

FEMINIZED MALES IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

Victorian literature offers rich characters, extremely diverse plots, and a variety of themes that hint at the natural complexity of works produced during nearly a century's span of incredible growth and industrial development. It surprises me, then, that when the issue of gender in Victorian literature is discussed, male characters often play the same role; Victorian men are seen as the oppressors, the dictators of women's domesticity, and the enforcers of social regime, and male characters, respectively, are discussed in the same way. However, male characters can often be so much more; they can be weak the same way female characters are weak, nurturing, and protective. Like the period of writing in which they were born, male characters, too, represent an incredibly diverse experience.

In order to discuss gender in Victorian fiction, it is first necessary to outline some of the most basic beliefs about Victorian history. Because it comprises such a large portion of the discussion about Victorian life, it seems that no discussion of Victorian history, particularly accounts looking at gender, would be complete without talking about the cult of domesticity. To abbreviate the concept quickly and describe it in a traditional way, the cult of domesticity was heavily entrenched in the theory of separation of spheres, wherein women cared for the home, the private sphere, and men entered the world of business and politics, the public sphere. Borrowing from Karl Ittmann, the Victorians supported the theory of separate spheres on a philosophical basis; they

encouraged men to enter the world because they believed their “rationality, aggressiveness and intellectual power allowed them to succeed,” whereas women stayed at home “to cultivate their moral and nurturing characters, which they used to guide their children and their husband” (142).

Further, the cult of domesticity centered on ideas about the importance of home. As John Tosh notes, Victorians had a “deep commitment to the *idea* of home” (27); home was a place where family relationships were overwhelmingly important, where family members developed and maintained a sense of morality, and where men could seek refuge from the pressures of the outside world. Because Victorians viewed the health of their homes as essential to their well-being, the roles of men and women in relationship to the home became important to their expected behavior in society. Wives were expected to have “a sympathetic ear and a soothing tongue” (Tosh 54), readily available to comfort their husbands and unwilling to complain about their domestic worries; husbands expected wives to maintain order, cleanliness, and morality at all times. Husbands, in turn, provided all of the material goods for the household and held domestic authority (Tosh 62). While the wife managed daily affairs, husbands controlled larger decisions about the family.

Other texts exploring Victorian gender relationships also describe beliefs about males and females in society. Believed to possess “inferior mental ability,” women were often restricted to their roles as caretakers and denied the opportunity for education (Lewis 84); in fact, women’s intellectual talents were not seen as valuable in relationship to their ability to take care of the home (Tosh 54). Additionally, women were praised for “passive virtues” like “patience, resignation, and silent suffering” (Dyhouse 175); as

such, women were encouraged to play a dependant role wherein they held little power in their marriages and were constantly subject to male authority, weaker and oppressed by their husbands (Trudgill 66).

Throughout the last few decades, beliefs about Victorian gender relations *have* been challenged, particularly views about the separation of spheres. For example, Peter Mandler discusses aristocratic women who were involved in philanthropic committees; for such women, charity events and bazaars could be seen as a movement into the public sphere (164). Leonore Davidoff, in *Worlds Between*, also challenges the idea that separate spheres were stable or absolute (228); males often attended theatres and clubs that acted like havens from the outside world but at the same time were unrelated to the domestic sphere specifically (259). The separation of spheres is challenged in a variety of other ways; fathers were more involved with their children than perhaps initially thought and were even active in purchasing items such as furniture or in maintaining household gardens (Davidoff, Hall 329-387).

However, works seeking to change definitions of masculinity by re-examining the separation of spheres often have troubling aspects. For example, Mandler's discussion revolves around aristocratic women and thus cannot be applied universally. Davidoff's *Worlds Between* also still perpetuates some of the traditional beliefs about male and female relationships; it discusses women as protectors of the home with no outlet for their sexuality while still describing men as the domestic masters, thus the enforcers of women's role in the home (45-53). Further, works such as *Family Fortunes* sometimes include seeming contradictions; though *Family Fortunes* expands the male role by stating that men "took an active part in the setting up of the home" (Davidoff, Hall 387), it still

makes clear that women were solely responsible for maintaining and creating the household (Davidoff, Hall 360).

As a result, much of the literary criticism dealing with Victorian fiction still perpetuates classic beliefs about Victorian gender relations and rarely discusses male characters outside the bounds of what is expected of them as Victorian males as seen through the scope of traditional Victorian history. Hence, the history given here is brief and basic; it aims to outline major points about Victorian history in order to get to the real objective of this thesis.

The real objective, then, is to contest the way in which traditional beliefs about Victorians permeate criticism of Victorian fiction, particularly in their viewpoint about males. Nina Auerbach, for example, suggests the image of the Victorian woman in writing as either angel or demon derives from mythic beliefs about woman's power and the desire to repress such power; naturally, the people responsible for repressing women's power would, thus, be Victorian males seeking to bind women in a domestic role. Likewise, in discussing Victorian fiction targeted at a female audience, Judith Rowbotham mentions how many of the texts produced supported images of the perfect wife and instructed girls to aspire to domestic perfection, with patriarchal ideas responsible for the continuation of such images. Similarly, Paula Cohen, Patricia Stubbs, Helene Meyers, Robyn Warhol, Winifred Hughes, and Ruth Yeazell all also use constructions of Victorian gender to discuss different themes but are united in their view of manhood; Victorian men act as oppressors, forcing women into restrictive social roles which they either accept or try to reject in their writing. There are countless examples of

feminist criticism dealing with Victorian males in the same way; it is easy to find analysis premised on the oppressive and negative force of the Victorian patriarchy.

Thus, traditional ideas about gender permeate the way characters are discussed; there is such an all-pervading view of Victorian males as oppressors and the binary opposite to feminine characteristics that considering a male character as feminine in any way is rare. For example, there is a reluctance to call a male character weak even when he is obviously weak; there is a reluctance to call a male character “maternal” or nurturing because those words are generally only used when looking at female characters. Further, since there is a reluctance to discuss male characters in feminine terms, there is also a reluctance to even admit they *are* weak or nurturing; in essence, being weak or nurturing becomes a strictly feminine trait when discussing Victorian literature.

However, there are often instances where feminine traits do appear in male characters and male characters can be discussed as behaving in a “feminized” way. “Feminized,” then, refers to instances where male characters act or express feelings contradictory to what is expected from their behavior within the framework of traditional views about Victorian gender relations and, by extension, how they are typically discussed in literary interpretations dealing with gender. Rather than acting in a traditionally masculine way or espousing masculine views, “feminized” male characters behave the way female characters would be expected to behave instead. They exhibit qualities or ideas usually only reserved for talking about females or a feminine perspective, particularly in criticism covering Victorian fiction.

Some issues arise with the use of the term “feminized”; certainly, one important flaw in the term comes from concepts about gender construction. Since constructions of

gender can fluctuate wildly depending on a variety of factors, whether or not a character is actually “feminized” can be questionable. After all, “gender is not a rigid or reified analytic category imposed on human experience, but a fluid one whose meaning emerges in specific social contexts as it is created and recreated through human actions” (Gerson, Peiss 317). Identifying exactly how Dickens, the Brontës, or Eliot felt at the exact moment of the writing of their novels about traditional male and female behavior would be nearly impossible; additionally, the response of their readership to their novels could fluctuate depending on specific regional concepts about gender or even a specific reader’s experiences with gender in their lives. Thus, the term “feminized” used in this thesis is extremely limited to discussing only traditional beliefs about Victorian gender relationships; it operates as an expansion to literary criticism discussing Victorian fiction in traditional gender terms and, as such, is truly limited only to that discussion.

Additionally, the use of the term “feminized” carries certain connotations that are necessary to dispel. The word “feminized” becomes problematic because it implies male characters appear feminine and perhaps only feminine; male characters can certainly maintain their masculinity while displaying feminized traits. For example, although Pip of *Great Expectations* does appear weak, he is also masculine in a variety of ways. At various times he engages in the male outside world of business; he shows attraction to female characters and consistently strives to become a gentleman. Likewise, Rochester definitely displays many masculine characteristics; Brontë describes him as strong and athletic, powerful and domineering, meaning he also plays a very traditionally male role. Thus, I am not challenging characters’ masculinity but expanding the definition of how

gender can function for a character; even though I use the term “feminized” to describe aspects of their characters, I am not denying their masculinity.

By looking at male characters and seeing how they show feminized behavior, it is not my intention to challenge historical interpretations of the Victorian period either. I am not trying to redefine Victorian gender roles; however, I am trying to redefine interpreting gender in Victorian fiction. The key to my concept, in fact, is the word *fiction*. Victorian texts are the creation of their authors; they are their imagined world, and how close their representation lies to reality is difficult to tell. Therefore, for example, whether or not a male character represents the Victorian male experience is somewhat irrelevant to discussing how that male character interacts with the female characters he encounters or the traits he possesses. Hence, a male character could very well behave in a “feminized” way, regardless of whether or not Victorian males would actually exhibit the same traits.

Overall, however, the term “feminized” works well; it reflects the shifting nature of gender constructions all four texts present and the idea at the heart of this thesis. Ideas about gender are loaded with concepts that tend to break apart in the real world; for instance, ideas like “gender is invariant,” “the male/female dichotomy is natural,” and “all individuals can (and must) be classified as masculine or feminine” (Hawkesworth 649) usually fail to represent the reality of many people. Most people, instead, tend to fall somewhere along a continuum of gendered behavior.

Certainly everyone can identify someone they know who engages in both traditionally masculine and feminine behaviors. Some of the most modern examples include men who chose to stay at home with their children while their significant other

works and supports them, women who enter traditionally masculine fields of work such as firefighting, and men who enter traditionally feminine fields of work such as nursing. Further, males can often be extremely sensitive whereas females can often be reluctant to be emotional, fathers can act as the nurturing figure in their children's lives whereas as mothers can be indifferent, and women can dominate households whereas men can have little control over domestic affairs. Thus, holding rigidly to ideas about how men and women should behave within the guidelines of socially expected behavior often borders on the ridiculous. Few people exhibit totally masculine or feminine traits; most people fall somewhere in between the two concepts of gender.

If characters in novels are representations of people and life, it seems nearly ridiculous to expect them to act in a wholly masculine or feminine way as well. Using gender guidelines to discuss Victorian fiction presents the same problem; even with broader definitions for male roles in Victorian society, applying gender to analyze texts still asks characters to participate in the "male/female dichotomy" they may or may not actually represent. The solution, then, is not necessarily to redefine masculine roles in Victorian society and apply the new definition to male characters; the solution, instead, is to deconstruct how traditional gender beliefs have affected the interpretation of Victorian male characters and see if perhaps something about them has been ignored because of the heavily gendered way in which they have been viewed.

For all of the authors explored in this thesis, feminized males have a purpose. It benefits male characters to have feminine traits, advances more open-minded concepts, and improves the living standards of the people surrounding them. Because male feminization also helps to develop themes in all of the novels, looking at the male

characters' roles opens the texts to interpretations that might not be possible if they were only considered within expected notions about how they, as Victorian males, should behave. Thus, by looking at male characters as "feminized," new aspects of their characters come into play.

I would suggest, further, that the "feminized" traits of the male characters are actually humanizing traits instead; though perhaps traditionally seen as feminine in relationship to Victorian studies, the "feminized" traits the male characters exhibit are humanizing and sympathetic forces for them in the text. Being weak, nurturing a child, protecting loved ones, and showing sympathy all help to create a more three-dimensional view of characters as real representations of human life. To deny, ignore, or overlook such traits because they seem contradictory to set expectations about how the characters should behave denies part of the craftsmanship of the author's work.

CHAPTER I

FILLING THE NEED: EDGAR AS THE PROTECTOR OF THE HOME IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Borrowing from the introduction of *A Man's Place*, “for most of the nineteenth century home was widely held to be a man's place, not only in the sense of being his possession or his fiefdom, but also the place where his deepest needs were met” (Tosh 1). What, then, can be said about the home Emily Brontë presents in *Wuthering Heights*? Certainly, Catherine fails to meet Edgar's “deepest needs”; she dominates the household and does little to provide emotional stability, never particularly protecting her family members or creating harmony for Edgar. By making Catherine a negligent wife, Brontë creates a need in the Linton household; someone has to stabilize the family, especially after Cathy's birth. Edgar, then, takes on the maternal role of protecting his home. He cares for Catherine during her illness, emotionally nurtures Cathy, provides a stable home, and keeps Cathy away from outside threats. In doing so, Edgar acts in a feminized way, wherein the feminized aspects of his behavior supplement Catherine's failings and provide an antithesis to her actions. Without Edgar, *Wuthering Heights* would be a novel presenting a world of chaos; Edgar allows Brontë to explore Heathcliff and Catherine's seeming insanity while still showing a normal home exists, grounding the novel and making it more realistic. Edgar's feminized traits, then, actually stabilize more than just his home; they stabilize *Wuthering Heights* and provide resolution in the novel.

Before she even marries Edgar, Catherine shows signs she will not be considerate of his feelings. In Chapter IX, Catherine explains to Nelly why she accepts Edgar's marriage proposal; Nelly, who "represents a folk wisdom" (Holbrook 84) and acts as the voice of reason, responds to the engagement by questioning why Catherine loves Edgar. Catherine's reasoning seems shallow and underdeveloped, and Nelly summarizes all of Catherine's points to help her understand why marrying Edgar might not be the brightest idea; Nelly tells her she only loves Edgar because he is "handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you" (77), indicating the first signs of trouble for Edgar. As Nelly tries to make Catherine realize, two of the qualities she loves about Edgar are not eternal; he will not be "young" and "handsome" forever. Additionally, he may not be "rich" for the rest of his life, since fortunes can change; also, though Nelly does not mention it, it is impossible to forever be "cheerful" and never upset or disturbed by anything in life, meaning, in reality, only one of the qualities Catherine loves about Edgar has a high probability of remaining stable and even that quality, his love, could potentially fade. Eventually, Catherine admits she, like Nelly, believes it is wrong to marry Edgar but not because she loves him for the wrong reasons; Catherine is only concerned with herself and her feelings, telling Nelly that Linton's soul "is as different as a moonbeam from lightening, or frost from fire" (80) and implying she would be far more compatible with Heathcliff. Catherine's analogy of the differences between her soul and Linton's are accurate but disturbing because, as the "moonbeam" or "frost," Catherine will likely crush Edgar. Yet, Catherine acts untroubled about how Edgar will fare in their relationship, even though she obviously loves Heathcliff more deeply than she loves Linton and, inevitably, inflicts her unhappiness on Linton in the form of rage.

As such, Catherine's vested interest in Heathcliff threatens the health of the Linton household; yet, Catherine uses her love for Heathcliff to justify marrying Edgar, another sign she only has her interests at heart. She goes so far as to suggest that, instead of being poor and married to Heathcliff, she can use her marriage with Edgar to financially aid Heathcliff. Though Nelly is correct in that it is Catherine's "worst motive" (81) for wanting to marry Linton, Catherine acts generally unaffected by Nelly's advice; she believes, or at least espouses to Nelly, that marrying Linton would be a passionate act of kindness above her own self-satisfactions. Of course, Catherine's thinking is entirely wrong; helping Heathcliff with Edgar's money only fulfills her desire that Heathcliff become elevated in status, ironically the one impediment she sees to marrying him instead of Edgar. Catherine shows little regard for how Edgar would feel about Heathcliff's presence in her life. By deciding to marry Edgar anyway, Catherine, as Nelly suggests, is either "ignorant of the duties you undertake in marriage; or else that, you are a wicked, unprincipled girl" (82). Catherine feels little sense of duty to Edgar; she is unconcerned with guarding his feelings or protecting the balanced well-being of their marriage, even in hypothetical terms.

Edgar, then, makes a rather foolhardy decision in allowing Catherine to take all of the control in their relationship once they do get married. Though there are several indications doing so would not be wise, Edgar plays a more traditionally feminine role in the Linton household. Unwilling to change any of her behavior, both Isabella and Edgar accommodate Catherine once she arrives at Thrushcross Grange; as Nelly narrates in Chapter X, "it was not the thorn bending to the honeysuckles but the honeysuckles embracing the thorn" (91). By always "bending" to Catherine, Edgar relies on Catherine

not to hurt him since he gives her nearly complete control in their marriage. Marianne Thormählen notes, further, that Catherine has “no tenderness or compassion for anybody” (184), and, thus, submitting to her whims leaves Edgar in a rather vulnerable position. Because Catherine is so self-interested, she does little to defend her home with Edgar; she only cares about protecting herself and her own interests, and those she should shelter matter very little to her.

Somewhat predictably, considering her motivations for marriage and her selfish nature, Catherine’s power does begin to crush the family members at Thrushcross Grange. Because she challenges Edgar and directly threatens their marriage, she destroys all stability for the Lintons. For example, Catherine invites Heathcliff into her home, despite the fact that Edgar looks “vexed” (94) at the idea of receiving Heathcliff as a formal guest. Recognizing his displeasure, Catherine simply “seized” and “crushed” (95) Edgar’s hand into Heathcliff’s hand, forcing him to accept Heathcliff. Brontë’s terminology about Edgar and Heathcliff’s meeting is important; though Edgar hints that he does not want to see Heathcliff, Catherine forces him and, as Nelly suggested earlier, literally bends him to her will with aggressive gestures suggested by words such as “seized” and “crushed.” To add injury to insult, Catherine then proceeds to ogle Heathcliff in front of her husband; the pair are so “absorbed in their mutual joy” to see each other that they do not “suffer embarrassment” (96) because of their inappropriate display of affection. Though Edgar “grew pale with annoyance” (96), Catherine ignores him entirely. Even when Edgar tries to remind her of his presence by reminding the pair about their tea, Catherine does nothing to protect his feelings. Though Heathcliff’s statement that he built his wealth “only for you” (96) implies obvious romantic

undertones, Catherine does not inject Edgar into the conversation or, in some way, show she loves him. She literally brings chaos into the plot of *Wuthering Heights*.

Further, Catherine's actions are particularly destructive because she justifies her behavior, suggesting she will not reform and suddenly want to protect her home. In fact, after Heathcliff leaves and Edgar goes to bed, Catherine feels the need to wake Nelly up and complain about how Edgar reacted to the meeting with Heathcliff. Catherine's words reveal how self-centered she truly is by displaying an utter disregard for the hurt she caused Edgar; she failed to shield him from the obvious, romantic outside threat of Heathcliff but, rather than seeing how he might be threatened by Heathcliff, and how her actions might have been less than reassuring, Catherine finds "great weakness" in Edgar and declares him a "spoiled" (97) child. Further, she believes she "humour(s)" (97) Edgar even though she makes him vulnerable and afraid to oppose her. Catherine acts true to form by not seeing the meeting with Heathcliff from any perspective other than her own. Her need to denigrate Edgar in order to justify her position also hints at how easily she will throw him aside once she views someone else as more valuable. Edgar's position in his home, then, becomes disastrous; left at the mercy of Catherine's will, he can only hope she will not make a spectacle of herself and her old love in front of him. Though Nelly eventually convinces Catherine to make peace with Edgar, Catherine turns her apology into an act of selfless martyrdom for the sake of Heathcliff, making even her "peace" (99) offering to Edgar ominous and hollow. She does not sincerely protect or give comfort to Edgar; Catherine's behavior forces Edgar, in turn, to try to protect the welfare of his home instead.

Though Catherine thwarts his efforts, Edgar first acts as a protective figure in *Wuthering Heights* when he realizes the necessity of eliminating Heathcliff from the Linton household. Knowing Catherine will not be pleased, Edgar challenges Catherine's power for the well-being of their marriage; the confrontation between the pair reveals both Catherine's reluctance to act as a nurturing figure and Edgar's driving need for stability. Despite Heathcliff's threat to wreak havoc on the Linton household, Catherine still defends Heathcliff when Edgar interrupts their conversation in the kitchen and tells Heathcliff to leave (Chapter XI). Provoking Edgar, Heathcliff taunts him instead of leaving; he turns to Catherine for support, mocking Edgar by saying "this lamb of yours threatens like a bull" (114). By talking about Edgar in third person, as if he is not in the room, Heathcliff denigrates Edgar's position in the household; Heathcliff acts as though he and Catherine are sharing a private laugh about Edgar's inferiority and, by connecting the pair, acts as though he and Catherine share a closer relationship. Enraged, Edgar gives Nelly a signal to bring men to escort Heathcliff from his home. Catherine, however, wants Heathcliff to stay and so joins in the attack on Edgar's character. Directly opposing her husband, Catherine throws the key to the exit into the kitchen fire, exclaiming, "I wish Heathcliff may flog you sick, for daring to think an evil thought about me!" (115). Though Edgar does not attack Catherine or her loyalty, Catherine accuses Edgar of not trusting her so that, like Heathcliff, she can attack him and berate him enough to have her way. By insulting Edgar, Catherine does not show support for him; instead, she appears to support Heathcliff at the expense of the harmony in her home, particularly when she knows he means to harm Edgar and Isabella and should, hypothetically, help to rid the household of his negative presence. She willingly hurts

Edgar in order to retain her power and keep Heathcliff. Rather than letting her dominate, however, Edgar continues to ask Heathcliff to leave; he opposes Catherine, knowing she will undoubtedly hurt him more, because Edgar cares about the well-being of both his marriage and the occupants of his house.

In fact, Catherine does make the situation far worse by taunting Edgar and hurting him by revealing she has no loyalty towards him. Though Edgar feels “anguish and humiliation” overcome “him completely” (115), Catherine ignores his distress even though he is visibly shaking; she compounds the seriousness of her attack by continuing to mock Edgar even though she is clearly aware that she upsets him. Going so far as to refer to him as a “sucking levert” (115), spiritless, animalistic, and weak, she emasculates Edgar by telling him not to worry because Heathcliff will not hurt him. Since Edgar fails to get upset until Catherine turns against him, it seems like his wife’s sense of loyalty troubles Edgar more than the physical threat of Heathcliff; yet, Catherine ignores her part in Edgar’s pain and insults him further by suggesting he is cowardly. As the scene progresses, Heathcliff continues to talk about Edgar in third person, remarking to Catherine “this is the slaving, shivering thing you prefer to me!” (115). Again, Catherine does nothing to protect Edgar; she does not negate Heathcliff’s statements or tell him to leave, watching her husband suffer instead, certain he will do nothing to defend himself.

Despite all of his pain and suffering, though, Edgar still persists in his mission to rid their marriage of Heathcliff. The conclusion of Edgar and Catherine’s argument shows the underlying meaning behind why the two characters behave the way they do; Catherine only cares about herself and her happiness whereas Edgar will sacrifice

anything for his family's stability. When, unexpectedly, Edgar strikes Heathcliff, Edgar gains the upper-hand; he runs from the kitchen to collect his men, and Heathcliff decides it is time to leave after all. Realizing the argument did not conclude in her favor, Catherine begins to cover her tracks; she quickly tells Nelly she is in "no way blamable" (116) for the argument in the kitchen, conceiving a plan to hurt both Heathcliff and Edgar. As she points out to Nelly, Catherine wants her plan to remind Edgar that he should revert to "dreading to provoke me" (117). Despite humiliating him and causing him a great deal of grief, Catherine is only concerned that Edgar's outburst has given him new power; she wants to make sure she will not lose her position in the household, regardless of the chaos she causes in her wake. Edgar, however, only flees when his point has been made; he leaves when he manages to hurt Heathcliff and make Heathcliff realize he cannot easily return, even though leaving sooner would have spared Edgar an enormous amount of shame.

Since Catherine plans to exact revenge on Edgar by literally self-destructing in order to destroy those around her, as taunting him is not enough, Catherine creates an overwhelming need for stability in the Linton household. Though always somewhat feminized by the power structure in his home and Catherine's complete dominance, Edgar begins to display feminized traits in another way during her illness. While nursing Catherine, Edgar starts to act like a parent figure, more specifically a mother, to her. Edgar increasingly focuses his energy on Catherine's well-being and selflessly devotes himself to her recovery. Unlike Heathcliff, whose primary concern is how Catherine's actions hurt him, Edgar genuinely wants Catherine to get well for her own sake; even when Heathcliff intrudes into his home, Edgar forgets the insult in order to save

Catherine, putting her needs above his own. After her death, Edgar decides he must continue living; he creates stability in the household and a nurturing home for Cathy, traditionally the responsibility of a mother and not a father. As *Wuthering Heights* progresses, Edgar increasingly acts as a maternal force in the Linton household, trying to keep Cathy away from Heathcliff and, once she falls prey, ultimately saving her one last time. By filling what should be Catherine's role, Edgar, then, acts in a largely feminized way.

As Catherine begins to self-deteriorate, Edgar steps in as a caretaker. Nelly astutely notes "no mother could have nursed an only child more devotedly" (133). Slowly slipping away from the character she was before, Catherine becomes childlike in her illness, no longer mentally functioning at a normal adult level. Edgar, as a result, becomes like a parent to Catherine; to be more specific, as Nelly suggests, he acts like a "mother." He "sacrificed" his own "health and strength" (133) in order to bring Catherine back to life, thus putting her needs before his own; he makes gestures such as bringing her flowers and, even when she responds by crying, acts cheered because she shows some kind of emotion indicative of the person she used to be. Throughout the process of tending to Catherine, Edgar never seems to want gratitude for what he sacrifices; he never questions whether or not he should care for her or what he will gain by restoring her back to life.

The contrast between the way Heathcliff and Edgar treat Catherine during her illness further shows Edgar's role as a maternal figure in their home. While Edgar spends "many an hour in trying to entice her attention to some subject which had formerly been her amusement" (155), gently coaxing Catherine to find herself again, Heathcliff

instantly demands “how can I bear it?” (156) when he secretly meets with her. Unlike Edgar, Heathcliff focuses entirely on himself. He does not seem to care about how her deterioration affects her happiness; instead, he only wants Catherine to get better so that *his* torment will end. Heathcliff insults and berates her, blaming her for her illness; he even reveals he knows about her plan by telling her “I have not broken your heart – you have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine” (159). Although Heathcliff’s statement shows he understands Catherine better than Edgar, his admission is possibly the worst thing to tell her. In essence, she now knows her plan is working; she knows that through her death she will hold more power over Heathcliff than she does in life, so allowing herself to die becomes a rather enticing option. Because Heathcliff reacts to Catherine in such a self-centered way, he actually showcases the maternal aspects of Edgar; it is easy to contrast the two characters and also easy to see who is more nurturing towards Catherine.

The contrast between Heathcliff and Edgar also shows that Edgar is a force of stability in the home, a necessary component in the protection of the family’s well-being, whereas Heathcliff, the less feminized male, causes more chaos because of his selfish attitude towards Catherine. Nelly recognizes the danger in Heathcliff’s presence; she asks Heathcliff if he will “ruin her, because she has not wit to help herself?” (161). Nelly acts like the voice of reason; Heathcliff’s behavior makes Catherine worse because he only cares about himself in the situation. Heathcliff, like Catherine, does not seem to believe actions have consequences. He says what he wants to say without thinking about how his words might affect Catherine’s well-being and refuses to leave the Linton home because he wants to stay, no matter how disruptive his presence might be to the

tranquility of the home. Initially enraged when he sees Heathcliff, Edgar responds by trying to remove Heathcliff and eliminate the threat to Catherine's recovery, desperately endeavoring to protect her. Realizing, however, that Catherine has gone limp, Edgar ignores Heathcliff, turning his entire focus on Catherine's health. He forgets "her hated friend" and quickly moves Catherine into the parlor, managing to "restore her to sensation" (161). Edgar's ability to attend to the most important issue at hand, Catherine's health, suggests he possesses love and devotion for her that allows him to see beyond his own needs and fully protect her. Additionally, Edgar's ability to revive Catherine suggests he is the protective figure in her life; whereas Heathcliff's intrusion causes her to fall further ill, Edgar brings her back to her senses. He provides stability because his nurturing sensibilities take precedence over his desire to fight Heathcliff; Edgar is different than males such as Heathcliff because he is a highly maternal, nurturing figure for Catherine.

Ultimately, though, Catherine does die, leaving behind her daughter and, more or less, abandoning her. Since Catherine originally designs her illness, she does not seem to care much about Cathy before or after her birth; Catherine's "motherly feelings (are) not very strong" (Thompson 69). Edgar, then, becomes the primary caretaker of Cathy; as such, he also becomes responsible for creating a harmonious home and, though he grieves for a short period of time, rises to fulfill his duties. Nelly's narration about how Edgar handles his grief reveals the selfless way he decides to move forward with his life. Not embittered by Catherine's death the way Heathcliff is, Edgar finds "resignation, and a melancholy sweeter than joy" (180). Nelly's statement is important; Edgar's "resignation" indicates he recognizes the need not to dwell on the past because he, once

again, sees the world beyond his own desires. Nelly's mention of Edgar's "earthly consolations" (180) only a paragraph later suggests he knows Cathy needs a parent; as Nelly explains, Edgar is "too good" (180) to remain depressed for too long. Though she never quite spells out exactly what she means, shades of Catherine's behavior before and the contrast in Edgar's spirit seem to make the concept clear. Whereas Catherine flies into fits of passion and allows her emotions to dominate everyone around her, Edgar is aware of how his attitude affects the Linton household. He is also aware that Cathy needs a stable, loving, happy environment not tainted by his grief. Nelly also draws a comparison between Hindley Earnshaw and Edgar, finalizing the concept of Edgar's selflessness and, also, marking him as different from other men. When Hindley's "ship struck, he abandoned his post," sending everyone in his home into "riot and confusion" (181); Edgar, however, "displayed the courage of a loyal and faithful soul" (181), trusting in God's goodness and holding his home together. Brontë cannot make the point more clear; in Catherine's absence, Edgar pulls the family together because he recognizes the need for stability. He transcends his grief in order to provide happiness to others; he protects his family because no one else will.

The overwhelmingly positive description of Cathy's upbringing bolsters the idea that it is Edgar, not Catherine, who stabilizes the Linton household. Without anyone making disruptive outbursts, Edgar guides his home into a period of tranquility. Brontë's decision in Chapter XVIII to advance the novel by twelve years suggests likewise; there is nothing outrageous or interesting to comment on in the twelve years that pass because, as the absence of description implies, it is a relatively normal, calm time. Nelly describes the years as "the happiest" in her life, with the most troubling events centering on Cathy's

“trifling illness, which she had to experience in common with all children” (185). Thus, Cathy receives a fairly normal childhood; the only problems to come her way involve typical childhood illnesses that, obviously, Edgar cannot prevent or protect her from. Additionally, Nelly’s decision to mark Cathy’s childhood years as “the happiest” in her life suggests Edgar *does* create domestic stability; whereas Catherine always caused turmoil in the household before, Nelly, with Catherine dead, enjoys being with the Lintons. Unlike Catherine who might have been too self-interested, Edgar is highly present in Cathy’s life and her happiness results from his methods of child-rearing. He never speaks “a harsh word” to Cathy and only reproves her “with a look” (185), indicating he acts in a kind and patient way towards his daughter; he also becomes directly involved with her by taking “her education entirely on himself,” making it an “amusement” (185) and entwining himself into her daily activities.

Though Edgar’s decision to keep Cathy at home and to retreat from the outside world himself seems reclusive and unhealthy from a modern perspective, his decision, within the framework of Victorian thinking, actually indicates another way in which Edgar acts as a maternal, protective figure in Cathy’s life. Although Edgar makes Cathy somewhat isolated by always keeping her at home, he positively shelters her by keeping her there; within the framework of Victorian beliefs about the domestic sphere, a good home provides “social harmony of moral responsibility, an antidote to the declining moral values” (Trudgill 46) current in the outside world. Considering his contact with Heathcliff and the destruction Heathcliff’s presence creates in the Linton household, Edgar has reason to believe the values of outsiders threaten those at Thrushcross Grange, particularly since Heathcliff neighbors him. Thus, it is logical for Edgar to always keep

Cathy at home protected by the “social harmony” provided in his little sphere.

Additionally, Edgar’s decision to remain at home marks another feminized aspect of his character; traditionally, “men entered the public world of business and politics” while “women remained at home in order to cultivate their moral and nurturing character” (Ittman 142); however, in the absence of Catherine, Edgar takes over the motherly role of crafting a home for Cathy. As Nelly comments, Cathy thrives in Edgar’s created world; she appears “perfectly contented” while “*Wuthering Heights* and Mr. Heathcliff did not exist for her,” (186) meaning Edgar makes the right choice to shield Cathy. Once she does make contact with the outside world, without her father’s permission or knowledge, her life spirals into chaos.

Edgar tries to take Isabella’s son, Linton, away from Heathcliff, but, bearing no real legal claim to him, Linton returns to *Wuthering Heights*. In adolescence, Cathy begins to stray away from Thrushcross Grange and meets Linton, bringing the outside threat of Heathcliff home. Disturbed, Edgar scrambles to protect Cathy. As Cathy questions Edgar about why he denies her access to Linton, Edgar begins to understand that Cathy has been manipulated into believing he does not have her best interests at heart. In response, Edgar “drew her to him” (217), literally and symbolically making Cathy nearer to him and, as he hopes, reminding her of their closeness and his protective presence in her life. The way Edgar chooses to handle Cathy’s confusion reflects great wisdom; dismissing Cathy from ever seeing Linton and demanding obedience would engender rebellion against his wishes. Edgar, then, treats Cathy with respect appropriate for her age and appeals to her logic rather than her emotion. Realizing she might believe he is denying “her a pleasure she might harmlessly enjoy” (217) because, as he correctly

surmises, Heathcliff misrepresents the truth to Cathy, Edgar tries to remind her that he loves her and would not deny her anything that is “harmless.” Explaining his thought processes, Edgar outlines the reasons why meeting with Linton endangers Cathy. Telling her “you could not keep up an acquaintance with your cousin without being brought into contact” (217) with Heathcliff, Edgar carefully maneuvers the conversation. He knows better than to demonize Linton in any way, since Cathy has a connection to him, so he focuses on how Linton, through no fault of his own, is only a threat because of his father. By also telling Cathy “I knew he (Heathcliff) would detest you on my own account” (217), Edgar guards her feelings. Rather than saying Heathcliff despises Cathy directly, and possibly making her feel inferior or harmed in some way, Edgar makes it clear that Heathcliff, her uncle, only dislikes her because of her connection to him. Though Edgar “could not bear to discourse long on the topic” (217), he also recognizes that he will not be able to shield Cathy without telling her the truth about Isabella’s fate. Edgar, showing his ability to put others before himself once again, delves into the painful “topic”; he relives Isabella’s death in order to help Cathy see his logic, even though he obviously wishes Cathy would just believe he acts for her “own good, and nothing else”(217).

Though he warns Cathy, she still ventures to Wuthering Heights. Upon discovering her continued affair, Edgar’s reaction, shown when he speaks with Nelly, reveals his intention in keeping Cathy away really is born out of his desire for her safety, not out of the need to retaliate against his old rival. Explaining to Nelly that he would “not care one moment for Linton being Heathcliff’s son; nor his taking her from me” (248); Edgar is open-minded enough to accept that Linton may not be a bad person, and “taking her from me” may not necessarily be negative for Cathy. Additionally, Edgar

does not care about the feud between him and Heathcliff; it does not matter if “Heathcliff gained his ends, and triumphed in robbing me of my last blessing” (248) so long as Linton, honestly, enhances Cathy’s life and acts as a good husband.

However, Edgar fears Linton is “unworthy – only a feeble tool to his father” (248) because, as he rightly believes, Heathcliff overpowers people in order to gain his own ends. Though Edgar admits his decision to prevent Cathy’s budding romance hurts Cathy’s feelings, Edgar acts as the ultimate protective figure by continually trying to make Cathy understand the risk involved in her love, even at the expense of her affection for him. Still talking to Nelly, Edgar proclaims “hard though it be to crush her buoyant spirit, I must persevere in making her sad while I live” (248); like a good protective figure, he would rather make her unhappy and damage their relationship than see her suffer a fate like the one his poor sister endures at the hands of Heathcliff. Pulling together everything he surmises, Edgar decides it is best to meet with Linton and judge his character. If, as he believes possible, Linton proves his worthiness, Edgar will accept him into their family; if not, he will never “abandon” (248) Cathy by letting her choose a self-destructive path, no matter the personal cost to him. Edgar guards Cathy as well as any mother could; he fills Catherine’s place and plays the role of both mother and father, indulging in Cathy’s desires and trying to protect her at the same time.

Linton, however, won’t come to see Edgar. Ignoring everything her father says and does to keep her safe, Cathy falls for Linton’s ploy to bring her to Wuthering Heights where, predictably, Heathcliff physically abuses her and Linton antagonizes her, claiming all of her property for his own. Surprisingly, though, Linton helps Cathy to flee Wuthering Heights when she cries for her father, ill and far away at Thrushcross Grange.

Severely upset by Edgar's illness, her "anguish had at last spurred Linton to incur the risk of liberating her" (274). Since Linton feels "glad at first" (271) when Cathy is beaten, finally deciding her pain is piteous but that she deserves to be hit, he seems like an unlikely candidate to sympathize with and aid Cathy, especially at his own "risk"; in fact, nothing in their relationship changes before he decides to free her from the house, suggesting his choice has little to do with Cathy. Perhaps Linton remembers Edgar trying to save him from Heathcliff; perhaps he finds sympathy for Cathy's pain because he realizes what she stands to lose if her father dies, even wishing for a father like Edgar. Either way, Edgar, in his illness and subsequent death, manages to save Cathy from Heathcliff one last time.

Though Cathy still has many battles ahead of her after her father's death, Edgar fulfills the role of her protector and nurturer as much as any character possibly could. As Wade Thompson makes clear, *Wuthering Heights* is a novel brimming with sadism and infanticide, offering little of what would be expected in a Victorian home; Edgar, however, provides "consistently loving care" (70) to Cathy, driven by his desire to shield her from Heathcliff's abuse, no matter the cost. At first filling the need for stability created by Catherine's destructive behavior, Edgar, as a feminine, maternal character, models the type of home Brontë eventually returns to in the end; Cathy and Hareton find happiness with each other, while Heathcliff, straying away from home, eventually returns calm and placated. Edgar, then, models a sane and normal life by acting feminine; his feminine characteristics fill the need to present a world alternate to Catherine and Heathcliff's angry, passionate ranting, acting as the stability in *Wuthering Heights* that everyone, gratefully, finds.

CHAPTER II

BEAUTY, THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE, AND HELPING JANE IN *JANE EYRE*

Like Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* also features a romantic couple wherein one character creates a need the other character fills. However, whereas Catherine behaves in a more traditionally male way forcing Edgar to adopt feminine characteristics, *Jane Eyre* presents a need because Jane *does* behave traditionally. *Jane Eyre*, then, plays with the idea of role reversal but does so in a significantly different way.

For traditional Victorians, the outward appearance women presented to the world was “an indication of inner nature” (Rowbotham 23); thus, beautiful women were seen as inherently superior to unattractive women. Certainly, Jane believes in the traditional stereotype; she sees beauty as an all-determining factor in likeability. Additionally, because the importance of beauty was “male-oriented” (Rowbotham 23), Jane believes an attractive mate will never want her. Brontë, then, creates the need for a character to counter Jane's beliefs; to be more specific, Brontë needs a character to espouse the feminist perspective that inner beauty is more important than outward features, an idea usually progressed by “women modifying the ideal” (Rowbotham 23). Rochester, however, acts as the character that deconstructs Jane's traditional beliefs; he is the character that adopts a feminist perspective, not Jane or another female character. Thus,

Rochester's interactions with Jane in which he discusses beauty show Rochester as behaving in a feminized way.

Brontë's decision to reveal how Jane creates her stereotypes about beauty suggests Jane's unattractiveness and the loss of self-esteem she suffers because of her unpleasant appearance play an important role in *Jane Eyre*. In fact, Brontë presents Jane's problems with beauty fairly early in the novel. After her incident in the Red-room in which she believes she sees a ghost and subsequently falls ill, Jane overhears Bessie and Abbot discussing her place in the Reed household and her family history. Abbot suggests Jane does not deserve much pity on the basis of Jane's physical appearance and tells Bessie "if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate with her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that" (25). Abbot's reference to Jane as a "toad" dehumanizes Jane and also suggests how Abbot treats her; Abbot sees her as less of a child and more of an unnecessary nuisance, a "toad" in the home who has little feelings and, because Jane lacks the kind of beauty that might make Abbot more "compassionate," deserves no empathy. Brontë, then, suggests Abbot connects physical beauty with a person's likeability. Additionally, when Bessie, initially Jane's advocate, agrees that "a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be moving in the same condition" (25), Abbot's beliefs about beauty become more significant; Bessie's plea for pity shatters because, like Abbot, Bessie degrades Jane's difficulties on the basis that someone more attractive would be deserving of more sympathy simply because someone more attractive would be more likeable. Since Jane dislikes Georgiana, Bessie's reference to Georgiana as potentially more likable furthers the insult; Jane knows Georgiana has "a spoiled temper" and "a very acrid spite" (14), and the suggestion that

Georgiana is superior, and superior only because she is more beautiful, contributes to the idea that beauty is more important than any other human characteristic. Because Jane hears Bessie and Abbott's conversation, Brontë, in part, shows how Jane's beliefs about beauty are constructed. Early in childhood, she begins to understand that part of why she is mistreated is because she is not physically pleasing, and by incorporating such constructions about beauty into Jane's childhood Brontë shows how Jane is trapped into believing them. Because her beliefs about beauty are overwhelmingly negative, they create a problem for Jane in the novel; she believes she is inferior, and other people view her as less sympathetic, because she is not attractive.

Beyond showing how her views are constructed, Brontë also reveals how Jane's belief system about beauty translates into problematic behavior as an adult. She seeks approval from other people and believes they are disappointed in her because of the way she looks, secretly hoping they will find her more attractive as an adult. When she realizes she still fails to please people with her appearance, Jane feels the need to validate herself by displaying her talents in order to counter what she perceives as other people's initial negative reaction to her. One instance where Brontë shows Jane's problem occurs when Jane encounters Bessie after they have been apart for a significant period of time and Jane reenters the world as an adult. After initially discussing the Reed family, Jane observes Bessie and declares "I am afraid you are disappointed in me, Bessie" (93). Though she says the statement "laughing" (93), Jane seems to be seeking approval from Bessie; since Jane would probably not make a similar statement to Mrs. Reed, at least not in a "laughing" or friendly manner, her words reveal she places value on Bessie's opinion and is perhaps more serious about what Bessie will say than her "laughing" manner

implies. Also, because Jane phrases the statement with the initial words “I am afraid,” Jane asks Bessie to reply to her in a way that contradicts what she believes to be true, especially since Bessie looks at her with “regard” but not with “admiration” (93). When Bessie replies that Jane is adequate but not beautiful since she was “no beauty as a child,” Jane smiles at Bessie’s “frank answer” (93) as though what Bessie thinks does not affect her. However, in her narration Jane remarks how “at eighteen most people wish to please” and her inability to please with her “exterior” brings her “anything but gratification” (93). Though she has little control over her physical appearance, Jane sees her inability to please Bessie as a personal failing; she can never immediately please people the way other, more attractive characters in the novel can. Jane, then, begins to seek validation in other ways; she plays the piano for Bessie and shows Bessie her paintings. Even though Jane does gain approval and elevates herself through her talents, the order in which she goes about seeking acceptance further shows the large importance she learns to place on beauty. Since Brontë shows Jane is hurt, at least in the beginning, by her encounter with Bessie, Brontë hints at the seriousness of Jane’s problems with her appearance. Though Jane underscores the significance of her feelings about being called “no beauty,” events later in the novel suggest the small scene with Bessie reveals far more than its length would indicate.

In fact, Brontë shows how serious Jane’s problems with appearance are once Jane arrives at Thornfield Hall only a few pages later and begins a critical self-examination. Brontë’s use of increasingly harsh diction in Jane’s narration suggests she is more discontent about her appearance than she admits. At first, Jane notes that she “sometimes regretted” that she “was not handsomer” (100). The use of the word “sometimes”

indicates Jane only occasionally wants to look better. Brontë's choice of "regretted" also suggests that Jane does not have harsh feelings about her beauty; since she only "sometimes" regrets not being more beautiful, her negative thoughts seem like nothing more than the reflection of a passing wish. Jane, however, then lists everything she wants; she desires "rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and a small cherry mouth" and to be "tall, stately, and finely developed in figure" in direct contrast with her "little" body and "pale" complexion, her "features so irregular and marked" (100). Looking at her narration reveals the extent to which Jane feels unhappy about the way she appears; literally, Jane lists every part of her outside appearance and finds it lacking. Her list also suggests she thinks about her appearance often, at least frequently enough to pinpoint every part of her body she dislikes, much more than the "sometimes" she admits to earlier. In addition, her diction subsequent to her list of negative features heightens the idea that her physical attributes irritate her more than her initial statements would suggest. Jane sees her body as a "misfortune" (100), a term hinting at a much more long-term torment than merely occasional "regret." She calls her features "irregular" and "marked" (100), suggesting Jane also believes her appearance makes her separate; she is not regular but "irregular" and cannot look like other people because she is "marked" in a way which makes her negatively stand out. Jane, then, truly hates the way she looks; for her, beauty is an enormous issue because she uses it to point out faults about herself, destroying her sense of self-esteem.

Perhaps most significantly, however, particularly in terms of Jane's relationship to Rochester, Jane cannot rectify her loss of self-esteem because she fails to understand why she places value on beauty; thus, Jane's lack of insight creates the need for a romantic

partner who can help her to see past her faulty constructions and learn to accept herself. Typically able to understand her situation in life and to recognize the powers that wrong her, Jane, oddly, does not make a connection between her past experiences and why she feels like beauty is so important. At the end of the section where Jane narrates her feelings about her appearance, she asks the question “and why I had these aspirations and these regrets” (100), driving her narration towards an answer and, expectantly, seeming like she will provide a solution to why beauty is such an issue in her life. Her answer should be obvious. Yet, Jane narrates that “it would be difficult” (100) to say why exactly she has the desire to be beautiful. Jane reaches the conclusion that she has a “logical, natural reason” (100) to want to appear comely, but she fails to name the “reason” or explain exactly what she means. In effect, Jane blindly supports the idea that beauty matters; she fails to understand that her beliefs about beauty are nothing more than a social construction, and she remains ensnared by views that continuously hurt her sense of self-esteem, suggesting she will not be able to overcome her problems alone. She needs someone to make her see the truth, and Brontë, thus, primes Rochester for the role of filling Jane’s need.

Additionally, because she becomes self-conscious and insecure about how other people perceive her, Jane creates negative stereotypes about males that need to be reversed in order for her to fall in love. For example, after meeting Rochester for the first time on the dark road to Thornfield Hall, Jane expresses a sense of relief because Rochester is unattractive; she believes any male with “beauty, elegance, gallantry” would neither have “nor could have sympathy with anything in me” (116). Attractive males threaten Jane to an astonishing level; her belief that attractive males could not associate

with “anything in me” reveals she does not think any male could possibly look beyond her appearance and, consequently, could never find anything of value in her. As such, it would be incredibly difficult for Jane to fall in love, or at least any kind of positive love, since she cannot find value in herself. She needs a male character to break her stereotypes; she also needs a male character to place a large amount of importance on her value and worth as a human being.

Further, Jane needs Rochester, specifically, to make her realize beauty is not linked to inherent superiority but, instead, internal characteristics. Jane imagines Rochester will select a mate but, naturally, will choose someone beautiful like Miss Ingram. Her choice of Miss Ingram as a mate *is* more socially fitting, but Jane has no reason to believe Rochester’s spouse *has* to be beautiful other than her preconceived notions that men, and men such as Rochester who have a great number of options because of their social status, will automatically select a beautiful partner. Jane torments herself by deciding to draw a picture of herself and a picture of Miss Ingram for comparison. Jane bases the painting entirely on a fictional representation of what she thinks Miss Ingram looks like; she knows nothing about Miss Ingram’s personality, and yet the way she titles the pictures suggest she believes beauty is linked to superiority. Jane labels her portrait as “Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain” and Miss Ingram’s as “Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank” (163). Though Jane is somewhat “disconnected,” she does have friends in the world; the word “disconnected” implies Jane is entirely alone and unwanted, while Jane’s choice of “plain” implies nothing about her is remarkable, though her personality is far too complex to be plain. Jane marks Miss Ingram, however, as “accomplished” when Jane knows fairly little about

her accomplishments; labeling Miss Ingram as a “lady of rank” also makes Miss Ingram sound noble and established though, again, Jane knows little about her. When Jane finally compares the two obviously biased portraits side by side, her reaction shows how much faith Jane has in the power of beauty. Looking at the two portraits, “the contrast was as great as self-control could desire” (164). Jane finds “self-control” by visualizing how much less beauty she has than Miss Ingram; she believes that the “contrast” between the two of them in regard to their appearance is the deciding factor in whom Rochester will choose to love. Jane’s thoughts about how Rochester feels, then, are two-dimensional; because of her lowered self-esteem, she thinks that he will see her and Miss Ingram the same way she sees the two portraits, and she does not believe he will see anything else. She desperately needs someone to show her that superiority comes from within; she needs a romantic partner to make her feel cherished for all of the positive internal traits she clearly possesses.

Rochester, then, already has several needs to fill once he becomes the primary romantic interest for Jane. In fact, his past history primes him to help Jane challenge her misconceptions. By the time he meets Jane, Rochester has been changed by his marriage to Bertha; he is “at Bertha’s mercy” (Stone 116) and, to an extent, controlled by her behavior. Because Bertha represents “Romantic energy at its most willful and uncontrolled” (Stone 116) and because beauty is linked to the “conventions of Gothic Romance” (Stone 116), much of Rochester’s beliefs in traditional, Romantic love and beauty disappear. Additionally, his ill-fated affair with Celine Varens reinforces the notion that beauty can be deceiving; though quite attractive, Celine treats Rochester cruelly, and he no longer sees beauty as a mark of superiority in women. Learning from

his past, he holds completely oppositional opinions to Jane about the importance of physical attractiveness and its relationship to a person's likeability and ability to be loved. As a result, Rochester subverts Jane's beliefs by acting in opposition to them; he helps her to break down her stereotypes and ill-conceived constructions about beauty by consistently thwarting the way she expects him to behave and then, in the end of the novel, proving to her that what he says is genuine. In doing so, Rochester behaves in a feminine way; he acts in a manner contradictory to what would be expected of him as a Victorian, male character.

Unlike Jane, Rochester acts more comfortable with his outward appearance; he does not have as much invested in his appearance as Jane. When Rochester asks Jane if she finds him attractive and she tells him she does not, his response to her reply suggests he is not hurt by what she says. Rather than dismissing her answer and trying to prove to her that he is still worthy as a person by displaying talents, the way Jane does in a similar situation with Bessie, Rochester analyzes what Jane says in a playful, if not somewhat teasing, critique. He asks Jane what she means by answering him in such a frank way, and she seems confused by his approach; Jane tries to erase her response by telling him what she should have said instead was that beauty does not matter. If Jane truly offended Rochester, he would probably either begin a new conversation or stop talking with her; however, he realizes she believes she has offended him and proceeds to toy with her instead. The Rochester's tone reveals his playfulness; he tells Jane that "under the pretense of softening the previous outrage, of stroking and soothing me into placidity, you stick a sly penknife under my ear!" (133). Rochester's use of hyperbole suggests he is not really upset by Jane's initial remark. When he calls Jane's words "the previous

outrage,” he heightens the power of her response; certainly, truthfully answering a question posed to her is not an outrage and, even if Rochester were offended, would not constitute outrageous behavior. Additionally, Jane is hardly “stroking and soothing” Rochester. Her attempt at erasing what she initially said in no way directly flatters him the way “stroking and soothing” would suggest, and Rochester’s reference to Jane sticking him with a penknife afterward, as though she were assaulting him, completes the hyperbolic scene. Rochester continues to use hyperbole and traps Jane further into his game; Jane grows increasingly bewildered and at last decides he has had too much wine. In reality, Rochester is toying with her because she keeps trying to erase her offense; his hyperbole suggests he is mocking Jane’s reaction to what she has done because she does not realize what she said is not as offensive as she believes it to be. Rochester even reveals more of his flaws for Jane to see by lifting his hair and showing his forehead; showing more of his flaws bolsters the claim that he does not see his physical deficiencies as problematic. Rochester’s playful manner suggests he does not need approval based on physical appearance and, further, does not think it is nearly as important as Jane does.

In the same scene, Rochester also subverts Jane’s beliefs about beauty and its connection to likeability; he suggests value extends beyond the physical and deconstructs Jane’s beliefs about appearances. After toying with her, Rochester tells Jane she is “not pretty any more than I am handsome” (134). Since definitions of beauty can fluctuate, his admission bears significance; Rochester does not find Jane physically beautiful, so his attraction to her is not based on her outward appearance. However, unlike Bessie who simply allows her statement about Jane’s beauty to stand alone, Rochester compliments

her by remarking that “a puzzled air becomes you” (134). By following a somewhat negative statement with a positive comment about how she looks, Rochester lets Jane know there is something about her which makes her look attractive beyond her actual features. His statement implies that Jane’s expression is what makes her look interesting and, since it is not her given features which make her beautiful and her expression is a reflection of her inner thoughts, the internal qualities she possesses enhance her appearance. In short, Rochester is telling Jane who she is makes her an attractive companion, and his statement takes away any judgment that his declaration of her unattractiveness might have carried. Rochester also tells her “it would please me to draw you out” (135); Rochester lets her know he has an interest in her based on her mind, and he wants to continue his conversation with Jane because he appreciates what she has to say. At the end of their conversation, Rochester also encourages Jane to believe in herself by telling her he hopes she will no longer shy away from him, almost sensing why Jane behaves apprehensively around men. Rochester urges Jane to let go of her “fear in the presence of a man and a brother – or father, or master, or what you will” since he recognizes Jane’s fear is “controlling (her) features, muffling (her) voice” (141). Rochester suggests further that once Jane can be more comfortable her “looks and movements will have more vivacity and variety than they dare offer now” (141). Rochester actually tells Jane not to muffle her voice or be so controlled; he wants her to speak with him openly without fear about how he will respond and realizes Jane’s fear derives from his status as a male, indicating Rochester wants to break the stereotypes of males Jane obviously believes are true. It is also significant that Rochester believes Jane will have more “vivacity” and “variety” in her appearance once she feels free to show her

entire personality; since the terms “vivacity” and “variety” both carry positive connotations, Rochester tells Jane she will appear more attractive if she allows her personality to be expressed in her features. In doing so, Rochester shows Jane a different value system than the one she believes in; he shows her that definitions of beauty are not as solid as she believes they are, and he also shows her how her constructed beliefs about beauty do not apply to all males.

Further, Rochester also defies set expectations about how he should behave by showing a greater interest in Jane’s personality than in her appearance, again defying what Jane expects about male behavior. When Rochester begins to demonstrate romantic interest in Jane, he acts in a feminine way by placing a large amount of importance on Jane’s personality and very little on her physical beauty. During the scene in which he hosts a party and talks privately to Jane in disguise as a gipsy, Rochester provides a list of Jane’s qualities that, because he falls in love with her later, must please him. Though he studies Jane’s physiognomy in order to make pronouncements about her character, Rochester does not make any judgments about how her features actually look. Instead, he uses Jane’s features to discuss what he likes about her, revealing that his interest in her lies almost totally in her personality. When Rochester tells Jane her eyes are “favourable” (204) he does not do so because of their color or shape; he describes her eyes as “soft and full of feeling” (203), full of both “sensibility and chagrin,” “pride and reserve” (204). Rochester’s depictions of Jane’s eyes show he recognizes her complexity; because her eyes are “soft and full of feeling” he shows Jane that he knows she has many inward thoughts and emotions and, because Rochester also includes a description of Jane’s eyes that have conflicting connotations, he does not portray Jane as

merely simple and emotional. Next examining her mouth, Rochester discusses how Jane uses her mouth and not its actual appearance whereas, as a gipsy who should not know her, he should probably not be making statements about what she does with her mouth but about how the shape or color of her lips might indicate something about her character. Rochester wants Jane to know she has a mouth that should “speak much and smile often” (204), bolstering the sincerity of the claim he made earlier that he hopes she will be comfortable enough around him to freely express herself. Rochester, then, firmly establishes his interest in Jane’s thoughts. He even appreciates aspects of Jane which, if she believes in stereotypes about males, mark Rochester as different from other men. Looking at her brow, Rochester professes to see that Jane believes she can “live alone, in self-respect” (204), suggesting he realizes she has an independent spirit he that draws him to her; it certainly suggests he would not want her to be submissive.

If Rochester wanted the chance to criticize Jane’s appearance, his act as a gipsy would have given him the perfect opportunity especially since, as she does not realize he is acting as a gipsy, he is anonymous. Yet, because Rochester decides to reveal who he is to Jane and unmask himself before she leaves the room, he is, in essence, using his foray as a gipsy to explain to Jane why he likes her and his words, later, explain why he falls in love with her. In the gipsy scene, Rochester shows how he, literally, sees past Jane’s appearance and how her features are just representations of the internal aspects of her he enjoys. Esther Godfrey suggests, further, that Rochester’s turn as a gipsy is another indication that Brontë is playing with traditional gender roles; Godfrey sees Rochester’s disguise as a female gipsy as reflecting a “sexual fluidity” (863) challenging Victorian gender norms, bolstering the claim that Rochester is behaving in a feminized way. By

pretending to be a woman, he is able to fully express feminist concepts about how Jane should behave and, also, why he should fall in love with her. Rochester, thus, entirely challenges Jane's expectations and beliefs.

Jane and Rochester's different belief systems about beauty and its importance in love actually collide when Rochester asks Jane to marry him, providing Rochester with the perfect opportunity to espouse his non-conventional beliefs about beauty in direct opposition to what Jane tells him. Even after learning more about his character and a few hints in earlier chapters that he might be interested in her, Jane still believes Rochester cannot possibly fall in love with someone who is not beautiful. Pretending to be engaged to Miss Ingram, Rochester baits Jane into telling him that she wants to stay with him. Angry because Rochester then asks her to stay, but still not making the connection that Rochester wants her to stay with him at Thornfield Hall as more than just an employee, Jane asks Rochester if he believes she does not have feelings because she is "poor, obscure, plain, and little" and then declares that if she had "some beauty, and much wealth" (257) she could make him feel for her the way she feels for him. Considering Rochester's declaration only a page before that without Jane he would "take to bleeding internally" (256), she should be realizing that Rochester wants her to stay because he feels more for her than simply friendship. However, Jane cannot believe that he is hinting about marriage because she still views herself as nothing more than "poor, obscure, plain, and little." Though Jane uses her words to accuse Rochester of callousness, her wish that she could have "some beauty" shows she still thinks physical attributes are a deciding factor in whether or not a man can fall in love. Jane still views beauty as one of the only powers available to please other people and does not realize that

her personality alone could make a person want to be with her, causing her to resist Rochester until she believes his “earnestness - and especially in his incivility” is “credit” to his “sincerity” (259). Rochester, for his part, credits what she says about her appearance but continues to pursue Jane, saying “you - poor and obscure, and small and plain as you are – I entreat you to marry me” (259). Agreeing with Jane about her physical appearance does not lessen the love he has for her in any way because, as shown in scenes like the one where he pretends to be a gypsy, he loves Jane for her mind and values her as more than just a physical object.

Additionally, Rochester even tries to make Jane see that, though she is not conventionally beautiful, his love for her makes her beautiful in his eyes; in fact, “Rochester derives various pleasures from looking at Jane” (Gliserman 101), despite what she thinks. Rochester, unable to convince Jane he genuinely loves her, tries to make her understand the fluidity of beauty; it can express itself beyond the bounds of the constructions of beauty Jane creates. Still, though, Jane seems unable to grasp the concept that Rochester could find her beautiful, or by extension valuable, in any way. The morning after he asks her to marry him, Jane looks in the mirror before going down to see Mr. Rochester and decides that, although she had always “feared he could not be pleased at my look,” her face will not “cool his affection by its expression” (261). Although Jane at first appears more confident, a closer look at what she actually says shows Jane, though in a better mood about her appearance, still lacks a tremendous amount of self-esteem. Despite Rochester’s marriage proposal, Jane thinks the best she can do is not “cool” Rochester’s “affection” by looking at him; she believes her appearance is

acceptable at best and is pleased because, simply, she thinks Rochester will no longer find her face repulsive.

In response, Rochester does everything in his power to make Jane understand love can transcend appearance. He tells Jane women who “please me only by their faces” often have “a perspective of flatness, triviality, and perhaps imbecility, coarseness, and ill-temper,” but women like Jane are “supple and stable, tractable and consistent” to whom he can be “ever tender and true” (264). Rochester cannot make his position more obvious; to him, a woman’s beauty is not as important as a woman’s mind, and he has fallen in love with Jane for her mind. Nevertheless, she remains unconvinced only a page later.

It is incredibly interesting, then, that Jane finally agrees to marry Rochester and seems happy with her decision once he is blinded (436). Ironically, it is Rochester’s blindness that gives Jane the ability to see. Because he loses his vision, Jane no longer worries about whether or not she is attractive; after being told about his condition, she even arrives at Ferndean with the expectation that Rochester will want to marry her (443). As Jane describes, watching Rochester, she sees him as a “lamp quenched, waiting to be relit” who is “dependant on another for that office” (447), with Jane assuming she will be the one to restore Rochester to life. Since Jane has no contact with Rochester for an extended period of time preceding her homecoming and makes her realization early into their reunion, her beliefs about Rochester, his dependence on her and his love for her, spring from the history they share together; though Jane previously believed Rochester’s love would fade and that he could never love someone like her, she suddenly believes she will light Rochester’s “quenched” lamp because, as Jane realizes,

Rochester really did love her the way he always claimed he did, particularly since “she shows the same unabashed frankness, the same devotion to principle that she first brought into their relationship” (Chase 77) when they come together in the end. With Rochester unable to see her, but with her personality unchanged, she finally recognizes the truth; he genuinely meant what he said when he professed to love her for her mind and Jane, at last, is “at perfect ease, because I knew I suited him” (444). She finally realizes she always had value, despite the way she looks.

Rochester, then, helps Jane to overcome her lack of confidence; his perspective, feminist in nature, resolves the problem Brontë creates for Jane. In fact, romance often “requires, as various feminist critics have noted, that women’s anxieties about gender inequality be both aroused and allayed” (Kaplan 7); thus, Brontë’s display of Jane’s initial insecurity and eventual triumph over insecurity could even be seen as a conventional tool for establishing the romantic connection between Jane and Rochester. Because Rochester sees beyond Jane’s appearance, he alleviates the gender inequality Jane experiences as a result of judging women based on their beauty. Thus, Jane can trust Rochester’s love for her; the feminist aspects of Rochester’s character allow Jane to believe Rochester is genuine. Like Edgar of *Wuthering Heights*, who shows the importance of stability, Rochester’s role in *Jane Eyre* also carries a broader message: love truly is blind, and blind love lasts longer than mere physical infatuation.

CHAPTER III

GREAT EXPECTATIONS AND THE UNEXPECTED: USING MATRIARCHAL SYSTEMS OF POWER TO GLORIFY FEMINIZED MALES

Unlike either *Wuthering Heights* or *Jane Eyre*, Dickens's characters do not present needs in the novel that are then filled by other characters; instead, male feminized behavior seems to occur as a reaction to other issues being presented in *Great Expectations*. Though the feminized male characters in *Great Expectations* can be compared to other feminized male characters in the previously shown novels, the reason Dickens's male characters adopt feminine traits mark *Great Expectations* as fairly unique from the Brontë works.

In fact, Dickens's *Great Expectations* overflows with issues about power structures. Magwitch, the novel's criminal, allows Dickens to criticize the patriarchy and its treatment of those born into unfortunate circumstances; it explains, in part, why the existing system of power fails. Because both Joe and Pip sympathize with Magwitch, Dickens suggests the pair also see flaws in the patriarchy; they object to the way Magwitch is treated and see the injustice of his criminalization. In *Great Expectations*, then, the patriarchy is negative. Interestingly, though, Dickens challenges the power structure further not by showing male characters that change the way they control women but by actually creating male characters that outright reject their authority as males; both Joe and Pip *choose* matriarchal systems of power instead.

By rejecting patriarchal ideas, both Joe and Pip act as feminized male characters; both behave in a traditionally feminine way in their relationships with women. Entirely dominated by Mrs. Joe, Joe allows his wife to control his actions and cowers to any decision she makes. Dickens uses terms that imply weakness to describe Joe, and Joe never challenges his treatment because, as he believes, asserting his authority could crush his wife. Since Joe acts as the “center of Pip’s moral universe” (Schilling 73), his feminine behavior seems positive and correct; he is, ultimately, one of the most positive male figures in the novel, so Dickens as well seems to support Joe’s decision to behave in a feminized way. Pip is also described in womanly terms and is dominated by the women in the novel; like Joe, he too suffers abuse in his relationships with women, but Dickens does not seem to suggest Pip should have more masculine traits. Instead, Estella is indicted because she is not as emotional as Pip; she, like him, should be more sensitive and caring. Dickens, then, perhaps a bit unexpectedly, appears to glorify feminized traits.

Magwitch plays an important role in *Great Expectations* because his character openly challenges the patriarchy and points to gaping flaws in the existing judicial system. For Joe and Pip, who watch Magwitch’s capture in the beginning of the novel, the treatment of criminals by local law enforcement seems cruel; objectified and dehumanized, Magwitch gains sympathy from the pair. The extent to which Magwitch’s punishment affects his life also helps to establish the unjust nature of criminalization, particularly since Magwitch loses nearly everything most people consider important. Perhaps the most telling section of the novel, however, occurs when Dickens allows Magwitch to explain why and how he becomes involved in crime; always disadvantaged, he is, ironically, punished by the same system that denies him the chance to become

anything greater in life than a thief. Since Joe and Pip both turn to matriarchal structures of power instead, Magwitch's character, and the tragic events of his life, help to explain why the patriarchal system currently in place is so unacceptable.

Magwitch's treatment by local authorities and those who support the authorities in Chapter 5 dismays Joe and Pip, particularly since Joe and Pip are unable to help the criminals. Struggling to recapture Magwitch and Compeyson, the people searching for them frequently refer to them in objectified terms and lighten the seriousness of their fate. One sergeant sent to recapture Magwitch asks those present at the Gargery home if "anybody here has seen anything of any such game" (31), referring to the two escaped convicts. By using the term "game," the sergeant belittles the seriousness of the situation Magwitch has placed himself in by running away; the term "game" implies little empathy for what will happen to Magwitch when he is caught and suggests he and the other convict, Compeyson, are objects to be watched for entertainment. Pip recognizes this objectification when he narrates the attitudes of those present in the Gargery home, excluding Joe, only a page later. Rather than thinking about the position of the two men, the group "had not enjoyed themselves a quarter so much" because of the "entertainment" and "excitement" (32) the sergeant brings into their lives by relaying news of the convicts. Considering the manhunt as "entertainment" dehumanizes the convicts and also clearly displays the power structure of the manhunt; catching the men is nothing more than a "game" or "entertainment" because the convicts do not have the capability to defend themselves against all of the men hunting them down nor do the convicts have a social status that requires the men to respect them in any way. Only Joe and Pip, who seem to humanize the convicts by hoping they will not get caught, display

any empathy for them before their recapture; yet, even though Joe and Pip mutually hope the convicts will escape, Pip's belief that his hope is "treasonably" (33) spoken confirms the harsh reality of Magwitch's position in society at large. In a more daring move, Joe does briefly publicly express his sympathy for Magwitch by telling him he was "welcome" (39) to the pie Joe believes he took since Joe, humanizing Magwitch, believes Magwitch has the right to food no matter what crime he committed. Joe's statement allows Dickens to segue back to Pip's narration, where Pip privately challenges Magwitch's treatment as a criminal, but Joe's statement does not change the power structure under which Magwitch lives because Joe, alone, is incapable of changing it as well. Magwitch is still taken back to the boat. In the remaining commentary on Magwitch, Pip notices "the something I had noticed before" that "clicked in the man's throat again" (39) when Magwitch is taken away, suggesting Magwitch opposes his treatment but can only internalize his feelings about his situation. Magwitch does not have a choice. He has to submit to his objectification, and Pip and Joe are incapable of changing what they see as an injustice.

Even when Magwitch finally is released from prison, the long-term effects of his criminalization permanently taint his character in a way that, again, suggests and helps to explain the unjust nature of the patriarchal system. As a former criminal sentenced to exile, Magwitch loses his country since he loses the right to own land in England. More importantly, in part due to his exile, Magwitch is forced to give his money away in order to gain the social justice he hopes his money will buy him. As Magwitch explains to Pip, the only hope he has of social redemption is to get "his head so high that he could make a gentleman" (309), not *be* a gentleman himself. Magwitch can never enter London society

because he literally can't live in London and, even if Magwitch could, he is permanently branded as a criminal, meaning Magwitch could never rise in social rank. The system forces Magwitch to achieve his dream vicariously. The judge who sentences Magwitch also prevents Magwitch from producing his own male heir or knowing about his daughter; in essence, Magwitch becomes impotent because of his crimes. Never knowing Estella, and unlikely to produce an heir who could rise in social rank, Magwitch has no choice but to select Pip as the heir to his great expectations. It is a humiliating aspect of his treatment by the patriarchal structure.

In addition, criminalization makes Magwitch the subject of unfair social judgment. Magwitch considers himself Pip's "second father" and looks to Pip as "my son – more to me nor any son" (309), placing a large amount of importance on the relationship he forces into creation. As such, Pip's initial response to Magwitch, though Magwitch acts sympathetic and undaunted, is incredibly damaging. Though Pip pities Magwitch when he is a child watching Magwitch get caught, Pip still judges Magwitch on the basis of his criminalization. Pip narrates the "abhorrence" he feels for him, going so far as to refer to Magwitch as "some terrible beast" (309). The term "beast" is significant; the sergeant, when he caught Magwitch and Compeyson years before, had also referred to them as "beasts" (35). Pip's diction suggests he, as well, initially objectifies Magwitch by viewing him as a criminal and nothing more. Though Pip reforms his view of Magwitch, realizing he is more of a victim of circumstances than anything else, Magwitch constantly has to justify his integrity as a person before anyone accepts him.

Perhaps the greatest amount of sympathy for Magwitch appears, however, when Magwitch is allowed to explain his past, clearly showing how he has been failed and condemned by the people who should have helped him. By allowing Magwitch to reveal details about his childhood and show how he is led into a life of crime, Dickens explains that Magwitch has always been dominated by the system and how, in all reality, his fate has always been somewhat inevitable, creating sympathy for Magwitch. Magwitch has, in his words, “been done everything to” (334), implying he has had little control in his life. Magwitch doesn’t *do* things in life; things are “done” to him. He has been “carted here and carted there, and put out of this town and put out of that town, and stuck in stocks, and whipped and worried and drove” (334), all again implying an unspoken noun, those in power, as the force which creates action in Magwitch’s life. As Magwitch explains, he “was a ragged little creetur as much to be pitied as I ever see” (334); Magwitch was only a child when he was forever locked out of social graces, condemned by those around him as “hardened” (334). Magwitch should have received mercy and help from the power structure, but he never did. Magwitch has limited options in life as a result of his harsh upbringing; no one would hire Magwitch after he had been rejected by those in power, and it is little wonder Magwitch fell prey to someone such as Compeyson. Dickens pushes Magwitch’s injustice further by exposing the myth of “impartiality in the courts” (Hagan 170) when Compeyson and Magwitch are finally tried in court for misdemeanor charges. Tried separately, the judge grants mercy to Compeyson because he does not have the same negative history Magwitch has, although, ironically, it is those in power who have given Magwitch a poor track- record. Rather than continuing to flee when he escapes from the prison boat, Magwitch feels the need to

create his own justice and rectify the injustice of Compeyson's light sentencing; when he attacks Compeyson on the marshes before they are both recaptured, Magwitch is trying to right the wrongs of the world and is condemned for life after the affair. Magwitch, however, seems justified in his actions; knowing what Dickens allows him to reveal creates sympathy for Magwitch's plight, shows how Magwitch was abused by Compeyson, and how, ultimately, the judicial system fails Magwitch yet once again. As a result, the patriarchal structure, particularly the judicial ruling system, is condemned; it holds too much power over Magwitch's life and can too easily be abusive, suggesting, additionally, that the patriarchy might be incorrect in the way it treats people.

It is little wonder, considering Magwitch's treatment in the novel and the overwhelming amount of social injustice displayed, that men such as Joe and Pip might look for different power structures to follow. Instead of living under male authority, both Joe and Pip turn to matriarchal structures instead.

Interestingly, the initial descriptions of Joe Gargery compare easily with Dickens's character Lucy Manette of *A Tale of Two Cities*. Physically, like Lucy, Joe Gargery is "fair" (8); additionally, Joe shares Lucy's coloring, with both characters possessing blond hair and blue eyes. Joe also possesses a "smooth face" (8), much like Lucy's "smooth" forehead (*Tale* 18), indicating youth and thus vitality. It is possible Dickens uses similar imagery in both works to describe conventional beauty; however, the personality traits Dickens employs to describe Joe further link him to Lucy's character. Like Lucy, who takes the news about her father fairly calmly and never threatens anyone despite the horrific conditions surrounding her throughout the novel, Joe is a "mild" (8) man. Beyond this, Joe is "good-natured" and "sweet-tempered", a

“foolish, dear fellow” (8). Dickens never directly lists these qualities about Lucy in an introduction the same way he does for Joe; however, there does seem to be undeniable connections between the two, either intentionally or by accident. Even considering the connection accidental, it is apparent Dickens uses these characteristics to portray characters who are in some way weak. It is also obvious that these characteristics, at least to Dickens, can be or are feminine. Since Lucy is often portrayed as a woman held in place entirely by Victorian standards about women, Joe’s character is likewise portrayed as womanly by his opening description.

Joe’s relationship with Mrs. Joe also supports the idea that Joe is feminine in nature and non-participant in the patriarchy; like Brontë’s Edgar and Catherine, Joe does not dominate the Gargery household because Mrs. Joe assumes more authority than he does. The very beginning of Chapter II emphasizes Joe’s degraded position when Pip comments “Joe Gargery and I both were brought up by hand” (8), referring to Mrs. Joe’s hand. When exploring the idea of what it means to be “brought up by hand,” Charles Parish notes that the phrase more commonly referred to children who were bottle-fed rather than, as Pip believes, children disciplined with physical force (288). In a review of Parish’s article, Robert Finkel supports this assertion, pointing to an instance in *Oliver Twist* in which Dickens uses the term “brought up by hand” to refer to bottle-fed children (390). Therefore, when Dickens lets Pip explain Joe is “brought up by hand” by Mrs. Joe, Joe takes on an infantile status. Either connotation for the phrase, whether referring to physical abuse or to bottle-feeding, keeps Joe child-like. The phrase implies Joe’s complete dependence on Mrs. Joe and his lack of ability to support or care for himself. That a child narrator, Pip, would point to this indicates a further degradation for Joe. Pip

supports this idea when he links himself to Joe as “fellow-sufferers” (8); obviously, they are both dominated by a ruling authority over which neither character asserts control. Pip comments later that Joe is “a larger species of child, and as no more my equal” (9), entirely establishing Joe’s subordinate role in the Gargery home. Pip’s beliefs must be accurate because, to a degree, it would be in Pip’s best interest if the mild and gentle Joe would run the household rather than the verbally and physically abusive Mrs. Joe. Pip would not want Joe to be weak; therefore, when Pip mentions Joe’s weakness it is wholly believable.

Joe’s role as a male character feminized by his relationship with Mrs. Joe, in terms of his submissiveness and lack of power, appears at various points in *Great Expectations*. Joe often appears intimidated by Mrs. Joe and afraid to question her authority; yet, even when others challenge her authority, possibly helping Joe, he maintains his position by supporting and defending her. He seems unafraid of what other men will think about Mrs. Joe’s position in the family, or, if he is afraid, more terrified of contradicting his wife. For example, when Mrs. Joe learns of Joe’s decision to give Orlick a half-holiday, she contradicts his decision in front of his employee, going so far as to say she wishes she “was his master!” (110). This negates and degrades Joe’s position of authority in his workplace, and Orlick, probably not pleased with Mrs. Joe for her opinions about his half-holiday but also for her treatment of Joe, replies that Mrs. Joe wishes she could “be everybody’s master” (110). Orlick’s comment acts as a climactic moment since his statement is consistent with Mrs. Joe’s character as shown earlier in the text; Mrs. Joe has always held control over the people in her household through physical and verbal abuse. Orlick’s challenge to Mrs. Joe remarks on more than just Orlick’s

issue about his half-holiday; it questions Mrs. Joe's character and her right to have power and control, particularly in Joe's workplace. Yet, Joe's immediate reaction is to quell the conflict between Orlick and his wife. He tries not to defend her at first, hoping instead to defer the argument altogether by telling Orlick to "let her alone" (110). He repeats this several times, but Mrs. Joe chooses to escalate the argument, knowing she will force Joe to act on her behalf by reminding everyone present that negative comments are being made about her with her "husband standing by" (111). Mrs. Joe actually controls the situation by subtly telling Joe what to do. Joe knows Mrs. Joe's statement means he must defend Mrs. Joe, though she certainly seems capable of defending herself. Joe, then, has a choice: he can assert his own power and do what he wishes to do about the situation, or he can do what Mrs. Joe implies he must do. Joe chooses to fight with Orlick rather than displease his wife or defy her wishes, making Mrs. Joe the key power figure in their relationship. Even Orlick understands Joe's weakness and inability to gain power in his relationship with Mrs. Joe; rather than blaming Joe and staying angry with him, Orlick makes peace with Joe only a paragraph after their fight.

Joe supports Mrs. Joe and the power structure of their family on a philosophical level as well; Joe, in fact, fears patriarchal structures. When Joe warns Pip not to tell Mrs. Joe about the reading lessons Pip gives him, Pip begins to question Joe with a "Why-" (47). Joe does not allow him to finish his question, surmising what he will say; Pip wants to know why Mrs. Joe is allowed to have all of the power in the household. In this way, Joe protects Mrs. Joe; he does not want Pip to verbalize what might be considered a flaw in their marriage or, more precisely, a flaw in Mrs. Joe's character, since Joe clearly needs to keep secrets from her. When Joe does answer Pip's unspoken

question, he acknowledges some of the abuse both he and Pip have received in the past at the hands of Mrs. Joe. Joe even ventures so far as to verbalize Pip's question himself, saying Pip meant to ask him why he didn't "rise" (48) against Mrs. Joe. At a moment when Joe could justifiably make complaints against Mrs. Joe or express an intention to "rise," he quickly turns the conversation to Mrs. Joe's favor, again protecting her.

Richard Barickman mentions that many of Dickens's characters, including Joe, "turn conversational occasions into self-aggrandizing or self-protective monologues" (129).

Though Barickman provides a different example of how Joe uses conversational opportunities in *Great Expectations*, Barickman's observation about Joe's "conversational occasions" plays a significant role in how Joe answers the question of why he doesn't "rise." Joe claims Mrs. Joe is a "master-mind" (48), and when this fails to adequately satisfy Pip, who presses forward for more explanation, Joe is "arguing circularly" (48), trying to avoid fully explaining to Pip why Mrs. Joe holds power and, by doing so, disengaging from a conversational opportunity with Pip. When Joe does adequately answer the question, he replies with a monologue. His reply is not meant to make Pip understand as much as it is meant to reveal qualities inherent in Joe's personality; Joe's response is not conversational but defining to Joe as a character, particularly since Pip provides no conversational reply and instead returns to his narration. Joe's reply is, overwhelmingly, self-protective and justifies his belief for why Mrs. Joe must remain in power. Joe fears exerting power over Mrs. Joe will turn her into his "poor mother" who was "a woman of drudging and slaving" (48), never finding peace. He would rather be "a little ill-convenienced" (48) by Mrs. Joe than exert his own power because, he believes, he would break Mrs. Joe. Joe's statements mark an

important aspect of his character; his decision to support Mrs. Joe's control is an active choice on the part of Joe and not made entirely based on fear of the repercussions he might suffer at Mrs. Joe's hands if he defies her. Joe fears what patriarchal structures do to women, and his active separation from patriarchal structures feminizes Joe's character.

Interestingly, Pip appears to support Joe's decision to deny patriarchal structures. Following Joe's monologue about why he will not "rise," Pip explains that Joe's statements forever change the way he looks at Joe; though Pip still sees himself and Joe as "equals," he has "a new sensation of feeling conscious" that he is "looking up to Joe in (his) heart" (48). Pip's newfound admiration springs from Joe's revelation that he is choosing not to interfere with Mrs. Joe's control. However, considering his position in the family and the physical abuse Mrs. Joe inflicts on him, Pip's new sentiments seem almost contradictory to his self-interests. Joe's behavior enables Mrs. Joe to treat Pip the way she does, but Dickens has Pip ignore his own position and only consider how Joe is affected by Mrs. Joe's power. Looking again at Joe's monologue and considering it within the framework of how Pip interprets Joe's behavior, Dickens uses Pip to elevate Joe so that he plays a martyr to Mrs. Joe's power. Joe's fear of harming Mrs. Joe supercedes any of the harm that might come to him as a result of allowing Mrs. Joe free-reign, and Joe willingly suffers in silence because he puts the health and happiness of his wife before his own health and happiness. Joe even wishes he could take on, so to speak, Pip's pain so that Pip would never have to suffer and asks Pip to forgive his "shortcomings" (48) for not being able to actually alleviate Pip's pain; even though Joe might be able to make the abuse stop if he took control, Pip's lack of anger with Joe indicates Pip views Joe's apology as part of Joe's martyrdom. Joe's inability to save Pip

obviously grieves Joe, yet Joe's guilt about his "shortcomings" still does not deter him from his chosen path. Joe's martyrdom is highly feminine and not characteristic of masculine behavior; yet, it is the discovery of this martyrdom that causes Pip to admire Joe in a way he never considered before. Joe's character is glorified throughout *Great Expectations*; Pip steadily comes to recognize Joe as a wise and good figure. Joe's lack of power in the household is part of his character, and Joe, in the end, is a good man.

Like Joe, Pip's relationships with women and the power women exert over him greatly affect his life. Mrs. Joe's domination prepares Pip to pass from one matriarchal power structure to another; fear of his sister, and the personality traits Pip's fear makes him have, prime him for his submissive relationship with Estella. Before Pip meets Miss Havisham, Mr. Pumblechook "reproachfully" warns Pip to "let your behaviour here be a credit unto them which brought you up by hand" (54). Considering Mr. Pumblechook's close relationship with Mrs. Joe, and his lack of reverence for Joe, Mr. Pumblechook is reminding Pip to think about how Pip's behavior reflects on Mrs. Joe when Mr. Pumblechook mentions "them." This warning serves to frame Pip's encounter with Miss Havisham and with Estella; if Pip fails to behave properly, word of his misconduct will reach Mrs. Joe, and she will undoubtedly make Pip suffer for any wrong-doings. Pip is aware of the consequences he will face should he displease Miss Havisham or Estella, so he is unlikely to do anything against either of their wishes. He mentions this fear in his narration later when Miss Havisham asks Pip to play, and he is dumbfounded about what to do; he expresses "the fear of my sister's working me before my eyes" (57) as he struggles to appropriately respond to Miss Havisham's wish.

If Pip did not fear his sister, it might have been difficult for Dickens to justify why Pip would continue to stay at Miss Havisham's or why, later, Pip would allow himself to love Estella, as Miss Havisham desires; fear of his sister keeps Pip from asserting his own power and easily allows Miss Havisham and Estella to control him. Pip's fear, and the abuse that produces Pip's fear, play a psychological role in why Pip interacts with those around him the way he does. Both Mrs. Joe and Miss Havisham are respected well enough in society; when Pip does not believe them to be acting appropriately, such as when Miss Havisham asks Pip to play and he feels uncomfortable doing so even though she believes her request is reasonable, Pip experiences a conflict between what he believes is right and what he believes those who are in power in his life, and thus socially correct, would think is right. The end result is a psychological malfunction, in which Pip asks "what's wrong with me that I don't see things the way I should? I must be bad" (Rawlins 669). Pip's lowered self-esteem as a result of his initial encounter with Miss Havisham then plays a role in how Pip interacts with Estella. Already believing he somehow acted the wrong way, Pip does not dare to assert his power when Estella ridicules Pip for, as Estella says, incorrectly naming his card and possessing rough hands. This translates into Pip's assuming he "must be bad." Pip immediately feels ashamed; in his own words, Estella's "contempt for me was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it" (58). Yet, despite Estella's unpleasantness, Pip still desires to see Estella again; within the framework of his thinking, his desire makes perfect logical sense. If Pip is "bad," then Estella must be good, and he cannot fault her for disliking him. Because Pip starts his relationship with Estella from a position of inequality, he has similar needs to Jane in *Jane Eyre*; Pip needs someone to subvert his

negative constructions but, unlike Rochester, Estella does nothing to correct Pip's feelings of inferiority. Because she has no empathy for Pip, Estella easily maintains her power.

Additionally, Pip describes himself in womanly terms because of his experiences while living with Mrs. Joe, further establishing Pip as a non-patriarchal character and giving Estella more power. Following his first meeting with Estella, Pip declares "my sister's bringing up had made me sensitive" (60) to explain why he cries after Estella departs; the abuse he suffers makes him emotionally vulnerable. When Estella returns, however, she shows little sympathy for Pip; Pip tries to hide his crying, but Estella embarrasses Pip by telling him she knows he wants to cry. She exposes his sensitivity without revealing any of her own, making Pip vulnerable to Estella. Pip's reply to Estella does little to quell her statements; she is right, and Pip knows she is right. Estella's attack makes Pip's sensitivity seem wrong, though he can't control it. Since Estella acts like a superior in the situation and Pip truly believes she is, Pip starts a pattern of behavior with Estella that forever keeps Estella in a position of power.

Like Joe, though, Pip chooses to surrender his power to Estella. Because Pip views himself and his actions as "bad" and Estella as good, Pip actively engages in situations where he should know he will be crushed; yet, he chooses to continue his self-destructive behavior with Estella in hopes that she will someday want him. Estella never gives Pip the impression that he can marry her, so his dream is foolish and continuously keeps Estella in power. In his narration, Pip acknowledges many instances in which Estella's behavior should serve as a warning for events to come; after their brief kiss, Pip states that Estella "never told me I might kiss her again" and, out of Estella's listed

behavior Pip provides, three of the ways Estella treats him after their kiss should have made him suspicious about his relationship with her (91). Estella “tolerates” Pip, “condescends” to Pip, or “energetically” relates her hatred for him (91); Pip’s later expectation that Estella will love him seems entirely unfounded and based on the psychological need of Pip to be loved rather than actual, concrete events he and Estella experience together that would make him think she loves him. Miss Havisham knows Pip is weak; she makes Estella aware when she first meets Pip that Estella can easily break Pip’s heart. Therefore, when Miss Havisham “would often ask” Pip if he thinks Estella grows “prettier and prettier” (91), Miss Havisham cements Estella’s hold over Pip, or, more precisely, Pip’s growing obsession with Estella that allows Estella to act as the powerful figure in their relationship. Pip never questions Estella’s beauty or why he feels he must have her; he never even questions Miss Havisham’s intentions, though Miss Havisham relishes the idea of Pip falling in love with Estella and Pip overhears Miss Havisham whisper to Estella to “break their hearts” (92), obviously not a good sign. It is as if Pip’s overwhelming self-esteem issues and his need for love prevent him from understanding the danger of entering into a relationship with Estella, but also, ironically, provide the perfect way for Miss Havisham, and thus Estella, to gain control and insure Estella can carry out Miss Havisham’s given mission of abusing men through abusing the control Pip subconsciously makes Estella have.

Ultimately, the power Pip gives Estella in their relationship is damaging. Estella’s power makes Pip begin to question every aspect of his life after he leaves Miss Havisham; in every way that Pip is not like Estella, he assumes he is inferior to her and also assumes that if he can correct his inferiority Estella will want him. Pip’s rejection of

his life reveals the true power of his obsession for Estella, shown even in the way chapter 14, the chapter after Pip becomes apprenticed, is written. Pip's belief system is literally torn apart, and he experiences "a stage of purely iterative existence – presented in chapter 14 – where the direction and movement of plot appear to be finished" (Brooks 510). The brevity of the chapter reflects the idea that Pip's life is stalling. There is nothing for Pip to say; there is no action worth mentioning, and Pip's narration only fills two pages, as if the plot has come to a crashing halt. Without Estella, or the possibility of her, the only sentiment Pip has worth mentioning is his utter despair. Pip's self-effacement also reflects the unhealthy nature of Estella's power over him. Everything Pip believed was "sanctified" becomes "coarse and common" (103), suggesting the complete devaluation of Pip's life. Because Pip receives great expectations, Dickens's plot remedies Pip's dissatisfaction; however, if Pip had been forced to remain in the forge and never given the chance to elevate himself socially, Pip's devaluation could have had serious ramifications on his life, particularly since he, in the framework of Victorian culture, could never have elevated himself to Estella's social class without fortunate outside help. In essence, Pip's salvation revolves around a lucky plot device that gives him the opportunity to explore what he perceives as the ultimate solution to his problem. Considering chapter 14 without the foreknowledge of Pip's coming fortune, the damaging effects of Estella's power and Pip's obsession with gaining Estella's approval heighten; if Pip *did not* receive his great expectations, Pip's state of mind during chapter 14 indicates how stunted Pip's life would have been. He no longer sees the forge as a "glowing road to manhood and independence" (103), suggesting, without his fortune, Pip may never have gained self-esteem in adulthood had he remained at the forge. Pip's

biggest fear, however, would have greatly stunted him had he not been elevated in society; the fear Estella might see him and “exult over” and “despise” (104) him indicates Pip would have always felt inferior and unworthy of social acceptance. Even if those in Pip’s society had viewed him as acceptable, he no longer believes in their standards; he believes in Estella’s, and Pip could have never attained self-fulfillment because he could never have attained Estella’s social acceptance without gifted money.

Pip, however, never expresses the desire to take Estella’s power away from her despite the many warning signs their relationship will not work and the potential harm that might result from their relationship failing. In fact, Pip merely wants to be socially equal to Estella so he will be worthy of her and perhaps chosen as her mate, still giving Estella and Miss Havisham all of the power in his relationship with Estella even if his most desired fantasy comes true. Pip hopes he will be *selected* to be Estella’s spouse, like a woman. When Pip first meets Herbert, Herbert’s initial comments about Estella should again serve as a warning sign to Pip; Herbert, socially equal to Estella, does not need Estella to validate his place in society nor does he seek approval from Estella. Therefore, Herbert finds Estella, as he tells Pip, a “Tartar” (168) and mentions that he is not particularly disappointed he did not become engaged to Estella. Despite Herbert’s statement, Pip still becomes interested when Herbert discusses Jagger’s relationship to Miss Havisham. Pip does not narrate the connections he makes between Jagger’s guardianship of him and Jagger’s relationship to Miss Havisham, but his commentary on the information, stating “this was bringing me (I felt) to dangerous territory” (169), suggests a wealth of information. The use of the words “dangerous territory” allows Pip’s thoughts to be constructed; Herbert’s information is only “dangerous” because Pip

uses it to assume a stronger connection between his newfound wealth and Miss Havisham. Pip talks to Herbert with “a constraint” he “made no attempt to disguise” (169), suggesting the strong emotions Pip has revolving around the issue of Miss Havisham and Estella and also his excitement about the possibility that Miss Havisham is priming him to marry Estella. Pip carries the belief that Miss Havisham means for him to marry Estella for a large part of the novel; he, though sometimes impatient, has no real qualms about waiting to be chosen as Estella’s mate nor does he debate the idea that he must be groomed in order to marry Estella. Pip eventually directly places Miss Havisham as a matriarchal power figure; he assumes Miss Havisham has “as good as adopted me” (223), like a parent; Pip will blindly believe it is Miss Havisham’s “intention to bring” Estella and him together despite knowing his love for Estella is “against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against all discouragement that could be” (223). Pip gives Miss Havisham the ability to destroy or fulfill what he, at the time, believes to be his life’s purpose without actually knowing her “intentions”; he gives Estella all of his love, though he has no reason to believe their relationship will function. Pip gives Miss Havisham and Estella the ability to control his life, since he spends it trying to be equal to Estella. Even in chapter 38, where he actually verbalizes Miss Havisham’s plan in his narration and Estella tells him she will never try to “entrap” (302) him the way she does other men, Pip still wants Estella to love and choose him.

Pip, of course, ultimately realizes he is not meant for Estella. When Estella tells Pip she will marry Drummle, Pip’s reaction exposes the extent Estella’s information damages him. Pip exclaims that Estella is “part of my existence, part of myself” (351). For Pip, “so much was done and gone” (352). It is tempting, then, to read the conclusion

of *Great Expectations* as a kind of revenge chapter against women who hold too much power. Estella's marriage with Drummle obviously hasn't gone well, and there is an indication that, despite all of her power, Estella has been humbled and beaten. However, there is no indication that Pip tries to gain power over Estella, even when she is considerably weaker and he no longer believes he can marry her. Pip tells Estella she has "always held" her own "place in (his) heart" (466), indicating he still wishes to be friendly with her; Pip could easily gain power over Estella by reminding her he was correct about Drummle or ridiculing Estella for her degraded position in her marriage, but he doesn't try to elevate himself over her. Estella, instead, pleads for forgiveness from Pip, not because she held power over Pip but because she abused the power she held; Estella comes to understand what Pip's "heart used to be" (466) because she herself is abused. Pip and Estella, in the end, are finally equalized, mainly because Estella has learned to be "sensitive" like Pip, no longer "proud" and "hard" (296) the way she was before her marriage. Pip and Estella's relationship, then, much more closely mirrors Jane and Rochester's relationship; Estella validates Pip's anxieties and then reverses them by explaining that she was wrong to make Pip feel insecure.

Ultimately, Dickens's messages about power structures are difficult to reconcile with what would be expected of a Victorian male author's viewpoint about Victorian patriarchy. Because Dickens uses Magwitch to criticize how the patriarchal structure lowers the status of individuals in society in an unfair way, Dickens seems to be suggesting the patriarchy is incapable of meting out justice and is wrong in the way it lowers the status of individuals. Further, Dickens seems to imply men who are feminized

are better than men who are not; men who submit to a matriarchy are ultimately glorified and correct in their decision, right to have feminine characteristics. ,

CHAPTER IV

GEORGE ELIOT: MALE FEMINIZATION AS A SOLUTION FOR ACCEPTING INTELLIGENT WOMEN AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* presents a complicated look at instances in which male characters behave in feminized ways, particularly since feminized male characters appear in a variety of forms. Tom, though only for a short period of time, becomes more like a girl when he realizes his inferiority; recognizing his stupidity makes Tom feel weak and forces him to feel vulnerable. Mr. Tulliver, another primary male figure, listens to his maternal instincts and nurtures Maggie in a way Mrs. Tulliver will not, causing him to act as a surrogate mother and thus marking his character as partially feminized. Philip, on the other hand, is perpetually a feminized male character; he only views the world through a woman's perspective.

How, then, to discuss feminized males in *The Mill on the Floss*? Interestingly, like Dickens's *Great Expectations*, male feminization seems to run parallel to an argument in Eliot's work. In the same way Dickens subverts traditional power structures, Eliot challenges traditional beliefs about women's education and the importance of women's intelligence. Since Eliot "saw the need for improved education and employment opportunities for women" (Foster 188), not surprisingly the more a male character acts as a proponent of women's education the more the male character receives a positive portrayal. Interestingly, though, male support of women's education is directly

proportionate to how feminine the male character behaves in the novel. As a result, looking at passages involving education helps to illuminate how male feminization operates in *The Mill on the Floss*; there seems to be a suggestion that male characters who behave in a feminine way are more open-minded, thus able to accept intelligent women, making womanly traits more positive in the novel. Male feminization, then, acts as a solution to a problem in the novel.

Tom serves as an example of the predominantly non-feminized male. From the beginning of the novel, he is a particularly stupid character. Tom's first exposure to education, or at least education in which he is expected to perform well, occurs when he is tutored by Mr. Stelling, a man less than impressed with Tom's natural ability. In terms of the actual plot of *The Mill on the Floss*, Tom's intellectual achievements are somewhat irrelevant since he thrives in the world later and never uses his education outside of Mr. Stelling's classroom. However, the amount of time Eliot spends on Tom's education, and describing how poorly he performs, indicates Eliot intends to show more specific characteristic traits in Tom; Eliot shows how Tom's behavior ultimately makes him a negative character, and Tom's stupidity acts a key element in why he fails as a person. Mr. Stelling sees Tom "as a thoroughly stupid lad" (124) and, as expressed later, does not believe anyone can be as stupid as he; Mr. Stelling even believes Tom must just be incredibly lazy, revealing that Tom is almost unbelievably dull. Further, Eliot also takes the time to explain why Mr. Stelling believes Tom is stupid; Tom is capable of memorization but not capable of understanding anything "so abstract as the relation between cases and terminations" (124) in Latin. Therefore, Tom can mimic but not comprehend information, making him like a child who can say the alphabet but not

connect letters with words. Tom's education, then, is useless in terms of knowledge; he cannot intellectually develop. Though Stelling's teaching approach is poor because "Tom's education is designed according to his father's needs rather than his own" and "it does not help him to develop his best skills" (Paxton 73) Eliot, nevertheless, degrades Tom for failing to accomplish what should be relatively easy tasks; Eliot's examples of his lack of intelligence, such as his disbelief Romans actually existed, make Tom look simple and moronic, and, though Eliot gives him a chance at redemption, foreshadow why he will not be able to overcome the faults that mark him as a negative character.

Eliot's negative portrayal of Tom appears initially while he is away at school although, as he begins to suffer at the hands of Mr. Stelling's teaching style, Tom gradually becomes a figure of pity and receives a chance at redemption as a character. Because Mr. Stelling's teaching begins to create feelings of inferiority in Tom and by feeling inferior Tom becomes more humanized, Tom temporarily becomes more likeable as a character. Interestingly, during Tom's period of noticed inferiority, Eliot also uses feminine terms to describe his character. Eliot states that, while learning with Mr. Stelling, "Tom became more like a girl than he had ever been in his life" (126). Although unaware of how this affects his behavior, education humbles Tom in a surprisingly positive way in terms of how he treats others. Tom, before he began his education, "had a large share of pride" which made him almost too "comfortable in the world" (126). Education forces Tom to realize he does not excel in everything he does; education forces him to see that he "appeared uncouth and stupid" to educated people, and his realization "nullified his boyish self-satisfaction and gave him something of a girl's susceptibility," eliminating his tendency towards "brute-like rebellion and

recklessness” and giving him “human sensibilities” (126). Unlike the overbearing and rambunctious Tom of previous chapters, Tom in “Tom’s ‘First Half’” feels vulnerable by temporarily experiencing a womanly reality. When he appears more like a “girl,” Tom becomes a character easy to associate with and understand. He gains more dimension and temporarily gains sympathy; at this particular stage in development, he could become a much better person than he has been, and Eliot implies feminization acts as the path to Tom’s betterment.

However, as his lack of intelligence foreshadows, Tom truly is too stupid; he fails to recognize what his womanly sensibilities mean or how his new feelings might apply to other people and the lesson of his feminization is lost. As soon as he encounters Maggie again, Tom reverts to old habits and tries to dominate her, primarily because he is jealous that she can succeed in ways that he cannot. Before Maggie arrives to visit Tom, Eliot reveals he “yearned to have Maggie with him” (128), indicating his education makes him more aware of how much Maggie means to him; Tom learns to place a higher value on Maggie’s companionship than he did before he left home. Ironically, though, Tom begins belittling Maggie the instant she arrives because she offers to help him with his schoolwork. His response to Maggie’s offer of help shows that Maggie threatens Tom; if he did not need help, or if he truly believed Maggie could not help him in any way, he would probably have responded to her statement by saying she could help him. However, because Tom fails in his academic endeavors, and possibly because he knows she is more intelligent than he, Tom rushes to dominate Maggie by belittling her in hopes that she will not persist in helping him and actually reveal her intellectual superiority. Tom responds to Maggie by saying “*You* help me, you silly little thing!” (129). By

emphasizing the word “you” in the beginning, he implies she is the person least capable of helping him to understand his studies; referring to Maggie as a “silly little thing” is abusive and childish, meant to silence her. After his tirade, Tom finally decides to risk letting Maggie look at his materials because he hopes she will not understand them and fail in the same way he fails, equalizing the pair; he even “quite enjoyed the idea” (129) that she might not succeed, forgetting how failing makes him feel and revealing Tom has no capacity for empathy. By reverting back to his old behavior, he loses the sympathy Eliot temporarily grants him. Rather than becoming the more humanized version of Tom, Tom becomes, once again, merely a stupid, prideful figure, meaning he can never overcome either his stupidity or the faults stupidity creates in his character.

The idea that Tom’s rejection of his feminine traits makes him a negative character is further supported by the way he continues to treat Maggie while she visits him. When he makes statements about Maggie’s ability to learn, his opinions seem driven by jealousy, propelled by his need to regain his “boyish self-satisfaction” (126) and no longer feel vulnerable. For example, when Maggie comes to see Tom at school and he resorts to telling her girls are “too silly” (129) to understand Latin, Tom seems to be acting defensively and childishly rather than actually presenting the idea that women are in some way intellectually inferior. Similarly, when Maggie proclaims she is sure she could learn Euclid, and displays the beginnings of knowledge when she tells Tom she knows that the letters “A B C” (134) correspond with lines, Tom immediately reacts out of fear, telling Maggie that he’ll ask Mr. Stelling if she can learn Euclid. Had he succeeded at Euclid, Maggie’s realization might mean less; however, her statement acts as a particular threat to him because she reveals she is intelligent in a way he is not.

Whereas Tom cannot draw connections “between cases and terminations” (124), or the Latin language and the actual existence of Romans, Maggie, within the space of a few days and by herself, draws the connection between the name of the lines and the lines themselves; Tom fears she could easily find the meaning if she were taught Euclid, and the idea horrifies him. When he asks Mr. Stelling if Maggie can learn Euclid, he phrases his question in a leading way; Tom tells Mr. Stelling how to answer by asking, “Girls can’t do Euclid: can they, sir?” (134). By asking about “girls” rather than specifically asking about Maggie, he hopes Mr. Stelling will make a judgment about women as a whole and not a judgment about Maggie’s intelligence. The use of a statement followed by a question also allows Mr. Stelling to more easily agree with Tom and eliminate the threat of Maggie’s superiority. When Mr. Stelling answers Tom the way Tom hopes, Tom fully loses any of the womanly qualities that made him feel substandard and humbled him. Instead, despite the fact that Maggie is “mortified” (134) and obviously hurt by Mr. Stelling’s statements, Tom simply acts relieved that he, once again, gains a dominant position over her. He is “delighted” with Mr. Stelling’s agreement; in fact, Tom “telegraphed his triumph by wagging his head at Maggie behind Mr. Stelling’s chair” (134). Because Tom behaves in such a childish way, and regards his sister’s mortification as a personal “triumph,” Mr. Stelling’s statement, and his belief in it, seems like a quick way to achieve the “self-satisfaction” that makes Mr. Stelling and Tom feel superior but that, in reality, makes them negative characters.

Tom reveals he has rejected his feelings further when he fails to express any kind of empathy for Maggie. Where he hypothetically should have learned what it means to feel inferior, and then learned not to inflict the same pain on other people, he reverts back

to his “boyish self-satisfaction” (126) many times by telling Maggie she is inferior. Tom never openly supports his sister and constantly negates any attempts she makes at education because he knows she will surpass him, but also, as he realizes after Maggie leaves him at school, she actually has the capability to help him the way he had initially feared she would. Tom “had really been brighter, and had got through his lessons better” (135) when Maggie was at school with him; however, he never apologizes to her or lets her know she is superior. For the rest of *The Mill on the Floss*, he tries to keep Maggie inferior by berating her on any ground he can, usually resorting to calling her morally wrong. Because of his jealousy, he never empathizes with Maggie and Tom’s jealousy, the enemy of his ability to associate with women, makes him unsympathetic as a character. Tom, then, is the opposite representation of characters like *Jane Eyre*’s Rochester; Tom refuses to adopt feminist perspectives because doing so means he loses power. As a result, Tom tries to shed any emotion that, to him, indicates femininity.

Overall, Eliot seems to be indicating that men who are opposed to women’s education, particularly men such as Tom, have in some way failed in their lives and so, jealously, want the women in their lives to fail in the same way. Because Tom has an opportunity to act as a feminine character, he acts as both an explanation and a warning for men like him. Tom represents men who are afraid of women’s intelligence because their driving need for status predominates over any other lesson life might have to teach them; as a result, such men fear behaving feminized in any way, explaining why Tom acts the way he does. Eliot portrays Tom in a negative way in order to highlight how fear of womanly qualities leads to narrow-mindedness and personal destruction.

Mr. Tulliver, however, is more accepting, and therefore more positive, than Tom. Mr. Tulliver's attitudes and behaviors towards Maggie are made clear in "Mr Tulliver, of Dorlcotte Mill, Declares his Resolution about Tom." Even though the chapter's title indicates the chapter should be about Tom's future, only about half of Mr. Tulliver and Mrs. Tulliver's conversation revolves around what to do with Tom. Rather than only discussing Tom's merits, Mr. Tulliver cannot help but state the obvious conclusion he reaches about his children; as he seems to intuitively know, "Maggie would have benefited enormously from the classical education which is completely wasted on Tom" (McKay 292) later. Though Tom should be the natural heir to the mill business, Maggie is far more intelligent and suited for an education. If Mr. Tulliver were in any way misogynistic, he would never actually reveal Tom's weakness in comparison with his superior daughter; his admission reveals the beginning of the conflict between what he says about women's intelligence and how he feels about Maggie's capabilities.

Eliot reveals Mr. Tulliver's conflict in full throughout "Mr Tulliver, of Dorlcotte Mill..." when he speaks about what he thinks of Maggie's intelligence. Mr. Tulliver's declaration that Maggie is "too cute for a woman" (10) initially gives the impression that he dislikes Maggie's intelligence and judges all women in a stereotypical way. The idea that Mr. Tulliver might be sexist is bolstered by his statements about Maggie, such as "an over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep – she'll fetch none the bigger price for that" (10). By comparing an intelligent woman to a "long-tailed sheep," Mr. Tulliver creates a metaphor that degrades the status of intelligent women, especially because he not only compares them with a rather lowly animal but with a somewhat deformed lowly animal, none the better for its slight anomaly.

As repulsive as Mr. Tulliver's initial statements about Maggie seem, though, he directly negates his statements only a few lines later in the chapter. When Mrs. Tulliver begins to criticize Maggie, agreeing with Mr. Tulliver's statements but then taking her criticism further, Mr. Tulliver defends her with the same attributes he previously pointed to as faults in Maggie's character. When Mrs. Tulliver says, "it seems hard as I should have but one gell, an' her so comical" (10), she escalates her criticism of Maggie beyond anything Mr. Tulliver had previously said. Whereas Mr. Tulliver had been commenting on how the world could be difficult for an intelligent woman, and he wished Maggie could have been born less intelligent, Mrs. Tulliver directly assaults Maggie by more or less saying she wishes God had given her another daughter entirely. Clearly upset, Mr. Tulliver dismisses her thought with the declaration of "Pooh, nonsense!" (10). He then, ironically, uses Maggie's intelligence to justify why she is a good daughter, telling Mrs. Tulliver she is not "behind other folks's children; and she can read almost as well as the parson" (10). By pointing to Maggie's ability to read as a justification for why Maggie is equal to, or perhaps better than, "other folks's children," Mr. Tulliver validates Maggie's intelligence as a positive attribute. He also reveals that he thinks of Maggie in terms of comparison and finds her superior to figures of authority in their community which, because he uses her reading ability as a positive attribute, suggests Mr. Tulliver is actually proud of Maggie's intelligence.

Mr. Tulliver's defense of Maggie in opposition to Mrs. Tulliver also acts as a foreshadowing to the dynamics of the Tulliver family. Like Cathy in *Wuthering Heights*, there is no positive mother figure in *The Mill on the Floss* for Maggie; though not as extreme as Catherine, Mrs. Tulliver constantly faults Maggie and does nothing to protect

her. Mr. Tulliver, then, fills a need the same way Edgar does; he nurtures and shelters Maggie from Mrs. Tulliver whereas, as a Victorian woman, Mrs. Tulliver should be “nurturing” (Ittmann 142) towards Maggie. When Maggie enters the room, Mrs. Tulliver leaps into criticizing Maggie, finding fault with her hair and the way she keeps her clothes. Considering Mrs. Tulliver’s previous statement that she cannot believe the one daughter God gave her is so “comical,” Mrs. Tulliver’s criticism of Maggie seems harsher; rather than driven by a desire to improve her daughter, Mrs. Tulliver seems to be pointing to all of the ways her daughter is deficient so that her statement, which Mr. Tulliver entirely invalidated, can be justified. Yet, despite Mrs. Tulliver’s dismay, Mr. Tulliver “laughs audibly” (11) when Maggie refuses to do her patchwork after her mother tries to make Maggie a “little lady” (11). Mr. Tulliver’s willingness to laugh even though Mrs. Tulliver seems to be rather upset by Maggie’s actions signifies his desire to protect Maggie; when he laughs, he weakens Mrs. Tulliver’s criticism by both siding with Maggie, who is being defiant, and by lightening the situation, thereby protecting Maggie’s feelings. Mr. Tulliver, then, validates Maggie’s feelings at the expense of Mrs. Tulliver’s; he, like Edgar, acts as a protective figure while Eliot portrays Mrs. Tulliver as wrong and self-interested.

With Mrs. Tulliver absent as a “nurturing” figure, Mr. Tulliver appears feminine in the way he interacts with Maggie and, inadvertently, supports intelligent women in the process. For example in “Enter the Aunts and Uncles,” when Maggie defies her mother and cuts off all of her hair, Maggie quickly realizes her mistake but knows she will still have to appear in front of her family who will, undoubtedly, act horrified. Maggie is terrified and regrets her decision, yet Mrs. Tulliver gives “a little scream” (59) when she

first sees Maggie, drawing the family's attention to Maggie without providing any sort of comfort or relief for her. As everyone in the family begins to talk about what Maggie has done, Mr. Tulliver reacts by "laughing with much enjoyment" and asking Mr. Deane "did you ever know such a little hussy as it is?" (59). Where Mrs. Tulliver's reaction incites the family to begin talking about what a naughty and terrible child Maggie is, particularly to upset her mother, Mr. Tulliver's reaction displays a great affection for Maggie's intelligence, since Maggie's decision to cut her hair is the perfect way to defy her mother. Mr. Tulliver's question to Mr. Deane also softens the effect of Maggie's rebellion; rather than seeing her defiance as an act of unspeakable horror, Mr. Tulliver points to Maggie as a rare and exceptional child, and the tone of his question, asked after he laughs with "enjoyment," shows he is not disappointed but proud to be the father of such an exceptional girl.

Mrs. Tulliver's and Mr. Tulliver's oppositional parenting appears best at the end of the episode; Mrs. Tulliver thinks only of the "domestic sorrows" (60) her daughter causes her and the resulting humiliation she suffers because of Maggie, whereas Mr. Tulliver, recognizing Maggie's humiliation, rushes to comfort her the way her mother should. Even Maggie realizes the difference in her parent's affections. Instead of turning to her mother for comfort when she finally begins to cry, she runs to her father to save her which, naturally, he does even though everyone else in the room has in some way negatively judged her. Mr. Tulliver "soothingly" tells Maggie "father'll take your part" (60), partly in order to protect Maggie from the family's intense criticism but also because her behavior, though defiant, displays an intelligence that makes her exceptional; Mr. Tulliver cannot resist indulging in his smart daughter's flights of fancy. Eliot's

narration of Maggie's thoughts after her father helps her suggests Mr. Tulliver often helps Maggie in such situations; Eliot writes that she "never forgot any of these moments when 'father took her part'" (60). Eliot's use of "these moments" suggests Mr. Tulliver takes Maggie's "part" often and, as a result, she clearly favors the parent who is more supportive, protective, and nurturing to her.

Because Eliot redeems Mr. Tulliver by showing his support of Maggie and her intelligence, Eliot even tries to excuse some of the attitudes Mr. Tulliver displays that mark him as a somewhat sexist character by claiming he is ignorant and not malicious in his thinking. Although Mr. Tulliver represents a likeable character because he is so kind to Maggie, the heroine of the novel, he still has serious flaws that limit his success as a character; Mr. Tulliver fails financially and eventually loses his mind because he perceives his financial losses as an inability to support his family, hindering his position as a man. Eliot does make it clear that his decision to become embittered and retreat from the world simply because he can no longer support his family is wrong; Eliot shows that Maggie remains Mr. Tulliver's "desire of his eyes" but that "the sweet spring of fatherly love was now mingled with bitterness, like anything else" (251), meaning Mr. Tulliver could have still been a great asset to his daughter but, mistakenly, allows his idea of manhood to cloud the decisions he makes. Additionally, Mr. Tulliver's greatest fear, as a result of his financial loss, is that Maggie will marry poorly as his sister did; he again displays, in his darkest hours, some of the sexism he initially displayed in the beginning of *The Mill on the Floss*. However, because Mr. Tulliver consistently acts as a support for Maggie throughout most of the novel and is redeemed by his maternal affection for Maggie, Eliot makes sure readers know that Mr. Tulliver sometimes thinks the way he

does because he belongs to a class of “uncultured minds” (251). By suggesting Mr. Tulliver is ignorant, but not jealous the way Tom is of Maggie, Eliot excuses his mistaken thoughts. Unlike Tom, who maliciously attacks Maggie in order to protect his status, Mr. Tulliver truly believes he fails as a father and believes he robs Maggie of the only way for her to succeed, by marrying well, because of his actions.

Mr. Tulliver, in the end, is sympathetic because he truly cares for Maggie. His love for his child allows him to support women’s intelligence. Unafraid of his nurturing instincts, Mr. Tulliver does not shy away from his feminine sensibilities the way Tom does; he embraces his need to protect Maggie and never rejects her on the basis of her intelligence. Though Mr. Tulliver’s intentions are good and he is more accepting, he does not represent the most feminized, or the most accepting, male character. Eliot seems to suggest men such as Mr. Tulliver are moving in the right direction in terms of how they should think about women but still have some distance to cover.

Philip, then, acts as the pinnacle of correct “male” thinking. Fully supportive of women’s education, Philip seems to realize Maggie is stifled by her “low position in a rigid society which allows very little upward mobility, especially for women” (Johnstone 47); he tries to give Maggie an outlet for her intellectual capabilities. Comfortable with his own intellectual blessings, Philip does not become jealous the way Tom does when Maggie expresses the desire to learn; he also acts superior to Mr. Tulliver by not just subtly supporting Maggie’s behavior but directly teaching and encouraging learning. While visiting Tom, Maggie interacts with Philip and reveals she does not know what Philip is studying but is interested in knowing about his book. When she asks him about it, Philip replies, “It’s about Philoctetes – the lame man I was telling you of yesterday”

(163). Even though Maggie makes herself vulnerable by telling Philip she does not understand what he is looking at, Philip responds by explaining the material and not by taking the opportunity to expose and prey on Maggie's ignorance. His response also pushes Maggie to learn; rather than just saying, "It's about Philoctetes," whom she might not remember, Philip reminds her about their conversation from the day before so that she forms a connection between the name and the information she previously learned. Philip's non-verbal signals also indicate he tries to create a positive learning environment for Maggie and wants her to ask more questions; instead of brushing her aside or only laughing at her antics, Philip behaves "as if he were not at all sorry to be interrupted"

(163). Because he gives Maggie attention, Philip validates her interest; he makes it seem natural that Maggie wants to know more and also natural that he shares the information he knows with her because, as he believes, Maggie can and should understand it. Her affection for Philip, displayed only a page later, also reinforces Philip's role as a positive influence in Maggie's intellectual development. Maggie tells Philip she would like him for a brother since he "would teach me everything" (164). Philip obviously makes her feel like he would encourage her to learn in the future and, since he in no way negates her statement, he truly would teach her "everything," not just the information typically relegated to a female's education.

Philip's role as a proponent of women's education is further tested and proven when Maggie decides to abandon all educational ventures. Philip, who begins to meet her in the Red Deeps, acts appalled with her decision and will not allow Maggie to squelch her intelligence by denying herself books written by writers such as "Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich" and turning to "the path of martyrdom and endurance, where the

palm branches grow, rather than the steep highway of tolerance, and self-blame, where there are no leafy honors to be gathered and worn” (263). In essence, Maggie reaches a point in her life at which she no longer wants to learn but wants to follow; she internalizes books and uses their words as guides instead of interpreting and having to reconcile their meanings with her reality, meaning “Virgil” and “Euclid” become less helpful to her than Christian readings that directly tell her how to live her life. Though somewhat incapacitated, Mr. Tulliver does not recognize why Maggie’s decision is detrimental or even that Maggie changes in a significant way; Tom, also, ignores the new change in Maggie because he never values her intellectual development. Only Philip, who randomly sees Maggie in the woods, notices the change in Maggie and identifies what she is doing; additionally, only Philip recognizes Maggie is in danger of losing her intellect by slowly destroying it, and only Philip sees her intellectual repression as an extreme threat to her well-being. When Philip realizes what Maggie is doing, he proclaims that it is “narrow asceticism” and that he doesn’t like to “see (her) persisting in it” (275). Instead of ignoring Maggie, he confronts her and confronts her in a way that doesn’t patronize her; Philip talks to her like she is an intellectual and will understand the relevance of what he is saying, leaving her to think about “narrow asceticism” instead of just telling her to stop. By not telling Maggie to stop, Philip also shows respect for Maggie; he believes she will see the logic in what he is saying, but he does not try to control her decisions in any way.

Because Philip acts as a proponent of women’s education and does not try to classify or repress Maggie, Eliot means for him to be one of the heroic figures in *The Mill on the Floss*. Later in the novel Eliot reveals why Philip is able to be so open-minded

about the truly exceptional Maggie; Philip has feminine characteristics and loves Maggie in a feminine way. Philip believes his physical deformity will always make him pitiable; since he learns to view himself in such a way, and has been “kept aloof from all practical life” (male life), Philip is “by nature half feminine in sensitiveness” with “some of the woman’s intolerant repulsion towards worldliness and the pursuit of sensual enjoyment” (297). Using terms like “half feminine” establishes Philip as feminine and masculine; rather than entirely feminine, the word “half” keeps Philip from falling into a dandified-like classification in which his character might be construed as homosexual and no longer acceptable as a romantic partner for Maggie. Philip, then, is positive because he is able to cross gender lines without losing his ability to act as a love interest for Maggie.

Additionally, Philip recognizes his femininity and does not struggle against it; he knows he is not like his father and is comfortable with his “sensitiveness.” Considering Eliot’s Christian background, Philip’s “intolerant repulsion towards worldliness,” a feature Eliot classifies as “woman(ly)”, also greatly improves his character. Philip’s capacity to look beyond the material allows him to look at Maggie for more than just her beauty; unlike Stephen, who is initially drawn to her appearance, Philip wants to see Maggie again because he remembers her from childhood, a time when she was intelligent and creative but not nearly as attractive. Philip, then, loves Maggie for more reasons than Stephen, can who at least partially bases his infatuation with her on her appearance; Philip’s ability to love is more pure than any other male character’s ability to love a woman, especially because both Mr. Tulliver and Stephen place a higher importance on the material aspects women have to offer. Eliot furthers the idea that Philip loves Maggie more purely by also making Philip womanly in another way; Philip does not pursue “sensual enjoyment”

the way, Eliot implies, most men do (297). Eliot also describes Philip in feminine terms when he begins his romantic relationship with Maggie. As Maggie bends down to kiss Philip, Philip's face is "full of pleading, timid love – like a woman's" (297). Unlike Stephen, who manipulates Maggie and tricks her into running away with him, destroying her reputation, the connotation of the words used to describe Maggie and Philip's encounter suggests Philip gives Maggie all of the power in their relationship. By being "pleading" and "timid," Philip is submissive to Maggie; he hopes she will choose him, but he does not feel he has the right to choose her.

Maggie's reason for loving Philip, expressed in "Philip Re-Enters," also reflects how Philip's sensitivity makes him superior and benefits Maggie. Philip appeals "more strongly to her pity and womanly devotedness" than to "her vanity" or "egoistic excitability" (367). Philip does not appeal to Maggie's "vanity" because he is sincere about his feelings and does not overly flatter her appearance; to him, her appearance is only part of her appeal. Additionally, Philip brings out the "womanly devotedness" in Maggie which makes her such a strong character; Maggie's strongest moments in the novel, including her death, occur because of her sense of loyalty. Philip, ultimately, does the most for Maggie's character; even though they are not together in the end, it is clear, especially after Maggie's unfortunate incident with Stephen, that Philip would have been the best partner for Maggie. Even after Maggie betrays Philip, Philip's love for her is so pure that he writes her to let her know that, always, he will be loyal and love her.

Eliot seems to suggest men, as a whole, have problems with narrow-minded thinking because of their constructions about what their status should be in society; her solution, then, is for men to become more like Philip and shed those constructions by

tapping into their feminine side. Since many view *The Mill on the Floss* as a portrayal of “none other than Mary Ann Evans as she was in childhood and young womanhood” (Huldane 161), issues arise surrounding whether the male characters in the novel are mainly fictionalized or a representation of Eliot’s childhood reality; additionally, because Eliot was known to have “conservatism towards women’s social and sexual roles” (Foster 187), though she did not necessarily practice her beliefs, the idea that Eliot purposefully feminized male characters seems complicated. However, whether or not Eliot intended to include feminization as a solution to a problem seems irrelevant; there is a direct correlation between progressive, positive male characters and male characters’ ability to embrace femininity, and, purposefully or subconsciously, Eliot appears to push for male feminization as a way to better the male sex.

Perhaps a key into this issue can be found when examining how Eliot viewed art; as Daniel Cotton suggests, Eliot strove to present “an all-inclusive sympathy” in art, “one that transcends all opinions or judgments” wherein “sympathy represents the life of humanity” (184). Thus, the best male characters would be the ones able to sympathize best with the people around them. They would be able to see more of humanity and so characters like Philip, who sees Maggie best because of the feminine traits that allow him to sympathize with her, are portrayed in a far better light.

CONCLUSION

Wuthering Heights, *Jane Eyre*, *Great Expectations*, and *The Mill on the Floss* all show male characters who express feminine traits; whether responding to a need of another character or indirectly supporting ideas present otherwise in the novels, the male characters defy stereotypes about how they should behave. Looking at their feminized traits, however, leads to a larger question: what does male feminization mean in the context of all four novels?

Since, as proposed in the introduction, “feminized” traits can often be seen instead as “humanized” traits, expanding the meaning behind the “feminized” behavior of the characters presented often reveals deeper, more universal meaning to their purpose and function in the novels in which they appear. The “feminized” aspects of male characters do not necessarily contradict other existing literary interpretations about their behavior; instead, the feminine characteristics usually positively contribute to either the three-dimensionality of the characters or didactic purposes in the texts.

For example, Edgar’s ability to consistently provide protection to the people he loves obviously benefits his family but also benefits Edgar in a fairly significant way. Always able to take care of other characters without considering his own needs, Edgar provides hope in *Wuthering Heights*. His feminine qualities are traits all people universally want those in their lives to possess; people want to be loved unconditionally, to be taken care of and protected against outside threats. Thus, Edgar fulfills a universal

need, not just one specific to Catherine or Cathy. The stability Edgar manages to provide also suggests hope about human nature; no matter how difficult, some people never stop fighting for the ones they love.

Similarly, Rochester's response to Jane fulfills a need in the novel to heal Jane's wounded sense of self-esteem but, in the process, also elevates Rochester's character. Since he continuously forces Jane to reject all of the negative images she has about herself and, additionally, about how others perceive her, Rochester's feminist perspective makes him caring, giving, and sensitive. Though he does toy with Jane and tries to dominate their relationship in several ways, his ability to see Jane's need and then fill it makes his love for her more whole and fair than it would appear otherwise. By helping Jane, Rochester sees their relationship beyond his own desires; he becomes selfless in a way that might not be evident if the feminine aspects of his character were not explored. In particular, his qualities suggest both partners in a relationship have to give each other something; Jane gives Rochester a reason to live, and Rochester shows Jane she deserves to live well.

Joe and Pip also benefit from their feminine characteristics. Because both Joe and Pip decide to reject their male authority and because both suffer as a consequence, they act as ennobled victims in *Great Expectations*. Though as men Joe and Pip could reclaim their power at any time, they would rather suffer than cause suffering; as Joe makes Pip understand, there is an inherent risk that power will become abusive. In fact, any character, male or female, that holds power in *Great Expectations* eventually does use his or her power to abuse other characters, making Pip and Joe's message universal in the novel. Though their weak and submissive qualities are generally associated with

feminine traits, Joe and Pip represent a much larger point that Dickens proposes; in essence, their weak attributes make Pip and Joe pacifist characters, and their pacifism makes them positive because they strive not to abuse other people. There seems to be a suggestion, further, that if all people were like Joe and Pip no one would get hurt.

Eliot, then, completes Dickens's concept in *The Mill on the Floss*. With the ability to sympathize for powerless Maggie, robbed of her education and her future, Philip does not try to dominate or limit Maggie in any way. All crises involve power struggle; there are always two opposing sides, with one side stronger than the other. When the members of the stronger side learn to recognize and understand the position of the weaker side, the stronger side finds both the ability to correct the crises and a pathway to enlightenment; Philip aids Maggie in every way he can and also acts as perhaps the most knowledgeable, wise character in the novel. Sympathy as a solution, however, applies to more than just the female and male dichotomy; it applies to nearly every struggle known to man, and Philip's solution is entirely universal.

Admittedly, though, there *are* serious flaws with pointing out "feminine" traits in male characters. Although discussing "feminine" traits perhaps opens new avenues to discussing male gender in literature, the applied theory still operates within the traditional framework of Victorian gender studies. It would perhaps be better to formulate definitions of masculinity similar to definitions of femininity that are applied in feminist theory. I would argue, however, that in order to advance male gender studies it is integral to first notice what has been missed within the traditional framework; it is first necessary to flip the binary and discover what has been hidden before any progress can possibly be made. This thesis, then, is not meant to be definitive about male characters; it is meant to

open discussion about aspects of male characters that might not have been noticed before in hopes that more will be done with Victorian male gender studies.

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