THE MOTIF OF THE FAIRY-TALE PRINCESS
IN THE NOVELS OF SHELBY HEARON

THESIS

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Shelby Hearon's eight novels--Armadillo in the Grass, The Second Dune, Hannah's House, Now and Another Time, A Prince of a Fellow, Painted Dresses, Afternoon of a Faun, and Group Therapy--are unified by the theme of the fairy-tale princess and her quest to assert her autonomy and gain self-fulfillment while struggling with marriage, family, and the mother-daughter relationship. This study traces the development of Hearon's feminist convictions in each of her novels by focusing on the changing quests of her heroines. This analysis of Hearon's novels attests to their lasting literary significance.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE QUEST OF THE FAIRY-TALE PRINCESS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armadillo in the Grass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Second Dune</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah's House</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now and Another Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Prince of a Fellow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painted Dresses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon of a Faun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Therapy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CONCLUSION: THE CHANGING QUEST</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armadillo in the Grass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Second Dune</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painted Dresses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Therapy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIBLIOGRAPHY | 131 |
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Shelby Hearon once remarked in an interview that "all fiction is autobiographical,"¹ an idea which is certainly reflected in her novels. She writes of that with which she is familiar, of Kentucky and Texas and glimpses of New York, of spoonbread and armadillos, of love and divorce, of being a woman. Her lifelong obsession with determinism, or what she calls her "protest against pre-destination,"² is also the major thematic concern of her novels. Through her remarkable portrayals of the human spirit, Hearon explores women's futile attempts toward self-definition through the traditional role of the fairy-tale princess.

She was born Evelyn Shelby Reed on January 18, 1931, to Charles and Evelyn Shelby Reed of Marion, Kentucky. As the first of four daughters, she became the third bearer of a family name originating with ancestor Issac Shelby--Kentucky's first governor. While Shelby was still in high school, her father, a geologist, changed jobs and moved the family to Texas. After graduating from the University of Texas at Austin in 1953, she married Robert J. Hearon, Jr., a lawyer. The Hearons made their home in the scenic Austin hill country with their children Anne Shelby and Robert
Reed. In 1977, they were divorced. Hearon remarried in 1981; she and her husband, philosopher Bill Lucas, presently live in Westchester County, New York.

Following the appearance of her first novel in 1968, Hearon became a free-lance writer, publishing articles and one novella in such magazines as Redbook, McCall's, The Writer, Publishers Weekly, and Texas Monthly, where she also served as contributing editor. Since then, she has written few short pieces but has concentrated on her successful career as a novelist. Her eight novels and her co-authored nonfictional work, Barbara Jordan, A Self Portrait, have won her recognition in several leading journals, including Newsweek, The New Yorker, and the New York Times. For her outstanding literary achievements, Hearon has received numerous awards: the Texas Institute of Letters Jesse Jones award for fiction in 1973 and 1978, a Guggenheim fellowship for fiction in 1982, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for creative writing in 1983, and recently the NEA/PEN short story prize.

Her first novel, Armadillo in the Grass (1968), is set in the Texas Hill Country near Austin and tells the story of Clara Blue, a frustrated housewife and mother of two who seeks self-fulfillment through sculpting. Armadillo is a very brief work, some 150 pages in length. Though the novel has many of the flaws found in first novels, the
London Observer comments that "it does have honesty and readability to recommend it."

In 1973, Hearon published The Second Dune, a novel primarily concerned with marriage and divorce and a young woman's experience with both. In the novel, Hearon pays close attention to the development of her characters, especially to that of her protagonist, whose thoughts and demeanor are quite complex. For The Second Dune, Hearon won her first Texas Institute of Letters Jesse Jones award for fiction.

Her third novel, and one of her most popular, Hannah's House (1974), is, as the subtitle reads, "a novel of mothers and daughters." Hearon explores the relationship a woman has with her mother and that which she has with her daughter, those "quiet familial paradoxes," as one critic notes. Like Hearon's previous novels, Hannah's House focuses on identity--who we are as contrasted with who others wish we were.

Hearon addresses the subject of inherited dreams in Now and Another Time (1976). Set in Texas, the novel follows two families over a forty-year period and traces the passage of the first generation's desires and ambitions to the third. The characters are victims of a deterministic world in which their "decisions" are simply reactions to past events. Although the book was her most ambitious,
it did not receive the critical attention her previous works had. The story becomes tedious because of its many extraneous details and often exhausts the treatment of determinism.

A Prince of a Fellow, published in 1978, is a very deftly written novel described by Newsweek as "bittersweet . . . a fairy tale of sorts." It was well-received and earned Hearon her second Texas Institute of Letters award. Set in a fictitious town in the South Texas Hill Country, it focuses primarily on a young woman who is searching for a way which will provide her an escape from her past and a means to establish her identity. The New Yorker correctly observes that "the book is less important for its plot than for the thorough portrait of a woman" that emerges.

Her sixth novel, Painted Dresses (1981), centers on the lives of two individuals: Nell Woodard and Nicholas Clark. It was favorably reviewed in several publications, including the New York Times and a review-interview in the Dallas Morning News. The book discusses the characters' rebellion against the patterned existence in which they find themselves entrapped and the circuitous life journey each takes to find the other.

Afternoon of a Faun (1983) is another work in which Hearon follows the lives of two of her characters--a young
man and woman who are painfully confronted with the topic of adoption. Laura Furman notes that it is a "droll intellectual drama of modern family life, a stripped-down Dickensian romp complete with well-meaning obfuscating adoptive parents, cases of mistaken identity, warped fates, incestuous expectations, and a search for missing fathers." The novel lacks, however, the harmonious development present in Painted Dresses since it often abruptly shifts from one of the characters to the other.

Her most recent work, Group Therapy (1984), is certainly her best written. Although the thematic concern—that of the individual asserting himself in society—is basically the same as in her previous novels, Hearon nevertheless approaches it in a fresher way. The story is about a woman in her early thirties who decides to leave her home in Texas for a teaching position in New York. There, she is able to shape an identity apart from the one her family has tried to force upon her. The New York Times notes that "Shelby Hearon's eighth novel is intelligent, witty, and tightly written."8

Most essayists and reviewers agree that Hearon has emerged as a significant American novelist, one who has both consistently addressed pertinent social concerns and grown in artistic maturity. Their criticism focuses on her regionalism, style, and preoccupation with personal identity and the feminine consciousness.
She is frequently praised as a regional writer, primarily because of her "'enormous sense of place,' an equally powerful flow of time (domestic or geologic), and a vividness of physical perception—the way food tastes, the way skin feels, the way a garden smells." This "place," however, is not limited to the Lone Star State. Afternoon of a Faun takes place in Kentucky and Colorado. Although the setting of the other novels is Texas—usually Austin—it often shifts to another state: Kentucky in A Prince of a Fellow; Kentucky, California, and New Mexico in Painted Dresses; and Georgia and New York in Group Therapy. Hearon uses her accurate descriptions of raccoons, possums, and armadillos, of fingerling dry limestone for fossils, of watching the Easter Eve fires in the Hill Country, of the hardwoods on the Eastern Coast as vehicles for communicating the complex and deeply rooted reflections of her characters. She demonstrates her acute awareness of the experience of southern women in such a way as to make it of universal concern. Her heroines—Clara, Ellen, Beverly, Julia, Avery, Nell, Jeanetta, and Lutie—represent all women. A few critics focus too intently on the "sense of place" in her novels and thereby overlook the unchanging social truths which make her works so relevant. Valerie Miner of the New York Times, for example, reads Group Therapy strictly as a regional novel, one in which the
story's suspense is Lutie's decision of whether or not she is "indelibly Southern" or "seduced by the North." Yet there are others who give a more accurate assessment of her works. In a review of Now and Another Time, Larry McMurtry notes, "it would be slightly inaccurate to say that these particular Texas families are what interest the author most." Carol Marshall observes that Hearon's Hannah's House is one of many works by Texas women which "illustrate a fictional progression that parallels the growing consciousness of women in the twentieth century."

The meticulousness and brevity so characteristic of Hearon's style are frequently praised by the critics. One remarks that her style is "poetic." The Washington Post describes Hannah's House as "a spare and elegant novel" in which "Mrs. Hearon's rare wit and steely control make it very satisfying." Larry McMurtry notes that "she is a disciple of Thackeray -- delicate, natural, and graceful when she is describing or reflecting," and that "it is through dialogue or scene that she gives us a sense of her characters, their dilemmas, and their lives." In a review of Painted Dresses, Laura Cunningham, a New York Times critic, notes that it is Hearon's "love of frills and detail that makes this double life story . . . into such a fancy collage." Where one critic has labeled Hearon as "awkward when writing scenes," another has
complimented her skillfulness, remarking that "every scene is painted in color." Her vivid, succinctly written descriptions of everyday detail lend strength and credibility to the poignant message behind them.

Hearon's novels are frequently tagged "women's fiction," implying an absence of both universal appeal and relevance. A critic in the London Observer remarks that Armadillo in the Grass is "regrettably classifiable as a woman's novel." However, a closer study of her works would prove the contrary. Although one of her primary thematic concerns is how a woman seeks and acquires individuality, her works are in no way like those non-literary fictions written by women solely for women. Mary Brinkenhoff of the Dallas Morning News observes that she "doesn't throw together those prefabricated 'women's novels'--those literary hovels ripe for razing. When she builds a book, it's planned for human habitation." As her career has progressed, she has become increasingly more aware of the male experience; Now and Another Time, Painted Dresses, and Afternoon of a Faun each traces the lives of a man and a woman. One's sex is an important factor in Hearon's novels, for she notes that "you have to know how they [characters] see themselves as female or male, how they see other people and the interaction between male and female, because I think our first concept of ourselves is or should be as
that sex. You come to consciousness as male or female."'21 Although she considers herself a radical feminist, she adds that "I'm not sure the radical feminists would think of me as a radical feminist," for "they say I'm not a writer, which means a tract writer, . . . but that's not what I'm doing."'22 Her women characters are often criticized for not having advanced toward greater equality, yet Hearon defends them by noting that one must "allow for a starting point and obstacles along the way."'23 The value she places on individualism alone attests to her affirmation of feminism and, more broadly, humanism.

What is of greatest concern to Hearon is how one arrives at that separate consciousness, whether female or male. The greatest barrier between the individual and self-fulfillment is family. The central character is generally a woman who seeks to establish an identity solely her own, one separate and distinct from her husband's and family's. Prevalent throughout Hearon's novels is the mother-daughter relationship, which often represents the clash between Southern tradition, emphasizing the importance of one's heritage, and modern ideals, which highlight the individual's self-worth. The character is faced with either living her mother's unfulfilled dreams or repeating her mistakes. The closeness between the two is frequently so great that she experiences, at times, a loss of self, a
sensation that her present actions are blending with ones in another's past. Hearon's concern for the individual terrified of the possibility of having to submit to the past and, in turn, to pattern the future is shared by many of her American contemporaries. Critic Tony Tanner best describes this social proclivity toward self-absorption as an abiding dream in American literature that an unpatterned, unconditioned life is possible, in which your movements and stillnesses, choices and repudiations are all your own; and that there is also an abiding American dread that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous.24

Her characters will often sacrifice various ethics, morals, and standards of conduct associated with that family group in order to prevent becoming caught in such a limited existence.

Intertwined with the mother-daughter relationship is the motif of the individual as a fairy-tale figure. Hearon illumines the character's struggle to escape the fairy-tale-princess syndrome, which portrays women as helpless individuals waiting to be rescued from a predetermined life by vital men. The character lives in a fantastic world where nothing is what it appears and no one is as he seems. A confused identity is often the focus of interest. In the storybook, the young woman is not the dirty, ordinary step-daughter after all but the princess of the kingdom;
similarly, the woman in Hearon's novels prefers to see herself not as her mother's daughter but as a special, self-shaped individual who will live happily ever after. Acknowledging that nothing is as it seems--that a predetermined life is something from which one can escape--provides Hearon's protagonist with an alternative more attractive than accepting the burden of a traditional role. However, she soon realizes that life is not the fairy tale it appears to be; she discovers that she makes a poor princess and the man in her life, an inefficacious prince. By exploding the fairy-tale view of life in her novels, Hearon states that it is possible to transcend determinism and attain individuality by one's own strength and perseverance rather than by depending on another's, especially an imaginary prince's.

This study will examine the futile attempts made by the fairy-tale princess to assert her autonomy and gain self-fulfillment while struggling with marriage, family, and the mother-daughter relationship in Armadillo in the Grass, The Second Dune, Hannah's House, Now and Another Time, A Prince of a Fellow, Painted Dresses, Afternoon of a Faun, and Group Therapy. Chapter II will discuss the manner in which the woman's role as a fairy-tale princess distorts her self-perception and thus prevents her from becoming the self-fulfilled person she longs to be.
The final chapter will trace the development of Hearon's feminist convictions from *Armadillo in the Grass* and *The Second Dune* to *Painted Dresses* and *Group Therapy* by examining the artistry and the universal appeal of her novels. This analysis of the major thematic concern of Shelby Hearon's novels attests to their social relevance and lasting literary significance.
NOTES


9Brinkerhoff, p. 1.

10Miner, p. 18.


13McMurtry, p. 2.


15McMurtry, p. 2.

17 McMurtry, p. 2.

18 Cunningham, p. 15.

19 Observer, p. 25.

20 Brinkerhoff, p. 1.

21 Patrick Bennett, Talking with Texas Writers (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1980), p. 120.

22 Bennett, p. 132.

23 Brinkerhoff, p. 1.

CHAPTER II

THE QUEST OF THE FAIRY-TALE PRINCESS

Armadillo in the Grass

Armadillo in the Grass is Hearon's first examination of a woman's ambivalent attitude toward fairy-tale-princess ideals as a means of attaining self-fulfillment. The novel's central character eventually discovers herself to be a self-determined individual.

The story centers on Clara Blue, a middle-aged housewife with two young sons, who is frustrated with the clash between her view of life and her husband Anslow's. She notes that "yesterday was typical of this difference between us. When Anslow came home, loping across the yard with the new book in his hands, I was on my hands and knees talking down a tunnel to the retreating back of an armadillo." It is because of this difference that she increasingly feels the need to be appreciated as an individual whose opinions and interests are important. Upon the suggestion of her husband, Clara resumes an old college hobby--sculpting--in order to better pass her time. Her renewed interest becomes a subject of irony. Anslow wants Clara to see her artistic endeavors as he does his book: as a way of translating one's thoughts into a form which can be shared and
which, consequently, makes life in general more meaningful; however, Clara begins to view her sculpting, and eventually her teacher, Locke, as a way of affirming her individuality and attaining self-fulfillment.

Clara is dissatisfied with her present situation, for she fears that others neither see her nor accept her for who she truly is. Family--her husband and her parents--is the primary obstacle to her quest for self-expression and identity. Anslow does not understand why she focuses so intently on the present and wants to change her view of life so that her feet rest in the past and her eyes look to the future as his do. Yet Clara knows this can never be, that "he does not understand that it is enough for me to sit in the damp grass in the dark nights through the speeding years because I know who I am when I sit there: I am Clara Blue who hates the raccoon and loves the possum" (p. 6). She tries to make him see "the world in pictures" (p. 4) and tells him "that galaxies are moving away from each other, and animals are mutating, and Texas is becoming a desert, all right under your nose, and you can't see it unless someone reports it to you in print" (p. 36). She wants him as well as her sons to understand what her mother already realizes, that "the star burns, the red bird calls without your eyes and ears" (p. 36). By concentrating on the present, Clara can gain self-knowledge and form her own
identity. In their bedroom one morning, she undresses and poses like the bronze statue of a pregnant girl holding her middle which stands in Locke's study and tries to explain to Anslow why she sees herself as that figure. Yet, because he does not see her as she really is, he becomes disgusted; "God, the way you see yourself" (p. 37). Such responses smother her self-expression and frustrate her attempt to establish her identity.

Clara's experience is very much like her mother's. Clara describes her as a quiet, reflective person whose true character is never seen by her husband, or by anyone for that matter. The image she has of her parents is of them in their garden, her father working and calling it his "solar system, because he has something always blooming, something always dying" and her mother "a stillness in the center of the garden meditating in long-practiced oriental style" (p. 12). She paints the portrait of two people who see the world in entirely different ways, her mother living very much in the present while her father concentrates on his study of biochemistry and the way it relates to past and future times. This difference, coupled with her father's unwillingness to see his wife clearly, results in a very unsatisfying life for her mother, whose favorite quotation is one of Elinor Wylie's:

I was being human, born alone.
I am being woman, hard beset.
I live by squeezing from a stone
The little nourishment I get. (p. 80)

Her parents' marriage terrifies Clara, for she views it as the predetermined pattern she and Anslow are doomed to follow. In an effort to avoid repeating her mother's past, she readily pursues sculpting as a means of expressing her thoughts and of exerting her own will, something her mother did not do. Her mother's death is the turning point in Clara's dilemma which results in a twofold effect: it increases her dread of becoming her mother, and it intensifies her tendency to become a fairy-tale princess.

Clara begins to reflect upon her mother's life and the type of person she was. Her memory of her mother's poetic concern for the present, to "be in the world as if you were a stranger or traveller; when evening comes expect not the morning; when morning comes expect not the evening" (p. 76), makes the tragedy of her passing all the more poignant. Clara recalls her mother's advice to become the raccoon she is sculpting, to remember "you are the rabbit in the grass; he is also the grass" (p. 18). Her death is very much a part of the present moment; Clara sees her mother, allegorically speaking, as "the rabbit in the grass." The rabbit represents both the physical death of her mother, as Anslow tells Clara of her mother's death as she is sitting in the grass with her children watching a rabbit, and the "living death" of her mother, of the
disregard of others toward her uniqueness and her acute awareness of the present. Clara's realization of her death is intense, and she becomes more determined not to allow her mother's and her own awareness of the present moment to die. Her mother will always be a part of the present, will be the rabbit eating in the back yard, will sit "forever in the chair in the center of the galaxies of smells that is the garden," will be the "prickly Saint Augustine" grass growing under Clara's crying eyes as she lies face down in the yard (p. 78).

After her intense experience with her mother's death, Clara stops toying with the idea of the fairy-tale princess and actually becomes one. She immerses herself in the memories of her childhood, "the faded watercolors of being eight years old" (p. 79). She dreams of the times she played in the creek and of her visits to her grandparents. This return to childhood is a step toward the fairy-tale-princess role, for it represents a time of innocence and inexperience when one turns to another for identity and guidance. Clara no longer wants to be an adult woman responsible for her life and feels that she is not adept at single-handedly fighting determinism for her identity.

As she swings at Travis Park, she remembers another time she became a fairy-tale princess when she was "in the
middle of a crisis between getting into and out of school" and having trouble "accepting the difference between a bird laid out on the lab table . . . and a bird as he dived under the trees" (p. 58). It was then that she began sculpting, a start toward knowing "what being alive meant" (p. 59). Yet that year she met Anslow and soon discovered that it was much easier to rely on someone else to determine one's own identity and view of life. Clara uses the language of the fairy tale to describe this period in her life as a young woman; she remembers herself as a "girl" who lived in the midst of enchanted surroundings. She thinks back to the time ten years ago when she met Anslow there in the park and remembers "a small girl that was me wrapped in a huge coat down to her ankles on the edge of a lily-pad pond waiting for a tall boy. Black goldfish swam beneath the dark water . . . " (p. 58). That tall boy was Anslow, Prince Charming, "who knew where the world had been and where it was headed" (p. 59) and who could whisk her away from her problems. Upon returning to school from a trip to his family's home, she remembers driving past gas flares which "looked like fireflies in the dark" and notes that "Anslow built castles in the air for us, floated promises on the moat of our future" (p. 62). However, her marriage to Anslow has become dissatisfying; she realizes that he has neither removed the barriers surrounding her identity nor provided her with an identity.
Although becoming a fairy-tale princess did not help her to reach her objective of self-definition the first time, she nevertheless tries it again. She sees her art teacher, Locke Smith, as a new candidate for the role of prince and admits "this May I have waked in the nights with Locke's name before me. Waked to lie in bed feeling very much like a girl" (p. 69). Becoming a girl again is her way of rejecting womanhood in favor of the girlish role of the fairy-tale princess. However, she never actually acts on this inclination until her mother's sudden death.

A month after her mother's funeral, Clara returns to Locke's studio for lessons. It is then that she very consciously attempts to capture the girlish innocence characteristic of the fairy-tale princess. She notes, "Before I got in the car this morning I put on my new delphinium-blue dress. . . . My hair is washed and tied with a blue ribbon. Wearing a fresh pink mouth I am admitting how much I want to look like a girl" (p. 84). She simultaneously plans to tell Locke that she loves him and that she must stop coming to his studio for lessons. This ambivalence marks the awakening of her feminine autonomy, the realization that a woman possesses the ability of self-direction. She is not the princess she wants to be, for she is neither young nor innocent. She is a married woman with two sons who tells another man she loves him. Furthermore, what princess
pursues the prince? Both have already decided that the lessons must come to an end, that her "dependence" on Locke is too great and that her pursuit of self-expression--artistic as well as psychological--can be better accomplished alone. She therefore sheds the role of the fairy-tale princess and finally decides to combat determinism--to resist repeating her mother's past--by undertaking the arduous task of shaping her own identity.

First, her rebellion against her family's attitudes ceases to be private. When her father comes for a visit after the funeral, Clara finally explodes after spending an entire evening with him and Anslow absorbed in discussing "scientific fact" and "historical guesswork" (p. 102). She cries, "Did you ever see Mother?" (p. 105). But the discouraged Clara knows too well what the answer will be. She says, "I know I don't know any better than you do what she was like. It's just that I want everybody to see her so she won't just slip away like a rock in the water after the ripples are gone and you can't even tell where it was" (p. 106).

No longer clinging to the imaginary strengths of a "prince," Clara directly confronts her increasing dread of repeating her mother's past; she becomes interested in finding if anyone knew who her mother really was, and thus if anyone will know her. Consequently, she takes her
mother's old letters her father brings her and begins sifting through them in order to "catch a glimpse of Mother through her friends" (p. 114). Yet after reading several, Clara concludes "she is not anywhere in the letters" (p. 116).

She continues to ponder over what action she can take to reconcile herself to her mother's life and to make and preserve her own. Her second sculpture, that of an armadillo, is her first deliberate attempt toward self-expression. Unlike the wood rabbit which represented her mother and the life she could possibly inherit, the stone armadillo represents Clara's own character, high in resistance and slow to shape but lovely (p. 110).

Yet is is through her friend Louise that Clara realizes the commonness of her dilemma. There are other mothers who are not seen clearly and other daughters who struggle with the role of the fairy-tale princess. Such is the case with Louise and her daughters, Daphne and Diana, two girls she describes as looking like Snow White and Rose Red. During the party, Clara observes Louise trying to console, to communicate with one of her daughters who was crying but who "was years away from her mother in a private teen-age world" (p. 113). She remembers Louise's saying "you never see your parents, you only remember your reaction to them" (p. 113). Clara sees a defeated mother in Louise, a
misunderstood woman, and wonders, "If your husband idealizes you at a moment in your past, and your children are too lost in themselves to know you are there, who is there to see you?" (p. 113). It was Prince Charming for Clara, as it will probably one day be for Daphne and Diana.

Because she wants others to see her as she truly is, Clara invites her sons to watch her with her friend the raccoon, thinking "they might like to see me once, playing a ribbon game" (p. 117). Her sons respond in entirely different ways to the raccoon. Arch becomes more preoccupied with thoughts of caging the animal for show-and-tell and taking pictures of it than he is with simply watching and enjoying it. He argues, "There's no point in just seeing it if you're not going to tell somebody about it; if you're not going to tell the guys--" (p. 119). On the other hand, Cal plays with the raccoon and whispers "I love you" to the furry creature. The scene encapsulates the larger clash between Clara's view of the world and Anslow's. Arch decidedly shares his father's view while Cal shares his mother's. Yet the contrast shows Clara that someone may truly see her character and may one day share her view. The fact that Cal is different, is like her, helps her establish a separate identity.

Until this point, Clara has still not completely broken away from the role of the fairy-tale princess; she
has simply stopped seeing Locke for lessons and has considered her option of self-determination. However, upon winning the purchase prize for her armadillo, her "glyp," Clara begins to lose the last traces of the fairy-tale princess and is on her way to becoming self-reliant and attaining completeness of character. Her wish to shed this role is illustrated in her choosing a new dress for the museum showing. She notes that "getting the dress was a problem. My blue had been so easy, but I couldn't find another color that wasn't blue . . . . She asked what colors I did like, and what colors I wore--but I couldn't remember anything but blue jeans and my delphinium" (p. 130). Yet she settles on "a really sweet gray and white" (p. 131). Clara, like many women, has difficulty shedding her royal blue fairy-tale-princess exterior and has trouble replacing it with another role. The one which fits her best is the one which complements her own unique character.

Clara becomes more aware of her growing visible uniqueness. Later, when she begins sculpting a head of her mother, she experiences difficulty in carving the facial features. Instead of going to Locke for help and studying the faces in his studio, Clara literally looks to herself and studies her own face in the mirror "peeling off with my eyes down to the bone structure and then layering back muscles, skin, hair, seeing finally the total impression. . . . ." She observes that "I realized that I had never seen
myself before" (p. 147). In sculpting her mother, she is able to capture her character in the present and preserve it. Clara plans to give it to her father so that she "could think of him caught again in the present instant with Mother" (p. 147).

Through the character of Clara Blue, Hearon illuminates the shortcomings of being a fairy-tale princess and notes that by relying upon her own strength she is able to become a more spiritually self-aware person.

The Second Dune

In The Second Dune, Hearon again focuses on the difficulty experienced by a woman who has relied on the fairy-tale-princess role as a means of attaining self-fulfillment. Her protagonist, Ellen Marshall, like Clara Blue, has held the position that marriage to Prince Charming is the means of establishing her identity. However, she goes one step farther than Clara by becoming involved in an extramarital affair in an attempt to gain the freedom of self-expression she lacks in her present marriage. At the time the novel begins, Ellen has finally experienced disillusionment with the fairy-tale-princess role and struggles to protect her daughter from its influence. It is then that she begins the tedious search for the means of affirming her identity that Clara has found in her artwork.
The novel illuminates Ellen's conscious introspection during a one-month period beginning on Friday, May 5 and ending on her birthday, Friday, June 2. Ellen remembers her marriage to Franklin as being the smothering of her self-expression by his domineering punctiliousness. During this crisis, Ellen turns to one of Franklin's friends, the very gregarious John Marshall, who she decides will rescue her from her stifling marriage. After her divorce from Franklin and marriage to John, she begins to realize that marriage was not the solution to her dilemma after all. In the midst of an all-too-common social contretemps, Ellen becomes aware of her inner strength and is able to begin the process of shaping herself.

Obstructing her path to a unique identity and acceptance is her family: her husband, her brother, and her mother. Ellen is caught in Franklin's rigid way of life and finds it impossible to express herself. After she plans to marry John, she notes that

> even after I had persuaded myself that everyone would be better off it took so long to break the news to Franklin. What held me was the strength of our routine, the pull of his unvarying consistency. We had our days so ordered that there was no scheduled time to admit my unfaithfulness . . .

From his routine arose a conformity of spirit which Ellen felt was suffocating her identity and her son's.
After Ellen's marriage to John, her brother Edward, a senior medical student, functions as her superego, playing upon her conscience through his frequent allusions to tradition, moral attitudes, and a sense of guilt. Edward sees life realistically and indirectly attempts to make Ellen conform to the usual way of doing things. They are often sharp with one another and seldom tease. He intrudes during what Ellen calls "the husband time of day," the early evening when she wants to be alone with her family enjoying her new life. Yet, his presence forces an increased moral awareness upon her and reminds her of past times. She notes that "I try to make a life he can't undo, but the effort is akin to swimming upstream" (p. 38). When Ellen asks him if he and his wife, Laura Ann, will be moving nearby, Edward remarks, "It will be all right .... We won't eat your blueberry muffins" (p. 38). By mentioning the muffins, he reminds Ellen of her and Franklin's "small celebration of Sunday mornings . . . of blueberry muffins instead of wholewheat toast" (p. 38), reminds her of her behavior which disrupted a family and broke a social code. He again alludes to her previous marriage by making "another oblique reference to an old husband" as he compliments her chicken in jalapeno and cumin sauce. "Don't know how you turned Rima into a cook," he tells John. "A magic potion. No one else managed to" (p. 44). Later the same evening,
Edward tells John, "That's too bad about old Harold... Divorce can be a real hassle" (p. 51), another comment aimed at her conscience. On their way to Dallas, Edward asks her about "old Franklin. The Discarded." Their dialogue which follows illustrates Edward's attempts to degrade Ellen's self-image.

"Don't heap guilt on me, Edward, about Frank."
"Why not? You thrive on guilt."
"My Protestant ethic. I was born into sin."
"Your uptight parents; you were born to them." (p. 83)

Edward also thwarts Ellen's attempts at self-integration, insinuating that her womanhood and her socially unacceptable conduct prevent her from becoming a vital part of humanity. As a woman, she fiercely fights to be accepted by men as a person. Yet, Edward's attitude toward women blocks these attempts. His forcing his continuously miscarrying wife to have a baby for his own self-satisfaction infuriates Ellen, who says, "Why does she have to do this, Edward? Were you frightened by a fertility rite? Still sleep on the rice thrown at your wedding? Let her be. What does it do for you, the annual knock-up?" (p. 41). However, Edward continues to hold this bias. Ellen notes that "Edward talks in front of me, in the habit men have, as if in the presence of infants or the retarded" (p. 53). Instead of caring enough to use her name, to acknowledge her individual personhood, he
speaks of her as a part of "they," as being "other." Ellen expresses her dislike of "the way he tracks down the myriad distinctions in the species, until the similarities between us are obliterated." She notes that having three surnames in three decades "does not help one be at home with oneself" and criticizes his interference when she observes that "it is hard enough to live with being Ellen at any given place and time; it is too much of Edward to expect me to handle being they" (p. 53). He even blocks the attempts of Ellen to integrate her alter ego, her daughter Ellen Nor. As Edward drives them to his home in Dallas, Ellen observes that Ellen Nor is "the human race." Edward interrupts her and remarks, "What egotism for your genes" (p. 82). Later, when Ellen Nor tells her uncle that "My mother . . . lets me go at the filling station any time I need to," he replies, "Your mother is too lenient on the future of the race. . . . You may have to wet your pants because I'm not going to stop" (p. 84).

Edward's presence also makes Ellen keenly aware of her rejection of her mother's legacy. Following his comment about possibly moving into their area, Ellen imagines Laura Ann as her neighbor to whom she will take "yellow daffodils, sweet grape hyacinths, and dwarf blue iris. . . . sweet peas and pinks in a yellow bowl, roses in a cut-glass vase," and a dozen other old-fashioned plants
Because anything reflecting her own self meets with Edward's disapproval, she notes "what else is there to give that Edward won't snipe about but growing plants, reminders of our mother" (p. 36). Following John's suggestion that Ellen stay with the ailing Laura Ann, both she and Edward privately think it is a poor idea because of their conflicting personalities. Yet Edward tells her, "We'll make you welcome," in a tone Ellen observes as "slightly mocking to keep it light." She notes that "welcome is our mother's word" (p. 48), which reminds her of her fear of becoming her mother, which diverts her attention from her quest for identity. Ellen harbors the fear of repeating her mother's past, of tolerating the psychological suppression which results from being married to a man who disregards her needs and is uninterested in her thoughts. She notes that her mother "was not the best example of how to be a woman," for "through the years, unable to get a response from my father, she pruned and mulched in compensation until she grew herself as dwarfed and mannered as a boxwood hedge" (p. 77). Ellen fears that she and Franklin are destined to become like her parents who "diminish each other as they talk" (p. 171). Ellen longs to be a wife and companion who is considered by her husband as an equal and who has the freedom of self-expression. However, she finds herself in a position
similar to her mother's and decides to depart from "what it cost my parents in daily interest to bend themselves to each other to make a union for me" by divorcing Franklin (p. 77). She tells him that their son "needs to live with a man who doesn't need a go-between. Who won't turn me into my mother" (p. 16). As this desire is stronger than that of giving her son Frank "a rooted union, one set on the limbing genealogy that is recorded for eight generations in a framed branching tree over Mother's bed" (p. 76), she becomes "a mother who was a woman first" (p. 77).

Because Ellen herself cannot seem to overcome the obstacle suppressing her identity, she decides to become a fairy-tale princess who will rely on someone else to defend it. As a girl, she was raised as a princess who was to think of marriage as a fairy-tale existence which served as "the answer to all secrets" (p. 149). She says that "as a small child I had lived in the time of fairy tales, where the seventh son of a seventh son combs the seven seas for seven scales, while the princess remains unaltered, nubile, waiting: a castled Penelope, east of the sun and west of the moon" (p. 5). Gazing at her wedding gown before her marriage to Franklin, she remembers being "caught in the magic of that moment when, dressed all in symbolic white, you become someone else--the imagined you, a fairy-tale princess, a legend, a vestal virgin, a bride" (p. 13). She
soon realizes that marriage to Franklin has failed to transform her into this ideal woman and is consequently dissatisfied. It would seem that this experience with Franklin would convince her of the fallaciousness of being a fairy-tale princess, yet she persists in looking to the Knight in Shining Armor as the source of self-definition rather than to herself. She sees John Marshall as the one who will rescue her from her frustration. In his presence, she blossoms once more into a fairy-tale princess.

In many ways, Ellen possesses special features often associated with the fairy-tale princess. After tossing all night on the uncomfortable bed at Edward and Laura Ann's, she likens herself to "the Princess and the pea" (p. 86). She is often called a name which bears a resemblance to her appearance. On several occasions, Edward calls her "Rima, the Bird Girl," the island native, when she appears in a black t-shirt and black pants. And Ellen herself tells John she is like Rapunzel with her long hair.

Ellen has the lovely dark hair of a Snow White. She pinned it up when she was married to Franklin, for she observes that "with Franklin I was no one but myself." However, for John, she undid her hair as if she "were again the native girl [she] had played at on the beach" (p. 115). After they are married, she continues to sport a singular appearance and notes that she prepares herself for John "as
carefully as if we were still meeting, unlawful, in the mornings . . . ." As she stands in the shower "under chlorinated rain," she begins to wash her hair and observes that "so much of me is dependent on this heaviness of hair, its weight, its presence; it is a mantle I go under like Rapunzel, or a bare Godiva. Or mermaid. Come out of the sea to man" (p. 23).

And like a fairy-tale princess, she lives in an enchanted surrounding. During their affair, she and John shared a sagging bed covered with a chenille spread and furnished with an old chintz chair on a threadbare flowered rug (p. 155). Yet she sees it entirely differently. Having found her prince, she notes that "for him I climbed the steps to rendezvous in a rented room that was for me a flowered island day dream" (p. 115) adorned with "lavish faded cabbage roses" (p. 154). As a fairy-tale princess, she blurs her perception of herself as well as her surroundings.

The sea is another type of enchanted surrounding to which she is able to project her self-image. It serves as a revitalizing source for her confused identity. Like other princesses, she is not what she appears, one perplexed about her place in the world, but is actually someone great, a self-confident woman who has made known her true identity. Because Ellen sees the sea as representing
the unification of time with all existence, she is able to transcend present obstacles which have stifled her identity and brings her closer to amalgamating her other selves—past and present. She observes that "the living sea makes time more visible than the rigid faulted cliffs at home where prior existence is set as hard as stone" (p. 25). Her close kinship with the sea is best seen in her annual return to the ocean on her birthday where "earlier Ellens still lie, like surfaced fossils, for the gathering. There, in the dimensions of that shore, all the Ellens live: only the time of their existence shifts" (p. 24). She sees that "at that water's edge are many Ellens": a small child "suited for the beach" (p. 27), a tanning "Gauguin native" (p. 28), a woman pregnant with Franklin's child, one pregnant with John's.

When she is unable to be at the water's edge, Ellen has her own "seaside" retreats at home: her bedroom, known as the Green Room, and the dusty caliche cliffs once the ocean floor. To Ellen, her Green Room is her sea away from the sea, her "oasis," her "waterhole" (p. 22). She describes it as

a seascape: a room washed in palest celery, a canvas of waterlilies by Monet. It is the green of the underside of leaves, grass lightened with dew, the sea on a rainy day. The pale carpet, the cotton coverlet bound in silk, the chaise, sheer curtains layered like thicknesses of spiderweb to mute the light, all aim at the translucence of a certain depth of water. (p. 23)
It is another place where she can come to terms with her selves and somehow move closer to a self-definition.

The novel opens with Ellen and her daughter on one of their many morning excursions to the cliffs to "search for signs of the sea" (p. 3). During the course of their fossil-hunting, Ellen reflects on one of her selves, that of being a mother to Ellen Nor. It is here that Ellen first expresses her ambivalent attitude toward being a fairy-tale princess, for although she continues perceiving herself as possessing special features characteristic of a princess, she nevertheless realizes its shortcomings.

Although she has embraced the ideals associated with the fairy-tale princess, Ellen wants a better life for Ellen Nor. She remarks, "The essence of the love we mothers have for daughters is distilled in what we convey to them of all that we have learned about being female. In what time we have we must sort out the truth as we have lived it, and hand it on" (p. 6). She does not want Ellen Nor to take on the role of fairy-tale princess who depends on another for her identity. As she knows that "even in her day men will attempt to define her," Ellen notes she "speaks silently to some man in my daughter's future" and says, "Don't love this girl for reasons which obscure her meaning; don't love her for her shape or smile. Love her because she sweats a mustache and drips behind her knees."
Love her because her hands are fierce and digging" (p. 6). Yet despite Ellen's best efforts, the life of her daughter has become the making of a princess. Thinking back to Ellen Nor's birth, Ellen observes, "The path to womanhood is so strewn with the obstacles of Barbie dolls and bake-sets. Already the brothers had arrived with bouquets of pink gowns and pinafores" (p. 163). Like a princess, Ellen Nor has a special heritage, a kind of matrilineal descent, for "it is from female to female that the Word is passed" (p. 6). Ellen notes that she herself was formed from "her mother hand-stitching a galaxy of green-tipped stars upon a sea of quilts until her eyes made water and her thimbles were smooth" and that "it is this backbone of the species that makes my daughter confident" (p. 7). One characteristic that Ellen Nor possesses is her special name, which she does not have to share with her mother. To herself and Ellen, she becomes Ellen Nor. However, this attempt at self-definition is met with endearing, precious names; John calls her Baby Ellen, and Edward calls her Ellie. Ellen becomes frustrated that they "decorate" her daughter with such names and remarks that "this bothers me; I want this female to go by her proper name." Yet, the damage has already been done, for "Ellen Nor is used to this and doesn't take it amiss" (p. 40). She wants to provide Ellen Nor with a good example of womanhood, of someone who
has maintained her autonomy. However, the only example she sees is Edward's wife Laura Ann, whom Ellen describes as

the Princess of her parent's expectation. She still has the air of pleasing that goes with walking down the runway, a glowing Bluebonnet Belle. . . . As was expected of her, she chose a tall, dark knight in scrub-suit. (p. 81).

Fearing a similar fate for her daughter, Ellen, upon seeing Ellen Nor's hands dirty from looking for "Sally Mander," tells her, "'See that they stay that way.' Bluebonnet Belles don't have dirty hands" (p. 90).

More frustrating to deal with than the other obstacles confronting her small daughter's identity is Ellen's own adherence to fairy-tale ideals. She is frequently guilty of describing Ellen Nor as a fairy-tale character. When she pushes the elevator button to leave her father's office, Ellen likens her to "Alice going down the Rabbit's hole" (p. 93). Later, she tells Ellen Nor "Little Red Riding Hood" for her bedtime story and notes that "Ellen Nor acts out the great escape and falls into the saving arms of the woodsman--the elephant, of course" (p. 126). By telling this story, Ellen indirectly condones Ellen Nor's dependency upon a prince figure. Tired of fossil-hunting one day, they climb out of the quarry and sit in the shade of a mesquite tree. Here, Ellen Nor finds a condom and asks if it is a balloon. Ellen tells her it could be part of a rubber
glove like their housekeeper Nancy uses to clean the oven. She admits to herself that it is a dishonest remark, that it "sounds like the sort of evasion my mother handed me. . . . Such comments to girls make marriage seem the answer to all secrets" (p. 149). She imagines having the courage to tell her, "That's for boys to use when you are living with them. The way you'll do, maybe, in Paris and in London and on a summer trip to Africa, if you feel like it" (p. 149). She later tells Ellen Nor, "Grown-up girls . . . when they leave home, can sometimes sleep out in the park" (p. 150). Although this is far from her preferred answer, it nevertheless represents a departure from the fairy-tale-princess mode of thought.

In an attempt to universalize Ellen's dilemma, Hearon highlights the experiences of two minor characters. She first focuses on Velma, Ellen's friend and former sister-in-law, who believes that with the widower from church she can find privacy and a means toward self-expression. Like Ellen, she decides to break her five children's "rooted union" of family and leave her minister husband and his ever-present brothers for someone better, a Prince Charming of the Franklin-type no less. She writes Ellen that "Oscar reminded me the first time he showed up of your previous husband . . . who had Eyes for Nobody But You. But there you are with Johnny . . . the grass is always greener"
However, Velma and Ellen actually see the other as "jumping from the frying pan" (p. 61).

Karol, Ellen's neighbor, is a divorced woman burdened with two wild teenage daughters and an ailing mother who is looking for a prince to lessen her responsibilities and rescue her from everyday banality. Ellen describes her as one who "wears the giveaway air of looking for a man" (p. 16). She first dates Pete the widowed doctor who suffers with a kind of chronic hayfever and later the warehouse salesman, Nookie, "a man of unsavory character" (p. 132). Upon discontinuing her relationship with Nookie, Karol gradually realizes that being a fairy-tale princess distorts reality.

She also shares Ellen's concern for uniqueness. Her calling everyone by his complete name is, as Ellen observes, "a way of giving [one] a distinction apart from possession" (p. 18). Her daughters become Molly Surrey and Sally Surrey. Through these characters, Hearon illustrates the prevalence of women's struggle with the conventional role of the fairy-tale princess and their growing feminine consciousness.

It is after meeting John's secretary Peggy that Ellen realizes that she has failed as a fairy-tale princess. She observes that "that girl with her heart on her pants suit sleeve showed me what a warm existence she could create if
she were married to a man like John. . . . [who] deserved better than he got at home" (p. 159).

At the end of the novel, Ellen acknowledges that marriage, that the fairy-tale-princess role, has not been the means by which she can become complete. She states, "My conviction is that girls who know the right spells to cast can get out of their own towers without waiting for some passing prince" (p. 81). She realizes that she should be a more responsible adult who adapts to situations instead of playing the passive princess who looks for the ideal situation. Ellen makes the most dramatic change she can by cancelling her annual birthday pilgrimage to the coast. She notes that "the birthday coming inland is but an outward notice of these private alterations" (p. 153). She has neither completely broken away from the fairy-tale-princess syndrome nor has become completely independent. Her telling John of her plans to have her birthday at home while simultaneously describing herself as "Rima in the forest" of her Green Room illustrates these two conflicting tendencies at work. Yet Ellen is on her way to establishing her identity and begins to search for the means. In this passage, Hearon notes that the replacement of the fairy-tale princess ideals with independent vitality is a gradual process and cannot be accomplished suddenly. Thus Ellen, like the female land crab, "repeats the long journey
inland past predatory sea birds," past the second dune, "to make her home at last by some waterhole which will moisten her gills and quench her thirst" (p. 1).

Hannah's House

Hannah's House, like Armadillo in the Grass and The Second Dune, is the story of a woman in search of a unique identity. It is also the story of the tensions between mothers and daughters, obligatory relationships, and the clash of values of a generation gap in reverse. With a keen awareness of society's attempts to annihilate individuality, Beverly Landrum wrestles to free herself from the convention which holds that happiness and self-fulfillment can be attained through the role of the fairy-tale princess.

Beverly is a divorced woman of forty who is employed at the small agency HEXPOP (Halt Exponential Population Growth), which attempts to call public attention to the problem of overpopulation. In her first-person narrative, she expresses dissatisfaction with her inability to separate herself from the rest of humanity. She admits that

My problem then [in high school] as now was my addiction to people . . . [which] does not mean affection for or delight in; it means you cannot help it. There are too many of us and we all have such entangled lives. We are at the same time constituted of large parts of the people who began us and who tug and pull to continue us, and smaller fragments of the hundreds of others. . . . 3
When she is at HEXPOP, she finds it impossible to find an individual when dealing with "four and a half billion others grouped into crowds so vast as to be called by names such as Chinese, Arabs, and Vietnamese" (p. 51). When in bed with Ben Roberts, her lover of seven years, she feels that "there are many of us there: there is Charlie reaching his hand down my sweater . . . the CPA with his brittle laugh . . . Ben's rounded girls who stare and stuff themselves . . . a long-ago pregnant wife" (p. 57).

That she sports a confused identity is also made apparent by her use of various names. "Beverly" holds no meaning for her; she observes that it is only "for my daughter I answer to this name" (p. 19). For years in school, she signed her name "Bananas Foster" instead of Beverly Foster, which no one noticed except Miss Fordyce. With this name she finds some comfort, some truth, as she does with the name of Foster, which she can use only when away from Hannah at HEXPOP. However, the night she meets Ben, she notes, "I wanted to get what might be my only lasting affair of the heart off to a truthful start" and thus admits, "My real name is Hannah's mother" (p. 32). However, her inability to assimilate the various identities behind these names is brought about by her family, which becomes the primary obstacle in her quest for a unique identity.
Yet, there are certain individuals who serve to open Beverly's eyes to the possibility of establishing her own identity. She remembers that Miss Fordyce spoke to her condition, showing "that there were ways to live for yourself. . . . [that] you have to do something important with your life" (pp. 161-62). And from her friend Meg, she had learned that "there wasn't just one right way to do things, the way I wasn't doing it" (p. 119) and that "you weren't grown until you could forgive your parents for being your parents" (p. 64). From them she receives the encouragement necessary to begin her journey toward self-discovery.

Her mother and her sisters, Mildred and Dorothy, expect Beverly to conform to the fairy-tale-princess version of womanhood. They cannot accept her deviation from this revered convention. They, as well as Hannah, want her to blend in with the rest of female society, to constitute a group with her "friends" Judy and Clarice, instead of being a conspicuous individual. Beverly discusses her dilemma with her supervisor Henry, who, too, experiences difficulty with his family. He notes that "most of the damage parents do they do when they are trying their damndest to do their best by you" (pp. 128-29). Beverly's theory is that "they do the most damage when they are insisting you all love one another" (p. 129). Yet, they agree that there is "no getting away from your family" (p. 129).
Beverly observes that "sisters are difficult kin; too close to deal as strangers yet with not enough in common to be friends" (p. 141). She remembers that although her eldest sister Mildred was "continually vexed with me when we were growing up, she was very helpful to me. She was more definite than Dorothy or my mother" (p. 132). Beverly notes that Mildred even tried to coax her into going through sorority rush, "strange as I was, in an old shirt of Dad's and blue jeans a generation ahead of my time, she was willing to make an effort for me" (p. 51).

Dorothy, on the other hand, is her childlike younger sister who possesses the helplessness of the fairy-tale-princess figure. Beverly describes her "very gentle" sister as having the gift of "softness that makes others gather to save her. Her even teeth like shoe-peg corn look prey to cavities, her creamy skin to melanoma, her straight white legs to varicosity" (p. 40). Beverly tells her daughter that "Dorothy is such a peach of a person" (p. 145).

However, it is Opal, her mother, who primarily blocks Beverly's way toward self-clarification, for she expects Beverly, as well as her other daughters, to live out her own unfulfilled dream of a fairy-tale princess existence. Beverly notes that her mother

yearned above all else . . . to be socially noticed . . . [yet] because she didn't have much else except us to use, we were the means by which she tried to get the world's attention.
But when you live vicariously, you don't receive enough of life, and therefore nothing we ever did was enough for Mother, not even Mildred with all her talents nor Dorothy with all her charms, and certainly not Beverly. (p. 161)

Beverly desperately wants to attain happiness--self-fulfillment and her mother's approval. Yet she wants to please her mother without becoming her mother and thus turns to the fairy-tale-princess role as a means to accomplish both goals. Upon meeting Roger Landrum, Beverly discovers that she had found her prince. She remembers that Roger

told me daily . . . that he wanted to be a participant in life, not an observer. . . . To me to be a participant, then, meant to live your own life and I was for that. Roger could be the one to show me how. (p. 116)

Therefore, by marrying Roger she believes her future is set and her new way of life has begun and her mother is pleased.

Following the basic pattern for the heroines in Hearon's novels, Beverly realizes that marriage to this "Certified Public Asshole" was "a way out" (p. 116), and it ends in divorce. With her growing ambivalence toward the fairy-tale-princess life, she observes, "It is hard to be sure now what was the fault of our personalities and what was the fault of the system's expectations" (p. 118). However, Beverly continues to believe it is the way to self-clarification. She raises her daughter to embody the
idealism of the fairy-tale princess in order to make amends for her own past and to please her mother. By doing this, Beverly later fears that she has become like her mother. She asks Ben, "Does each generation have to live through the next? Do I do that with Hannah?" (p. 60).

After Hannah's birth, Beverly remembers spending "what seemed to me all my waking hours to make my daughter the person I had never been, to mold the diapered wide-faced child into a girl who could make it in junior high with all the boys like Charlie" (p. 118). Hannah is raised as a fairy-tale princess and becomes what Beverly never was, "a friendly, steadfast girl who fits in where she should, who knows where she belongs" (pp. 20-21).

Hannah exhibits many of the characteristics of a fairy-tale princess. Her name bears special significance, by indicating her constancy of character: "Hannah spelled backward is Hannah" (p. 21). She also lives in the enchanted surrounding of a new castle, which is a "yellow stucco house . . . on a nice street, in a nice neighborhood" (p. 17), for which "she has waited all her life" (p. 19).

Her very nature and appearance are those of a princess. Beverly observes that "Hannah is more like my sisters than my sisters" (p. 202). As she desperately wants to please, she visits her grandmother, seeks the
advice of her aunts, and adheres to the values taught her by her mother. Beverly notes that Hannah's sunbleached hair and faint sunburn give her the appearance of "Heidi in the Alps" (p. 61). Her outfit of "skybaby blue" gives her the royal colors of a princess. She is "a favorite among the girls in her group because she was a friend who could be counted on" (p. 38) and an idol to her two sets of cousins who "run around [her] like around a maypole," who "gaze at [her] as if wishing hard enough would transform them with their thin legs and short hair into her" (p. 135).

Hannah is doted on by her two fairy-godmothers, Mildred and Dorothy. They see that she receives proper sorority recommendations, that she knows how to sew, that she mas material for her long dress. Mildred provides a country club reception for Hannah, and the excited Dorothy, described by Beverly as the "beaming fairy-godmother she is" (p. 76), is delighted to "do everything" for her engagement party (p. 79).

In contrast to the godmotherly aunts is Beverly, Hannah's unpleasant "stepmother," who does not fit into this fairy-tale world. Wearing a turtleneck aqua dress and arranging her straggling hair before the engagement party, Beverly remarks that "there is some question as to whether setting out to raise someone who fits comfortably
into the world is worth this ruse, this fitting myself, like a square peg in a round hole, into this beaded disguise" (p. 74). She has more empathy for her soon-to-be stepdaughter Van, Jr., "an unruly child, [who] might better have belonged to Foster, once styled Bananas" (p. 197), who appears to Hannah as "a freak or a cripple" (p. 200). However, Beverly knows what lies ahead, that "if you are to give your best efforts to make a normal daughter, you must be willing to be judged by the sharp and limiting edges of normalcy" (p. 48).

The climax of the novel occurs when Hannah, the princess, becomes confused about her identity, confused about who her mother really wants her to be. After the visit from Van, Jr., Hannah finally explodes, "You don't even mind that Van, Jr. is openly sleeping with a person who is doing badly in school and doesn't want to do anything at all but paint his pictures" (p. 217). She notes that Beverly cooked with Van and even made Aunt Gladys's potato pancakes. She took Van to her office and went to lunch with Ben and Van--things she never does with her. A crying, angry Hannah tells her mother that "you have one set of values for me and I have always tried to do everything you wanted me to, just the way you wanted me to, and then you have another set for her" (p. 217). Beverly simply buries her head in her shirtwaist and "weep[s] for all of
us everywhere who breed ourselves into families, for all of us everywhere who are never enough for one another" (p. 220).

It is through Eugene the Prince that Hannah believes she will be able to escape her mother's vicarious living and ambivalent attitude toward fairy-tale ideals. Eugene is a young man who "has done what was expected of him all his life" (p. 77) and who will attempt to be the prince of Hannah's expectations. History repeats itself.

During her visit with Van, Beverly observes that, unlike her and Henry, "Van understands the part of it below the surface, that you never get loose from your family and that you are your family but that you have to find a way to transmute your past so you can be the beginning of you" (p. 202). Opal's presence at the wedding is "a reminder that there is no escape from the woman who bears you, just as Hannah must live out her life embarrassed by me" (p. 235). Beverly is finally able to overcome her mother's expectations by not inflicting the same on Hannah. She plans to tell Hannah "wanting to make clear and audible before everyone that it is possible to please your mother. To tell Hannah that I know she has tried hard, and done her best, and been all she could be, and that is all we can expect of one another." However, "stepping slightly on her hem, disarraying slightly her white length of
unstained veil," Beverly tells Hannah what she will understand, that "you are enough for me" (p. 237).

Having overcome this obstacle of family, Beverly is free to continue her pursuit of individuality. She also decides to marry Ben, for she realizes that their union will neither attempt to detract from her nor attempt to define her. Beverly's taking notes to mark the passing days is her attempt to define herself and "to leave behind in this yellow stucco house the image of one singular and separate life" (p. 240).

Now and Another Time

Although Now and Another Time follows the basic pattern of Hearon's previous novels, it is her most complex. The story traces the lives of Hardin Chambers and Julia Allen and the way in which they have fulfilled the dreams of their parents. In the novel, Hearon discusses Julia's futile quest for self-expression through the role of the fairy-tale princess.

Julia Allen Chambers is the mother of two young women and the wife of a successful lawyer and newly-elected judge. Caught in the midst of the Austin political scene, she becomes frustrated with living her life according to the expectations of others and decides to concentrate on establishing her separate identity.
However, Julia's advance toward individuality is impeded by her family--her husband and her mother. Her dilemma is similar to Clara Blue's; she is not seen clearly by her husband and does not want to repeat her mother's past. She remembers that "even on their initial meeting Hardin took her as . . . she was offered to him by Jimmy: This is Julia, she whom you should want to have." Hardin sees Julia not as Julia but as a contrast to his mother, whom he greatly admired. He observes,

he and Julia used different languages, and hers conveyed nothing of her feelings to him. The truth was, if he were continuing to be honest, he would wish that she were flying tomorrow up to Neiman's for a dress to wear to his ceremonies. He wished that she cared enough to want to purchase the equivalent of the peach silk dress which his mother had dragged out to show him on so many Sunday evenings. (p. 130)

Julia herself wonders, "How is it possible . . . to share a man's bed for so many years and never be seen by him, never be truly naked to him?" (p. 192).

However great a hindrance Hardin is to Julia's quest for self-expression, her mother, Mary, is a greater one. Set in Houston in the year 1934, the novel begins with the introduction of Julia's mother. Mary Allen is a young woman expecting her second child and contemplating the effect a boy would have on her, since she is descended from a long line of daughters, and on her husband, Albert, who she believes deserves a "namesake" (p. 4). Having a son
would enable her to both honor Albert for his being a good father to their daughter and to make adequate restitution for her loving Tom Henderson. Albert Allen and Francis Henderson have been friends since high school, because both their families "had been in on the beginning of Houston" and because the two of them had assumed the "duty to continue it properly" (p. 5). Even as married adults, Albert and Francis have continued to be friends. Together, they purchase a summer home, named Little Hills, in order to perpetuate this friendship between the two families. As Albert and Francis are usually found together exchanging ideas about city concerns and reminiscing about past times, Mary and Tom find themselves left to care for the children and to make their own conversation.

It is during these treasured visits to Little Hills that Mary and Tom fall in love. Mary reflects that "until she had met Tom, . . . [she] had not thought of love except in terms of God, for marriages were formed by other ties, were made for one's parents and for one's future children" (p. 6). Eventually, Tom expresses his feelings and his desire to consummate their love. Since she is a very religious person who seeks God's will through prayer, Mary is greatly troubled by his proposition. On the brink of an affair, the undecided Mary strikes a bargain with God for a solution to her dilemma and promises Him her faithfulness
only if her child is a boy. Therefore, because she does bear a son, the relationship with Tom is never consummated. Nevertheless, since childhood, Mary's daughter, Julia, and Tom's son, Jimmy, have suspected some kind of union between Mary and Tom. Consequently, despite the lifelong closeness Julia and Jimmy have shared, they do not become romantically involved because both fear that a second union between the Allens and the Hendersons would be an incestuous one. In an attempt to avoid repeating her mother's life, Julia never considers marrying her true love, Jimmy, and decides instead to marry Hardin Chambers.

Since Hardin has not provided her away of establishing a separate identity, she begins to behave like a fairy-tale princess, and begins to search for a man who can help her define herself. Like Hearon's other fairy-tale princesses, Julia possesses certain special features. Her heritage is an uncommon one; she is "descended from a line of daughters thought to go back to the Revolutionary War." In addition, her name reflects the "unvarying set of first names . . . handed down from mother to daughter as a bond to tie the distant branches of the family together" (p. 3). Like all fairy-tale princesses, Julia possesses a confused identity; she thinks of herself "primarily as the daughter of Mary, the wife of Hardin, and the mother of Fay and Louisa" (p. 79). Julia also lives in an enchanted world in which
the way "things seemed was not at all the way things were" (p. 5). It is not until much later in her life when she discovers the truth about Mary and Tom that she is able to tell Jimmy, "Things are not what we thought" (p. 181).

In talking to Fay about her visit to see her grandmother Mary, Julia discovers that Mary and Tom never had an affair. She tells Jimmy that "it was not like we thought with my mother and your father" (p. 182), and the Allens and the Hendersons cease to be "the family." It is here that Julia attempts to escape from this predestined existence, to be more than a link between the past and the present. She silently observes that "with Mary's story told, a final step remained. That was to cross the distance, years long, that divided them, to violate the last unwritten rule" (p. 183). Tired of living her life in reaction to her mother's, she decides that doing what she wants to do will enable her to live her own life. Consequently, Julia is able to have Jimmy as the prince who will aid her in establishing her own identity apart from her mother's. United with Jimmy at last, she observes that "as she leaned into him and away from him she was no longer a young Julia waiting to be invented, she was a woman who in her passion led her body to take . . . a pleasure so fierce she fell upon him gasping at the last" (p. 260). However, by her actions to avoid determinism, she ironically succumbs to it.
What she does not realize is that her fairy-tale-princess temperament fits perfectly into the predestined scheme of her predestined life. Things are certainly not as they appear. Through her affair with Jimmy, she is neither able to shape a unique identity nor to escape her predestined life; instead, she fulfills her mother's dream of sleeping with a Henderson.

History continues to repeat itself. Through the life of Fay, Hearon attempts to show that others besides Julia are inclined to become fairy-tale princesses as a means of escaping a predetermined existence. Fay also looks to conjugal love as a way of establishing her own identity and of avoiding the mistakes of those before her. In an effort to "replicate her passionate mother, to fold back time and create her afresh" (p. 167), Julia plans to name her first-born Mary. However, her mother disapproves and tells her that "the world has enough of us, the Marys. We drag it down" and to name her instead after "who I could have been" (p. 167). Thus, before the birth of Mary Fay, it is destined that she inherit her grandmother's unfulfilled dreams. Fay realizes her similarity to Mary and asks her mother, "Do you believe she breathed herself into me from the start? Or was it you? Did you mark me in the crib by saying, 'She looks just like Mother'?" (p. 175). Fay believes that Rand Coulter, the chemist with whom she is
in love, is the prince who can rescue her from a life predetermined by her grandmother's and consequently enable her to live her own life. However, by adopting fairy-princess ideals, she repeats her mother's mistake instead.

One cannot transcend the limiting confines of a predetermined life by becoming a fairy-tale princess. In *Now and Another Time*, Hearon stresses that, had Julia relied on her own strength instead of on an imaginary prince's, she might have been able to attain her goals. Yet, she never realizes her mistake. At the end of the novel, her ironic quotation of Shaw on Caesar to Jimmy, "He knows the real moment of success is not the moment apparent to the crowd" (p. 272), highlights her misconception.

**A Prince of a Fellow**

*A Prince of a Fellow*, Hearon's fifth novel, deals with a woman's adoption of fairy-tale-princess ideals in her quest for identity. Avery Krause triumphs where Julia Chambers fails. Conjugal love is ultimately rejected as a way of attaining self-fulfillment. Through her experiences, her wry observations, and her candid self-analysis, Avery is able to overcome the obstacle of family which lies in her path to self-discovery.

Set in the fictitious South Texas Hill Country town of Prince Solms, the novel centers around the
self-clarification of Avery Krause, a disc-jockey for the local radio station KPAC, Pasture Radio. Caught in the midst of a family tug-of-war, between a proud Swedish mother and the rigid German family of her late father, she becomes frustrated with being unable to shape an identity apart from either.

The Krauses define Avery as a German. Grandmother Magdelena considered her a continuation of the Krauses and observed that "A decent son's wife would have called you after me. There'd have been no shame in that. . . . Who knows where she got such a name. It's not decent for a granddaughter of mine." Avery remembers how her father had "nonetheless used his clever hands to pull me as best he could into the clan. . . . 'The Krause women you know can always have their pick of men,' he would remind his mama, flattering her, but at the same time putting me and my skimpy blondness in the same class." Papa would also tell her that "You're as good as anybody, don't forget" (p. 38). When she was a child, Avery recalls her father driving her to the cemetery where he had proposed to her mother. Although he remarks that it seems his wife has been "vaccinated" against his family, he tells Avery that "that doesn't have to hold for you. You don't have to forget that you belong here. They may not have had much to say in life, and they certainly are a closemouthed bunch in
death, but they're the best stock around these parts" (p. 39).

In a similar way, Avery's mother, Olga, has labeled her a Swede and "had kept herself a Swede on purpose, had excluded herself from the Germans to survive" (p. 173). If Avery's surname identifies her as a German Krause, then her given name and her appearance make her a Swedish Dolle. She notes that "Mama and I are set apart from the Germans we married or were born into by our near-white curls, our wide thighs, even our sweet Swedish smiles" (p. 4).

Although she loves Olga and is "proud to be [a] Swede" (p. 174), Avery fears the possibility of resembling her mother in more than just appearance. She does not want to repeat her mother's dreadful past. In the following passage, Avery has difficulty seeing herself apart from her mother:

When a woman carries a baby it is in her, but it is not her. Or is it? Was I Mama when I was in her? If so, when did I become not her? When I quickened? When I was born? This Sunday noon at her dinner table?

I have separate trouble distinguishing my connection with Mama and my difference from her. By the Germans we married into or were born into we are lumped together, as if two kolache or two dumplings or two rising loaves of Swedish bread. Yet to me, it is crucial that we not end up the same. I am haunted by a photograph of her which stands in a gold frame on Grandfather's mantel. She is a radiant young girl clinging to the arm of a narrow-shouldered boy who looks like Papa. She wears my same frizzled hair and light eager eyes. She leans against him with my thin arm and flaring thigh. Preparing to live happily
ever after, she, Olga Dolle, the bride, beams out at all of us. Now in the bulging tiptoeing woman at Grandfather's house I can find no resemblance. (pp. 34-35)

When she attends the Easter Fires with her writer friend Billy Wayne, he asks her, "What is it you are afraid of being changed into, Avery?" She replies, "Mama. Anyone's. The hausfrau of Papa. Anyone's" (p. 124).

Avery sets out to escape this predestined existence by rejecting the standards of conduct associated with her family and by incorporating other things into her life. She explains,

Unsettled by a fear of repeating whatever steps turned her from her earlier to her present self, I have avoided those entanglements that could lead from a cheek pressed against a hairy belly to those miscarried infants, that enormous bulk, or the fading of the light in those expectant eyes. (pp. 35-36)

Instead, she has an affair with the mayor of San Antonio.

Avery has adopted the departed Ybarra family to replace her own and frequently visits their graves in the town cemetery. She notes that "this buried borrowed family had become my kin in much the same way Pasture Radio had become my home: It was the preferable alternative. When you had only your dough-faced Swedish mama, trapped in the house of the bent and unforgiving grandfather, to turn to, then you looked elsewhere for comfort" (p. 20).

Appropriate to this fairy-tale novel is the theme that "None of us are as we present ourselves" (p. 3). By
assuming that nothing is what it seems, Avery assumes that
a life predetermined by her mother's past is something from
which she can escape. In her private life as in her job on
the air, she presents "illusions as real" (p. 5) and conse-
quently decides to present herself as a fairy-tale princess.

From the beginning of the novel, Avery views herself
as a princess of sorts:

I am a frizzy-haired, washed-out princess
looking for a prince. Some ordinary prince on a
limping horse, to carry me off to his leaking
rented castle, to share his beans and salt pork
and lie beside him in his bed. No one special;
after all, I am nothing fancy. At thirty I have
never established residence with a man, and those
I have rubbed bellies with have been no better
than I was willing to settle for. Concerned as
I am with reality, I don't get my hopes too high;
just a third son of a minor king. (p. 1)

Like Hearon's other heroines, Avery also possesses cer-
tain characteristics associated with a fairy-tale princess.
Her heritage is special, for, although she represents the
union of German and Swede, her mother "marked" her so the
Germans could not claim her. Avery observes that it was
"much as, in fairy tales, the princess is blessed with a
special mole or strawberry mark, which, in the end, saves
her from the wicked king" (p. 173). She also has a spe-
cial name that Olga had taken from the big red sign--
AVERY'S MARKET--outside her hospital window. Her mother
tells her that "That was a name which counted for some-
thing. It was the name of one who owned something" (p.
171).
In addition to these characteristics, Avery also possesses a confused identity. Is she a unique individual, or is she her mother? Can a woman ever be sure who she is? Every Sunday morning before Avery has lunch with her mother and grandfather, she lies in bed and works out "the boundaries of my self" (p. 33). She remembers that when she was a girl living in Kentucky, she had tried "to discern where the world left off and I began" (p. 33). Sights and sounds were things not a part of you, she decided, until they reached your eyes and ears and then they were. Yet, she observes, "I am, fortunately, no longer so simplistic. . . . yet now, grown, I still retain the feel of those confusions; still believe that all women must have trouble knowing what is them and what is not them" (p. 34).

This fairy-tale princess lives in an enchanted surrounding where "Things are seldom what they seem. None of us are as we present ourselves" (p. 3). Otto Ramirez, who, dressed in lederhosen, delivers the news and weather reports at KPAC in a "heavy German accent," is described by Avery as "a forty-five-year-old Mexican, with Pancho Villa moustache, who works afternoons . . . as the cemetery sexton" (p. 4). Her newly made friend Minna Raabe, an east coast newswoman dressed in an elegant suit, was actually an insecure individual plagued by her past as an obese
child classical pianist. Congressman Willy Vlasig, the pride of the Prince Solms Germans, is also "not all he seemed." Avery notes, "You could see the dye job at the roots of his fair hair; spot the bright blue contact lenses; catch a suggestion of pancake on his even sunlamp tan" (p. 156). And Jane Brown, alias Queen Esther of the Missionary Baptist Church, who does not bring her radio audience simply those choice items of female industry, arts, crafts they expect to hear; instead, she also announces that her intentions are to make "the patriarchs in this town . . . deal with the existence of a woman they did not control, which in this day and time still means a Negro, as they have their own females in a state of bondage" (p. 182). The princes Avery chooses are also not what they seem.

Most important, Avery relies on a prince to free her from the deterministic clutch of her family. By engaging herself in a "shabby affair with [a] burgher in white socks" who has his wallet full of pictures of his two sons, she attempts to make a detour around marriage, around repeating her mother's past, and she succeeds. Yet, this detour is not the road to self-fulfillment but rather one to self-degradation, for there is no love between Avery and the mayor. With this on her mind as she drives to meet Sterling, she decides to pay a visit to Vittoriamo Gutierrez Ybarra's grave since she receives more help from "the
unknown and departed than the living and kin" (p. 17). It lies in one of the plots reserved for Catholics who married outside the faith. Avery observes, "Its kneeling lambs, risen angels, and tin crosses with their crucified tin Jesuses all seemed to offer penance in the dusk. Which is why I come: to be forgiven for sleeping with the mayor of San Antonio, for making love where I do not" (p. 17). She "atones" for her sin by paying Otto one hundred dollars to tend the grave. "It seemed fitting to seek atonement here--among those whose very souls depend upon it" (p. 18).

Upon meeting the year's recipient of the J. Frank Dobie grant, Billy Wayne Williams, alias Gruene Albrech, Avery believes that she has found an ideal candidate for prince. She had pictured him a brooding German writer, but discovered him to be a Czech who "seemed as eager as a kid on his first day of school dressed in stiff new jeans, glossy boots, and a red bandana with the price tag on it" (pp. 2-3). Because she falls in love with him, she thinks that Billy Wayne is a true prince who can guide her toward her separate identity. She becomes his fairy-tale princess and observes that "waiting for the writer on the stairs outside my garage apartment, I had been reminded of a fairy tale . . . " (p. 120). Avery eventually begins to question the validity of fairy-tale princess ideals. She
becomes so disgusted with her liaison with Sterling that she decides not to meet him for their appointed rendezvous. It is here that Avery fully realizes her own potential for patterning her identity:

It must be that with every step we take--eating with Olga Dolle, waiting on the outside stairs for Fords to show, speeding down the freeway--we make a choice. Even with our backs turned and our heads agog with other matters, we are deciding all the time. A reassuring thought for one who has not mastered Grandmother's forthright style. I think I finally slammed a door. (p. 142)

In fact, their unsavory relationship has permanently ended; she tells him, "I'm retiring, having had enough of lime and aqua" (p. 145). After Sterling threatens to retaliate by starting a rumor about her and Otto, she chooses to seek revenge with the help of Willy Vlasig. Her plan is to appear at The Queen's Garden Party as "Cinderella at the ball" and embarrass Sterling. Although her action reflects her decision to abandon her fairy-tale-princess expectations, it actually represents the gradual transition of one moving away from the princess syndrome toward autonomy. Here, Hearon again emphasizes that this change is a gradual one. Avery notes that "I had come, of course, as the princess, in a yellow gown light as corn silk . . . Then, remembering some fairy tale in which the princess danced all night in silver shoes in a silver wood, I had added platinum slippers" (p. 153).
During the party, Avery accidentally discovers that Billy Wayne is not the New England scholar of Czech descent he told her he was, but is actually a San Antonio newsman who was from an old German family. She is faced with self-deception, for he is not the prince she thought he was.

She finally realizes that there is something better than being a fairy-tale princess, for the reality from which she is escaping is not so bad after all, that there is nothing wrong with being who you are. Avery discovers that by attempting to emulate her Grandmother Magdelena's silent ways, she was only preserving the status quo as her grandmother did. Avery begins to see her mother for who she truly is, begins to see how "Olga . . . her corkscrew curls bobbing and her little heels teetering had boldly tilted at the very totems of the Germans--their church and their tongue and their heirs--and felled them all" (p. 175).

Through the person of Queen Esther, she observes,

I had learned a lot about those of us who try to pass for others. Those of us who try, like Minna said, to be more like everyone else than everyone else. Here taking her leave of us in a public place, an elderly woman in a flowing red robe provided an example for us all. Like Olga Dolle stuffing her Swedish ways down the throats of the grandfathers, Jane Brown's electing to go forth as Queen Esther demonstrated that winners were the ones not afraid to say they were others and act upon it. Otto passing as a German, Gruene passing as a Czech, Minna passing as invisible, and Avery passing as a third-rate princess waiting in the wings of her garage tower could all take lessons. (p. 185)
This fairy-tale novel closes with the birth of a more spiritually self-aware individual. By discovering her self-worth and the importance of relying on her own strength rather than that of an imaginary prince, Avery can continue her quest for individual personhood.

**Painted Dresses**

Hearon's sixth novel, *Painted Dresses*, traces the lives of Nicholas Clark and Nell Woodard, their choices and repudiations, and the paths they take to find one another. Within this unique love story is Hearon's basic pattern of a woman's attempt to secure self-integration and fulfillment by becoming a fairy-tale princess.

Nell Woodard is a young woman in her mid-twenties dissatisfied because she cannot express herself and be seen clearly by others. Trapped in the confines of family, she notes, "It is hard to tell what something you are a part of is really like; it is the way you cannot see a picture if you are in it looking out."6

Nell's family--her husband and her eccentric rhyming relatives--is the primary obstacle to her quest for a unique identity. Upon leaving her husband, Tucker Drury, a prominent banker, she tells him that "nothing was right" (p. 48). Although little is said of her marriage, it is implied that life with Tucker was one consumed with the social status connected with the good Drury name.
and one which consequently smothered Nell's own identity.

Mommy also blocks Nell's attempts toward self-expression. Her plans to divorce Tucker are met with Mommy's disapproval; "It's too much LaNelle. Think of all the talk. They'll think there's someone else no matter what you say . . ." (p. 29). Yet, Nell silently observes that "the fear, of course, was not that there was someone else, but that there wasn't" (p. 28). Her simple reply that "I just don't want to be married to Tucker" (p. 27) is beyond the comprehension of her mother, who takes great pride in the Drury name. It is difficult for Mommy to understand Nell's dilemma as she herself has been primarily responsible for creating the restraining atmosphere with which Nell is so discontented. Nell does not want to be like her mother, a self-centered, status-conscious woman who thinks that self-definition is akin to family membership and that "ours was the only family" (p. 261). Her marriage to Tommy separated Nell from her real father--a "stranger" instead of a family member who seems to have lived an attractive life because of it--and gave her a perverted stepfather who molested her. Nell avoids repeating her mother's past by leaving her son Alfred in order "to show him that one person at least could break out of this" (p. 265), could seek an identity apart from
one predetermined by family. During a visit with Alfred, Nell tells him, "I think I wished I had not lived with my mother" (p. 88). Later, she silently wonders, "Was every parent who left a child getting even? . . . If so, at whom? The parent who raised you or the one who didn't?" (p. 88). She decides to spend her time painting, to spend "the rest of [her] life trying to catch the essence of the strange yellow haze filtered through the hardwoods on a hillside of blackberries . . . or distill the difference between the white of the coverlet in the Babies Room and the white of the Capodimonte roses." She observes that "spending one's life translating light was outside the framework of Mommy's world" (p. 28), which is precisely where she wants to be. Thus, by separating herself from Tucker and Mommy and Tommy, Nell is able to pursue her painting—the means by which she will define herself.

Because Nell is an artist not adept at verbal expression, her impressionistic thoughts and observations are expressed through her artwork. Much like Clara Blue, Nell begins her quest by seeking self-integration and fulfillment through her painting, yet, later, as she becomes frustrated with her slow progress, she turns to the role of the fairy-tale princess as the means. Her learning to paint coincides with her first attempts at separating her identity from her family's. She notes that "nothing told you
how it really worked. . . . nobody said to you how you got the picture in your head out through your fingers onto the canvas. It was a matter of having what you were seeing in you become apparent as the same thing outside you. Between recollecting and reproducing there was a missing step" (p. 44). Soon thereafter, as she begins to construct and shape the floor model of the Wedding Dress, she begins the process of shaping her self. Nell's paintings of the "Dresses" become projections of her changing self-image. Much later, Nick notes "that each, against its dark backdrop, represented Nell. The dresses had no faces, because the face was hers. . . . Early ones had an innocence that later ones did not . . . " (p. 268). The late midsummer exhibition of the best of her "Dresses" made her painfully aware of the fact that the show was "a meager lot for almost six years' work. Only in the last six months had she been able to make the canvas show what she saw" (pp. 67-68). As her artwork seems a tedious way to attain her separate identity, she turns to what she believes is a better way, the role of the fairy-tale princess.

Her decision to don this guise is not a surprising one, for she has been raised as a princess. Like most princesses, she possesses a special name--LaNelle--which rhymes with her sister's name, Moselle, and her mother's, Estelle, and which fits into a long line of rhyming family names. Her eccentric great-aunts--Vinnie and Minie--serve
as doting fairy-godmothers whom she describes as "older than age, ancient Sears and Roebuck copies of genteel ladies, their paint and powder cracked and dried on their wrinkled skin" (p. 3). Nell periodically visits them in their enchanted house where the rooms are known by colors, her favorite being the Rose Room in which sit her beloved Capodimonte china roses. Her appearance is often described as "drab," for her usual outfit is brown. In addition to her appearance, Nell's nature is also recognized as being distinct. Mommy notes that her artistic temperament is "like a birthmark . . . . An artist is simply outside [the family], you know" (p. 29). Moselle tells Nell that "you just aren't like other people. You aren't looking for what the rest of us look for . . . " (p. 37). Mommy and Tommy serve as her wicked stepparents from whom she seeks to escape.

Frustrated with her artwork in Santa Fe, Nell begins to look for a prince one night in the Blue Parrot Bar. There she finds Max Short as the perfect candidate, for he resembles her father, someone who is not family and who would remain a stranger, someone who could help her escape the unpleasant confines of family. She observes that

As she had fought those years in Santa Fe to make cool colors on her canvas, so also she had fought its languor and indolence to retain some passion inside her. Now in her joy at having found it with Max, she saw that she had forfeited the regimental order that had
constituted her life before him. . . . It was time for Nell to be offered another view of life. (pp. 90-91)

However, when the alcoholic Max proves to be completely unable to aid her in establishing an identity, Nell turns to painting once more.

After his death, Nell immerses herself in her artwork with a more fragmented self. She views her confused identity in terms of her interest with the "partial figure," collecting her own fragmented body parts together and explained to Them that Theirs was a common lot. The stomach linings, aching back, sluggish bowels, damp armpits, plugged sinuses, tough scaly elbows propping things up, knees weak with bending to the loss . . . . They were flattened to be Art. (p. 145)

After going to the nearby care and visiting with Vera the waitress, who loves her job, Nell goes home and begins to piece together the dismembered parts of her identity:

That night in the white bed she gathered Them around her. "It's too vicarious," she said, "--- other people." They said: "We told you so." "I want one of my own," she said. "A life." They knew she would come around. There was hugging and crying as They piled into bed with her and the lot of Them settled down to a good night's sleep. (pp. 159-60)

She continues this shaping of her self quite literally at the Greenhouse Health spa with Mommy and Moselle. She notes that it was "a body shop for wornout parts" (p. 181), where "everything was cared for; no part was forgotten."
They were all earth worms divided into sections, annelids getting it together." However, regardless of the grief she has experienced with Max as her "prince," her ambivalence toward fairy-tale princess ideals emerges when she wants to end her "top-to-toe rejuvenation program" with a man (p. 192).

While in New Orleans, she spots Nicholas Clark, who appears to be "a good man who would have a wife back home whom he was faithful to, and Eagle Scouts named Dolph and Rolf" (p. 215). Angry with herself for "assuming banality," she decides to follow him to the Market. Yet, with Nick, she finds, not an imaginary prince who is to rescue her and assign her an identity, but someone for whom she can care, someone with whom she can share her life. She wonders why she did not pick up Nick instead of Max at the Parrot. Why did Nick choose Virginia? Both had fairy-tale expectations of a mate, which Nell describes as "excuses." She tells Nick that it's like the fairy tale where the witches cast a spell on Sleeping Beauty that she'll prick her finger on a spinning wheel. You never doubt that; even when her daddy banishes them all from his kingdom, you know she'll find one. The butterfly was your excuse for not being able to avoid it. (p. 231)

Yet Nell continues to struggle with her ambivalent attitude toward being a fairy-tale princess and her frustration with her seemingly inescapable family. In her
bedroom with Nick, she tells him, "I hate it. It feels like I'm a puppet and somebody is jerking my strings. Do you think that every time we have sex that there will be twenty of us there? . . . All those legs and arms and wide-open mouths?" (p. 235). She fears that running away with Nick and living his way would turn her into a fairy-tale princess again.

Through various characters, Hearon makes Nell's dilemma universal. Her sister, Moselle, like Nell, feels trapped by her family and thus makes token changes in an attempt to individualize herself. She tells Nell,

> What I mean is that I think most people do the same thing that most other people do. So they want to seem different. Look at me. Everyone has a red-tiled roof, so Mo has a blue one. . . . I wouldn't have named my twins Frank and Stein, instead of Quatro and Cinco to go with Daddy Trey, if that hadn't already been the trend . . . I was letting them know we'd carried it too far. (p. 38)

Mo encourages Nell to go to Santa Fe, for she says that "it's what I'd most love to do in the whole world" (p. 40). Later, her affair becomes her futile attempt to attain self-expression as a fairy-tale princess.

Minette Williams, a recovering alcoholic with a glass eye whom Nell meets at the health spa, is also attempting to "get fixed up," to put together her fragmented self. In looking at the woman's sagging body, Nell observes that "It was her spirits showing" (p. 187). For fun and
therapy, Nell gives Minette a "new self" by telling her to play the part of a mysterious Virginia tobacco heiress. However, she becomes discouraged when she realizes that Minette's fairy-tale disguise would not "play for the patched-up woman back home" (p. 191).

While sitting in a hotel coffee shop in New Orleans, Nell eavesdrops on a nearby conversation between two elderly ladies. They discuss a friend's worries about her former daughter-in-law's pregnancy and her own trip abroad to get her "mind on other matters." By listening to their conversation Nell realizes that almost everyone is burdened by family at one time or another. She silently observes that "Here, as well, families were all entwined with one another; from time to time one of them was sent out of town to recuperate" (p. 214).

Nick's mother, Mary Ann, is a woman whose identity is as fragmented as her speech. Suspected of drowning her half-sister when she was younger, she was forever banned from her family. Her Russian "mother" informed her that she was actually her stepmother; in doing so, she ruined her life and, as Nell notes, "had driven a spike through this threadbare doll" (p. 253). After changing her name from Marian to Mary Ann, she meets her prince, Nick's father, and is married. Watching Nick's father help Mary Ann to the table, "Nell could see her: bride, in a white
dress, nothing under it, no body, no substance, no past, just a dress going down the aisle on the arm of a man who carried her as protectively as his own hands." Living life as a fairy-tale princess has not provided Mary Ann with an identity, for she is nothing more than an apparition (p. 252).

Once she recognizes the fallaciousness of fairy-tale princess ideals and admits that Max was never a prince, Nell is able to take the responsibility of developing her own identity. She discovers, "You can't love what is not there. You can only love your memory of it, which distorts, and blurs, until all that is left is you. Love Lost is looking in a mirror. What did she have of Max but her own past fervor and grief and anger? None of Max" (p. 243). With this realization, she is able to live with Nick, for she knows he is someone who will share her love and not be a Max who takes it. By learning to rely on her own strength through her painting, Nell is able to escape her family and find love. Even though the role of the fairy-tale princess actually delays her attainment of a unique identity and true love, she sees it as something which, when overcome, was nothing more than a pause which will not prevent her from finding happiness. Nell thinks of "what they missed, then; no longer of what she would miss" and tells Nick that "I know we had to have been there
to be here. But I wish we hadn't stayed there so long" (p. 270).

**Afternoon of a Faun**

In *Afternoon of a Faun*, Hearon takes a slightly different approach in developing her main concern with identity by focusing on the lives of two young people, but primarily that of fifteen-year-old Jeanetta Mayfield. Faced with the reality of her adoption, Jeanetta realizes that she is not who she appears to be and consequently sets out to find her true identity.

For all of her fifteen years, Jeanetta has defined herself according to who her parents are and how they view her: she is the darling daughter of the kind and respected Betty and Finis Mayfield. While looking at herself in front of her bedroom mirrors, Jeanetta is concerned about projecting this favorable self-image, wondering "if the image you saw was the same image other people saw when they looked at you." She is confident that it is until her fifteenth birthday when her parents tell her that she is adopted. The very ones who once defined her become the obstacles she must overcome. It is then that Jeanetta begins her quest for a unique identity through the role of the fairy-tale princess.

Jeanetta possesses the distinctive traits of a young woman who has been raised a fairy-tale princess. Born on
Valentine's Day to a couple she believes to be the Mayfields, she develops into an uncommon young woman "marked" by her partiality to the color combination of pink and yellow and by her poor coordination and tone deafness. Her person is, by the title, likened to a faun, a mythological creature of extraordinary parentage. She is described as "beautiful," having the regular features of "a kind of small nose and eyes that slanted up just a little at the corners" and the distinctive feature of "long and shiny blonde" hair (p. 22). Jeanetta is cared for by the loving Betty, a kind of fairy-godmother, who shares a relationship with her "closer than most mothers and daughters" (p. 19). She has provided for Jeanetta an enchanted surrounding--a bedroom decorated in yellow and pink and lined with a "three-foot row of mirror tiles" (p. 3). On her special fifteenth birthday, her adopted father breaks the news of her special origin to her in the form of a fairy tale:

Once upon a time, in the sight of God . . . there was a beautiful young bride whose heart had closed in grief. . . . So some kind doctor comes along and sees her misery, and persuades her to unbend herself. "What is it, lovely lady" he asks, and she tells him, "It is my fondest wish to have a little girl." . . . In time . . . Betty and Finis Mayfield were blessed with the one perfect chosen daughter, and they named her Jeanetta Edna, because they loved her. (p. 25)

He adds that she was "the fairest of them all" (p. 26). Jeanetta later becomes angry at her parents, for "they
couldn't see that she wasn't the same person she had
been . . . " (p. 45).

Following this unexpected revelation, Jeanetta be-
comes consumed with her mistaken identity. She continues
to struggle with the fact that she is not as she appears.
She looks into her mirrors and "it was like she saw the
girl for the first time: whose eyes were those, whose nose,
whose hair, whose tongue that curled, whose finger that
clasped left thumb over right? Whose breasts?" (p. 56).
In an effort to seek a solution to her crisis, she tells
her friend Leslie, who thinks it is a novelty to be a
"foundling," "a love child" (p. 38). Because Jeanetta is
not as "adventurous" as Leslie, she cannot view herself
in this way. Consequently, she decides to replace her
"wicked stepparents" with true fairy-godparents who will
seriously aid her in finding her identity.

Jeanetta goes to her biology teacher, Mr. Jenkins,
who she believes would "understand the genetics" of her
dilemma. She asks him if "a person is more like his
adopted parents on account of having grown up around them,
or like his real parents on account of having their genes?"
He replies, "Well, now, the honest answer is, beats the
hell out of me" (p. 43). In a very lighthearted manner,
he attempts to answer her very obscure questions, yet he
misinterprets her intentions by thinking that she may be
pregnant and considering adoption herself. Later, she tries again to fit Mr. Jenkins into the role of "godfather" by imagining him as her mysterious biological father, the romantic young doctor. However, the image does not last, for Mr. Jenkins is neither as serious nor as knowledgeable as he appears to be.

Unable to find her identity through a godfather of whose character she is sure, Jeanetta, instead, looks for a godmother to replace the "wicked stepmother," Betty. While acting as a volunteer at the Kentucky State School for the Deaf, Jeanetta meets Miss Beasley, the director of volunteers, who is a helpful, dedicated, and seemingly well-adjusted older woman. Jeanetta sees her as the ideal candidate for her godmother. Yet, Miss Beasley falls short of the fairy-tale godmother role for, as a lesbian, she is confused about her own identity and is unable to help Jeanetta establish hers.

Jeanetta is still persisting in her search for someone, this time a prince, who will define her uncertain identity when she enrolls at the Summer Arts Program at Bennington College. There she meets the sensitive Harry James who takes an interest in her adoption and quest for identity, for he tells her that he knew her father. Neglected by his own parents, Harry, as a teenager, "adopted" her biological parents, Danny and Ebie Wister. Yet Harry James is unable
to rescue her from her dilemma, for, as a homosexual, he, too, is confused about his identity. It is through friendship rather than romance with Harry that Jeanetta is not only given a glimpse of her heritage but also receives a better understanding of adoption as love. She notices Harry's constant tugging at her sleeve, a habit that their "father" Danny has, and notes, "You're like the Deafs doing that"; Harry simply replies, "It's heredity" (p. 171). Her awkward gait and tone deafness indicate to Harry that she is Danny's daughter and a part of his "family," that she was "connected" with him (p. 198).

After Harry makes arrangements for Danny to see Jeanetta during her recital, Danny mistakes another for her. It is then that a very frustrated Harry says what Jeanetta has felt--that your family is never able to see you clearly, that

what hurt was knowing that you never knew them and they never knew you. None of them, not the ones who had you or the ones you adopted, could pick you out of the crowd. They could pass you on the street and never know that you were theirs. Anybody could be more kin . . . (p. 207)

Jeanetta gradually begins to see herself as a unique person instead of one defined by family. Describing to Harry her performance in Jakob's class, she notes that "I'm the worst one in there . . . but you would think it would bother me, not to be good, but it doesn't because I know why, I'm not limber enough. . . . I used to not be
able to see that for myself, but now I can . . . " (p. 168). Jeanetta feels uncomfortable telling her parents about her renewed interest in the piano because her playing has become the means by which she will establish her unique identity. Consequently, she does not invite them to her recital at the summer camp and tells Harry, "I don't keep secrets from them, but they don't happen to know that I'm playing again . . . ." Harry is able to speak her feelings, and his own, by noting, "Parents can take things away from you simply by perceiving them" (p. 200).

It is not as a fairy-tale princess that Jeanetta is able to overcome her family, for the godparents and the prince she chooses are not as capable as they appear. However, through her experiences at the summer program and her attempts at introspection, she is finally able to overcome the shock of adoption and is able to set out and discover who this "new Jeanetta" is (p. 57).

**Group Therapy**

*Group Therapy* is Hearon's fresh approach to an old theme. It is the story of an educated young woman in pursuit of her identity and the various means by which she attempts to attain it. Through her experiences, she is able to change her perception of herself as a fairy-tale princess and subsequently begin the process of self-definition.
Thirty-two-year-old Lutie Sayre, having completed her doctorate in sociology, leaves her home in Texas to take a teaching position at a New York university. She, like Hearon's other heroines, is frustrated because she is never recognized as the person she actually is. Moving is her only option, for the chief obstacle to her quest for individuality is her family.

Lutie fears that she is destined to live her mother's unfulfilled dreams. Descended from a fine old Southern family, Florence Sayre places great importance on the continuation of its traditions and genteel past. However, she does not want to sacrifice the independence and responsibility she has acquired with being a modern career woman. In order to have the best of both worlds--to have the excitement of the modern and the cherished customs of the past--Florence sees her daughter as the one to preserve the Southern traditions of the Sayres: entertaining in the house with a name, living with an old-fashioned name, marrying to attain social status. Therefore, she raises Lutie to be a Southern Belle, a fairy-tale princess, through whom she will vicariously live. Since Florence equates being a part of a family with such an overwhelming sense of tradition to self-fulfillment, she laments Lutie's leaving and "warns" her that in the North "there are whole groups of people who don't have any sense of family, at least not
as we know it." Yet, from experience and from her mother's actions, Lutie knows that one cannot attain self-clarification through one's family. Seeking a means which would lead her to a life of her own and an identity apart from her family's, Lutie ironically turns to the very role from which she is attempting to escape—that of the fairy-tale princess.

Lutie possesses all the characteristics of one destined to live a fairy-tale life. Her name has a special origin. Although she was born "Lutie Pinter," she becomes "Lutie Sayre" when the newly divorced Florence changes their surname to her mother's maiden name, "the fine old name of Sayre." Before her birth, Florence and her sister Caroline "had searched the entire genealogy for just the right names" for their daughters and had decided that "Lutie and Nannie" were perfect. Lutie also has a unique parentage; it is almost as if she had spun into existence asexually. She describes her heritage as "matrilineal descent" and notes that it seems "from the start there was only Gran and the four of us: Mother and Aunt Caroline, and Nan and I" (p. 3). In addition, Lutie has lived in an enchanted surrounding—the family house with a name. When she was small, this house was River Bend, "Gran's tidy white frame house" (p. 3); when she was older, it was her mother's Redoaks.
Even as a child, Lutie felt the restriction placed upon her by her family. She realized that neither she nor Nannie had an identity of her own, that "we, small girls, seemed insignificant and inessential. Paper children, with outdated names, cut from a pattern book" (p. 7). As an adult, Lutie sets out to change that self-image by becoming a fairy-tale princess.

By marrying Dabney, Lutie intends to escape her family's influence by establishing her identity through her association with this fellow scholar. However, her marriage to him only identifies her as the fairy-tale princess of her mother's dreams. It was not a happy marriage. On her belated honeymoon to Italy, Lutie has renewed hope that this fairy-tale marriage will work and "expected [it] to change in lovely Rome: sunlit, pine-scented, lavish, crumbing Rome" (pp. 192-93). Yet, it does not. The marriage ends in divorce, and Lutie continues to be trapped in the confines of family.

It is then that she realizes that her escape from her family must be a literal one. At the beginning of the novel, Lutie is preparing to leave for Manhattan, to run away from home. There, she plans to teach what she begins to realize is true in her own life: "that we take the view of others toward us to be ourselves and that we take this projected self as real when we act toward others" (p. 118).
It is not until Lutie enrolls in the therapy group that she begins to examine her motives for being a fairy-tale princess. The very fact that she joins a group shows that she no longer wants to project the image of Southern fairy-tale gentility for which she has been raised. She observes, "It was threatening to know that you are seen differently from the way you intended. That's what a group would do: show you who you were, reflected in their eyes" (p. 28).

Although she intends for the group to become the means by which she will establish her individuality, she nevertheless lapses into the role of the fairy-tale princess and begins to view her therapist, Joe Donaldson, as the prince who will rescue her identity from her family's clutch. The concern of the group is Image. After taking off all items which would provide clues to their identities, they try to guess the age and profession of those sitting next to them by concentrating on their clothes and gestures. They discover that "no one was what she or he looked like" (p. 69). When the participants are told to write on their pads the image they would like to project, Lutie writes, "independent--individual--in control" (p. 69). After the group, Joe and his assistant Sammy persuade her to stay. Her consent to spend the night marks her reacceptance of fairy-tale princess ideals, for she turns to conjugal love as a means of establishing her identity.
However, their first night together consisted of nothing more than a visit. Lutie notes, "The night we met was not 'the night we met'" (p. 92). As Lutie plays the part of a Cord owner under Joe's direction, she is able to become the confident individual in control that she wants to be. After they become lovers, Lutie notes "the present changes the past . . . and what was enough is not enough now" (p. 95). Her pursuit of individuality through the means of her own strength and daily experiences no longer appears to be the best. She notes that "now I am lonesome without him" (p. 95).

As their relationship progresses, Lutie realizes that Joe is not a prince, but a person who is not in control of life himself and who is still in the process of shaping his identity. Yet, most important, she realizes that there is nothing redeeming about being a fairy-tale princess. Time and distance and group therapy sharpen Lutie's perception, and she is able to see her family more clearly. Upon visiting Aunt Caroline in Savannah for Thanksgiving, she discovers the damage the fairy-tale princess version of womanhood is capable of as it distorts reality. Caroline's emphasis on her husband's being a prince completely blinded her to the fact of his possessing human weaknesses and eventually led to his suicide. To make matters worse, those who were primarily responsible for the eviction of the
black family which upset Uncle Elbert so—the Rutledge sisters, Ladye and Faith—now serve as Caroline's fairy-godmothers, who provide her with a "darling cottage" and a life filled with "house parties to Tybee" and "card parties" (p. 152). Caroline's conscience does not permit her to admit that Elbert died by suicide, for suicide is not part of the fairy-tale life. Shocked and disgusted, Lutie searches for traces of Uncle Elbert. In his church study, she finds his picture and stares at "the owl-eyed man as if at a stranger" (p. 182). Later, she wonders "if status among women was always bought at the cost of lives without men" (p. 243).

In returning to New York, she discovers that Joe has been "back in the sack with [his] ex" (p. 216). Because Lutie has been a fairy-tale princess who has been allowing her family to determine her life, she has alienated Joe. He wants her to be at home with him and tries to explain to her that home is where he is. However, it is Nannie who later makes Lutie understand that their mothers "wanted you to be married but never to leave home" (p. 232). Lutie is afraid that living with Joe would make him her prince, and she would be repeating the bad experience she had with Dabney. She realizes that her quest for identity as a fairy-tale princess has smothered and is even capable of extinguishing the identities of the men most important to her, even that of her "prince."
Later, Lutie visits her mother and attends her awards ceremony. At the program, she realizes that being a fairy-tale princess has neither helped her to escape from her family's influence nor provided her a means to self-fulfillment. She is not Lutie Sayre but rather "somebody's daughter" (p. 245). Before returning to New York, she decides to continue to look beyond fairy-tale princess ideals by seeing her father, Mr. Pinter. Seen through his eyes, Florence appears as the demanding, unreasonable fairy-tale princess that she is, and Lutie becomes increasingly disenchanted.

The character portrayals of Mrs. Rodino, Mavis, and Nannie lend credibility to Hearon's theme by universalizing Lutie's dilemma. Lutie likes Mrs. Rodino, her dressmaker, who "lived in a settled neighborhood with flower borders and glassed-in front entries." While watching her favorite soap opera "Texas," Mrs. Rodino talks about her mother during the commercial breaks, "who had died two years ago at ninety, and [who] she missed . . . every day of her life" (p. 46). She tells Lutie that it was good of her to keep in touch with her mother but cannot understand why Lutie would move so far away from her. Through the character of Mrs. Rodino, Lutie realizes that this strong life bond between mother and daughter dictates other women's thoughts and actions as well.
Her friend Mavis displays an even closer relationship with her mother by feeling compelled to repeat her mother's life. Although her mother is doing fine after her father's death, Mavis is not. Crying and laughing at once, she tells Lutie that she is lonesome. She continues to note,

What's the point of getting tenure if I still take two weeks out of every summer and go all the way across the country to spend it with my mother? I ask you. What's the use of getting all this education if you still can't shake the idea that you ought to have some bald man with a potbelly who hasn't read a book in fifteen years parked in your living room, and you think you're missing something if you don't? (p. 131)

Nannie, like Lutie, is in psychological bondage to her mother. Because she is unmarried and has become extremely overweight, she does not make a proper fairy-tale princess like her sister-in-law Mickey and is consequently alienated from her mother. She talks about her mother ignoring her father's depression and describes the Rutledge sisters as "the witches." Nannie tells Lutie, "You know how they are, our mothers; they don't cognize anything they don't want to" (p. 232).

Although she realizes the shortcomings of the fairy-tale princess life, the breaking of the old habit of being a princess, of being more preoccupied with herself than with the man she loves, is a gradual one. When she forgets to meet Joe one afternoon, he becomes enraged and compares her to Browning's Last Duchess, who, when the duke offered
her his heart for the tenth time, had her mind on the day's trivial matters.

By rejecting fairy-tale-princess ideals as a means to self-fulfillment, she is able to escape her family and share a life with the man she loves. Together, it is possible for them to form a group, a family. She observes, "It had to do with the fact that even if you let it be true, the way Joe said, that nobody changed, you had to make provisions for the fact that they changed in relation to you" (p. 272). Having assumed the responsibility of directing her own life, Lutie is able to attain self-fulfillment and happiness.
NOTES

1 Shelby Hearon, Armadillo in the Grass (Dallas: Pressworks Publishing, Inc., 1983), p. 4. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

2 Shelby Hearon, The Second Dune (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 15. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.


4 Shelby Hearon, Now and Another Time (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), p. 86. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.


6 Shelby Hearon, Painted Dresses (New York: Atheneum, 1981), p. 3. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

7 Shelby Hearon, Afternoon of a Faun (New York: Atheneum, 1983), p. 4. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

8 Shelby Hearon, Group Therapy (New York: Atheneum, 1984), p. 16. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION: THE CHANGING QUEST

In Armadillo in the Grass, The Second Dune, Hannah's House, Now and Another Time, A Prince of a Fellow, Painted Dresses, Afternoon of a Faun, and Group Therapy, Shelby Hearon examines women's unsuccessful attempts to attain self-fulfillment by subscribing to powerlessness, the traditional image of femininity. By adopting the romantic notions of a fairy-tale princess, her characters experience a delusory psychological liberation from their dilemmas and mistakenly believe they are asserting their autonomy and are moving toward a self-definition.

Hearon's thematic intention—to repudiate the notion that females are inferior persons who must rely on sexual relationships in order to attain completeness of character—is clear in each novel. Through their ensuing experiences, their protagonists discover that viewing life as a fairy tale and men as princes only contributes to the disarray of their identities. Although Hearon develops her message by way of the fairy-tale motif throughout her eight novels, her focus shifts. The princess in search of a prince who figures so prominently in her early novels is gradually transformed into the mature individual of her later novels.
who seeks to establish a unique identity herself. This progression reveals Hearon's maturing artistic ability and her intensified affirmation of feminism as well as humanism. Her changing perspective, reflected by the increasing complexity of her characters and the change in their quests, can best be traced by examining her first two novels—Armadillo in the Grass and The Second Dune—and two of her later novels—Painted Dresses and Group Therapy.

Armadillo in the Grass

In Armadillo in the Grass and The Second Dune, Hearon's exploration of women's experiences with powerlessness and their dependence upon another for identity refutes the traditional ideas about womanhood. Her heroines—Clara Blue and Ellen Marshall—are women who attribute their inability to attain self-fulfillment to their supposed inherent feminine debility. They are fairy-tale princesses who see the men in their lives as princes who will fulfill many of their most fantastic expectations of life. They are private, reflective individuals whose rebellion does not completely overturn the conventional ideas of marriage, motherhood, and personal satisfaction. Although these women eventually recognize that men are not princes and that the shaping of their identities is their own responsibility, they never make a dramatic break from the old ascribed image of femininity.

Clara Blue, in Armadillo in the Grass, is characterized by her contemplative and reticent nature. Partially due to
Hearon's inexperience as a writer and partially due to Clara's own lack of verbal adeptness as an artist, the character of Clara Blue is not a complex one. In many ways, she is childlike, for she is more comfortable in the presence of children and animals than of adults. She also experiences difficulty in properly verbalizing her thoughts and feelings, and frequently makes awkward observations. Moreover, Clara's reflections are often those of another—primarily her mother's view of the world and favorite lines of poetry. Faced with the threat of repeating her mother's past and with her own lack of self-confidence, Clara seeks to escape by attempting to live a storybook life. But, instead of escaping from or changing reality, she distorts it by viewing the men in her life as superhuman, as princes who will secure her an identity entirely her own.

Clara first attempts to define herself through Anslow. Confused about life in college, Clara turns to Anslow for a solution. She remembers him as being a "very tall and fair" man who had "his feet rooted in the lessons of the past and his eyes fixed on the promise of the future." Therefore, Anslow seems a suitable candidate for prince and becomes the person upon whom she will rely for self-fulfillment. However, it is not until later in her married life that Clara realizes that Anslow is not the prince she believed him to be. She observes that although his view of
life continues to be rooted in the past and fixed on the future "it seems different. Now he keeps tripping over me down here on my hands and knees in the present." Instead of seeing her interest in the possum, the armadillo, and the raccoon as an attempt to communicate her concern about the present moment, Anslow tells her, "If I wandered around in the middle of the night feeding scraps to half the four-legged animals in the state, I'd want some proof of my sanity" (p. 6). Anslow has not only been unable to rescue her identity from obscurity and thereby procure her self-fulfillment, but he has compounded her problem with his intense concern for the past and future and his disregard of the present.

Experiencing frustration and dissatisfaction with her present situation, Clara begins to search for a new means to express herself. Despite her inauspicious beginning as a fairy-tale princess, she once again relies on the "strengths" of a prince--her art teacher, Locke Smith, whose frankness and spontaneity attract her. Following one of her lessons, she notes, "For the first time he does not grab my hand goodbye, and I think that it means something. One of these days I am going to see him not so blurred and then it will be even harder to go out the door of the carriage house" (p. 42). During the course of her lessons, she begins to view him as the prince who will rescue her from a husband who does not understand her and from the
terrible threat of the predetermined life with which her mother has left her.

Yet Clara's perception of Locke is distorted. She chooses to ignore his being a "bony man with close-cut hair" clad in jeans and tennis shoes who speaks of a past tainted with alcoholism. Instead, she focuses on his princely characteristics, the most distinguishing of which is his "light eyes," which Clara describes as "blinding" and "brighter than the sun" (p. 57). Although she is intrigued by their luminescence, she is attracted most to their acuity. She notes that "they are almost closed, wrinkled at the corners, watching me" (p. 55). His "light eyes" seem to be more perceptive than Anslow's and enable him to "speak to [her] condition" (p. 57). Locke understands that her concern for the present is a way of resisting change. Clara silently reflects,

When he talks of a place to begin, it is my mother saying: You have only to know that wherever you are you are on the road to yourself. When he talks about the sky and earth smashing together it is what happens for me in our part of the woods as the sun first turns on our faces in the mornings. (pp. 57-58)

Since Locke understands her dilemma, she believes he can help her begin a new life.

Just preceding the death of her mother, Clara notes, "This May I have waked in the nights with Locke's name before me" (p. 69). After her mother's death, when Clara's
fears of repeating her mother's life are intensified, Locke appears on her doorstep bearing her a gift of a smooth, fine-grained wooden stump. She silently notes, "It was such a kind thing for Locke to do to bring me this, such a good time for him to bring something that I have never worked on before" (p. 89). As in a fairy-tale, his thoughts are transformed into an object which Clara later uses to become a more self-aware individual. Although Clara eventually realizes that his presence is unnecessary in the shaping of her talent as well as her identity, she does so not by her own intuition but by Locke's observation. After Clara tells Locke she loves him, he replies,

   Besides, it isn't me, great as that is for the ego. It's the work you do when you walk through my door. And you can have that wherever you are. . . . If you had your choice between preventing grass stains with me or working on that wood stump you've got there-- (p. 91)

After their discussion, Locke shows her how to work with the wood by teaching her to look at the "lights" and to trust her own perception. This advancement in her artistic skill--her sculpture of the rabbit from the walnut stump--signals the emergence of her feminine autonomy.

Because Clara is an artist not adept at verbal expression, her work becomes the outward expression of her inner experience. Upon her completion of the walnut rabbit, Locke brings her a large quarry stone and shows her how to study its form. She notes that "it is the first
time I have worked in a medium without seeing pieces of his to go by" (p. 109). As she begins to work with the stone, she observes, "The light of the wood was blinding, but the fantastic opacity of the stone is harder yet on the eyes. It swallows light . . . " (p. 110). The gift of the bright stone represents Locke's final transference of the misplaced "light"--psychological acuity--that Clara has forced upon him back to Clara herself.

It is then that she begins viewing her sculpting rather than Locke as her means toward self-expression. Later, when he picks her up from the park and takes her back to the museum, he is pleased to hear Clara call him "Teacher," and thereby acknowledge that she no longer thinks of him as a prince. As they drive away, her thoughts are not on Locke but rather, as she reflects, on "the creek rimmed with fall leaves, [and] a walnut face that I might make framed with branches of sumac and tallow trees" (p. 135). Her autonomy continues its gradual emergence. Following Locke's move to Houston, Clara notes, "I have cried two times because he is leaving, as most of my time there is nothing but to work" (p. 150).

Although Clara has become more conscious of her self-worth, she makes no significant advancement toward independence. For the most part, Clara remains the conventional woman--the repressed housewife and mother--she was
at the beginning of the novel. She does not seriously con-
front her husband, does not consider divorce, does not pur-
sue a career in sculpting. Her main objective, her quest,
has primarily been to find a way to reconcile herself to a
dissatisfying life as a powerless woman.

Despite her frustration with Anslow, the marriage re-
mains intact. As they talk one night, Clara again expresses
her need for stability, for constancy, for the present mo-
ment. She tells him,

An, it's just that I need some things to stay the
same. I need to picture Sarah always in brown and
pink; Marthanne always on the bridge; the glyp
never extinct in the ferns; the raccoons begging
by the feeder tray; the armadillo in the grass;
my mother in the garden . . . . (p. 144)

Anslow tells her, "Life isn't like that" (p. 144). Ironi-
cally, the very clash in perspectives that separated them
before has become a stabilizing factor in her life, for
the difference is something which will never change. At
the end of the novel, Clara is still scrambling eggs at
seven-fifteen for Arch and Cal and is still attending
faculty parties with Anslow. She reflects, "There would
not be the urgency to capture my pictures forever in wood
and stone and bronze if the scene never changed" (p. 150).
Her sculpting is the only change she has made in her mun-
dane routine, and however inconsequential it may appear,
it does represent her movement toward self-expression and
fulfillment.
Like Clara Blue, Ellen Marshall, in *The Second Dune*, is a housewife, a mother of two, a person who experiences frustration with an unresponsive husband and who fears repeating her mother's past. She attempts to overcome her dilemma and define herself by marrying Prince Charming. Ellen nevertheless comes closer than Clara to attaining autonomy. Although she is far from being a radical feminist, she does manage to break away from some of the feminine conventions to which Clara Blue is still bound. The difference between these two characters represents an important advancement in the development of Hearon's thematic statement of feminism.

Ellen is a complex individual. She is characterized by sensitive womanliness rather than a clumsy girlish charm. In her pursuit of self-definition, Ellen is frequently found reflecting on womanhood and attempting to integrate her various identities as a daughter, a lover, a mother, and a woman. Through her introspection, she examines her desires and her motives for changing husbands. Although she, too, fluctuates between feminism and fairy-tale ideals and attempts to establish her identity through marriage, she does so with more zeal than Clara. Her choices are bold; her disappointments, intense.

On the other hand, Ellen, in many ways, overturns the traditional idea of womanhood, which holds that a woman
must always sacrifice herself for the good of husband and family. She becomes involved in an extramarital affair with John Marshall, a man she believes will provide her with a fulfilling life. In doing so, Ellen believes she is escaping from the routine Franklin has imposed on her life. Ellen remembers, "We had our days so ordered that there was no scheduled time to admit my unfaithfulness, to mention that which was outside the pattern of our time inside the cooling walls of home."²

Upon meeting John, Ellen, viewing herself as a kind of fairy-tale princess, believes she has found her prince. Because John is of a gregarious nature and delights in variety and excitement, she sees him as the one with whom she will be free to become a complete and integrated self.

However, she eventually realizes that John is not a true prince either, for he has not provided her with what she believes she needs: privacy and order. Ellen describes his homecoming:

> John creates sound, as John collects people. When he comes up the walk there are dogs, bike horns, voices where before there was only concrete and heat. Inside the house there is a gathering. (p. 31)

He also enjoys the company of others, especially of his brothers. To him, their visit is a pleasure; yet, to Ellen, it is a strain. She notes their presence "brought back too much of my past to me, parts of it that I do not
want to go through a second time," which include the dis-
comfort which comes with family gatherings and the guilt 
of her divorce (p. 74). After John promises to spend an 
evening alone with her and brings his friend Pete home in-
stead, Ellen becomes furious. The sociability she once 
thought would lead to her self-integration has instead 
contributed to her self-fragmentation. She silently ob-
serves, "I haven't learned to live with what I thought I 
wanted: everyone is always we to John" (p. 131). In their 
bedroom one night, John reminisces about their affair and 
tells her how glad he is that she has found happiness with 
him. Yet Ellen silently notes, "I hid my face against him, 
shamed that I was that content no longer" (p. 167). It is 
then that she begins to question the validity of her 
fairy-tale-princess ideals.

After she meets Franklin by chance downtown, she 
recognizes her error in attempting to transpose the role 
of prince onto a man and finally experiences the full weight 
of her conscience. She observes, "By the time of the di-
vorce I found Franklin's invariability to be rigidity. 
With John to compare him with, I faulted Franklin for all 
those things that I had needed most" (p. 102). Ellen re-
members that at one time she and Franklin had agreed that 
"it gives a certain security to follow a routine" and 
that it had been nice for Franklin to be a "clock" to her
She sorely misses his "constancy . . . , his dependability, his air that he will be the same tomorrow as he is today . . . " (p. 127). Her regret is intense as she silently observes, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is most foolish of them all" (p. 103). Realizing that she cannot attain a separate identity through a sexual relationship, Ellen notes,

There were better things I could have done. There were ways I could have broken habits without breaking a marriage. If I had seen that then, there would have been more private places than a donut shop to hear the voice of Franklin say, "You're wearing your hair down."

But with John already there and waiting, every irritation became magnified. Love is a distorting glass we look through. (pp. 124-25)

Hearon universalizes Ellen's struggle with conventional ideas about marriage by illuminating the experiences of her friends, Vera and Karol. Like Ellen, Vera has turned to a prince to rescue her from a marriage which is suffocating her self-expression and threatening her identity. However, Vera has not yet recognized that the devoted, mild-mannered widower from church is not the superhuman Prince Charming of her dreams.

In contrast, Ellen's friend Karol has discovered that men are not princes. She admits that it is because of her unreasonable fairy-tale expectations that she and Nookie are no longer dating. Karol tells Ellen, "It's the same old story. I hang too many decorations on their
branches. I have to build them up like J. C. Superstar and then I wonder why they can't support the weight. He's just a common salesman, is the truth" (p. 170). Through these characters, Hearon illuminates the prevalence of women's struggle to attain self-fulfillment through the romantic fairy-tale image of marriage.

During her unsuccessful attempts to attain self-integration by relying on the "strengths" of another, Ellen eventually recognizes men as fellow persons and not princes. She observes that although marriage can change the style of her life, it cannot change her nature. With this realization, she begins to assume more responsibility for determining her life.

In addition, Ellen also challenges the traditional, highly revered, self-sacrificing image of motherhood. In order to establish her independence, she divorces Franklin and thus tears her son away from his family, "a rooted union, one set on the limbing genealogy that is recorded for eight generations in a framed branching tree above Mother's bed" (p. 76). Because she places greater value on her own well-being than on Frank's, Ellen's role as a mother becomes of secondary importance. She notes that she is "a mother who was a woman first" (p. 77).

Despite her rebellion, Ellen never completely separates herself from certain conventions. She rejects
marriage and then suddenly embraces it again. Contrary to one's expectations, Ellen does not find the personal satisfaction she is seeking because she continues to hold the romantic notion that marriage will provide her with fulfillment and, consequently, happiness.

After she and John are married, Ellen continues to allow herself to be dictated to by tradition, by social expectations. In order to somehow salve her guilty conscience for having become "a mother who was a woman first" (p. 77), Ellen bears a second child. In this way, she is able to give Ellen Nor the "rooted union" she has stolen from Frank.

Because Ellen has neither asserted her feminist views nor completely rejected the fairy-tale image of womanhood, she remains a dissatisfied person. However, at the close of the novel, she displays a willingness to pursue fulfillment herself. The "uncustomary" breakfast of pecan waffles and juice in crystal glasses she serves John in bed is her "outward observance" of this "inner event" of her gradually emerging autonomy (p. 178). This is her attempt to escape her tower "without waiting for some passing prince" and to continue the process of becoming the self-integrated individual she wants to be (p. 81).

**Painted Dresses**

In *Painted Dresses* and *Group Therapy*, Hearon focuses on women who are more involved with their assertive action
than with their conscious introspection. Nell Woodard and Lutie Sayre are women who, even in the beginning, are portrayed more as feminists than as princesses with confused identities. Although they, too, struggle with the conventional expectations of womanhood, they are able to overcome the feeling of powerlessness which continues to oppress Clara and Ellen. These characters realize that identity is a reflection of the choices one makes rather than the people with whom one associates. Nell and Lutie are not passive feminists--those who recognize their self-worth but who attempt to find solace by burying themselves in hobbies or special interests. Instead, they are women who emerge as self-fulfilled individuals, as feminine activists, who have rejected marriage and motherhood as the means of arriving at a self-definition.

Nell Woodard, in *Painted Dresses*, is a creative woman whose self-expression has been smothered by a possessive family and a disinterested husband. In many ways, Nell is like Clara Blue. Both are housewives-turned-artists who are weary of devoting their energies solely to husbands and children, and both begin to express their personal thoughts and feelings through artwork. However similar they may be, there exists an important difference between them. Nell finishes what Clara has begun. The radical changes Clara contemplates making at the end of *Armadillo in the Grass*
are actually made by Nell at the beginning of *Painted Dresses*. Clara is the budding feminist; Nell, the blossoming. In order to preserve her individuality and thereby establish her identity, Nell chooses to divorce her husband, to leave her child, and to attempt to sever connections with her family by moving to Santa Fe.

However, in her zeal to become a complete individual, the impatient Nell ironically chooses once again to seek fulfillment through sexual relationships. From her ensuing experiences with Max Short and Nicholas Clark, Nell realizes that women can never acquire self-integration by depending on another.

Upon meeting Max Short in the Blue Parrot Bar in Santa Fe, Nell believes she has found a prince who can help her establish her identity. Because he resembles her father in appearance, she feels the short, red-haired Max possesses that same ability her father does, which is to live an independent and therefore fulfilling life apart from the family. By associating with this "prince," Nell believes that she, too, can acquire this good life. Their affair blossoms, and "all their time was rose-colored time: the lavender shadows of adobe church altars, pink crushed strawberries for brunch, the ruby reds of sunsets seen from her bed. All their time was full of joy for Nell."³ Nell is so intent on looking at Max through these "rose-colored"
lights and becomes so entranced by her vision of him as a Prince Charming that she distorts reality. She ignores the fact that he is a hopeless alcoholic with a confused identity. Instead, she pretends he is a dynamic prince. When they meet, the drunken Max, unsure of his own identity, teases her by saying that his name is "Max. Wilhelm Maxwell. Willie Max. Helmwell. Whatever pleases." Then he tells her his name is "Maxwell Baxter. Max Bax for short . . . Maximum Million. Maxmillian" (p. 72). During the course of their romance, his alcoholism renders him impotent. It is then that Nell finally realizes the disorder Max has brought into her life, that "for six years her life had been dichotomy. When Max was in Santa Fe, she fitted herself around his ways. When he was gone, her life and work resumed" (pp. 114-15). As his physical condition worsens, she begins to pull away from him. She notes, "when he lost the mornings of love, and lost assignments, and lost track, and lost connections, she knew that he was lost" (p. 121). She gradually recognizes that Max is not the prince she wants him to be. As the two of them walk through the redwoods, Nell is able to express her thoughts about Max through her artistic perception of nature.

This forest happened ages ago. Nell loved it and began to paint it in her head. She envisioned Max's white shirt against a giant redwood tree. You could tell it was a tree only by the bark, for it made a dark background that shut out everything except the white flapping
shirt. She remembered a fairy tale of the seven shirts and seven brothers, where the sister was to weave shirts for them so that they would no longer be birds but men again, but she didn't get the seventh one finished in time, and one brother was left with one white wing. Nell could see the painting: the shirt, winged on one side, against the dark bark of another time.

A portrait of Max. (p. 120)

Nell's self-deception of thinking of Max as a prince results in the fragmentation rather than in the integration of her self. Shortly before Max's death, Nell begins to realize that she is unable to fulfill herself by relying on his imaginary devotion to her. As she walks through "a grove of stunted trees," Nell projects her innermost feelings through an artistic vision. She observes that,

Ahead of her, just ahead, she was a white lace Dress. It looked as if it were running, yet did not move. Its small sleeves puffed out as it turned to the side, listening to the sound of the concert from the stage.

She sat on a bench and put it through her eyes into her head: the gross birds stuck as if with chewing gum to the tree tops, the forest, heavy and beheaded, the white Dress.

It was twilight and quite cool. The grays and browns made a monotone of the woods. She felt herself again the brown girl in the brown coat in the Kansas City train station. The bench felt as if it were the same bench. Trains arrived and departed but she did not move. She had followed the Dress to its lair, and she did not want to leave it. She shuttered it with her eyes, to keep it. Dress With Trees. It stood the way she sat: half-turned, afraid to move. (pp. 123-24)

Nell, unlike Ellen Marshall, admits the failure of her second attempt at love and fulfillment. She feels "bitter
because of all those years spent with a man who did not know she was there" (p. 193).

Nevertheless, when Nell meets Nicholas Clark, her ambivalent attitude toward fairy-tale ideals does not prevent her from viewing Nick as a prince figure. She describes him as a tall man with sandy hair who possesses a kind of hidden vitality. She observes, "The thing that struck her most was the way he didn't move . . . This man seemed to do all his motion within himself. It was as if he never shut off the motor inside and so had to conserve his body's energy" (p. 227). Nell once again turns to a sexual relationship as a means of attaining self-integration by noting that "she had found someone to care for and she wanted to go at once up to the room with him and pull down the shades and take off her clothes and start over" (p. 227). In doing so, Nell again distorts reality, for Nick is not the prince he appears to be.

Like Nell, Nick is an individual struggling to avoid repeating his parents' past by attempting to establish an identity apart from his family's. As a boy, he was taught the implacable Calvanist [sic] doctrine of the saved and the damned: "Some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life and others foreordained to everlasting death . . . and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." (p. 49)

Repulsed by the picture of his eccentric parents "forever smiling in the library" (p. 21) and his obnoxious brother
Richard who charcoaled the family pet, Nick attempts to set himself apart by trying to disprove Calvinism scientifically. However, he discovers in graduate school that both genetics and psychiatry presented a view of the world as foreordained as the doctrine of Presbyterian predestination. The genetic code seemed (was), according to Darwin, a closed system since the start of time; and, for Freud, our forgotten past acted as sole determinant of our future. (p. 50)

Therefore, Nick begins to think that Lamarck "had been right in his insistence on the transmission of acquired characteristics" (p. 50). His scientific experiments with rats resemble Nell's paintings in that both are attempts at defining oneself apart from family and at proving that it is possible to escape a predetermined life.

Nick also falls victim to fairy-tale expectations. Just as Nell looks for a prince, so Nick looks for a princess to help him establish his own identity and thus gain self-fulfillment. He first sees his brother's former girlfriend, Virginia, as his princess who will provide him with an "incredibly different" family, with a "fussy house and grandparents" (p. 21). Nick sees his future life as "eating overcooked pot roast, listening to the garrulous in-laws, and touching Virginia at night" (p. 22). However, years later, Nick discovers his tattooed wife is a "slut" who picks up men in bars and who sleeps with his own brother and who is not a princess at all. Despite his bad
experience, Nick continues to view life as if it were a fairy tale.

After he plans to divorce Virginia, he unexpectedly sees Nell again and "felt a lift to his spirits" (p. 216). To Nick, Nell is a kind of princess whose reappearance suggests that "you did not lose for all time what you had done without" (p. 216). Later, he does not go into the hotel coffee shop for fear of being disappointed by possibly seeing her with someone else. Nick realizes he was "creating a fantasy built on a long-ago scene, and he knew it; it appeared to be his pattern" (p. 218). He silently observes, "He knew it was absurd of him to expect another person to erase all of his painful past. Yet Nell seemed to do all that. He had imbued her with that magic . . . " (p. 258). Nick even attempts to be a prince who will rescue Nell from her strange family. He notes that "he had wanted more than anything in memory to do for Nell what she had done for him, erase the bad and heal the wounds" (p. 260). Yet Nick realizes he is not the prince he wants to be, for when they go to visit her family in San Antonio, "he stood in her mother's house, tongue-tied and immobile" (p. 260). Later as they talk about their work, Nell observes,

We must all have the same idea, and our hands pick different things to build to say it. So it looks different; but it starts the same. It must be the way every kid asks: "How do I know I'm not dreaming," and--. (p. 225)
On hearing this, Nick "felt as if he could cry," for "this woman had dismissed a lifetime of living with the pressure of being the elected son in an elected family" (p. 226). Therefore, Nick sees her as his escape from the deterministic clutch of his family.

Nell eventually begins to see that Nick does not possess the fairy-tale character she has forced upon him. In discussing their past loves, she describes her relationship with Max to Nick:

I told myself it was perfect. But in fact most of it was my invention. When he was on the coast and not in Santa Fe I painted all the time, pink-washed dresses, tattered matters, an apprenticeship. When he was there, I gave myself over to him completely. It was, no doubt, as much a fantasy as yours--. (p. 231)

Because the fairy-tale ideals have been so ingrained into her thinking, Nell fears she will go against her better judgment and continue viewing Nick as her prince. Her cautiousness causes her to remain in San Antonio. However, she soon decides to join Nick, and upon meeting him in Kansas, she realizes she has not made him into an imaginary prince. There, she discovers Nick's charm is very real, for "when she saw him, the tight face, the thin sandy hair, the ears, the unconcealed pleasure at seeing her, she thought: of course. She touched his face. 'I remember you,' she said. She hadn't invented him after all" (p. 244).

Her life with Nick represents the love for which she has long been searching, a genuine mutual caring apart from
the conventionality of marriage. In realizing that love and independence can be enjoyed together without turning the man in her life into a fairy-tale prince, Nell assumes the responsibility of directing her own life. Through her painting she is able to integrate her various selves and move closer to a separate identity.

Nell's adherence to feminism is also seen through her relationship with her son. She not only wants to separate herself from Tucker but from her child as well. Although she loves baby Alfred, Nell decides to reject motherhood as a means of attaining self-fulfillment and of establishing her own identity. She informs Mommy that "Tucker and our son are going to stay in the house" (p. 28). The reason she leaves her son behind is a complex one.

She wanted to give her son what she had wanted from her father and not got. She wished her daddy had stayed in Mineral Springs, in another part of town, maybe a not-nice part of town, and that she had been allowed to go see him and meet his woman (whom she always pictured looking like Belle Watling in Gone With the Wind). He would be laughing and drinking whiskey and he would take her on his knee and ride-a-cock-horse. And then she could have seen why he had to leave Mommy and her girls, why he could not stand it. She had wanted that fiercely, a glimpse of an alternate world. Even if he had sold insurance and married a plump woman who liked to bake from mixes and covered their bed with a chenille spread, that would have been all right. She could understand that. You just wanted to know what was worth leaving for.

She could offer that to Alfred: another way of doing. Daddies could do that. Mothers could not; they had to live with you. Mothers never took their eyes off you and they didn't take you too seriously. You asked mothers, "How do I know I'm
not dreaming?" and they said, "Pinch yourself, honey, and if it hurts you're awake." Or they said, "The pokey way you're moving around here today I'm not sure myself." But daddies would look up from their papers, or have you down to spend the night, and say: "I never figured that out myself." (pp. 41-42)

Despite her bold decision, she nevertheless struggles to escape traditional values and expectations and the guilt society has placed upon her for leaving Alfred. Upon hearing Nell's decision, Mommy, with her neck as tight as turkey's, tells her, "It is not possible to abandon a child." Nell defends herself by explaining that "I'm not giving Alfred away; I'm leaving him at home" (p. 29). Later, mistakenly feeling herself under attack from Moselle, Nell tells her sister,

It isn't something you get used to. Fathers have had this problem forever. Weekend visits, trips to the zoo. Weekend mother is not something we know what to do with. Think of me as the father. You wouldn't be bothered by that. (p. 37)

Nell must also reassure herself that the way of life she has chosen is best. She describes her visits with her son:

But mostly Alfred played in the back yard with the visiting dogs, who flopped down panting after their walks, or played with the tire swing she had put up on the huge shedding pecan tree beside the yellowed weedy patch of ground where once a garage had been. That was something that she could do for Alfred: take her eyes off him. That's what daddies did. (pp. 43-44)

When Nell toys with the idea of moving to Santa Fe to paint, she must again overcome her own doubts about living apart from Alfred.
Daddies, she told herself, did that; they went away and came back for visits. You flew out to see them. She could do that. She could go away from home.

After she tells Max she has a son who lives with his father, he asks, "What'd the husband have on you?" (p. 74). Nell, once again criticized for departing from the conventional image of motherhood, firmly replies, "I didn't give him away; my husband had been raised without his father. I fly back once a month to see him" (p. 75). Following a visit with ten-year-old Alfred, Nell decides it is time to put her plan into action, to let him see "the reality of my life" (p. 89), to meet her forty-year-old alcoholic lover, and to see the disorder of her life as it is reflected in her artwork. "It was time for Alfred to be offered another view of life. Time he saw what one left for. That was only fair" (p. 88). However, her good intentions are halted by the obstinate, overprotective Tucker, who never permits Alfred to travel to Santa Fe.

Nick is the only one who understands why Nell left Alfred, who understands her "strange" feminist convictions. After he meets Nell's family, Nick tells her, "Some things are clear that weren't before. That you left your son because it was the most you knew to do for him, to show him that one person at least could break out of this" (p. 265). When she is finally understood, Nell weeps.
Through the colorful character of Nell Woodard, Hearon confronts the issue of feminism with intensified vigor. In *Painted Dresses*, Hearon depicts a woman who has successfully gained her independence apart from marriage and motherhood. The feeling of powerlessness with which Clara and Ellen continue to struggle is gradually overcome by Nell. She is the first of Hearon's characters who completely rejects any semblance of a traditional role; she divorces her husband, separates herself from her child, lives with her lovers. In departing from the old ascribed image of femininity, Nell sets forth a new set of values, and, in doing so, offers an alternative to other women restrained by conventional expectations: that it is possible for a woman to attain happiness and fulfillment apart from her family. She uses her triumphs as well as her mistakes to expose the social myths about womanhood—-that being a wife and childbearing are not the ways a female can find fulfillment. Nell is a feminist seeking the means through which she can best express herself. Interestingly, Nell's quest ends as it began, with her clad in a brown overcoat in Kansas City. This sameness seems to highlight the one feature Nell has altered: her self-perception. She is no longer the young woman dreaming about her "happy marriage to come" (p. 3) but is instead a more self-aware individual who is moving to Kansas City to live with her
lover and to paint, who is shaping her own identity outside the accepted pattern.

Group Therapy

Like Nell Woodard, Lutie Sayre, in Group Therapy, is a reflective yet strong-willed young woman who places more emphasis on expediency than on conscious introspection. She, too, is divorced and attempting to separate her identity from her family's by running away from home. Through her character, Hearon illumines the story of a passive feminist who becomes an active one.

Lutie is characterized by her maturity, by her independence, and by her ability to analyze her situation and think for herself. Her primary objective is to make these qualities apparent to others. It is interesting that the same dilemma which confronts Clara Blue, Ellen Marshall, and Nell Woodard also confronts Lutie--that of not being seen clearly, of being unable to project her self-image. She notes that "It was threatening to know that you were seen differently from the way you intended." Although Clara turns to sculpting; Ellen, to contemplating the wonders of the sea; and Nell, to painting, it is Lutie who takes the most dramatic steps toward self-expression by participating in a therapy group. She observes that such a group would "show you who you were, reflected in their eyes" (p. 28). Although the contrast between Lutie and
Nell is not as great as that between Nell and the other heroines, Clara and Ellen, it is nevertheless significant. What the artist Nell is unable to express about her personal struggle with her family, the sociologist Lutie is. Lutie is Hearon's first truly professional female character. Unlike Hearon's other working women, she does not pursue her career as a result of her divorce. Instead, Lutie works on her doctorate in sociology before and during her marriage to Dabney and later uses her vocation as the primary means of analyzing her family situation, of expressing herself, and of projecting her self-image. Lutie's quest more than any of Hearon's other characters' encapsulates the spirit of assertive feminism. It is she who takes direct vigorous action, she who competely refutes traditional notions of femininity. By rejecting marriage and motherhood and challenging Southern family tradition as the means by which she can establish her identity, Lutie redefines the meaning of womanhood.

Through her relationships with Dabney, Joe, Uncle Elbert, and Mr. Pinter, Lutie realizes that the predominantly female world in which she lives has misrepresented men as princes. By viewing Dabney as a prince, Lutie not only distorts reality but fails to know him as a person. In Chapter 18, entitled "Journal: Married and Alone in Rome," Lutie attempts to answer the question "Did I ever
see Dabney?" She marries him hoping that he will rescue her from her mother's influence. Although she can remember one of his favorite outfits, she cannot recall his face. In fact, throughout the entire novel, Dabney's surname is never mentioned.

Later, Lutie reminisces about their trip to Italy and how she had hoped to revive their marriage there. When they arrived, she notes that she "was instantly, unexpectedly in love with Rome" (p. 193). In fact, she is more enamored of Rome than of Dabney. As she delights in the most minute features of the city, Dabney becomes disgusted with her preoccupation with the trivial and is disappointed that "his wife [was] . . . so tiresomely the same" (p. 193). He tells her, "You could be in your own backyard, for all you see of what's here" (p. 200). By focusing her attention more on the enchanted details of life than on Dabney himself, she unintentionally disregards his human worth.

Despite her unpleasant experience with Dabney, she nevertheless continues to live life as if it were a fairy tale by viewing Joe as a prince. When she becomes better acquainted with him, Lutie discovers that under his "direction," she becomes a "star" (p. 94). She is a tense and self-conscious schoolteacher until Joe suggests she play the role of a Cord owner and he the role of an Austin
Healey owner. In doing so, she is transformed into a self-confident individual. However, he is not who he appears to be, not the prince, not the self-assured man who can transform her identity. During the evening, Lutie notes, "I could see that Austin Healey owners, whatever they pretended, wanted to take control of whatever space they were in. That was fine when he was a group leader, but here it made me feel crowded" (p. 93). Lutie asks him how it feels for him to make himself at home in her apartment by preparing supper. Joe replies, "That if I could pick you up and sit you here and beat the egg yolk and cream here, then nothing would get out of hand" (p. 93). Later, when she spends some time with Joe and his sons, Fritz and Noah, she observes, "It was clear to me from the start that Joe Donaldson didn't have any control whatsoever over his sons and that that was his real anxiety about bringing them here and also the reason for his trying to run everyone else's life" (p. 99). As their relationship progresses, Lutie realizes that Joe is not a prince but a person who is not in control of his life and who is also in the process of shaping his identity. Nevertheless, she experiences difficulty at first in viewing her relationship with Joe apart from fairy-tale ideals.

With Joe's encouragement, Lutie makes an effort to view the man in her life in a more realistic way. She notes,
"ever since Joe made me shut my eyes that first night and describe him, and proved that I couldn't, he's been trying to show me that I never do see men, that I'm blind to all the ones who count" (p. 96).

Following her mother's awards ceremony, Lutie decides to drive to Waco to visit her father, Alfred Pinter. Upon seeing Mr. Pinter for the first time in thirty years, she realizes she hadn't completely forgotten him and recognizes "the . . . big toothy smile and the way his eyebrows shot up" (p. 254). Moreover, she realizes that her mother was unreasonable in expecting him to fill the role of a prince. He remarks that he had always thought Florence had remarried "someone more her level" (p. 253).

When she is in Savannah visiting her Aunt Caroline, Lutie attempts to see the character of her late Uncle Elbert more clearly. Yet, there are no pictures of him in her aunt's house, and she is forced to go to the church office to find one. After discovering the shocking news of his suicide, Lutie begins sifting through the papers which were on his desk at the time of his death. Although she understands little, it is clear that his fragmented notations reflect his frustration with his inability to assert his masculinity, his individuality at home and at church. In his notes on Abraham and Isaac, Elbert writes,

To lose the object of his desire; to be obliged to deprive oneself of the object of long desire,
one's self. To sacrifice Isaac is to sacrifice one's own self, one's own hope, one's promise. Isaac appears as one's own self in actualized form. (p. 180)

By discovering he committed suicide, Lutie discovers the damage a fairy-tale princess can do to the man in her life by expecting him to be a superhuman prince.

Through her experiences, Lutie discovers that men are not the storybook heroes one depends upon for self-definition. By divorcing her husband and by living with her lover, Lutie shows that she rejects the traditional notion that marriage is a vital part of a woman's experience. In doing so, she begins to assume the responsibility of being a self-determined woman.

In addition, Lutie ceases to view parenthood as necessary to a female's normal and rewarding life. While she is married to Dabney, she becomes pregnant and mistakenly believes that a child will save her failing marriage and give her a purpose in life. She notes, "I though [sic] about the pregnancy going on inside me and about all my hopes for a new beginning here among the palaces of Rome" (p. 199). However, upon returning home from Italy, her marriage already ended, she begins to realize that she cannot depend upon motherhood for self-fulfillment, for her mother had an abortion performed without her knowledge.

It is after she moves to New York and spends time with Joe and his two unruly sons that Lutie discovers that
parenthood is not a means of defining oneself. In fact, Joe's failure to be an assertive father has contributed to his own self-fragmentation. Lutie observes that it was clear to her in the beginning that Joe's lack of control over his sons "was his real anxiety . . . and also the reason for his trying to run everyone else's life" (p. 99). Even when her father observes that with Joe and his sons it "sounds like you got a ready-made family for yourself" (p. 256), the steadfast Lutie simply ignores his comment. Throughout most of the novel Lutie adheres to the feminist belief that parenthood is not a means to feminine fulfillment.

Although Lutie exhibits her feminism when she establishes herself in a career and moves to New York and when she rejects marriage and motherhood, she still experiences difficulty with separating herself from her mother. Weary of the constraining influence that Southern traditions have upon her life, Lutie decides to move to New York. Her rebellion is met with great opposition from her mother who is both shocked and angered that Lutie is moving away from her family. Florence tells her of her dissatisfaction at living "up North" during the war when she was married to Mr. Pinter.

You don't know what you're getting into. I was so homesick up there and you were a baby--it's so hard for anyone to understand now what Army life meant in those days. . . . You have no idea,
Lutie, but there are whole groups of people who don't have any sense of family, at least not as we know it. (p. 16)

Even after Lutie has been in New York for six weeks, Florence writes her about a letter I wrote [Carolie] when I was pregnant with you, in Washington, D.C., saying, "I feel so lonesome up here, a pregnant girl with a pregnant cat. Just think how it will be Christmas when I come home to see you and Mama. I'll be something to behold." You can see where my mind was then, and I can imagine you are getting just as homesick up there now. (p. 33)

Despite the boldness of her decision to live in New York, Lutie begins to doubt whether or not she should go. She feels such a responsibility, such a connectedness to her mother that "had it not been for her cousin Nan, Lutie would never have been able to pick up and go" (p. 16), for Nan had agreed to care for her mother's house, Redoaks, while Lutie was away. After she receives some encouragement from Nan, Lutie is able to tell her, "You've saved my life by coming" (p. 21).

Once Lutie meets Joe, she finds the person whom she can love outside the confines of marriage. However, during the course of their romance, she discovers that she has not really left home, that she has not really separated herself from her family. Their dialogue illustrates the strain that Lutie's abnormal feelings of obligation to family has placed on their relationship:
"You didn't care. It was more important to you to go visit your aunt than to stay. I wanted to have this out Thanksgiving, but you had to go tripping off. You're going home to mother Christmas. What am I supposed to say to her?"

"But you're divorced."

"Oh, grow up, will you?"

"How come it's all right for you to spend the first night you're back--when I'm trying to help you with your uncle's death--covering a notebook with reminiscences about your ex and not all right for me to deal with mine when there are kids involved?"

"You told me to." She wiped her face. "You told me to find out Whatever Happened to Men. So I was. You told me."

"Well, you might have looked up and wondered what was happening to this one."

"I was going back, that's all. I thought ... "

She buried her face in her hands. "I even intend to find Mr. Pinter when I go home."

He grabbed her wrists in his two hands. "That's it. Say that again: 'When I go home.' Where does that leave me?"

"Say, 'When I go home, Joe always has the light on.' Say, 'When I go home, he makes me tea.' Say, 'When I go home, my mind isn't on my aunt Caroline.'"

He let her arms go and got himself another beer.

"Oh."

"Do you get the idea?"

"You mean, move in?"

"I mean, move your brain in at the very least."

"Live up here?"

"People have run away from home before."

"At thirty-two?"

"Don't ask me."

She turned away. She had to think about it. Was this something people did, used each other to get away? Besides, how did you know it would work? When she'd moved in with Dabney, it hadn't changed anything at all.

"But I promised Mother," she said out loud.

"Fuck your mother," he said ... (pp. 216-18)

Through her relationship with Joe, Lutie realizes that a true separation from her family consists not only of a relocation but of a change in attitude as well. In contrast,
the starry-eyed Nell at the close of *Painted Dresses* is more concerned with her life with Nick than she is with her separation from her family. Lutie comes closer than Hearon's other protagonists to completely separating her identity from her mother's. At the close of the novel, Lutie has decided to remain in New York for there was an opening for the spring term at SUNY Purchase and that she felt it would help her future job chances if she took it. So that she could now talk about her teaching when she wrote. Her hopes were that by summer Mother would have got used to her being gone, or at least learned to make do with her new tenants at Redoaks, and that Lutie could stay here, returning less and less, weaning them both. (p. 262)

Although Lutie can see the shortcomings of her family's twisted sense of tradition, she also knows that she can neither change her mother nor disown her. Instead, she realizes that you had to make provisions for the fact that they changed in relation to you. If you didn't, you were going to end up like Gran, sitting in the rocker on the porch, watching the sun go by, mad every day that it set behind your back. (p. 272)

With this discovery, Lutie is able to make a life of her own in New York with Joe and emerges as the "independent, individual, in control" person she has wanted to be (p. 69).

Through the character of Lutie, Hearon focuses more on the action an autonomous woman must take than on the introspection and inner turmoil experienced by the budding feminist. Lutie's quest is not primarily the passionate
search to find the prince of her dreams, but is rather a series of intellectual analyses of her relationships which have caused her feeling of powerlessness. It is Lutie's powerful attack on social myth which makes her character so appealing. By challenging conventional ideas and by reassessing relationships, Lutie is able to create a new set of values—a new perspective of herself and her family—which better suits her life as a self-determined woman.

The fragile, emotional woman of Hearon's early novels is gradually transformed into the self-confident, assertive person of her later novels. This progression reveals both an intensification of her affirmation of feminism and a significant growth in her artistic maturity. Shelby Hearon's insights into the contemporary human condition combined with her gift of wry humor give her novels a coherence and vitality which is of lasting universal relevance.
NOTES

1Shelby Hearon, Armadillo in the Grass (Dallas: Press-works Publishing Inc., 1983), p. 58. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

2Shelby Hearon, The Second Dune (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 15. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

3Shelby Hearon, Painted Dresses (New York: Atheneum, 1981), p. 82. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

4Shelby Hearon, Group Therapy (New York: Atheneum, 1984), p. 28. Subsequent quotations from this work will also be from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.
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