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Direct Speech and the Eclipse

of the Hero

in some

Nineteenth Century Novels

by

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## SUMMARY

This thesis argues that the active, masculine, dominant, or substantial hero is virtually non-existent in the major English novel of the nineteenth century. Moreover, it contends that certain factors outwith the novel were responsible for changes in the perception of the hero in the nineteenth century. A major factor was the concept of Realism which modified the craft of the writer and the expectations of the novel reader. Another significant change was that middle-class ideology influenced the speech style of the hero in the nineteenth century English novel.

Thus the direct speech of heroes is the central concern of this thesis. An examination of their speech shows how it contributed, in its effect, to the decline of heroes to very ordinary principal male characters. The direct speech of other prominent characters is also examined and used to underline the uninspired quality of the hero's language. In addition, other reasons for the decline of the hero are explored concurrently with the examination of the effect of his speech.

In the first section of the thesis the direct speech of the hero is examined. In the second section the speech of other prominent characters is examined. Heroes are grouped in types for convenience sake. The grouping of other prominent characters is less arbitrary.



Following the introduction, chapter two shows how many heroes in the nineteenth century English novel are mere ornaments. Their speech is found to be a written style. Their function in the novel is often minimal and their role purely a decorative one. Generally, they seem to be included only as a reward for the heroine.

The subject of chapter three is the hero who is burdened with the role of mentor to the heroine. Such a role demands an appropriate language. It curtails heroic speech to the detriment of the mentor's heroic status. Generally the mentor hero shares the same artificial speech style as the drawing-room hero. Moreover, the burden of the mentor role adds an unheroic, pedantic quality.

The speech of the spokesman hero in chapter four is similar in style although different in content. In his case, content is largely responsible for his lack of individuality. As a mouthpiece for the author's views he is little more than a puppet. When the spokesman hero speaks it is the voice of the author that is heard.

Chapter five attempts to show how the influence of the Byronic hero generally failed to generate substantial heroes in the nineteenth century English novel. The problem has been a failure to allow the Byronic hero to speak as he ought. He has been made to conform in speech to the ideal of the time; that heroes should speak in a

respectable, written English style. In accommodating their readers, writers have helped undermine their heroes.

The following three chapters attempt to show how memorable portrayals of heroines, villains and eccentrics are substantiated largely through their direct speech. These vigorous, memorable characters throw into stark relief the insipid portrayal of most heroes.

In chapter nine some heroes are looked at as heroic characters. Few are found to be satisfactory heroes. Some are found wanting in many aspects but have been included for their potential. This very paucity of substantial heroes is in itself some support for the argument of the thesis.

In conclusion it is suggested that the decline of the substantial hero is a result of complex factors involving changes of ideology in the nineteenth century and the influence of these changes on the novel genre. This thesis highlights the eclipse of the hero as a substantial character by focussing attention on a major symptom of his inadequacy as a hero: his direct speech. While the principal male character in the major nineteenth century English novel is almost always a character integrated into his particular novel, with few exceptions he falls short of being a memorable hero. This disappearance of the substantial hero from the novel genre is evidence of change in the concept of narrative fiction.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Few aspects of the major nineteenth century English novel have escaped the net of critical scrutiny. Indeed, the combined critical assessment of the novels of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy is a formidable one. It is therefore all the more extraordinary that the hero, traditionally regarded as the novel's central figure, has been virtually ignored by literary critics.(1)

Only one substantial critical work explores the condition of the hero in the major nineteenth century novel and that was published some thirty years ago.(2) In addition, only a handful of pertinent essays form the scanty aggregate of critical work on this important aspect of the novel.(3) This neglect is even more puzzling considering that satisfactory portrayals of heroes are rare in the works of the major nineteenth century English novelists; only a very few heroes stand squarely at the centre of their novels as vigorous, memorable characters. In many novels the hero is obscured by the brilliance of other characters; often by the heroine, but also by sensual, attractive villains, humorous or sinister eccentrics and vigorous rustics. But more often it is their own insipid portrayals which leave a void at the centre of so many novels. Indeed, Carlyle's lament for the

decline of the hero in the real world: 'Alas, the Hero from of old has had to cramp himself into strange shapes.', is very appropriate in its application to the hero of most nineteenth century English novels.(4)

It is the intention of this thesis therefore to explore the phenomenon of the unheroic principal male character in some novels of the major nineteenth century authors mentioned above. These authors have been chosen not only because they are writers of distinction but also because their novels span the entire nineteenth century. I thus hope to show that the unheroic principal male character was typical of novels throughout the century and not simply of one particular period within it.

My examination will focus on factors that I consider to be of major importance in the decline of the hero. Perhaps the most important symptom of this decline is their direct speech. This will be examined in some detail. The direct speech of other important characters will also be examined in an attempt to demonstrate how it contributes to their vigorous, memorable portrayals. Such comparison should help to highlight the inadequacy of the principal male character's portrayal as a hero. Parallel with this exploration of direct speech will be a discussion of literary and social influences on the re-shaping of the hero's position and role in the nineteenth century novel.

The decline of the hero in the novels of major authors in the nineteenth century is so vast a problem that my treatment of it must necessarily be selective. What follows, therefore, is a clarification of my assumptions about concepts central to my argument and an explanation of the principles employed in selection.

To posit a decline in the portrayal of the hero implies two main points: that the reader has some deep-seated need of a hero in fiction and that principal male characters in literature were more heroic prior to the nineteenth century.

Research suggests that heroes have always supplied a need within the individual and society in real life as well as in fiction. J.G. Frazer observes how 'the ablest of the tribe' rose to authority in even the most primitive societies. Such 'heroes' serve as a focus of the tribe's aspirations. And as society seems always to have needed scapegoats, so also it seems to have a psychological need for heroes.(5) The psychologist Henry A. Murray tries to clarify this need in relation to the reader of literature. He observes that the reader 'enjoys in reading, or represents in fantasy' what the man of action actually does; 'Thus, instead of pushing through a difficult enterprise, an S (subject) will have visions of doing it or read books about others doing it.' This 'imaginal need', as

Murray calls it, seems to be innate and is probably best fulfilled through an heroic protagonist.(6)

Myths and legends also seem to be intrinsically linked to the psychological needs of society. It is significant that these are usually hero-centred. Freud regarded these oral and literary forms as 'expressions of permanent but unacknowledged attitudes and forces.' Jung uses different language to express the same idea. Myths are 'symbols of desire and passion which all mankind feels but does not acknowledge.' He goes on to describe mythic heroes as 'archetypes of collective unconscious: patterns in which the soul of man develops.'(7)

The function of the hero from the earliest oral and literary fiction seems to have been primarily to serve this psychological need. I do not propose to investigate the underlying causes of this need. I simply record it to help underpin my assumptions about the hero's value in fiction.

The following brief outline of the hero's dominant place in literature prior to the development of the novel in the nineteenth century should help to place the unheroic principal male character in an historical perspective.

The hero in Western fiction has long been the lynchpin of poetry, drama and prose. The Greek legends are an heroic literature. The Odyssey and The Iliad are essentially concerned with the heroic adventures of the warriors

Odysseus and Achilles. Their physical prowess, however, is but one aspect of their heroic portrayals. Their speech is a commanding, vigorous oratory appropriate to their heroic roles. Here is a sample of the speech of Achilles after the death of his friend Patroclus:

... ,for my part,I will not swallow food or drink - my dear friend being dead,lying before my eyes,bled white by spear-cuts,feet turned to his hut's door,his friends in mourning around him. Your concerns are none of mine.Slaughter and blood are what I crave,and groans of anguished men.(8)

The speech breathes vigour,passion,individuality and nobility: it is the mark of a substantial,memorable hero. The link between direct speech and character is an ancient convention. The Roman poet Livy 'flames into fiery rhetoric when a hero or villain delivers one of those character revealing and emotionally moving orations with which he punctuates his action.'(9) Aristotle also emphasises this revelatory link: 'character ... reveals the moral' and 'speeches ... which do not make this manifest ... are not expressive of character.'(10) It is such attention to an appropriate speech style which distinguishes the substantial hero from the mere male principal character in the novel.

In the narrower context of English literature the earliest fiction has generally centred on a vigorous,memorable hero. Beowulf,for example, valiantly confronts the monster Grendel to protect his people. He too speaks in an heroic



rhetoric appropriate to his role. Here he addresses the problem in speech which is vigorous and direct:

... I do not want to kill him,deprive him of life,by means of the sword,although I perfectly well could. He does not understand the good of exchanging sword-blow for sword-blow with me,of having at a shield,even though he is renowned for his malicious acts of aggression.(11)

Beowulf displays the heroic nobility of his nature by his intention of meeting his enemy on level terms. In Pagan literature the hero overcomes the dangers to humanity from monsters and sub-humans. He reigns supreme at the centre of the fiction. His speech emphasises his heroic role and functions to uplift those about him and,of course,the reader or listener.(12)

Later,Christian literature uses vigorous,memorable heroes in the fight against evil. The notion of the heroic individual was by this time firmly rooted in people's minds. In 797 A.D. Alcuin remonstrates with his monks about their preference for listening to heroic song rather than to spiritual wisdom.(13) Piers Plowman,for instance,is a Christian hero and not a warrior hero.Nevertheless,he is heroic in his personification of the Christian rural way of life. He functions as an exemplar for the peasant to look up to. His speech is vigorous:it is drawn from the common stock of language available to the poem's original audience. Much of the vigour derives from the poet's use of the Old English alliterative line,a device unavailable to the author of

dialogue in the nineteenth century English novel for the direct speech of the principal male character.

Thus in early literature the hero occupies an important, central, dominant place in the story. But the tradition of a hero centred literature is continued in, for example, the great tragic plays of Shakespeare. Here they are more recognisably human perhaps. But always they are unforgettable heroes central to the drama. The heroic grandeur of their speech contributes in no small measure to their memorable portrayals. In the following short speech Coriolanus expresses his arrogant, vigorous defiance at the common people he loathes:

Let them pull all about mine ears; present me / Death on the wheel, or at wild horses heels; / Or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock, / That the precipitation might down stretch / Below the beam of sight; yet will I still / Be thus to them. (Act III, sc. II)

Shakespeare's heroes have the added advantage of speaking with the cadence of poetry. Again, this device is not available for use in the direct speech of the novel hero.

Some three hundred years later hero centred literature continues in the works of the Romantic poets. Byron in particular was largely responsible for the cult of the individual as hero during this period. These heroes also had the decided advantage of poetical cadence in their speech to enhance their heroic portrayals.

Generally the great heroic character arose from and thrived in the dramatic genre of the poem and the play. However, Epic, Picaresque and Romantic prose fiction which preceded the novel all contain heroes whose lineage is the hero of the great dramatic literature of the past. But even these heroes are shadows of their great tragic predecessors. Fielding's hero, Tom Jones, for example, is heroic in behaviour. He is the mock hero of a fiction whose main function is humour. He is, therefore, not on the same grand scale as, for instance, the hero in Shakespeare's plays. Nevertheless, he is a vigorous, masculine character who is the novel's centre of interest. His weakness as a substantial hero lies in his direct speech style which is a rather improbable written English. Squire Western's more vigorous dialect is, by comparison, more realistic and memorable. So even in the eighteenth century the written speech style of the hero begins to subvert his heroic portrayal.

Heroes were also undergoing changes in other directions. Richardson's Lovelace, for example, has more of the Satan in his portrayal than is expected in the traditional hero. Defoe's Crusoe is very much an heroic male principal, but his portrayal also alters the traditional image of the hero. He is without doubt the novel's axis; he has all the heroic attributes such as endurance, resourcefulness and courage. Nevertheless, he has other characteristics not

entirely associated with heroic principles: he is materialistic and acquisitive; he is excessively circumspect; he dwells on trivial detail; he is respectable to the point of dullness. These characteristics are essentially those of the respectable middle-class of the nineteenth century and were to be largely responsible for the decline of the hero in the English novel.

By the nineteenth century prose fiction was beginning to establish a place for itself with the reading public of the respectable middle-class. This fiction was more narrative than dramatic and at its highest level had begun to concern itself with wider social issues. In this milieu the heroic central male character, already in decline, virtually disappears. The major nineteenth century authors seem to have been more concerned with the impact of social institutions upon the individual, with interaction between individuals within social contexts, than with the more heroic impact of a great individual upon society. Changes or ills in their immediate society were reflected in the works of major nineteenth century novelists. Greater order in society, increased restrictions on the individual, the concept of 'respectability', the cult of the family and the power and influence of evangelical religion structured a

society in which an individualistic hero could have no place.

Moreover, the developing function of the major novel as a vehicle for realistic fiction meant that the principal male character had to be realistic. And as speech plays a vital part in the representation of a realistic character it has to be consistent with the role and the social class of the speaker. This has serious implications for the hero in a nineteenth century novel, however. As one critic shrewdly observes:

The hero cannot survive the kind of analysis ... which strip him of his idealised attributes and reduces him to nothing more than a half-conscious product of his environment.(14)

As the hero of the nineteenth century English novel is largely a representative of the respectable middle-class, his speech style reflects this and is consequently a formal written style rather than a natural conversational one. Although this is detrimental to an heroic portrayal it does have certain advantages for the author. It allows him to discriminate between 'approved' characters and others:

Characters of irregular habits or disposition were easily identified and evaluated according to their degree of departure from the normative style of the hero and the author.(15)

Thus the rather insipid speech of most male principal characters in the nineteenth century English novel is symptomatic of the decline of the vigorous, dramatic hero.

At this point clarification of my assumptions about the potency of direct speech as a rhetoric of character is necessary. Fundamentally, in written fiction, direct speech is rendered in formal or informal styles. The latter is nearer to natural speech. In its representation of real speech this style makes use of colloquialism, slang, a flexible grammar, and syntax which is often abbreviated appropriately in the context of natural conversation. This natural style evokes spontaneity which lends credibility to the speaker. In real life, except in ultra-formal contexts, this style is generally adopted. However, as I hope to show, the principal male character in the major nineteenth century novel is generally saddled with an unwieldy, formal written style of speech. Such a burden has detrimental effects on heroic portrayals. It is a constraint on natural presentation and it suggests rigidity and lack of warmth in the speaker. Because such a formal style assumes the lack of an intimate audience, it imposes a far greater explicitness and precision than is natural in real conversation. The effect is artificial: at best it creates an impression of pedantry, at worst it makes the speaker seem a rather unlikely character. Thus, considering that direct speech is an index of

character, a written style is a considerable disadvantage to a fictional hero.

So, despite the influence of realism in many other aspects of the major novel, nineteenth century English authors were constrained by other considerations to make their principal male characters speak in an unnatural written, 'respectable' style. The reasons for this lie in the absorption of the middle-class of that period with the idea of 'respectability'. Walter Allen outlines the potency of respectability on the Victorian mind. It was:

... a code governed by considerations of "good form" ... To be respectable was to be at once orthodox and fashionable. ... It was the respectable who composed the reading public and it was for the respectable that the great Victorian novelists wrote.(16)

Speech style was a badge of that respectability and so far as principal male characters in the novel were concerned a respectable speech meant a formal, written style. Jane Austen is, of course, outwith the compass of the Victorian novelist, but her concern with propriety and decorum extended to the use of language and ensured that her male leading characters all spoke in a formal, written style.

Later critics have observed that the 'great nineteenth century novelists' have rendered speech in 'a superior expressiveness of the kind which we do not ordinarily achieve in real life.'(17) The historian G.M. Young writes of the importance of language propriety for Victorians. He

stresses their 'anxious avoidance of indecency' in language and notes how the middle-class were willing to submit their language to 'a drastic and vigilant censorship' in order to maintain respectability.(18) More recently,an historian surveying the nineteenth century European scene comments on 'the assertion of the cultural supremacy of the vernacular language' and contrasts this with England where the middle-class written style remained supreme.(19)

In the novel,this tension between middle-class respectability and artistic realism was resolved at the expense of the hero. Other characters were allowed to retain a less 'respectable' but more natural and vigorous speech style. The middle-class reading public expected middle-class heroes. Respectability demanded that they spoke in an insipid,artificial written style. As the hero became respectable he shed his heroic mantle and became no more than a male principal character, generally less interesting than those around him.

My selection of novels for study has been heavily influenced by my assumptions as to what is meant by a 'novel'. This area is a complex one. Literary criticism is a minefield of confusing terms meant to distinguish one type from another: Historical Novel,Social Novel,Gothic Novel,Romantic Novel,Epic Novel,Picaresque Novel are only a few of the more frequently used terms. My own definition



of 'novel' is based on the distinguishing term 'Social Novel' although I am fully aware that this is a matter of convenience and is not absolute. Many of the novels I examine in this thesis have elements of the Historical or Romantic or Gothic in them, but fundamentally they are novels of life as the author knows it. For convenience sake I have chosen novels which basically adhere to Clara Reeve's definition: 'The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it was written.'(20)

Northrop Frye makes the same definition in order to illustrate what distinguishes the 'novel' which emerged with the works of Richardson, Defoe and Fielding. He recognises their fiction as the beginning of an attempt to represent real people in a society familiar to the reader. Novels, and the principal characters in them, are dependent upon a framework of society. Very often it is the institutions of society which are the focus of attention, the principal male character being a mere functionary of theme or plot.(21)

Ian Watt adopts a similar standpoint on the definition of the novel. He sees the novelist, as opposed to the writer of other prose fiction, as one who tries to construct his fiction from life around him. The novelist shuns the old classical plots of previous fiction. He concentrates with a 'realistic particularity' on character. One implication of this for the male principal character is that he was

portrayed as 'real'(except for his speech) and this most often meant being unheroic.(22)

Categorisation of fiction is perhaps only useful as a convenience, but in taking a perspective of the major nineteenth century English novel as realistic fiction I feel that I am in accord with critical tradition. In this type of novel society's impact on the individual's behaviour and attitudes is important. In the novel a character is the product of his society and its institutions. In Romantic fiction, for example, characters are more likely to be idealised rather than realistic. In nineteenth century English prose fiction, the realistic novel is qualitatively and quantitatively the predominant form. It is this form, I contend, which has been the cause of the decline of the heroic male principal character.

It follows, therefore, that my selection of novelists and their particular works is based on my assumptions as to what constitutes a 'novel'. As the novel was the most prolific form of prose fiction in the nineteenth century it is evident that a comprehensive examination of all novels and all novelists is outwith the scope of this thesis. I have, therefore, concentrated on a few major novelists who are generally considered to be among the best: Jane Austen, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. From the entire novels of these authors I have selected only those which I

consider to be in essence novels rather than, for example, Romantic or Historical fiction. I have consequently omitted certain works which are not concerned with the society of the time in which they were written. George Eliot's Romola, Charles Dickens's Barnaby Rudge and A Tale of Two Cities and Thomas Hardy's The Trumpet Major have all been excluded because they are much more Historical Romance than realistic novel.

This method of selection still allows a fairly extensive examination of male principal characters from major novels by authors of some distinction. Furthermore, the novels span the entire century. Some of Jane Austen's heroes, it is true, were fashioned before the century began, but they indicate the state of the hero in the novel at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Hardy's last hero appears in eighteen ninety-six and illustrates the condition of the hero at the end of the century. By tracing the hero across the entire century in the works of major authors it becomes clear that the unheroic male principal character is no mere fashion of a particular decade or the whimsy of a particular author, but is rather a peculiarity of the realistic novel.

My selection is also designed to avoid criticism that the unheroic male principal character is a function of the author's sex. And although there are five female authors to only two males, this has been necessary to equalise the

number of heroes portrayed by men and women authors. In fact, of the thirty three heroes examined seventeen are from the novels of female authors. Another factor influencing my selection is that the heroes come from both urban and rural environments, thus avoiding possible criticism that milieu alone is the cause of unheroic portrayals.

As no selection is beyond criticism, I will now attempt to justify the omission of certain authors from this thesis. Thackeray, it might be argued, is more important than, for example, the Brontë sisters. He has been omitted simply because I consider him to be a lesser author than Dickens and Hardy, and also as a matter of convenience: his inclusion would have skewed the research in favour of heroes created by male authors. In addition, like Trollope who has been omitted for similar reasons, Thackeray seems to have been consciously engaged in subverting the heroic male protagonist: his Vanity Fair is subtitled 'A Novel Without a Hero'. Such conscious and deliberate suppression of the heroic in the portrayal of the male principal character is not overt in the work of the other authors. To have included Thackeray in this study would, I believe, have skewed the argument in my favour. For, as one historian remarks: 'Thackeray's characters have nothing of the heroic. They are frail humans, mixtures of good and

bad.'(23) David Cecil also notes how Thackeray's work 'admits of no heroic characters'.(24)

Trollope and Thackeray are also writers who focus on a narrower social strata than does Dickens who encompasses a wider range of social class and social issues. Hardy's selection in preference to both authors derives from the fact that his heroes reflect rural life and his works were written in the latter part of the century, thus widening the compass of research.

Sir Walter Scott is an author of great distinction whose omission deserves explanation. His works generally do not reflect life, either urban or rural, in the nineteenth century.(25) Much of his fiction is set in past ages and often in exotic lands. Scott's work is historical fiction and much of it essentially romantic rather than realistic. In any case his work falls outside my assumption that a 'novel' should reflect contemporary society and its social attitudes, values and beliefs. Georg Lukács describes the typical Scott hero: 'The "hero" of a Scott novel is always a more or less mediocre, average English gentleman'; Scott 'builds his novels round a "middling", merely correct and never heroic "hero"'.(26) Scott's heroes, therefore, would support my argument insofar as their portrayals are unheroic, but his fiction has deliberately been omitted as outwith my definition of the novel.

Finally, it remains for me to outline the structure of the following chapters and the methodology used. Firstly, I examine the speech style of principal male characters in the context of their role and function. Secondly, the speech, role and function of certain other characters are examined in order to underline the inadequacy of the portrayal of the male protagonist.

In order to facilitate this procedure I have divided the thesis into two sections. Section one, chapters 2 - 5, deals only with principal male characters; section two, chapters 6 - 8, focusses on those salient characters whose portrayals overshadow those of the principal male characters.

Furthermore, in order to impose some structure upon each chapter I have grouped principal male characters into types of 'hero' in the first section. Similarly, in the second section, each chapter deals with one specific type of supporting character. Naturally, similar types of hero and supporting characters occur in the work of other nineteenth century authors. It would be impracticable to include all possible examples from every nineteenth century novelist in this limited thesis. In order to keep my study within reasonable proportions I have limited my examples to those that occur in the works of the major novelists I have elected to examine. Moreover, my aim is to examine a large number of principal male protagonists from

the works of each author rather than one only from the works of a far greater number of authors. As I hope to show, the unheroic principal male character is the norm, and not the exception, in the major English novel of the nineteenth century.

Selection of speech samples for study has also been necessary. Clearly it would have been a formidable task to have analysed every speech made by every principal male character. Some principle of selection has had, therefore, to be established. Consequently, I have chosen speeches from significant and dramatic points in the narrative which underscore the personality of the speaker. I have also attended to the introductory speeches of principal male characters on the assumption that these have generally been constructed to emphasise instantly the important traits of the speaker's personality. Wherever possible I have also used speech samples by different protagonists in similar contexts. For example, some protagonists are compared through their proposal speeches. Other speeches are selected from situations of dramatic confrontation, which should reveal heroic qualities, if any exist, in the speaker.

Examination of direct speech is conducted with reference to vocabulary, grammar, syntax and the representation of accent where appropriate. Such analysis is merely an heuristic tool to lead to critical evaluations made in

conjunction with evidence drawn from meaning and context, its results are not regarded as significant solely on cumulative evidence. The purpose of identifying and interpreting the minutiae of direct speech is not to allow the comma 'to smile haughtily at the sentence to which it owes its existence' (27) but rather to help 'establish some unifying principle, some general aesthetic aim pervasive of a whole work'. (28)

In the chapters that follow, the central argument will contend that most principal male characters in the major nineteenth century English novel fail to measure up to traditional assumptions about heroic characters. My research will attempt to highlight the paucity of such heroes, principally by focussing on their speech style which I see as symptomatic of their inadequacy as heroes. It will also attempt to illustrate that the nineteenth century 'hero' was never more than an ordinary protagonist, and rarely a memorable one. Finally, it will underline the important contribution that direct speech played in the insipid portrayal of the principal male character in the major nineteenth century novel and ultimately to his decline as a hero.



## NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

- 1 This criticism applies to the paucity of critical research on the hero in the nineteenth century major English novel. Critical work on the hero of other eras and on hero types is more numerous (see bibliography) which tends to support the point I make.
- 2 Mario Praz, The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, Oxford, 1956
- 3 The following are two examples of this type of specialised essay:  
  
 Angus Wilson, 'The Heroes and Heroines of Dickens', Review of English Literature, 2 (1961), 9-18  
  
 Leonard F. Manheim, 'Dickens's Heroes, heroes, and heroids', Dickens Studies Annual, Vol 5 (1976), 1-22
- 4 Alan Shelston (editor), Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings, Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 235
- 5 J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, London, 1957 (abridged edition), pp. 60-61
- 6 Robert M. Liebert and Michael D. Spiegler, Personality: Strategies for the Study of Man, Illinois, 1974 (revised edition), p. 197
- 7 Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition, Oxford, 1967 (revised edition), pp. 523-24
- 8 Homer, The Iliad, translated by Robert Fitzgerald, London, 1985, p. 463
- 9 Highet, p. 348
- 10 Aristotle, Poetics, Bk. IX, ch. 1
- 11 Anglo-Saxon Poetry, translated by S.A.J. Bradley, London, 1982, p. 429
- 12 Gwyn Jones, Kings, Beasts and Heroes, Oxford, 1972, p. 60
- 13 Stanley B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature, London, 1966, p. 1
- 14 Peter L. Thorslev Jnr, The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes, Minneapolis, 1962, p. 193

- 15 Leonard Lutwack, 'Mixed and Uniform Prose Styles in the Novel', The Theory of the Novel, edited by Philip Stevick, New York, 1967, p.215
- 16 Walter Allen, The English Novel, London, 1954, p.138
- 17 Geoffrey K. Leech and Michael H. Short, Style in Fiction, London, 1981, p.166
- 18 G.M. Young, Portrait of an Age: Victorian England, London, 1953 (second edition), p.18
- 19 E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolutions, London, 1973 (revised edition), p.311
- 20 Clara Reeve, Progress of Romance, London, 1785, cited in Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, Harmondsworth, 1963 (third edition), p.216
- 21 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton, 1957, pp.304-5
- 22 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, Harmondsworth, 1963, pp.14-19
- 23 William L. Langer, Political and Social Upheaval: 1832-1852, New York, 1969, p.571
- 24 David Cecil, Early Victorian Novelists, London, 1964 (second edition), p.78
- 25 Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, Harmondsworth, 1962, p.32
- 26 Lukács, pp.32-33
- 27 The quotation is from Friedrich Hebbel and is cited in Georg Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe', The Nineteenth Century Novel, edited by Arnold Kettle, London, 1972, p.76
- 28 Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, Harmondsworth, 1963, (third edition), p.182

## CHAPTER TWO: DRAWING-ROOM HEROES

By the nineteenth century the vigorous, active hero had well and truly sloughed off his armour and been re-shaped to fit neatly into the expectations of middle-class readers of the novel. In a great many cases this new 'hero' gravitated towards the respectability of the middle-class drawing-room. These new principal male characters were not simply 'chance products of their creator's fancy'(1); they 'reflect class, ideological and historical factors which are dominant in the age'.(2) The change was therefore inevitable: as society changed, the new fiction, the novel, developed and the traditionally active, dominating individual of earlier literature became redundant. Those authors who retained the traditional hero at the centre of their fiction soon found themselves on the periphery of serious major fiction.

Drawing-room heroes were not new on the literary scene, but in the nineteenth century they began to increase in numbers in the major novel. Hazlitt had complained of this type of male protagonist marring the eighteenth century 'romance' with his 'downright insipidity'.(3) But this early warning of a decline in the traditional portrayal of heroes appears to have gone unheeded by some authors, as the general decline continued into the nineteenth century. At the same time, the concept of 'hero' continued to generate

expectations associated with the hero of previous great literature. When measured against great heroes of the past, the drawing-room hero is a great disappointment.

Yet, while expectations of a vigorous, manly hero persisted, pressures from a changing cultural and social climate worked against the depiction of this type of hero. Instead, new types of hero were fashioned in the light of a serious, social fiction which aimed at depicting real life. One of the least satisfactory of these new hero types was the drawing-room hero. He was fashioned primarily to fit passively into the respectable, static drawing-room society of an increasingly democratized bourgeoisie. This move into respectable society diminished the hero's dynamism and tended to shift him from the novel's centre. Changes in his situation inevitably required changes in his speech style. The dramatic, vigorous speech of earlier heroes was no longer appropriate in the genteel, respectable drawing-room of the nineteenth century middle-class. Instead, he was obliged to speak a 'polite literary, book prose'. (4) This rather insipid, or at best neutral, style contributed greatly to his decline as a substantial, memorable hero.

In the nineteenth century a written speech-style was thought desirable and respectable for the hero who had to be the novel's paradigm of correctness and respectability. Even today Standard English is defined in terms of

correctness that would have been approved of by nineteenth century authors: 'English as is held to be proper and respectable, fitting and dignified, in all conditions'.(5) The key words in this definition imply conformity, standardisation and neutralisation. These are hardly the characteristics of a vigorous, memorable hero. Rather, they are the attributes of a drawing-room hero constrained in speech, and action, by the respectability imposed by the ideology of the age.

Thus the speech style of the drawing-room hero operates to his detriment as an heroic character and is symptomatic of his decline to an unheroic male principal character. This type of hero appears throughout the novels of the authors in this study. Indeed, he forms the basic pattern for most other hero types. The Spokesman and Mentor heroes are essentially drawing-room types with more important schematic functions. And when a rustic is cast as a principal character, he is very often made to assume the speech style of the drawing-room hero. However, in this chapter I will focus only on those drawing-room heroes whose purpose is less than central to structure and theme and which appears only to be as a reward for the heroine.

Drawing-room heroes are found fairly frequently in the novels of Dickens. Critics have commented on the insubstantiality of his heroes. George Orwell, for instance, regards them as unnatural as 'no hero speaks like

a working man'.(6) Nor do they speak in a form anywhere approaching an heroic style. Mario Praz sees them as the by-product of a larger, artistic and social movement: 'His heroes are figures conceived in accordance with the neo-classicism which, in the bourgeois nineteenth century, inspired sepulchral monuments: they are angels with mild stupid faces'.(7) This is a very perceptive observation of Dickens's heroes in general. A less inclusive condemnation of the 'weak field of his heroes and heroines' is made by Angus Wilson. He discerns a development throughout the novels towards a greater depths in heroic characterisation. This insight is borne out by a study of his later heroes. At the same time, Wilson lays much of the blame for Dickens's inadequately portrayed heroes on Victorian sexual morality (8), and though this has been a common source of blame for almost everything considered wrong with the nineteenth century English novel, literary repression of sex in the novel did have a detrimental effect on the vigour of direct speech as heroes were forced to fall back on euphemistic language. A critical comment by a contemporary of Dickens is perhaps a good insight into why his drawing-room heroes do not measure up to the vigorous, dynamic, heroic type:

His heroes are ... homebred and sensitive, much impressed by feminine influences, swayed by the motives, the regards and the laws which were absolute to their childhood.(9)

This description is not that of the vigorous, free individual hero. By withdrawing from the field of physical action into the safe comfort of the drawing-room, the hero is constrained by feminine values (the values of a home-centred middle-class society) and so loses contact with the larger issues that a substantial hero is expected to occupy himself with.

Perhaps the paradigm of drawing-room heroes is Harry Maylie in Dickens's Oliver Twist. He is certainly one of the most unmemorable. There is some excuse for his unheroic characterisation in the fact that he is not the central figure in the novel. Nevertheless, as the central, good male protagonist who is deemed worthy of the heroine, his characterisation might well have been more vigorous.

Harry Maylie does not appear until chapter 34, after which he appears infrequently. This makes him a rather shadowy figure. His portrayal has the hallmarks of an afterthought. He is clearly an antidote for the sick Rose and is her reward for her goodness. The courtship of Harry and Rose is also an excuse to introduce into the novel the sentimentality of a 'pining heroine', a feature popular with readers and used by some nineteenth century authors. Two notable examples of the use of this device among major novelists are Marianne Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility, and Caroline Helstone in Shirley,

Harry Maylie is, in fact, a hero of very little substance. His very few appearances serve to render him only as a gentlemanly ornamentation of the domestic scene. He remains always a passive, still-life figure in the background, achieving no more than elegantly gracing the respectable drawing-room of the middle-class.

But Maylie's unheroic portrayal is best exemplified by his respectable speech. The following is an example of its unnatural quality:

I was brought here by the most dreadful and agonising of all apprehensions ... the fear of losing the one dear being on whom my every wish and hope are fixed. You have been dying: trembling between earth and heaven. We know that when the young, the beautiful, and good, are visited with sickness, their pure spirits insensibly turn towards their bright home of lasting rest; we know, Heaven help us! that the best and fairest of our kind, too often fade in blooming. (ch.xxv, p.231)

This is not natural speech. It is a written style considered correct and respectable for a middle-class gentleman. It is a language which belongs to the flat, insipid hero of the penny novelette of that time. In this speech can be discerned the influence of the 'homely, crude melodrama, very moral, very sententious, and entirely unreal' (10) which was very popular in the nineteenth century English theatre. It is out of place in a serious, realistic novel and especially incongruous in the speech of the principal male character.



The dramatic context is to some extent responsible for the substance of the speech: Harry is speaking to the convalescing Rose, having been parted from her for a long time. But the character is swamped by the author's relish for sentiment. Dickens's own voice, in the emotional homily about the link between death and the good, can be clearly heard. Yet even that part of the speech which is more credibly Harry's, the first two sentences, does little to suggest the speech of a vigorous, masculine hero. Take for instance his gloss of 'dying' as 'trembling between earth and heaven'. Such euphemistic flourishes are more characteristic of the prolix speaker than the direct man of action.

Nor is Harry's choice of epithets particularly masculine: 'dreadful' and 'agonising' have a feminine ring to them. Some research into the conventions of female speech in fiction suggests that women frequently use adjectives such as 'darling', 'exquisite', 'adorable' and other words expressive of emotion.(11)

Harry is shown up as an insipid hero in his handling of Rose in the scene where she rejects him in the cause of 'respectability'. The conversation (ch.xxxv, pp.232-35) is too long to reproduce here. Considering what is at stake, Harry's speech lacks the vigour and conviction of an ardent young man determined to win his beloved. Harry has returned to renew his wooing of Rose in earnest.

However, his demeanour is that of a drawing-room hero. His speech should have been a vigorous persuasion of his worth for he is trying to influence Rose to marry him against the wishes of his mother. It lacks, however, the vigorous assurance of heroic language. It is Rose who dictates the action in the scene; it is she who decides what Harry must do, he is left with no choice in the matter but to obey her wishes. Harry, in fact, acts the part of the perfect, drawing-room gentleman. He is the good, respectable male protagonist who accedes to the wishes of his beloved.

An examination of Harry's speech in this scene will help to show how unheroic he is. First, Harry's meaning is clear but his speech lacks vigour. He is tentative when he should be direct: 'the most cherished hopes of my heart are not unknown to you, though from my lips you have not heard them stated'. Compare this limp indirectness with the speech of a manly, active hero:

Now for the love of Love, and her soft hours/ Let's not  
confound the time with conference harsh./ There's not a  
minute of our lives should stretch/ Without some pleasure  
now. What sport tonight? (12)

This speech is colloquial and thus natural even within the context of poetry. Note the characteristics of spoken language in the two contractions 'Let's' and 'There's' and the idiomatic final sentence. Harry's speech is artificial by comparison. Unlike the vigorous last speaker, Harry is

too much the respectable, drawing-room gentleman to press his suit: 'I - I - ought to have left here before'. This lack of masculine vigour contrasts glaringly with the direct, positive, assured approach of the Shakespearian hero. The conventions of heroic speech have changed since Shakespeare's day. The change, whatever the cause, has had a detrimental effect on the portrayal of the male principal character in the nineteenth century English novel.

Harry Maylie is, of course, a product of his age. He is speaking as a respectable gentleman of the middle-class, not as a substantial, vigorous character in the traditional heroic mould. His main speech (ch. xxxv, p. 232) beginning 'A creature ... ' and ending ' ... my heart to all mankind.' is unreal as spoken language. It is a torrent of literary clichés and constructions: apostrophe; 'Oh, who could hope ... ' and 'Rose, Rose, ... '; alliteration: 'some soft shadow'; euphemism: 'that bright sphere' and 'winged their early flight'. In addition the sentences are indirect and complicated. One sentence employs four semi-colons, six commas and one dash to cement it together. This is the kind of 'correct' speech advocated by Addison for gentlemen and made popular by his and Steele's articles in the Spectator. Here is an extract from one of Sir Roger De Coverley's speeches:

It is, ... worth while to consider the Force of Dress; and how the Persons of one Age differ from those of another, merely by that only. One may observe also that the

General Fashion of one Age has been follow'd by one particular Set of People in another, and by them preserved from one Generation to another.(13)

The influence of this 'conversational' style as a mode of speech for respectable gentlemen in fiction cannot be over-estimated. No doubt there were people who adopted this ornate written mode in real life. In fiction its influence is observable in the artificial speech of many principal male characters in the nineteenth century English novel. There is little spontaneity in Harry Maylie's speech. Persuasion, to be natural, demands a direct, brief, forceful speech style. Harry is easily dissuaded from his purpose, not an heroic characteristic. In the end he is reduced to begging favours: 'I ask one promise ... Once, and only once more, - say within a year, but it may be sooner, - I may speak to you again on this subject, for the last time' (ch.xxxv, p.235) This is the expected respectable, gentlemanly behaviour of the mere protagonist.

Like Harry Maylie, Allan Woodcourt in Bleak House is an ornamental, respectable gentlemanly character who speaks in an ineffectual, artificial written style. He appears earlier in the story than does Maylie in his, but he is unnamed and remains a very shadowy figure until chapter 14 where he speaks briefly in his role as a doctor. Thus like Maylie, he is handicapped as a hero by his lack of a dominant position in the story. His principal function would appear to be as a reward for the heroine and as a way out of a complicated relationship between Mr Jarndyce and his young ward. A

relationship which,carried to a logical conclusion,would have been offensive to Dickens's respectable middle-class readers. Even Allan's profession is rather a device than a job; being a doctor allows him to move freely and credibly between social classes and to be in areas such as Tom-All-Alone's.

But Allan is first and foremost a decorative,drawing-room hero. In Dickens's time had Allan simply been a doctor and not also a respectable gentleman,Esther would certainly never have countenanced his advances. She would have dealt with him in the manner she treated Guppy. Indeed,such is the high status of gentlemen in Dickens's fiction that Little Dorrit is made to prefer Clennam,a melancholy,middle-aged bankrupt,but bred a gentleman,to the younger John Chivery who is of common stock. In this,Dickens was influenced by the ideology of his class and times,the same set of values that considered it necessary for respectable gentlemen in fiction to speak in a written mode.

To build up Allan's heroic stature,Dickens resorts to the clumsy device of manufacturing a shipwreck in which Allan behaves gallantly. However,his technique of using Miss Flite (already an admirer of that gentleman) to relate Allan's off-stage heroics (ch.35,pp.555-56) has little conviction,as 'telling' is generally an undramatic method of communication,lacking as it does the impact of

'showing'. Nor does Esther's occasional narrative commentary on the virtues of her respectable sweetheart help to make him any more credible as a memorable hero.

Allan's own speech does little to invigorate his character either. Aside from an occasional marker of his occupation his speech is the norm for the drawing-room hero. The following proposal speech discloses many of the unheroic features of Harry Maylie's style:

I should poorly show the trust that I have in the dear one who will evermore be as dear to me as now, ... if, after her assurance, that she is not free to think of my love, I urged it. Dear Esther, let me only tell you that the fond idea of you that I took abroad, was exalted to the Heavens when I came home. I have always hoped, in the first hour when I seemed to stand in any ray of good fortune to tell you this. I have always feared that I should tell it you in vain. My hopes and fears are both fulfilled tonight. I distress you. I have said enough. (ch.61, p.889)

This is the proposal of a respectable gentleman who worships women from afar and sets them on a pedestal. It is not the speech of an assured, masculine, vigorous hero. Like Harry Maylie, he is apologetic for having the audacity to speak on terms of such intimacy, and he is gentlemanly enough to desist at the mere hint of distress from Esther. A substantial, dominant hero perseveres despite any obstacle.

The language is formal. It is an elevated, written mode of speech, respectable but artificial. It has a mannered style of construction which suggests a deliberation which is

incongruous with its tentative content. The parallel structure of sentences three and four is followed by a fusion of these structures in a compressed form in the next sentence. This is a characteristic of a well prepared literary style and is clearly Dickens at work rather than the spontaneous, natural speech of a lover. The style undercuts Allan's portrayal as a credible character and does nothing to enhance his heroic stature. Essentially, such an artificial speech style fails to create a credible human being.

While a credible spoken mode of speech is necessary to establish verisimilitude, a memorable hero requires a speech style which is both vigorous and masculine. Direct, positive and powerful speech is needed to indicate a dominant, forceful personality. The following sample of speech from another Shakespearian hero will throw into relief the insipid speech mode of the drawing-room hero:

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius, / To cut the head off and then hack the limbs, / Like Wrath in death and envy afterwards; / For Antony is but a limb of Caesar. / Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius. / Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods, / Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds. / And let our hearts, as subtle masters do, / Stir up their servants to an act of rage, / and after seem to chide 'em. (14)

There is no disputing that this is the language of a leader of men. It is direct, contains a shrewd grasp of reality and is made vigorous by its poetical cadences; principally by

its emphasis on the striking repetition of the metallic sound of the consonant 'c'. It is a dramatic speech, appropriate to the dramatic situation and it makes the speaker salient and thus memorable.

This mode of language would be inappropriate spoken by a male principal character in the novel of the nineteenth century. Arthur Clennam would be entirely out of character were he to speak with such vigour. Therein lies the crux of the problem of the hero in the English novel of that period. He is constrained by, on the one hand, the writer's desire for realism, and on the other by expectations of a correct mode of speech for middle-class principal male characters.

Arthur Clennam is a respectable gentleman and a drawing-room hero and he operates in the milieu of the respectable middle-class. In effect his position in society and his function in the novel both operate to diminish his chances of being portrayed as a vigorous, dominating hero at the centre of the novel.

While Arthur's speech is not entirely feminine in its characteristics, it does illustrate much of the tentativeness, uncertainty and apologetic mannerisms conventionally associated in nineteenth century fiction with feminine speech.(15) Arthur is older than most Dickens heroes and is a 'retiring man, with a sense of many deficiencies'. (Book the First, ch.xvi, p.190) This is not



the description of a substantial hero. Generally, the behaviour of the principal male character in Little Dorrit is apologetic, conciliatory and propitiatory, characteristics which are marked in his speech by self-effacement, indecision and over-politeness. Years of submission to his parents have left their mark on his personality. (Book the First, ch. iv, p. 45)

Naturally, as a gentleman, Arthur speaks in a written mode. His melancholy disposition also dictates the depressive tenor of his speech. His speech is thus harnessed to his functional role rather than to enhance noble, heroic qualities. Immediately he is introduced, his inability to be positive is made clear in his replies to Meagles: 'I have heard none.' and 'Most people do I suppose'. (Book the First, ch. ii, p. 15) The former answer implies caution by its suggestion of possibilities unknown to the speaker. The latter answer indicates his lack of assurance by the use of the tentative modifier 'I suppose'. This indirectness and evasion is further highlighted in the same scene in direct contrast with Meagles's own arrogant self-assurance. His imperious manner stands out vividly against Clennam's diffidence.

The need to be polite generates wordiness and Arthur, who has cultivated a veneer in which politeness is a defence, uses effusive language that at times verges on ingratiating. Here are some examples of his overly-polite

style: 'May I ask you ... in no impertinent curiosity ... so much pleasure in your society ... wish to preserve an accurate remembrance of you and yours ... your good wife ... ' (Book the First,ch.ii,p.17) These polite expressions in the one short speech indicate a deferential attitude on the part of the speaker. But for Arthur deference is not a means of personal gain. Rather,it functions as a kind of self-abasement. By addressing Meagles,who is by no means superior socially,in this way,Clennam is surpassing the normal bounds of politeness between equals and is,in fact,signalling his 'inferiority'.

In a later speech (Book the First,ch.ii,p.20) Clennam tells Meagles about his own upbringing. Like many speeches uttered by Dickens's characters,this is hardly realistic. Dickens sacrifices realism for dramatic intensity. Clennam's speech begins, 'Ah! Easily said. I am the son,Mr Meagles,of a hard father ... '. This is the speech of a person wallowing with a perverse delight in his miserable childhood. To have allowed Clennam to supply this information through direct speech was,I feel,an artistic error: the effect is sentimental and melodramatic,and it does not enhance his portrayal as a substantial hero.

The most salient feature of this speech is the abundance of emotive words.These have been selected to elicit sympathy for Clennam but the effect is maudlin and absurd because the sentiment is overdone. Here are some of Clennam's word

choices: he was 'trained ... broken ... heavily ironed ... shipped away ... hated'; his environment was 'strict ... stern ... gloomy ... austere'; he was subjected to 'nothing grateful or gentle anywhere'. The harsh convict and prison imagery is perhaps overdone. As the function of this speech is to supply information about Arthur's background it might have been better rendered in the narrative. As it stands, the indulgent self-pity undercuts a vigorous portrayal.

Clennam's mission in the story is to atone for his father's sins and this involves him in a form of self-abasement manifest in his speech. Altogether his speech mode is most inappropriate for a vigorous hero. His conversation with Frederick Dorrit (Book the First, ch.viii.pp.77-8) is stamped with deference: 'I beg your pardon ... will you allow me ... Pardon me once more ... I beg you to excuse me ... I am not impertinently curious ... Grant me a favour... sufficient apology ... taking the liberty of addressing you ... I do assure you that I am, and do entreat you to believe that I am, in plain earnest'. There is a lack of self-assurance in this speech. It is self-apologetic to an extreme. F.R. Leavis's assertion that Clennam 'is felt as a pervasive presence'(16) in the novel makes sense in terms of the language he uses which creates an atmosphere of melancholy and guilt throughout the novel.

Arthur's mode of speech is so formalised and his thinking so restricted that he is quite unable to understand colloquial speech. Mrs Gowan remarks, 'He picked the people up at Rome, I think?'. Arthur is perplexed, 'Excuse me, I doubt if I understand your expression.'. Mrs Gowan glosses the idiom for his benefit: 'Picked the people up ... Came upon them. Found them out. Stumbled against them.'. Arthur at last understands but first has to interpret into his own formal written style: 'I really cannot say ... where my friend Mr Meagles first presented Mr Henry Gowan to his daughter'. (Book the First, ch. xxvi, p. 307) Such stiff formal language illustrates the difficulty in portraying memorable and vigorous heroes in a genre intent on realism and remaining respectable.

So despite a more extensive and central role than the other drawing-room heroes already examined, Clennam is still very much an unheroic principal male character. He is a well portrayed character in that he has been moulded by the social and psychological pressures of his environment. His upbringing has cowed his spirit, suppressed his masculinity and vigour, and undermined his self-confidence. These and other negative traits enhance the character Dickens requires for his novel and to this extent Arthur's portrayal is a success. However, he is a success as a mere male protagonist and not as a substantial hero.

If the subdued Arthur Clennam is forced to the forefront by his role, then John Harmon in Our Mutual Friend is driven into the background by the complications of his part in the plot. A conscious effort is required to accept Harmon as the principal male character let alone the novel's hero. He spends much of his time off-stage, or in the guise of Rokesmith and Handford, lesser personages in society whose personalities he is obliged to adopt. Dickens has sacrificed his 'hero' in the interests of his convoluted plot.

Harmon's most extensive appearances are in the role of the lowly clerk Rokesmith. Because of his job Rokesmith's speech has markers of deference to indicate his lowly status. Naturally this works against the portrayal of a dominant, memorable hero.

The flatness and formality of his speech mode as Rokesmith are illustrated very clearly as he attempts to insinuate himself into employment with Mr Boffin. (Book 1, ch. 8, pp. 94-98) His speech is instantly recognisable as a written style, the badge of the respectable drawing-room hero and 'man of genteel appearance'. (p. 94) In a lengthy conversation extending to more than four pages, Harmon's speech is entirely devoid of the common features of a conversational style: there are no verbal, and few negative, contractions, no idioms, no stoppages or natural hesitations common in spoken language, and the language is

rather elevated; he uses, for example, the rather uncommon 'unconscionable', a word well outwith the comprehension of the illiterate Mr Boffin. In the context, the use of this kind of language only underlines Harmon's education and social status as a gentleman. Dickens is careful in other novels to have his lowly clerks, Uriah Heep and Guppy are examples, speak in a more interesting and vigorous non-standard mode unsuitable for gentlemen. At this point in the novel the reader is aware that Harmon is the principal male character and the drawing-room mode of speech confirms his respectability.

Harmon's role as Rokesmith at this juncture demands deference as an appropriate behaviour but this works against the portrayal of a vigorous, dominating hero. The following is a selection of deferential and self-effacing expressions used by Harmon:

I beg your pardon, Mr Boffin ... No sir, you don't know me ... I am nobody ... and not likely to be known ... If you allow me to walk beside you, Mr Boffin ... Would you object ... I took the liberty ... I am afraid ... I trust you will not ... I know you will find me faithful and grateful ... I regret to hear ... . (Book 1, ch.8, pp.94-98)

This deferential style brings to mind the speech mode of another drawing-room hero, Arthur Clennam. Moreover, the fact that Harmon resorts to deceit for such a trivial purpose diminishes him somewhat. His resorting to disguise compares unfavourably with the behaviour of a great

hero,Odysseus,whose deceit was more honourable in that he was greatly outnumbered by his wife's tormentors.

But simply to call Harmon a colourless hero (17) and a nullity (18) is to forget that his portrayal is justified in terms of the plot. He is,therefore,merely a functionary of the plot and never assumes the central,dominating role of a memorable hero.

It is only at the very end of the novel that John Harmon speaks for himself. In ten pages of dialogue (Book 4,ch.13,pp.769-778) he speaks only twice,a total of twenty-three words. This scant presentation does nothing to create a memorable image of the principal male character. In the next chapter (pp.787-88) a feeble attempt is made to render him as a vigorous character. In this scene he confronts the villainous Wegg; hardly a formidable opponent,with his wooden leg,for a substantial hero. To make matters worse,Harmon's language in this scene is fit only for the hero of a melodrama. Dickens,with great theatrical relish,burdens his principal character with a mode of speech which diminishes his credibility as a hero. For example,in the long speech beginning 'That Dutch bottle,scoundrel,contained the latest will ... ' the language is melodramatic: 'scoundrel ... thankless wretch ... mudworm'. Moreover,the piling up of violent phrases such as: 'knock your head against the wall ... knock your brains out ... shake the life out of you ... twist your

head off, and fling that out of the window!' elicits from the reader laughter at the expense of the speaker. The melodramatic style is reminiscent of the younger Dickens who turned Nicholas Nickleby into a melodramatic juvenile lead uttering equally ludicrous language. (see Nicholas Nickleby, ch. xxxii)

Dickens's drawing-room heroes had their precursors in the novels of Jane Austen. Edward Ferrars, for example, is as insipid a principal male character as any in Dickens's novels. Like other drawing-room heroes, Ferrars exists as a reward for the heroine. He speaks in the neutral norm of the respectable gentleman of the period. The essence of this written mode of speech is its formal, stodgy prose. The following is a typical example of his language:

I thought it my duty ... independent of my feelings, to give her the option of continuing the engagement or not, when I was renounced by my mother, and stood to all appearance without a friend in the world to assist me. In such a situation as that, where there seemed nothing to tempt the avarice or the vanity of any living creature, how could I suppose, when she so earnestly, so warmly insisted on sharing my fate, whatever it might be, that any thing but the most disinterested affection was her inducement? (Sense and Sensibility, Vol III, ch. xiii, p. 367)

Edward's lack of sense in getting mixed up with Lucy Steele in the first place and his naivety in allowing himself to be 'trapped' by her wiles are a measure of his inadequacy as a substantial hero. He lacks common sense and it takes the sensible Elinor to explain exactly what Lucy's



'inducement' will be. The speech also encapsulates his gentlemanly role. He is motivated by an admirable, but distorted sense of duty to his mother and her feelings about his choice of a wife. He is almost tied to her apron strings and this does not enhance his image as a dominating, vigorous hero. The flat prose he utters is neither direct nor vigorous. The sentences are long and unwieldy (as spoken language), with parenthetical clauses and phrases adding to the confusion of the meaning. It is rigidly formal and elevated in places - 'disinterested affection was her inducement'. It also lacks the spontaneity of spoken language and exudes an air of artificiality which diminishes the personality of the speaker.

The principal male character in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, Edmund Bertram, is, like Harmon and Clennam, bogged down by his role in the plot. But first of all he is basically a drawing-room hero complete with all the respectable behaviour, including 'correct' speech, expected of heroes in the English nineteenth century novel.

Edmund is Fanny's sole support at Mansfield and is crucial in her development. He is in many ways an admirable character, but he is never a dominating, vigorous hero. To the modern reader his values and beliefs may seem priggish. It is perhaps an indication of our moral perversity that modern preference in fiction, if not in real life, is for

flawed but vivacious characters such as Mary and Henry Crawford.

Edmund's initial speeches are used to support Fanny, to give her confidence in an otherwise hostile world. Their content also underpins his father's morality, the ethos of Mansfield Park, which Fanny embraces as her own. In his protector's role, Edmund displays his sympathy for his poor relation. This is expressed by a gentle, intimate mode of address. His vocatives include the endearments: 'My dear little cousin' and 'My dear little Fanny'. (Vol I, ch.ii, p.15) A more generally pervasive but subtler mark of his interest is his constant reference to her when he is speaking to her: he uses 'you' or 'your' fifteen times in nine lines of speech. (Vol I, ch.ii, p.15-16)

His consideration for Fanny is admirable but it is not a sufficient condition for heroic status. Edmund's mode of speech is symptomatic of his unheroic portrayal. His 'correct' style is the highest seal of his author's approval but it is often mannered and pompous and tends to undermine his vigour and masculinity. In comparison both Henry Crawford and Tom Bertram, two characters disapproved of by the author, have a less 'correct' speech mode based on a spoken style. This is meant to indicate that they are flawed but it also has the effect of making them natural, vigorous individuals.

The key word in Edmund's description is 'dull'. Three critics, ranging over a considerable period of time, use this term about his speech and character: 'a dull young man', 'a dull stick' and 'his conversation and conduct are predictably rhetorical and dull'.(19) The following speech is illustrative of this 'rhetorical and dull' style. In it he defends the clergy and their role in the community against criticism by Mary Crawford:

We do not look in great cities for our best morality. It is not there, that respectable people of any denomination can do most good; and it certainly is not there, that the influence of the clergy can be most felt. A fine preacher is followed and admired; but it is not in fine preaching only that a clergyman will be useful in his parish and his neighbourhood, where the parish and the neighbourhood are of a size capable of knowing his private character, and observing his general conduct, which in London can rarely be the case. The clergy are lost there in the crowds of their parishioners. They are known to the largest part only as preachers. And with regard to their influencing public manners, Miss Crawford must not misunderstand me, or suppose I mean to call them the arbiters of good breeding, the regulators of refinement and courtesy, the masters of the ceremonies of life. The manners I speak of, might rather be called conduct, perhaps, the result of good principles; the effect, in short, of those doctrines which it is their duty to teach and recommend; and it will, I believe, be every where found, that as the clergy are, or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation. (Vol I, ch. ix, p. 93)

I will not concern myself with the sentiments expressed about the encroachment of secularisation in the expanding cities. One eminent social historian has remarked on this issue: 'The problems of being a parish priest in an agricultural village were no guide to the cure of souls in

an industrial town or urban slum.'.(20) Bertram's good argument on the role of the clergy is lessened by the lack of vigour in his pompous,roundabout method of presenting it. The idea that the right moral behaviour of a comfortable clergyman will produce the same good conduct among the needy poor is indicative of Edmund's naivety and is the kind of narrow conservative thinking of his father and the 'upper classes who deformed religion in their own image'.(21)

This speech,and many of his other speeches,has the tone of a sermon. He is of course a clergyman,but even a clergyman need not be as dull as Edmund. The dogmatic simplicity of his ideas underscores his simple mind-style. His other speeches also illustrate his inability to read the character of others. For example,he constantly misinterprets the feelings of Fanny and the conduct of the Crawfords. He has a very dull perception for a hero of substance. Like Dickens's drawing-room heroes,Edmund Bertram is only a respectable gentleman fit as a reward for the heroine and acceptable to the reader of the middle-class in the nineteenth century.

Another clergyman who cuts a poor figure as a hero is the Reverend Edward Weston in Anne Bronte's novel Agnes Grey. He is as slight a hero as is Maylie or Woodcourt and is without any doubt simply a reward for the poor governess. Little information is given about him: he is sprung upon

the reader when the story is almost finished; he is first mentioned in chapter x and does not speak until chapter xii. Such a belated entry and brief appearance is hardly conducive to the creation of a dominating, vigorous hero. Weston, of course, is the product of a novice writer and is little more than the typical curate of romantic fiction; young, kindly, personable and idealised.

The speech mode of Weston differs slightly from the other drawing-room heroes already discussed. Weston sometimes shows signs of informality in his speech. These are, however, confined to the contraction of the awkward sounding 'do not' and verbs, as in the following example: ... don't let it go near the rabbit warren, for the gamekeeper swears he'll shoot it ... '. (ch. xii, p. 82) These tiny deviations from a rigid, written style of speech are probably simply a mark of development through time, and are not significant enough, or employed regularly enough, to make Weston's speech natural or vigorous. Signs of the representation of real speech in the language of principal characters can be seen as early as the works of Jane Austen. The hero of Persuasion is permitted to contract negative verbs: 'Don't talk of it, don't talk of it'. (ch. 12, p. 135)

At this point it is interesting to compare Weston's proposal speech with that of Maylie's and Woodcourt's.

Weston asks Anne to accompany him on a walk during which he proposes marriage:

My house is desolate yet, Miss Grey ... and I am acquainted now with all the ladies in my parish, and several in this town too; and many others I know by sight and by report; but none of them will suit me for a companion; in fact, there is only one person in the world that will: and that is yourself; and I want your decision. (ch.xxv, p.157)

This has all the bluntness of a business proposal. Weston has weighed up the alternatives and has decided on Anne. Sadly, he fails to realise what Anne would have desired. This calculated decision to propose after a practical appraisal of the marriage market is a little reminiscent of that more famous proposal by another clergyman, Mr Collins. This is no ardent, vigorous lover speaking. Weston is an artificially constructed figure and is more of a zero than a hero. (22)

Unlike the drawing-room heroes already examined, William Crimsworth in Charlotte Brontë's novel The Professor has the central role in the story. His centrality is principally because he is the narrator. But although as narrator he is ubiquitous, he still lacks the substance, vigour and masculinity needed to make him a memorable hero. He is, to be sure, a small 'hero' fighting a small 'heroic' battle in everyday life, one of those people whom Victor Hugo has called 'obscure heroes, sometimes greater than the illustrious ones'. (23) This expansion of

the concept 'hero', however, has its roots in the literary notion of realism and is not conducive to the characterisation of traditional, substantial heroes. In fact, implicit in this idea of an ordinary 'hero' lie the seeds of the traditional hero's decline in the realistic novel of the nineteenth century.

Crimsworth is a mere principal character despite his central role. He has much in common with Arthur Clennam as an insubstantial hero. Both lack physical presence; both are gloomy characters; both have undergone considerable psychological suffering which has scarred them. Consequently, both men have partially retreated from personal relationships and this has had an effect on their language. Like Dickens's drawing-room hero, Crimsworth is also hesitant and unsure of his worth. He exhibits these negative qualities through his speech.

But the most salient point in Crimsworth's speech which undercuts any chance of an heroic portrayal is its feminine characteristics. This is perhaps the outcome of the author's desire to create a hero with the virtues and gentleness of a woman.

The following examples of Crimsworth's speech demonstrate all the points made above. As Crimsworth is the narrator most of his long speeches are in 'voiceless soliloquy' (ch. xii, p. 108) while his direct speech is rendered as brief responses. This in itself is detrimental

to a vigorous portrayal as direct speech is generally more dynamic. An examination of Crimsworth's responses to the vigorous probing of Hunsden (ch.vi,pp.47-54) should serve as a means of illuminating his flaws as a vigorous hero. Crimsworth has lost his menial job through the fault of Hunsden. In the dialogue which ensues, the general tone prefigures that between Rochester and Jane Eyre when she is first interviewed by him. (Jane Eyre, ch.13, pp.152-56) In this scene Crimsworth has Jane's submissive role. He is at once disadvantaged in his portrayal by the unfavourable contrast between him and the powerful, masculine figure of Hunsden. The difference in speech styles also underlines Crimsworth's effeminate gentility. Despite the provocation of having lost his livelihood through Hunsden's interference, Crimsworth's anger is verbally constrained to the level of invective one would expect of an angry lady. He uses the feeble token invective 'nonsense' twice, and the even weaker exclamation 'stuff' is uttered once only. The avoidance of strong, taboo words and coarse language is even today a convention in fictional female speech. In the nineteenth century English novel the convention was rigidly adhered to in the case of the speech of ladies, but substitute oaths of some vigour were acceptable in the speech of male characters in appropriate contexts. This sop to realism was often a means of making a male character credibly vigorous and masculine.



Crimsworth's speech also exhibits general expressions of surprise and uncertainty which suggest, if not effeminacy, then a lack of that positive quality we expect from substantial, manly heroes. These features are generally betrayed by a recurring pattern of questions, repetitions and exclamations: 'Nonsense! bread is bread and salary is a salary ... Looking steadily to the needful! ... How can I do otherwise? ... Influential relations? Who? I should like to know their names! ... Stuff! ... Why do you ask me twice? How can hands ... aristocratic palms?'. There are many other examples in the four pages of dialogue in this scene. This pattern of indecisiveness, his reluctance to make a direct assertion and his use of genteel invective highlight a personality lacking in the positive vigour of a substantial hero.

In her preface to the novel, Charlotte Brontë affirms her intention of making her 'hero' ordinary to comply with real life. There is little doubt that she succeeds. In nineteenth century fiction the convention has been to formulate women's speech to show signs of non-assertion, indefiniteness, uncertainty, deference, and a marked politeness. (24) By rendering Crimsworth's speech in this manner, Charlotte Brontë precludes an heroic portrayal in the traditional way. Crimsworth consequently becomes another insipid drawing-room hero in the nineteenth century English novel.

From the perspective of the reader who expects the male principal character to be a dominating, vigorous, masculine hero at the centre of the novel's action, the drawing-room hero is a failure. He is portrayed as the representative of a class rather than as an individual. Substantial heroes, on the other hand, although they may be individuals in a social class, are not simply representative of that class. They are first and foremost individuals and are, unlike drawing-room heroes, usually at odds with the values and beliefs of the society in which they live.

Dickens's drawing-room heroes are representative of the middle-class. As such they are unable to indulge in heroics, as the essence of heroic action is vigorous, individual action, very often directed against the society which has moulded the drawing-room hero. These principal male characters, and those of Jane Austen and the Brontës, conform to the standards of their class. They have been made acceptable to the contemporary reader by their respectability. The drawing-room hero must never be ill-bred. He is never given the opportunity to be vigorous, dominating, masculine or memorable and as a result he is dull and insipid.

The drawing-room hero seems to have evolved from society's movement away from the idea of an individual hero. Such heroes are scarce in real life and most major authors have been content to use ordinary individuals as principal male

characters in their novels. This reflects life and is in accord with the notion of realism. Moreover, the ordinary life and experience of an author is a 'determiner of the kind of hero' he selects.(25) The selection ground of the major nineteenth century English authors was the burgeoning middle-class; formal, respectable, conformist, increasingly standardised in thought and speech as industrial mass-production influenced taste and values, and assured in the idea that their morality and beliefs were absolute. 'Correct' speech is a concomitant of such a society. However, the consequence of 'correct' speech in the mouths of novel heroes is the creation of grey, dull, insipid drawing-room protagonists.

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### CHAPTER THREE: THE HERO AS MENTOR

The drawing-room hero is only one type of ineffectual hero whose emergence in large numbers in the English nineteenth century novel accelerated the decline of the traditional heroic principal male character. The mentor hero is another. Similar to his drawing room colleague, he too is a respectable gentleman and speaks in an artificial, formal written mode. He differs in emphasis, however. While the drawing-room hero is often little more than a reward for the heroine, the wise, counsellor hero is often much more functional.

Mentor heroes are structured to fulfil a thematic purpose, generally in relation to the development of the heroine. In his role as counsellor he guides the immature heroine through moral and social crises towards maturity. Quite often he is also rewarded by attaining the hand of the heroine in marriage. The mentor hero has, therefore, a functionary role which, although important, is not the dominating central role of a substantial hero. The focus of interest is always his young charge. The mentor stands just outside her spotlight, somewhat obscured by her lustre. He lacks, therefore, the force of impact of an heroic character who acts as the novel's centre of interest.

The hero as mentor is not the creation of the nineteenth century English novel. Perhaps the most famous mentor is

Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison whose goodness as an exemplar is unbelievable. Grandison, it has been suggested, is the original of Jane Austen's mentor heroes.(1) Consequently, with Richardson's eighteenth century mentor as her model, it is not surprising that Jane Austen's work contains the best illustration of the mentor hero in the nineteenth century English novel.

The decorous, well-ordered society of Jane Austen's fictional world is hardly a breeding ground for memorable and exciting heroes given to vigorous, individualistic behaviour. There is no place or approval in her world for those who dare to upset the ordered moral and social order. Standards are agreed and set by what is considered proper and decorous. Failure to live up to these standards, or to deviate from them, marks the ill-bred and unrefined. In their own way, Jane Austen's characters are as 'respectable' as those of the Victorian authors.

In Jane Austen's fictional world the principal male character is well-bred and usually a county gentleman. His speech matches his refinement. This means that it conforms to a rigid, formal written mode. In addition it contains no impropriety or vulgarism; it must always be fit to be heard in the drawing-rooms of those county gentleman and ladies who grace Jane Austen's novels.

The constraints of their role deny Jane Austen's mentors the chance of an heroic portrayal. Their role is functional:

their speech constructed to instruct. But by its nature, instruction requires reason and caution: it has to warn against the consequence of impulsive action and as a result excludes enthusiasm, passion and spontaneity. The implications of this rational, calculating approach to life affect characterisation, for speech is a potent indicator of personality. For example, as Thomas Hardy remarks, 'social refinement' - of which speech is a most important indicator in fictional portrayal - 'operates in a way which is more often than not prejudicial to vigorous portraiture'.(2) By implication, the converse of this is that vigorous, heroic language is more likely to be spontaneous and natural. A written mode of speech distances rather than attracts; it standardises and neutralises those features of personality required to individualise a character in a memorable fashion.

The most celebrated of Jane Austen's mentors is George Knightley: he is certainly the most overtly presented as a wise counsellor. Knightley appears almost as often as the heroine of Emma does. Yet, despite this frequent exposure, he is never as memorable as Emma. It is the young heroine who grips the reader's attention and imagination. It is she who makes the errors of judgement that dictate the plot, and whose vulnerability and vibrancy as a developing personality attracts and delights the reader.



However, Knightley's cautionary role does not quite turn him into the 'dull stick' that is Edmund Bertram, but it does have a constraining effect on his credibility as a warm, human being. For although Jane Austen endows him with a certain masculine dignity, his constant rectitude, necessary as it is for Emma's guidance, makes his portrayal tedious at times. He does show some weakness; he is jealous of Frank Churchill for example, but generally his behaviour is that of a paragon of virtue. As a contemporary of Jane Austen shrewdly observes, 'we have little interest in unalterable felicity'. (3) This is perhaps truer of the heroic character than any other.

The character of Knightley is built up to a large extent through the narrative prose. The reader is told of his kind actions and, generally, these consist of little to indicate a dynamic hero: he puts up manfully and patiently with Mr Woodhouse's inane chatter; he helps Mr Martin, a social inferior, although this may seem like patronage to the modern reader; he lends his carriage for the use of Miss Bates and he gives her gifts of newly picked apples from his orchard. These are all very commendable, charitable actions but they are part of the trivia of real life, hardly the heroic actions of a memorable hero. They are, in fact, the actions of the 'small hero' mentioned by Victor Hugo.

The following sample of Knightley's direct speech shows how the written, formal mode undercuts his chances of appearing as a vigorous, memorable hero. The necessity for him to appear morally and socially respectable in accordance with his role and function precludes any other style:

I do not know what you mean by 'success' ... success supposes endeavour. Your time has been properly and delicately used if you have been endeavouring for the last four years to bring about this marriage. A worthy employment for a young lady's mind! But if, which I rather imagine, your making the match, as you call it, means only your planning it, your saying it to yourself one idle day, 'I think it would be a very good thing for Miss Taylor if Mr Weston were to marry her' and saying it again to yourself every now and then afterwards - why do you talk of success? - Where is your merit? What are you proud of? - you made a lucky guess; and that is all that can be said. (Vol I, ch. i, pp. 12-13)

This is Knightley's rebuke to Emma for her silly notion that she has 'match-making' abilities. It is designed to be instructive. Knightley, like a good mentor, very patiently distinguishes for Emma the difference between fanciful imagination and practical endeavour. His defining of 'success' is a mark of his mentor role as is his demand that Emma establish proof for her assertions. Note also the implied reprimand of her life-style in the transferred epithet 'idle' in 'one idle day'. His use of a natural mode is restricted to reporting Emma's idiom as if he were attempting to dissociate himself from such inelegant usage. The short speech is also sprinkled with words crucial to Jane Austen's preoccupation with decorum: 'endeavour ...

properly ... delicately ... endeavouring ... worthy ... good ... merit ... proud. Such a vocabulary suggests the speaker's mind style and its focus.(4)

Despite his faults as a hero of substance, Mr Knightley is a more impressive character than any drawing-room hero or any other of Jane Austen's mentors. As an older man he has the wisdom of age and experience which is some mitigation for his infallibility and his right to instruct. He has a consideration for others beneath himself in class and intellect, a trait shared with the dull Edmund Bertram, and he has a very pragmatic nature, which is also Mr Darcy's real strength. Knightley, however, has neither the dullness of Bertram nor the arrogance of Darcy. But his mentor role undercuts any likelihood of an heroic portrayal, and is so obvious that the novel becomes something of a 'sentimental education'.(5)

Knightley's language burdens him with a wisdom and a dignity but no profound dramatic, heroic role within which to employ them. His speech is so artificially formal that it makes no concession to the speech indicator 'don't' which is used even by the heroine. (Vol III.ch,xiii,p.429) He is so rigidly formal that he gives the impression that he lacks warmth and spontaneity. His love for Emma appears to be secondary to, and dependent upon, his shaping of her character. His guidance is also irritating as it consists of openly remonstrating with her about her conduct. His

constant preaching only undercuts his chances of appearing heroic.

In the following speech, Knightley rebukes Emma for her rudeness to Miss Bates:

I cannot see you acting wrong without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character age and situation? - Emma, I had not thought it possible. (Vol III, ch.vii, p.374)

He goes on, further outlining the enormity of her offence, and ends:

I will tell you truths while I can, satisfied with proving myself your friend and faithful counsel, and trusting that you will sometime or other do me greater justice than you can do now. (Vol III, ch.vii, p.375)

These are the words of an experienced adviser; strict, blunt but just. The language is neither too harsh for the offence nor euphemistic not to strike home sharply on the sensibility of Emma: 'insolent' and 'unfeeling' strike just the right chord in summing up the unmannerly behaviour of a young person towards an older one in unfortunate circumstances. Finally, the admonition to improve is the seal of the mentor.

Henry Tilney's principal function is that of mentor to the very young heroine of Northanger Abbey. He is less grave and his perfections less wearisome than the older mentor Knightley. In addition, Henry's instruction is rendered in an amusingly satirical form.

Tilney teaches the innocent Catherine through satire. His parody of the shallow conversation of the middle-class is designed to illustrate the difference between reality and romance. The following speech by Tilney satirises the convention in romantic novels that heroines keep journals:

Not keep a journal! How are your absent cousins to understand the tenour of your life in Bath without one? How are the civilities and compliments of every day to be related as they ought to be, unless noted down every evening in a journal? How are your various dresses to be remembered, and the particular state of your complexion, and curl of your hair described in all their diversities, without having constant recourse to a journal? - My dear madam, I am not so ignorant of young ladies' ways as you wish to believe me; it is this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature may have done something, but I am sure it must be essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal. (Vol I, ch.iii, p.27)

Tilney is himself an avid reader of romances, as is Catherine. But Henry reads for pleasure and does not mistake the world of romantic fiction for the real world. Catherine has not learned to separate romantic fiction from reality. It is Henry who guides her to this distinction.

A comparison of the tenor of the above speech with Knightley's illustrates the different styles of instruction. Tilney's comments on the trivia of journal entries are a trenchant observation on the silliness of young heroines in romantic fiction and, by implication, the silliness of writers of such fiction. The irony of 'the easy style of writing' is worth noting, while the use of 'agreeable' has damning connotations of 'faint praise' in a Jane Austen novel. The use of such 'imprecise' language is a sign of adverse criticism of the person, or object, to whom it is applied.(6)

However, Henry, although amusing, is a passive character and he fails to develop as the novel proceeds and so fails to grip the reader's attention. Like Knightley, Henry comes into his fictional world rather too neatly packaged to be memorably interesting. He is also less credible as a mentor than Knightley, for his age makes his experience, wisdom and maturity rather unlikely. His counsel is wise, but the content of his mocking speech suggests to the reader a mind preoccupied with trivia. An heroic character would hardly be concerned with 'the price of muslin'. (Vol I, ch.iii, p.28) His keen observation of the shallowness and folly of empty-headed rattles such as the Thorpes and Mrs Allen is commendable, but it is not a sufficient condition for an heroic portrayal.

Tilney's epigrammatic mode of speech is also detrimental to an heroic portrayal. For the modern reader, this style has associations with glibness, foppery and superficiality. Moreover, the author's young voice filters through in Henry's speech and strains his credibility as an individual. This is the converse of the advantage of having a character 'take over as leading proponent of Jane Austen's viewpoint', which one critic fails to mention.(9) Epigrams, expressed regularly in speech, reinforce the impression of an artificial, mannered mode of speech which undermines the spontaneity of spoken language. His portrayal is further undermined by Jane Austen's later use of this kind of glib smartness in the speech of her flawed characters such as the Crawfords, the Eltons and Frank Churchill.

The following examples of Henry's epigrammatic smartness indicate a character who is clever, smart, and concerned only to observe, not to act. He is altogether much too passive to qualify as a substantial hero:

(On teasing) ... nothing in the world advances intimacy so much. (Vol. I, ch. iii, p. 29)

(On emotion) ... surprise is more easily assumed, and not less reasonable than any others. (Vol I, ch. iii, p. 26)

(On partners) ... Nobody can fasten themselves on the notion of one, without injuring the rights of the other. (Vol I, ch. x, p. 76)

(On dancing and marriage) ... Fidelity and complaisance are the principal duties of both ... man has the advantage of choice, women only the power of refusal. (Vol I, ch. x, p. 76)

These epigrams perform two functions: they act as teaching points and they announce implicitly the young author's perspective of her society. Henry's portrayal is depreciated by his function. He comes across as a likeable,if superficial young gentleman mentor but never as a vigorous,dominating,active hero.

Fitzwilliam Darcy differs from the other mentors in that he learns from his heroine. This,however, is insignificant in terms of his status as a memorable hero. He belongs to the same class as Knightley and Tilney and uses the same written mode of speech. His central flaw is pride,a point very important for the plot. His rigid inflexibility makes Elizabeth's attraction to him rather incredible. In the end it is she who teaches him that true propriety is that refinement which is tempered by humanity.

Darcy speaks with a frozen formality which underlines his arrogance and distances him from the inhabitants of Meryton as well as the reader. The following is a sample of his pontificating style:

Will it not be advisable,before we proceed on this subject,to arrange with rather more precision the degree of importance which is to appertain to this request,as well as the degree of intimacy subsisting between the parties? (Vol I,ch.x,p.50)



The tenor of this speech is reminiscent of a barrister intimidating a witness. Mr Darcy is a stickler for precision and insists on a definition of terms. His folly, as Elizabeth points out, is that he allows 'nothing for the influence of friendship and affection'. (Vol I, ch.x, p.50) In short, he lacks compassion for human frailty.

Like the worst kind of mentor he is a walking book of rules and regulations which he applies rigidly regardless of the context. His speech is sprinkled with glib epigrams which he uses to back up his viewpoint: 'To yield without conviction is no compliment to the understanding of either' (Vol I, ch.x, p.50) he tells Elizabeth. But his epigrams lack the wit and humour of Tilney's. His merely underline the inflexibility and gravity of his personality.

Darcy sees the world as a construction of social and moral laws to be applied rigorously without recourse to a consideration of the matrix of human emotions which generates conduct. In this part of the novel, Darcy's speech is a symptom of his belief in an ordered, correct, rational world. He is unable to come to terms with the world as it 'is' but must have it as it 'ought to be'. Elizabeth teaches him that such a world, devoid of humanity, is as much a romantic notion as a world constructed from the imagination.

His concern with order is evident in the short speech above. His word selections, for example, form a meaningful pattern which manifests this concern: 'arrange ... more precision ... degree of importance ... degree of intimacy!'. The modifications in the sentence structure indicate a mind-style anxious to make meaning precise. The use of such structures in ordinary conversation is tiresome and pedantic.

It would not be unduly harsh to claim that the Darcy in the first part of the novel is unrecognisable from that at the end. His sudden change of character is designed to make him a fit reward for Elizabeth but does nothing for his portrayal. He is reduced to drawing-room hero proportions for the sake of a tidy ending and any chance of a vigorous portrayal is thus excluded.

Darcy's speech is symptomatic of his non-heroic portrayal. He is introduced with an insulting, insensitive remark about Elizabeth in her hearing:

Which do you mean? ... She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me. (Vol I, ch.iii, pp.11-12)

This speech has a brusqueness which breaches honesty to become rudeness. The formal structure and vocabulary of the written mode lend a coldness and stiffness to the tone. His

dismissal of Elizabeth also calls into question his discernment. Finally, the stress on 'me' (italicised in the text) indicates his feeling of self-importance, while his selection of 'slighted' to describe Elizabeth's wallflower condition at that particular moment is insensitive. Darcy is overweeningly proud and this is essential to the plot. But it does not enhance his portrayal as a memorable hero. His notion of pride is suspiciously like arrogance to others for it seems to be based on class distinction and social manners.(8)

In the end Elizabeth uncovers the real Darcy and comes to understand something of her own weakness - prejudice. But Darcy's far too rapid development is unconvincing, nor does it make him a substantial hero. He is in fact tamed and turned into a rather passive, respectable gentleman, having lost even the slight impression of vigour that his former rudeness and inflexibility gave him.

To a certain extent Jane Austen is a prisoner of her technique of classifying her characters from their deviation from a written mode of 'correct' speech. Principal male characters are burdened with this written mode which is detrimental to vigorous portrayal. Instead of appearing heroic, mentors come across as 'pert and priggish' and 'irritatingly superior'.(9) But despite the validity of this criticism, Jane Austen's mentors never quite become the tedious 'faultless monsters' of which Hazlitt

disapproved.(10) However,in a 'realistic, bourgeois-centred,anti-heroic' world her mentors fail to achieve the stature of heroes.(11)

After Jane Austen the overt mentor is less in evidence in the serious,major English novel of the nineteenth century.In Dickens's work,for instance,only John Jarndyce in Bleak House,and Eugene Wrayburn in Our Mutual Friend are cast in the mentor role. As the former is neither young nor a legitimate suitor for Esther's hand,I have excluded him from my set of male principal characters. Wrayburn I have also omitted mainly through lack of space and partly because his instant conversion from 'cad' to 'hero' does not ring true.

The mentor also features in the works of minor authors in the nineteenth century,Disraeli's for example,but as these lie outwith the scope of my research I have omitted them.

In Charlotte Brontë's novel Shirley,Louis Moore is actually a professional tutor. Louis Moore is also disadvantaged by this role and its associations with 'governess' which invite feminine comparison. His reserved,gentle passive nature highlights this comparison,and lends support to the criticism that he is little more than a 'Brontëan heroine flimsily disguised in waistcoat and spectacles'. (12) To satisfy the author's thesis,however,Louis is portrayed as half a man: Robert is the other, masculine half . Together

they represent Charlotte Brontë's ideal man. The idea of submission and dominance merged in one to make the ideal is writ large in her novels. She has observed that she herself found it natural to submit providing that she found the right person. (13)

In the characterisation of Louis Moore, Charlotte Brontë overturns our expectations by having Shirley, a dominant heroine, fall in love with him, a passive male. The passive, ailing Caroline Helstone and the vigorous, aggressive Robert Moore make up the more conventional sweetheart pairing of a nineteenth century novel.

Because he is shorn of his masculine characteristics, Louis Moore's impact on Shirley strains credibility. But Shirley is influenced by him. She uses him as a standard by which to judge her suitors, Robert Moore and Sir Philip Nunnely, whom she finds wanting. She learns from Louis to consider anew what aspects of human relationships are most important: her learning is reinforced by her romantic nostalgia of her earlier relationship with him. In rejecting Philip she rejects further wealth and higher social status; in rejecting Robert she rejects the traditional notion of a strong, manly lover; in choosing a non-assertive male as a complement to her own strong personality she is made complete - according to Charlotte Brontë's thesis.

Unfortunately for Louis Moore, his place in the author's thesis diminishes his portrayal as an heroic principal character. His speech mode is symptomatic of the causes which contribute to his status as a very ordinary protagonist. In addition, his femininity is underlined immediately he is introduced. His looks are compared with those of his sister Hortense and his nature contrasted unfavourably with his brother. This scene also establishes his lesser importance as a protagonist than Robert or Caroline. He speaks only three very short sentences in this, his introductory scene, which is dominated by the presence of Robert.

When next Louis appears he speaks as a mentor. In the following conversation with Shirley, Louis speaks first:

This September afternoon is pleasant ... .

Even for you?

As pleasant for me as for any monarch.

You take a sort of harsh, solitary triumph in drawing pleasure out of the elements, and the inanimate and lower animal creation.

Solitary but not harsh. With animals I feel I am Adam's son; the heir of him to whom dominion was given over 'every living thing that moveth upon the earth'.

And my roses smell sweet to you, and my trees give you shade.

And ... no caprice can withdraw these pleasures from me: they are mine. (Vol III, ch. iii, p. 517)

These remarks are counsels about the value of the natural things in life. They are resonant with the philosophy of

Wordsworth which suggests Louis's romantic outlook on life. Mrs Gaskell writes in her biography of Charlotte that she regarded Wordsworth as a 'first-rate' poet, so the influence is hardly surprising. (14) Louis seeks pleasure in nature, as I suspect Charlotte Brontë did in her writing, because he had abandoned attempts to deal with ordinary people. No caprice can interfere with his pleasure in nature: personal relations are more delicately balanced and more easily interfered with. Louis is secure in his love of the natural world as this requires only a passive interaction - the inanimate and the non-human cannot hurt the ego. Louis is no man of action and is disadvantaged in his relations with people, for valuable and lasting relationships require active participation and reciprocation. He is a passive observer of, and commentator on, the active world around him and as such a character can never hope to be a dynamic, memorable hero.

At other times, Louis's speech verges on the ridiculous when he indulges in an over-blown poetical mode:

Behold the metamorphosis! ... scarce imagined ere it is realised: a lowly nymph develops to an inaccessible goddess. But Henry must not be disappointed of his recitation, and Olympia will deign to oblige him. Let us begin. (Vol III, ch. iv, p. 557)

This is the language of the poet and pedagogue who carries his work into the intercourse of ordinary life. It does not

enhance an heroic image. Moreover, the allusions and imagery owe their origins to classical study - hardly the province of the man of action.

One important point which differentiates these early mentors from those that come later in the novels of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy is that while the heroines of the former invariably take counsel, those of the latter fail to take advice until it is too late to avoid disaster.

Gwendolen Harleth in Daniel Deronda is such a heroine. She fails to benefit from Daniel's guidance. She learns too late to avoid a life of tragedy, but in the end she turns to Daniel for advice. However, Daniel Deronda's role as a mentor is secondary to his role as the author's mouthpiece, and it is in the latter role that he features in another chapter. The rest of this chapter will focus on the mentors of Thomas Hardy.

In Far From the Madding Crowd, Bathsheba Everdene's resistance to the advice of Gabriel is responsible for the plot. Oak acts out his part overshadowed by Bathsheba's passionate, vibrant performance. She dominates the story. Gabriel hangs around like a faithful dog. His example serves as instruction to Bathsheba, although she ignores it until after disaster has struck.



Gabriel's speech mode, the fictional representation of rustic speech, is meant to illustrate his integrity and common-sense as a countryman. His very first utterances indicate his sound judgement. They also serve as a prefiguration of Bathsheba's vanity which is to play a vital part in the plot. (ch.1, p.41) In this scene Gabriel's stolid good sense is highlighted by his focus on her 'faults' rather than on her beauty alone. When he places Bathsheba's vanity in the context of women in general, Gabriel shows that he is no mere country yokel in demonstrating that his wit can move from the particular to the universal. (15)

The content of his speech is designed, however, to suit his rectitude and works against an heroic portrayal, particularly in his submissive attitude to life in general and Bathsheba in particular. His excessive loyalty to her and his willingness to appear when she 'whistles' is the behaviour of a sheepdog rather than a substantial hero.

His submissive nature is built up through his use of idioms which capture the essence of his acceptance of the vicissitudes of life. The heroes of the past literature I have referred to in an earlier chapter were heroes very often because they battled against adversity. When Bathsheba remarks on his fondness for his name, he replies: 'You see it is the only one I shall ever have, and I must

make the most of it'. There is a rustic inevitability about fate in life underlying the triteness of Gabriel's reply. It encapsulates his (and perhaps Hardy's) stoicism. Oak seems aware of the shackles imposed on him by his life. But he shows no desire to struggle against fate, only 'to make the most of it'. (ch.3,p.58)

Neither is the following admission of his inadequacy particularly heroic:

But I can't match you, I know, in mapping out my mind upon my tongue. I was never very clever in my inside. (ch.3,p.59)

This deficiency is the superficial one of inarticulacy. But Oak is not inarticulate. His use of imagery is witness to his ability in communicating easily and imaginatively. What he is really ashamed of is his inability to speak in the standard dialect. Hardy thus diminishes his 'hero' to ordinary proportions by allowing the reader an insight into such a trivial concern. A character self-conscious about his accent is hardly the stuff that heroes are made of.

Gabriel's passive and unheroic nature is further highlighted in his response to Bathsheba's rejection of his marriage proposal: 'Very well ... Then I'll ask you no more'. (ch.4,p.70) The dignity of this simple, direct reply is evident and his reaction is very practical, but it lacks the vigour and positive drive of the reply of an

heroic character. A comparison of this passive acceptance with Heathcliff's rage against heaven and hell in a similar position underlines the lack of vigour in Gabriel's portrayal. Again, when his sheep are killed and his livelihood ruined, Gabriel demonstrates an unbelievable stoicism: 'Thank God I am not married: what would she have done in the poverty now coming to me'. (ch.5,p.75) The sentiment is admirable in its unselfishness. It is remarkably akin to the stoicism of Job, and as incredible. There is more interest in a hero who 'shouts defiance at the Gods' - it is part of our Promethean mythology and perhaps psychologically necessary to our survival as a species. Gabriel fails as a hero because he lacks the vigour and passion to rise above adversity. Bathsheba recognises Gabriel's role: 'You have played the part of mentor to me many times ... ' she tells him. (ch.56,p.492) But her impulsive, passionate nature will not allow her to act on his good counsel. Gabriel is clearly an admirable man, but he is so excessively good, so excessively honest, so passive and so cautious that he fails as an heroic principal character.

Giles Winterborne is another Hardy hero who is stolid and passive, and whose example is meant to be counsel to the headstrong heroine. He is a much less rugged character than Gabriel Oak and his passivity is expressed in a gloomier melancholy redolent of the season he is named after. His

sensitivity, charity and honesty ring loud as examples for Grace Melbury to follow, but in the true tradition of the Hardy heroine she rejects his counsel. His passive acceptance of her rejection of his suit and his feeble attempts to win her mark him out as an unheroic principal male character.

Winterborne is a paler shadow of Oak, far too meek, virtuous and passive to be a hero in the traditional mould. Indeed, if Oak is a 'sheepdog' as I have suggested above, then Giles is more like a sheep in his behaviour.

His physical strength does not conjure up the image of a hero either: his death from influenza after spending a few nights in the open comes without any real Herculean effort to survive. The impression he leaves is of a character who is no more than a melancholy rustic, unsure of himself, over-humble, shifting from one foot to the other and with eyes down in deference to his 'betters'. Born in winter as his name implies, he is barren of positive growth; slowed by the process of hibernation, he is slow of thought and movement.

Such an image is not an heroic one and his speech contributes to its general impression. His basic speech mode is a token regional dialect, much the same as Gabriel Oak's. The following sample shows how near to a written mode it is, in keeping with his position as a male principal character:

Is it not enough that you see me here moiling and muddling for my daily bread while you are sitting there in your success, that you can't refrain from opening old wounds by calling out my name? (ch.25,p.207)

Apart from the less standard 'moiling', this short speech has more affinity with a written mode of speech than with a regional dialect. What success it achieves as representative of the way language is spoken comes from the contracted negative verb and the idioms.

This over-dilution of Giles's natural dialect adds to an already insipid portrayal: a more vigorous, natural rustic speech mode might well have enlivened his characterisation. His passivity and weakness are also constantly emphasised by the cumulative effect of the vocabulary selected to describe his manner of speaking: 'spoke quite anxiously', 'mildly admitted' (ch.9,p.102); 'with distress' (ch.9,p.103); 'with a sensation of heart-sickness' (ch.16,p.146); 'a little tremor' (ch.16,p.148); 'with much more reserve' (ch.28,p.235); 'with some hesitation' (ch.28,p.236); 'with great sad eyes' (ch.38,p.313) and 'almost fearfully'. (ch.39,p.320) This manner of speaking does not mark out the speaker as an assured, dominating, vigorous hero.

Giles's tendency to self-deprecation and to take a negative view of life are also less than heroic: 'She would hardly have been happy with me, ... I was not well enough educated: too rough in short.' he whines dejectedly.

(ch.31,p.256) While this may be a fairly valid view of the relationship,it is the outlook of one bound by rigid,social values. One purpose of a hero is to struggle against,and change,if possible,such superficial values. Giles's meek acceptance of the social norm marks him as a passive follower not a leader,a mere principal character and not a hero. His negative view of life is illustrated in the gloomy words and phrases he uses: 'life is short ... uneasy and fearful ... If one of us were to die ... If we should drop out of the world ... as I sank down dying'.  
(ch.38,p.310)

Giles Winterborne must certainly be one of the most unlikely heroes in the nineteenth century English novel. His example as an honest,loyal and good person is ignored by the heroine. He initiates no action in the plot,Fitzpiers has much more influence here,and while not entirely without interest,his gloomy,passive nature makes him an unsympathetic character. Nor can it be claimed that he holds the focus of interest in the novel: there is much more vigour and interest in the relationship between Grace and Fitzpiers. At the end of the novel Giles has been forgotten by all except Marty South,but his portrayal throughout the novel has been so insipid and shadowy that the reader can be forgiven for forgetting him long before the end.

Hardy's final mentor, Clym Yeobright in The Return of the Native, has more heroic aspirations than the unfortunate Giles. His tragedy, however, is that he lacks the ability, physical or intellectual, to carry out these aspirations or even to convince others that they are worthwhile. Like Giles, Clym is a mentor whose exemplary behaviour is ignored by a heroine whose values are those of the flesh and material comfort. As a vigorous hero in the traditional mould, Giles is a disaster. He is easily thwarted by mundane events and the very ordinary people around him. He is unequal to the task he burdens himself with in marrying Eustacia; he lacks the common sense to see her as she really is.

In true Hardyian fashion Clym is buffeted by the fates, in much the same manner as a classical hero. He suffers immensely, losing first his sight, then his mother and finally Eustacia. In addition he carries the heavy burden of guilt for their deaths. However, the comparison with a tragic, classical hero ends there. His struggle against the odds fails to engage interest because there is no positive struggle. Clym is no tragic hero; he is merely a passive victim. It is the struggle to overcome adversity against the odds which tempers an hero and makes him memorable.

In his role as mentor, Clym alienates his wife by demonstrating to her that her unhappiness, and dissatisfaction with life derives from her desire for

material things. Clym functions as an expression of Hardy's notion that only by making an accommodation with the natural environment can a person hope to attain contentment. One implication of this is that acceptance, compromise and passivity become more commendable attributes than vigorous assertion and struggle. Thus, in Hardy's ideal world there is no room for a hero.

His melancholy acceptance of fate leads Clym into the non-heroic indulgence of self-abasement. He comes across as an ordinary man crushed by fate not tempered by it. His speech is symptomatic of his unheroic portrayal. The following is a typical example of its high-flown literary style:

... Talk about men who deserve the name, can any man deserving the name waste his time in that effeminate way, when he sees half the world going to ruin for want of somebody to buckle to and teach them how to breast the misery they are born to? I get up every morning and see a whole creation groaning and travailing in pain, as St Paul says, and yet there I am, trafficking in glittering splendours with wealthy women and titled libertines, and pandering to the meanest vanities - I who have wealth and strength enough for anything ... . (Book 3, ch. 2, p. 199)

To begin with, his speech is a written mode. Here Clym condemns the kind of superficial life he has led in Paris. But the fiery effect such a speech might have had is dampened by the written, literary style in which it is uttered. Instead it has the tone of a mentor calmly and rationally sounding off at a world disapproved of.



Ironically this mode of speech distances him from the rustics of Egdon Heath with whom he seeks affinity.

Clym's inadequacy as a hero is voiced explicitly. Hardy shows us the 'hero' as seen through the eyes of the romantic, Eustacia, and the realist, Clym. Referring to his loss of sight, Eustacia says: 'If I were a man in such a position I would curse rather than sing'. Clym replies at some length in his mentor fashion:

Now, don't you suppose, my inexperienced girl, that I cannot rebel, in high Promethean fashion, against the gods and fate as well as you. I have felt more steam and smoke of that sort than you have ever heard of. But the more I see of life the more do I perceive that there is nothing particularly great in its greatest walks, and therefore nothing particularly small in mine of furze-cutting. If I feel that the greatest blessings vouchsafed to us are not very valuable, how can I feel it to be any great hardship when they are taken away? ... . (Book 4, ch. 2, pp. 276-7)

Here is the perspective of the pessimist who bows to fate. Heroic behaviour is essentially optimistic, and therefore life embracing, in its struggle to change things for the better. And in terms of fiction, it is the 'steam and smoke' of life that engages interest. Clym's dampening of that fire is one reason why he never becomes more than an ordinary principal character.

In the following speech, Clym elaborates on Eustacia's romantic vision of a hero:

I suppose when you first saw me and heard about me I was wrapped in a sort of golden halo to your eyes - a man who

knew glorious things, and mixed in brilliant scenes - in short, an adorable, delightful, distracting hero? (Book 4, ch. 3, p. 178)

Clym suggests here that the image of the hero springs from the fancy. Clym's portrayal fits neither Eustacia's image of a romantic hero nor that of a traditional, vigorous hero of fiction. Symptomatic of this inadequacy is his mode of speech, the formality and artificiality of which undermines any possibility of an heroic portrayal. Moreover, his autonomy as a character is called in question, for he speaks, as one critic observes, 'in such neat summaries' that the reader has the impression that it is the author's voice he hears. (16)

In general, then, the role of mentor has contributed to the decline of the traditional hero in the nineteenth century English novel. At best he is no more than a principal male character. He stands always off-centre and slightly in the background, partially obscured by the heroine. The essence of his ineffectuality as a hero is his thematic role. As a wise counsellor and an exemplar of virtue he is unable to behave in the direct, impulsive, passionate and vigorously active way of a substantial hero. He has to condemn action and speech governed by impulse and passion and extol reason as the generator of behaviour. His wisdom often makes him seem infallible: he can appear priggish, as Mr Knightley sometimes does, or incomprehensibly eccentric like Clym

Yeobright. Moreover, flaws are much more interesting than virtues and the mentor is often virtually faultless which makes him tedious. Lastly, speech carries much of the burden of the mentor's role. It must be appropriate in mode and content to conform with realism. This in effect means a written mode as nearly 'correct' as is possible. The net result is a portrayal lacking individuality and vigour, both attributes necessary for the characterisation of an heroic principal male character.

### NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

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#### CHAPTER FOUR: THE HERO AS SPOKESMAN

So far I have argued that certain types of male principal characters in the nineteenth century English novel are far from being vigorous, dominating heroes. Moreover, I have attempted to show how role and function, so necessary in a novel intent on portraying reality, work against heroic portrayals. I have further pointed to the direct speech of these male principals as being symptomatic of their insipid, unheroic portrayals. I have also suggested that the environment of the nineteenth century, in which the novel protagonist operates, was no longer a suitable environment for individual heroism. Writers were increasingly focussing upon the problems of groups and classes within society and questioning injustices arising from archaic institutions. Often the problems and institutions take centre stage and even the principal characters are swamped. In the nineteenth century English novel society and its institutions either crush the individual or reduce him to conformity; he never succeeds in rising above it triumphantly. Society has become too powerful for the mere individual and the hero of previous social orders is an anachronism.

In order to expose social injustice or inequality, or to present an argument about some profound point or other, some nineteenth century authors have harnessed their male principal characters to speak for them in their novels.

Some authors manage to convey their attitudes, values and beliefs covertly. However, others openly use their male principals as spokesmen. It is this type of hero that I will deal with in this chapter.

One of the main problems in creating a spokesman is how to maintain his autonomy as a fictional character. Such is the burden of disseminating the author's views that it is almost impossible not to render the mouthpiece as a puppet. George Eliot's mouthpieces, for example, are ludicrous. Characters such as spokesmen 'suffer from the unqualified approval' of their authors and come across as puppets. (1) The spokesman becomes a contrived construction to preach the author's message to the reader and in consequence loses much of his interest as an individual. He becomes a mere extension of the author and contributes to the decline of the vigorous, individualistic hero.

The drastic consequences of the manipulation of male principal characters as mouthpieces are best exemplified in the novels of George Eliot. An intellectual with a serious turn of mind, George Eliot found it almost impossible in her later, larger novels, to resist preaching to her readers. At least two of her heroes, Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda, are disasters as heroes for they are never allowed to develop characters of their own.

It is worth noting that George Eliot seems to have felt that the novel had outgrown the traditional 'hero'. Realism

is very much a part of her craft and realism shifts the focus away from the grand to the ordinary. (2) In Adam Bede she observes that there are few heroes in real life. (ch.xvii,p.174) At the same time Adam is as near the substantial hero type in some ways than most other male principals in the nineteenth century English novel. However,her first 'hero' in the short story Amos Barton is perhaps more typical of the way she saw male principal characters as very ordinary persons. Mario Praz's observation that she seems to have disliked the traditional hero is certainly well supported by her rendering of heroes in the later novels. (3)

As the two George Eliot characters,Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda, are,in my view,the most obvious of the spokesmen heroes in the major novels in this study,they will form the focus of discussion,in this chapter,into the effect of their function and its implications for their direct speech. In addition the spokesmen heroes of Dickens and Hardy will also be discussed.

In Felix Holt,George Eliot seems less interested in an heroic portrayal than in communicating a political message. Felix is controlled by her;his behaviour is manipulated to persuade us of his integrity; his speech is artificial. Felix's rhetoric is incredible if not always ludicrous. His failure as a hero is accelerated by his unnatural speech mode. Contemporary critics had harsh words to say about his

portrayal. Henry James, for example, calls him a 'fragment' and an 'insubstantial character'. (4) Modern critics are in general, agreed that he is an inadequate hero figure. Moreover, the increasing interest in the language of speech as textual evidence has highlighted Felix's speech mode as a major contribution to his failure. Walter Allen, for instance, observes that Felix 'habitually speaks as no man ever did, addressing Esther as though she were a public meeting or a class of schoolgirls to be scolded'. (5)

Felix's over-blown rhetoric evolves from the author's anxiety to get her political message across to her 'public meeting' of readers. But it undermines her principal character's individuality. Felix is meant to be a political Radical. He is created in the image of an intelligent, educated working man who is prepared to set aside his own ends and work for the betterment of his class. But Felix is 'almost a propagandist's dummy' (6) and George Eliot's view of radical political change is tempered with caution. For her, radical change should come about slowly and should be channelled through the education of the lower classes. Her portrayal of unsavoury radical agents seems to indicate an unconscious evaluation of her idea of uneducated, unthinking working class behaviour. What the lower orders needed, George Eliot seems to imply, was an educated, enlightened working class figure such as Felix, to lead the working movement towards political equality. But



such circumspect 'radicalism' is easily contained by existing conservative structures in society: radical changes include sweeping aside existing laws which are clearly unjust to large sections of the community. So, while Felix is not exactly a 'white man's nigger' (7), as a modern critic describes Stephen Blackpool, he is certainly no Radical in the accepted sense of the word. He adopts middle of the road strategies, which is sensible and practical politics but hardly conducive to radical change, or to an heroic portrayal. Another critic observes that Felix is much more concerned to constrain than to lead the workers. (8) George Eliot restrains him from being an active radical and makes him the voice (her voice) of reason. Thus, having lost his autonomy as a character - 'Felix Holt's opinions are George Eliot's opinions' (9) - he loses his substantiality as a hero.

Felix's speech mode is designed for his functional role as mouthpiece for the author, but unsuitable for an heroic portrayal. The following long speech is typical of his style:

The way to get rid of folly is to get rid of vain expectations, and of thoughts that don't agree with the nature of things. The men who have had true thoughts about water, and what it will do when it is turned into steam and under all sorts of circumstances, have made themselves a great power in the world: they are turning the wheels of engines that will help to change most things. But no engines would have done, if there had been false notions about the way water would act. Now, all the schemes about voting, and districts, and annual parliaments, and the rest, are engines, and the water or steam - the force that

is to work them - must come out of human nature - out of men's passions, feelings, desires. Whether the engines will do good work or bad depends on these feelings; and if we have false expectations about men's characters, we are very much like the idiot who thinks he'll carry milk in a can without a bottom. In my opinion, the notions about what mere voting will do are very much of that sort. (Vol II, ch. xxx, p. 250)

Here Felix is addressing a crowd of mostly working men. It is doubtful if any could have followed the convoluted sentence structures of this speech. This is the language mode of a bore: by no stretch of the imagination can this be claimed as natural spoken language. It has to be read to unravel the imagery and the analogy. The political message of restraint is clearly the author's and this has a debilitating effect on the individuality of the speaker. He becomes an idea, a thesis, 'a moral assertion' (10) rather than a human being. This is the language of an intellectual mind, couched in a style and content preaching restraint: in short, it is George Eliot speaking through her mouthpiece.

Felix's language undermines his portrayal as it is contradictory to his intention of remaining among his own class. 'Why should I want to get into the middle class because I have some learning?' he asks. (Vol I, ch. v, p. 57) But his speech mode is a badge of that very class. To remain among the working class speaking as Felix does and hope to be accepted totally discloses a weakness in George Eliot's observation of real life. Felix's aspirations to remain among the workers is hardly credible in the light of

the following mode of speech: 'One may do a good deal of that and work with one's hands too.' (Vol I.ch.xi.p.115) This is the mode of speech of the middle class or of someone aping them. It is hardly a mode of expression guaranteed to consolidate his position among the workers.

Moreover, Felix makes extensive use of adverbials to diminish or intensify as an aid to precision and this is a singular mark of the speech of educated, middle class people. For instance, in one very short speech he uses the qualifiers, 'generally', 'rather' and 'yet', and in another brief reply he uses the intensifier 'certainly'. Later he uses the indirect hedge, 'I should think', a hedge much used by middle class speakers to imply that they have just made a balanced, rational judgement. (Vol I.ch.xi.pp.115-16)

In the dialogue between Felix and Chubb, from which the above speech samples are taken, George Eliot further highlights Felix's middle class style of speech by contrasting it with Chubb's sub-standard, uneducated dialect. The clear difference in styles does nothing to distinguish Felix as a working class man. But even in more elevated circles, his speech stands out as a written mode. In a brief exchange with Jermyn (Vol II.ch.xvii.p.163) in which Felix complains about election bribery, his speech is a formal written structure which illustrates the tendency to modification and qualification much loved by the educated middle class speaker. His opening words, 'I have

simply to complain' is a markedly.and insipidly polite. middle class manner of expressing a grievance: it is far from the vigorous and passionate speech of a working class radical. Moreover,his use of such qualifying structures as, 'with what purpose you,Sir.may know better than I do' and 'it appears' is too apologetic in tenor for a dominating hero.and is far too lacking in fire for a character supposed to be a crusading.working class radical.

Circumspection.restraint.reluctance to challenge existing law or to disrupt social order are hardly the attributes of a fierv.radical hero. Heroic behaviour should be active.vigorous and dominating. Heroes cause change.either in themselves or in society. They are not passive visionaries waiting patiently for time to eradicate injustice. It may well be in the nature of man to steal fire and not to beg for it.

Felix's idealisation is the author's message to her public that radical change is best achieved through the nobility of the educated working man.through reason and morality. Thus.her 'hero' is a poor thing.a sermon rather than a real person. His portrayal is sacrificed to accommodate the author's argument.

By creating rather ludicrous.puppet spokesmen to spread her ideas.George Eliot has made a considerable contribution to the decline of the vigorous.memorable.traditional hero. And while character as a function does not exclude character as

an end in itself, it does help to undermine the individuality of a character. The essence of a hero is his autonomy and the role of mouthpiece precludes this.

In her last novel, George Eliot constructs a mouthpiece to assert her vision for world Jewry. Daniel Deronda is a mere puppet speaking with his author's voice. He is a failure because he is an artificial creation to perform a function in the novel. Daniel is a channel for George Eliot's determination to re-educate people's thinking about Jews. (11) But merely by making a Jew the 'hero' of a novel in the nineteenth century, George Eliot is proclaiming a moral message to her readers. Through Deronda she champions the right of a minority group to be recognised as the equal, or superior, in intellect and vision to an Englishman. Her attempt is weakened by two points: she chooses a 'hero' who passes as a cultured Englishman in looks and education, and the portrayal is so wooden, so insipid and artificial that it undermines her intention.

As a result of her anxiety to portray Deronda in the best possible light, George Eliot idealises him as a 'knight errant'. (12) In her zeal to make him a good person she leaves him without a blemish, and without interest. In a conversation with Meyrick, Deronda says of himself: 'I was a wiseacre to answer you seriously'. (Book 5, ch. 37, p. 519) It is difficult not to smile at the unintended irony, for

Daniel is without doubt one of the dullest wiseacres in the nineteenth century English novel.

Daniel's speech is symptomatic of his function as a mouthpiece and as an insipid principal character. Barbara Hardy ascribes Daniel's failure as a hero mainly to the author's mistake of building a character to represent a race and not an individual, and partly to his speech mode. She comments, 'we do tire a little of all the very wise and sound sayings that Daniel produces from what is after all a somewhat limited experience'.(13) Daniel has never been developed fully and credibly as a character fit to carry the profound and weighty philosophy George Eliot wishes to communicate. Like Felix Holt, he crumples under the burden of his function as a mouthpiece.

Deronda's speeches echoing his author's message are too many to repeat here. However, here are a few of the more important ones and their locations: Daniel uses Mazzini as an example of what can be done to unify a nation (Book 6, ch. 42, p. 595); Daniel on pride in being Jewish (Book 7, ch. 50, p. 698); Daniel expounds on the sacred power of racial and national roots (Book 7, ch. 53, pp. 726-27); in a dialogue with Mordecai, Daniel commits himself to be trained as the future leader of his people. (Book 8, ch. 63, pp. 817-21) The speech below should illustrate how George Eliot uses Deronda as a mouthpiece:

I shall call myself a Jew ... But I will not say that I shall profess to believe exactly as my fathers have believed. Our fathers themselves changed the horizon of their belief and learned of other races. But I think I can maintain my grandfather's notion of separateness with communication. I hold that my first duty is to my own people, and if there is anything to be done towards restoring or perfecting their common life, I shall make that my vocation. (Book 8, ch. 61, p. 792)

The tenor of the speech is incredibly mature for someone so young and so recently aware of his nationality. The speech misses nobility by the implicit arrogance of 'I shall make that my vocation', although arrogance is not intended. George Eliot's own voice is apparent. In the first place she seeks to placate those among her readers who fear the unknown in the closeness of the Jewish community which would seem to exclude Christians, by making Daniel vow a radicalism in belief, a willingness to learn 'of other races' and to maintain links with these others. For the Jews among her readers there is the expression of the wish that they gain the restoration of their common life in an unspecified, common, unified nation.

Altogether, the content of Daniel's speeches is unlikely for a young, inexperienced man. It is, rather, the considered thought of a mature, reflective intellectual: it is George Eliot's thought uttered in remarkably stilted prose by her mouthpiece. The bulk of Daniel's speeches follow a similar pattern in content and mode. His direct speech is totally inapt for a credible character: it is a written

mode, composed for the pulpit and the lecture hall. Saddled with such a role and such a speech style Daniel has little chance of becoming a memorable, individual hero.

Another nineteenth century spokesman whose role and speech mode contribute to his failure as a credible hero is Stephen Blackpool in Dickens's Hard Times. The balance of social inequality and injustice is so heavily weighted against him that heroic struggle is made impossible. All that Stephen can do against the social institutions which grind him down is to curl up, turn his face to the wall and die. Stephen is a sad and sorry spectacle as a principal character.

Stephen is as much a spokesman for Dickens's views on marriage and divorce, and the Trade Unions, as Deronda and Holt are for George Eliot's views on Jewry and Radicalism. Moreover, besides the burden of his role, Stephen is hampered with a regional dialect which seems to bear little relation to any real dialect and which makes him appear foolish.

The placing of Stephen Blackpool at the centre of Hard Times must surely be seen as a symptom of the decline of the traditional, dominant, active hero. Stephen's portrayal is over-sentimentalised. He is very clearly a puppet manipulated by his author to persuade the reader of the evils of organised trade unionism. He is also used as a tragic example of the mindlessness of society's laws on marriage and divorce. Stephen, despite a central part in the



novel, is a stock figure of Dickens. These are invariably figures of great dignity (if over-sentimentalised), honesty and moral rectitude, despite their lowly class and lack of education, and they are almost always subject to exploitation, generally by the institutions of society. Joe Gargery, Great Expectations, Ham Peggotty, David Copperfield, and Betty Higden, Our Mutual Friend, are examples of the type.

These stock figures draw largely on the fictional tradition that simple rustics and the lower classes are essentially honest largely because they are untainted by education. The symbol of their veracity and integrity is a regional dialect. But although this method of character illustration works well enough with figures in minor roles, it has to be handled with care when used with principal characters: a balance between realism and dignity must be achieved. Stephen's regional dialect is little more than a sub-standard uneducated mode of speech. Moreover, it is so overdone that it destroys his dignity as a male principal character of great integrity. And although his ludicrous dialect is not alone responsible for his failure as an invigorating and memorable hero, it must shoulder much of the blame.

His consistent moral goodness and his self-destructive urge are unbelievable in a realistic fiction. F.R. Leavis has harshly criticised the portrayal as a white adaptation of

'Uncle Tom'. Most certainly his subservience, his over-developed conscience, his total acceptance of his fate is servile behaviour. There is, however, no doubt that Dickens expects the reader to respect this servile attitude to employers. Despite the fact that life was 'awful a muddle', Stephen knew his place in society, and this, for Dickens and others in Victorian middle class society, was perhaps the most desirable feature a working class man could have.

Instead of Stephen's speech underpinning his characterisation as a hero, it emphasises his role as victim and martyr. He is crushed by the weight of his insoluble marital state. His laments are suitably depressing:

From bad to worse, from bad to worsen. She left me. She disgraced herself everywhere, bitter and bad. She come back, she come back, she come back. What could I do to hinder her? I have walked the streets nights long, ere ever I'd go home. I have gone to the brigg, minded to fling myself over, and have no more on't. I have bore that much, that I were old when I were young. (Book I, ch.2, p.110)

There is no doubt that Stephen has much to moan about, but this kind of speech does not create an image of a vigorous, dominant hero. It is the speech of a very ordinary human being unable to cope with, or struggle against social forces. Moreover, Stephen is caught inextricably in a social order which has made him a prisoner of his mind and morals. He is unable to act like a hero as he is manacled to his wife

by the moral pressures of a 'respectable', middle class society. The idea of acting positively by leaving his wife and living with Rachael would have scandalised him. So Stephen bears his misery passively like a latter day Job.

Of course, this cheerless, melancholy portrayal of Stephen functions to elicit sympathy for him and thus underline the author's message. Dickens uses Stephen as an idealised working man to do two things. First, he attempts to underline the injustice of institutions towards the poor and the powerless. Second, he attempts to expose what he saw as the crassness and the potential threat to freedom of trade unionism.

But Stephen lacks the depth of character to carry Dickens's message convincingly. Here he is speaking some last words to his fellow workers, having told them that he will not join them against their employers:

... haply, when this question has been tak'n up and discoosed, there'll be a threat to turn out if I'm let to work among yo. I hope I shall die ere ever such a time cooms, and I shall work solitary among yo unless it cooms-truly, I mun do't, my friends; not to brave you but to live. I ha nobbut work to live by; and wheerever can I go, I who ha worked sin I were no heighth at aw, in Coketown heer? I mak'n no complaints o' bein turned to the wa', o' being outcasten and overlooken fro this time forrard, but I hope I shall be let to work. If there is any right for me at aw, my friends, I think 'tis that. (Book 2, ch.4, p.174)

Firstly, the over-done regional dialect is unconvincing and detracts from the seriousness of what is really a touching

speech. It is not an heroic speech, however. It lacks vigour, optimism, fire: there is no evidence of a passionate desire to fight against the majority. He is incapable of shouting defiance at the gods. Instead he accepts everything passively, even masochistically ('I hope I shall die'), and the entire tone of the speech is apologetic. Stephen is so idealised as to be unbelievable and his dialect makes him sound like a caricature of a regional speaker.

Moreover, Dickens further undercuts any chance of an heroic portrayal by making Stephen use a catch-phrase, a speech characteristic more appropriate in the dialect of an eccentric character or peripheral rustic. His constant use of 'awlus a muddle' makes a mockery of his central role and diminishes his credibility as a serious, dignified character. It places him on the same level as minor characters such as Mark Taplow with his irritating reiteration of 'little credit', Barkis with his "Barkis is willin'" and Grimwig with his forced and unfunny 'I'll eat my head'.

His role and his speech make Stephen Blackpool a pitiful figure, not a pitiable one as Dickens intended. No character could hope to retain any dignity saddled with the troubles and the speech mode of Stephen. His insipid, passive portrayal is just one more example of the extent of the

decline of the traditional,memorable hero in the nineteenth century English novel.

The themes that concerned Dickens in Hard Times also interested Thomas Hardy in Jude the Obscure. Marriage and the institutions which tie the helpless working class man to it and the general powerlessness of the poor are basic themes of both novels. In Hardy's work,Jude Fawley is used to spread his author's views on these issues. In Jude's portrayal the demise of the hero is clearly discerned. The essence of a traditional hero is his individuality. He requires the right milieu in which he can assert that heroic individuality. Jude exists in an era in which social institutions and society in general suppress individuality. He belongs to a social class upon which social inequality and injustice fall impartially. Jude's hardships are not his alone;they are the common lot of those in his class who aspire to better things before their time. This generalises his afflictions but fails to univeralize them to tragic proportions. The inability to obtain a higher education or a divorce are ordinary afflictions taken in the context of the times when these were denied to all ordinary,working-class people. Jude is merely one of these ordinary people and not a hero.

But where Jude departs from the ordinary is in his direct speech. The following speech,for example,is clearly an example of Hardy's ventriloquism:

I know that women are taught by other women that they must never admit the full truth to a man. But the highest form of affection is based on full sincerity on both sides. Not being men, these women don't know that on looking back on those he has had tender relations with, a man's heart returns closest to her who was the soul of truth in her conduct. The better class of man, even if caught by airy affectations of dodging and parrying, is not retained by them. A Nemesis attends the woman who plays the game of elusiveness too often, in the utter contempt for her that, sooner or later, her old admirers feel; under which they allow her to go unlamented to her grave. (Part Fifth, ch.1, p.279)

This is Hardy's view of women. It is the viewpoint of an older, more experienced, more intelligent man than Jude. Such a speech idealises Jude, making him a working class intellectual far above his capacity. Moreover, Hardy is too emotionally involved in his character for Jude to ring true. (14) As another critic observes, Jude 'is racked by drives he cannot control, drives he barely understands'. (15) This is hardly surprising for it is Hardy who is in the driving seat. But let Sue Bridehead sum up the inapt style of Jude's speech as she petulantly explains her dislike of Jude's remonstrances: 'Oh, well - you are not nice - too sermony'. And in a sense many of Jude's speeches are in fact sermons by Hardy on his topics of marriage (Part Fifth, ch.4, p.305); social injustice (Part Fifth, ch.4, p.306); education (Part Sixth, ch.1, pp.345-46), and on mankind's future (Part Sixth, ch.2, p.356)

One of the most salient features of Jude's speech which undercuts a vigorous portrayal is its literary quality. Although it is meant to underline his scholarly aspirations it is far too heavy with classical quotes and allusions to be credible. It is Hardy who speaks, and because he carries the burden of this artificial speech, Jude suffers as an individual and as a substantial hero. The following is a sample of Jude's speech:

Sue, you seem when you are like this to be one of the women of some grand old civilisation, whom I used to read about in my bygone, wasted, classical days, rather than a denizen of a mere Christian country. I almost expect you to say at these times that you have just been talking to some friend whom you met in the Via Sacra, about the latest news about Octavia or Livia, or have been listening to Aspasia's eloquence, or have been watching Praxiteles chiselling away at his latest Venus, while Phryne made complaint that she was tired of posing. (Part Fifth, ch.3, pp.290-91)

Jude the man and Jude the individual simply crumple up under the weight of the author's erudition.

And again, in the dialogue between Jude and Sue (Part Fifth, ch.4, pp.299-307) in which they discuss their views of marriage, the author's voice comes through very clearly. Two longer samples of Jude's direct speech from this discussion will show the peculiarly unnatural speech which results when a character is harnessed as a mouthpiece. In this scene, Jude tries to encourage Sue to go through a registry service of marriage. He proceeds to quote very fully and precisely from Deuteronomy:

We will.'For what man is he that hath betrothed a wife and hath not taken her? Let him go and return into his house,lest he die in the battle and another man take her'. So said the Jewish Lawgiver. (Part Fifth,ch.4,p.300)

This is not spontaneous conversation,nor is it strikingly heroic. Indeed,there is a pomposity about the display of knowledge. A few pages later,Jude enunciates Hardy's views on the effect of the sterile environment of a legal marriage on relationships:

Well,I don't know. The intention of the contract is good,and right for many,no doubt; but in our case it may defeat its own ends because we are the queer sort of people we are - folk in whom domestic ties of a forced kind snuff out cordiality and spontaneousness. (Part Fifth,ch.4,p.305)

This speech is more natural,containing as it does the idioms of conversation: 'Well,I don't know ... no doubt, ... defeat its own ends ... queer sort of people ... folk ... snuff out'. But the natural effect and rhythm of ordinary speech is in the end marred by the turgidity of the last few words. But in this particular case it is the content - the profundity of thought - and not the form,which signals Hardy's voice.

So,like Daniel Deronda,Felix Holt and Stephen Blackpool, the burden of being spokesman for the author affects the credibility of Jude Fawley also. The weight of his master's voice flattens him. Hardy's constant pontification creates



for Jude the impression of a weak,carping personality who is incapable of facing up to the vicissitudes of life with any strength of will. Although Jude gains some sympathy in the beginning,his subsequent miserable recourse to alcohol when things go wrong is decidely unheroic. It is the weak behaviour of an ordinary person frustrated by life; the behaviour of a mere principal character and not that of a substantial hero. And though Hardy,Dickens and George Eliot produce novels which tackle social issues within their own society,they do so by sacrificing their principal male characters by using them as spokesmen at the expense of their individuality as vigorous,dominant heroes.

In this chapter I have tried to show how the creation of spokesmen heroes helped oust the traditional hero from the major,nineteenth century English novel. Functioning as a blatantly didactic voice undercuts heroic characterisation. Moreover,spokesmen are made to adopt speech modes and behaviour appropriate to the dictum they espouse and disseminate. This works against a vigorous,autonomous portrayal as speech is rendered in an artificial,written mode. In addition,spokesmen heroes become tedious,for the reader becomes weary being preached at constantly. Consequently,the function of spokesman with its concomitant speech mode works against the rendering of vigorous,memorable,substantial heroes.

# NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 Gerald Bullet,George Eliot, London,1947,p.79
- 2 Mario Praz,The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction,Oxford,1969 edition,p.375
- 3 Praz,p.336
- 4 Both remarks are from unsigned reviews cited in:  
George Eliot:The Critical Heritage,edited by David Carroll,London,1971,p.275 and p.355
- 5 Walter Allen,George Eliot,London,1965,p.141
- 6 Walter Allen,The English Novel: A Short Critical History,London,1969 edition,p.218
- 7 F.R. and Q.D.Leavis,Dickens the Novelist,Harmondsworth, 1980 edition,pp.272-73
- 8 Alexander Welsh,Reflections on the Hero as Quixote,Princeton,N.J.,1981,p.135
- 9 Raymond Williams,'The Industrial Novels',The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism,edited by Ian Watt,Oxford, 1978 edition,pp.142-64,(p.161)
- 10 Peter Coveney,'Introduction to Felix Holt',Harmondsworth,1980 edition,pp.7-65 (p.14)
- 11 For George Eliot's views on the attitude of contemporary Christians to Jews see her letter to Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe in:  
Gordon Haight,George Eliot: A Biography,Harmondsworth,1985 edition,p.487
- 12 Praz,p.342
- 13 Barbara Hardy,'Introduction to Daniel Deronda',Harmondsworth,1976 edition,pp.7-30 (pp.19-20)
- 14 W.J.Harvey,The Art of George Eliot,London,1961,p.179
- 15 Irving Howe,'On Jude the Obscure',The Victorian Novel,edited by Ian Watt,pp.432-45 (p.441)

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE BYRONIC HERO

The influence of the Byronic hero has been most powerful in the category of fiction conveniently called romance, for in this form of fiction the author does not create real people 'so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes'. (1) Moreover, it was on the continent rather than in England that Byron was most influential. (2)

In the major nineteenth century English novel the influence of the Byronic hero has generally been confined to the novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, although there are some tenuous signs of influence detectable in at least one of the novels of George Eliot. So far as most major novels are concerned, the influence of the Byronic hero has been that his less savoury features have been appropriated by the villain: the gothic features of the Byronic hero are more credible in a villain than a hero in a realistic novel. However, this appropriation has tended to create villains more vigorous and memorable than the male principal character in the nineteenth century novel, as I will attempt to show in a later chapter.

Byronic heroes might well have filled the void at the centre of most nineteenth century novels as the type is

essentially individualistic and of great psychological interest. In practice, however, in the few novels where the type has been attempted, it has failed to work: realism is a poor environment for a Byronic hero. His natural home is in the literature of Romantic poetry, and in Romantic and Gothic fiction.

Walter Allen has implied that Byron himself may have founded his own Romantic image on the Gothic hero. He observes: 'the man that Lord Byron tried to be was the invention of Mrs Radcliffe'. (3) The fact that Emily Brontë's great novel has a great many Romantic and Gothic features is perhaps why her Byronic hero is such a substantial success. More villain than hero in essence, by the criteria of the social novel, yet Heathcliff dominates the novel as a very substantial character. But other heroes created in the image of the Byronic hero are failures as substantial heroes.

Before I begin to explore the reasons for this failure, I will first attempt to sort out from the multitude of definitions of a Byronic hero, one which carries a consensus. Macaulay, with characteristic prolixity, describes the Byronic hero thus: 'a man proud, moody, cynical, with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart, a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge yet capable of deep and strong affection'. (4) Meredith, on the other hand, sees him through the eye of the realist as

'posturing,statuesque and pathetic'. (5) George Sampson describes him as 'outcast,stained with crime,proudly solitary' in a perpetual state of rebellion against the social order and authority. (6) Even Dickens found time to enunciate on the features which he thought typical of a Byronic hero,although he does so in an oblique fashion.In a letter of advice to a young writer,he says: 'Leave Byron to his gloomy greatness,and do you "Find tongues in trees,books in the running brooks/Sermons in stones,and good in everything"'. (7) The implication of this is that Byronic characteristics were illustrative of the darker side of life. Rutherford sees the essence of the Byronic hero in a combination of qualities: 'melancholy,isolation,and misanthropy'; 'fiery courage and tumultuous passion'; 'warped by suffering and injustice to an evil and destructive force'; 'misanthropy and ruthless violence'; 'rebellious pride' and much more. (8)

With the exception of the pragmatic Meredith,the general consensus of opinion about the traits which make a Byronic hero can be summed up as follows: he must be proud,cynical,of a gloomy disposition,rebel against the prevailing social order and be a vigorous,fiery individual who stands out from the mass of ordinary people around him.

But such a hero is out of place in the milieu of the nineteenth century novel with its focus on real

life. Thomas Carlyle remarks very percipiently on Byron's influence. He criticises 'the dark stormful indignation of a Byron, so wayward and perverse' and 'his fatal misery' as a contributory factor to 'the spiritual paralysis of the age'. (9) Thus Byronic heroes do not bear with them the ethos of the age and therefore cannot survive in 'important works of Victorian literature'. (10) Their true environment is in Byron's poems and in Romantic or Gothic literature. Attempts to adapt them to the realistic novel of the nineteenth century have generally failed.

Interest in the Byronic hero persisted well into the nineteenth century, but only the Brontë sisters, Charlotte and Emily, have modified the prototype for use in the novel. Other major novelists seem only to have been influenced tenuously however well they may have known and admired Byron's work. I have shown above that Dickens knew about the Byronic personality and was no great admirer of it. Jane Austen was familiar with the poetry: 'I have read the Corsair, mended my petticoat, and have nothing else to do' she writes to her sister Cassandra in characteristically flippant style. (11) She would also have read most of his poetry as it was exceedingly popular at that time. George Eliot's biographer tells us that the young Mary Anne Evans read Byron and many other poets at school. (12) Hardy's youthful notebooks are testimony to his familiarity with the works of Byron while his interest

in the man is noted in at least one biography. (13) Byron was a staple diet of the Brontes and his influence is discernible in the male principal characters of the two older sisters.

But Byron's own heroes flourished in poetical environments specially created for them. These environments were exotic and romantic, suitable for the Byronic hero. The heroes themselves were constructed to re-affirm the values and beliefs of Byron and his group. Their individualism and revolutionary temperament was the product of an age that romanticised revolution. (14) The language of poetry is also a great advantage in creating a heroic character. Its elevated, heroic style is more credible in the speech of a poetic hero than in that of a principal character of a realistic novel. In a novel such a style becomes melodramatic.

Heathcliff is perhaps the finest example of a Byronic hero in the major nineteenth century English novel. In Wuthering Heights his characterisation 'has been raised to the level of great literature'. (15) One reason for his success is that his creator has provided a 'poetical' environment, romantic, gloomy, with Gothic overtones in which he can seem credible. Another is that his language, behaviour and personality is very similar in style to those of Byron's heroes. For instance, like them, he too is bent on vengeance, and he too dies 'defiant

and intransigent'. (16) However, while it was necessary to include mention of Heathcliff in this chapter, further discussion of his place as a hero is left until chapter nine.

By her characterisations of Rochester, Robert Moore and Paul Emanuel, Charlotte Brontë is largely responsible for the disappearance of the memorable substantial hero in the realistic novel of the nineteenth century. George Eliot has one hero, Will Ladislaw, who can be linked to the influence of Byron.

Charlotte Brontë's Byronic heroes are more substantial than other types of hero already discussed. They appear more frequently and for longer periods than drawing-room heroes. They share the centre of the novel with their heroine as do mentor heroes, but they lack the latter's irritating infallibility. And as they are not mouthpieces for the author, they retain some individuality and credibility as characters in their own right.

All Charlotte Brontë's principal male characters have some features of the Byronic hero in their portrayal. In her earliest work, The Professor, the 'Byronic hero type is evident in the extremes of Yorke Hunsden' who is a more masculine figure than the androgynous Crimsworth. (17) Louis Moore also has some facets of the Byronic type, but like Crimsworth is more feminine than masculine: both are, of course, products of the author's wishful thinking



about the ideal man. (18) And because these Byronic types operate through the passions, and not through cold reason, they are often more unpredictable and therefore much more interesting. They also have backgrounds which are mysterious or exotic. Moore and Emanuel are foreign (as is George Eliot's Will Ladislav), while Mr Rochester's mysterious past is buried abroad in the West Indies, and hidden in a room on the third storey of Thornfield Hall. Mr Rochester is indeed a direct 'descendant of the Gothic Villain', and all the more intriguing for it. (19)

Why then, with all these advantages, does the Byronic figure fail as a substantial hero? Essentially the failure derives from an inconsistency of characterisation. The Romantic ideal and the Gothic allure of the type have eventually to be dropped for the purposes of realism. Charlotte Brontë's heroes in particular change their characters suddenly to comply with the author's wish to depict the ideal male. Their Byronic male aggressiveness and dominance desert them far too quickly for credibility. The Mr Rochester of the final part of Jane Eyre is not the dominant, masculine hero of the early part of the novel.

However, in fairness, the difficulty of transferring the Byronic hero from poetry or Romantic fiction to the realistic novel is immense, if not impossible. The exotic milieu of 'The Giaour', 'The Corsair', 'Lara' and 'Manfred' are feudal, romanticised because of their distance from and

strangeness to the reader, and therefore fertile worlds for romantic heroes whose behaviour and speech would be incongruous in the fictional world of the realistic novel in the nineteenth century. Both worlds induce different behaviour in their principal characters. This is as much a matter of genre as culture. The poem comes alive more by its density of language and relevant associations, affective evocation comes before verisimilitude. The hero can comfortably occupy and dominate the centre of the poem's narrower stage. His tragedy or triumph is the principal focus of interest. Generally the poem also allows freer reign to the reader's imagination. There is less emphasis on the minutiae of life which reveals the ordinariness of individuals in the realistic novel. Moreover, the fine web of poetical imagery and allusion heighten the dramatic rendering of a hero in poetry. His portrayal is rarely measured against the real world outside the poem as is the portrayal of the novel's principal character.

In the world of the novel the willing suspension of disbelief is much more difficult. This is especially so of the nineteenth century English novel where realism is a yardstick of credibility. Therefore, to move the Byronic hero into the realistic milieu of the novel means that the essence of the hero must be drastically modified. The passionate, rebellious hero cannot operate credibly in a

stable,ordered,democratised society. Even Byron had to leave an England,smug and self-satisfied in its institutions and its seemingly indestructible industrial base,to become a hero in a fragmented Greece. A sociological explanation as to why the hero vanished from the serious,major English novel of the nineteenth century might be inferred from one critic's astute observation on the genesis of heroes:

The need for a hero only arises when everything has broken down and there is the aspiration by a people to start afresh and reach for a better goal in life. (20)

These criteria did not obtain in nineteenth century England,despite injustices and social inequalities. In a relatively stable environment the rebellious hero becomes redundant. And in the increasingly corporate society of the nineteenth century,individuals had less individual power to alter society. Committees and groups were fast becoming the real forces for change. In a fictional representation of the real,contemporary world,such as the nineteenth century novel,characters have to reflect the pre-occupations of the age. Thus,the individual,active hero of the feudal and aristocratic state disappears in the novel of the bourgeois state,to emerge much modified,much less interesting and memorable as an ordinary male principal character. (21)

Such ordinary male principal characters were expected to speak in the written mode that contemporary readers expected of respectable middle class characters. This speech mode has a detrimental effect on heroic portrayal. In particular, the constraints of the mode precludes the kind of speech acceptable in poetry. Compare the following:

I do defy ye, - though I feel my soul/Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;/Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath/To breathe my scorn upon ye - earthly strength/To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take/ Shall be ta'en limb by limb.

I in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation: instead of bending to the decree I defied it. Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me: I was forced to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. His chastisements are mighty; and one smote me which has humbled me for ever. You know I was proud of my strength: but what is it now, when I must give it over to foreign guidance as a child does its weakness?

The first passage is from Byron's 'Manfred' (Act III, sc. iv): the second is a speech by Mr Rochester (Jane Eyre, ch. 37, p. 471). The similarity is in the Byronic defiance of both heroes. However, Mr Rochester's style lacks the fire and passion of the poem's hero. Moreover, his admission that his infirmity has defeated him is unheroic in comparison with Manfred's defiance. The latter's defiance is final, resolute, and absolute. His speech style, though clearly poetical, is nonetheless direct and uncomplicated. His death and defeat are turned into a

glorious victory, for he retains his human dignity in his defiance of both spirit and death. Mr Rochester is handicapped in that he has to live on in his crippled condition, thus realism makes him more pathetic than heroic, to satisfy his creator's notion of the ideal male.

Charlotte Brontë's male principal characters are products of her intensity and passion as a writer. Her novels are fertile ground for the Byronic hero. Her dialogue technique, for example, is confrontational rather than interactional. This creates an atmosphere of heightened emotion which may appropriately become impassioned without seeming ludicrous or melodramatic. In addition, the narrow confines of her contexts, especially the Gothic houses of Jane Eyre and the closeted, brooding atmosphere engendered by the school-life in Villette, add an almost supernatural mystique to the novels, imbuing them with an unreal air. This creates something of an acceptable environment for the Byronic hero to operate. It is significant that Robert Moore who appears in the most realistic of the novels, Shirley, is the least mysteriously Byronic of her male principals. But despite the almost Gothic quality of the other two novels, her Byronic heroes are only partly successful.

In the beginning, Mr Rochester is fittingly rendered as a Byronic hero. He is dominantly, even aggressively, masculine. He has been warped by his

suffering, and although this has not turned him into an 'evil and destructive force', like Lara there is 'In him inexplicably mixed appeared/Much to be loved and hated, sought and feared;'. ('Lara', xvii, 289-290) Secretive, cynical and solitary, he exudes a powerful attraction for Jane and the reader. In his early portrayal, Mr Rochester is surpassed as a Byronic type only by Heathcliff.

Unfortunately, Rochester's portrayal is inconsistent. That is to say, Charlotte Brontë develops those aspects of his character which turn him into a very ordinary, emasculated principal male character. He suffers the fate of all her 'heroes': he is turned into 'a figure of wish-fulfilment'. (22)

In his first interview with Jane, Rochester's speech mode clearly illustrates their master-servant relationship, and demonstrates his cynicism as well as his fiery, masculine aggression. His speech is symptomatic of his powerful portrayal. The conversation is too long to reproduce here but my examples are from the dialogue in chapter 13, pages 152-56. Rochester speaks in a basic written style, but expresses himself matter-of-factly in brief sentences or short clauses linked by punctuation. This structure avoids complexity and imparts a directness of manner to the speaker. (23) The effect is terse and decisive: Rochester

is very much master of the discourse, positive, masculine and dominant.

Contributing to the tension in this confrontation, and underlining Rochester's dominance, are the twenty eight interrogatives hurled relentlessly at Jane. The context is responsible for the questions it is true, but this excessive questioning is a way of heightening tension and of persuading the reader of Rochester's aggressively masculine character. A further contribution to the tension of the scene is made by the ten exclamations he utters. But what really explicitly consolidates his dominance in the scene is the number of imperatives he delivers, eighteen in all. Interrogatives, exclamations and imperatives are the language of dramatic dialogue; they imply tension and confrontation rather than simple interaction. (24) No drawing-room hero speaks in such a manner to the heroine. Rochester's early speech mode is symptomatic of a 'massively masculine strength of character' which if it had been maintained throughout the novel would have produced something other than the 'woman's man' that is finally created. (25)

Rochester's decline as a substantial hero is accelerated by his late entry into the story and his disappearance for a long period after the disclosures at the 'wedding'. This is detrimental in that he is removed from the centre of

the story and has little direct control over the development of the plot.

But it is the author's development of Mr Rochester into a gentle, besotted lover and the subsequent change of his speech mode that reduces him to a mere male principal character. His poetic badinage with Adele (ch.24, pp.295-96) is clearly Charlotte Brontë's idea of the fanciful, playful speech of a lover. It has a leaden ring, however. It is out of character: Rochester is neither young nor romantic, and the psychological burdens which should weigh upon him, his insane wife and the bigamy he is about to commit by marrying Jane, are too easily set aside by the author in her misguided, romantic notion of a lover.

In this scene Rochester's previous masculine, dominant behaviour is overturned. He addresses Adele in the fanciful diction of the romantic lover. But although the words are addressed to Adele, the sentiment is meant for Jane's ears. These sentiments are idealistically feminine, a product of wish-fulfilment rather than male passion. Rochester's masculine vigour and dominance is gone, in its place is a slavish solicitude: 'I shall seek a cave ... I shall gather manna for her morning and night ... Fire rises out of the lunar mountains: when she is cold, I'll carry her up to a peak, and lay her down to the edge of the crater'. Here Rochester is transformed from a cynical, dominant, Byronic male into a stereotype of the



good, male provider of food, heat and shelter. But even this type needs aggression to function properly. However, Rochester relinquishes his aggression and masculinity when he speaks of a gown as 'a pink cloud' and a scarf for his lover as a 'rainbow'. This is the language of a romantic dreamer and not that of a vigorous, masculine hero.

The following is a further example of the unreal nature of his language which is symptomatic of his decline as a hero:

Oh, it is rich to see and hear her! ... Is she original? Is she piquant? I would not exchange this one little English girl for the Grand Turk's whole seraglio - gazelle-eyes, houri forms and all! (ch.24, p.297)

This is an identical speech mode to that used by the androgynous tutor Louis Moore. The general sentiment of the speech, the hyperbole of the repudiated exchange, are part of the wishful thinking of the female author rather than the honest sentiment of a lover. The imagery is exotic in the Byronic, poetical tradition but its language is suggestive of a feminine mind steeped in the jargon of romantic fiction. Note also the influence of content on the function of stylistic features: here the interrogatives and exclamations are rhetorical in function and do not have the tension of their confrontational use in the interview scene. As Ullmann has pointed out 'the

same device of style may give rise to a variety of effects'. (26)

Rochester's final fall from credibility as an heroic figure comes with his later role as dependant, and this is highlighted also in his direct speech. His aggressive masculinity is taken from him so that he can become acceptable as a husband for Jane. A look at his direct speech from the point where he is certain that Jane has returned to Ferndean (ch.37,p.457),from the speech beginning, 'My living darling ... ' shows that it has lost all signs of its original vigour. Rochester is not quite emasculated,although this is hinted at when Jane threatens to 'rehumanise him',symbolically 'parting his thick and uncut locks' (ch.37,p.461) in a gesture evocative of Delilah. A compromise is reached, however,for Jane merely combs his hair so that he is 'redd up and made decent'. (ch.37,p.463)

Moreover,his speech is symptomatic of his dependency. His former assurance is replaced by a timidity and uncertainty expressed by a continual questioning of reality: 'It is a dream ... I always woke and found it an empty mockery ... You will fly,too,as your sisters have fled before you ... It is you is it Jane? (ch.37,p.459) Even allowing for the context,his constant questioning in this dialogue (there are twelve interrogatives) functions as a measure of his uncertainty. These persistent markers of uncertainty are

considered to be a feature of female speech in fiction, as is the excessively heightened emotion. (27)

There is also a profusion of other feminine features such as the explicitly affectionate terms, 'darling', 'vision', 'gentle, soft dream' (ch.37, p.459); intensifiers, 'so', 'such' (ch.37, p.459), 'very' (ch.37, pp.460-61); the occasional interjection marking heightened emotion (28), 'Ah!' (ch.37, p.459), 'Oh!' (ch.37, p.464) and a cluster of vocabulary associated with emotional tension more appropriate in the speech of a fictional female: 'misery ... dream ... loved ... trusted ... kissed ... desolate and abandoned ... my life dark, lonely, hopeless my soul athirst ... so animated and piquant, as well as soft: it cheers my withered heart'. This is the price of Rochester's 'feminine' development in the cause of the author's conception of the ideal male.

In her anxiety to demonstrate her thesis that the most rewarding, fulfilling marriage is one in which the woman is needed and has an active role to play in the relationship, Charlotte Brontë makes the mistake of completely reversing the female-male roles. Jane becomes the vigorous, if not aggressive, dominant partner while Rochester is reduced to a poor shadow of his potential Byronic self.

And yet, despite his final collapse, Mr Rochester is a much more satisfying 'hero' than the others influenced by the

Byronic hero. His early Byronic portrayal owes its success to a novel which has undertones of the Romantic and the Gothic, although essentially a realistic novel.

However, the portrayal of Robert Moore in Shirley has not the same contextual advantage enjoyed by that of Mr Rochester. Moore's principal burden is to be cast as a Byronic hero in a novel which lacks the poetry and passion of Jane Eyre. In addition, his emotional life, the mainstay of a Byronic characterisation, is sacrificed in favour of an external portrayal only. Robert Moore is thus a Byronic type in a realistic novel. He is convincing only in his physical description and in his cynical, hard, sombre portrayal. But because the reader is denied access to his consciousness he remains only a physical husk.

Moore has a slight aura of mystery, although this is less intriguing than Rochester's, for Moore is merely a foreigner among Yorkshiremen. His cynical outlook is another feature of the Byronic hero. His comment on Sweeting the curate's involvement with the Misses Sykes illustrates a cynical view of love and of women generally:

Better be generally in love with all than specially with one, I should think, in that quarter. (Vol I, ch. ii, p. 27)

His selfishness is mitigated to some extent by his experience of trying to run the mill in such difficult circumstances. His failing business and his concern for it

is used as an excuse for his harsh views and his desire to replace men with machines. The author uses her character to advance her own views on the primacy of owner over worker. Moore's behaviour, even his violent behaviour, is made to appear just, while that of the workers is shown to be irresponsible. With the exception of William Farren, another white man's Uncle Tom, all the mill labourers are either villains or mindless sheep.

However, Moore's single-mindedness and his vigour are beyond dispute. He is always cynically prepared to act ruthlessly in his own interest. These are features of the Byronic hero. His physical vigour is intimated in the following speech:

... : most of the manufacturers seem paralyzed when they are attacked. Sykes, for instance, ... took no steps to discover or punish the miscreants: ... Now I, if I know myself, should stand by my trade, my mill, and my machinery. (Vol I, ch. ii, p. 30)

Moore suits his actions to these words later when his mill comes under siege from the workers. This kind of sentiment enhances Moore's image as a tough, ruthless protagonist. But it is an image based on a surface behaviour only. Moore never allows the reader an insight into his thoughts. He is never disclosed psychologically as a Byronic hero should be. He is a physical stereotype only. This kind of portrayal is of limited interest. It is a

flat,surface portrayal of a tough,physical man who is a mere shell.

Nor does Moore command the centre of the novel. Much of the physical action,it is true,is initiated by his tough style of management,and Caroline Helstone's physical deterioration is also directly,if unwittingly,caused by him,but otherwise his share of the limelight is small. Shirley Keeldar is a much more interesting character and one who occupies the novel's centre. Indeed,Moore disappears for periods long enough for readers to lose interest in him.

Moore's final acceptance of Caroline as his wife is also psychologically inconsistent with his character. He has been portrayed as an aggressive,practical,cynical,hard-headed business man. Such a character would have been aware that Caroline would never have made a suitable wife. An impression of authorial manipulation does little for Moore's portrayal here by this rather conventional pairing of a vigorous,dominating male protector and a submissive,delicate female. Robert's sudden realisation of his love for Caroline is clumsily engineered; his behaviour pre-supposes that he has been hiding a romantic,sensitive personality beneath his hard exterior. In accepting Caroline,he accepts second best; by failing to strive for Shirley under any circumstances he shows

himself to be only a mere principal character and no Byronic hero.

Robert Moore, like Rochester, inherits the rugged, dark, good looks, and the dominating masculinity of the Byronic hero. Dark eyes and a taciturn nature identify the strong, silent type of fictional character. This is partly why Paul Emanuel in Villette is difficult to categorise as a Byronic type. His physical portrayal works against the conventional image. Instead of a physically attractive but emotionally sterile figure, as for example Graham Bretton, the author presents a rather unattractive male protagonist with a more interesting personality. But this only makes Paul Emanuel an interesting male principal, not a substantial hero. His lack of physical presence undercuts his status as a hero. The rendering of such a 'hero' underlines the decline of the traditional hero in the nineteenth century novel. The ordinary male was clearly displacing the man of outstanding ability and interest at the centre of the realistic novel.

Nonetheless, Paul Emanuel has sufficient links with the Byronic hero to be squeezed into the category. In the first place he is foreign and even though the action takes place in his own country, to the English reader he has the exoticism and mystery of a foreigner.

This background mystique is further enhanced by his dialect which is meant to be representative of non-native

English speech. Here he is exhorting Lucy to take a role in the play:

Play you must. I will not have you shrink, or frown, or make the prude. I read your skull that night you came; I see your moyens; play you can; play you must. (ch.14, p.202)

But the attempt to evoke a romantic air of mystery through this rather ludicrous speech mode fails miserably. The insistence throughout the novel on a broken English dialect simply makes the little Belgian a laughing stock. Speaking as he does is detrimental to his chances of coming across as a hero.

Emanuel also possesses a fiery, passionate nature in the Byronic mould. However, this temperament attains demonic proportions in the confines of a girl's school - hardly the appropriate context for a vigorous, memorable hero. Thus his fiery temperament becomes, in the context, more like tantrums and bad temper. Here he berates Lucy for the conduct of the girls. His speech is rendered in a distorted style, 'free indirect speech' (29) but Emanuel's irritation is evident:

Was I the mistress of these girls? Did I profess to teach them the conduct befitting ladies? - and did I permit and, he doubted not, encourage them to strangle their mother-tongue in their throats, to mince and mash it between their teeth, as if they had some base cause to be ashamed of the words they uttered? Was this modesty? He knew better. It was a vile pseudo sentiment - the offspring or the forerunner of evil. (ch.21, p.319)



This move away from direct speech does nothing to enhance his heroic stature. Paul Emanuel is 'raging like a pestilence' during this tirade. But the passion is hardly generated by heroic or Byronic impulses. Indeed, his outburst is what might have been expected from a shrewish, bad-tempered woman. These petty rages undercut his manliness. They show him for what he is, a bad-tempered human being, a mere principal character and never a substantial hero. Here is another example of his speech mode which undercuts his dignity:

How seems in the eyes of that God who made all the firmaments, from whose nostrils issued whatever of life is here, or in the stars shining yonder - how seem the differences of man? But as Time is not for God, nor Space, so neither is measure, nor comparison. (ch.36, p.517)

This mode of speech verges on the ridiculous. It reduces Emanuel to the proportions of a caricature. The stylized language and capitalisation suggests the author at work and this is why the speech lacks spontaneity. Mouthing such sentiments can only result in the speaker appearing silly.

Thus, cooped up in a woman's world of intrigue, jealousy and back-biting, Paul Emanuel inhabits a world in which trivia assume unreal proportions. It is therefore little wonder that his personality is warped. As a rather

fussy, pedantic, petty and womanish character, M. Emanuel is perhaps realistically portrayed, but his characterisation as a hero, Byronic or otherwise, is a failure. His contribution to the novel is as a principal male character, subsidiary to the heroine, and despite his tenuous links with the Byronic hero he is a poor substitute for the vanishing hero in the nineteenth century English novel.

George Eliot also produces an unsatisfactory substitute for the traditional hero in her novel Middlemarch. Will Ladislaw also has tenuous links with the Byronic hero. First of all he is foreign. This gives him an air of romance and mystery. There is also mystery attached to his birth, a device straight from the Gothic novel. Will is also a dependent relative, a fact which helps to embitter him, although it does not turn him, as it does Heathcliff, into a misanthrope nor into 'an evil destructive force'. Will's personality is much more petty and less interesting. Will also represents the virile, sensuous aspect of life and his interest in art underlines this. These features of his characterisation suggest the influence of Byron on George Eliot. The comment by Mrs Cadwallader, below, suggests that the author may well have had the Byronic hero in mind when she created Will:

Oh,he's a dangerous young sprig,that Mr Ladislaw, ... with his opera songs and his ready tongue. A sort of Byronic hero - an amorous conspirator it strikes me. (ch.38,p.415)

However,Will's worth as a hero is never tried nor tested. His ugly resentment of Causabon reveals a petty nature. Will marries the heroine but he never reveals any superior qualities to deserve her. Nor is he a man of excellence in any field. He is revealed as little more than a dilettante artist. He has no solid,practical skills such as has Caleb Garth. But in the realistic world of the fictional Middlemarch there was little chance of any individual assuming heroic proportions;such a social milieu neither requires nor encourages heroes.

Will's behaviour fails to generate heroics and so does his speech. His written mode is more drawing-room hero than Byronic hero. Often the content is artistic,for he has been given a kind of 'effeminate aestheticism' (30),but the Byronic tenor is missing. Here is a sample of his thoughts on language as a more artistic medium than other art forms:

Language gives a fuller image,which is all the better for being vague. After all,the true seeing is within; and painting stares at you with an insistent imperfection. I feel that especially about representations of women. As if a woman were a mere superficies! You must wait for movement and tone. There is a difference in their very breathing: they change from moment to moment. (ch.19,p.222)

Although the validity of the sentiment is debatable, the speech is pretentious and hardly enhances the image of an active, memorable hero. It has the tenor of an effete mind at work, one which is concerned with making trivial distinctions rather than dealing with things of practical significance.

Even when Will does finally win Dorothea there is little that is heroic about it. The heroism, if any, is Dorothea's for giving up so much for so little in return. Will has only his love to give her but has neither hope nor assurance of his own worth. His self-pity at times becomes an indulgent whine. The following bitter cry over such a trivial matter was never the language of a substantial hero:

There is no hope for me, ... Even if you loved me as well as I love you - even if I were everything to you - I shall most likely always be very poor: on a sober calculation, one can count on nothing but a creeping lot. It is impossible for us ever to belong to each other. It is perhaps base of me to have asked for a word from you. I meant to go away into silence, but I have not been able to do what I meant. (ch.82, p.868)

The salient feature of this speech is self-pity. His pessimism about his future does not justify this childish self-indulgence. As a hero he is a fine example of the pale, ordinary, uninteresting male principal character who was usurping the rightful place of the substantial hero in the major nineteenth century English novel.

Wherever the influence of the Byronic hero appears in the nineteenth century English novel it fails to produce substantial,memorable heroes. This is largely because the Byronic hero cannot tolerate the realism which is an essential part of the English novel in the nineteenth century. The Byronic hero survives best in an exotic environment and an atmosphere of mystery. The male principals of the nineteenth century English novel are required to adapt to the real world of that time,and in the end the logic of that real world demands a realistic character. Few heroes can survive the glare and detail of realism. Thus the heroic potential of male principals cast in the likeness of the Byronic hero is never achieved. And despite their claim to our interest as characters,they remain mere principal male characters,figures in the novel who substitute rather unsatisfactorily for the traditional,substantial hero of the past.

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## CHAPTER SIX: THE HERO AS CONSORT

So far I have attempted to illustrate how the direct speech of the principal male character is symptomatic of the decline of the traditional hero in the nineteenth century English novel. But this inadequacy of speech, although an important factor, is only part of the reason for the hero's demise. In the nineteenth century novel, as I have already indicated, the male principal character had to contend with the burden of his function in a genre often more interested in the communication of a message than in the rendering of an active, interesting individual. In this chapter I will try to show how the burgeoning of novels with heroines as the focus of interest also helped overshadow the principal male character. In most of these novels the hero is quite unable to compete with the brilliance of his heroine and is effectually reduced to the role of a consort.

My attention in this chapter, therefore, will be focussed on these heroines to show how their characterisations, with emphasis on their speech, contribute to the overshadowing of their consorts.

The portrayal of the heroine at the expense of the hero is not entirely a nineteenth century phenomenon. Major novels



in the eighteenth century, Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa, for example, had females as the centre of interest. Nonetheless, the beginning of the nineteenth century marked by the novels of Jane Austen surely signals an important point where major novels began increasingly to centre their plots on females and their development. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that this to some extent is a significant point in the decline of the hero.

The increase in novel centred heroines was in part because of the increase in major women novelists. But there was also an increasing, if incipient, interest among male authors in the woman's role outside the home. This interest was to increase as the century advanced: Hardy's use of heroines rivals that of Jane Austen. Dickens's masterful temperament led him to suppress the idea of women as other than housekeepers, although it must have been apparent to such a keen observer of life that women were becoming increasingly important both in and out of the home. But generally his attitude to his heroines is patronising. They are either 'tall, composed, steadfast and sensible' or 'small, fluttering, playful and dependent'. (1) Dickens was certainly one Victorian male author who portrayed his heroines as the 'custodian of the moral conscience, the repository of all virtue' and believed that her potential was 'fulfilled in her domestic role'. (2) Yet even he shows signs that the Victorian stereotype

heroine was probably more a fictional convenience than a reality. In two of his best novels, Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend, he portrays two real women in Estella and Bella Wilfer. He renders the first as self-sufficient, cold and proud, and the latter as wilfully proud and domineering. Neither heroine is the traditional, gentle and submissive Victorian stereotype.

Nowhere in the major nineteenth century English novel is the heroine so salient as in the works of Jane Austen. All of her novels concern the development of the heroine, all else is subsidiary. Of course, some heroines are more illustrious than others. Catherine Morland and Elinor Dashwood in the earlier novels may compare less favourably with Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse as vibrant personalities. These personalities are rendered through a dialogue of interaction with others. Their language makes them credible, interesting, vivid and memorable. It enables them to seem three dimensional in contrast to the male principal characters of whom only one facet of personality is seen.

It is speech which defines and delineates the heroine's character. Her formal, written mode proclaims her moral and social status. Tiny blemishes in early speech occur from time to time to indicate flaws in her behaviour or attitude. In Marianne Dashwood's contracted negatives and 'enthusiasms' the reader is alerted to a character not yet

fully developed. And yet she is a vibrant character who puts both Ferrars and Willoughby in the shade. Despite the idea of morality as a basis of conduct and character, Jane Austen's heroines are never insipid because they are graced 'with wit and elegance of mind'. (3)

The role of the heroine in a Jane Austen novel is the central one; the male protagonist merely assumes the role of consort. The action of the story and plot is followed through the eyes and mind of the heroine, with some intrusive assistance of the author. This thrusts the male principal character into the background. He has little chance to function as a memorable hero.

Marianne Dashwood is a vibrant, memorable heroine. Her conduct in Sense and Sensibility 'stands as a constant warning against substituting for a careful inspection of one's own motives a blithe conviction that "we always know when we are acting wrong" (Vol I, ch. xiii, p. 68)'. (4) The novel involves her development and in the early stages she is portrayed as flawed in that she is unable to see that Willoughby's behaviour is improper. Her conduct is marked by examples of poor judgement regarding both Willoughby and Colonel Brandon, and the 'excessive affliction' she suffers as a result is 'the harvest of a foolish taste for romantic sentiment'. (5) And yet it is this very youthful foolishness which makes her interesting, makes her sparkle with enthusiasm and puts her consort in the shade.

Marianne's faults bring her to life as a real person. Her humanity is expressed on behalf of her sister, and her natural, spontaneous emotions are captured by her speech mode. In this example her warmth of feeling is expressed in a double endearment in which the two negative contractions impart a natural informality: 'Dear, dear Elinor, don't mind them. Don't let them make you unhappy'. (Vol II, ch. xii, p. 236) The idiomatic 'mind' adds to the informality and intimacy of the speech. So while such speech deviations from the 'correct' mode are meant to suggest a slight impropriety, they also render her as a warm, sympathetic, if impulsive young lady. A little later she repeats this unselfish concern for her sister: 'Oh, don't think of me! ... don't think of my health. Elinor is well, you see. That must be enough for us both. (Vol II, ch. xiii, p. 242) This warmth of emotion endorses her humanity. When her personality is compared with that of the callous Willoughby it becomes clear that he is little more than a cardboard cut-out figure.

Marianne is youthful, however, and she allows her enthusiasms to blind her to reality. She is at times unable to control her feelings: the blunt truth that she espouses is in sharp contrast to her sister's practical ability to maintain a role as a 'teller of polite lies'. (6) Her suffering because of Willoughby's conduct is meant to temper her personality; to make her aware of what is,

rather than what ought to be. Willoughby is a fairly unconvincing character even without competition from the vibrant and memorable Marianne Dashwood.

Emma Woodhouse is as flawed in her early development as is Marianne Dashwood. But she is even more interesting, more vivacious, and more memorable. In comparison, the young, physically attractive Frank Churchill is insipid. Frank's rather superficial attraction fails to make him a memorable hero. With Emma holding centre stage, Frank Churchill is completely overshadowed.

Emma is young, inexperienced, smug, self-assured and selfish. Her well-meant but ill-directed interference in the lives of others causes havoc, but Emma is blissfully unaware of her imperfections. In a Jane Austen novel such limitations might well merit a speech mode less than 'correct'. But Emma is the heroine and convention requires a written speech mode. It is inconceivable for a heroine in a Jane Austen novel to speak as Lucy Steele or Mrs Elton. The flaws in Emma's character are highlighted by what she says rather than in the way she speaks. The structure of her speech is a written norm: her character is measured by the nonsense she utters. But her portrayal is so vital, so vivid and memorable that she completely eclipses the rather flimsy Frank Churchill. This eligible young gentleman is all charm and little substance. Mr Knightley, Emma's mentor, and the author's arbiter of the

worth of others, sees through his veneer of gallantry. Of Frank's foppery in travelling to have his hair cut in London, Mr Knightley observes: 'Hum! just the trifling, silly fellow I took him for'. (Vol II, ch. vii, p. 206)

Nor is Churchill a match for Emma. She is eventually perceptive enough to recognise his inability to oppose her as weakness. Churchill is certainly not constructed in the heroic mould, preferring the subterfuge of a false gallantry to an honest expression of his thoughts and views. Frank is sure that more people could be accommodated in the room set aside for a dance. Emma demurs:

No, no, ... you are quite unreasonable. It would be dreadful to be standing so close! Nothing can be farther from pleasure than to be dancing in a crowd - and a crowd in a little room! (Vol II, ch. xi, p. 249)

Emma's directness is a measure of her spontaneity, she is incapable of a deliberate deceit and her final remark testifies to her innate grasp of the proprieties required of her social status. Churchill's reply is illustrative of his ability to be obsequious when it suits his own ends:

There is no denying it, ... I agree with you exactly. A crowd in a little room - Miss Woodhouse, you have the art of giving pictures in a few words. Exquisite, quite exquisite! (Vol II, ch. xi, pp. 249-50)

Churchill would have made an excellent consort for Emma with such a weak resistance to her dogmatic nature. His penchant for flattery is not an heroic trait. Emma, however, has her match in her mentor Mr Knightley, who despite his inadequacy as a substantial hero is much more of a manly figure than the shadowy, dandified Churchill.

Emma's temporary attraction to Churchill is part of her development. Through his flaws she begins to appreciate Knightley's worth. Frank, of course, is secretly engaged to Jane Fairfax and his attention to Emma is primarily to divert attention away from this relationship. Nevertheless had his intentions been serious towards Emma, he would have been little more than a consort to the imperious heroine.

Charles Dickens is the one author in this study who fails to use a heroine in an extended, serious characterisation at the centre of a novel. Even Esther Summerson in Bleak House, who is the narrator for much of the novel, is a poor, dull substitute for a heroine. In the end it is her constant reiteration of her deprecating modesty that unseats her portrayal.

Despite this, Dickens manages to render two portraits of memorable 'heroines' which suggest that his other female central characters are fictional sops to the 'patriarchal ideology' that held sway in his time. (7) Estella and

Bella Wilfer are indeed more interesting than his usual insipid heroines.

Estella is very much the imperious heroine of Great Expectations who reduces Pip to the lowly and humble role of consort. She is cold and haughty and prone to snobbery which extends to speech. She sneers at Pip's 'common' speech: 'He calls knaves, Jacks, this boy!'. (ch.8, p.90) But her highly original characterisation is a memorable one which does a great deal to dim Pip's portrayal. So powerfully drawn is she that one cannot help feeling for Pip in the future promised by the changed ending. The flatness of his portrayal throughout the novel, despite his eventual development, is consistent enough to suggest that he would always play the humble consort to the memorable Estella.

Bella Wilfer's appearances are as infrequent as Estella's but she also succeeds in rendering the male principal character to a mere consort in her presence. Besides the spoiled, ebullient and sparkling Bella, John Harmon is a pale, flat figure. Bella is portrayed as an energetic, lively young woman and this makes her a much more interesting individual. Harmon is presented ready made, is a shadowy figure and is somewhat incredible in his triple role. He is a poor enough hero to start with, as I have attempted to show in an earlier chapter, but is made



even more unlikely,less exciting,by being paired with Bella.

Here is a sample of Bella's refreshingly robust speech:

You are a chit and a little idiot ... or you wouldn't make such a dolly speech. What did you expect me to do? Wait till you are a woman,and don't talk about what you don't understand. You only show your ignorance! ... I declare again it's a shame! Those ridiculous points would have been smoothed away by money,for I love money, and want money - want it dreadfully. I hate to be poor,and we are degradingly poor,offensively poor,miserably poor,beastly poor.(Book the First,ch.iv,p.37)

Bella calls a spade a spade.She comes across as honest in an insensitively naive way. Her natural style makes her sound like a real person in contrast to Harmon whose formal register makes his portrayal artificial.

The Brontë heroines live in fictional worlds governed by explosive emotions and passion. This is reflected in their vigorous speech. Jane Eyre's honesty and directness finally subdue a debilitated Mr Rochester.

But Catherine Earnshaw's portrayal is so vivid that it totally obscures that of her consort,Edgar Linton. Catherine's behaviour is almost as violently anarchic as Heathcliff's. Her vigorous,violent speech renders her memorably as a passionately spontaneous creature of impulse. She speaks bluntly with little regard for the

feelings of others. Heathcliff is a match for her, but Edgar is a weak, meek, rather ordinary consort for such a brilliantly portrayed heroine.

Much of the supernatural passion and emotion which pervades the novel is a direct consequence of Catherine's powerful language. Chapter x is a source of many good examples of the violence of her language: 'smart chastisement ... fight to the death ... I might kill him ...' (p.83); 'basely injured ... grasps ... flings ... bodily harm ... ' (p.84); 'slap on the cheek' (p.85) and 'crush you like a sparrow's egg' (p.87). There are as many similar examples in the next chapter: 'attack ... beaten ... flog you sick ... strike ... kick ... ' (p.98). Clearly this is unladylike speech and it does not endear Catherine to the reader. But it does make her a memorable character: it makes her a human being with flaws, passions and uncontrollable urges. By comparison, her consort Edgar is a milk-sop, a cardboard cut-out figure who is recalled in memory only because Catherine has married him and not because he is in any sense a substantial character in his own right.

George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss is another headstrong, passionate, intense and disturbed heroine. However, she is never so violent as Catherine Earnshaw, nor so wilfully selfish as Bella Wilfer. But Maggie has vivacity, energy and spontaneity in large enough

measure to completely eclipse her handsome consort Stephen Guest. Maggie's headstrong character and her sensitivity make her one of the best loved heroines in the nineteenth century novel. The poignancy of her serious quarrel with Tom and its resolution in their tragic deaths give an additional indelibility to her memory. In the tragedy of her death her consort is completely forgotten.

Maggie's vivacity and honesty are built up through her natural speech style. Here she pleads with her father on her erring brother's behalf: 'Father, Tom wouldn't be naughty to you ever; I know he wouldn't'. (Book First, ch.3, p.65) The conversational style helps convey her warmth as an individual, her freedom from the cares of adulthood and the atmosphere of family intimacy. Later her speech becomes more formal as her outlook on the world becomes more adult and serious.

Maggie's vast potential for loving makes her an outstandingly memorable heroine. She agonises sensitively over her feelings for both Phillip and Stephen. Her consort, Stephen, on the other hand has no such sensitivity. He sees things clearly in black and white and always to his own advantage. Here he speaks in his rather stilted formal written mode:

If you do love me, dearest, ... it is better, it is right that we should marry each other. We can't help the pain it will give. It is come upon us without our seeking; it is natural - it has taken hold of me in spite of every effort I have made to resist it. God knows, I've been trying to be

faithful to tacit engagements, and I've only made things worse -I'd better have given way at first. (Book Sixth, ch. 11, p. 569)

In comparison with Maggie's torment over her disloyalty to Phillip, Stephen's cries of anguish over his 'unrequited love' are shallow and selfish, and even, at times, melodramatic: 'Good God! ... what a miserable thing a woman's love is to a man's'. As a hero, Stephen is a poor figure. He performs a temporary role as consort to Maggie but is always overshadowed by her. In the end he is conveniently sent abroad, thus resolving the moral dilemma that would almost certainly have arisen had he stayed and claimed Maggie as his own.

Maggie Tulliver is a memorable heroine who impresses by the boundless capacity of her feelings for others. However, her overshadowing of her consort Stephen is made easier by his rather uninteresting portrayal. In Middlemarch, Dorothea Brooke has a harder task in obscuring her consort Casaubon. Casaubon is no substantial hero; he lacks health, looks, youth, vigour and passion. Nonetheless, Casaubon engages interest enough as a fairly well-rounded character.

Dorothea sparkles because she has the enthusiasm for life of a young idealist. Her tragedy lies rooted in her idealism and her inexperience. She tends to see life, not as it really is, but as she thinks it ought to be, and she

imposes her inexperienced vision on others . Her development is a much harsher process than Emma Woodhouse's. The latter had the benefit of a sensible mentor. Dorothea has to winter a cruel lesson in mortification through a sterile marriage. The irony of her self-delusion is marked in her early speeches. In the following speech her blindness to Casaubon's mediocrity is the blindness of a romantic imagination:

Could I not be preparing myself now to be more useful? ... Could I not learn to read Latin and Greek aloud to you, as Milton's daughters did to their father, without understanding what they read? (ch.7, pp.87-88)

The linking of Casaubon with Milton heightens the irony almost to tragic proportions. The romantic set of Dorothea's mind is clear. Her idealised notion of disciplining her life to the needs of others is marred slightly by her practical desire that 'others' should first be worthy. Much later as she matures and develops her need to help others becomes altruistic.

There is a pattern of uncertainty in Dorothea's speech. Her questions are really statements which demand affirmation rather than discussion. In fiction this is conventionally a mark of submission in the speech of a woman. (8) Derek Oldfield outlines in some detail the extent to which Dorothea's speech changes with her personality after her passionless marriage to Casaubon.

(9) Prior to her marriage her speech is vigorous, and direct, suggesting spontaneity and an affirmation of life. In her early speech her ideas are expressed naturally, spilling out in a series of direct, brief sentences:

It is very painful ... I can have no more to do with the cottages. I must be uncivil to him. I must tell him I will have nothing to do with them. It is very painful. (ch.4, p.60)

There is not the prolixity of polite, mannered language in this very short speech. Her indignation is plain, matching her speech. Her plan to discourage Chettam is stated simply, directly and vehemently ('I can ... I must ... I must ... I will'). The repeated 'It is very painful ... is no literary mannerism, but more a spontaneous cry of distress. And yet, despite her enthusiastic claim that others are foremost in her thoughts, in this early, pre-marriage speech, the constant use of 'I' suggests an incipient tendency to dwell on her own condition. There is much that is egotistical in Dorothea's character prior to her ordeal by marriage. And it is this 'flawed' portrayal which makes her so memorable an individual. Her later 'good' character is much less interesting.

Dorothea's youthful assurance and zest for life are eroded by her marriage to Casaubon. Her Rome honeymoon initiates a conflict within her between her want of an idealised

love and her need of a physical love. These new experiences cause insecurity and she begins to lose her former assurance. Her conflict is reflected in a changed manner of speech, especially in her dialogues with Casaubon. She no longer expresses her thoughts spontaneously. Her speech becomes more considered, more hesitant, dampened, as it were, by her relationship with Casaubon:

May I talk to you a little instead? ... I have been thinking about money all day - that I have always had too much, and especially the prospect of too much. (ch.37, p.409)

These words are the start of a long conversation with Casaubon, the point of which is to secure for Will Ladislav a dependance from poverty. Dorothea makes her approach in a tentative manner; she has lost her former directness and assurance in her new insecurity. She proceeds to the point slowly and hesitantly, with a long preamble uncharacteristic of her former manner. She attempts to formalise an argument and her sentences grow longer and more complex. She digresses about Aunt Julia and Casaubon's efforts at educating Will, as though these will delay what she is apprehensive of saying. These delaying tactics underline her uncertainty about her husband's response to her proposal. Her former, youthful assurance

that all her desires in life would be acceded to is gone for ever.

It is this development of Dorothea that makes her such an interesting character. And although Casaubon is interesting in his arid psychology, he is overshadowed by the exuberance and the brilliance of the portrayal of his young wife. He is remembered only as the rather pathetic older consort of the heroine Dorothea Brooke.

Gwendolen Harleth is another interesting and memorable heroine whose portrayal helps to push the male principal character into the background. Gwendolen has a similar selfish,spoiled nature as Dickens's Bella Wilfer,and her development has something in common with that of Dorothea Brooke's. Here the parallel ends,for Gwendolen is afraid to give of herself to others. In her,George Eliot portrays a real individual - 'warts and all' - whose flaws make her a real,memorable person. George Eliot appears to have been opposed to the convention of rendering 'good' flawless heroines. One of her biographers comments,'nor was she (George Eliot) stimulated by writing for readers whose concept of a heroine was so restricted that they could not bear the thought that even as a child she might have had a dirty face'. (10)

As Daniel Deronda is divided into two more or less separate stories bridged only by the eponymous hero,Gwendolen does not appear throughout the entire



novel. (11) Moreover, her consort, Mallinger Grandcourt, although a male principal character, is more villain than hero. His presence casts an awesome bleakness on the lives of those around him, especially Gwendolen's. Compared with the good, idealistic mouthpiece, Daniel Deronda, Grandcourt is horrifyingly real.

Like Dorothea Brooke's portrayal, Gwendolen's is memorably interesting because it is flawed and undergoes a process of development. This is primarily why her portrayal obscures her consort's. Grandcourt's is a static portrayal. He exudes a power almost elemental in its effect. As a result he becomes slightly unreal. Grandcourt is superior, contemptuous and bored and he never changes.

In Gwendolen's moral and spiritual decline, after she has deliberately and perversely chosen to marry for wealth and status instead of love, Grandcourt becomes merely a prop used to chastise her for her folly. Just as Deronda's presence is designed to make her regret what might have been, so Grandcourt's presence is a constant reminder of the bleakness of her own life. Her early years had signalled her immaturity and her selfishness through her attachment to her mother. Her vulnerability is evident from the security she demands from her mother. She needs to be loved but cannot accept the reciprocal demands of love:

I shall never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them ... I can't bear anyone to be very near me but you. (ch.7,p.115)

The sentiment is clear and the demand on her mother as direct as her syntax. This kind of love is that of a baby,demanding yet giving nothing directly in return. This speech illustrates her lack of maturity. Like a child,she makes a habit of pleasing herself,often at the expense of others,and ignoring the convention that young ladies should 'please everybody but themselves'. (ch.9,p.130)

Her insecurity leads her to adopt an artificial manner of speech which seeks to impress others with its erudition. In this example she takes up the defence of Klesmer against a young Philistine:

You are one of the profane, ... You are blind to the majesty of genius. Herr Klesmer smites me with awe; I feel crushed in his presence; my courage all oozes from me. (ch.10,pp136-37)

Gwendolen's recognition of Klesmer's talent as 'genius' is meant to parade her sagacity,but only underlines her lack of perspicacity. Her choice of words is eulogistic,a form of recognition Klesmer's talent does not merit. But although she appears to be defending Klesmer her purpose is really to highlight herself; Klesmer's 'genius' is,as it were,proven through her recognition. Gwendolen is thus making a rather immature attempt at impressing her

audience and so salvaging some of her self-esteem wrecked by Klesmer's criticism of her very small talent.

The crucial point in the presentation of Gwendolen's speech in the early stages is that it is generally superficial, facetious and flippant. It illustrates her insecurity and her egoism. However, this is a style which attempts to mask and suppress the private person from the public gaze. Later, as her character develops her speech changes. In her mounting despair at her decision to marry for status and wealth, her speech becomes studded with admissions of her selfishness in marrying Grandcourt despite knowing of his conduct towards Lydia Glasher. For example:

I said I should be forsaken. I have been a cruel woman. And I am forsaken ... You have been very good to me. I have deserved nothing. I will try - try to live. I shall think of you. What good have I been? Only harm. Don't let me be harm to you. It shall be better for me. (ch.69, p.877)

This language has echoes of the Bible, and the confessional: 'I am forsaken ... I have been a cruel woman ... What good have I been?'. It is also sincere, simple, direct and honest. Gone is the facile glibness. This speech indicates that she has moved a long way from being the spoiled child of her earlier, pre-marriage days. She suffers and she learns through her suffering. In her weaknesses she is a three-dimensional

character of substantial interest, of much greater substance than her flatter consort, Mallinger Grandcourt.

In Gwendolen Harleth and Dorothea Brooke, George Eliot has created female principal characters who are different from the pale, insipid traditional Victorian heroine. In so doing she has created exciting and memorable characters who are also credible individuals. So well are these 'heroines' rendered that their consorts appear insubstantial by comparison.

Where George Eliot had picked up the threads of vibrant female portrayals from Jane Austen, Hardy continued in George Eliot's footsteps. The heroines of Hardy have contributed as much as those of the female novelists to the decline of the hero in the nineteenth century English novel. Rarely do Hardy 'heroes' have as much impact as his memorable heroines. To some extent the characterisation of Hardy's potentially sensual heroines is the culmination of a literary war of attrition against the stereotype Victorian heroine of fiction whose 'chastity was the foundation of her personality'. (12) The war was not won by Hardy, but his battles were a major turning point. He portrayed heroines who were 'unchaste' in the technical sense of the word. He was heavily criticised by his contemporaries, many of whom were genuinely appalled at what was considered to be indecent literature. For while the Victorian period is notorious for its respectability, and while much of this

may have been superficial, it would be an injustice to many sincere, god-fearing, generous people to assume that they were all hypocrites. (13) To the modern reader, the sensuality of his heroines makes them infinitely more appealing and credible, such is the influence of the values of one age on the critical assessment of another.

Not all of Hardy's heroines are exceptional portrayals. But even his early heroines are made of such substance as to obscure their consorts. In his first Wessex novel, for example, the heroine Fancy Day is hardly an exceptional heroine, but she is much more lively and memorable than her insipid consort, Dick Dewy.

Fancy's education - she is a teacher - places her instantly on a different social plane from her consort Dick. Fancy occupies the centre of the novel while her suitors spin around her in various orbits. Dick occupies the inner orbit but is still obscured by Fancy's lustre as a vivacious heroine.

Like most of Hardy's heroines, Fancy's sensual appeal originates in her good looks. Hardy, in his narrative, compares her, rather inelegantly, to the other village girls as 'a flower among cabbages'. (ch.vii, p.79) But she also intrigues because she is so changeable in her feelings towards her suitors. This makes her very real and very human. Dick, on the other hand, is predictable and the Reverend Maybole has very little personality to commend

him. He is never as pompous as Jane Austen's Mr Collins, but he has some of his characteristics. When he proposes to Fancy he illustrates his self-importance. He sums up her worth to him:

They (her attributes) are equal to anything ever required of a quiet parsonage-house. .... Don't refuse; don't ... it would be foolish of you - I mean cruel. (Part the Fourth, ch. vi, p. 200)

Such faint praise as in his first sentence is a measure of his lack of sensitivity about the feelings of a young lady. His self-importance is signalled in his use of 'foolish', quickly changed to 'cruel', implying that he is a considerable catch. But Maybold is only being used by the confused Fancy, and although she accepts his proposal she easily repulses his ineffectual advances: 'Don't, please, don't come near me now! I want to think'. (Part the Fourth, ch. vi, p. 200) There is no doubt that Maybold plays a consort role to the queen-like Fancy.

However, even though she favours Dick Dewy, Fancy also assumes the principal role in their relationship. Like a good, passive consort, Dewy has to be content with what his mistress dispenses. To avoid wetting her hair in the rain, Fancy presents her hand, instead of her lips, to her disappointed lover: 'Never mind, Dick; kiss my hand' she commands him imperiously. There are signs in even such an unexceptional heroine as Fancy Day that Hardy seems intent

on making his heroines outshine his male principal characters.

Even in the group of novels Hardy categorised as 'Romances and Fantasies', where many of the heroines are themselves unremarkable, the male principal characters are even more insignificant. In A Pair of Blue Eyes, a romance with two very insubstantial heroes in Stephen Smith and Henry Knight, Elfrida the heroine, although a fairly slight characterisation, is more credible than either. Hardy manages her youthful confusion and conflict with much more conviction than he does Knight's egotistical idealism or Smith's effeminacy. However, Elfrida is never fully enough rendered to play the queen to the consorts of Smith and Knight. Their inadequacy as substantial heroes derives from their own very limited portrayals.

In Two on a Tower, the full flavour of characterisation is sacrificed to the idea of an unusual romance and an intricate plot. Yet, even in this lightweight novel the heroine is more credible than the male principal character. Swinton St Cleve is a flat, idealised intellect rather than a human being. His devotion to science at the expense of Viviette does not ring true; neither is it heroic. Indeed, it is the unselfishness of Viviette Constantine that is heroic. She may hardly attain the stature of Hardy's more vibrant heroines, but Viviette has something of their essential womanliness which makes her

more memorable than her consort. Swithin lacks the fire of human passion; he remains always a type, and not always a very credible one.

The romantic fantasy The Well-Beloved is another of Hardy's lesser novels which highlights the importance of women in his fiction. Jocelyn Pierston's pursuit of an elusive ideal is a fantasy which works against an heroic portrayal. In pursuing a fantasy he rejects reality. It is difficult to believe in a hero who is unable to come to terms with reality. And while it is the pathetic search of Jocelyn's that is the core of the novel, it is the essence of woman, in the idealised notion of *Avice Caro*, which pervades it. The novel is more of a romantic-fantasy than a realistic story, but even this fails to mitigate a 'hero' who proposes marriage to two women in the course of a dozen pages.

Thus, even in his romances and fantasies Hardy's male principal characters are never quite memorable heroes. In these less popular of Hardy's works, however, the heroine has the seeds of the brilliance possessed by his later heroines in his novels of 'character and environment'. It is in these novels that Hardy demonstrates his uncanny knowledge of the feminine mind, and where his portrayals of heroines does most to undermine the male principal character.



The honest but stolid Gabriel Oak plays the minor role of consort to the vivacious Bathsheba Everdene. He is overshadowed by her portrayal. Hardy's foregrounding of his heroine extends to her speech. Despite her rural background she speaks in a written mode. Her consort speaks in a token rural dialect. In itself this suggests her superiority. Gabriel brings this to the notice of the reader when he comments: 'You speak like a lady - all the parish notice it'. (ch.4,p.69)

However,Oak's inadequacy as a substantial hero in his own right has already been dealt with in chapter three. Here only the effect of Bathsheba's portrayal in overshadowing him and reducing him to a consort will be discussed. It is Bathsheba who is the keystone of the novel,drawing together as she does the figures of Oak,Troy and Boldwood. Her faults and her gradual development towards maturity make her more memorable than her stolid,passive consort. As she moves from the unexciting Gabriel to the exhilarating but shiftless Troy,and as her foolishness involves her tragically with the disturbed Boldwood,she remains always an unusually interesting and vibrant female. She emerges from her series of misfortunes as a memorable individual. Oak remains a consort,overshadowed by Bathsheba's brilliance.

Gabriel's subordination to Bathsheba is fairly explicit from the beginning. The following dialogue illustrates Bathsheba's feminine power over the awkward Gabriel:

'I am sorry,' he said the instant after.

'What for?'

'Letting your hand go so quick.'

'You may have it again if you like; there it is.' She gave him her hand again.

Oak held it longer this time - indeed, curiously long.

'How soft it is - being winter time, too - not chapped or rough, or anything!' he said

'There - that's long enough,' said she without pulling it away.

'But I suppose you are thinking you would like to kiss it? You may if you want to.'

'I wasn't thinking of any such thing,' said Gabriel simply; 'but I will - '

'That you won't!' She snatched back her hand.

Gabriel felt himself guilty of another want of tact.

'Now find out my name,' she said teasingly; and withdrew. (ch.3, p.59)

Gabriel lacks Troy's facility in handling women. Bathsheba's dominance in this scene is later contrasted with her submission to Troy. The contrast highlights Gabriel's inadequacy as a substantial hero. In the above scene the author suggests a relationship between superior and subordinate, if not quite queen and consort. The impression of a queen offering a subject her hand to kiss is supported by the royal accretions of the term 'withdrew'.

Bathsheba's passionate, impulsive and vital personality keeps Gabriel in the background throughout the novel. Despite his qualities he is never credible as the rightful partner for Bathsheba. Even at the rather contrived ending there is a suspicion of unreality about their marriage, despite Hardy's insistence on the 'camaraderie' which exists between them as a result of their mutual experiences.

Oak is himself aware of his consort position: 'I've danced at your skittish heels, my beautiful Bathsheba, for many a long mile, and many a long day; ... '. (ch.56, p.494) Even with her youthful passion spent Bathsheba remains the dominant partner, however. When she expresses a desire for 'The most private, secret, plainest wedding that it is possible to have.', we are told that Gabriel, submissive to the end, 'meditated a full hour by the clock upon how to carry out her wishes to the letter'. (ch.57, p.496)

Eustacia Vye is another Hardy heroine whose sensual personality is the locus of her memorably interesting portrayal. There is, however, more of a dark side to Eustacia's character. She has a very discontented nature. Sexually she is more akin to Arabella in Tess of the d'Urbervilles, while Bathsheba has more in common with Tess. Nor is Eustacia as central to the novel as Clym. Yeobright, whom Hardy considered to be the nicest of all his heroes (14), is very simply that and only that.

Eustacia attracts attention from her 'nice' consort simply because she is a more exciting and interesting personality. Somehow, for modern readers at least, the flaws and vices of Eustacia are more memorable than Clym's rectitude.

So, although Eustacia has a less central role than Bathsheba, she does in no small measure overshadow her male consort, Clym. Such is the strong image of Eustacia as a kind of royalty in Egdon that one critic refers to her as the 'Queen of Night'. (15) Like Gabriel Oak, Clym is a second choice of sexual partner for the heroine. This is detrimental to an heroic, masculine image. This is worsened by Eustacia's adultery with Damon Wildeve. Such is the stigma attached to the cuckold in Western culture that it is impossible to acknowledge Clym as a substantial hero.

The salient characteristic of Eustacia's speech is its morbidity. Her discontent with her rustic environment is clearly registered in her speech. It is this singular dissatisfaction which makes her so strikingly interesting. It is a flaw that many readers will identify with. The following list of words and phrases express this morbid discontent with her lot: 'Damon, you are not worthy of me ... I must bear your mean opinion ... ' (Book First, ch. 6, p. 89); 'how gloomy I have been because of that dreadful belief ... But perhaps it is not wholly because of you that I get gloomy ... It is my nature to feel like

that. It was born in my blood,I suppose. ... Damon,a strange warring takes place in my mind occasionally .' (Book First,ch.6,pp.90-91); 'Love is the dismallest thing where the lover is quite honest ... My low spirits begin at the very idea ... ' (Book First,ch.9,p.109); 'Tis my cross,my shame,and will be my death.' (she refers here to Egdon Heath) (Book First,ch.9,p.111); 'I have not much love for my fellow creatures. Sometimes I quite hate them ... Do you mean nature? I hate her already.' (Book Third,ch.3,p.209) Such morbidity is not an endearing attribute but it is more interesting and perhaps more of a human trait than Clym's rather priggish intellectualism. Clym is a dry stick,devoid of sexuality,akin in spirit to George Eliot's Casaubon,interesting enough as a character but hardly as memorable as his heroine.

Tess Durbeyfield has an innocence and honesty such as it is difficult to imagine Eustacia Vye ever having possessed at any age. In contrast to Eustacia,Tess demonstrates a fidelity to her own natural feelings regardless of social and moral pressures. It is not her experience with Alec which destroys Tess but Angel's attitude to it. Tess literally towers above her puny,insubstantial consort. While the analogy of queen and consort is not an entirely happy one,particularly in relation to Tess,there is ample evidence to show that Angel is at least a consort in a literary sense.

Tess is the first of the heroines discussed here who moves naturally between her rustic dialect and the written speech mode she has learned at the National School. (ch.3,p.580) Her innocence and her sexual attraction are considerably enhanced by her rustic dialect. Like the dialect of Adam Bede, Tess's is also only spoken in intimate conversation with her family. Her speech registers the traits that make her memorable. She is gentle, considerate, honest, naive, tender, loving and loyal. Below are some samples of her speech which illustrate these attributes. In this first speech she exhibits a gentle, filial consideration for her mother:

I'll rock the cradle for 'ee, mother, ... Or I'll take off my best frock and help you wring up? I thought you had finished long ago? (ch.3,p.57)

The dialect is, of course, merely representative of a rural dialect. There is really only one regional marker 'ee' representing an elided 'thee', the regional alternative for the standard 'you'. The word 'frock' is a more universal rural equivalent for dress, while the phrase 'help you wring up' is a colloquialism rather than rustic vocabulary. Syntactically the speech is standard and together with the 'token' dialect this facilitates comprehension. But even this simple deviation from the standard norm of the written mode is enough to indicate that Tess is speaking a regional dialect. Thus Hardy

manages a realistic effect, without making his heroine sound like a country yokel or causing his readers undue distress in translation. Hardy was well aware of this problem of dialect and comprehension for the reader. In a letter to Edward Clodd, 7 October 1898, he comments: 'But the dialect of East Anglia is a crack-jaw performance for a reader only acquainted with West Saxon.' (16)

Tess's innocence, naivety, and loyalty to her drunken father are all illustrated in this speech in which she attempts to make excuses for his condition:

He's tired, that's all, ... and he has got a lift home, because our own horse has to rest today. (ch.2, p.50)

Of course Tess knows that her father is drunk. Her naivety lies in her believing that her more experienced companions will accept her story. Her companions are aware of her naivety and make this plain in their retort: 'Bless thy simplicity, Tess. ... He's got his market-nitch'. (17) Hardy as narrator labours the point further for the reader's benefit: 'Tess Durbeyfield at this time of life was a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience'. (ch.2, p.50)

Her experience is further highlighted when she outlines the proof that will uphold her family's claim to the name d'Urberville: she remarks of their silver crested spoon that 'it is so worn that my mother uses it to stir the pea

soup'. (ch.5,p.83) Tess is incapable of archness: she simply states the truth as it occurs to her innocent mind. Her standard mode of speech is a simple kind. In the speech of which the above quotation is merely a part, simplicity is evoked partly by her frequent use of the conjunction 'and', suggesting a simple mind-style.

Tess's inexperience and innocence are also sometimes illustrated by an inappropriate use of language. In one scene she falls foul of Car Darch, one of Alec's former girl friends, and is challenged to fight. Tess's indignant reply is couched in a standard, spoken mode and is an attempt to appear dignified. Her naivety prevents her from realising that the pomposity of this style will only inflame the situation. To compound this error, she is led into the error of insulting her companions, calling them a 'whorage', possibly without fully understanding its depth of meaning. (ch.10,p.120) Despite Emma Hardy's defence of her husband's use of the word as innocuous, insisting that it had 'ceased in Somerset, Dorset, etc, to carry with it the coarse idea of its root meaning, being spoken by the most modest to imply only a company of slatternly, bickering, and generally unpleasant women' (18), for the majority of contemporary readers its use by Tess must have coarsened her character in their eyes.

But the manifestly superior quality of Tess's character in comparison with that of her consort's is best illustrated



in her conversations with Angel in chapter 35. Tess cannot, in her innocence, understand Angel's attitude to her after she has confessed her relationship with Alec. In her naivety she is quite unable to comprehend the magnitude of the social stigma which Angel attaches to her 'shame' and which will eat away at his pride. He is unable to accept the opportunity to act heroically. Tess's words 'Forgive me as you are forgiven! I forgive you, Angel', are testimony to a compassion and humanity that her consort lacks. She reveals herself as a more worthy, more memorable human being than her hypocritical consort. Angel Clare's inability to stand up and face the censure of society places him in the category of the mere male principal character. He cannot rise above the conventions or values held by others, even for the love of Tess. He is indeed poor heroic material. In this novel Tess exhibits the heroic qualities which highlight Angel's ineffectuality as a hero.

Thus, in the major nineteenth century novel, the heroine at times usurps the place once held by the traditional, substantial hero. His place is taken by a consort who plays out his role partly obscured by the brilliance of his heroine. In effect, these memorable heroines have been a further contributory factor in the decline of the substantial hero, a central role becoming

ever more difficult to fill by male principal characters  
in the major nineteenth century English novel.

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- 3 Hazel Mews, Frail Vessels, London, 1969, p.47
- 4 Philip Drew, 'Jane Austen and Bishop Butler', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 35 (1980) 127-149 (p.128)
- 5 Norman Page, The Language of Jane Austen, Oxford, 1972, pp.79-80
- 6 Susan Morgan, 'Polite Lies: The Veiled Heroine of Sense and Sensibility', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 31 (1979) 188-205 (p.188)
- 7 Stubbs, p.3
- 8 David Barker and Olga K.Garnica, 'Male and Female Speech in Dramatic Dialogue', Language and Style, Vol XIII, No.4, pp.3-28
- 9 Derek Oldfield, 'The Language of the Novel: The Character of Dorothea', The Nineteenth Century Novel, edited by Arnold Kettle, London, 1972, (pp.224-247)
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- 11 For a severely critical view of this structure see: F.R.Leavis, The Great Tradition, London, 1948
- 12 Stubbs, p.26
- 13 Walter Allen, The English Novel: A Short Critical History, London, 1969 edition, pp.135-39
- 14 Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: A Biography, Oxford, 1985 edition, p.476
- 15 David Eggenschwiler, 'Eustacia Vye, Queen of Night and Courtly Pretender', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 25 (1970) 444-54
- 16 R.L.Purdy and M.Millgate, The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Vol II, Oxford, 1980, p.202
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- 18 Millgate, pp.307-308

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE VILLAIN AS RIVAL

It is conventional to think of the hero in fiction as always opposed to some villain who is dominated, and ultimately defeated, by him. This is sometimes the case, but not always. In the nineteenth century English novels in this study some central figures have combined in their characterisations aspects of both hero and villain. Indeed, in great literature this is almost always the condition of the substantial hero. I have attempted to show in the portrayal of the Byronic hero, in chapter five, how this blend of the villain and hero fails to produce a substantial hero because of certain conditions prevailing in the writing of the realistic novel of the nineteenth century.

The allure of the villain in great literature is timeless. Dryden, for example, and Hazlitt are among those critics of the past who see the villain, Satan, as the real hero of Milton's Paradise Lost. (1) Shakespeare's great tragic heroes are a mixture of good and bad. Macbeth, for instance, is in the conventional sense of the word more villain than hero. In poetry Byron's heroes are of a similar mix. The novel too has its examples. The tragic Lovelace of Clarissa is a villain who dominates the novel and is one of the most psychologically interesting 'heroes'

in the early novel. Even Fielding's heroes are as much rogue as hero, a point that makes Tom Jones much more interesting. Walter Scott also knew how to present a villain-hero, despite the number of rather 'good' insipid romantic heroes he created. His reckless George Staunton in The Heart of Midlothian is not exactly a memorable success but is an interesting combination of hero and villain.

It is this kind of character, the hero-villain, that forms the basis of a substantial hero. The blend of good and bad is exciting in a character and lends credibility to the portrayal. However, for the most part, in the nineteenth century English novel this type of portrayal was abandoned to the detriment of heroic characterisation. In most novels the 'substantial hero' is replaced by two characters: a good but insipid young gentleman, and a villain of strong masculine appeal who is generally more interesting and attractive but who loses out to the weaker 'hero' in the end.

This dichotomy of the substantial hero has helped undermine the heroic characterisation of the male principal character in the nineteenth century English novel. Not only were good, virtuous characters emasculated in their physical behaviour but they were also condemned to speak in an 'emasculated' style as a rhetoric of their goodness. Thus in contrast with their rivals, the villains who suffered

little restriction on behaviour and language, these weak insipid 'heroes' are uninteresting and lack virility.

Consequently, the disappearing 'heroes' who feature in this chapter are all fatally undermined by the fierce competition from their respective rival villains. These villains possess the virility, sensuality and masculinity that is forbidden in the portrayal of the 'hero' in the nineteenth century English novel. And, although the villain's physical attraction to the heroine is meant to be repellent, it is more often of fascinating interest to the modern reader. Ultimately, the powerfully portrayed, sexually attractive, masculine villain, despite his vices, is more memorable, more interesting and more substantial than the 'hero' whose masculinity is undermined by the contrast.

Even Jane Austen subscribed to the portrayal of villains whose central interest is their sexual attraction. She never attempts to cover up the influence of this type of man on women. Morally reprehensible characters such as Wickham, Willoughby and Henry Crawford have a masculine attraction which Jane Austen seems to have understood.

The sexual potency of the villain is as old as Genesis. Nearer our own time, literary men such as Steele, Johnson and Ford Madox Ford have pondered the psychological phenomenon of why fictional villains capture the interest of readers. Steele wonders 'why the Heathen struts and the Christian sneaks in our imagination'. (2) Doctor Johnson was critical

of 'wicked heroes' who were made so attractive that 'we lose abhorrence of their faults' and praises Richardson's portrayal of Lovelace for losing 'at last the hero in the villain'. (3) Ford Madox Ford criticises the trend on grounds of credibility, but his criticism is proof enough of the villain's interest for the reader. (4)

The villains of Jane Austen are never better men than her male principal characters, but they are almost always more sexually attractive to women, although that attraction is often short-lived, and therefore tend to overshadow the 'hero' who is emasculated in his role as a good person.

In Sense and Sensibility, Willoughby, although not in direct opposition to the 'hero', has little difficulty in obscuring him. In the first place his role in the plot is more salient. He comes over as a much smarter, if shallower, character and is certainly more vigorous. Ferrars's image as a vigorous masculine character is severely damaged by his inability to deal with women: he cannot stand up to his mother and is weak in his handling of Lucy Steele.

Ferrars's character is vitiated by a retiring personality which neutralises him, and by an ineffectual speech mode, as I have demonstrated in chapter two. This gives Willoughby a distinct advantage over him. Not only has he 'a manly beauty', which Ferrars lacks, but he also has, for the romantic Marianne, the aura of 'the hero of a favourite

story'. (Vol I,ch.ix,p.43) Such a fortunate combination engages the attention of the reader as well as the heroine. In addition,Willoughby has a distinctive speech style which helps chisel out his personality.

But it is Colonel Brandon,the other drawing-room hero,who is Willoughby's rival for Marianne's affection. The former is undoubtedly the better man morally. In real life Brandon would perhaps be a better marriage prospect. However,considering the youth and vivacity of Marianne Dashwood such a match is anathema to the modern reader. Colonel Brandon makes an unlikely hero. He has nothing to offer Marianne except material advantage. The prospect opened up by this match with the heroine is one of dull,passive tedium. Brandon's eagerness to please is a positive flaw in his character as a lover for Marianne. He is also quite devoid of the kind of sexual attractiveness that makes the villain Willoughby memorable.

Brandon's speech is far from being a masculine,vigorous style:

I met Mrs Jennings in Bond-street ... and she encouraged me to come on: and I was the more easily encouraged,because I thought it probable that I might find you alone,which I was very desirous of doing. My object - my wish - my sole wish in desiring it - I hope,I believe it is - is to be a means of giving comfort; - no,I must not say comfort - not present comfort - but conviction,lasting conviction to your sister's mind. My regard for her,for yourself,for your mother - will you allow me to prove it,by relating some circumstances,which nothing but very sincere regard - nothing but an earnest desire of being useful - I think I am justified - though where so many hours have been spent in convincing myself that I am right,is there not some reason to fear I may be wrong? (Vol II,ch.ix,p.204)



I have chosen this speech by Brandon as it is the longest and most significant speech he makes. Its structure of three long, convoluted sentences in formal language makes it a style foreign to heroic speech. The tentativeness of the language gives it the tenor of the speech of a diffident young lady rather than that of a military man. It lacks the assurance of a substantial hero. He seems to be abjectly apologising for his kindness. In fact, his protestations of regard tend to diminish his sincerity. He comes across as much too good to be true and too much lacking in vigour.

In contrast, Willoughby's nastier sentiments are much more memorable. His speech defines his villainous character. There is wit in his malicious barbs. In the sample below, the sentiment is unforgiveable but the style is memorable:

Brandon is just the kind of man, ... whom everybody speaks well of, and nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers to talk about. (Vol I, ch.x, p.50)

I consider him (Brandon), on the contrary, as a very respectable man, who has everybody's good word and nobody's notice; who has more money than he knows how to employ, and two new coats every year. (Vol I, ch.x, p.51)

Willoughby's first clause in his first sentence above sums up very aptly Brandon's impact as a 'hero'. Such anticipation of Wildean maliciousness and wit is memorable. The epigrammatic style stamps the speaker in our consciousness. It creates an image of a suave villain.

Willoughby is himself a comparatively slight character, but compared with Brandon he is sharply delineated in his role as villain. Brandon, in contrast, is a poor figure and his inadequate speech style has much to do with his inadequate portrayal.

In the context of Jane Austen's fictional world Willoughby's speech sets him in the ranks of those who deliberately misuse language. (5) But through this misuse of language he becomes salient and memorable. Witty repartee is always attractive, but even more so in fiction where the barb is blunted by the divide between fictional reality and real life. In addition, the epigrammatic structure of his speech gives the impression of a quick lively mind and this underlines the stolidity of thought in the 'hero'. However, Willoughby's lapses from propriety are indicative of lapses in 'moral taste' (6); a 'lack of taste or discretion' and 'indifference to right conduct and sound principles'. (7) But while he has nothing to recommend him morally, Willoughby is infinitely more sexually attractive and more masculine than the other principal male characters in the novel.

Like Willoughby, George Wickham in Pride and Prejudice is attractive to woman. They have much in common. His attempted seduction of Georgiana Darcy parallels Willoughby's seduction of Eliza Brandon, except that the 'hero' Darcy foils the elopement. It is worth remarking

that Darcy demands no physical retribution for his sister's humiliation,as one might have expected of a vigorous,masculine hero. The physical (if melodramatic) retribution exacted by Nicholas Nickleby on Sir Mulberry Hawk for insulting his sister Kate might have enhanced Darcy's image as a hero. But despite Wickham's failure to seduce Georgiana,he succeeds in eloping with another young,impressionable female,Lydia Bennet.

Wickham's appearance,like Willoughby's, 'was greatly in his favour; he had all the best part of beauty,a fine countenance,a good figure and a very pleasing address'. (Vol I,ch.xv,p.72) His physical impact on women was instant; when entering a room,even in the company of his fellow officers, 'Mr Wickham was the happy man towards whom every female eye was turned'. (Vol I,ch.xvi,p.76)

Wickham's speech mode is very similar to Willoughby's,and its content is as malicious,although not as witty. Wickham slanders Darcy and this slander is the impetus to Elizabeth's behaviour towards the 'hero'. His calumny places him on an even more despicable level than Willoughby: seduction is more readily forgiven than calumny,for the former springs from a basic drive for life,while the latter is aimed at the destruction of character and is a perversion of life.

Much that has been said about Willoughby's speech applies to Wickham's. Here is a small sample which has been selected to illustrate his penchant for slander:

Oh! No - it is not for me to be driven away by Mr Darcy. If he wishes to avoid seeing me, he must go. We are not on friendly terms, and it always gives me pain to meet him, but I have no reason for avoiding him but what I might proclaim to all the world - a sense of very great ill-usage, and most painful regrets at his being what he is. His father, Miss Bennet, the late Mr Darcy, was one of the best men that ever breathed, and the truest friend that I ever had; and I can never be in company with this Mr Darcy without being grieved to the soul by a thousand tender recollections. His behaviour to myself has been scandalous; but I verily believe I could forgive him anything, and everything, rather than his disappointing the hopes and disgracing the memory of his father. (Vol I, ch. xvi, p. 78)

The whole tenor and design of this speech is aimed at branding Darcy a villain and proclaiming himself the ill-used party in their quarrel. The tone of aggrieved forbearance suggests self-indulgence. Wickham sets out to establish himself as the better of the two men in Elizabeth's eyes. He suggests that Darcy has more to fear from their meeting than he has. His 'forgiveness' of Darcy is aimed at building up a facade of integrity for the benefit of Elizabeth. It is reminiscent of Pecksniff at his most 'forgiving'. It is altogether a hypocritical speech but it stamps Wickham indelibly in our memory. The only comparably memorable speech of Darcy's is the very short one in which he insults Elizabeth in her hearing. (Vol I, ch. iii, pp. 11-12) Darcy's later 'good' conversion fades away quickly from memory. Paradoxically, for a culture which espouses Christian virtues, the villain in the nineteenth

century English novel is generally more attractive than the 'hero'. Even more remarkable is that the villain is the character endowed with masculine vigour and sexuality. It would seem that in the nineteenth century forces were at work thrusting the natural human drives into the background in the interests of an ascetic Christianity.

Thus Wickham, despite his flimsy part, is memorable in his villainy. He is a liar, an ingrate and a cheat but his attraction for women is enviable. In contrast, the Darcy of the middle and later chapters is a mechanical construction with speech and virtues to match.

The 'hero' of Mansfield Park, Edmund Bertram, is as mediocre a character as is Edward Ferrars. Edmund has a stronger central role but his presence at the centre of things merely serves to throw his mediocrity into relief. His natural aura of greyness is accentuated by his being portrayed in opposition to one of Jane Austen's most attractive villains, Henry Crawford.

Henry Crawford's villainy derives from his attractiveness to the female sex. This alone would have been ample enough rendering of his character to have obscured the asexual, dry stick Edmund Bertram. However, Crawford has other accomplishments all of which underpin his attractiveness to the detriment of Edmund's portrayal. He is talented, cultured, intelligent, all of which make him dangerously attractive to women.

But Henry's standards of propriety and morality are not those of Jane Austen's approved characters. His seduction of vulnerable females is morally exacerbated because it is coldly and deliberately planned to inflate his ego. His sister comments prophetically ,but not harshly enough,on his behaviour: 'He is the most horrible flirt that can be imagined. If your Miss Bertrams do not like to have their hearts broke,let them avoid Henry'. (Vol I,ch.iv,p.43) Mary's warning is borne out by his own thoughts about Maria Bertram: 'An engaged woman is always more agreeable than a disengaged. She is satisfied with herself. Her cares are over and she feels that she may exert all her powers of pleasing without suspicion'. (Vol I,ch.v,p.45) Both he and Maria further their sexual attraction for each other by manoeuvring themselves into the parts of Frederick and Agatha,the illegitimate son and abandoned mother of Lover's Vows. (Vol I,ch.xiv,pp.134-35) This stage partnership allows them to 'develop an insidious intimacy' (8) which eventually leads to Maria's disgrace. The perverse manner in which Crawford flouts moral and social convention by paying court to Maria and finally destroying her reputation places his villainy in direct line with that of the libertine Lovelace. (9) And like Richardson's hero,Henry Crawford's punishment is in finally realising Fanny Price's worth and that she will not have him.

But despite his calculating selfishness in trifling with the feelings of others, Henry's vigour, and active personality are more attractive and interesting to the modern reader than Edmund's staid, passive portrayal. Henry's animation is conveyed through his speech. He uses the same basic, formal written mode as Edmund, but his comes across as dynamic, lively speech while Edmund's is deliberate, ordered and passive. In these opposed styles lie the web of Jane Austen's theme which outlines the threat to the moral, ordered, conservative existence of Mansfield Park by the frenetic, changing, chaotic outside world of the Crawfords.

Henry's lively personality owes much to his constant use of intensifiers which impart an emphatic assurance and vigour to his speech. The following examples are all taken from one conversation with his sister:

I am quite determined ... My mind is entirely made up ... my own entirely fixed ... She is exactly the woman ... she is exactly such a woman ... She is the very impossibility ... But till it is absolutely settled ... beyond all interference ... No, Mary, you are quite mistaken ... I could so wholly and absolutely confide in her ... it was bad, very bad ... I will make her very happy ... Fanny will be so truly your sister! ... but he is a very good man ... Mrs Rushworth will be very angry.' (Vol II, ch. xii, pp. 291-97)

It is the overall, cumulative effect of these intensifiers which imparts to his speech a tension and animation which is missing in the flaccid prose style of Edmund.

Crawford is also bent on radical change; he has an elaborate plan to 'improve' Thornton Lacey. Edmund is as

determined on retaining the status quo,'very little of your (Henry's) plan for Thornton Lacey will ever be put into practice'. (Vol II,ch.vii,p.242) This urge for change in the Crawfords - at one point Mary says,'I am not born to sit still and do nothing' (Vol II,ch.vii,p.243) - is intended to represent a moral inadequacy to contemporary readers. However,for modern readers the Crawfords liveliness and desire to change fashions and mores has an empathic appeal which makes them attractive and interesting. Besides Henry,Edmund is dull,wooden and enervated. As a 'hero' he is undermined by his insipid portrayal,the effulgence of Mary Crawford and by the unfortunate contrast made between him and the villain.

Jane Austen's villains engage interest because they are attractive,vigorous,and often nasty,flawed human beings. This is not quite the case with Dickens's villains. His mightiest villains,the ones who are most memorable,are often macabre and melodramatic. But their villainy is also linked with their sexuality. However,while the sexuality of Jane Austen's villains attracts both female characters and readers,that of Dickens's villains repels. Daniel Quilp,for example,one of Dickens's most grotesque villains,has an erotic,sensual quality which fascinates women,we are told. At the same time,his lecherous pursuit of Little Nell causes revulsion. Other less grotesque characters such as Seth Pecksniff in Martin



Chuzzlewit, Carker in Dombey and Son and Uriah Heep in David Copperfield are reduced to lechers by their slaverling lust for the heroine. They are fascinating caricatures rather than credible human beings; but because they are so larger than life, they are vividly stamped in our memory.

However, Dickens's novels boast at least two villains who are neither grotesque nor eccentric. Steerforth in David Copperfield and Harthouse in Hard Times are more like real people, although Harthouse is seen by at least one critic as the 'demon king' to fit into a theory of Hard Times as a fairy tale. (10) But, although Harthouse does exhibit characteristics of the melodramatic villain - he smokes a cigar with upper-class indolence and insolence - his role is far too 'flimsy' to establish a case for him as other than an instrument of plot. (11) Steerforth is certainly the more substantial villain, but both he and Harthouse, to a greater and lesser extent, help to undercut the 'hero' by exhibiting a masculinity which attracts and, in Steerforth's case, entraps the heroine. Dickens has second thoughts about Louisa's seduction and saves her at the last moment, as he had previously saved Edith Dombey from Carker's lecherous clutches. There is little doubt, however, that Louisa is attracted to Harthouse: she confesses to her father, 'But if you ask me whether I have loved him, or do I love him, I tell you plainly, father, that it may be so. I don't know!' (Book the Second, ch.12, p.242)

As with Jane Austen's villains, seduction of the vulnerable female is the keystone of their villainy.

But Dickens introduces another, interesting element into the portrayals of his realistic villains. Steerforth and Harthouse are part of a class that Dickens seemed at once to envy and despise.(12) They are upper-class villains: educated, wealthy or used to wealth, well-bred in the social sense of the phrase, and worst of all, from Dickens's viewpoint, arrogantly despising the work ethic of the middle-class in their affected, fashionable ennui. (13)

James Harthouse is by far the flimsier villain of the two. But he is nevertheless 'a thorough gentleman, made to the model of the time; weary of everything ... ' (Book the Second, ch.1, p.153) besides his role as a seducer in the furtherance of the plot, he is also used to underline the sterility of utilitarianism. His scheming, calculated attempt to seduce Louisa for practical purposes must be seen as the inevitable consequence of Gradgrindery. Harthouse is the Gradgrind of emotional attachment, an area that Dickens regarded as ruled by the heart and not reason alone.

But despite his slight role, Harthouse manages to interest and attract by his masculinity and credibility as a character: both attributes which the 'hero' lacks. His credibility as an upper-class villain is largely because of his speech mode. Like the speech of the 'hero', it helps to

distinguish him as an individual, and substantiate him as a villain. Stephen Blackpool's speech lends nothing to his substantiality as a hero. And, though Dickens works hard in the narrative to paint a picture of the villain's speech as weak, langorous and ineffectual (Book the Second, ch. 2, p. 157), Harthouse's direct speech manages to avoid the impression that it is 'yaw-yawed' and comes across as more vigorous and manly than Stephen's.

Harthouse has a decided physical superiority over Stephen. Mrs Sparsit gives a quick inventory of the villain's handsome appearance: 'Five and thirty, good-looking, good figure, good teeth, good voice, good breeding, well-dressed, dark hair, bold eyes'. (Book the Second, ch. 1, p. 154) The repeated 'good' is an ironic commentary on this upper-class, superficial method of assessing character. House tells us that although Dickens respected superficial differences, in rank and wealth, for example, he was always quick to stress that 'True hearts are more than coronets'. (14)

Harthouse's 'good voice' is complemented by the polite, gentlemanly style of his speech. This style is much more energetic than the arid, formal style of the drawing-room hero. Dickens catches the clipped style conventionally used in fiction to distinguish upper-class speakers. Here is a sample from Harthouse's initial dialogue:

- very heavy train and vast quantity of it in the van - and strolled on looking about me. Exceedingly odd place. Beg

your pardon, really! ... much obliged to you for reminding me. (Book the Second, ch.1, p.154)

This is more of a spoken style than a written one and therefore more natural sounding. The impression of real conversation is caused mainly by the omission of the subject from the sentences. Besides imparting a clipped, vigorous tone to the speech, this style avoids the pomposity which comes with a more orotund sentence structure.

Other factors also obtrude to distinguish his speech as that of an upper-class character. The mixture of elevated words and colloquialisms lends credence to his education while allowing him to sound natural, a factor sadly lacking in Stephen's speech. In the villains first conversation with Mrs Sparsit he uses the following elevated vocabulary: 'philosophical ... exemplary ... laudable ... edifice' but manages to avoid pomposity by interspersing his speech with the following colloquialisms: 'strolling on to the Bank to kill time .. having the good fortune .. Thousand thanks ... Quite an eternity!' (Book the Second, ch.1, pp.154-56) And finally, his superficiality is highlighted in the ease with which obsequious phrases drip from his smooth tongue. Here is a selection of these phrases from one speech:

I assure you, Mrs Powler ... I am obliged to you ... Pray excuse my intrusion ... Many thanks ... Good Day'. (Book the Second, ch.1, p.156) Needless to say, Harthouse's polite deference is a means to his own calculating ends.

Thus Harthouse's speech, if not his behaviour, pronounces him a gentleman, at least in the social sense of the word. It also helps confirm and compound his villainy, as it shows a cool, calculating mind at work. Such a mind suggests an energy and vigour belied by his pose of weariness. So, despite his few appearances and his rather small role as an agent of the plot, Harthouse is presented as a fairly credible villain. In contrast, Stephen Blackpool's portrayal is flat, insipid and incredible.

James Steerforth in David Copperfield is a much fuller characterisation than his fellow villain Harthouse, and is certainly a more realistic, more masculine character than the 'hero'. Like Harthouse, Steerforth is an upper-class villain and is subject to the boredom that Dickens regarded as a weakness of the upper-class. Steerforth also shares with Harthouse, and with Jane Austen's villains, a sexual attraction for young, vulnerable females. His villainy, like theirs, is centred on a shameful seduction. David Copperfield, in comparison, is a pale, asexual shadow of a character.

A lot is learned about David by his inability to see through Steerforth. Steerforth is, in effect, part of the disillusion that David has to experience in his growth to maturity. In the shameful scene in which Steerforth offensively and arrogantly belittles Mr Mell, David is blinded by superficialities: 'I could not help thinking

even in that interval,I remember,what a noble fellow he was in appearance,and how homely and plain Mr Mell looked opposed to him'.(ch.vii,p.84) Dickens recreates a similar scene in Our Mutual Friend,in which Wrayburn,the upper-class male principal,belittles Bradley Headstone,the lowly schoolteacher cast in the role of villain,which suggests an innate admiration,on Dickens's part,of the arrogant,insolent assurance of the upper-class. In the first scene,however,it is David's lack of sensitivity and perspicacity which is the point being made. And just in case the reader misses the point,Dickens has Traddles direct attention to it with an involuntary cry: 'Shame J.Steerforth! Too bad!' (ch.vii,p.83)

Nevertheless,even this juvenile meanness of Steerforth's is never quite allowed to wholly dim his attractiveness. In the same scene,Steerforth is the commanding figure. Mr Mell senses his influence over others: 'If you think Steerforth ... that I am not acquainted with the power that you can establish over any mind here'. (ch.vii,p.83) David never assumes such command in any scene. Even his confrontation with Uriah Heep is done alone and at night. (ch.xxxix,pp.488-91) But even this pales into insignificance beside Micawber's famous denouncement of the 'umble' clerk. (ch.lii,pp.639-48) In both of these scenes it is the other characters,Steerforth and Micawber,who exhibit commanding qualities. David is merely a shadowy

observer in the background. In the scene with Mr Mell, however, Dickens has masterfully set the pattern of Steerforth's future villainy; an indulgence of his own gratification and power at the expense of the weak and the vulnerable.

In the fashion of the nineteenth century villain in the novel, Steerforth's villainy is linked with his sexual attraction for females. His seduction and desertion of Emily is the essence of that villainy. It is significant that Dickens, in his last novel Our Mutual Friend, stops Wrayburn's intended seduction of Lizzie, which would have consolidated his role as 'villain', to save him in order to develop the novel's theme of education, and make him morally fit to attain the heroine.

Steerforth's masculinity and credibility is manifest in the snobbery which is part of his villainy. His speech is, of course, a medium for displaying that snobbery. Most of his speech exhibits his upper-class insolence, but chapter xx, in which David meets Rosa Dartle at Steerforth's home is full of examples which condemn Steerforth as an insensitive snob. In his condescendingly patronising manner he refers to the Peggottys as 'that sort of people'. (p.251) Further prompted by the malicious Rosa, Steerforth elaborates:

Why, there's a pretty wide separation between them and us, ... They are not expected to be as sensitive as we are. Their delicacy is not shocked, or hurt easily. They are wonderfully virtuous, I dare say - some people contend for that, at least; and I am sure I don't want to contradict them - but they have not very fine natures, and they may be

thankful for that,like their coarse rough skins,they are not easily wounded. (ch.xx,p.251)

Thus Steerforth takes refuge in such stereotyped images to abuse the Peggottys. David's hint in the narrative that Steerforth is jesting is not confirmed by a study of the speech,nor is it likely that he is. And even the author's magnificent contrasting of Rosa's deliberately malicious behavior with Steerforth's seemingly unconscious indifference is not enough to mitigate his callous insensitivity.

The structure of Steerforth's speech is similar to that of Harthouse's. It is a basic written style showing the characteristics of education and class. Its conversational flavour derives from its contracted verbs and negatives and from the colloquialisms, 'pretty wide' and 'I dare say'. The natural tenor of his speech makes him credible as a real person. David,on the other hand,is restricted to a formal,respectable written mode,much to the detriment of his portrayal. Steerforth as villain needs no markers of respectability in his speech,and so sounds more natural,is more substantial as a consequence and altogether a more memorable character than the hero. (14)

The fiction of Charlotte and Emily Brontë reverses the singular Christian convention that heroes should be physically emasculated before they are fit to be heroes. This convention may well have its roots in the early Christian notion that celibacy is the highest state to



which one should aspire. Certainly in the early Christian church the celibacy of nuns and priests exalted them above the sexually 'defiled' flock. Saints, too, in the Christian religion almost always achieved their exalted state through an asceticism which denied sexuality. The veneration of marriage and the family in the Victorian era would appear to have conspired against sexuality as a natural part of human nature. In the novel at least, as I have tried to show, the sexually attractive man was portrayed as a Satan or villain, and his portrayal used to underline the notion that such types are bad for marriage and tend to undermine Christian society.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the passionate, masculine male principals in the novels of the two older Brontë sisters were considered by contemporaries as more devil than hero. Paradoxically, their villains are sexually emasculated. The passion of St John Rivers and Brocklehurst is the passion of religious zeal: in the former's case this passion is demoniacal but genuine, in the latter's it is superficial and hypocritical. Neither of these 'good' characters is attractive enough to compete with the Mr Rochester of the early chapters.

In Villette, the villains are women and these are more sexually attractive than the heroine, Lucy Snowe. In Shirley, they are working-class Dissenters, virtually faceless except for the caricatured Moses Barraclough. It

is significant that this 'villain' is also a minister of religion.

In Wuthering Heights, Emily Brontë turns the concept of 'hero' upside down with her portrayal of Heathcliff. His vigorous masculinity pervades the novel. It makes him a memorable hero and at the same time pronounces him villain by the standards of the Victorian novel. However, with the older Brontë sisters, respectability is more a criterion for villainy than is sexual attraction. Consequently, their 'villains' are no competition for the sexually attractive 'heroes'.

In contrast, George Eliot's heroes and villains tend to follow the Christian ethic: heroes are good but emasculated, and villains are sexually attractive but a danger to marriage and society. Like the villains of Dickens, George Eliot's are very often upper-class and always sexually attractive.

Two of George Eliot's early villains, Arthur Donnithorne and Godfrey Cass are both upper-class gentlemen whose villainy stems from their seduction of lower-class females. Cass's contribution to Silas Marner, however, is not a substantial one and his role does nothing to overshadow Silas's portrayal as a hero. He functions merely as an agent of the plot in his role as Eppie's natural father. Arthur Donnithorne is undoubtedly 'more sexually aware and awake' than the stolid and puritanical Adam. (16) But George

Eliot, in her early novels at least, has tended to emasculate her heroes in the fashion of fiction in the nineteenth century. Many of her 'heroes' have their sexuality channelled into paternal behaviour. Adam Bede, Felix Holt, Silas Marner, Daniel Deronda and Casaubon are all more father-figures than lovers. For sexually attractive men in her novels we have to look at her villains or her less central young gentlemen: Donnithorne, Cass, Stephen Guest, Will Ladislaw, Harold Transome and his natural father, the rascally lawyer Jermyn.

In *Mallinger Grandcourt*, George Eliot has created an evil character who is also a credible one. He is all the more credible and terrible because he is not a physical oddity like the grotesques of Dickens. His is such an interestingly psychological portrayal as an evil villain that he eclipses the staid, gentlemanly, but emasculated 'hero'. Like Richardson's Lovelace, Grandcourt's sole aim is power over others. He despises women 'but has to dominate them'. (17) He coldly discards his mistress Lydia Glasher and just as coolly sets out to marry Gwendolen. There is no question of love in his desire for her; his need is to master someone who seems to be morally akin to himself. He and Gwendolen are obsessed with their own importance and need to bolster this self-esteem by being superior. Grandcourt is the ultimate realisation of such an outlook: he is the 'English aristocrat whose status licenses any

amount of languid disdain'. (18) His villainy springs naturally from his breeding just as do his refined social mannerisms. To the world at large, and to Gwendolen in particular, he presents a 'civilised mask which conceals a moral vacuum'. (19) However, after their marriage, Gwendolen's aversion to him is justifiable as his portrayal is made 'frightful enough'. (20)

This 'frightful' character is, I contend, a more salient, memorable portrayal than that of the limp 'hero'. Grandcourt haunts the mind long after the novel has been set aside: Deronda never quite takes credible shape and fades quickly from memory.

Grandcourt is further individuated by the aristocratic ennui which is his hallmark. Deronda sounds like a serious, wise old man. His attraction for women is that of a father-confessor. The villain's attraction is sexual and resembles the fascinated revulsion of prey for a serpent. In fact, throughout the novel Grandcourt's image is based on reptilian associations: his body posture 'lacks rigidity, it inclined rather to the flaccid' (ch.11, p.145); the reader is constantly reminded of his coldness, of his expressionless eyes and of his ability to remain still as though mesmerising his victim. (ch.13, pp.170-72)

Grandcourt's aristocratic languor is manifest in his speech: it is at the same time a mark of his type and his singularity. He aims always at negating activity as though

he were some powerful anti-life force: 'I have left off shooting' is but one of his many assertions of negated activity. Even the one sport - hunting - which he indulges in is admitted to with all the weariness of the inevitable: 'One must have something'. His intolerable ennui reaches its nadir in his reply to Gwendolen's question, 'You are fond of danger, then?'. His reply, 'One must have something or other. But one gets used to it.' encapsulates an utter weariness with the world and life itself. (ch.11, pp.146-47)

The key word in Grandcourt's vocabulary is 'boredom'. It distinguishes his speech throughout the novel. He expresses his boredom on every possible occasion. Its reiteration serves to remind us of his aristocratic lineage. Here are a few samples: 'Great bore' (ch.11, p.146); 'This is a bore' (ch.13, p.170); 'is a great bore' (ch.25, p.348); 'it's a bore' (ch.29, p.372); 'the greatest bores' (ch.29, p.470). But Grandcourt's 'linguistic thumbprint' does not turn him into a villainous humour from the Dickens cupboard. His malignity lacks humour, and though he can be linked through his aristocratic langour with Harthouse and Steerforth, he is a more psychologically complex expression of intellectual and spiritual debilitation. As a character he engages the reader emotionally, for he frightens and repels the reader just as he does Gwendolen. In comparison to the three-dimensional villain, Daniel Deronda is an abstraction and a failure as a substantial hero.

Grandcourt is the most villainous of the villains in the nineteenth century novels in this thesis. Yet he has qualities, breeding and sexual attraction, which link him strongly to the pattern of the villain so firmly set in the nineteenth century English novel. It is the unfortunate fate of the 'hero' that he is denied the same sexual attractiveness as the villain. As a consequence, portrayals of 'heroes' in the nineteenth century novel seem emasculated, neuter if not unmasculine, and lacking in substance.

Hardy's villains may not be aristocratic but they are certainly all sexually attractive to women. Their villainy, too, centres on the seduction, and even rape, of the vulnerable or on promiscuous sexual behaviour. Hardy's formula for the portrayal of villains is therefore very much the same as that of other nineteenth century authors. In literary terms this formula is attractive to readers, especially modern readers. The vigour and masculinity it imparts to villains makes the heroes appear insipid and unreal by comparison.

And while Hardy's villains are not aristocrats like Grandcourt, neither are they simple rustics or common workers. Each of them has elements in his portrayal which suggest an upper-class character. Troy's military dress makes him almost classless; he is a dashing, striking figure with an assurance of manner which implies breeding. Only

the reader is aware that Alec d'Urberville's aristocratic lineage has been paid for. These villains are certainly not likeable characters but they are as interesting and memorable as the 'heroes' with whom they are in competition.

Gabriel Oak's unheroic portrayal has been examined in an earlier chapter. Here his rival, Sergeant Troy, will be discussed in an attempt to understand how his portrayal as an attractive villain is detrimental to the 'hero's' portrayal.

Troy derives his powerful evocation from his sexual attractiveness for women. His masculinity, activated in such sexually implicit scenes as, for example, his first appearance before Bathsheba (ch.24) and in the famous sword-play scene (ch.28), is in direct contrast with Oak's sexual passivity. (21) Despite his villainy, however, Troy is not entirely 'without sympathy' (22) as he demonstrates in his genuine remorse at Fanny's tragic death. (ch.43, p.382) He is the opposite in character from Oak. He is inconstant in love but successful in attracting women: Oak is constant but relatively unsuccessful. The sergeant's attraction is of a romantic, superficial kind; his profession, his uniform and arms, and his good looks make him a dashing figure. Bathsheba, whose besetting sin is vanity, is easy prey to the flattery of this handsome soldier. In every outward way Troy is a far more attractive and colourful figure than the

stolid Gabriel. To some extent Hardy's equation of vigour and activity with villainy and goodness with passivity and order is rather akin to that of Jane Austen's.

Troy as a flawed character is more interesting and credible than the flawless, dull 'hero'. Gabriel is condemned to unattractiveness because he is incredibly good. Hardy further undercuts Oak's image by portraying him as a conventional rustic (he even plays the flute), a type which is rarely associated with vigorous heroics. By contrast, and to the detriment of Oak, Troy is cast as the dashing military man, a well established type that evokes an heroic image. (23)

Troy's attraction is heightened by his skill in flattering women. He makes himself attractive to Bathsheba by acknowledging her attractiveness. Although his insincerity is deplorable, his manipulation of her feelings as he brings romance and excitement into her dull life is memorable. By feeding her vanity he arouses her physically. This is exactly what Oak fails to do. His stolid, practical approach to Bathsheba fails to excite her. Indeed, what woman would be excited by an honest appraisal of her faults in the guise of a proposal of marriage? (ch.4)

In contrast to Oak's insensitive bluntness, Troy's wooing of Bathsheba focusses on raising her esteem. He remarks on her beauty from their very first meeting: 'Thank you for the sight of such a beautiful face!' he flatters as the lantern



illuminates her. (ch.24,p.222) He turns her mild remonstrance into an excuse to flatter her: 'I like you the better for that incivility,miss'. This initial conversation with her is liberally sprinkled with words and phrases designed to flatter. She is 'a fair and dutiful girl'; he calls her 'Beauty' and insists 'I am thankful for beauty ... These moments will be over too soon!; and the ultimate in praise,and in flattery,perhaps,is showered upon her, 'I've seen a good many women in my time ... but I've never seen a woman so beautiful as you'. Troy is shrewd enough to treat Bathsheba as a special human being. It is a formula few can resist and Bathsheba being young,vain and vulnerable is mesmerised by it.

It is a truth of fiction and of real life that villains and villainy are often exciting,while virtue and the virtuous are often dull and uninteresting. Troy is attractive because the reader can engage with his human frailty. Oak is kept at a distance because he is incredibly virtuous. His passivity effectively curtails heroic behaviour which is essentially a struggle to change things. His role makes him a mere principal character,but his portrayal is underlined in all its unexciting dullness by the contrast made with the colourful,exciting and attractive villain.

Angel Clare,despite his forename and skill at playing the harp,is less virtuous a figure than Gabriel Oak. But like Oak,he is dehumanised and emasculated by a love that owes

more to the spiritual than the physical. Angel's sexual aridity places him in a direct line with other emasculated Hardy 'heroes' from Henry Knight in A Pair of Blue Eyes. But Angel Clare is a less sympathetic character than Gabriel Oak or for that matter, Clym Yeobright whom Hardy regarded as 'the nicest of all my heroes'. (24)

Angel Clare is such a 'poor thing' in his own right as a principal male character that he is even less memorable than the rather melodramatic villain, Alec d'Urberville. Alec has not the attractive qualities of Sergeant Troy but, nevertheless, his masculinity and vigour as a villain play a part in showing up the deficiencies of the emasculated 'hero'.

Alec d'Urberville is the one Hardy villain who shares the same lineage as the great Dickensian villains Sir Mulberry Hawk, Jonas Chuzzlewit, Carker and Heep. But Alec lacks the extreme behaviour which epitomises Dickens's villains. He is rather more a simple melodramatic villain than a great eccentric character. He has the bearing, assurance and mocking manner of the stage villain. He also sports the physical accoutrements of the 'handsome, horseý young buck' chewing 'a cigar between his teeth, wearing a dandy cap, drab jacket, breeches of the same hue, white neckcloth and brown driving-gloves'. (ch.6, p.96) He is hardly a realistic type and he appears to function as 'a kind of "formal Vice"' as one critic has observed. (25)

Despite this stage villain portrayal, however, Alec does have a masculine attraction and power to arouse Tess sexually which is lacking in Angel. The attraction of such an arid personality as Angel for such a passionate, vivacious young creature as Tess is hardly believable. Tess's physical behaviour with Alec is more credible than her spiritual attraction to Angel Clare. In the end it is the sensual villain, and not the emasculated 'hero', who is more memorable

It is essentially Alec's masculine and sexual behaviour which makes him stand out in comparison with the insipid Angel. His salience is further enhanced by his 'stagy' speech of which the following is a sample:

And why then have you tempted me? I was firm as a man could be till I saw those eyes and that mouth again - surely there never was such a maddening mouth since Eve's! ... You temptress, Tess; you dear damned witch of Babylon - I could not resist you as soon as I met you again! (ch.46, p.447)

The speech is heavy with sexuality. Alec's physical desire for Tess is never in doubt, and is, in a sense, more honest than Angel's false morality. But, this kind of language, allied with his tendency to sprinkle his speech with conventional, fictional upper-class expressions such as, 'My Beauty' and 'Upon my soul', makes him recognisably the stage villain of the melodramatic theatre. But he does exude a potent sexuality which is made to seem no more than the passionate sexuality of a rather selfish man. This gives him a masculinity and vigour which makes the 'hero' look

effete by comparison. Alec's behaviour after the seduction is made to seem abhorrent to Tess and certainly he has his own selfish indulgence in mind. But at least his behaviour offers her some practical ease in a harsh world. Angel's desertion, on the other hand, leads her into a despair, the horror of which is further compounded by his cold rationalisation of what he is doing. Alec is a somewhat less than realistic villain, but his vigour and masculinity remind the reader of the deficiencies in the 'hero's' portrayal.

As I have attempted to show, sexual attraction and a 'dangerous' masculinity is the nexus between villains in the nineteenth century novel. In contrast, the hero is emasculated; his is rarely a masculine portrayal and at best he comes across as neuter. For the modern reader unrestricted by the Victorian ideology that sexual attraction was somehow not 'respectable', the flawed villain is more attractive than the virtuous 'hero'. The interest of the villain derives from his flaws. He exists as a real person through his weaknesses. Moreover, goodness in literature is without any great interest and is tedious in great quantities. Villainy, on the other hand, is deviant and of great curiosity because it is forbidden. Thus the villain in the novel has an advantage over the 'hero' who has virtue, with all its drabness, imposed on him. It is a burden he bears to the detriment of his heroic portrayal.

It is, therefore, paradoxical that in trying to secure the morality and respectability of their heroes, nineteenth century English novelists have merely contributed to their eclipse. This eclipse was quite clearly the result of various contributory factors. One of these factors was the salience and attractiveness of the villain. In their efforts at upholding the Christian principle of celibacy, and the ethos of family and home as sacrosanct, authors emasculated their 'good' characters and, perhaps unconsciously, made their villains more vigorous and attractive to the reader.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

- 1 Dryden's viewpoint is quoted in:  
Peter L.Thorslev Jnr, The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes,Minneapolis,1962,p.110  
Hazlitt's view is expressed in his essay: 'Why Heroes of Romance are Insipid',The Complete Works of William Hazlitt,edited by P.P.Howe,Vol 17,pp.246-56 (p.254)
- 2 Quoted in:  
Ian Watt,The Rise of the Novel,Harmondsworth edition,1979,p.278
- 3 Watt,p.319
- 4 Watt,p.320
- 5 Donald D.Stone,'Sense and Semantics in Jane Austen',Nineteenth Century Fiction, 25 (1970) 31-50 (p.43)
- 6 Gilbert Ryle,'Jane Austen and the Moralists',English Literature and British Philosophy,edited by S.P.Rosenbaum,Chicago,1971,pp.168-84 (p.180)
- 7 Norman Page,The Language of Jane Austen,Oxford,1972,p.148
- 8 Tony Tanner,'Introduction to Mansfield Park',Harmondsworth edition,1975,pp.7-36 (p.29)
- 9 R.F.Brissenden,'Mansfield Park: Freedom and the Family',Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays,edited by John Halperin,London,1975,pp.156-71 (p.162)
- 10 David Lodge,The Language of Fiction,London,1966,pp.58-59
- 11 Philip Hobsbaum,A Reader's Guide to Charles Dickens,London,1972,p.179
- 12 Dickens's ambivalent attitude towards the upper-class has been noted by most critics. Among the best discussions of this attitude are the following:  
Humphry House,The Dickens World,Oxford,1971 edition,ch.vi,pp.151-69  
Philip Hobsbaum,A Reader's Guide to Charles Dickens,London,1972,passim  
George Orwell,Collected Essays,Journalism and Letters,edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus,Harmondsworth,1971 edition,Vol 1,pp.470-72

- F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens the Novelist, Harmondsworth, 1980 edition, passim
- 13 Richard Faber, Proper Stations: Class in Victorian Fiction, London, 1971, p.18 and pp.138-39
- 14 Quoted in House, p.153
- 15 F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, p.144
- 16 Jane Miller, Women Writing About Men, London, 1986, p.159
- 17 Jenni Calder, Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction, London, 1976, p.141
- 18 F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition, London, 1948, p.113
- 19 W.J. Harvey, The Art of George Eliot, London, 1961, p.240
- 20 Gordon Haight, George Eliot: A Biography, Harmondsworth, 1985 edition, p.496
- 21 Walter Allen, The English Novel, London, 1954, pp.141-42 and  
J.I.M. Stewart, Eight Modern Writers, Oxford, 1973 edition, p.30
- 22 Merryn Williams, A Preface to Hardy, London, 1976, p.98
- 23 Michael Millgate, Thomas Hardy: A Biography, Oxford, 1985 edition, p.152
- 24 Millgate, p.476
- 25 Trevor Johnson, Thomas Hardy, London, 1968, p.149

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ECCENTRIC AS RIVAL

The nineteenth century novel is rich in characters whose portrayals are so memorable that they completely overshadow the hero. Of course, some eccentrics are more potent than others in this respect. Eccentrics such as Mrs Gamp, Mr Pecksniff and Mrs Norris are writ large in the literature of the nineteenth century and will be remembered so long as a literate culture exists. Lesser eccentrics such as George Eliot's 'characters' are perhaps less universal in their appeal, but they nevertheless contribute, as brilliant vignettes, to the reader's awareness of the hero's deficiency as an exciting character.

Most of the nineteenth century novelists in this study have entertained their readers with portrayals of memorable eccentrics but the trend reaches its zenith, in quality as well as quantity, in the novels of Charles Dickens. One probable cause of the surfeit of rich, but often peripheral, eccentric portrayals seems to be the preference of publishers in those times for large, three-volume novels and, in many cases, the serialisation of the novels in weekly or monthly parts in the periodicals. Larger novels appear to have led to an increase in characters to fill the pages. The publication in serial form meant that characters, particularly peripheral ones, had to be made



especially vivid in order to be instantly recognisable after a period of time. (1)

The implications of this wider compass of characterisation are important for direct speech. As speech is a primary method of individuation, the more characters in the novel, the more diverse speech idiosyncrasy has to be. Consequently, speech is the hallmark of the eccentric in the nineteenth century novel. Some characters are made salient simply through a repeated word or phrase which underlines the theme or a specific character trait of the speaker. Sometimes the speech style is more fully an illumination of the speaker's singularity and no catch-word or peculiar phrase is required. (2) Jane Austen's memorable eccentrics, for example, fall into the latter category, while Dickens's eccentrics generally use the simpler device of a repeated phrase. George Eliot's rustics have a regional dialect, with its literary evocation of honest, forthright wisdom and earthy humour, to make them memorable characters. Many of the most memorable eccentrics in the nineteenth century novel are humorous characters. Humour would appear to be fertile ground for producing memorable eccentrics in any age. Falstaff, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and Squire Western are instances in other ages and literatures. Humour plays an important part in the novels of Dickens and Jane Austen and it is not surprising that they produce many memorable eccentrics who divert attention even further from

their ineffectual 'heroes'. This chapter will focus mainly on the eccentrics of these authors, but eccentrics from the novels of Emily Brontë, and George Eliot will also be examined. The language of these eccentric characters will be the main concern of my examination. I hope to show that their direct speech is the basis of their memorable portrayals, and that these salient portrayals contribute to the eclipse of the 'hero' in the nineteenth century English novel.

Firstly I will look at a type of eccentric rendered by both Dickens and Jane Austen. This 'silly woman' type fills the pages of both authors with her garrulity and impresses her portrayal on the reader's memory. Her misuse, or abuse, of language is the mark of her salience in the novel. When the 'silly woman' appears in the story, pallid, insubstantial heroes tend to dwindle into the background. The very silliness of these eccentric women keep them firmly fixed in memory.

Dickens's most memorable 'silly woman' is Mrs Nickleby who seems to have been modelled on his mother. (3) Her part in the plot is slight and yet her image is more vivid than that of her son Nicholas. Her eccentricity is not the sole contribution to her son's pallid portrayal. However, it is an additional attraction for the reader, and helps underline the deficiencies of Nicholas as a memorable character. Her portrayal differs from that of Jane Austen's 'silly women'

in that she is not nasty; she is merely a silly, garrulous, exasperating, empty-headed female.

Mrs Nickleby's brand of silliness which engages the reader's attention is exemplified in her naivety, her impracticality and her selfishness, all of which are illustrated in her direct speech. She epitomises a type of mother and woman in that era; unskilled and inexperienced in practical matters, made helpless and dependent by widowhood and by the restrictions imposed on her by marriage. She functions mainly as a source of humour. The reader is invited to laugh at her complete unawareness of the exasperating quality of her interminable chatter:

'Let me proceed, ma'am, pray,' said Ralph, interrupting his sister in law in the full torrent of her discourse

'Kate, my love, let your Uncle proceed,' said Mrs Nickleby.

'I am most anxious that he should, mama,' rejoined Kate.

'Well, my dear, if you are anxious that he should you had better allow your Uncle to say what he has to say without interruption,' observed Mrs Nickleby, with many small nods and frowns. (ch.x, p.118)

And so, Mrs Nickleby rambles on, oblivious to the sensitivities of others and to the world around her, as she steadily digresses from the point. The humour lies in her inability to realise that her own loquacity is the cause of Ralph Nickleby's irritation, and in her exasperating but unconscious trick of ascribing the interruption to her daughter.

Mrs Nickleby's direct speech is almost a written mode, as befits a genteel woman in nineteenth century fiction. She

does not, for example, contract negatives or verbs. She does, however, use colloquialisms which help colour her speech. Her usage is of a generally acceptable kind, neither vulgar nor coarse. For instance, 'Bless my soul' and 'bye and bye' (ch. xvii, p. 214) merely soften the formality of her otherwise written style. Her silliness is also underlined by her penchant for flourishes such as 'French and extras'. (ch. III, p. 25) But this incongruity of her formal style and the silly content of her speech is basic to her humour.

Her interminable speeches move rapidly at a tangent from the original point of discussion. In almost every speech she moves quickly from the main point to an anecdote in support of it, but is then diverted again by a parenthesis, the point of which is in turn followed up; she proceeds thus to the next parenthesis which constitutes the basis for the next digression. The whole process is remarkably Shandyan. Take, for example, the speech (ch. x, p. 120) in which Mrs Nickleby agrees with Ralph's views on the millinery trade: it begins, 'What your Uncle says is very true, Kate, my dear'. She then proceeds to relate an anecdote by which, presumably, she intends to support Ralph Nickleby's view that millinery is a lucrative trade. Her naive, parenthetical digressions subvert this intention, and humour is derived from both the exposure of Ralph Nickleby's view as exaggerated and Mrs Nickleby's

lack of awareness that her speech has undermined his view rather than supported it.

A similar example illustrating Mrs Nickleby's comical tendency to controvert important points is found in her speech to Kate,beginning: 'Bless my soul Kate'. (ch.xvii,p.214)This speech reveals her impractical nature. It is not only a 'delightful thing' but also a 'likely thing' to this empty-headed woman that Kate should be taken into partnership and that Nicholas should become the headmaster of Westminster School. Her use of the imprecise,loose,vague noun 'thing' is perhaps a sign of her wooliness of thought. She follows up her prognosis of Kate's future with an anecdote about a Miss Browndock who was taken into partnership with the subsequent good fortune of becoming wealthy very quickly. Once again a parenthetical digression undermines her point by revealing the real source of Miss Browndock's wealth as being a legacy.

'Silly woman' she undoubtedly is,but Mrs Nickleby,although her role is small,is stamped forever with the Dickensian seal of an entertaining and memorable eccentric. She is remembered with an exasperated smile of delight while her 'walking gentleman' son is but a hazy recollection.

With the exceptions of Miss Bates in Emma and Mrs Jennings in Sense and Sensibility,Jane Austen's 'silly women' are rather nasty characters. Two of the most nasty,Mrs Norris

in Mansfield Park and Mrs Elton in Emma are portrayed in such a vivid fashion as to be unforgettable. Like Dickens's Mrs Nickleby, it is the speech of these two eccentrics that renders them memorable. Mrs Norris is so graphically drawn in her meanness of mind and spirit that she overshadows the dull 'hero'. Mrs Elton has a harder task. Knightley is a much better hero-figure than Edmund Bertram. Nevertheless, Mrs Elton's vulgar enthusiasm and brashness pushes her to the fore in every scene in which she appears. She simply refuses to be ignored, and in her own small way she accentuates the 'hero's' deficiency as a salient character.

Mrs Norris is characterised by a speech mode that illustrates her lack of generosity, her nastiness to those who are weak and vulnerable, and her shallow, trivial mind. There are two sides to her personality which help make her Jane Austen's most unpleasant character. Mrs Norris adapts her verbal behaviour to enhance her own chances of survival. With those she judges inferior, Fanny Price for example, her mean nature surfaces readily; with those she acknowledges superior, the Bertram family, she adopts an ingratiating subservience. In this her hypocrisy follows a similar pattern to Pecksniff's who also 'bullies downwards and toadies upwards'.

The opening chapter of Mansfield Park (Vol I, ch.i, pp.6-7) has a fine illustration of the ingratiating speech that

makes Mrs Norris so memorable. She begins with a characteristically excessively flattering vocative and an obsequious form of address, 'My dear Sir Thomas'. Her forms of address, especially on those occasions she finds it to her advantage to persuade by flattery, are a salient feature of her speech. Such usages tell us a great deal about the character of a speaker. (4) Another feature of her speech is her use of long sentences with modifying clauses which function as propitiatory gestures to Sir Thomas, 'I perfectly comprehend you', 'the generosity and delicacy of your notions' and 'I entirely agree with you'.

In a later speech her false humility is exposed:

My dear Sir Thomas, with all my faults I have a warm heart: and poor as I am, would rather deny myself the necessities of life, than do an ungenerous thing. (Vol I, ch. i, p. 7)

The ingratiating mode of address and false humility instantly identifies Mrs Norris no less surely than Dickens's Heep and Barkis are identified by their repeated 'tags', 'so 'umble' and 'Barkis is willin''. But despite her protestations of generosity, Mrs Norris makes it quite plain that she is unwilling to have the young Fanny met any further south than London.

Jane Austen's technique in displaying Mrs Norris's meanness is to have her behave in the opposite manner to her stated principles. It is a simple but effective device for betraying hypocrites: Dickens employs exactly the same technique with Seth Pecksniff. Mrs Norris's meanness is

directed at the weak, defenceless Fanny, and she spends much of her time reminding Fanny of her lowly position in the Bertram household. Mrs Norris is blind to the fact that she practices the 'sins' against which she preaches. A blatant example of this blindness occurs in one long, rambling self-revelatory speech. (Vol. I, ch. xv, p. 142) In it she accuses the Jacksons of being 'encroaching people ... just the sort of people to get all they can' and declares hypocritically, 'I hate such greediness'. Here her direct speech becomes a potent technique of self exposure. (5)

Mrs Norris's shallow, trivial thought is demonstrated in a long, torrential speech which she manufactures to divert Sir Thomas's obloquy. In it she emphasises her own importance by establishing social links with the Rushworths. Every line of her rambling, disjointed speech is designed to illustrate her silliness. Once more her words are at odds with her behaviour: 'I hate to be worrying and officious'. She stoutly proclaims her consideration for the horses and the old coachman, but conveniently forgets that it was her selfishness that made them suffer 'roads almost impassible' in the 'middle of winter'. It is hardly surprising that 'Sir Thomas gave up the point, foiled by her evasions, disarmed by her flattery ...'. (Vol II, ch. ii, pp. 189-90)

Thus two kinds of structure individuate and invigorate Mrs Norris's direct speech: obsequious vocatives and 'hasty



assurances of agreement'. She is blind to her own faults and to the moral issues raised by the theatricals at Mansfield Park. Her vast energy is in stark contrast to the lassitude of her sister, Lady Bertram, but it is negatively employed in mean and petty considerations which satisfy her avarice and increase her importance in the eyes of others. (6) But it is her nastiness that makes Mrs Norris's portrayal memorable long after the 'hero's' lack-lustre image has faded.

That Mrs Norris's impact on the reader was instantaneous is clear from early comments from Jane Austen's family and friends. The following are a few contemporary observations: 'Aunt Norris is a great favourite of mine' - F.W.A.; 'Delighted with Mrs Norris' - Anna; 'Enjoyed Mrs Norris particularly' - Mrs James Austen; 'Enjoyed Mrs Norris' - the author's mother; 'hating Mrs Norris for teasing her (Fanny)' - Mr B.L. (7)

Another Austenian version of the nasty, silly female is portrayed in Emma. This time the character is much younger and is essentially a type whose upstart vulgarity derives from a speech style and content which are socially unacceptable. She too is blind to her own deficiencies and like all Jane Austen bores she is indifferent to the feelings of others or their privacy, and shuts off reality with ceaseless, silly chatter. (8) And although the hero, Mr Knightley, is hardly the 'dry stick' that Edmund Bertram

is, Mrs Augusta Elton's (her forename is an ironic reflection of her own exalted conception of her social standing) portrayal is so meretricious that it cannot but help undercut the 'hero's' impact on the reader.

Mrs Elton's vulgarity is a concomitant of low breeding and social pretensions. She is a familiar enough basic type in the fictional world of Jane Austen: the Steele sisters are earlier renderings of the type. She is an upstart who equates wealth and position with good taste and refinement; who unwittingly displays her own inelegance and coarseness of manner by expressing astonishment at Mrs Weston's lady-like manner and bearing after she finds out that she has been a governess. (Vol II, ch. xiv, p. 278) Jane Austen's usual subtlety is all too explicit as she allows Mrs Elton to underline her vulgarity as she remarks in all seriousness: 'I have a horror of upstarts'. (Vol II, ch. xviii, p. 310)

Mrs Elton stands out from the agreeable people around her through her direct speech. The gushing, too familiar manner is indecorous and is immediately ascribable to her alone. Such is her arrogance and her insensitivity to the feelings of others that she assumes that her narrow, trivial experiences are of interest to others. She admires Hartfield for its good fortune in being so 'very like Maple Grove, indeed!'. (Vol II, ch. xiv, p. 272) Her ignorance and limited experience lead her into profuse and exaggerated language in praise of her own property. The irony in her

comparison between Hartfield and Maple Grove is clear to the reader who has been told that the former is merely a 'comfortable home' (Vol I,ch.i,p.1) and who has Emma's avowal that Mrs Elton has 'over-rated' it. (Vol II,ch.xiv,p.273)

The use of exaggerated intensifiers is a salient feature of Mrs Elton's speech. She is 'extremely partial'; the house is 'a charming place,undoubtedly' and 'so extremely like Maple Grove',while the grounds are 'strikingly like'. (Vol II,ch.xiv,p.273) The poverty of her thought is further underlined by her 'penchant' for convenient 'filler' words and phrases when her vocabulary is found wanting. For example: Maple Grove is 'quite a home',and the configuration of trees and shrubs at Hartfield put her 'so exactly in mind' of the grounds at her own home. (Vol II,ch.xiv,p.273) Her narrow experience of the world is equally well illustrated by her arrogant 'correction' of Emma's observation that other counties lay claim to the title 'garden of England':

No,I fancy not, ... I never heard any county but Surry (sic) called so. (Vol II,ch.xiv,p.274)

Such is her self-importance that she cannot imagine that which she has never impinged on her experience.

Clearly she is both nasty and vulgar. She is,nevertheless,a very colourful character. The hero,and others,wilt into the background as the meretricious Mrs Elton takes the spotlight. The sheer vulgarity of the woman cannot be

ignored. The 'hero', George Knightley, is a righteous character, but besides this gaudy upstart he is driven speechless. Mrs Elton needs no audience as she speaks primarily to impress others with her 'wit and elegance': this explains her preference for monologue rather than dialogue. Her long, main speeches consist of declarative sentences requiring no comment or answer from her long-suffering audience.

An examination of the two speeches beginning 'My brother and sister have promised us a visit in the spring' (Vol II, ch. xiv, p. 274) and 'Oh! no, indeed; I must protest against any such idea ... ' (Vol II, ch. xiv, p. 276) shows that her sentences are long and complex, averaging eighteen words apiece. With the exception of one imperative, and one declarative question - 'You have many parties of that kind here, I suppose, Miss Woodhouse, every summer?' - which is pragmatically a statement rather than an attempt to glean information - all the other sentences are declarative and mostly in the active voice. This combination gives her speech a tone of arrogant dogmatism which contrasts ironically with her obvious ignorance. These aspects of her speech together with her constant self-reference - she uses the personal pronoun twenty-four times in the second speech - indicate an overweening concern with herself. She is, in fact, to adapt a phrase of Gilbert Ryle's, the pontificating voice of universal condescension. (9)

But her manner of addressing others in an over-familiar way is perhaps the most salient speech characteristic that makes her memorable. Her reference to Mr Woodhouse as 'this dear old beau of mine' is vulgar and patronising.(Vol II,ch.xvii,p.302) Apart from the impropriety of this over-familiarity,the use of 'beau' (a favourite word of that other Jane Austen vulgarian,Anne Steele) is unrefined as well. Other vulgarisms are her references to Mr Elton as 'Mr E' (Vol II,ch.xiv,p.276 and p.278) ,and 'caro sposo'. (Vol II,ch.xiv,p.278) These phrases must rank as an abuse of language generated by a desire to appear fashionable. But perhaps the ultimate in vulgarity which stamps Mrs Elton in our memories is her pretentious claim to an intimate acquaintance with Mr Knightley,indicated by her use of his surname only in referring to him.

Thus by degrading Mrs Elton's speech,Jane Austen has elevated the character to a memorable one. Her speech makes her more salient than her functional role alone demands. Thus,with such characters as Mrs Elton in the novel,it is small wonder that the 'hero' is not quite the force that he might have been.

As with the portrayal of Jane Austen's nasty women,direct speech is the basis of Charles Dickens's eccentrics. One of his less famous eccentrics,Miss Flite in Bleak House,is worthy of examination first,as an example of how even a fairly small character is made vividly memorable in a novel

in which the 'hero' is a pale shadow of a figure. Miss Flite is more accurately described as demented than silly and is the type of eccentric Northrop Frye has called a 'tagged humour' (10): a character associated with a particular, repeated word or phrase which has become a 'linguistic thumbprint'. (11) She is instantly recognisable through her re-iteration of a phrase very relevant to the theme of 'judgement' which occupies her entire life. Her function is thus thematic. Her purpose is one of bitter humour directed at an absurd Chancery system which reduces human beings to poverty and suicide.

Miss Flite's mental distress is signalled through her dislocated syntax and her manic repetition of imminent 'judgements'. However, Dickens's use of periods to 'chop' her sentences does not wholly convince the reader of her madness. The superficial impression of this 'chopped' structure is of neurotic speech. But her speech makes admirable sense when the full stops are ignored. Nor is Dickens always consistent with her 'chopped' speech. For example, in her long conversations with Richard Carstone and Esther Summerson, she 'chops' only one sentence in thirty-seven. (ch.5, pp.84-86)

But generally, Miss Flite's singular speech style makes her a memorable character. It makes her memorable enough to contribute to a diversion of interest from the less interesting main characters, Woodcourt and Carstone. The

following examples of her direct speech show how it is the odd sentence structure and her persistent dwelling on the theme of 'judgement' that fixes her in the reader's memory:

I expect a judgement. Shortly. On the Day of Judgement. (ch.3,p.63 and p.64)

I expect a judgement shortly ... In consequence of the judgement I expect being shortly given. (ch.5,p.85 and 86)

I expect a Judgement. On the day of Judgement. ... Until the Judgement I expect is given. (ch.14,p.251)

It is evident,even from these few samples,that Miss Flite's obsession is a pervasive part of the novel's thematic structure,and not simply an unrelated catch-phrase used for a minor effect. Dickens may well have produced some eccentrics for their own sake,but very much more often he harnessed them to enhance the larger, overall effect that he aimed at in his work.

Selfishness and hypocrisy are the targets of Dickens's art in Martin Chuzzlewit. To this end he employs two of his most famous eccentrics,Sairey Gamp and Seth Pecksniff,to underscore his themes.In the company of two characters whose names have become legend in English literature,Martin Chuzzlewit,the novel's 'hero' can hardly hope to compete.

Seth Pecksniff is a nasty eccentric who manipulates characters for his own selfish ends. He adopts an unselfconscious public face which continually professes his own unselfishness. The horror of Pecksniff lies in his self-delusion of righteousness. His hypocrisy is used to achieve his ends,but it derives from the egotistical notion

that he is superior to everyone. He protects and nourishes his ego by instantly ascribing any criticism adverse to himself as ingratitude, jealousy, ignorance or some other malign influence motivating his detractor.

The powerful image of Pecksniff lingers on in the memory, sharply delineated in his hypocrisy, long after the insipid image of the eponymous 'hero' has faded. It is his speech, both its manner and content, which brings Pecksniff to vivid, eccentric life. His language is full of his own magnanimity: 'I bear ... no ill-will to any man on earth'. The sweeping universality of the statement proclaims his self-regard; he is fully aware of his own perfection but has to proclaim it for the benefit of lesser men. As one critic perceptively observes: 'His speech is that of a man amusing himself at someone else's expense' but he 'makes himself ridiculous when he thinks he is making fools of his listeners'. (12)

Pecksniff's brand of hypocrisy is fully illustrated in the following short speech. John Westlock, a former pupil of Pecksniff's, has just been 'forgiven' for being indiscreet in criticising Pecksniff and his establishment. At the moment of his departure, Westlock wishes to shake hands. Pecksniff refuses:

'No, John,' said Pecksniff, with a calmness quite ethereal; 'No, I will not shake hands, John. I have forgiven you even before you ceased to reproach and taunt me. I have embraced you in the spirit, John, which is better than shaking hands'. (ch. II, p. 19)



For Pecksniff the concept of forgiveness is merely a matter of empty words and not practical behaviour. His refusal to shake hands underscores the hypocrisy of his speech. He deals in a brand of 'forgiveness' that costs nothing but a few empty phrases. Indeed, his 'exaggerated language is a correlative for insincerity'. (13) The tone of the speech is one of martyrdom at being so wronged. In each sentence he uses the pronoun 'I' as the subject agent of each action, a consistent feature of his speech, and one that underlines his preoccupation with himself. Pecksniff, of course, has nothing to forgive. Westlock's criticism is honest and true. Pecksniff's counter charges are simply a defence mechanism designed to keep his public face intact. He cleverly shifts the focus of an argument away from the pertinent point, and to his own advantage: John Westlock's accusations of cheating and over-charging are ignored and counter-charged as a 'reproach and taunt'.

It is this adroit deflection of adverse criticism which is the core of Pecksniff's portrayal. He neatly turns aside the accusation and then proceeds to accuse his accuser of some moral flaw. He adopts a tone of aggrieved, long-suffering indignation and delivers a tedious, moralising discourse at his accuser. These hypocritical homilies are characterised by pompous language, cliché, Biblical references and allusions, and melodramatic phrases. It is small wonder that his portrayal is a memorable one.

Pecksniff's reply to John Westlock's honest accusations contains many examples of his singular speech. He begins with a cliched proverb 'money is the root of all evil. I grieve to see it is already bearing evil fruit in you', with an added Biblical allusion, and reworked to suit his own ends. (14) There are also many examples of pompous, melodramatic phrases which help make his speech ridiculously memorable: 'the heart's repose', 'shed his dearest blood', 'a wounded heart', 'the heart is wounded', 'my breast still wrung'; while the archaic 'perchance' adds to the overall impression of empty rhetoric and insincerity. (ch.II, p.20)

An excellent example of his fondness for vague abstractions which mask his insincerity can be found in chapter v, page 80. Here he speaks of the 'mutual faithfulness and friendship' between himself and Tom Pinch, uses a Biblical term 'If it comes to pass', and a stale, extended metaphor '... be run over, in any of those busy crossings which divide the street of life'. The hypocritical, empty rhetoric could be reduced to a simple statement such as, for example, 'Tom Pinch and I are friends who would help each other if in trouble'. But here the clarity of the language makes the sentiment so obviously hypocritical that the structure would be too direct to issue from the twisted mind of Pecksniff. Like Jane Austen's eccentrics, Pecksniff's direct speech works by the general tenor of his language and not

by a specific 'linguistic thumbprint'. It is his speech that is responsible for his salient and memorable portrayal, a vivid portrayal that contributes in no small measure to the eclipse of the 'hero' in the same novel.

Even a much more substantial 'hero' than Martin Chuzzlewit would be hard pressed to compete in the company of one of the most brilliantly portrayed hypocrites in English literature. But poor Martin is eclipsed by a myriad of eccentrics all jostling for the reader's attention. The infinitesimal chance that young Martin has in attracting interest is scuppered by the colossal wave of interest which follows in the eccentric wake of Sairey Gamp.

Mrs Gamp's attraction derives from her eccentric speech mode. Its power and vigour, not to mention its singularity, contribute to Martin's portrayal seeming thin and insipid by comparison. Her peculiar speech is so full of speech eccentricities that there is no one aspect which is most salient. There is no one striking catchword reiterated (her constant reference to her 'friend' Mrs Harris is the nearest approach to a 'linguistic thumbprint') as with some Dickens eccentrics. Rather, her memorable effect is achieved through her massive distortion of pronunciation and grammar, the source of her linguistic identification (15) and her individuality. In addition to her own peculiar form of malapropism, Mrs Gamp's speech is a prefabrication of re-worked clichés, very often of Biblical origin, the

jargon of her job as a mid-wife and nightwatch nurse, and the distortion of fact in an effort to impress the world that she is 'pious, professional, sober and beloved'. (16) In her own way she is as big a hypocrite as Pecksniff

Her very striking speech illustrates how the sheer abundance of language eccentricities makes her a more interesting and memorable character than the 'hero'. The basis of her speech is a non-standard, uneducated dialect. This is achieved by the conventional method of suggesting mispronunciation and misapprehension through deviant spelling. For example: 'natur ... sich ... chimley-piece ... nothink ... (ch.xix, p.316) and 'pint ... Rooshan ... Prooshan ... Widder' (ch.xix, p.319). Such constant misspelling creates an instant visual impression of the speech of an uneducated person of the poorer class. In addition, her own peculiar distortions further mangle her words: 'owldacious ... Piljian's Projiss ... berryins' (ch.xxv, pp.403-4) and 'Ankworks package' meaning 'Antwerp packet or boat' (ch.xl, p.624).

Her propensity for malapropism is also a source of humour. Malapropisms are not as frequent, however, as first impressions suggest. There are, in fact, only about six instances of genuine malapropism in the novel. These are: 'reconsize' for 'reconcile' (ch.xxv, p.407) which only just qualifies by its sound association with 'reconsider' and the link with 'size up'; 'imperient' also qualifies by its

double link with 'imperious' and 'impudent (ch.xxix,p.461); 'The torters of the Imposition' is now a cliché among malapropisms and needs no explanation (ch.xxix,p.465); 'proticipate' seems to be a blend of 'prognosticate' and 'anticipate' (ch.xl,p.625), and finally 'aperiently' for 'apparently' is an interesting slip of the tongue as its root 'aperient' means a laxative medicine and is a word Mrs Gamp would have been familiar with from her duties as a nurse (ch.xlix,p.753). (17)

One other particularly interesting and peculiar feature of her idiolect is her phonetic translation of the consonants 's' and 't', and the suffix 'ed' into /dz/ which takes the written forms 'g', 'ge' and 'dg'. Here are some of the remarkable distortions: 'dispoged', 'deniged', here the 'g' is merely inserted, 'suppoging', 'parapidge', 'brickbadge', 'St Polge's', 'reagion', 'individgle' and 'excuge'.

These eccentricities of speech form a striking 'eye-dialect' which instantly catches the reader's attention. Besides the humour, the power and vigour of her speech contribute to an effect that points up the deficiencies of the 'hero's' insipid formal, written speech mode.

Mrs Gamp's distortion of figurative language and Biblical allusions is of great linguistic interest. Her muddled references and figures are both comical and fascinating. For example: 'Rich folks may ride on camels, but it aint so

easy for 'em to see out of a needle's eye'. (ch.xxv,p.406) The comical confusion of the Biblical reference and the colloquial language results in a fascinating idiolect. Mrs Gamp later confuses the Biblical tale of Jonah: she expresses a dislike for the 'Ankworks Package' calling it a 'smoking monster' and wishing it 'in Jonadge's belly'.(ch.xl,p.624) The humour is again derived from a ludicrously distorted image.

Even her non-Biblical figures are distorted in a comical fashion: either by mixing metaphors as in 'You are gold as has passed the furnace' (ch.xlix,p.752),or by dislocated syntax as in 'a voice like a Jew's harp in the bass notes,that it took six men to hold at sech times,foaming frightful'. (ch.xlvi,p.714) Sometimes comical confusion is derived from a striking piece of Biblical imagery that defies interpretation even on close scrutiny: ' ... plain enough to them as needn't look through millstones,Mrs Todgers,to find what is wrote upon the wall behind'(ch.xlvi,p.701) In this instance references from the old and new Testaments are mangled and forced together like the wrong pieces of a jig-saw puzzle.

No mention of Mrs Gamp would be complete without reference to her imaginary friend Mrs Harris. Clearly,the eulogies of Mrs Harris are designed by Mrs Gamp to impress listeners of her competency and her sobriety. Mrs Harris is a fiction

manufactured to supply ad hoc personal references for the grotesque midwife and night-watch nurse.

Her use of the jargon of her profession plays a part in Mrs Gamp's brilliant portrayal. I include a few choice examples, despite the space already devoted to her speech, in the hope that they will function as evidence to help refute one critic's assertion that Mrs Gamp's speech is 'nonsense pure and simple' (18) rather than an aspect of her character. Quite apart from the selfishness revealed by her direct speech, Mrs Gamp's use of professional jargon keeps her occupation (and her abuse of it) very clearly in the mind of the reader. Dickens builds up the character of a nurse by having her use the following common words and phrases of medical jargon. She tells us, for example, that the dead are laid out with 'a penny-piece on each eye' (a piece of information from which Thomas Hardy makes more dramatic capital) (19) before being deposited in their 'long home' or grave. (ch.xix, p.316) Her night-nurse duties call for her to 'lay ... out' all her 'fellow creetur's' (ch.xix, p.316) She uses medical jargon in its colloquial version, and appropriately mangled; 'when he was took so strange' (ch.xlvi, p.714); she recommends 'half-a-dudgeon fresh young lively leeches on your temples' as a remedy for Mr Sweedlepipe's 'confugion' (ch.xlix, p.745) and threatens poor Mr Chuffey with a drastic remedy for his behaviour:

Spanish Flies is the only thing to draw this nonsense out of you, and if anybody wanted to do you a kindness, they'd

clap a blister of them on your head, and put a mustard poultice on your back. (ch. xlvii, pp. 707-8)

Sairey Gamp's idiolect is so grotesquely distorted that it is impossible not to find her comical. But she is more than a fascinating character, just as her speech is much more than 'nonsense pure and simple'. She acts as a minor agent of the plot, bringing Martin and John Westlock into communication with Mr Chuffey, and is thus partly responsible for the downfall of Jonas Chuzzlewit. Her character traits help underscore the themes of greed and selfishness: she consumes alcohol to excess, she is concerned more with her fee than her patients, she is callous to her patients and selfishly concerned that her image should be projected to the world as righteous, respectable and noble. She is therefore important structurally and thematically, and her distorted speech plays a large part in drawing her to the attention of the reader. Her brilliance as an eccentric character is another nail in the coffin of the 'hero's' lifeless portrayal.

Eccentric characters are so numerous in the novels of Dickens that space alone is the only reason for any omissions from this chapter. As I have already examined some female eccentrics, tenuously linked together as 'silly women', I now propose to look at two male eccentrics who are linked by their inability to function effectively in the adult world. Harold Skimpole in Bleak House manipulates his feigned incapacity for selfish ends: the bumbling



incapacity of Mr Brooke in Middlemarch is honest enough. Both become memorable through their incapacity. Skimpole is despicable; the doddering Mr Brooke is merely pathetic. But both succeed as eccentrics who in their own small way contribute to the eclipse of their respective 'heroes'.

Mr Brooke's portrayal is that of the 'silly man'. His speech is indicative of a rambling habit of thought: incoherence, fragmented speech, cliches, unfinished sentences all of which are conventionally featured in the direct speech of 'silly females'. His irritating habit of attempting to make sense of events through appeals to past experience is a mark of his stolid conservatism. And, as conservatism is one of George Eliot's themes in this novel, it is clear that Mr Brooke is more than a rather comical, pathetic figure.

Because he is an eccentric whose speech differentiates him from others, Mr Brooke attracts our interest. His silliness sticks in the memory, especially as it drives home the 'self-debilitating consequences of unexamined privilege'.  
(20) Alone, he is neither more important nor more interesting than the principal male characters, but each time he appears, each time he speaks, the interest created adds to the cumulative effect of all the other aspects in the novel which contribute to their eclipse.

The following speech is a good example of Mr Brooke's 'rambling habit of mind' which attracts interest. In it he disagrees with Sir James Chettam's ideas on modern farming: A great mistake, Chettam, ... going into electrifying your land and that kind of thing, and making a parlour of your cow-house. It won't do. I went into science a great deal myself at one time; but I saw it would not do. It leads to everything; you can let nothing alone. No, no - see that your tenants don't sell their straw, and that kind of thing; and give them draining tiles, you know. But your fancy farming will not do - the most expensive sort of whistle you can buy; you may as well keep a pack of hounds. (ch.2, p.39)

The structure of his argument is built up by supporting assertions with vague generalities based on appeals to the past. (21) It is a flimsy, illogical structure. The content of his speech indicates his negative attitude towards change. It is little more than a series of imprecise statements trailing off into vagueness: 'electrifying your land and that kind of thing ... it leads to everything ... sell their straw and that kind of thing'. These vaguenesses are 'supported' by what are merely expressions of disapproval: 'A great mistake ... it won't do ... No, no ... will not do'. The entire flimsy edifice of his 'reasoning' is based on the dubious, unspecified evidence of his experience: 'I went into science a good deal myself at one time'. This statement alone is heavy with irony considering that precise, logical thought and expression are the hallmarks of science. Mr Brooke is clearly unaware of his deficiencies, a trait he shares with the 'silly women' of Dickens and Jane Austen.

Thus, in his first long speech, Mr Brooke exhibits his three outstanding speech characteristics: the vague phrase, 'that kind of thing' used to gloss over his ignorance; the tag expression, 'you know' which absolves him from giving detailed information, implying, as it does, understanding and agreement on the part of the listener; and the negative expression of disapproval, 'it won't do', in a variety of forms. He uses these forms so frequently that they immediately identify his speech as an 'idiosyncratic style'. (22) Here are a few specific examples of his disapproval of things new or different: of 'human perfectibility' he observes, 'I saw it would not do' (ch.2, p.39); he criticises Casaubon's filing system, 'Ah, pigeon holes will not do'. (ch.2, p.42) He seems only vaguely aware of why Casaubon is deficient: 'But I never got anything out of him - any ideas, you know ... may be a Bishop - that kind of thing, you know'. (ch.4, p.62) His views on marriage fade into indeterminacy: 'People should have their own way in marriage, and that sort of thing - up to a certain point, you know'. (ch.4, p.63) But Mr Brooke's bumbling speech is more salient than the speech of the principal male characters. Its idiosyncratic style is more memorable than the formal, written mode used by the novel's 'heroes'.

Mr Brooke's propensity for name-dropping is also a salient feature of his portrayal which stamps him indelibly in the

reader's memory. He constantly 'supports' his assertions with appeals to higher authority, claiming personal acquaintance with either the individual or his work. Sometimes the authority is a grandiose, theoretical abstraction such as Science. (ch.2,p.39) Sometimes it is an exalted individual: Mr Brooke dined with Davy and Wordsworth on one occasion (ch.2,p.38); he is familiar with the works of Adam Smith and Southey (ch.2,p.39) and 'made a great study of theology at one time', and also 'knew Wilberforce in his best days'. (ch.2,p.41) He also 'knew Romilly' and reinforces the authority this reflects on him by noting that 'Casaubon didn't know Romilly'. (ch.4,p.62) This habit of Mr Brooke's is basically the same strategy that Sairey Gamp uses. In Brooke's case, his acquaintance with grand personages is designed to create for him an aura of importance. The habit of name-dropping is so ingrained that he only just prevents himself from claiming personal acquaintance with Virgil. (ch.6,p.78)

The fascination of Mr Brooke is the fascination of a bumbling, innocuous character whose deficiencies are a source of some humour. This is largely accomplished by his speech mode which illustrates an incoherent and rambling mind. But Mr Brooke is not simply a 'silly man'. The reader has to reflect on the influence of such a man on Dorothea's upbringing, and of the implications for society of such a witless, bumbling person in a position of privilege. The

contrast between him and Caleb Garth, who is everything that Brooke is not, reveals a social system which disadvantages the able by its adherence to class division. Thus the figure of Mr Brooke is a trenchant commentary on the prevailing class system.

The scope of the huge novel of the nineteenth century allowed many eccentrics to flourish in competition with the principal male character. Such eccentrics are an inherent part of the nineteenth century English novel. But because nineteenth century novel 'heroes' are generally insubstantial in themselves, these eccentrics undermine rather than enhance their portrayals.

I turn now to another minor character whose presence contributes, in small measure, to the eclipse of the 'hero'. Harold Skimpole in Bleak House is unwilling to function in the adult world. This incapacity is deliberately feigned for selfish ends. Unlike the portrayal of Mr Brooke, Skimpole's presentation lacks humour; he is a ridiculous, despicable character who irresponsibly denies all obligations in life, preferring to live like a parasite on the generosity of others.

Nonetheless, Skimpole's singularity engages interest to such a degree that he is more memorable than either Woodcourt or Carstone. Like most eccentrics, Skimpole is remembered by his speech. His linguistic thumbprint is his

re-iteration of the key word 'child' which he uses to excuse his irresponsibility. (23)

Most of Skimpole's memorable speeches are specious defences of his idleness, in which he attempts to rationalise his egotism. To this end he invokes the innocence of a child. The character is based on Leigh Hunt although criticism made Dickens deny this and attempt to cover up the resemblance. In a letter to his friend Forster, Dickens reveals that 'Brown (Phiz) has done Skimpole, and helped to make him singularly unlike the great original'. (24)

In the following speech Skimpole's specious logic has an almost brilliant effrontery in its proposition that those who are generous to him are favoured:

I almost feel as if you ought to be grateful to me for giving you the opportunity of enjoying the luxury of generosity. (ch.6, p.100)

Such bold effrontery sticks in the memory. There is nothing as memorable in the rather turgid speech of the novel's 'heroes'. However, Skimpole's direct speech has not the peculiarities or distortions which make Sairey Gamp's so ear- and eye-catching. His basic mode is akin to that of Mr Brooke and it works as an individual style by way of its repeated phrases and words that expose his character. By renouncing adulthood, Skimpole retains his 'innocence' and thus becomes deserving of the protection of those practical people more used to the harsh realities of life, such as the

need to worry over things like 'the base word money'.(ch.6,p.101) He calls himself 'a confiding self' (ch.6,p.100) to suggest that he lacks the guile of the normal adult. But Esther,another 'shrewd child' figure, sees through him; she succinctly sums up the impression he wishes to convey to others; 'as if he said,you know! "You are designing people compared with me!"'. (ch.6,p.101) When Mr Boythorn invites him to his house,Skimpole refers to himself in the same fashion:

He has invited me ... and if a child may trust himself in such hands: which the present child is encouraged to do ... I shall go ... (ch.15,p.258)

There is no other character in the novel whose character is exposed so mercilessly through his speech. Only one facet of his character is developed but he remains an interesting and memorable personality nevertheless. Through the effrontery of his speech he becomes more clearly stamped in the reader's memory than the 'heroes',Woodcourt or Carstone.

Skimpole's parasitism is further illustrated in his affected indifference towards money:

I suppose it will cost money? Shillings perhaps? Or pounds? Or something of that sort? (ch.15,pp.258-59)

Here the use of the indeterminate 'suppose' and 'perhaps',and the alternative 'or' express his assumed ignorance of the sordid necessity for money,while the force

of the indeterminate 'something of that sort' is a show of affected indifference. That his attitude towards money is an affected one is explicitly stated by the observant detective Mr Bucket, another person who sees through him: 'No idea of money ... He takes it though!'. (ch.57,p.831) One function of Mr Bucket is to inform the reader of Skimpole's real nature. Dickens, at times, prefers to play safe by 'telling' as well as 'showing'. He uses Bucket to acquaint Esther Summerson about Skimpole's deceit:

Now, Miss Summerson, I'll give you a piece of advice ... Whenever a person says to you that they are as innocent as can be in all concerning money, look well after your own money, for they are dead certain to collar it if they can. Whenever a person proclaims to you 'In worldly matters I'm a child' you consider that that person is only a-crying off from being held accountable, and that you have got that person's number, and it's Number One. (ch.57,p.832)

Bucket shrewdly recognises the selfishness that motivates Skimpole. This egotism is illustrated in his extensive self-reference. In his introductory speech, for example, he manages to make twenty-three references to himself, using the personal pronouns 'I' and 'me'. In the speech immediately following this, of about half the length, he refers to himself sixteen times. (ch.6, pp.99-100) Most of his other speeches show a similar marked tendency to dwell upon himself.

In the nineteenth century English novel rustics were generally still portrayed as eccentrics, although there was an increasing tendency to utilise the rustic character in



more important and serious roles. Two particular eccentric rustics are worth looking at in some detail as they are created in such a fashion that they have become memorable in their own right.

One such outstanding rustic is Joseph in Wuthering Heights, any summary of which would certainly only make brief mention of him and yet he is very roughly hewn in our imaginations. Joseph is among the best known servant characters in the nineteenth century English novel. But unlike that other famous servant, Sam Weller, Joseph's attraction does not derive from his wit or humour. Rather, it attracts by the awesome vigour of his graphic speech in its unholy blend of pagan and religious fervour. Joseph's dialect is so broad that it rightly deserves the label 'realistic', although it is clear that absolute realism of speech is neither attainable nor desirable in written fiction.

Much of Joseph's dialect proved so difficult for readers of the first edition of the novel in 1847 that Charlotte Brontë made some revisions in the second edition (1850). In a letter to the publisher, Charlotte explained her misgivings about her sister's use of a broad dialect:

It seems to me advisable to modify the orthography of the old servant Joseph's speeches; for though as it stands it exactly renders the Yorkshire dialect to the Yorkshire ear, yet I am sure Southerners must find it unintelligible; and thus one of the most graphic characters in the book is lost on them. (25)

It is Joseph's 'graphic character' invigorated by his dialect, which is part of the powerful evocation of this novel and which throws into relief the insipid, passive nature of one 'hero', Edgar Linton. Edgar's portrayal is vitiated by his formal, written style and further weakened by the contrast with the vigorous dialect spoken by Joseph. His speech gives Joseph's portrayal the 'stamp of high genius' as one critic puts it. (26) Here are two samples of the same speech, either of which makes it impossible not to notice and remember the character. The first is from the first edition, the second from Charlotte's revised second edition:

Noa! ... Noa! that manes nowt - Hathecliff maks noa 'cahnt uh t'mother, nur yah norther - bud he'll hev his lad; und I mun tak him - soa now yah know. (ch.19, 1847 edition)

Noa! ... Noa! that means naught - Hathecliff maks noa 'count o't'mother, nor ye norther; but he'll hev his lad; und I mun tak him - soa now ye know. (ch.19, 1850 edition)

There are nine changes in this short speech but any loss of realism seems of minor importance. For non-Yorkshire readers Charlotte's version still retains the illusion of verisimilitude. The gain in the greater ease of comprehension offsets any loss of realism. The changes Charlotte considered necessary to ease the strain of reading are worth considering. Clearly she thought that the personal pronoun 'you' is more easily interpreted in the form 'ye' than in the form 'yah'. This makes sense considering the link of the former with Biblical

language, from which rural dialects draw heavily. Indeed, the personal pronoun 'ye' is found in most fictional, regional dialects. It is interesting also that changes are made to bring back standard English spelling to certain words: 'manes' now becomes 'means', 'nah' becomes 'now', 'cahnt' becomes 'count', 'Nowt' on the other hand has only been converted as far as 'naught' which is more archaic than standard. These aids do serve to facilitate comprehension while the illusion of a regional dialect is still maintained.

Joseph's speech highlights his portrayal in contrast to that of Edgar Linton. Here is another sample of his vigorous, eye-catching dialect:

Ech! ech! ... Weel done, Miss Cathy! Weel done, Miss Cathy! Hahsiver, t'maister sall just tum'le o'er them brocken pots; un'then we's hear summit; we's hear hah its tuh be, Gooid-for-owt madling. (ch.13, p.123)

The malicious gloating comes across more powerfully spoken like this than it would in a formal written style. The marked regionality of the speech makes Joseph stand out more than his fairly small part demands. Its singular language features help to individualise him and give him a malevolent vigour which makes him memorable. Edgar Linton is remembered because he married Catherine Earnshaw: Joseph is memorable because he is a personality of some substance. His fanaticism and crankiness are accentuated by his 'peculiar' speech. The same effect would have been

impossible to achieve had the old servant been made to speak in a written style. But as he stands, his eccentric portrayal, in which his speech plays a major part, contributes to the eclipse of the 'hero', Edgar Linton, by highlighting the deficiencies of the latter's insipid portrayal.

Mrs Poyser in Adam Bede is a model of practicality and common-sense. Her natural portrayal, warm and unaffected, highlights the stiffness of the hero in the early part of the novel. In common with other eccentrics, her direct speech is the key to her memorable portrayal. It is full of sound sense delivered in an imagery drawn from her own experience of rural life. According to her biographer, George Eliot based Mrs Poyser on her mother. From the first publication of the novel it was obvious that Mrs Poyser was to become a memorable character: Blackwood pronounced the character 'first rate'; Jane Carlyle was impressed enough to use one of Mrs Poyser's pithy sayings in a letter to the author, and even Queen Victoria was much impressed by the character. (27) Her function is humour largely, but her vigorous affirmation of life serves as a contrast to the darker intensity of the Methodist principles espoused by her niece.

Mrs Poyser, like most of the other eccentrics examined in this chapter, exists almost entirely through her speech. The reader's visual image of her behaviour is limited narrowly

to her cooking in her kitchen. She exists as the voice of rustic common-sense. Her vigorous speech gives her a vivid presence which makes her stand out whenever she appears in the story, which she does frequently. So salient is her personality that in the early part of the novel her presence eclipses Adam's portrayal, despite the fact that Adam, in the end, emerges as one of the more credible heroes in the English nineteenth century novel. Adam's dourness and intensity of character, in his early inflexible portrayal, contrasts to his detriment with the humour and warmth of Mrs Poyser's personality. Such personalities in fiction are not easily forgotten.

Mrs Poyser's direct speech is a regional dialect and this is rendered in the conventional manner of fiction: non-standard spelling and consonantal elision are the visual markers of regional pronunciation. Some regional vocabulary is added to remind the reader that it is a rustic dialect. Here are some examples: 'gallowsness' and 'mawkin' (ch.vi, p.74) and 'geck'. (ch.ix, p.97)

But what makes Mrs Poyser's dialect sparkle is her expression of traditional rustic wisdom. This takes the form of epigrammatic sayings, the imagery of which is drawn from her experience of country life. This makes her speech idiosyncratic and therefore easily distinguished from other speakers in the novel. Adam's mother Elizabeth, for example, also speaks in a regional dialect, but the

gloomy, pessimistic tenor of her speech is instantly distinguishable from the vigour and humour that makes Mrs Poyser's dialect sparkle with life.

Her rustic prescriptions for sensible living are punctuated with a caustic wit:

... it's all very fine having a ready-made rich man, but may happen he'll be a ready-made fool; and it's no use filling your pocket full of money if you've got a hole in your corner. It'll do you no good to sit in a spring-cart o' your own, if you've got a soft to drive you; he'll soon turn you over into the ditch. I allays said I'd never marry a man as had no brains; for wher's the use of a woman having brains of her own if she's tackled to a geck as everybody's a-laughing at? She might as well dress herself fine to sit back'ards on a donkey. (ch.ix, p.97)

Each sentence is declarative (sentence three is pragmatically a declaration despite its interrogative structure (28) ) but the content gives the speech a tone of assurance rather than dogmatism. In Mrs Elton's declarative style the content acts with the structure to make the tone dogmatic. The language is concrete and the imagery is drawn from the world immediately around her, and this underscores her astute observation and common-sense. The figures are lively, original and fresh, and the humour and dialect combine to take the pomposity from what is essentially an exposition on choosing a husband.

The following examples of Mrs Poyser's rustic wisdom should help illustrate her impact on the reader:

what are you stanning there for, like a jock as is run down.  
(ch.vi, p.75)

folks don't live on the naked hills, like poultry  
a-scratching on a gravel bank. (ch.vi, p.77)

I might as well talk to the running brook, and tell it to  
stan' still. (ch.vi, p.78)

... an lie a-bed wi' the sun a-baking you like a cucumber  
i' the frame? (ch.xiv, p.142)

Ay, it's ill living in a hen-roost for them as doesn't like  
fleas. (ch.xiv, p.143)

Ther's Chowne's wife ugly enough to turn the milk an' save  
the rennet ... (ch.xviii, p.185)

The smell o' bread's sweet t'everybody but the baker.  
(ch.xx, p.210)

These and a great many other rustic sayings help to create  
the rustic texture of the novel and stamp Mrs Poyser  
ineradicably as a memorable character. She is as sharply  
delineated a character as is Adam Bede although she is  
less central to the plot. Adam's early portrayal, before his  
development, is unsympathetic and very much lacking in  
humour, a characteristic necessary to impart humanity to a  
character. He is quite unable to draw the strength, optimism  
and wisdom that Mrs Poyser draws from her environment. Her  
personality is built upon an affirmation of life and this  
contrasts to the disadvantage of the hero who embraces the  
rigid, negative side of life, manifest in the bleakness of  
Methodism. And so, while Adam is in many ways a substantial  
hero, he is to some extent, in his early portrayal, eclipsed  
by the brilliance of Mrs Poyser's memorable personality.

In attempting to trace the impact of eccentrics as  
contributory influences on the eclipse of the hero in the  
nineteenth century English novel, I have tried to show how

direct speech was important. Among most of the eccentrics examined, speech was significant in producing memorable and fascinating portrayals because it generated humour, either by linguistic singularity or by irony. Humour, it would appear, seems to be the best medium for creating eccentrics who stick in the reader's memory, and direct speech is the best method of creating humour. Direct speech has, therefore, indirectly but inexorably, so far as eccentric characters are concerned, been a powerful contribution to the eclipse of the substantial hero in the nineteenth century English novel.



## NOTES FOR CHAPTER EIGHT

- 1     Dickens's problems with the weekly and monthly serial  
are documented in:  
John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at  
Work, London, 1957, pp. 201-21
- 2     See:  
G.L. Brook, Varieties of English, London, 1977  
edition, p. 56  
and  
Randolph Quirk, 'Some Observations on the Language of  
Dickens', Review of English Literature, II (1961) 19-28
- 3     Philip Hobsbaum, A Reader's Guide to Charles  
Dickens, London, 1972, p. 54
- 4     Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, Style in  
Fiction, London 1981, pp. 310-12
- 5     D.W. Harding, 'Character and Caricature in Jane  
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B.C. Southam, London, 1968, 83-105 (p. 86)
- 6     Norman Page, The Language of Jane Austen, Oxford  
1972, p. 144
- 7     B.C. Southam (editor), Sense and Sensibility, Pride and  
Prejudice, Mansfield Park, casebook  
series, London, 1976, p. 200
- 8     Martin Price, 'Manners, Morals and Jane  
Austen', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 30 (1975) 261-80  
(p. 273)
- 9     Ryle refers to Miss Bates (Emma) as the 'twittering  
voice of universal goodwill':  
Gilbert Ryle, 'Jane Austen and the Moralists', English  
Literature and British Philosophy, edited by  
S.P. Rosenbaum, Chicago, 1971, pp. 168-184 (p. 174)
- 10    Northrop Frye, 'Dickens and the Comedy of Humours', The  
Victorian Novel, edited by Ian Watt, New York, 1971, p. 53
- 11    Leech and Short, p. 167
- 12    V.S. Pritchett, 'The Comic World of Dickens', The  
Victorian Novel, edited by Ian Watt, New  
York, 1971, pp. 33-34
- 13    Barbara Hardy, 'Martin Chuzzlewit', Dickens in the  
Twentieth Century, edited by John Gross and Gabriel  
Pearson, London, 1962, pp. 107-120 (p. 119)

- 14 Patrick J. McCarthy, 'The Language of Martin Chuzzlewit', Studies in English Literature, 20 (1980) 637-649, (p.642)
- 15 Randolph Quirk, 'Some Observations on the Language of Dickens', Review of English Literature, II (1961) 19-28 (p.21)
- 16 McCarthy, p.643
- 17 Quirk, p.18
- 18 A.O.J. Cockshut, The Imagination of Charles Dickens, London, 1961, p.114
- 19 Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, London, 1978 edition, pp.171-72
- 20 Robert Kiely, 'The Limits of Dialogue in Middlemarch', The Worlds of Victorian Fiction, edited by Jerome H. Buckley, Cambridge, Mass., 1975, 103-123 (p.110)
- 21 U.C. Knopfmacher, 'Middlemarch: An Avuncular View', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 30 (1975) 53-81 (p.60)
- 22 Jeremy Warburg, 'Idiosyncratic Style', Review of English Literature, 6 (1965) 56-65 (p.56)
- 23 Stephen F. Fogle, 'Skimpole Once More', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 7 (1952) 1-18 (p.9)
- 24 David Paroissien (editor), Selected Letters of Charles Dickens, London, 1985, p.331
- 25 Quoted in:  
Norman Page, Speech in the English Novel, London, 1973, p.66
- 26 Barbara and Gareth Lloyd Evans, Everyman's Companion to the Brontës, London, 1982, p.380
- 27 Gordon Haight, George Eliot: A Biography, Harmondsworth, 1985 edition, pp.3, 254, 274 and 335-36
- 28 Randolph Quirk and Sydney Greenbaum, A Universal Grammar of English, London, 1980 edition, p.195

## CHAPTER NINE: SUBSTANTIAL HEROES

Much like the types of hero examined in the preceding chapters, substantial heroes are also a far from homogeneous group. In the first place, all the elements in the definition of 'substantial hero' cannot be applied to every hero without some qualification. Secondly, features specific to a particular novel create very different substantial heroes. For example, the hero of Pickwick Papers, a humorous, picaresque novel, will not have the same characteristics as the tragic hero of, for example, The Mayor of Casterbridge. What is expected from both, however, as substantial heroes, are characteristics which make a memorable impact on the reader.

The image of the substantial hero should dominate the novel. He should be the main agent of the central plot. His portrayal should be more memorable than that of other characters. He should stand out from his social peers and his particular story should be the main interest for the reader. Personal attributes such as honesty, vigour, masculinity, intelligence, rebelliousness and so on, will spring naturally from his function in the novel and will be consistent with an heroic portrayal. But an

honest,intelligent protagonist will not necessarily be a substantial hero.

Consequently,the substantial heroes examined in this chapter are as diverse as the novels in which they appear. Some will seem to compare more favourably than others. Such comparative evaluation,while worthwhile in its own right,should be recognised as the partial judgement that it is. A hero is made substantial by the context in which he operates. The fictitious world created for him by the author has a large part to play in his portrayal as a substantial hero.

Thus,a judgement that Michael Henchard is a better example of a hero than,say,Samuel Pickwick,is more the product of the received notion,generated by Aristotle and the Greek playwrights and substantiated in the works of Shakespeare,that tragic heroes are somehow more significant in our literature,than of an impartial judgement of his merits as a hero. What is most relevant to a hero's substantiality are those features of his portrayal which make him memorable. For example,Stephen Blackpool has a considerable element of tragedy in his portrayal but he is far from being a substantial hero: despite an attempt to make him memorable through his death,he remains always only a pitiful,and at times ludicrous,figure.

A primary expectation about the substantial hero is that he should form the central interest in the novel. In those nineteenth century English novels I have already examined, this expectation is never fully realised. As I have attempted to show, these 'heroes' are for the most part overshadowed by characters of a more interesting nature.

Silas Marner is never eclipsed by his fellow characters and his position in the novel is indisputably central to the structure and plot. Yet, he has none of the obvious physical features associated with a hero. He is not well-bred, physically attractive or educated. However, despite these superficial disadvantages, Silas is as much a substantial hero in his own fictional world as any other hero in the nineteenth century English novel.

Silas is that uncommon hero in the nineteenth century English novel - a working-class hero with a regional accent. Dickens had already failed in his portrayal of Stephen Blackpool, a superficially similar type, but George Eliot manages to instil an immeasurable dignity into her portrayal of Silas, mainly by rendering his regional dialect as credible. His substance as a hero evolves from two features of the novel's structure. The first is the rustic background within which Silas's regional dialect is acceptable. The second point is that the entire story is centred around Silas. He becomes a substantial hero

because the reader is allowed to follow his spiritual development from recluse to compassionate human being. By the end of the short novel Silas's struggle against the odds to regain his humanity has made him a memorable hero.

Silas's early portrayal is unheroic, which is as it should be: the process of becoming a hero is the significant aspect of an heroic portrayal; ready-made heroes are, as Hazlitt has observed, tedious and incredible. At the beginning of the story Silas is wrongfully accused of theft. He loses his sweetheart Sarah and his other friends, and is forced to leave Lantern Yard in disgrace. In these early episodes, Silas's speech echoes religious and Biblical language. This is consistent with his connection with the narrow Calvinism of the Lantern Yard brethren. Here is a sample of his speech and its Biblical evocation:

I must have slept ... or I must have had another visitation, like that which you have all seen me under, so that the thief must have come and gone while I was not in the body. But, I say again, search me and my dwelling, for I have nowhere else. (ch.1, p.60)

The Biblical tenor and rhythm are unmistakable, especially in the final sentence. The use of the archaic 'visitation' and 'dwelling', and the phrases 'another visitation', 'thief must have come (in the night?)', 'not in the body' and 'But, I say again (unto ye?)' all echo Biblical language.

Appropriately, in his role as a recluse during his early years at Raveloe, Silas has no more direct speech until he is forced by the loss of his gold to seek help from the villagers at the Rainbow. When he does speak, his language has lost its religious and Biblical cadence and vocabulary. This, of course, is very appropriate as an overt sign of his loss of faith. Silas has only three direct speeches in the Rainbow scene, but there are enough signs in these to show that he still retains his regional dialect. He uses the singular past tense of the verb 'to be' in the hypothetical construction: 'If it was you stole my money', and uses a colloquial form of elliptical construction 'was you stole' omitting the standard 'you'. His use of the imperative in an inverted manner, 'give it me back' is also non-standard. (ch.7, p.107) Some important development of character is also discernible in this scene. Silas quickly sees the folly of his accusation against Jem Rodney, as though reminded of the injustice done to him at Lantern Yard: 'I was wrong ... yes, yes, - I ought to have thought. There's nothing to witness against you Jem'. (ch.7, p.109)

Silas's spiritual re-awakening begins with his discovery of Eppie asleep on his hearth. From this point onwards he grows in stature. He provides for and protects his new-found 'gold'. His values undergo a radical change and a new, generous faith takes root in him. And, in keeping with

his return to humanity,he appears and speaks more frequently.

In the end,Silas faces the biggest calamity of his life when Eppie's natural father,Godfrey Cass,claims her. But Silas's renewed and strengthened spiritual faith has prepared him to deal heroically with this impending tragedy. He tells Cass:

... repentance doesn't alter what's been going on for sixteen year. Your coming now and saying 'I'm her father' doesn't alter the feelings inside us. It's me she's been calling her father ever since she could say a word. (ch.19,p.231)

After listening to Cass outline the material advantages Eppie would gain by returning to her real father,Silas heroically replies:

I'll say no more. Let it be as you will. Speak to the child. I'll hinder nothing. (ch.19,p.232)

Considering Silas's disrupted life and what he has had to endure,losing Eppie must have seemed to him like the final malicious blow of an unjust God. Once more he is faced with a crisis of mind and spirit. Yet he faces it this time,with directness and dignity,and his speech makes this clear. But the development of Silas has been working towards this scene. In it,he substantiates himself as a worthy hero whose renewal of spiritual faith has made him a substantial character which is reflected in Eppie's devotion to him. The Silas of the recluse days,or



earlier, could never have passed on to Eppie the values she falls back on when she has to choose between the material advantages of her real father and the warmth, love and compassion of Silas. Thus, a spiritually renewed Silas has become a hero of substance because, among other things, he now possesses human values and has learned to reject material ones. (1)

Silas Marner is a substantial hero of a serious countenance and with a serious message to impart. One reason for the proliferation of serious heroes in the nineteenth century novel is that the novel form is the product of earnest authors in an earnest age. Most authors have eschewed humour as a means of communicating their central message, using it mainly for achieving minor or subsidiary effects. Those who do make constant use of humour in their work generally avoid humorous heroes. Indeed, among all the heroes and principal male characters in the novels discussed in this thesis, only one, Mr Pickwick, is a comic hero. And yet there are earlier precedents for humorous heroes in the best literature: Don Quixote and Tom Jones are two examples.

The paucity of substantial heroes in the nineteenth century seems to have been discerned by Dickens, as the following irritable comment suggests. Reacting to contemporary criticism of novel heroes, he says:

I have always a fine feeling of the honest state into which we have got, when some smooth gentleman says to me or

to someone else when I am by, how odd it is that the hero of the English book is always uninteresting - too good - not natural, etc. (2)

The irascibility of this complaint lends a tone to his utterance which perhaps cloaks his own awareness of the truth of the criticism. Certainly, the criticism that they are 'uninteresting - too good - not natural' strikes home squarely at Dickens's own 'heroes'.

But one hero of Dickens certainly must have escaped such astute, contemporary criticism. The Pickwick Papers avoids the net of the profoundly serious, social, realistic novel because (although it was written in 1839) its roots are in a slightly earlier, pre-Victorian age. Mr Pickwick survives as a comical hero in a humorous novel. That is, he reigns easily and naturally in the fictitious world Dickens has created for him. In this world he lives an honourable life, breaking no laws, moral or social, remaining always a gentleman, magnanimous even to those who have slighted him and always on the side of right and justice. All real danger and evil have been excluded from this world and so nothing 'can threaten his ineradicable innocence'. (3) Here is one hero in a novel by Dickens who is not cast 'in the role of juvenile lead'. (4)

Thus, despite the fact that the novel is 'realistic' in that it deals with a world recognisable to contemporary readers, Dickens has created in The Pickwick Papers an idealised world of delights in which a comical hero can

function as a substantial hero. Within these bounds the characterisation of Pickwick succeeds. Like Silas Marner, Pickwick is hardly the ideal hero. But in some ways he is even more substantial. In the first place he is indisputably more memorable. Today the name Pickwick is almost universally recognised. He is also the admirable 'socially acceptable character' around whom the traditional novel has tended to revolve. (5)

The essence of Pickwick is the immensity of his comical portrayal. His comically serious note-taking raises a smile but the enthusiasm for life which this indicates is commendable. He is, as he remarks of himself 'an observer of human nature, Sir'. (ch.ii, p.17) But unfortunately, like Don Quixote, he is quite unable to interpret what he observes. It is this innocence, coupled with an optimistic view of his fellow man that allows the Mr Jingles and the Mrs Bardells of this life to exploit him. Truly, his 'general benevolence was one of the leading features of the Pickwickian theory'. (ch.ii, p.22)

But Pickwick is no mere comical, gentleman scholar. He is also rendered (comically) as a vigorous, manly hero who is also a leader of men. This portrayal places his characterisation in the mock-heroic mould. Pickwick's heroic intentions are, therefore, humorously undercut. For example, when he stands up vigorously for his friend Winkle against the awesome Dr Slammer 'Stay, Sir ... I really

cannot allow this matter to go any further without some explanation' (ch.iii,p.51),his intentions are comically doomed to disaster. Dickens,in the narrative,gives us the details of Pickwick's comic posture in a mock heroic style. Dr Payne has insulted Pickwick and his company:

Rising rage and extreme bewilderment had swelled the noble breast,almost to the bursting of his waistcoat,during the delivery of the above defiance. He stood transfixed to the spot,gazing on vacancy. The closing of the door recalled him to himself. He rushed forward with fury in his looks,and fire in his eye. His hand was on the lock of the door; in another instant it would have been on the throat of Dr Payne of the 43rd,had not Mr Snodgrass seized his revered leader by the coat tail,and dragged him backwards. (ch.iii,p.52)

Pickwick's friends manage to restrain him,and fortified by their loyalty,and some brandy and water,he consoles himself that the military gentlemen are not worthy of his contempt. The scene is an hilarious evocation of the familiar feelings that occur once danger or insult is past - a behavioural version of 'esprit d'escalier',in fact.The mock-heroism of the situation produces humour and prevents any serious aspersion of cowardice on the part of the hero.

There is no doubt about Pickwick's courage. It is graphically illustrated throughout the novel,in comical fashion,of course. When in the Fleet,for example,he physically confronts two ruffians who have stolen his nightcap and abused him verbally: "'Now' said Mr Pickwick,gasping no less from excitement than from the

expenditure of so much energy,'come on - both of you - both of you!'. With this liberal invitation the wealthy gentleman communicated a revolving motion to his clenched fists,by way of appalling his antagonists with a display of science." (ch.xli,p.641)

Clearly this scene is meant to be comical,but Pickwick's heroic intentions are no less heroic for that. His challenge is a warning to all ruffians who seek to harass the weak. He stands as the heroic champion of the underdog. He does physically what no doubt Dickens would have liked to have done,but was unable to because he inhabited the real world. Nor is Mr Pickwick's aggression merely a ludicrous behaviour. It is visually comical but never just silly as is the violent behaviour of,for example,Nicholas Nickleby. The latter's challenge to Mulberry Hawk is justifiable but his manner and language are inconsistent with the serious nature of the confrontation and the result is melodramatic and silly. (ch.xxxii,pp.414-15)

Mr Pickwick,in the manner of the substantial hero,is resistant to injustice in any form and from any quarter. Even the law cannot contain his heroic impulses. Pickwick is one of the few Dickens heroes who actively contests the social order; his later 'heroes' tend to be much more passive. (6) When he is taken before the magistrate on suspicion of planning to fight a duel,he is angered at the

law's attempt to constrain his freedom of speech: ' ... I shall take the liberty,sir,of claiming my right to be heard,until I am removed by force'. (ch.xxv,p.374) Heroic in the best sense of the word,Mr Pickwick is prepared to confront the might of the law in pursuit of justice and liberty. Here is a hero whose behaviour is worthy of emulation. Sam Weller puts his finger succinctly on Mr Pickwick's essence as a hero: 'Pickwick and principle'. (ch.xxv,p.374) And Pickwick's heroic principles are not abandoned even in the presence of the 'mean pettifogging robbers' Dodson and Fogg whom he heroically confronts at the end of the novel.

However,there is more to Mr Pickwick than an aggressively physical hero in pursuit of villains and righting wrongs. He is also magnanimous and this is both an admirable trait and one which makes a character memorable. All that recalls to mind such characters as Mr Brownlow,the Cheerybles and Mr Jarndyce is their magnanimity. When Mr Pickwick meets the pathetic fraud Mr Jingle in the Fleet Prison,he forgives him with an heroic and practical generosity. He gives money to this 'destitute outcast' who had 'duped,deceived and wronged him'. (ch.xlii,p.659) In an entirely realistic novel,this incident would be regarded as mawkishly sentimental. However,Pickwick 'inhabits a fairytale world of carefree frivolity' (7) in which such magnanimity is acceptable.

Pickwick is clearly a memorable hero even though he is a humorous character. He dominates his fictitious world with qualities of leadership and a vigorous personality, fighting injustice and always on the side of the poor and the oppressed. His mock-heroic behaviour is never just silly. It is comical, heroic, always commendable, never mean or petty. His comic personality overlays a character that is staunch, loyal, and truly memorable. He is one of the few substantial heroes in the nineteenth century English novel.

A substantial hero of a severer demeanour is George Eliot's Adam Bede. Adam is probably one of the most harshly criticised nineteenth century heroes. George Lewes considered him 'too passive throughout the drama'. (8) Henry James complained that Adam was 'too good'. (9) More recent criticism suggests that Adam's 'flawed' characterisation arises because he carries 'too visibly the hallmarks of her (George Eliot's) moral approval'. (10) This criticism is just as far as it goes, but it only tells part of the story. Lewes's timely criticism persuaded George Eliot to include the fight scene between Adam and Arthur Donnithorne to give him a more active, physical appeal as a hero. Nonetheless he remains a fairly passive character. On the other hand, his massive physical presence (although inactive) dominates the story. He is the main interest in the novel. Neither of the

heroines, nor Arthur Donnithorne, are interesting enough to eclipse him. Only the magnificent portrayal of Mrs Poyser has any effect in diverting attention away from the hero.

James's criticism of Adam misses much of the point of George Eliot's handling of her hero. Adam is portrayed as a character in the process of development. Of course he is 'stiff-backed', to use James's phrase. Adam has all the rigidity and intolerance of youth. This is specifically highlighted in his apparent lack of compassion for the frailties of his father in life, and lack of outward grief at his death. This is deliberate. George Eliot uses this hard, severe youth as a base from which to begin his character development. By the end of the novel Adam recognises the human frailty in himself and others with a humanity and compassion which heralds his spiritual maturity. Speaight's criticism is more difficult to counter. Adam does appear to be a paragon at times. His moral rectitude is often unbearable, especially in his early portrayal. But his human weakness is also highlighted. He shows that he is no paragon of virtue when he angrily refuses to shake hands with Donnithorne after knocking him down (ch.xxviii, p.296), and in his 'bitterly jealous' condemnation of Hetty:

Her head was allays likely to be turned ... when a gentleman, with his fine manners and fine clothes, and his white hands, and that way o' talking gentlefolks have, came about her, making up to her in a bold way, as a man couldn't do that was only her equal; and it's much as she'll ever like a common man now. (ch.xxx, p.313)



These thoughts suggest, if anything, the author's disapproval of Hetty rather than her approval of Adam. Adam is speaking no more than the truth about Hetty, but the truth is generated by his bitterness at Hetty's rejection of himself. His frailty as a human being is all too apparent in his reactions to her 'betrayal'.

Adam's claim as a substantial hero lies largely in his developing character and in his speech style. He undergoes an 'education through suffering' (11) until he becomes more compassionate. His characterisation is rendered more credible through his speech mode. His rustic dialect carries with it the weight of its traditional associations with traits such as honesty, directness and decency. Adam's serious demeanour saves his portrayal from the comical associations of the dialect.

But it is physically that Adam most overtly resembles a traditional hero. He is instantly established as a character who stands out in a crowd. He stands physically above his fellows, strong and tall, and his face expresses honest intelligence. (ch.1, p.8) Among his fellow rustics he is an imposing fellow. Hetty Sorrel thinks of him as: '- Tall, upright, clever, brave Adam Bede - who carried such an authority with all the people round about ... who was often rather stern'. (ch.ix, p.95) Like a memorable hero, Adam has an aura which raises him above the

ordinariness of others and makes him the novel's centre of interest.

Adam's development is traced from the early stages of the novel. In the incident below, the hard, insensitive young Adam vents his wrath on his fellow workers who finish work seconds before their allotted time;

I hate to see a man's arms drop down as if he was shot, before the clock's fairly struck, just as if he'd never a bit o' pride and delight in 's work. (ch.i, p.13)

This is the Adam who provokes the critic Walter Allen into calling him a 'humourless, hectoring, loquacious prig'. (12) Outwith the context of the ambience and ethos of the spiritual influence which pervades George Eliot's work, Adam's sentiment, in this particular incident, does seem priggish and petty. But by the end of the novel he is no longer the same person: he is still rather humourless, but he is now more compassionate and aware of his own frailties. Speaking of Dinah, he admits: 'She's better than I am - there's less o' self in her, and pride'; and of himself he says: 'I've always been thinking I knew better than them as belonged to me'. (ch.liv, p.508)

Pride and lack of compassion are Adam's weaknesses. But his experiences with Hetty and Dinah alter him for the better. Through this development, Adam emerges as a more complex and interesting character. The first step in his development comes with his father's death when his 'mind

rushed back over the past in a flood of relenting and pity'. (ch.iv,p.54) This initial erosion of his youthful callousness is the first of many such indications that Adam is more complex than a mere 'stiff-backed' passive character.

Adam's heroism manifests itself physically and morally when he confronts his 'superior' Arthur Donnithorne about his dalliance with Hetty. To some extent Adam's behaviour is not altogether altruistic. His pride has been hurt by Hetty's preference for Arthur. The scene is therefore not simply one of just physical retribution. Adam is clearly wrestling with his own jealousy of Arthur, a further point which helps refute the claim that he is a paragon of virtue, but he is also aware of the practical and moral considerations of such an affair, and of how these will affect Hetty. Thus, even in his rage and pride there is consideration for the vulnerable Hetty. Morally he stands head and shoulders above the selfish, insensitive Arthur.

The fight scene between Adam and Arthur has been criticised as an example of plain 'dialect suppression'. Adam's rustic dialect is suppressed, it is claimed, in order to retain the seriousness of the confrontation and heighten the drama. It is true that Adam's speech at this point is not as broadly dialectal as usual. But this is, in my view, an astute reading of the context within which Adam finds himself, rather than a simple device to heighten the drama.

If it were a case of deliberate dialect suppression for dramatic purposes then surely Adam's speech would have been much nearer to a written style than it actually is in this scene. It is more likely that Adam is adapting his speech in an attempt to raise himself to Arthur's level.

In these heated exchanges, Adam's speech never quite rids itself of all the features of rustic dialect. Dialect suppression by the author would surely have aimed at a fully written mode. This suggests that the case against George Eliot's handling of her hero's speech in this particular scene has been over-simplified. Adam's speeches are few in the part used as evidence against him. (ch.xxvii, p.290) He has four brief utterances consisting of 17, 21, 19 and 30 words respectively. In these, the visual markers of a fictional regional dialect are missing. This gives the illusion of standard speech. On the other hand, his speech is not the written style that signals the speech of a nineteenth century gentleman or that of a drawing-room hero. It has nine contracted verbs and negatives which give it a conversational tone rather than a written one.

Why then does George Eliot 'raise' her hero's speech mode at this specific point in the novel? I contend that her reason is connected with her artistic desire to demonstrate the psychological reality of Adam's reaction to a situation in which he has a need to equalise his

inferior social status. Adam is, in fact, attempting to raise his speech to the level of his rival's. This scene illustrates a man of immense pride in himself unconsciously attempting to prove himself the equal of Arthur, for whom Hetty has shown a decided preference. Upwards convergence of speech is a fairly well known method of trying to attain equality of status in a conversation or argument. Obviously this also has a dramatic function, but it derives from psychological realism and is not merely a device for effect.

My argument, therefore, is that Adam's speech changes as a natural concomitant of his psychological condition. A close look at his speech supports this view. Only one sentence, 'I tell you you're a coward and a scoundrel, and I despise you', sounds formal. But even this is saved from structural formality by the colloquial structure 'you're'. However, the tenor of his other short speeches is stilted and unnatural, and little wonder, for Adam is attempting to speak in a mode unnatural to him. He clearly exhibits a lack of fluency. Consider for instance the stilted form of the sentences: 'Do you want provoking any more?' and 'You're a double-faced man'. These are not the facile expressions of someone at ease in a written mode of speech. Rather, they are the awkward expressions of someone unused to formal speech. Adam's insecurity is revealed in the sentence: 'You think I'm a common man ... '. He

attempts to prove that he is not common in the only way possible in the circumstances; by raising his register to the level of that of his adversary. Finally, Adam does use one feature of rustic dialect: he uses the regional marker 'as' as a personal ,relative pronoun in preference to the standard form 'who'.

So, even in the most serious, most dramatic of scenes, Adam's speech is fairly natural. Nor does he ever use an entirely written mode of speech. Like the intelligent man that he is, he modifies his speech mode according to the context. Like any young man of his education and background his speech is a natural blend of his native dialect and standard speech. George Eliot has succeeded in portraying a hero whose natural speech mode does not debilitate his vigour. She has refused to impose a written style on her hero, as Dickens, for example, has done on most of his 'heroes' 'in defiance of all probability' (14), and the result is a hero of some substance and vigour. Thus, although Adam is a hero bound by the limits of a very closed rustic environment, and therefore constrained in his physical behaviour (15), he is nevertheless one of the few memorable, masculine heroes in the nineteenth century English novel.

Emily Brontë's Heathcliff is as different a hero from Adam Bede as Adam is from Mr Pickwick. He has none of the moral features that help to make Adam a hero, and his portrayal

has none of the humour and sheer joy that infects Pickwick's characterisation. In fact, a good case can be made for consigning Heathcliff to the villain category. Nevertheless, he does qualify as a hero through his dominance in the novel and by the memorable portrayal of his unique personality.

Heathcliff inhabits a fictitious world the bleakness and harshness of which challenges the normal concept of morality. His world is one in which 'goodness', as symbolised by Edgar Linton, the good principal character, is a weakness. Neither is it a world, as is Pickwick's, where good and bad are clearly delineated. Heathcliff's fictional world is partly a gothic-romantic world in which human passion and intensity of relationships are in tune with nature at its wildest and bleakest. Against the stark, harsh background of Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff's behaviour is amoral and nothing is explained or gained by labelling him a villain. In such a milieu, Heathcliff's behaviour might be described as normal and Linton's as abnormal.

The name Heathcliff, like the name Pickwick, is instantly recognised universally, and this is an excellent measure of the memorable nature of his portrayal as a hero. Over the years Heathcliff has been recognised as a fictional character on the grandest of literary scales, on a par with, for example, Melville's brooding Captain Ahab and

Hardy's magnificent Michael Henchard. (16) He dominates the novel and the characters in it. He is the direct, active agent of the plot: 'from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house' and Hindley regarded him 'as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges'. (ch.iv, p.31)

Heathcliff's portrayal is so powerful and memorable that no other character succeeds in wholly diverting attention from him. Catherine Earnshaw's portrayal is also a very powerful one but it complements, rather than undercuts, the hero's vigour, while the character of Old Joseph, although strong enough to detract, by comparison, from Edgar Linton's portrayal, does nothing to detract from the hero's memorable portrayal. Heathcliff remains always the centre of attraction for the reader. Even in death he leaves an awesome image stamped in the memory. Here is Nelly Dean's description of Heathcliff as he lies dead:

I tried to close his eyes: to extinguish, if possible, that frightful, lifelike gaze of exultation before anyone else beheld it. They would not shut; they seemed to sneer at my attempts: and his parted lips and sharp white teeth sneered too! (ch.xxxiv, p.287)

The Gothic influence is evident in this description and the image created is an unholy, awesome one. But the devilish description is not melodramatic: it is only too consistent with what the reader knows of Heathcliff in



life. He has died as a hero should die, shouting his defiance at the Gods.

Heathcliff's portrayal is also enhanced by his masculinity. He has the strength of character and the physical prowess to pursue what he desires, even beyond the grave. His failure to achieve his desire in life is an heroic failure. Like a real hero, he refuses to admit defeat. And though his pursuit of Catherine beyond the grave is macabre, it nonetheless makes him memorable. In addition, his vigour, aggression and masculinity are contrasted to his advantage with Edgar Linton's effete, languid portrayal as a drawing-room hero. And while Edgar marries Catherine, Emily Brontë leaves the reader in no doubt as to who is physically the better man. Heathcliff's taunt 'Cathy, this lamb of yours threatens like a bull! ... It is in danger of splitting its skull against my knuckles. By God! Mr Linton, I'm mortally sorry that you are not worth knocking down!' (ch.xi, p.98), is one of many suggestions that Edgar is not a satisfactory masculine character.

Heathcliff's aggressive dynamism is perhaps overdone, but it is never altogether melodramatic, despite the savagery of the language. Quite surprisingly for someone who began life at Wuthering Heights speaking 'some gibberish, that nobody could understand' (ch.iv, p.30), Heathcliff's speech is generally a standard spoken style, although it is

invigorated with idioms which are regional in tone. This mixed style enhances his directness and vigour. His sentences are generally short and direct. His longer sentences are usually a series of simple sentences linked by punctuation marks. These brief, direct structures help to generate tension in an appropriate speech. The following is an example of the intensity generated by these and other language features:

Are they at home? Where is she? Nelly, you are not glad! You needn't be. Is she here? Speak! I want to have a word with her - your mistress. Go, and say some person from Gimmerton desires to see her. (ch.x, p.790)

The speech is made up from interrogatives, exclamations and imperatives, structures which are indicative of a colloquial style. It is at once commanding, forceful and filled with a spring-like tension. This abrupt, dominating tone which Heathcliff adopts is indicative of his aggressive nature and his strength of will.

However, these language features are only supplements to the passion and tension generated in Heathcliff's direct speech. It is the consistent clustering of words associated with anger, hatred and violence which is the major factor in the evocation of turbulence and evil vindictiveness which pervade the novel. This powerful language is largely instrumental in constructing Heathcliff's vigorous, masculine personality. In the ten pages of the novel in which Heathcliff has fairly frequent

conversations (ch.x,pp.90-91 and ch.xi,pp.92-99),there are an inordinately large proportion of words directly or implicitly linked with violence and aggression of a physical and psychological kind:

Wrench; menaced; ghoulish; turning the blue eyes black; detestability; every day I grow madder after sending him to heaven; infernally; you are an idiot; revenge; grinds; crush; torture and death; insult; cut my throat; splitting its skull against my knuckles; mortally; knocking down; milk-blooded coward; slaving,shivering thing; strike; kick; faint for fear; blow burning in my gullet; by hell; crush his ribs; rotten; floor (in its idiomatic meaning 'to knock down'); murder,let me get at him.

This violent vocabulary is the foundation of Heathcliff's speech and of his personality. His is the direct speech of a red-blooded,aggressive male,and while it is not at all times overtly violent,it is always infused with menace,insult,anger or hatred. It is a speech mode which distinguishes him from the usual middle-class principal male character in the nineteenth century English novel. It helps to substantiate him as a physically and psychologically fascinating character.

Moreover,despite his violent nature and language,Heathcliff manages to engender sympathy by his obsessive,single-minded pursuit of Catherine Earnshaw against all the odds. He is memorable because he is like no other hero in fiction. But Heathcliff's speech would be considered ludicrous outwith the fictional confines of Wuthering Heights. It becomes credible because of the 'excess of emotion' which generates the novel; because

Emily Brontë has created an atmosphere and a world within which Heathcliff's behaviour and 'unnatural grief' becomes acceptable. In such an unusual ambience, Heathcliff's personality cannot be measured by the criteria of the ordinary in the real world. Such a personality would be out of place in a novel such as, for instance, Middlemarch, for George Eliot is intent on creating a world realistic in every sense. Heathcliff has been created for the passion and emotion of a novel that defies labelling, but which for convenience sake might be called a realistic novel with Gothic and Romantic overtones. In such a novel Heathcliff becomes larger than life; he is no mere male principal character but a memorable, substantial hero.

Like Heathcliff, Hardy's most substantial hero speaks in a dialect which enhances his portrayal. Some critics contend that in Michael Henchard, Thomas Hardy has created the finest tragic hero in the nineteenth century novel. Weber, for instance, insists that he 'is the most forceful and one of the most original characters that Hardy ever drew. The author conceived him as a truly heroic man cast in the Shakesperian mould'. (17) This is indeed high praise, although comparisons with Shakespeare are fraught with danger. Certainly, Henchard is the most unforgettable hero that Hardy has created. Perhaps Henchard's compulsively tragic behaviour is more akin to that of the

hero in Greek Tragedy, a literature in which Hardy was well versed.

Another critic observes that Henchard 'fulfils perfectly Aristotle's definition of the tragic hero: "a man not eminently good or just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice, but by some error or frailty"'. (18) No doubt Henchard's massive capacity for stoical suffering (or his indulgence in it) contributes to his downfall. Walter Allen sees him as Hardy's greatest hero who 'contains all nature within himself as a truly great hero might be described as doing'. (19) Such praise is somewhat vague but Henchard's 'unforgettable massive presence' does make him 'one of the greatest characters in all fiction'. (20)

Henchard's impulsiveness and pride are his weaknesses. He is also solidly inflexible in action and thought. This rigid nature impedes his progress in business and in personal relationships. He assumes the same role in every relationship: unless he plays the dominant part in every friendship he is uncomfortable and feels threatened. He has but the two extremes of social communication, overweening paternalism and aggressive bullying, and the irony of it is that his frailty in revealing himself so indulgently in the former situation leads to the latter.

Henchard's assumption of the dominant role in relationships has clear implications for his speech style. Generally his manner is domineering and often hectoring. There is no doubt that this tone of speech, in conjunction with his powerful physique, makes him a memorable character. In addition, he alone is the focus of attention and interest in the story. His actions generate the complexities of the plot and the forwarding of the story. There is no heroine, nor villain, nor eccentric powerfully enough rendered to eclipse Henchard.

Nor is Henchard weighed down with the burden of a written speech style and all its disadvantages in the portrayal of a hero. His rustic dialect maintains his masculine vigour, and is also rendered intelligible for the wide reading public of the Victorian novel. By Hardy's time the idea of realism had been firmly established in practice and Henchard's rustic background made his speech acceptable in a hero. But at the same time, the demands of hero status, and effective communication, precluded speech in a broad regional dialect. A broad rustic dialect was still regarded as fit only for humorous or eccentric peripheral characters in the nineteenth century English novel. Henchard's speech mode is, therefore, a colloquial form lightly infused with the conventional, fictional language characteristics which signify a 'token' rustic dialect. This literary compromise is still very much more

an invigorating mode of speech than a formal written style and has the advantage of enhancing the speaker's vigorous individuality.

Like Heathcliff, Henchard is memorable in death as well as in life. Henchard's death is more akin to that of a tragic hero's. His tragedy arises from his behavior which is a consequence of his personality. There is a determinism about his eventual tragic death. His pride and impulsiveness are fired by a dark outlook on life and about people. From this black pessimism arises a powerful and persistent tendency towards negation in speech. In my view, this constitutes Hardy's main device for building up the tragic, gloomy personality of his hero. By consistently speaking in negative terms, Henchard presents a view of life which is melancholic, dark, tragically pessimistic and lacking in any positive affirmation of life. This is the other side of Gabriel Oak's fortitude and optimism. While Oak sees misfortune as an exterior phenomenon to be harnessed as experience for enhancing life, Henchard experiences it as an internal, personal event to be brooded over and embraced as evidence confirming the negative quality of life. But Henchard is no simple, passive cynic; Hardy has imbued in him the capacity for impulsive rages which often end in violence. It is as though Henchard is doomed to fight a losing battle with his personality which is driving him inexorably towards tragedy. It is the

tension generated by the contrast between his positive, physical action and his persistent verbal negation of life which makes him a complex and memorable hero.

Negation pervades the speech of Henchard: it is not only used at specific points in the dialogue to illustrate a particular feature of his character. The first two examples discussed below are indicative of this pervasive usage although both come from important dramatic points in the story. The first example (ch.7, pp.84-87) illustrates Henchard's pessimistic assumption that kindness is necessarily done for material reward. The force of meaning in much of this dialogue with Donald Farfrae shows that Henchard has adopted a negative attitude towards life and human nature. Farfrae has given Henchard a recipe to save his bad corn. Henchard offers a cash reward. In the conversation that follows, Henchard has fifteen brief speeches in which he uses sixteen negatives. In addition, he uses another four indefinite expressions, such as 'surely' and 'no doubt', which function as negatives. Of course, some of the negation is probably only part of natural speech. For example, 'But I see you have not finished supper' is innocuous enough, and it arises naturally from the context, although it could just as easily have been expressed positively: Henchard might well have remarked 'I see you are still eating'. Thus it is not



the peculiarity of his specific negative comments, although most of these are significant in themselves, but the consistency with which he selects them that contributes to his pessimistic personality.

A negation which more lucidly and directly underlines Henchard's negative personality occurs in the speech below:

... and of course you don't care to tell the steps of the process sufficiently for me to do that, without my paying ye well for't first. (ch.7, p.85)

Apart from the cynicism, the negative style of the statement discloses the speaker's defence mechanism against the prospect of disappointment. Had Farfrae chosen to withhold the formula, Henchard's ill view of human nature would have been reinforced. In a perverse way the expectancy of such confirmation protects against disappointment.

Sometimes Henchard's speech illustrates a tendency towards self-mortification. This feature of his speech emphasises his tragic portrayal. For example, he exhibits a manly, honest character in confessing his 'guilt' immediately the firmity woman accuses him of selling his wife and child. But the confession is more complex than an honest admission. It has the tragic overtones of guilt and self-mortification: 'And upon my soul it does prove that I'm no better than she'. (ch.28, p.266) Henchard, in his readiness to think the worst of all humanity, including

himself,refuses to ask for the good he has accomplished to be taken into consideration. A character who seems bent on deliberately demeaning himself is hard to forget. This readiness to condemn himself is psychologically consistent; it is both pessimistic and impulsive,necessary attributes for a hero whose ending is to be a tragic one.

Examples of the hero's negative speech-style abound in the novel. In one conversation with Lucetta (ch.25,pp.235-38),in which he speaks sixteen times,he uses seventeen negatives. Again it is the cumulative effect which underpins the tragic nature of the character. Negatives such as 'You know I couldn't have helped myself if I had wished - ' (ch.25,p.235),taken in conjunction with the context,are indications of Henchard's pessimistic view that he is trapped in a deterministic world.

Life in a deterministic world can only be countered,if at all,by action of a negative kind,and this is demonstrated time and time again in Henchard's speech. He reacts negatively against marriage,which is a social symbol of the affirmation of life,by getting rid of his wife and child. He re-marries Susan,not in a positive act of love,but in an impulsive fit of guilt and self-mortification. When she dies,he thinks in terms of gloomy negation,he 'could not bear the idea of marrying again'. Henchard also sees his duty in negative terms 'it was my duty not to let any necessary delay occur'.

Thus what makes Henchard so memorable a hero is that his life is lived in tragic terms of self-denial and guilt. He is therefore a hero in the gloomy, tragic mould. His tragedy is that his temperament makes his behaviour extreme. He rejects totally that which affects him adversely. This is most explicit in his complete abstention from liquor for twenty-one years in self-mortification to atone for his guilt in selling his wife and child. A compromise to drink moderately and wisely would have been inconsistent with his character.

All of the heroes examined in this chapter are not of the same calibre. Indeed, their status as 'hero' is, in most cases, only relative in terms of the nineteenth century English novel. Only Henchard and Heathcliff can stand comparison with the great heroes of literature. But classification of heroes in rank order serves no worthwhile purpose as it relies heavily on the emotional preferences, and often prejudices, of the classifier. What is more to the purpose is to attempt to distinguish those attributes in a portrayal which set aside the hero from the mere male principal character. It is more fruitful to be critically aware that a memorable hero is created from an unique set of circumstances in which he alone is the dominating force. The nineteenth century English novel generally set out to embrace large social or moral issues without focussing on an individual to solve these issues.

Thus the nineteenth century novel had moved on to a form of literature which no longer needed the hero. But making the hero redundant did nothing to impoverish these novels as great works of art. Nevertheless, great heroes linger in the memory very often after details of the novel are forgotten. They are, in a sense, often bigger than the novel itself, and sources of identification or aspiration for the reader.

# NOTES FOR CHAPTER NINE

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## CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

The eclipse of the memorable, dominant hero from the novels of major English authors in the nineteenth century is highlighted by the paucity of heroes deemed fit for inclusion in the previous chapter, and is further underscored by the fact that, of those included, only two can lay claim to the title 'substantial hero' without some reservation.

Much of the problem of the hero in the novel lies in the disparity of the inclusiveness of the definition and the ordinary reader's narrower expectations of what a hero should be. The nineteenth century novel of the serious realistic kind has not been fertile ground for the creation of substantial heroes. For the most part, it has failed to meet the expectations of readers in this area, leaving a void at the centre of some novels.

Northrop Frye has suggested that 'the essential difference between the novel and romance lies in the concept of characterisation'. (1) This difference has been a major contributory factor in the eclipse of the hero in the nineteenth century English novel. My argument throughout this study supports Frye's distinction. I have gone a step further in attempting to show how direct speech, which is a

significant rhetoric of character, has played a large part in re-fashioning the 'hero' of the nineteenth century English novel into a mere male principal character who is generally no more significant or memorable than some other characters. As Frye observes, the hero of romance is dealt with as an individual and this has distinct advantages in the rendering of a memorable hero. On the other hand, the hero of the novel has a 'social mask' imposed on him. Outside the constraints of the serious, realistic novel, a hero can prosper as the dominant central figure: he can be, indeed he is most often expected to be, vigorous and masculine with the skills, endurance and shrewdness of an Odysseus or the rebelliousness of a Prometheus. He is larger than life and is therefore memorable. The novel, however, constrains its 'hero' within the stable order of society and subjects him to the concept of realism. The result is the eclipse of the hero who stands as a model for man to aspire to and identify with. The novel replaces the hero with a very ordinary, conforming principal male character.

In general, the English nineteenth century novelists whose works I have examined have attempted to portray real life in their novels. But as Trollope has observed, 'heroes and heroines, as so called, are not commonly met with in our daily walks of life'. (2) Thus the substantial hero, because he is uncommon in real life, of necessity disappears from



the real-life novel. George Lukács paints a drabber picture of the substantial hero's lot in the nineteenth century novel:

The more naturalistic writers become, the more they seek to portray only common characters of the everyday world and to provide them with the thoughts, emotions and speech of the everyday world - the harsher the disharmony. The dialogue sinks into the arid flat prose of everyday bourgeois life. (3)

I have attempted to show the adverse influence of the 'speech of the everyday world' and its 'arid, flat prose' on the portrayal of the 'hero' in the nineteenth century English novel. In particular, Lukács's insight suggests the direct effect of realism on the tendency to use middle-class speech as a norm in the realistic novel. Moreover, the nineteenth century low mimetic conventions which present only what is conventionally presentable reduces the 'hero' to little more than an unexciting, flat, respectable, principal male character. The observations of Lukács are echoed by Bergonzi who asserts that the nineteenth century English novel is 'realistic, bourgeois-centred, anti-heroic'.

(4) Certainly, if we look at some of the villains in the English novels of the nineteenth century through the eyes of a modern reader, the idea of the 'anti-hero' is a valid one. Many of these villains refuse - in the manner of the substantial hero - to accept the imposition of social and moral restraints of their nineteenth century fictional worlds.

Changes in society were thus responsible for changes in the presentation of fiction. The novel virtually came to be the mode of representing the reality of the society of the time. The fact that society was, in nineteenth century England, middle-class and 'respectable' had serious ramifications for the traditional, substantial hero. Of major importance in his eclipse was the standardisation of his speech mode to a written style to comply with 'respectability'. The badge of the respectable, drab nineteenth century principal male character is his insipid, written speech mode. This style was equated in the public mind with 'respectability' as it carried with it associations of correctness which had accrued to it from the great eighteenth century grammarians who preached a prescriptive language. But its very correctness and uniformity helped render the speaker as a standardised figure; it is deviation from the standard which creates individuality and interest. It is significant that Heathcliff and Henchard are not burdened with a formal written speech mode. But so many principal male characters in the nineteenth century English novel are afflicted with this standard badge of respectability that it is difficult, at times, to distinguish one from the other by speech alone. Moreover, the uniformity of dialogue and the author's prose tend to create monotony, for changes of narrative style in a text help vivify the reader's enthusiasm to continue. Consequently, if speech becomes

inseparable in tone from the narrative, which often carries the voice of the author, the speaker's individuality suffers.

A formal written mode of speech has other grave disadvantages for heroic language. As it ranges from the formal to the 'frozen', or rigidly formal, it creates an impression of the speaker as, at best, lacking in cordiality or, at worst, as being a cold fish. Neither is advantageous to the portrayal of a substantial hero who needs emotional depths to be of interest to the reader. Without such depths a character becomes more an automaton, or a puppet controlled by the author, than a credible human being.

The coldness of a formal written mode of speech gives an impression of aloofness and pomposity. Empathy between reader and protagonist is lost or, at least, stretched to its limits, and sympathy is not easily elicited. Such principal male characters become mere types with which the reader is unable to identify with or aspire to emulate. They are thus rejected by the reader as heroes. It should be added, however, that no male principal character in the nineteenth century English novel speaks entirely and consistently in an entirely 'frozen' style. Even the formal written speech mode of Jane Austen's most decorous 'heroes' is occasionally allowed to assume a measure of informality in specific contexts. Nevertheless, it is the use of a formal written speech mode as a normative style which

underpins the impression of dull respectability and conformity that so very many nineteenth century English 'heroes' create.

There are, of course, more aspects undercutting the portrayal of substantial heroes than direct speech. It is not valid to assume that a male principal character is a substantial hero merely because he speaks a dialect other than the written standard. What is said has an important influence on the form in which it is uttered. Pickwick's orotundity of speech is mitigated by his warmth and humour. The mawkish sentimentality of the content of Stephen Blackpool's speech cannot be condoned by his regional accent. Pickwick is a memorable hero despite his speech mode: Stephen Blackpool is a failure as a hero regardless of his regional speech.

More generally, however, deviance from a formal written mode, so long as it is appropriate in the context, produces speech which makes a speaker memorable. The most substantial characters establish their effect mainly through their speech. It is their deviance from the standard mode which accentuates their presence in the novel. The most powerful and lasting affects are generated through modes of speech which are non-standard - who can forget Sairey Gamp? Many of Dickens's greatest characters seem only to exist through their speech.

The speech styles of the substantial heroes in chapter nine exhibit some evidence in support of the idea that a natural speech mode helps to create memorable heroes. Only Pickwick has what might be called a formal written style. The remainder speak in a 'token' regional dialect: a speech mode which individualises the speaker without being unintelligible to readers. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the imposition of a formal written mode of speech on the male principal character was a fairly significant contribution to the eclipse of the hero in the nineteenth century English novel. There are clear indications that the constraints of such a speech mode have helped reduce the traditional hero to a mere male principal character.

The very many dull, insipid male principal characters in the nineteenth century English novel testify to the inadequacy of a formal written mode as an heroic form of direct speech. However, the inability of these principal characters to function as heroes was not only a consequence of ineffectual speech. The notion of a correct, written mode of speech was a legacy from the previous century. Such a prescriptive notion of speech with its rules, order and conformity was most acceptable to middle-class Victorians. It integrated well with their worship of respectability and order and the concept of the absolute as achievable; and just as the nineteenth century man aspired to things

material and spiritual which would pronounce his respectability to the world,so also did the middle-class gentleman aspire to a correct speech-style as an overt badge of his respectability.

In the nineteenth century the old plural society of gentry and peasantry had long gone. The middle-class had wedged themselves between and were fast assuming the real power of the nation. It was this class which assumed to itself the written standard as a speech dialect. The middle-class adopted the style as a means of asserting themselves: it was a means of pronouncing their education,status and concern with order and correctness. Along with their wealth and their religion,their 'correct' speech became a banner of their rectitude and was made to substitute for their lack of aristocratic breeding and self-assurance.

These changes in society brought changes in the fiction that attempted to represent the social life which the author was experiencing. With few exceptions,the great literature prior to the nineteenth century concerned itself with individuals and events in the past. In the eighteenth century most of the great poets still looked to the classical ages for their heroes and topics. Even those actively engaged in the gradual process of change still retained the old forms and diction for their contemporary social commentaries. As great poets gradually found their topics in their own world they began to develop a language

of literature which would 'seem an echo to the sense' of their subject matter. Wordsworth was in the vanguard of those who aspired to use the 'real language of men' in their poetry.

But in the nineteenth century English novel 'the real language of men' was generally retained (in a fictional representation) for the speech of the lower order of characters. Apart from George Eliot and Thomas Hardy most authors preferred their heroes to be identified as belonging to the respectable middle-class and thus rendered their speech in a 'respectable' formal written mode. At the same time the novel had begun to distinguish itself from other fictional forms by its focus on the detail of real or 'ordinary' life. The novel intent on giving an impression of real life and real people is characteristic of nineteenth century English prose fiction at its best.

This focus on the real or the ordinary had clear consequences for the hero and his language. Eric Auerbach in Mimesis has traced the influence of realism on Western Literature, and Mario Praz has linked its influence with the decline of the hero in Victorian fiction. I will not attempt to summarise these extensive studies of a complex idea. However, one point made by both authors is relevant to this study. It is that the details of life in society are the basic ingredients of realism. It follows, therefore, that heroes are difficult to render as individuals in the novel

form. Rather, they must be rendered as products of the society which moulds and sustains them. This, to some extent, helps explain why the substantial, individual hero has been eclipsed in the nineteenth century English novel, and replaced by an ordinary, respectable gentleman of the middle-class.

The extraordinary man who commands attention, who acts as an inspiration for the reader, had effectively become redundant in the changing novel of the nineteenth century. This kind of hero, from Beowulf through Odysseus to Hamlet, had been essentially the fictional product of less integrated, less ordered, less conventional societies. Such 'unstable' societies seem in psychological need of the hero to spearhead its hopes and aspirations. In the relatively stable and conformist society of the nineteenth century there was no place in its realistic fiction for a physically active hero to undermine its sacred institutions. The novel had shifted the perspective of fiction away from the dynamics of individual heroism towards a concern with more abstract and social issues. In many novels the principal male character is no longer an active agent for righting wrongs, but merely a device to highlight the inadequacies of a social institution. In these novels the individual becomes secondary to the theme and heroic characterisations become virtually impossible. Thus in a society which paid homage to conformity and



respectability, the active, individualistic hero becomes an anomaly.

Moreover, focus on detail had grave implications for the survival of the memorable hero in the nineteenth century English novel. Realism led to a restructuring of prose fiction, producing the novel whose artistic ends contributed to the acceleration of the hero's decline. Many of the greatest novels in the nineteenth century are large edifices, often with multiple plots, themes and more than one principal male character. The scope of these vast novels made them an infertile environment for the creation of an all-powerful, central, dynamic individual as hero; so many protagonists of equal interest divert attention away from each other. The memorable hero has no equal in his fictional world. He is generally more at home in a fiction which is narrower in scope, has a single plot and fewer characters. By limiting the scope of a fiction in this way it is easier to focus attention directly and solely on the hero. Hardy's Henchard, for example, could well have been reduced in stature had the author developed the stories of Farfrae and Newsom. Many critics have suggested, too, that George Eliot's loose weaving of Deronda's story with that of Gwendolen Harleth's substantially more memorable one is a contributory factor in Deronda's insipid portrayal.

The nineteenth century 'hero' had other problems of an artistic nature. Not only was he shifted from the novel's

centre but he was also often burdened with a thematic function or used as an author's mouthpiece. Such impositions limit heroic potential by constraining action in the interest of a wider artistic purpose. The hero loses his autonomy, and thus his individuality, as he becomes a mere puppet controlled by the author. Heroic language becomes unnecessary when the character is rendered as an ordinary, realistic member of society. Indeed, heroic language would be incongruous spoken by a mentor, consort or mouthpiece in the fictional world of a realistic novel. Heroic speech uttered by a drawing-room 'hero' simply produces melodrama, as in the case of, for instance, Dickens's young hero, Nicholas Nickleby. But generally, the middle-class gentlemen who are the male principals in the nineteenth century English novel speak in a formal, written mode.

The nineteenth-century novel 'hero' also suffered the indignity of having his place at the centre of the story usurped by heroines of outstandingly memorable calibre. It is little wonder that the hero found himself eclipsed as he was often forced to play consort, always one pace dutifully behind the vibrant heroine. The implications for speech in this kind of role can be encapsulated in one word - deference; and deferential speech was never a hallmark of the dominant, substantial hero.

Competition from the villain was another contributory factor in the hero's eclipse in the nineteenth century English novel. Good male principal characters suffered badly in comparison with villains who were rendered as individual, attractive, masculine and dominant. A male principal character, already vitiated by other factors, could never rival in attraction this kind of villain.

Besides villains, the nineteenth century male principal found himself eclipsed by the overwhelming number of memorable eccentrics who fill the pages of many nineteenth century English novels. As the novel began to scrutinise larger worlds, more people, classes and types were encompassed. Some of these types surfaced as eccentrics who outgrew their peripheral roles and have become synonymous with their respective novels. Others have become better known than the novel's 'hero'. More significantly these eccentrics have become memorable through their direct speech. Their deviant speech helps the reader to recall them: catch-words and phrases, deviant syntax and grammatical solecisms become memorable and stay in the mind long after formal, written speech is forgotten. The 'hero' is not only eclipsed through the insipidity of his own speech mode but also through the vigorous speech of the eccentrics which works to extinguish his light.

Thus the majority of male principal characters at the centre of the novels I have examined in this thesis are far

from being substantial heroes: some are not even substantial characters. However, many of them function satisfactorily in their prescribed roles. But the fact is that in the nineteenth century English novel the term 'hero' is generally inappropriate when applied to the male principal character. (6) The criticism, therefore, that there is a void at the centre of the nineteenth century English novel is a valid one only if it is assumed that novels should be hero-centred. Such an assumption loses sight of the fact that the nineteenth century English novel sets out to be an impression of real life, and very often undertakes to examine in detail some social abuse. Nevertheless, the eclipse of the active, masculine hero from the nineteenth century English novel loses for that particular form a source of attraction. There is, even for the modern reader, if the popularity of secret agent 'novels' can be regarded as fulfilling a universal desire for an active, masculine hero, an intrinsic need in the human psyche to dream about the possibility of what man might become. This need is fulfilled in much of the great literature of the past, through characters ranging from Prometheus through the heroes of Shakespeare to Hardy's Michael Henchard and others. Here is Goethe's Prometheus crying his heroic defiance at the Gods in an heroic language:

I pay homage to you? For what?/Have you ever assuaged/Have you ever relieved/The burdened man's anguish?/The frightened man's tears? Was it not omnipotent Time/That forged me into manhood,/and eternal Fate,/My masters and yours? (6)

The general run of 'hero' in the English novel cannot match the enduring heroism of this behaviour or speech. The nineteenth century 'hero' fails to inspire lofty aspirations for man's destiny. There is nothing in his portrayal that fulfils the psychological need for man to believe in the possibility that he can soar above the ordinary wretched condition of humanity. Symptomatic of this nineteenth century lowering of the eyes from the heavens to the reality of ordinary existence is the eschewing of a vigorous heroic speech style in favour of a formal mode of speech which to a large extent accelerated the eclipse of the substantial hero.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TEN

- 1 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, Princeton, 1957, p.304
- 2 Quoted in:  
Mario Praz, 'Anthony Trollope', The Victorian Novel, edited by Ian Watt, London, 1971, 362-372 (p.368)
- 3 Georg Lukács, 'Narrate or Describe', The Nineteenth Century Novel, edited by Arnold Kettle, London, 1972, 62-79 (p.77)
- 4 Bernard Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight, London, 1965, p.14
- 5 Philip Stevick (editor), The Theory of the Novel, London, 1967, p.5
- 6 Stephen Spender (editor), Great Writings of Goethe, London, 1958, p.223

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