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ANNE TYLER'S TREATMENT OF MANAGING WOMEN

THESIS

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Among the most important characters in contemporary writer Anne Tyler's nine novels of modern American life are her skillfully-drawn managing women who choose the family circle as the arena in which to use their skills and exert their influence. Strong, competent, independent, capable of caring for themselves, their husbands, their children, and others, too, as well as holding outside jobs, these women are the linchpins of their families. Among their most outstanding qualities are their abilities to endure hardships with heads high and skills unhampered. Within this broad category of managing women, Tyler clearly delineates two types of managers: the regenerative managing woman and the rigid managing woman.

A major character in every novel, the regenerative managing woman not only endures, she also adapts. The key to her development and her strength is her capacity for trying again, renewing herself, and her family relationships. The evolution of a vital regenerative woman from a lonely childhood through the beginning of her vibrant womanhood is a key element in every Tyler novel. This development always includes an escape from her original family; an attempt to

establish her own family; at least one major hardship that often sends her reeling home; and finally, at least one new start toward establishing her ideal family circle. Tyler's treatment of the regenerative managing woman in the first four novels concentrates on her young womanhood and her early establishment of her family. The later novels begin when the regenerative managing woman is in her thirties or forties and concentrate primarily on the ways the regenerative woman manages her family.

Many of Tyler's novels also feature a rigid managing woman. While this character type manages with strength and competence, she is not a positive influence on her family. She endures. But she does not adapt. Too proud to admit her mistakes, or too selfish to notice them, she does not learn; thus, she does not change. Consequently, she stifles her own growth, as well as that of her family, even though she is not totally devoid of good qualities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the publication of her first book in 1964 when she was only twenty-two years of age, Anne Tyler's novels have evoked critically favorable attention from reviewers in popular magazines and journals. Her first novel elicited twenty-two reviews in such publications as the New York Times Book Review, The (London) Times Literary Supplement, Saturday Review, Library Journal, Booklist, and Harper's. As her work matured, periodicals such as The New Yorker, Sewanee Review, Southern Review, and the Virginia Quarterly Review regularly reviewed and praised her latest efforts. By the end of 1977, she had published seven novels¹ and forty short stories, four of which were honored in prestigious collections of short fiction.² These achievements prompted the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters to honor her in that year for "literary excellence and promise of important work to come."³ Since that time, she has, in fact, lived up to the expectations of the Academy and her public. She has published two more novels,⁴ both highly acclaimed and commercially successful, as well as several more short stories. And her work has demonstrably matured in its vision and its execution. However, despite her recognition from the

literary community and the reading public, she has received little scholarly attention. To date, one dissertation, which focuses almost entirely on the theme of the individual in the family in the first seven novels,⁵ and two recently published articles in The Southern Quarterly⁶ and The Southern Review⁷ are the only substantial published examinations of Tyler's work. Otherwise, reviews of her novels, interviews in the press, and passing references in reviews and articles constitute the entire body of published secondary sources about her work, although her novels have been the subject of papers at more than one conference. Yet Tyler is one of the better contemporary American writers, and her fiction deserves fuller treatment.

Tyler's first novel, If Morning Ever Comes, was published in 1964, one year after the publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, often credited as the starting point of a new feminist movement. Yet Tyler's books are as free from overt attention to that struggle as they are to other societal upheavals of that period to the present--the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, outbreaks of hostility in the Mid-East and Central America, the high school graduation of the "baby boom" population, the rise of the computer. Unlike many novels by women during the late 1960's and 1970's, her books are not conceived in anger, immersed in sex, nor focused on competition between male and female. Nor are the books written as political statements.

Instead, Tyler writes about the family--not as a passé institution or an inevitable battleground, but rather as the central shaping influence in the development of the individual and the individual's search for the meaning of life and as the most likely place to find acceptable resolutions to that search.

Not all of the protagonists in Tyler's novels are women, but each novel contains more than one memorably portrayed woman. For the most part, these women are white and middle-class. Within that category, they may be young or old, ordinary or unusual, rich or poor, rural or urban. In any case, Tyler's ability to capture the emotions, motivations, thoughts, and actions in a way that sympathetically reveals the past, as well as the present, of her significant women characters is one of her major strengths. Further, her ability to catch the gestures, the cadences, the garments, and the possessions that reveal her women's inner and public lives is uncanny, whether the character appears in one paragraph or dominates the book. Indeed, one of Tyler's most important skills is making the most extraordinary, even grotesque, women quite believable while at the same time making ordinary women who lead plain and seemingly uneventful lives quite fascinating.

Among the most appealing and important women characters in Tyler's novels of modern American family life are a rich array of skillfully-drawn managing women who have chosen the

family circle as the arena in which they want to use their skills and exert their influence. Strong, competent, independent, fully capable of caring for themselves, their husbands, their children, and other friends and relatives, too, if necessary, as well as holding another job if family finances demand, these women are clearly the linchpins of their family groups. Among their most outstanding qualities are their abilities to endure whatever hardships life and their own failings throw their way with heads high and skills unhampered. Within this broad category of managing women, however, Tyler delineates clearly two types of managers: the regenerative managing woman and the rigid managing woman.

A major character in every novel, the regenerative managing woman not only endures, she also adapts. She makes mistakes, and she suffers at the hands of others, but she also learns from these troubles and always picks herself up and starts again. Warm and supportive, she may not always be able to articulate her feelings directly or gracefully, but she is usually able to communicate her affection in a way that is clearly apparent to those she loves. A positive influence on her family, for the most part, she may find that she must leave or give up her husband or resign herself to the loss of a child, but the key to her development and her strength is her capacity for trying again, renewing herself, her love, and her family relationship. The evolution of a vital regenerative woman from a lonely childhood through at

least the beginning of her vibrant womanhood is a key element in every Tyler novel. This development always includes a decisive break with and an escape from her original family; an attempt to establish her own dream family; at least one major hardship that often sends her reeling home; and finally, at least one new start toward establishing the ideal family circle.

Many of Tyler's novels also feature a rigid managing woman. While this character type manages the external necessities of her life quite competently, she is not a positive influence on her family. She endures, but she does not adapt. Too proud to admit her mistakes, or too selfish to notice them, she does not learn; thus, she does not change. Consequently, she stifles her own growth, as well as that of her family. Though she may have affection for her family, she is not able to communicate it in a way that makes the recipient feel secure in her love; instead, too often she misses or ignores opportunities to express her feelings or adds demands and complaints to her words of love and so spoils their effect. Overly aloof or overly interfering and, in either case, overly demanding, the rigid woman kills rather than renews love. Since Tyler is an excellent novelist, particularly gifted in the portrayal of character, each of these rigid managing women is a unique individual developed as completely as necessary for her role within the novel.

Tyler's regenerative managing women are all questers, and the novelist gets full mileage from the most common, perhaps the only, universal myth--the journey. She uses the journey as an explicit metaphor for life in several novels and as a recurring motif in every novel she has written to date. Further, love of travel in Tyler's work often signifies an adventurous or growing nature, a nature that can accept, or even relish, change. Thus, all of her regenerative women do a good deal of traveling; some are downright devoted to it. Elizabeth Abbott in The Clock Winder happily travels to and works in a number of eastern cities before she finally settles down. In Searching for Caleb, Justine Peck and her husband move almost every year to a new small town in Maryland or Virginia. Further, Justine joins her grandfather in his search for his lost brother, a search that takes them by car, bus, and train up and down the Eastern seaboard for sixteen years. Justine joins the search because she loves her grandfather and also because she loves traveling, loves going anywhere, especially if she can do it speedily: "Getting somewhere. She loved going fast in any kind of vehicle."⁸ A later regenerative woman, Emily Meredith in Morgan's Passing, travels with a theatrical company in her youth and at the end of the novel joins a traveling show troupe. One of Tyler's least-traveled woman protagonists, Charlotte Ames Emory in Earthly Possessions, is haunted from the time she is seven until the close of the

novel by the waking and sleeping dream that she will be called upon to take a long, long footmarch alone (a fantasy that Tyler herself shares in part).⁹ Yet, she is born, reared, married, and still lives in the same house at the end of the novel. In the course of the story, however, Charlotte is kidnapped and travels in unusual circumstances from her hometown in Maryland all the way to Florida. Upon her return, her husband, who knows her penchant for travel, sometimes asks her if she would like to take a trip somewhere. However, her answer is a straightforward expression of the "life is a journey" theme: "I don't see the need, . . . We have been traveling for years, traveled all our lives, we are traveling still. We couldn't stay in one place if we tried."¹⁰

Rigid managing women, on the contrary, do not travel much, and they do not travel well. Only Pearl Tull (Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant), who is married to a traveling salesman whose company keeps transferring him, does any significant traveling, and she dislikes it so much that she eventually quits even returning the welcoming calls and food from friendly neighbors, since she knows nothing lasting can develop. Instead, she concentrates her efforts on making her house unassailable by weather or wrongdoers and confining her family within its walls. The others do practically no traveling at all to the reader's knowledge.

For Tyler's regenerative managing women, there are almost always three important journeys: leaving home, returning home, and leaving home again. All of Tyler's regenerative women, as a part of their evolutionary processes during their late teenage years or early twenties, make a decisive break from their inhibiting families. While the escape theme frequently plays a part in novels written by women during the nineteenth century,¹¹ Tyler's use of this theme is quite different. Her women may live in gloomy houses, but they are not locked up or incapable, because of their own shortcomings or society's strictures, of making their own ways. Without any cries to heaven or physical danger (except in the case of the kidnapped Charlotte), and usually without even a quarrel, Tyler's women leave home. Yet escape is clearly the critical need. In some cases, just getting away from their families, away from their confines and expectations, is sufficient motivation to flee. In other instances, while escape is urgent, the ultimate goal of the flight is already evident, for in leaving home, these women are also searching for home, a goal of which they may not be immediately aware. Though some of Tyler's heroines, like typical male questers, may love traveling for its own sake, their flights from home, unlike those of their male counterparts who seek only adventure and movement,¹² always have at center quests for roots, though the roots are not attached to places so much as to people. These women always

ultimately desire intimate relationships with their own men and later their own children. Two of Tyler's major regenerative women elope from home as teenagers to marry the men of their choice;¹³ four elope to marry their chosen husbands after they have already made their breaks from home;¹⁴ two have formal weddings as the jumping off points for their new family lives.¹⁵ (To her dismay, Charlotte Ames Emory finds that her marriage does not really take her away from her childhood home, but her later kidnapping and return home maintain the same cyclical pattern Tyler establishes less dramatically with her other major regenerative women.) Only one of these women remains single at the end of her novel, and her unmarried state is certainly not of her choosing.¹⁶

For all of these women, leaving home is an important event, and Tyler often describes their particular journeys in detail to give them their full dramatic and thematic impact. Equally important are their trips back home. In all but one case (Mary Tell in Celestial Navigation) these women either actually take or at least emotionally take trips back to their original families. More than just being visits home, these trips occur at critical junctures in the characters' lives, points at which they must question the foundations or the directions of the new lives they have created for themselves. Consequently, these trips are also symbolic, questing journeys. Only the fact that she has no living

family keeps Mary Tell from making the journey home, and at that, she contemplates a return to her first husband or to his mother in her need for solace, her desire to start over again, and her homesickness, the same motivations that prompt returns home in Tyler's other novels.

Once the regenerative managing woman has returned home in reality or imagination, she realizes again that her life no longer belongs with the world of her childhood, and reevaluating her life and her dreams, she starts over again. This ability to renew is almost always symbolized at least in part by another journey away from home. Sometimes she returns to the relationship she has temporarily deserted;¹⁷ sometimes she leaves home to start another new life or at least determined to start another new life.¹⁸ In any case the actual or contemplated return home and the journey outward again when she has regained her confidence and her determination to endure and to adapt are important journeys in the evolution of a regenerative managing woman.

As questers, Tyler's regenerative women have two primary and interrelated goals: to find their true selves (as Charlotte in Earthly Possessions puts it) and to create their own ideal family units. Tyler's treatment of the quest for self is not heavily freighted with introspective musings; her women are usually quite practical and ordinary in their searches. They want to test their capabilities and their capacities and to measure what they can get against what they

want. As a first step, all of Tyler's regenerative women must overcome their own feelings of inadequacy, a persistent theme in contemporary American literature about women. For several of Tyler's major young women, this lack of confidence appears primarily as part of their troubled teenage years. As Patricia Spacks notes, adolescence is a notoriously difficult period to live through as a time of life and to portray as a subject for fiction, but because "conflict is the essence of fiction, adolescence provides rich material. The severe opposition between fantasy and reality in this stage of life derives partly from the adolescent's central problem: to find the proper balance between self and others."¹⁹ On the other hand, while adolescence intensifies their difficulties, most of Tyler's regenerative women have problems with their identities and their self-esteem from earliest childhood because of their inadequate families which are often characterized by weak fathers and incompetent, cold, or overbearing mothers. Unsatisfactory relationships with their mothers are almost always central issues.

In Tyler's families, the influence of the mother is clearly of paramount importance. By her presence or absence, she is at the center of every family. Yet the mother is often weak, aloof, nagging, dictatorial, or mean in her relationship with her offspring and her husband. Fathers often run away, actually or figuratively; children may try, but they can never really escape their mothers' influence.

The mother's lack of ability or interest in communicating with her family sets the pace and the scope of her children's search for intimacy with others. During the course of several novels, some of Tyler's strongest female characters move from childhood to motherhood themselves. Though these extended characters are quite different from their own mothers, they often have their own problems with mothering.

Nineteenth-century novels customarily express hostility toward mothers by removing them from the stories;²⁰ Tyler usually follows the twentieth-century pattern of dramatizing the hostilities. Among Tyler's regenerative women, Evie Decker (A Slipping-Down Life) is the only motherless girl, and Tyler graphically depicts the consequences of this lack in Evie's life. On the other hand, having a living mother is far from an unmixed blessing in the world of Tyler's fiction. Only two of her regenerative women (Elizabeth in The Clock Winder and Mary in Celestial Navigation) have good relationships with their mothers in childhood, and once the girls reach their teenage years, the narrowness of their mothers' lives and attitudes becomes unacceptably oppressive. For the rest, the mothers are aloof, inconsistent, unbending, pitifully weak, physically or verbally abusive, or some horrible combination of these qualities. Modern psychology and psychoanalysis bear out the peculiarly important and lasting effect of the mother/daughter relationship. In 1978, Nancy Chodorow published The Reproduction of Mothering, a

comprehensively researched, seminal work, growing out of feminist concerns with questions about how women learn to mother and what mothering means to the woman and the child. According to Chodorow, biology is not a sufficient explanation for the reason women mother, nor does she find that mothering is the result of intentional role-training. Drawing on psychoanalytic accounts of female and male personality development to show how mothering reproduces itself cyclically, Chodorow finds:

Women as mothers produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother. Capacities and needs are built into and grow out of the mother/daughter relationship itself. By contrast, women as mothers (and men as not-mothers) produce sons whose nurturant capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed.²¹

There seems to be strong agreement in the fields of psychology and psychiatry that both daughters and sons begin life attached exclusively to their mothers because mothers are the primary caretakers; but there is a stronger sense of oneness and continuity from mother to child over a longer period of time in a mother/daughter relationship because they also share gender identity.²² Consequently, the primary identity a woman develops and carries with her through life is one of self in relationships.²³ Indeed, women do not really reject their mothers emotionally in favor of men, but usually remain in an internal emotional triangle even after they have resolved their sexual orientation in favor of men.²⁴ Because women generally want and need the intense,

primary relationships they enjoyed with their mothers, which most men with their more reserved and ambivalent attitudes about intimacy are unable to fulfill, women generally want to have a child or children, and they get a good deal of gratification from mothering.²⁵

As a result of her special relationship to her mother, a daughter finds indifference and cruelty from her mother more intolerable than such treatment from any other person.²⁶ Women who feel insufficiently mothered usually have very difficult times establishing positive self-images; and at one extreme, they may spend their adult lives looking for a substitute mother in both men and women, or at the other extreme, they may deny any vulnerability and spend their lives proving their strength in mothering others. In the latter cases, of course, women will always need the neediness of others.²⁷ Achieving independence is a real dilemma for a girl because of her identification with her mother; indeed, often she can only break away by devaluing her mother, which in turn must devalue the girl's own feminine identity.²⁸ Identifying closely with their mothers, girls are often enraged by their mothers' passiveness, domestic martyrdom, weakness, and low esteem, for the mother's victimization is more than a humiliation to the daughter; it is a burden passed on to her directly. Additionally, the "super mom's" attempt to do everything perfectly and to demand perfection of others and the aloof mother's inability to love or express

love can be equally debilitating; for these mothers also hide self-hate and cannot be pleased.²⁹ The mother/daughter relationships in Tyler's novels realistically portray Chodorow's conclusions.

Tyler's novels also illustrate other psychological theories about self-development and relationships for women. Her women discover, as women must in life, that self-confidence and independence cannot be wrested from society or others; they must be developed painstakingly by the defeat of fear and anxiety within each person. Again matching life, Tyler's women's struggles are particularly difficult because women often measure their successes by the extent to which they see that they are valued by others.³⁰ Their strong emphasis on relationships as goals in themselves and as ways to achieve one's fullest potential makes the lives and achievements of Tyler's women particularly coherent and sometimes particularly paradoxical, for the more capable they become of managing their own lives, the more they may need others to make their lives complete according to their own standards.

Along with their childhood feelings of personal inadequacy, Tyler's regenerative women almost always feel alienated and lonely during their youth. Six of these nine women are only children,³¹ and all nine of them, particularly as teenagers, feel considerable distance from their parents. Though these young women are finally brave in establishing

relationships, Tyler's novels clearly illustrate, as one of the key themes, that each individual always remains locked within her private experience. As Mary Darcy Tell in Celestial Navigation remarks: "[T]here is no one you can depend upon forever and no change in your life however great that can keep you from being in the end what you were in the beginning: lost and lonely, sitting on an oilcloth watching the rest of the world do the butterfly stroke."³² Yet, despite this certainty, Tyler's regenerative women still seek lasting relationships with men, which they hope will lead to marriage and families.

While Tyler's regenerative managing women want to overcome their sense of isolation, they also want to maintain a share of personal privacy and space; indeed, achieving the balance between distance and sympathy is clearly a major thread in Tyler's work.³³ Because of the difficulty in striking the balance, Miss Vinton (Celestial Navigation), one of Tyler's wisest women, and one of her few single ones, suggests that everyone should establish a living situation more like a rooming house than a typical family:

If you want my opinion, our whole society would be better off living in boarding houses. I mean even families, even married couples. Everyone should have his single room with a door that locks, and then a larger room downstairs, where people can mingle or not as they please.³⁴

Within their family circles, Tyler's women expect to find the perfect blends of intimacy and privacy, responsibility and freedom to suit their individual needs. What they find, of course, has more in common with the old Welsh saying about "the rent that's due to love." That is, the lovers find that there is a continuing price to pay for the relationships they seek; the arrangements are never perfect; and it often seems that the other parties will not do their parts. Additionally, they learn that relationships are never complete and static unless they are really finished in the sense of being over; rather, the relationships are dynamic, changing through time and circumstances, evolving into stronger unions or deteriorating and disbanding. In most of Tyler's works, the regenerative women's progress in building unions with their men both before and after marriages is an important part of the novels, for usually their growing competency in handling themselves and relationships with mates and families signals their development from naive, alienated, unsure girls to strong, competent, coping, managing women.

Tyler's regenerative women bear out the findings of modern psychologists that the need to love is primary and that the struggles that love almost always entails are really struggles against fear, not against love.³⁵ The fears take many forms: fear of failure to win the love of choice; fear of rejection; fear of loss of love once gained; fear of loss

of privacy; fear of full fusion; fear of responsibility. Any and all of these fears produce avoidance and distance, as fear makes love and commitment seem painful and unprofitable ventures. In Tyler, these fears are enacted in homely ways depicting the kind of every day misunderstandings that cause "one more invisible parting or tiny, jarring rearrangements,"³⁶ as Charlotte Emory describes them in Earthly Possessions. Most of the regenerative women have already openly or internally rebelled against their families when they pick their future mates; most also suffer from lack of confidence, lack of experience, and lack of recognized direction beyond their hunger to establish a relationship that will lift them out of the loneliness and isolation they feel.

One way of explaining Tolstoy's axiom in Anna Karenina that all happy families resemble one another, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way is to recognize that upon close examination no family is purely happy. At least Anne Tyler's remarkable gallery of family portraits bears out this interpretation, for although many of the families she depicts seem happy to outsiders, all families featured in the novels reveal cracks, strains, compromises, defeats, tragedies, anger, defections, and other problems. Tyler explains that she finds "families . . . convenient ways of studying how people adapt and endure . . . and go on loving and adjust to the absurdities of their confinement."³⁷

Indeed, it is usually through family clashes, the mismatch between expectations and reality, between independence and commitment, between one generation and the next, between privacy and intimacy within the family that the regenerative woman changes and grows. Faced with similar challenges, the rigid woman manages, but she does not change. Since all of Tyler's novels feature a regenerative woman who breaks away from her first family in order to start her own ideal family, all novels include at least two generations; most include three; and Searching for Caleb stretches over five. Both the rigid and the regenerative women find their families to be central to their worlds, and they spend the major parts of their adult lives working within and on behalf of their families; nevertheless, their assessments of family life are quite different. Regenerative women learn to accept the imperfections of family life, recognizing, as Charlotte Emory (Earthly Possessions) says, "Maybe all families, even the most normal-looking, were as queer as ours once you got up close to them."³⁸ On the contrary, rigid women usually pretend publicly that their families are happy, while they rail at their children and themselves for their imperfections. Thus, Pearl Tull (Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant) feels sick with envy at the happy family outings she believes other families enjoy, and in her letters home describes a joyful, flawless family life; simultaneously, she makes the kind of bliss she covets impossible.

Most of Tyler's families seem somewhat isolated from their communities. Through guilt and ridicule, rigid women usually make interaction with the rest of the community almost impossible for their children by insinuating that an interest in "outsiders" is disloyal or degrading; they themselves, of course, remain pridefully aloof. Although regenerative women move out of their original families in their quests for their own family circles, once they have established their own units, their lives are clearly family-centered. Still they do involve themselves more with their communities than do rigid family managers, even though Tyler is more likely to mention these associations than to portray them through scenes. Thus, Tyler notes that Mary Tell in Celestial Navigation takes on quarrels with overbearing teachers and neighborhood bullies on behalf of her children, but there are no scenes depicting Mary interacting with school personnel or children other than her own. Even Mary's life among women, which is very important to her, is merely described generally without developing her friendships with women other than her mother-in-law and Miss Vinton. Charlotte in Earthly Possessions tells her adopted son Jiggs that she has spent her life in the Clarion PTA, but no other mention or event gives credence to her statement. Only Justine in Searching for Caleb, a fortune teller who works with her customers in her own kitchen, is shown in any detail in her interacting with those outside the family once she has

become the family manager. Indeed, Tyler illustrates that in every family there is a certain kind of relationship that sets its members within a circle forever closed in part to anyone else. Because Justine and her husband Duncan have rebelled against their original family, partly because of the snobbish, self-righteousness of the self-contained Peck family whose members look down on and close out all non-Pecks, the young couple has opted from the first to have an open household, and they always encourage their daughter Meg to bring home friends. However, Meg comes to realize that the close, intimate relationship between her parents, including their unified attitudes about openness, constitutes its own kind of enclosure. "The two of you are as closed as a unit can get, I don't care what he says,"³⁹ Meg tells her mother. The drama within the family circle remains the focus of every Tyler novel.

Throughout her novels, Tyler consistently works with motifs (such as escape and flight, overcoming low self-esteem, dealing with isolation, balancing relationships within a family) that are akin to feminist themes, but Tyler's works are largely free from feminist grievances against society. As a rule, Tyler's books do not concern themselves very much with either sex or politics, nor with sex as politics.

The first big wave of American feminism rose with the Seneca Falls convention in 1848, a meeting that sparked the

movement that earned women the vote in the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The second wave rose in 1963 after Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, a book that started an avalanche of books and articles, and thus launched a new discipline in "Women's Studies," spawned several politically and socially important women's organizations, and inspired a movement that has accounted for numerous profound changes in society. It is, indeed, astonishing to contemplate how quickly this movement became popular and how deeply it has affected American life, including the creation and study of literature. The quickening interest in women as people, as writers, and as characters developed by both male and female writers is startlingly clear from the number of outstanding scholarly and popular periodicals and books on these subjects during the past two decades. While an enormous amount of serious and responsible scholarship in many disciplines has been written during this period, a good deal of angry invective has also been unleashed.⁴⁰

Among critics, there is currently widespread agreement that for the past several years serious fiction has been dominated by the feminist themes that exploded onto the national scene after Friedan's book in the sixties.⁴¹ Personal independence, individual self-fulfillment, the yearning for freedom to compete in a different world and the need to prove oneself competent in it, the conflict between

love for an individual man and anger for men collectively are the fundamental themes for most of these works. Most of these novels written or influenced by feminists feature women whose independence and ambitions can be fulfilled only by competing with men in the world of work. Completing professional degrees, climbing the corporate ladder, building a personal fortune, beating men at the games of adventure, big business, finance, or artistic creation are among the most popular plot developments in these novels. Far more likely to feature the breakup of relationships with men rather than their creation, these books hardly ever consider building a family an important consideration. In these books, the sexes battle one another at home and at work.

In contrast, Tyler's women are rarely ambitious for careers. Though most of her managing women hold jobs outside their homes, those jobs do not usually capture the imagination or the devotion of the characters. Of the regenerative managing women, only Jenny (Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant) works hard to complete her college degree so that she can become a doctor. Though three of the others have a few college courses to their credit, none considers it particularly important nor longs to complete a degree. Only Emily (Morgan's Passing), a puppeteer, and Justine (Searching for Caleb), a fortune teller, seem to find any sense of self-fulfillment in their work. Though Charlotte (Earthly Possessions) finds some pleasant surprises

in the way her subjects appear when she develops the photographs she takes, she still thinks of the studio and the equipment as belonging to her father after he has been dead for seventeen years. Further, it is clear that if there were no need for the extra income, she would not bother opening the shop. And while Joan (The Tin Can Tree) and Evie (A Slipping-Down Life) are competent and enjoy their work, there is no sense that they regard it as central to the shape of their ideal lives, however important the money it brings may be to their ability to make their own decisions. To the three rigid managing women who work, jobs are an unpleasant necessity, required because there is no man to assume his rightful duty.

Many critics have observed a trend in the eighties for women to move beyond anger. According to Jonathan Yardley,⁴² feminist themes are basically narrow and feminist novels tend to be quite similar to one another. Consequently, he believes it is time for women to establish their own unique voices and themes. In fact, he believes several women novelists, including Anne Tyler, are pointing the way to a new and better period of fiction by writing without anger about contemporary relationships between men and women. Betty Friedan calls this new period "The Second Stage";⁴³ Erica Jong calls it the "phase of empathy";⁴⁴ Lynn Nesbitt calls it postfeminism.⁴⁵ Manifesting a belief that women should not forget their rage nor how they won their new

voices, Jong maintains that women should move beyond anger "to explore the whole world of feeling." Although anger has been the catalyst for the strong new cadre of women writers, Jong notes that anger is not the only propellant for literature: "Stronger even than anger is curiosity-- emotional and intellectual curiosity."⁴⁶ According to Betty Friedan, the family is the new frontier where the second stand will be joined, for "the future of the family is the overriding feminist issue."⁴⁷ An article about post-feminists in Time magazine in 1984 cites Isak Dinesan as saying: "Only when women are old enough to have done with all that business of being women can they let loose their strength."⁴⁸ However, the article itself disproves Dinesan's point by featuring a group of strong, young women writers, including Anne Tyler. Several of the surveyed writers demonstrate that they are competent to manage a personal life, husband, and family relationships and at the same time write novels. Certainly, Anne Tyler has been juggling these multiple responsibilities successfully for some twenty years.

Writing an article for The Writer on Her Work, a special collection of essays by women about their own writing, Tyler titled her piece "Still Just Writing."⁴⁹ The thirteen pages she wrote about herself as a writer make it fairly clear why Tyler's novels have developed in her own way outside the feminist movement. Spending her childhood in an experimental Quaker commune in the wilderness, she emerged at eleven to

find that the world as represented by Raleigh, North Carolina, looked very strange and acted very peculiarly and that the world, no doubt, thought that she was quite strange and peculiar, too. She adds, "I have given up hope, by now, of ever losing my sense of distance; in fact, I seem to have come to cherish it."⁵⁰ Further, she makes a point of noting that in her recollection the only time her "being female was ever a serious issue"⁵¹ was when her parents convinced her to give up her dream of attending Swarthmore and accept her scholarship at nearby Duke University in order to save their money to send her three brothers to college; for they thought "it was more important for boys to get a good education than it was for girls." While she still does not consider the decision just, it was at Duke that she found herself in the classroom of Reynolds Price, the one person she ever knew "who could actually teach writing." So, as she says, "It all worked out, in the end."⁵² Describing the compartmentalization of her life illustrates still another way Tyler has avoided the rage and despair that permeate a good deal of contemporary writing by women. Clearly, Tyler and her husband, who is a practicing psychiatrist, as well as a novelist, have discussed and planned the division of their duties for the family; and Tyler accepts as her job the traditional role of caretaker for the family and the house when the children are home. She writes her novels during those times her children are in school. Rather than feeling

aggrieved that she cannot devote as much time as she pleases to her work, she seems to feel almost guilty that she has uninterrupted time to devote to writing, while her husband's responsibility to earn the family's living does not afford him the same kind of opportunities. Tyler believes her right to set her own schedule is a real luxury, a luxury she appears to find superior to her husband's luxury of not having to drop everything when a child is ill.

No doubt, Tyler's life has its share of frustration when the well-laid plans do not work as expected. However, the points she makes are that she has chosen to raise her family and write her books; she keeps a long perspective so that a day's or week's delay does not exceed its true proportion; she has accepted the limitations of the 168-hour week. The feminist complaint about the tragedy of hidden silences of women artists--those periods that almost always interrupt the productive lives of women who are also mothers⁵³--seems not to bother Tyler nor to relate to her strongly either, for she has averaged a published book every other year since her first book appeared. Further, the feminist claim that a woman's sacrificing her full potential for writing in order to develop or maintain her relationships always lowers her sense of self-worth⁵⁴ also seems inappropriate in Tyler's case; apparently, Tyler finds being consciously in control of her life and making the choices that suit her and her family and her art are sufficient to preserve her self-esteem and

her joy in life. Far from finding her children a drain on her or feeling herself suffocating in the nursery and kitchen, Tyler claims her children have enriched and deepened her work, as well as her life and world. "Who else do you have to love, no matter what?" she asks, and adds that now "her life seems more intricate . . . and dangerous,"⁵⁵ descriptions which seem to indicate that in her view her children give her life a sharp, exciting edge she enjoys.

Describing Tyler as a writer who has sidestepped or moved beyond feminism by no means implies that she has deliberately set out to do either. On the contrary, unlike feminists and other political writers who argue that novels should reflect the ways women and men should behave, Tyler writes novels about the ways women and men do behave given their time and place in society. Her milieu is ordinary life, and her focus is on ordinary people involved in or trying to be involved in familial relationships. Whether women should or should not view their primary roles as relational ones involving husband and children is not really at issue in Tyler's fiction; the fact is they do have that world view. While Tyler's work is free from political invective, it also clearly concerns issues of paramount concern to women--development of a competent self, independence, intimate relationships, family, and

balance--and demonstrates them beautifully through an impressive gallery of competent, coping, managing women.

In traditional women's novels, the happy ending is marriage;⁵⁶ in the typical feminist novels of the past decade, the traditional ending is divorce.⁵⁷ In Tyler's novels, both marriage and divorce are new beginnings. All of her novels feature open endings in the sense that the characters' flow of experience and conscience is still expanding at the end.⁵⁸ Thus, it makes sense that Tyler would remark that she often wonders how some of her characters are doing in the time periods following her novels. Two of her books (If Morning Ever Comes and Earthly Possessions) end with a wife returning to her husband, and one (The Tin Can Tree), with a woman returning to her unfulfilling, but better-than-nothing relationship with the man she loves. Both The Clock Winder and Morgan's Passing conclude with a full chapter showing a regenerative woman managing a new life with a new husband, and Searching for Caleb finishes with still another departure scene for the traveling Justine and her husband, who are leaving for still another adventure in living. Although A Slipping-Down Life ends as Evie Decker leaves her husband and Celestial Navigation ends after the separation between Mary and Jeremy becomes irreparable, neither of these is what has now become the typical feminist novel that blames men for the subjugation of women and proposes divorce as the cure for all

ills. Clearly, Tyler already puts into practice in her novels the stricture of many feminists that it is not sufficient for women to confront the need for nor the pitfalls in change; rather, it is incumbent upon them to do something about unsatisfactory situations.⁵⁹ Tyler's regenerative women courageously make major changes and minor adaptations that allow them to establish or maintain their family relationships. But the problems Tyler's characters confront and the ways they meet these challenges are obviously beyond feminism. Her strongest characters develop into family managers whose creative energies are devoted to founding and maintaining their family units, and when these family managers can not only endure but also adapt, they join the ranks of the regenerative managing women who exert a positive influence on their families and foster growth and joy in their homes.

CHAPTER II

REGENERATIVE MANAGING WOMEN IN ANNE TYLER'S FIRST FOUR NOVELS

Tyler's first four novels enter the lives of her major regenerative managing women at relatively early points in their development. When the novels open, Evie Decker in A Slipping-Down Life still lives at home; Joan Pike in The Tin Can Tree and Elizabeth Abbott in The Clock Winder have left their original homes but still have not found the dreams to which they expect to devote their lives; only Joanne Hawkes in If Morning Ever Comes is already married. All of these women are clearly immature--Evie is only seventeen; the other three, in their early twenties, are still groping with growing up. Further, the first three Tyler novels cover relatively brief periods in the lives of the characters. Both of the first two novels (If Morning Ever Comes and The Tin Can Tree) present only a few days, and the third (A Slipping-Down Life) covers less than a year. Although The Clock Winder covers a ten-year time span and is, in part, a deeper, more complex book in consequence, the bulk of the book depicts Elizabeth's long adolescence. As a whole, Tyler's first four novels concentrate on the reasons these budding regenerative managing women break away from their

original families; their low self-esteem; their sense of isolation; their unhappy or restrictive relationships with their original families; their escapes, returns, and escapes again; and on their internal and outward attempts to discover and to try to establish the kinds of lives they want to lead as adults. While Tyler portrays in each novel at least the beginnings of what each regenerative woman hopes will become her dream family, the novels end before the new life is very far along. Even though Joanne is married and already has a child, her new life is clearly still at its beginning. Joan is still unmarried and likely to remain so. Tyler portrays Evie's short, doomed marriage in detail; however, it is clear that Evie, still just a youngster, is on her way to a new beginning when the novel ends, and the shape of that new life is wide open. In the last chapter of The Clock Winder, Elizabeth has finally found her way and has a few years' start on her dream family, but Tyler's presentation is such that the reader sees Elizabeth's new life from an outsider's perspective, rather than from Elizabeth's. As a whole, then, Tyler's first novels feature women as they make the break from their first families and make a start on the development of their own family circles. It is only in her later, richer, and more complex works that Tyler will show the regenerative managing women deeply involved in the family circles that they themselves have created.

Although Anne Tyler wrote her first novel If Morning Ever Comes from the perspective of twenty-five-year-old Ben Joe Hawkes, it is very much a work about women. Ben Joe has grown up in Sandhill, North Carolina, in a family of women--an older sister Joanne; five younger sisters; his mother Ellen Hawkes; and his father's mother, Gram. Moreover, the family has been disrupted by his late father Phillip Hawkes's moving out of the house and living with Lili Belle Mosely, a young factory worker who eventually bears him a child. Further, a good part of the book concerns Ben Joe's reunion with his first girl, Shelley Domer, who leaves town with him as his bride-to-be at the novel's end.

Joanne Hawkes Ben Joe's favorite sister, is a forerunner of many of the regenerative managing women in Anne Tyler's novels. Seven years before the novel's opening she had run away from her unhappy home life to escape her aloof mother, deserting father, and the interminable quarrels between her mother and her grandmother over why Phillip Hawkes had left home. Like most of Tyler's regenerative women, Joanne is greatly influenced by her inadequate mother, whose lasting impact makes it difficult for Joanne to establish the kind of relationship with a man and the kind of family she wants. Nevertheless, during her absence, she has met the man she loves; married; moved to Kansas with her husband; and borne a child, the toddler Carol. When reality does not meet her expectations, she runs away from her new

relationship, also. It is her return home to Sandhill with her baby and without her husband that precipitates Ben Joe's return from college in New York to check up once more on his family and thus sets the novel in motion.

Like all of the Hawkes children, Joanne is deeply troubled by the unhappy marriage of her parents. Her father's excessive drinking and his desertion of his family are painful, but it is her mother's cool detachment that affects her most adversely. Briskly undemonstrative, Ellen's standard response to problems is "It's none of our affair,"¹ and her persistent command to her family is that they should stay out of other people's business, even if those other people are their own family members. Because of Ellen's uncommunicative reserve, Joanne is never sure of her own place in her mother's affection and constantly seeks proof that she is loveable and loved. Fond of and sorry for her brother and sisters, Joanne demonstrates her managerial abilities early as she compensates for her mother's inaccessibility to the Hawkes children by being the center of warmth for them herself. It is Joanne, who "just by smiling that smile of hers. . . could make everything seem safe and in its right place" (238). It is she whom all the children turn to with small discomforts and major griefs, because she knows how to listen and how to provide comfort for all of them and would "fold every single person up close to her and

cry, and pat them softly" (84). And she alone of all the family can express warm feelings straightforwardly.

At school and in town, too, Joanne is always the center of activity and thus the center of attention, as she constantly tries to demonstrate to herself and to others that she is not cold like her mother and that she is worthy of love. Further, the desire her beauty and revealing dresses arouse in men gives her a sense of control over her life at a time when her family is crumbling apart, leaving her feeling powerless at home. Although Ben Joe remembers her with joy for her teasing sense of fun and her warm, caring ways and with pride for her popularity, intelligence, and magnetism, the town remembers her as pretty but fickle--at least flirtatious, possibly fast, maybe even worse. As the Hawkes marriage deteriorates, Joanne's appeals for attention become more frantic, culminating in her running away to marry a virtual stranger while she is still a teenager. Retrieved before the ceremony after a nightlong search by her father and the sheriff, Joanne is greeted at home in early morning by a mother who says merely, "'Well, let her sleep'" (191). And Joanne is again left to deal with her insecurities and alienation on her own. At supper that evening, when Joanne shows off her new trick--a piece of plastic vomit--the whole family laughs at her antics. Apparently, no one sees any significance in her choice of tricks--plastic or elopement--and the abandoned husband-to-be and the aborted marriage

plans join the many other topics never mentioned in the Hawkes family. Soon after this incident Phillip Hawkes quits coming home. Shortly thereafter, Joanne leaves home, too, alone this time, intending to put behind her the unhappiness of her family in order to look for a more satisfying life.

In retrospect, Joanne describes her approach to life before her marriage as "first-dating":

"I always did like first dates . . . I was good at those. I knew what to wear . . . and what to say, and by the time I was ready to come in I'd have them all the way in love with me or know the reason why. But the dates after that are different. Once they loved me, what was I supposed to do then? . . . So I ended up confining myself to first dates. I got so good at them that I could first-date anyone--I mean even the people that were on seventh dates with me, or even people that weren't dates at all. I could first-date my own family, even--just figure out what would make them love me at a certain moment and then do it, easy as that." (73)

After leaving home, but before her marriage, Joanne continues her flirtatious, first-dating ways, making five dates for a single weekend, playing the field, constantly proving to herself and others that she is worthy of love, that she has power. As Gary tells Ben Joe:

"There was this about Joanne back then: seems she liked drawing people to her. Once she got them, she sort of forgot what she was planning to do with them, like. But if you drew away, she'd be out to draw you to her again." (237)

Clearly, one reason she "flits around a lot" (235) is her fear of commitment, for her need for love is second only to her terror at the prospects of the commitment and the

responsibilities it entails. Even though she apparently is very much in love with Gary, it seems that only Gary's inadvertent unavailability to Joanne at a time she wishes to see him wins her in marriage.

Marriage does not dispel Joanne's anxieties about her self-worth. Still uncertain about her capacity to love deeply and warmly, she seriously fears that, like her mother, she will be unable to establish and maintain an intimate relationship. However, Joanne is a regenerative woman, clearly capable of change, and she determines to try to be the kind of wife she admires. Thus, early in their marriage, Joanne follows Gary around reading psychology books about marriage, searching for the secret to the successful relationship she wants. Although she makes progress, she falls short of the self-perfection to which she aspires, and when she tells Ben Joe her reasons for leaving Gary, Joanne exposes her fears at work:

"The trouble is, . . . you have to stop clinking your bracelets and dancing like a maniac after a while. You have to rest now and then. Which may have been okay with Gary, but not with me. I didn't know what to do once I had sat down to rest, and so I started being just terrible. Following him around telling him what a awful wife I was. Waking him up in the middle of the night to accuse him of not believing I loved him. He was all sleepy and didn't know what was coming off. . . Got so I couldn't bear my own self, . . ." (74)

Furthermore, when Gary tells Ben Joe about their problems, it is even more obvious that the example of Ellen Hawkes is both

a conscious, as well as an unconscious, concern:

"And Joanne'd start feeling bad--say it was her fault and she was making the house cold for me. First time she said that was in a heat wave. You couldn't hardly see for the little squiggly lines of heat in the air. 'Cold?' I says. 'Cold? Honey, you make this house cold and I'll love you forever for it,' but Joanne, she didn't think it was funny. Carol was crawling across the table in rubber pants and Joanne picked her up and spanked her for no reason and then started crying and saying history was repeating itself." (239)

But Gary will not allow that the Hawkes disaster has any relationship to their lives: "[I]t's got no bearing on us and Joanne's house wasn't a cold one, no" (239).

Joanne's compulsive behavior is also carried over into her care of her child. As Gary, who wants lots of children, says, "Joanne takes too good care of just the one" (238). Obsessively concerned about Carol's being secure and having no doubts about being loved, Joanne "follows her around reading psychology books" (238), just as she had earlier followed Gary. In fact, her conscious concern about Carol's welfare is the reason Joanne has come back to Sandhill. Convinced that she is not and cannot be a good wife, she decides to leave Gary; and she wants Carol to grow up and be cared for in a town where people know who she is since Joanne is going to have to work and leave her in the care of others.

When Ben Joe rushes home to see Joanne after her long absence, he depends a good deal on her looks to tell him whether she has changed and, if so, how much. In this

respect, he is like Tyler, who almost always calls on physical appearance, gestures, and facial expressions to play a role in delineating character and personality. Slender, quick-moving Joanne had been noted in high school for her good looks and verve; gypsy-red dresses with swirling skirts; golden bangles; long, dark, swinging hair; and a teasing smile. Seven years later, Ben Joe is relieved to see that she's "not old yet" (60). In fact, he decides that she is still much the same, for she still has her warmth, her ability to express her affection, and her good humor, "but she had a different way of showing it. A subtler one, he thought" (60). No longer dressed in form-revealing red, Joanne wears soft colors with a sacklike fit, but she still has her bangles and her figure.

While it might seem that Joanne would not wish to return to a house in which she had been terribly unhappy and that she would not wish her daughter to be brought up in the same distant, isolated way that marked her own early years, Joanne is convinced that "it's not the same place I'm coming back to, really. Not even if I wanted it to be" (74). Yet Joanne does expect some answers about her past and her parents to come out of her return.

Since her departure, her father has died, and no one has given her the details of his death. Further, she wants to understand her parents' relationship with one another. Indeed, finding out more about their relationship is clearly

a part of her motivation for coming home, as her queries to Ben Joe about Phillip's last weeks reveal. What she really wants to know is "'Who won. Mama or that other woman'" (76). Just two weeks before Phillip's death he had come home, as one of Jenny's letters cryptically notes--"'You'll be happy to know Daddy has got back from his trip'" (77). Still, he died in Lili Belle's house. According to Ben Joe, drunken Phillip had gone to town for ice cubes and "forgot which home he was supposed to be going back to Just a mistake. And Lili Belle hadn't really won after all" (77). Joanne is not convinced, and even though she might have been less certain had Ben Joe shared the full events of the terrible night of their father's death, her conclusion that their father would have gone back to Lili Belle sooner or later in any case supports her own thesis about the need for warmth and communication in a marriage.

Further, Joanne is trying to recapture some of the better feelings she had as a girl at home, and she comes home to take a rest from her managerial responsibilities, which she is afraid she is not handling well. In Sandhill she can stay up all night watching TV and sleep late the next day because she knows her family will look after her baby. When the opportunity arises to revive a high school flirtation, Joanne cannot resist playing the game that makes her once again feel loved and powerful; knowing that she will never

allow this man to discover her vulnerabilities, she is off on a first-date relationship again.

At the same time, Joanne also knows that she will not have to explain herself to her mother and that her leaving her husband and returning home with her baby will be accepted without question. Because her mother has never considered her perfect, Joanne expects to be able to drop her facade and rest comfortably without the tensions of joy and disappointment that a marriage inevitably entails. On a more unconscious level, Joanne's need for her mother's love and her insecurity about it undoubtedly play their parts. Having failed, as far as she is concerned, to win her mother's love as a child and having failed as an adult to be the perfect wife she wishes to be, Joanne subconsciously feels that a failed marriage is all she deserves. Perhaps she also feels subconsciously that only by failing in marriage, and thus not surpassing her mother's achievement, can she protect her mother's self-esteem and pave the way for a closer relationship with her.

Obviously, Gary is wrong in thinking that the Hawkes marriage has no bearing on his own, for Joanne's insecurities, anxieties, and compulsiveness can be traced to her experiences within her family, particularly her relationship with and observation of her mother. On the other hand, he is right in thinking that his marriage with Joanne will not be a repeat of the history of the marriage of

her parents. Warm-hearted and easy-going, Gary is not going to stand on his pride and let his wife run away without a fight. He does not really understand why she left, but he does know he wants her back: "'I always say . . . no sense acting like you don't miss a person if you do. Never get 'em back pretending you wouldn't have them if they crawled'" (240). Further, he takes Joanne's intensity in stride, and he understands and loves her better than she knows. When Joanne insists on keeping her date with an old boyfriend after Gary's arrival, because she is "darn well going to keep her commitments" (222), Gary remains calm. Neglecting to remind her that her marriage vows represent a commitment, too, he waits patiently. Gary wins because Joanne really does not want to be a first-dater all her life; she wants to be and is capable of being a regenerative managing woman.

In Joanne's search for an ideal family, she looks to her mother's marriage to define the relationship she wants to avoid and to self-help psychology books to define the relationship she wants to establish. Failing to grasp that there are many degrees of difference between the two models and that her inability to reach perfection on all counts according to her own meticulous standards does not mean her relationship is permanently incapacitated or utterly defeated almost loses for Joanne the family she desires. Fortunately for her, she does learn something from her runaway trip from Gary and her return trip to Sandhill. She learns that she

does have the capacity to love Gary deeply and that the first-date game is no longer as exciting as it was. She learns that Gary both knows and can tolerate her imperfections and keep on loving her; after all, he not only asks her home, as her mother refused to do for Phillip, Gary also comes after her. She also learns that she, too, can accept some of her own imperfections because she can pick herself up and try again to do better. And most importantly, she learns that the Hawkes house in Sandhill is not home anymore; home is with Gary and Carol. Accepting such homely truths allows Joanne to renew her life with her new family, regenerating a life of intimacy and warmth and avoiding the rigid loneliness of her mother.

Commenting about her early novels in an interview in The National Observer, Anne Tyler says that she does not much like her first two novels because "they seem so bland."² While Joanne Hawkes is far from being the most fascinating of Tyler's regenerative women or even the epitome of her type, she is engaging, and she is instructive for the directions she points for future Tyler women; for Joanne foreshadows most of the regenerative women in Tyler's later novels in her rebelliousness against her family, her conflicts with her mother, her search for a dream family, and her ability to recover from her mistakes and start again. Later regenerative women will also follow her cyclical pattern of leaving home, returning, and leaving again. While many of

Tyler's later regenerative women will be attractive or even beautiful in their own ways, Joanne is the only one of the group that is considered the prettiest girl in her town and the only one that has any of the flirtatious qualities associated with the typical Southern belle. After the first four novels, the regenerative women will not leave home alone as Joanne does at first; instead, like Joanne at the end of If Morning Ever Comes, each will leave home with a man, usually the man of her choice, running to her future every bit as hard as she is running away from her present and her past. Though Joanne is only a shadow of the stronger, more fully developed women of the later works, she is a worthy first effort to depict an important character type.

Joan Pike, the central female character in Anne Tyler's second novel The Tin Can Tree is portrayed as a very ordinary woman. She is, indeed, quite average in appearance, intellect, and character and consequently exemplifies one noteworthy ability of Tyler: to make ordinary women engaging, not by exposing hidden eccentricities or flaws, but by revealing what Tyler calls the slow, desperate courage of average people who learn to endure or adapt and keep on loving.³ Obviously sympathetic to her characters, Tyler is able to capture their motivations, habits, joys, and pain, as well as those nuances of personality and style that make quite common women both believable and memorable.

Secretary to a high school principal in a small North Carolina town, Joan at twenty-six is sturdy, sensible, and single. She has no distinctive characteristics except to those who love her or at least know her well. As is Tyler's custom, she uses Joan's physical appearance to help define her character. Thus, her boyfriend, James Green, who likes to take photographs of people he knows "in the way his mind pictured them when they weren't around,"⁴ always imagines Joan as he first saw her--in a dust storm carrying "two suitcases and a drawstring handbag, spitting dust out of her mouth and turning her face sideways to the wind when she walked" (23-24). This image, which he finally captures in a photograph, reveals first of all Joan's isolation, but it also demonstrates her determination, stoicism, and strength: "Her figure made a straight black line through a circle of wavery blurs, and her head was bent forward in that way she had when she walked" (174). James finds other women too fragile; he is "used to Joan, who was unbreakable and built of solid flesh" (61). Not fashion-conscious at all, Joan has a serviceable wardrobe of clothes she has owned for a long time. In fact, James believes he can tell the seasons by the clothes and "if she bought something new, he felt uneasy and resentful toward it until it had become worn-looking" (111). Joan, herself, is also comfortably attractive and pleasant.

Though Joan is an ordinary woman in many respects, she is unusual in comparison with other Tyler heroines. At the

end of The Tin Can Tree, she is still unmarried and has no real prospects for marrying; she has no child and is not pregnant. Like most Tyler women and all of Tyler's other female protagonists, Joan very much wants to be both a wife and a mother. Thus, the resolution of her story leaves Joan's potential unfulfilled and her hopes unrealized. Nevertheless, Joan is a regenerative woman, and even in her disappointment, there is hope.

Like several of Tyler's later regenerative women, Joan begins life as an only child and grows up lonely and isolated from her family and from the world. At twenty-six, Joan has "lived in bedrooms all her life"; in fact, she has always lived "the way a guest would--keeping her property strictly within the walls of her room, hanging her towel and washcloth on a bar behind her door" (33). Her alienation is the result of her family background, for like Joanne Hawkes in If Morning Ever Comes, Joan suffers from an aloof mother. However, Mrs. Pike's failure as a mother for Joan is quite different from that of Ellen Hawkes's for Joanne. Whereas Ellen's aloofness and lack of warmth have driven her husband to alcohol and another woman, Mrs. Pike's insecure reserve is matched by her husband's. As a consequence of Ellen's cool, hard pride, her daughter (as well as her other children) grows up involved in one of the town's leading scandals and subject to constant noisy quarrels within the family. On the other hand, the Pike house is prim and quiet, for the very

proper and bland Mrs. Pike is a compatible partner for her colorless, timid husband. Middle-aged when Joan is born, the Pikes are not "sure what they [are] supposed to do with her" (33). Although they are polite, they treat her "like a visitor who had dropped in unexpectedly" (33). Joan is always aware that she discomfits her parents; even an attempt at a simple conversation is enough to make them feel uneasy because they really have nothing to say to their daughter. Joan's departure from home appears to have permitted her parents to resume their comfortable, narrow existence without the stress of a guest around all the time.

Mrs. Pike offers no nurturing to her daughter; she is neither a model worth emulating nor a personality strong enough to rebel against. Thus, Joan grows up in isolation, unsure of herself, unsure of what she wants. Her guiding code of behavior is to strive to be no trouble to anyone. When she happens upon the home of her aunt and uncle (as a guest, of course), she sees for the first time up close what a family can be--warm, comfortable, intimate, active; and she wants this kind of family for herself. Though she perceives the stresses and pain, as well as the joy and the ordinariness of the family life, she still values this kind of commitment and vitality over the sterility and isolation in which she has always lived. Unfortunately, her mother has not equipped Joan to achieve closeness; she has only left her with an unfulfilled, perhaps unfulfillable desire for it.

Joan lives as a guest with her parents before she leaves home, and she automatically lives that way in the home of Lou and Roy Pike, her aunt and uncle, where Joan is living when the novel opens. Her reticence comes from her upbringing, not from her uncle's family, who had invited her to stay with them during a visit she had made four years earlier because she had developed a special rapport with their children, Simon and his little sister Janie Rose. Clearly, the Pikes want her to feel a part of the family. In fact, Lou has openly said that she wishes Joan would act more at home: "You could at least hang your coat in the downstairs closet. . . . Could you do that much?" (33) Joan nods and from then on hangs her coat in the family coat closet, yet her towel stays "in her room, because nobody mentioned that to her" (33). Fitting into one room is not difficult for Joan. Like many Tyler heroines, she travels light; all she owns can be packed into two suitcases with room to spare.

However, Joan does not want to live the rest of her life as a guest in someone else's bedroom, nor does she want to live alone. Enjoying the warmth and the activity within the Pike family and the interaction with the Potters and the Greens, who live in the other two units of their long, isolated three-family dwelling a mile outside of Larksville, North Carolina, Joan has accepted the Pikes' invitation, rather than looking for her own place, because "here there was always something going on, and a full family around the

supper table" (34). She enjoys Simon and Janie Rose, plays games with them, comforts them in their sadness, helps them with their problems, and serves as steadfast friend and from time to time as surrogate mother. In fact, she often pretends they are hers. Now Joan wants her own place, her own family, her own children and she wants for her mate her neighbor James Green, with whom she sits "every evening talking of the same things and never moving forwards or backwards" (34).

The event which opens The Tin Can Tree and provides the impetus for unfolding the future and for probing the past, is the funeral of six-year-old Janie Rose Pike, who also suffered from an aloof mother during her brief life and whose death, in the opinion of her mother, is the result of motherly neglect. Recognizing her failure with Janie not just on the day of the accident, but throughout her life, Lou understands the finality of her loss. In her resulting guilt and grief, she isolates herself with her agony, disassociating herself from family, friends, and even the most common daily routines and actions. The result is that she now ignores Simon, her previously favored son, even more fully than she had neglected Janie Rose. Having been used to his mother's doting attention, Simon suffers terribly from his mother's aloofness, and no one, not his sympathetic cousin Joan or his neighbors, can comfort him for his loss of his mother's devotion.

Although her ability to participate fully in family life has been hampered by her isolated upbringing, Joan manages the family during the crisis of Janie Rose's death. For example, she is the one who packs away Janie Rose's clothes and toys. It is she who takes care of Simon's clothes for the funeral; cuts his hair (though not very well) in the following week; and generally, takes over all care of Simon and of the family chores when Lou abrogates her responsibilities. Despite the fact that she really does a good job in this crisis, Joan feels inadequate and powerless, for she is unable to console Lou or to pull her out of her grief sufficiently to attend to Simon or to alleviate Simon's consequent pain. "'I don't know how to comfort people,'" Joan tells Simon (54), and days later, still trying, but still unsuccessful, she tells her mother, "'I'm not helping'" (185).

At the same time, Joan also feels inadequate and powerless in realizing her dream of an ideal family based on a union between herself and James; unfortunately, her hopes for a family with James are blocked by his ties to his invalid brother Ansel. Both Joan and James recognize that Ansel could live a normal life if he would follow the doctor's orders and take care of himself, rather than deliberately courting setbacks in his health through excesses and omissions, such as drinking bouts and "forgetting" his shots. However, they handle this knowledge very differently.

James accepts the way Ansel manipulates him, even when it means additional and unnecessary worry and work, for he carries constantly an almost buried concern that Ansel may really be more seriously ill than anyone knows. Joan, on the other hand, resents Ansel's emotional hold on James, abhors his manipulation of his brother and others, and personally dislikes Ansel, besides. Furthermore, she will not pretend otherwise, even to make things easier. Joan's anger and frustration are focused on James and Ansel personally, as particular humans--not as representatives of their sex. Actually, the cozy domesticity that James has established and his tender care of his brother at the expense of his own personal life is very much in the tradition of Southern womanhood, not Southern manhood. In any case, the result is that Joan must either give James up or wait unwed in the wings as long as Ansel lives, and it appears that he will be around a long time. As this impasse impresses itself upon Joan's mind once again after Janie's death, she decides, once again, that she must escape this deadlock.

The runaway motif is a strong one throughout this early novel with most of the main characters running away at one time or another. In Joan, the runaway motif is especially pronounced. Perhaps she is not so much a runaway as a driftaway when she first leaves her mother's and father's home in Larksville, since she thinks of her trip as a sojourn, not a flight; nevertheless, her departure turns out

to be as final as if she had bolted away without word or warning. Underlying Joan's trip, however, is her search for an ideal family. Unfortunately for her, her first family experience is so meager that although she knows she wants something more, she does not quite know what it is. She only knows she is often homesick for "something long ago and lost" (143); at the same time, she knows she is not homesick "for any home she'd ever had" (143). This homesick feeling, coupled with her unsatisfactory relationship with James, leads Joan to try to escape more than once. Only the month before the accident, Joan had packed her bags, and without a goodbye, had left the Pike's to catch a bus for her parents' house. However, she had changed her mind and returned "dragging two big suitcases behind her and hobbling along on her dressup shoes" (175). Although she laughs at herself for her indecision, her desire for flight is real. She is sure that "ten years from now, and twenty, James would still be enduring, on and on, in that stuffy little parlor with Ansel in it; and she couldn't endure a minute longer" (216).

After the funeral, as Joan finishes packing away Janie's belongings, she wishes she could just walk off, find "some place to sit alone and think things out" (42); if it weren't for Simon, she muses, she would do so (42). A few days later, despite Simon, Joan's overpowering need for escape makes her once again secretly pack her things and sneak away, leaving her bedroom so clean and bare that "no one would ever

know she had lived there" (217). However, Joan does not hide from herself the fact that Simon will care very much that she is gone. Consequently, when Simon catches up with her on her way into town and she refuses either to change her mind or let him come along, her refusal makes her feel "heavy and old," as if "the weight of her sadness dragged behind her through the fields like another suitcase . . ." (219). Joan thinks that "of all the bad things she had ever done this might be the one sin" (219); nevertheless, she continues her flight "with that sudden light, lost feeling that came from walking in a straight line away from people she loved" (220).

While waiting for the bus Joan feels her isolation even more keenly than usual. Her voice sounds "thin and sad" to herself, and she feels "like a stick, very straight and alone, standing upright with nothing to lean against" (220), a figure reminiscent of James's photograph. She can hardly believe that no one notices her strangeness, but in fact, no one seems to notice that she is leaving town. The driver does not even look at her as she boards the bus, and she is aware that "already she was outside the little circle of Larksville, and only another stranger to the people on this bus" (222), none of whom look at her, except a sailor who stereotypically winks. Joan's particular kind of isolation as she leaves Larksville is a frequent thread stitched through Anne Tyler's novels; this motif recalls the theme of W. H. Auden's "Musee des Beaux Arts": while one person is

engaged in something momentous or even monstrous, ordinary life goes on without skipping a beat, perhaps without even noticing. Thus, each human being is and remains essentially alone.

Joan's isolation and loneliness are epitomized in her daydreams as she journeys away from Larksville on the bus. In her mind, she pictures herself in many familiar settings. But no matter where she sees herself--at the Pikes' kitchen table, on the porch with James, in her parents' parlor, on the bus she is currently riding, or even on the firmest seat she knows, James's lap--she sees herself sitting an inch or more above the seat, balanced precariously, "resting on nothing" (223). When Joan leaves the bus to get a Coke at an intermediate stop, she exits through a team of boys all ganged together in matching uniforms and waiting to board. Their solid mass and clear union with one another make her feel "thinner and more alone than before" (227). While Joan is at the drink machine, a strange man in sunglasses asks her for directions to the men's room. Joan is frightened until she realizes that he is blind. Then "that slow, trusting way he let himself be guided forward with his hands folded gently in front of him" (228) reminds her of Simon at six when he got up at night and moved unknowingly wherever he was led. "'Can you imagine traveling blind?'" one of the drivers asks Joan, and she answers, "'No, I can't'" (228).

However, Joan soon sees that she is traveling blind herself, escaping from one bad situation into another. Although fleeing from the barrenness of a life as the town's oldest courting couple and "fondest joke" (121), she is not running to a more generative future: "all she was going to was another bedroom, to years spent reading alone in a little house kept by old people," to years of "smiling indulgently at other people's children" (222). Life at her parents' house may have less potential for pain than life in Larksville, but it also condemns her to a life without joy, without intimacy, without love. Joan does not like all of the life she has just left, but at least it has a potential for happiness. It is not her ideal family, but it is a family; it is a home, and she chooses it. "'I want to go back where I came from,'" she says (229). The driver treats her decision as a joke: "'Women got a right to change their minds'" (229), he laughs. Joan, on the other hand, knows her decision to return is serious. This time she is fully aware that the trip to Larksville, not the trip to her parents', is a return home.

Far from a happy ending, Joan's decision does not mean she will be able to start her own family as she wants to do nor that her place within the extended family at Larksville will automatically be more intimate and satisfying. Her decision means that she has made up her mind to endure after all, even though nothing has changed except Joan herself. As

a matter of fact, Joan's isolation within the extended family is emphasized repeatedly in the last scene in the novel. When Joan returns, the Pikes' house is strangely dark and empty; thus, her homecoming is unobserved and uncelebrated, a particularly poignant omission since the whole extended family is at that moment gathered at the Greens' house celebrating Simon's safe return from running away, a journey Joan did not even know he had taken. Except for Ansel, who saw her leave, and Simon, no one else realizes that Joan has left town earlier nor has anyone tried to find out why she is not present. Once Joan has joined the party, her isolation is starkly obvious. When the Potter Sisters, engaged in their favorite party trick of cutting silhouettes, insist that Joan be next, "the lamp glared at her so brightly that it made a circular world that she sat in alone, . . . Outside the circle was the noise, and the beating music and the dark, faceless figures of the others" (264-65). A moment later, seeing her own shadow out of the corner of her eye and remembering the many occasions that the Potter Sisters have cut silhouettes, Joan suddenly says, "There is a whole gallery of silhouettes in this house" (265), a remark that points not only to Joan's particular isolation, but also to the basic solitariness of every individual, each being essentially a closed and shadowy outline to all others.

Because Joan is a competent young woman--quiet, polite, hardworking, and attractive--a woman who should be capable of

building an independent life for herself away from both Pike families and James, her decision to endure, rather than struggle; to stay, rather than to flee to a new life, may seem old-fashioned to feminist critics. However, Joan's upbringing has not prepared her to fight for what she wants from James, nor to create or to seek any special kind of independent life of her own. Having no interest in a career, she works happily enough, but the work is for money on which to live. As she grows up, her barren emotional life fills her with vague longings for a different kind of life, a life she recognizes when she visits her aunt and uncle. Her dreams, now, are for her own family circle. Unable to achieve the pinnacle of her hopes, Joan decides to adjust her dreams and take what she can get. If feminists find Joan weak or unattractive, Anne Tyler does not. She has said several times in several different ways that to her the real heroes are those who adapt, those who endure, those "who somehow are able to grant other people the privacy of the space around them and yet still produce some warmth."⁵ Joan's capacity in all three areas is her entree into the ranks of the regenerative managing woman.

Joan's life will not be an easy one. She has chosen to live in an extended family, one in which she will always be welcomed and valued, one in which she will have management responsibilities, but one in which she will also always be in most ways alone, the single woman in a group composed of

smaller groups. Nonetheless, she chooses it. Up until the end of the novel, Joan has been ambivalent about her future. Generous and loyal, she tries to help and guide those she loves, but her lack of confidence and experience leads her to retreat in the face of failure. Thus, over and over again when she is discouraged, she heads for the sterile safety of her room. In returning to Larksville this time, she has made an affirmative choice to stay--not to run, not to drift through the years without noticing their passage. She will be the single cousin, the old maid secretary, one half of the town's longest lasting unconsummated romance. Her choice leaves her alone within the context of the novel and alone among Anne Tyler's female protagonists; for she is not a wife, not a mother, not a mother-to-be, and not the recognized manager of a family. However, at last Joan has taken charge of herself and accepted her limited managerial role within the extended family. And in that effort is at least the seed of a new beginning.

In A Slipping-Down Life, her third novel, Anne Tyler presents her first work in which a woman is clearly both the protagonist and the center of consciousness. Covering about one year's time, this novel traces with verve and irony the transformation of seventeen-year-old Evie Decker, a lonely, isolated only child, into a young, regenerative woman capable of managing her life on at least some of her own terms. Evie's childhood is, actually, even more dismal than Joan

Pike's. Unlike physically attractive Joan, Evie is fat, frumpy, homely, and clumsy. While Joan's mother is aloof and inattentive, Evie's mother is absent altogether, for Mrs. Decker was "the last woman in Pulqua County, North Carolina, to die of childbed fever."⁶ Because there is no surrogate either, Evie grows up in a dark, "leaden, damp-smelling house" (59) with only her unheeding, inept father. That Evie has the unrestricted use of all of this dreary house does not indicate a more spacious and integrated life than Joan had in her single bedroom; rather, it points to the true lack of concern that anyone has for Evie's behavior. While Joan is at least taught to be a good guest, Evie seems to have been taught nothing. Her only long term relationship is with her father, and for Evie, life with father means "years of silence" (46). While Joan's parents at least attend to her with uneasy courtesy when she tries to converse, Evie and her father do not communicate at all. Even at mealtimes, each one reads separately. As a result of her upbringing, Evie has developed practically no self-esteem, no personality, and no vision of a better life for herself; she is almost totally alienated from her father, from her schoolmates, and from her culture as a whole. The only one of Tyler's major female characters to lack a mother during her formative years, Evie vividly epitomizes a girl's need for such a nurturing relationship.

A high school math teacher, Mr. Decker is vague, gentle, and neglectful, but he does not mean to be unkind to his daughter. It does not occur to him that Evie needs any special expression of love or any guidance. On the contrary, he assumes that she will "manage just fine" (12). Offering neither his time nor his interest, he does not know Evie's age, her friends, nor how she spends her time. Further, Mr. Decker never mentions his dead wife. Thus, Evie is deprived not only of her mother's physical presence, but also of any possibility of knowing her mother vicariously or of feeling herself a wanted baby through her father's sharing memories with her. Instead, Evie knows her mother only as a photograph smiling "hopefully from a filigree frame" (207), remembered only by a husband who never mentions her name. Characteristically, Evie never asks about her mother, either, for she fears what she would hear. She constantly expects her father to remonstrate: "'You are what I traded your mother for, and it was a bad bargain at that'" (46). Actually, Mr. Decker never says anything personal at all; he is a poor surrogate mother and no father at all.

Because Mr. Decker is not the kind of father Evie wants and needs, she compensates for his inadequacies in her fantasies. In her talks with her one friend Violet, Mr. Decker keeps "turning out to be the kind of father who put his foot down" (12). In reality, Mr. Decker is incapable of such firmness with anyone. Unaware that Evie is infatuated

with Drumstrings Casey, a local rock musician, and making weekly visits to the Unicorn, a local roadhouse, to see him, Mr. Decker is totally bewildered by Evie's carving CASEY into her forehead. Just as Mr. Decker has not noticed her weekly jaunts to the Unicorn before her self-injury, so he is unaware when she resumes her treks, this time as a paid publicity gimmick to boost her idol's popularity. Because she goes every Saturday, then every Friday, too, and dresses each night in the same black outfit, Evie can hardly believe that her father never notices. Eventually, Evie plans and carries out her elopement and marriage without ever being discovered. Although her life with her father should have abundantly informed her, Evie is still surprised "that she could do something so monstrous without his sensing it" (143).

The lack of attention and guidance from her father would not have been so destructive to Evie had her mother lived or had there been a satisfactory substitute for her. Though someone must have cared for Evie when she was an infant, the caretakers were undoubtedly impermanent and unimpressive, since they left no discernible mark on Evie, her memories, or her environment. Without the mirror of a mother or a surrogate, Evie, as does any other infant or child, finds it almost impossible to develop a core personality.⁷

Clotelia, the daily housemaid for the Deckers, is clearly not a good mother substitute, though Evie would have

been glad had the maid tried to be one. Flamboyant with her bush hair-do, African cape, and "earrings as big as slave bands" (59), Clotelia treats the Decker house and the Deckers with supercilious disdain. She interrupts her daily television and beer only long enough for sporadic, superficial cleaning and uninspired, hurried cooking. "Continually disappointed" by Clotelia, Evie is sure that "other people would have turned into members of the family by now," but Clotelia is still an "indifferent stranger" (59), angry, critical, suspicious, and unloving. After four years, she continues to carry her purse from room to room with her all day long. For her favorite soap opera characters, Clotelia has a continuous commentary of encouragement, compliments, warnings, and care. For Evie, she has only silence, anger, insults, and criticism. As Tyler comments: "Clotelia never would act the way she was supposed to" (61), though Evie, long after she knows the futility of her wishes, keeps hoping that Clotelia will serve as her surrogate mother or guiding adult. At the end of the book, when her father dies, Evie insists that she wants to be alone in her father's house; but being alone is not what she wants at all. She wants comfort, the mother she has never known, and she calls Clotelia. Clotelia arrives quickly, but she is neither mother nor comforter. She is still Clotelia, and she begins at once to criticize. When Evie snaps at Clotelia to quit "harping" on her, the maid comments that she should have

brought her own mother, "'a consoler at the Baptist Church,'" where she goes to all the funerals to "'console the mourners till they is cheered up . . . just hug them and pat their shoulders, offer them Kleenex'" (210). These skills, however, are foreign to Clotelia, as Tyler makes clear: "Then Clotelia, who was not like her mother at all, turned her back and rinsed out the cocoa pan, and Evie cupped her hands around the mug for warmth" (210).

Violet, Evie's only friend, is not a good mother substitute either. "An enormously fat girl with teased black hair and a beautiful face" (13), Violet is as flamboyant in her dress and as self-assured in her behavior as Clotelia. Nothing seems to upset or shock Violet. Predictably, she treats Evie's self-disfigurement with her usual aplomb, twirling casually on a stool as she watches the doctor stitch up Evie's forehead. Efficient and bossy, Violet likes to get things organized; it is she who helps Evie with her clothes at the hospital, calls Mr. Decker, and arranges to retrieve Evie's purse from the ladies' room at the Unicorn. When Evie decides to get married, Violet takes charge, investigating marriage laws and blood tests and driving the couple to the doctor and to the courthouse for the license. Her ministrations to Evie, however, are those of a teenager, thrilled by a new, daring life and a secret elopement, not those of a mother or counselor. Unperturbed by reality as a mother might be, Violet calls the pitiful, tacky elopement

the most exciting day of her life, and her romantic enthusiasm for Evie's marriage still gushes long after Evie has settled into a tiny, ugly tarpaper shack: "'I think you're the luckiest girl in the senior class'" (155).

With no father, no mother, and no satisfactory surrogate mother to guide her, and only one friend who is nearly as alien to teenage life as she, Evie grows up in almost total isolation. She almost always walks alone. Her classmates pass her hurriedly without noticing her; neither she nor they speak. Nor is Evie any more at ease with her generation's culture outside of school. When Evie and Violet go to their first live rock show, Evie feels "a sort of seeping discomfort" (15), and thinks she has made a mistake in coming, but the other teenagers listen cheerfully and applaud and whistle afterward. At intermission, Evie and Violet, who have "kept their coats on, as if they were only dropping in on their way to somewhere else" (15-16), are the only ones who stay in their seats. Although the other acts do not impress the girls, Drumstrings Casey with his "speaking out" intrigues them both, and they begin making weekly trips to the Unicorn to see him perform. Violet is soon at home at the roadhouse; Evie, alone among all the other teenagers, remains ill at ease.

Evie's alienation, discomfort, and low self-esteem are exacerbated by her unattractive appearance. As usual, Anne Tyler does a superb job not only of depicting the physical

being, clothing, and gestures of her protagonist in sharp, realistic images, but also of using these elements to represent, in part, her personality and attitudes. As Evie's appearance affects her, it also represents her. Overweight, with a "pudgy and formless" face (10) and slouching posture, Evie is heavyfooted and awkward. No matter what she wears, it turns grey and limp before she returns home. Further, her garments always seem to need attention; thus, Evie is continually tugging at her hems, rebuttoning her buttons, tucking in her shirt, and pulling up her socks. Her constant motion makes her appear nervous, but her face is "blank and listless" (20). She looks no one in the eye. In her most private moments, Evie cherishes a few good features hidden in her shapelessness: "a narrow nose, slender wrists, perfect oval fingernails" (48). However, these treasures do not gain her any favorable attention from others, nor are they sufficient to shore up Evie's self-confidence and self-esteem. Without ever having anyone capable of the job interested enough to manage Evie, it seems almost impossible that she can learn to manage herself or to develop the strong, positive self-image needed to lead a productive life.

Drumstrings Casey is the first person or thing in which Evie takes a real interest. She is attracted to him because of what she perceives as his cold, smooth, hard sureness. When she first hears him during a radio interview, Evie thinks his voice sounds "cool and motionless, like a stone

dropped into a pool" (7). Seeing him in person confirms the validity of her early image; and as he leaves the stage, "an envelope of cold air traveled with him, as if he had just come in from a winter's night" (30). When Drum comes to the hospital with a photographer to capitalize on Evie's disfigurement for his own publicity, his mirrored sunglasses turn his face "into something as hard and as opaque as the sunglasses themselves" (51), and Evie perceives that "even this close, he seemed filmed by cold air" (52).

Drum embodies all of Evie's desires. Where she is too muddled even to consider her future, he is absolutely certain about what he wants. He wants to leave North Carolina, and he believes that becoming a rock star is his ticket to escape. "While David [his drummer] talked about up, Drum talked about out" (78). Moreover, he seems to have no doubts that he will achieve his goal quite easily. Evie, on the other hand, does nothing easily and has no confidence in her ability to achieve a goal, even supposing she had one. In Evie's eyes, Drum is solitary and remote because he needs no one else, unlike Evie herself, who is alone because she has no one else. Totally inhibited and self-conscious, Evie feels herself to be powerless; Drum, on the contrary, without self-consciousness, dresses and acts as he pleases. In addition, the glamour of show business, however tawdry the Unicorn, and the sexuality of Drum's tight black pants and

greasy black hair, however trashy, are potent magnets to Evie.

Another compelling aspect of Drum's appeal is his mysterious "speaking out." As a rule, Evie cannot understand Drum's lyrics because of the loud music and the way he slurs his words, but within each song, he stops singing and "speaks out" statements and questions that change each night and that seemingly have nothing to do with the music in progress nor with one another:

"Why do you walk on my nerves this way?" (17)

"You know I'm late . . . Will you let me be?" (35)

"Don't come no further." (88)

This gimmick, unlike anything Evie has heard before, holds her spellbound. Although she cannot understand what these lines mean, she wants to answer back. Fascinated and puzzled, she asks, "'Is he saying something? Is there something underneath it? Is he speaking in code?'" (35) For Evie, solving the mystery of the speaking out will also unlock the secrets of Drum; then all of the things that confuse her, constrain her, alienate her, and defeat her will become clear and manageable. In Drum, Evie sees escape from a desolate, meaningless life to a life over which she has control and in which she has power. Drum himself is both the symbol and the key.

Although Evie is almost helplessly passive and unmotivated and almost hopelessly isolated and lacking in

self-esteem at the beginning of the novel, her attraction to Drum Casey and her unformulated but enlarging belief that through identification with him she can possess his qualities, enhance herself, and create her own world, engender both a measure of self-knowledge and a measure of courage and, thus, set her on a path which eventually leads to her running away from home to seek her ideal life as the manager of her own family. Her initial step is to paste a poorly drawn portrait of Drum in the center of her mirror. "Drumstrings Casey's penciled head took the place of her own every time she combed her hair" (24). At last, someone important looks back at her from her mirror. Dissatisfied with the quality of the drawing, Evie takes her Kodak to the Unicorn, but her self-conscious worrying almost incapacitates her. Then suddenly, she just stands up, calls his name, and snaps his picture. As she describes it later: "'It wasn't something I had thought up first, you know. It was spur-of-the-moment. 'Why not?' I thought, and did it. Impulse. That's what it was'" (32). Since Evie has purposefully taken her camera with her to the Unicorn in order to take Drum's picture, her action is not totally without premeditation. However, as Evie recognizes, a real advance plan would entangle her in shackling fears about how she looks and what others think of her, and these concerns would keep her from focusing on her real purpose. The result would be failure or embarrassment or both. At this point,

Evie can do what she wants only by freeing herself from the prison of her self-consciousness, an enclosure she can elude solely by quick action and resignation to the fact that she may suffer for it later. "'Why not?'" Ironically, then, to Evie, impulse means control. It means taking action without concern for what others think. It means accepting the consequences for doing what she wants, even if they are painful and unpleasant.

Jealousy spurs Evie to the next step. Unable to flirt with Drum or talk to him the way some girls can, Evie, frustrated by her anonymity, broods about Drum and impulse. One evening, a redhead answers his speaking out--"If I called your name wrong, would you still say yes?"--with a resounding "You bet I would" (36) and pulls him around to dance with her. Evie abruptly leaves the table, rushes to the ladies' room, and carves CASEY in large, ragged letters all the way across her forehead. Thus, Evie takes possession of at least his name and insures that the self she sees in the mirror and the self the world sees when looking at her are permanently identified with and by Drumstrings Casey.

Even though she has cut the letters backwards "as if she were staring out at the letters from within, from the wrong side of her forehead" (39), Evie is elated with her act: "'I believe this might be the best thing I've ever done'" (43), she proclaims. She is proud that she has actually taken things into her own hands for a change, acted definitely,

surely, without self-consciousness and without concern for the consequences. She is sure that if she "'had started acting like this a long time ago,'" that is, decisively in control, her "'whole life might've been different'" (43). Since Evie confirms only a few pages earlier that whatever she does to attract Drum will have to be done on impulse, without planning beforehand, the reader must assume that Evie's decision to cut CASEY is made suddenly, followed by her customary "Why not?" Yet, impulse alone could not have carried Evie through the full five letter name. Somewhere between the wobbly C and the droopy Y, Evie's grit and determination, stubbornness, and budding pride must have taken over. Her joy in her act is in part the joy of taking charge and managing her life (however wrong-minded). Thus, she responds to the photographer's query: "Was it all of a sudden? Had you planned it?" with the cryptic: "It's hard to say" (53). In any case, Evie believes that she is now inextricably identified with Drum, his power, and his mystery. Further, she is confident that her act will win not only Drum's attention and regard, but that of others as well.

However, Drum is not so easily snared. Repulsed by her appearance, he does not want to be associated with her. She has not discovered his code; she has not even carved the right name, as far as he is concerned: "Why not my first name? . . . There're thousands of Caseys around" (54). Protesting that she doesn't "have that big of a forehead"

(54), Evie is astonished to learn after all this time that everyone calls him simply "Drum." Whether he likes it or not, Evie has staked a kind of claim on Drum, which he recognizes, but tries to evade: "Certainly was a peculiar feeling, . . . Feels like meeting up with your own face somewhere" (55).

In an interview in The National Observer in 1972, Anne Tyler notes that A Slipping-Down Life is the only one of her novels she likes (she had published only three at the time) "because it's the one book . . . in which the characters change." Indeed, she describes her other novels as exhibiting "an utter lack of faith in change," partly because "I really don't think most people are capable of it."⁸ Evie definitely changes, and Anne Tyler, in one of her most skillfully drawn characterizations, limns the erratic but unequivocal transformation of Evie Decker from a passive, insecure, alienated teenager into a regenerative managing woman, an independent woman who can make her own choices, assert her own needs and desires, cope with her own life, and run her own household. This conversion causes Evie to run away first from her father's house and then from her husband's house in her search for the life she wants.

Evie's progress in developing her person and her vision of the future seems to come to a halt when she returns home from the hospital. Dejected because Drum is unmoved and untouched by her sacrificial wounds, Evie is at first almost

immobilized. Yet she manages to emerge from her inertia and begins again to plot an association with Drum. Although Drum initially rejects her offer to serve as a publicity gimmick for him, he does drive her to school, to Evie's delight, for she knows that "the whole school will know by noon" (75) that the girl who carved the singer's name in her forehead is now hanging out with him. Without bringing her popularity or acceptance, Evie's new notoriety does bring her attention. On the last school day, when everyone signs yearbooks, Evie, for the first time in her life, finds her autograph in demand. Shortly, Evie's initiative pays off with Drum, too, for David, his drummer and manager, convinces Drum to give her idea a try. Evie's pleasure in her victory is dampened initially by Drum's making it clear that he considers the whole plan--"the fat girl with a name on her forehead," the audience whispering and pointing--sickening (85-86). Nevertheless, Evie soon finds herself riding to and from the Unicorn with David and Drum every Saturday night. Furthermore, her hunch about publicity also proves to be on target; her presence does enhance Drum's popularity, and they begin working Friday nights as well.

The trips to and from the Unicorn are Evie's biggest rewards for initiating another connection with Drum. To her, those half-hour periods are gifts, for she never sees Drum at the Unicorn except when he is on stage. Accordingly, Evie makes the most of that time; shoving down all of her natural

reserve and self-consciousness, going "against her own nature, even . . . she drilled him with words" (92). Soon she discovers that questions about himself and compliments about his music are the way "to grab his attention" (92). Even though Evie mourns at the end of July that "things were no different from the very first night" (104), there really are many changes. Her self-confidence grows steadily all summer as she learns to feel comfortable with Drum, to lead the conversation, and to feel at ease inside the Unicorn. At the same time, small chinks in Casey's hard smoothness appear. At the end of each show, he is puzzled that he is no closer to getting out than before, and "his proud cold envelope of air" (97) leaves him momentarily. Evie uses these opportunities to reassure him; nevertheless, she is unable to establish a real communication link with Drum, and her weekend treats end abruptly when Drum callously informs her she is no longer welcome.

After her dismissal, Evie feels "as if she had returned from some long hard trip that no one else knew about" (113). Obviously, this difficult journey has changed her, expanded her horizons, and strengthened her; and immediately she makes plans for a new start--cuts her bangs, throws away her black clothes, and buys her school supplies. Later, although she allows Drum, who has lost his job and quarreled with his parents, to sleep on the Decker porch, she is not overwhelmed and willing to accept anything he offers as she has been

before; for she recognizes that they both have changed. Drum now needs Evie's adoration to soothe his spirit and her conversation to fill his empty hours; and his need and her response to it continue to build her confidence. Thus, although Evie, who has "never been given as much time before" (125) by anyone, relishes Drum's undivided attention, she soon becomes dissatisfied with her role as his secret, undemanding, and unrewarded handmaiden and now projects another kind of dream life. Boldly she pushes him for a commitment: "'Drum Casey, what do you want out of me?'" (129) And she is willing for him to leave in a huff, not even sure she wants to bring him back. When he does return, Evie does not kowtow; indeed, in a reversal of their past interactions, she asks him when he is going to leave her alone. As she stands ready to "fire back at him" again, he seems "to have given up" (134). Nor does she rejoice at his proposal of marriage, which does not meet her dreams of a courtship with "double dates and dances and matching shirts" (136). Only when he explains--"'Things are just petering out all around me and I want to get married to someone I like and have me a house and change. Make a change. Isn't that enough? Don't you want to change your life some?'" (135)-- does she answer typically, "'Oh, well. Why not?'" (136) After all, she does, indeed, want to change her life.

However, even as an engaged woman, on the brink of a marriage that only a few weeks ago had seemed completely

unobtainable, Evie is still unwilling to submit to anything and everything Drum wishes. Self-assertively, she refuses to elope to Dillon, South Carolina, which she sees as the place where "the trash" run off to "when they have to get married" (139), even though Casey points out that it is the only place where people can marry at once. Further, she insists on the ceremony being performed by a minister, rather than a justice of the peace. Recognizing each time the possibility that she may have pushed too far, Evie, nevertheless, holds her position and wins her way.

Evie's escape to establish her dream family with Drum is not, in the end, a success, and Evie must once again formulate an ideal and effect her escape with still another person with whom she hopes to build a satisfying relationship. On the other hand, the marriage with Drum is not a waste, either. Tyler is particularly deft in depicting this union, her first in-depth treatment of a marriage. Characterized by uncertain feelings, shallowness, and poverty, this marriage would seem an unlikely setting for personal development; yet, ironically, Evie's confidence and strength, her ability to cope and manage expand greatly within it, even though she is unprepared for such a relationship. With no circle of family or friends, Evie has never seen a real-life love affair or a good or bad marriage up close. For information about these intimate human interactions, she looks to magazines, movies, and television

as her guides to beauty and grooming, love and romance, getting and keeping a husband, and managing a home and family.

Inadvertently, Drum is responsible in large part for Evie's growth as a managing woman. Acting almost entirely from selfish motives, he still pays more attention to Evie than anyone else has ever done. Bored and perpetually needful of ego support, he seeks Evie's presence constantly. Worrying at first that Drum will tire of her, Evie checks "everything for stupidity" (156) before she opens her mouth. Because of his moody silences and his disdain, Evie fears Drum will be difficult and intolerant; contrarily, he settles into marriage immediately and completely. Soon, Evie stops tiptoeing and talks about whatever comes into her mind, mostly household hints and other items from magazines, convinced that "these were the things she was supposed to talk about. Wearing her bibbed apron; tying a scarf over her pincurls, she began to feel as sure and as comfortable as any of the feather-light girls floating down high school corridors" (156).

However, Drum is not fully supportive of Evie's growth as a person and as a manager, for he not only encourages Evie to spend time with him, he also discourages her from doing anything that takes time away from him. "'Ah, don't go to school . . . I'll do more for you than any schoolhouse will'" (155), he promises. He sees no point in Evie's finishing high

school since he never did, and despite their constant need for money and his own reluctance to work at anything but his music, Drum is also opposed to Evie's working. What Drum likes is coziness--the two of them snugly ensconced in their little tarpaper shack with Evie feeding his stomach and his ego and no one telling him what to do.

Although their shack is cozy, it is not filled with warmth from their stove or their passion. Having waited all her life to be kissed, Evie is disappointed from the first with Drum's "cold, blank lips" (136). After their marriage, "their love-making was sudden and awkward, complicated by pitch dark and a twisted nightgown . . ." (154). When the school principal admonishes Evie to be discreet around the other girls, Evie wonders what she could talk to them about; in truth, she has "overheard more in the girl's gym than she had yet found out with Drum in the papery bedroom" (154). Tyler's description of Evie and Drum pressed together between kisses, looking "over each other's shoulders like drivers meeting on opposite lanes of the highway" (143) is an excellent image to depict their entire relationship.

Infrequently attending school, Evie is, however, learning in other ways, and her abilities continue to develop along with her responsibilities. Initially, Drum engages in a flurry of small jobs to make their tarpaper shack cozier; he installs can openers and towel racks, arranges furniture, chooses cushions. Thereafter, he leaves to Evie all

household responsibilities---cooking, cleaning, laundry, repairs, and the budget. In addition to learning tricks about saving money, she also makes the plans to get more, including staging publicity stunts to improve Drum's marketability and secretly getting a job for herself.

Finding the "importance of details" to be "peaceful and lulling" (171), Evie is competent and happy at her job in the Pulqua Library; in fact, she is sorry to leave "the words and the warmth" (172) each day. Yet tucked away in the back of her mind are Drum, his displeasure when he discovers the truth, and an array of excuses and explanations. Evie's worry about Drum's discovering her job parallels her worry about her father's discovering her seeing Drum. In both instances, she can hardly believe that the hoodwinked man does not perceive the true situation. Yet, clearly, Evie's fears of terrible unnamed consequences for deceiving her father and then her husband are unnecessary. Upon discovering the truth, both men passively accept her actions, leaving Evie both relieved and disappointed. Neither ever asks Evie why she has made her decisions nor openly attempts to change her mind. Although Evie has absorbed from her society, without quite knowing it, an expectation of male strength and power, she finds instead, again without articulating it, that control and responsibility rest with those that act decisively, regardless of sex. In Tyler's novels, this managing power within the family is more likely

to reside in women than in men. Tyler treats this point subtly in A Slipping-Down Life, as she does in all of her novels. Evie learns; she does not pontificate--nor does Tyler.

In their life together, Evie assumes Drum's needs, not his powers, as she had naively expected when she carved his name on her forehead. The cool, self-confident dark star she once admired on stage, she discovers to be a thin country boy, poorly educated and in need of constant ego support. Ironically, he has many of the same traits she has--insecurity, lack of direction, loneliness--the same traits she had expected her identification with him to help her overcome. As it happens, his growing need calls forth new strength in Evie, and she becomes more competent, as Drum becomes less so. Even though Evie supports Drum in his dream of escape and stardom, freeing him from the necessity of a full-time job and praising his work, he makes no progress, and he complains constantly: "'I ain't but nineteen years old and already leading a slipping-down life, and hard rock is fading so pretty soon nobody won't want it'" (177). Loyally, she pins her hair back off her forehead to publicize her belief in him, but her exhibition is now done to help him, not because she expects to benefit from it herself, as she had initially.

While Evie is learning that there is no magic answer in Drum, she continues to learn that she herself has power when

she takes things into her own hands. Without telling Drum, she decides that she wants to get pregnant, and despite their infrequent sex, Drum's whispered questions about safety, and their lack of money, she succeeds. Consciously, she does not know why she wants a baby; yet "the thought of a baby sent a yellow light through her mind, like a door opening" (177). Thus, Tyler's image makes clear that to Evie a baby will be the modus operandi for her next big escape, this time from the slipping-down life that Drum has accurately articulated. Just as she has not told Drum of her wish to get pregnant, she carefully conceals from him the fact that she is, though she worries constantly about where the money will come from and how they can make do in their present surroundings.

When she returns to the tarpaper shack the morning after her father's death, she has already set her sights on a different kind of life. Finding Drum in bed with another woman does not devastate her as it might have done earlier; rather she greets this new betrayal with brisk efficiency, ushering the interloper outside and turning immediately, without even removing her coat, to make coffee. Evie also brushes aside Drum's attempts to explain and moves directly into her news about the baby and her resolve to live a better life. Once again, Evie wants a change, and this time she proposes a transformation for Drum: "'Now my father has left me his house. We can move in this afternoon--just pack up and leave this place. Start a new life. Give some shape to

things'" (217). For Evie, the dream of stardom and escape to glamour is over; she wants to return to the middle class. Drum protests, of course, for he is reluctant to accept the end of his plans to escape North Carolina and incapable of accepting that Evie is the stronger of the two: "'Evie, I would do almost anything for you but not this. Not get organized and follow after you this way. You used to like it here. Can't you just wait till my luck is changed?'" (218) However, Evie has already started a new life, quite literally, as she says: "'I have the baby now'" (218). That Drum doesn't see how a baby changes anything simply confirms Evie's resolution to leave--without him if necessary. Having made the decision, Evie moves with dispatch. She already knows what to do: "Hundreds of times, in movies and television, she had watched this scene being rehearsed for her . . . there was no way she could make a mistake" (219). Unfortunately, Drum seems unfamiliar with these films, for at the point that he is supposed to agree to go with her to a new life in a decent house, he refuses. They are still looking past each other's shoulders going different ways. While he says wistfully that maybe she will change her mind, she says what she thinks he should already know: "'I never back down on things'" (221).

Perhaps Evie overstates her steadfastness. She has backed down on the marriage. She has, also, in a way, backed down on the CASEY carved into her forehead, for she has just

told Drum, in spite, that she did not cut the name herself, that unknown girls had held her down and disfigured her. On the other hand, Evie certainly has held true to her decisions through long, tough times and moves on only when it becomes clear that a higher priority demands she cut her losses. Now the baby is a fact, and she will not back down on her primary responsibility to provide a good life for her child.

The escape theme is very strongly developed in A Slipping-Down Life, as Evie time after time slips away or bolts away, figuratively and realistically, from unpalatable situations, and Drum's whole being is always focused on getting out. But while Drum reacts, Evie acts, taking big steps which cause her pain, but at the same time insure her growth as a regenerative managing woman. Her first journeys are only a few miles out of town to the Unicorn, but Evie surely moves herself into a new life by these secret trips. Further, Evie escapes her passivity and anonymity by carving CASEY in her forehead. For the first time in her life she cannot be ignored by father or peers, and though her deed cannot be considered a model for transforming oneself and it certainly does not have the exact consequences she expects, it still changes her life completely. Eloping with Drum Casey to Tar City, she returns with him to a tarpaper shack and what she hopes to be a fulfilling life as the wife of a rising rock star. Each time Evie leaves home, she returns, but her experiences send her home a different woman. After

her summer at the Unicorn, she self-assertively forces a proposal and elopes. When the dream of marriage turns out to be a "slipping-down life" instead, she escapes again to return to her father's house. This return, too, is another encounter with the future. Evie is now the owner of the house, and despite her father's death, she is not alone; she returns with her unborn child as her companion.

Although Evie has developed the firmness and capabilities to shape her own identity and build her own life, she is clearly in for difficult times. She is still unattractive, and her confidence in herself as a woman has been battered by Drum's betrayals and by his letting her go so easily. Intelligent, Evie still has not finished high school; competent, she still has only a part-time job. But Evie has also developed the capacity to manage her life and to learn and grow from painful experiences; she is young, but she is clearly a regenerative managing woman who can use her newfound strength to help her change her father's house into a home and change herself into the kind of mother that her child deserves. By comparison, both Joanne's and Joan's futures look almost easy with Joanne's complete family circle and Joan's larger but less intimate extended group. At the end of The Tin Can Tree, Joan, while recognizing the narrow permanence of her choice, still chooses to endure, to take what she can get within the overlapping family groups in which she wants to live. Her reaffirmation of her heart's

desire is also her resignation to the limitations real life imposes on her dreams. Evie's choices, on the other hand, consistently accept the discomfort and challenge of expanded responsibility. Perhaps this painful growth explains why Tyler has called A Slipping-Down Life a "braver" book than her first two.⁹ Evie's courage resides in her constructing a dream and acting against all odds to achieve it; then owning up to her mistake to herself and acting courageously again to try for still another dream relationship. At novel's end, with her pregnancy soon to be as prominent a physical sign of her commitment to her baby as CASEY on her forehead was to Drum, the reader can be sure that Evie faces her new obligations and her newly organized life with even more confidence and proven ability than ever before.

The Clock Winder, Tyler's fourth novel, is a more ambitious work than its forerunners. For one thing, it covers directly a much longer time period than that incorporated into her earlier books. Additionally, it greatly enlarges the number of characters involved in the story. In each of Tyler's first two novels, she chooses a single event as the reason for a family gathering and covers a time span of only a few days; in A Slipping-Down Life, she covers less than a year. However, in The Clock Winder, Tyler narrates ten years in the lives of Elizabeth Abbott and the Emerson family. Even in her earlier works, Tyler gives her novels the resonance of time past and her characters depth

and meaning by using key events and the personal associations triggered by them to probe memories. Providing both more events and a larger cast offers more opportunities for Tyler to use her well-developed skills in integrating the influence of past events and people with the present through the use of flashbacks, inner thoughts, and relationships to flesh out her major characterizations and her plot. Tyler expands her scope still further by using several different points of view so that she not only depicts the major characters' development over a ten-year period, but she also shows them from several different perspectives.

Elizabeth Abbott, protagonist of The Clock Winder, the first of Anne Tyler's heroines to be consciously independent and in charge of her own life when the novel opens, is a more interesting character at the beginning of her novel than her earlier counterparts. Like the preceding regenerative women, Elizabeth leaves home to escape an unsatisfactory family environment, but unlike them, she leaves home with the firm intention of preserving her freedom. In contrast to later Tyler regenerative women, who will all leave home with men as Evie Decker does, Elizabeth leaves home alone, as does Joanne Hawkes and Joan Pike. In many other respects, however, Elizabeth's departure contrasts with Joan's and Joanne's.

For example, Elizabeth does not quickly learn that what she really wants is to establish her own family. The women in the prior novels both have cool aloof mothers, and they

anxiously seek to redress the lack of warmth in their lives as soon as possible. Elizabeth, on the other hand, has previously enjoyed a close relationship with her mother, but a restrictive life, and she leaves home determined to be on her own, free of the demands and expectations of others.

Knowing only how to be a good guest, Joan leaves behind her a life with two remote and aging parents, a life without warmth, albeit one filmed by a thin veneer of courtesy, to live as a guest in another household. When she leaves home, she has no notion of what she wants or what she can do, nor have her parents offered her any advice or help toward discovering the answers to these implied questions. Elizabeth, on the other hand, flees a warmer, but very directive family, a family shaped by the narrow constraints of her father's role as a Southern Baptist minister, her mother's role as his dutiful wife, and the mores of small town Ellington, North Carolina. Reverend and Mrs. Abbott try both to pose and to answer life's questions for Elizabeth in accord with their own beliefs and behavior, but Elizabeth will not acquiesce.

Although Elizabeth leaves home, as Joanne Hawkes does, as a result of a family quarrel, the circumstances of the disputes are quite different. In the Hawkeses' household, noisy fights are commonplace, and Joanne, already bewildered and miserable over her parents' unhappy marriage, leaves because she can no longer tolerate the endless, acrimonious

debates between her mother and her grandmother over Phillip Hawkes' defection. On the contrary, the Abbotts enjoy a relatively tranquil home founded on a solid marriage. Strife breaks out only spasmodically when it becomes clear that Elizabeth does not accept the Abbotts' tenets for her life. Fond of her family, Elizabeth is not merely rebellious toward their expectations, she is also deeply saddened by their disappointment in her; simultaneously, she is too honest and too courageous to accept a dogma or a lifestyle in which she does not believe. Consequently, Elizabeth leaves home after an explosive quarrel with her father immediately following her younger sister Polly's wedding. The Abbotts had clearly hoped this wedding would prompt Elizabeth to marry the boy they have picked out for her, settling her down once and for all. Instead, she flees.

She is escaping her life as the preacher's daughter and the concomitant expectations that she will be a good Baptist and a good housewife and mother in a small North Carolinian town. Even though she likes Ellington per se, she does not want her life prepackaged. Because Elizabeth does not believe in Christianity and is openly exploring different religions and philosophies, she is in frequent and painful conflict with her father. "'He just considers me a trial. Always has,'"¹⁰ she says. Indeed, an argument over her current belief in reincarnation, which she admits is probably a temporary one, is the quarrel which precipitates her

departure from home. At the same time, an unrecognized, but pervasive concern is Elizabeth's need to escape living a life like her mother's.

Elizabeth loves her mother and recognizes and admires her mother's strengths and capacities as the real manager of the Abbott family; at the same time, Elizabeth recognizes and disapproves of the deception and the narrowness which hamper the scope of her mother's life. As the perfect minister's wife, Mrs. Abbott gives serene and seemingly absolute attention to her husband's sermons and sweet support and sympathy to the rest of his ministerial duties. Without a doubt, Mrs. Abbott sees quite well that much of what she does is hypocritical; but she accepts deception for good cause as part of the natural order. Beneath her patience and docility, she is "all bustle and practicality" (130), cooking up a dozen chicken casseroles at a time to deep freeze until a church member becomes ill or dies; "if she could have deep frozen her sympathy ahead of time too she probably would have" (130). Convinced of the frailty and helplessness of men in general, Mrs. Abbott is also aware of her husband's particular flaws. In the time-honored way of the dutiful wife, she conceals these shortcomings and compensates for them whenever she can. Often the buffer between Elizabeth and her father, Mrs. Abbott advises her daughter about how to deal with her father peacefully; but because her advice almost always involves deceit, Elizabeth is more and more

unwilling or unable to accept it. For example, Mrs. Abbott knows that her husband has over-reacted to Elizabeth's remarks about reincarnation; yet, even though he is a grown man and a minister of God, she also knows he will not back down. Consequently, in her letter to Elizabeth, she pressures her daughter to apologize, catering to her father's pride: "Honey he is just so hurt but would never show it for the world, you know how proud he is. Nobody is as strong as they look. . . . Just one word is all it would take and it would make him so . . ." (32-33). On another occasion Mrs. Abbott tells Elizabeth her basic belief about the relationship between the sexes: "'Don't tell your father, . . . but it's a fact that from the day they're born till the day they die, men are being protected by women. Here at least. I don't know about other parts of the world. If you breathe a word of this . . . I'll deny it'" (142). However, this fundamental principle is hardly a secret; it merely confirms a truth that the whole life pattern of the Abbotts reveals daily.

The Reverend Abbott, however, apparently does not know this rudimentary rule. Handsome, with a rich voice and absolute conviction in the rightness of his beliefs and methods, he sees himself as a pillar of strength for his flock. Even though his wife and the other women in the congregation cater to him and protect him, Reverend Abbott is not always happy. At times, Elizabeth thinks that she can

read "all his disappointments . . . in the grooves around his mouth," and she imagines him thinking: "Why couldn't his family see him the way his congregation did? Why had his daughter stayed glued to her seat in the revival tent? What gave him the feeling sometimes that his wife viewed God indulgently, like an imaginary playmate, and that she prepared her chicken casseroles as she would teaparty fare for children on a Sunday afternoon?" (150-151) Elizabeth loves her father; but she cannot take what he says "at face value" (131).

In contrast to Elizabeth, Polly matches the Abbott's expectations perfectly. "Smaller than Elizabeth, with a heart-shaped face and a tousle of yellow curls like a frilled nightcap" (135), Polly grew up to be Queen of the May in high school; Elizabeth grew up to be the one with the cute little sister. Feminine, amenable, conventional, Polly predictably marries her high school sweetheart. Before her marriage, she was "the younger sister" in Mrs. Abbott's eyes; after her marriage, she "somehow bypassed Elizabeth," and mother and married daughter exchange "knowing glances" (136) over Elizabeth's head and behind her back.

Understanding the basic deception on which her life is based does not lead Mrs. Abbott to help her daughters prepare for a different, more honest life. On the contrary, Tyler makes it clear that Mrs. Abbott believes that marriage, children, protecting a man's pride without his knowledge, and

bolstering a man in his life's work are exactly what her girls should aspire to achieve. Confused and disturbed by Elizabeth's unwillingness to commit to college or marriage (college being only a way station toward marriage), Mrs. Abbott finds Elizabeth's lack of definite plans unsettling and unacceptable, especially since the perfect future is already at hand in Dommie, the handsome young pharmacist destined to take over his father's drug store and the nicest boy in town. Since Dommie is clearly in love with Elizabeth, Mrs. Abbott cannot understand Elizabeth's hesitation. Long after Elizabeth has left home, Mrs. Abbott is still cautioning her daughter about Dommie, reminding her that "nobody waits forever" (32). Although Elizabeth is sorry that she is a disappointment, she is not sorry enough to accept her father's religion nor to buckle under to a life like her mother's.

Typically, Tyler helps establish Elizabeth's iconoclastic character through her clothing and gestures. As a rule, Elizabeth dresses in what is almost a "uniform--moccasins, dungarees, and a white shirt, and a bulky black jacket with a rib-knit waist" (20). In the winter, she adds huge black rubber boots with red soles and metal clasps and a leather aviator's helmet closely fitted to her head with "ear-flaps that little boys often wear" (45). Pretty in a plain way, Elizabeth does nothing to improve her appearance: her dark yellow hair hangs straight to her shoulders; her

square hands are badly cared for with chopped looking nails and scraped knuckles; she wears no make-up; her shirt tail hangs out concealing a tall, lanky, flat-chested body. Others are always trying to improve Elizabeth's grooming--retie a scarf, lend curlers, apply lipstick; she is good-natured, but usually unaccommodating. Clearly, Elizabeth is straightforward, unpretentious, comfortable, and sturdy. Clothes do not make this woman, nor hide her either.

Although Elizabeth has not consciously formulated a specific future she is running toward, Tyler makes it clear that two principles guide Elizabeth's quest. At the top of her list is her desire to be useful and needed by others, an everyday hero helping people through hardships and rescuing them from difficulties. Obversely, and equally important, she also wants to avoid doing any harm to anyone. While these principles are clearly part of every regenerative managing woman's foundational beliefs insofar as they concern her own family, it is a sign of Elizabeth's youth that her ambitions extend far beyond these parameters at this point. Further, strict adherence to her narrow definition of avoiding harm to others precludes her establishing an intimate relationship or starting her own family for the time being. For Elizabeth, avoiding harm means, first, avoiding sustained involvement which leads to expectations she might not be able to meet, such as those of her parents. It also means refusing to change people's lives around--either by

coercion or persuasion. Since childhood she has been horrified by the effects of her father and the traveling revivalists with their hellfire sermons on the Ellington congregations, and she assiduously avoids persuading friends to change even mundane plans for fear that they might suffer car wrecks or fires that their original plans would have allowed them to escape. A third manifestation is her unwillingness to take on any job involving children. "'I don't like children'" (10), she says flatly; "'I don't like people you can have so much effect on'" (11). In this sentiment, even though it is temporary, Elizabeth is unique among Tyler's regenerative women. Lacking confidence in her talents and abilities, Elizabeth is, nevertheless, determined to grow, to be competent, and to remain free and independent in finding her own direction in her own way.

Given this web of needs and attitudes, Elizabeth finds it natural to stop to help the fragile, overdressed, and overburdened Mrs. Emerson, whom she sees trying to move a morass of outdoor furniture from her long veranda and across the vast length of her sloping lawn to her garage. Because the wealthy, newly-widowed Mrs. Emerson needs companionship and help with her house and Elizabeth needs to be needed and to find employment, Elizabeth's accepting a job as the Emerson handyman seems appropriate, even if a female handyman is unusual. In truth, the job appears ideal for Elizabeth; for she likes surprising herself by doing new things. Since

leaving home, she has held several very different jobs in a number of northern cities--stuffing envelopes, proofreading textbooks, delivering mail--and she has been fired from each for making "horrendous errors" (61). These failures, coupled with her sure knowledge of her parents' disappointment in her and her history of ineptness at home, have left Elizabeth with the belief that she is prone to make mistakes and cause pain. Yet from her first meeting with Mrs. Emerson, she works with a competence that is "comforting to watch" (13). Taking pleasure in the big old Victorian house, Elizabeth is proud of her ability to handle so many different jobs so well. She caulks windows, cleans gutters, repairs locks, replaces glass panes, prunes trees, repairs furniture, and winds all the clocks and synchronizes their chimes. Something always needs attention. Best of all, everything she attempts seems "to work out fine. Not like the old days" (33) at home when she broke more things than she fixed.

From the day that Elizabeth first climbed those porch steps, a born fumbler and crasher and dropper of precious objects, she had possessed miraculous repairing powers; and Mrs. Emerson (who had maybe never broken a thing in her life, for all Elizabeth knew) had obligingly presented her with a faster and faster stream of disasters in need of her attention. (70)

To Elizabeth, the right to make her own schedule is one of the most important benefits about her new job, for it means she is at last grown-up. "Where to go and when to sleep and what to do with the day were hers to decide--or not

to decide, which was even better. She could leave here when she wanted or stay forever, fixing things" (33). Because of her resolve to be free and independent, Elizabeth avoids fixed destinations and set plans as much as possible. "'Do you usually go about things in such a roundabout way?'" Mrs. Emerson asks her when they first meet, and Elizabeth answers joyfully: "'Always'" (9). Even when she does schedule something in advance, she is easily deflected and changes directions on the spur of the moment. For example, she never refuses an invitation: "'I always go where I'm asked, . . . It's a challenge: never turn down an invitation'" (36). Later, when Mrs. Emerson demands, "'How do I know that you won't go wandering off with someone tomorrow and leave me to cope on my own?'" Elizabeth answers bluntly, "'You don't'" (75). Leaving her options open and at the same time holding strong opinions is one of the fascinating contradictions of Elizabeth's nature: "'You are going to turn into a very objectionable old lady, Elizabeth. You know that. The opinionated kind. 'I like this, I don't like that,' every other sentence--it's fine now, but wait a little. See how it sits on people when you've lost your looks and you're croaking it out'" (87), a friend warns her. Actually, there is nothing grim or narrow about her personality, despite her insistence on her independence and her anxieties about causing harm. Laughter seems to come "shimmering off her like sparkles of water" (45). Indeed, her sense of fun, her

refusal to take offense at possible slights or infringements, and her enjoyment of life make her both loveable and maddening to the Emersons, who tend to take every event involving themselves as serious and major. They cannot understand, nor can they often resist, her ability to turn most events into sources of fun.

Elizabeth, it appears, has found her niche in Roland Park, though balancing her desire for freedom and her need to help and to avoid damage is not as easy a task for Elizabeth as she expects. The objective altruism she believes she wishes to practice is possible only in short term, superficial, or impersonal situations. While it might appear reasonable that a handyman's position would allow her to maintain this kind of emotional distance from her employer, in reality it is immediately apparent that Mrs. Emerson needs a friend at least as much as an employee to care for her property. Installed across the hall from Mrs. Emerson's bedroom in the former room of Margaret, Mrs. Emerson's second daughter, Elizabeth quickly integrates herself into the fabric of the big Emerson family. Mrs. Emerson finds her indispensable, and although Elizabeth complains about the multitudes of crises, quarrels, accidents, and troubles that the Emersons keep piling up at her feet "waiting for her to exclaim over the heaps and admire them" (82), she actually enjoys the hubbub. Her only concern, which sometimes distracts from her pleasure, is that she may inadvertently

cause harm by her reaction--or her lack of reaction. Overall, Elizabeth, fascinated by the dramatic, event-prone Emersons, finds entanglement easy and distance difficult. The truth is that this is just the kind of life Elizabeth seeks--a diverse, exciting, irregular family to manage, a family in which everyone depends on her. At the same time, she is not sufficiently secure to assume fully such awesome responsibilities. Unrealistically, she hopes that she can set the parameters of the relationship on her own, enjoying the managerial responsibilities she chooses and simultaneously holding herself sufficiently distant from the Emersons that she can remain free from the shackles of their expectations.

On the surface it might seem that Elizabeth would find Mrs. Emerson intolerable, for the widow treats Elizabeth to the same nagging attempts to correct, uplift, improve, alter, and control that she inflicts upon her own children. For the most part, Elizabeth laughs, shrugs, or ignores these attempted intrusions because they do not really threaten her freedom. At the Emerson house, Elizabeth is clearly an independent adult, not the dependent child she will always be, to some extent, within her own family. Moreover, at the Emerson house, she is the valued and competent fixer, not the burdensome bungler that she seems to be at the Abbotts. At one point, Mrs. Emerson, trying to express her appreciation of Elizabeth and simultaneously control Elizabeth's dating

habits, suggests a more traditionally familial relationship, saying, "'Elizabeth, in a way I think of you as another daughter'" (75). But Elizabeth quickly and sharply responds, "'I'm already somebody's daughter, . . . Once is enough'" (75). Elizabeth can tolerate Mrs. Emerson's nagging because she is confident that she is, after all, both deeply appreciated and actually free to stay or leave as she chooses; just so, Mrs. Emerson can accept Elizabeth's independence because Elizabeth is not her child and therefore neither a reflection on her nor a responsibility to her. Thus, imperious Mrs. Emerson and unflappable Elizabeth are comfortable with one another immediately, intrigued by their differences and hooked by their mutual needs, their lives fitting "together as neatly as puzzle pieces" (69), despite the surprise it evokes in others. Tyler's picture of Elizabeth, playfully wearing her treasured chauffeur's hat, driving Mrs. Emerson, properly attired, her outfit complete with a flowered spring hat and gloves, presents an image descriptive of their full relationship: "Mrs. Emerson, as she talked, kept dexterously erect in spite of Elizabeth's peculiar driving, and Elizabeth went on smiling into the sunlight even when Mrs. Emerson's voice grew creaky with complaints" (69).

Even after Elizabeth's duties begin to involve not just things but people, her magical competence in dealing with the Emersons holds. However, involvement with human problems

makes Elizabeth uneasy. Since she is still not ready to take on the full responsibilities of managing the Emersons, Elizabeth worries about her increasing entanglement with this crisis-prone family almost as much as she enjoys the challenges of her position and her abilities to meet them; and she keeps promising herself she will move on soon. At the same time, she does not want to give up her satisfying companionship with the Emerson brothers, neither Matthew, whom she is beginning to love more deeply, nor Timothy, who is coming to need her help more seriously. Nor can she tolerate the thought of losing Mrs. Emerson, "the one person who leaned on her," and "going back to being a bumbler" (77). Her solution to her dilemma is to set a deadline: at the first mistake of any kind she will leave.

When Elizabeth does make a mistake, it is a tragic one. Misjudging the full extent of Timothy's problems, she mishandles his love for her and his suicidal depression. When he points a gun at himself and unlocks the safety catch, Elizabeth violates her own rule of non-interference and lunges for the gun; as she touches him, he shoots himself. Although Matthew tells Elizabeth that she should not blame herself, she has a different idea:

Who else could she blame? She had done everything wrong with him from the very beginning, laughed off all he said to her right up to the moment when the gun went off, misread every word; and what she hadn't misread she had pretended to. She thought of that snowy night when he worried that he had died, and she had acted as if she didn't

understand. If she couldn't help him out, couldn't she at least have admitted she couldn't? (134)

This death is a much bigger mistake than Elizabeth ever thought she would make, and after Timothy's funeral, she withdraws in blank despair back to Ellington, back to where her mistakes are embarrassing but not fatal. Remote and lethargic, she watches television all night, sleeps all morning, and accomplishes nothing each day beyond walking the dog and simultaneously worrying and annoying her parents. Her suffering is starkly evident in her thinking that she is "back where she is supposed to be" (134), for everything about Ellington and her family is punishing: her mother makes her feel "all the more lumpish" (129); her father regularly sermonizes her on "Slothfulness. . . . Aimlessness. Slobbishness" (130) and buries his face in despair after every talk; the landscape is "parched and bleak and glaring" (134); and the whole disapproving community considers her "a black sheep--the minister's ne'er-do-well daughter" (132).

Though her confidence in herself as rescuer and mender is almost destroyed, Elizabeth is not defeated; as a regenerative woman, one who can at least manage herself if not an entire family yet, she slowly renews her confidence and tries once more to build her life. Vowing again to involve herself in nothing that can possibly cause harm, she agrees to care for the very old Mr. Cunningham, whose

daughter can neither afford to stay with him nor bear to put him in a nursing home. Because there is no medicine to administer and because it is clear that the old man is already losing his faculties and will die soon, Elizabeth believes she can perform her duties without real involvement and without doing him any harm. However, she soon joins him wholeheartedly in doing battle against old age. With that commitment comes her predictable worry:

Wasn't he sinking awfully fast? Just since she had come here? Maybe, having found her to lean on, he had stopped making an effort. Maybe she was the worst thing in the world for him. When she read aloud so patiently, and pulled his mind back to the checkers, and fought so hard against his invisible, grinning, white-haired enemy in the corner, it was all because of that worry. (166)

Her apprehension is for herself as well, for she is "fighting for her picture of herself as someone who was being of use, and who would never cause an old man harm" (166). Although Elizabeth plans to leave Mr. Cunningham in the fall to return to college, she finds that, after all, she has signed on for the full battle; thus, she sacrifices her freedom in order to stay on until his death a year and a half later. During this experience, Elizabeth learns to accept the fact that involvement is an essential part of caring for someone else, and she learns to manage not only Mr. Cunningham's life, but also to manage without despair the inevitable pain that involvement brings.

Elizabeth's next major step on her way to becoming a mature regenerative managing woman is to agree to marry her persistent suitor Dommie. Having left home earlier to avoid just this kind of marriage and this kind of life, Elizabeth has come to see responsibility and commitment differently, prompted by both her experiences and her brother-in-law's convincing her that she should vote. At the polls, she is struck with admiration for the dogged dutifulness of her fellow citizens, ordinary people waiting responsibly in line. She is sure "'they wait like that every voting day, and put in their single votes that hardly matter and go back to their jobs and to the same chores over and over. Just on and on. Just plodding along. Just getting through till they die'" (202). Comparing herself unfavorably, she thinks, "'Wouldn't you think I could do that much? Make some decisions? Get my life in order? Let my parents breathe easier for once?'" (202) Her answer to these questions is to set her wedding date with Dommie. Just before the wedding, however, Elizabeth realizes that this marriage is not the union she seeks. Because the experienced Reverend Abbott advises her that all brides get cold feet and that she owes the guests a wedding, Elizabeth goes through most of the ceremony, but she still says "'I don't'" (199), instead of the expected "I do" and leaves guests, family, and "poor, sweet Dommie" to sort out the rest of the event, while she escapes again. Still unswervingly honest with herself, Elizabeth refuses to accept

praise for her courage from Margaret Emerson, who drives the getaway car:

"What's the matter with you? What are you admiring so much? If I was so brave, how'd I get into that wedding in the first place. Oh, think about Dommie, he's always so sweet and patient. And my family doing all that arranging, and people coming all that way for the wedding. But Dommie. He's never said a mean thing in his life, or done anything but hope to be loved. What am I going to tell him now?" (202-203)

By now, Elizabeth no longer believes in the comforting thought that everyone has extra lives with which to experiment: "I've tried to believe it, but I can't. Things are so permanent. There's damage you can't repair" (202). Having once more escaped a life like her mother's, she will try again, even more careful to avoid causing harm, for she knows she will not be able to start with a clean slate.

Uncommitted and bored, Elizabeth takes a job at a shop where she sells crafts. Then one day while she is looking out of her window at a parade, she has the Joycean-like epiphany that finally moves her into the mainstream of life:

"There were people crammed on both sidewalks, mothers with babies, . . . fathers with children on their shoulders. And suddenly I was so surprised by them. Isn't it amazing how hard people work to raise their children? . . . For every grownup you see, you know there must have been at least one person who had the patience to lug them around, and feed them, . . . and keep them out of danger for years and years People you wouldn't trust your purse with five minutes, maybe, . . .

Then I thought, 'What am I doing up here, anyway? Up in this shop where I'm bored stiff? And never moving on into something else, for fear of some harm I might cause? You'd think I was some kind of special case, . . . 'but I'm not! I'm like

all the people I'm sitting here gawking at, and I might just as well stumble on out and join them!' So right that day I quit my job, and started casting about for new work." (247)

This wonder at the fact that living human beings are all the result of some kind of care is a recurring idea in Anne Tyler's work. Though not usually causing a major change in a central character's life as it does here, an appreciation for the difficulty and a reverence for the endurance that ordinary life and parenting incur are part of every Tyler novel.

Elizabeth's new work is teaching crafts in a girls' reform school. Good at her job and committed to her students, she enjoys her new role, but she leaves precipitously to care for Mrs. Emerson when she suffers a stroke. Declining the officious proposals of the eldest Emerson daughter Mary, Elizabeth succumbs to savvy Margaret's request for six weeks of rescue work with no strings attached. Thus, Elizabeth with her new perspectives returns to her second home, the home that she had planned never to see again, for it is also the house where she has felt most adult, most appreciated, and most like the person she wants to be--the competent mender and manager. Once more, as she had done with Mr. Cunningham and with her girls at the reform school, Elizabeth finds value in schedules, involvement, and commitment; and instinctively, she sets in place a pattern of behavior and attitudes that protects Mrs. Emerson's privacy

and pride, while helping her recover. Soon, during Mrs. Emerson's naps, Elizabeth takes up the role of handyman again. Unable now to say Elizabeth, Mrs. Emerson calls her Gillespie, and she calls her often; but Elizabeth likes the sound: "The name Gillespie rang in her ears--the new person Mrs. Emerson was changing her into, someone effective and managerial who was summoned by her last name, like a WAC" (244-245).

Elizabeth has one more lesson to learn before she becomes the permanent regenerative manager of the Emerson family. She must deal with her own feelings about her responsibility in Timothy's death. Though no one has mentioned Timothy to Elizabeth, Andrew, Timothy's unbalanced twin, who has come home at the news of his mother's stroke, still blames Elizabeth, and now he is horrified that she is caring for their mother, no matter if she is his mother's choice. Pointedly, he never sees Elizabeth nor allows her to see him; the "weighty, surreptitious clinking" of his silverware as he eats alone in the kitchen casts a "gloom over the dining room" (238) at every meal. On the day Andrew is to leave to return to New York, he finds Elizabeth alone in the yard and shoots her, wounding her superficially. While facing Andrew's gun, Elizabeth realizes that even though she knows she made a bad mistake with Timothy, she still does not know what she should have done. It is only when she hears the shot and knows that she has been hit that

Elizabeth finally learns that nothing she "can do will change a bullet in its course" (254); that knowledge and her wound free her at last from her guilt: "Now we are even, no Emerson will look at me ever again as if I owe them something . . . " (254), she thinks.

In The Clock Winder, as in earlier Tyler novels, the escape theme is pervasive; in addition, in this work, more than any of the earlier ones, there is a pronounced rhythm of leaving and returning. Even as Elizabeth makes her escapes, there is always an undercurrent that pulls her back again to that from which she has run--until she comes finally to rest at Roland Park. Among other examples, Elizabeth escapes from the Abbott household, from the Emerson household, and from marriage; she also returns to each, although her marriage partner is different. Moreover, Elizabeth's belief in reincarnation lends further emphasis to this rhythm, for surely, as Doris Betts perceptively points out, Elizabeth's belief in reincarnation is "Tyler's ultimate expression of the motif of departure and return."¹¹ Each of the Emerson children wants to escape the Emerson household. Ironically, while each does move away physically from the Emerson house, none escapes the shackles of anxieties locked in by Mrs. Emerson's demands and expectations. Throughout the novel, the Emerson children struggle against the nagging persistence of their mother's telephone calls, visits, and interminable tape-recorded letters; and guilt and frustrated love pull

them home for major events, such as Timothy's suicide and their mother's stroke. By the novel's end, two Emerson sons--Matthew, the sanest who has married Elizabeth, and Andrew, the quirkiest, who now adores Elizabeth--are back in the Emerson house in Roland Park, living as contentedly as their past and their biological mother will allow them in the care of the ultimate mother Elizabeth, who by this time also has two children of her own.

The last chapter of The Clock Winder, set in 1970, some five years after Elizabeth's return to Baltimore, and told from the viewpoint of Mrs. Emerson's youngest son Peter, gives an outsider's view of the family that Elizabeth has created for herself. Separated by several years from the other Emerson children, Peter has always felt like a pariah in his family; and his alienation is even greater now, for he has not been home for a long time. Moreover, his new wife P.J., a former waitress and a daughter of a poor Georgia tobacco farmer, creates more distance. Peter has never told his family a word about P.J., nor has he told her much about them. During this impromptu visit, Elizabeth, now called Gillespie by everyone, emerges clearly as the manager of the household; equally clearly, she is the chief worker as well, serving as cook, handyman, maid, mother, housekeeper, daughter, sister, wife, and mother to the others who live in the Emerson house. Mrs. Emerson, now almost fully recovered from her stroke, presides with full prestige, but no real

power, in her supercilious, demanding way, though she is more relaxed and happy since her home is full again and she has many to direct, regardless of their obedience.

Whether Elizabeth's end is a happy one or not is somewhat ambiguous. Of course, no feminist could find the ending positive. Elizabeth may be the head honcho; she is also the major menial. Tyler, herself, found the ending sad: "I think Elizabeth does herself irreparable damage in not going farther than she does, but on the other hand what she does is the best and happiest thing for her. I think of it as a sad ending, and I've been surprised that not everybody does."¹² Certainly, Peter's new wife P.J. does not find Elizabeth's lot appealing, as she tells Peter:

"That little closed-up family of yours is closed around nothing, thin air, all huddled up together scared to go out. Depending on someone that is like the old-maid failure poor relation you find some places, mending their screens and cooking their supper and fixing their chimneys and making peace--oh, she ended up worse off than them." (278)

However, when Peter wanders into the kitchen shortly afterward, he finds Elizabeth/Gillespie there nursing the baby "like a broad golden madonna" (280). Since P.J. has walked out on him, Peter toys with the idea of simply leaving her behind or of staying on in his old home:

This house could expand like an accordion, with its children safe and happy inside and Gillespie to take care of them. Why not? . . . Gillespie hummed beneath her breath--a juggler of supplies, obtaining and distributing all her family needed. (280-281)

Actually, Elizabeth has apparently discovered and claimed the family and the life she has always wanted. She has achieved her wish to be not merely useful but essential to a family a little more sinful, a little less sanctimonious, and a good deal more interesting than her own blood relations. Even seen through the eyes of the alienated Peter, Elizabeth emerges as one of the few examples in Tyler's work of a genuinely good mother. Although this view of her covers a short time span, she materializes as a nurturer, loving and attentive without being overprotective or cloying. Still unflappable, still having fun, Elizabeth clearly respects her children and enjoys them, too. Possessing her dream has required her to give up her independence and freedom in exchange for commitment and responsibility, but the trade of total control over her own life for managing control over the full range of Emersons in Roland Park appears to work well for her.

Two recurring symbolic actions in the novel shed light on Elizabeth's roles and needs: the first, the winding of clocks gives the novel its name; the second, the mending of buttons represents Tyler's first choice for a title for her work. Returning to Ellington after Timothy's suicide, Elizabeth's frequent nightmares are always followed by a dream that she is mending huge quantities of broken buttons, a scene "as boring and comforting as hot milk" (128). Leather, plastic, wooden, gold, mother of pearl buttons spill

from cans and boxes. With great speed, dexterity, and assurance, she glues, paints, recovers, and repairs them as needed, "replacing the gagging horror of the nightmares with a quiet calm" (128). Although she sometimes grows discouraged at the task--"Why mend things so fragile? Why couldn't they let her throw them out and buy new ones?" (128)--she still takes joy in performing well. She awakens feeling as exhausted as if she had been working hard all night. This dream reinforces many insights about Elizabeth--her love of variety and her capability to perform a number of tasks well; her strength and endurance; her preference for and capacity for hard work; her basic love for repairing and using old things; her need to be useful, to be needed; and her emerging belief that the horrors of life can only be overcome by enduring over and over again the ordinary daily tasks that keep things and people in working order. According to Stella Nesanovich, Knopf disliked The Button Mender as a title and proposed A Help to the Family, a title Tyler resisted because it sounded like "a first-aid book for beginning babysitters."¹³ The compromise title The Clock Winder refers to Elizabeth's uncanny ability to synchronize and maintain without any fuss or much thought the eight-day clocks that fill the Emerson house. In this skill she is like Billy Emerson, Mrs. Emerson's late husband and the father of all of her children. Both Elizabeth and Billy are caretakers, not just takers, and they know instinctively how

to manage, nurture, and repair or how to find out how to accomplish what they want to do. At the end of the book, Elizabeth is finally able to maintain all the functions and integrate all the lives of the diverse Emerson family and the big old house into a regular rhythm symbolized by the multitudes of clocks. Mrs. Emerson, who passed without perturbation from father to husband, does not escape disruption in her pampered life after her husband's death and her son's suicide; but in her old age, she does come to rest comfortably again in the hands of another clock winder, Elizabeth Abbott Emerson.

In his mind, Peter has pictured Elizabeth "as some kind of family retainer, ageless, faceless, present for as long as he could remember, although in fact she hadn't arrived until he was in college" (281); thus, she is only a few years older than he is. Still, he confesses to her what is most on his mind--his family's obvious disapproval of P.J.: "'They think I've made a mistake, . . . Maybe they're right, . . . You shouldn't hope for anything from someone that much different from your family'" (281). Elizabeth/Gillespie's answer seems appropriate both for Peter's critics and for her own: "You should if your own family doesn't have it" (281).

The most significant female character in each of Tyler's first four novels is a regenerative managing woman--a woman like Elizabeth, who is competent to run a household; raise children with the attention, firmness, and love they need;

care for a husband, and hold a job outside the home if necessary. That Joan has no husband and Evie walks out on hers and that Joan is raising someone else's children, not her own, and Evie, though pregnant, has no children as yet are not at issue; each woman is competent to manage these tasks well, and since each is still quite young at novel's end, there seems every indication that these women will continue to learn, to grow, and to change and thus to become increasingly competent family managers. Because all of these regenerative managing women suffer from low self-esteem as children or teenagers and all find their relationships with their parents and/or their parents' expectations onerous, all effect an escape from their original homes before establishing the new family circles for which they serve as hubs. Additionally, all share a set of important characteristics as regenerative managing women. They are all able to communicate and demonstrate their love in ways that the recipients can readily feel and understand. They attend not only to the physical needs of those in their care, but also pay heed to their emotional needs as well. Without prying or nagging, without invading the private spaces of their family members, they pay attention as they guide, rescue, repair, and manage those they love. And they all change and grow. Obstacles, problems, disasters certainly hurt them, anger them, puzzle them, and may, for a time, even stifle them; but the regenerative managing women can and do

pick themselves up and start again. Because these women are all skillfully drawn, realistically unique individuals, the ways they fit this general pattern are surprisingly different from one another. Some are clearly more successful than others in their quests; some certainly have a longer way to go than others. But all of Tyler's characterizations are astonishingly inventive, poignant, humorous, and believable. Writing about The Clock Winder, the reviewer in The Virginia Quarterly praises Tyler in a sentence that seems particularly appropriate for all of her first four novels: "One wishes to praise Anne Tyler with the most shameless superlatives, for she has created a novel of vast interest entirely with character."¹⁴

The Clock Winder is in several ways a transitional novel in Tyler's oeuvre. Bolder and broader than the earlier works, it covers a much longer time period than that of Tyler's first three books, and it offers a larger and more diverse cast of characters. Further, Elizabeth's underlying principles of management are similar to those of which Tyler seems most approving, at the same time that she realizes that they can be contradictory. When Clifford Ridley, in an interview written shortly after the publication of this fourth book, queries Tyler about her ideas, she answers:

"I must find the idea of taking care of others very attractive; there must be a place in life for people who do that. If I have to take a moral

stand, though, I feel terribly strongly that nobody should do anything, that you should leave your hands out of other people's business. In many ways The Clock Winder condemns what it praises and vice versa. . . ."¹⁵

Tyler's remarks clearly echo Elizabeth's strong desire to rescue and mend and manage and her equally strong desire to avoid changing people and causing harm. Finding the proper balance between these twin points is a major concern for all of Tyler's regenerative managing women. Inherent, but not explicit, in the first three novels, this particular paradoxical characteristic comes to full and obvious expression in Elizabeth. In the later novels, each of the managing women will struggle to find this balance, but Tyler's treatment will be more subtle, more skillful, and will plumb more deeply as she handles older women already enmeshed in their own family lives when their novels begin; however, these later regenerative managing women will not necessarily be more successful in finding and maintaining the equanimity necessary for their own personal definitions of happiness than is Elizabeth Abbott Emerson.

CHAPTER III

REGENERATIVE MANAGING WOMEN IN CELESTIAL NAVIGATION AND SEARCHING FOR CALEB

In her fifth through eighth novels, Tyler focuses her attention on ways regenerative managing women establish their families, the steps they take to insure the viability of their families, and the means by which they overcome setbacks with adaptations and fresh starts, rather than concentrating on the ways the regenerative managing women escape from their original families and establish their own family groups, as the first novels do. Consequently, in the later novels, Tyler introduces the regenerative managing women after they are already married and managing their own families. Although Mary Tell in Celestial Navigation and Emily Meredith in Morgan's Passing are only in their early twenties when the novels in which they are featured begin, both have been married for several years. Forty-year-old Justine Peck of Searching for Caleb has been married for twenty years at the beginning of her story, and at only thirty-five years of age Charlotte Emory of Earthly Possessions has been married over fifteen years. Whether the actual time span of the novel covers a short period (three days for Earthly Possessions) or many years (thirteen for Celestial Navigation), the richness

of memory and association is clearly enhanced in each of the later novels by starting the stories at later periods in the lives of the female characters. The effect is, of course, the sense that the novels cover a longer time period; thus, Tyler can deal with the major characters in greater depth and roundness than she has managed in her earlier works. Further, the later novels are much longer than her first three efforts, again giving Tyler more scope for character development. All of the regenerative managing women in the later novels are mothers of at least one child (as is Justine in Searching for Caleb), and most have more children (six for Mary in Celestial Navigation; two each for Charlotte in Earthly Possessions and Emily in Morgan's Passing, though she loses the supervision of her older child before the novel concludes). As in the earlier novels, the ways the regenerative managing woman suffers and yet learns to cope with her early feelings of low self-esteem and alienation, her problems with her parents and background, her break from her original family, her selection of her husband, and her creation of her own family circle are important parts of the flashbacks and other memory devices Tyler uses. However, the main foci of the later novels' depictions of the regenerative managing women are the ways they manage their families and households, meet and solve minor and major family problems, deal with at least one major crisis of self in their thirties or forties, and renew themselves by starting over.

Tyler's portrayals of regenerative managing women in these later novels reflect two currently prevailing theories of female psychological developments as major concerns. First, Tyler's regenerative women graphically illustrate that female identities are processes rather than products.¹ Formed in large part by developing social relationships, women's identities are likely to be inner-directed and continuously changing as their relationships change;² thus, a fundamental part of the definition of the feminine personality is the self in relationship to others.³ Secondly, adolescent women do not need to prove themselves to be women. Close identifications with their mothers leave them secure in their gender. Thus, at adolescence they are not involved in the same kind of search for self as that which engages young men.⁴ Rather, adolescent girls are usually encouraged to remain dependent until their marriages, and their attention is generally focused as adolescents on finding a mate and starting a family.⁵ Women's identity crises in which they, too, want to know the world and achieve independence of mind and body usually do not occur until they are well along into their marriages. Typically, women are well past their thirtieth year before these crises lead them to strike out on their own, often leaving husbands and children behind.⁶ While each of Tyler's later regenerative managing women has a major crisis of self during her thirties or forties, a crisis in which she must test herself and her

life against her previous aspirations and her personal goals, these major moments do not usually send her, like Ibsen's Nora, out into the world alone. Only Mary Tell in Celestial Navigation of Tyler's mature regenerative managing women is independent at the end of the novel; and she never considered for a moment leaving her children behind. Further, despite her ability to support herself and her children, Mary most likely will marry again and complete her dream family of a dozen children. The others resolve their crises within the context of a marriage: Charlotte Emory in Earthly Possessions by returning physically to her husband; Justine Peck in Searching for Caleb by returning emotionally to her husband; and Emily Morgan in Morgan's Passing and Jenny Tull in Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant by finding new husbands.

Tyler demonstrates a good deal of growth and maturation in her later novels through including a larger number of developed characters, compared to that of her earlier works, and through successfully experimenting with points of view. Further, her ironic appraisal of life and her meticulous accuracy in the details of setting and characterization are sharpened in these later novels, which are richer with humor and paradox and deeper with poignancy and truth than her earlier efforts. Chapters III and IV of this paper will look at Tyler's development of the regenerative managing woman in her fifth through eighth novels, with Celestial Navigation

and Searching for Caleb covered in Chapter III and Earthly Possessions and Morgan's Passing covered in Chapter IV.

In Celestial Navigation, her fifth novel, Tyler uses the first person point of view for the first time. Although Jeremy Pauling, a strange, reclusive artist is the central character, his story is told primarily through the first person accounts of four important women in his life. Only one woman critical to Jeremy's development is denied her voice--his mother--for her death is the occasion with which the story begins. Nevertheless, her influence on Jeremy and his sisters is clearly evident in the novel. Interestingly, Tyler approaches Jeremy's own inner thoughts and motivations through limited omniscient narration. Because Celestial Navigation is Tyler's only book so far about an artist and because she named it her own favorite among her works in a 1977 interview after the publication of her seventh book,⁷ this novel has attracted special attention from Tyler critics. Despite the obvious differences--Jeremy is male and creates tactile art, beginning with collages and moving through increasingly textured pieces to "great towering beautiful sculptures,"⁸ rather than a woman writer of fiction--Tyler does mirror through Jeremy a good deal of her own view of and approach to art. One of the most striking of Jeremy's characteristics is his instinctive way of viewing "life in a series of flashes" (37); in those flashes he sees only broadstrokes for backgrounds, but he sees in precise,

minute detail some small part of whatever is in his line of vision. Thus, in his art he presents the whole through capturing the essence of a small part in crystalline detail. Further, all of Jeremy's work depicts ordinary things and people so that "the smallest and most unnoticed scenes on earth" (129) reverberate with meaning and take on the lustre of important truths. In these two ways particularly, Jeremy resembles his creator, and in Celestial Navigation, Tyler not only exemplifies these techniques, but she also polishes them to a much higher degree than she has exhibited in earlier works.

The women who tell Jeremy's story (in addition to the narrator in the four chapters told from his consciousness) are Amanda, his older unmarried sister; Miss Vinton, a middle-aged, unmarried resident in the Pauling rooming house; Olivia, a hitchhiking hippie, who temporarily joins the household; and Mary Darcy Tell, who becomes Jeremy's common law wife and bears him five children. Three of the four women who contribute their accounts of their relationship with Jeremy have never been married; two clearly never will be; one has never even wanted to be. In this respect, they are unlike most of Tyler's women. Their primary purpose in this novel is to give their perspectives on Jeremy Pauling and on Mary Tell, the major woman character in Celestial Navigation. Mary Darcy Tell, a prime example of a regenerative managing woman, is Anne Tyler's paeon to

motherhood. "Motherhood is what I was made for, and pregnancy is my natural state" (61), she says. Never happier nor more beautiful than when she is pregnant, Mary promises herself early in her life that she will have a dozen children, and she is halfway there when the novel ends.

Like Joan in The Tin Can Tree, Mary is the only child of parents who are already middle-aged when she is born; however, unlike Joan, Mary grows up greatly loved and greatly loving in return. Her parents are pleased with their beautiful, well-behaved docile daughter, and the Darcys live a happy, placid life. Unlike the regenerative women in Tyler's first four novels, Mary establishes a close relationship with her parents, especially her mother. However, although Mary enjoys the attention of and involvement with her mother, she is distanced from her peers by her closed family. This distance is exacerbated by her parents' positions--her father is the principal of Partha High School, and her mother is an English teacher--and by the fact that they protect their daughter assiduously. Devoutly religious, both parents are pillars of the Baptist church; and though Mary shares their views when she is a child, even toying for a time with becoming a missionary and a martyr, as a teenager she "just turned out not to be a believer" (55) without knowing why. Rather than openly rebelling as Elizabeth Abbott does in The Clock Winder, Mary continues to go to church, but she is "chafed inside by some irritation

that extended even to the starchy smell of . . . [her] mother's best dress and the way . . . [her] father kept tugging his shirt cuffs down when he didn't need to" (55). Mary's rejection of her parents' religion soon spreads to other aspects of their lives. Recognizing that the narrow predictable path her parents follow seems to predestine the same path for her, a route along which college, marriage, and children are "not changes, so much as additions" (56), Mary smolders at the thought of that apparent inevitability. Her secret defection from her parents' life style and beliefs leaves the formerly secure and happy Mary feeling alone, lonely, lost, and ripe for escape.

At fifteen, Mary first sees Guy Tell at Dewbridge Lake, where she and her parents have gone for a picnic. Sitting sedately on "an oilcloth with a picnic lunch that would feed an old folks' home and great quantities of insect repellent and sunburn lotion and wet cloths wrapped in cellophane in case of spills" (55) Mary, closely chaperoned, watches Guy and the other young men dive into the lake from a fallen tree and play around with "great splashing butterfly strokes and . . . wolf howls . . ." (55). One of those her mother refers to as "the rougher element" (55), Guy is handsome, arrogant, loud, daring, and, at twenty-two, "older than anyone will ever seem . . . again" (57). Frightened and fascinated, Mary begins seeing Guy without her parents' knowledge. Clearly not from the same background as Mary, poorly educated Guy

works evenings pumping gas in a filling station and races motorcycles in his spare time. His biggest appeal to Mary is that he is "more a stranger than any boy" (68) she knows. Sitting in church beside her parents, recalling Guy's kisses, she thinks: "I am never going to be like them, I have already broken free" (57). On Mary's sixteenth birthday, the day her mother tells her she can now begin to date if she wants, Guy says, "I reckon we could get married now if you want. Don't look like I am going to get over you any time soon" (58). Ten days later, in a motel room with her new husband, Mary weepingly comprehends that in her exhilarating rush to escape the narrow life her parents have chosen for her she has bypassed her youth. She is married, but she has never had a real date.

Nevertheless, as a budding regenerative woman, Mary determines to make a success of her new life. Because they live with Guy's mother, household management offers small scope for Mary, but soon she is pregnant with her first child and happier than she has ever been, despite Guy's misgivings. He does not want to feel the baby move; he is embarrassed for her to be seen out in public; and he will not go with her into the labor room. Although the doctor has warned them that the birth will be difficult because Mary is too young to have a baby, Mary says, "Having that baby was the easiest thing I ever did. I was meant to have babies. Age has nothing to do with it" (62). Naming her daughter Darcy,

after her parents, Mary settles joyfully into mothering. To her disappointment, Guy does not want more children. "Ain't this one taking all of your time as it is? What you want to go and ruin your figure for?" (67) he says each time Mary brings up the subject; and each time he asks those questions, Mary stares at herself in the mirror, sees that she is "bigger than life, full of life, with not enough people to pour it into," and regrets that her "world had turned out narrow after all--different from . . . [her] parents', but just as narrow" (67).

At these times, a second yearning joins Mary's desire for more children. As she watches passers-by through her front window, she finds herself wanting "to climb into every one of them and be carried off to some new and foreign existence" (67). She dreams of entering into a life, finding out all there is to know about it, then leaving for another life when the first one is no longer strange. Guy, of course, has no suspicion of Mary's yearning for adventure and newness. "His idea of change was to take in a movie on Saturday night" (68). Thus, while Guy spends more and more time racing, Mary dreams of "trying different lives out, cheating on the rule that you can only lead just one" (60), a motivation that Tyler herself has given for writing novels.⁹

It is by recognizing and then capitalizing on Mary's desire for a fuller life to manage, a life with more breadth, more children, and more adventure that John Harris, a casual

friend of Guy's, wins Mary's love and convinces her that she should run away with him. John makes his first impression on Mary because he is in almost every way different from Guy; darkly handsome and well-groomed in the manner of magazines, John is slow to make up his mind, deliberate and cool in his actions, well-educated, and socially polished. Moving cautiously in his courtship, he wins Mary's approval first by his interest in Darcy. Only after months of visits, does he ask Mary, "Now that you have this one pretty little girl, are you going to have a whole crowd more?" (53) To Mary's answer that Guy says one is enough, John answers bluntly that Guy is a fool. When John first asks Mary to come away with him, she objects, "I'm a homebody, . . . This is just not like me" (49). His response shows he knows her well, for he asks, "Do you always do things exactly in character?" (49). Thus, he underscores her restrictive life while offering her a change. Later, urging Mary to run away with him immediately, even though his divorce is not final, John insures her acquiescence by asking: "Where is your spirit of adventure?" (66) The truth is, as Mary says, "I'd had six years of Hot Rod magazine and now I was ready to move on to something new" (60). Thus, Mary escapes another narrow existence, running away with another strange man to a new life in which she can develop her dream of creating and managing a family of a dozen children.

The new life is again not the one Mary expects. Rather than opening up new vistas and a wider sphere of influence for her managerial skills, John installs her and Darcy in a single bedroom in the seedy Pauling rooming house in a deteriorating section of Baltimore. There Mary spends her days playing with her four-year-old child and waiting for John's calls and visits, which dwindle steadily. When he finally announces his reconciliation with his wife, Mary does not collapse; instead, as a regenerative woman, she begins at once to pick herself up and make a new start, not an easy task for someone with no money, no education, and no job skills or experience. Indeed, Mary's desperation is so obvious that even Jeremy notices.

Afraid of Jeremy at first, Mary compares his appearance to that of a slug or the stereotypical picture of a child molester. However, she soon learns that he is harmless, if odd. Certainly, Jeremy is strange-looking. As his sister Amanda describes him,

He is, and always has been, pale and doughy and overweight, pear-shaped, wide-hipped. He toes out when he walks. . . . His eyes are nearly colorless There is no telling where he manages to get his clothes: baggy slacks that start just below his armpits; mole-colored cardigan strained across his stomach . . . , exposing a yellowed fishnet undershirt top and bottom, and tiny round-toed saddle oxfords. (11)

However, he is even stranger in his actions. He rarely leaves his house and with one exception, which "didn't work out" (28), has not crossed a street in some twenty years.

Though he has moments of blazingly clear sight, these visions are private, and he appears to move in an uncomprehending daze most of the time. When he speaks, his words are "so confused and some of what he says is so out of place--things a deaf man would say having lost touch with the world--" (54) that Mary must carefully suppress her laughter, though she notices that the other roomers all treat him with gentle courtesy and kindness and create "a sort of circle that is designed to protect him" (54). Jeremy wins a measure of tolerance from Mary by his obvious fondness for children. Even though he is inept and does not know how to talk to Darcy, the child enjoys going to his studio to cut and paste, and Mary is grateful for the diversion. At the same time, he makes her "feel too tall and too loud and too strong" (54).

For his part, Jeremy finds Mary "very beautiful; not someone he wanted to raise his eyes to. Beautiful women made him uneasy" (44). Consequently, he does not look at her or even think about her until one evening after she has quarrelled with John, she instinctively turns to him for solace. Although he is frightened and shocked, he manages to pat her arm and beg her not to cry. From that moment, Jeremy's view of Mary is always veiled with fantasy.

What color was her hair? What color were her eyes? Away from her, he never could remember. He saw her in black and white like a steel engraving, with fine crosshatching shading her face and some vague rich cloak tumbling from her shoulders. Her clearest feature was her forehead--a pale oval. In the novels his mother read to him, a wide ivory brow stood for purity and tranquility. (79)

To Jeremy, Mary has become a Victorian heroine, who has turned to him in desperation, and he longs for crises--fires, floods, fevers--for which "he would be a rock of strength for her. He would go for the doctor without a thought, no matter how many blocks from home it took him"; he would be "a straight line of confidence for her to lean against. . . ."

(78) But Mary is not the Victorian heroine, frail and helpless, he fantasizes about each night, as each morning's meeting proves afresh. Nevertheless, he dreams his dreams and plans his courtship.

Jeremy's courtship, hilarious and poignant, represents his own best efforts at "slaying dragons" (95) for his lady, though, of course, Mary never guesses the extraordinary efforts he must make just to speak to her. At his first proposal, Mary can reject his offer with tact because she is already married, and Jeremy, heartbroken and relieved, can relax. Yet as Mary's plight worsens, Jeremy again feels himself called, and, in the middle of the night, dressed in his one suit, Jeremy suggests to Mary that, since no one knows she is still married, they pretend to be married:

"But you see to me it would be marriage. . . . I would take care of you and you would start another life instead of going along on tag ends the way you are now, you could give all your time to Darcy and have more children if you wanted and never have to leave them to go out and work in sweatshops--"
(111)

As she refuses, he adds the question that changes her mind:

"What hope do you have for a better life if you keep on saying no to everything new?" (112).

As in A Slipping-Down Life, Tyler does a superb job of depicting a marriage, even though the Paulings do not sanction their union legally. In fact, the portrayal of this relationship has a good deal more depth than that of Drum and Evie since it covers a longer time period (ten years compared to a few months). Further, the extended family in Celestial Navigation includes many more people than the Casey marriage; the Pauling household eventually holds the couple, plus six children, plus six or more roomers, compared to only one young couple in the earlier novel. Also, Mary and Jeremy are more mature, more richly presented, and more fascinatingly diverse than Evie and Drum. In addition, seeing the Pauling marriage from the viewpoints of each of the partners, as well as from those of other members of the extended family, adds a multi-dimensional quality that the earlier book does not afford. Like the Casey marriage, the Pauling union begins well, satisfying needs within both partners; similarly, both relationships end in separation.

Since Jeremy is such an eccentric and special man and Mary is such an "everyday kind of woman" (128), the Pauling roomers are not only surprised by their marriage, but worried about its effect on them both. However, "she remained her serene and contented self, while Jeremy seemed ready to burst out of his skin with pride and happiness" (128). Initially,

Mary does not comprehend just how unusual Jeremy really is and asks him to help her pick out curtains, to go to the movies, and to undertake other common tasks and trips. Soon she sees her mistake and looking at Jeremy honestly, she perceives that he is never going to be a typical husband. Perhaps he is a genius as an artist, but he is not going to run errands, take out the trash, take her to dinner, or be a shoulder to lean on. Mary will have to be in charge, and as a regenerative managing woman, she is well up to the challenge. Ironically, and yet in keeping with her yearning for the new and different, when Mary stops expecting Jeremy to be like other people, she begins to love him and within months, her "world began to center on him, so that her first thought in the morning . . . and [her] last at night was concern about his welfare" (194).

Within her relationship with Jeremy, Mary, truly happy, comes into full flower as a regenerative managing woman. Every other year she has a new baby; by their tenth year together, there are five Pauling children to love and to rear along with Darcy. Like Elizabeth in The Clock Winder, Mary is one of the few good mothers in Tyler's novels. Among her greatest attributes as a mother are the total attention she gives to her children when they speak to her or need her; her unruffled demeanor in the face of chaos and crises; and her vigorous battles on behalf of her children against all dangers and evils--their own mischief, overbearing teachers,

neighborhood bullies, household germs; and her ability to change and grow and keep the household running. In addition to her children, Mary has Jeremy to lavish with special favors and general care. Then there are the roomers, whom she regards as part of the extended family and the stray teenagers she picks up from time to time. Even the neighbors and the local shopkeepers receive and return Mary's affection and may also receive gratis Mary's managerial suggestions and assistance. At last, she has sufficient scope for the overflowing life and love and capacity she has within her. And every year she grows more able, more caring, and stronger, as she loves, mothers, stocks her larder, takes care of the house, works with Jeremy's art dealer, and manages everything within her expanding world.

The development of Mary's managerial skills is not an unmixed blessing in her relationship with Jeremy. Certainly, Jeremy benefits from their union, both personally and artistically. Not only is his life more comfortable, it is also richer, more loving, and more complex, and these attributes are reflected in his art. Deepening in texture and doubling in size, his "pieces" intensify in meaning, and his reputation enlarges as well. At the same time, Mary often overpowers Jeremy; and even though she knows he wishes she "would shrink a little," she reflects, "He never guessed that I already had shrunk, that this was as small as I could get" (182). However, Mary is never small, physically or

emotionally. She loves Jeremy better than anyone she has ever known, and she sets out to do everything for him, big or small, to force him to need her, because, as she explains, "the more he depended on me, the easier I felt. In fact, I depended on his dependency, . . ." (192-193). But, Jeremy does not want to recognize the kind of need Mary describes. From his courtship throughout their life together, he fantasizes about rescuing Mary, taking care of Mary, and serving as a bulwark of strength for her. For example, while awaiting their first baby, in an attempt to make his daydreams more practical, Jeremy orders a book for prospective fathers; but he waits in vain to put to use any of the techniques he memorizes for lightening her load and providing her with sympathetic support: "none of that advice had come in handy. Mary made her own nest" (154). Actually, Mary does everything--except lean on Jeremy or need anything from Jeremy (except his dependency). Also, Mary knows that in reality, he is too sequestered, too much a stranger in the everyday world to be of much use in protecting and supporting her. As a result of Mary's independence and strength, a continuing thread of discord develops as Mary tries to manage her family single-handedly and to absolve Jeremy from all responsibility.

The major breach in their relationship at the birth of their fourth child exemplifies this problem. Despite Jeremy's inability to leave his own block under most

circumstances, he has established a family ritual of taking Mary by cab to and from the hospital when she gives birth, and these difficult trips are the source of his greatest pride. Sensitive enough to realize how difficult these rushed cab rides across town are for Jeremy, Mary fails to perceive that they are even more important to him than they are difficult. Thus, when the fourth child is on the way, she asks Miss Vinton to drive her to the hospital so that she will not have to disturb Jeremy. To Jeremy, Mary has signaled rejection and disdain, not loving care. During the ensuing emotional crisis, Mary confesses to Miss Vinton both her love for Jeremy and her biggest fear: "I feel that every new baby is another rope, tying me down like a tent. I don't have the option to leave anymore. I'm forced to depend on him. He's not dependable" (126). As a regenerative woman, Mary, with a little help from Miss Vinton, repairs this rift and begins again; but she does not really resolve the basic problem it reveals.

As Mary grows older, she becomes quieter, more controlled and more capable; what she holds in reserve to keep from totally overwhelming Jeremy, she finds outlets for elsewhere. Consequently, every year she becomes more motherly, more managerial. While Mary is delighted by all of their children, Jeremy is bewildered, annoyed, overwhelmed, and astonished by them. They all seem to be Mary's alone, with her coloring, her boldness, her energy. By the time he

and Mary have been living together ten years, he cannot remember a time when the house was quiet, nor imagine a day in which he would be able to work without interruption. Then he recalls that "silent golden period between his mother's death and Mary's arrival" and wonders if there is "anything to hope for after love" (153). Mary's maternal instincts, in fact, lead her to buy food for teenagers she sees on the street and to bring home and install a young hippie hitchhiker Olivia. As Jeremy listens to the two of them calling back and forth to one another ("Mary's voice was downward-slanting, definite, while Olivia's rose in an uncertain way at the end of each sentence"), it occurs to him again that this house might be a school for women:

In the old days he had assumed that what women know came to them naturally. He had never suspected that they had to be taught. But listen to Mary, to the firmness of her voice, not issuing concrete instructions so much as showing Olivia how to be; listen to Olivia slowly and questioningly taking on her tone. . . . They were all being tutored. . . . Were there no such tutors for men? Was it only women who linked the generations so protectively? (164)

Further, he thinks sourly about Mary that with "six children now she was six times more motherly than when she had had only one. Was it a quality that grew by mathematical progression?" (149) The basement of the Pauling home is "lined with case lots of Mary's household goods . . . an entire cabinet of sneakers, waiting to be grown into. Another of toilet paper. A barrel of detergent big enough to

hold two children" (143). Clearly, Mary has the large and active household under control for the present and for the future as well; but Jeremy feels aggrieved: "He felt she was pointing out something to him . . . 'See how I give? And how I keep on giving--these are my reserves. I will always have more, and you don't even have to ask'" (143). Not only could she manage everything, but she was stronger in every way. "Were women always stronger than men?" (150) Jeremy wonders, for he is convinced that Mary is stronger than he, even when she is asleep. Actually, that she can fall asleep so easily and sleep so deeply is proof of her strength to him:

Mary was more vulnerable than any man, the deepest pieces of herself were in those children and every day they scattered in sixty different directions and faced a thousand untold perils; yet she sailed through the night without so much as a prayer. There was no way he could ever hope to match her.
(150)

When Mary receives the news that her first husband has divorced her and tells Jeremy that they can get married now, the two are farther apart than she knows. While Mary carries on with the household, expecting the following Thursday to be their real wedding day, Jeremy secludes himself entirely; his excuse is that he is working on a new piece. Had Mary been allowed to see his new work, she would have found the piece instructive about his ambivalent and agitated feelings; for the artist is crafting a statue of Brian, his art dealer, whom Jeremy portrays leaving the Pauling house, eager to be gone, an "easy and independent man whose walk was

light-hearted nearly dancing; he might have been celebrating his return to freedom" (160). Although Jeremy sees Mary's reminder about their wedding day, he continues to work feverishly and without comment straight through Thursday. Mortified by Jeremy's missing their wedding day, Mary takes the occasion as a signal that he does not want to marry her; thus, she borrows a shack that Brian owns by the river where he keeps his boat moored, gathers up the children and their essential belongings, and one more time runs away. Her destination is a rotting, filthy, clearly uninhabitable shack in a remote, almost isolated area. As Brian reluctantly drives away, Mary, looking back at her children clustered in the doorway, "smudged from the things they had been carrying, framed by rotting wood," thinks, "I have seen happier pictures in those ads appealing for aid to underprivileged children. I never thought that any children belonging to me would look that way" (180).

Mary leaves the Pauling house with mixed feelings, feelings that strike at the core of some of her most intriguing contradictions. She had sworn after leaving Guy that she would never leave anyone again, a resolution reinforced by the break-up of her affair with John; after all, she is a homebody, a bearer and rearer of children, a family manager. Moreover, she is almost overwhelmed by sadness because she is leaving Jeremy, whom she never expected nor wanted to leave: "Oh, never Jeremy" (172).

Mixed in with these feelings is Mary's old sense of adventure in being free of things and living different lives. On an even more abstract level, she enjoys the thought that she can cavalierly toss her life "like a set of dice, gambling it, wasting it," for she has "always enjoyed throwing things away" (60). What she likes is starting over. Although the minute Mary settles into a new place, her managerial self begins laying in supplies for the present and for the future, she still does not lose her love of throwing out all but the necessities and organizing for another trip. Consequently, after Jeremy's defection, she almost feverishly throws herself into planning a clean, silent getaway, though she notes immediately that "the bare essentials for six children can fill a truck in no time. You don't get the same feeling of purity as when you run away with one small child and her favorite doll" (172). Despite Mary's determined, silent dispatch, she does not really want to go, and she admits to herself that "if he had said a single word to keep me with him, I would gladly stay forever" (174). Yet she slips away, denying him the chance of saying that word. Additionally, she sends him silent messages through the night once she and her children have bedded down in the shack: "Come and get us. . . . Make up some excuse for missing your wedding, anything at all, I'll believe it: you suffered a stroke or amnesia, you were mugged in the studio, you would never have simply decided you didn't want to marry me" (182). Of

course, Mary knows that her silent plea is unrealistic, for Jeremy does nothing in a hurry and leaves his house only in direct response to extraordinary events, such as the birth of a baby. "But," she wonders, "couldn't he, just this once?" (182) She acknowledges that she would give up anything . . . anything but the children" (182) to have him ask them back, but within three days she stops thinking they will be leaving soon. It is apparent that Mary is ready to begin another new life unless Jeremy makes some significant change.

Thus, at only thirty-two years of age, Mary finds herself on her own in an isolated environment with six small children to care for and no immediately apparent means of support. She is beginning again for her fourth time. Reflecting on her life as a whole, Mary is struck by the irony between what she might seem to be to outsiders and the reality of her being:

I understand that from outside I seem to have been leading a fairly dramatic life, involving elopements and love children and men stretching in nearly unbroken series behind me, but the fact is that when you proceed through these experiences day by day they are not really so earth-shaking. All events, except childbirth, can be reduced to a heap of trivia in the end. (200)

Born to be a mother, Mary wants a family to love and manage, and she has promised herself a dozen children. At the same time that she wants the babies and is never more radiantly beautiful and happy than when she has just given birth, she also feels confined by them, for she simultaneously wants the

freedom to move around and live more than one life. Children both insure her future and hold her future hostage.

More than any other of Tyler's women, Mary not only enjoys but recognizes the value of other women in her life. Having a close relationship with a devoted, if somewhat cautious, mother has given Mary self-confidence and a sense of security in her own being. It is in part this very self-confidence that inspires Mary's active pursuit of a life much bigger and broader in scope than her mother's--a life with more movement, more breadth of interests, more children. When her first baby is due, Guy refuses to go into the labor room with her. Discomfited by what he perceives as mysterious woman's business, he is also afraid Mary will blame him for the pain. But Mary's mother, who has forgiven the elopement, stays with her throughout her ordeal, reading to her, sponging her forehead, keeping her mind occupied; at Guy's defection, she says, "'Never mind, honey, Mama's here'" (61). Thinking back on it, Mary believes:

[R]ight there I began to live in a world made up of women. My mother and Guy's, the neighbor women who gave me their old baby furniture and their bits of advice--women formed a circle that I sank into. I suppose you have to expect that, once children come along. The men draw back and the women close in.
(62)

Mary admits that only the fact that she and Guy move in with his mother Gloria, who treats Mary as her own mother has done, keeps her from going out of her mind when she is first married. Gloria's manner and methods, of course, are quite

different from those of Mrs. Darcy. "A peroxide blonde forever in shorts and a halter" (63), Gloria drinks a lot of Southern Comfort with a truck-driver friend, watches the soap operas regularly, and reads confession magazines.

Acknowledging that such a life would be depressing seen on a television screen, Mary, nevertheless, maintains, "Gloria was just wonderful to me and I loved her like a mother" (63).

Barred from school because of her marriage, lonely and bored while Guy works, Mary relies on Gloria to teach her how to be a wife and how to spend her time. In fact, after Darcy's birth, Mary is almost ashamed of how much she relies on Gloria, who does not interfere, but when Mary "was feeling lost and too young, she was right there handing [her] hot milk and talking on and on in that airy, fake-tough way she had, appearing not to notice anything was wrong but soothing" (63) in her own way. "Could a man do that?" Mary asks. "No man that I know of" (63).

During Mary's marriage to Guy, he spends many days and most weekends riding his motorcycle in rallies. Eventually, Mary refuses to go with him, but he continues his racing without her. Although Gloria complains that Guy should stay home more to tend to his family, Mary does not really mind his leaving her behind. To her, it seems "part of the pattern" of married life; "the other women's husbands didn't stay home either" (68). On summer evenings, the women and children go to Roy's for hamburgers, "a double line of women

and children, not a man among us. All the women laughing and scolding and mopping spilled drinks, filling every corner of their world" (68). Guy's boots and voice jar the house on his return, and he seems almost an intruder to Mary and almost a stranger to Darcy.

When both of Mary's parents die, Gloria is her mainstay. No wonder Mary cries when she and Guy move out of Gloria's house into their own place, though Guy cannot understand why Mary is not delighted to have a house of her own; no wonder she still sees Gloria almost every day of the rest of her life with Guy. Upon leaving Guy, one of Mary's major concerns is what Gloria will think; later Mary's desire to know how Gloria is getting along prompts a note after an absence of almost ten years. From this communication with her second mother, Mary learns that Guy has divorced her for desertion.

Once Mary is fully ensconced in the Pauling household, Miss Vinton becomes her friend. A middle-aged spinster, Miss Vinton is loving, kind, and fully committed to privacy, her own as well as others. Since privacy is the thing she values most, silence is the price she pays for it. Loving Mary and Jeremy and enjoying watching their children grow up, it is often difficult for her to refrain from offering advice when her distance from the problems and her love for the participants give her special insight. She sees clearly how with all good intentions Mary wounds Jeremy by never calling

for his help with any of the bigger problems of running the family, for even if big decisions or decisive actions would strain him, these are the appeals and duties he needs to prove to himself his value to Mary. She also sees how Jeremy's failure to extend himself, to take important helpful or thoughtful actions without being asked, wounds Mary in turn, despite the fact that she is capable of getting along on her own without him. Thus, while Miss Vinton can see what her two favorite people are gradually coming to overlook--their deep need and true love for one another--she painfully maintains her silence, observing that "the acts that take the most out of you are usually the ones that other people will never know about" (126).

Mary differs from Tyler's other regenerative managing women in several significant ways. First, she makes more escapes, running away from her parents, her first husband, and Jeremy, and escaping John and her unsatisfactory half-life with him as well; thus, she makes more dramatic new starts than any of the others and is, in fact, embarked on still another new lifestyle as a single, independent head of her own household when the novel ends. Additionally, Mary does not take a trip home. Like Evie, Mary can say that she never backs down on things. Often when she makes a major move, she discovers that she has not given her action sufficient thought, and there are almost always good reasons for her to reconsider and retrace her steps. However, she

always finds going back impossible. Thus, dismayed that her parents do not come after her when she runs away with Guy, saddened by the estrangement from her parents that follows her elopement, and horrified by her awakening to the fact that she has skipped her youth by her precipitous marriage, Mary sticks by her decision for six years. She leaves Guy with little more thought than she had given her elopement with him, and soon after she arrives in Baltimore with John, she realizes how intolerable her position is. Without money, friends, or education, she has simply walked away with a man who is still married to someone else and has few economic resources; yet Mary knows that, even if things do not work out with him, she will not go back to her husband.

It's true I wouldn't go back. It just isn't in me. Even if it doesn't work out with John, even if there is nowhere else to turn . . . I don't know which takes more courage: surviving a lifelong endurance test because you once made a promise or breaking free, disrupting all your world. There are arguments for both sides; I see that. But I made my choice. (65-66)

Leaving Jeremy is more painful than her earlier escapes, and she is less enthusiastic about leaving and more saddened by the results. However, although she fantasizes wildly about Jeremy's coming after her, she never considers returning without a specific overture from Jeremy, one of the least likely people in Tyler's fictional world to proffer such an invitation. Going backward is not Mary's way. She uses her

energies and her experiences to help her make her next moves forward.

When Mary leaves Guy Tell, she comes away penniless with only the clothes on her back and the child in her arms, not realizing until later that she is totally dependent on John, an unreliable man with only modest funds that must still be shared with a legal wife. As a regenerative woman, Mary learns from her mistake and promises herself that from now on she will always have her own money: "I am going to save my own money no matter what. I don't care if I have to steal it; I will save that money and hide it away somewhere in case I ever have to be on my own again" (64). Consequently, while she lives with Jeremy, she carefully develops her own private cache of money--money she earns from writing household hints for women's magazines, receives for rebates and refunds on household goods, and redeems from food coupons--money she feels is legitimately and solely hers. The money in Jeremy's checking account she refuses to touch when she leaves. Feeling "strong and competent and too big for the car," Mary presumes herself secure upon her immediate departure from Jeremy because she holds firmly in her purse a plastic refrigerator container full of her own conscientiously hoarded money, and she thinks:

Never mind, children; I might carry you away without ever saying why but at least I will be with you, and I will provide for you. I learned my lesson the first time around. Women should never leave any vacant spots for men to fill; they should

form an unbroken circle of their own and enclose each child within it. (177)

However, Mary's lessons in financial planning are disastrously incomplete and her feelings of financial security appallingly misplaced. Her small stash is quickly depleted, and circumstances soon make it clear that Mary must have more money to support her family, that no circle of women is now available to call on, and that she will probably have to find another man. Depressed, she muses that every move she has ever made has depended on a man's support and she fears that her independent decision and small store of money have simply delayed the inevitable. That Brian is waiting patiently in the wings--"'Don't worry. I'm not going to rush you'" (189)--does not comfort her. "That's what they say in soap operas. . . . People don't say it for real. There are no heroes in real life" (189), she thinks, and she mourns her future which will undoubtedly put her and her children again under the support and control of a man because she cannot think of another way to manage her life:

Eventually I would have to give in and find someone, Brian or someone else, it all came to the same thing. I could see it ahead of me as clearly as if it had already happened. I couldn't think of any way out. I felt drained and weak suddenly, as if I had shriveled. (199)

However, Mary underestimates her own powers. In this instance, too, she is able to pick herself up and start again, this time as an independent regenerative managing woman. She does not succumb to the luxury that Brian offers

nor falter before her own inability to provide her children with a lifestyle matching their former material standards. Instead, she finds a job at a day care center and discovers that she not only likes the work, but can actually support herself and her children. By the time Jeremy finally takes his heroic trip across town to see Mary and the children, she has long since had to make other plans in order to survive, and she is pleased with her ingenuity and resourcefulness. Although she would prefer to live with Jeremy, she does not have to live with any man. Should Jeremy propose again, she can accept his offer out of love. However, Mary has overlooked Jeremy's naivete. He never looks in his checkbook and never spends any money except what he finds in the kitchen cookie jar where the roomers leave their rent. Protected by Mary, he has no concept about the cost of raising children; further, he has no idea that she has not been using their joint bank account. Consequently, he does not know that she has had financial difficulties, nor that her new-found self-sufficiency is a point of extreme pride and enormous relief. To Jeremy, Mary has always been fully capable and in control.

With a vast sea of misunderstanding between them, they each wish and wait for the other to make the first move, and it is the reclusive Jeremy, for whom the mere contemplation of such a venture is akin to the magnitude of the first space flight, who packs his lunch, buys toys for the children, and

sets off by bus and on foot on the longest journey he has ever taken. Nervous and elated by his ambitious trip, Jeremy is cast into deep depression at the sight of Mary's shack. Clearly uninhabitable, the house itself seems an affront to him personally. Why else has Mary chosen to live in the worst possible place? When she asks how his work is going, he says it is going well, better than ever, because he cannot bear to have her know that he has almost stopped working because of his loneliness and his confused feelings. Then Mary feels compelled to say that she and the children are doing well, too, (though he can see the house they live in), adding, "I'm managing on my own now. I'm not depending on a soul. I'm doing it on my own" (239), a statement that seems self-evident to Jeremy: "Mary had always managed on her own. Why did she even bother mentioning it? The answer was simple: she was telling him she had no place for him" (239). Jeremy's lack of knowledge about Mary's past and his lack of experience with people and with money cause him to miss Mary's point completely; she was hoping for a compliment, not implying a slur against him. When Mary points with pride to the fact that she and Darcy are winterizing the shack, something most people would have to ask a man to do, he again takes her pleasure in managing against the odds to be a rebuke for his neglect and an insult to his male competence; thus, he rushes to take over the job himself and to do it better than she. But his immediate care for the winterizing

indicates to Mary that he is making the place as tight as possible because he expects her and the children to stay through the winter.

The most critical event of Jeremy's visit is the airing of the sails on Brian's boat, a job Mary hates, thus one Jeremy must take over for her, even though he has never been off solid land before in his life and is terrified of the task, of the water, and of being a fool. Naturally, the children beg to go, telling him they go with their mother when she airs the sails, an argument which brings about his reluctant agreement. As the children are climbing into the dinghy, Mary rushes from the house, baby on her hip, horror on her face: "'Jeremy, I--please don't take the children'" (245). Mary mistakes Jeremy's shocked look as stubbornness and begins to placate him with excuses, but his look is one of infuriated pain that "she was willing for him to go himself but not to take the children!" (245). Her suggestion that she will go along, as if her presence guarantees safety, merely exacerbates his rage and suffering. "'Get away from me . . . Just leave me alone, . . . And you,' he told the children 'Get out'" (245). As it happens, Jeremy does make it to the boat safely, and he airs the sails with no great difficulty; but he never looks back at his family: "he kept his back to them and pretended they were gone. For him, they were gone. He had never felt so isolated" (247).

On the shore, Mary, the most motherly and the most independent of Tyler's heroines, stands surrounded by her children. Guy Tell compared Mary to a black widow spider in the single letter he had written to her ten years ago: ". . . soon as you got your child then a man isn't no more use to you" (70). But Jeremy has been a far more satisfying husband for the managing, maternal Mary, for he is willing for her to have as many babies as she wants, and he is very like a child himself. Despite Mary's occasional wishes for someone to depend on, her desire for Jeremy to depend on her while she retains control is much stronger; indeed, it is Jeremy's dependency that touches her as much as anything. Unfortunately, Jeremy's mother had read to him from the wrong novels in his childhood. If she had only read him novels about the Victorian wife, instead of the ingenue, the real Mary, the eternal mother, manager, and mainstay might have been his ideal, instead of the helpless, dependent doll he fantasizes about, but whom he could never have cared for anyway. As for Mary, she still has time for a number of new lives and the rest of her babies, though as she watches Jeremy sail away, she probably feels again as she has at other moments of great loss in her life: ". . . there is no one you can depend upon forever and no change in your life, however great, that can keep you from being in the end what you were in the beginning: lost and lonely, sitting on an

oilcloth watching the rest of the world do the butterfly stroke" (75). But Mary will begin again; she will manage.

When Searching for Caleb, Anne Tyler's sixth novel opens, the central character Justine Peck is already forty years old. Although she has had only one husband, Justine has lived a life of change. Quite different in her management style from earlier Tyler regenerative managing women, Justine is still clearly the hub of her family--which includes her husband Duncan, who is also her cousin; her teenage daughter Meg; and her grandfather Daniel, who pretends to be visiting Justine, but who, nevertheless, lives with Justine year round except for short trips to his own house hundreds of miles away in Baltimore. Unlike handyman Elizabeth and motherly Mary, Justine does not like housekeeping, house maintenance, nor cooking. Her preference is to eat in diners, but if she has to cook, she usually turns out scorched frankfurters from her one skillet. As a rule, the family uses all of their dishes before washing any of them and wears all of their clothes before heading to the laundromat. While Daniel and Meg are appalled by this lack of routine and order, Duncan and Justine are oblivious to their surroundings, undaunted by criticism, and delighted with their life together, a life which may be haphazard, but is always rich in surprising discoveries about people and the way things work.

Like many of Tyler's regenerative managing women, Justine begins life as a lonely, only child, marked in her early years by long months of uncertainty, confusion, and fear in Philadelphia and short, relatively happy summers in Baltimore. Her misery is rooted in her relationship with her mother, Caroline Peck Mayhew, the baby of Daniel Peck's family of six children. Dressed in fluffy, frilled nightgowns and bedjackets and topped by tightly curled blonde hair, Caroline looks very much like the pink-frosted cupcakes she devours in bed throughout the day. In her view her unhappiness has a single cause: her husband Sam Mayhew has exiled her from her family and Baltimore to the wilds of Philadelphia. To Caroline, Sam Mayhew is "as different and exotic as an Asian prince,"¹⁰ and Philadelphia, as remote and dreary as Devil's Island. To Caroline, the Roland Park section of Baltimore is the only place to live, and the manners and mores of the Peck family are the only guides to proper living. Suffering from constant headaches (for which no one can find a cause) except when she is visiting her own family in Baltimore, Caroline spends most of every day in bed, rousing herself late in the afternoon on her good days to dress hurriedly before Sam returns. On her bad days, she remains in bed and snaps, "'Oh, go away, Sam, let me be" (70). If these bad days continue unbroken for a long period, Sam calls Daniel Peck; then Caroline's daddy comes to set things straight again--chastizing Caroline for her bed

littered with chocolate wrappers and cake crumbs and her fatness; threatening the landlord with lawsuits if the needed repairs to the apartment are not made at once; opening the curtains to let in the light; and effecting, without spoken words, remarkable changes in the attitude, appearance, and performance of Claudia, the maid. Only her father can straighten things for Caroline and get her back on her feet.

Because of her inability to cope with life away from her family and Baltimore, Caroline's treatment of her daughter Justine is quite erratic and cruel, even if unintentionally so. Justine adores her mother, loves her "soft skin and her puffy bosom and the dimples on the backs of her hands" (69). Snuggling with her mother beneath her bed's velvet canopy is the child's greatest joy. Yet, for Justine, each day begins with her agonizing suspense about entering her mother's room. Will she be welcomed or rejected? If she does enter, her mother may say, "'Oh, Justine, can't you let me be?'" (69) or merely weep copiously and refuse to speak at all. On the other hand, if she does not go in, her mother may call plaintively, "'Justine? Aren't you ever going to say good morning?'" (68) Indeed, Caroline may say something resembling both remarks within the space of a single hour. When Caroline is in the right mood, she hugs Justine and teaches her the games of her own childhood and tells her the true Peck family stories, which are "better than anything in books" (69), including how Caroline's fortitude made it

possible for Justine to be born in Baltimore despite her premature birth and Sam's obtuseness. At other times, Justine is not allowed into Caroline's room all day or even for many days at a time; instead, the child is left to "puzzle over what magic password had given her entry before" (70).

Caroline's vacillating love and attention condemn Justine to spending most of her days "marooned on a scratchy brocade chair" (70) in the dark, dusty living room, carefully keeping her feet up, away from her fears of the "bearded men under all the furniture" (67), who would "snatch her by the ankle and drag her down" (70) if she lowered a foot. There she waits for the impatient, ungracious Claudia to arrive or reads her mother's tattered, old set of The Book of Knowledge, for these were the only volumes she could reach without touching the floor. With these books she can lose herself for a time. At night when her bedroom door is closed, "blue worms squiggled through the blackness"; when the door is open, "the knob stuck out exactly like a shotgun barrel sidling through to aim at her head" (68). Consequently, Justine trains herself "to lie motionless for hours pretending to be a wrinkle in the blankets" (68). Unfortunately, Justine receives no succor from her mother's neglect or her own fears from her father or friends. Sam Mayhew, "only a small pudgy man with a Baltimore accent" (70), is awkward and inept as a father. Though gentle and

kind, he has no concept of what Justine's life is like nor any idea about how to relate to her, and having focused all of her desires upon her unpredictable mother, Justine offers her father little encouragement or opportunity. Even after Justine starts to school and finally comes to know some other children, she can never make friends with them; for her mother makes the peculiarities, unfitness, and foreignness of all Philadelphia children quite clear. It is only with her cousins that Justine can safely interact; indeed, "Baltimore was the only place on earth where Justine would not be going over to the enemy if she agreed to play Prisoner's Base" (74).

Consequently, the high point of every year is summer when the little Mayhew family visits the extended Peck family in Roland Park, an upper middle class section of Baltimore. There in great-grandma's spacious white brick house, flanked by three other Peck houses with a "fleet of shiny black V-8 Fords lining one side of the street" and a flock of "little blond . . . Peck cousins waiting for her to come out and play" (74), and her mother with her "summer laugh," happy and talkative, regaling her family with "terrible giggling stories about Philadelphia" (74), Justine feels mostly happy and almost safe, although she knows herself to be an outsider. She is not really a Peck, but a Mayhew; she lives in foreign Philadelphia; and though she looks like them, talks like them, and knows all the same family stories as her

Roland Park cousins, she does not understand all their jokes and feels they "slow down for her in some way" (75).

Three things save Justine from the destructive effects of her mother's weakness and unreliable love and attention. The first, of course, is the knowledge that in extreme situations Grandfather Daniel can be relied on to come to Philadelphia and straighten things out. No matter what the problem, he knows the right way to solve it--not only for Caroline, the landlord, the maid, but also for Justine herself. For instance, on the day Justine is to begin kindergarten, she absolutely refuses to go; the next morning her grandfather is there, dressing her himself, walking her to school, pointing out the place where Claudia will meet her each afternoon, awkwardly handing her his inevitable gift of horehound drops, and finally nudging her forward alone, up the long, lonely steps into an alien world, while he waits--solid, caring, certain--until she is safely inside. Another stable support for Justine is the Peck family as a whole; their undeviating sameness and sureness and the Mayhew's unfailing trips to Roland Park every summer guarantee Justine one bright period in which she can count on her mother's being proud of her and happy with her. Finally, Justine's own personal way of dealing with her mother's changeability and extreme swings from loving concentration to annoyed disinterest builds a zone of protection around her. Most children react to such erratic treatment by constant

attempts to win the attention of their mothers, whether the attention is favorable or not, or by profound withdrawal. But rather than demanding attention, Justine waits, alert to change; and rather than withdrawing totally, she remains tuned to nuances and causes for happiness and misery. Consequently, though her early years are lonely, insecure, and unhappy for the most part and her self-esteem is low, she is not irreparably damaged; in fact, her intuition and sensitivity become finely honed.

When Sam Mayhew goes to war in 1942, Justine and Caroline move back to Baltimore to live at great-grandma's house. While Caroline grows "carefree and girlish," Justine forgets "almost completely the dark, bearded world of Philadelphia" (76), as she lives with and like her Peck cousins. When Sam returns, Caroline convinces him to live in the big three-story house in Roland Park since there is plenty of room and his company has reopened its office in Baltimore, though Sam prefers his own home in Guilford closer to his parents; and Daniel gives him a black V-8 Ford, just like that of all the Pecks, though Sam prefers a De Soto. His biggest regret, however, is that by this time Justine has "changed into one of those damned Pecks, clannish and secretive with a veiled look in her eyes, some sort of private amusement showing when she watched an outsider. And Sam was an outsider. Not that she was rude to him. All the Peck girls had excellent manners" (80). But Sam is right in

thinking that he has lost her, for in Baltimore the Peck family is a "sealed unit with an imperious grip on its members through the twin traps of heredity and environment."¹¹ Here, Justine finds that life in the bosom of the Peck family and her own thorough Peckishness, are the magic that secure her mother's approbation and love. "'We were that way'" (80), Caroline says serenely and approvingly of Justine's behavior. Only occasionally does Justine wonder if she has "not missed out on something in choosing to be her mother's child alone" (77).

Justine's belief in and conformity to the Peck style take her securely through high school, and it appears that she is heading toward a full lifetime of the narrowness and rigidity that her father fears for her. But in her first year of college, her favorite cousin Duncan leaves home, repulsed by the same qualities that disturb Sam--the family's sameness, snobbishness, smugness, and disdain for outsiders; by happenstance, only Justine knows where he has gone. All of his life, Duncan had been a rebel, known as "an evil, evil boy" (77) and worshipped by his cousins. "Prankish, reckless, and wild" (77), he habitually lies to adults, takes up with strangers (especially the wrong kind), injures himself through his adult-defying stunts, and disappears. But this disappearance is different; for he does not just miss supper or stay out too late, he actually moves himself out of his family home. Typically, he leaves his clothes and

takes "his box of tools and scrap metals" (89), for super intelligent Duncan is enamored of science and technology and endowed with both an inventive mind and inventive fingers. At first with her family's encouragement and then because she wants to, Justine visits Duncan; she also listens to his harangues against the Pecks and defends the family against him. One of Duncan's major complaints is the family's coded communication:

"Too little said and too much communicated, so that if you fight back they can say, 'But why? What did I do?' and you won't have any answer. It all takes place in their secret language, they would never say a thing straight out." (98)

When Justine protests, "'But that's tact. They don't want to embarrass you,'" he snaps, "'They don't want to embarrass themselves, . . . Isn't that right?'" Admitting that he is probably right, Justine maintains that she is right as well: "'There isn't any right and wrong. . . And what does it matter, after all? They're your family'" (98-99).

Yet Justine begins to look and listen to her relatives in a new light and often feels sad and bewildered as Duncan's predictions about their responses and reactions come true time after time. Indeed, a new distance grows between Justine and the rest of the family, but no one speaks to her about it; the Pecks do "not believe in asking too many questions" (97). Justine loses her strict punctuality and her absolute obedience. In addition, she criticizes the clothes her mother chooses for her; although before she has

always cheerfully worn whatever Caroline picks, now, she calls a new print dress "old-ladyish" (100). The fact is that from the time Justine begins seeing Duncan and refusing to reveal his whereabouts to the family--placing his desire for secrecy above the family's desire to straighten him out--Justine has been heading toward a deeper intimacy with and commitment to Duncan, one that will eventually outweigh those she enjoys with the Peck family. She has, in fact, begun the escape from her family that have so far preceded every regenerative managing woman's establishment of her own family. Unlike her predecessors, however, Justine does not eagerly escape her family. On the contrary, she struggles to maintain her loyalty to all the Pecks even as she admits her all-engrossing love for Duncan, a love which allies her firmly with the family rebel and moves her a giant step forward in her escape from the total Peckness of her life.

All of Tyler's regenerative managing women love their original families, albeit to varying degrees (even Evie has an aggrieved affection for her father, however unsatisfied it is and however inadequate he is), but none of the others has loved her family with the absolute devotion and approval that Justine bestows on the Pecks for a while. Her dedication extends not just to the individuals, but to their houses, their other possessions, their manners, their philosophies. Clearly, the Peck family has its flaws (to all but the Pecks); they are even more uncommunicative about their

affection than the Hawkeses, as unrestrained in their criticism of everyone else as Mrs. Emerson, and even narrower in their lifestyles than the Abbotts and the Darcys. Nevertheless, while her counterparts deliberately break away from their families to start new lives, lives in which they intend to be significantly different from their own origins, Justine tenaciously clings to the Pecks long after she has begun to see their flaws and to ally herself with a man who clearly wants to denounce and reject the family and its ways. Certainly, part of Justine's allegiance rests on the importance of the Pecks as the only reliable source of happiness in her early childhood and on the stability and security the Pecks give her from the time she is nine years of age when she and her mother move in with them. Further, Justine sees clearly that her mother cannot cope without the support and physical presence of her Peck family. Earlier regenerative women have neither been particularly concerned nor held back by similar considerations about their mothers' lives, for none of them have had really weak mothers. Thus, love, loyalty, gratitude, and her own sense of herself are all tied to the Pecks. While most of Tyler's regenerative managing women are eager to leave their hometowns, Justine, long after her marriage, agrees with the Pecks that Baltimore is the best, perhaps the only really suitable, place in the world to live.

Most of Tyler's regenerative women pick men who are quite different in temperament and background from themselves; but Justine, who had run "so artificially, so hopefully, at the edge of the other [Peck] children's games" (75) in those bright summer frolics before she moved to Baltimore, treasures her acceptance by the Pecks and clings to her sanctuary with them. In choosing her cousin Duncan, she selects someone who looks almost exactly as she does, as all of the Pecks do--yellow hair; fair skin; blue eyes; pale, straight, pointed features; and long, lean lanky bodies--and someone who comes from a thoroughly Peck background, for he has lived all of his life in the Roland Park enclave Justine finally joins. Additionally, the earlier Tyler regenerative women have all eloped (except Joan, who remains unmarried), and an elopement is exactly what Duncan wants. But Justine, to Duncan's chagrin, insists on announcing their plans to the family and having a proper Peck wedding. When Duncan demands to know why the family's approval matters since they are "just some yellow-haired ordinary people" (105), she answers, "Because I love them" (105), a remark to which Duncan cannot respond. As a Peck, "Love was not a word he used, even to her" (105). Justine's ability and willingness to express her feelings, a very un-Pecklike trait, presages her full development as a regenerative managing woman, a category to which no traditional Peck woman can belong. However, again

unlike earlier Tyler regenerative women, Justine's marriage does not bring her freedom from her girlhood family.

Choosing Duncan as her lover, and soon thereafter as her husband, means, as Justine knows, that she must physically leave her family and her home in Roland Park, though she does not suspect the distances to which the separation will eventually propel her. In addition, she knows that Duncan plans to work outside the family law firm and that he rejects the family because of what he believes to be the absolute rigidity, narrowness, snobbishness, and hypocrisy of their ways. Nevertheless, Justine's own competence in seeing more deeply, more widely, more clearly, and more objectively than Duncan, engenders in her a special ability to perceive issues, words, actions, and people from many perspectives and a special gift to intuit change, the unspoken, and the not yet done. These qualities allow her to discern real motives, true needs, genuine affection, and hidden insecurities that mitigate Duncan's harsh appraisal of the Peck family. Thus, while Duncan professes to dislike the family and all of those traits it incorporates and on which it prides itself, Justine continues to love the family and each family member as fully as ever, even as she rejects their lifestyle and escapes their jurisdiction. All in all, the two young Pecks, looking as much alike as brother and sister, simultaneously escape their families and encapsulate them, not only each in his/her

own self, but each in the most significant other person in his/her life.

Justine's marriage is neither the clean break Duncan desires nor the smooth transition for which Justine longs. As Duncan predicts, the Peck family overcomes its shocked surprise at their engagement quickly as the benefits of having Justine settle Duncan down and of not having to break in an outsider for either of them rapidly surface. However, Sam Mayhew is far more upset than they anticipate. Indeed, he promptly announces that he will not give Justine away nor even attend the wedding; further, that he is moving to Guilford--with Caroline if she agrees to give up her family except for one Sunday dinner a month; with Justine if she gives up Duncan; or alone. Of course, he leaves alone. Taking full charge of and full pleasure in the big, formal wedding plans, Caroline "bustled and darted, giving commands, trilling our fitting schedules in a voice so gay it seemed about to break off and fly" (108). Justine, surprised and relieved to see her mother so happy, considering that her husband has just left her, cannot take seriously Duncan's warning that she must prepare her mother and herself for her departure. As Justine and Duncan start to leave on their honeymoon, Caroline, who has been "sedate all through the ceremony" and "gay and flirtatious at the reception afterwards" (114), loses control. "'No!' she screamed. 'No! How can you just leave me all alone? It's your fault your

father's gone! How can you drive off like this without a heart?" (114) While Daniel tells Caroline that Pecks do not cry, Duncan stops Justine from getting out of the car. Justine leaves home, but she is not yet fully free.

Justine and Duncan begin their life together as farmers about an hour away from Baltimore. Duncan's ambition to raise goats and to sell milk and cheese is as surprising to Justine as it is repugnant to the Baltimore Pecks. However, their three room cabin makes it clear that the young couple has not given over completely the Peck way of life, for it is furnished with massive antique furniture, heavy damask drapes, thick Oriental rugs, and hand-monogrammed linens from the various Peck households. While Justine questions if these furnishings are appropriate for a cabin, she knows no other way to set up a home. Nor have the Pecks accepted Justine's defection; every day's mail to the newlyweds on their scraggly goat farm brings a stack of the traditional Peck letters full of "reproaches, transparent braveries, phrases with double and triple and quadruple meanings" (117) that Duncan sardonically points out, while Justine reluctantly agrees that the letters have many unspoken messages. Soon the Baltimore Pecks install a telephone in the goat farm cabin, over Duncan's strenuous objections; now the phone rings several times a day to thrust laments of loneliness and pleas to come home for a visit, all couched in the typical Peck multi-layered language, until Duncan in

frustration cuts the telephone cord. Though they have not been back to Baltimore in the six weeks since their wedding, they have not been free of Baltimore either.

The real break with the family comes with the death of Justine's parents. Upon hearing that Sam Mayhew has died suddenly of a heart attack, Caroline walks out onto the highway and deliberately and successfully seeks to be run down. With both parents dead, Justine can hardly bear her sense of guilt and longs to lose herself in the solace of Roland Park, and her aunts press hard upon her emotions. However, Justine, armed with her sure knowledge of Duncan's love and need for her is able to tear herself away and start again. When Justine leaves, kissing her way down the row of Pecks, listening to their remonstrances, she feels "as if this, not the wedding, were her real leavetaking" (128). Sanctioned and ritualized by the family, the wedding is, indeed, less a departure than this one; also, at the wedding, the Pecks expect that Duncan and Justine will soon be home again in Baltimore, sobered and settled and ready to fit neatly into their assigned places in the family law firm and the Roland Park dwellings. Leaving after the deaths of Justine's parents to return to a goat farm is not acceptable to the Pecks, for the double tragedy should have shown the youthful couple the error of their attempt to deny their duties as Pecks. Leaving now is true rebellion.

While still in high school, Justine had visited a fortune-teller, Madame Olita, who had told Justine two important and, in Justine's mind, quite unlikely things: first, that Justine could be a serious fortune teller herself and, second, that she was "'going to enter into a marriage that will disrupt everything and break your parents' hearts'" (83). In view of the recent tragedy and her own feelings of guilt, Justine needs to know: "'If your palm predicts a certain future is there any way you can change it?'" (131) Magic Marcia, Madame Azuki, and Serena, Mistress of the Occult, all give Justine the answer that should ease her conscience: the future cannot be changed. But Justine is not satisfied and finally drives to Baltimore to ask her question of the one who inspired it. Madame Olita avers that one can change not only the future, but also the past--not the events themselves, but the hold the events have on one. Depressed by the first part, though it is the only answer to her question that sounds right to her, and intrigued by the second, Justine, with a good deal of ambivalence, begins to study fortune telling by Tarot cards with Madame Olita. Warning her that the assigned meanings are all ambiguous, Olita advises Justine to think of the cards as tags: "'Tags with strings attached, like those surprise boxes at parties. The strings are attached to your mind. These cards will pull out what you already know, but have failed to recognize'" (136). Olita also categorizes customers into two kinds--the

few who lead eventful lives who cannot make decisions and the majority who are merely bored and hoping something will happen. When Olita refuses to categorize Justine because she is still living in the past, the young woman denies it adamantly; but driving back to the farm after each lesson, "threads, strings, ropes pulled her in the direction of Roland Park, and although she never gave in, she had the feeling she was bleeding somewhere inside" (137). Now, it is not Duncan who either stops or discourages her from returning to visit the Pecks, but "her new accomplishment, which was still as thin and fragile as a freshly hatched egg" (137); for she knows the Pecks will not approve and that their disapproval will besmear her new interest so that it will never seem valuable again. Putting her new ability above the family is still another step forward in Justine's journey to freedom from Pecks and guilt.

Developing her skill with the Tarot cards and her ability to call upon her special intuitive powers, Justine tells two fortunes that impel her toward another critical decision point in her life. First, she tells Olita's fortune and learns that her teacher is dying; thus, she inherits Olita's set of ancient cards wrapped in their square of fragile silk, items passed down through generations of gypsies. The second significant fortune she reads is her own. Fascinated by her new ability, "the only special skill she had ever possessed, the only thing she knew that [Duncan]

did not" (138), Justine grows surer of herself and more independent until Duncan suggests they move to Virginia so that he can become a woodworker, an ambition as surprising as goat farming had been earlier. To her objection that they are so nice and settled, he responds, "'But I don't like being settled'" (145); to her objection that it is too far away from Baltimore and that she does not "'want to go farther,'" indeed, cannot "'stand going farther'" (145), he says, "'All right'" (145). But he also grows silent, gives up his favorite scientific and technical books in favor of cheap novels, starts drinking heavily, and dreamily drunken, ignores Justine. Almost idly one evening after Duncan has drifted serenely off to bed without a word to her, Justine lays out the cards to tell her own fortune. What she sees are "journeys, upheavals, surprises, new people, luck, crowds, hasty decisions, and unexpected arrivals" (146). At first, she thinks it must be impossible to tell your own fortune. But a moment later she thinks of the interest she would have in any client for whom she might lay out such cards; she would be "amazed at his quicksilver life." Then she imagines "possessing such a future herself, having to consult the cards every day, so much was going on" (146). Finally, however, it seems that rather than reading her potential future, she is looking at her real fate; the "little square papers . . . told her what was expected of her next. She had no choice but to stand up, and gather her

cards, and wrap them up in their piece of silk before she went to the bedroom to wake Duncan" (146). From now on they will be on the move.

Just what is behind Justine's rapidly changing thought pattern as she looks at her Tarot cards can be inferred by looking at her life to this point. As loyal and loving as Justine feels toward the Peck family and as dependent on them as her mother has been, clearly the family alone is not sufficient to make Caroline's life worth living; further, Justine's own growth, especially under the tutelage of Duncan, has shown her the narrowness of the Peck life. Most important, she has committed her life to Duncan, and although they have never defined exactly the kind of life they will build, it is always clear that Duncan is irresponsible and mercurial and that he means to live as free of the Pecks as his heredity and early training allow. While he will stay on the goat farm with her without losing his good nature, he is definitely becoming stagnant for want of new experiences. Too much a Peck to tolerate strangers, he is uncomfortable because their neighbors are beginning to be friendly; too much opposed to the Peck way of life to want to be a success by society's standards, he is uneasy and bored by the goat farm now that he has learned how to run it. Obviously, he is ready to move on. Since Justine has joined herself to the family rebel, why not enjoy the experiences, the surprises, the changes? One of her few memories of happiness as a child

in Philadelphia involved putting herself into the picture of an imaginary train to the moon in one of her mother's old Book of Knowledge volumes. Why should not her real future be just that exciting, even more so because she has someone she loves with whom to share it? Olita has told her that she and everyone else can change their futures if they want to: "'I have seen lines alter in a hand overnight. I have seen cards fall suddenly into places where they refused to appear at any earlier reading'" (134).

Thus, Justine chooses her future. For the next twenty years, she leads a life of travel, surprises, and new people. No longer hesitant or even thoughtful, she is "fast-moving, kaleidoscopic" (151) with "a sort of dash to everything she did" (151-152). Always in a hurry, though she never seems to know where she is going, she rushes from one adventure to the next, making friends, doing favors, telling fortunes, enjoying the unexpected. Change is what she values for herself and without even reading the cards, she advises clients, "'Change. I don't need cards for that. Take the change. Always change'" (32). Every year or so she and Duncan move from one small Virginia or Maryland town to another. Although Duncan is the one who gets restless and picks his next job, Justine as the regenerative managing woman is always the one who really makes the decision to move on. Duncan's pattern is to start a new job in an entirely new field at a near-failing establishment, turn the business

around so that it is clearly successful, and then lose interest. At that point, Duncan is ready to move, but Justine is usually reluctant, for she will have made friends and established herself with steady fortune telling clients. Secretly at first, then openly, Duncan begins playing solitaire and drinking bourbon until Justine finally makes up her mind: "We'll just move, what's wrong with that?" (153) and they get ready for the next exodus, both becoming "light-headed as if spared from some disaster they had been dreading for weeks" (153). Packing becomes Justine's favorite occupation; consequently, long before they are ready to leave, even the things they need daily have been boxed away and are unusable. Every move gets easier and easier as Justine gives away or just leaves behind pieces of furniture, kitchen equipment, tableware, dishes, and linens. By the time the novel opens, the traveling Pecks have only one set of linens for each bed, a rosewood table, a few mismatched chairs and little else in the way of possessions.

However, they do have a daughter. It is Justine who wants a baby and who prevails over Duncan's initial misgivings, for he assumes a baby will mean immediate settling and anchoring and a tightening of the pull of the Pecks and Baltimore. To his astonished relief, Justine shows no interest in returning to Baltimore for the birth. Further, she names the baby Margaret Rose, after one of the few Peck rebels, their grandmother, who was full of laughter

and love and music. However, Justine cannot manage the personality of her child, and her Margaret Rose, called Meg, is the epitome of a good Peck child. Having always feared genetic defects, Duncan is amazed that he has not considered the most obvious one of all: "total Peckness" (151).

Justine loves Meg fiercely and blindly from her birth and intends to be the perfect mother. However, while Justine is a much better mother than Caroline had been, she is also far from the ideal mother for her daughter, for Meg, like the child Justine before her, passionately longs for the life of the Pecks of Baltimore. In Roland Park, Meg is "the darling. There was not one facet of her that was foreign in any way" (151). Justine devotes her consistent attention, her constant enthusiasm, her high level energy, her creative imagination, and her spontaneous joy to Meg's upbringing. There is never any doubt that Meg is welcome in Justine's life every single day; Meg never sits marooned and isolated, afraid to speak and afraid not to speak at the same time. However, as Meg grows up, she becomes more and more a "housewifely, competent little soul who always knew where things were and what had been forgotten, and when they were supposed to be somewhere" (150), Justine, on the other hand, becomes more slapdash, more rushed. Meg owns the only alarm clock in the house; it is she who wants to complete all of her homework and to put away all of her toys, while her mother urges her to drop everything and come out to play.

While Justine is convinced that Meg is perfect, she does not really see Meg for the serious, sedate, little Peck child that she is; instead, Justine tries to engage Meg in adventures and surprises that not only do not appeal to the child, but often embarrass her thoroughly. Moving so quickly from place to place and idea to idea and activity to activity that no one can keep up with her, Justine enjoys life so much she cannot imagine that her daughter does not take equal pleasure in it. Yet Meg neither enjoys nor approves of her parents' nomadic, haphazard lives, and her embarrassment and unhappiness increase dramatically after she enters adolescence. She does not want to move every year and cries each time she has to leave her school and friends. She hates the tacky little apartments or houses they live in and their ugly, broken down furniture and their irregular lives. Having grown beyond the Roland Park Pecks herself, having discovered the enchantment of freedom and the wonder of the unexpected, Justine has forgotten the security in order and the solace of routine; thus, she claims that teaching a child to adapt is the best education anyone can give her. For Meg, this rationalization of their lifestyle is clearly inadequate, but Justine meets her daughter's objections and tears with new plans for more merry adventures. Although Meg loves her parents, she has, by her teenage years, developed "a permanent inner cringe from wondering how they would embarrass her next. They were so extreme. So

irresponsible!" (170) First dissatisfied, then ashamed, Meg finally becomes desperate to escape.

A series of family tragedies forces Justine to question her management of twenty years of joyous, eccentric un-Pecklike life. First, soon after Meg turns eighteen and before she finishes high school, she elopes with a young assistant minister Arthur Milsom, from Semple, Virginia, a man whose chief quality seems to be harmlessness. Kind-hearted and polite, he is also overprotected and over-dominated by his mother, Mrs. Milsom, a rigid managing woman, who lives with him and runs his household, his ministry, and his life. When Meg brings Arthur to Caro Mills to ask for her hand formally, she hopes to win sanction for an engagement, followed by a real Peck wedding in Baltimore, one like Justine's, complete with a long white dress, great-grandma's sixpence in her shoe, the family's traditional, passed-along veil, and "rows and rows of aunts and uncles and second cousins, grave Peck eyes approving her choice" (173). However, as Meg fears, her parents do not really hear her wishes, let alone approve. While Justine disappears into the kitchen to read the cards for a client, Duncan disparages Meg's future "trapped" as a minister's wife, "sitting in the front pew every Sunday nodding all the flowers off your hat" (178), urges her to do something with her life--"travel somewhere. . . . Take a freight train. . . . Learn to surf" (178), and briskly ushers Arthur out

the door. Braced for teenage difficulties--"long-haired suitors, LSD, shoplifting, pregnancy, revolutionists, firearms in the closet" (181)--Justine believes she can handle anything, but she has not bargained for the insipidness of an Arthur Milsom, nor does she realize how out-of-touch with Meg she really is. Thus, Justine does not know until it is too late that Meg, though mourning the loss of her Peck wedding, is eloping to marry Arthur.

With Meg gone, Justine finds her own life surprisingly bereft. Remembering that Meg as an infant, as a toddler, even as a young child needed Justine's attention, "as if things came into existence only when she was certain her mother knew about them" (195), Justine feels shaky, sad, unimportant: "'I'm not necessary any more'" (195), she complains to Duncan, who does not really understand because he has never had the sense that he is essential to Meg. Wandering aimlessly, seeking companionship from everyone, traveling anywhere for any purpose, Justine relives her shortcomings as a mother; she castigates herself because she moved too quickly, she never waited, she did not really listen, she neither served nor tried to understand Meg's needs, she was inconsiderate, she did not prepare Meg for life. When Justine finally visits Meg and sees for herself the life her daughter now leads, she suffers even more; for Meg does not live the regular, normal life she ran away to find. Instead, with a faith healing mother-in-law who

manages everything and a husband who will not stand up to his mother at all, her present life is in some ways even more bizarre than her life with Duncan and Justine; certainly, it is more confining.

A second family tragedy concerns another Peck family rebel, Caleb, Daniel's younger half-brother who disappeared in 1912 and never contacted the family again. Nor has any family member tried to locate him until Daniel, already an old man himself, discovers a hidden photograph of Caleb playing a cello in an open stable loft. To the surprise and dismay of all of the Baltimore Pecks, but with the assistance of Justine, Daniel begins to search for his brother, now missing for almost fifty years. Following up on every lead that involves anyone remotely connected with anyone who has ever known Caleb, Daniel and Justine travel by car, train, and bus all over the eastern seaboard. As his children grow more disapproving of his search, Daniel gradually begins spending most of his time with Justine and Duncan. Though he clearly finds their lifestyle distasteful, he is careful to refrain from criticism and interference. While Daniel never admits that he lives or would ever live any place but Baltimore, Justine is fondly aware that her beloved grandfather is part of the family she manages, and she teaches him to be patient in his search and to enjoy their journey as it stretches out over fifteen years. Understanding that Caleb doesn't count to the Baltimore Pecks

because to them he is a deserter, Daniel values his brother as a family member who goes back almost as far as his memory: "I would give all the remaining years of my life if I could set eyes on him again. . . . If I could just walk to church with him once more, . . . only this time, paying closer attention . . . if they could just give me back one little scrap of time that's all I ask!" (162) To Justine, who is willing to go anywhere and talk to anyone on a moment's notice and can bolster Daniel's confidence in the face of dead ends and disappointments, finding Caleb is not the most important objective; to her the search is the opportunity for more change, more adventure, more movement. For both of them, the search for Caleb becomes a way of life, a shared journey.

For Daniel's ninety-third birthday, his children hire Eli Everjohn, a private detective, to search for Caleb, and in eighty-one days Eli accomplishes what Daniel and Justine have not been able to do in fifteen years. Proud of his detective work, Eli does not find reporting his feat as much fun as he anticipated, for the methods he uses are in themselves a critical commentary on the Peck family. First, he discerns almost at once that the key to Caleb's character and personality is that he is a musical man, but because the Pecks find such a trait unacceptable, they have never attached any importance to Caleb's obsession with music. Second, Eli discovers that the person who taught Caleb to

play ragtime music, his favorite kind, was Lefleur Boudrault, the Creole gardener and husband of Sullie Boudrault, who is now in her eighties and has been a Peck family servant since she was thirteen years old; thus, Eli asks Sullie if she knows where Caleb has gone, a logical question that none of the Pecks has thought to ask for over sixty years. As it happens, she does know and has known all this time, but she has vowed never to tell unless she is asked. In fact, she has also vowed never to speak to Laura Mae, Caleb's mother, until she asks about Caleb. None of the Pecks ever ask her, and none of them notice that Sullie does not speak to Laura Mae for the last forty-six years of her life. The revelation that they have overlooked the two most obvious ways to locate Caleb and, thus, that they have spent fifteen years of unnecessary searching are stressful enough, but the further information that Caleb is living in a state supported home for the elderly is a terrible blow to Daniel. Although he manages to write a typical multi-layered Peck letter to Caleb that invites him to visit, admonishes him for allowing himself to live in a home when he has family to call on, wishes him well, remonstrates with him for his thoughtlessness, etc., Daniel does not live to see Caleb again. Dying of a heart attack, Daniel's last words are: "I had certainly hoped for more than this out of life" (261). Already devastated by her grandfather's death, Justine is deeply wounded when she reads the carbon copy of the letter

he had written Caleb, for the last paragraph concerns her:

To tell the truth, Caleb, it appears that my ties to the present have weakened. I cannot feel that what happens today is of any real importance to me. I am not overly connected to my own descendants, not even my granddaughter. She means well of course but is so different from me and so unlike my earlier recollections of her, perhaps I would not know her if I came upon her unexpectedly in the street. (255)

With her daughter sadly married, her grandfather dead (his quest ended, but not satisfactorily or even finally since Caleb has not replied), and Duncan bored again and ready to move, Justine reevaluates her life, and she finds it appallingly wanting:

She had only speeded up with every year, gathering momentum. Racing toward some undefined future and letting the past roll up behind her, swooping Meg along under one arm but neglecting to listen to her or ask her if she wanted this trip at all. So Meg . . . left home alone for a sad stunted life . . . and Grandfather Peck became ever more lost and bewildered stumbling through a series of paper shanties. (266)

Justine is, in fact, in the midst of a full-fledged identity crisis. In this respect, Justine is fairly typical of real-life women who usually undergo major identity crises in their thirties or forties.¹² However, Justine has already made one enormous personality switch, and she is now fearful that in casting her lot with change, she has recklessly gambled away her true identity. At Daniel's funeral, it seems that all of his relatives and acquaintances confirm his assessment of the extent to which she has changed--everyone else looks the same, but Justine is distinctly different.

She no longer feels connected to the Roland Park houses or the Peck family as a whole or to her cousins, once her best friends. No wonder her grandfather had been puzzled and Meg lonely, for she is no longer the "old slow, tender Justine" (266), but a quick, impatient someone who pulled them bewildered and stumbling through a series of dusty towns and run-down shacks, instead of providing a proper home. She feels now that she has mislaid herself, and maddeningly, "Duncan, who had changed her whole life and taken all her past away from her" (266), remains exactly the same as ever.

Now Justine must search for herself, and her first decisive move is to take up her grandfather's obsession; thus, she goes to Louisiana to fetch Caleb. More than she knows, however, she is still the "new" Justine, for she encourages Caleb to run away with her over the back wall, rather than going through the required dismissal procedures; and since he has been escaping one way or another all of his life, he does just that. But Caleb is not Daniel, and his un-Pecklike habits grate on Justine's nerves. On the other hand, Caleb seems comfortable with everything about Justine and Duncan's slapdash life, except their disregard for food. Consequently, he takes over the cooking, lovingly placing strange spicy dishes before them like gifts. (Justine finds the food delicious, but it is so unlike that of the Roland Park Peck households that she is irritated by it as well.) Worst of all, he will not visit the family nor let Justine

cannot understand it. One thing is certain; she now refuses to move, maintaining that it is time that they settle down and further insisting that Duncan must not humor her, but must agree with her. To Duncan, Justine has always been the other shoe that does not drop--infinite possibilities and surprises--but when he finally asks her the question about which he dreads her answer--does she want to move back to Roland Park, to the house their great-grandma has left her, while he submits himself to a made-up job in the family law firm?--she agrees that she does. With a mixture of defeat, heaviness, and relief, he realizes the other shoe has fallen. It appears momentarily, as Lynn Schwartz wittily notes that Tyler has wryly reversed Thomas Wolfe's theme that "you can't go home again" to question whether you can ever really get away.¹³ At any rate, Justine believes momentarily that she can find herself again in Roland Park.

But Tyler has not quite finished with Justine's regenerative abilities. As she packs for the move to Baltimore, Justine receives the traditional Peck thank-you note from Great-Uncle Caleb. Pecks are taught early that every visit must be followed as soon as possible with a proper personalized thank-you note on cream-colored stationery. Though the paper looks a little worse for wear, the language is perfect:

Dear Justine,

I want to apologize for taking so long to write, but circumstances prevented me up until now.

It was very kind of you to invite me to stay with you. The frankfurters you cooked were delicious, and I shall remember my visit with a great deal of pleasure for a long time to come.

Love,
Caleb Peck

There can be no doubt that Caleb is a Peck. Justine has seen hundreds of these letters written by her grandfather after each of their wild goose chases to locate Caleb and dozens more by assorted relatives after their visits to Daniel at Justine's house. At the same time, there can be no doubt that this true Peck chooses to leave Roland Park, chooses to leave the Peck family, chooses even to leave Duncan with whom he is clearly a kindred spirit, chooses to lead his own life in his own way. Coming out of her fog of uncertainty once again, Justine picks herself up for a new start. Reading the Tarot cards for herself, she sees more journeys and travels and surprises, and soon she has another new life to lay before Duncan, and this time she picks the job and the place, as well as making the decision. She signs them up with Habit Forming Entertainments, a traveling carnival company owned by one of Justine's long-time customers and friends; Duncan will serve as the carnival mechanic, and Justine will be the fortune teller. Living in a purple trailer in their home base in Parvis, Maryland, traveling light, because everything they need is built in, they will go with the carnival wherever that takes them. Justine has picked herself up out

of her doldrums and has started again to manage the life of surprise and change that she wants for herself and for her family. This time, in fact, Justine has almost outdone herself, for she has arranged a long journey composed of journeys and a life of some stability amidst constant change.

CHAPTER IV

REGENERATIVE MANAGING WOMEN IN EARTHLY POSSESSIONS AND MORGAN'S PASSING

Charlotte Ames Emory, regenerative managing woman, central character, and first person narrator of Earthly Possessions, is Anne Tyler's most unusual runaway. Since the age of seven her life has been "a history of casting off encumbrances, paring down to bare essentials, stripping for the journey,"¹ a long, lonely, anonymous journey that she desperately wants to make and that she is sure her future holds. At each stage of childhood, she carefully chooses the single items she can allow herself to take along; as an adult her only important personal belongings are expensive walking shoes, and she carries at all times a hundred dollar traveler's check in a secret compartment of her billfold. However, Charlotte never strikes out on this journey on her own; instead, one person or one event after another conspires to keep her so tightly enmeshed in what always seems to her at the time as an unhappy family life that she never leaves her home town until she is kidnapped during a bank robbery and carried away at gunpoint. In this seventh novel, Tyler moves for the first time to a full novel delivered in the first person. She also tells the story in an unusual

counterpoint fashion with every other chapter set in the present, alternating with chapters set in the past. Partly because of this rigidly symmetrical structure, Earthly Possessions received more mixed reviews than any of Tyler's previous novels. Critics also complained about the extensive use of parallels in the plot and the theme. Further, to some critics, Charlotte is not as appealing a character as earlier Tyler regenerative managing women. However, Charlotte resembles Tyler herself, in several respects, according to the way she describes herself in "Still Just Writing." Like Charlotte, Tyler often accepts things passively, views the world ironically and from a distance, hates her childhood, and is always prepared for travel.² Although Charlotte needs the nudge of a kidnapper's gun to tear herself away from Clarion, she is very typical of Tyler's regenerative managing women--stronger than she knows and better than she realizes at first in achieving her dream family.

Another of Tyler's lonely, only children, Charlotte is grotesquely unhappy as a child. She grows up alienated and bewildered in her mother's "dead father's house" (11) beside the Texaco station. This "big brown turreted house" (11) is closed to outsiders, except for her father's photography studio, and is permeated by the smell of "stale, dark, ancient air, in which nothing had moved for a very long time" (14). But Charlotte's major source of pain and confusion is her mother Lacey Debney Ames, a woman whose description must

always begin with the word fat, for as Charlotte says, "You couldn't overlook fatness like my mother's. It defined her, it radiated out from her, it filled any room she walked into" (11). While in her mid-twenties, "still a maiden lady teaching school" (11), Lacey marries Murray Ames, a traveling photographer, who converts the library into a studio and settles down in Clarion. To Charlotte, her parents are singularly ill-matched. Her father, who "looked like an empty suit of clothes" (14), is "given to fits of cold, black moodiness" (12) that frighten Lacey and later Charlotte; her mother, who wears huge, sleeveless, flowered shifts all year long, is bored and miserable since Murray does not want his wife to work and they have no social or community life. Nor do they have much of a married life. Charlotte cannot recall seeing them touch one another; in fact, they seldom look at each other: "They seemed to be staring inward, like people cheated or disappointed somehow" (14). Family meals are "strained and silent" (17), marked by occasional bursts of hopeless, bitter, angry words; Charlotte recalls that "there was no point in eating. Anything you ate in that house would sit on your stomach forever like a stone" (17).

From the beginning Charlotte's relationship with her mother is marred by Lacey's belief that Charlotte is not her true daughter. Unaware of her pregnancy until she begins labor, Lacey is surprised that the result of her hurried trip to the hospital is the birth of a six pound baby girl.

Describing the event over and over again to Charlotte, Lacey emphasizes the shock of an unexpected birth, which she compares to "an earthquake! a tornado! Other natural disasters" (15); and relates that at the hospital they give her some kind of gas that affects her vision and makes the whole scene seem like a dream. However, when they dismiss her and hand her the naked baby wrapped in a blanket, she does not believe that it is hers; she accepts it only because she does not want to cause trouble. Later, studying Charlotte's looks, Lacey enumerates her disparate qualities: brown hair, extremely high arches, yellowish skin, tall, straight body--all unlike anyone else on either side of the family. Always, Lacey ends these discussions with the consolation, "'But of course I love you anyway'" (16), which Charlotte knows, but love does not solve the question of identity. Unfortunately, the hospital records are no help at all, and Lacey, certain that her real little blonde daughter is out there some place "growing up with a false name, a false identity, a set of false, larcenous parents" (16), resigns herself to accept the situation as it is. But Charlotte does not; she believes that sooner or later her mother's true daughter will be found, and her earliest memories are those of insecurity for herself, later complicated by embarrassment about her parents. As a child, she has two main worries: "one that I was not their true daughter, and would be sent away. The other was that I was

their true daughter and would never, ever manage to escape to the outside world" (17).

Although both parents embarrass Charlotte, Lacey, because she is the mother and also the stranger of the two, is the source of more pain for Charlotte than her father. Further, Charlotte guiltily believes she loves her father more than she loves her mother, a phenomenon Chodorow describes as typical in real life situations,³ however, Charlotte believes she loves her father more because he believes she is his true daughter. Wishing she had a different mother who participated in school events and socialized with other women, Charlotte simultaneously hopes her own mother will never go out at all. Because of her size, Lacey must walk slowly and carefully, tilting at every step, "holding herself carefully like a very full jug of water" (12). Lacey "sweated and puffed even crossing a room; she traveled in a casing of thick, blind differentness" (32). Each year she grows fatter and fatter until she can no longer sit on regular furniture, but must carry with her a special broad-slatted wooden chair to bear her weight.

At the same time that Charlotte is horrified at her mother's looks, she also knows quite well that Lacey is dissatisfied with her daughter's appearance. When Charlotte is seven, her parents enter her in a "Beautiful Child Contest" at the County Fair as a way of getting publicity for her father's studio, but nothing her parents do can tempt

Charlotte to smile for the entry photograph; the result is a dark-eyed little girl who intends to look fierce, but actually looks as sad and forlorn as she feels. Even though she is chosen for the finals, Charlotte still refuses to satisfy her mother's dream of dressing her daughter in white eyelet frills. In the group picture of the finalists, all of the children are in light-colored organdies and ruffles--except Charlotte, who stands out like the "Little Match Girl" in her plain dark school dress with her sad, dark eyes. Later, Charlotte is sure that she won the contest because the judges could not bear to hurt her feelings.

It is during her stint as the reigning beautiful child in Clarion County that Charlotte meets the woman she believes to be her true mother, begins her fantasy of escape, and is kidnapped for the first time. A tall dark, slender woman, a refugee from the European wars, mistakenly believes Charlotte to be one of her children, all of whom were lost during her flight from the Nazis to freedom; and Charlotte, convinced that she has at last found her true identity, simply walks away with her. Although Charlotte passionately protests that she belongs with the woman, that she is her true daughter, her newly-found "mother" makes no move to keep her when they are discovered, and Charlotte must leave forlornly to return to the Ames and Clarion. On the journey home, Lacey questions whether or not Charlotte has actually been kidnapped. Perhaps the child has simply wandered out onto

the midway. Perhaps the fair personnel just lost her. Charlotte, on the other hand, is positive she has been kidnapped--but she is not sure by whom--the refugee woman or Murray and Lacey Ames. Her sense of identity and her self-esteem seem permanently disfigured and shackled by these uncertainties as a child, and even as an adult, Charlotte's memories confuse and dismay her. It is during this same trip home that Charlotte's lifelong waking and sleeping picture of her future forms in her mind, a picture reminiscent of the story her refugee mother told her of a long, dusty foot journey in which, worn down to only bone and muscle, she travels alone without possessions, not even food and extra clothing, bound for an unknown destination. There is no landmark in sight. Consequently, "since October 16, 1948," her "life has been a history of casting off encumbrances, paring down to bare essentials, stripping for the journey" (41); after that day, possessions and people who depend on Charlotte make her anxious, and one part of her is always poised for escape.

As a teenager, Charlotte deliberately remakes herself. "Through an enormous effort of will" (60), she becomes the best-groomed and most vivacious girl in the senior class. She participates in clubs, works on committees, goes on dates, attends social events, and joins her girlfriends in grooming sessions and slumber parties. During these activities she feels almost normal, but she never asks anyone

to her home; and upon each return to the dismal house and the eternal questions about her activities from her morose, peculiar parents, Charlotte sees herself again as she really is in her own mind--ugly and freakish and alienated. Escape is still her main motivation and her only salvation as far as she can see.

A partial scholarship to college seems to offer the means for Charlotte's escape, but her father's heart attack recalls her to Clarion before the first class begins. During the crisis, as her father hovers between life and death, Charlotte guiltily agonizes that he may die before she ever gets to know him; and upon his return home, she learns to serve him as a practical nurse and to take over his work in the photography studio. Only when he has almost recovered does she finally realize the true scope of her predicament: "home, trapped, no escape" (62). Charlotte's life continues to close in on her as the family becomes increasingly isolated from the community and lives in smaller and smaller areas within the old house. Charlotte's only hope for freedom is returning to college, but her father's death and her mother's collapse close that escape route. There is no money; there is no one to care for her mother, who clearly cannot care for herself. Hopelessly, Charlotte feels herself "locked in a calendar; time was turning out to be the most closed-in space of all" (68). Charlotte thinks of running away, but she never does. Instead, Charlotte becomes a

regenerative managing woman. There is no one else to run the house, care for her incapacitated mother, handle the finances. Still a teenager, Charlotte can and does manage everything. However, she does not expect her destiny to be managing her mother's house; she plans to leave and manage her own.

The need for extra income opens a crack in the isolation in which Charlotte and her mother live, for Charlotte decides to take in a roomer. The first applicant is Saul Emory, a big, handsome man, recently discharged from the army and the second son of a former neighbor. Indeed, Charlotte has always been fascinated by the Emory family with the beautiful, gypsyish mother Alberta and the four strapping sons--all deliciously wicked and mysterious. Thus, almost immediately, Charlotte falls in love with Saul and begins a different kind of fantasizing about escape. While she urges dispatch and daring, he proceeds cautiously, thinking in grand terms about his future life work. Charlotte does not take warning. Instead, she seduces him in order to speed up the wedding date and learns to her astonished dismay that he wants to stay in Clarion and that he expects the two of them to take care of her mother as long as she lives. Soon after the wedding, Charlotte is further astounded to learn that without consulting her, Saul has finally found his direction for the future. He wants to attend the Hamden Bible College and study for the ministry of a fundamentalist church. As a

person whose whole life has been focused on escape--escape from her confining, oppressive house; escape from her peculiar, leaden mother; escape from her own sense of alienation--Charlotte for once can almost believe in God, for it seems to her that a supernatural joke is in progress: "The only place more closed-in than this house was a church. The only person odder than my mother was a hellfire preacher" (96). While Saul feels secure because he has been called to preach and stay in Clarion, Charlotte feels trapped. For the first time, one of Tyler's regenerative managing women does not make her escape from her first family before or through her marriage. Instead, after a lifetime of preparation for and repeated attempts to escape, Charlotte finds herself more securely enclosed than ever, more suffocatingly entrapped than she ever imagined. "It was very clear; they were tearing down the rest of the world completely. They were leaving me no place standing but my mother's. They were keeping me here forever, all the long, slow days of my life" (96).

Also, for the first time, Tyler does not at first present her regenerative managing woman's marriage as a likely foundation for her ideal life. All of Tyler's marriages have problems; in some, like Evie's in A Slipping Down Life and Mary's in Celestial Navigation, the problems are so severe that the unions end in permanent separation. However, in earlier novels there is always a sense, for a

time at least, that this partnership may become the foundation for the kind of family unit that the regenerative managing woman wants to create. However, after Charlotte's one week honeymoon, which she spends blissfully lying in the sun "recuperating from the years of loneliness, warming and glowing and deepening all week long" (94), Charlotte's marriage is not a happy one. Indeed, the opening line of the novel--"The marriage wasn't going well and I decided to leave my husband" (5)--is almost the motto for the marriage; Charlotte is as focused on escape once she is married as she was when she was an unhappy, unmarried teenager. In fact, she first leaves Saul only three months after their wedding. First, she feels trapped by Saul's chosen profession. Knowing that she cannot believe in his religion and thus cannot feel that he is spending his life wisely, Charlotte also knows she cannot be a good minister's wife, and her self-esteem suffers from knowing she cannot do her part well, plus feeling constant disapproval from his congregation. Second, there is Saul himself with what Charlotte believes to be "his judging gaze that noted all of [her] faults and sins" (117) and his deepening disappointment as he learns her true nature while his own "fine mannerly presence" and goodness are "eternally showing her up" (117). Third, Saul has now moved into the Ames house all of his mother's furniture and household goods so that the already overstuffed and suffocating space is now packed even more tightly. "Every

piece of furniture had its shadow, a Siamese twin" (113), and Saul will not hear of disposing of anything. Fourth, Lacey dotes on Saul, believes he can do no wrong; indeed, Charlotte believes her mother likes Saul more than she has ever liked her daughter. Consequently, Charlotte is envious of Saul's good traits and jealous of her mother's regard for him. Further, Lacey constantly takes Saul's side, criticizes the way Charlotte treats him, and warns Charlotte to be careful not to drive him off, a thought that sends shocks of pleasure through Charlotte as she fantasizes "chasing him with a stick, like the girl on the Old Dutch Cleanser can" (117), believing that her "hopeless, powerless feeling would vanish like a fog" (117) if she could just drive him off that way, scream out, 'Back away! Back away! Back away! Give me air!'" (117) Instead, Charlotte herself leaves, simply marches out one day, goes directly to the bus station, and buys a ticket to New York. She has no luggage, not even a coat against the October chill; and she has only eight dollars left after her purchase, but she says, "I believe that was the clearest, happiest moment of all my life" (117). Unfortunately for Charlotte's escape plans, there is no bus to New York that day, and Saul easily finds Charlotte at Clarion's one motel and brings her home by telling her what her inexperience has overlooked: she is pregnant. Thus, instead of escaping, Charlotte feels the constraint of one

more set of bonds attaching her to Saul, her mother, and Clarion.

Charlotte does not collapse or give up at this news. As a regenerative managing woman, she meets the challenge with energy and strength, becoming more active and more capable in running her household and fulfilling her responsibilities. Her range of duties expands rapidly over the next few years. Although she refuses to be the typical minister's wife, she does attend services (without listening to the sermons), and she cooks Sunday dinners not only for her family, but also for homeless visitors, sinners from the mourners bench, and others Saul invites home. Further, she continues to operate her father's photography studio for the extra money it brings in, even though in the studio she is always "only a transient" (127). At the same time, the family grows rapidly. First, there is the addition of her daughter Selinda; then various homeless parishioners from Saul's church join the household on semi-permanent bases; and then one by one Saul's brothers return: first Linus, the chronically depressed; then Julian, the gambler; then Amos, the musician who always runs away. Finally, a few weeks after Charlotte suffers a miscarriage and the doctor tells her she should avoid having more children, Saul brings home Jiggs, a baby deserted by his mother, for Charlotte to raise.

Since Charlotte's practical concerns about money elicit only "The Lord will provide" (126) from Saul, she is left to

deal with the inexorable worries and responsibilities of caring for the extended family and running the large household alone. Though this life is not the one she has dreamed about, Charlotte handles everything efficiently, learning in the process "that in every family there are certain ways one has to shrink and stretch to accommodate other people" (167). Further, she learns to mitigate her disappointment and her loss of hope by looking "at things with a faint pleasant humorousness that spiced [her] nose like the beginnings of a sneeze. After a while humor became a habit . . . " (126). In the back of Charlotte's mind is the sense that her current life is temporary, that she will be leaving soon, that with her traveler's check, her walking shoes, and her children--her "excess baggage, loved and burdensome" (127)--she will soon escape. Competently filling a multitude of roles in the lives of her large and expanding household, Charlotte still does not really know who she is nor whom she wants to be.

By the time Lacey confesses that there is something wrong with her health, she has an inoperable cancer. Only Charlotte has the courage to tell her mother the nature of her illness and its prognosis, as she conscientiously cares for her mother, whose bedroom becomes the center of the household; at the same time, Charlotte continues to maintain the rest of her duties equally competently. It is during Lacey's last weeks that Charlotte finally sees her mother's

true daughter in a cheap photograph her mother gives her to burn. Recognizing her immediately--"Something about the eyes, maybe--light-colored, triangular, expectant. . . . or the merry, brimming smile" (192). Charlotte immediately feels connected to the little girl, feels she knows her, thinks they could have been friends, and she wonders if the true daughter knows about the life she should be living in Clarion, where Charlotte, the usurper, lives "married to her true husband, caring for her true children, burdened by her true mother" (193). Never considering destroying the photo as her mother requested, Charlotte carries it with her through the last phase of her mother's illness, and the photo releases her in some way, allowing her "to step back to a reasonable distance and finally take an unhampered view" (194) of her mother. What she sees is "the mending, cooking, story reading, temperature taking, birthday cakes, dentist's and pediatrician's appointments--necessary for the rearing of a child" (193-94)--and what she acknowledges at last is how difficult these things had been for her mother, who, nevertheless, "had managed, middle-aged though she had been, crippled with high blood pressure and varicose veins, so clumsy and self-conscious that the simplest trip for new school shoes was something to dread for days beforehand" (194). Charlotte's recognition of just what rearing a child requires recalls Elizabeth Abbott's epiphany in The Clock Winder, as well as instances in other novels in which Tyler

celebrates the ordinary, unavoidable difficulties in raising children. While Elizabeth's new insight frees her from the paralyzing fears that she may make mistakes or cause harm, fears that keep her from really living, Charlotte's new insight frees her to love her mother, though she cannot yet acknowledge to herself that she does so.

Lacey's illness lasts more than a year, and in the end, despite Charlotte's hopes to the contrary, her mother spends her last days in a hospital room, hooked up to cords and dials, unconscious most of the time:

She was like some unsolvable math problem you keep straining at, worrying the edges of, chafing and cursing. She had used me up, worn me out, and now was dying without answering any really important questions or telling me a single truth that mattered. A mound on the bed, opaque, in fact.
(200)

Surprisingly, Charlotte finds herself furious and forcing her protesting, dying mother to look at the photograph of the true daughter, Charlotte insists, "Who is it, Mama" (201), but she can hardly believe her mother's answer, "Oh, me.

. . . Me as a child" (201). When Charlotte murmurs "I thought it would be your true daughter. The one they mixed up in the hospital . . . the baby. You didn't think it was yours" (201), her mother seems to pull herself together:

"It? . . . It wasn't an it, it was you, Charlotte. The baby was you" (201-202). And despite Charlotte's badgering, Lacey maintains that she has never doubted that Charlotte was her true daughter. Still sure of her childhood memories

(almost), Charlotte recognizes that the laughing blonde child in the photograph is obviously her mother. Having found "so much in that little girl's eyes, imagined such a connection" between herself and the child, Charlotte, without articulating it even to herself, sees at last the connection between herself and her mother, and when Lacey dies a few days later, Charlotte can at last admit to herself, "This death had taken me by surprise; I'd lost someone more important than I'd expected to lose" (202).

Ironically, although the means of escape are at hand after Lacey's death, Charlotte turns away from the opportunity. During the last period Lacey is at home, Amos, Saul's brother, has come to admire and then to love Charlotte, who he sees is brave and strong, as well as beautiful. "I don't know how you manage this" (195), he tells her repeatedly. Admitting that he did not understand her at first, he lavishes her with extravagant compliments:

"Now I see everyone grabbing for pieces of you, and still you're never diminished. Clutching on your skirts and they don't even slow you down. And you're the one who told her the truth; I heard you. Said the word out loud. Cancer. You sail through this house like a moon, you're strong enough for all of them." (195)

Though Charlotte does not think the compliments well-taken-- "I should have argued. (I should have laughed)" (195)--she accepts them, as well as Amos' kiss, and soon the two are meeting in vacant rooms, in the attic, in the bend of an unused stair for a hurried kiss and Amos' promise to take her

away when her mother is gone and no longer ties her to Clarion. Charlotte loves him "for not being Saul. . . . Or for being a younger, happier Saul. He carried no freight of past wrongs and debts. . ." (196). Still misreading her own character, she thinks Amos does not understand that she would gladly have walked out any day, for she wanted to "get out, throw all the old complexities off, make a clean start" (196), escape. She believes that only her attempt to live up to his image of her keeps her faithful to managing her family. Yet after her mother's death, she makes no preparations to leave, not even in her mind. Realizing almost simultaneously her love for and her loss of her mother is a major revelation and a major blow for Charlotte, and in her sorrowful awakening, she begins to understand herself and her real relationship with her family better than she has ever done before. "Unusually careful of people" (203), accepting everything they offer, Charlotte sees in stark and sensitive certainty that everyone lives "in a sort of web, crisscrossed by strings of love and need and worry" (203). When she tries to explain to Amos how tangled up she is with other people in the family, more connected than she ever thought, and that there is really no way she can get loose, Amos is enraged. Having assumed it was her duty to her mother that has kept her, he now believes that she is merely inert: "You're passive, Charlotte, you stay where you are

put. Did you ever really intend to leave?" (205) At her affirmative answer, he says:

"Then I pity you, . . . It's not only me you've fooled, it's yourself, . . . you've let yourself get buried here and even helped fill in the grave. Every year you've settled for less, tolerated more. You're the kind who thinks tolerance is a virtue. You're proud of letting anyone be anything they choose; it's their business, you say, never mind whose toes they step on, even your own. . . ." (205-206)

Actually, passivity, or at least unassertiveness, has been an important part of Charlotte's make-up all of her life, though her ironic, humorous, mock-tough manner of discourse tends to obscure that characteristic somewhat. Her embarrassment about her parents, her low self-esteem, her sense of alienation have all combined to render her diffident and reticent about demanding what she wants. Indeed, for the most part, she doesn't know what she wants, except escape. Yet despite her life-long desire to flee, Charlotte still settles in to care for first her father, then her mother, instead of going to college. Upon falling in love with Saul, Charlotte hopes and believes that he represents her way out, but at the same time, she leaves everything to him: "All I had to do was give myself up. Easy. I let him lead me. I agreed to everything" (90). When Saul travels to Denver to consider a business opportunity, it does not occur to Charlotte or to Saul that perhaps she should be involved in the decision about his future; the only person who asks Charlotte about her preference is her mother, who fears

Charlotte may move far away from Clarion without her. However, when Saul returns, now dissuaded from a move to Denver, Charlotte's one assertive move is to visit him late at night, knowing that if they are physically intimate, he will insist on an early marriage. Predictably, the ensuing speedy marriage keeps them in Clarion. Until they have actually set the date, Charlotte does not know that Saul has been "saved" at the Holy Basis Church, nor that Saul wants to be married there, nor that they will have to go to the church for instruction for a full month before the preacher will perform the marriage ceremony. Astonished that she knows Saul so little, Charlotte still takes no steps to know him better. Thus, she is astounded again when, soon after the marriage, Saul announces that he has been called to preach. Charlotte records for the reader her horror at his choice of occupation and at the way her marriage, which she had expected to free her, will instead cement her imprisonment in Clarion. Later, she offers no objection to the numerous transient and permanent guests, including Saul's brothers, who come to live with them for short or long periods, and when Saul brings home Jiggs and says that they are going to keep him, Charlotte notes that "there was some comfort in knowing I had no choice. Everything had been settled for me. Even the baby seemed to see that, and leaned forward as if he'd expected me all along and dropped like a stone into my waiting arms" (155).

At the same time, it is a mistake to see Charlotte's lack of assertiveness as the central quality of her character. Far more to the point in understanding her behavior are those qualities that Tyler admittedly values above all others: endurance, adaptability, the capacity to keep on loving, even though life does not fulfill one's dreams perfectly.⁴ Amos' earlier view of Charlotte's ability to cope with her expanding family, to handle her responsibilities with efficiency and affection, to learn new skills, to face the heart-rending truths of terminal illness with honesty and warmth, to accept change and to change in turn, to take disappointments in stride--indeed, to manage her multitudes of physical and emotional duties in a way that has a positive effect on her extended family is not just a more flattering view, it is a more apposite one. Time after time, she has picked herself up after major setbacks and started again: the death of her father before she really knew him; the failure of her plans to attend college; her inability to escape her home and her mother to live her own life even for a short time; her recognition that she has married a person who is fundamentally different from herself in his beliefs about and approach to life; her husband's ministry; the loss of her second child; and, one after another, the addition of more Emorys and more semi-permanent guests to her household. In Charlotte, Tyler depicts a regenerative managing woman who in the central aspects of her

behavior is very typical of real life contemporary managing women who choose the family as their sphere of influence-- basically passive in dealing with their husband's choice of lifestyle and career, but basically independent and strong in running their households and the rest of the everyday lives of all the family members.⁵

Charlotte's character and personality contain not only fragments from Tyler's own being in her stoicism and ironic approach to life, she also has a kinship with other Tyler regenerative managing women beyond those characteristics that mark her as a member of this character type. She shares with Elizabeth Abbott Emerson her mutual fears and desires for intimacy and responsibility and her reluctance to interfere with another person's life. As Charlotte tells Saul after he has already enrolled in the Hamden Bible College, "'I hate the whole idea, and I would try to make you quit if I were sure that I had any right to change people'" (116). Saul is bewildered by Charlotte's comment and says he does not understand her. That Charlotte also shares Elizabeth's view of fundamentalist preachers is clearly illustrated in her response, "'No, I know you don't. Preachers never ask themselves that question, that's what's wrong with them'" (116).⁶ In other ways, too, Charlotte shares qualities with Tyler's other regenerative managing women. Like Joanne Hawkes she is pretty, vivacious, and popular in high school; though she lacks Joanne's flirtatious, Southern belle ways.

Like Mary Tell, she accepts without undue strain the addition of strangers to her family circle, going Mary one better in that she not only accepts non-family persons as permanent additions to the family, she also accepts Saul's three brothers, and she feeds the whole lot. She is like Joan Pike in her stoicism and her endurance of a relationship that will always be far from satisfactorily fulfilling; though Charlotte does enjoy a satisfying sexual life with Saul, while Joan remains virginal, the fundamental differences between Charlotte and Saul are actually far greater than those between Joan and James. Interestingly, however, Saul's devotion to his brothers seems to create another bond between him and Charlotte as opposed to the obstacle Ansel proves to be between Joan and James. On the other hand, Charlotte differs most significantly from Tyler's other regenerative managing women in that she does not escape from her original family by physically leaving her mother and father while she is in her teens or early twenties. Instead, Charlotte's marriage, while giving her the scope and challenges she needs to develop her regenerative and managerial talents, confines her to her first home. Charlotte's escape from this home is an escape from the extended family of which she is already the hub.

Amos' passionate criticism and departure clouds Charlotte's emerging understanding of her real role within the family and pushes to the foreground and into sharp focus

all her uncertainties and dissatisfactions--all of Alberta's furniture still crowding the rooms inside the big, dark house despite Saul's promise to dispose of it years ago, the house itself, "stranded here between the Amoco and the Texaco" (206), the only home on the block, and Charlotte herself, still in Clarion all of her life, never once seeing anything different or going anyplace else--and one more time, Charlotte prepares to escape. Energetically, she discards furniture, clothing, and things, aiming for "a house with the bare, polished look of a bleached skull" (207); then she discards people, no longer answering the phone nor speaking to acquaintances; then she closes the studio. When her family, who still "pestered" her and "hounded" her because they thought she had something left to give them, make demands, she tells them, "You'll have to manage on your own from now on" (208). She announces to Saul that the marriage isn't going well and informs Jiggs that her idea of a perfect day is an empty square on the calendar. As Charlotte at last plans her departure, having managed to get everyone out of the house at once, a toy tin badge pours out with her cereal, and stamped on it is what she considers to be her own personal legend: "Keep on trucking" (211). Charlotte lets the message on the badge and the fact that "once you start an action, it tends to bear you along" (210) pull her out of the house and to the local bank to get cash for her trip. At the same time, with another part of herself, Charlotte mourns the

loss of her life and her family as she recognizes one of her major failings: "Oh, I've never had the knack of knowing I was happy right while the happiness was going on" (210).

While waiting in line at the bank, Charlotte is abducted at gunpoint by one of literature's most inept bank robbers, Jake Simms. Still at gunpoint, Charlotte runs with Jake all the way to the bus station, where they board the bus for Baltimore. Jake's escapade has netted him two hundred dollars in one dollar bills and Charlotte. Although Charlotte keeps expecting and hoping that someone will notice how peculiar it looks for them to be running down the street and how strange it sounds to order two tickets to the end of the line without concern for where that might be, but as so often happens in Tyler's novels, this abduction, like other unusual events, goes unnoticed in the midst of ordinary life. Already disappointed by the lack of attention humans have given her, Charlotte thinks she has never seen "anything so heartless as the calm, indifferent way those cows were grazing" (22) in the countryside she and Jake speed through on the way to Baltimore. Thus, Charlotte at last escapes her marriage, her family, her house, and Clarion, and she travels as lightly as she ever imagined that she would. Yet clearly this is not exactly the trip she has dreamed about, for she is far from free and in control when she leaves; instead, she is an unwelcome encumbrance to an impatient young man who

does not really want to deal with her, yet is unwilling to let her go.

Charlotte's lack of assertiveness emerges as clearly in those chapters that detail her kidnapping as in those that portray her previous life. On their bus ride to Baltimore, Jake keeps the gun jammed into her ribs, though Charlotte cannot understand why. She is sure that even if she screams, the other passengers will ignore her or think that she is merely insane; and actually, she knows she will never scream, for she "would rather die than make any sort of disturbance" (20). Stopping at a dingy bar, Charlotte orders beer, even though she never drinks, because she doesn't "want to seem unfriendly" (23), and later, after Jake has stolen a car and started driving south, Charlotte relinquishes her money and her comfort to Jake to avoid his throwing a scene. "I am gifted with the ability of giving up" (84), she says. Almost as much as she hates scenes, Charlotte likes feeling that someone else is taking care of her. Thus, her anger at Jake abates somewhat when he is able to fish out of his pocket a packet of sugar to sweeten her coffee: "I felt comforted. All I had to do was lift the cup which was warm and heavy and solid. Everything else had been seen to. I was so well taken care of" (87). Ironically, the next chapter juxtaposes her engagement with Saul, and here, too, Charlotte simply gives herself up to the situation: "I agreed to everything.

It was such a pleasure that I felt soothed and sleepy, like a cat in sunshine" (90).

While Charlotte does not willingly accompany Jake, she is, certainly, on her way to fleeing on her own when he grabs her. Thus, even early on in their escape, Charlotte is ambivalent. It is the gun in her side that sets her running and Jake's tight grip on her arm that keeps her from outdistancing him and moves her onto the bus to Baltimore. However, even though the gun is still jammed in her side, Charlotte feels there is hope and sinks into a seat suddenly "light-hearted," feeling almost "as if [she] were going on a trip, really" (9). Though frightened for her life, she thinks how glad she is that she got to have the window seat, and seeing her own reflection in the glass, she notes how much more interesting-looking it is "than real life" (22). Later, when Jake relaxes a little and no longer keeps the gun poked into her ribs, he steals a car and chains and padlocks her side of the door, and he watches her closely to be sure that she is still clearly under his control at rest stops and snack breaks. However, by the time they have reached Georgia, she is insulted when he refuses to let her sleep in the back seat because he fears she will slip away. Additionally, she tells Jake that she was in the process of leaving her husband when he took her hostage, a fact which clearly eases his mind about not releasing her, and when they see Saul on television denying that Charlotte would ever

leave him, Charlotte adamantly insists to Jake that Saul is lying:

"I don't know why he said that. Not only was I planning to leave him but I've left before, and he knows it. Back in nineteen sixty. And I told him I would in sixty-eight also as well as a lot of other times, I couldn't say just when, exactly" (56-57)

Jake's disbelief is evident, and Charlotte thinks to herself how she would like "to give that Saul a piece of [her] mind" (57). The truth is that Charlotte makes no attempt to seek help or to escape until she actually leaves Jake, and Jake's surveillance is always minimal and becomes increasingly lax by the end of their journey together.

Perhaps, if this trip is not the one Charlotte planned, it may be, because of her character, the only one she can take. Besides, it does have similarities to the journey which has occupied her imagination for almost thirty years. She is definitely traveling light with only the clothes she is wearing, and later, because she has no opportunity to bathe or shampoo and because Jake feeds her only junk food at odd times, she comes to look much like the emaciated, stringy-haired Charlotte she has always fantasized she would become on her long trip. As Charlotte relates the story of her second kidnapping, she expresses only one real regret about her forced journey: she does not have the excellent walking shoes she has had in readiness for just this occasion, and when they run out of gas and have to walk a

deserted country road, her feet hurt. Although Charlotte uses the fact that she has children for whom she has made no after school arrangements as an argument to Jake for her release before they leave Clarion, she never records any further worries about them, and the unstated but clear implication of her earlier plan is that she expects to leave alone, without her children, an act that will undoubtedly hurt her conscience. For Charlotte, being kidnapped allows her to leave her husband and desert her children without guilt since she is abducted against her will. Ironically, Charlotte's escape is also an entrapment about which she comments as hopelessly as she does her earlier imprisonment with her mother: "We were locked together forever. There was no escape" (29).

The relationship that develops between Charlotte and Jake Simms is not one that romantic fiction and swashbuckling novels have led readers to expect. Neither handsome nor dashing, Jake is a young, insecure, unlucky, permanently restless, small-time criminal bungler, and the bond that develops between him and Charlotte is not at all sexual. Instead, it comes to be marked by familial affection and bears out Tyler's comment that even an association involving as "bizarre a couple as a bank robber and a hostage could become a bickering familiar relationship. Anything done gradually enough becomes ordinary."⁷ Because Jake is needy and Charlotte is accustomed to responding to needs with

sympathy and practicality, Jake soon confides in her the reason he robbed the bank, his destination on their journey southward, and his need to escape. For Jake, escape means first breaking out of the Clarion jail and second fleeing from the bad opinion almost everyone, including himself, has of him. Despite his lack of education and sensitivity, Jake does have flashes of insight, and he recognizes that "any time you see someone running, it's their old faulty self they're running from. Or other people's notion of their faulty self" (175). His remark rings true for Charlotte, as well as for himself, as her anguished account of her flawed relationship with Saul makes clear:

"We disagree on everything, . . . He's always finding fault, . . . I tell him, . . . 'Is it my fault I'm not religious?' I never have been, not since I was seven and they gave me this book of children's Bible stories, this jealous God throwing tantrums, people having to sacrifice their children, everybody always in the wrong. . . See, it's not that I don't believe. . . What the trouble is: I don't approve. . . It's against my principles. . . and really, it's harder to be good if you do it without religion. Give me an A for effort at least,' I tell him. . . ." (181-82)

Once again, Jake's insight unmaskes an important new perspective for Charlotte. He asks why, if all she says is true, did Saul say on television that she was a good woman; and he refuses to let Charlotte get by with saying that Saul probably just meant she would not rob a bank. "'What his words were, you're a good woman, . . . you just had him figured wrong to start with. I mean it could be he really

does believe you're good, and worries what that means for his side'" (183).

Charlotte also helps Jake with his responsibility and relationship. Having impregnated a frail frivolous teenager Mindy and refused to marry her, Jake has second thoughts about his treatment when he receives a letter begging him to rescue her from a home for unwed mothers so that his son will not be born in prison. As a result, he picks her up and takes her along, although he has no greater plan than getting to Perth, Florida, where Oliver Jamison, his one friend, whom he has not seen since reform school, now lives with his mother. Although Mrs. Jamison despises Jake as a bad influence on her son, Jake still harbors the dream that with Oliver's help he will be able to figure out how to manage his life. Jake's problem is that he does not want to get married, for he sees a family as just another prison, yet at the same time he already feels himself tied to Mindy by something he describes as "worse than love, harder to buck. Like we had to wear each other through, work something out, I don't know" (101), but Charlotte understands. Although Jake is far outside her range of experience with his brushes with the law, his fights, his destruction of property, and his misuses of those who love him, Charlotte sympathetically sees how all of his misfortunes, mishaps, and meanness came about without his intending any harm; and she comes to care about Jake, as well as Mindy, who is scatterbrained and silly, but

touchingly human, too, as she wails, "I'm only young! I can't do this all by myself" (146), when it is clear that Jake has no plan, will receive no help from Oliver, and is running from the law with a hostage in tow. And Charlotte, understanding the stresses, the jolts, the compromises, the readjustments of self and others needed in any marriage and knowing, as only someone who has been there can know, how difficult these problems are to manage even when the couple does not have all the strikes against them that Mindy and Jake have, finds there is really little she can do to help the young couple until Jake discovers Charlotte's traveler's check hidden in her billfold. Apologetically, Charlotte explains that she has carried this check for years and for just one purpose: traveling; so she "'forgot it could be used for anything else'" (150). Once again, Jake puts things into perspective when he announces the obvious, "'Charlotte, . . . we are traveling'" (150).

Though Jake thinks the money will free him, Charlotte sees that it will free her, too. Once the check is cashed, she gives him the money and says goodbye. However, Jake, like the others in her life, has come to depend on Charlotte, and he wants her to stay:

"I can't quite manage without you just yet. Understand? I've got this pregnant woman on my hands. . . . Charlotte, it ain't so bad if you're with us, you see. You act like this is the way life really does tend to turn out. You mostly wear this little smile. I mean, we know each other, Charlotte. Don't we?" (219)

And Charlotte acknowledges that they do, but she is still leaving, leaving him her money and her "Keep on trucking" medal, and her good wishes, but leaving nonetheless because she is free to do as she wishes and she wants to go home.

More instructive than she ever expected it to be, Charlotte's long-awaited journey is ripe with important messages for her. For example, she learns that a 1953 car can be as much a prison as a house suspended in time between the Texaco and the Amoco stations. Tyler's use of both the old Dabney house and the old car as symbols of the clutter and destruction of daily life, as well as the way that anything that ties one with real or symbolic chains and ropes is a prison is skillfully done in Earthly Possessions. Also, Charlotte learns that her imprisonment in both instances is more in her mind than in her chains; and she frees herself by seeing more clearly and choosing to take charge. When Charlotte looks at her own life without self-pity and without deprecating irony, she sees that what she has considered previously as a static life has actually been one rich in change and movement. Most important, she sees that the life journey she has embarked on with Saul is really the one she has prepared for all of her life and the one she now freely chooses to continue. Thus, Charlotte returns to Clarion, to her husband, her children, the Emory brothers, the transient and semi-permanent guests from the Holy Basis Church, the photography studio (in which she at last says she wheels her

camera, instead of her father's camera, around), and to her own position as the regenerative managing woman of her household. Clearly, Charlotte's life journey with Saul is still characterized by rough roads, disagreements, misunderstandings, and the frequent "tiny, jarring rearrangement" (222) of themselves. Yet when Saul, feeling insecure, suggests to Charlotte that perhaps they should take a trip as she used to want to do, Charlotte says no. She has already used her traveler's check, and she knows that her lucky badge's legend to "Keep on trucking" applies to Clarion as well as anywhere else. They do not have to leave town to take life's journey. "We have been traveling for years, traveled all our lives, we are traveling still. We couldn't stay in one place if we tried" (222).

In Tyler's eighth novel Morgan's Passing, she again puts a male in the central position. Gower Morgan is a character of towering eccentricity whose adult life is largely lived donning a series of costumes and personae ranging from Klondike gold miner, to Greek Orthodox priest, to sailor, to gypsy, although he really earns his living as the manager of a hardware store, a position he holds only by virtue of his wife's family's ownership of a chain of stores. Burdened by the oppressive sameness of his "real" existence in an upper middle-class Baltimore residential area with his wife Bonny, their seven daughters, his senile mother Louisa, and his neurotic, middle-aged sister Brindle, Morgan looks for

romance, glamour, simplicity, order, magic--never mind that these qualities may be contradictory; he wants almost anything that will relieve the humdrum monotony his days would be to him without his impersonations. However, equally important to the novel's development are the young professional puppeteers Emily and Leon Meredith, whose daughter Morgan delivers in the back seat of his car during his brief impromptu imitation of a doctor. Attracted to the couple by his perception that they live a streamlined, carefree, vagabond life and by the fact that his performance as a doctor clearly has an enormous impact on their lives (while his other roles may go totally unnoticed or garner only casual interest), Morgan shadows the young family for four years before he speaks to them again. At first frightened, then annoyed, by this weird presence who can be seen in some unusual costume following them or lurking in doorways watching them almost every day, the Merediths do not immediately welcome Gower when he finally tries to reenter their lives directly, but his desperate digressive attempt to explain, eventually strikes a note of sympathy within Emily, who says, "I see what he means, in a way. . . . He just . . . has to get out of his life sometimes."⁸ Thus begins the formal involvement of Morgan and the Merediths.

Emily Cathcart Meredith is the sparest of all Tyler's regenerative managing women. Small-boned and frail, she has not an ounce of extra weight, not an item of excess clothing

or furniture; before she is twenty, she has learned the knack so many of Tyler's women seek of ridding herself of possessions and of traveling light. Emily's past is also sparse. In comparison with Tyler's treatment of other regenerative women, Emily's background and her relationship with her family receive much briefer treatment. Nonetheless, what Tyler does portray or reveal through Emily's memories is quite coherent with the general patterns of childhood and adolescence established in Tyler's earlier books. Additionally, the emotional, communal, and material environment in which Emily grows up is also meager. Further, Emily's reserved, anxious personality; her pale skin, disappearing lashes, and sober expression; and her composed, proper almost prim behavior, reinforce the pared-down effect. Tyler demonstrates particular skill in showing that Emily's veneer of control covers a lack of confidence and simultaneously an internal war between her determination to do everything properly and her desire for more color, more vigor, more drama than life affords her. Because of her background, spareness is a permanent part of Emily's make-up; at the same time, richness is a permanent part of her dreams.

Another alienated, only child, Emily grows up in Taney, Virginia, in a squat little house she and her mother share with their Aunt Mercer, because Emily's father was killed in a car accident when Emily was still a baby. Shadowed by great old trees, the yard boasts no grass, "just patchy bits

of plantain in the caked orange dirt" (210). Inside, the "dark and ungainly" (211) furniture overfills the space so that there is barely enough room to walk between chairs and occasional tables" (221), and the fussily-patterned wallpaper, the small-paned windows, the smell of old newspapers" (211), and the knickknacks (like the high-heeled china slipper filled with china roses and the little brass monkeys) adorning every table top, exacerbate the smothering atmosphere. Even the clock ticks "with a muffled sound, as if buried" (221). Sharing a single room with her mother, Emily grows up in "an intertwined, unprivate life" (220), never really feeling alone and at the same time always feeling lonely.

Looking back on her family, her life, and Taney, Emily remembers them as ordinary, pale, and isolated. In addition to the stuffed silence of Aunt Mercer's house on Erin Street, Emily grows up in the Quaker quiet of the Taney Friends Meeting-house, "a gray frame cubicle huddled in the back yard of the Savior Baptist Church" (214), the only such Meeting-house in Taney County. This quiet is "not a total silence but a ticking, breathing quiet, with the occasional sound of cloth rubbing cloth, little stirrings, throats cleared, people rustling coughdrop packets or fumbling through their purses" (214). Never religious, Emily expects nothing and gets nothing from this quiet, populated as it is almost entirely by old people.

In almost every way as she grows up, Emily is set apart from people her own age. With her father dead and her mother suffering from a heart ailment, Emily's family has very limited means, yet their background and manners, held over from more affluent times, set them apart from most of the town and the poor countryside nearby. Though Emily may occasionally accompany her schoolmates to their doors so that they can grab their books and their cold biscuit lunches, "the rough, ragged smoke of hand-rolled cigarettes and the smells of fried fatback and kerosene" (306) in their kitchens make her shrink inwardly, "as her family would have expected her to do" (306); though she longs to step farther into those worlds, the evidence of every sense is that she is and will remain an outsider. Further, the unpopular, if non-threatening, Quaker religion, with only two or three others of her age included in the congregation as she grows up, also creates a barrier between Emily and her peers. When she graduates from high school, she is "the only girl her age in Taney, Virginia, who was not either married the day after graduation or taking a job at Taney Paper Products" (65).

But Emily does not want to live in Taney; like Tyler's other regenerative women, she wants to escape her physically crowded, but emotionally empty childhood home. Thus, when she earns a full scholarship as a mathematics major, she sees going away to college as a way to flee her past, as well as a way to seek her future. Nervously concerned about her

daughter fitting in when she goes to college, Mrs. Cathcart spends a good deal of time planning and making Emily's college wardrobe. As Emily's Aunt Janie says, "'No one else in your class went away to school, none of those Baptists, those Haithcocks and Biddixes. She wanted you to go off nice and show them all, come back educated, settle down, marry someone good to you. . .'" (219). However, Emily always hates "being made conscious of her physical appearance" (73); she does not want the "sweet paisley dress with the little white collar and cuffs" (219) to wear to Meeting; and she does not intend to come back to Taney. Indeed, Emily makes it very clear that for her going to college is her escape from everything that her Taney life represents to her: "'Mama, I do not intend to go to Meeting there and all I want is blue jeans. I'm getting out, . . . I'm going to join, get to be a part of some big group, not going to be different ever again'" (219). Of course, her mother pays no attention, and Emily leaves for college with her new wardrobe, prepared lovingly, at great sacrifice, but against Emily's true wishes and irrelevant to her real needs.

Though Emily's matriculation in college does effect her escape from Taney, the circumstances work out quite differently from those she anticipates; for she plans to become a junior high school mathematics teacher. However, before she has completed her first semester, she has fallen in love with Leon Meredith, an intense, angry junior student

determined to be an actor. Through him, she is pleased to note, her life becomes more dramatic, and she begins spending almost all of her time with him, dazzled by his sharply focused performances on stage which transform his gloominess into powerful intensity. Too shy to appear in a play herself, Emily signs on to build sets and becomes a reticent, but skilled, backstage member of the theatrical group at the college. Another, less welcome source of drama comes from Leon's parents, who drive over from Richmond almost every Sunday to complain about Leon's grades, criticize his lifestyle, and ridicule his acting aspirations. These visits inevitably end in terrible fights, insults, and threats until finally Mr. Meredith says that unless Leon provides him with a signed, notarized statement that he will give up all extracurricular activities, including plays and girl friends, he will refuse to pay Leon's tuition. Leon's response is to leave college--not for home, but for New York; and Emily, who has not been asked, determines to go with him. Leaving behind most of her new wardrobe, her unicorn collection, her books, her diary, her locket with her only picture of her father--most of which she never even thinks about until years later--Emily packs a bag and rushes to their meeting place. Long before she reaches a conversational distance from Leon, she begins her pitch:

"I don't care what you say, . . . I'm coming with you. . . . I think we ought to get married. Living in sin would be inconvenient, . . . but if that's what you prefer, then I'd do that too. And

if you tell me not to come, I'll come anyway. You don't own New York! . . . I'll ride on the bus one seat behind you. I'll tell the taxi driver, 'Follow that cab!' I'll tell the hotel clerk, 'Give me the room next to his room, please.'" (73)

When Leon laughs, Emily knows she has won him, but she does not smile back. The spunky, calculated assertiveness she has won him with is not a real part of her personality, and she is "alarmed to find him so easily taken in" (73) or perhaps to find him so ready to behave in real life like the stereotypical hero of a romantic comedy who always laughingly surrenders when the heroine behaves outrageously. What Emily fails to see is that she is learning to adapt and change in order to become the regenerative managing woman of her future dream family. Nonetheless, they flee together--Leon to pursue his dream of life on the stage, Emily to pursue her dream of life with Leon.

Because to Emily, Leon is the epitome of decisiveness and his magnetic stage presence makes her understand "for the first time . . . why they called actors 'stars'" (66), she expects their life together to be marked by closeness, drama, success, and a firm sense of purpose. All in all, however, "marriage didn't cause as much of a jolt in her life as she'd expected" (74). They are desperately poor; Leon's only job at a theater is to clean up after a performance, and Emily works as a waitress. The main drama in their lives comes from their quarrels about money and Leon's flare-ups of violent anger with almost everyone. But Emily is learning to

manage their money, their meager quarters, and their dreams. To Emily, the most difficult and disappointing part of their early married life is their lack of genuine intimacy. Thinking she may be pregnant makes Emily feel "trapped and horrified," but worst of all is the fact that she does not dare tell Leon; for she is sure he will fly into a rage, then sink "in on himself like oven-risen bread" (75), blaming her for insisting on the marriage and for not guarding against a baby--after all, she is the one who complains about what they cannot afford. When she discovers that she is not pregnant, she cannot share her relief with him, either. "What kind of a marriage was it if you couldn't tell your husband a thing like that?" (75) Although Emily is disturbed by this failure to communicate at the deepest emotional level, she does not let this failure destroy every aspect of their marriage. Rather, she regains her equilibrium and begins again to manage those things she knows how to or can quickly learn how to handle. Although Emily loves Leon, she soon sees that he is not going to be the one who manages and guides their life together, though she has both expected and hoped that he will; nor will he make her job of managing the family easy. Instead, in making decisions, she will have to present plans for growth or change to him, posing them carefully, ignoring his anger, or apathy, coming back to the ideas gradually and repeatedly until she finally wears him down.

Thus, when the young couple finds itself stranded in Baltimore with no money and no prospects, it is Emily who convinces Leon that they should put on puppet shows of fairy tales at children's parties. Clearly finding the prospect no more appealing than the part time job at the Texaco station that leaves his fingernails permanently rimmed in black, he agrees only because Emily lines up a paying customer. Emily manages everything: the financial arrangements, building the stage, making the puppets, and after they arrive at the party, supervising the children. Leon, on the other hand, will not even try out his hand puppet before the event and only agrees to listen to the story of "Beauty and the Beast," which he claims never to have heard before, on the way to the party. However, when his puppet Beast arrives on the stage and he hears the children respond to his characterization and unique flourishes of interpretation, Emily sees him realize that he has a real audience, and she knows that their performance will be a success. Within a few weeks they are putting on puppet shows once or twice a week at parties; soon they also perform at school fairs, church fundraisers, and special dental hygiene shows for dentists. Grumbling before every show because he feels held back from his true destiny by wasting his talents on puppet shows, Leon, nevertheless, makes all of his characters come alive during performances. Actually, the puppet shows do not really hold Leon back, but his temper does; he quarrels with almost every theatrical

producer and group in town to the point that he is unwelcome at try-outs. While Leon sulks or seethes, Emily continues to learn and grow. Doing all of the household chores--cooking, cleaning, and eventually caring for their child--Emily also works long hours every day creating new stages and sets and new puppets for their shows, making surplus puppets to sell in a crafts shop, and experimenting with new puppet types.

Accepting the fact that all of the household and, later, all of the childcare responsibilities are hers as unquestioningly as Leon does, Emily is a fastidious housekeeper and an excellent mother, giving her daughter consistent attention and unquestioning love. She also enjoys their puppet business. At first, she has no feelings that she is being mistreated because she carries the major share of this load, too, doing everything except the single task of playing the parts of the male characters. This lopsided division of labor means that Emily works all day, while Leon works only during the shows. By the time she feels ill-used about her work, Leon has already developed several other attitudes that trouble Emily deeply. For one thing, it is clear that Leon does not consider Emily to be either creative or innovative nor to value very highly the contributions the puppets themselves make to the couple's success. In a newspaper piece about an upcoming festival in which they are to appear, Leon says, "'The whole idea . . . is improvisation. We take it moment by moment. We adapt as we

go along. I'm talking about the plays, you understand--not the puppets. The puppets are my wife's doing. She makes them according to a fixed pattern. They're not improvised" (131). While Emily does use patterns for the puppets' outlines, she makes the patterns herself, and the most important parts of the puppets are their faces with the "dips and hills of their expressions, which tended to develop unexpected twists of their own no matter how closely she guided the fabric through the sewing machine. Yes, definitely, the puppets were improvised too" (132). As an extension of Leon's lack of faith in Emily's ability to innovate and even more as an outgrowth of his underlying resentment of Emily's taking over (albeit by default) the management of their family and their lives, he criticizes Emily as narrow-minded and rigid. Talking to Morgan, Emily complains, "'He always makes it seem that everything is my idea, that I'm the one who organized our lives this way, but I'm not. I mean, if he just sat, what was I to do? Tell me that!'" (196) When Emily objects that they only do their shows or stay home, he says she cannot be pleased. She suspects that "'he's doing it for spite--he's saying, 'You wanted to marry and settle, didn't you? Well, here we are, and we're never going anywhere again'" (196). Leon, on the other hand, avers that she is unable to be happy "unless, perhaps, she could bring the whole solar system into line exactly her way, not a planet disobeying" (206). Yet it is

Leon who will not consider trying different types of puppets, no matter how ingenious they are. When Emily says she is tired of the old puppets and accuses him of never trying anything new, he replies, "You can't just switch the universe around, any time you tire of it" (209). Underlying Leon's stated and implied criticism is the fact that he blames Emily for his own sense of failure; in his mind, she has insisted on their sticking with puppets, and thus, she has ruined his chances for a real acting career. When he discovers he can no longer memorize lines readily, he gives up trying out for plays even occasionally, and he blames her for that as well. Emily, in turn, eventually, feels mistreated, too: "'I sit in that room with that sewing machine; I feel like someone in a story, some drudge'" (196).

In limning this marriage, Tyler again illustrates her strength in depicting those "invisible partings" and "tiny jarring rearrangements" of selves that Charlotte Emory comments about in Earthly Possessions. Unfortunately, the Meredith marriage eventually cracks under the strain. When Charlotte tells Saul the marriage is not going well, he points out that all relationships have rough places and urges her to wait it out. When Emily tells Leon that their marriage has "something badly wrong with it, something out of step, she couldn't say just what" (206), he asks her challengingly what she wants him to do about it, adds that he is sure only absolute obedience can please her, and demands

to know what she expects of him. As their bad times become more frequent and noticeable, Emily's heart breaks to see their daughter Gina, now nine years old, become "unswervingly alert to their moods, watching from a distance, smoothing over quarrels" (206). Additionally, she sees that their puppet shows never go well any more. "Running through every play was some kind of dislocation--characters stepping on each other's speeches, unsynchronized, ragged, or missing cues and gawking stupidly. Fairy tales fell into fragments, every line a splinter" (207). Emily is certain the audience can feel that "when Cinderella danced with the Prince, their cloth bodies clung together, but the hands inside them shrank away" (207). Leon, on the other hand, ridicules both perceptions: Gina is merely growing up, and since they are making more money than ever before with their shows and even have to turn down invitations, everything must be "going wonderfully" (207). But despite the fact that they start out each morning courageously hopeful, each day deteriorates rapidly and ends with their "sleeping with their backs to each other on the outermost edges of the bed" (209).

The death of Emily's Aunt Mercer, whom she has not seen for twelve years, provides Emily with the excuse to return to Taney. Returning home as a way of recuperating from loss, reevaluating one's life, recreating or revising one's dream, or simply rediscovering one's true path is a recurring motif for Tyler's regenerative managing women. Only Mary Tell

(Celestial Navigation), who shortly after the birth of her first child loses both parents and has no other relatives, fails to make at least one such trip. Traveling alone without luggage, Emily feels unburdened, pleased even by the traffic--"so many people skimming along. No doubt they were out here day and night, endlessly circling the planet, and now at last she had joined them. She smiled at every driver she passed" (210). At the end of the four-hour drive, Taney is still so small and so unchanged that it seems the same men are still "hunkering before the Shell station" (210), smoking their hand-rolled cigarettes. Aunt Mercer's house and her remaining relatives, all the same as before, crowd in upon her, smothering her with love and guilt. During the Meeting-house service, sitting again in the living quiet in which she grew up, Emily sees her life with Leon roll out before her and thinks that it was only with the first sight of him that her life had been set in motion: "Everything had started up, as if complicated wheels and gears had finally connected and had raced along in a blur from then on. It was only now, in this slowed-down room, that she had a chance to examine what had happened" (215). Aching for all the losses she has not had time to mourn, Emily, at the same time, sees clearly how incompatible Taney--"this leaden, lumbering world of old people" (220)--is with her "other life--its speed, its modernness, the great rush of noisy people she knew" (215).

Yet the next morning when she wakes before dawn and discovers that Aunt Janie has found the ancient marionette that Aunt Mercer had once dreamed of taking on the road as part of a gypsy caravan, she sees that the puppet's strings are attached to the kind of single control bar that Emily has thought she only recently invented; but now, though she cannot recall having seen the doll before, it seems she must have remembered it. "Maybe it was something that was passed in the dark through the generations--the very thought of giving puppet shows, even. And here she imagined she'd come so far, lived such a different existence!" (221) But the thought of such continuity oppresses her; she now perceives her innovations as somehow crippled, and without even planning to do it, Emily steps outside for a breath of air, tentatively opens the car door, and then slips away without even a goodbye. Still trying to escape Taney, she speeds to Baltimore and throws herself into Leon's arms--the circle surrounding her own life. Like other regenerative women, Emily discovers that her childhood home is no longer home at all. Only Charlotte, who becomes the manager of her original family while still a teenager and creates and manages her own extended family circle within the house of her childhood finds her first family home a satisfying place to live, and her reconciliation to this fact takes years.

Although the trip to Taney propels Emily back to Baltimore and intensifies her efforts to save her marriage,

no such revelations or resolutions have touched Leon, and Emily's efforts to communicate and revitalize the union are not successful. Soon, she thinks that Leon is "impossible," that the relationship is hopeless, and that "she had locked herself in permanently with someone she couldn't bear" (230). One of the problems is that "she and Leon were too well-acquainted, the most innocent remark could call up such a string of associations, so many past slights and insults never quite settled or forgotten, merely smoothed over. They could no longer have a single uncomplicated feeling about each other" (230).

Despite her efforts to the contrary, Emily finds her life too sparse. Ironically, a major part of the attractions the Merediths hold for Gower Morgan is this same sparseness, which he characterizes as order, compactness, streamlined simplicity. "He enjoyed imagining their eat-in kitchen, with just two plates and two sets of silver and an earthenware bowl for the baby. He liked to think that their bathroom contained a bar of Ivory soap and three hotel towels. Well, and Leon's shaving things, of course. But nothing else. No bath oil, talcum tins, acne creams, hairdryers, . . ." (48). Simultaneously, he believes they lead "'a footloose sort of life, . . . Carefree. Unattached'" (12). When Emily explains to Morgan early on that he has the wrong idea, that they are not transients or shiftless wanderers, she tries to prove her point by describing the full and careful plans they

have made for the baby then on the way: "'We've planned out every detail. . . . We didn't buy a crib because cribs are extraneous. We're using a cardboard box for now, with padding on the insides. . . . What's the point of all that equipment--cribs and strollers and Bathinettes?'" (20) But the more she explains their arrangements, the more delighted he is with the pared-down order that he is convinced allows them to travel around constantly and easily. When he finally sees their apartment--the blinding whiteness of the kitchen, the barely furnished rooms, Emily's workroom equipped with only a sewing machine and a stepstool on which she sits to make her puppets--he is not disappointed with the reality of the house or Emily and reflects that "she was as uncurtained as the windows" (125). For Emily, too, has a spare simplicity and unassuming straightforwardness about her appearance. And she always looks the same with her long, blonde hair neatly braided and pinned atop her head. Having left most of her clothes in her college dorm when she eloped with Leon, she deliberately leaves almost all the rest of them in a hotel during the brief period she and Leon travel with an improvisational group before they land in Baltimore. From then on, she wears only leotards with matching wrap skirts that make "fashion seem beside the point. . . . She didn't look outdated at all. She looked stark, pared down. She had done away with the extras" (48). Though Morgan loves the whole of Emily's family and her management of it, it is

finally changeless Emily, who embodies "the single point of stillness" (240) in his world, the one thing in it that makes him think, "mornings, now, when I wake up, I have this springy, hopeful feeling, and I see that everything is worth it, after all" (245).

Stillness and spareness, however, are not really what Emily wants. Like Elizabeth Abbott she is interested in a life a little more colorful and dramatic and a little less restrained and austere than the one she has. Emily has always hoped that she and Leon will lead dramatic, exciting lives, that she will become more active and outgoing as he used to be in college; instead, he has become more reclusive, more quiet, more like the reserved, spare person she has always been. And though Emily is able to meet other challenges her union with Leon brings, she has not been successful in adding the spice of excitement to their lives that she craves. Thus, as her relationship with Leon deteriorates, the flamboyance, unpredictability, and warmth of Morgan make things seem brighter. She likes the stories about his family and his house in which there is always too much excitement going on. Before she visits his home, Emily imagines it as "a bulging, seething box of a place--the roof straining off, the side seams splitting" (134), and although the house is literally holding together quite nicely, it does definitely project the sense of too many people, too many events, all colliding and overlapping in one large but

densely populated home. Early in their friendship, Morgan often acted so strange that Emily "felt an urge to walk several paces ahead so that no one would guess they were acquainted" (141). As they become more and more close, Morgan's antic behavior--dancing on the street to music he hears through an open window, wild costumes, and wilder impersonations and stories--can still embarrass Emily or exasperate her. At the same time, he adds a welcome new dimension to her world; "he made things look more interesting than they really were" (141), and he could always make her laugh. Further, as a valued aspect of his personality, he is a wonderful handyman and takes over the repairs in the Meredith apartment. Soon, Emily depends upon him to unstop the sink, recharge the batteries, and keep everything working, as well as lift her spirits. Some nine years after Morgan first enters Emily's life as a make-believe doctor performing the very real service of delivering her baby, they become lovers--another surprising and enchanting development in their long and eventful relationship.

For several months, though they suffer from the strain of their deceit and their unfulfilled desire to spend long, unencumbered periods of time together, the physical intimacy between Emily and Morgan has little effect on their relationships with their legal mates; Emily's problems with Leon continue, and Morgan feels as affectionately fond as ever about Bonny. Further, each continues the involvement

with and attraction to the other's family with unabated enthusiasm. Nonetheless, their new, intense, and astonished delight in the mystery of the other consumes most of their attention. Emily is struck by Morgan's "separateness. He was absolutely unrelated to her. She would never really understand the smallest part of him" (235). In turn, Morgan thinks Emily "so different from other women" that he is "baffled and moved and fascinated He couldn't imagine what it felt like to be Emily" (246). Though they admit their perplexity to themselves, they also believe they know enough to perceive that the other embodies the qualities they desire. Morgan, a man with a vast repertoire of personalities sees in Emily "an emblem of that Spartan order he longs to bring to his over-furnished life,"⁹ and a person who has found her one true chord of character; and he wants to link with her streamlined depth and stability. For her part, Emily perceives in Morgan, in exaggerated form, two of the qualities she saw and desired, but now realizes are unavailable, in Leon: a decisiveness and drama. Of course, neither of the lovers is entirely accurate--nor completely wrong--in these unconscious assessments. At the same time, the very qualities they desire are often the ones that cause the most friction, and each is searching out in the other almost the opposite of what the partner is seeking. Tyler's deft, poignant, humorous handling of these paradoxical

qualities of intimate human relationships is among the chief excellencies in Morgan's Passing.

During the period of deception, Emily's increased anxieties are revealed in her new hobby, jogging. Morgan and Leon think it a strange thing for her to do, and she cannot explain her reasons--"'I'm just running'" (245) she answers to questions trying to link her jogging to her heart, her figure, her circulation. One thing is clear to all: she is pushing herself, "pressing her limits" (245). Gradually, however, Emily realizes that what she is doing is training to leave, to get out, to escape:

"When I jog, you know what I imagine? I imagine I'm in training for some emergency--a forced flight, a national disaster. It's comforting to know that I'm capable of running several miles. . . I tell myself 'Now, Emily, you can manage. You're very good at surviving. You can run five miles at a stretch if you have to, and your suitcase can be ready in thirty seconds flat--'" (250)

As it happens, she is already half-packed, has been packed for years. Indeed, like Charlotte Emory, she says, "'I'm set. It seems I always knew that I might have to be. I've worked it so I could grab my bag up anytime and go" (250).

Emily's sense of impending disaster, her preparation for flight, her desperation to escape her unhappy marriage are brought to a head by the knowledge that she is pregnant. Running away is Emily's first thought; but Morgan, after his first shock and his pain at the dissolution of the two marriages, both of which he thinks are quite good, accepts

the situation as a kind of mystical assignment. Rather than reacting angrily, Leon simply moves out, leaving Morgan to do what he has secretly wanted for some time: he takes Leon's place in Emily's life, in the Meredith apartment, and eventually in the puppet shows. Thus, it is Leon, not Emily, who leaves.

For Emily, Morgan is eminently more satisfying as a mate than Leon, for Morgan thinks she is wonderful; unlike Leon, who leaves everything to her and, at the same time, openly or silently criticizes the way she handles things, Morgan is supportive and helpful. Moreover, she likes the drama and the surprises that life with Morgan brings. While Morgan gleefully anticipates moving into the sparse Meredith apartment and taking up a pared-down simple life of order and regularity, he has reckoned without Bonny, who takes swift and direct retribution. First, she dumps his clothes, personal props, and his mother's dog on the sidewalk in front of the hardware store. Then she has him fired and removed from the store. Once he has moved in with Emily, she drops off his mother, his sister, and all of their belongings at the small apartment.

Trunks and dress forms, a rusty birdcage, barrels containing a gigantic cup-and-saucer collection muffled in straw, stacks of National Geographics, Brindle's catalogs, Louisa's autograph book, a samovar, a carton of records, a lady's bicycle, a wicker elephant. And this was only what lined the hall, which had once been as empty as a tunnel.
(288)

Each room becomes a jumble with almost no floor space showing, and the closets are packed so tightly with Morgan's clothes that there is not even room for air. Though Morgan apologizes repeatedly for the clutter, for his relatives, and for Emily's having to make more and more puppets since he has no steady employment, the truth is that Emily loves everything about their life together, which seems to her "foreign . . . , mysterious and exotic" (289). She relishes the clutter and feels "you could draw vitality from mere objects evidently--from the seething souvenirs of dozens of lives raced through at full throttle" (289). Further, Morgan's mother and sister "(both, in their ways, annoying, demanding querulous women) troubled her not a bit, because they weren't hers" (289). And since she is used to working without anyone even noticing that she carries almost the full load, she warms to Morgan's concern and produces puppets joyously. "What he didn't understand was that Emily felt happier now than she'd ever felt before. She rattled inside this new life like . . . well, like Morgan in one of his hats, she supposed" (290). Only one part of Morgan's transported life troubles Emily; Bonny calls her many times every day at any hour she pleases. Although Emily is relieved that Bonny appears not to blame her, the phone calls are far too personal, far too frequent, and far too inconsiderate of her duties and feelings for Emily to accept them without discomfort. But Morgan and Gina are not just

discomfitted; they are really unhappy about their living arrangements. Gina is offended that her mother has let two old ladies move into her room, and as Morgan points out, Gina is at an age which "disapproves of irregularity" (308). For himself, Morgan feels cramped and crowded with all of his possessions packed into a much smaller space and deprived because he and Emily never have a chance to be alone:

"'. . . it's like a transplant. I transplanted all the mess from home. It's like some crazy practical joke'" (307). He worries about money; he cannot support even Emily and Joshua, their baby, let alone their other three dependents.

Morgan's solution is to desert the excess possessions and the extraneous responsibilities. Two events make that solution possible. First, Leon, having reunited with his parents, enters both college and his father's bank, and he wants Gina to live with him. Offended that Leon, who used to complain that she tied him down, now criticizes her as unstable, Emily rejects the offer without equivocation. However, Morgan analyzes accurately that pre-teen Gina will want to make the move. Her life has been totally disrupted; she has absolutely no privacy at home; and most important, the affluent regularity of life with her grandparents and her father will be compellingly attractive. A second event is the visit of Durwood Linthicum from Tindall, Maryland, the manager of the Holy Word Entertainment Group, who has written many letters to the Merediths over the years, though Leon has

always thrown them away. Mistaking Morgan for Leon, Durwood offers the Merediths a permanent position with his company. Additionally, Morgan is convinced that the minute he, Emily, and Joshua leave his mother and sister, Bonny will come and pick them up. Indeed, he thinks everyone will be pleased: his mother and sister will be glad to get back to color TV and more space, and Bonny will roll her eyes, but be willing, nonetheless, because, as he says, "'She likes a lot of tumult'" (309). Emily's first reaction is shock. She absolutely will not give up Gina; it is not proper for Morgan to assume Leon's name; and it is certainly not proper to desert Morgan's family. Yet late one night when the phone rings and rings, Morgan tells Emily not to answer it, to let it ring because he is "'almost'" sure that it is not Gina and not an emergency, and Emily "took the chance, she didn't get up. There was something restful about simply giving in, finally--abdicating, allowing someone else to lead her" (311).

In the end, Emily follows Morgan's lead in slipping away from his family and moving secretly to Tindall, Maryland, to live in a trailer house and work in the Holy Word Entertainment Company, but she does not abrogate her responsibilities as a regenerative managing woman. She has, however, revised her management style, welcoming participation and support from Morgan, even delegating certain decisions to him. Clearly, Emily has reevaluated her

life and started over again. Still in charge of Joshua, the house, the puppets, and the puppet shows, Emily is now willing for Morgan to take over the financial arrangements with Linthicum, even though it means that he assumes the name of Leon Meredith. Also she has accepted, though painfully and reluctantly, the wisdom of Gina's living with Leon. No doubt, Emily misses Morgan's costumes and clutter, but all of these are left behind in the interest of making a clean break with the past and developing a lifestyle more in keeping with the desires of each of the partners--order and simplicity on the one hand, surprises and drama on the other. In continuing the puppet shows, yet joining a troupe, in getting their own house, but a mobile one, Emily and Morgan have combined the search for change and the search for stability--the contradictory qualities that each in quite different ways really wants. In their new life, Emily remains the regenerative family manager, but she does not have to manage alone, for Morgan's handiness, his joy in living, and the insights and maturity he gains in his "passing" give Emily a shoulder and an arm on which to rely--as long as her touch remains light enough.

Two constant motifs trace through Morgan's Passing--escape and puppetry--and the two meet and intertwine. All of Emily's life seems poised for escape--first from Taney, then from the the placidity of college, then from the crowded, hand-to-mouth traveling improvisation troupe. When Emily and

Leon begin to perform as puppeteers, this new activity is simultaneously an escape from their money problems and from the drab sparseness of their lives. Morgan's life has, similarly been one of escape, and while Emily finds release in the puppets, Morgan finds release in his poses. In a sense, he makes a puppet of himself and pulls the strings to make his life fuller and more exciting than it would be if he were merely husband, father, and hardware store manager. For Emily, the puppets add new dimensions to her life, giving her not only sustenance, but also escape into creativity. However, though Emily tries over and over again, she is unable to bring consistent joy to Leon's life. Neither a new career in puppets, nor a child, nor an increased family budget, nor the freedom to do what he wants is sufficient to satisfy him. (As a matter of fact, Leon never appears to be happy until he has returned to his father's expectations.) As her marriage stagnates, puppets also create barriers to the kind of intimacy Emily wants her life with Leon to encompass; for he remains disdainful of the creation of the puppets and interested only in his own performances, and he constantly lets Emily know in subtle, as well as overt ways, that she has chosen this life against his wishes and to the detriment of his career and thus must live with the burden of her decisions. Consequently, Emily, wanting to escape her life with the somber, accusatory Leon, eventually wants to escape the puppets she creates as well. In a way, the

puppets come to represent her feelings of being an unappreciated drudge in her marriage with Leon. Also, the kinds of revelations and resolutions of the classic fairy tales that the Merediths present promise easy solutions, magical interference on the side of right, and happy endings--in short, a good deal more ease and expansiveness than Emily's life delivers. In Emily's favorite tale, "Beauty and the Beast," the good princess, as modest, self-effacing, and loving as Emily herself, learns to perceive the real worth beneath the shaggy head and the hot breath of the Beast, just as Emily believes she has seen Leon's worth beneath his gloominess and explosive temper. During their very first puppet performance, Emily forgets that the Beast is supposed to turn into a prince once he is loved for himself; and thus, there is no princely puppet for the happy ending, though Beauty and the Beast "live happily ever after" nonetheless. When the mother who has hired them asks why there is no transformation, Emily says, "'[W]e use a more authentic version'" (88). However, in Emily's real life, Leon, the beastly, may change, but he does not become a prince, nor do they live happily ever after. On the other hand, when the novel ends, Morgan, in Emily's eyes, has become a prince.

Just as nautical terminology and imagery pervade Celestial Navigation, puppetry, stage, and fairy tale terms, images, and associations permeate Morgan's Passage. For

example, during Emily's early married life when she and Leon live with a group of young impersonators, she feels that to them "everything was a skit" (80). When she revisits Taney, her relatives look as if they have been right there on the couch since she left--"abandoned, sagging, like large cloth dolls," and when one of them reaches up from his seat on the couch to pat her shoulder, "his arm seemed disproportionately long and distant from his body" (211), a gesture reminiscent of puppets. To Emily, Morgan has characteristics that often remind her of fairy tales or puppets; she thinks "he could have stepped into a puppet show and not been out of place" (102), and later she regards him as "a household elf" (223). Further, he clearly has an impression of the Merediths that is quite different from the way they see themselves: "'We're not who you imagine'" (125), Emily tells him. Unwilling to give up his own perceptions, Morgan simply tries to be puppet master, or the fairy tale writer, or the playwright to their lives. The good side of Morgan's insistence on his misperceptions is that by seeing through Morgan's eyes, Emily can see her life as more dramatic--"[I]tinerant puppeteers!" she thinks, "and she'd look at Leon and realize what a flair he had. . . . She herself would not feel quite so colorless. . . ." (141). More negatively, Morgan's insistence obscures the real problems Emily faces so that even after she has been sharing with him her unhappiness with Leon for several years, even after Emily and Morgan are lovers, indeed

just before she announces her pregnancy with his child, Morgan is plotting to talk to Emily about her marriage, for he cannot understand what her problem is, cannot believe she is talking about the same marriage he knows. Since his "knowledge" is his own fiction, he is right that they are not talking about the same marriage. Emily also attracts comments or thoughts that recall the world of puppets. She worries about being Leon's "deadwood wife" (76) even before they become puppeteers, and another character complains that Emily always acts wooden. When she runs, she reminds Morgan of a weather doll, and her legs fly out like sticks beneath her wrap skirt. While Tyler uses the image of strings and ropes and threads tying characters to their families in many of her novels, this metaphor works particularly well in Morgan's Passing with its emphasis on puppets. Thus, Emily, always surprised at finding herself alongside Morgan, "this bearded man, this completely other person," still feels "drawn to him by something far outside herself--by strings that pulled her, by ropes" (289). But perhaps the overriding purpose of the puppets is to demonstrate the opaqueness of each character as far as the others in the novel are concerned, to exemplify the essential way in which all people are closed to others, and to illustrate through the improvisations of the puppets that actions always draw forth responses, whether desired by the actor or the reactor or anyone at all. The lack of intimacy and control that

characterize the last of Emily's relationship with Leon can thus prompt her to say to him that she is tired of puppets and later to assert to Morgan that she "could manage just fine without her puppets" (275), a boast which later proves untrue.

Despite its nomination for a National Book Critics Circle award in hardback fiction and an American Book Award in paperback fiction, Morgan's Passing drew mixed reviews from critics with much of the disapproval and the praise being centered on two things: first, the character of Morgan (whom some critics like and others find tedious) and, second, Tyler's plot. For example, James Wolcott complains that "long before Morgan and Emily link arms, the reader has connected the dots separating them, so there's no suspense, no surprise. Instead, the book is stuffed with accounts of weddings, crowded dinners, cute squabbles, . . . Sentence by sentence the book is engaging, but there's nothing beneath the jokes and tussles to propel the reader through these cluttered lives. It's a book with an idle motor."¹⁰ Proposing that "it is by faithfully, modestly rendering life's minute ups and downs, its damp and sunny patches, and its trailing wisps of meaninglessness that Anne Tyler expresses her sense of reality," John Updike, nevertheless, criticizes the book as "a novel without a crisis."¹¹ However, without arguing the comparative merits of the novel as a whole, it does seem that since each of these critics,

along with others, has admitted that Tyler has made art out of the ordinary, it must also follow that for ordinary people, whom she perceives so vividly in her imagination and portrays so engagingly in her novels, those "damp patches" are indeed crises; that those ordinary weddings, dinners, and squabbles are indeed the things that keep the reader moving along in life as in novels; and that for a life journey, it is not always the final outcome but the road taken and the mode of travel that create the surprises. Emily's life would seem to support these assumptions. Despite her spareness and her anonymity to all but those who really focus on her, Emily's life is full of both surprise and crisis. Leaving her sheltered home to go to college to train for a position as a junior high school math teacher, but eloping to New York with an angry young man who has no contacts, no money, and no prospects is a very surprising turn for a young woman with a consistent history of low self-esteem and a small town Virginia background. Becoming a performer, albeit behind a puppet and a scrim, and taking over the management of a household, a difficult husband, an obstreperous child, and the family finances are all quite surprising to Emily, and her failing marriage, her love affair, and her impregnation by Morgan are all crises in her life. The fact that some similar crises may be relatively common in the lives of others does not keep them from causing shock, anguish, or joy in Emily's life.

By any accounting, Tyler's work both matures and deepens in her later novels, and this assessment is particularly true of her treatment of regenerative managing women. Picking up their stories when the regenerative managing women are already matured, married, and mothering in the fifth through the eighth novels makes it possible for Tyler to depict these women during crisis periods after they are well established as the managers of their families, as well as to portray the breadth of their responsibilities and the ways they handle their lives routinely. Thus, the later novels give full scope to the qualities that distinguish regenerative managing women from others: their capacities to endure, to adapt, to love, to grant autonomy to other adults, to run households, to care for children, to face failure honestly, to grow, to help others grow, to change, and to start over again no matter how difficult--and, when called upon, to do all of these things, with varying degrees of facility, simultaneously. Further, because these women are older, there are many more layers of memories and many more associations to call on to help explain the reasons the characters behave, feel, and make choices as they do. Additionally, the later works are all much longer than the first novels, so that important elements can receive longer and deeper treatment. Thus, while Tyler focuses the bulk of her attention to her regenerative managing women in her early novels on their childhood and adolescent problems of low

self-esteem and alienation, their strong need to escape from the jurisdiction of their families, and their locating the husbands of their choice and starting their families, these challenges are given more attention and delineation in some of the later works than the earlier ones, even though the later books focus on the characters' mature lives. For example, Tyler's treatments of the childhood and adolescent years of Justine in Searching for Caleb and Charlotte in Earthly Possessions are more detailed than any of those in her first four novels, despite the fact that the major emphasis in these later novels is on the way these regenerative managing women deal with crises in their adult lives.

Though Tyler is often, and rightly, regarded as a novelist of family life and a traditionalist in her view of what family life is, there should be no suggestion that she closes her eyes to the realities of modern marriages. Two of the four regenerative managing women are divorced at least once; one of the others leaves or threatens to leave her husband repeatedly; and the fourth at least considers separation as a viable option. Yet these are far from promiscuous, frivolous women; rather, they are all women in crises, the crises usually involving their primary relationships with their husbands and perhaps other family members and responsibilities. All encompass the qualities Tyler repeatedly names as heroic--endurance, adaptivity,

warmth--but all also are capable of cutting their losses when they evaluate their situations as unsalvagable or no longer worthy of a salvaging effort. And all can and do renew themselves and begin again.

CHAPTER V

RIGID MANAGING WOMEN IN ANNE TYLER'S FIRST THROUGH EIGHTH NOVELS

While every Tyler novel to date has a regenerative managing woman, not every Tyler novel has a rigid managing woman. However, when rigid managing women appear, they are always important either in the development of the lives or in the life crises of the major characters. At the same time, the backgrounds of the six rigid managing women in Tyler's nine novels are never developed as fully as those of the regenerative managing women, and indeed, with the exception of Amanda Pauling, who shares the same mother as Jeremy Pauling, the central character in Celestial Navigation, Tyler gives only sketchy information about their childhoods and adolescence and only broadstroke comments, if that much, about their relationships with their parents. Even Pearl Tull's life before her marriage is handled in snippits, though she is clearly the major character of Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant. The result of this briefer attention to the early years and the parents of the rigid managing women is that usually the reader has few answers about why these characters have become the kind of women they are. On the other hand, the ways the rigid managing women affect others

are very important parts of the novels. Ellen Hawkes (If Morning Ever Comes) and Pearl Tull are mothers of the regenerative managing women in their respective novels, as well as of the men who are also major characters in these two novels, and both mothers are important influences on the development of all of their children. Mrs. Emerson is mother to several major characters, including Matthew, husband to Elizabeth, the regenerative managing woman and central character in The Clock Winder; additionally, as Elizabeth's employer and friend, Mrs. Emerson's influence on this novel's most significant character is more profound than that of mother-in-law alone. In Searching for Caleb, Laura Peck is Great-Grandma to both Justine, the central character and the regenerative managing woman, and her husband and cousin Duncan; further, her managing influence has clearly set much of the tone and the parameters of the Peck clan. While Mrs. Milsom, as mother-in-law to Meg Peck, Justine's and Duncan's daughter, in the same novel, has a less direct influence on Justine's full life than the previously named rigid women have had on the regenerative women with whom they are connected, the punishing view of Mrs. Milsom's all-encompassing manipulation of Meg and her husband Arthur is a major contributing factor to Justine's crisis of self. Only Amanda of the rigid managing women is unmarried and childless, and only she lacks influence over the life of a regenerative woman. Amanda's function in the novel is

primarily to shed light on Jeremy's upbringing and development and to serve as foil both to the regenerative managing qualities of Mary Tell and to the more enlightened spinsterhood of Miss Vinton, one of the long-time roomers in the Pauling house. Interestingly, then, except for Amanda, the reader sees clearly how influential these rigid women are on others and particularly how importantly they impact on the personalities and futures of their own children; at the same time, the reader has little particular information about the forces that contributed to their rigidity.

The difference between the regenerative managing women and the rigid managing women is not a matter of competency. Tyler's rigid managing women are often as competent, or even more competent in certain ways, than her regenerative managing women. Rigid women run their households and their families efficiently, sometimes even compulsively, as they supervise cooking, cleaning, wardrobes, children, husbands, social lives, and etiquette, as needed. In addition, Ellen Hawkes and Pearl Tull hold down full-time jobs outside their homes, and Mrs. Milsom uses her home as the site of her "business." Managing large households in the upper middle-class Roland Park area in Baltimore, Mrs. Emerson and Laura Peck do little actual physical labor; instead, they manage a staff of servants to perform the household and family tasks, including, in Mrs. Emerson's case, a full-time handyman and grounds keeper. On the other hand, Pearl Tull

is her own gifted handyman, as well as an able performer of household duties and tasks. The difference is not, then, in their competency to manage, to take on many tasks at the same time, and to see them all to fruition.

Nor is the difference between the rigid women and the regenerative women one of the capacity to endure, for Tyler's rigid managing women often suffer terrible disappointments, losses, betrayals, setbacks, and bereavements that might incapacitate lesser women, perhaps sending them reeling off to a life of invalidism, institutionalization, seclusion, or even death. Indeed, all of Tyler's rigid managing women are strong and durable. Mrs. Emerson's son commits suicide; Laura Peck's husband is a stern, rigid bully before he becomes a bed-ridden, half-paralyzed invalid for years, and her son leaves home without a word, never to be heard from by her again; Ellen's and Pearl's husbands desert them, both husbands leaving their wives with big families to care for. But Tyler's rigid managing women can cope. They persevere.

The critical differences between Tyler's rigid and regenerative managing women fall into four other categories; three are among those Tyler specifically names as part of the make-up that she considers heroic: the capacity to adapt, the willingness to give others their own space, and the ability to produce warmth.¹ While rigid women may lack these qualities and thus fall into the negative category of managers, their failures may also stem from their too

enthusiastic or even compulsive endorsement of these same attributes. For example, Ellen Hawkes certainly gives everyone space; indeed, her major fault lies in insisting on too much space, a flaw that leads to her inability to give or accept sufficient warmth to create a happy home. The fourth quality is one that Tyler has not specifically identified in interviews, but, nevertheless, one she clearly portrays as a major facet of her regenerative managing women: the ability to start again--to renew oneself and one's relationships or to cut one's losses and begin over again with new relationships. Soon after the publication of her third novel, Tyler admitted that she did not believe most characters were capable of change and that she thought the characters in her first two books were singularly devoid of this ability,² while Evie Decker in A Slipping-Down Life, her third book, clearly does change. Yet, however small or unnoticeable to most observers are the changes in Joanne and Joan, their deliberate decisions to take positive actions based on their own conscious assessments of reality represent regeneration, and each regenerative managing woman, as Chapters II, III, and IV demonstrate, makes and follows through on major and minor acts of renewal. Effecting such change requires that the character first admit to some mistake or flaw and then take affirmative action to correct it. For the most part, rigid managing women are incapable of either part of this regenerative process. Though they see

that their children have flaws, that their husbands desert, that they are unsuccessful in various ways, the causes, as far as they are concerned, always reside outside themselves. Rigid women see themselves as at least correct, perhaps heroic, maybe even divinely right.

While Ellen Hawkes, in If Morning Ever Comes, is not the central character in this novel, she is the character who exercises the most influence on the other characters. With her great capacity to endure (but with little ability to adapt), with her insistence on a hands-off policy which grants everyone space but no one much warmth, Ellen has a major effect on all the members of her large family and is at least indirectly responsible for most of what happens in this first Tyler novel. A vividly developed character, Ellen is Tyler's first portrayal of the strong, but rigid, managing woman.

Practically nothing is known of Ellen Hawkes' background in If Morning Ever Comes except that she is a northerner. Despite the discussions about the placement of certain families within the social fabric of Sandhill, North Carolina, and the obvious emphasis that some of the major characters in the book, such as Gram, Ellen's mother-in-law, and Shelley Domer, soon to be Ellen's daughter-in-law, impose on such matters, there is no discussion of Ellen's former family or hometown, no recounting of an on-going relationship between Ellen and her children on the one side and Ellen's

original family on the other. But Ellen's character is very well-developed. Forceful, competent, and independent, Ellen has a mind of her own, a fierce pride, and enormous reserve. These qualities can be either negative or positive. One favorite family story reveals how these characteristics contribute to Ellen's being well-loved by her future father-in-law, even before her marriage to Dr. Phillip Hawkes. On her first visit to Sandhill, when she asks for a glass of water, Mr. Hawkes pours her a glass of clear moonshine, which Ellen proceeds to drink without showing her surprise or its strength. "'Honey, you're no Yankee,'"³ he tells her delightedly and loves her like a daughter ever after. His wife, on the other hand, says that all Ellen has proved is that she is no lady. The fact is that from the first, Mrs. Hawkes, called Gram, thinks Ellen cold-hearted and never likes her very much, while Ellen thinks Gram is soft-cored and never admires her very much.

Despite Ellen's and Phillip's promising beginning and seven children, the Hawkes marriage is not a happy one. A major part of the problem resides in Ellen and her inordinate commitment to the combination of qualities that won her the approval of her father-in-law in the anecdote above, for in more intimate and personal situations, Ellen is equally restrained, determined, and uncommunicative. Carrying her respect for privacy and independence to an extreme, she refuses to interfere or comment or involve

herself in other people's affairs, even those of her husband and her children. Further, she forbids them to do so as well. Her standard response to major scenes, day-to-day situations, problems, and crises is, "It's none of our affair." Ben Joe, her only son, often wonders "how many times in his life he had heard his mother say that" (19). Ellen's attitude exemplifies what can happen if the attitude of Elizabeth Abbott (The Clock Winder) or Charlotte Emory (Earthly Possessions) of never wanting to change people's lives around is carried to an extreme.

After years of a marriage lacking the intimacy and warmth he wants, Phillip suddenly realizes, after making an early morning house call, that he cannot bear to go home. Consequently, he stops at the first "room for rent" sign he sees and stays. Hearing the news that her husband has rented a room on the wrong side of the tracks and will no longer live at home, Ellen merely "clamped her mouth shut and said that was his lookout, nothing she could do about it" (117). She has a similar comment upon hearing that Phillip has begun sharing a room with Lili Belle, the unmarried daughter of his landlady, and still the same remark upon hearing that her husband's alliance has produced a son, named Phillip for his father. Since Dr. Hawkes is the town's "fair-haired boy" (103), a warm, caring doctor, from one of the better families, rather than an aloof outsider, the town's sympathy is clearly with Phillip, and at least one of the Hawkeses'

neighbors has volunteered her advice to Ellen about how to get her husband back, according to Shelley Domer, Ben Joe's girlfriend:

"Mrs. Murphy said many's the time she herself went to your mama to tell her all she had to do was let herself get to crying and then, as soon as the tears got started good, go to . . . where your father lived at and tell him she wanted him back, but your mama always just tossed her hair and said who cared and offered Mrs. Murphy a slice of angel food cake. It was the doctor's business and no one else's, she would say, though if it wasn't the doctor's wife's business, too, then what did they get married for?" (103-104)

Just as Mrs. Murphy's interference draws scorn and anger from Ellen, no doubt Shelley's sincere perplexity would garner the same emotions had she ever dared pose her question directly. When Ben Joe is a senior in high school, his father comes home briefly to discuss his older son's education at Harvard, but Ellen refuses to allow Ben Joe to take a penny of the money her husband has laboriously saved for this purpose unless Phillip moves back home. To his comment that "he didn't see that it would really matter to her if he never came home again" (118), Ellen remains characteristically silent. Her son may go to a local college instead of Harvard, her husband may leave her again and never return, but Ellen will neither help him nor hinder him nor meet him halfway. In truth, as Lili Belle tells Ben Joe, "'If your mother'd said one word he'd have stayed with her, always would have. He was just wanting her to ask him. But she didn't'" (126).

Clearly, Ellen's aloof attitude has a chilling effect on the entire family--her husband and her children. Ellen boasts of raising her daughters to have pride and to stand aloof, and Ben Joe thinks that as a result, all of his younger sisters are flighty and inattentive. In spite of his obvious anxiety-ridden concerns about them, "none of them took any notice of him" (70). Indeed, it seems no one, except Joanne, ever really listens to anyone else in the Hawkes household. Their family life is lived on the surface only, while each individual remains quite separate and secretive, following Ellen's injunction not to interfere with events, not to impose on privacy. Emotions are to be controlled and outgrown, not shared. There are many important topics, such as Joanne's high school elopement, their father's life away from home, and later their father's death, that are never mentioned in the Hawkes house, not even between brother and sister. "What else didn't they mention?" (86) Ben Joe wonders about his sisters. "[W]hat went on behind their cool, bright smiles. What did they think about before they went to sleep at night?" (86) A part of the answer he already knows: they do not mention what Ellen does not mention. When Ben Joe tries to find out on the telephone more from his mother about Joanne's coming home with her baby and without her husband, he receives the response he expects but dislikes: "'What's done is done, and it's none of our affair'" (19). When he arrives in

Sandhill to check up on this major development, his mother scolds him for leaving Columbia University, where he is studying law, assures him that Joanne is perfectly all right, and even more forcefully than usual insists: "And it's her own business. Ben Joe--nothing we have any right to touch. I don't want to hear about your meddling in it" (55). And Ellen's insistence on staying out of other people's affairs has been passed along to her daughters; consequently, Ben Joe receives the same kind of answers in an exchange with his sister Susannah:

"Well, it's none of my business."
 "She's your sister, isn't she?"
 "That still doesn't make it my business."
 "What does, then?" Ben Joe asked.
"Nothing." (51)

What they think about, his sisters and his mother, in "this still, unchanging world of women" (199), Ben Joe does not know and cannot imagine. Finding the perfect image to depict the Hawkes family's difficulties with communication, sharing, and attention, Tyler writes that in his confusion and uncertainty when he talks with his mother and sisters, Ben Joe always feels "as if he and his family were a set of square dancers coming to clap the palms of their hands to each others', only their hands missed by inches and encountered nothing" (20).

If Morning Ever Comes concerns primarily the effect of Ellen's rigid managerial style, which dominates her household and drives away her husband, on the two oldest Hawkes

children, Ben Joe and Joanne. As a boy, Ben Joe cannot accept the fact that his father's desertion is Phillip's lookout alone; and feeling embarrassed and frightened, he visits Phillip and Lili Mae, planning to ask his father to come back since his mother will not do so. But seeing his father laughing and happy, eating more than he has done in years, Ben Joe cannot say a word about home. Nor has he ever resolved his conflicts nor decided who was right, who was wrong. The major plotline follows Ben Joe's dealing with his unresolved relationships with his parents, his homesickness for an idealized past, and his eventual plunge into the future.

Joanne escapes her unhappy family shortly after her father's leavetaking. Trying to establish her own family, she discovers that she has not left all her family conflicts behind. Her unresolved relationship with both parents, her need to know who was right and who won in the battle between her parents, her own feelings of inadequacy and her drive for perfection and security propel her home again to Sandhill. Interestingly, Ellen is much more intrusive in Joanne's homecoming than her own philosophy allows. She seems to recognize a special link between her own situation and her daughter's; perhaps she feels vicarious retribution in having her daughter leave her husband as Ellen was left by Phillip or takes some pleasure in a shared suffering. In any case, the first thing Ellen asks when Joanne arrives in Sandhill,

according to Jenny's letter to Ben Joe, is "was he unfaithful, they all are . . ." (30). Moreover, Ellen is even more adamant than usual that Ben Joe should not meddle in Joanne's business and tells him repeatedly to stay out of it, a form of meddling in itself. Additionally, forgetting her own insistence on staying out of other people's affairs, Ellen advises Joanne to discontinue wearing her wedding ring, an act that can only create more distance between Joanne and her husband. There is really no point in it, Ellen tells her daughter. After all, Ellen never wears her ring because it "would just keep reminding her" (72). Ben Joe is aghast when Joanne tells him this story in answer to his question about why she is not wearing her ring: "'Mom's advice is the last I would take. . . . She wants you to say, 'Oh, who cares about him?' and then your whole problem is solved. You saw what that did for her'" (72).

As a household manager, Ellen must be commended on the variety and quality of some of her skills. Both before and after Phillip's desertion, she cares for her seven children, the rambling house, the family finances, and Phillip's widowed mother, with whom she still does not get along well, and she takes a job in a book store to augment the family income. At the time of the novel, the older girls have household duties, but Ellen is still the hub of the family, still supervises everything, and still engages in many household chores: sewing, cooking, changing beds, cleaning,

and, of course, major child tending functions. Nor is Ellen devoid of love and caring, as Ben Joe knows:

You had to be a sort of detective with his mother; you had to search out the fresh-made bed, the flowers on the bureau, and the dinner table laid matter-of-factly with your favorite supper, and then you forgot her crisp manners. He wondered, watching her, whether his sisters knew that. (54)

Intellectually, Joanne must also know, for she tells Ben Joe, "'Mom's not as coldhearted as Gram keeps telling you, Ben Joe. You know that'" (72). Nevertheless, a mother whose love requires detective eyes to search it out is unlikely to create and maintain a happy, secure home. The major difficulty for Ellen and her family is that despite a good deal of evidence that her aloof reserve is not bringing happiness nor laying the groundwork for future happiness for her family, Ellen refuses to admit that she is wrong or even to try to change. Sensitive Shelley sees that Ellen does not mean to hurt Phillip, "I reckon she is just a little prideful and thinks pride's the same as dignity so she doesn't try to change herself" (103). Yet Ellen does nothing to rectify her mistake with Phillip at the beginning or later, not even when he comes to discuss Ben Joe's education. Nor does she give her children the warmth and support they need. When teenage Joanne runs away to marry a total stranger and fortuitously is brought home unharmed and unwed, Ellen refrains from "meddling" and simply allows the incident to pass without showing any particular concern or

offering any special guidance. Time after time as husband and children leave or have difficulties, Ellen withholds her overt concern. Not evil, nor even mean, Ellen is simply absolutely sure that she is right in her approach to life, and she rigidly holds herself steady and aloof, unwilling to take a fresh look and start again on a more promising path. Although slightly more intrusive than usual in Joanne's affairs when she leaves her husband and comes home with her child, Ellen's tiny turn does not seem to auger a new, more helpful, loving, supportive mother, so much as a kind of encouragement to Joanne to learn to live alone and aloof as vindication or reinforcement of Ellen's philosophy. Tyler has often noted that giving people privacy and refraining from changing people's lives are qualities she admires; however, Tyler always points to the necessity of producing warmth, even while allowing space. Further, several of Tyler's novels take as major threads the human pain that results from carrying a hands-off policy to an extreme as Ellen does. Ellen gives off so little warmth that only sleuths can detect it; she offers her family not just space, but a vacuum.

Always skillful in depicting old ladies, Tyler has created one of her most memorable characters in Mrs. Pamela Emerson, the rigid managing woman in The Clock Winder. With exact and enlightening detail, Tyler makes this spoiled, imperious, captious, yet somehow brave and likeable old lady

spring to querulous life from the very first page of the novel, when Mrs. Emerson "popped out" of her door, "skin and bones in a shimmery gray dress" with "her face carefully made up, although it was only ten in the morning,"⁴ and proceeded to fire her handyman for peeing in the rosebushes, a habit he had had for twenty-five years. That she is already dressed turns out not to be noteworthy. Always carefully groomed, Mrs. Emerson "dressed up for everything, even breakfast" (4). Dressing up means ultra-sheer stockings, spike heels, pastel skirts with matching sweaters or shimmery dresses--never slacks. By the time she meets Elizabeth, "there was something brave about the prettiness" (4), for it clearly calls for special effort now. Though she must fight the urge "to spend her days in comfortable shoes and forget her chin strap and let herself go" (4), Mrs. Emerson always makes the effort and greets each day with well-coiffed, golden-tinted hair, pearly make-up, and smooth white hands with polished nails. Mrs. Emerson's grooming is matched by the grace of her carriage. She walks and sits with a perfectly straight spine and floats down the stairs, "her head perfectly level, one hand weightless on the banister" (46). To Elizabeth, Mrs. Emerson usually looks "like an advertisement" (25). On their infrequent visits, the Emerson children view their mother with relief (and a touch of disappointment, Mrs. Emerson thinks) because she has not "become a broken old lady after all" (4).

Indeed, her grooming and carriage make it clear that she is wealthy, bound by convention, and determined to be in control.

Tyler captures exactly in Mrs. Emerson the inner feeling and attitudes of the pampered widow who only begins to appreciate her husband when he is no longer around. A widow for three months when the novel opens, Mrs. Emerson is accustomed to having someone take care of her; that is, she is used to having someone else handle those areas of life in which she is not interested (such as making money), while giving her free rein to manage everything she wishes to do (such as spending money and running her family and her household). She moves from being the pampered daughter of a rich man to being the pampered wife of a rich man, Billy Emerson. Late in her life she reveals to her children that her family had disapproved of her marriage because while her husband was wealthy, he was not of their class. Further she came to accept the wisdom of her family's objections: "Oh, we got along, . . . But there was so much--we were so far apart. Never understood each other" (279). During Billy's lifetime, "only strangers considered him important" (51), and they usually considered him very important. The second Emerson son, Timothy, overhearing a man say that he managed to get his real estate problem settled because he was fortunate enough to know Billy Emerson personally, "as if Billy Emerson were a name worth dropping" (51), is

astonished and wonders if there was "something about his father that he had overlooked? Something that he should reconsider?" (51) But he decided that, after all, his father's only talent was for making money. "'Money is essential,' Mrs. Emerson said, 'but not important.' Her children had no trouble understanding her" (51). Only since Billy Emerson's death has she noticed some of her husband's wisdom and mystery: "He knew answers to questions she had never thought of asking, and had kept the answers to himself" (6). Among other mysteries were the clocks; her house is full of clocks, "one to a room--eight day pendulum clocks that struck the hour and the half-hour. Their striking was beautifully synchronized, but the winding was not. . . . Only her husband knew the system (5). Her husband "had wound the clocks absentmindedly, on his way to other places; he had synchronized their striking without even mentioning it to her--but how?" (6) She has considered letting them all run down, "but the symbolism involved--the tick, pause, tock, the pause and final tick of the grandfather clock in the hall, the first to go--made her so nervous that she abandoned the plan" (5). The clocks simply tick and strike out of tune until Elizabeth Abbott, her unusual but competent handyman, comes to the rescue. Then Elizabeth, like her husband, apparently without a thought, synchronizes all the clocks and keeps them well wound. Quite surprised after a life of luxury and a promising

girlhood as a Roland Park debutante to find herself old, "with nothing to do, no one to talk to, alone in a sealed house with the last of her supports sent away" (6), Mrs. Emerson is bored, lonely, and self-pitying.

There is, of course, only one thing for a woman like Mrs. Emerson to do under the circumstances: step up her attempts to manage her children's lives. Having been a rigid managing woman and mother to a large family, Mrs. Emerson's house seems especially big and solitary now that all of her seven children are grown and living away from home. Although she first tells Elizabeth that the Emersons were once a large, happy family whom all the neighbors envied, she revises her story to describe their life as "all bickering, arguing, scenes, constant crisis" (15). Elizabeth's comfortable "'I reckon most families work that way'" (15) does not satisfy Mrs. Emerson; she could never accept the fact that there could be anything ordinary about her family. She also likes to imply that all of her children are fond of her and of family gatherings; however, she is too honest to deceive herself:

"Oh, I always try to look on the bright side, especially when I'm talking to people. That makes me tend to exaggerate a little. But I never fool myself. I know I'd have to attend my own funeral before I see them lined up on this veranda again talking the way they used to. They are always moving away from me; I feel like the center of an asterisk. They work at moving away. . . . They find me difficult." (15)

Although she is aware that her children find her difficult, Mrs. Emerson cannot understand why. To her children, Mrs. Emerson pleads and harangues:

"I'm asking you, I really want to know. What did we do?"

"Just loved you and raised you, the best we knew how," Mrs. Emerson said. "Made mistakes, but none of them on purpose. What else did you want? I go over and over it all, in my mind. Was it something I did? Something I didn't do? Nights when you were in bed, clean from your baths, I felt such--oh, remorse. Regret. I thought back over every cross word. Now it's all like one long night, regret for anything I might have done but no fresh faces to start new upon in the morning. Here I am alone, just aching for you, and still I don't know what it was I did. Was it me, really? Was it?" (118)

Tyler, however, makes the answers quite obvious to the reader. No one can live up to Mrs. Emerson's expectations or meet her demands; with a perfectionist's eye and shrew's tongue, she projects a constant stream of suggestions, criticisms, requests, and officious offers of assistance that perpetually insist upon the acceptance of her wishes, regardless of those of others, and at the same time let her children know the impossibility of their ever doing anything right without her help.

Constantly attempting to improve their minds, change their habits, straighten them out, set their sights higher, Mrs. Emerson simultaneously protests any thought of interfering in their lives. When Mrs. Emerson and Elizabeth first meet, the sight of Elizabeth's Swiss army knife brings tears to Mrs. Emerson's eyes as she recalls that her oldest

son Matthew had requested one for Christmas when he was a child; remembering that she had given him instead a violin, a record player, and a complete set of Beethoven's symphonies makes the tears flow more freely. Nevertheless, her behavior still follows this same pattern as she grows older and her children grow up and move away. Once her nest is empty, she spends a good deal of her time dictating notes for letters to her children into a tape recorder so that she will be sure to remember every passing thought. Her letters resound with phrases such as "I'm not any ordinary mother-in-law," as she says something stereotypically associated with mothers-in-law; or "Now the last thing I want to do is offend you," as she proceeds to do just that; or "I am not the sort of mother who interferes," as she inserts herself into some part of her child's private life. Later, when her loneliness becomes unbearable, she takes up visiting her children, especially Mary, because she has children of her own. While Mrs. Emerson thinks of herself as a wonderful guest, full of helpful suggestions and practical service to the entire family, her children have a different view. For example, when Mrs. Emerson offers to come to Mary's to care for the children while Mary and her husband go off on vacation, Mary finally reveals her true feelings:

You're out here all the time, and every visit you make I have the feeling you might not go home again. You get so settled. . . . You act as if you are taking over my household. . . . You throw out all our food and buy new stuff from the health store. . . . You send my clothes to the laundry

to save me ironing when ironing is something I enjoy, you buy curtains I can't live with and hang them in the dining room, you string Geritol bottles and constipation remedies all across my kitchen table--" (210-211)

Exacerbating her dictatorial nature is her habit of "summing up each child in a single word, putting a finger squarely on his flaw. Margaret was moody. Andrew unbalanced, Melissa high-strung" (28). These assessments, of course, become self-fulfilling prophecies, along with her conviction that all her children "live on crises. It's the only time they're happy. No, they're never happy. They lead such complicated lives" (28). Even worse, she is openly disappointed that her children all take after Billy's family, when she and Billy had both assumed and certainly desired that they would take after her side; indeed, Billy had insisted that each child have Pamela's maiden name--Carter--as a middle name to give them a point of pride. As if "she were discussing some abstract problem," Mrs. Emerson mourns:

"I had such expectations of you all! How did things turn out so differently? You're pure Emerson. You're all just like Billy's brothers, separate and silent with failure just built into you, and now looking back I can't even pinpoint the time when you shifted sides. Why did it work out this way?" (279)

Although Mrs. Emerson does not cook, clean, or repair her house and admits that her husband and her children are disappointments for her, she is still a managing woman and

a very rigid one. She has always been able to hire maids, cooks, gardeners, and handymen to take care of the physical needs of her property and family; her background clearly prepares her for a life not of doing things, but of ordering things done. Disdainful of her husband and his work--real estate, "a line of work so beneath notice that no one had ever thought of suggesting it for his sons, least of all Mr. Emerson, himself" (51)--Mrs. Emerson had had full control over Billy, who wanted so much to possess Mrs. Emerson's background, social graces, and social friends, that he was willing to suppress his own past; play golf weekly, though he despised the game; and follow Mrs. Emerson's lead absolutely, as desperate to understand her code as Evie had been to decipher Drumstrings Casey. And, of course, Mrs. Emerson has been a heavy-handed, all intrusive, nagging, domineering mother. Despite the event-prone, crisis-prone lives of the Emersons and the repeated lessons life hands her about her managerial style, Mrs. Emerson does not change. It never occurs to her that she is wrong. In fact, she finds it impossible to entertain such thoughts. When her children complain, often sounding in their adulthood as whining and/or rebellious as they used to sound when they were youngsters, she simply brushes their criticisms away as untrue, unfair, or childish distortions. Then hurt or angry or both, she continues to act as she always has.

Mrs. Emerson's best chance for improvement might seem to be association with her new handyman Elizabeth Abbott, for although Mrs. Emerson and Elizabeth Abbott get along beautifully, they are very different from one another. Indeed, Mrs. Emerson stands in clear contrast to Elizabeth in almost every way--her background, her approach to life, her hopes for the future, her attitude toward others, her managerial style. Mrs. Emerson is used to being served; Elizabeth is used to helping. Mrs. Emerson is talkative, critical, unhandy; Elizabeth is laconic, noncommittal, and competent. Rich, proper Mrs. Emerson is always concerned about appearances; poor, unpretentious, Elizabeth is irreverently unconcerned about the proprieties. While fun-loving Elizabeth wants to zigzag freely through life, domineering Mrs. Emerson insists on "plans neatly made, routes clearly marked, beelines to success" (28); and she wants to be the one making, marking, and lining. While Elizabeth is constantly fretting to make sure that she does no harm, it never occurs to Mrs. Emerson that her influencing or coercing others could be anything but good for them. Consequently, although her attempts to improve or control or change her children cause pain or estrangements, Mrs. Emerson never changes her style or tactics.

When Mrs. Emerson suffers a paralyzing stroke, it seems there may be a possibility for real change. Certainly, she is humbled by the way her body has let her down. Humiliated

by her infirmities, especially her loss of memory and her loss of control over her speech, Mrs. Emerson finds it as difficult to be dependent on her children as they find it difficult to be in charge of her. During this period, she wants and gets, against the wishes of many of her children, Elizabeth Abbott, who has returned to North Carolina after the suicide of Mrs. Emerson's second son Timothy, to come back to Baltimore to care for her. In winning Elizabeth's help for a limited time, she guarantees her own improvement and at least opens the door for the reinstatement of a romance and then a marriage between her oldest son Matthew and Elizabeth. Though in the end, Pamela Emerson still holds forth as if she were the managing woman of the Emerson household, and certainly she loses none of her dictatorial ways, the truth is that Elizabeth clearly takes over the house, the family, and Mrs. Emerson herself, trying to keep her happy, so long as it does not interfere with the needs of the total household. In the last chapter of the book, Mrs. Emerson, almost fully recovered from her stroke, carries on as imperiously and as insensitively as ever. Perhaps somewhat more mellow, she is still virtually the same. But the rigid managing woman of this household is now a figurehead, and Elizabeth, the real regenerative manager knows enough not to tell her so.

Amanda Pauling, the first person narrator of the first chapter of Celestial Navigation, begins the book with an

account of her trip to Baltimore with her younger sister Laura in the fall of 1960 to attend their mother's funeral. Tyler's only unmarried, rigid managing woman, Amanda's chief functions in the book are to depict her brother's life-long peculiarities and background clearly and unsympathetically; to reveal the nature of the Pauling rooming house; and to serve as an indirect foil for Mary Tell, one of Tyler's most engaging regenerative managing women, and for Miss Vinton, a resident in the Pauling rooming house and Tyler's only major portrait of a happy, well-adjusted spinster. It is a tribute to Tyler's powers of characterization that Amanda not only fulfills her informational duties with verve, but also emerges as another of Tyler's funny, exasperating, and poignant old ladies. A spinster, who avers she looks younger than her forty-six years, though she definitely sounds and acts much older, Amanda is unstinting in her demands for perfection from others and from herself. Since she is concerned only with small acts and since she sets the rules (which she often fails to share until they have been broken), she is usually able to meet her own exalted standards of performance or to find the perfect rationalization; consequently, she is both self-righteous and smug. Amanda feels that she has been cheated--stunted by nature and shunted aside by society. She knows that she is unlovable; but she does not understand why she does not engender love nor why others do, and she makes no real

efforts to discover the reasons. Instead, standing on her pride, she finds it sufficient to hug her grievances and to endure with dignity. Certainly, she does not consider adaptations or changes in herself. A high school Latin teacher, Amanda admits that her life has been uneventful. "I have never had a marriage proposal or a love affair or an adventure, never any experience more interesting than patrolling the aisles of my Latin class looking for crib sheets and ponies--There are a thousand jokes about the likes of me. None of them are funny."⁵ Actually, Amanda does not see much to smile about and nothing to laugh about, except sardonically, in life as a whole. Quite intelligent, she is aware and offended that other people often sum her up with a glance and dismiss her even before she finishes speaking, as if what she is "came through more clearly than any words she might choose" (35). She "has been by-passed, something has been held back" from her. "And the worst part is that" (35) she knows it. A major part of that "something" is her mother's love. As with many of Tyler's regenerative managing women, Amanda's major problem is her relationship with her mother. Amanda is the only one of the rigid women whose mother is named and whose growing years are described in any detail. While Tyler notes that Ellen (If Morning Ever Comes) is from the north and that Mrs. Emerson (The Clock Winder) grows up as a wealthy pampered debutante in Roland Park in Baltimore, she omits the

particulars of those backgrounds and only suggests the early formative relationships. However, because Amanda and Jeremy share the same family and because Amanda's role is, in part, to reveal that family life, Tyler answers more deeply than she does for the other rigid women in her novels the "why's" about the reasons Amanda came to be the kind of person she is.

Mrs. Pauling "had room for only one person at a time and that one the youngest and smallest and weakest" (13). When Amanda confronts her mother with her preference--"'You love Jeremy more than you do me'" (26)--Mrs. Pauling does not deny it, but offers instead, "'Well, honey, . . . you have to remember that Jeremy is a boy'" (26). At first, Amanda thinks her mother means that boys are more lovable; later she wonders if it means they take more care because of their weaknesses or proclivity for accidents and mistakes; eventually she gives up trying to understand. "It doesn't matter what she meant; the fact is she did love him more. And next to him, Laura. The pretty one, who in those days was only slightly plump and had hair that was really and truly golden. Me last of all" (26). Feeling unloved by her mother, Amanda, along with the rest of the family, is also deserted by her father, who steps out one evening for "a breath of air" (25) and never returns. Two weeks later, the family receives a postcard from him from New York; on the back he writes, "'I said I needed air, didn't I?'" (25) and

that is the last they hear of him until his death a year and a half later. Because Amanda originally adored her father, this defection is particularly painful, but she closes her heart to him and is unstintingly contemptuous of her mother, who still keeps his picture on her nightstand, his brushes on her bureau, and even his shaving mug in her bathroom. Nor is Amanda's childhood relationship with her sister satisfying, for Amanda feels she loses her tenuous place in her mother's affection immediately upon the birth of Laura; further, Laura seems unaware that she herself is disposed by the birth of Jeremy. Indeed, Laura genuinely loves their baby brother and treats him as a kind of super-doll; thus, Amanda sneers at her sister's failure to perceive her own displacement in their mother's affection, as well as her affection for Jeremy, who by anybody's standards is weird and unnatural. As soon as each of the girls is old enough for college, Mrs. Pauling expects them to earn their own money for their education and, in fact, to be completely self-supporting once they leave home; yet she sells half her ground rents to send Jeremy to the finest art school in Baltimore, at which Jeremy hardly ever attends classes, and she supports him all her life. While Amanda clearly sees the unfairness and the waste, Laura obtusely seems to think this partiality quite natural.

Although Amanda claims, "Well, I couldn't care less about that now, of course. I never even think about it.

But I did at one time" (26), the truth is that Amanda can never forget her rage at the injustice at losing her mother's affection to her weird brother and her weak sister, both of whom are less competent, more demanding of care, less attentive to the proprieties than she. Fixated in her childhood feelings of being unloved and unlovable, Amanda is unable to grow emotionally, to cut her losses, and to begin anew. Thus, clearly capable of and strongly driven to managing, Amanda takes charge of everything but change. She has great powers of endurance--she copes with a narrow life in which she is virtually unnoticed and unappreciated, but she does not adapt well to new circumstances nor start over again after setbacks. In her mind, she is always right; to the extent that others may not agree, they are at fault. Thus, change would, in her mind, be tantamount to relegating herself to the infelicitous categories of the weak, the evil, the slovenly, the sentimental, the self-indulgent into which she thrusts others. Despite her conviction that others fail because they are weak, as well as wrong-headed, she is, nevertheless, unrelenting in her determination not only to point up their flaws but to force correction of them.

Amanda communicates her displeasure in three basic ways: she firmly and explicitly corrects the offending party; she speaks in coded messages in which the underlying theme is a disparagement and an invitation to guilt, though

the actual words may be quite different; she uses body English and silence to pointed effect. Thus, Amanda lambasts Laura directly for allowing Jeremy to live as a virtual recluse without leaving his block, a situation Laura has known for years, but one of which Amanda has been unaware until her mother's death has brought her to Baltimore. To Laura's defense that Jeremy isn't hurting anyone, Amanda is even more horrified. "'You let things ride because it's easier, but . . . he's our brother! Sitting in one spot like a beanbag. . . . Wouldn't it be to his own good to make it stop before it gets worse?'" (30) On the other hand, to chastise Jeremy for his failure to meet her and Laura when they arrive in town or to make any arrangements at all for their visit, she uses the oblique approach: "We couldn't get a taxi from the funeral parlor. It was hard enough to find one at the railroad station, and evidently no one thought to meet us" (18); she also points out that she needs a long rest because the walk from the funeral parlor to the Pauling home has tired her and caused her feet to swell. However, Jeremy is either unaware, unconcerned, or unwilling to acknowledge her implied criticism and her obvious expectation of guilty apologies and self-castigations. Jeremy is always unsatisfactory in this way. Disgusted by Jeremy's and Laura's hearty appetites "as if Mother's passing were a picnic! . . . Some kind of eating spree!" (21) Amanda snaps, "Well, don't come

to me with you indigestion, that's all I have to say" (21). However, Amanda can also let her displeasure be known without words. When Miss Vinton shows up at the funeral parlor wearing her everyday clothes, Amanda thanks her for coming, but her true message is delivered via the "good sharp glance at her clothing to show" (8) Miss Vinton that she is inappropriately dressed.

On her own for over twenty-five years, Amanda at first has only her classroom and her own small life to manage until Laura, widowed within a year of her youthful marriage, joins her, and the two sisters begin to share an apartment in Richmond. But even now this small household provides small scope for Amanda's strong managerial urges and abilities. It is clear to see that she is invigorated by the idea of straightening out Jeremy's unsatisfactory life style, selling the old rooming house, and adding Jeremy to her Richmond household, notwithstanding her duplicitous air of resignation to an onerous duty. To her chagrin, however, Mrs. Pauling once more protects her favorite, for as she says in her last letter to her "darling girls," she leaves the house and "any financial doings" (28) to Jeremy, admitting that "it might seem unfair but I trust that you will understand, as the two of you have always managed so nicely while Jeremy has his mind on art and such" (28). Infuriated by the further confirmation of favoritism embodied in the distribution of goods, Amanda is also

horrified and enraged by the revelation that Jeremy actually has not crossed a street since he attended art school. Amanda may not be able to do anything about the will, but she intends to take firm charge of this abnormal behavior right now. Consequently, bit by bit, through steady pressure and the pretense that they are going only to the next landmark, Amanda gets Jeremy out of the house, down to the corner, across a street, and to the middle of the next block. Certain that she is right and that she is acting in his best interests, she can feel her own strength propelling him along and thinks, "Someone should have done this long ago" (32). But in the middle of the second block he collapses: "Just crumpled in upon himself and folded onto the sidewalk, where he sat in a heap and shook all over" (33). Laura and one of the roomers rush to rescue him, half carrying Jeremy home, apparently unconvinced by Amanda's protestations that she didn't mean any harm and unconcerned about whether she returns home with them or not. Although Laura accuses Amanda of having no heart, Amanda maintains to herself, since no one else is talking to her, "I am not a cruel woman, I have never intentionally hurt a person in my life" (34). Left to walk "six paces behind, all alone" (34), Amanda thinks there are worse things than being alone: "look at Jeremy, propped up on both sides, . . . If that is what love does to you, isn't it possible that I am the most fortunate of us all?" (34) But no one could answer that

question "yes," not even Amanda, who spends a long, sleepless night going over all the losses of her life "while some hard bleak pain settled on [her] chest and weighed [her] down" (36). The next morning, however, Amanda, brisk and bossy as ever, takes charge; she handles all of the arrangements herself, thus insuring that they are done well. Unfortunately, after her long painful night of introspection, she is exactly the same.

In Searching for Caleb Tyler presents two portraits of rigid managing women--Laura Baum Peck, second wife of Justin Peck, founder of the Baltimore Peck family, and Mrs. Milsom, mother of Reverend Arthur Milsom, an assistant minister of a Protestant church in Semple, Virginia, and husband to Meg Peck, daughter of Justine and Duncan. Although Laura is Justin's second wife, she is clearly the matriarch of the family. Justin's first wife, a frail sixteen-year-old, whom Justin marries when he is already fifty years old and very rich from his import-export business, dies giving birth to Daniel only nine months after the wedding. Within a year, Justin remarries a woman from stronger, if less socially acceptable, stock; his choice is Laura Baum, the twenty-year-old daughter of a sturdy, fun-loving German cutler. This one scrap of information is almost the only thing that Tyler reveals about Laura's background, for the most striking thing about her is how readily she gives up her past and takes on the philosophy, style, and ambitions

of her husband. Plain in appearance and severe in manner, Laura looks forty when she marries and about the same when she dies at ninety-seven. Although it was Justin's plan to leave behind many children, Laura bears no children for five years; however, she is an attentive, careful mother for Daniel, teaching him to read and cipher and to observe all of the proprieties, and later when her own son Caleb is born, she attends to him with equal care and rigor. Even before Caleb's birth, Justin suggests that Laura stop taking Daniel with her on her visits to her father, an undignified foreigner, who likes practical jokes and the company of the seamen who hang out at his shop. Not only does Laura obey instantly, she also stops her own visits to her father as well; for she has learned to read immediately the Peck multilayered, oblique family code and aspirations without any words at all. Indeed, Laura not only accepts without demur the Peck way of life as Justin defines it, she endorses and rigidly enforces the principles and attitudes of Peckness without reservation. That she is frightened by the fierce old man to whom she is married enhances her enthusiastic acquiescence to the vision and her absolute obedience to the form. Consequently, her constant reminder to her sons is that they "must live up to their family's name,"⁶ a remark that she finds so self-evident that no explanation is necessary, but one that always evokes hidden laughter from the servants, who whisper to one another,

"'What family? What name? Peck?'" (55) But to Laura and to her sons being a Peck does have well-defined boundaries: distrust of outsiders and disdain for their unPecklike ways; impeccable manners; self-satisfied smugness with everything Peck; control of one's emotion; dedication to the preservation, well-being, and growth of the family and its wealth and holdings.

Although Daniel not only understands, but also accepts these precepts instinctively, Caleb grows up attracted to music, laughter, and strangers--all habits Laura tries without success to break and manages fairly well to hide from Justin. Therefore, when Justin takes Caleb, on the day after his high school graduation, down to the warehouse to show him where he will be working, Caleb's announcement that he would prefer being a musician so shocks and infuriates Justin that he suffers an apoplectic stroke which leaves him permanently paralyzed on one side and seriously impaired in his speaking abilities. As Laura tells her son: "'You have killed your half of your father'" (58). Laura's responsibilities now include caring for an embittered, cold-hearted old man, who has determined to remain in his bedroom until he is fully recovered and, clearly blaming her for Caleb's ambition, treats her with contempt; keeping Caleb on duty at the warehouse; and seeing Daniel through law school.

Tyler does not detail Laura's participation in . planning, building, and furnishing the two new Roland Park residences upon which Justin insists (one for Daniel and his new bride and one for Justin, Laura, and Caleb); however, it is clear that she continues to run her own household and to try to help Caleb to accept his life, forget his music, and find a wife so that another house can be built on the ample Peck property. Yet Laura's manner of helping Caleb remains rigidly the same: "'At least think of the family,'" (66) she insists. Justin wants a great many descendants, and Daniel and his wife Margaret Rose provide six children in five years. Unfortunately for their marriage, Margaret Rose is not a ready convert to Peckness. Despite Daniel's stern disapproval and oblique directions and despite Laura's exemplary model, she simply does not become a true Peck. Indeed, ignoring Laura's example, she insists on showing her emotions--openly laughing, hugging, and singing; wearing delicately colored fashionable clothing instead of proper, dark-colored matronly garments; inviting friends in for no other purpose than the pleasure of their company, instead of maintaining a dignified distance from all non-Pecks and inviting others into the house only for business purposes. When Daniel refuses to allow her to take the children by train to Washington for her mother's birthday celebration, she does not take the lesson Laura so quickly learned in her marriage, but goes alone; furthermore, she never returns.

Now Laura, as upright, energetic, plain, and unbending as ever, has two households to run. Often, she is the only family member that the Peck children see for days, since their father often works until past their bedtime. In 1912, the Peck family suffers several losses: Caleb leaves home (though no one notices until several days after his departure); Justin fades and dies; and Margaret Rose is killed in a boarding house fire. Although their teachers commiserate with them as poor, motherless orphans, the Peck children, having long ago given up their mother and accepted Laura as the center of their world, are always surprised to hear it. All of Daniel's children grow up to recognize the value of the Peck name and the Peck ways. As a result only three of them marry; Justine's mother, Caroline, is the only one of the girls, for who would want to give up the Peck family name? The two boys marry women "merely for their ability to be assimilated" (80), women who can never be "as important as the true Peck[s]" (74). The three married children produce seven offspring, and until her death in 1958, Laura, known as Great-Grandma, presides with smug satisfaction over the family enclave, now grown to four side-by-side, almost identical houses, filled with two brittle spinsters, three stuffy married couples, six docile children, and rebellious Duncan, to whom the Pecks resemble hamsters or gerbils--"Any of those little animals that cluster in one corner piled on top of each other even when

they have a great big cage they are free to spread out in" (85). Laura has accomplished the job for which old Justin picked her. But of the seven descendants, only four marry; an immediate divorce for one and an immediate annulment for another leave only the two Peck cousins Justine and Duncan to produce the last descendant Meg. The exclusive devotion to Peckness by most of the family has gone so far that the family tree presented to Daniel on his ninety-third birthday is the shape of a diamond.

Along with their disdain for all others and their smug satisfaction with their own Peckness, there are numerous examples of unhappiness and poverty of spirit that result from the rigid, materially affluent Peck lifestyle. As a young woman, Laura's inexperience and fear of her husband were perhaps sufficient reasons for her rigidity. Yet major events, Margaret Rose's and Caleb's departures being prime examples, as well as minor ones, illustrate the need for new approaches to managing her family, yet Laura never falters in the style and the philosophy she promptly absorbed upon her marriage. Just as her looks hardly change, so does her family management remain almost identical, except for the increasing numbers she has to care for and to train. The narrowness of the lives of Daniel's children impoverishes their minds and spirits so that they spend most of their time criticizing outsiders; trying indirectly in a way no one can specifically fault to win an advantage over or

revenge a slight from a family member; and keeping score of countless tiny, inside-the-family victories and defeats. With trivia the only safe topics for conversation, no one can discuss the departures of Margaret Rose and Caleb, let alone try to bring them back. When Laura dies, Daniel is surprised and disturbed to find a picture of Caleb hidden in her neatly ordered desk drawer. Because of the poor focus and haphazard composition, he is fairly sure that Margaret Rose was the photographer; thus in a sense this one picture brings back two family runaways, whose traces have otherwise been systematically destroyed and whose memories have been methodically forgotten. The resulting "sorrow that drove straight through his ribcage" (160) sets him off on a fifteen-year search for his brother that none of his children and only Justine and Duncan of his grandchildren can understand. Near the end of his life, Daniel reveals to these two grandchildren the questions his last years have engendered in his mind:

"In my childhood I was trained to hold things in, you see. But I thought I was holding them until a certain time. I assumed someday, somewhere, I would be given the opportunity to spend all that saved-up feeling. When will that be?" (259)

But Daniel is not alone in his repression. His runaway brother Caleb, his rebellious grandson Duncan suffer equally from the Peck strictures against showing emotion or having any outside the family. Caleb never marries, establishes no strong emotional ties; even though he escapes the daily

reminder that he is a disappointment and follows his music, he does not free himself from his early training. And Duncan, loving Justine beyond anything in life and despising all the Peck family mores, is still so much entrapped by them that he cannot bring himself to use the word love to her, even when he stands in jeopardy of losing her for want of just this expression. Thus Laura's legacy lives on.

Tyler accords Mrs. Milsom a much briefer sketch in Searching for Caleb; she appears in only one scene when Justine, Duncan, and Daniel pay a visit to Meg and her new husband after their elopement. Yet her portrayal is even more vibrantly alive, perhaps because it is so sharply focused. A "long, wilted lady with . . . a pale tragic face, eyes as black and precisely lidded as a playing-card queen's" (230), Mrs. Milsom shakes hands with fingers like "damp spaghetti" (230). Although the Pecks do not know it at the time they first see her, Mrs. Milsom always wears the kind of limp white dress she is wearing for their visit. Floating, rather than walking, she drifts so lightly into a chair when she sits that parts of her appear "to settle whole minutes after other parts" (230). Despite her pale, listless appearance, Mrs. Milsom is a rod of steel. She has been the rigid manager of her son, her son's career, and her son's household for years, and she is giving up none of her authority or responsibilities to Arthur's wife. Under the guise of helping Meg overcome what Mrs. Milsom regards as

clearly inadequate training at home and assisting Meg in learning the duties of a minister's wife, Mrs. Milsom keeps a tight rein on all activities and decisions. As Meg says, Mrs. Milsom does everything, even making up Meg and Arthur's bed each morning because Meg does not know how to make hospital corners. Because Mrs. Milsom's "healing group" is coming over on Sunday evening, Mrs. Milsom says it is impossible for Meg to invite her family for lunch that day, even if Meg plans to do the cooking herself, a task of which Mrs. Milsom clearly does not think her capable; for Mrs. Milsom needs full access to and use of the kitchen in the late afternoon and will not have time to accommodate two events. Mrs. Milsom also insists on sweetening all of the tea she prepares for the Pecks' visit; when Meg tells her that Justine prefers hers with lemon (actually sweetened tea almost gags Justine), Mrs. Milsom, typically, ignores this preference: "'Oh, everybody likes their tea with sugar, it's so refreshing'" (236). At Meg's request to make a separate glass of tea for her mother, Mrs. Milsom makes it clear that Meg is unwelcome in the kitchen.

Obviously, Mrs. Milsom is the authority on her son and on the duties of a minister's wife. Although Arthur has specifically asked Meg to wake him when her parents arrive, Mrs. Milsom refuses to allow it: "'If we do, he'll have his head till tomorrow, believe me, . . . I know him'" (232), she says, making both her superior knowledge about and authority

over her son abundantly clear. It seems that Arthur naps every fourth Sunday after delivering his once a month sermon because "preaching takes so much out of him" (230). Arthur's weakness, of course, adds to Mrs. Milsom's strength. That Mrs. Milsom has helped create and now helps sustain his sermon day headaches also seems quite evident: "Generally on fourth Sundays he awakes with a headache, . . . and sustains it during the entire service and even afterward, until he admits that I am right and takes to his bed" (231). To make sure Meg does not go to wake up Arthur and to make it clear in whose living room everyone is sitting, Mrs. Milsom pats the arm of her chair and calls Meg to come and perch beside her. When Duncan asks what kind of job Meg plans to look for now that she has completed her high school degree, it is Mrs. Milsom who answers: "Mr. Peck, . . . being a minister's wife is a job" (232). When Duncan suggests that he means "besides that" (232), Mrs. Milsom avers there can be nothing else. "'Believe me, I know. . . . I've been standing behind Arthur all this time filling in until he found himself a wife: attending teas and sewing circles, helping at bazaars, fixing casseroles---" (233). However, there is no doubt that having filled in for Arthur until he found a wife does not mean that Mrs. Milsom intends to give up running the show; instead her intention is to keep on rigidly managing this household; she will simply have another person to order around and to take on smaller, less interesting duties. "Mainly, of course, the

minister's wife is a buffer, . . . She filters his calls, tries to handle the little things that so clutter his day--oh, Margaret can tell you. We've been teaching her all about it" (233).

Meg's expectations of leading a regular, normal, orderly life are clearly foiled by Mrs. Milsom. When Meg had met her mother-in-law-to-be earlier, Mrs. Milsom had seemed just like anyone else, except for always dressing in white; now her intention to continue to manage Arthur and his ministry and his household as absolutely as before are quite clear, and, as Meg mourns, "'Arthur just won't stand up to her'" (237). However, from Meg's perception, Mrs. Milsom's faith healing endeavors are far more terrible than her rigid domination of their lives. At these sessions, Mrs. Milsom and the old, sick people who attend cry and shout and pray so loudly they can be heard all over the house. Apparently, even God doesn't know how to run things as well as Mrs. Milsom since she keeps reminding God that it is unjust that she should be losing her powers of healing when there are people sick and in pain everywhere; that it is unfair that she cannot stop her own son's headaches anymore. Further, to Meg's dismay, Mrs. Milsom is sure that Arthur also has the gift; she even wants to look at Meg's hands to see if she has the gift. While Meg feels she will be able to thwart such plans for herself, she is not at all sure Arthur can and will refuse to

lend himself to his mother's scheme. Meg's anguished conclusion is that she lives "among crazy people" (237).

As with her other rigid managing women, Tyler gives the reader little of Mrs. Milson's background. Boasting of coming from a long line of clergy, Mrs. Milson is a little discomfitted to admit that her husband was not a minister, but "in construction" (231). Although there are no overt clues about Mrs. Milson's married life, the few pages in which she entertains the Pecks and the few more in which Meg describes her behavior are enough to paint a classic portrait of a woman who will make an invalid of her son before she will let him become independent; a woman who is in her own mind always right about everything, from how one should take one's iced tea to how God should order the universe; a woman to whom any suggestion that she should change her way of handling things would win the proposer a place in her prayers, but would certainly not bring about any more significant change in Mrs. Milson.

Tyler's presentation of rigid managing women illustrates beautifully the overall sympathetic treatment that Tyler accords the characters in her novels. These strong and competent, but unaffectionate and self-righteous, women are about as close to being villains as any of the characters Tyler portrays, for they cause pain to their families. (Only the weak and inept parents, like Caroline Peck in Searching for Caleb, Lacey Ames in Earthly Possessions, and Mr. Decker

in A Slipping-Down Life cause as much damage to their families.) However, the rigid managing women--despite their nagging, belittling, domineering, emotionally disabling attitudes towards their husbands, children, or other family members--are not evil women. They are merely narrow, self-satisfied, and unbending. Though the rigid women have opportunities to adapt their own habits and preferences in order to play a more affirmative role in their management of their families, they are all convinced of their own absolute rightness and can neither adjust nor start over. Thus, though they are able, energetic, forceful, and tough, they lack the essential quality that allows them to bring abundant life to themselves and their families: they cannot change in substantive ways.

Rigid managing women often provide an important part of the humor and paradox that distinguish Tyler's work. Mrs. Emerson, Amanda, and Mrs. Milsom are all really humorous characters, though their humorous moments are usually poignant or appalling, also. For example, Mrs. Milsom's sure knowledge that sweetened tea is refreshing to everyone is truly comic in its blatant egotistical rigidity, and Amanda's stories of her mother's partiality to Jeremy are both amusing and painful. Additionally, rigid managing women often demonstrate the surprising and often touching paradoxes that are another Tyler trademark. For example, Laura (Searching for Caleb) secretly hides a photograph of Caleb for fifty

years, clearly manifesting that she cares about him, but she never thinks to ask Sullie, the maid, or her husband Lafleur, who has taught Caleb ragtime, his favorite music, if they know where Caleb has gone; and they do know, but have vowed not to tell Laura unless she asks. In Celestial Navigation, Amanda, the most untrusting and cautious of women, leaves her suitcase in the unlocked foyer of the Pauling home where, in fact, it is stolen; in The Clock Winder, Mrs. Emerson's long tedious letters, the epitome of the stereotype that accounts for the term "momism," always include the caveat that she is no ordinary mother.

Yet though Tyler is almost unerringly accurate in depicting her character's flaws and the absurdities into which these flaws lead them, she is never bitter or malicious in her portrayals. On the contrary, it is clear that underlying even the sharpest characterizations there is an element of sympathy. In describing her manner of composition, she writes:

"My people wander around my study until the novel is done. It's one reason I'm very careful not to write about people I don't like. If I find somebody creeping in that I'm not really fond of, I usually take him out."

Further, Tyler admits in still another interview: "'I don't care for writers who write about people they don't like.'"⁸ Tyler's sympathy, even for those who fail to adapt, fail to give sufficient space to others or maintain it for themselves, or fail to admit mistakes and start again is

readily apparent in her treatment of her rigid, managing women, a character type which reaches an apex in Tyler's first nine novels in the person of Pearl Tull, the central character of Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant. This most fully developed of all Tyler's rigid managing women will be considered in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER VI

DINNER AT THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT

By almost all accounts, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant is Anne Tyler's finest novel and one of the best novels published in 1982. Popular with the public and critics alike, the book was reviewed in almost every major popular publication featuring such articles, was named many times in late December and early January lists of the year's best novels, and remained on the New York Times best seller list for weeks. Although other Tyler novels have attracted attention from movie and television producers, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant is the only one that has an active and prestigious screenwriting and production team at work on it now.¹ Just as the praise for the novel is almost universal, so is the opinion that this novel represents for Tyler a new level of power, a new profundity of treatment, and a new darkening of vision. Somber, dark, grave, depressing, even joyless are commonly used to describe the novel as a whole, or at least its atmosphere, even in positive reviews and articles.² There seems no disagreement that Tyler traces the same motifs and themes in this book as in her earlier ones--escape; enclosure; establishing a family; the chafing, as well as the nurturing, that family members provide one

another--and places these in the same arena--the American family. Nevertheless, despite these similarities, commentators also agree that this work is "the darkest of all Tyler's novels."³ If they try to explain the tone at all, critics generally ascribe the causes to Tyler's portrayal of a powerful family determinism⁴ which assumes "that character is shaped early and disfigured before the will can intervene,"⁵ or to the revelation of the "bitter narrowness of life."⁶ However, these ideas and techniques have always been part of the fabric of Tyler novels. A more likely and simpler reason resides in characterization, the quality for which Tyler deserves and receives the greatest praise and the quality upon which all of her books are fundamentally based, for Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant is more pessimistic in outlook and more discomfiting in conclusion because it is the first Tyler novel in which the most significant woman character is not a regenerative managing woman.

The major woman character and, indeed, the major character, in Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant is Pearl Tull, the most completely developed example Tyler has yet presented of the rigid managing woman; Pearl is, as John Updike says, "a witch but our authentic heroine."⁷ In past Tyler novels, the regenerative woman with her ability to adapt, endure, and start over when necessary, her gifts of love and growth, has been the major character (as Evie in A Slipping-Down Life; Elizabeth in The Clock Winder; Justine

in Searching for Caleb; and Charlotte in Earthly Possessions); or has shared top billing with her chosen mate (as Joan in The Tin Can Tree); or has been the major woman character in novels that project a male as the central character (as Joanne in If Morning Ever Comes; Mary Tell in Celestial Navigation; and Emily in Morgan's Passing).

Naturally, the affirmative approach to life and the ability to see and overcome their own mistakes and life's problems and crises, even if their causes are beyond the control of these regenerative managing women, undergird the books in which they play significant parts with the sweetness of hope and the jauntiness of forward movement, no matter how severe the challenges, how problematical the victories, nor how ambiguous the novel's resolution for the woman character. Evie Decker's return to her father's dreary house with no money, no education, and no help in sight, except the unborn baby she carries, which is potentially just as much a liability as an asset, is an upbeat ending because Evie has grown and changed and started over before, against all odds, and one expects the same small, homely miracle again. The reader can wish that Mary Tell and Jeremy Pauling had the wisdom of Miss Vinton so that the last view of the two of them would not limn each so starkly alone. However, Mary's love and energy have enriched Jeremy's life and consequently his art, and if he is alone, at least he finally has the solitude to figure out and use all he has learned about life

from Mary and the children, and no one who reads the novel can doubt that Mary will find a way to continue to use her expansive views and her enlarging capabilities to the good of her children and her own enjoyment of life. Even in Morgan's Passing and If Morning Ever Comes, in which Tyler presents males as the major figures and gives them the novels' last words, words ripe with expectancy and hope, neither Morgan nor Ben Joe is strong enough to inspire the reader's confidence that he can move forward with the life he envisions without the help of a strong regenerative managing woman. In the earlier novel, Ben Joe can only break away from the imprisonment of the past after he sees Joanne's regeneration, and it is his resulting decision to take a potentially regenerative woman with him when he leaves his home town for New York that gives the ending of this novel its affirmative tone. And clearly, Morgan, who cannot even remember what it was like to be unmarried, sees his future through the prism of Emily; indeed, it is the sight of her with their son on her hip which lifts his heart and makes all he sees "luminous and beautiful, and rich with possibilities."⁸ But the major woman and the central character in Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant is a narrow, angry, embittered, rigid woman, and it is her character which shapes her family and the novel.

At the same time, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, like all Tyler novels, does include a regenerative managing

woman in Jenny Tull, Pearl's daughter, and Jenny follows Tyler's pattern for this character type in most respects: she suffers from loneliness and alienation in her childhood; in her youth she is desperate to escape her family and does so; rather quickly she picks the man with whom she wants to unite and establish a family; very quickly, she runs into problems which call for her to endure, to adapt, or to start over, and most of the time Jenny is equal to the challenges. However, Jenny has not progressed as far as Tyler's earlier regenerative women in one important respect: she has set her need for her own space beyond the dimensions that will allow her to be fully nurturing and loving for either her children or her husband. Thus, Jenny, certainly as competent as any of Tyler's previously depicted regenerative managing women and as full of loving instincts, refrains from some of the connections and communications that would enable her to be a more forceful positive influence on her family than she is. Partly because Jenny is not as strong in her regenerative powers as Pearl is in her rigidity, and partly because Pearl is the major character, the rigid Pearl receives fuller treatment than the regenerative Jenny; consequently, the overall mood of the novel is darker and more disquieting.

Like many of Tyler's regenerative managing women, Jenny Tull in Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant endures a miserable childhood, and her relationship with her mother Pearl Tull is the main problem. As aloof and reserved from showing

affection as Joanne Hawkes' mother in If Morning Ever Comes and Joan Pike's mother in The Tin Can Tree; as inconsistent in her moods and as stiflingly narrow in her rejection of all the world except her own family as Justine Peck's mother in Searching for Caleb, Jenny's mother adds to these flaws a demanding, perfectionist nature, a violent temper, and emotional and physical abuse of her three children. Anything but weak, retiring, and passive, like the mothers of the regenerative managing women in the two novels immediately preceding this one--Charlotte Emory's mother in Earthly Possessions and Emily Meredith's mother in Morgan's Passing--Pearl is, herself, the strongest and most rigid of all of Tyler's managing women.

Although she is beautiful with thick dark hair and luminous eyes, Jenny as a child and as a teenager is not attractive to her peers, partly because of her clothes. While she is young, Pearl dresses her poorly in ill-fitting garments meant for someone older; and when she is a teenager in the fifties, she wears "hand-me-downs from her mother: limp, skimpy dresses fashionable in the forties, with too much shoulder and not enough skirt."⁹ Because Pearl disdains loafers as sloppy, Jenny also wears "the same kind of sturdy brown oxfords that her brothers wore" (66). As a grown-up, Jenny acquires a picture of herself, taken when she was thirteen, and shows it to thirteen-year-old Slevin, the oldest son of her third husband. Shocked and disturbed, the

boy refuses to believe that the picture is really of Jenny because she looks so forlorn: "'Look at it! Why, it's like a concentration camp person, a victim, Anne Frank! It's terrible! It's so sad!" (207) Jenny has good reason to be both sad and watchful as a child and as a teenager. From the time her father Beck Tull leaves home permanently when she is nine until Jenny herself goes away to college at eighteen, she feels she lives with a witch; for although Pearl has been a strict, demanding, perfectionist before her desertion, her demeanor becomes far more unreliable and violent once Beck has gone.

Unlike the majority of Tyler's regenerative managing women, Jenny is not an only child;¹⁰ instead she shares her unhappy home with two older brothers: Cody, the firstborn, and Ezra. Although both brothers are fond of Jenny and support her when they can against their mother's wrath, none of the children can stop Pearl or slow her down when she is in a fury. Unfortunately, too, Cody is a mischievous, rebellious boy, often in trouble outside of home, and so jealous and envious of his brother that he continuously torments Ezra with both simple and elaborate schemes to get the younger boy in trouble and discredit him in Pearl's eyes. However, his tricks almost always result in another violent, frenzied scene with Pearl, and usually they also backfire against Cody, as Pearl feels compelled to defend Ezra fiercely against his big brother. Involved only peripherally

with this one-sided brotherly contest that subsumes a major part of the Tull family life, Jenny must learn to withdraw, to avoid taking sides. Thus, while certainly not alone, Jenny is clearly lonely.

Warm-hearted and eager for love, Jenny anxiously tries to please her mother, but she and her brothers all know that Pearl's moods are treacherously untrustworthy, and her temper, savage. When Pearl goes on a rampage, all of the children try to become invisible and noiseless. On one such occasion, Pearl dumps the contents of all of Jenny's bureau drawers on the floor and hurls the drawers around the room; she strips the wardrobe bare of clothes and throws the dresses on the floor in crumpled heaps. While Ezra wishes they could just go away and not come back until the rage is over, Cody realistically points out, "It won't be over till she's had her scene, . . . You know that. There's no way we can get around it" (50). Wishing their father were there, wishing they could run away, they sit numbly on the bed after getting the room straightened and wait for Pearl to call them to supper, though they have such loaded feelings in their throats, they do not want to eat. When they enter the kitchen, Pearl, without looking at them, begins a tirade that covers her dissatisfaction with their failure to do chores; their wasting time with school activities like chorus and clubs; their association with other children (all "disreputable" to Pearl); their smoking and pranks and

trampish girl friends. Of course, only Cody is actually guilty of the last crimes, a fact Jenny cannot help pointing out. This tactical error draws Pearl's attention and results in a vitriolic account of Jenny's complimenting another girl's dress, a remark which Pearl screams is a terrible betrayal on Jenny's part; an open criticism of Pearl's ability to provide for her children adequately; and Jenny's renunciation of her entire family. The long diatribe winds down with a series of searing rhetorical questions:

"What's wrong with us, I'd like to know? Aren't we good enough for my own blood daughter? Doesn't she feel I'm doing my best, my level best, to provide? Does she have to pick up riffraff? Does she have to bring home scrum? We're a family! We used to be so close! What happened to us? Why would she act so disloyal?" (52)

When Cody points out that the incident happened on Sunday and this is Wednesday, Pearl slaps him and calls him a "wretch" and an "ugly horror" (53). She yanks Jenny out of her chair by her hair and slams a bowl of peas down on Ezra's head. "'Parasites,' she told them. 'I wish you'd all die, and let me go free. I wish I'd find you dead in your beds'" (53). Exhausted, Pearl heads upstairs for bed, while the children carefully clean up the kitchen, listening to the neighborhood children laughing and playing, "their voices . . . so faint they seemed removed in time as well as space" (53).

From her ninth year, Jenny suggests to her brothers in time of crisis that they should run away, and although they convince her that they have no place to which to run, she

still longs to escape. Unable to depend upon her mother's good humor or protection, to believe in her love, or to predict what will please her or anger her, Jenny grows up emotionally thwarted, inwardly anxious, and almost devoid of self-esteem. Helplessly aware that she can never live up to her mother's expectations, she still tries; the result is that she becomes compulsively neat, single-mindedly determined to perform well in her studies; and aloof from and reserved toward her schoolmates, who in consequence, hardly speak to her. After her brothers leave home--Cody to college and Ezra to the army--Jenny has "a faint tremulous hope" that her relationship with her mother will improve, but she knows in reality that Pearl is "a dangerous person--hot breathed and full of rage and unpredictable Which of her children had not felt her stinging slap . . . ?" (70) Jenny had seen her hurl Cody down a flight of stairs. She'd seen Ezra ducking, elbows raised, warding off an attack. She herself, more than once, had been slammed against a wall, been called "'serpent,' 'cockroach,' 'hideous little sniveling guttersnipe'" (70). Jenny never feels secure, and at night she dreams her standard dream:

[H]er mother laughed a witch's shrieking laugh; dragged Jenny out of hiding as the Nazis tramped up the stairs; accused her of sins and crimes that had never crossed Jenny's mind. Her mother told her, in an informative and considerate tone of voice, that she was raising Jenny to eat her. (70)

By the time Jenny is in high school her ambition is to become a doctor, a dream that requires that she earn a scholarship; thus, when she graduates from high school, she has no friends, no sense of self, and no grade below an A. But she earns her reward; college is her way out.

Characteristically, Tyler captures just the details that make the Tull house, which Jenny flees so eagerly, realistically believable at the same time that it stands as an emblem for the family itself. Grim, dark, and cramped, the house has a smothering, closing-in effect with the odor of the previous evening's meal always pervading its small sparseness. There is "something pinched and starved about the way this house was decorated. Not a single perfume bottle or china figurine sat upon [Pearl's] bureau. No pictures hung on the walls. Even the bedside tables were completely bare" (41). In all of the house directly supervised by Pearl--the kitchen, the linen closet, the bathroom cabinet--there is perfect order. Every item in the drawers in her room is exactly "aligned, and squared precisely--the clothing organized by type and color, whites grading into pastels and then to darks; comb and brush parallel; gloves paired and folded like a row of clenched fists" (41-42). And woe be unto the child who puts comfort above order in his or her room or having fun before behaving properly in the common rooms. After Jenny goes away to college, she returns home only twice a year and either works in a small town near

college or makes excuses for the summers and other holidays. The atmosphere of the house itself dampens her spirits and strangles her good nature almost immediately when she enters it; and as her head grows stuffy and achy, she snaps at everyone, feeling imprisoned again by the narrow, tight, little house and the narrow, rigid mother who rules it and whose personality it so clearly reflects.

Forcing herself to keep her distance from her family and Baltimore, Jenny eventually finds herself able "to discard the very thought of them" and grows "brisker, busier, more hurried" (84). Soon she discovers that she cannot read Ezra's letters in one sitting, and the two occasions on which Cody visits her are not pleasant, for despite her happiness to see him and her pride in his well-dressed good looks and obvious success, she feels "muffled" by him--"everything she said carried, for him, the echo of their mother" (84). Unable to break through his wariness, she feels unjustly accused by his assumption that she is as "domineering, or reproachful, or meddlesome" (85) as Pearl. When she tries to face the situation head-on by saying, "Let's start over. I didn't intend what you think I intended" (85), it is clear he suspects the motives of her heartfelt attempt at candor and communication. After his departures, Jenny acts "gayer than usual, for a while, and had a sense of having clapped her hands to free them of some thick and clinging dust" (85). Single-minded about her studies, yet still at the center of a

popular group within the college, Jenny believes she has truly escaped, that she is free.

Near the end of her senior year, Jenny picks for her future husband Harley Baines, an acknowledged genius, who is "not outside Jenny's group so much as above it, beyond it--a group in himself" (85). She first notices him when she is accepted to the medical school at Paulham University and learns that he will be going there as well. Unconsciously anxious about the fact that her own high-spirited gang will soon be disbanded by graduation, leaving her alone and defenseless again, Jenny fixes on Harley, decides she loves him, plans a courtship which at first seems to go smoothly but then explodes at graduation time when she laughs at his first attempt to kiss her. Not hearing from him again until mid-July, she is surprised to receive a short, neat note proposing marriage based on a set of straightforward reasons: they are both going to Paulham; it will be more economical to live together; he will be glad to assume her financial responsibilities, which he senses are something of a problem for her; and he loves her. No longer really pulled by what she regards as "a school girl crush brought on by a senior panic" (90), Jenny is now attracted to the "angularity of the situation--the mighty leap into space with someone she hardly knew" (90). In her mind, marriage is supposed to be "like one of those movie-style disasters--shipwrecks or earthquakes or enemy prisons--where strangers, trapped in closed quarters

by circumstances, show their real strengths and weaknesses" (90). Worried that her life is growing narrow and that she may, after all, grow old like everyone else, Jenny answers the proposal, "All right," which she considers "the ultimate in no-nonsense communication. Even Harley couldn't find it excessive" (90).

However, before their first year together is over, Jenny realizes that she has made a mistake, and like most other Tyler regenerative women, she finds herself pulled home--back to her mother, even though she "has frightened and mistreated" (105) her all her life, as Harley accurately points out, and to her childhood home, even though it has always suffocated her. But contrary to Harley's assessment that there is no reason at all for her to go back to Baltimore, Jenny does have a compelling reason: she desperately needs "the only place where people knew exactly who she was and loved her anyhow" (103) as the setting in which to evaluate her marriage and decide what to do about it. Ironically, Jenny has married a man with many of the undesirable traits of her mother. Disapproving, dictatorial, and impossible to please, he criticizes her friends, her dress, her eating habits, her study techniques, her household organization; and his superior intelligence lends a maddening note of reason and inevitability that angers her at the same time that it makes her anxious, for Harley is not just a genius in math and genetics, but in everything. "'Nothing is

unplanned, for Harley. You can see the numbered pages leafing over inside his head. There's never a single mistake" (101). Admittedly, Jenny has been warned. Harley's letter of proposal, she realizes now, is really pretentious and pompous, not direct and streamlined; and when she visits his home before the wedding, she sees that all of the books in his room are arranged by heights and color, not alphabetically by title or by subject matter. "'[I]t's worse than Mother's bureau drawers. It's out of the frying pan into the fire!'" (102) she cries. Not only has she chosen to overlook these traits, she has also calculated to marry him for practical reasons. But now "having got what she was after, she found it was she who'd been got. . . . He was going to run her life, arrange it perfectly by height and color. He was going to sit in the passenger seat with that censorious expression on his face and dictate every turn she took, and every shift of gears" (105). However, Jenny intends to manage herself and her family, not spend the rest of her life being managed by someone else. Her real future as a pediatrician is as clear to her now as it was when she entered college. In her dreams, she plans to establish her practice "in a medium-sized city, preferably not too far from a coast," because "she liked knowing she could get out anytime" (83). Given her forethought about starting over if things don't work out with a location, Jenny cannot let a mistake of a marriage keep her enchained. Consequently, she

ends this union and determines to start over again on marriage.

Tyler does not provide details of Jenny's life during her divorce, nor her involvement, engagement, and marriage to her second husband Sam Wiley, an artist. Later, Jenny admits she loves him best of her three husbands; but he is "totally shiftless. Totally unreliable" (195) and leaves Jenny when she is eight months pregnant with their daughter Becky. Clearly, Jenny has not found her home management niche with Sam, anymore than with Harley. She continues her medical internship in a daze, single-mindedly pursuing her profession, though her self-esteem is at its lowest point:

She saw that she had always been doomed to fail, had been unlovable, had lacked some singular quality that would keep a husband. She had never known this consciously, before, but the pain she felt was eerily familiar--like a suspicion, long held, at last confirmed. (213)

Nor is Jenny immediately successful in creating and managing a family unit once Becky is born. Completing her internship with its months of night duty, thirty-six hours on call at a stretch, emergency room, and trauma surgery gives her almost no time with her daughter, and her residency is hardly better. With no attention and not much help from Jenny, Becky changes from a baby to a little girl, and Jenny wonders, "was it possible, after all, that this small stranger might constitute a family?" (213) But when Becky at two learns to say, "No!" with a flat, definite spunkiness as

Jenny tries to stay awake and attend to her in the brief time they have together, Jenny begins abusing her. She slaps Becky across the face, shakes her until her head lolls, slams her face into her plate and bloodies her nose, yanks her hair, throws water in her face. In horror, Jenny revisits her own childhood: "her mother's blows and slaps and curses, her mother's pointed fingernails digging into Jenny's arm, her mother shrieking, 'Guttersnipe! Ugly little rodent!'" (214). As Jenny wallows in her guilt, her exhaustion, her incompetence to handle it, after all, she misdiagnoses cases at the hospital, she carelessly sprains her ankle, and she continues to mistreat Becky, though she swears to herself she will not. Consequently, when Pearl calls to complain that Jenny is not writing often enough, Jenny means to say, "Leave me alone, I remember all about you. It's all come back. Write? Why should I write? You've damaged me; you've injured me" (214); instead she breaks down, "torn by dry ragged sobs" (214).

It is Pearl who now saves her. For two weeks Jenny stays in bed, giving over everything to her competent mother, who arranges for Jenny's sick leave from the hospital, takes over the care of Becky with respect and patience, cleans the house, cooks, shampoos Jenny's hair. When Pearl reads The Little House to Becky, Jenny remembers that she, too, always loved that book as a child and that her mother used to read it to her three, four, five times at a sitting. Thus, when

Becky urges Pearl to read it again, Jenny listens as closely as her daughter. Both of her brothers are also supportive. Ezra drives up on Sundays and reads the paper to her, never speaking directly about Jenny's vulnerability, a reticence for which she is grateful. "There was already too much openness in the world, she felt" (215). Cody breezes in, all energy and money, and arranges for a full-time sitter for Becky, the best Jenny will ever have. After two weeks of this care, Pearl has to return to work, and Jenny is also ready to go back, though she carries "herself as gently as a cup of liquid. She kept level and steady, careful not to spill over" (216). Acknowledging through her actions, but not through her words or thoughts, that she is not really free from her mother, Jenny turns down more lucrative offers from Philadelphia and Newark to return to Baltimore to establish her practice.

However, Jenny does acknowledge that she has changed, for she deliberately sets out to manage herself better, to protect what she thinks of as her "trembly, fluid center" (216). The people she admires and tries to emulate all have one thing in common: "they gazed at the world from a distance. There was something sheeted about them--some obliqueness that made them difficult to grasp" (217). Studying her models, Jenny recognizes that what she needs is to lose her intensity; she needs to learn "to make it through life on a slant" (217). And learn she does. When Pearl

urges her to remarry, Jenny simply lets her mother's suggestions about mingling and socializing and having more children pass by; Jenny cannot be bothered by her mother or by a romance. Indeed, she begins to feel quite "textureless, so that events just slid right off her with no friction whatsoever; and the thought of the heartfelt conversations required by a courtship filled her with impatience" (217).

Her third husband Joe, however, with "his padding, his moat, his barricade of children" (217), is different. Answering his call for a doctor in the middle of the night, Jenny learns that his wife has just deserted him and their six children. She attracts him because she is not "'a skimpy woman. . . . Not rigid. Not constricted. Not the super-serious kind'" (193). He likes the way she allows the children to climb all over her without irritation and does not get upset if everything is not tidy. He attracts her because he and the six children are all so urgently needful of her brisk competence and cheerful managerial skills and simultaneously because it is apparent that there will be no time for deep intimacy. Having promised herself that she and Becky will "manage on our own, that's what I was best at" (193), she still cannot resist the opportunity for the expanded family circle, as long as she can handle things in her own cool, blithe way, maintaining her expanded private space and avoiding real closeness. Indeed, joining her household with Joe's seems the perfect solution, for the rush

of caring for seven children and maintaining two careers produces a steady acceleration of physical needs and a constant struggle to juggle schedules; and Jenny's new determination to lead life on the slant allows her to manage this kind of pressure beautifully, especially since it is almost a guarantee that she will be beyond deep intimacy with any child or with Joe. "No conversation there--she and Joe had hardly found a moment to speak to each other seriously.

. . . She didn't even have time for thinking any more" (217). The fact is that Jenny is never alone. "Always there was someone--children, patients, colleagues," and she finds having empty space on both sides of her at the same time gives her "an echoing, weightless feeling, as if she lacked ballast and might at any moment float upward" (202).

Jenny's good humor and brisk competence win Joe's children over quickly; and in the evenings, as she surveys the group at dinner, she feels pleased, for she believes they are doing well, "even the older ones, who'd acted so wary and hostile when she first met them" (198). At the same time, a sobering thought occurs: "this would have to be a permanent arrangement. Having taken on these children, straightened their upturned lives and slowly steadily won their trust, she could not in good conscience let them down" (198). When these unsettling moments or some noisy rampage or some extraordinary pressure from the sheer magnitude of seven children, two careers, and a new marriage occurs, Jenny can

always make a joke to relieve the situation. Indeed, laughing together that "whoever's the first to mention divorce has to take the children" keeps Jenny and Joe together through many rough times. Yet, Jenny's super cool obliqueness, her cheery frictionlessness create problems as well.

While Jenny feels she has everything under control--her profession, her bulging household, and her mother's house as well, for she has taken over much of that responsibility, too--it is apparent that Joe is not as sanguine, though he does not often complain directly. However, he is quick to correct Jenny when she says that he married her because he needed her as a manager for his children, his household, and his life; even though Jenny admits that just this neediness is his attraction for her, he insists that he first admires then loves her for what he sees as her largesse toward and enjoyment of life. "'Need had nothing to do with it'" (193), he states. Charmed by her cool unflappability (he asks her if she puts cucumbers on her skin) at first, he is increasingly frustrated by their inability to have any real communication. Notwithstanding the bustle and constant demands for attention and action at home because of the numerous children, Joe wants time alone with his wife, time for real intimacy. Jenny, on the other hand, has chosen Joe in part to escape deep communion with another. Knowing that something is missing, yet unable to articulate just what he

needs, Joe advocates that he and Jenny should have more children, at least one joint child. Unsure that she should agree at thirty-six to have another baby, Jenny comments, "'Though I suppose if it means so much to him, it's all the same to me'" (200). Jenny's passivity conceals her unconscious knowledge that the sheer physical needs of a new baby thrust into their swarming house can easily be used to stave off demands for real conversation for several years.

That Jenny is unstintingly generous with herself in treating her patients is also a source of unstated but apparent hostility from Joe. Outraged by the bumps, bruises, and cuts that Jenny accumulates daily in her enthusiastic treatment of and playing with her patients, Joe makes her a varnished wooden plaque for her office: "Dr. Tull is not a toy" (200). However, just as the plaque is almost lost among the crayoned pictures and the snapshots of birthday parties and vacations, so is the sentiment lost on Jenny, who continues to invest herself fully in her squirming, rambunctious little patients. In fairness, Jenny does not give her small patients more of herself than she gives to Joe and the children at home; at the same time, she does not give her own family much more emotional depth than she gives her patients. On both fronts, Jenny is competent and fun to be with; and while she manages the physical needs of her patients and her family and balances her household and professional responsibilities quite well, she withholds from

all of them communication at the deepest emotional levels. Although staking out and maintaining one's own private space is a characteristic of most of Tyler's characters and people who respect that need for private space for others and still manage to create warmth are among those that Tyler openly admires,¹¹ Jenny's deliberate calculation to forge for herself a supersized, impregnable circle is unique among Tyler's regenerative managing women; for not only will Jenny allow no penetration from without, she also tries to prevent her own sympathetic emotional responses from escaping.

While earlier regenerative women either recognize that their mates are in many ways unknowable (or Tyler as narrator identifies for the reader at least some of the ways the couple will always be strangers), they, nevertheless, want to penetrate the mystery of the other at the same time that they are awed by it. Initially, Evie in A Slipping-Down Life sees her salvation in her ability to understand the enigma of Drum; that she is wrong in her assessment does not in any way detract from her attempts to communicate with him and know him deeply. As a teenager Charlotte in Earthly Possessions is almost struck dumb by her perception of the supreme separateness of Saul, and although the revelation of his inner self is as often as not a source of discomfort or even anguish to her, she does not consistently and deliberately shy away from that intimacy. Over and over again, Tyler's regenerative managing women also realize that their children,

too, are in the most profound sense really separate individuals. Yet that knowledge does not preclude these mothers from their feelings of passionate connection to their children or from their trying to establish communication at the deepest levels. Justine's failure in Searching for Caleb to slow down for Meg and to fulfill Meg's need for more order and security is not the result of her purposeful decision; rather, she means to satisfy Meg's emotional needs, but fails. That Gina chooses to live with her father, rather than Emily in Morgan's Passing, is not because Emily does not choose to communicate with her daughter, but because Gina is at a particular stage at which life in a luxurious townhouse with doting grandparents standing by with open checkbooks is particularly appealing, especially when the alternative is life with Morgan and his plethora of things, costumes, relatives, and poses.

Of course, no woman can strike consistently the perfect balance of brisk efficiency and warm emotional support needed to maintain all of the responsibilities the ideal regenerative managing woman assumes. The difficulties of balance are clearly exacerbated if the woman also works outside the home, and they become most difficult of all if, like Jenny, the woman's job is an absorbing one, pulling from her a greater response than merely her need for income would entail. The first of Tyler's regenerative women to pursue a career that she has chosen as a child and pursued

relentlessly, even at great cost to other important parts of her life, Jenny clearly demonstrates the enormous difficulties in balancing the demands on her time and her person of an exacting profession and an exacting home life. Certainly, Jenny cannot be faulted for preserving her own private space within which she carefully fortifies her special self, especially during a period when she still feels that this self is fluid, unstable, and subject to spills, evaporation, and spontaneous combustion. That Jenny is able to restore her equilibrium after her breakdown and pick up her life again as a beginning doctor and as a mother demonstrates that she clearly belongs within the regenerative managing woman category. Taking on the added responsibilities of a big pediatrics practice, her mother's household, her new large family all show growth and renewal. The danger is that Jenny will become fixated at cheerfulness and become, if not fully rigid, at least not fully regenerative.

The most serious and lengthy illustration of Jenny's emotional reserve and its unfortunate consequences for her family is her determined resistance to believing that anything is wrong with Slevin, Joe's oldest son, though incident after incident is a clear bid for attention or a cry for help. First, one of the priests at Slevin's school calls Joe and Jenny in for a conference because Slevin has no friends, makes poor grades, is moody and withdrawn, and

rudely refuses any help. Suggesting tactfully that the reason for Slevin's problems may be the boy's inability to adjust to the family turnovers in his life, the priest receives for his trouble only ironic accounts of the way Joe and Jenny meet, their individual problems with their previous mates and Jenny's steadfast refusal to accept that anything is wrong with Slevin. Later, Jenny receives a request for a visit from Slevin's teacher, who also proposes, even more strongly, that Slevin has emotional problems stemming from his mother's abandonment and his poor adjustment to new family circumstances, but Jenny terms the analysis nonsensical: "'What's a little adjustment? And anyhow, that happened a good six months ago. It's not as if . . . why look at my daughter! She's had to get used to seven new people and she's never said a word of complaint. Oh, we're all coping!'" (200) Soon Pearl complains that Slevin has stolen her vacuum cleaner, but Jenny laughs off this charge as impossible, though she later finds it to be true. When Pearl remarks that Slevin is asking for help, Jenny cannot resist making another joke--"More likely he's asking for a neater house, . . . The dust balls on his closet floor have started raising a family" (209)--a joke which in turn sets her off on a wild imaginary scene of Slevin "in desperation, stealing an arsenal of cleaning supplies" (209). Confronted with the deed, Slevin acknowledges that he took the cleaner, but avers he was just borrowing it because it was exactly

like his mother's, even smelled the same; yet, when he got it home, "'it didn't work out,'" he had "'lost the connection. It wasn't the same after all'" (211). Instinctively sympathetic, Jenny comforts him, "Heavens, honey, that's all right" (211); but immediately anxious that "her voice had shown too much" (211), she begins making jokes: they can get Slevin a Hoover for his birthday; they can have a toy vacuum cleaner made up in calico for him to take to bed with him. In the meantime, Slevin has turned over on his side away from her and closed his eyes. Shortly, the priest from the school visits Jenny to report that Slevin has stolen an umbrella stand made from an actual rhinoceros foot; although Jenny makes the immediate connection between the theft and Slevin's relationship with his mother, she still jokes about the situation. In desperation, the priest asks, "Dr. Tull, don't you see this is serious? We have a child in trouble here, don't you see that? Don't you think something should be done? Where do you stand, Dr. Tull?" His questions and his earnestness touch a tiny texture left unsmoothed, and Jenny acknowledges to herself that she feels "suddenly bereft, as if something were missing, as if she'd given something up. She hadn't always been like this!" (218) Nevertheless, as soon as she reveals to the priest that she believes Slevin steals items that remind him of his mother, Jenny is laughingly off again on a wild scenario in which Slevin is out stealing weird mementos from his mother's past and

bringing them home: "her photo albums and her grade-school yearbooks, her college roommate asleep on our bed and her high school boyfriends in our living room" (219).

Because Jenny does not play a major role in the last three chapters of the novel and because Tyler does not portray further incidents that reveal significant insights about Jenny's skills in communication and intimacy in the last part of the book, it is impossible to trace the way Jenny manages to balance more happily her family's need for personal, intimate attention, with her own need for space; her desire for a textureless life, free from intensity of feeling, with her family's need for emotional support and commitment. However, her instincts for caring are still sound, as her quick (though also often quickly stifled) sympathy illustrates, and her repeated ability to correct her own course, to learn from her mistakes, to start over again when renewal is called for argue compellingly that she will continuously try to provide her family with what it needs. However, equally compelling is the assurance that, although she will be regenerative, she will not be perfect.

The closing scene of the novel sees Ezra vainly hoping, as he does many times during the course of the book, to pull the entire family together and keep them together long enough to complete a meal at his Homesick Restaurant. The occasion is Pearl's funeral and, according to her previous instructions, Beck has been invited. Furthermore, he

appears; thus, after a thirty-five year absence, the Tull children see their father again. But Jenny is not particularly interested, for she claims she hardly remembers her father at all. When Beck suggests that the fourteen people at the table are like a clan or a reunion on television: "What I mean to say . . . it looks like this is one of those great big, jolly, noisy, rambling . . . why, families!" (300) Cody angrily denies the reality of any such appearance and uses the occasion to pour forth his invective against their mother's ill treatment and their father's desertion. Jenny does not join in this discussion. She does not join Cody's criticism, though she has her own fearful memories of her mother; she does not join Ezra's defense of Pearl, though she knows he is right in saying that their mother had good qualities and their growing years had good times, as well as bad ones; most important, she does not make one joking remark. Jenny knows that this family may not be the happy family of television and movies, but it certainly is a family. Despite estrangements, abuse, desertions, and additions, this group is, like all families, held together by overlapping, individual nets of heredity, environment, memory, love, need, and worry; and as Cody's rantings prove perhaps better than anything else, the family never relaxes its grip. However, Jenny's way of dealing with this knowledge is to take efficient care of those for whom she is the regenerative managing woman. Slevin is now away at

college, but she and Joe still have seven children at this table, counting their new baby girl; and while Cody furiously rehashes the past, Jenny busily handles the present--correcting manners, moving the table conversation of her children away from the morbid aspects of death, and efficiently saving the baby's life when she almost chokes to death on a mushroom button. Indeed, there seems no doubt that the answer to Jenny's rhetorical question, "Will I live to see them grown?" (303) is a resounding yes. Jenny still has lessons to learn and improvements to make, but as a regenerative managing woman she can and will endure, adapt, and start over again when she must.

While Jenny's regenerative powers and cheerful efficiency are impressive, her part in the novel is clearly secondary to that of her mother, Pearl Tull, Tyler's most fully developed characterization to date of a rigid managing woman. One of Tyler's most brilliant and most horrifying characters, Pearl sees all of her children grown up and middle-aged before she dies at the age of eighty-five. As she lies on her death bed in the first chapter of Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, Pearl's mind roams freely over her past life from the time of her courtship to her present advanced age. Her growing years, however, are only sketchily revealed, as is true of most of Tyler's rigid managing women; thus, the reader learns nothing of her childhood, only that she is orphaned and lives with her uncle and his family in

Raleigh during the years of her teens and twenties. Small, slender, fair, dainty, and well-mannered, Pearl has plenty of suitors, but she has no proposals; she cannot fathom "the magical word" that everyone else knows that sends "streams of girls, years younger than she, effortlessly tumbling into marriage" (4). When she asks her uncle's advice, he offers to send her to college or to secretarial school, but Pearl refuses, even though she knows he is worried about supporting forever his "orphaned spinster niece tying up his spare bedroom" (4), for, to her, preparing herself to work for a living will be an admission of defeat. At thirty, she meets the lean, good-looking, flamboyant Beck Tull, a man a little too young and a little too common for her, but he makes her feel reckless and dashing, bursting with possibilities; thus, she marries him and makes the first of many moves, despite her dislike of travel.

As a traveling salesman, Beck is on the road all week and every year or so there is another uprooting calculated on the possible chance for a promotion or a richer territory. For six years there are no children, and "pregnancy, now, took on the luster that marriage had once had--it was the treasure that came so easily to everyone but her" (6). When they finally have a baby, Pearl at first thinks one child is enough; but her fear of losing her first born son Cody during his serious illness leads her to want an "extra" (2); but the second son Ezra is so endearing that she feels she cannot

possibly give him up; so she adds the third child Jenny before she realizes that each child leaves her "more endangered than ever" (2). Now she has "not one loss to fear but three" (2).

It is not a happy marriage. Soon after Pearl embarks with such high spirits on this adventure, she begins to feel a "constant itch of anxiety" (7); with "her forehead always tight and puckered" (7), she studies Beck constantly. In the early days, she thinks Beck handsome, wonderful, rising; then, predictably, her perfectionist nature sees his flaws, and she begins to wonder if it is not his fault they move so often, but still do not get anywhere. She sees that he is loud, slangy, vain--a show-off, not an achiever. He neither provides an ample income, though they never really go without necessities, nor provides other kinds of support to her. There is no real understanding or intimacy between them. Beck has no sense of propriety: what to buy the children as toys, what to do to please her, how to dress, how to act in public are all beyond him. She must maintain a constant alert when he is home, for he always disrupts the routines, upsets the children, creates scenes, behaves extremely, acts the fool. And though she corrects him constantly with words and looks, he never improves. For the most part, she must manage everything alone--the day to day care of the children; the crises with the children's health, studies, and mischief; maintenance of the rented houses to which their moves take

them; dealings with the landlords and the creditors; everything. All in all, Beck is "not a person she could lean on" (7). And there is no one else. Cut off from her uncle and other relatives, Pearl is uninterested in or mistrustful of her neighbors, and she makes no friends. She tells Beck, "'This whole entire house is resting on my shoulders'" (15), and she means her remark "as an accusation" (15). Like all rigid managing women, Pearl is both a perfectionist and a persistent prompter for others to do things the right way, that is, her way. Nonetheless, despite her best efforts, Beck never seems to improve; in fact, his flaws seem to become more intense and more entrenched as he grows older.

Yet when Beck announces, after twenty years of this marriage, that he does not wish to be married any longer, that he is going to Norfolk that night and leaving her and the children in Baltimore, she is surprised and horrified. In her mind, she has been a wonderful wife; it is Beck who is flawed. She cannot understand nor allow his desertion, which will reflect so badly on her. Assessing his reaction to her calm request for a reason, Pearl notes that he looks "like a young and belligerent school boy waiting for a scolding" (7) and decides she can take charge: "'We'll sleep on it'" (8), she says. This time Pearl has guessed wrong, for he insists he is going that night; he will not explain why. Searching for another angle, she says, "'You'll want to visit the children'" (8), and her mind rushes ahead to a reconciliation

in which she greets him at the door in her Sunday dress, perhaps even wearing a little rouge. Humiliated by Beck's desertion, Pearl cannot admit such a failure, and she decides not to tell the children; in fact, she convinces herself that Beck will be back and that the children, used to their father's absences for long periods, will never notice if this trip is a little longer than usual. Nor does she tell anyone else. To her family, she writes chatty notes about her happy marriage and family life; although she aches to return to Raleigh, she holds herself rigidly aloof, reminding herself of how they had all been sure she would never find a man and vowing they will never know what has happened. When her old girl friend Emmaline stops by Baltimore to visit her, Pearl keeps up the pretense; she longs to confide in Emmaline, to tell her how "horrible" (10) she feels, but, of course, she stops herself. As a rigid managing woman, Pearl allows herself no real intimacy with anyone, and she cannot bear for anyone to think she has failed, not even herself. When she daydreams about Beck's return and his gratitude at her keeping his secret so that no one will know the mistake he has made, Pearl prides herself on her cleverness:

He would be so easily readmitted, since only the two of them knew he'd left; outsiders would go on believing the Tulls were a happy family. Which they were, in fact. Oh, they'd always been so happy! They'd depended only on each other, because of moving around so much. It had made them very close. (9)

When Pearl finally admits to herself that Beck is never coming back and that she is going to have to support the family, as well as manage it single-handedly, forever, she still cannot bring herself to tell the children. When they quit asking when he will be home, she takes their silence to "show how little importance a father has" (19). Clearly, she has fulfilled their needs so well that they have no need of Beck and, in fact, have virtually, if not absolutely, forgotten him. Months later, thinking that they might prove more manageable, rallying to her support, if they knew Beck was gone for good, she wants to tell them, but the thought that she might cry--"it was unthinkable to cry in front of the children. Or in front of anyone. Oh, she had her pride!" (13)--holds her secret fast. Still later, when she actually does try to tell them, they simply refuse to listen, continuing with their own conversations and refusing to allow her to deliver the message they have all figured out and believe she should have told them long ago. Consequently, she never tells them, and the year Cody graduates from high school, she feels "a twinge of angry joy" (19) at how well she has handled everything, managing "the transition so smoothly that not a single person guessed. It was the greatest triumph of her life. My one true accomplishment, she thought. (What a pity there was no one to whom she could boast of it.)" (19)

After a month's absence, Beck sends Pearl a note and fifty dollars. Clearly, she will not be able to manage on that little; so she dons her "rakish, visored hat that was patterned after the hats the WACs wore" (10) and walks to Sweeney Bros. Grocery and Fine Produce to apply for the cashier's job. Though she needs the money, she is humiliated by having to work. Thus, throughout her workday, "she continued to wear her hat, giving the impression she had merely dropped in and was helping out as a favor, in a pinch" (13). To the customers, she adopts a brisk efficient manner; nodding with a squint she means to represent a smile, she rings up their purchases with her own special little rhythm between punching the cash register keys and sliding the groceries to Alexander, the bag boy. Then with another "shorthand smile" (13), she finishes off with a lightly frosted "'Thank you, and good day'" (13), for "she liked to seem crisp and professional" (13). When the customers are her neighbors or others whom she knows, "she felt she was dying inside but she didn't lose her composure" (13). Instead, she becomes even brisker. She never changes her routine at work, never allows herself to become friendly with her co-workers or employers, never relaxes her reserve with even the most frequent customer. Consequently, she never enjoys her job, but always feels the same sense of shame, mistreatment, and anger at the necessity of it. Upon her return home at 5:30 each afternoon, the children greet her

with all their saved-up bad news, disasters, accidents, and squabbles:

"'Jenny fell down the stairs today . . . and had to go to Mrs. Simmons's house for ice and gauze.'" . . . "'The toilet's stopped up,'" and "'I tore my pants,'" and "'Cody hit Ezra with the orange juice pitcher.'" (14)

Mortified by having to work, fatigued by her day of stiff pretense and control, Pearl snaps, "'Can't you just let me be? . . . Can't you just give me a minute to myself?'" (14) Nevertheless, angry, self-pitying, she moves on to manage her home responsibilities.

One of Tyler's most competent managing women, Pearl is as capable as Elizabeth Abbott (The Clock Winder) with tools. From the early days of her marriage, once she had accepted how often they would be moving, "she had concentrated on making each house perfect--airtight and rustproof and waterproof. . . . All she cared about was sealing up the house, as if for a hurricane" (15). She patches walls, glazes windows, mends electrical switches, replaces stair treads, paints cupboards. "Hammering down a loose floorboard, with a bristle of nails in her mouth" (15), Pearl forgets her dissatisfactions, and time slips away. She never enjoys any time she spends away from home, not the Sunday outings nor the few vacations, for worrying about the house. Aware that her neighbors consider her unfriendly, "the witch of Calvert Street" (15), she scoffs at such nonsense; all she wants is "to get on with what mattered: calk the windows;

weatherstrip the door. With tools she was her true self, capable and strong" (15). Inside the house everything is perfectly ordered but pinched and meager. The tops of tables and bureaus are bare; no pictures hang on the walls. In Pearl's drawers are "her ironed handkerchiefs stacked so exactly that they seemed encased by an invisible square box" (47-48). Fastidiously neat and clean in her person and in her housekeeping, Pearl demands the same traits in her children. On her death bed she still takes pleasure in her management capabilities:

She soothes herself by wandering, mentally, from one end of the house to the other, cataloguing how well she'd managed. The fireplace flue was shut against the cold. The drains were clear and the faucets were tight and she had bled the radiators herself--sightless, turning her key back sharply the instant she heard the hiss of water. The gutters were swept and the roof did not leak and the refrigerator hummed in the kitchen. Everything was proceeding according to instructions. (24)

During their growing years, Pearl always cooks for her family, but her efforts are grudging, ungracious, and unimaginative. She is a classic "nonfeeder" (162), according to Cody. Rushing home from work and into the kitchen with her hat still on her head, scolding the children for not having done their chores properly, Pearl slams pans around, opens tins, and throws everything together--mashed potatoes and crushed pineapple, Spam and olive-drab peas. Burning things it seems impossible to burn, leaving other items half-raw, Pearl uses only salt and pepper for seasoning and

undiluted cream of mushroom soup for sauce. Later in life, Cody recalls that even in their childhood "when they'd depended on her for nourishment . . . why mention you were hungry and she'd suddenly act rushed and harassed, fretful, out of breath, distracted" (162). She feeds her children, but with displeasure and disdain: "She ate little herself, often toyed with her food; and she implied some criticism of those who acted hungry or over-interested in what they were served. Neediness: she disapproved of neediness in people" (163). Further, Pearl chooses dinner times for family arguments and scenes. The result for Cody is a lack of interest in food. As a grown man, a very successful businessman, he obligingly orders lunches for himself during business meetings and dinners for himself during dates, but often as not, he merely plays with the food. On his own, he eats only when a gnawing pain in his stomach insists on food, and he does not care what he eats to fill the gap. And Jenny, too, suffers lasting results. Always on a diet of lemon-water and lettuce, Jenny as a girl never allows herself a sweet and often skips meals altogether, "as if continually bearing in mind that disapproving expression of her mother's" (163). Later, Jenny learns to cook well for her large family, but her satisfaction comes from the fulfillment of her responsibility, not enjoyment of the food. Though Tyler only mentions in passing that teenage Becky has anorexia, the reader might reasonably infer that this problem of self-

starvation may be still one more consequence of Pearl's attitude toward feeding. Ezra, on the contrary, is a feeder. He eats cheerfully what other people offer, but more importantly, his greatest pleasure comes from serving wonderful food, beautifully arranged, surprisingly seasoned, and painstakingly prepared. "There was something tender, almost loving about his attitude toward people who were eating what he'd cooked them" (164). That Ezra grows up to own a restaurant seems a fitting career to everyone except his own family. Naming his place Homesick Restaurant, Ezra insists on preparing food that is good for body and soul, consoling food, food that reminds him not of the home he had and misses, but of the home he never had yet always longs for. While Doris Betts points out that the ambiguous name of the Homesick Restaurant can be taken as sick for home or sick of home in the Tull family,¹² there is also the suggestion in Ezra's choice of the name of the same kind of homesickness for the home never really experienced that colors the emotions of many of Tyler's regenerative managing women.

Continually on edge, Pearl is "an angry sort of mother" (18). Even before Beck's desertion, she feels over-burdened, too much alone. Afterwards, the tension, the worry, the responsibilities are much worse, especially since there is the constant struggle to pay the rent, juggle the budget, keep "those great, clod-footed children in new shoes" (18). Given to raging tantrums of name-calling and physical abuse,

Pearl's frenzies are unforeseeable and terrifying to her children, who only know that once she starts on one of her "rampages," there is no way to stop it until she has had her savage scene. Most of Cody's memories of his mother are violent ones. He remembers her as "a raving, shrieking, unpredictable witch" (301):

"She slammed us against the wall and called us scum and vipers, said she wished us dead, shook us till our teeth rattled, screamed in our faces. We never knew from one day to the next, was she all right? Was she not? The tiniest thing could set her off. 'I'm going to throw you through that window,' she used to tell me. 'I'll look out that window and laugh at your brains splashed all over the pavement.'" (301)

Ezra, on the other hand, protests that it was not always that way, that her angry spells were widely spaced, that there were good times when they played games and put on family melodramas. Generally, the overriding attitude of Pearl toward her children is very much like that of her attitude toward Beck: her children simply do not measure up to her own high standards; they are not perfect. Thus, there is constant nagging about chores, scoldings about flaws, suggestions for improving their minds or behaviors, complaints about everything.

Actually, Pearl shares several important characteristics with Mrs. Emerson, the rigid managing woman in The Clock Winder. Despite the obvious differences in their circumstances and their natures--Pearl must struggle without money and a husband to raise her children, while Mrs. Emerson

is quite wealthy and has her husband with her until all of her children are grown, and Pearl adds a level of violence and anger to her rigid family management that is quite foreign to Mrs. Emerson--neither woman can ever admit to her own children that they are good enough, and, at the same time, each believes her children to be very special.

Like Mrs. Emerson, Pearl sums up each child by his or her outstanding flaw: "Something was wrong with all of her children. They were so frustrating--And she sensed a kind of trademark flaw in each of their lives. Cody was prone to unreasonable rages; Jenny was so flippant; Ezra hadn't really lived up to his potential" (21). Of course, it would be impossible for Ezra to live up to her expectations. He is her favorite, as the entire family knows, which makes her aspirations for him even higher. Further, while she wants him to become a teacher and takes it for granted that he will follow her plans, he will not even go to college; instead, he pursues his own goal of running a restaurant, an occupation she would regard with contempt even if it were not contrary to her wishes. Although she loves her children, Pearl is far more likely to note their failings than their good qualities. None of them is handy with tools, and she feels "an indulgent scorn" (15) for them because they do not inherit her skill. "Cody lacked the patience, Ezra was inept, Jenny too flighty" (15). Self-righteously, Pearl thinks it remarkable "how people displayed their characters in every little thing they

undertook" (15). While Pearl lies dying, she makes up her mind that she does not want to go to the hospital and convinces the doctor to let her have her way without telling the children how seriously ill she is. Although Jenny believes her mother should be in the hospital because she is allergic to penicillin and would thus be difficult to treat at home, Ezra is not so sure; he wants his mother to be happy. In the pause that follows, Pearl thinks:

You could pluck this moment out of all time, . . . and still discover so much about her children--even about Cody, for his very absence was a characteristic, perhaps his main one. And Jenny was so brisk and breezy but . . . oh, you might say opaque, . . . And Ezra, mild Ezra: no doubt confusedly tugging at the shock of fair hair that hung over his forehead, considering and reconsidering . . . "Well," he said, "I don't know . . . Maybe if we waited a while . . ." (32)

Smilingly, Pearl relaxes, for she knows now that they will debate for hours, "echoing each other's answers, repeating and rephrasing questions, evading, retreating, arguing for argument's sake, ultimately going nowhere" (32-33). Her last words to them are: "You always were duckers and dodgers" (33).

As their mother, Pearl expects, as does Mrs. Emerson, to have a share in running her children's lives even after they are grown; indeed, Pearl does not even bother with the denials that she is interfering or the protestations that she has no expectations of having her suggestions carry special weight. At the same time, Pearl, along with Mrs. Emerson, is

conscious that her children are constantly moving away from her, despite her efforts. Neither of these rigid women is very successful in managing her children's lives nor in establishing intimate relationships with them. However, while The Clock Winder details only scattered incidents from the childhoods of the Emerson children, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant focuses a good deal of attention on the childhoods of the Tull children. Consequently, Pearl's effect on her children throughout their lives is much more visible, and her inability to alter her way of dealing with her children, even when she sees the bad effects, is also apparent. For example, though Pearl can see that Cody is eaten up by jealousy of his brother Ezra and that her open favoritism exacerbates his feelings, she cannot alter her own behavior. Pearl always takes Ezra's side, insisting that he be given a turn at a new toy or an advantage in a game, even if he does not want them. Whatever goes wrong is automatically Cody's fault in Pearl's eyes. Told frequently and often, with violent language and kicks and slaps to punctuate the message, that he is mean and vicious, Cody fulfills his reputation, inventing and executing elaborate plots (which usually backfire) to get Ezra in trouble, and suffering constantly from his jealous rage and his feelings of being unloved and mistreated. In addition to the pain that comes naturally to him as a result of Pearl's favoritism, Cody deliberately sets up situations in which he

knows he will suffer. For example, he saves his money to buy his mother a bus ticket to visit her friend Emmaline, but the time period he selects includes Ezra's birthday, and Pearl declines. When Cody tell his son Luke this story years later, Luke cannot see the viciousness that Cody feels so keenly, for the boy would not want his own mother to leave on his birthday; but Cody is certain that Pearl would have missed any other day of the year, including his birthday or Jenny's, without a thought, though he never tested the theory.

All his life, Cody believes that his girl friends find Ezra, "that sissy pale goody-goody Ezra" (133), more attractive than himself, while Ezra never shows any interest in women at all. However, Ezra is "not immune," only "waiting in his stubbornly trustful way for the proper person to arrive" (144). When Ezra does fall in love with Ruth, he succumbs completely and without reservation; and Cody immediately sets out to woo and win her, despite the fact that she is in every way different from any other woman to whom he has ever been attracted. Though Ezra is too naive and trusting to see the carefully planned campaign, Pearl is not; but she does not warn Ezra. Her failure to alert him secures the success of Cody's plan, and Cody carries off the only woman Ezra will ever love. While this plan is Cody's meanest trick on his brother, it also carries the severest backlash: the marriage lasts, but it is never happy. The

union is characterized by "a certain failure to connect" between the two partners, a "thin, tight atmosphere," "a sense of something missing" (182). Though Pearl sometimes wonders if she could have prevented this triple tragedy--been more welcoming to Ruth when Ezra brought her home or warned Ezra about Cody's campaign, which anyone but gullible Ezra would have detected in a minute, she always absolves herself--"ridiculous, of course, to imagine that anything she did could have mattered" (176)--or she blames Cody alone. And "after all, this choosing of mates was such a small brief stage in a family's history" (174).

Tyler records no conscious thought on Pearl's behalf that Ezra's marriage to Ruth will change the cozy domesticity that Pearl enjoys with her favorite son. However, Pearl clearly finds the countrified, "scrappy and hoydenish" (143) Ruth quite inferior to her Ezra and cares for her even less than she does for most outsiders. After she has spoiled Ezra's dinner party announcing his engagement by quarreling with Jenny and walking out before Ezra can even introduce Ruth, Pearl admits to Cody that she knew just what she was doing. She has already figured out the occasion before she arrives at the restaurant, but she cannot control herself when she sees confirmation in the extra plate set for "the country cook" (142):

"Well, I acted badly. Very badly. You don't have to tell me, . . . I know when I'm being

unreasonable. Sometimes I stand outside my body and just watch it all, totally separate. 'Now stop,' I say to myself, but it's like I'm . . . elated; I've got to rush on, got to keep going. 'Yes, yes, I'll stop,' I think, 'only let me say one more thing, just this one more thing . . .'" (143)

Certainly, she affirms, she wants Ezra to marry: "I truly mean that. I want somebody taking care of him, especially him" (143). Yet she is jealous, too. Not admitting her jealousy of Ezra's obvious adoration of hillbilly Ruth, she does confess her jealousy of their feeling that they are "completely special, the first, the only people ever to feel the way they're feeling" and their belief that "they'll live happily ever after, that . . . those ordinary, worn-down, flattened-in arrangements . . . are nothing like what they'll have" (143-144). In fact, these attitudes make her mad, and she selfishly wants to ask them, "'Who do you think you are anyhow? Do you imagine you're unique? Do you really suppose I was always this difficult old woman?'" (144) When Cody successfully wins Ruth, Pearl tells Ezra, as she has on so many other occasions, "'He's just doing it to be mean, sweetheart'" (173), and she is as right now as ever. But in the past Ezra has always nodded hopefully, wanting to believe that his beloved big brother is just playing a joke; now Ezra replies, "What does it matter why he did it? He did it, that's all" (173). Pearl sees that he is "bleak faced, grim, a walking ache of a man" (173), and she grieves for him. Indeed, she tries to persuade Ezra to retrieve Ruth even

after she has already married Cody, but Ezra will not cooperate with her subterfuge to throw him together with Ruth or with implied suggestions that he go after Ruth and bring her back. The result, of course, is that Pearl lives the rest of her life with Ezra, her most beloved child and the only one of the children who will "let her in" (175).

Not only do Pearl's children resist her efforts to run their lives, Cody and Jenny also move away from her influence physically and emotionally as soon as they can. Once Cody leaves home for college, he rarely returns, and when he does come back to Baltimore, he makes a point of knocking on the door so that Pearl will understand clearly that this house is not home to him, a habit she tries to counteract by watching out the window for him and beating him onto the porch when she knows he is coming for a visit. After Cody enters the business world, he never spends another night in Pearl's house; he calls infrequently and visits even more infrequently except during his courtship of Ruth. The marriage creates even more distance, since Cody can hardly bear for Ruth and Ezra to speak to one another. Nor is Pearl ever invited to visit Cody and Ruth. When their son Luke is born, Cody ignores Pearl's offers to help, even though Ruth has no other family. Eventually, Pearl meets her grandson after he is already a walking, talking toddler because she invites herself to visit, and Cody reluctantly agrees. Altogether, Pearl thinks Cody acts more like an acquaintance

than a son and "a not very cordial acquaintance" (183), at that.

Jenny, too, deliberately weans herself from home and Pearl when she goes away to college. Getting a job near school, she allows herself only two visits to Baltimore a year, until she enters medical school. Then, although she refuses to confide in her mother, let alone ask her advice, she begins coming home on weekends to remove herself from her unhappy marriage in order to decide what to do. Nevertheless, her trips home are often marked by quarrels and dissention, and on those occasions in which she does ask Pearl's advice, such as the selection of her wedding dress for her second marriage, the clash of angry differences, undergirded by their past history, spoils the day. While Jenny does not ask for Pearl's help, she recognizes that Pearl saves her sanity when the pressure of her internship and her new child become unmanageable for her. Moving to Baltimore to set up her practice does not mean, however, that Pearl and Jenny become close. On the contrary, Jenny has developed an even larger private space, protected by an even stronger shield of brisk competency and flippant good humor, than she had before. Rather than sharing herself with Pearl, or even needing Pearl, Jenny takes over much of the management of Pearl's household.

To Pearl, the family is not only important, it is everything, and she wants the circle tightly closed because

only in this way can she control it. When the children are young, she encourages them verbally to invite their friends to their home. However, they know she is not sincere, for she criticizes every child with whom they associate once she knows about the friendship. Though Cody often brings his friends into the house while Pearl is at work and even perversely takes them through Pearl's bureau drawers, he never lets Pearl know; indeed, he tells her he does not need outside friends, a remark which always brings a pleased look to her face. "I guess your family's enough for you, isn't it?" she would ask. "Aren't we lucky to have each other?"

(47) Praise of another child or the child's family or possessions can throw Pearl into one of her rages, for she regards compliments to outsiders as not only disloyal to the Tull family, but also as a criticism of her own family management. Holding herself aloof from her neighbors and the community, Pearl expects the same behavior from her children. While it is important to Pearl for the family to stay together, it is clear that it is important for Cody and Jenny to get away. Cody bats Pearl away from infancy, and Jenny is always evasive. "All my life," Pearl says, "people have been trying to shut me out. Even my children. Especially my children. If I so much as ask that girl [Jenny] how she's been, she shies away like I'd inquired into the deepest, darkest part of her" (127). Yet the truth is that Pearl does not know how to express her own affection under ordinary

circumstances, although after she no longer has the full burden of management for the family, she relaxes a good deal and expresses much more openly her love for her grandchildren than she has done for her own children. And, for all her complaints that others are standoffish, Pearl herself is incapable of real intimacy. When one of her children is in need, Pearl is there. When Jenny suffers a breakdown, Pearl drops everything to care for her daughter; when Cody suffers an on-the-job accident, he will not allow her to visit, but she calls daily. But when Ezra confides in her, implicitly begging for help, she can neither accept his trust nor offer counsel. Ezra reveals:

"I'm worried I don't know how to get in touch with people, . . .

I'm worried if I come too close, they'll say I'm overstepping. They'll say I'm pushy, or . . . emotional, you know. But if I back off they might think I don't care. I really, honestly believe I missed some rule that everyone else takes for granted; I must have been absent from school that day. There's this narrow little dividing line I somehow never located." (127)

"'Nonsense; I don't know what you're talking about" (127) says Pearl, unable to help, unwilling to admit that she cannot.

Reflecting on her life as a mother, Pearl is astonished to think of how much of herself is invested in her children and how short a period in the whole context of her life they were with her--except for Ezra. And despite her protestations to the others, it is Ezra she loves best.

Often Pearl reflects that "Ezra was all she had. . . . Sometimes, in his childhood, she had worried that he would die young--one of life's ironic twists, to take what you value most" (175). But other times when he was still a little boy who climbed into her lap, "she would drink in his smell of warm biscuits and think, 'Really, this is what it's all about. This is what I'm alive for'" (175). Once Cody steals Ruth, it is clear that Ezra will stay with his mother until the end of her life. Trying courageously to make the concept of family a reality for the Tulls, Ezra stages ritualistic dinners at the Homesick Restaurant for engagements, weddings, Thanksgiving, promotions, and other special family occasions, hoping through these carefully planned, beautifully prepared and served meals with special wines and epicurean flourishes to create the family feeling which Pearl fantasizes about, but never provides. Yet every meal ends in a quarrel or a walk-out before it is complete. Sometimes the group does not even get seated before someone flares up and walks out, leaving the soup cooling in the bowls; but once, they make it right up to dessert before someone storms out. As often as not, Pearl is the cause of the trouble. She still finds mealtimes good times for starting family quarrels, especially since she often does not like the surprise or the event the meal honors. She is horrified when Ezra plans a dinner at which he ceremoniously presents Mrs. Scarlatti, the glamorous woman owner of the

restaurant at which he has been working for several years, one dollar to pay for his full partnership in the business. Since Pearl has planned for him to go to college and become a teacher, this new turn of events is clearly against her wishes. Beyond that, what will people say about his accepting such a gift from a woman, an older woman at that? "It's a favor; partnerships don't cost a dollar; you'll be beholden all your life. Ezra, we Tulls depend on ourselves, only on each other. We don't look to the rest of the world for any help whatsoever. How could you lend yourself to this?" (95) When Cody, for once, takes Ezra's side, Pearl almost pounces on him, accusing him of enjoying seeing Ezra ruin his life and the family "break up, dissolve in the outside world" (96), before she marches out the door. When Cody announces triumphantly that he has been hired to reorganize the Tanner Company, the firm their father, Beck Tull, had worked for (might still be working for)--a firm Cody considers "tacky," "nickel-and-dime," "a trash heap," Pearl takes personal offense and asks, before leaving her unfinished meal: "'Cody, why must you act toward me in this manner? . . . Have I ever wronged you knowingly? Ever done you harm?'" (94) On another occasion, a quarrel with Jenny gives Pearl still another opening to march dramatically from the room; however, knowing that Ezra's introduction of Ruth as his fiance is the surprise they are celebrating that

evening certainly gives wings to her feet. When Cody's jealousy of Ruth, once she is his wife, moves him to act as his mother often does, leaving the table, pulling Ruth outside and away from the restaurant, Pearl asks:

"Why does it always turn out this way? How come we end up quarreling? Don't we all love each other? Everything else aside, . . . don't we all want the best for each other?" (181)

Ezra's strong affirmative answer is comforting, but the truth is that the family never finishes a meal together. Cody wonders if Ezra ever notices that the family as a whole never finishes his dinners. He wonders why Ezra goes on trying. More to the point, he wonders why the others continue to come? "In fact, they probably saw more of each other than happy families did. It was almost as if what they couldn't get right, they had to keep returning to. (So if they ever did finish a dinner, would they rise and say goodbye forever after?)" (157) Actually, all of the Tulls have taken from Pearl her perseverance, her tenacity, her ability to endure. Pearl is not willing to change, but she is willing, indeed determined, to keep on trying, especially with her family. Although she does not make the connection for herself and her own family whom she has not seen for decades, she blames catastrophes that befall her children on their losing contact with her: "Oh, this was what happened when you broke off all ties with your family! It wasn't right; with your family, if with no one else, you have to keep on trying" (178). Much

later, Pearl believes that her family has failed. Both sons are unhappy; her daughter cannot stay married. Uncomfortably, she thinks she has to accept the blame since she "raised these children single-handed and did make mistakes, oh, a bushel of mistakes" (189). But almost as quickly as self-blame arrives, so does her rationalization. Probably it is "simply fate, and not a matter for blame at all. She feels everything has been assigned, has been preordained . . . " (189) She never planned or "intended to foster one of those good son/bad son arrangements, but what can you do when one son is consistently good and the other consistently bad?" (189) To Cody's life-long question, "Don't you see?" about some real or imagined slight on her part or infringement on Ezra's, she can only answer, "Honey, I just can't understand you" (190), and late in life her physical blindness replicates her lack of emotional insight. Thus, though Pearl, at her life's end, realizes that her own family is not a happy one, she cannot really see her own flaws. It is the Tull fate, not Pearl's failure, that is responsible; so she proudly continues her same pattern: "Others might have given up . . . , but never Pearl" (190). Still, when she observes other families, she covets their happiness. What is the secret of their closeness? Are they more religious; are they stricter or laxer; do they participate in sports, books, hobbies together? And when she overhears a neighbor discussing plans for a family Fourth of

July picnic in which every family member from the oldest to the baby has a special honored part to play, "Pearl felt such a wave of longing that her knees went weak" (189).

Though Pearl's life is a difficult one, full of disappointment and compromise in many ways, she never buckles, never collapses; she manages--coping with the difficult, enduring the painful. She does not change. Her anguished contemplations of her own mistakes are quickly covered by rationalizations about destiny, or outside circumstances, or the unreasonable amount of responsibility she has had to carry; and she again comforts herself with her strength and her ability to cope. She is a strong-willed, self-sufficient woman. On one occasion she leaves her broken arm untreated for a day and a half until Beck returns from a business trip and can stay with the children while she goes to the doctor because she does not want to ask anyone outside her family for help. For years before her death she is totally blind, but she never admits her handicap and carries out her duties without sight. While Pearl can handle tools, budgets, time, physical necessities handily and without assistance, she cannot handle the duties of the heart with the skill and sensitivity needed to insure her family's happiness. As a perfectionist, Pearl finds neither husband nor children good enough to suit her; even the favorite Ezra annoys her with his ineptness and his passivity. Consequently, she treats them all with an anxious

watchfulness, always expecting mistakes and scorning them when they predictably follow. Unable to express affection, Pearl shows her concern through nagging, worrying, and talking about family closeness without actually accomplishing anything of the kind. Her worst flaw, however, the quality that keeps Pearl from being an overall positive, rather than negative, influence, is her unchangeability. When she takes stock, even if she recognizes mistakes, she makes excuses, not corrections. She digs in; she does not change. Cody need not have worried or anticipated the time that the family under Pearl's direction would finally "get it right," finishing a meal at the Homesick Restaurant and freed at last of the tenacious grip of heredity, environment, and their pearl of a mother; Pearl will always do it over, but she will always do it the same way. This inflexible resolution is the foundation of Pearl's strength, her family's problems, and the novel's dark tone.

Most reviewers and critics, in judging Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant as Tyler's finest work, point to her particularly skillful use of point of view as one of the novel's chief excellencies. In this book, each chapter, "rounded like a short story,"¹³ in John Updike's terms, reflects a different family member's consciousness. Using this narrative technique, Tyler demonstrates more fully than ever before the peculiar subjectivity of the past. Tyler's structuring of events is also freer in this novel. Avoiding

the strict patterning of present, past, present, past that drew criticism for Earthly Possessions, she also veers away from the clearcut forward movement through time (with the past revealed through flashbacks and memory and associations), a technique she combined quite successfully with separate points of view for each chapter in The Clock Winder, Celestial Navigation, and Morgan's Passing. Instead, Tyler plunges into each chapter at the point that makes the most impact, regardless of whether it appears at first to maintain the forward thrust of the narrative. The result is that she reveals more clearly than ever that neither an individual's nor a family's past is so much a continuum as a layered sheaf of vivid memories. But whether it is Pearl's consciousness or another's which carries an individual chapter, it is Pearl's special brand of rigid management that shapes the life of the major characters and the tone of this novel.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

With nine novels published to date, American novelist Anne Tyler adds, through her work, a special contemporary second to Jo March's joyful affirmation at the end of Little Women--"I do think that families are the most beautiful things in all the world"¹--for the family is clearly the framework upon which Tyler builds her fictional world. However, without diminishing this institution's importance or beauty, Tyler's interpretations and endorsement of the family are filtered through her own realistic and ironic viewpoint, and she sees clearly into and writes engagingly about the paradoxical nature of families, whose protective circles can defend human frailties, nurture human growth, support human needs for affection and intimacy and, at the same time, effect what John Updike calls "intimate cruelties,"² stifling individual progress, curbing independence, and alienating its members from one another and from the community at large. Tyler acknowledges that she writes about families because she finds them "convenient ways of studying how people adapt and endure."³ It also seems that Tyler writes about families for reasons she holds in common with her fellow novelist Mary Gordon's self-assessment:⁴ she hears daily rhythms more than

the music of the spheres, and she values discovering the nature of human happiness more than the nature of the universe.

The family is clearly the microcosm of society for Tyler, and within its circles, power is exercised by those who take things into their own hands. In Tyler's novels, those hands almost always belong to women. The result, as discussed in Chapters II through VI of this paper, is a diverse and engaging collection of strong, competent managing women. Their management styles range from benevolent to dictatorial with a good deal of variety from one individual to the next; however, as the Introduction to this paper postulates and Chapters II through VI prove, a basic dividing line can be drawn between two principal types: the regenerative managing women and the rigid managing women. Every Tyler novel features a regenerative managing woman. Indeed, regenerative women, as manifested in Chapters II, III, IV, and VI, are the epitome of those whom Tyler describes as heroes: they endure, they adapt, they grant others their own private space, and they go on loving no matter what.⁵ In addition, they all have the ability to renew themselves, to start over again when life, others, or their own mistakes cause misfortunes or failures. Thus, regenerative managing women are nourishers of those whom they guide and direct. Whether their hands are light or heavy on the reins of control, their aim is to manage their families

and their households so that they provide for physical needs, protect a degree of personal privacy, insure individual growth, offer warm affection, and cope with adversity and special circumstances. Generally good communicators, regenerative managing women usually listen to their children and their husbands with attention, and they usually are able to express their own love with words and with overt acts. Though they suffer setbacks and wrongs, and they make mistakes--small ones; silly ones; sometimes daily ones, for a while; sometimes very big, painful, damaging ones--regenerative women are capable of admitting their errors, picking themselves up, and starting again. They do not break; they do not dig in and refuse to let go or to change, once it is clear that their present courses are unproductive. Not all of Tyler's regenerative women have developed their regenerative managerial skills to the fullest degree by the time their novels end; but their warmth, their courage, their strength, their competency, their flexibility make it clear that these women can handle their own lives and the lives of their families in ways that have a primarily positive effect on everyone involved.

Because Tyler is a serious writer, her portrayals are far from formulaic; each regenerative woman is astonishingly alive and surprisingly individual at the same time that, like other regenerative women, she follows certain patterns in adolescence; she sets her sights on managing her own family

as her major goal in life; and she has the basic personal characteristics outlined above. Thus, all regenerative managing women have major difficulties with their original families and suffer at some point in their lives from a sense of alienation and an unhappiness so strong that they literally run away from home or at least definitely and premeditatedly escape their families. Further, most regenerative managing women take three important journeys during the course of their lives: they leave home questing for the kind of family to which they want to devote their lives; they return to their original homes regressively looking for solace or safekeeping; and they leave those homes again convinced that their original homes are not really their homes anymore and ready to start again. As described in Chapter II, Tyler's first four novels focus attention on regenerative managing women during these early phases of their lives, detailing their childhood and teenage problems and their three journeys. These novels end at the points or soon after the points that the regenerative women, still in their twenties or even their teen years, have made fresh starts. In Tyler's last five novels, as discussed in Chapters III, IV, and VI, the regenerative managing women are in their thirties or forties when the novels open, and without losing any of the importance of their developmental years and their three journeys, these longer novels also attend to a more complex development of the characters

through their longer life spans and richer memory banks. Consequently, the later novels illustrate the regenerative women's enduring and adapting abilities in much more detail than do the early books, and the later novels usually portray more than one new start for each regenerative woman, thus lending additional heft to the nascent dimensions of each character.

The Clock Winder, covered in Chapter II, is clearly a transitional work for Tyler. Longer than her earlier books, this novel includes a larger and more diverse range of characters and covers an extended time span; thus, this fourth novel points the way to the even more skillfully written and more sharply penetrating novels to follow. It remains to be seen whether Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, Tyler's ninth novel, discussed in Chapter VI, is also a transitional work. While it follows the same treatment of its regenerative managing woman as that of Tyler's fifth though eighth novels, discussed in Chapters III and IV, every critic has noted its dark tone; most, whether favorable or unfavorable in their overall assessments, have judged this novel to be gloomier and more pessimistic than any previous Tyler work. Although none has attempted to explain in depth the reasons for Tyler's unusually somber mood in this book, one important reason is described in Chapter VI. In Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, Tyler, for the first time, makes a rigid managing woman--Pearl Tull--the central character,

while the regenerative managing woman, Pearl's daughter Jenny, takes a secondary role; and despite her progress, Jenny has not yet overcome some of the damage her mother inflicted on her as a child. Consequently, rather than the regenerative managing woman and her heroic qualities setting the course of action and the tone of the novel, the most fully developed of all of Tyler's rigid women is in charge.

Tyler's rigid managing women, as demonstrated in Chapter V and VI, are not devoid of good qualities. Indeed, rigid women may be even stronger, even more efficient than regenerative managing women in meeting their families' physical needs. They may grant even more individual privacy for their children, and they may give them even more room to become independent. Certainly, they can endure hardship. Nevertheless, even if they receive high marks on these points, there are two important managerial qualities that rigid women do not have: they cannot communicate their affection for their families in ways that make the family members feel securely loved, and they cannot change. Once rigid women have set their philosophies, their characters, their courses of action in place, they do not alter, even though they may recognize that they have made mistakes or that they are wrong. However, such recognition is rare, indeed, and always fleeting; for the most part, rigid managing women never see their own flaws, but blame someone else or fate when people or events go wrong. Rigid managing

women do not break or give up, but, lacking flexibility, they adapt only when forced to do so by circumstances beyond their control (the desertion or death of a husband, for example, though they may deny the former for years) and, while they may mellow with age, they are never really able to change and start over. Therefore, while they may be adequate or even good providers of physical needs, they are not nourishing influences on their families as a whole. Far from being unmitigatedly evil, rigid managing women are, nevertheless, among the small group of villainous characters in Tyler's work.⁶ Although Tyler's novels give a good deal of time and attention to the contributing factors in the development of regenerative managing women, there is almost no background information about why rigid managing women grow into such intractable personalities. Even when the rigid woman is the central character, as Pearl Tull is in Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, Tyler notes her childhood and youth in broadstroke hints, rather than developing memories and scenes, as she does for regenerative women.

Tyler's novels bear out Nina Auerback's assertion that the family is the first community we know and "it takes shape of Mother."⁷ All but three of Tyler's managing women, rigid and regenerative, are mothers, and one of those three is pregnant at the book's end. Additionally, mothering skills are a part of most managing women's portfolios of abilities. However, Tyler devotes more attention overall to the effect

of their mothers on her regenerative managing women than to the ways the regenerative managing women handle their own jobs as mothers. Only Justine Peck's major blunder with her daughter Meg in Searching for Caleb, a failing from which Justine picks herself up with great difficulty for another new start, and Jenny Tull's ineffectiveness with her stepson Slevin and her abuse of her toddler daughter in Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, both failings tied to her own past with her rigid mother Pearl, are important events in their respective novels. In general, while it is significant that regenerative women have children, their skills are usually described rather than enacted. Because the individual children of regenerative managing women are seldom fully developed characters in the novels, the effects of their regenerative mothers upon them are rarely depicted. On the other hand, the effects of rigid managing women on their children is usually a major, though negative, thread in their stories. Overall, for Tyler, the shaping influence of Mother patterns every major family except in A Slipping-Down Life, which features the vaguely connected Evie and her father in an inchoate relationship clearly blurred by the mother's death. In contrast, fathers are often absent by their death or desertion; and whether they are physically present or not, if Tyler describes the relationship (with the debatable exception of Justin Peck in Searching for Caleb), the mother shapes the family. Even in the Peck family, in which the

patriarch may have laid down the parameters, Laura, the mother, trained the children and ran first her own household and eventually her son's as well.

Judith Kegan Gardiner avers in a 1981 article: "The most disturbing villain in recent woman's fiction is not the selfish or oppressive male but instead the bad mother."⁸ This statement has been true for Anne Tyler since she published her first novel in 1963, though none of Tyler's mothers are absolutely despicable. Like Eudora Welty, whom Tyler identifies as her strongest influence and earliest inspiration,⁹ Tyler presents no clear villains in her work.¹⁰ She does not write about the vilely vicious, unredeemably evil; instead, no matter how weak, confused, blundering, or cruel a character may be, she is always forgiveable. When her brother asks Jenny Tull (Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant) to name the most common complaint she hears in her pediatric practice, Jenny answers without a pause, "Mother-itis."¹¹ It is her own chief complaint against life, as well, since her mother Pearl is the worst woman to date in Tyler's fiction.

If the family is shaped by the mother, it, nevertheless, begins with a marriage,¹² or as Jessie Bernard¹³ has it, with two marriages--his and hers. Although Tyler may not always give equal attention to his marriage in relationships involving her managing women, she does give recognition to the fact that the husband has his own perspective, sometimes

one even more reasonable than his wife's. While Carolyn Heilbrun¹⁴ can wonder, in a typically feminist way, how anyone can expect much of an institution whose success depends on a woman's failure at autonomy, such sentiments are hardly part of Tyler's fiction. Instead, her work illustrates Patricia Spacks' point that "marriage can be, and usually is, a particularly useful way of fulfilling the fundamental human need to discover and assert one's value."¹⁵ Thus, Tyler's managing women choose marriage and the resulting family circle as their primary goal in life and as their primary sphere of interest and influence. That two managing women never marry, two are deserted by their husbands and do not marry again, and two have left their husbands and face life with children but no husband at the end of their novels does not reflect on their goals and choices, merely on their successes and failures.¹⁶ Patricia Spacks¹⁷ claims that Jane Austen's heroines grow into instead of diminishing into marriage; one can say of Tyler's regenerative managing women that they grow through marriage, even in the relatively infertile soil of marriages with such men as Drumstrings Casey in A Slipping-Down Life and Guy Tell in Celestial Navigation. With the exception, of course, of the unmarried Joan (The Tin Can Tree), regenerative managing women gain not only the chance to develop their characters, which Ellen Glasgow¹⁸ wittily proclaims in Romance of a Plain Man to be the most a woman can expect from love, they also

gain the opportunity to develop a full range of managerial skills. For Tyler's managing women, both regenerative and rigid, are always the stronger of the two in the marriage couple and the mainstays of their families. Though even the most substantial and the most self-contained of Tyler's managing women make it clear from time to time that they would like to lean on their men more, rather than carrying the full responsibilities for their families themselves, the truth is that it is primarily the women's power that holds the family circle together and the women's strength that supports the men. This combination of female strength and male dependency sometimes leads to problems; Tyler's novels mirror psychological studies demonstrating that within a marriage the hostility between the husband and wife is often due to unwanted or overly burdensome dependency.¹⁹ Even though Tyler is a novelist of the family and, in general, upholds family ties, her regenerative managing women do not stay with husbands with whom they cannot find satisfaction; rather, when their situations, from their perspectives, clearly block them or their children from happy, fulfilling lives, they leave and start again.²⁰ Though rigid managing women may be deserted, they, of course, do not leave their husbands, despite the fact that not one of them is happily married.²¹

Anne Tyler's first nine novels take a good solid look at what most lives are really all about; indeed, it is the

essence of her art that her novels "deal in the most immediate and intimate ways with the ordinary business of getting on with life."²² Yet at the same time, each Tyler novel reveals as a matter of course hidden beauty, eccentricities, pathos, irony, fervor, humor, sensitivities, and magic. As a result, more than one reviewer has noted that Tyler's view of common life is skewed;²³ however, she herself explains her choice of subject matter and her ability to see the unique within the ordinary as her unbreakable custom of seeing life through a "mist of irony,"²⁴ a genuine delight in "beautiful everyday life,"²⁵ and a passionate interest in the ways "people can maneuver and grow within the small space that is the average life."²⁶ Tyler credits Eudora Welty's work for opening her eyes to the fact that mundane life is a proper subject for serious literature,²⁷ and like Welty she believes small things and people are often more important than large ones.²⁸ As Welty comments about good writing in general, Tyler "lets us believe--doesn't ask us to, can't make us, simply lets us."²⁹ In language that rarely calls attention to itself or strikes a false note³⁰ and in a style thickened with the details of daily life and reverberating with associations and memories, Tyler writes about ordinary life in the family with all of its extraordinary features. For Tyler's fiction, the prevailing question is not so much "what happens next?" as "why?"--a characteristic that focuses attention sharply on character.

It also lends itself to her own stated view of her work: "I think of my work as a whole. And really what it seems to me I'm doing is populating a town. Pretty soon it's going to be just full of lots of people I've made up."³¹ Among the strongest, most competent, and most numerous in Tyler's fictional town are her managing women, regenerative and rigid, who choose the family circle as the setting for exercising their managerial skills; and among the select group of heroes, one in each novel to date, are her regenerative managing women with their expansive abilities to endure, adapt, leave space, love, and begin again.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹If Morning Ever Comes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964); The Tin Can Tree (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); A Slipping-Down Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); The Clock Winder (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972); Celestial Navigation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Searching for Caleb (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976); and Earthly Possessions (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).

²William Abrahams, ed., Prize Stories 1969: The O. Henry Awards (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969) 121-30; William Abrahams, ed., Prize Stories 1972: The O. Henry Awards (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972), 116-26; Bill Anderson, ed., The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses (New York: Pushcart Book Press, 1976), 11-18; and Martha Foley, ed., The Best American Short Stories: And Yearbook of the American Story (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 317-37.

³Mabel C. Simmons, "Turning Over a New Leaf," New Orleans Times-Picayune 20 March 1977, sec. 3: 8.

⁴Morgan's Passing (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); and Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

⁵Stella Ann Nesanovich, "The Individual in the Family: A Critical Introduction to the Novels of Anne Tyler" diss. The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1979.

⁶Doris Betts, "The Fiction of Anne Tyler," The Southern Quarterly 21 (Summer 1983): 23-27.

⁷Frank Shelton, "The Necessary Balance: Distance and Sympathy in the Novels of Anne Tyler," The Southern Review 20 (Autumn 1984): 851-60.

⁸Anne Tyler, Searching for Caleb (1975; New York: Fawcett Popular Library, 1977) 12.

⁹Nesanovich, 209.

¹⁰ Anne Tyler, Earthly Possessions (1977; New York: Popular Library, 1978) 222.

¹¹ Patricia Beer, Readers, I Married Him: A Study of the Women Characters of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974) 126, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 85.

¹² Nina Auerbach, Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 8.

¹³ Evie Decker Casey, A Slipping-Down Life, and Mary Darcy Tell, Celestial Navigation.

¹⁴ Joanne Hawkes, If Morning Ever Comes; Elizabeth Abbott Emerson, The Clock Winder; Emily Meredith, Morgan's Passing; and Jenny Tull in Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant.

¹⁵ Justine Peck, Searching for Caleb, and Charlotte Ames Emory, Earthly Possessions.

¹⁶ Joan Pike, The Tin Can Tree.

¹⁷ Joanne Hawkes, If Morning Ever Comes; Joan Pike, The Tin Can Tree; Elizabeth Abbott, The Clock Winder; Justine Peck, Searching for Caleb; and Charlotte Emory, Earthly Possessions.

¹⁸ Evie Decker, A Slipping-Down Life; Mary Tell, Celestial Navigation; Emily Meredith, Morgan's Passing; Jenny Tull, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant.

¹⁹ Patricia Spacks, The Female Imagination (1972; New York: Discus Books, 1976) 146.

²⁰ Spacks, 191.

²¹ Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 7.

²² Chodorow, 109.

²³ Chodorow, 109ff.

²⁴ Chodorow, 140.

²⁵ Chodorow, 168ff.

²⁶Adrienne Rich, Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution (1973; New York: Bantam, 1977) 232.

²⁷Rich, 245-46.

²⁸Elizabeth Abel, "[E]Merging Identities: The Dynamics of Female Friendship in Contemporary Fiction by Women," Signs 6 (Spring, 1981): 427.

²⁹Betty Friedan, The Second Stage (New York: Summit Books, 1981) 113.

³⁰Judith Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan, "Ambivalence: The Socialization of Women," Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness, eds. Vivian Gornik and Barbara K. Moran (New York: New American Library, 1971) 236.

³¹Joan Pike, The Tin Can Tree; Evie Decker, A Slipping-Down Life; Mary Darcy, Celestial Navigation; Justine Peck, Searching for Caleb; Charlotte Ames, Earthly Possessions; Emily Meredith, Morgan's Passing.

³²Anne Tyler, Celestial Navigation (1974; New York: Popular Library, 1980) 75.

³³Shelton.

³⁴Tyler, Celestial Navigation, 125.

³⁵Vivian Gornick, "Toward a Definition of the Female Sensibility," Essays in Feminism (New York: Harper and Row, 1978) 127.

³⁶Anne Tyler, Earthly Possessions (1977; New York: Popular Library, 1978) 72.

³⁷Cited in Nesanovich, xii-xiii.

³⁸Tyler, Earthly Possessions, 72.

³⁹Tyler, Searching for Caleb, 179.

⁴⁰Gayle Kimball, "Women's Culture: Themes and Images," Women's Culture: The Women's Renaissance of the Seventies, ed. Gayle Kimball (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1981) 2.

⁴¹Jonathan Yardley, "Women Write the Best Books and Men Are Losing Their Grip on Literature," The Washington Post 16 May 1983: B1.

⁴²Yardley, B1 and B11.

⁴³Friedan, The Second Stage.

⁴⁴Erica Jong, "Blood and Guts: The Tricky Problem of Being a Woman Writer in the Late Twentieth Century," The Writer on Her Work, ed. Janet Sternberg (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980) 179.

⁴⁵J. D. Reed, "Postfeminism: Playing for Keeps," Time 121 (10 January 1983): 60.

⁴⁶Jong, 179.

⁴⁷Friedan, 102.

⁴⁸Cited in Reed, 61.

⁴⁹Anne Tyler, "Still Just Writing," The Writer on Her Work, ed. Janet Sternberg (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980) 3-16.

⁵⁰Tyler, "Still Just Writing," 13.

⁵¹Tyler, "Still Just Writing," 14.

⁵²Tyler, "Still Just Writing," 14.

⁵³Tillie Olsen, Silences (New York: Dell, 1978) 57.

⁵⁴Bardwick, 237.

⁵⁵Tyler, "Still Just Writing," 9.

⁵⁶Ann Swidler, "Love and Adulthood in American Culture," Themes of Work and Love in American Adulthood, eds. Neil J. Smelser and Erik H. Erikson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980) 127.

⁵⁷Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Marriage and Contemporary Fiction," Critical Inquiry 5 (Winter 1978): 309.

⁵⁸Alan Friedman, The Turn of the Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁵⁹Amanda Lohrey, "The Liberated Heroine: New Variety or Defeat?" Meanjin 38 (Spring 1979): 297.

CHAPTER II

¹Anne Tyler, If Morning Ever Comes (1964; New York: Berkley Books, 1983) 19. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

²Clifford A. Ridley, "Anne Tyler: A Sense of Reticence Balanced by 'Oh, Well, Why Not?'" The National Observer, 11 (22 July 1972): 23.

³Anne Tyler, "Gregory Hemingway Remembers Papa," rev. of Papa: A Personal Memoir, by Gregory Hemingway, The National Observer 15 (5 June 1976): 21.

⁴Anne Tyler, The Tin Can Tree (1965; New York: Berkley Books, 1983) 23. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁵Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8:05 to 3:30," The New York Times Book Review 82 (8 May 1977): 43.

⁶Anne Tyler, A Slipping-Down Life (1970; New York: Berkley Books, 1983): 45. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁷Anthony Brandt, "Self-Confrontations," Psychology Today, (October 1980): 96 ff.

⁸Ridley, 23.

⁹Ridley, 23.

¹⁰Anne Tyler, The Clock Winder (1972; New York: Berkley Books, 1983) 55. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

¹¹Doris Betts, "The Fiction of Anne Tyler," The Southern Quarterly 21 (Summer 1983): 29.

¹²Frank Shelton, "The Necessary Balance: Distance and Sympathy in the Novels of Anne Tyler," The Southern Review 20 (Autumn 1984): 854.

¹³Stella Ann Nesanovich, "The Individual in the Family: A Critical Introduction to the Novels of Anne Tyler," diss.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1979, n. 2, p. 240.

¹⁴Rev. of The Clock Winder, by Anne Tyler, Virginia Quarterly 48 (August 1972): cxx.

¹⁵Ridley, 23.

CHAPTER III

¹Judith Kegan Gardiner, "On Female Identity and Writing by Women," Critical Inquiry 8 (Winter, 1981): 349.

²Gardiner, 354.

³Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," Woman, Culture, and Society, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974): 44.

⁴Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 169.

⁵Judith Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan, "Ambivalence: The Socialization of Women," in Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness, eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: New American Library, 1971): 232.

⁶Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Marriage and Contemporary Fiction," Critical Inquiry 5 (Winter, 1978): 314.

⁷Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8:05 to 3:30," The New York Times Book Review 82 (8 May 1977): 43.

⁸Anne Tyler, Celestial Navigation (1974; New York: Popular Library, 1980) 248. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁹Anne Tyler, "Because I Want More Than One Life," The Washington Post 15 August 1976: G1.

¹⁰Anne Tyler, Searching for Caleb (1975; New York: Fawcett Popular Library, 1977) 70. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

¹¹Lynn Sharon Schwartz, Rev. of Searching for Caleb, by Anne Tyler, Saturday Review 3 (6 March 1976): 28.

¹²Heilbrun, 314.

¹³Schwartz, 28.

CHAPTER IV

¹Anne Tyler, Earthly Possessions (1977; New York: Popular Library, 1978) 41. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

²Anne Tyler, "Still Just Writing," The Writer and Her Work, ed. Janet Sternberg (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980) 11-15.

³Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 38.

⁴Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8:05 to 3:30," The New York Times Book Review 82 (8 May 1977): 43.

⁵Chodorow, 177.

⁶For the most part, none of Tyler's regenerative managing women find either strength or solace in religion; in fact, Tyler makes specific critical points about the ill effects of religion on the lives of three regenerative women--Elizabeth Abbott (The Clock Winder); Mary Tell (Celestial Navigation); and Charlotte Emory (Earthly Possessions).

⁷Michaels, 43.

⁸Anne Tyler, Morgan's Passing (1980; New York: Playboy Paperbacks, 1981) 129. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁹Thomas Disch, rev. of Morgan's Passing, by Anne Tyler, The Washington Post Book World 16 March 1980: 5.

¹⁰James Wolcott, "Some Fun," rev. of Morgan's Passing, New York Review of Books 27 (3 April 1980): 34.

¹¹John Updike, "Imagining Things," rev. of Morgan's Passing, by Anne Tyler, The New Yorker 56 (23 June 1980): 98.

⁵Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8:05 to 3:30," The New York Times Book Review 82 (8 May 1977): 43.

⁶Weak people who cannot maintain their family responsibilities, such as Caroline Peck Mayhew; and men who are unloving and rigid, such as Justin Peck (both characters are from Searching for Caleb); and anyone who lets her or his family down or interferes too strenuously in another person's life would also qualify, though there are no really evil people in Tyler's work.

⁷Nina Auerbach, Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 35.

⁸Judith Kegan Gardiner, "On Female Identity and Writing by Women," Critical Inquiry 8 (Winter 1981): 356.

⁹Bruce Cook, "New Faces in Faulkner Country," Saturday Review 3 (4 September 1976): 40.

¹⁰Ruth M. Vande Kieft, Eudora Welty (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962) 173.

¹¹Anne Tyler, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant (1982; New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1983) 282.

¹²Though Mary Tell and Jeremy Pauling in Celestial Navigation never legally marry, they live together as man and wife for ten years and so must be considered married for purposes of this discussion.

¹³Jessie Bernard, "The Paradox of the Happy Marriage," Women in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness, eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: American Library, 1971) 145.

¹⁴Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Marriage and Contemporary Fiction," Critical Inquiry 5 (Winter 1978): 309.

¹⁵Patricia Spacks, The Female Imagination (1972; New York: Discus Books, 1976) 150.

¹⁶Joan Pike (The Tin Can Tree) and Amanda Pauling (Celestial Navigation) never marry. Ellen Hawkes (If Morning Ever Comes) and Pearl Tull (Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant) are deserted. Evie Decker (A Slipping-Down Life) and Mary Tell (Celestial Navigation) have left their husbands.

¹⁷Spacks, 170.

CHAPTER V

¹Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8:05 to 3:30," The New York Times Book Review 82 (8 May 1977): 43.

²Clifford Ridley, "Anne Tyler: A Sense of Reticence Balanced by 'Oh, Well, Why Not?'" The National Observer 11 (22 July 1972): 23.

³Anne Tyler, If Morning Ever Comes (1964; New York: Berkeley Books, 1983) 146. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁴Anne Tyler, The Clock Winder (1972; New York: Berkley Books, 1983) 1. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁵Anne Tyler, Celestial Navigation (1974; New York: Fawcett Popular Library, 1980) 35. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁶Anne Tyler, Searching for Caleb (1975; New York: Fawcett Popular Library, 1977) 55. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

⁷Michaels, 43.

⁸Ridley, 23.

CHAPTER VI

¹Joe Brown, "Backstage," The Washington Post 31 October 1983: C7. Actor Hume Cronyn and playwright Susan Cooper, who wrote the play Foxfire in which Hume starred on Broadway, are writing the screenplay which will be produced by Liz McCann and Nelle Nugent.

²See Cynthia King, Rev. of Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, by Anne Tyler, Detroit News 18 April 1982: F2; Frank Shelton, "The Necessary Balance," The Southern Review 20 (October 1984): 858; and John Updike, "On such a Beautiful Green Little Planet," The New Yorker 58 (5 April 1982): 195-196 for representative samples.

³Ann Evory and Linda Metzger, "Anne Tyler," Contemporary Authors, II, new rev. ser. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1984) 512.

⁴Shelton, 858.

⁵Andrea Barnet, Rev. of Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant, by Anne Tyler, Saturday Review (9 March 1982): 62.

⁶Updike, 195.

⁷Updike, 196.

⁸Anne Tyler, Morgan's Passing (1980; New York: Playboy Paperbacks, 1981) 333.

⁹Anne Tyler, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant (1982; New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1983) 66. All subsequent quotations will be cited in the text by page numbers only.

¹⁰Six of the nine regenerative women are only children: Joan (The Tin Can Tree); Evie (A Slipping-Down Life); Mary (Celestial Navigation); Justine (Searching for Caleb); Charlotte (Earthly Possessions); and Emily (Morgan's Passing).

¹¹Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8:05 to 3:30," The New York Times Book Review 82 (8 May 1977): 43.

¹²Doris Betts, "The Fiction of Anne Tyler," The Southern Quarterly 21 (Summer 1983): 35.

¹³Updike, 196.

CHAPTER VII

¹Louisa Mae Alcott, Little Women (1869; New York: Gossett and Dunlap, 1947) 539.

²John Updike, "On Such a Beautiful Green Little Planet," The New Yorker (5 April 1982): 196.

³Stella Ann Nesanovich, "The Individual in the Family: A Critical Introduction to the Novels of Anne Tyler," diss. The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1979, 79.

⁴Mary Gordon, "The Parable of the Cave or: In Praise of Watercolors," The Writer on Her Work, ed. Janet Sternberg (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980) 32.

⁵Marguerite Michaels, "Anne Tyler, Writer 8:05 to 3:30," The New York Times Book Review 82 (8 May 1977): 43.

⁶Weak people who cannot maintain their family responsibilities, such as Caroline Peck Mayhew; and men who are unloving and rigid, such as Justin Peck (both characters are from Searching for Caleb); and anyone who lets her or his family down or interferes too strenuously in another person's life would also qualify, though there are no really evil people in Tyler's work.

⁷Nina Auerbach, Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 35.

⁸Judith Kegan Gardiner, "On Female Identity and Writing by Women," Critical Inquiry 8 (Winter 1981): 356.

⁹Bruce Cook, "New Faces in Faulkner Country," Saturday Review 3 (4 September 1976): 40.

¹⁰Ruth M. Vande Kieft, Eudora Welty (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962) 173.

¹¹Anne Tyler, Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant (1982; New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1983) 282.

¹²Though Mary Tell and Jeremy Pauling in Celestial Navigation never legally marry, they live together as man and wife for ten years and so must be considered married for purposes of this discussion.

¹³Jessie Bernard, "The Paradox of the Happy Marriage," Women in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness, eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: American Library, 1971) 145.

¹⁴Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Marriage and Contemporary Fiction," Critical Inquiry 5 (Winter 1978): 309.

¹⁵Patricia Spacks, The Female Imagination (1972; New York: Discus Books, 1976) 150.

¹⁶Joan Pike (The Tin Can Tree) and Amanda Pauling (Celestial Navigation) never marry. Ellen Hawkes (If Morning Ever Comes) and Pearl Tull (Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant) are deserted. Evie Decker (A Slipping-Down Life) and Mary Tell (Celestial Navigation) have left their husbands.

¹⁷Spacks, 170.

¹⁸Cited in Alfred Appel, Jr., A Season of Dreams: The Fiction of Eudora Welty (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965) xiv.

¹⁹Betty Friedan, The Second Stage (New York: Summit Books, 1981) 127.

²⁰See Chapters II, III, IV and VI of this paper.

²¹See Chapters V and VI of this paper.

²²Jonathan Yardley, "Writing About Our Real Lives," The Washington Post 7 February 1983: C6.

²³See David Kubal, "Fiction Chronicle," rev. of Morgan's Passing, by Anne Tyler, The Hudson Review 33 (Winter 1980-81): 440; and Yardley, C6.

²⁴Anne Tyler, "Still Just Writing," The Writer on Her Work, ed. Janet Sternberg (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980) 12.

²⁵John Updike, "Loosened Roots," The New Yorker 53 (6 June 1977): 130.

²⁶Nesnovich, 79.

²⁷Cook, 40.

²⁸Michaels, 43.

²⁹Eudora Welty, "Words into Fiction," First Person Singular: Writers on Their Craft, ed. Joyce Carol Oates (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1983) 62.

³⁰Jonathan Yardley, "Adventure of the Heart," The Washington Post 21 March 1984: B15.

³¹Michaels, 13.

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