# SEXUALITY AND SETTING: MODES OF CHARACTERIZATION IN SELECTED NOVELS BY JOANNA RUSS

by

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The bulk of criticism on the works of Joanna Russ deals with one or two of the novels. Even encyclopedic works of criticism such as E.F. Bleirer's Science Fiction Writers give little more than a summary of plot, theme, and key characters. As a matter of fact, most critical works analyze only Russ's Female Man while excluding her other novels.[1] This lack of criticism creates a problem in analyzing the development of Russ's characters within each work as well as their chronological transformation throughout her six novels to date. Russ's protagonists are among the most unique in the genre of science fiction. Avoiding the stereotypical patterns for characters seen in early science fiction as well as the archetypal patterns usually found in works by women writers, Russ creates each protagonist through accurate psychological mimesis. Her characters are not identified solely through gender roles, jobs, social responsibilities, or plot action. Most often, Russ's characters are also developed through various models of sexuality which conflict with the social structures in her novels' settings. Russ uses social setting as well

as sexuality to effectively explore the thematic process of decomposition, fragmentation, and alienation which her protagonists undergo. By blending her portrayal of character with a didactic theme, Russ's protagonists surpass their typical science fiction counterparts.

The emergence of character in the novel reached its peak in nineteenth-century literature. However, twentieth-century literature reflects an eroding of the individualism expressed by authors of the previous century, such as Dickens, Fielding and James. Vast changes in technology, economics, society, and war caused skepticism of the changelessness of individual identity in modern novels: "Belief in the autonomous individual--belief in what D.H. Lawrence called `the old stable ego of the character'--was likewise abandoned in the modernist novel" (Sanders 132). The novels of Lawrence, and his contemporary Virginia Woolf, explore the inner selves of their protagonists. This literary movement toward a more accurate depiction of the psychological intricacies of the human mind found its most radical expression in the works of James Joyce.

The opposite response to these developments can be found in science fiction. After the horrors of two world wars and the Depression, the 1940's saw the boom of science fiction literature. Rather than explore the human search for identity within, science fiction

examines the de-emphasis of the individual from a societal viewpoint which is outside the particular character. Sanders, in his article "The Disappearance of Character," confirms this hypothesis:

> SF deals . . .with the same societal and intellectual developments whose intimate effects on personality have been explored in modernist fiction; the two literary modes examine the outside and inside of the same phenomenon. (132)

Because of the dissolution of the individual as a viable force in post-war society, the genre of science fiction explores the causes of this disintegration. In achieving this aim, science fiction investigates the phenomenon of living in a systematized society in which the individual is anonymous, absorbed into a technological culture with which he or she cannot relate.

Like many other science fiction writers, Joanna Russ finds that " . . .there is no way of escaping in art from one's society, as any social product will of necessity embody the society's values and pressures" ("Technology" 252). Russ believes that science fiction "bridges" the gap between the technology offered in a modern scientific culture and the world of human values seen in medieval literature ("Aesthetic" 117). By drawing its values from a pre-industrial revolution culture and its setting from the twentieth-century world of technology, science fiction expresses a collective

view of humanity in a conformist society. This view of society leads science fiction to illuminate the "disappearance of character" rather than the exploration of the inner mind as in modernist works (Sanders 132). By fragmenting and isolating its characters, science fiction asks its readers to carefully contemplate the fictional society presented rather than identify with the characters. In this process, the role of character is not neglected, but rather undermined by the author's interest in exploring theme.

These patterns of characterization are evident to some extent in Russ's science fiction. Individual protagonists are seen as products of the society in which they live. Through their interaction with society, Russ's protagonists exemplify her theme and play an integral role in a process of decomposition-fragmentation-alienation. This process can be traced between the three books examined in this study--And Chaos Died, The Female Man, and We Who Are About To. Despite the strong influence of society and theme on her protagonists, Russ's central characters are more fully developed than many others in science fiction. To illuminate Russ's protagonists, it is necessary to look at some literary theories of characterization by mainstream and science fiction critics. Russ, herself,

has written on character in science fiction; these comments will be examined also.

W.J. Harvey's Character and the Novel (1965) touches on a process called "psychic decomposition" in his discussion of character to describe the artistic practice of creating fictional characters as well as the course on which modern humanity has embarked according to science fiction writers.

> This process, wherein our sense of duality between Self and World is diminished and in which discrete identities merge into the unity of a larger spiritual continuum, we may call psychic decomposition. (Harvey 124)

Harvey calls this procedure an integral part of the "artist's vision of the world" (124). In this manner, an artist's view of society is such that characters are created through the decomposition of individuals who then split into disproportionate identities. Decomposition, in this sense, refers to the disintegration of an individual's identity, resulting in his or her loss of the particular elements which make that individual a unique self. This loss of individuality and the fragmentation which follows lie at the heart of science fiction as a genre and Russ's novels in particular. The next step, alienation, follows as an effect of this process. Alienation, in this sense, has been explored in the drama of Bertolt Brecht. In Brecht's plays as in Russ's novels, the reader is encouraged to look beyond

the individual character. These artists ask the reader to reflect on "social, ecological, and metaphysical" issues inherent in our culture (Sanders 131).

Because of this emphasis on society, Russ's protagonists would seem to pale in light of the theme expressed in the novel. Yet, this is not the case. Harvey touches on the reason for this paradox in his further explanation of psychic decomposition:

> But the relative solidity of individual characterization does not quite conceal the fluidity of the original vision, so that characters exist not merely in the context of normal human relationships but also unite in their common reference back to the single imaginative vision from which they emerged which . . .still envelops and overflows their individual outlines. (Harvey 124)

In this blending of theme and characterization, the individual protagonist does not lose his or her identity as a viable character, but rather adds to the importance of the work through tying these two components together. This mixing of theme and character is seen in Russ's works.

David Ketterer and other critics of science fiction almost unanimously find that science fiction "`involves a certain magnitude or breadth of vision which militates against an interest in detailed characterization'" (Sanders 131). This "breadth of vision" can be interpreted as an overriding concern with theme or plot. In discussing the aesthetics of science

fiction, Joanna Russ states that "traditionally `human' concerns will be absent; protagonists may be all but unrecognizable as such" ("Aesthetics" 118). Russ also states that "protagonists of science fiction are always collective, never individual persons (although individuals often appear as exemplary or representative figures)" ("Aesthetics" 113). Other critics assert that character is "not merely neglected in SF; it is subverted" (Sanders 133). The lack of characterization in science fiction has long been a standard in the genre. Though all novels contain character-like creations, in science fiction, they are often presented as archetypes or stereotypes rather than fully developed human beings who express the complexities of life.

Virginia Woolf, in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," criticized the characterization by one of the first science fiction writers, H.G. Wells, in her essay on character. Wells felt that "close scrutiny of character is only possible when the social frame remains constant" (Sanders 132-33). He argued that rapid change caused by the impact of science on industry and society made the "social frame" of the novel as important as the character. However, Woolf disagreed and asserted that characterization was the reason the novel evolved in the first place:

> I believe that all novels . . .deal with character, and that it is to express character--not to preach doctrines, sing songs,

> or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of novel . . .has been evolved. (Woolf 324)

Woolf's essay explored the tendency of authors, such as Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy, to shy away from character as subject. She believed that in order for novelists to stimulate their readers they must write about something each reader recognizes. Through this recognition process, the reader's imagination will be engaged and each will become involved in the story. Woolf insisted that readers identify with real people as characters, rather than with people who are merely a part of Well's "social frame."

The lack of attention to characterization has been lamented by some science fiction critics and authors such as Ursula Le Guin. In her article, "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown," Le Guin discusses and agrees with Virginia Woolf's ideas by claiming that " . . .we are not objects. That is essential. We are subjects, and whoever amongst us treats us as objects is acting inhumanely, wrongly, against nature" (Le Guin 3Ø). She notes the inadequacy of most science fiction to portray fully developed individuals as subjects. Le Guin assigns this tendency to the author's "yearning for the seemingly godlike detachment of the scientist" and decides that the result is "an evasion of the artist's obligation to reproduce . . .a vision" (32). Le Guin does not mention Well's

comments about the influence of social change on the individual. However, this influence is of key importance in all works of science fiction, including her own.

In his book, Structural Fabulation (1975), Robert Scholes asserts that Woolf's argument for realistic character portrayal is unreasonable. Espousing a more pluralistic and contemporary viewpoint, he comments on Woolf's theoretical arguments:

> . . .these writers each presented in his [or her] work a model derived from a different aspect of reality and related to it in a different way. Every important writer's work offers us a different system of notation, which has its own focal limits in abstracting from the total system of existence. (Scholes 6)

Scholes' assertion helps to explain the variety and complexity of modern fiction, including science fiction. By exposing the "realistic fallacy" used by Woolf and other writers of her period, contemporary critics have begun to realize the importance of the artist's vision of the world in the creation of a fictional work. The uniqueness of this vision is crucial in character creation and underlies the work as a whole. Russ's main characters exemplify this contemporary trend in critical thought.

Joanna Russ's protagonists are developed to a point which falls somewhere between the mainstream fiction of Virginia Woolf and the bulk of science fiction. Though her protagonists may not be

characterized as fully as those in mundane fiction, they are developed sufficiently to play an integral part in the explication of her theme. Russ uses two methods of developing and involving her protagonists in the story. The first method is not particularly unique to Russ. In this method, Russ advocates the use of the "setting itself" as an "antagonist" ("Setting" 150). However, Russ admits that "setting is important only as it impinges on the protagonist" ("Setting" 150). The usage of setting as antagonist is fairly common in science fiction; yet, Russ fully utilizes her setting by using it to help define and influence her protagonists.

More importantly, Russ's use of sexuality in defining her protagonists is essential to her works. To define sexuality in Russ's novels, one must look beyond traditional patterns of sexual activity to also examine gender roles, homosexuality, and their effects on each individual. Russ characterizes each protagonist in her novels through this expansion into the personal, and socially conditioned, psychology of sexuality. Though not as round or fully developed as Woolf's Mrs. Brown, Russ's protagonists are seen as individual human beings. Though products of their society, each maintains a duality or individuality in their world. Marilyn Holt claims that Russ uses a "confessional form" to portray her characters:

> [She examines] the viewpoint character's perceptions of the environment, and intellectual and theoretical interests. But the character's prejudices, limitations, and psychology--what could be called a psychological landscape or innerscape--control the story. (484)

Russ creates her protagonists' innerscapes largely through her portrayal of individual sexuality. Using her subjective vision of the world as a woman, lesbian, and feminist, Russ conceives protagonists who struggle with problems of decomposition (loss of identity), fragmentation and alienation. Though Russ uses the individual characters' perceptions and sexuality to convey the theme or process, they do not become stereotypes. Each protagonist remains a viable force in the novel, often struggling to deal with the problems of life in an alien or hostile society.

By tracing the movement of Russ's protagonists through decomposition-fragmentation-alienation in three novels, it is possible to explore the intricate relationship between Russ's protagonists, their sexuality, and their world. Through this relationship, Russ produces new myths for her active female protagonists, while reversing or subverting the existing male traditions. These new myths often make Russ's novels seem enigmatic. However, the puzzling quality of these works can be attributed to Russ's unique vision of

the world which designs female archetypes previously unavailable to women.

## Note

1. Twelve of the sixteen articles available on Joanna Russ's works discuss The Female Man. However, seven of those twelve articles analyze only that novel. In addition, of the sixteen articles on Russ's novels, only six discuss the literary aspects of her work, while ten critics focus only on her feminist approach. None of the articles surveyed examine her methods of characterization in depth.

## CHAPTER II

## DECOMPOSITION

At its most basic level, And Chaos Died (1970) is about perception: perceptions of identity, sexuality, and power are critical elements in understanding ourselves, each other, and the world. The ability to perceive our place in society plays a key role in establishing our individuality. An epigraph from Chang Tzu, which prefaces this novel, illuminates the problems surrounding perception: " . . .the eye is a menace to clear sight, the ear is a menace to subtle hearing, the mind is a menace to wisdom, every organ of the senses is a menace to its own capacity" (ACD i). In the story which follows, Chaos, the kind god of the center, encounters Fuss, the god of the Southern Ocean, and Fret, the god of the Northern Ocean. To repay Chaos's kindness to them, Fuss and Fret decide to experiment on him. Since they have discovered that Chaos lacks the same sense apertures as everyone else, they drill holes in him to create these sense organs. On the seventh day, Chaos dies. In the process of becoming like everyone else, Chaos loses his individuality and his life. The key to the epigraph lies in the fact that Fuss and Fret are

unable to accept that Chaos can function without the same sense organs (and perceptions) that they have. Thus, they feel that they must alter his perceptions to fit their understanding of reality. By altering Chaos's perceptions of reality to fit their model, Fuss and Fret "kill" his individuality.

Jai Vedh, Russ's first and last male protagonist to date, can be equated with Chaos in the Chang Tzu passage. He is different, not only from the norm in the alien society he encounters, but also from the norm in Earth culture from which he originates. His difference lies in his sexual preference: Jai is a homosexual. Russ emphasizes Jai's duality between self and the world through the splitting of his mind into two conscious entities--Jai One and Jai Two. This duality is maintained, with decreasing frequency, until near the end of the novel. As Jai is assimilated into the alien culture which will not tolerate his different sexuality, his individuality (duality) disappears. In order to understand how Russ builds the complex character of Jai Vedh, it is necessary to look at her protagonist, his development, and the role he plays in the story.

Jai's duality can be seen in several references. The first of these scenes occurs in the dream Jai experiences while travelling to the alien planet. In this crucial segment, the two selves do not delineate

themselves consistently. Russ often uses Jai Two as a thinking self and Jai One as the speaking self, but these references are chaotically mixed with citations that carry no specific tag. In some cases, Jai Two will also speak. This confusing mixture of thoughts, spoken sentences, and varying references to the speaker symbolically create the chaos of Jai Vedh's self-identity. Later textual references show the same type of confusion in his identity.

Jai, on his first voyage into space, is introduced as a "quiet" and "desperate" man, "alone among thirty-five hundred" (ACD 3-4). He feels an emptiness inside himself that he has known for some time. This vacuum plays a significant role in understanding Jai's character, and particularly, his sexuality. He relates this feeling of emptiness to the activities of his everyday life, which include "struggling in bed" (ACD 4). As the trip proceeds, Jai shows signs of super-sensitivity. Eventually, he presses his body against a porthole to place the vacuum inside himself as close to its "big relative" in space as possible (ACD 4). Jai is found in this state of collapse, taken to the ship's infirmary, and given sedatives. The doctors tell him that space is not a vacuum, but matter. In his highly sedated state, Jai feels "filled with peace, stuffed with it, replete"; and thus, he finds space to be trustworthy

(ACD 4). Moments later, the ship explodes. The explosion of the ship highlights the lie he has been told about space containing matter rather than being a vacuum.

In her brief examination of this novel, feminist critic Marilyn Holt ascribes Jai's behavior in this passage to a need for "honesty and release," when he "realizes that he is not an individual, but part of a greater oneness" ("Joanna" 486). However, Jai's isolation can be better explained through looking at his sexual dilemma. In fact, this passage plays a vital role in understanding Jai's character and sexuality as a homosexual who is isolated from humanity.

Written in 1969, before the gay liberation movement, this novel explores the traditional view of sexuality as defined by the Freudian libidinal economy theory. Samuel Delany explains this model by asserting that it "holds that sexuality is a presence, best thought of as a visible/invisible substance (or essence) that women alone possess and for which men have an appetite" (118). This substance which only women possess is sought after by men who wish to embrace or obtain possession of this mysterious substance. The male's lack of this substance necessitates his behavior in trying to obtain or embrace it. So in terms of this model, females are the only gender to possess substantial sexuality. In males, sexuality is only a behavior, not a substance; and

thus, there is no specific male sexuality (or substance). Russ symbolically refers to this pattern of sexuality in her symbols of matter and vacuum.

Russ uses the vacuum/matter metaphor to symbolize male/female sexuality. The first indication of homosexuality occurs when Jai's vacuum (male sexuality) feels powerful while near the larger vacuum of space. By flattening himself against the porthole, he attempts to merge his vacuum with the vacuum outside the ship. This symbolic merging of male sexuality can be interpreted as homosexuality. However after the doctors sedate Jai, they lie to him by telling him that space is filled with matter. Believing that the vacuum in space does not exist, Jai feels more comfortable. Though his behavior may seem paradoxical, the matter (or female sexuality) relieves Jai of his discomfort with his true sexual orientation. His need to conceal his homosexuality indicates the reason he has isolated himself from others. A reference by Delany on Girard's essay on Camus's La Chute discusses the problems that individuals outside of societal norms have in adjusting to these rules:

> . . .persons out of contact with society as Camus's hero, Mersault, are not unconcerned with what other people think of them. On the contrary, they are obsessed by other people's opinions, which they assume, quite wrongly, are all negative judgments. (Delany 116)

The fear of society's judgment causes the "closet"

behavior common among certain homosexuals. These fears often lead homosexuals, who experience difficulty in accepting their sexual preferences, to pretend to be heterosexual, or to avoid sexual relationships completely. Jai Vedh is caught in a battle between his desires and his need for acceptance. Russ uses this battle between Jai's inward and outward identity to characterize her protagonist, equating him with Chaos of the epigraph.

The next sequence in the novel expands on Jai's character and sexuality. This characterization occurs in dream time rather than real time. As the escape ship approaches the planet of telepaths, the planet's inhabitants enter Jai's drug-induced slumber. The result is a dream of sorts through which the telepaths come to understand the passengers aboard the approaching ship.

In Jai's dream, they have crash-landed on the planet. He lies outside the escape capsule "on his back, one knee thrust up, an arm bent under him" in "diffuse and glaring brightness" (ACD 4). Jai is disoriented. He feels pain in his head and blows on his back; he also hears a woman speak, though he cannot see her. The confusion of this landing contrasts with the actual landing, which occurs twenty-three pages later. The latter reference describes this action quite differently:

> They came down in the escape capsule the next morning: Jai Vedh safely strapped in and trying to control his air-sickness. Outside the round porthole, the cloud strata streamed by; the ship bucked like a freight elevator. (ACD 27)

Whereas the description of the first landing contains dream-like attributes, the account of the actual landing sounds more realistic. After the real landing, Jai and the Captain are greeted by a delegate of the colony and events proceed chronologically from this point. The disorientation and confusion of the first, dream landing represent the drug-influenced images in Jai's mind. However, Jai's hallucinations are not all his imagination; the telepaths are causing the dream to occur.

Establishing this section as dream time rather than real time is important in characterizing Jai's sexuality. The first dream reference occurs when Jai meets the telepath, Evne. When she tells him that she finds him attractive, Jai's mind closes "instantly" to her thoughts (ACD 8). By closing his mind to Evne, Jai reinforces his homosexuality. Later, the ship's Captain begins to fondle Evne, who has slipped into the comatose state necessary for telepathic communication. Jai Two finds this action offensive and clearly states the fact: "`I don't like women,' said Jai Vedh's second self, the cool one, `and I like you less'" (ACD 10). After Evne

revives herself, she discards her dress. Once again, the Captain makes comments about her naked body to which Jai replies, "I don't like women. I never have. I'm a homosexual" (ACD 11). The second reference by Jai uses no tag, such as Jai One or Jai Two, but merely Jai Vedh. Although Jai admits his homosexuality, this confession occurs during his dream. Since this admission take place in Jai's mind, he must be honest about his feelings. However, even in his subconscious he fears negative reactions to his confession.

The Captain responds to Jai's confession with a "repelled jerk of the head;" and later, when they are alone in the ship, he acts uncomfortable and hostile (ACD 11). In addition to the Captain's revulsion, Jai's admission of his homosexuality elicits a response from the telepathic environment.

> I beg your pardon! added the clearing like an offended schoolgirl and then it kept touching him on the back with hysterical joy until they were half-way around the lake. (ACD 11-12)

Later, Evne tells Jai that he is sick "in the head," then claims that she cannot cure him (ACD 29). These verbal and non-verbal reactions to his homosexuality confirm Jai's fear of negative judgments concerning his true sexual desires.

The second key dream setting occurs in the escape capsule where Jai and the Captain have sought refuge from

the telepaths and a rain storm. As he sits smoking a cigarette, Jai thinks, "I wish I knew what it was like to be a man who loves a woman" (ACD 18). After this wish, Jai's thoughts turn to the Captain.

> I could drive him out of here with ten words. Or a touch. If I wanted. He's a beautiful man, I could play with him like a toy. But always stay detached, never get involved with anyone. And never, God help me, get sexual. . . . Tell me about youth camp, twelve years old. Confessions. Protests. Tears. And then come back for more. I itch with the very idea. So why do I never do it? (ACD 18)

This series of thoughts explores the inside of Jai's mind, resulting in more signs of his internal chaos. Though he wishes to be heterosexual, his thoughts about the Captain are clearly homosexual, showing both frankness and reluctance. Perhaps the substantial phrase in these thoughts is the last. Why has he "never" done it? This question emphasizes Jai's discomfort with his homosexual feelings. Combined with his dislike for women, Jai's desires leave him isolated sexually. Though his desires are clearly homosexual, this passage proves that he has not acted on those feelings.

The designation of this influential section as dream time is critical in that we are allowed to see inside Jai's mind before he arrives on the planet. This passage contains the only verbal admission of his homosexuality and all of the openly homosexual thoughts that he has in the entire book. By using the dream to

characterize her protagonist more fully, Russ delves into the psychological issues of homosexuality without detracting from her theme. At the same time, she emphasizes Jai's discomfort with his homosexual desires.

The last scene before the actual landing provides another clue to the section being a dream. In this scene, Evne stands at the door of the escape capsule and talks via a squeaking door hinge. She apologizes for placing Jai and tha Captain under a "frontal attack . . . too much stress" and assures them that they will forget what they have experienced (or dreamed). As she prepares to leave, the door latch, via Evne, announces that she is a "witch doctor," then enunciates more clearly saying "psychiatrist" (ACD 23). The equation of a witch doctor with a psychiatrist ironically foreshadows the telepathic people's ability to manipulate minds like they are doing in this dream. By manipulating Jai's mind, the telepaths supplant his homosexual desires with their model of sexual behavior.

Delany denounces the sexual model portrayed in the telepathic culture. He finds that this model, which contours the libidinal economy theory, is a "received model" and reveals "itself to be fiction of substantial sexuality" (Delany 121). There are clues that Russ feels the same way. By equating a psychiatrist with a witch doctor, Russ offers a poignant criticism of the science

of psychology. She also draws parallels between psychoanalysis and the "heterosexual institution" which promulgates the validity of the sexual model symbolized in the telepathic culture (Russ Magic 28). Delany agrees by saying that "the writer" is not out to proclaim the values of this sexual model and finds that Russ "shuns" the social model "in favor of a greater psychological mimemis" (121). By showing Jai's inner battle between his desires for men and the guilt he feels for not conforming to the heterosexual model, Russ psychologically depicts the problems that homosexuals have in accepting their sexual preference.

Likewise, Russ criticizes the sexual model by placing her protagonist outside of the accepted norm and showing how the telepaths use mind control to convert him to their values. She uses psychological mimesis to portray her protagonist's inner mind in depth as well as to emphasize his role in the novel's theme, which concerns the loss of his individuality. Once again, we see the similarities between Jai's conversion and the alteration of Chaos in the novel's epigraph. Though both Chaos and Jai begin their stories as individuals, different from the others around them, each is altered to fit a model more acceptable to society. Since the telepaths through their sexual model perceive Jai as

abnormal; according to their rules, he must be changed to fit into their society.

While on the planet, Jai becomes sexually active. His first encounter occurs in a dream, when Olya, the Slavic woman, comes and offers herself to him. He tells her to go away and says, "You know what I am" (ACD 45). Olya counters this oblique reference to his homosexuality by saying that she knows better. He has passionate sex with her, though he feels "terrified, sweating, overwhelmed" and "suffocated" by her (ACD 45). Just before his climax, he notices a mole on Olya's lip, but she claims that it is Evne's mole because she does not have one. Evne receives the culmination of his sexual excitement. This intermixing of minds and bodies symbolizes the ability of the telepaths to influence Jai's dreams. The changing of partners along with actual references to the "dream-Olya" confirm that this sexual encounter has occurred in a dream (ACD 45). However, it signals a striking change. Previously, Jai Vedh's inner self has proclaimed him a homosexual, or at least non-sexual with anyone. This dream offers clues to the mind controlling power of the telepaths. Their active presence in the earlier dream gives a clue to their existence in this dream. They are beginning to alter Jai's outlook on the expression of emotion as well as his sexual preference.

After this dream, Jai becomes more familiar with and absorbed into the telepathic culture. He realizes that he can perceive thoughts from the telepaths as well as from the natural setting. This realization does not come easily for him. At various times, Jai fears the telepaths, wishes to harm them, and becomes conscious of the need to protect his mind. However, as Jai sits near the lake watching the telepaths play, he is touched (or loved) by someone invisible. Jai's experience with love pushes him toward learning to experience the telepaths' culture; and in the process, he becomes more sexual.

Jai's next sexual skirmish occurs in the library with Evne. In this scene, Jai attempts to rape Evne. As he follows her down one aisle of the library, he decides to bend her back over a shelf and "make a go of it" (ACD 76). His actions are quick and deceptive. Though she turns her head away, he forcefully holds her wrists. However, Jai, who cannot achieve penetration without losing his balance, fails to achieve the sexual release he desires. The attempted rape reveals his anger at the fragile hold he has on both the speaking and telepathic worlds. In fact, the brutality of this sexual encounter is echoed shortly thereafter.

Just after leaving the library, Jai kicks Evne's feet out from under her and falls on top of her. Lying on the grass, surrounded by nature, Jai claims, "it's all

this goddammed nature. It's making me do it" (ACD 77). Jai feels he might die and "in order to prolong his death and his terror, caressed her until he couldn't see" (ACD 77). However, the passage which follows describes the setting's role in this sexual act.

> The continent swelled under him and closed around him, entangled him, dragged him into the swamps. . . . The swamp crooned over him, licked him, sucked at him; of his own free will he dove into it and ploughed it, hammered, ruined himself, gathered himself together to run headfirst into a stone wall. (ACD 78)

The descriptive images continue to show him to be in pain, "squeezed," "pulled out of shape," "fed into a series of long-distance explosions," and at last, "mauled to death with pillows" (ACD 78). The influential role of the planet itself is important in assessing Jai's lack of control over his own bodily needs. In this passage, the planet clearly influences his behavior.

The next sex scene occurs on the trip back to the settlement. The important act occurs after Jai has "thrust himself into her" and he forgets who Evne is (ACD 79). Eventually he comes to with "a woman under him, his organ tamed and domesticated inside her" (ACD 79). Though the passage is short, it emphasizes a compelling point in this series of sexual encounters. Jai does not think of Evne, or of love, but rather of copulation as a physical relief for the mental and physical pressures he feels. Though Jai achieves this release via sex with a

woman, Evne plays a small role in the act. Her body, her gender seems inconsequential in comparison to his need to have sex.

After being forcefully removed from the primitive planet of the telepaths by a rescue ship, Jai and Evne are transported toward Earth while being studied by the doctors and scientists aboard the ship. In one scene, Evne and Jai are questioned by the medical officers on the ship. Evne pretends to cooperate with the officers while reading their minds. She tells them, "you export craziness. Things are ready to pop. You export Sterilization. Art. Homosex. Visions. Castration" (ACD 101). Evne's inclusion of homosexuality comes as no surprise considering her society's culture. However, in the lines immediately following this outburst, a medical officer throws "his hand up to defend his forehead" (ACD 101). This reaction suggests that Evne is reading his mind, rather than giving her own opinion. She counters his action by insisting that she doesn't have to be a mind reader to know these things; and then, she lies and tells the crew that she can't read minds unless she concentrates. The next line confirms that her statement is an "awful lie" (ACD 101). Even granting that Russ's portrayal of the telepathic culture has been somewhat conservative, these statements do not lead us to believe that Evne has spoken here. The confusion about whether

she reads the officer's mind or not seems trivial at first; but if she is mind reading, his thoughts tell us that homosexuality has not been completely accepted on Earth. Combined with the Captain's earlier reaction, this attitude would explain Jai's discomfort and inability to act on his homosexual feelings earlier in the novel.

Evne tires of the questions and teleports herself to the surface of Earth without Jai. Not as experienced at teleportation as she, he attempts to do the same and finds himself on the other side of the planet, alone in a culture which has become foreign to him. Quite different from the communal society of the telepaths, Jai realizes the importance of having a specific identity in order to survive on Earth. In this setting, Jai One and Two surface again to hold conversations together about "disguises, fake IDs, club membership, and wristplates" (ACD 115). Though life on Earth requires a specific identity for survival, Jai finds the Earth people part of a "rigid social structure"; and while listening to their thoughts, he discovers that "it was impossible to pick anyone out of the mass" (ACD 12Ø). The comparison and contrast set up between Earth and the telepathic colony can be best exemplified in the characters he meets.

The characters that Jai meets on Earth represent a society of isolated individuals. Whether defined by

jobs, social groups, or gender roles, these individuals have no knowledge of themselves outside of these definitions. This lack of personal identity confounds their individuality and isolates them from the rest of humanity. One of the characters Jai Vedh meets is Victor Liu-Hesse, who is defined by his job as a professional, a government man. By bribing Liu-Hesse, Jai obtains the identification bracelet he needs to survive.

The next major character Jai meets is Ivat, a boy full of hatred. Ivat belongs to a social group of other teenagers. According to their rules, when Jai keeps Ivat from bleeding to death, the boy cannot remain in their group. Jai befriends Ivat and uses his telepathic powers to read the boy's mind. He discovers that Ivat is suspicious and feels that "someone he loves can read his mind" (ACD 144). Jai further examines Ivat to find that behind his tough, rational facade, the boy is "silly, boastful, defensive, and swamped in affection" (ACD 145). These descriptions of Ivat's feelings for Jai are not explicitly homosexual, but this preference is implied. During his inward search of Ivat, Jai finds a "small, dark shadow" which feeds on the boy's fears and shame (ACD 145). This shadow of a "second, ageless Ivat" symbolizes the cancerous growth of self-hatred (ACD 146). Though presented here in stronger terms, this self-hatred parallels the same feelings that caused Jai to isolate

himself from others. Because each of these characters is outside the norms of society, he hates and refuses to act on that portion of himself which he feels causes his dilemma. Jai refuses to act on his homosexuality, but Ivat seeks another, more violent, means of curing his desires. He tries to kill Jai.

The couple to whom Ivat introduces Jai is defined by gender roles as well as their activities. Though these definitions give them purpose, they exhibit a loss of individuality to rigid rules. The woman tries to seduce Jai because it is her responsibility as a wife. She must seduce him so her husband can kill him. However, Jai controls her mind to the point that she forgets her purpose and her plans are foiled when Ivat and her husband return prematurely. Toward the end of their visit, Jai insists on telling the couple how artificial their lives are. When this behavior angers Ivat, Jai begins to gloat about his powers. He even threatens Ivat as he catches him by the throat:

> I will turn your mind inside out . . .I will tear you to pieces. Your friends are fakes, my boy, and I am twenty times as powerful! Twenty times to the twenty-thousandth power! (ACD 153)

Jai continues his tirade of power by telling Ivat to "praise his luck" that he has found a "guru of the very highest order" (ACD 153). This outburst of self-aggrandizement shows Jai's fragile hold on the telepathic

abilities he has learned. He further displays his abusive powers by mentally forcing Ivat to accompany him to an underground area.

The scene in the underground area represents complete anarchy without any of the rules experienced in suburban Earth. This area is embroiled in a massive, destructive party. This party, in which people are killed and maimed, represents the complete loss of individuality. This view of decomposition hints at the primitive animal nature of humanity when all identity is lost. Jai confirms this idea when he discovers that he cannot detect individual minds, though the crowd noise is deafening. Confused by what he has found, he "wondered why the crowd-mind is so flat, drug-bound, silent, all individuality lost" (ACD 156). After deserting Ivat, Jai tries to find someone to relieve the sexual frustration he feels from his earlier encounter with the wife of Ivat's friend. He rejects the first woman he finds because she has no intelligence and proceeds toward the edge of the crowd where a female voice sings.

Amidst the chaos of the party, Jai finds a singing feeble-minded girl whom he discovers to be quite human. He has sex with her. First to please himself, then in an almost sympathetic gesture, he tries to find out what pleases her. In the end, he still makes love to her the only way he knows how and leaves her crying in a security

booth. Though Jai shows a bit more compassion and awareness in his sexual acitivties, he still uses a retarded girl in order to relieve his physical frustration. Note that this view of woman as an object needed for sexual satisfaction parallels the patriarchial sexual model described earlier by Delany.

The atmosphere generated by the Earth culture is violent and brutal. This element can be seen in the suburban culture as well as the underground section. The relationships of the characters with each other and with Jai also show this violence. When surrounded with these attitudes, Jai uses his powers in an often violent and abusive manner. In his attempt to gain the identification bracelet, Jai kills Liu-Hesse in a bizarre use of his telepathic powers. When he meets Ivat on the beach, he uses his powers to defend himself from the boy's arrow, and in the process, the shaft of the arrow goes through Ivat's hand. These meetings with the Earth people all show the violent nature of Earth's society, but they also show an abuse of power on Jai's part. Though Ivat's injury is minor in comparison to Liu-Hesses's death, Jai learns just how great his telepathic powers have become.

After his sexual activities at the underground party, Jai finds a disgruntled Ivat. The boy wants to kill him and shoots another arrow at him. Though Jai

destroys the arrow, he controls Ivat's mind and forces the boy to watch him die. Ivat dissolves into tears and wants to crush his own head on the street, but Jai stops him. He shakes the boy and forces him to confront the reality that Jai still lives. This exercise of telepathic power almost destroys Ivat's mind and is Jai's most serious abuse of power. Yet, because of his powers among the masses of unseeing "eye people," Jai discovers that he is more of an individual. His identification bracelet gives him the necessities of life, and his telepathic powers allow him to remain aloof from the dangerous people of Earth.

After the group of telepaths escape from Earth, they return to their home planet with Ivat. Upon their return, Jai learns the story of their origins. Made by an organic species who had turned themselves into robotic people in order to live longer, the telepaths were created for "a joke or a trick" according to Evne (ACD 183). The key to Evne's story lies in the fact that when the telepaths discovered their creators, they destroyed the machine-like beings because "there was no understanding them" (ACD 183). Note how this phrase shows the lack of compassion or concern for difference that is apparent in the communal culture of the telepaths. Because of the story's proximity to the end

of the novel, this passage emphasizes the negative aspects of the telepathic society.

The closing pages of the book show Jai at a potter's wheel thinking that the telepathic world is "idyllic" (ACD 183). However, Joseph K. warns us that it is "not quite" the ideal place and concludes by relegating their existence to "just life" (ACD 183). Preceded by the story of how the telepaths killed their creators, one would be inclined to agree with Joseph K.'s assessment of the situation. Though the social structure seems less rigid than that of Earth, the intolerance of differences in sexuality or ideas seems to place the telepathic colony in the same relative position as their violent neighbors. The difference between the isolated individuals of Earth and the loss of individuality experienced on the telepathic planet seems negligible in relation to its effect on outsiders.

From the beginning of the novel, which explores Jai Vedh's character in detail, to the end of the novel, which emphasizes the different societies, the movement has been toward the dissolution of the individual personality. To clarify this movement toward decomposition of the individual, it is necessary to understand the ramifications of living in a telepathic society.

Understanding the particular telepathic society that Russ has created is essential to establishing the effects of that culture on her protagonist. Olya's story of Chang Tzu's "ming" or "generalized internal perception" conveys a vague idea of the telepath's powers by telling the story of the squirrel and the ivy plant (ACD 60). The squirrel operates much like the telepaths. It has a sense of the branches, directions like up and down and other properties of mass and space-time. However, the ivy, which grows on the branch, perceives all things as static. It has no concept of "branch" or "down," only what it perceives from its fixed position (ACD 60). When Jai and the Captain arrive on the planet, they perceive the telepathic world in the same static manner that the ivy plant does. Olya finishes her story by saying to Jai, "we see everything, we do everything" (ACD 60).

One of the first specific references to the powers of the telepaths comes through a child, Evne's daughter. Evniki tells Jai that the colony's children are unable to use telepathy until they are pubescent; yet they can sense feelings in others. She also tells Jai that the grown-ups are "horrid," "haven't the slightest compassion," and "hardly even have names" (ACD 53, 55). After Jai wanders off alone, a daisy, which he suspects of being Evne, tells him everything about the telepaths.

Jai relays this information to the Captain and Olya the next day.

> It [telepathy] allows you to know where everyone is, what everyone is thinking and feeling. Everyone else knows what you are thinking and feeling. You can transport yourself from place to place instantaneously, you can levitate, you can perceive and manipulate objects at a distance, from . . .the sub-microscopic--size. (ACD 58)

This shared ability to know the thoughts and feelings of of others reduces the privacy of the individual. It also indicates a loss of individuality since the person cannot retain personal ideas or emotions without everyone in the society knowing what these are. This loss of individuality is symbolized in the adult telepaths' reluctance to use names.

Harvey's theory of psychic decomposition perfectly describes the individual's absorption into society. Though Jai begins the novel as an individual, his identity or self gradually diminishes as he merges with the world of the telepaths. As Jai becomes more proficient in telepathy, he perceives the thoughts of plant life, the planet itself, the other telepaths, and even the non-telepathic people he meets on the rescue ship and Earth. In one particular scene on Earth, Jai laments his inability to shut out the sounds of plant and animal life on Earth. In this passage, the author's voice tells us, "he would never be alone again; his mind

would never be his own again" (ACD 119). These words are given more authority since spoken by the implied author rather than incorporated into Jai's thoughts.

In her comparison of the works of Suzette Haden Elgin and Joanna Russ, Thelma Shinn acknowledges the effect that this ability has on the individual: "Inevitably, the individual perception dissolves in a telepathic world into communal knowledge" (213). Shinn also claims, "And Chaos Died, consequently, seems to be Russ's first attack on individual values and support of communal strength" (214). However, this so-called "attack" seems negative rather than positive when considering the loss of individuality through the mind control which the telepaths use. This point becomes apparent when considering the changes Jai undergoes in the course of the novel.

> But nowhere in the novel does the protagonist, Jai Vedh, ever consciously decide he wants to do/learn/change X, Y, or Z, to which ends a subsequent and sizable proportion of the action in the text is then devoted. (Delany 112)

The discrepancy between wanting to change and the actual alteration that takes place can only be explained by the telepath's usage of mind control.

One of the more potent uses of telepathic power can be seen when Olya forces the Captain to back down from a fight with Jai. In this section, the Captain and Jai try to wrestle a sedation rifle away from each other.

As both men hold onto the rifle, "a film seemed to pass over the Captain's eyes" (ACD 62). The Captain immediately lets go of the rifle and backs away from Jai, saying that "there's no need to fight" (ACD 62). When Jai asks Olya if she caused the Captain to back down, she acknowledges that she mentally "gave him a little nudge" to change his mind (ACD 63). One of the keys in this passage occurs when the "Captain did not appear to notice" that Jai had taken the gun away from him (ACD 62). Immediately after Olya admits to using mind control on the Captain, she uses it on Jai. In his fear of her mind controlling powers, Jai points the sedation rifle at Olya, then begins to feel "his fear had turned into sadness" and he lowers the gun, unloading it (ACD 63). Not until he has left the hut does he realize "he had never learned how to unload a sedation rifle" (ACD 64). Even though he acknowledges that he did not know how to unload the gun, he still doesn't realize that Olya has forced him to do so by controlling his mind.

This ability to alter another individual's mind explains how the telepaths begin to change Jai's sexuality. Delany notes that Evne and the other telepaths "`cure' Jai of his homosexuality" during the first celebration which occurs during the dream sequence (Delany 117). However, because this supposed "cure" takes place during dream time, it seems more likely that

the actual transformation occurs sometime later. His first sexual encounter on the planet also occurs in a dream; but between this scene and the next sexual contest, in which he tries to rape Evne, Jai begins to slowly change into a telepath himself.

Jai's experience at the amphitheatre where he witnesses the strange performances by the telepaths provides the first indication that he is being exposed to mind control. He experiences "a change of pressure in his ears" and "blood" rushes to his head as the telepaths play with gravity and light (ACD 51). He feels uncomfortable with these changes and has a "vision of himself out in space, curled like a fetus and attached to the planet with a string, whirling like a toy" (ACD 52). This vision upsets him and he frantically runs away from the amphitheatre with his "hand clasped idiotically around his head to prevent his thoughts from leaking out" (ACD 52). Jai's feeling that the telepaths are playing with his mind is confirmed in his reaction to the experience.

The pivotal conversion passage occurs after the daisy tells Jai everything about the telepaths and Olya mentally forces him to unload the sedation rifle. Jai begins to explore the countryside, eating "whatever intruded itself on his notice (berries, bark, plant galls, grass)" (ACD 64). When he sits beside the lake,

watching the telepaths play, Jai becomes aware that something is happening to him.

> Jai--panic stricken, trembling, suddenly cold with sweat--threw one arm violently across his face as if to ward off a blow. The feeling passed. A vagrant drift of warm air wrapped itself around him and then slipped off, leaving behind it the vaguest of the vague impressions, which he could not quite form into words. . . . He had been loved, and he still lived. It was a miracle. (ACD 66)

This exposure to love seems miraculous to Jai. However, the next line gives us a clue that his experience conceals an effort to convert or control his mind. Once again, the authorial voice tells us that "he forgot about it" (ACD 66). The possibility that Jai, who has been so closed to love and sex, would forget about the miracle of being loved seems unlikely. Using her authorial voice, Russ emphasizes the mind control of the telepaths. Just as the Captain forgot he was fighting with Jai for the gun, Jai forgets the miracle of love that he has experienced. From this point through the rest of the novel, Jai's experiences are clearly heterosexual.

The shifting of Jai's sexual preference illustrates the mind control of the telepaths. On his arrival to the planet, he is at least sexually confused and definitely isolated from others. However, the more he learns about the telepaths and the longer he remains on the planet, the more Jai's sexual activities change. He becomes more telepathic, more sexually active, and

even begins to adopt the customs of the colony, such as being naked. These changes in Jai's sexuality serve to emphasize his loss of identity and gradual assimilation into the alien culture.

The importance of the setting in this sexual assimilation must also be remembered. In the countryside, Jai and Evne are surrounded by nature. The telepaths are able to communicate with nature, even with inanimate material. They accomplish this feat by going to the juncture where the "subjective and the objective meet" (ACD 69). Russ uses this phrase to describe what she refers to as a "fused setting":

> . . .a kind of unity between the camera-eye objectivity of direct description . . .and the off-handed telegraphy that tells you as much about the describer as about the described. Here the objective and subjective mix together, so that perception becomes action and action perception; . . .states of mind, intentions, possibilities, action, environment, all become one. ("Setting" 153)

Russ's use of setting to show the state of Jai's mind is particularly important in his sexual encounters. For example, when he tries to rape Evne in the library, he feels angry at being unable to control both worlds in his mind. Later, outside the library when Jai and Evne have sex, the natural description and an effective phrase set up the relationship between Jai and the setting, with the planet itself as antagonist. In that scene, as they lie on the grass before having sex, "a subversive intention,

born in the basalt layer miles below them, broke the surface of the earth, flooded through the grass, through her, into him" ACD 77). After Jai has been flooded by this "subversive intention," his sex drive increases.

The description of the sex act, quoted above, bears witness to Russ's use of a fused setting where the environment comes into contact with the protagonist, his desires, intentions, and actions. When Jai ponders on this ability to communicate with nature, he discovers the dangers of this power and theorizes that "if one lost one's soul into this, . . .it would fade out in a great fan, into vapor, right out of one's breast. One could spread oneself pretty thin in this country" (ACD 7Ø). This effect is echoed in Harvey's assertion that "decomposition may result from the novelist's attempts to render passional states of unusual depth and intensity, moments of union when one's identity is merged into another's" (127). Russ's usage of setting shows evidence of an attempt to portray the disposition of Jai's mind when influenced by the environment as he has sex with Evne.

In this manner, Russ clearly demonstrates that Jai's identity has disintegrated and merged with the physical environment as well as with the telepathic culture. The influence of telepathic mind control and of merging with the environment forces Jai Vedh into a state

of psychic decomposition. As he becomes one with the alien world, he loses the characteristics which define him as an individual--his homosexual impulses and his sexual isolation.

From this point in the novel, Jai is seen as one of the members of the telepathic culture. His change gets the attention of the men who come to rescue them; one of whom remarks, "Well, you certainly have gone native and that's a fact" (ACD 84). This appraisal signals the beginning of Russ's comparison between the two cultures. The move toward societal comparison and contrast occurs just eighty-seven pages into the book and also denotes the end of Jai's indepth characterization.

The scope of Russ's contrast of the two cultures allows little attention to character detail. Jai is basically seen as an extension of Evne and the rest of the telepaths. Russ uses Jai's new powers of telepathy as a means to explore the two cultures.

> The intensity of Jai's telepathic abilities provides a graphic and insightful examination of Jai's native culture (earth) as a collection of isolated individuals, whose separate self-destructiveness wreaks societal chaos (of the title), juxtaposed against the harmonious, self-determined individuals who compose the communal consciousness of the telepathic colony. (Holt "Joanna" 486)

Though Holt seems to imply that Earth's culture should be seen as negative in comparison to the telepathic colony, Russ avoids these value judgments.

Perhaps the salient point occurs when Jai, Evne, Ivat and the rest of the telepaths have returned to the unnamed planet. Evne's compassion as foretold by Evniki, Evne's admission to Jai that she is vicious, and her later confession as they travel back in Limbo, that "you're better than I. You'll have to get used to it" all encourage us to think that the telepaths have the capability to be as violent as the Earthlings they have left behind (ACD 18Ø). Joseph K.'s warning that all is not idyllic in the telepathic colony cannot be ignored, though Russ's authorial voice encourages us not to trust him. In the end, the readers are left to make their own decision about the two cultures. By leaving the ending open, Russ encourages the reader to think about it longer.

Besides her look at the opposing cultures, Russ emphasizes her theme when she decides to use sexuality as a means of defining her protagonist. This emphasis provides a look at the sexuality model which resembles Freud's libidinal economy theory and in the process, critiques it. Delany finds this portrayal of the telepathic society "thin" since Russ uses only "one social index" which "is conceptually thin (and the substantial model of sexuality is among the thinnest)" (121). Though her portrayal of the society may lack depth, Russ's use of sexuality to characterize her

protagonist examines the effects of cultural taboos on variant sexuality and individuality.

By subverting the Freudian model, Russ examines the way in which individual sexuality makes people different and criticizes such rigid classifications. Quoted in Ronald Fernandez's study, Social Psychology in Literature, Howard Becker addresses the manner through which social deviants become classified as such:

> [majority] . . .social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. (Fernandez 400)

According to this viewpoint, "deviant" behavior such as Jai's homosexuality is not abnormal because of the "`quality of the act'," but rather as a "`consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions'" (Fernandez 400). This criticism of the heterosexual model in And Chaos Died is subordinated to Jai's loss of individuality. But by characterizing Jai as a homosexual and showing his subsequent conversion, Russ also makes this issue essential in her work. At the end of the novel, Jai has lost these qualities which made him an individual and through his decomposition can be equated with Chaos in the epigraph.

The movement from character to theme as seen in the latter parts of the novel is typical of the science fiction genre. Yet, Russ's early efforts to characterize

Jai Vedh through his sexuality and interaction with the setting create a character who is atypical of others in the genre. Jai never sees his problems on the telepathic planet as more than "his survival as a coherent sensibility":

> . . .this does not mean he has no `psychology,' no desires, no feelings, no reactions, no fears; it does mean, however, that these desires, feelings, reactions, and fears become the material of the text--that is, they are presented at a much finer degree of resolution than we usually expect in a novel. (Delany 118)

Delany's words sum up Russ's tremendous efforts to show Jai Vedh as an individual character, rather than a stereotype or archetype who contributes only to theme. By combining character depiction with theme, Russ demonstrates how an individual's perception of self undergoes the process of decomposition when considered an outsider to the norms of society. In her next two novels, Russ explores the subsequent effects of this loss of identity--fragmentation and alienation.

## CHAPTER III

## FRAGMENTATION

Joanna Russ's The Female Man (1975) is a study of the fragmentation caused by rigid sex roles. By exploring the manner in which female perceptions are altered in a male-dominated society, Russ moves beyond the war between the sexes to examine how women can transform their dual identities and become whole human beings. This transformation, stated in the title, fuses "female" and "man," offering to women a new myth through which they can overcome gender-based oppression. In defining this myth, Russ explores the consciousnesses of four female protagonists, each genetically related to the other, but separated in time and space. By examining the lives of these protagonists, she looks at the effects of patriarchal oppression on three of the women and offers a contrast through the fourth. In The Female Man, Russ's characters, setting, plot structure, and language all work to show the fragmentation that women suffer because of this insidious oppression.

The epigraph which precedes the novel confirms the relationship between self-perception and fragmentation. In this epigraph, taken from R.D. Laing's The Politics of

Experience, Russ emphasizes how female self-perception is altered by men.

> If Jack succeeds in forgetting something, this is of little use if Jill continues to remind him of it. He must induce her not to do so. . . . Jack may act upon Jill in many ways. He may make her feel guilty for keeping on "bringing it up." He may invalidate her experience. . . . He can indicate merely that it is unimportant or trivial, whereas it is important and significant to her. Going further, he can shift the modality of her experience from memory to imagination: "It's all in your imagination." Further still, he can invalidate the content: "It never happened that way." Finally, he can invalidate not only the significance, modality, and content, but her very capacity to remember at all, and make her feel guilty for doing so in the bargain. (FM i)

This "transpersonal invalidation," when combined with the denial that such things are being done, alters the woman's perception of truth, self, and the world to fit the man's concept of reality (FM i). Corroborating this change of perception, Pamela Annas states that "this duality of perception comes, for a member of an oppressed class, through the experience of having one's reality defined not by oneself, but by someone else" (144). Russ addresses this duality of self-perception in the novel:

> . . .the knowledge you suffer when you're an outsider . . .the perception of all experience through two sets of eyes, two systems of value, two habits of expectation, two minds. (FM 138)

This duality leads to fragmentation. The Female Man explores the fragmentation of self-perception caused by this altered sense of reality by examining the effects of rigid gender roles and sexuality in women.

Russ's four protagonists symbolize the various fragments of one woman. Russ uses sexuality, self-perception, and the effects of each separate society to define these characters. These women form a continuum based on their level of self awareness; the least aware is Jeannine, who is followed by Joanna, then Jael and finally, Janet who is the most self-aware of the four women. In the course of the novel, these women come together to better understand their relationship to each other, while Jeannine and Joanna begin to realize their problems and move toward a new reality. In order to understand the correlation between these women, it is necessary to examine each protagonist in some detail, paying particular attention to the manner in which Russ uses sexuality and setting to define her.

Janet, the first protagonist introduced, represents the only character who is not oppressed by men. She is portrayed as independent, witty and intelligent as well as physically adept. After stalking and killing a wolf at thirteen, this profound young woman mastered several jobs and travelled extensively. At the opening of the novel, Janet is employed as a Safety and Peace officer. She is married, a mother and, defined in our terms, a lesbian. Though these elements may seem to be a contradiction for modern readers, Janet's world is quite different from ours.

Janet lives on Whileaway, an alternate world in the future, that is inhabited by women only. Love is important in Whileawayan culture and is accompanied by the same distractions, panic, and ecstasy found in all love relationships. In Janet's account of falling in love, she describes her feelings for her future mate:

> This is Vitti, whom I know, whom I like; and the warmth of that real affection inspired me with more love, the love with more passion, more despair, enough disappointment for a whole lifetime. (FM 78)

In the strength of her love and passion for Vittoria, Janet fears the dissolution of her own being. In Whileaway, this fear is a valid reason to put distance between the lovers until the initial passion has subsided. Eventually, Janet and Vittoria are married, but Whileawayan marriages are not ruined by monogamy. To prevent jealousy, each partner is free to have sex with anyone else she chooses.

In her analysis of Whileawayan culture, Annas finds that "Russ's basic assumption . . .is that a society of women would be freer, more individualistic, less rigid, than any society based on patriarchal assumptions" (148). This freedom coupled with their strong sense for self-determination allows Whileawayan marriages to remain intact.

Whileaway's society plays an important role in developing an individual's perceptions of self. Though

technology is advanced, Whileaway has a tribal, nomadic and agricultural society, which emphasizes the individual as well as family and children. Through their advanced technology, Whileaway has succeeded in "the merging of ova" through genetic surgery (FM 12). This procedure, which joins two mature female reproductive cells, perpetuates the all female race.

The typical Whileawayan will live in a family or tribe of "about thirty persons" in which a child and her mother spend much time together with the mother attending to the "finer spiritual needs" until the girl is about age five (FM 5Ø). At this point, they are separated and the child enters a regional school where she is educated in all facets of Whileawayan life. At puberty, these young women leave school, and in successive stages, travel or seek careers, are assimilated into the labor force (though no Whileawayan works more than three hours at a time on any one job), move into more dangerous jobs, have children of their own, and eventually in old age, are able to work in sedentary jobs.

In studying their own culture, the Whileawayans discover the advantages and disadvantages in their method of child-rearing.

> Whileawayan psychology locates the basis of Whileawayan character in the early indulgence, pleasure, and flowering which is drastically curtailed by the separation from mothers. This

> (it says) gives Whileawayan life its characteristic independence, its dissatisfaction, its suspicion, and its tendency toward a rather irritable solipsism. (FM 52)

Though sometimes overly self-absorbed, most Whileawayans develop a quick wit, superior intelligence, and a propensity for hard work. The child-rearing process also affects their marriages since the forced separation of the child and mother creates in the mature adult a "reluctance to form a tie that will engage every level of emotion, all the person, all the time" (FM 53). Though this reluctance does not prevent them from entering into relationships, it does contribute to the freedom which exists among married couples.

Whileaway is, in many ways, a realistic utopia with advantages and disadvantages. Yet, its greatest advantage is the ability to encourage individual freedom and expression for all its inhabitants. As a member of this culture, Janet is a typical Whileawayan.

Whileaway has only a few mores to govern its inhabitants. Though this culture is not entirely peaceful, these women advocate "distance" to settle squabbles which usually result from different temperaments (FM 48). Whileawayans don't fight out of hatred, but only when the job requires it or for sport. Other Whileawayan taboos include having "sexual relations with anyone considerably older or younger than oneself,

waste, ignorance, offending others without intending to" (FM 53). Although refusal to participate in community the by running away is a punishable crime in Whileaway, the reported cases are few.

The next character introduced is Jeannine Dadier. Jeannine is a part-time librarian living in a parallel Earth on which World War II never happened and the Depression continues. Her world contains no television, though it does have radio, and economic concerns as well as good jobs are essential for the people of Jeannine's world. The social customs and gender roles portrayed in this world are equivalent to those in 1930's America, although the actual time setting is 1969.

Jeannine mirrors her stifling world perfectly. Because of these social and economic pressures, Jeannine has a fragile hold on reality and identifies herself through material things. When her reality is disturbed, she instantly recites a list of those things she possesses, "I have my cat, I have my room, I have my hot plate and my window and the ailanthus tree" (FM 3). She is lethargic, not rising from bed unless forced.

> Stupid and inactive. Pathetic. Cognitive starvation. Jeannine loves to become entangled with the souls of the furniture . . .softly drawing herself in to fit inside them . . .[it is] such a relief to her. (FM 92-3)

In contrast to Janet, Jeannine has no sense of herself as an individual as indicated when she asks herself "who am

I, what am I, what do I want, where do I go, what world is this" (FM 122).

Though some of Jeannine's confusion comes from her world-hopping to Whileaway, most of her angst is caused by the rigid gender roles with which she is forced to live. Jeannine is depressed, but she cannot discover the reasons for her feelings because the society in which she lives invalidates the importance of her perceptions. She is also involved, rather unhappily, with a man, Cal.

Her relationship with Cal and her family serve to emphasize her problems. At twenty-nine, Jeannine's family constantly berates her because she has not married. This pressure to marry causes Jeannine to be more depressed and unhappy.

> Mother [Mrs. Dadier] and daughter [Jeannine] wear the same face . . .calm and deathly tired--Jeannine idly pulling the heads off weeds at the side of the path with a abstract viciousness completely unconnected with anything going on in her head. (FM 112)

Jeannine, who is unable to discover or accept a view of reality other than the one which she has been taught to believe, isn't even aware of her anger at the people who are trying to fit her into their mold. Jeannine suffers from a severe duality of perception. Though she is unhappy with the life she leads, she cannot imagine another alternative. She has no concept of herself as an independent human being, and does not realize her

duality. As the unidentified narrator claims, "Jeannine is not available to Jeannine" (FM 109). She feels that there is a barrier between her and life "which can only be removed by a man or marriage," but somehow she feels she is not "in touch with what everybody else knows to be real life" (FM 120).

However, Jeannine finds sex with men disgusting. When Cal enters the library, Jeannine tries to hide from him. When he discovers her hiding place and speaks, she feels "a horrid shock" (FM 3). Cal wants to have sex with Jeannine; she doesn't want to, but feels helpless and pictures "the pillow under her back . . .and Mr. Frosty [the cat] stalking around them, . . .walking widdershins around the lovers" (FM 4). Cal pesters Jeannine until she reluctantly consents, thinking she will "watch the ailanthus tree" (FM 4).

In a later encounter with another man, Jeannine becomes alarmed when he leans forward to kiss her. Sexually, she is disgusted and frightened. After a horrible date to a local play, Jeannine rises the next morning to call Cal and make plans to get married. This action is safe in several ways. It keeps her from having to see the other man again, her family is happy with her, and since Cal is in New York, she doesn't have to remember all the negative things about him until he

arrives. In effect, family and social pressures have cut Jeannine off from her own feelings even more than before.

The third fragment of this female consciousness is Joanna. Joanna comes from our world, New York, around 1969. Russ spends little time describing this setting. Other than showing the interaction between male and female characters, Russ expects the reader to come to the novel with this knowledge already in hand. Yet, in these interactions, such as a television interview and a Manhattan cocktail party, the reader can see the extent of society's influence on women. Joanna suffers from a duality of perception, too.

Joanna, the main narrator, is an educated, modern woman. She likes "bars, hotels, air-conditioning, good restaurants and jet transport" (FM 8). She tells four other women: "I have a Nobel Peace Prize, fourteen published novels, six lovers, a town house, a box at the Metropolitan Opera, I fly a plane, I fix my own car, and I can do eighteen push-ups before breakfast" (FM 117). However, before she met Janet, Joanna confesses that she was "moody, ill-at-ease, unhappy and hard to be with" because her life revolved around "The Man" (FM 29). Because of her role as narrator, Joanna is perhaps the most transparent character that Russ creates. Though she talks about herself a great deal, her actions do not characterize her as completely as those of the other

protagonists. However, her language, depth of self-reflection and tone hint at the problems that intelligent women suffer in a male-dominated culture.

Because of her intelligence, Joanna lives "between worlds," and thus, sometimes perceives herself through the masculine vision of reality (FM 11Ø). Her actions and beliefs are evident in her relationship with Jeannine and Janet. Her sexuality is also askew because of this duality of self-perception.

> . . .I warm up to men and flirt beautifully (I mean I really admire them, though I'd die before I took the initiative; that's men's business), I don't press my point in conversations, and I enjoy cooking. I sleep well, wake up on the dot, and don't dream. There's only one thing wrong with me: I'm frigid. (FM 11Ø)

Joanna's other self is filled with conflict, rage, and despair. She argues, frets, and tries singlehandedly to "buck" the patriarchal system that invades her reality (FM 11Ø). This alter ego is the complete opposite of her other half. This enraged and feisty self dreams at "her desk" and loves to "fuck" (FM 11Ø). These contrasting halves convincingly substantiate the duality of Joanna's self-perception.

Joanna is introduced into the book as "a female man" meaning her "body and soul were exactly alike" (FM 5). The title story, in which Joanna describes the process of becoming a female man, demonstrates the way

that women can unite the fragments of their self-perceptions.

To unite these two sides, Joanna symbolically advocates taking the two opposing self-perceptions and forcing them to become one within one's own personality. Following this transformation, she tells women that minor shocks to self-perception can be "shed . . .over your outside like a duck and it does nothing to you" (FM 139). However, when the shocks are major, you should make "yourself a conduit for holy terror and the ecstasy of Hell" (FM 139). In short, she asserts that the healthy release of anger will help to heal fragmentation.

Joanna claims that this process is the only way to heal and that women must utilize the power that anger gives them. She asserts that "there is one and only one way to possess that in which we are defective, therefore that which we need, therefore that which we want" and that is to "become it" (FM 139). Through this procedure, Joanna unites her dual selves--the frigid, deferring fragment and the sexual, raging fragment--and becomes a whole being.

Jael, who defines herself as a "man-woman," is the fourth persona introduced (FM 188). Jael has gray hair, metal teeth which can be covered to look like real teeth, crippled-looking fingers which house deadly blades, and hairpin-shaped scars where surgeons have altered her

body's chemical makeup so that she can summon incredible strength. Jael is a cold and calculated assassin. She trained for this role for many years. During her training, Jael began to "drift away from the community [of women] . . .[because] specialization (they say) brings you closer to the apes . . ." (FM 187). However, Jael's contact with the Manlanders, whose constant harassment has caused her to become even more calloused, has accentuated her training. She can no longer find compassion in her heart, but seeks revenge against men. She likes killing.

Jael's society exists in the future, somewhere between the modern day and the world of Whileaway. On her planet, the two genders are separated into different camps and engaged in an actual war. She explains to Janet, Jeannine, and Joanna how it happened.

> There was increasing separatism, increasing irritability, increasing radicalism; then came the Polarization; then came the Split. The middle drops out and . . .there was only one war left. The only war that makes any sense. (FM 164).

Though the war has "cooled off," Jael feels that it should be continued at full scale. She believes "questions that are based on something real ought to be settled by something real without all this damned lazy miserable drifting" (FM 164-5). She wants the

male/female war to be settled by eradicating the Manlanders completely.

Jael's sexuality can be seen in her relationship with Davy, her male android. She claims to be "an old-fashioned girl" and does not "have love-affairs with other women," although she doesn't condemn those who do (FM 192). Jael enjoys Davy's body and their sex acts together. The description of their lovemaking is the most erotic scene in the book. When Jael discovers that the three other J's are watching, she eventually tells them the truth, "Alas! Those who were shocked at my making love that way to a man are now shocked at my making love to a machine; you can't win" (FM 200). Jael and Janet are the most free of the four personas, both sexually and in their perceptions of themselves.

As in other science fiction, Russ's novel is heavily influenced by the effect of society on the individual. However, unlike other science fiction, Russ's vision more accurately reflects the real victims of society's influence--women. Commenting on the two-sexed societies in other science fiction works, where men and women work alongside each other, Russ notes that "the real problems of a society without gender-role differentiation are not faced" ("Image" 85). She substantiates her claim by asserting that these works do not describe "personal and erotic relationships," "child-

rearing-arrangements," or women facing the real problems of pregnancy ("Image" 85). In contrast, The Female Man deals with most of these problems.

Excluding Whileaway, which is clearly offered as an alternative, the worlds are populated by both sexes. In these societies, rigid gender role expectations affect the characters' self-perceptions causing different problems for each protagonist. Jeannine's passivity and inability to understand her own needs, Joanna's duality between submissiveness and rage, and Jael's cold-hearted contempt of the male gender show the whole spectrum of repercussions that patriarchal oppression has had on women. In a 1975 interview, Russ admits, "I can't imagine a two-sexed egalitarian society and I don't believe anyone else can either . . ." ("Reflections" 45). Russ's inability to envision a society where men and women are equal is evident in the protagonists and the worlds she has created in this novel.

Harvey's theory of psychic decomposition explains how the "artist's vision of the world" contributes to the creation of fragmented characters who are interrelated (124). As noted earlier, Harvey asserts that this vision "decomposes and splits into various attributes which then form the substance of disparate characters" (124). In her discussion of The Female Man, Russ states:

> I do not think it any artist's business to pretend to a false objectivity . . .Actually the book is somewhat more complex, inasmuch as the women it it . . .are really parts of one woman. ("Reflections" 42)

Russ also confirms that her feminist viewpoint "affects" what she writes, just as her personality, character, values, and life experiences affect her writing ("Reflections" 42). The author's acknowledgement of the effect of her vision on her protagonists and their worlds affirms Harvey's theory. Russ further certifies this viewpoint when she says "the worlds in The Female Man are not futures; they are here and now writ large" ("Reflections" 45).

By using her protagonists to symbolize the fragments of one woman, split into the four separate consciousnesses, Russ offers her vision of the world. In the novel, Jael attests to this relationship when she brings Janet, Jeannine, and Joanna to her world. She asks them to "look in each other's faces. What you see is essentially the same genotype, modified by age, by circumstances, by education, by diet, by learning, by God knows what" (FM 161). She goes on to describe the differences in each woman and asks them as a group if they remember the story of the "Doppelganger" (FM 162). In their current state, the women are unrecognizable as other selves, but do share that "mysterious kinship . . . that informs you at once that the other is really your

very own self" (FM 162). Russ's use of the term, doppelgänger, sustains this splitting of the self as well as the fact that these women are all connected consciously.

Marilyn Hacker addresses the connection of Russ's protagonists in her discussion of feminism and science fiction:

> . . .speculative fiction has provided the convention of two or more characters being distinct and yet nominally `the same'--one genotype in different time continuums. . . . This could be taken as a metaphor for the aspect of internal dialogue implicit in fiction. (74)

Applying Hacker's metaphor, Russ's protagonists can be seen as portions of the consciousness of one woman. Textual clues to this sharing of consciousness abound. Though any of the four personas may narrate, "only one viewpoint appears in each chapter, even if several of the protagonists are in the chapter" (Holt "Joanna" 487). Other clues can be seen in the actions of the protagonists as the weaker persona seems to disappear during another's moment of assertion.

Jael defines the strength of each consciousness calling Jeannine the young one, Joanna the weak one, and Janet the strong one. Jael is the strongest of all, while Joanna is the weakest. Neither Janet nor Jael disappears, hides behind bookcases or in the furniture during the novel. However, when Laura asks Janet to tell

her a story, Jeannine "flattens like a film of oil; she vanishes into a cupboard, putting her fingers in her ears" (FM 143). After Janet admits to Laura how she killed another woman, Joanna laments "I shall have to drag Jeannine out of the woodwork" (FM 145). Jeannine is clearly a secondary personality when Janet has the stage. Joanna provides an interesting perspective to this story-telling. Since Janet initially refuses to tell Laura the story, Joanna tells it. This sharing of minds is indicative of shared consciousness.

In another incident, Joanna shrinks from Janet when Laura kisses the emissary from Whileaway. Joanna "sprang away and hung by one claw from the window curtain" and later, flees the room when Janet and Laura get into bed together (FM 71). Because Joanna is the weakest, she "ducks behind bookshelves" when Jeannine must confront her mother (FM 111). Later she stands "like Atropos in the corner" when Jeannine decides to get married (FM 131). The ability of the stronger personalities to assume the stage even when the weaker personas are present indicates the switching of point of view to favor the strongest persona available at that time. The strength or weakness of these four personas is important in understanding Russ's vision of women and its implication in her theme.

Russ's vision is important; however, it is her presence in the novel as an authorial voice which lends credence to her characters. Feminist critic Rachel DuPlessis agrees with this assessment:

> Russ . . .relishes the decisive authorial presence and manipulations of the apologue form; she calls our attention to herself and, curiously, . . .the characters seem to be less like puppets of the author's will. (5)

Russ's authorial voice in "the internal monologue and the external narration are often inseparable" (Holt "Joanna" 487). This difficulty in separating character voices and authorial voice is most prevalent when Joanna speaks. However, it should be clearly stated that Joanna is not her namesake, the author. Perhaps because Joanna narrates so much of the novel or because unidentified passages precede or follow her narration, the point of view becomes confused.

The clearest example of authorial point of view occurs in the closing pages of the book. This joining of the author with the protagonists is indicated in a scene at Schrafft's, a restaurant for women, after they have all had Thanksgiving dinner.

> We got up and paid our quintuple bill; then we went out into the street. I said goodbye and went off with Laura, I, Janet; I also watched them go, I, Joanna; moreover I went off to show Jael the city, I Jeannine, I Jael, I myself. (FM 212)

The obvious reference to the "quintuple bill" indicates

that the author has joined with the four separate parts of her vision. A few paragraphs later, the authorial voice speaks directly to the created novel, her "daughter-book," and tells it to "recite yourself to all who will listen; stay hopeful and wise" (FM 213). This break in point of view clearly shows authorial presence as separate from, but concurrent with, the action of the plot and the four characters.

Though science fiction typically restricts the role of character by overemphasizing theme, Russ avoids this problem by combining the two elements. As in And Chaos Died, Russ's The Female Man blends characterization with the exploration of vital issues which serve to illuminate her theme. When her protagonists interact with the fictional societies in the novel, Russ is able to show the effects of socially-defined gender roles, masculine taboos against feminine anger, and distorted views of sexuality on her female characters, while explicating a powerful and relevant theme.

One of the most poignant examples of this combination of characterization and theme occurs when Joanna takes Janet to a Manhattan cocktail party. In this scene, Janet and Joanna are characterized by their responses to masculine attempts to negate their self-perceptions. As they enter the room, Joanna names and

gives background information on most of the women at the party.

> Sposissa, three times divorced; Eglantissa, who thinks only of clothes; Aphrodissa, who cannot keep her eyes open because of her false eyelashes; Clarissa, who will commit suicide; . . .Wailissa, engaged in a game of ain't it awful with Lamentissa. (FM 34)

The list goes on to include such names as "Saccharissa," "Amiscissa" and "Ludicrissa," but the one characteristic these cardboard characters have in common is deference to men. These one-dimensional characters serve to contrast the more "rounded" protagonists. Janet finds the party both amusing and boring; in contrast Joanna is a nervous wreck because she fears what Janet may do or say. Throughout the party, Janet's reactions are the antithesis of Joanna's. When Janet becomes angry with the party's host, who insists that women are inferior to men, Joanna clings "to her hair like a homuncula, battering her on top of the head" so that she won't speak out in anger (FM 44). In the end, Joanna's deepest fears come true when Janet fights with the host.

To emphasize the effects of socially-defined gender roles, Russ invents the little blue and pink books which the host and Joanna carry to help them ascertain their roles in conversation. These tangible artifacts of societal psychological conditioning are, paradoxically, both humorous and frightening. When Janet calls the host

a savage, he looks in his little blue book to find that it means "masculine, brute, virile, powerful, good" (FM 45). He feels good and Janet, who means something quite different, ends up knocking him to the floor. He immediately consults his book to find out what his next move should be.

> `Bitch!' (flip flip flip) `Prude!' (flip flip) `Ballbreaker!' (flip flip flip flip) `Goddamn cancerous castrator!' (flip) `Thinks hers is gold!' (flip flip). (FM 46)

When the real fight begins, Joanna hides "behind the closet door," but Janet, cool and calm, stands her ground, flips her oppressor and pins his arm in a precarious position (FM 47). The difference between Joanna's and Janet's reactions to the situation characterize each protagonist.

As they leave the party, Joanna picks up the host's blue book to compare it to her pink one. His book gives entries which tell him that the woman will back down and his manhood will be vindicated. She discovers that everything in her book "begins with an M" and an entry claiming that "man's bad temper is woman's fault" (FM 47). Though the scene is humorous (depending on one's point of view), the books are frightening when seen as tangible objects symbolizing the very real programming of feminine and masculine minds.

Another issue that Russ explores, which blends the examination of theme and character, is the taboo against feminine rage. The Female Man is stuffed full of rage. In response to this criticism about the novel, Russ insists that female expression of anger "is a taboo almost as powerful as the taboo against being indifferent to The Man" ("Reflections" 42). Hence some of her protagonists react in an angry manner. Janet becomes enraged at the party's host, Joanna's second self is enraged, the narrator who tells the story of the bear in Pogo is enraged, and even Laura Rose is enraged. However, Jael offers the best example of active rage in the novel. DuPlessis asserts that Russ uses Jael to symbolize "the mirror recognition of women's murderous rage at the glib, patronizing, and equally murderous patterns of the socially acceptable relations between men and women" (7). DuPlessis's assertion is confirmed in Joanna's story of healing her fragmented consciousness.

These claims can be also seen in the episode where Jael kills the Manlander. Though she listens patiently to the Boss's plans to get the two sexes back together, he refuses to do business with her, thus relegating her desires to a second-class importance. As he becomes more and more demeaning in his talk about women, she gets angry. Jael thinks to herself:

> This is the time for me to steal away, leaving behind half my life's blood and promises, promises, promises; but you know what? I just can't do it. It's happened too often. I have no reserves left. (FM 178)

The Boss tries to force himself on Jael. She kills him. This act of murderous rage leaves her feeling "clean and satisfied" because she has stood up for herself (FM 182). Jael's response to the killing validates DuPlessis's assertions about anger as a way to heal fragmented and oppressed persons.

By contrast, Jeannine is unable to get angry. Though badgered and belittled by Cal and her family, Jeannine will not confront them. She gives in to Cal when he wants to have sex, even though she does not want to. According to Jael, Jeannine is "potentially the most intelligent" of the four, yet she seems unable to think enough to realize her options (FM 162). Jeannine herself mentions that she loves "reading and thinking," but these pleasures are denigrated when Cal calls them "daydreaming" (FM 15Ø). Thus, she feels that "[everything in her world] . . .makes her cry, seems to say to her, `You can't'" (FM 1Ø5). She is caught between wanting to die, wanting to live, and wanting to love, but she cannot figure out how to have love and a happy life in her world. The options open to her are limited and she wants "something else" (FM 123). Even after she finally decides to get married, Jeannine feels that

something is wrong. She tells Janet and Joanna, "I have everything and yet I'm not happy" (FM 15Ø). This emotional angst is the foundation for Jeannine's character. Unable to cope with the world's rigid gender roles, she finds her self-perception fragmented and confused.

Distorted views of sexuality caused by socially-defined gender roles form a major commentary in this novel. The type and abundance of sexuality in all of Russ's novels are indicative of the importance she assigns to the issue of sexuality. In speaking of female protagonists, Russ states that "for the heroine the conflict between success and sexuality is itself the issue, and duality is absolute" ("Heroine" 8). Consequently, any female protagonist who does not fit into the gender specified role becomes "hard and unfeminine" and thus "a bitch" ("Heroine" 8). The host's response to Janet's physical defense of herself exemplifies this attitude. However, the problems surrounding rigid sex and gender roles is one with which Russ grapples constantly in The Female Man. In exploring Russ's use of sexuality in this novel, Judith Spector observes that "sexuality functions . . .to show both the way things are and the way they might be and to critique relentlessly existing sexual inequities" (2Ø3). A closer look at each protagonist and her sexuality will

illuminate how Russ uses this key issue to help in defining her characters as well as their worlds.

Jeannine's offstage sexual encounters with Cal offer a heterosexual point of view. Though Jeannine doesn't enjoy sex with Cal, she does have sex with him. This lack of pleasure in sex typifies her unhappiness due to the rigid gender roles present in her society. Because Cal is not romantic and treats Jeannine as a less than whole human being, part of her dislike comes from feeling like a sexual object. In contrast, Jael deeply enjoys sex with Davy. Though he looks and functions like a man, Davy is technically a machine. Because Davy is a machine and is thus more sensitive to Jael's needs, she is able to experience sexual satisfaction and pleasure. Her feelings for Davy are warm and her thoughts of him are erotic. However, as a machine, Davy has no emotional or sexual needs as would a real human. Spector confirms this interpretation, concluding that "sexual objectification is much more appropriate with a robot" then suggesting that "if one desires sex with an object, one should acquire an object" (200). The comparison of Jeannine as sexual object with Jael's sexual object demonstrates the devastation which can occur to a real human when placed in a sexual object's role.

Joanna, while deferring to men and playing the social games required of her, seems asexual. As quoted

earlier, she states that she is frigid. Joanna does not describe a sexual experience until after she has become a female man. Because of this transformation, Joanna is able to have sex with Laura Rose late in the novel. Though Joanna feels awkward at first, expecting Laura to reject her timid advances, she persists. When Laura responds to her touches and kisses with excitement, she and Joanna decide to have sex. Joanna remains questioning and unsure throughout the experience, though she seems to move closer to acceptance near the end of the passage.

Janet, however, does not have these problems with lesbian sexuality. Since her world contains only women, she feels having sex with women is perfectly natural. And though she is curious about men, she is not attracted to them sexually. In fact, the need for men (in order to have erotic sex) seems ridiculous to her. When the male emcee suggests that Whileawayans don't have "sexual love," she rebukes him saying "how foolish of you. Of course we do" (FM 11). But as she begins to explain how Whileawayans enjoy sex, the television cameras cut away to a commercial. This response by the media is typical of the reaction to lesbianism in a male-dominated society. Their reaction baffles Janet.

Janet's relationship with Laura Rose does cause her some minor problems, but only because of the

Whileawayan taboo against having sex with someone who is considerably younger. However, she does not allow these taboos to prevent her from helping the young woman discover her own sexuality. Left alone in the heterosexual world of Joanna or Jeannine, Laura Rose would have spent her life fragmented between socially acceptable sexual roles and her true desires. In chapter four, section eleven, Laura Rose describes her battle with societal views of sexuality and her own desires.

> I've never slept with a girl. . . . That's abnormal and I'm not, although you can't be normal unless you love men. To do what I wanted would be normal, unless what I wanted was abnormal, in which case it would be abnormal to please myself and normal to do what I didn't want to do, which isn't normal. (FM 68)

In this passage, Russ (through Laura) specifically addresses the taboos of lesbianism in a patriarchal culture. After this statement, one is left with the idea that in a society with less rigid sexual and gender roles, women would be free to experience their sexuality according to their own preference. By dealing with important issues to women, Russ elaborates on her themes; however, she does not negate her characters in the process.

Russ's science fiction escapes the problems of the theme-dominated genre by blending characterization and theme to develop her protagonists. Russ's theories on

characterizing female protagonists are well explained in her article "What a Heroine Can't Do or Why Women Can't Write." She observes that female characters are defined by roles and masculine viewpoint. Literature contains images of women as stereotypes, such as "bad women, good women, motherly women, bitchy women, faithful women, promiscuous women, beautiful women," but not "plain women" ("Heroine" 5). The shortage of viable roles does not express the complexity of womankind as human beings and causes major difficulties for women writers who wish to create real women for their stories. In his article, "Science Fiction Women: Victims, Rebels, Heroes," Richard Law asserts:

> Anthropology, psychology, and cultural history notwithstanding, the myth of `the Great Mother' is not complementary, not even palatable, to Joanna Russ' victims and rebels. (15)

Though veiling his comments with a reference to male-created authorities, Law misses the point of Russ's criticism of archetypes and stereotypes. Russ finds that female stereotypes cannot really exist because "the Other does not have the kind of inner life of consciousness that you and I have" ("Heroine" 6). Without this portrayal of inner consciousness, female characters are reduced to less than whole beings. When female characters succumb to masculine viewpoints concerning

sexuality and gender, they become "flat" and, hence, uninteresting as protagonists.

Stylistically, Russ's lack of plot and the jumbling of narrative voices allow the reader to experience the fragmentation of her protagonists. The chapters are divided into many sections. The setting of these sections may jump from one planet to another, or one time to another. Short anecdotes or personal glimpses into one or another protagonist's mind add to the fragmented style. In the first chapter, which is eighteen pages long, there are sixteen separate sections. One section may deal with Whileaway, while another addresses Jeannine's depressed world, or a third examines Joanna's modern world. Holt calls this structure a "cinematic montage" which "melds the four characters, while the four worlds remain separate" ("Joanna" 486). However, this structure, as well as the lack of a chronological plot, emphasizes the confusion and separateness of the individual protagonists as well as their societies. As the story proceeds and the characters interact, this fragmentation begins to disappear. But the same is true of the book's structure. As the story proceeds, chapters get longer and the sectional divisions are less frequent. So in this respect, the book's structure also shows the fragmentation of the characters, as well as their fusion.

This type of structure illustrates what Russ calls the "lyric mode" ("Heroine" 12). Russ defines "lyricism" as "a particular principle of structure" which "consists of the organization of discrete elements (images, events, scenes, passages, words, what-have-you) around an unspoken thematic or emotional center ("Heroine" 12). This structure "exists without chronology or causation" by using the principle of association ("Heroine" 12). Lyric structure combats the limiting effects of fragmentation by allowing women to get in touch with all the pieces of their self-perception. Through this montage-like structure, women writers can characterize their protagonists more fully as well as explore a strictly feminine consciousness. For this reason, Russ uses lyric structure to characterize her protagonists.

As noted throughout this study, Russ uses each protagonist's world to help in defining her character. The influences of the various societies play a key role in the way her characters perceive themselves and others. In this way, each setting is only important in the way it acts upon the protagonist. For Jeannine, the setting devastates her self-perception, confusing and depressing her. Only after Jeannine has met Jael and begins to trust her own perceptions can she say " . . .goodbye to Normality, goodbye to Getting Married, . . .goodbye to waiting for Him . . ." (FM 209). Joanna's world causes

her to experience a duality of perception, her's and the Man's. Her transformation into a female man prompts her growth and fusion. Jael, though more free than the previous two, is still influenced by the harrassment of the Manlanders with whom she must do business. Only Janet is free from the pressures and social rigidity of a two-sexed society.

Of the four settings used in the novel, Janet's world is the best described. The depth of description about Whileaway gives us a clue to Russ's emphasis on the single-sexed culture. In a written appreciation of the novel, Douglas Barbour comments on Russ's creation of Whileaway:

> Whileaway is definitely the most complete example of culture-creation in The Female Man, and it's obvious Russ is creating a culture which is admirable in comparison to our own. (72)

This evaluation contrasts the typical view of matriarchy found in some science fiction works. These stories often depict a matriarchy as "static and hierarchal" ("Image" 87). However, Whileaway avoids this folly because Russ's vision is more realistic. The point of contrast comes between a male writer's view and a female writer's view. All-female societies, from Russ's view, can be as dynamic and productive as two-sexed societies, perhaps even more. Russ's inability to envision a two-sexed egalitarian

society also supports the acceptance of Whileaway as the preferred culture.

Though Jael's world offers a gender-separate culture, it is not described except through the negative experiences which occur with the Manlanders. To affirm Whileaway as the most favroable setting, Russ asserts that "Janet's world is the potential one, not Jael's" ("Reflections" 45). The emphasis on freedom of individual perception portrayed on Whileaway contrasts the insidious negation of female perceptions experienced by the other protagonists in the novel.

By exploring the issues through which a patriarchal culture negates the self-perception of women and causes fragmentation, Russ delivers a powerful look into the psyche of one woman. The four fragments of this woman's mind, as portrayed by the protagonists, eventually come together at the end of the novel. Jeannine and Joanna decide to help Jael in her efforts to strengthen the Womanlanders' fight against their male counterparts. Only Janet, whose world is peaceful and completely without male influence, refuses to help. Though the others stare disapprovingly at Janet, the narrator closes by saying:

> Goodbye to Janet, whom we don't believe in and whom we deride, but who is in secret our savior from utter despair, who appears Heaven-high in our dreams with a mountain under each arm and the ocean in her pocket. (FM 212-213)

This tribute signals the importance of the "Janet-persona" to all women. Indeed, Janet and Whileaway offer the potential world which Jael and the Womanlanders are fighting to bring about. By unifying Jeannine, Joanna, Jael, and Janet with the authorial voice at the end of the novel, Russ confirms that the fusion of these disparate personas has taken place. It is extremely fitting, and somewhat ironic, that this coming together occurs on Thanksgiving Day, for it symbolizes the hope that one day womankind can revel in her own power of perception while bringing to mind the current manner for celebrating this holiday with women in the kitchen, cooking and cleaning while the men watch television. Russ ends the novel with this bittersweet memory of a new self-awareness and proceeds to the next book, which emphasizes the alienation felt by the woman who is aware of her own needs and desires.

# CHAPTER IV

# ALIENATION

In We Who Are About To (1977), Russ continues to explore how women perceive themselves. She focuses on intelligent, independent women and the alienation they experience when they refuse to abide by the rigid roles forced on them by existing power structures. Through the complex weaving of theme and character, Russ examines the alienation of intelligent women. For these women, alienation can be described as the feeling of being an outsider among their own people. Because support systems for these women are lacking, each may feel isolated from other women as well as from men. Russ's use of sexuality and setting continue to play vital roles in defining her protagonist and in illustrating the alienation she struggles to overcome.

Alienation, as a major theme in modern literature, has been explored by many writers including Sartre, Hemingway, Kafka, and Hesse. However, the overuse of this theme has caused its meaning to become indistinct. In an effort to specifically define the alienated human being, critic Carl Yoke paraphrases Edward Abood's list of characteristics which describe the alienated male.

This list claims that the alienated male is "at odds with the prevailing norms of society," "in active revolt" against this society, or "turned in upon himself with such ferocity that he is reduced to despair and longing for death," "isolated and estranged," "emotionally . . . lonely, frustrated, anxious, and tense," and has a "typically negative" attitude (Yoke 1Ø6). Abood's characteristics depict an alienated man as abnormal from the typical, or normal man. However, caution must be exercised in applying these male standards to alienated women.

A woman's alienation differs from her masculine counterpart's in that she cannot find self definition in the male-defined norms of a patriarchal society. Often theories based on men, including one by F.H. Heinemann, establish their definitions of alienation with the belief that a "`preceding unity and harmony has been transformed into disunity and disharmony'" (Yoke 1Ø6). However, the duality in women's self-perceptions, created by patriarchal oppression, prevents this previous harmony from being a part of female experience. Psychiatrist R.D. Laing finds that all human beings are estranged from their own experiences (11). However, some forms of alienation, or estrangement, are accepted as normal because they are defined by a majority of people. Laing asserts that "other forms of alienation that are out of

step with the prevailing state of alienation . . .are labeled by the `normal' majority as bad or mad" (12). These "bad or mad" forms of alienation often apply to women, who are unable to fully perceive themselves as a part of the "normal" experience of men. For this reason, other definitions must be found.

Feminist critics and theorists have begun to study alienation as it manifests itself in women and, in particular, in women's literature. In the book, Madness and Sexual Politics, Barbara Hill Rigney analyzes novels by Bronte, Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood. She finds that "many women writers [including the mentioned writers] have been and still are preoccupied with similar themes of victimization, alienation, and psychological fragmentation" (126). The preoccupation of female writers with these themes arises from women's struggles to survive in a world which defines their experiences through male norms. In her study of the female bildungsroman, Annis Pratt finds that both male and female heroes may be alienated from their social identities. However, in the woman's novel of development "the hero . . .is radically alienated by gender-role norms from the very outset" (Pratt 36). Male-defined gender role norms devastate female perceptions of self and thus, the woman's ability to achieve personal fulfillment. This result can be seen in the female

characters of women writers in all literary genres. Yet, Pratt excludes the genre of science fiction in her comments because she feels that "the narrative pattern of these novels conforms to the usual definition of the (implicitly male) bildungsroman . . .based on the idea of personal fulfillment . . ." (36). Although Russ's protagonist in We Who Are About To is alienated from the societies in which she has lived, she does eventually choose to strive for personal actualization and fulfillment.

The opening pages of the novel describe the protagonist's feeling of alienation succinctly and clearly. To begin the novel, Russ completes the ellipses in the title with the word "die" (WWAAT 7). This feeling of imminent death emphasizes the protagonist's isolation. In the statements which follow the opening sentence, Russ writes "we are all going to die;" "we're nowhere;" "we'll die alone;" and "we do not know where we are" (WWAAT 7-9). These concise, emphatic statements convey the alienation of her protagonist.

A major clue to Russ's use of alienation is that the protagonist of We Who Are About To is unnamed. Though this woman is the principal speaker and all visions of the alien planet are filtered through her viewpoint, she is never referred to by name. The other characters never call her by name. This absence of name,

or identity, affirms her as an outsider, isolated from the other survivors. In the latter section of the book, when she imagines visits by friends from Earth, these visions never call her by name. This lack of an identifying nomenclature emphasizes her alienation from herself since the hallucinations come from within her own mind.

Russ's setting also acts on her protagonist to increase her alienation. The mere fact that the planet is alien to the protagonist stresses her isolation. Also the danger of poisoning from the plant life or water are realistic concerns. The landing party is underequipped and unprepared to live on this planet. They have no way to forecast the seasons or tell time. Any number of hostile microorganisms could enter their bodies and cause severe pain and suffering. Even when Ude entreats the colonists to think of Earth, the protagonist is reminded of the horrors which Earth's pioneers suffered--"smallpox and plague and earthquakes and ringworm and pit vipers" (WWAAT 2Ø). The patriarchy, which emerges in this lawless culture, accentuates her isolation because it deprives her of freedom of choice. She wants to make her own choices, but realizes the other colonists feel differently.

> I think everyone loves it here because their choices are made for them; we were never very comfortable with our fate in our own hands,

> were we? Better to act on the modern religion: an incantation of the immortal germ-plasm. (WWAAT 59-6Ø)

The protagonist cannot make the others understand the dangers involved in their attempts to colonize. She also cannot make the other women understand that they are sacrificing their freedom to the three male survivors. She alone understands the grim reality of their isolation, and this intelligence separates her from the others. Her knowledge marks her as an outsider.

Earth's society, however, has not been hospitable to the protagonist either. Earlier in her life, the protagonist had been involved in two underground movements on which she reflects late in the novel. The first, a religious group called the Neo-Christians, was a relatively harmless gathering of intellectuals. The protagonist chose to leave this group when the media publicized it and "all of a sudden, there were Neo-Christians everywhere" (WWAAT 1Ø8). However, in her second affiliation, the protagonist joined a Communist group. At a large meeting, the protagonist became aware of imminent danger. She left the meeting immediately, and though some people tried to stop her, she did not return. She never rejoined the group. Later, a friend informed her that the room in which the meeting had been held was completely refurbished for unknown reasons. Though Russ does not specify what happened to the group

inside the room, she implies that they were permanently silenced by Earth's non-civilian government. Alone, the protagonist must deal with her guilt for running away and her failure to do so creates her alienation from herself.

Russ uses the non-civilian government versus civilian classes of Earth as a metaphor for the male/female dichotomy set up on the new planet. In this fictional Earth society, the government represents the controlling power, creating and enforcing the rules to which the civilians must conform. This same controlling power is conferred upon the patriarchy on the new world. In the novel, the non-civilian government is threatening to the civilian protagonist because her values and beliefs are not synchronized with the dominating structure. Her flight from the meeting, when the government routs the Communist group, bears witness to the life-threatening danger inherent in opposing the dominant system. She ran and escaped the danger. However, she views her reaction as a failure according to her set of values. This past experience influences her actions on the new world. A closer look at this unnamed woman will help define her role as protagonist and viewpoint character in the book.

Russ creates an alienated protagonist who realizes, due to being stranded on the alien planet, that she must act on her own experiences and values. She is a

forty-two-year-old "musicologist" (WWAAT 16). And as she interacts with the other characters, we discover that she is intelligent, independent, and well-travelled. Her employers pay her to lecture on and play tapes of "very old" music--"European twelfth century to Baroque" (WWAAT 13). This job requires a great deal of travel. However, she feels like "a scrounge" (WWAAT 12). She calls herself a "scrounger" because she feels her work is "nothing real" (WWAAT 13). This reference to her job offers a clue to her perception of herself as an outsider since she works in a job which isn't important or "real" to the non-civilian government. It is also unimportant in the alien world.

This feeling of being outside of society is emphasized when the survivors encounter their first night on the alien planet. The protagonist defines the night as "black velvet . . .this awful sense of being outside" and wishes to be back inside the escape capsule (WWAAT 19). This sense of being outside also occurs later in the book, after the other characters are dead. In this scene, the protagonist states, "God knows I'm private now. And on the periphery now. As far from anything as one can get. Outside the outside of the outside" (WWAAT 119). A few pages later, she examines her past and laments, "it's a bore, a dreadful bore, being outside history" (WWAAT 123). These references to being an

outsider affirm the protagonist's perception of her isolation from society. Her inability to bring about change on Earth or within the new colony emphasizes her lack of power and increases her sense of alienation. Initially, this lack of power altered her self-perceptions. Later, in the smaller colony, she is able to produce different results and strengthens her identity.

The protagonist finds herself trapped in a new society which is hostile to her desire for freedom. The seven characters who represent this culture include the wealthy Valeria Graham and her purchased husband, Victor, as well as their adopted daughter Lori; Nathalie, an angry young woman on the way to be trained by the non-civilian government; Cassie, a waitress-type woman; John Ude, a pseudo-intellectual bureaucrat; and Alan, a young, foolish brute. Among this "dull bunch" of people, the protagonist is clearly the most intelligent (WWAAT 12). Of all the colonists, the protagonist appears to be the only one who realizes the tremendous odds against their survival. So, she assumes the role of doom's prophet, continually spouting her realistic, but depressing warnings to the other characters. Her "rabble-rousing" makes the other colonists uncomfortable and eventually Cassie pushes her face down into the dirt in an effort to make her "shut up" (WWAAT 25). The others do not wish to

hear about the impossibility of their survival. Though the protagonist stops "rabble-rousing," her point has been made, and the other colonists stay away from her for the most part.

The protagonist begins to realize the disadvantages and advantages to being an outsider among the small group of colonists. Following a discussion about her religion, Ude tells the protagonist that she, Nathalie, Cassie, and Lori are to be "childbearers" (WWAAT 31). She becomes adamant at his abuse of authority and retorts, "My religion . . .says a lot about power. Bad things" (WWAAT 31). Such a response demonstrates her distress and disgust with being forced into any role. Her hostility toward the emerging patriarchy's attempt to enslave the women as childbearers reinforces her position as an outsider to the others. After Ude leaves, Valeria asks the protagonist when she last slept with someone. When the protagonist says it has been years and implies that other things are more important, Valeria becomes hostile and demands to know what could be more important than "sex" and "money" (WWAAT 32). The protagonist realizes that her honesty has placed her at "the bottom of the pecking order" within the new society (WWAAT 32). Yet, it is not a position that she dislikes.

The protagonist believes that being "at the bottom" will enable her to "hide effectively" (WWAAT 33). So, to assure that the other colonists place her at the bottom, she tells Valeria that she was a Communist and asks the older woman to call her a "nobody" (WWAAT 33). When Valeria asks if she is still a Communist, the protagonist ambiguously sidesteps the question claiming that "none of us are anything anymore" because of their current status (WWAAT 33). Through these carefully orchestrated conversations, Russ describes the protagonist's past perceptions of herself as a "nobody," a "scrounger," and a crazy religious intellectual. However, on the new world, she has assumed a new strength of character. Though these attributes may seem to characterize the woman as weak and crazy rather than strong and intelligent, the protagonist's thoughts reveal that her deceptiveness is necessary to achieve the goals she desires.

The importance of these verbal exchanges between the protagonist and the other characters is critical. As we later discover, the protagonist's experience with the Neo-Christian movement was brief and the only reason she kept the medallion was in memory of an evening with her friend, "L.B. and getting drunk" (WWAAT 11Ø). Likewise, her involvement with the Communist group was short. She brings up these events from her past to assure that the

other colonists will avoid her. She even considers telling them that she is a vegetarian so that they will "discount even more" of what she does, but cannot manage the lie with a straight face" (WWAAT 37). The protagonist wants to be left alone and out of their plans to colonize the planet. By making the others think she is mad, she hopes to be able to live and die in the way she chooses. However, she realizes that this possibility is unlikely.

Though she does not want to die, the circumstances in which the protagonist finds herself are unacceptable. Ude's announcement of her role as a childbearer signals that "the patriarchy is coming back" and that she wishes to play no part in it (WWAAT 34). Without her music, books, and friends, the protagonist does not wish to continue to live. Though she fears death, she realizes that she must have the option of choosing her own destiny. This choice is not one offered by the patriarchal culture which is evolving on the alien planet. Her body has become community property, needed for the survival of the race. As a woman, living in this emerging patriarchy, she curses her situation by saying, "Deliver me from the body of this. This body. This damned life" (WWAAT 35). Her symbolic cry for freedom falls unheard on the ears of the other colonists. Because she is not allowed to choose her own destiny,

Russ's protagonist symbolizes the struggle of all women to be recognized as human beings with needs and desires of their own, rather than as childbearers, whose role is to give birth and raise the offspring.

Though Russ does not describe actual sexual encounters, sexuality still plays a major role in the novel. Yet, the contrast between the supposedly egalitarian society of 21st century Earth and the fledgling colony's patriarchy is ambiguous. Because Russ cannot imagine an egalitarian two-sexed society, her illustration of Earth's culture is purposefully vague. This lack of description implies that equality between genders may exist in the form of equal rights, but that personal relationships are still dominated by men. The protagonist's sexual isolation demonstrates this inequality. Through her past relationship with L.B., the protagonist is basically characterized as heterosexual; however, her sexual inactivity since that time comments on the inequity of male-female sexual relationships. On the new planet, Valeria's and Ude's conversations about sex corroborate the powerful politics involved in sexual relationships. Though Valeria's money originally buys her power over her husband, nothing on the alien planet can buy her power. In fact, because Valeria is too old to have children, she becomes the "person-of-least-value" among the other colonists (WWAAT 21). The assessment of

worth based on the ability and/or desire to bear children is only one characteristic of the oppressive nature of this patriarchy.

In a meeting, the other colonists decide that the protagonist and Victor should be the first pair to mate. The protagonist feels "helpless," forced to abide by the plans of the others (WWAAT 57). She offers to leave them her share of the food and drink stream water, if they will allow her to leave and live her life as she desires. They ignore her offer. She offers excuses for her inability to participate immediately, claiming to be on pills. The others discount her arguments; and in the end, she is forced to agree to a date one month later. During the waiting period, Victor dies. Yet, the protagonist knows that the other men will not be as polite as Victor and decides to make her getaway immediately.

The forced sexual roles depicted in this scene describe the rigid gender roles experienced by women in a male-dominated society. These roles are purported to carry great significance by the men in this society. Childbearers are essential for the propagation of the species. However, as Russ demonstrates, these roles are also used to place women in a position which may be against their wishes. By forcing the women into a childbearer's role, this fledgling society is denying

them the freedom of choice; and thus, their perceptions of self are altered to fit the demands of the male-dominated society. Though Cassie invites motherhood, Nathalie does not want to be placed in this role. Yet, rather than protest, she goes along with the group and hides her anger at the system. The protagonist cannot allow this insidious oppression to change her self-image or alter her plans.

The night after Victor is buried, the protagonist drugs the sleeping colonists and escapes. She takes only enough food for nine days and some clothing. She uses the "broomstick," a one person hovercraft, to travel some two hundred and forty kilometers away from the others, which she feels is "six or seven days' walking for exceedingly determined people" (WWAAT 79). She knows they will come after her and so takes enough food to be physically strong when they arrive. She is desperate and will not return with them. She enjoys her temporary solitude, finding "joy in it" (WWAAT 97). The protagonist dictates her actions, thoughts and feelings into a "vocoder," or recording device. She sets up her "little apartment," singing and sleeping whenever she desires (WWAAT 105-106). This escape and her happiness show that the protagonist has finally succeeded in standing up for her own values. She has escaped the

domination of the oppressive colonists and is free to choose her own destiny.

However, as she predicted, the other colonists arrive to take her back by force. Ude threatens her saying, "We're going to tie you to a tree with your hands behind you so you can't get loose" (WWAAT 84). Armed with a rock and a small gas pellet gun, she kills Alan, Nathalie, and Ude. She furnishes Cassie with pills so that the other woman can take her own life. After disposing of the bodies, the protagonist then returns to the colony to kill Valeria and Lori. She kills Lori, who is allergic to everything, so that she won't die from starvation or poisoning. Though some people might see her act as cold-hearted, the protagonist performs the last murder as an act of compassion. These opposing qualities in the protagonist show the complexity of her character.

Russ's protagonist is confused about her self-perceptions. Because of the past failures, the protagonist has lost her perceptions of self: "She is . . .a failure in terms of her own life and beliefs" (Hacker 77). Because she cannot handle this failure, she runs away. The psychological mechanism she uses in deciding to live her life as a "scrounge" is denial. By ignoring her values to avoid unpleasant confrontations with Earth's non-civilian government, the protagonist

"sells out" and, in the process, loses her own identity. Sitting alone in the cave, she laments not bringing a mirror with her to "let my face go into it, my identity, and be faceless forever more" (WWAAT 129). However, she decides it was "clever, perhaps, not to" (WWAAT 129). At this point, her solitude and guilt cause her to doubt her ability to become whole again. Her desire for a mirror shows that she is considering the easy way out again. By losing her identity through the mirror, the protagonist would be running away as she had in the past, abandoning her own values.

The guilt for her past actions follows the protagonist to the uninhabited planet. The emerging patriarchal society adds to her dilemma, but here she is equal to the test. In her attempt to escape the restrictions of the other colonists and the alien world, she breaks away from the mold which had imprisioned her on Earth. The murders she commits result from her long restrained rage. Once this rage is expressed, she can begin to get in touch with the woman she really is.

Though the protagonist has no desire to be a childbearer for the patriarchal colony, her reasons for escaping and even for killing are more complicated than not wanting to be dominated by men or forced to have children. Her quest is a spiritual, though not Neo-Christian, attempt to become whole again. This spiritual

ritual, which advocates the expression of rage, parallels the method through which Joanna in The Female Man unifies her duality, and is offered as a myth for women. This effort can be seen in her attempts to get herself together as she slowly starves. Her hallucinations describe this spiritual journey. The first hallucinations arise from her guilt over killing the other colonists. In these scenes, she is tormented by visions of Cassie and the others. The visions, via her own conscience, condemn her actions. Later, imaginary visitors from her past also appear. Key portions of these hallucinations help to characterize the unnamed musicologist and show her alienation.

One of the first key scenes occurs when visions of the dead colonists appear in her cave. In a confrontation with the imaginary Ude, the protagonist symbolically faces her failure to brave the government's opposition when she was a Communist. She admits that she had been a "coward" and "didn't have the guts to stand" against the government (WWAAT 143). This confrontation with her past via the vision of Ude, the government man, shows her effort to atone for what she perceives as her past failures.

Nathalie, as a hallucination, condemns the protagonist's actions, not only on the alien planet, but throughout her whole life. Her knowledge of the

protagonist's inner thoughts and feelings suggests that she is the unnamed woman's doppelgänger.

> When you were born, there was no real place for you, no one was fond of you . . .not of that real self only you knew, so you took the whole world on your back and put yourself in the center of it and said It's mine and said I'm going to get everything and I'm going to change everything. And when it didn't work you ran away, and when that didn't work you started starving yourself to death . . .with lectures you didn't like and friends you didn't know. (WWAAT 146-47)

Nathalie finishes this tirade by telling the protagonist to "look in my face and you'll see your own rage and your own deprivation" (WWAAT 147). This confrontation with her other self shocks the protagonist, but is necessary in order to integrate the split portions of her personality. This fusion can only occur when the protagonist fully recognizes Nathalie as her mirror-self and confronts the failure, frustration, and schizophrenia from which she has been suffering. Without this sort of healing, her self-perceptions, caused by the dual roles in which she has envisioned herself, cannot be made whole and her spiritual quest will fail.

As the hallucinations of the dead colonists fade, the protagonist is left to deal with her guilt and past failures. She argues with her conscience, envisioned as L.B., and feels that she is not succeeding in her spiritual quest for wholeness. Once she begins to work through the guilt, she realizes that she'll "never be

properly guilty" (WWAAT 160). This realization signals the start of her journey toward unification. This healing starts when the protagonist hears music again. The music symbolizes the opening of her soul. She is, at last, free to acknowledge her own experiences and perceptions as real. In fact, she calls it "a terrific liberation" and rejoicing in these beautiful sounds, she weeps. This emotional catharsis heals her griefs. Next, she is visited by Kennedy, a friend's small child, who was killed in a car wreck at an early age. When the vision of Kennedy touches her knee, she feels it, "a thrill, a fear, a warning, that insistent, communicating, hot-damp, little hand" (WWAAT 167). This actual contact with the dead represents to her "A gateway. A sign. A messenger" (WWAAT 167). Russ's protagonist takes a long look at her self-perceptions and symbolically heals the split segments of her feminine consciousness. At this point, she finds the strength to finish her life through suicide.

Russ uses alienation to demonstrate a type of evolutionary process through which her protagonist achieves unification. Psychologist Erich Fromm also believes that alienation is "evolutionary" and that "transcendence is possible" (Yoke 107). Fromm asserts:

> Human nature drives toward unity with the "all," with nature; but unity on the highest level requires a temporary separation, and

> consequent loneliness. One goes out in order to return enriched. . . . To accomplish this transcendence, man must establish a sense of identity based upon his experience of self as subject and agent of his own powers. (Yoke 107)

Fromm's claim that man can return to society unified and whole is accurate. However, woman cannot achieve this same transcendence because she has little opportunity in a patriarchal world to envision herself as the "subject and agent" of her own powers. This inequity between male and female experience stems from the fact that women, even when they have integrated their self-perceptions, must struggle to maintain that identity in a male-dominated society. Though Russ's protagonist isolates herself from society in order to achieve unification, she cannot return to the patriarchy. Russ depicts this problem for her protagonist by placing her on the desolate alien planet which represents woman's continued isolation. Alone, even though integrated, woman cannot confront or survive this hostile situation. Because of her isolation from other integrated women, Russ's protagonist chooses to end her life in suicide.

Her suicide, a symbol of her independence and strength, might be seen as the spiritual quest to find new life through death as presented in Christianity. However, it is more likely that Russ avoids this masculine vision of rebirth in favor of the myth of

phoenix. In On Strike Against God, Russ urges her oppressed sisters to unite themselves by practicing the "Phoenix Reaction" to achieve this rebirth (25). The death of the protagonist in We Who Are About To creates a new woman who has the strength to pursue a higher purpose--unifying her soul. By confronting the fear and failures of her past as well as the impossible horrors of her present, the protagonist finds an inner peace through which she can be healed. Although she dies following this healing, it opens the way for the re-birth of a new woman, stronger and more self-actualized.

In many ways Harvey's theory of psychic decomposition describes the character creation in this novel. Though Harvey makes no allowances in his theory for character alienation, his concept of the artist's vision of the world applies to Russ's vision of her protagonist. In this vision, Russ writes about the alienation of women, a vision with which she is most familiar. Marilyn Hacker attributes the writing of the novel to an isolated period in Russ's life.

> It also began . . .in a bleak epoch in Russ's own life, . . .when the daily abuses and inequities blatant to a new feminist consciousness are not counter-balanced by the support and shared struggle of like-minded women; when you are the only one . . .in town, and maybe . . .you're just crazy. (77)

This assessment of Russ's vision seems to be accurate

when combined with her own comments in "Not For Years But For Decades."

In this essay, Russ writes of her own alienation from herself and society. Though it would be naive to equate the author with the fictional character, there are several parallels between Russ and the protagonist of We Who Are About To. These parallels can only be attributed to Russ's vision of the world. In the essay, Russ admits having difficulties in accepting her sexual identity. Trapped in the predominately male, heterosexual institutions of our society, she was unhappy and confused. In one particularly relevant section of the essay, Russ describes a nightmare: she is "alone in a city at night" and feels frightened (Magic 28). She interprets this portion of the dream to mean that she feels "totally alone in a solitary world" (Magic 28). In the nightmare, Russ finds herself sitting on the front steps of a schoolyard in a world that is "utterly desolate and deserted" wishing someone would take her away from there (Magic 28). She is approached by a car which contains the "shadowy figures of a man and woman," and she gets in (Magic 28). Though she feels that the car begins to move, she looks down to see that "through the floorboards, grew the grass" (Magic 28). When she looks up, she is once again, alone. Russ's dream and her

interpretation of it offer some insight into the alienation of women, and in particular, her protagonist.

The protagonist in We Who Are About To is also trapped in a culture which is alien to her. Not only is the uninhabited planet foreign to her, but she is also separated from her friends and her music. This deprivation compounds her sense of isolation. Through her hallucinations, she is further shown to be cut off from herself. Her lack of power to make changes in Earth's society is compounded by her fears and failures; but instead of getting angry and fighting, she submits to the authorities and isolates herself from her own perception of identity, her own values.

In the essay, Russ goes on to interpret her nightmare as "genuinely schizophrenic, with the changelessness of madness, the absolute desolation, and the complete lack of hope" (Magic 29). Russ's interpretation of this dream as schizophrenic illustrates the duality experienced by women who internalize the rigid gender role expectations of male-dominated society. Her interpretation of madness, desolation and lack of hope arise from a vague sense of her authentic self which is isolated from her experiences in reality. The isolation, feelings of madness, and schizophrenia written about in the essay can also be found in the protagonist of the novel.

The schizophrenia felt by Russ's protagonist when she faces Nathalie, her alter-ego, rings strikingly close to the author's interpretation of her dream. Likewise, as the protagonist begins to starve herself to death, an act many people would consider mad, she starts having hallucinations, another symptom of madness. Though she realizes her visits from the dead are imaginary, she feels that "starving doesn't drive you mad. But solitude does" (WWAAT 129). In her aloneness in the cave on the uninhabited planet, Russ's protagonist eventually summons memories of the dead into life-like visions. At first, she pretends to not believe in the visions; but as her solitude increases, she refers to them as actualities. In a similar fashion, the protagonist's lack of hope is evident throughout the novel. Even as she sits in the cave dictating into the vocoder, she claims "nobody will find this anyway" (WWAAT 113). Her purpose for dictating is to relieve her boredom and solitude. The schizophrenia, madness, desolation, and lack of hope in Russ's nightmare are also experienced by her unnamed protagonist.

Yet, despite her past problems, the spiritual journey of Russ's protagonist establishes a new myth for women. In doing so, Russ subverts the classic Robinson Crusoe myth with her story of feminine healing and power. "The Robinson Crusoe survival theme is one of the more

common heroic traditions" (Holt 488). In his article "Eve at the End of the World," Brooks Landon claims that Russ's novel presents this "well-known literary formula" then twists it by "presenting unexpected and/or inverted patterns in male-female relationships" (64). He also asserts that We Who Are About To is the "most thorough archetype for the anti-formula novel" (Landon 64). The patriarchal Crusoe-like myth implies that only men can survive in severe situations. In this survival myth, man is able to survive against enormous odds. Some science fiction novels use derivations of this theme in which whole planets are colonized. Of course, colonization requires women, but only for childbearing.

> These lucky people, who in reality probably couldn't survive in a state park, increase their number, conquer the planet, and establish and maintain an ideal 195Ø's patriarchy. (Holt 488)

However, typical science fiction novels which employ this theme also use the archetypal characters to people their stories. Russ, however, subverts this myth. Though her stereotypical colonists are determined to actualize this great pioneering spirit, increase their numbers and set up a patriarchy, Russ's realistic protagonist foils their plans. As a woman, her need for self-actualization, which leads to her rebellion, does not fit into the mythical scheme of the story. Hence, the colonists cannot leave this woman alone to find her own spiritual

unity. Their refusal to allow her the freedom to live and die according to her own rules causes their annihilation. Her triumph allows her the opportunity to achieve self-actualization. In this way, the male myth is destroyed in favor of building a new feminine myth.

Russ's definition of this female character is superb. In creating her protagonist, Russ avoids merely reversing sex roles as found in other science fiction works. "Ultimately her protagonist acts neither as compliant victim nor as superwoman, but as an individual unwilling to cede her independence to an abstraction" (Landon 66). In this woman, who represents many intelligent, but oppressed women, Russ realistically describes the self-defeating psychological games which many women play to survive in a male-dominated society, shows the alienation these games cause, then offers a symbolic solution for the problem. In short, she creates a new mythology for women.

In presenting her new mythology, Russ also explores how sexual inequities between men and women encourage alienation and contradict women's self-perceptions. The protagonist's lack of sexual activity is a testament to this problem. Her assertion that other things are more important than sex emphasizes her withdrawal from sexual relationships. Valeria responds to the protagonist's lack of sexual activity by calling

her a "frigid little woman" (WWAAT 33). However, frigidity is not the issue with Russ's protagonist. Rigney discusses sexual withdrawal as a means of reacting to "psychologically threatening situations" (121). In her study of Bronte's Jane Eyre, and Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway, she discovers that each protagonist withdraws sexually as a means of "self-preservation" or "privacy" rather than because of "frigidity" (Rigney 121). This withdrawal signifies the "dangers to identity which women experience in sexual relationships with men" (Rigney 121). Russ's protagonist philosophizes about having sex:

> Why is it [fucking] sometimes rememberable and sometimes not. And what do you remember? I think either a picture or an emotion, but not the physical thing itself. . . . Like a dried leaf. A dead rose. A taste that's gone. (WWAAT 138)

These pictures of sexual activities are images of death and confirm the protagonist's fear of losing her identity. She continues to philosophize about what people remember and finds that "ideas stick. Meanings stick" (WWAAT 141). Yet, she does not connect meaning with sexual activity. For her, sexual activity is merely "fucking." There is no meaning because only the emotion lasts, even though she wishes "it didn't" (WWAAT 141). These passages show the protagonist's disillusionment with sex. However, this lack of sexual activity does not fail to characterize her more fully. Sexual isolation parallels the alienation theme.

Russ's use of setting is also crucial in defining the protagonist's alienation. The alien planet, on which the survivors land, symbolizes death to the protagonist. Separated from her music and friends on Earth, she finds the planet hostile. Compatibility problems with the new environment and emerging, oppressive gender roles emphasize the protagonist's despair and play important roles in affirming her alienation. By creating this antagonistic setting. Russ underscores the role of an oppressive society in denigrating the self-perceptions of women.

Though in the past the protagonist has run away from her perceptions and values, her decision to escape from the colony is not negative. Instead, her choice is positive because she leaves to seek her own destiny, rather than submit to the restrictions placed upon her against her will. She is acting on her own values and beliefs, rather than against them. To stay and defer to the oppression of the male-dominated culture would be denying her self-perceptions. This form of denial could only further alienate her from her perception of self. To escape the threats from the other colonists, she reacts much differently than she has in her past. She explains the dangers she faced to a vision of L.B.:

> I was going to be tied to a tree and raped for goodness sake. It was a mass-delusional system . . .and anybody who doesn't agree has to be

> shut up somehow because it's too terrifying. So I ran away, but they wouldn't let it be; they came back to drag me back into that insanity and I killed them; I had to. (WWAAT 151)

After running away from the danger at the Communist meeting, the protagonist is not pursued. She must live with her failure to stand up to the oppressive authorities. This failure to stand up to the dominant system isolates her from herself. Though her actions seem basically the same on the new world, her running away is a more positive step. The positive nature of her decision is reinforced by the pursuit of the other colonists and their subsequent deaths. The protagonist has changed. This change makes her a dynamic character.

Russ further demonstrates the change in her protagonist through another key character, Nathalie, who serves as her doppelgänger. At one point, the protagonist and Nathalie have the same thought about seeing Alan "with a broken neck" and the protagonist remarks "two minds with but a single thought" (WWAAT 74). However, most of Nathalie's traits contrast the protagonist's, so that she becomes a "mirror-sister" of the protagonist (WWAAT 132). These traits can be seen in Nathalie's desire for power. Her need to be part of "the other, real world" contrasts the protagonist's denial of self and submission to authority (WWAAT 133). During the fight scene at the cave, Nathalie assaults her from

behind. Unable to see her attacker, the protagonist thinks it odd that she knows the attacker is Nathalie because of her smell. After the protagonist has killed Nathalie and the others, she must confront the vision of an angry, almost insane Nathalie in her hallucination. This symbolic confrontation is essential to her spiritual survival because Nathalie represents her other half. She must unite with this half to be whole again.

Early in the novel, the protagonist sees Nathalie as "death's head" on two occasions (WWAAT 16, 75) and the "spirit of death" on another (WWAAT 72). The symbolism of this deathly image foreshadows Nathalie's role in the book. When Russ's alienated protagonist realizes that Nathalie is her alter-ego, she is shocked. This realization is essential for her to find the "self" she has lost "among the socially prescribed false selves which she has assumed," while running away from past experiences (Rigney 122). In this way, Nathalie works as a positive mirror image.

> Upon recognition of the doppelganger, each protagonist begins a descent into actual madness. . . . Having descended, symbolically, into the flames where she consciously recognizes herself as `insane' or potentially insane, each protagonist, phoenixlike, is able to surface as sane, equipped with an integrated self, an identity. (Rigney 122)

Rigney also asserts that "in order for the self-integration to occur, the doppelganger, . . .must in

some way be annihilated . . ." (123). Russ's female protagonist recognizes her double in Nathalie. In the protagonist's process of self-integration, Nathalie plays a key role by exemplifying the raging, angry self. When the protagonist recognizes Nathalie as her other self, she is able to force the vision of Nathalie out of her mind and move toward reintegration.

The death of Nathalie makes possible the fusion essential for unification. Once unified as a whole woman again, Russ's protagonist commits suicide. But this act is not negative. Rather, it is a positive step towards the re-birth of a new woman and confirms her independence from either of the two worlds and her old self. Through this independence, Russ describes the spiritual journey that each woman must take to destroy the influence of patriarchal oppression, which forces women into dual worlds or perceptions. At the same time, Russ characterizes the inner mind of one, unnamed woman who embarks on and succeeds in this journey.

Though Russ uses more symbolism in this novel than in The Female Man, the singular protagonist she creates is much more complex than any one of the four protagonists she creates in the previous novel. Through this woman, Russ shows the intense psychological and sociological pressures placed on independent, intelligent women. She also comments on the frustration caused by

powerlessness, which leads to alienation not only from the dominant system, but also from other women. However, she offers a solution for healing these isolated individuals. Through her complex characterization of the protagonist, Russ creates a new myth for women. Her use of characterization to emphasize theme enhances both elements of her novel and reveals her message clearly.

## CHAPTER V

## RUSS'S OTHER PROTAGONISTS

Though not covered in detail in this study, each of Joanna Russ's other protagonists play a particular role in a transformational process through which the group as a whole progresses. The previously unmentioned protagonists include Alyx of Picnic in Paradise (1968), who precedes the characters discussed in depth, Irene in The Two of Them (1978), Kittatinny of Kittatinny: A Tale of Magic (1978) and Esther, in On Strike Against God (1980), all of whom follow the protagonists examined earlier. Though Alyx and Irene are isolated by their exceptional abilities, they were not included in this study because they do not clearly fit into the loss of identity, fragmentation, and alienation thematic models used. Also the relationship between sexuality and self-perception is not as sharply defined in these two protagonists. Kittatinny is excluded from both the detailed study and this brief look at Russ's other protagonists because she is a child character who inhabits a magical, children's fairy tale world. Esther was excluded from the detailed study because she acts in a realistic rather than science fiction novel. However,

sexuality and setting do play important roles in the remaining works studied and, to varying degrees, in the development of each adult protagonist.

Russ guides these characters through a transformational process with each individual protagonist portraying an essential part in this growth. This growth process is closely linked with each protagonist's awareness of self, sexuality, and his or her setting. A look at Russ's other protagonists will help in defining their roles.

Alyx, Russ's first protagonist, transfers to the novella from the author's short stories. Appearing in such fantastical sword and sorcery tales as "Bluestocking," "I Thought She Was Afeard Till She Stroked My Beard," and "The Barbarian," Alyx's reputation as a master pick-lock, expert fighter, and magician debunker follows her into Picnic on Paradise. She is, in short, an exceptional woman who considers herself to be unique among men and women. Saved from death by Trans-Temp, who "fish" her from a watery grave in the sea, Alyx is transported to a war torn planet named Paradise to lead a group of tourists to safety. As a protagonist, Alyx displays a lack of self-awareness and naiveté not found in the protagonists of Russ's later novels. This difference may be attributed to the sword and sorcery genre, which typically uses less developed characters,

from which Alyx was taken. Setting and, to a lesser degree, sexuality assist in describing her development.

The title reflects Russ's irony in that the group's journey is hardly a "picnic," and "Paradise" is a treacherous, frozen wasteland. Russ uses the novella's setting as an antagonist to her main character. This usage of the setting parallels its role in her later novels as well as most science fiction works. As the weather on Paradise worsens and members of the group die, Alyx begins to lose her strength of character, becoming more confused and dependent on a couple of the remaining members--Machine and Iris. By the end of the novel, Alyx is a mere shadow of the strong woman who begins the journey.

Sexuality plays a minor role in Alyx's adventure. Though she does have sex with one young man in the group, which causes friction with the other tourists, she is ambivalent about his sexual relationship. Alyx's sexual exploits with Machine show her to be torn between love/hate, pleasure/disgust, and pride/shame. Alyx, troubled by Machine's impersonal lovemaking, begins to feel "a vague but disquieting sense of having done something or said something she should not have said or done. She knew she hated him there, for a while" (AOA 166). Though their sexual relationship has little to do

with the novel's action, it illustrates Alyx's ambivalence towards sex.

Though Alyx's feelings for Iris, a young woman in the group, are not clearly described as sexual they can be interpreted as lesbian. As Alyx holds and comforts a sleeping Iris, stroking the young woman's hair, she realizes that she does not "know exactly" what she feels for Iris (AOA 174). Later when she thinks of Iris and Machine, she muses "I've got two of them" (AOA 174). By equating her feelings for Machine with her feelings for Iris, Alyx hints at her submerged lesbian feelings. However, these sexual hints are subtle, not overt. This interpretation is enhanced when Iris tries to prod the drugged Alyx along the trail. Alyx asks the young woman, "How can I come on if I'm coming out?" (AOA 210). Alyx then launches into a tirade demanding an explanation of that "conundrum, that impossibility, that flat perversion of the laws of nature; it is absolutely and utterly impossible" (AOA 210). The protagonist's references to the "flat perversion of the laws of nature" and "coming out" suggest that Russ is playing with language to symbolize her character's lesbian tendencies. However, though the drugs seem to release her inhibitions, Alyx is only minimally aware of her feelings.

The ambivalence of her feelings for Machine, when combined with her possible desires toward Iris,

contributes to Alyx's ambiguous sexual characterization. From the independent fantasy character who knows no fear in Russ's short stories, Alyx changes into an ambiguous character in the novella. The confusion of her previous identity is further muddled by the duality in her sexuality and Alyx ends the novel as a lonely, isolated woman, lacking the self-awareness typical of Russ's other female protagonists.

Irene, in The Two of Them, can be compared and contrasted with Alyx in several ways. Both are employed by Trans-Temp and consider themselves to be unique. As The Two of Them progresses, Irene realizes the flaw in this logic, yet Alyx never discovers this truth. Feminist critic Marilyn Holt calls Irene the "spiritual sister of Alyx: scrappy, opinionated, capable, and alienated" (Holt "Joanna" 489). Irene is characterized as strong, independent, and intelligent much like Alyx. However, Irene uses her strength to move toward greater self-actualization and seek out others like her, while Alyx, isolated by her uniqueness, lapses into loneliness. Both Alyx and Irene are most clearly depicted as heterosexual. Though Alyx does exhibit some ambivalence, Irene does not. Irene, as protagonist, represents a new direction in Russ's feminist thought. In many ways, Irene symbolizes the re-born woman who continues from the protagonist's suicide is We Who Are About To. Though the

bond between these novels is not as clear as the link between the works studied in detail, there are some hints to their connection.

From the protagonist in We Who Are About To, whose death symbolically represents the flaming rebirth of the phoenix, a new woman is created. This woman is more confident and self-assured than the previous protagonist. Irene Waskiewicz exemplifies the reborn woman because she enters The Two of Them mature and powerful. Irene and Ernst, her male partner, are equals on their assigned missions. They alternate the leadership role in their business transactions despite the biases of the planet on which they are working. Irene, who acts on her convictions independently, does not need male approval from Ernst, or any other man for that matter. However, she begins to realize that she cannot exist in isolation from other strong women. As she grows to understand this problem, Irene leaves Ernst to seek out other women.

Russ reverses traditional male myths by placing Irene in the typically masculine role. Irene saves Zubeydah from the oppression of the patriarchy of Ala-ed-deen, reversing the gender of the rescuer in the damsel in distress myth. She also reverses the role of the woman as helpmate when Irene kills Ernst, her helpmate, who has betrayed her. These role reversals serve to define Irene's development and show the unity in her

self-perceptions. Irene is the most independent of Russ's science fiction protagonists. Even her other strong female protagonists, Jael and Janet of The Female Man, do not act with Irene's power of conviction and determination.

Setting, in particular the alien planet of Ala-ed-deen, plays a major role as antagonist to Irene. Through her experiences with the strict Moslem culture on Ala-ed-deen, Irene discovers her feminist consciousness. Ala-ed-deen is "inhabited by a sect which has adopted the fairy-tale aspects of patriarchal Moslemism, so extremely that they have been denounced by the true Moslem faith on Earth" (Holt "Docile" 96). In this society, "the only female occupations are marriage or servitude" and women must be docile or they will be drugged into submission (Holt "Docile" 96). These rigid gender roles lead Irene to kidnap the would-be poet Zubeydah to save her from the same imprisonment as her Aunt Dunya, who also aspired to write poetry. Seeing the horror of these women's lives awakens Irene's feminist consciousness. She begins to realize that strong women must seek out other strong women or they will be forced into submission by the patriarchy.

After Irene escapes from the alien planet with Zubeydah, she becomes disenchanted with Ernst's flattery and avoids him. Eventually she tells him, "When I get

back to the Center I want to change partners. I want a female partner next time" (TOT 141). Though Ernst tries to hide his shock, Irene sees through his glib patronizing remark about her uniqueness. Her response shows her conviction concerning the idea.

> `Let them recruit some,' she says. She adds, `If I wanted a black partner, they'd find one. If I wanted someone who spoke Zuni, they'd find one. What's so strange about this request?' (TOT 141)

Her question ignites an argument between the two partners. The strength of Irene's personality and convictions becomes apparent when Ernst treats her like a hysterical female and she reacts in anger. After their heated discussion, Irene learns that Ernst has betrayed her by denying her access to the computer terminals aboard the ship. Her solution to this betrayal is to kill him and flee to Earth with Zubeydah. Yet her flight does not negate the power of her convictions. She understands the immense power of Trans-Temp and knows that they will not allow her the equality she seeks. By avoiding a confrontation with the patriarchal powers of Trans-Temp, Irene acknowledges her need for support from other women like her.

On Earth, Irene has a dream which gives her a vision of hope. In a valley of dried bones, with Zubeydah beside her, Irene hears a faint whisper asking,

"Will these bones live?" (TOT 180). Though she fears they will not, she begins to perceive the following:

> . . .the barest shimmer, the faintest stir, the dimmest most perceptible rustling. . . . From autumn leaf to autumn leaf goes the message: something, nothing, everything. Something is coming out of nothing. (TOT 181)

This symbolic dream represents Irene's hope that change in the patriarchal order will eventually come. She and Zubeydah are the foundation of that dream. When they combine with other "unimportant and powerless people," a new movement will begin (TOT 178).

Though Irene's and Ernst's relationship is sexual, as well as a working partnership, she is not dependent on him for self-definition in either case. In fact, sexuality plays a minor role in this novel. Gender-based discrimination is almost non-existent in Irene's world when compared to Ala-ed-deen. Yet, Irene feels that she always gives in to Ernst and knows that he has more power than her with Trans-Temp. After her experience in the strict Moslem culture, Irene becomes more sensitive to the inequities in their male/female relationship which cause problems between the two partners. When Irene demands complete equality, Ernst cannot concede because he likes the difference between them. At the end of novel, Irene's strength isolates her sexually. It is this sexual isolation, caused by the inequity in

male/female relationships, which Russ addresses in her next novel.

Esther, Russ's last adult protagonist to date, inhabits a realistic setting. In On Strike Against God, Russ switches from the alternate Earths of her science fiction to our modern Earth in this mainstream or realistic story. Russ's switch to a realistic setting offers her the opportunity to speak directly to women about their sexuality without the veil of symbolism offered by alternate settings. It may also address Russ's need to clearly depict the real life struggles with self-awareness and sexuality encountered by real women in our culture. The realistic setting acts as an antagonist to Esther, a modern-day feminist, as she copes with the problems of espousing a feminist philosophy in a patriarchal world. Antagonized by her male counterparts at the university where she teaches, Esther reacts angrily, at one point stalking out of a room. Their condescending and patronizing attitudes infuriate her, but she is strong in the face of their barely masked hostility. Even when she visits friends, Esther encounters patriarchal assumptions. However, this antagonism only serves to strengthen Esther's convictions.

Esther is as strong as Irene. She proudly states that her name means "star" which she equates with the

"sun" rather than the Hollywood variety of star (OSAG 24). She does not want to be mythologized like other traditional masculine symbols which make women seem unreal. She identifies herself with the warm, flaming power of our solar system's brightest star. Though written in first person, like We Who Are About To, the protagonist of this novel definitely has a name and identity, and both exude power. Esther refers to the process through which she achieved this power.

> Did you hear that, starlets? You needn't kneel to Ahasuerus. You needn't be a burnt offering like poor Joan. Practice the Phoenix Reaction and rise perpetually from your own ashes!--even as does our own quiet little Sun. (OSAG 25)

Russ's allusion to the rebirth archetype of the Phoenix, which she used in We Who Are About To, emphasizes her belief in the empowering effects of this life-giving process. It also confirms the transformation that Russ's protagonists have undergone to discover their lost identities, by uniting their fragmented perceptions and realizing a new self-awareness and sexuality.

Sexuality plays a major role in this book. Through the novella's subtitle, "A Lesbian Love Story," Russ moves from Janet's make-believe Whileaway to offer lesbianism as a viable alternative for female sexuality in the real world. As the story proceeds, Esther becomes cognizant of her sexual feelings for Jean, a graduate student at the university. After Esther fantasizes about

Jean for a while, the two women have sex. However, Jean has problems in accepting her lesbian feelings and leaves town. Esther grieves her loss, but has problems herself in accepting her new sexuality. Her inability can be seen when she insists, "I'm not a Lesbian. . . . I'm a Jean-ist" (OSAG 70). By claiming that she could only have feelings for Jean, rather than another woman, Esther denies her sexuality. In her grief, Esther also leaves town to tell her friends about her relationship with Jean, seeking understanding. However, she meets with hostility rather than compassion. Even her homosexual friend, Steve, disapproves. After her disappointing trip, Esther arrives home to find that Jean has returned. After they talk, the two women resume their love affair. By the end of the novel, Esther has acknowledged and accepted her lesbianism as fact even after Jean leaves to go to New Zealand. Though her struggle in a heterosexual, patriarchal world is not over, Esther has found her own identity.

Russ's protagonists, beginning with Alyx, struggle to find their collective identity. Esther is the apex of their search. Marilyn Holt, in her influential study of Russ's works, claims that "Russ produces what is ultimately a fictional autobiography, her approach resembles the confessional form . . ." (Holt "Joanna" 483). The autobiographical nature of Russ's fiction is

confirmed in her essay, "Not For Years But For Decades," which details her personal struggle to acknowledge and accept her own lesbian feelings. This essay also offers insight into Russ's vision of the world through which her unique characters are created. Understanding the writer's vision aids in the recognition of the trasnformational process through which her protagonists journey.

From the exceptional, but isolated and sexually ambiguous Alyx to Jai Vedh, who has acknowledged, but not accepted his homosexuality, Russ depicts the isolation and loss of identity suffered by homosexuals in a rigidly heterosexual society. The four J's (Jeannine, Janet, Joanna, and Jael) in their fragmented consciousness address not only the still make-believe world of lesbianism, but also reprove patriarchal society which reduces women and their sexuality to second class status. Even when this fragmentation is healed, women, such as the unnamed protagonist in We Who Are About To, are alienated by heterosexual and patriarchal institutions. Only through the expression of angry, justifiable rage and withdrawal from the system can women heal and be reborn into strong and powerful women. Even then, they may become sexually isolated, like Irene, when they refuse to accept less than complete equality. Esther provides the alternative to this sexual isolation in her

relationship with other women. Each protagonist plays a part in this process toward self-awareness and expression of his or her sexuality. It is fitting that this process concludes in a realistic novel because it is a journey that Russ feels some women must embark on to achieve self-unity.

# CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

From naive and lonely Alyx to lesbian/feminist Esther, Joanna Russ characterizes her protagonists thorough their own perceptions of identity. Each protagonist's self-perception is governed by his or her level of self-awareness, which is usually reflected in each individual's expression of sexuality. By presenting her central characters through their sexual preferences, experiences and perceptions, Russ identifies each of them as a separate individual and characterizes them fully. Setting, depicted by the society in which they live, acts as an antagonist to each of these main characters, altering their perception of self-identity and sexuality. Through these two modes of characterization, sexuality and setting, Russ presents more rounded and psychologically realistic characters than many science fiction writers. By portraying the inner life of her protagonists, Russ demonstrates how these characters' self-perceptions drive and manipulate them in their conflict with society. As a result of this conflict, Russ's protagonists develop within each novel. Yet her characterization surpasses development in the individual

works through the chronological transformation of the protagonists from novel to novel. As Russ's vision progresses, her central characters move toward self-integration. In describing these changes in her protagonists' self-perceptions through their contact with society, Russ also defines her themes of decomposition or loss of identity, fragmentation, and alienation.

As a result of these techniques, Russ's protagonists are among the most unique in the genre of science fiction. Science fiction writer Samual Delany points out that "science fiction has traditionally been at the forefront of the dramatization process by which new models for thinking about the world are disseminated" (122). He goes on to suggest that Russ has placed her work at the "critical edge" of this process (Delany 122). Indeed, Russ's novels strive to bring previously unexplored movements of social thought into a new light. Her works investigate the varieties of human sexuality so thoroughly that readers can no longer ignore their significance in the development of an individual's self-perception and identity. Through Russ's efforts to realistically depict human sexuality, her protagonists are not limited to one model of sexual behavior. Instead, each novel reacts to a heterosexual model presented through the setting by contrasting it with the sexuality of the protagonist. A brief look at the major

protagonists, their sexuality, and the setting's influence on their self-perceptions will confirm the various models used.

Jai Vedh's identity and self-perception change drastically through the course of the novel. Intolerant attitudes toward homosexuality on Earth still appear to be in vogue, causing Jai's discomfort with his sexual orientation. Yet, though he is sexually isolated, Jai perceives himself to be homosexual. However, the heterosexual telepaths refuse to accept his different sexual identity and alter his self-perceptions through mind control. While their use of mind control changes his sexual identity, Jai's absorption into the telepathic culture symbolizes his loss of individuality. The restrictive nature of the heterosexual model and the devastating effects it has on individuals who do not fit into its mold are emphasized by Jai's loss of identity.

The introduction of a male protagonist is not unusual for the model of sexuality used in And Chaos Died. Yet, in Jai Vedh, Russ creates an exception to the model, a homosexual. However, she ironically uses Jai's homosexuality to emphasize that heterosexuality is a received model. Since sexual preference is taught to him as a child and enforced in dozens of non-verbal as well as verbal methods, Jai feels uncomfortable with his homosexual desires. In a less restrictive society, Jai

Vedh would have been able to openly celebrate his sexual orientation. Though Russ might have made her protagonist a heterosexual, free to copulate with his female counterpart, Evne, this character would have made And Chaos Died like thousands of other science fiction novels. By purposefully placing a homosexual in this role and providing the opportunity for the reader to witness how the heterosexual telepathic culture compels the subversion of his true identity, Russ critiques the sexual model she uses.

In The Female Man, Russ employs various sexual models to emphasize how sexuality affects the self-perceptions of women. Jeannine, Jael, and Joanna (in the beginning) are characterized thorough their dealings with men. Jeannine's depression and feelings of inadequacy, resulting from the strict gender roles in her world, lead her to fantasize about the perfect gentleman who will treat her with respect. She is unable to see beyond the heterosexual model or to cope with it in a manner which allows her freedom of choice and self-respect. She feels trapped; consequently, her perceptions of identity suffer from the limited options available to her. Joanna finds herself in much the same situation. However, Joanna lives in a more contemporary setting, which at least offers her some freedom of choice in jobs and other non-sexual areas. As a result, Joanna is more self-aware,

though her perceptions of sexual identity are clearly altered by the world around her. As long as Joanna perceives her role through the heterosexual model enforced on her world, she is frigid. When she breaks free from these restrictions, after meeting Janet, Joanna is able to express her previously submerged sexual preference, and eventually, has sex with another woman.

Jael's sexual relationship also comments on the heterosexual model. Since Jeannine, Joanna, and, to some degree, Jael suffer from being treated as objects of men's sexual desires, the reversal of sex roles in Jael's relationship with her male android, Davy, challenges the heterosexual model. Russ easily could have shown Jael sexually involved with another woman from the Womanlanders' camp; however by using the male android as her protagonist's sexual object, Russ is able to criticize woman's role as a sexual object in the heterosexual model. By reversing the male/female positions, Russ challenges each reader to compare the devastation caused by these rigid roles. The comparison, of course, is not completely parallel, since the protagonists are human beings and Davy is a machine. Russ uses this difference between the human protagonists and the android to emphasize that sexual objects should be objects rather than humans. Though contact with the Manlanders causes Jael to become calloused and vicious in

business dealings with them, her sexual identity is not altered by this contact. Because she is able to freely express her sexuality, Jael is not sexually repressed like Jeannine or Joanna.

Russ creates Janet and her world to offer an alternative to the heterosexual model. Her carefully detailed depiction of Whileaway's culture stresses the advantages offered by a one-sexed society. These advantages can be seen in Janet's strong perception of identity as well as her independence. Without the restrictions suffered by the other protagonists, Janet lives a full and happy life. Because her society is comprised of women only, Janet has no problems with her sexuality. She and her wife, Vittoria, share their sex life, work and family without unnecessary restrictions. By contrasting Laura Rose's difficulty with Janet's natural acceptance of her lesbian feelings, Russ again comments on the discrimination of the heterosexual model against other viable forms of sexual expression.

From Jeannine, as a repressed, sexual object, to Janet, as a free, loving woman, Russ depicts the effects that socially defined gender roles have on women. The four alternate worlds in which she sets the action of her plot all contribute, either positively or negatively, to each protagonist's perceptions of identity. Russ's creation of these four separate and different

protagonists to represent the fragmented self-perceptions of one woman symbolizes the desolation caused by the rigid sex roles of the heterosexual model in the reader's modern world. However, by focusing on Whileaway as an alternative, Russ offers hope to her readers.

The female protagonist in We Who Are About To is shown to be isolated and sexually inactive. The only sexual experience described in the novel is her past relationship with L.B., a male lover. Because the description of the protagonist's feelings about this relationship are vague, Russ encourages the reader to look at the protagonist as asexual, or at least not sexually active. Both of the societies in which the protagonist lives are two-sexed and inhibit her sexual choices. Though Earth's society is supposed to be egalitarian, the protagonist's lack of sexual activity clearly delineates an inequity in male/female sexual relationships. This inequity is illustrated in the protagonist's sexual isolation and duality of perception. When the patriarchy on the alien planet tries to force the female survivors into childbearing roles, the protagonist's choices are further restricted. Through her depiction of these two oppressive societies, Russ comments on the inequality inherent in a two-sexed society and shows the negative effects that direct and

indirect persecution have on women, both sexually and spiritually.

This unnamed female protagonist also perceives herself as isolated from society. Russ uses the restrictive non-civilian/civilian dichotomy on Earth as a metaphor for the similarly oppressive patriarchy which evolves on the alien planet. Her protagonist, who merely wants to choose the course of her life, is denied this choice by both the non-civilian government and the patriarchy. By refusing to allow the protagonist her own political views as well as her freedom to live or die, these societies alter her perceptions of herself and her values. The difference in her reactions to each situation provides the beginning of her spiritual journey toward self-actualization; thus, she moves in a more positive direction toward the end of the novel. Annis Pratt finds:

> The greater the personal development of a hero, the more true she is to herself and the more eccentric her relationship to the patriarchy. A quality of consciousness that is essentially antisocial characterizes the most admirable heroes. (169)

The reaction of Russ's protagonist to the patriarchy formed on the alien planet illustrates this development. The other colonists, who interpret the protagonist's desire to be herself as antisocial, try to force her into their patriarchal system. Though she stops their

domination, she cannot fully develop until she recognizes and unites the split in her self-perception. Only then is her identity solidified.

Through her characterization of six distinctly separate protagonists, who react to the sexually confining roles of their respective worlds, Russ demonstrates her themes. These themes follow a pattern common in modern literature, especially science fiction and feminist fiction. Jai Vedh's loss of identity, the fragmentation symbolized by Jeannine, Joanna, Jael, and Janet, and the alienation of the unnamed protagonist result from the influence of the setting, or societies, in which they must live. Delany asserts that "in matters fictional the only way to represent society is to represent social indices" (120). Russ uses society's rigid sex rules to describe the settings for her protagonists. Feminist critic Barbara Rigney finds similar themes in works by other female authors.

> Bronte, Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood all condemn those social systems . . .which demand adherence to arbitrarily established sex roles, thus denying individual freedom and contributing to psychological fragmentation, alienation, and madness. (119)

Fragmentation, alienation, and even madness can be seen in Russ's female protagonists as they attempt to define their own individuality within the patriarchy's rigid sex roles. By using various sexual models for her

protagonists to contrast the heterosexual model described in most of her settings, Russ explores the relationship between human sexuality and perceptions of identity in describing her characters.

As discussed in the introduction, Virginia Woolf and other earlier novelists sought to confine character, denying the influence of society, to the sort of obscurity found among modernist authors like Joyce. However contemporary critics are more aware of the effects of society. Literary critic Mark Spilka's edition of a panel discussion on the subject of character in the novel addresses some of these criticisms of characterization. In this article, "Character as a Lost Cause," critics, such as Arnold Weinstein and Victor Erlich, assert that society affects character. Weinstein argues:

> But much of the fiction that we have is about the problematics of character, about the tension between the integrity of the self, the creation or preservation of precisely a character, and the outside world. (Spilka 207)

As the character battles with the pressures of society in an attempt to define and maintain his or her individuality, the fictional character is developed. The mainstream critics mentioned above find this battle for individuality important, not only in the development of character, but also in the plot and theme of the particular story. This battle between individual

characters and their setting is also used by science fiction novelists.

Despite the fantastic settings and superhuman characters sometimes portrayed in science fiction, the various models used to depict social indices and individual characters are patterned on a reality known by modern readers. Professor Robert Scholes argues that "all fiction contributes to cognition . . .by providing us with models that reveal the nature of reality by their very failure to coincide with it" (7). As Scholes maintains, the conflict between real life social problems and science fictional social problems encourages the readers to extrapolate the book's fictional world into their own experience. Likewise, the characters, who represent rebels or "eccentrics," "symbolize non-conformity and individuality" and contrast the readers' perceptions of their own reality (Sanders 144). Scott Sanders, in his discussion of characterization in science fiction, addresses this trend.

> Identity has become problematic in SF because it has become problematic in modern society. We are pushed towards anonymity by bureaucracies and technology, by the scale of life in cities, by the mass media, by the techniques of manipulation perfected in government and business. (145)

The problematics of character addressed by Sanders and other contemporary science fiction critics are part of the reality of living in modern society. This difficulty

in defining and maintaining an individual identity is the same addressed by Joanna Russ in her novels.

Russ considers the relationship between art and society to be dynamic. Her portrayal of character is indicative of this belief. She asserts that "the old forms [of art] . . .do in fact disappear only when social conditions change" ("Wearing" 47). Her novels openly attack the traditional patriarchal heterosexual model in an effort to induce a needed change. As her characters interface with this societal model, Russ denounces the system by explicating the results such a system has on her characters. Russ believes this type of didactic message is integral in the role of science fiction, in that it implies "that human problems are collective, as well as individual, and take[s] these problems to be spiritual, social, perceptive, and cognitive" ("What" 19). The emphasis on these attributes, especially perception, can be seen in Russ's protagonists as they struggle to define and maintain their individual identities. Jai, Janet and Esther tackle the problems which confront homosexuals, while the remaining protagonists struggle with the perceptual problems facing women. Because Russ uses her central characters to tackle these problems, she places emphasis on the individual as a part of a collective group.

Russ's focus on sexuality as a means of self-definition for her central characters as well as representing social indices is unique and valid. Harvey's theory of psychic decomposition, which describes the author's creative process in character formulation, attests to the importance of an artist's vision in defining and involving the fictional characters in a novel's story. In examining the process for creating characters, Harvey asserts that "the causes and nature of psychic decomposition are very complex. It may be the result of some emotional nexus outside the book which is too painful to be brought into the novel in a pure state" (127). Harvey's hypothesis that a painful emotional link outside the book causes psychic decomposition seems to apply in particular to Russ's novels. This link between the fictional world and the real world of the author contributes to Russ's vision of her characters and setting. As a feminist writer and a woman, Russ's emphasis on the effects of rigid gender roles is expected. However, her focus on various modes of sexuality and her constant criticism of the heterosexual model are evidence of other aspects in her vision. In her essay, "Not For Years, But For Decades," Russ explains the influence of her lesbian/feminist vision of the world. The correlation between these influences, her

central characters, and the theme in each novel becomes readily apparent when compared.

Russ's personal experiences with the "heterosexual institution" resulted in the same confusion, loss of identity, fragmentation, and alienation as her protagonists' suffer (Magic 2Ø). Because of this institution's failure to recognize the importance of her feelings as a woman attracted to other women, Russ suffered the same loss of identity as Jai Vedh does in And Chaos Died. When Jai announced his homosexuality, the non-verbal messages he receives are the Captain's revulsion and the telepaths' ridicule. The heterosexual institution, consisting of parents, friends, books, films, and psychoanalysts, similarly made light of Russ's feelings either through ignoring them or by calling them "a stage" (Magic 18, 23). Russ comments on the devastating effects of this treatment.

> What I had begun to learn (in it's a stage) continued that summer, that my real experience, undefined and powerful as it was, didn't really exist. It was bad and it didn't exist. It was bad because it didn't exist. (Magic 19)

This lack of recognition for Russ's and Jai's inner feelings and sexuality cause them to doubt or deny their own self-perceptions. By categorizing feelings of real identity as non-existent, both the author and her protagonist suffer a loss of identity.

The heterosexual telepathic society of the novel and the heterosexual institution of Russ's reality bear a striking resemblance to each other. The verbal and non-verbal messages that enforce the validity of the heterosexual model can be seen in both the fictional and real cultures. The mind control by the telepaths symbolically describes the real life "mind control" by the heterosexual institution. By denigrating all other perceptions of sexuality, the heterosexual institution perpetuates itself as the only valid sexual identity. As seen in the novel and in Russ's essay, this altering of self-perceptions causes a loss of identity.

However, the altering of self-perception is not limited to homosexuals. Even the perceptions of women within the heterosexual institution are changed. Russ asserts that "in the area of sexuality women are emphatically not a privileged class" (Magic 17). However, the heterosexual model tempts women with alleged rewards for their loss of individuality. Russ elaborates, "I think now that the most attractive rewards held out by Love Comics . . .was freedom from responsibility and hence freedom from the burdens of being an individual" (Magic 19-20). At twelve, Russ, as a "tall, overly-bright and overly-self-assertive girl," felt the need to escape this "guilt of individuality" (Magic 20). And so she listened to the message of the

heterosexual model and learned what a "real woman" should be like. Though she found the requirements restrictive and disgusting, Russ gave up on her real self-perceptions and assigned them to the realm of fantasy (Magic 24). In this way, the message from the heterosexual institution caused Russ to suffer from the same duality and fragmentation seen in her protagonists.

Each of the protagonists in The Female Man is in some way a part of their creator. Jeannine symbolizes the hopelessness and helplessness that Russ felt in her encounters with marriage and the dependency encouraged by the heterosexual institution. Joanna, perhaps the closest to Russ herself, clearly represents the duality that the author speaks of when she asserts, "I regarded my inner life as both crucially important and totally trivial, the source of my vitality and yet something completely sealed off from `reality'" (Magic 24). The character Joanna suffers from this same duality as an intelligent professional woman, who must still sacrifice her individuality to men. Joanna's admission of frigidity correlates with the messages which Russ received from psychoanalysis (Magic 26). Joanna and Jael represent the anger that Russ felt at the heterosexual institution, in particular psychoanalysis. Janet, of course, depicts Russ's inner life, her lesbian feelings assigned to the realm of fantasy.

The protagonist in We Who Are About To symbolically depicts the isolation that Russ felt near the end of her marriage as well as after she had left her husband. The nightmare, referred to earlier, occurred during this period and accurately depicts the author's and her protagonist's feelings of alienation from society. The schizophrenia, desolation, madness and lack of hope which Russ interprets in her nightmare are all apparent in the protagonist as she struggles to free herself from restrictions of the two fictional societies. In the end, the protagonist escapes her bonds by suicide. Russ's real escape is more positive in that she separated herself from the heterosexual institution. However, her isolation was not over. Near the end of "Not For Years But For Decades," Russ addresses this issue.

> There's a lot I haven't put in this story. For example, the years of limbo that followed my first Lesbian affair . . .the overwhelming doubts that it had happened, which attacked me when I had to live an isolated life again in a world in which there exists absolutely no public sign that such things happen, or the self-hatred and persisting taboos . . .or the terror of telling anyone. (Magic 38)

Russ's journey toward a personal and spiritual self-actualization resembles the one through which her protagonist travels. The alienation suffered by both the real author and the fictional character are likewise parallel.

By drawing on her own perceptions of reality, Russ creates protagonists who closely approximate the same loss of identity, fragmentation, and alienation which she experienced. Marilyn Hacker claims that "it is a truism that characters in a novel are often manifestations of the novelist; literally, of course, they all are" (74). In Russ's case, the correlation between the actual author and her fictional characters is similar in the manner through which they express their sexuality as well as the way in which the setting, or society, affects their self-perceptions. The strict resemblance between Russ's experiences and her vision of the world helps her to create more realistic, fully developed, and psychologically mimetic characters than are typically found in science fiction.

In his book, Structural Fabulation, Robert Scholes attacks the problem of character from the point of realism. He argues that "every fictional work presents a model [of reality] which stands in some temporal relationship to the world of its composition" (11). He also claims that "all writing, all composition, is construction. We do not imitate the world, we construct versions of it. There is no mimesis, only, poiesis" (7). Scholes' assertion concerning "poesis" is true of Russ's alien planets and parallel universes. These settings are constructed with social indices which either compare or

contrast to their counterparts in the real world. However, Russ's characters are mimetic in that they react and respond as do real human beings when faced with the problems inherent in the setting and its system of values. In this way, Russ's psychological mimesis creates lifelike, non-stereotypical protagonists.

The central characters studied achieve their depth of realistic characterization through Russ's use of a poignant psychological mimesis which reflects a close imitation of the perceptual problems encountered by women in today's society. By characterizing her protagonists' inner minds, Russ encourages the reader to empathize with each character. However, her goal is not merely to gain reader acceptance for her unique characters. Russ's objective is to create new myths for women. Through the subversion of patriarchal myths, her protagonists define themselves according to their own self-perceptions and evolve, through their struggle with society, into whole integrated beings. The genre of science fiction is an excellent vehicle for demonstrating these changes in the cultural matrix. Russ fully utilizes this medium by portraying her protagonists' sexuality and their conflict with the setting. The result of this confrontation is central characters who are more than traditional archetypes or antitypes: they are new mythical prototypes for women.

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