barbara. Dimitry Convictions. Athens: Ohio State University Press, 1976.
- Williams, Merryn. Women in the English Novel, 1800-1900. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.