

Artistry and Domesticity Under the Same Roof: A Study of Anne Tyler's *Celestial Navigation*

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Abstract

Jeremy Pauling, the main character of Anne Tyler's novel *Celestial Navigation*, is a collage artist who is agoraphobic and lacks the ability to cope with everyday matters. Tyler once remarked that this novel was her favorite work and a parallel between the author and the central character can be observed. The solitude Jeremy requires for his creative activity is threatened when he meets Mary and has children with her. He feels the house is too crowded and retreats to his studio. When Mary and the children leave him after he lets go the occasion to legalize his tie to her, he realizes that he has detached himself too far away from them for the sake of his art. Tyler, who divided her time between writing and domesticity, knew how it may be difficult for an artist to satisfy creative desire and at the same time meet one's domestic responsibilities. Her insight into artistry and her interest in human relationships, particularly within families, work together in this novel. She shows how artistry and domesticity may not be compatible for an artist.

Keywords: Anne Tyler, *Celestial Navigation*, artistry, domesticity, isolation

1

Of the 23 novels that Anne Tyler (1941–) published between 1964 and 2020, *Celestial Navigation* (1974), which is her fifth, is the only one to include a professional artist as the main character. According to Marguerite Michaels's contribution to the *New York Times Book Review* in 1977, Tyler considered this novel her favorite because of the resemblance between its principal character Jeremy Pauling and herself. Both are artists who have lived in Baltimore for a long time, with Jeremy having spent his entire life in the same house. Jeremy is agoraphobic, and Tyler is somewhat reclusive. *Celestial Navigation* is a unique work in Tyler's illustrious career since it gives insight into an artist's inner vision and how he deals (or fails to deal) with the happenings in the actual, everyday world.

However, the novel is not disparate from Tyler's works, which comprise a long list. It contains

signature Tyler themes, such as marriage, family, growth, parenthood, and aging. It is set in a large, old house with many people, which is also a familiar setting in Tyler's works. In terms of structure and narrative point of view, *Celestial Navigation* spans a 13-year period, with each chapter alternatively related by five narrators; four chapters in third person from Jeremy's perspective, and the remaining six are narrated by four female characters, Amanda, Mary, Miss Vinton and Olivia. This multidimensional narrative framework was originally adopted in *The Clock Winder* (1972) and later seen in other works such as *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (1982) and *Digging to America* (2006). *Celestial Navigation* stands out from other works thanks to a combination of an artist-protagonist and well-known Tyler motifs.

The central character Jeremy Pauling is a man with few words and actions. He seldom leaves his residence, does not write, or does not make phone calls. He lives in a confined world and has a peculiar, uneven vision when observing anything around him. As a result of this strange perspective, unique collage artworks, which Jeremy refers to as "pieces," are created. Unsocial as he is, his peculiarities have been embraced by his mother and the boarders in his house, and his works occasionally win contests and earn him meager income. When he immerses himself in artistry, he fails to keep his promise to go and officiate his de facto marriage to Mary Tell.

Mary O'Farrell, author of *Hamnet*, who won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2020, refers to the "jaw-dropping vilification and downright barefaced misogyny" inflicted on Shakespeare's wife Anne Hathaway for five hundred years and asks: "Why are people so wedded to the idea of the fancy-free male artist that they have to put her down?" (Armistead, 2020) Is Jeremy another "fancy-free male artist"? Is his common-law wife Mary, as Alice Hall Petry points out, his victim and a caricature of "the Earth mother," which Petry identifies as one of "the most persistent representation of women in American culture?" (Petry 41). It is the aim of this study to explore Tyler's insight into the artist's creative desire and her enduring interest in human relationships, particularly within families, work together.

2

The opening chapter, narrated by the oldest Pauling siblings, Amanda Pauling, may be read as a superb short story in itself. On arriving home at the news of her mother's sudden death, Amanda refers to her brother Jeremy as a 38-year-old bachelor who is the sole male in her family and incapable of dealing with any practical aspect of life. The first thing said about him is that he "never did leave home" and she "gave up expecting very much of him" a long time ago (3). Everything about Jeremy, in Amanda's eyes, demonstrates his inadequacy and immaturity: calling his mother "Mama", failing to meet his sisters at the Baltimore station when they arrive in rain

from Richmond for the funeral, crumpling on the stairs where his mother fell dead and remaining there for hours, and not going to the funeral parlor to keep vigil beside her casket.

When Amanda acknowledges that Jeremy sells his work and is therefore a professional artist, she implies that this is only possible because someone he knows from his art school days works in the art business. She cannot help but add that this person “showed the good sense to switch from painting to dealing” (19), implying that anyone who cannot adequately sustain themselves through the sale of their work should not pursue art as a profession. In her opinion, what Jeremy does is mere cutting and pasting, and she does not “see the point of it” (24). Amanda’s lack of appreciation for art or respect for artists could be a reflection of what Tyler has observed in her own everyday life:

I was waiting for a child in a schoolyard when another mother approached me.

“Have you found work yet?” she asked. “Or are you just writing?”

How am I supposed to answer this question? (Tyler 2000, 11)

This episode, which gave the title “Still Just Writing” to her essay on how she writes, illustrates the widespread belief that art cannot be a serious work.

Jeremy adds his income to the rent money he collects from the boarders and manages to make ends meet. In her desire to find only what she wants to recognize in her brother, Amanda does not notice what others see. Amanda not only finds no value in Jeremy’s artwork, but she also sees no future for him, no worthwhile content in his life. She calls him “a man without landmarks, except for the unavoidable ones of getting born and dying” (36), and sees no significance in his life, let alone his art. Her perception of and attitude toward him becomes even harsher when she recalls how her mother loved Jeremy the most, her younger sister Laura the next, and herself the least of the three Pauling siblings.

As Amanda continues to attack Jeremy, she reveals as much about herself as she does about her brother. She supported herself to finish teacher’s college, lived an unadventurous, unromantic life as a schoolteacher, and believes she has been “bypassed,” feeling that “something has been held back from me. The worst part is that I know it” (41). Amanda represents a hard-working, pragmatic adult who is faithful to the Protestant work ethic. She has a critical eye for everyone around her, but her understanding of herself is clearer than that of anyone else. Determined to make Jeremy behave like any ordinary adult, she takes him for a walk with the intention of ultimately arriving at the funeral parlor, where their mother’s remains await them. However, not long after leaving their block, he crumples on the sidewalk, and his sister Laura, together with Howard, the medical student boarder, catches up with them. Without speaking or

paying attention to Amanda, they support Jeremy and lead him home, demonstrating their understanding and acceptance of Jeremy's reclusive nature. Amanda learns she is the only one who has not recognized Jeremy's way of life as unchangeable. Amanda, not her reclusive brother, is the one who faces the depth of her estrangement from those who are supposed to be closest to her.

At the end of the chapter and in bed, Amanda recalls the things she has packed inside her suitcase for this trip home. Unfortunately, when she arrived at their house to leave the suitcase before going to the funeral parlor, no one answered the door, so she left it in the vestibule, only to return to discover it gone. She remembers each item she has carefully packed: a quality undergarment she has kept for special occasions, a folding travel clock she received as a present and has used for years, and the most comfortable slippers and nightgown that have helped her unwind after a long day at work. With a strong sense of loss, she recalls the suitcase as a college graduation gift from her mother. Even though she returns to her practical realist self the next morning and ensures that the entire funeral procedure goes properly, the first chapter's finale is touching: Amanda's grief of her mother is compounded by the loss of her suitcase. She believes that her precisely scheduled, hard-working, self-reliant values and way of life have been harmed. By juxtaposing Jeremy with Amanda and presenting his sensitivity against her harshness, Tyler portrays two kinds of loneliness: one is solitude required for art, and the other is isolation which a hard-working, self-reliant person receives as a disappointing outcome.

Amanda keeps her distance from Jeremy for the rest of the novel, and Jeremy's life takes an unexpected turn when Mary Tell, with her young daughter, becomes a new boarder and later his *de facto* wife. She settles in what used to be Jeremy's mother's bedroom, suggesting her new role as a caregiver. Having been raised by a high school principal father and an English teacher mother, she could see only one kind of future ahead of her: going to college, getting married, having children, or going to church on Sundays. As she recalls how she began deviating from the predetermined way her parents expected her to follow, she acknowledges that if it were not for her elopement with Guy Tell soon after she turned sixteen, she "would still be traveling their single narrow life" (64). Her parents did not go out of their way to find her and bring her back, although she sent them a telegram to announce her marriage. Mary's mother softened following the birth of her first child, Darcy, but her religious father remained frigid. She lost all contact with her family when both her parents passed away within a year of Darcy's birth. Being apart from her parents did not broaden her horizons in terms of life experiences. Rather, she finds herself in a more restricted existence.

Dropping out of high school, getting married, having a baby while still in her teens, left without parents, and having no siblings; this is a fate she shares with Evie Decker in *A Slipping-Down Life*

(1970). Their marriages were short-lived and ended in divorce. Evie and Mary grew up without emotional support from their fathers. Jeremy, too, was left fatherless ever since his father abandoned his family. The result was his interdependency with his mother. Referring to the “absent fathers” motif throughout Tyler’s works, Robert W. Croft suggests that “lack of paternal support is one reason why so many of Tyler’s characters often feel isolated from themselves and others and why they struggle so hard to establish identities for themselves” (Croft 18). Even though the girls’ marriage do not last, it is the result of their commitment to change the course of their lives, and they bravely face the consequences. They demonstrate vitality to ensure the survival of themselves and their child, and they mature into a stronger individual. “Motherhood is what I was made for, and pregnancy is my natural state. I believe that,” Mary boasts (69), “I was meant to have babies” (70). She makes a contrast to Amanda who has a career and prides herself in supporting herself. Unlike Amanda, she is immersed in domesticity and when she becomes Jeremy’s partner, his life as an artist is bound to change.

3

Miss Vinton, the narrator of “Fall, 1968,” is the character who holds the highest regard for Jeremy’s work. She believes that “Jeremy is going to be a very famous man” one day (134). She identifies the changes in his works over the years: “They have doubled in size, and they are so deeply textured that they are almost sculptures.” (144–145) Her remark corresponds to how Jeremy began to notice a change in his artistic orientation in 1961, approximately a year after his mother died and shortly after Mary’s advent.

Nowadays, his collages filled him with impatience. He became conscious of the way his eyes tightened and ached when he looked at them too long. He started wishing for more texture, things standing out for themselves. He had an urge to make something solid. Not a sculpture, exactly. He shied away from anything that loomed so. But maybe if he stacked his scraps, let them rise in layers until they formed a standing shape. (90)

Her appreciation for Jeremy’s work, as well as his own description and that of art dealer Brian, adds to the evidence that Jeremy is a serious artist. She is also sensitive to his sadness: when Jeremy is attempting to make a marriage proposal to Mary and his days seem “duller than he had ever noticed before” (115), she recognizes that he is “thirsty for things to look at” (115) and brings him art books “as if she guessed that he needed comfort” (116). She remains a faithful supporter of him, even after Mary leaves with the children.

It is the strong sense of privacy she shares with him that helps her understand him better than others. She recounts how “life was so crowded” as a child growing up in a family of parents and five siblings (139). After living with and nursing her mother in her last years, her reaction was as follows:

I was relieved to have my privacy. If you were to shake me awake in the middle of the night and say, “Quick, without thinking: What is the most important thing in the world?” I would say, “Privacy.” Sitting alone in a room reading a book, with no one to interrupt me. That is all I ever consciously wanted out of life. (140)

She is not an agoraphobe like Jeremy. She works to support herself, and she is willing to give a hand to Mary and Jeremy as their children come along. However, if it were not for her undeniable desire for privacy, she would not be staying in the Pauling boarding house. She likes the arrangement of the house, with each person having their own “single room with a door that locks, and then a larger room downstairs where people can mingle or not as they please” (141). Being a discreet observer, she could offer anyone advice, but she refrains from doing so because she believes she ought to respect others’ privacy as well as her own. To be mum when she is ready to give an opinion is the price she pays for pricing privacy above all else. She understands how Jeremy feels when he says, “Mary, I feel so—it seems so crowded here,” since she has that inclination, too (160).

Miss Vinton recognizes Jeremy’s need for greater privacy as he develops as an artist. The studio’s location emphasizes that Jeremy is a privileged member of this household; it is on the third (top) floor and is believed to be secluded from the living quarters, where ordinary daily business goes on. It is higher than everything else and closest to the heavens; this is where the concept of the artist moving forward by “celestial navigation” comes from. At the same time, the placement forced everyone else to climb two flights of stairs to reach him. It is as if the studio was a sanctified zone where only those who are convinced they would not disturb the serenity are permitted to enter. It should be remembered how Jeremy’s mother fell and died on the spot at the top of the steps leading up to the studio. She may have been in a physical condition that made getting to the top floor a life-threatening endeavor, but Jeremy wanted her to see the work he had produced and invited her to come to the studio to see it. His mother would not have declined the invitation, because of their codependency, and Jeremy would not have considered the physical strain the visit may have on his mother’s heart. It was as if she had paid a visit to an art temple and sacrificed her life for the sake of pilgrimage. His mother’s death reveals that others pay the price for his prerogative, sheltered life, as he satisfies his creative impulse. Janis P. Stout indicates

that an artist may demonstrate that “the rigor of artistic creation ... holds a threat of dehumanization” (Stout 18). Jeremy stands on the brink of the danger, too.

4

Even after Mary and his children—five of them, plus Darcy from Mary’s previous marriage—have entered his life, Jeremy’s studio remains a haven. Miss Vinton recalls how a door was installed in his studio when the older girls were old enough to have their own bedroom, and the children had more opportunities to visit Jeremy’s creative space. One of the first observations Mary gives of Jeremy is: “You can tell he loves children.” (61) Miss Vinton describes how Jeremy returns home from hospital with Mary bearing the newest baby in his arms, beaming with laughter like any debutant parent. To be fair, Jeremy is by no means indifferent. However, the children continue to perplex him, and this becomes more so as more of them arrive. He cannot communicate with them since he does not understand them, and all he can do is observe them. Moreover, their noise interferes with this work.

When he was most deeply absorbed in his work, children came seeping up the stairs like the rising waters of a flood, and their noise—strange clangs and hoots and the unbearable pitch of their quarrels—would soak into him slowly, at first unnoticed, then so exasperating that he would fling down his scissors and throw open the door and stand there trembling. “Why are you doing this to me?” he would ask. “Why must you make this noise? Why do you keep, why do you—” (158–159)

Words like “seeping up,” “strange,” “unbearable,” “soak into,” and “exasperating” reflect Jeremy’s sense that the children are extraterrestrials on the verge of invading his sphere. For an agoraphobe, six children are a crowd, and not just their presence, but the number of things that accumulates with them is overwhelming. Those between the ages of 0 and 10 are too young to consider the situations of others, particularly their parents. He does not seem to mind having boarders at his home because, with the exception of one medical student, the boarders are primarily older people. Senior boarders calmly listen to Jeremy and respond to him, even when he is illogical. Thus, Jeremy thinks to himself, “Was there anyone gentler than old people? Could he ever feel as much at rest as he did sitting in this triangle of muted gray voices?” (117) On a sleepless night, he recalls a moment when his working environment was ideal:

If he changed his name his work would be totally different. He would be childless, wifeless,

and friendless—all alone, like that silent golden period between his mother’s death and Mary’s arrival. Only this time, of course, he would know enough to appreciate it. Back then, he hadn’t... now it seemed that life would stretch on forever and grow more tangled and noisy every day. (170–171)

The “silent gold period,” with just himself and the quiet boarders in the house, lasted only half a year. Children, unlike the elderly, are not gentle. They constantly assert themselves. When Mary is ready to tell Jeremy that she has finally divorced Guy Tell, Jeremy interrupts her and says, “You are pregnant” (172). This reaction indicates his fear of being yet more overcrowded. Jeremy’s art has gradually developed as a new phase of his life, beginning with Mary and his children; nevertheless, children prove to be an impediment to Jeremy’s creation due to the noise they make and the time and care they require. He faces serious conflict: his art expands as he is surrounded by more children, but his creativity may disintegrate.

Mary does her best to let Jeremy concentrate on his work when he needs it. Unlike Jeremy, she accepts constant clamoring as the norm. Silence, in fact, alarms her because she recognizes it is an indication that something is wrong. As the years pass, however, she grows tired of being Jeremy’s protector. Being a safe haven for someone like Jeremy, who admits that “nine tenths of his life consisted of doing things he disliked” (87), is taxing. She cannot help but confess to Miss Vinton that “every new baby is another rope” tying her “down like a tent” to depend on Jeremy, even though she knows: “He is not dependable” (142). Mary has struggled with being dependent on her partner ever since she eloped with Guy and dropped out of high school. In the early days of her living in the Pauling boarding house, when her relationship with John Harris seemed increasingly uncertain, she reassured herself: “This is what I resolve: if it works out that John and I are married, I am going to save money on my own no matter what... in case I ever have to be on my own again. Only I will not be on my own, not if it is up to me. I will not leave anyone else. It is too hard.” (73) Ironically, with more children, she becomes ever more reliant on Jeremy. When Guy eventually decides to divorce, she wants to legalize her relationship with Jeremy: it is a move motivated by love, but also by a frantic need to improve the situation. Jeremy agrees but refuses to leave the studio when the day to complete the legal procedure has come.

Why does Jeremy not follow through on his commitment of marrying her? Critics have attributed this to forgetfulness. “Jeremy forgets their wedding date,” writes Robert Croft (Croft 56). Susannah Clapp explains in her review that Mary leaves him “because he has forgotten their wedding day” (Clapp 69). In his *Washington Post Book World* article, Alan Pryce-Jones writes that it is “by sheer inadvertence” that Jeremy does not marry Mary (Pryce-Jones 73). Sue Lile Inman echoes these critics by writing: “He forgets to meet the mother of his children on their wedding

day” (Inman 57). Because adhering to a schedule or meeting deadlines is not in his line, it is understandable if he loses track of the days of the week and, therefore, forgets an appointment. His perception of time was always disoriented.

However, before dismissing Jeremy’s absence as a simple case of carelessness, it is important to look into how he missed the wedding day. Mary suggests a Thursday wedding on a Monday night, to which he agrees. He keeps imagining how Mary has kept in touch with her former mother-in-law while working on a piece on Tuesday morning. At noon, one of the children comes upstairs to inform him that lunch was ready, but he dismisses her, claiming that he is too busy to eat. In fact, he could pause for lunch: “It was just that the thought of going downstairs somehow made him feel so tired. All that noise!” (176) Mary then enters the studio with his lunch on a tray. As she enters, he notices “a long tail of noise and energy was pluming out behind her” (177), and it feels as though the studio has been taken over. He finishes the piece early in the afternoon, but does not leave the studio, does not meet Brian, who has come to see how his work is progressing, and allows Mary to bring dinner upstairs. He spends the night in the studio, and when he wakes up Wednesday morning, his thoughts are on his relationship with Mary, and how they seemed to be parts of one complete being: “It seemed to him that his acceptance and her defiance made up a perfect whole” (180). He starts planning his next piece, “a statue of Brian rounding the corner—a man half running, glad to be gone” (181). He spends the entire afternoon in the studio, and when he does not come downstairs, Mary cannot help but remind him that the next day, Thursday, is their wedding. “Yes, yes, I remember” (182), he says. Meanwhile, he continued to work on Brian’s statue, and its frame was finished by Thursday morning. He continues to add different objects to the frame, and when Mary knocks on the door, he does not stop working or respond. The studio clock has not been functional for some time, and he has no sense of time. He refuses the Thursday dinner, which Olivia, not Mary, suggested. He works until he falls asleep on the sofa, but continues to work in his dreams, only to wake up on Friday morning to discover his work totally unsatisfactory. He removes the things he has added to the framework, undoing what he did on the previous day, the day of his wedding. Not until Friday noon does he see that Mary and the children have left him.

If Jeremy “forgets” the wedding day, it may be arbitrary forgetfulness. There are three days between the time Mary proposes to officiate their wedding and the time he runs out of time. In other words, he takes three days to “forget”: on the first, he re-evaluates his relationship with Mary; on the second, he is reminded by Mary and claims he does remember; and on the third, he becomes further absorbed in creating the sculpture of a fleeing man. When Mary places a message on the lunch tray on Thursday that reads, “This is our wedding day. Do you still want to?” (185), Jeremy sees this. In response, he feels “a sharp stab of sorrow—the question mark,

perhaps.” (185) The note prompts him to pay attention to the sounds made downstairs by Mary or anyone else. He is also aware that it is past time that he takes a shower and brushes his teeth, and that he should leave the studio to go downstairs at some point. However, entering Mary and the children’s domestic realm means being unable to breathe: “He pictured himself descending into the noise as he would enter the sea... proceeding steadily with his hands lifted and his mouth set, submerging first his feet and then his legs and then his entire body, last of all his head” (185). After this imagination, he returns to work. It is Friday afternoon when he finally descends the stairs to find the house empty. He realizes that his sense of time is confused and he is unable to see what has happened: “Maybe his family had just gone out to a movie. Perhaps they abandoned him forever. Maybe they had grown up and moved some 30 years before, had children of their own, grew old, and died. He could not prove that it was not so.” (188) For the first time, Mary and the children are referred to as “his family.” He belatedly realizes that he has indeed been a member of a family, but no longer is one; instead, he has become a lodger of a boarding house, much like Miss Vinton, who finds such a living arrangement to be ideal.

5

In the face of it, Jeremy returns to “that silent golden period between his mother’s death and Mary’s arrival” (170), which he fondly remembers as the months when he faced the fewest hurdles to his work. How he fared in the weeks after Mary moved herself and the children to Brian’s riverside cabin is told by Olivia, an eighteen-year-old stray girl who Mary brought home to become a lodger and to look after. Olivia is influenced by hippie culture and acknowledges herself as an admirer of artists. She reports how Jeremy changed from what he had been: smoking, wearing whiskers, and smiling in a way suggestive of insanity. Olivia, who attempts to “see things through his eyes” (237) and desires to understand his pieces in a way that Mary was incapable of, drags him into her reckless pace of life. Her attempt reveals her animosity toward Mary, who abandons her after taking her in as a caring substitute mother. She must also prove her worth by outperforming Mary as an artist’s partner. In her opinion, Mary was disqualified from the beginning: “Actually she was a very ordinary woman, not at all what you’d expect of an artist’s wife. The wonder about this is that she had a good sense of marrying him in the first place. So earthbound, she was” (225). Her judgement coincides with Mary’s own, who remembers going to Jeremy’s one-man show and envisioning the gallery visitors looking at her, saying: “An artist... married to *her*?” (205) Both Olivia and Mary believed that domesticity and art were incompatible. Mary’s role as “supplier, feeder, and caretaker” (160) overwhelms Jeremy. Olivia does not provide the kind of support that Mary does for Jeremy, despite her desire for and

refusal of motherly care. Jeremy and Olivia gradually fall into apathy until Miss Vinton saves them by driving her out, an action that is so unlike Miss Vinton, who makes it a rule not to give advice to people she cares for.

The Olivia-narrated chapter has not necessarily drawn much attention in discussions on *Celestial Navigation*. Because she is young and still trying to see what she wants to accomplish with her life, she fails to reflect on herself, unlike other female first-person narrators. Tyler made the effective decision to make Olivia, rather than Miss Vinton, a companion to Jeremy at this time, because of her naïve aspiration to comprehend what goes on in an artist's mind. He tells her: "No one is purely what they seem on the surface" (229), implying strength beneath his apparent confusion and weakness. He lets her take a good look at his work and asks, "Would you say it was unique?" (235). He needs to know that no one, specifically Mary, is influencing his work. He reveals his concern of being overwhelmed by Mary when he tells Olivia: "I keep having the feeling that Mary is coloring things in some way" (236). When he lists those who have left him—his father, his mother, and his sisters—he exhibits his need to be loved and the loneliness he feels because his need is not fulfilled. He does not hide an acute sense of loss, as if Mary's leaving has broken something inside him rather than enhanced his creativity.

He comes to his senses when Olivia leaves. If the time between Mary's leaving and his visit to the place she has settled down with the children has any purpose, it is for him to realize he is worse off: "He had heard suffering made great art, but in his case all it made was parched, measly, stunned lumps far below his usual standard." (250) He is ultimately "desperate with the need to repair all he had done" (252) and desires to "undertake some metaphysical task, to make some pilgrimage" (252).

Jeremy makes a meticulously planned trip to Brian's cabin. Fear of using public transportation is listed as one of the typical symptoms of agoraphobia; therefore, it is extremely unusual for him to take a bus for the first time in thirty years. His heroic ventures to bring Mary and the children back fail when, rather than asking her to return, he proposes taking the children out on a dinghy, which the terrified Mary refuses out of concern for their safety. He goes out by himself, separated by a body of water yet close enough to hear the children blowing whistles. The third-person narrator describes how he does not "turn to look at his family" (272). The term "family" appears again, which is significant because at this moment he recognizes what he has lost. Only when he feels the detachment from them, and when it is too late, does he recognize himself as a part of them, and them as a part of him.

In the final chapter, "Spring, 1973," Miss Vinton praises "his great towering beautiful sculptures" (276). Jeremy is only in his early fifties, but he now whispers rather than speaking out loud, and Miss Vinton has lost the crispness she showed in the earlier "Fall, 1968" chapter.

The two advocates of privacy, now elderly people, appear to have found each other the best companion. Whether her aesthetic eyes are still trustworthy remains ambiguous and there is no mention of his growth or decline as an artist.

6

In a 1977 interview with 35-year-old Tyler, Marguerite Michaels describes how Tyler drew a clear line between the realms of domesticity and art by dividing her time between housework and writing:

At 8:05, Anne Tyler walked up the stairs to study. “As I close the door on the kids, I go up to my room, like one of Pavlov’s dogs. Otherwise, I’ll get sidetracked.”

Anne Tyler resents being referred to as a housewife who writes. “Is John Updike a father of four who writes?” From 5:30 in the morning to 8, she is Mrs. Modarressi: wife, mother, cook, housecleaner, and laundress. From 8:05 to 3:30, when school is out, she is Anne Tyler: writer, Mondays through Thursdays. Friday is for “groceries and snow tires.” (Michaels 40)

In her essay “Still Just Writing,” which first appeared in *The Writer and Her Work* in 1981 and reprinted in 2000, Tyler herself gives a humorous account of how one domestic chore after another keeps her from devoting herself to writing. She does not regard herself as a victim of a male-dominated society that often encourages women to be self-effacing. Tyler recalls her parents’ desire for her to attend Duke University, where she had a full scholarship, rather than another school she was considering, because her three younger brothers were following in her footsteps and her parents believed that “it was more important for boys to get a good education than girls” (Tyler 2000, 14). Although Duke turned out to be a good choice, she recalls the memory with a sense of indignation. Tyler remembers this as “the first and last time that my being female was ever a serious issue” (Tyler 2000, 14). After recounting the experience of wandering in and out of the world of her characters while she went back and forth between artistry and domesticity, she writes:

I could draw some conclusions here about the effect that being a woman/wife/mother has upon my writing, except that I am married to a writer who is also a man/husband/father. He published his first novel while he was a medical student in Iran; then, he came to America to finish his training. His writing fell by the wayside for a long while. He cares deeply about his writing and he’s very good at it, but every morning at five-thirty he gets up and puts on a

suit and tie and drives in the dark to the hospital. Both of us, in different ways, seem to be hewing out creative time in small, hard chips from our living time. (Tyler 2000, 5–6)

They were both committed to their family while still attempting to reserve time for writing. Tyler and her husband were each in their own way responsible for maintaining domestic life and writing separately. This would almost certainly necessitate mature independence and an uncompromising commitment to time management.

The line dividing domesticity from art, in the instance of Mary and Jeremy, is drawn between them rather than within each of them. Despite her fear of overwhelming him, Mary cannot help but grow stronger and more domineering as she assumes responsibility of rearing six children and running the household. Energetic as she is, however, she relies on Jeremy as the provider. Jeremy admires her strength and does help her with chores from time to time, but finally devotes himself to creative activity as a refusal to have his artistic realm overcrowded with domesticity. They become increasingly reliant on each other until they can no longer bear the weight of the other and their worlds—artistry and domesticity—are separated.

Tyler managed to save Jeremy from becoming another stereotypical “fancy-free male artist” and Mary from becoming his victim. He suffers an irrevocable loss as he realizes that his pursuit of artistry has kept him too distant from his family—Mary and the children, who have seemed to be an unbearable crowd. Mary is not put down by poverty and shows the strength to survive supported by the network of people she has come to know after she left Jeremy. Whether Jeremy’s art will develop or shrink remains ambiguous, but at least he does not turn into a heartless artist who has no regret for severing himself from his loved ones for art’s sake.

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(たんじ めぐみ)

芸術と家庭生活の共存 —アン・タイラー *Celestial Navigation* 研究—

丹治めぐみ

要 約

アン・タイラー (1941-) の小説 *Celestial Navigation* は、1964年から2020年までに発表された全23作品のうち唯一アーティストを主人公としている。ジェレミー・ポーリングは、独特のコラージュを制作する芸術家だが、アトリエがある自宅から1ブロック以上離れたところには出かけられず、実際的な生活能力に欠けている。ジェレミーは間借り人として彼のもとに来たメアリーと内縁の夫婦となり、メアリーの連れ子と合わせて6人の子持ちとなる。しかし、アーティストとして静かな環境で制作に集中しなければならないジェレミーは、子どもが増えるにつれて声や物音に圧倒されるようになり、望んでいた離婚がやっと成立したメアリーとの婚姻手続きをとらず、その結果彼女は子どもたちを連れて彼のもとを去る。静寂を取り戻したジェレミーがさらに充実した作品を作るようになったかは曖昧なまま、小説は終わる。執筆と家事・子育ての時間を区切り、芸術と家庭という2つの領域を行き来しながら書き続けてきたタイラー自身の経験が反映され、人物をステレオタイプに陥らせることなく、アーティストを苦しめるディレンマを描く作品である。

キーワード：アン・タイラー, *Celestial Navigation*, 芸術, 家庭生活