DISLOCATED WOMEN: DISINHERITANCE, MOBILITY, AND DOMESTIC SUBJECTIVITY IN BRITISH FICTION (1753-1855)

by

HENNA MESSINA

(Under the Direction of Beth Tobin)

ABSTRACT

This project engages with space in the British novel, specifically anxieties around dispossession, dislocation, and homelessness that many women writers express. While conduct manuals and polemical writing sought to locate middle- and upper-class women within domestic space by arguing that it was most conducive to happiness and social order, depictions of the home in British fiction are overwhelmingly negative: women are marginalized and often face threats of expulsion from the domestic sphere if they appear to have transgressed the authority of men or patriarchal surrogates. I explore the way women subvert these dynamics to reorder domestic space in Jane Collier's *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting*, Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*. I focus on the relationship between female subjects and their material worlds in order to reimagine what feminine subjectivity and agency can look like. By looking at the ways female characters recognize the agency of non-human things and how they negotiate materiality, I demonstrate that women may enact ingenious and creative resistances to their marginalization.

INDEX WORDS: British fiction, subjectivity, agency, materiality, class, gender

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DEDICATION

For those I've lost along the way: Carol Messina, Joe and Phyllis Gray, Nadjawa McCoy, and Ashleigh Simmons Kannalath

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Introduction

"Temporary, Partial, and Burdensome"

> "[T]he history of home is as much a saga of power, labour, inequality and struggle, as of sanctuary and comfort, colour and pleasure. Chaos often reigns. Cruelty begins at home." – Amanda Vickery[1]

> "One distinguishing feature of places called home is that they are built on select inclusions. The inclusions are grounded in a learned (or taught) sense of a kinship that is extended to those who are perceived as sharing the same blood, race, class, gender, or religion. Membership is maintained by bonds of love, fear, power, desire and control." – Rosemary Marangoly George[2]

In her Swiftian-inspired satirical conduct book *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753), Jane Collier writes in the voice of a powerful woman who enthusiastically instructs her fellow mistresses in how to most effectively torment members of their households. Most strikingly, Collier's speaker describes her unparalleled joy at the torments of the humble companion, a woman of good education but little to no financial means, the kind of woman who was also referred to as a "spinster" or what the Victorians would dub a "superfluous woman":

> [The servant] receives wages, and the humble companion receives none: the servant is most part of the day out of your sight; the humble companion is always ready at hand to receive every cross word that rises in your mind: the servants can be teazed only by yourself, your dogs, your cats, your parrots, your children; the humble companion, besides being the sport of all of these, must, if you manage rightly, bear the insults of all your servants themselves; who, the worse you use them, will the more readily use the power you give them, of revenging themselves on poor Miss Lucy.[3]

The humble companion's situation — living standards congruent with the middling ranks, the kind of respectable education young women of those ranks might expect, and little hope of an advantageous marriage without a substantial dowry — uniquely suits her to endure the tormentor's abuses since the alternative is to be cast out from a safe home. However, the safety of such a home is clearly compromised by its mistress's cruelty. If "Miss Lucy" is to survive, she must turn "toadeater" and swallow the bitter treatment she suffers. Collier strongly implies that between Miss Lucy and the servants, the latter are better off since they earn money while the former simply enjoys "free" room and board, privileges she pays dearly for at the expense of her self-respect and sanity.

Collier knew well of what she wrote and satirized. She grew up in a house plagued by debts and while "the Collier sons were able to train for professions … no such routes to autonomy were open to the daughters."[4] After their father died, Collier and her sister Margaret were dependent on the generosity of their brothers and friends, such as Henry Fielding who loaned them money and hired Margaret as a governess to his children. Collier lived with Sarah Fielding and even Samuel Richardson for a time, serving as governess to his daughter. In her introduction to *An Essay,* Audrey Bilger suggests that Collier's difficult personal circumstances likely led her to write *An Essay,* as the work demonstrates, "[a]n acute awareness of the evils of dependence and the need for a supportive community of friends."[5] Bilger argues that Collier's personal circumstances made her acutely aware of the potential for exploitation that women such as her were subject to since they had no personal fortune and little means of gaining one through respectable work.

Collier was not the only eighteenth-century writer to critique the domestic abuses heaped upon disempowered women. Her close friend Sarah Fielding examined their plight in her novel *The Adventures of David Simple*, and Frances Burney's oeuvre consistently returns to the domestic instability of her protagonists, their anxieties around marriage, and the constant threat of disinheritance and domestic dislocation at the hands of cruel women and men who claim power

over them. Indeed, Burney references Collier's piece in *The Wanderer* when Juliet reflects on Mrs. Ireton's well-developed skill at tormenting. The frequent occurrence of dislocated women extends to female-authored British fiction of the nineteenth century as well. The home, the most proper sphere for a respectable middle-class woman, can also be a site that paradoxically forbids many women entrée or suspends their share in its domestic comforts. Women who have transgressed, or appear to have transgressed, conventional femininity or those who have been born to unfortunate homes are variously confronted with a domestic environment in which they are constructed as interlopers; though given permission physically to inhabit a house, their unsuitability dictates the extent to which they are kept figuratively and literally at the margins. These women are kept in a permanent state of psychological homelessness: a subjectivity characterized by an acute state of discomfort wherein they are reminded they are liminal figures. Psychological homelessness acts to shape a fictional female subjectivity that is dependent upon the awareness that middle-class women must constantly negotiate and resist the ways in which their bodies circulate within domestic spaces. Domestic comfort is unstable, constantly shifting, and granted only at great personal expense. Like Collier's tormented humble companion, many of these characters are forced to tolerate the nasty tempers and swallow the mistreatments of their benefactors in order to survive.

But this project, while deeply interested in the domestic torments these kinds of women endure, is also concerned with how women resist and survive perverse domesticities, or what Mary Douglas refers to as "the tyranny of the home."[6] While Collier's humble companion's plight is terrible when considered as its own phenomenon, her domestic vulnerability can be read as a metaphor for the plight of all women in the period and indeed beyond. There are hierarchies within these domestic spaces in which some women are subordinated to others. Even the tormenting mistress torments because she is unhappy and unfulfilled in her social role; she too is trapped in a house, trapped as a wife, trapped as a mother, trapped in a domesticity she may have been coerced

into choosing. Here we see an early precedent for Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's titular figure in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, their foundational tome of feminist criticism that examines nineteenth-century fiction's recurring themes of enclosure, escape, and "maddened doubles function[ing] as social surrogates for docile selves."[7] In Collier's text, however, the madwoman is not haunting the attic but running the house, doling out deeply asocial behavior to the most disempowered members of her family. The suppression of madness that Gilbert and Gubar so effectively tease out of a century and a half of women's writing masquerades as normalcy in *An Essay*. Collier's domestic space is cruel, indeed, but it is a banal cruelty performed in the light of day. Collier's tormentor is also a predecessor for Mary Wollstonecraft's domestic tyrant who seeks unsanctioned power anywhere she can find it. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft draws attention to a type of woman who "by an undue stretch of power … [is] always tyrannizing to support a superiority that only rests on the arbitrary distinction of fortune."[8] The eighteenth-century home is then not quite the idealized space we might imagine. Instead, it always has the potential to be a space of cruelty and abuse.

While Collier's tormenting mistress may appeal to the reader as a cavalier and unscrupulous anti-heroine, it would be wrong to conclude that she is any kind of ethical model of female agency. Indeed, Collier's text sets up conflictual models of female agency through the activity of the speaker and the invisible but palpable presence of the humble companion sitting anxiously in the background. Even though the tormentor appears to be the creator of the text, it is in fact the humble companion, as evidenced by the beast fable which concludes the book and tells the story of a society of animals who discover a poem that "describe[s] the misery that is endured, from the entrance of teeth and claws into living flesh," its authorship designated only by an "L."[9] The poem impresses the animals with its authenticity and a debate ensues over who might have written it. The lion, the leopard, and the lynx argue over which of their family could be the creator, but the horse

steps in to argue for the meek lamb as the most likely author since "it is from suffering, and not from inflicting torments, that the true idea of them is gained."[10] Like the lamb, the humble companion is particularly sensitive to the abuses of those who hold power over her. Collier's ironic point is that these abuses are found in the home, a place that promises, as Vickery attests, "security, retreat, rest, warmth, food, and the basis for both a family life and for full participation in social life"[11] yet so often delivers pain and abuse to social inferiors. The fable clearly establishes the tormenting mistress as the target of the satire and imbues the humble companion with some semblance of agency and resistance through the creative act of writing.

The theme of cultivating creative resistance, however insufficient it may be in combating systemic oppression, can be traced through much of the female-authored fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even in seemingly conventional and canonical texts. "Dislocated Women" explores the way British women writers construct female subjectivity through a complex interplay of domestic space, financial obligation, filial duty, and personal desire. Specifically, I will be discussing Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814), Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854-5), and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), novels that, to varying degrees, portray versions of the humble companion struggling against confinement and cruelty to realize their agency and to build for themselves domestic lives that bring them fulfillment and comfort. The intimate space of the home and its attendant aggressions, vulnerabilities, and negotiations is a crucial site for constructing our modern understanding of a(n admittedly) narrow slice of female experience in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. A significant amount of British fiction, especially female-authored fiction, engages with the protagonist's search, not just for a home, but for an idealized domestic space that will satisfy their physical and spiritual needs along with the novel reader's expectations. The extent to which fiction can satisfy these appetites for home is something I discuss in depth; looking at these four novels together reveals that middle-class British femininity as

an ideology ultimately fails at establishing a domestic space that can fully satisfy all female desire. The marriage plot, though enshrined in a novel like *Pride and Prejudice*, is often exposed in fiction as a fragile and insufficient arrangement for middle-class and gentry women; there are far more matches like Maria and Rushworth or Lydia Bennet and Willoughby in British fiction than Lizzy Bennet and Darcy or Dorothea Brooks and Will Ladislaw. Maria Bertram and Lucy Snowe no doubt had their real-life counterparts, women who would not or could not find satisfaction in a conventional bourgeois or upper-class domesticity. Even the most idealized domestic space will fail to contain all erotic energy or the desire for independence.

Subjectivity and Agency

There is chronic domestic instability within domestic fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that helps to produce a particular kind of subjectivity in middle- and upper-class female characters characterized by anxiety and fear over class displacement and physical or psychological abuse. The female characters I am examining (middle-class and gentry, though Juliet, the daughter of an earl, makes for an interesting exception) are, for the majority of their narratives, insecure about the stability of their homes. Since women who occupy these social positions are bound to marriage and mothering as a matter of social convention, it is important to consider how this domestic insecurity affects their notions of who they are and how they fit into the world. Notions of labor vary from Burney to Austen to Gaskell to Brontë, but what they all have in common is the expectation that women who do not have substantial dowries (or in the case of Juliet, appear not to) will have to contribute in other ways, whether they are teaching, doing housework, or performing a more fluid emotional labor for their fellow household occupants. Taken together, domestic instability, the expectation of labor, and proper comportment shape identities that are contingent and insecure but also resistant and creative.

That subjectivity is a construction of social forces is a familiar notion for contemporary scholars. However, as Patricia Meyer Spacks points out in *Imagining a Self,* eighteenth-century philosophers viewed selfhood as contested territory rather than stable terrain. David Hume, for instance, was certain that "no principle of selfhood exist[ed] in him"[12] even if other individuals assumed they possessed a stable identity. Autobiography can give the impression of a stable self, though even minimal critical probing reveals it to be a construction. Novels can also perform the work of granting readers the sense of stable, if fictional, identities, but the novel's imaginative acts may "violate for their readers the distinction between memory and imagination."[13] For Spacks, eighteenth-century autobiography and novels helped to create the modern sense of self that is coherent, contained, and, while susceptible to change, fairly stable. However, this perception of a "self" conceals a more complicated understanding of identity:

> The sense of our continuing identity is intuitive, a product, once more, of our consciousness; yet rigorous examination of that consciousness as a phenomenon existing in time demonstrates that it consists necessarily of a series of experiences of the moment. We cannot, therefore, even prove our own identities, however certain we feel of them.[14]

If we apply this understanding of identity to fictional characters, we can parse how the marriage plot, abusive characters, and the physical space of the novel work to shape a sense of self that is fluid and subject to constant fluctuations.

Spacks's argument suggests that some eighteenth-century understandings of subjectivity may not be too far off from current theoretical trends. I rely on a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity for this project, specifically that of Judith Butler, to formulate my use of the term throughout my project. In the essay, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" Butler describes the subject as "constituted through an exclusion and differentiation, perhaps a repression, that is subsequently concealed, covered over, by the effect of

autonomy."[15] Furthermore, this subject formation is continually worked on and shaped by power: "power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted, but is subjected and produced time and again."[16] Put most simply, my understanding of subjectivity relies on the notion of a fractured self-conception that is always actively under construction, worked on by external forces but also an individual's internal self that has cohered and endured through time and experience.

Butler does not wish to deny the reality of these terms but rather to destabilize and contest them. Subjectivity and agency are forged through exclusionary practices: "[I]t is important to remember that subjects are constituted through exclusion, that is, through the creation of a domain of deauthorized subjects, presubjects, figures of abjection, populations erased from view."[17] Thus, though the female characters I will be discussing are marginalized in significant ways, abused and traumatized by the structures of power, it is important to keep in mind that while they struggle to enact their own agency in their worlds, their subjectivities and agencies come at the expense of others. Fanny Price can only ascend to spiritual daughter and sister to the Bertram clan after their biological daughters have been removed, and Austen's narrator subtly reminds us that the Bertrams' wealth is reliant on enslaved people's labor in the Caribbean. Lucy Snowe's professional independence is partly her own but the specter of Britain's colonial influence and wealth haunts *Villette* just as it haunts *Mansfield Park*. The right to exist as a subject, just like the right to assume power over a domestic space, comes at the erasure and denial of other individuals' rights to do the same.

Even though Butler does not deny the possibility of agency, she does qualify it. Agency is suspect, because it "*is always and only a political prerogative*."[18] While Butler's formulation of agency characterizes it as an exertion of power against others, my project attempts to demonstrate how it can also be a defensive posture that allows women to be active agents in their subjectivity creation despite the constraints placed on them by social, political, and linguistic forces. In her book *Gender*

and Agency, Lois McNay conceives of agency as the way an individual works to maintain a sense of self that is distinct from the external pressures she is always subject to: agency is partly "the capacity to manage actively the often discontinuous, overlapping or conflicting relations of power."[19] Butler acknowledges the impossibility of political neutrality in agency; we are only able to assert our agency if we have power over others. McNay is more concerned with the possibility of women producing a generative creative agency in order to resist oppression. She rejects a concept of agency that

> is either reducible to the subversions of the unconscious or undercut as an illusion of the symbolic order. Instead, agency is configured as a capacity to institute new or unanticipated modes of behavior, the ontological grounds of which lie in the originary capacity for figuration but which are not reducible to it because of the dynamic nature of the social order.[20]

Marginalized subjects may be limited in their agency, but they may also continually adapt their behavior in order to resist their marginalization. We might think about Fanny Price's behaviors in the context of McNay's claims, the way she, despite overwhelming gender and class biases, manages to institute small but significant resistances within the spaces she inhabits. These resistances, while seemingly insubstantial, result in Fanny's ascendance in the final scenes of the book to the highest position she herself could have imagined. Fanny is still subject to structures of power, but she has exerted her will and gained her desired outcome.

Because class status is so crucial to an understanding of the nineteenth-century novel, Pierre Bourdieu's social theory offers a helpful theoretical framework as well in the consideration of how class shapes subjectivity and agency, one that McNay herself builds on in *Gender and Agency*. *Distinction* examines how our personal tastes are shaped and established by our social class. Brought up to expect a certain quality of things, whether they be material or immaterial, we desire to find future means of support that will maintain the standard we have been trained to expect. This is well

illustrated, to use *Mansfield Park* as an example, in Fanny Price's return to Portsmouth as a young adult after having lived in the luxurious Mansfield Park for the last several years. Fanny's horror and discomfort are extreme and bear out not only in her psychological discomfort but her physical wellness. She is repulsed by the adulterated food and harassed by the loud uncouthness of her father and siblings. She desires above all to impose order and comfort on her surroundings and can only find respite in the improvements she coaxes out of her younger sister Susan. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu argues that social behaviors are based on an individual's practices within social strata. He terms our embedded social norms "habitus," which are a result of our social class and the values with which we are inculcated. We cannot understand individual behavior without acknowledging and analyzing these dynamics. My project aims to analyze how female characters negotiate domestic space to achieve an approximation of comfort and agency, so Bourdieu's focus on practice and habitus give me a suitable theoretical framework in which to ground my discussion.

Domesticity and the Domestic Sphere

I define domesticity as any behaviors, acts, and conversations that take place within a physical home and are intended to construct or negotiate domestic space. Domesticity and the intimate space it connotes have been traditionally constructed as private spaces juxtaposed against the public sphere of discourse, politics, and the marketplace. In *The Secret History of Domesticity*, Michael McKeon analyzes the emergence of the public-private divide and how the novel participates in that divide. McKeon argues that modernity makes the distinctions between public and private explicit and that domesticity results from this division; it is separated out from the political and economic. In addition to a division of public and private spheres, modernity divided women and

men within the domestic sphere; these divisions would give rise to the dominant nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres.[21] The concept of privacy grows out of domesticity — it is distinguished from secrecy because it is an entitlement to keep something hidden, whereas secrecy is an unethical or immoral deception. McKeon demonstrates how literature evolves to meet these divisions and by the mid-to-late eighteenth century, the domestic novel begins to hide political engagements within sexuality and familial relations: "the domestic novel labors to conflate the categories of the individual and the social."[22] Domestic fiction becomes a laboratory where larger social issues can be explored through personal and familial relationships.

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong views the domestic novel as functioning as a crucial ideological weapon for the emerging middle class; the public and private divide McKeon's history delineates is enhanced by the domestic novel's compelling depiction of romantic love and the power of feminine virtue. Armstrong argues that by "rewrit[ing] personal history,"[23] the domestic novel helped create an ideology of domesticity in which heteronormative relations and sterling middle-class values were positioned as morally superior and even natural. Idealized domestic space serves as an antidote to the corrupting influences of the public sphere, and the domestic novel nurtures female desire to participate in the private "feminine sphere." As Armstrong acknowledges, the separation of public and private spheres is no simple binary but a mutually informed, complex dynamic of social, economic, and political forces. However, Armstrong argues that cultural forces are largely responsible for the "formation of the modern political state" in England.[24]

If novels and other literary genres function as political tools in the mid-eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth as Armstrong argues, then how do these cultural forces shape the politics of domesticity in the Victorian period? As Tricia Lootens writes in *The Political Poetess,* the domestic sphere is not a "feminine" space at all but rather a necessary counterweight to the effective functioning of the power of the State. The "private sphere" is "a mortal, masculine martial refuge,

held scared by the labors of feminine custodians; and as such, it teaches a Morality that takes form, both as temporarily contained by, and as, redemptively, transcendently in excess of, Politics writ large."[25] Lootens argues that the kind of patriotic poetry written on behalf of this domestic sphere is unavoidably political even as it zealously performs a kind of femininity that denies political engagement. Antigone's defense of her brother Polynices, that he deserves a proper burial because he is "not some slave," draws our attention to the invisible labor of servants within the middle-class Victorian home as well as the enslaved and exploited labor that built the British empire and enriched its citizens at home and abroad.[26] In this formulation, the domestic sphere seeks to provide, in Jane Marcus's words, "an alibi" for the unsavory imperialist behavior perpetuated by the British State as well as its individual citizens. If the home is a bastion of morality, cleanliness, and safety, then it can purify British national identity, or so the reasoning goes. The "private sphere" is a tool of the State, a manufactured ideological counterpart to the masculine "public sphere," rather than a natural expression of an inherently feminine nature.

It is clear from Anne K. Mellor's[27] and Lootens's work that women writers had significant political influence in the nineteenth century. But, as Thad Logan points out in *The Victorian Parlour*, the physical location of middle-class women in the home was a powerful reality. Logan writes, "[w]hile the separation of spheres was a fantasy, insofar as homes did not and could not exist as transcendent spaces outside economic and political systems, the sequestration of women in the home was real enough, and compulsory domesticity was the context of life for middle-class Victorian women."[28] Influential Victorian writers like John Ruskin and Sarah Stickney Ellis advocated for the sanctity and importance of a female-governed domestic space. Despite the attempts to shape middle-class domestic space as an idealized moral refuge from the external world, it is in the nineteenth century that we get so many literary portraits of shattered, unstable, or ineffectual homes, from Felicia Hemans's *Records of Woman* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell*

Hall to Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*. For every stable home, we get ten destructive ones, just as we see more bad marriages and cruel parents than loving, harmonious families. Even Dickens's conservatism fails to model happy homes, as we come away from his novels like survivors from a domestic wreckage, wondering what price we have paid for our generic expectations for narrative closure. While the ideology of home and fictional representations of it change from Collier to Brontë, what does not change is an insistence on the power of the home to repress, abuse, and torture its inhabitants all the while performing care, love, and safety.

Dislocation, Disinheritance

Representations of the home in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British fiction are deeply unstable. That is not to say that stable domestic space is fully absent, but that the norm within fiction of these periods is domestic space that is hostile, contested, and oppressive. Clarissa Harlowe, Cecilia Beverly, Emmeline Mowbray, Anne Elliot, Jane Eyre, and Gwendolyn Harleth are just a handful of female protagonists that face dangerous, abusive, or hostile homes in British fiction. Admittedly, many of these plots are resolved and the protagonist is ultimately installed in perfect conjugal and domestic bliss, but what about Clarissa Harlowe, who is abducted, raped, and seems to will herself to die? What about Mary Bennet, who is plain and tiresome in contradistinction to her pretty and charming sisters? Or Thomas Hardy's Bathsheba, who finally marries Gabriel but "never laugh[s] readily now."[29] British fiction is full of women who fail to achieve the domestic happiness the marriage plot promises and must make do with the situation in which they find themselves.

According to Ruth Perry, this type of plot is pervasive in British fiction because real women's anxieties around domestic space were pervasive. Perry, like McKeon, views the novel as a heuristic for understanding important cultural concerns. As Perry explains in *Novel Relations*, literature does not necessarily "represent lifelike situations, or hold up a mirror to nature." However,

for Perry, literary works "represent the foci — the obsessions — of the culture, and that in their issues one can see the working out of the particular problems facing this society at that time. For literature is one way to think about life, to cope with problems that have no solution."[30] For Perry, the novel "obsessively rehearses"[31] questions of how kinship relations gradually shifted from consanguineal to conjugal during the eighteenth century. The legal and psychological disinheritance of England's daughters had been slowly taking root for centuries but gained greater currency in the late seventeenth century as common and ecclesiastical law implemented statutes more favorable to male succession: "The courtship plot begins to look more like the story of women scrambling to find new homes and to negotiate new families, their rights within the consanguineal family having been undercut by a shift in kinship priorities."[32] This "compulsively repeated plot premise — the dispossession of daughters — is a mythic recording of a banal and literal truth: shifts in the social and economic purposes of kinship over the previous half-century resulted in a reconception of the daughter's place in the family as temporary, partial, and burdensome."[33] As Perry points out, the dominance of the marriage plot in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction is a direct result of the financial consequences of constraining middle-class women to one of two alternatives: crippling dependence or marriage. Without giving middle- or upper-class women the freedom to inherit property or the ability to work for their own wages, the marriage plot becomes the primary way that women can survive.

My interest in domestic space and its paradoxical function as shelter and psychological torture chamber comes out of my experience reading and re-reading the female-authored fiction of the Long Eighteenth-Century and the Romantic and Victorian periods. Perry sees the concern over family negotiation as one of the most powerful anxieties present in the eighteenth-century novel. My study looks ahead to the nineteenth century, where no concern seems more pervasive to me than the duality of home and homelessness, and the anxiety present in fictional negotiations of those two

deeply fraught spaces. The search for family is, of course, present, but for characters like Lucy Snowe, family is fragile and fleeting; the self, alone and ensconced in comfort, independence, and psychological fulfillment, is our final vision in *Villette*. While the marriage plot remains a dominant element of fiction, it also becomes a tool for social critique, with writers like Gaskell and Brontë alternately employing and resisting it. Rather than portraying marriage as the ultimate good, characters like Mary Barton and Jane Eyre nearly die before their narrative journeys are brought to a close.

The Materials of Home

In *Behind Closed Doors*, Amanda Vickery delineates the unique nature of the relationship between the English and home. Respectable marriages in Britain required a couple's ability to construct or acquire their own home, and "[r]esidential independence was central to social respect and personal autonomy."[34] The Prussian writer Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, traveling in England in the 1790s, wrote that the English "prefer the most miserable cottage hired in their own name, to more convenient apartments in another house. The national character is discovered in this very circumstance."[35] However, the authority of property ownership (of even just the rights conferred to a renter) did not extend to women, or at least not legitimately. In her research, Vickery finds that "[e]lection minutes for 1768 [in Northampton] reveal landladies swapping their status as home owner with their male lodgers to allow them to vote during the election, often in exchange for a cash consideration."[36] "Residential independence" was not only a comfort or freedom but was literally tied to political capital.

Despite these political constraints, the value of a competent household manager was high and women assumed power within their homes even if their husbands or fathers were more legitimate authority figures. Women's domestic authority was complex and varied, but that they were deeply influential on cultures of domesticity seems undeniable. Notions of interior decorating, taste, and neatness — while shaped by bachelors, architects, and artisans alike — were viewed as indicative of moral refinement. Writing a century before John Ruskin's "Of Queen's Gardens" would espouse similar connections between morality and domestic order, some authors of eighteenth-century conduct literature "endow[ed] women with a gift for regulating claims to culture in a commercial society. Virtuous women, by making consumer choices that were moderate and reasonable, could moralise commercial society, protecting it from its own depravity. Thus male extravagance would be tempered and domesticated by female refinement."[37]

Vickery's fascinating book details the lives of real women's lived experience in Georgian England and how they negotiated the difficult relationship between patriarchal laws and conventions with their own desire for material goods and a home. Vickery contends that for women unable or unwilling to marry "the possession of a home of one's own was a universal goal."[38] Women who remained unmarried and lacked financial stability were threatened by social isolation, living in shabby rented rooms and struggling to survive; one thinks of *Persuasion*'s Mrs. Smith, bereft if not for Nurse Rook's assistance and gossip and Anne Elliot's disinterested company. Vickery defines a home as "some measure of control over space," and that "a house where an inmate has nil autonomy is a prison … For the powerless and marginal, home had to be a locking box, a collection of treasures and a consoling dream."[39] Mary Douglas echoes this definition when she writes that "home starts by bringing some space under control."[40] For both Vickery and Douglas, a home, as distinct from a house, is a space that encloses and protects rather than confines and controls. These distinctions have legal and political causes but they are also deeply rooted in the psychological and emotional

experience of an individual. For a woman of the middling ranks in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, the distinction between a house and a home has more to do with chance and circumstance than her individual choice.

Even conceptions of comfort that play so powerfully into Vickery's study are constructed by the forces of materiality. John E. Crowley's *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* persuasively makes the case that the notion of physical comfort is determined by the material world rather than some innate or "natural" sensation in the body. Crowley defines comfort as "self-conscious satisfaction with the relationship between one's body and its immediate environment"[41] and argues that our modern conception of comfort was developed through the early modern period and arrived at in the eighteenth century. Crowley explores the way that domestic space was used to cloister women in the medieval period and thus suggests that there is something traditionally "feminine" about domestic space since women were confined to the great aristocratic halls while the male inmates of those halls were frequently abroad. Crowley departs from the common historical assumption that material culture grew to meet human desires for comfort; rather material culture has shaped and reinforced our standards of comfort and eventually transformed this desire for comfort into a belief in its necessity by the nineteenth century. As Crowley's book makes clear, comfort is learned, not innate. Crowley's understanding of comfort demands that we tease out the way physical comforts are imbued with power because of their emotional resonances. Women are attached to domesticity not because it is natural for them to seek out comfort but because they have been socialized to find comfort and emotional fulfillment in domestic spaces. Importantly, Crowley also views materiality as fundamental to shaping human subjectivity, and in this sense, he shares some epistemological notions of the relationship between the human and non-human with thinkers like Gaston Bachelard, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and Jane Bennett.

Investigations of the impact of space on cognition and identity construction have been richly detailed in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard traces the complicated and intimate relationship people have with domestic space. Particularly, our childhood home is a sacred place of emotional and psychological comfort: "For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word."[42] What Bachelard describes moves beyond a casual understanding of memory and enters into the physical being of our bodies and the way our bodies remember: "the house we were born in is physically inscribed within us. It is a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all the other anonymous stairways, we would recapture the reflexes of the 'first stairway,' we would not stumble on that rather high step."[43] Bachelard's description of nests provides a useful understanding of the fragility of all houses or shelters that humans and animals seek refuge in: "A nest — and this we *understand* right away — is a precarious thing, and yet it sets us to *daydreaming of security*. Why does this obvious precariousness not arrest daydreams of this kind? The answer to this paradox is simple: when we dream, we are phenomenologists without realizing it."[44] The deep impressions the childhood home makes on characters in realist novels is crucial to understanding their behaviors and fixations. What else explains Margaret Hale's excessive devotion to and idealization of Helstone? It is because it was the home of her childhood years before she was sent to London to live with her aunt. Helstone preserves the tender impressions of Margaret's childhood.

My focus on how subjectivity is constructed and co-constructed by and through external forces relies on the interplay of materiality on female characters' bodies and minds. As described above by Vickery, Crowley, and Bachelard, the physical structures of domestic space affect the way individuals in general and women in particular understand themselves and the roles they play in their worlds. Space shapes human subjectivity and human interactions just as profoundly as human actions construct spaces in which to live. This is powerfully articulated by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's

assertion that "things stabilize our sense of who we are; they give a permanent shape to our views of ourselves that otherwise would quickly dissolve in the flux of consciousness,"[45] a haunting formulation that resonates with Fanny Price's construction of the East room in *Mansfield Park* or Lucy Snowe's recognition of Bretton's furniture and décor as she regains consciousness in *Villette*. The material world is not a mere extension of human desire and utility, rather "the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are. The material objects we use are not just tools we can pick up and discard at our convenience; they constitute the framework of experience that gives order to our otherwise shapeless selves."[46] Though Csikszentmihalyi and his collaborator Eugene Rochberg-Halton acknowledge the importance of all objects used by people, they argue "that the home contains the most special objects: those that were selected by the person to attend to regularly or to have close at hand, that create permanence in the intimate life of a person, and therefore that are most involved in making up his or her identity."[47] Thus, these domestic objects are especially worthy of analysis and consideration.

Literary scholars have also been drawn to understanding the power materiality exerts on subjectivity. In *A Sense of Things*, Bill Brown details his project to develop a "grittier, materialist phenomenology of everyday life."[48] Brown seeks to get at the relationships between humans and things, as "our relation to things cannot be explained by the cultural logic of capitalism"[49] but is instead rooted in what Brown claims is a primal desire to penetrate the ideas in things. Ian Hodder also articulates the inextricable relationship between humans and things in *Entangled*. Hodder argues that though many theorists have claimed to write about the relationships between humans and non-humans, "they could look more closely at the things themselves[50] … to explore how society and thing are co-entangled."[51] Hodder's metaphor of entanglement is compelling because it gives the reader a sense of the inextricable and messy nature of our interactions with the material world. One train of thought Hodder discusses is the effect of the material world on human cognition. External

stimuli act as "scaffolding" for mental processes: "our thinking comes about as an interaction between brain and world," and indeed, "we could go farther than saying that cognition is distributed and argue that self extends into the material world around."[52] Non-human things are thus not mere "props" but "co-producers" of knowledge and self-awareness.

New Materialism goes even further than Brown or Hodder and focuses on the agency of non-human materiality. New Materialism offers an especially useful framework for understanding the agency of nineteenth-century middle-class women. Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* offers a useful way of reconceiving the power of seemingly powerless characters. Fanny and Lucy, for example, are individuals who are quite profoundly affected by the nonhuman world around them, not just as marginalized women but as acute perceivers of the world; often ignored and overlooked, Fanny and Lucy observe and reflect, unnoticed by most and perhaps even at times underappreciated by the reader. Bennett's project seeks to "give voice to a vitality intrinsic to materiality, in the process of absolving matter from its long history of attachment to automatism or mechanism."[53] Distinct from Brown's thing theory, Bennett's theorizing rejects the "fixed stability" which might be implied by her term "thing-power," emphasizing instead that materiality is "as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension."[54] Vital materialism gets its "force," "energy," and "intensity" from "a congregational understanding of agency" rather than an atomistic one.[55] This congregational understanding of agency is comprised of assemblages, "ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts … living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within."[56] Bennett's use of Spinoza's conatus — "a stubbornness or inertial tendency to persist"[57] — along with McNay's generative theoretical framework allows a straightforward, "Do these female characters resist?" to become a more productive, "In what ways do these female characters negotiate resistance in seemingly impossible circumstances?"

The Politics of Home

By focusing on how nineteenth-century female characters may survive perverse domesticities, I do not mean to suggest that home or domesticity can or should be idealized. Any conception of the home as safe or neutral should be abandoned as my introduction's epigraphs suggest. Female protagonists might find measures of safety and stability in these narratives, but those measures cannot overturn the dangerous domestic ground Collier so vividly brings to life. Rather, I want to consider carefully what "home" and "safety" even are and how those concepts are complicit in exclusionary practices determined by gender, class, race, sexuality, and nationality. Rosemary Marangoly George argues that "[i]magining a home is as political an act as is imagining a nation. Establishing either is a display of hegemonic power."[58] It is perhaps conventional wisdom to say that having a home at all is a privilege, but for George, home-building is more than a display of local power; it is an essential part of the colonial project. Even if women do not make their homes in colonial spaces (the terrain George's project explores), feminine homemaking in England contributes to the British ideology that is crucial for imperial expansion. To have a home and to be able to transport or build that home (as we see the Brettons do in *Villette*) in other locations are related enterprises. The mystique of the British home reifies gender and class conditions that can then be transported outside of England and used to replicate social and political hegemony in colonial spaces.

Though I acknowledge the inherent political nature of the home, and take George's line that home "is not a neutral space"[59] as a sustaining undercurrent for this project, I also agree with Susan Fraiman that domesticity has been coopted by conservative political elements while being derided by the Left, and that both extremes are indicative of American and British culture's distaste for feminine spaces and practices. Fraiman's book *Extreme Domesticity* seeks to recuperate "domestic life and those of all genders who create and sustain it"[60] even as she acknowledges its force as a

conservative ideology that has powerfully and successfully enforced "compulsory heterosexuality, selfless maternity, class snobbery, racial purity, the wanton display of stuff, and the illusion of a safely barricaded life" since it emerged as a bourgeois ideal at the turn of the nineteenth century.[61] While homes can be exclusionary and oppressive, while they are frequently built at the expense of other lives, "home" need not be these things. The act of home-building can also be an act of ethical self-assertion and progressive or even radical resistance against conservative forces that seek to homogenize and control: "the home may be a key site of aesthetic, political, and psychological innovation."[62] A home, though fragile, unstable, and vulnerable, can help marginalized people find a degree of psychological and physical protection in a deeply unsafe world. A home can anchor an individual's subjectivity, aiding her in the construction of her sense of self even as the loss of that home threatens that same person with dissolution of identity and anxiety over her future. Juliet Granville, Fanny Price, Margaret Hale, and Lucy Snowe are characters confronted with various domestic dislocations who face significant threats and challenges to their bodily autonomy as well as their moral codes. Through persistence and creativity, Juliet and Fanny manage to secure a satisfying version of domesticity, whereas Margaret and Lucy are left in transitional spaces that gestures toward the possibility of a fulfilling domesticity while not making it a guaranteed outcome, conclusions which suggest that Brontë and Gaskell, writing about forty years after Burney's and Austen's novels, had come to question an idealized bourgeois domesticity.

Fraiman articulates many of my own conceptions of domestic space and how that space can be used to engineer a subtle but important resistance for marginalized people. This possibility for resistance also suggests a significant ethical formulation for modern feminism that I will return to in my coda; the question of who deserves a home and how that home's safety should be protected by institutional forces like government in order to ensure the full humanity of all people. While the origins of this conversation certainly date back much further than the late eighteenth century, the

conversation itself can certainly be found in the writings of women like Collier, Burney, and Brontë as their female protagonists seek shelter and protection from the cruelty and inhumanity that powerful people inflict on the marginalized. The home's ability to protect must always be counterbalanced by its potential to inflict bodily and psychological harm. This project attempts to interrogate both poles of the home's potential.

In chapter one, which takes Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) as its central focus, I draw on Bourdieu's social theories to establish how Burney is using Juliet Granville's body, her namelessness, and other characters' inability to recognize her aristocratic body to critique systems of class and gender in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. *The Wanderer* depicts the most domestically vulnerable woman in my project, since she is not only entirely cut off from the protection of a family but is actively hiding from a brutal husband. Burney, while explicitly loyal to the conservative social structures of eighteenth-century England, offers a harsh if incoherent critique of patriarchy and nationalism. Juliet's most brutal treatment in the novel is at the hands of upper-class people, usually women, who view her as a domestic contagion but find themselves unable to get rid of her. Burney's book functions as a version of banal Gothic, shaping domestic space as either deeply hostile and contested or overtly destructive and traumatic. The novel renders its protagonist voiceless and unprotected for a large portion of the novel. It is only through the most rigid comportment of feminine propriety and the risk of real harm and death that Juliet survives her time in England.

Chapter two examines Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and her unpopular protagonist Fanny Price. Utilizing Bennett, Csikszentmihalyi, Bachelard, and Marcel Mauss's *The Gift,* I perform a multilayered examination of space and gift economy to articulate an understanding of Fanny's complex agency in the novel. I argue that Fanny co-creates her subjectivity alongside a series of domestic assemblages in the novel, carefully curating spaces of comfort within larger hostile spaces

where she can recover from disturbances that plague her as a poor relation dependent upon the generosity of the Bertrams. Fanny is shaped by the forces that constantly whirl around her, but she is acutely aware of the power of objects and the confederations they form. Fanny is a remarkably effective manipulator of space, but her sensitivity has its drawbacks, as chaotic spaces like Sotherton and Portsmouth threaten to dismantle her fragile subjectivity. *Mansfield Park* is an exploration of these moments of strength, weakness, comfort, and trauma.

While chapters one and two reveal Burney's and Austen's commitment to the marriage plot, chapters three and four explore Gaskell's and Brontë's ambivalence towards it. *North and South*'s Margaret Hale is the subject of chapter three. Unlike Fanny Price who must incrementally build comfort as she grows up, Margaret begins as a happy character whose comforts are stripped away as she loses her childhood home and sees her family members die off. Domestic interiors leave Margaret wanting as she is haunted by the idealized home of her childhood, and domestic space in general proves insufficient to the more exciting prospect of moving in the wider world. It is at this point in my project that the focus shifts from protagonists seeking the right husband and the right home to figuring out how to build their own lives. Though Margaret is unconsciously attracted to John Thornton and the modern values he espouses, she rejects the narrative of the grateful and obedient wife. Left almost completely alone but with an independent fortune by the novel's final chapters, Margaret decides that she must learn how to live a fulfilling life and that decision requires her to reject a life of domesticity represented by her cousin Edith and her aunt Shaw. Rather than ending with an unequivocally happy conclusion, *North and South* concludes on a note of ambiguity but with the confidence that Margaret will endure and thrive.

My final chapter examines Lucy Snowe and *Villette,* that infamously unsatisfying Victorian novel. A most unconventional heroine, Lucy suffers personal trauma and setbacks before she embarks for Europe and the hope of making a new life there. Once she has arrived in Villette, Lucy

carves out space as a teacher, actress, art critic, and flâneuse, exercising her will and authority over others as she negotiates the extent to which she can act with propriety while still seeking out her desires. Overcome by hostile and uncomfortable domestic spaces, Lucy finds ways to thrive within them, but more importantly, she achieves some mobility and financial freedom through the aid of male surrogates who allow her access to power she would not have otherwise. Lucy's desire for mobility and independence prevails in the end, and like Margaret Hale, she is able to forge her own path without the necessity of a husband. Brontë's rejection of the traditional marriage plot also suggests a way of reading the novel that is rooted in resistance and female independence.

My project will conclude with a coda that further explores domestic instability while also weaving together literary texts from the nineteenth and twentieth century that imagine utopian feminine spaces that reject masculinity and heteronormativity in favor of connections with other women and productive behaviors and work. These utopians are, of course, transient and unattainable, but they are an interesting note to conclude on since they depict alternatives to the marriage plot and female dependence.

Notes

[1] Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 2-3.
[2] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.
[3] Jane Collier, *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting*, ed. Audrey Bilger (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2003), 58.
[4] Bilger, from *An Essay*, 11.
[5] Bilger, from *An Essay,* 17.
[6] Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space," *Home: A Place in the World*, ed. Arien Mack (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 261.
[7] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), ix.
[8] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* ed. by Deidre Shauna Lynch (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 71.
[9] Collier, *An Essay*, 10.
[10] Collier, *An Essay,* 130.

[11] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 2.
[12] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 2.
[13] Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, 4.
[14] Spacks, *Imagining a Self,* 22.
[15] Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Seyla Benhabib et al. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 45-6.
[16] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 47.
[17] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 47.
[18] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 46-7 (Butler's emphasis).
[19] Lois McNay, *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000)*,* 16.
[20] McNay, *Gender and Agency*, 21.
[21] For some discussion about the complicated critical legacy of separate spheres ideology, see: Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (*New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) ; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's introduction to their revised edition of *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Anne K. Mellor's *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993) and *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); and Tricia Lootens, *The Political Poetess*.
[22] Michael McKeon, *Secret History of Domesticity*, 715.
[23] Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 38.
[24] Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 9.
[25] Tricia Lootens, *The Political Poetess: Victorian Femininity, Race, and the Legacy of Separate Spheres* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 14.
[26] Lootens, *Political Poetess,* 13-4.
[27] See Mellor's *Mothers of the Nation*.
[28] Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.
[29] Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 389.
[30] Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5.
[31] Perry, *Novel Relations*, 7.
[32] Perry, *Novel Relations,* 7.
[33] Perry, *Novel Relations,* 42.
[34] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 7.
[35] Qtd. in Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 7.
[36] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors,* 8.
[37] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors,* 18-9.
[38] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 24.
[39] Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 24.
[40] Douglas, "The Idea of a Home," 263.
[41] John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), ix.
[42] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 4.
[43] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 14-5.
[44] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 103.
[45] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, eds. Stephen Lubar and David W. Kingery (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 23.
[46] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 16.
[47] Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things,* 17.

[48] Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3.
[49] Brown, *A Sense of Things*, 5-6.
[50] Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1.
[51] Hodder, *Entangled*, 3.
[52] Hodder, *Entangled*, 36.
[53] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.
[54] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 20.
[55] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 20.
[56] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter,* 23-4.
[57] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter,* 22.
[58] George, *The Politics of Home,* 6.
[59] George, *The Politics of Home*, 9.
[60] Susan Fraiman, *Extreme Domesticity: A View from the Margins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 3.
[61] Fraiman, *Extreme Domesticity*, 4.
[62] Fraiman, *Extreme Domesticity,* 9.

Chapter One

Language and Domestic Displacement in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*

> "Juliet, who in finding herself taken for her young hostess, found, also, how light a character that young hostess bore, was struck to see danger thus every way surrounding her; and alarmed at the risk, to which impatience had blinded her, of travelling, at so early an hour, alone. Alas! she cried, is it only under the domestic roof, — that roof to me denied! — that woman can know safety, respect, and honour?" – Frances Burney[1]

> "It is probably more accurate to reinterpret the so-called courtship plots of this period as being about homelessness and negotiation for an establishment rather than about disinterested love ... As Mr. B explains in *Pamela*, 'A man ennobles the woman he takes, be she *who* she will; and adopts her into his own rank, be it *what* it will.' Every woman is intrinsically orphaned, he implies, lacking social identity until she is 'adopted' by a husband and brought into his family." – Ruth Perry[1]

Frances Burney's protagonist in *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* is a character who is perpetually, one might even say pathologically, in motion. The role domestic space plays in shaping Juliet Granville's subjectivity is considerable and fraught since her tenuous occupation of place is continually threatened by abuse and homelessness. She is my project's paradigmatic dislocated woman: always wandering, always under physical and psychological threat, and subject to a level of discomfort rivalled only by such characters as Samuel Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe and Mary Wollstonecraft's ill-fated Maria Venables. Juliet is an exile, both from France where she grew up and from England where she cannot safely claim her family connections. *The Wanderer* wanders with its protagonist, moving with Juliet through so many households, rented rooms, and cottages that it is

[1] Frances Burney, *The Wanderer: or, Female Difficulties*, eds. Margaret Doody, Robert L. Mack, and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 666. Subsequent citations will appear in text.

difficult to keep track of all the disruptions.[2] Of the four protagonists I discuss, Juliet is from the highest social class, far exceeding the humble status of Fanny Price and Lucy Snowe as well as the bourgeois Shaw household where Margaret Hale comes of age. Juliet is born to an English aristocrat and his low-born wife and is raised in France with her friend Gabriella, the daughter of a Marquis. Juliet's class status is complicated, however, by the French Revolution, which threatens her adoptive family in France, and by Lord Denmeath's refusal to accept her parents' marriage as legitimate and his denial of her patrimony. Constrained by a rigid adherence to feminine propriety and a rational fear of her French husband discovering her in England, Juliet denies her name and connections, discovering along the way the depth of upper-class society's cruelty and the impossibility of safety both inside and outside the home for a woman unprotected by patriarchy.

Burney began writing *The Wanderer* towards the end of the 1790s but would not publish it until 1814. In her preface to the novel, Burney attributes this long delay to grief over her beloved sister Susanna's death in 1800 and a decade-long confinement in France with her husband and son due to travel embargoes during the Napoleonic Wars (4). Burney would remain in France from 1802-1812 before she returned to England with her manuscript of *The Wanderer* in tow.[3] The circumstances of the text of *The Wanderer* and Burney's own journey from France to England parallels Juliet's journey from France to England to escape the Reign of Terror. English fears around the French Revolution and the novel's anxiety over female displacement created by war offers us a way to understand the threat that displaced women pose to a conservative social structure; by examining how Juliet, a character who registers as a domestic threat, is treated by the broader social world she inhabits, and more importantly how she attempts to resist mistreatment, this chapter aims to demonstrate how domestic space — that ostensibly "safe" space for women — actually functions to threaten and damage women, coercing them into abusive social relations and traumatic domestic arrangements. While Juliet tries to endure these spaces, she ultimately refuses to remain in

uncomfortable places, threatening her literal survival but preserving her dignity and sense of self. Juliet's belief in the value of her own dignity angers malevolent characters while earning her respect from benevolent ones like Lady Aurora and Harleigh.

That Juliet, a character who is demure and seemingly powerless and poor, can deeply unsettle characters who are themselves quite powerful seems like a careful calculation on Burney's part to expose the absurdity of feminine comportment. Juliet is perpetually caught in an existential bind in which she desperately needs help, yet seeking that help requires her to violate the propriety she has been taught to uphold. Additionally, Juliet's reluctance to identify herself is crucially linked to her survival. It is not until two-thirds of the way through the novel that the reader finally learns Juliet's story: that she had to flee France after being coerced into marrying a dastardly French commissioner who threatened to guillotine her beloved French guardian. Juliet fears that her husband will be able to find her in England if she uses her surname of Granville. However, Juliet's silence marks her out as a suspicious woman to the social circle with which she becomes acquainted. Lady Aurora's guardian Mrs. Howel perfectly articulates Juliet's quandary when she scoffs at Juliet's claim of innocence: "Innocent? Without a name, without a home, without a friend?" (133). This exchange explicitly surfaces the connection between patrimony and morality — how can anyone be good or worthy if they can't reveal who they are? For Mrs. Howel and Mrs. Maple, two female characters who serve as the gatekeepers to proper society, a respectable name would situate Juliet inside the order of things; her lack of a name signifies her unruliness and establishes her as a domestic contagion that must be isolated and controlled.

The tension between Juliet's sense of her own goodness and the other characters' mistrust of her revolves around the issue of her name and identity. Her acquaintances are utterly confounded by her determined silence on who she is, and Burney continually returns to this unresolvable problem, as Juliet cannot mention her name without endangering her own survival and the other characters

cannot comprehend her behavior. As a result of these dynamics, Juliet's subjectivity is deeply fraught and contested by those around her; the reader cannot access her subjectivity initially, and we are left to puzzle with Mrs. Howel and Mrs. Maple since Burney denies the reader any special knowledge.

For most of the novel, Juliet refuses to name herself or to recognize the names by which others signify her.[4] She resists incorporation into the social schema they espouse. Debra Silverman writes that Juliet's "radical namelessness … acts as a masquerade and a curiosity. Because Juliet/Ellis is not officially labeled until the end of the book, she is allowed a type of mobility that other characters in the book are denied."[5] Indeed, Juliet is more mobile than other female characters in the novel who are bound by guardianship and propriety to remain within domestic enclosures. But while this mobility and Juliet's resistance to being named allow her to negotiate some active agency and, as Silverman argues, imbue Juliet with power, her behaviors also set her apart from the society that could protect her. Because Juliet's identity is mysterious, conservative authority figures within the novel identify her as a threat and seek to exclude her from their domestic spheres.

This chapter will chart the way explicit acts of naming and recognition shape Juliet's subjectivity and domestic location throughout the novel. Beginning with a more radical namelessness and domestic instability in the book's opening chapters when Juliet is identified as "the stranger," "the Incognita," and "the Wanderer," I will consider how Juliet's experiences as "Ellis" move her into a more stable yet more exploitative and coercive domesticity; though she is allowed to occupy domestic space, her name is insufficient, a ruse, and she is treated as a domestic contagion. Finally, I will examine how the revelation of her real name, "Juliet," an admission that might be understood to represent a moment of clarity for the reader and social restoration for our protagonist, actually brings the greatest danger for Juliet until male authority can confirm her name and produce legal documents to confirm her identity. Once the identity of her maternal uncle is revealed and her father's missing codicil is produced, Juliet grows more legible to the other

characters and more recognizably "domestic" — it is through naming that Juliet is domesticated by social forces but also by the confines of Burney's novel and the expectations of the novel reader. It is through naming that Juliet can acquire a home.

The Stranger/Incognita: "a poor destitute Wanderer, in search of any species of subsistence!"

Juliet's liminality is established from the opening page of *The Wanderer*, when she appears to a company of English tourists who, like Juliet, are fleeing the perils of Robespierre's Reign of Terror. It is not yet apparent that Juliet is our protagonist; she is a disembodied voice, "of keen distress resound[ing] from the shore, imploring, in the French language, pity and admission" (11). Her otherness is emphasized by her darkened skin[6] and shabby clothing. She will be variously referred to as "the stranger," "a wanderer," "demoiselle," and "Incognita," terms that emphasize foreignness, unknowability, and danger. Just as Juliet disrupts the company's rushed departure from France's dangerous shores, this series of appellations operates to mark out Juliet as a disruption since they signify an unknown, foreign individual. The French Revolution's savagery casts Juliet in a negative light since the English tourists assume she is French. With the exception of Harleigh and the Admiral, most of the other passengers are deeply suspicious of Juliet's "Frenchness." There is much confusion about how to read the Incognita, and she is described as potentially being a nun (13), "outlandish gentry" (14), a maid (17), a native of the West Indies or Africa (19), or an émigrée (20). Juliet refuses to dispel the mystery and for the most part, the rest of the boat's passengers are unwilling or unable to distinguish at all between types of non-English people. It is not until the boat has successfully arrived at Dover that Juliet claims the other characters' protection based on a shared origin when Mrs. Maple threatens to report her to the local magistrates: "I am no foreigner, -- I am

English!" (21), Juliet cries. Despite this admission, which is clearly a plea for protection, Juliet remains caught in an exilic state.[7]

Juliet's state of exile has proven to be a rich vein of exploration for critics such as Katharina Rennhak and Toby R. Benis. Rennhak's article "Tropes of Exile in the 1790s: English Women Writers and French Immigrants" argues that Burney utilizes the trope of the exile to critique the position of women during the Romantic period; one of these critiques is that economically disadvantaged people suffer more when their nationality or gender prevents them from maintaining the class position they are accustomed to hold.[8] Toby R. Benis's book *Romantic Diasporas: French Émigrés, British Convicts, and Jews* suggests that reading *The Wanderer* as a novel of Revolutionary emigration allows us to understand the complex ideological and narratological structures at work in the novel. Rather than designating it a Jacobin or anti-Jacobin text, Benis examines the difficulties Juliet faces in ascertaining her national identity. *The Wanderer* is an interrogation of what "homeland" means: "[Juliet's] difficulty is not that she has no country … Rather, as a woman raised abroad by an adoptive family whom she loves, she has one native land (or at least one possible national identity) too many, a state the revolutionary age has made untenable."[9]

Despite Juliet's claim that she is English, the company's association with Juliet's connection to France colors the way they view her. As Rennhak's and Benis's arguments suggest, Juliet's identity is not just mysterious but multiple; she performs upper-classness in the way she speaks and conducts herself even as she appears shabby and destitute, and she speaks both French and English with ease. It is not only Juliet's complex identity that the other characters find troubling, but rather it is her refusal to produce an explanation that would make her identity comprehensible that alienates her from them. Even more damning is her refusal to speak her name to prove that she is, in fact, traceable and thus recognizable as an English and properly feminine (i.e. "moral") woman.

While many of the company are suspicious of Juliet, Mrs. Maple is the most aggressively hostile to her, convinced that Juliet is scheming to harm them. Mrs. Maple only agrees to house and protect Juliet when she feels more threatened by the consequences of not doing so, as when Elinor promises to hire Juliet as her maid if Mrs. Maple will not consent to allow her to travel with them or when Lady Aurora takes an interest in her welfare. When she is permitted to reside at Mrs. Maple's, Juliet is treated as a second-class citizen, forbidden to circulate freely within the house and confined to the solitude of her own room. Juliet does not find this isolation a burden but a comfort after the chaos and turmoil she has recently lived through.

When not confined to the upper room, Juliet is treated as an object of curiosity over her transformation from her "black, patched, and pennyless" (28) state "to the brightest, whitest, and most dazzling fairness" (43). However, this transformation does not absolve Juliet of the pressure to reveal herself in a less literal way. Mrs. Maple asserts, "I have a great right to know the name of a person that comes, in this manner, into my parlour" (57). Ireton too shouts his support that Mrs. Maple "make her tell her name!" Shouts of "Your name!" issue from Elinor and Selina while Harleigh merely projects compassion and leaves the room. Juliet's steadfast refusal ends in her dismissal as Mrs. Maple declares, "she would not allow any such indulgence to an unknown pauper" (59). Though Juliet's dismissal is temporary and Mrs. Maple eventually relents, it is undeniable that her refusal to speak her name renders her unfit in Mrs. Maple's eyes to stay in her house. Her identity as "the stranger" or "the Wanderer" precludes her from any measure of domestic stability.

Juliet's alternative to domestic instability is the potential danger she faces in the public world, glimpsed in the novel's opening and brought to bear again on her fragile subjectivity when she travels to Brighthelmstone from Mrs. Maple's house in Lewes to check for a letter at the post office. While trying to retrieve her letter from the clerk, Juliet is faced again with the request that she supply her name and must rely on Harleigh to circumvent this request. Harleigh secures Juliet her letter as

well as a space in Miss Matson's milliner shop to read it in privacy, but while this reveals Harleigh's disinterested generosity it also underscores her vulnerability in being an unnamed woman. Burney firmly establishes Juliet's dilemma in the first seven chapters of the book: without her name or her money, she is at the mercy of the generosity or capriciousness of others. While Burney's previous novels also explore similar themes of female difficulties, Evelina, Cecilia, and Camilla are never destitute or so profoundly endangered by the whims and unkindness of others.

L.S./Elless/Ellis: "You must be called something or other"

While Burney manages to sustain the mystery of Juliet's identity for a sizable portion of the novel,[10] her namelessness hinders the story's progress since the other characters cannot accept it. The various appellations used by other characters to signify Juliet are soon abandoned and she is accidentally named "Elless" by Miss Bydel, who misunderstands Ireton's reference to the addressee — "L.S" — of Juliet's letter. "Elless" is altered to "Ellis" and becomes her moniker for much of the novel. Miss Bydel tells her, "your name, at least, can be no such great secret, for you must be called something or other" (81). Miss Bydel's ignorance of the underlying meaning of this nickname is ironic, but it serves to crystallize Juliet's subordinate status by emphasizing her ephemeral identity. Louis Althusser explains that individuals "are *always already* subjects" and

> that we function in the practical rituals of the most elementary everyday life (the hand-shake, the fact of calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you 'have' a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject, etc.) — this recognition only gives us the 'consciousness' of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition.[11]

Miss Bydel's practical reasoning ("you must be called something or other") follows Althusser's logic that we "are *always already* subjects," because she asserts her recognition of Juliet's subject status and

the necessity for the characters to have some way of identifying her. Miss Bydel's comment brushes up against Juliet's obstinate self-assertion not to allow herself to be hailed. The reader may think, along with many of the characters, that Juliet would make things easier for herself if she appeased this social group with a false name and a false story, but she resists all subterfuge.

Interestingly, the narrator does not begin to refer to Juliet as Ellis until she agrees to be called Ellis in a conversation with Harleigh. She tells him, "I am rather more contented to make use of this name, which accident has bestowed upon me, than positively to invent one for myself" (91). Ellis comes across as relieved, because she does not have to lie or disclose her name for the moment. The narrator writes,

> Ellis, therefore, which appellation, now, will be substituted for that of the Incognita, seeing no possibility of escaping this exhibition, comforted herself, that, however repugnant it might be to her inclinations, and her sense of propriety, it gave her, at least, some chance, during the remainder of her stay at Lewes, of being treated with less indignity. (91)

Ellis's persnickety sense of dignity cannot allow for this being completely honest, but under the circumstances, she accepts the need for a name. The narrator insists on reminding the reader of the artificiality of "Ellis," however, by sometimes referring to her as the Incognita and the stranger after she has accepted her new name and in moments when she is made to feel alienated by other characters.

Juliet's silence is a protective act, but it also challenges notions of female rationality and self-determination. However, Juliet's intentions are misinterpreted because her unknowability and her insistence on her right to privacy restricts others' knowledge of her while tantalizing them and making them more curious about her origins. As a result, Juliet becomes a domestic pariah, unsuitable for circulation in respectable homes and exiled to the most liminal domestic spaces; it is when this unsuitability is fully established, that she becomes not just morally suspect but vulnerable

to exploitation as an unprotected woman. While being named in this way appears to smooth the way for Ellis, it also licenses the other characters to make use of her as they will. "Ellis" gives them a sense of ownership over Ellis, "unfriended, unsupported, nameless!" (347), and she becomes a project, an object, and a curiosity with which they are entertained. As Margaret Doody has pointed out, the French translation of Miss Bydel's nomenclature "is a name which means less – elle-less – less than a woman" (xvi), while Darryl Jones suggests that "Ellis" is meant to invoke "Alias."[12] Both Doody's and Jones's interpretations invoke anonymity and concealment, and in addition to reminding the reader that "Ellis" is a false construct, we should notice what this demand for a name says about the other characters: their obeisance to conventions override their ability to protect someone in need.

Miss Bydel's domestication of Juliet as Ellis coincides with revelations of her usefulness. She is named after she demonstrates her musical abilities, skills as a needlewoman, and her ability to read and write with elegance and skill. As Ellis, her identity is stabilized and she becomes legible to other characters, and she somewhat successfully (if temporarily) integrates herself within the structure of Mrs. Maple's home. Ellis begins to perform acts of labor to pay down what she sees as the burdensome debt of Mrs. Maple's reluctant aid. After an amateur performance of *The Provok'd Husband* takes over Mrs. Maple's home,[13] Ellis "earnestly wished to soften the ill will of Mrs. Maple; and having heard, from Selina, that the play occupied all hands, she begged Mrs. Fenn to accept her services at needle-work" (77). Mrs. Fenn and Mrs. Maple quickly capitalize on Ellis's sewing skills, and she is supplied with "ample occupation; but as labour, in common with all other evils, is relative, she submitted cheerfully to any manual toil, that could rescue her from the mental burthen of exciting ill will and reproach" (78). Ellis hopes that this labor will endear her to Mrs. Maple, though it becomes clear that Mrs. Maple does not interpret her helpful nature as being indicative of good intentions.

Mrs. Maple's aid and Ellis's labor functions in an exploitative gift economy. As Marcel Mauss explains in *The Gift*, economies of gift exchange delineate social gradations: "the unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior … Charity is still wounding for him who has accepted it, and the whole tendency of our morality is to strive to do away with the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver."[14] Mauss gets at the heart of why it is so painful for Ellis to have to accept Mrs. Maple's patronage. She has no money and no sense of when she will have access to it. She is caught in a denigrating and painful cycle of exchange with Mrs. Maple that endows the latter with great power, and Ellis will continually face this unequal exchange with many other characters.

Ellis is never on sure footing in Mrs. Maple's home, as the latter is always threatening to expel her at the slightest provocation. Ellis, despite all the challenges she faces, is a self-assured character, convinced of her own ability to behave appropriately and bear the consequences of being misunderstood. While Ellis will suffer some abuse at Mrs. Maple's hands, she is not able to withstand endless cruelty. After she has been dismissed once again, "Ellis attempted not any opposition. The suffering annexed to an asylum thus perpetually embittered by reproach and suspicion, had long made her languish to change it for almost any other" (208). The danger of toadyism has already crept up for Ellis in Mrs. Maple's home, and the cycle of continual abuse, expulsion, and recantation threatens to envelop her. Mrs. Maple's home may shelter Ellis in a physical sense, providing her food and shelter, but she is alternately neglected and abused and finds it difficult to endure life there.

Burney's protagonist maintains a sense of self-respect and entitlement in the face of countless indignities and cruelties throughout the text. Her pride is indicative of her class status and is one of many signs that most of the novel's characters fail to recognize these superior markers of her class. Temporarily stripped of money and male protection, Ellis continues to perform her class.

In her article "How *The Wanderer* Works: Reading Burney and Bourdieu," Helen Thompson explores Juliet's subjectivity by applying Pierre Bourdieu's principle of habitus and Althusser's modalities of being to argue that Burney "imaginatively reconstitutes the wanderer's body in the interest of a postrevolutionary reconstitution of rank."[15] Thompson's article conceives of *The Wanderer* as aggressively embodying the patriarchal constraints of the post-revolutionary aristocratic body in order to challenge them. Bourdieu's *Distinction* articulates the concept of *habitus* as the embodied class of individuals, an ideology inscribed upon the body, and that different lifestyles are "the systematic products of habitus.[16] Thompson writes that "embodied class signifies not the inert, hypostatized materiality of the body, but its qualitatively different acts of 'perpetuat[ion],' its ceaselessly transitive act of embody*ing*."[17] Juliet's manners, accomplishments, and unfailing deportment are reiterated again and again by the narrator and the few characters that recognize her goodness, yet direct access to her subjective state is severely restricted for other characters and the reader. Thompson argues the reiterations that so annoyed William Hazlitt in his unfavorable review of the novel,[18] are "a drama of redundant discovery" that must be played again and again so that Juliet can reconstitute the aristocratic body that has been destroyed by the French Revolution.[19] This body is both metaphysical, since the Revolution has redefined the status of aristocrats, and literal, since Juliet's father's codicil is lost when her adoptive family's house is burned by the revolutionaries. These reconstitutions are thus not as Hazlitt argued instances of nothing,[20] but repetitions that demonstrate Juliet's class origins and intellectual capacities while concealing her interiority.

Thompson's reading demonstrates a useful application of Bourdieu's theory of class-based subjectivity to Juliet. I too will draw on his theoretical work from *Distinction* to demonstrate the ways Juliet's subjectivity is determined by her class status (that of a well-bred and well-educated aristocratic woman). However, rather than arguing that Juliet is reconstituting the aristocratic body

through her behaviors, I will be examining how Burney interrogates the possibility for a reformed aristocratic body that shares the domestic values of the burgeoning middle class. Juliet's subjectivity is shaped by having her class status denied to her, and more specifically by her negotiations of space and place throughout the narrative. Burney's novel is engaged in a project of remaking the aristocratic female body from one constituted by display to one contained in the privacy of domestic space. If the domestic novel is responsible for the cultural hegemony of the middle class, as Nancy Armstrong argues, then *The Wanderer*, a novel written by a middle-class woman that valorizes the values of middle-class femininity as it would come to dominate British culture by the 1840s, appears to me to be part of the tradition of literary domesticity with which Armstrong concerns herself. Armstrong explicitly labels the novel as a genre as "non-aristocratic,"[21] because it seeks to create a domesticity centered on sexuality and the moral authority of the middle-class woman. A novelist like Samuel Richardson writing a novel like *Pamela*, does so, in Armstrong's argument, to "aim desire away from the aristocratic body and into a world of private gratification that anyone by implication could enjoy."[22]

Michael McKeon argues in *The History of Domesticity* that for women writers like Margaret Cavendish, Lady Mary Chudleigh, and Mary Astell, the devolution of absolute monarchy resulted in women's civil deprivation as men as a group began to absorb "some portion of the absolute sovereignty that had tacitly accrued to the monarch alone."[23] According to McKeon, these three women writers experienced this transfer of power as "a transit from the actual privations of public absolutism to the innermost privacy of mind, breast, affections, and sexuality, a transit from subjecthood to something like 'subjectivity.'"[24] Feminine agency, confined in the public and legal sphere, sought expression in the private spheres of the home, relationships, and writing. As this evolution occurred in discourse, it was mirrored in the physical structure of homes; beginning in the fourteenth century and developing slowly through the early modern period, great households slowly

began to withdraw from more public displays of hospitality and power (large dinners in the great hall) in favor of semi-privacy and divisions of the house followed suit. Henry VII and Henry VIII initiated subdivisions in their rooms that created subtle distinctions in standards of privacy and dictated the terms by which the king's private space could be intruded upon. The female equivalent of private spaces was the aristocratic woman's closet where she could read, write, and pray. Aside from these explicitly private spaces, noble and gentlewomen's dressing rooms and bedrooms functioned as ostensibly private spaces but had more public functions as well, as when the bedroom became the stage for the ceremony of childbirth, what McKeon describes as "a 'private,' but also an emphatically collective, activity."[25] Other innovations included smaller rooms for family dinners and additional staircases for more discreet access to different rooms in the house.

The cultivation of upper-class domestic space that encouraged highly-developed standards of privacy would slowly filter down into less grand households in the eighteenth century. While some wealthy merchants with class pretensions emulated the spaces of the aristocracy and gentry, McKeon writes that "the impulse toward physical privacy was experienced as a universal human value rather than as proper to the socially elevated alone. What had begun as an elite withdrawal from collective presence had become the architectural expression of an emergent individualist norm."[26] Thus those families who could afford to would build domestic spaces that cultivated various types of privacy for different members of the household. McKeon argues, along with Armstrong, that this move toward privacy and domesticity is delineated and enshrined in domestic fiction.

The reason I include Juliet and *The Wanderer* in a project that is dominated by considerations of middle-class women is because Juliet, while categorized as an aristocratic woman by Burney's novel, is also, simultaneously, betraying her allegiance to middle-class values. Her aristocratic legacy is the motivation behind all the danger she fled in France, and many of the aristocratic people we

meet in the novel — Lord Denmeath, Sir Lyell Sycamore, Sir Jaspar, and even Lord Melbury and Juliet's father — are individuals with questionable characters. Their concern for status and their love of power lead them to treat people poorly and to take advantage of vulnerable women. The women who act as surrogates of these aristocratic men enact a cruel authority against Juliet and cultivate homes with perverse domesticities, closer to that of Jane Collier's cruel tormentor than the comfort and elegance of Darcy's Pemberley. Juliet represents a version of the aristocratic woman who is refined, well-educated, and elegant but also highly principled, generous, and willing to expend labor to maintain herself. She is the kind of aristocratic woman who Armstrong categorizes as possessing "certain psychological qualities" that "can go into the making of the new domestic ideal."[27] We cannot forget that Juliet does not proudly display her body but rather retreats from attention and prefers quiet domestic settings with intimate friends. Harleigh, too, models the kind of moral authority that Juliet herself possesses and perhaps this is the primary connection between them. Their marriage unites two of the most ethical characters in the book, and while the ending suggests a preservation of the landed class's system of patronage, that patronage is extended to deserving characters while cruel though higher-status characters are shut out from Juliet and Harleigh's domestic bliss. Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* participates in this same kind of reworking of aristocratic values through Pemberley's absorption of Elizabeth Bennet's influence; *The Wanderer*, similarly, models a version of aristocratic domesticity that is softened by the ethical considerations of the bourgeoisie.

Perhaps part of the reason the ideology of *The Wanderer* is so difficult to parse is due to the negotiations of class and gender Burney seems intent on working through; the book continually introduces new challenges that Ellis must face and work out. Ellis occupies quite an ambiguous space at Mrs. Maple's house; she is being "protected" and housed, but there is no agreed upon understanding of her status within that house and while this creates instability for Ellis, it also

protects her from a certain degree of exploitation since Mrs. Maple places no specific demands upon her. Ellis faces greater exploitation when she agrees to serve as Mrs. Ireton's humble companion after she is dismissed from the mantua-maker Mrs. Hart's services. The novel deliberately constructs Mrs. Ireton's home as a prison, and the spatial fluidity which Juliet has previously enjoyed becomes more restricted since Mrs. Ireton's displays of power often involve dictating Ellis's movements. Rather than the presumably small and plain room that Mrs. Maple housed her in, Ellis, upon her arrival, is shown into "a handsome chamber, of which the hangings, and decorations, as of every part of the mansion, were sumptuous for the spectator; but in which there was a dearth of almost everything that constitutes comfort to the immediate dweller" (484). The opulence of the room is not meant for comfort and ease, rather it is meant to convey Mrs. Ireton's power to the inhabitant. This luxury functions as a mockery of hospitality, bitterly reminding Ellis that she is no guest but rather a "toadeater," a vulnerable woman who must stomach whatever unpleasant treatment she is given. Ellis's discomfort at Mrs. Ireton's house is increased by her memories of time spent there with Lady Aurora: "Mrs. Ireton had taken the house of Mrs. Howel: – that house in which Juliet had first, after her arrival in England, received consolation in her distresses; been melted by kindness; or animated by approbation" (478). Ellis is pained by the contrast between her time in those rooms with Lady Aurora and her subsequent time with Mrs. Ireton.

Mrs. Ireton is significantly worse than Mrs. Maple since the latter is motivated by vanity and the former by blatant cruelty. Burney explicitly designates Mrs. Ireton as a daughter of Jane Collier's ingenious tormentor:

> [Ellis] saw, too, that the lady was amongst the many, though terrible characters, who think superior rank or fortune authorizes perverseness, and legitimates arrogance; who hold the display of ill humour to be the display and mark of power; and who set no other boundary

> to their pleasure in *the art of tormenting*, than that which, if passed, might endanger their losing its object. (emphasis mine, 489)

As Ellis struggles to maintain herself economically, she simultaneously struggles to endure the "consequences of humiliation and dependence"[28] to which such work subjects her. As Mrs. Ireton's humble companion, Ellis faces both subtle and overt abuses as Mrs. Ireton continually displays her power over those she can control, perverting the gift economy she has successfully coerced Ellis into accepting. Marcel Mauss's gift economy is necessarily constructed on social difference but its ostensible benevolence is transformed into an abusive social game in Mrs. Ireton's hands. Shades of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* also color Mrs. Ireton's behavior; though Mrs. Ireton has control of her fortune and her minions, her lack of legitimate authority outside of that small sphere is also perhaps what drives her to exercise the power she wields.

Petty domestic tyrants populate *The Wanderer* and help Burney build her critique of "female difficulties" the novel's subtitle indicates. Mrs. Ireton's rented home becomes a space of banal Burkean horror, where Ellis is variously tortured for the entertainment of spoiled individuals whom leisure has turned into inconsiderate, cruel, or sadistic solipsists. In a particularly claustrophobic scene, Ellis is trapped by Mrs. Ireton's son in the summerhouse while Mrs. Ireton's footman relays her demand that Ellis return to the main house to play and sing for Mrs. Ireton's guests. Ellis manages to get clear of Ireton by bolting the door after he has momentarily walked out. The hoydenish Miss Crawleys then come to the summerhouse to "haul The Ellis" to Mrs. Ireton's drawing room. Ellis manages to escape and "was nearly arrived at the house, before the besiegers of the cage perceived that the bird was flown" (512). The novel is fascinated by the formulation of women as caged birds, a common trope of the period that appears in Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) and Maria Bertram's identification with Sterne's story in *Mansfield Park* (1814). Harleigh also compares Ellis to a bird when he tells her that "My Lord

Denmeath, who had already gone through the ceremonial of demanding Mrs. Maple's permission to obtain a private audience with you, seemed thunderstruck at the news, that the bird he so much wished to sing to him was flown" (630). It is perhaps unsurprising that Sir Jaspar draws on this trope since he is so determined to catch Juliet and certainly seems to view her as a beautiful object worthy of rescue. After meeting Gabriella, he suggests that Lord Denmeath "will surely make it his business that you should coo together in the same cage?" (640). The caged bird metaphor is chilling and pernicious, because it captures the fragility and helplessness of women in Ellis's society; however, it also reveals the imaginative hold exercised by the small, clever, and resourceful, for Ellis continually escapes from the traps others set for her, even if she is to be caught again.

Burney portrays Ellis's resourcefulness in escaping, but she also constructs dark comedic scenes at the expense of the protagonist's would-be captors. In a moment of characteristically sadistic humor, Burney depicts Ireton trying unsuccessfully to climb through the window before Ellis escapes through the door. The Miss Crawleys do finally get ahold of Ellis, "rushing suddenly upon her, exclaim[ing] with clamorous joy, 'She's caught! She's caught! The Ellis is caught!' and, each of them seizing a hand, they dragged her, with merry violence, into the breakfast-room" (512). Burney is particularly interested in detailing Ellis's discomfort throughout the novel, but especially here, Burney dwells on the "merry violence" that torments Ellis. The discomfort this inflicts on the reader is significant, too; by detailing Ellis's discomfort so carefully and extensively, Burney forces a sympathetic reader to share in it. We have enough access to Ellis's thoughts that we know she is not a dangerous wanderer but a woman in danger, and it is difficult not to feel shaken by these abuses.

Burney makes it clear that domestic space does not offer Ellis any real safety but rather a different set of dangers than the public sphere. Barbara Zonitch argues that Juliet tries to secure female protection so that her reputation and honor will not be compromised by trafficking with men, but powerful female characters such as Mrs. Maple and Mrs. Ireton "envision their authority as

acts of cruelty against their inferiors,"[29] and "expect Juliet to uphold her end of this social contract but flatly refuse to perform the obligations incumbent upon them."[30] As a result of these behaviors, Ellis feels compelled to remain in motion, constantly moving from one pace to another in the hopes that the next one will be safe. Bourdieu's theory of class embodiment also helps to explain Ellis's constant relocations. She simply cannot stomach the cruel treatment she faces for long. Ellis knows all too well how she ought to be treated and prefers what she imagines to be the quiet dignity of paid labor to the exploitative toadyism of Mrs. Maple's and Mrs. Ireton's homes. Her decision to leave Mrs. Maple's and seek work elsewhere reflects her disgust over her treatment, but also her lack of understanding of how other classes live. This lack of understanding helps contribute to the chaotic nature of Ellis's movements.

Ellis's transition from Mrs. Maple's to Miss Matson's marks her slide from humble companion to exploited laborer. Ellis's labor manifests in several forms, and her social circle definitively assigns degrees of respectability to each job she attempts. She finds herself exhausted and denigrated, not as much by the labor itself for she is industrious and hard-working, but by the treatment she receives from customers, fellow workers, and employers. We see how Ellis's status changes even as she demonstrates her superior taste through her labor; in fact, it is her class status that allows her to know what well-off women desire to possess — the ability to play the harp well, the knowledge of how to arrange their clothing to appear to best advantage, and how to sew beautiful dresses. As Bourdieu explains, the skill she brings to her labor has been acquired through education. Her taste has been learned; it is not innate. This taste also makes it difficult for Ellis to collect the money she is owed: "However respectable reason and justice render pecuniary emolument, where honourably earned; there is a something indefinable, which stands between spirit and delicacy, that makes the first reception of money in detail, by those not brought up to gain it, embarrassing and painful" (454). In this light, working for money is incompatible with Ellis's

identity; the version of her that is Juliet rejects it even as she recognizes that it is respectably earned and necessary.

When Ellis exits the perverted gift economies of Mrs. Maple's and Mrs. Ireton's house, she enters the capitalist economies of the laboring world of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. Juliet is subject to the alienated labor of Karl Marx's *Capital* in her work for Miss Matson and Miss Hart, but she also experiences the sexual economy Lucy Irigaray delineates in "Women on the Market," as she encounters patriarchal surrogates such as Miss Arbe and Miss Bydel who are happy to trade on Ellis's skills as a beautiful and talented woman for their own amusement and gain. Ellis embodies several forms of economic labor, from gift economy, to capitalism, and finally to the sexual exchanges between men like Sir Jaspar and Lord Denmeath who view her as a bearer of virtue and status that must be controlled and relegated to the proper social sphere.[31]

Ellis's first series of adventures at Brighthelmstone involve her being preyed upon by Miss Arbe's selfish projects that leave her as humiliated and as penniless as before. Hoping to put her education to use to earn some money by teaching young women of means to play the harp, Ellis quickly discovers that the female protection she sought out has failed her; Miss Arbe has no interest in helping Ellis but instead exploits her as means of furthering her own social cachet by using her patronage as an excuse to solicit free harp lessons from Ellis. Ellis's physical shelter in Miss Matson's shop frequently fails her as does Miss Arbe's fraudulent social protection. Ellis's privacy is fragile and subject to frequent intrusions by higher-status female characters that use it to announce silently whether Ellis is in their good graces or not, power moves that signal to Miss Matson whether Ellis will be able to pay her rent.

After Mr. Riley publicly exposes her mysterious appearance during the boat ride from France, Ellis's music pupils begin to desert her. She waits in apprehension for a visit from Miss Arbe and grows hopeful when Miss Bydel stops by: "She rejoiced to receive a visit, the following

morning, even from Miss Bydel, as some mark of female countenance and protection" (256). Miss Bydel is lower on the social scale than Miss Arbe, but even she offers Ellis some social safety. Female protection is an elusive hope for Ellis throughout the novel, since she appears wholly unprotected by any male relations. Female protection is perceived as disinterested and respectable, whereas protection from men who are not family relations always carries the suggestion of illicit behavior. However, since Ellis's social cachet has declined, Miss Bydel does not go up to her room and instead "seated herself with Miss Matson, and sent for Ellis; who obeyed the call with extreme ill will, conscious how little fit for a milliner's shop, was either what she might be called upon to say, or what she might be constrained to hear" (256). Unsurprisingly, Miss Bydel humiliates Ellis by referring quite openly to Mr. Riley's divulgence, and when Ellis begs her to discuss it upstairs, Miss Bydel replies, "No, no; we are very well here; only be so kind as to let me know why you make such a secret of who you are?" (256-7). The meaning of this retort is clear: Miss Bydel does not feel compelled to allow Ellis the courtesy of privacy. This demotes Ellis's standing at Miss Matson's even lower. McKeon describes the modern conception of privacy as an entitlement to keep something hidden rather than a deliberate deceit. As Helen Thompson argues, Ellis's behaviors are constantly reinforcing her class status and her presumed entitlement to privacy is one of these embodiments. Ellis is offended by other characters' refusals to grant her privacy, while they are bewildered that she thinks she deserves it and see it as evidence that is concealing something from them.

Miss Matson's shop is perhaps the most ambiguous space Ellis occupies in the novel. Serving as both millinery shop and respectable lodging, the shop simultaneously occupies domestic space and the public space of labor and commerce. With no clear demarcation between public and private space, Ellis finds herself vulnerable to more than just Miss Bydel or Miss Arbe's petty — albeit dangerous — social games. Ellis's private space is visible and accessible to others since it is located within the shop. The threat of sexual impropriety looms in this conflation of spheres, as Ellis

is perceived by some characters as a public, available woman. The staircase that leads to Ellis's room opens out into the shop, so anyone who enters the shop can also reach her door, and male visitors such as Giles Arbe, Sir Jaspar, and Sir Lyell do take advantage of this access to intrude upon Ellis's time and space.

Ellis not only occupies the ambiguous space of Miss Matson's shop, but she must learn how to negotiate it when she begins participating in labor within it once Miss Arbe's schemes have run their course. Ellis changes rooms based on her financial circumstances, signaling clearly that her status has shifted. Once she begins working for Miss Matson, Ellis finds that her status continues to decline; she is taken aback to find that Miss Matson will not allow her to work in the privacy of her room but demands she labor visibly in the shop: "[Ellis] was told that, if she meant to enter into business, she must be at hand to receive directions, and to learn how it should be done" (426). As Chloe Wigston-Smith points out, what begins as Juliet's ladylike accomplishment — performing skilled needlework — becomes labor when it is transported to Miss Matson's shop: "Juliet's experience in the shop demonstrates how needlework, rather than being treated as an iconic domestic activity, is instead coupled with publicity. The shop constitutes a kind of stage and, indeed, Ellis soon learns that seamstresses bear the same sexualized treatment as actresses."[32] In addition to this sexual stigma, Ellis has expressed her acute fear of publicity before in her resistance to performing in *The Provok'd Husband* and at the concert for M. Vinstreigle. Ellis becomes anxious when she learns that Miss Matson is capitalizing on her taste in arranging clothing displays by telling her customers that these items are "a specimen of the very last new fashion, just brought her over by one of her young ladies from Paris" (429). Her fear stems both from the impropriety of these public displays as well as her fear that her husband will find her. Despite Ellis's attempts to refrain from these varied public performances, she is coerced into them from economic necessity.

Ellis quickly wearies of "the mingled frivolity and publicity of the business" (449) at Miss Matson's and Ellis moves on to work as a seamstress for Mrs. Hart. There she finds the semi-private state of her labor a relief: "though surrounded by still more fellow-work-women than at Miss Matson's, she was no longer constrained to remain in an open shop, in opposition alike to her inclinations and her wishes of concealment" (452). However, this environment provokes Ellis in certain ways, since it proves penetrable for Sir Lyell Sycamore who frequently finds excuses to catch glimpses of her. Ellis struggles here to fit in with her fellow workers, and ultimately finds that day-to-day work, while exempting her from the need to pay a premium, gives her no security once the wedding clothes she has been hired to sew are finished. Thus, Ellis encounters challenges at both Miss Matson's and Mrs. Hart's that she is unable to fully surmount. Unfamiliar with the nuances of working life, Ellis struggles to negotiate her sense of propriety with her necessity to support herself financially.

Juliet: "Madam, that Frenchman there … pretends your name is Juliet?"

Juliet's trials as "Ellis" come to a close when she is finally reunited with Gabriella and the reader learns Juliet's story along with Sir Jaspar. However, the revelation of Juliet's identity coincides with her husband finally catching up with her. The measure of domestic stability she experienced as "Ellis" completely falls away, and the name "Ellis" becomes dangerous since her husband includes it in his advertisement. But her husband is only one threat (albeit, a major one), and Juliet also faces the danger of Lord Denmeath's attempts to erase her permanently from the Granvilles' family history, and to cut her off from her paternal rights, her biological family, and her native land. To avoid provoking Denmeath without sufficient support and protection, Juliet must continue to keep her identity hidden from Lady Aurora and Lord Melbury even as she desires their protection and friendship.

Clues around Juliet's identity begin to emerge when she is felicitously reunited with Gabrielle at the beginning of volume three. Gabrielle addresses her as "Juliet," and it becomes clear that this French woman is the friend Juliet has been hoping to find in Brighthelmstone (387). The narrator refers to her as "Juliet" and explains that "the borrowed name of Ellis will now be dropped" (389). The rest of the characters will continue to address her as "Ellis" and will not learn the truth of Juliet's identity for a while, but the reader is given further insight into her character. Along with her name recognition, Juliet is afforded, for the first time in the narrative since her time with Lady Aurora, some semblance of domestic comfort:

> Juliet immediately resigned her large apartment, and fixed herself in the small room of Gabriella. There they settled that they would live together, work together, share their little profits, and endure their failures, in common. There they hoped to recover their peace of mind, if not to re-animate their native spirits; and to be restored to the harmony of social sympathy, if not to that of happiness. (394)

This humble utopian vision of a peaceful future is only to last a week before Gabriella must leave Brighthelmstone to attend her sick husband. While Juliet is allotted some measure of peace, Burney's narrative of "Female Difficulties" continues to punish her by taking away her only intimate friend in England and returning her to the cruel fate of laboring for Brighthelmstone's high society without getting paid regularly for her work or being respected for her skill and diligence. Rather than providing Juliet with happy memories that function as "life and food / For future years" for William Wordsworth's speaker in "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,"[33] Juliet finds that "[h]er short, but precious junction with her Gabriella, gave poignancy to every latent regret, and added disgust to her solitary toil" (406). With no clear end to her sufferings in sight, Juliet struggles to maintain her survival in the face of her brief memories with Gabriella.

However, though the reader finally learns Juliet's name, this knowledge does not convey any real information — we are not any closer to knowing her story, background, and the apparent horror of the circumstances that brought her into her current predicament. Even the introduction of Gabriella tells us little that we do not already know: that Juliet was raised in France and had to flee hastily and unexpectedly from her friends there. Her true name, furthermore, is not given to any of the other characters in the book just yet, and our awareness of the legitimacy of her identity only serves to increase our discomfort as readers, as we continue, along with Juliet, to witness her cruel treatment at the hands of everyone from Mrs. Howel to Mrs. Ireton's servants.

Lord Denmeath, too, knows Juliet's real identity, and he attempts to intimidate her into concealing it from Lady Aurora and Lord Melbury. Juliet overhears Lord Denmeath ask Harleigh whether she "had regularly refused to say who she was; or whether she had occasionally made any partial communication; or given any hints relative to her family or connexions" (613-4). The reader may be confused by Juliet's "agony of mind indescribable," but we quickly learn that Juliet knows more about Lord Denmeath than we do, and that he, too, is fully aware of who she is. However, we learn no more just yet about the relationship between these two. As readers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, we are accustomed to being privileged observers, of being confided in, and sometimes given much more information than even the protagonist herself. Burney rejects this convention and instead creates a significant sense of alienation between the reader and her protagonist; we too must wait patiently for Juliet's story to be revealed. Suzie Park attributes this alienation to the high premium Romantic culture places on self-expression, a tendency Burney deliberately challenges in *The Wanderer*. Park writes, "[i]nstead of naturalizing ready access to interiority … Burney undermines the very claim that interiority can be fully represented or 'completed' by the interpretive work of readers."[34] Though we can feel sympathy for Juliet, we

cannot feel the powerful and imagined connection we feel with characters such as Elizabeth Bennet or Jane Eyre. We simply do not have ready access to Juliet's subjectivity and circumstances.

Juliet's rigid punctilio combined with her fear of discovery make it impossible for her to disclose her story. In order to maintain Juliet's ideal feminine propriety, the narrative gives the responsibility of disclosure to Gabriella, a character not bound by Juliet's cultural constraints. Gabriella is French and thus not as subject to rigid English propriety, but she is also forgiven her disclosure because it emanates from her long intimacy and deep respect for her friend. Gabriella assumes Sir Jaspar knows Juliet's story and justifies Juliet's seemingly reckless behavior by her fidelity and devotion to her friends. Juliet's actions are intended not only for self-preservation but for the preservation of her beloved surrogate family: Gabriella, her mother the Marchioness, and her uncle the Bishop.

Gabriella's revelation not only absolves Juliet of any impropriety or wrongdoing; it vindicates Sir Jaspar's belief that she belongs to a high social station. After Gabriella's disclosure, Sir Jaspar excitedly tells her, "this forlorn, but most beautiful Wanderer, — this so long concealed, and mysterious, but most lovely *incognita*, is the daughter of the late Lord Granville, and the grand-daughter of the late Earl of Melbury!" (641). Gabriella also attests to the existence of legal documents (though these documents were destroyed in revolutionary violence) that prove Juliet's legitimacy and provide her with a financial settlement, as well as Lord Denmeath's refusal to accept the suitability of his brother-in-law's marriage to Juliet's mother. He proffers this arrangement to the Bishop:

> Let the young woman marry and settle in France; and, upon the delivery of the original documents relative to her birth, she shall be portioned; but she shall never be received nor owned in England; the Earl being determined not to countenance such a disgrace to his

> family, and to the memory of his son, as the acknowledgement of so unsuitable a marriage. (645)

Even though the marriage is acknowledged to be legal, it is disgraceful to the Granvilles because Juliet's mother is "virtuous, though lowly" (641). Lord Granville's family refuses to accept Juliet into their home and family because they deem her unworthy. Remuneration will be paid but Juliet cannot be claimed as part of the family. Her domestic alienation is established long before the novel's beginning, and Mrs. Maple, Mrs. Ireton, and Miss Howel are merely maintaining the domestic dislocation the Earl of Granville and Lord Denmeath have already established. Class restrictions override patriarchal considerations, and Juliet is held at a distance because of her mother's background.

When we finally hear Juliet's story and Sir Jaspar learns her name, it is as though the horrors that she has been staving off from the novel's beginning are spoken into existence by Gabriella's recitation. Once Gabriella has finished and Juliet acknowledges that she has not yet told all even to her closest friend, Riley enters the shop and informs them that the French pilot is close to discovering Juliet's whereabouts in London: "Riley, who had seen her, bounced into the shop. 'Ah, ha, I have caught you at last, have I Demoiselle?' he cried, rubbing his hands with joy" (650). Juliet intuits that the pilot has been hired by her husband to locate her and quickly flees the shop: "Her head bowed low; her bonnet drawn over her eyes; ignorant what course she took, and earnest only to discover any inlet into the country by which she might immediately quit the town; Juliet, with hurried footsteps, and trembling apprehensions became again a Wanderer" (655). Juliet transforms once again into a nameless woman, forced once again to resign her residence with Gabriella.

Heretofore, we have seen Juliet struggle to find shelter with upper middle-class and upper-class people. She has lamented their fickleness and vanity, since they are more concerned with treating Juliet in socially sanctioned ways rather than protecting her out of genuine human feeling.

Once Juliet flees the shop in Frith Street, she must adjust to the expectations and behaviors of the working classes, and she undergoes yet another transformation to garner sympathy among people she encounters in Salisbury. Juliet attempts to find shelter in people's homes, preferring those more private (and potentially long-term) domestic spaces to the more public space of an inn. However, though Juliet's "air, her manner, and her language made her application always best received by the upper class of tradespeople, who were most able to discern, that such belonged not to any vulgar or ordinary person," she meets with the same obstacles she met with in Mrs. Maple's circle: "when they found that she enquired for a lodging, without giving any name, or any reference, they held back, alike, from granting her admission, or forwarding her wish by any recommendation" (656). By refusing to name herself or having anyone to vouch for her, Juliet lacks the currency of an identifiable name and the social connections that would mark her out as a trustworthy person.

Juliet's fears that her husband will find her through her name prove to be founded when Juliet hears that her husband has advertised for her in the newspaper. Finding shelter with the Goss family, Juliet is horrified when Dame Goss asks her if she is the person "[c]ommonly known by the name of Miss Ellis?" (662). The family who takes her in by the New For8est is upset to discover that she may be "a young female-swindler" (669) who absconded from two homes without paying for her lodging. Although we know Juliet is innocent of such accusations, appearances are decidedly against her. Intent upon concealing her identity in any way possible, Juliet trades her white chip bonnet "for one of the most coarse and ordinary of straw" and buys a blue striped apron. Later this bonnet will cause Juliet great pain when it becomes a means by which her identity is conflated with Debby Dyson's "light character." Juliet painfully acquiesces to the need for these concealments even though she disapproves of them: "Shocking to all her feelings was this attempt at disguise, so imitative of guilt, so full of semblance to conscious imposture" (665). The white chip bonnet will bring trouble for Debby as well since it is part of the description in the advertisement for Ellis. The

bonnets become metonyms for Juliet and Debby, shrinking their subjectivities down to their most identifiable item of clothing, and so effective at concealing their identities that only Clark Kent's eyeglasses could surpass them as an incredulous disguise. However, Burney may be critiquing the way women are both highly visible and simultaneously invisible here, since Juliet struggles to avoid being seen in public and yet cannot be seen for what she is without a name and the correct clothing; she desires shelter but struggles to find it since she continues to resist the symbolic order of names and social connections. Juliet expresses her frustration over her inability to fit into domestic space when, after being mistaken for Debby the first time, she laments, "is it only under the domestic roof, — that roof to me denied! — that woman can know safety, respect, and honour?" (666). Juliet articulates her double bind here; she is not suitable in the domestic sphere and can find no safety outside of it. This question is both a rhetorical gesture of her frustration over her plight and a challenge to the reader to question the paradox of feminine comportment and masculine power.

Safe domestic space does come in fits and starts for Juliet, even though it is always transient and unstable. Juliet does manage to locate temporary shelters where she finds comfort only to be forced to move on. She is reunited with Gabriella after she leaves Mrs. Ireton's house, and Juliet helps her run her haberdashery shop in London where they find mutual comfort in helping one another: "Laborious as might seem this existence to those who had known 'other times,' Juliet, by the side of Gabriella, thought every employment delightful; Gabriella, in the society of Juliet, felt every exertion lightened, and every sorrow softened" (624). This domestic yet public comfort is destroyed by Riley's intrusion. In chapter seventy-five, Juliet relocates from the comfortable yet intellectually stagnant farmhouse to "lodge herself with the pleasing old woman, who had won her favour, in the beautifully picturesque cottage in the neighborhood" (698). Juliet's time here abruptly comes to an end when one of the women who lives in the cottage angrily confronts her about the infamous Debby Dyson's bonnet. She angrily tells Juliet that the bonnet had caused her daughter "to

be taken for that bold hussy, by the higler" and demands that Juliet re-exchange the bonnets (701). Again, Burney seems to be commenting on the frailty of women's reputations by imbuing the bonnet with great signifying power. Juliet finds that she must continue to wander until she finds an acceptable shelter.

Juliet finds a temporary home when she stumbles upon Dame Fairfield's cabin late at night, and meets with a welcome reception with that lady who remains grateful to Juliet for her kind treatment of her children. Juliet is relieved to receive a friendly reception, and "[a]ll her dread and scruples, with respect to the Salisbury turnpike hostess, or to any previous reports, were, she now saw, groundless; and she delightedly felt herself in the bosom of security, while encircled in the arms of affectionate and unsuspicious innocence" (707). Juliet finds real comfort here even as she fears that Dame Fairfield's husband is involved in criminal activities: "With repose so much required, she here found comfort, peace, and affection, — three principal ingredients in the composition of happiness! which her mind, in her uncertainty of the fate awaiting her, was delighted to seize, and eager to requite" (709-10). This shelter is broken when Fairfield's dealings bring him into contact with the French pilot who is a well-known smuggler, and Juliet must once again flee.

Juliet's experience throughout this section of the novel demonstrates how the beauty of nature and its corresponding indifference to human affairs mirrors the generosity and coldness of human nature. For every compassionate person who offers Juliet some humble fare or a trade of clothes, she meets someone who threatens harm or remains blithely indifferent to her suffering. Initially finding the New Forest's beauty comforting, Juliet quickly begins to understand the danger it holds for her:

> With a complication of fears she now went forth again; to seek, — not an asylum in the Forest, the beautiful Forest! — but the road by which she might quit it with the greatest expedition. Where, now, was the enchantment of its prospects? Where, the witchery of its

> scenery? All was lost to her for pleasure, all was thrown away upon her as enjoyment; she saw nothing but her danger, she could make no observation but how to escape what it menaced. (685-6)

The remote wilderness that hides Juliet also shelters potential harm. In one particularly anxious moment, Juliet meets with a friendly dog in the forest that soothes her with his playfulness. Caught up in a fleeting moment of safety, Juliet abruptly finds herself discovered by the dog's masters. She "now was herself in a danger more dreadful than any to which either misfortune or accident had hitherto exposed her, — the danger of personal and brutal insult. She looked around vainly for succor or redress; the woods and the heavens were alone within view or within hearing" (688). The implicit meaning of this insult is robbery or rape, and this is not the first time Juliet has sensed the potential for violence from strange men. She is intelligent enough to bluff her way out of danger, drawing on her beauty and polished manners to demand access to their father, a respectable farmer. However, the potential threat of violence lingers in the text, reminding Juliet and the reader, that at any point, with no one to protect her and no safe space in which she may seek shelter, her luck might run out.

Juliet's revision of an idealized pastoral world goes beyond her own experiences. While staying with the day laborer's family, Juliet quickly comes to understand the difficult life of the rural poor. She critiques her own idealization of the peasant and farmer, as well as the tendency of the wealthy and educated man to glorify the life of the peasant:

> The verdure of the flower-motleyed meadow; the variegated foliage of the wood; the fragrance and purity of the air, and the wide spreading beauties of the landscape, charm not the labourer. They charm only the enlightened rambler, or affluent possessor. Those who toil, heed them not. Their eyes are upon their plough; their attention is fixed upon the harvest; their sight follows the pruning hook. (700-1)

Burney mounts an incisive critique of some iterations of the literary movement we now characterize as Romanticism, challenging the figure of the male poet who easily moves through the natural world and uses it as a source of inspiration for the egotistical sublime. Juliet, unlike the economically-independent man fighting ennui as he circulates through London, can identify with the peasant's struggle to survive. Though her life has been a relatively smooth one, the past year has been trying, and she has had to make very difficult choices that threatened her survival. Juliet has endured grueling manual labor and cruel treatment by those characters who hold themselves above her. Her realization that laboring life in the country is extraordinarily difficult is perhaps brought about by her recent experiences and her understanding of just how cruel life can be. Home, comfort, safety — these are not privileges to be taken for granted but uncommon and transient things. Although a grand fate awaits Juliet if she can only survive long enough, it is impossible that in these moments she does not feel deeply connected and sympathetic to the people surviving on the barest subsistence.

Juliet is soon caught by her cartoonishly evil husband and then abruptly released when he is fortuitously apprehended by the magistrates. Juliet, her resistance finally worn down, consigns herself to Sir Jaspar's protection and divulges the circumstances that she has heretofore concealed. However, as we see in his behavior toward her at Miss Matson's shop and Mrs. Ireton's home, Sir Jaspar is a subtly menacing figure who protects Juliet in ways she dislikes. From the beginning of his acquaintance with Juliet, he attributes the assistance he provides her to the urgings of his "little friends," who he variously calls imps, fairies, sylphs, and devils. This rhetorical technique allows Sir Jaspar to circumvent Juliet's attempts to control herself by distancing himself from his actions, actions that affect Juliet. Believing that Lady Aurora and Lord Melbury have sent Sir Jaspar to bring her to them, Juliet is dismayed to learn that he misled her so that she would agree to accompany him. He tells her,

> And never did my delectable little friends serve me so cogently, as in suggesting my stratagem at your sight. If you do not directly name, they squeaked in my ear, her brother and sister, she may demur at accompanying you: if her brother and sister honour your assertion, you will fix the matchless Wanderer in her proper sphere; if they protest against it, — what giant stands in the way to your rearing and protecting the lovely flower yourself? (757)

This speech signifies Sir Jaspar's desire to locate Juliet within what he believes to be her rightful place. He is attempting to reconstruct Juliet as an aristocratic figure, believing like Harleigh and Lady Aurora that Juliet must be of high birth since she possesses all the proper characteristics. Sir Jaspar's whimsicality may camouflage his selfish and predatory behavior for a time, but it also implies that he behaved like Sir Lyell when he was young, especially when they arrive at a farm house in Salisbury and Burney's narrator comments that the old couple knew well Sir Jaspar's "old character of gallantry" and Juliet's beauty and youth "induced their belief, that he was inveigling this young woman from her friends, for her moral destruction" (763). Moments like this subvert patriarchal authority in the text by showing how manipulative and insidious male power can be; Juliet feels threatened by Sir Jaspar yet she persuades herself that he can be trusted because of his advanced age.

Despite Juliet's compliance in going along with Sir Jaspar, his attempt at playing suitor is met with resistance by Juliet when he forces her to tour Wilton, the magnificent mansion of the Earl of Pembroke. Juliet resists viewing the mansion, because of the impropriety of being seen with Sir Jasper and the unfitness of her clothing, but he once again manipulates her into acquiescing to his plans. Juliet follows Sir Jaspar "as one whom every thing was indifferent; whose discernment is gone, whose eyes were dimmed, whose powers of perception were asleep, and whose spirit of enjoyment was annihilated" (760). Perpetually kept on the margins, she is unable to appreciate the grandiose beauty of the great house. The excessive amount of "stuff" in Wilton overwhelms Juliet,

reminding her of her current station and vulnerability and her utter unsuitability in such a setting. While Wilton is a house, it does not seem to be a home and functions as a museum for pleasure-seekers. McKeon points out that while stately homes were designed to meet the complex privacy needs of aristocratic and gentry families, "[b]y the mid-eighteenth century the well-known conversion of England's stately homes into show houses for tourist consumption was already under way."[35] The distinction between public and private space is further blurred in *The Wanderer* by Wilton's undomestic/domestic space, as we are reminded that the fluidity of the public and private divide is always being tested by the demands of class.

The blurring of the private and public is carried further when Sir Jaspar brings Juliet to visit Stonehenge the following day. Juliet is initially unaware of where she is. Burney's narrative technique matches our disorientation to Juliet's so that we are surprised as well to find her at Stonehenge. Juliet is "excited by sympathy in what seemed lonely and undone, rather than by curiosity … She discerned, to a vast extent, a boundless plain, that, like the ocean, seemed to have no term but the horizon; but which, also like the ocean, looked as desert as it was unlimited" (765). Juliet identifies herself with "what seemed lonely and undone," something built that has been deserted and forgotten rather than an organic part of the natural scene. Julia Epstein calls Stonehenge a "metaphoric geographical center" for Juliet, arguing that there is a strong parallel here for her fractured identity.[36] The "boundless plain" that appears as "desert as it was unlimited" recalls the English Channel Juliet crossed at the novel's beginning, an image that paradoxically suggests hope and the extensive troubles that have confronted her in England. This moment of gazing into the horizon also invokes Juliet's reunion with Gabriella in the graveyard in Brighthelmstone in volume three. Juliet watches Gabriella as she "extended her arms, seeming to hail the full view of the wide spreading ocean; or rather, Ellis imagined, the idea of her native land, which she knew, from that spot, to be its boundary" (385). The walk Gabriella takes every morning to mourn her infant's death

is a practice of survival, a rejection of her dreary lodgings and embrace of the natural world. That she can also see the sea and imagine France on the other side imbues her practice of grieving for her lost infant with the grief over her temporarily lost homeland.

In Gabriella's walks to the graveyard and Juliet's communion with Stonehenge, the novel leaves domesticity behind, rejecting its confinement and social demands for the expanse and infinitude of an open landscape:

> In a state of mind so utterly deplorable as that of Juliet, this grand, uncouth monument of ancient days had a certain sad, indefinable attraction, more congenial to her distress, than all the polish, taste, and delicacy of modern skill. The beauties of Wilton seemed appendages of luxury, as well as of refinement; and appeared to require not only sentiment, but happiness for their complete enjoyment: while the nearly savage, however wonderful work of antiquity, in which she was now rambling; placed in this abandoned spot, far from the intercourse, or even view of mankind, with no prospect but of health and sky … nothing distracted the sight, nothing broke in upon attention, nor varied the ideas. Thought, uninterrupted and uncontrouled, was master of the mind. (765-6)

An experience of the Burkean sublime, this scene, perhaps more than any that has come before, firmly casts Juliet alongside the wandering speakers of Charlotte Smith's and Wordsworth's poetry[37] while looking ahead to Thomas Hardy's tragic Tess Durbeyfield. As Doody points out, the central conceit of *The Wanderer* places it in conversation with Romanticism: "'Wandering' is the quintessential Romantic activity … the Wanderer leaves the herd and moves to or through some form of symbolic wilderness or wildness, seeing a world very different from that perceived by those who think they are at the centre" (vi). Pam Perkins reads the novel's title "The Wanderer" as being indicative of Juliet's — and Burney's — fears that economic hardship has the potential to coerce women into prostitution in order to survive — male wanderers may be mobile and their experiences

communing with nature transcendent, but female wanderers risk becoming "public" women, as we see when Juliet is continually mistaken for Debby Dyson.[38] Doody argues that Juliet's "entrance into this place of ruins symbolizes the momentary death of law, culture, and names" (xxxvi), a reading which temporarily frees Juliet of her exilic state, allowing her a respite from the constant pressure to divulge her identity. We can also add the death of domesticity to Doody's list, since Juliet has only experienced alienation and abuse within walls and here in the deserted ruins of Stonehenge, she finds peace.

The significance of the ruin for Romantic poets such as Blake and Wordsworth is explored by Anne Janowitz in *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape*. Janowitz argues that "in its most general form, the ruin 'kind' of topographical poem presents a visible ruin in a landscape which provides a physical demonstration of the vanity of human constructions. The speaker then reads a humbling moral lesson in the detritus."[39] Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias" (1818) and Wordsworth's "A Night on Salisbury Plain" (1793-4) certainly fit this mold, but Juliet has few illusions about the nobility of human civilization and Burney's use of Stonehenge in this moment functions to take Juliet's thoughts away from her travails, connecting her to a more expansive world than that of the human. Juliet's consideration of the landscape and ruins begins with a consideration of her own travails but eventually moves away from her transitory problems and into a different mode completely. She begins by acknowledging that "though not even the rudest sculpture denoted any vestige of human art, still the whole was clearly no phenomenon of nature" (765), but the scene "blunted, for the moment, her sensibility, by removing her wide from all the objects with which it was in contact … nothing distracted the sight, nothing broke in upon attention, nor varied the ideas" (766). What begins as anthropomorphizing transitions into something Jane Bennett describes as a path to understanding vital materialism: "An anthropomorphic element in perception can uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances … [it] can catalyze a sensibility that finds a

world filled not with ontologically distinct categories of being (subjects and objects) but with variously composed materialities that form confederations."[40] Juliet's observation of Stonehenge becomes a moment where she no longer has to resist but can give in to the forces that surround her. Consumed by her view of the landscape, Juliet craves union with the assemblage of the desolate landscape and the ancient abandoned forms around her.

Juliet's view of the plain invokes Charlotte Smith's speaker from *The Emigrants* gazing at the sea from the Sussex cliffs. In a moment of deep sympathy with the French émigrés who seek shelter on England's shores, Smith's speaker remarks,

> I too have known
> Involuntary exile and, while yet
> England had charms for me, have felt how sad
> It is to look across the dim cold sea
> That melancholy rolls its refluent tides
> Between us and the dear regretted land
> We call our own…[41]

Smith's speaker, gazing across an expanse of sea like Juliet and Gabriella, experiences similar alienation and imagines the estrangement the émigrés must feel, abandoned and turned away from their homeland because of events beyond their control. For the poets Janowitz discusses, the image of the ruin immediately invokes the complexity of Britishness, but Juliet and Smith's speaker are cut off from a sense of ownership over that national identity. Even after they have returned to their home country, they feel alienated. For Juliet, this alienation carries over into the domestic sphere, rendering her incompatible with the behavior that would allow her to seek out shelter from strangers. Thus, Burney's novel draws on strains of Romanticism even as it critiques them. Like

Smith, Burney embraces sympathetic connections between the natural world and a suffering human speaker.

Sir Jaspar intrudes upon Juliet's solace, and he attempts to ingratiate himself with her by detailing Stonehenge's history. As both Doody and Silvia Mergenthal point out, Sir Jaspar enacts a masculine appropriation of Juliet's experience of Stonehenge. Doody writes, "Lame Sir Jaspar, toiling after Juliet, tells her the name [Stonehenge], and as 'nomenclator' begins to fill in the authority of the place, deciding its ritual and religious significance" (xxxvi). Sir Jaspar attempts to perform this historiography on Juliet, yet while she accepts the necessity of having a name, she steadily resists disclosure and accepting the demands of others to name herself. The domestic space Juliet has experienced thus far resists the introspection Juliet craves. Mergenthel, building on Doody's reading, argues that Sir Jaspar's rhetorical act demonstrates that "political differences between post-revolutionary France and Britain are mostly superficial, concealing, as they do, the victimisation of women by patriarchy in both countries. Stonehenge, in this scenario, signifies both the site of this victimisation and … a potential site for resistance."[42] Given that we now know that Juliet was coerced to marry to save her guardian's life and that her father's family has been actively working to suppress Juliet's birthright her whole life, the threatening nature of both countries renders them equally dangerous. Juliet struggles to find justice in her adopted country and her country of origin. Her plea from the beginning of the novel — "I am English!" — is haunting because it suggests that Juliet is working to maintain faith in the goodness of her fellow countrymen even as she is treated poorly by them.

Sir Jaspar also attempts to domesticate Stonehenge in other ways, making it an awkward courtship scene by gifting Juliet fine clothes and expensive, luxurious food: "Juliet, who, already, had observed, upon the nearest flat stone, a large band-box, and a square new trunk, placed as supporters to an elegant Japan basket, in which were arranged various refreshments" (768-9). He

tells Juliet that "the Druids have not been so debonnaire as to reanimate themselves to address me, [but] they have suffered a flat surface of their petrifaction to be covered over with a whole army of my little frequenters" (768). Referring here to his imaginary "tormentors," Sir Jaspar justifies his appropriation of this ancient spot by the absence of ghostly Druids and the machinations of his fairy friends. Riley's intrusion sabotages Sir Jaspar's "fairy purposes," causing Juliet to flee Sir Jaspar's makeshift drawing room. Despite his best efforts, the "druidical spot" resists domestication.

Juliet's name finally becomes a positive identifier when, caught up in a misunderstanding with Mrs. Howel, she meets again with the sympathetic Admiral who aided her at the very beginning of her journey. Juliet is reunited with her French servant Ambroise, and the Admiral takes the opportunity to ask him Juliet's name. The Admiral is shocked and overcome to learn Juliet is his niece, calling her the "daughter of the dearest of sisters!" and telling her "[y]ou shall be dear to my soul for her sake, whatever you may be for your own" (835). Admiral Powel, quite importantly, possesses a copy of Lord Granville's codicil, which confirms the legitimacy of Juliet's birth and guarantees her a substantial share of the Granville fortune. The Admiral prizes the codicil since "[i]t's the proof and declaration of my sister's honour! … It has been my whole comfort in all my difficult voyages and hard services" (840). The importance the Admiral places on his sister's sexual propriety is consistent with his expressed opinions about patriarchal relations. The codicil is not just a legal document in this case but a receipt guaranteeing his sister's virtue. But the document is also significant because it requires the law to treat Juliet by the terms her father has laid out and which Lord Denmeath seeks to suppress. Admiral Powel places himself in the position of her paternal benefactor, telling Juliet, "now I have you safe and sure, I shall carry my codicil to Lord Denmeath, — a fellow of steel, they say! — and get you your thirty thousand pounds; for that, I am told, is the portion of the lady of quality's daughter" (843). Only masculine, legal authority can resolve Juliet's

difficulties. Her full name is spoken by Admiral Powel and supported by Lord Granville's written authority.

By the end of the novel, and true to the genre's form, Juliet is awarded family and love, and, perhaps most importantly, ensured of her family name.[43] The novel installs her first in the Admiral's country seat before Harleigh's impatience to be married prevails. She partakes in "the name, the mansion, the fortune, and the fate of Harleigh" (870), and generously repays everyone who came to her aid when she was the Wanderer: "No one to whom Juliet ever owed any good office, was by her forgotten, or by Harleigh neglected. They visited, with gifts and praise, every cottage in which the Wanderer had been harboured; and Harleigh bought of the young woodcutters, at a high price, their dog Dash" (872).

However, Juliet is capable of doling out punishments as well as rewards. The inclusive and generous nature of Juliet and Harleigh's munificence is notably held back from those characters that have been cruel to her:

> But Riley, whose spirit of tormenting, springing from bilious ill humour, operated in producing pain and mischief like the most confirmed malevolence; Ireton, whose unmeaning pursuits, futile changes, and careless insolence, were every where productive of disorder, save in his own unfeeling breast; and Selina, who in presence of a higher or richer acquaintance, ventured not to bestow even a smile upon the person whom, in her closet, she treated, trusted, caressed as her bosom friends; these, were excluded from the happy Hall, as persons of minds uncongenial to confidence; that basis of peace and cordiality in social intercourse.
>
> But while, for these, simple non-admission was deemed a sufficient mark of disapprobation, the Admiral himself, when apprized of the adventures of his niece, insisted

> upon being the messenger of positive exile to three ladies, whom he nominated the three Furies; Mrs. Howel, Mrs. Ireton, and Mrs. Maple. (872)

What is most striking about these passages is they illuminate Juliet's ability to punish those characters who were cruel to her while offering resolute moral judgment on their behavior; banishment from "the happy Hall" signifies these six characters domestic unsuitability in the novel's moral universe while the previous page (871) reads as a voracious assemblage of Juliet's social commonwealth, as even the dog that showed partiality for Juliet when she was hiding in the New Forest is procured and established as Harleigh's outdoor companion. The effect is seemingly paternalistic and conservative as relationships are corrected, generosity is repaid, and chaotic erotic boundaries are fixed, as in the case of Sir Jasper's "false hopes or fanciful wishes" being "annihilated" and Flora's rescue "from impending destruction" by Juliet's insistence that Sir Jasper provide her a portion for "marriage with an honest vigilant farmer" (871). Tara Ghoshal Wallace writes that "the patriarchal idyll to which Juliet retires can thrive only by policing the boundaries of domesticity and sealing off its treasured values from the historical and social forces raging beyond the pale."[44] This reading suggests a domesticity of confinement, the aggressive wrangling of transgressive forces the novel has heretofore been permitting.

Barbara Zonitch argues that this tableau actually functions as "Burney's final disenchantment with all forms of aristocratic rule"[45] since it does not end with a portrait of the aristocratic nuclear family but rather a cobbled together community of those kinship ties Juliet has selected. This shift honors merit and chosen community rather than more traditional aristocratic codes of kinship. Zonitch's reading is (I think correctly) cautiously progressive, though I disagree with her assertion that patrilineage and primogeniture are rejected by the novel. While I agree with Zonitch that the patriarchal figure in *The Wanderer* is effectively useless,[46] women are still unable to assert any kind of substantial power without the sanction of men. Juliet's right to inherit her portion is secured by the

Admiral's proof of her legitimacy and her marriage to Harleigh ensures that land exchange is still based on conservative principles. Finally, the birth of Juliet's son — deemed Harleigh's heir by the text (871) — signals a continuation of primogeniture and not a refutation of it since the heir will take Harleigh's name and any daughters they have will likely marry and take their husbands' names.[47]

The ambivalent conservative strain that is continually rising and falling in the novel is further complicated in Burney's conclusion, which is a paean to Juliet's fortitude in the face of female difficulties:

> Here, and thus felicitously, ended, with the acknowledgement of her name, and her family, the DIFFICULTIES of the WANDERER; — a being who had been cast upon herself; a female Robinson Crusoe, as unaided and unprotected, though in the midst of the world, as that imaginary hero in his uninhabited island; and reduced either to sink, through inanition, to nonentity, or to be rescued from famine and death by such resources as she could find, independently, in herself. (873)

Burney's regular reiteration of "female difficulties" (though "female" as a qualifier is absent here) in the novel is always reminding the reader of the gendered nature of Juliet's struggles; she is as alone in an inhabited world as Crusoe is in his uninhabited one. Her vulnerability is so closely tied to her family name, both in its utterance in the French context and its lack of utterance in the English, that hunger, rape, and physical violence are very real threats for Juliet. Maximilian E. Novak writes that Juliet cannot survive as a Crusoe-type figure because she craves the intellectual comforts of education and culture,[48] while Rennhak notes that Burney's attempts to use the trope of exile to illuminate the plight of women ultimately fails because of the gendered dependence that proves impossible to escape: "Juliet succeeds in preserving her honor, delicacy, strength of mind and virtue, but still she would have either perished or lingered on miserably, if others had not rescued her."[49] The novel's ending, one that sees Juliet ensconced in unimpeachable English comfort, demonstrates

for Rennhak that "the trope of exile seems to be detrimental to a feminist vision, a truly liberal humanism, since the communities imagined do not erase gender differences."[50] This ideal portrait of domestic comfort and happiness is thus dependent on the containment of difference. If gender must be contained, the racial otherness of Juliet — whether that is her temporarily darkened skin or her perceived Gallic identity — represents a much more pernicious possibility in this comparison with Robinson Crusoe in Sara Salih's post-colonial reading of the text: "the title of 'female Robinson Crusoe' also signals Juliet's elevation from the position of colonized (or 'slave') to that of colonizer, and it suggests an ironic reversal of perspective … alterity has been altered so that the 'purity' or English national identity will not be stained by Juliet's inclusion in the ranks of the aristocracy."[51] Juliet visits Gabriella and her guardian in France but returns to England when she gets pregnant with Harleigh's son, and the text intimates that Juliet will leave England no more.

The Wanderer well-illustrates Ruth Perry's exploration of the way that novels of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century wrestled with the tensions between consanguineal and conjugal family bonds. Even as Juliet marries Harleigh and is incorporated into his life and finances, the circumstances that comes before this are crucial to Juliet's happiness and survival. Juliet, a character fully stripped of family, name, and wealth at the novel's beginning is awarded all of these things by the novel's end, and her happiness at being embraced by Lord Melbury and Lady Aurora, as well as discovering her lost uncle in the salty Admiral, is clearly as important to her as her union with Harleigh. Once Lady Aurora has learned the truth of Juliet's identity, Burney writes, "Juliet, acknowledged as her sister by Lady Aurora Granville; and with hopes all alive of the tender protection of a brother, felt every pulse, once again, beat to happiness; while every fear and foreboding, though not annihilated, was set aside" (822). Similarly, upon discovering the Admiral is her mother's brother, Juliet finds that "all her tenderest affections had been delighted, and her most ardent wishes surpassed, in being recognized as his niece by a man of so much worth, honour, and

benevolence as the Admiral." (844). Indeed, even as Burney grants her heroine marriage to a man she meets as her intellectual equal and romantic ideal, Burney also supplies her with the family connections Juliet craves and has felt bereft of for much of the novel when she imagined them swept up in the French Revolution's devastation.

As these varying readings of the text prove, it is difficult to walk away from *The Wanderer* with a definitive idea of what political perspective it is trying to impart. Claudia Johnson writes that though the novel attempts to mount social critiques, they are ultimately "strangled in the plethora of the novel's counterexamples, and the novel's very immensity impedes rather than extends insight."[52] Johnson's point is indisputable — there is simply too much text in Burney's final novel: too many twists, turns, and repetitions. One thing that is clear about the novel is the darkness of its worldview; even after the heroine has been compensated for all of her hardships, the novel's conclusion feels perfunctory. The ease with which everything finally falls into place feels unearned — not for Juliet but rather for Burney. Instead of reconfiguring the novel's form to express her dissatisfaction with the order of things, Burney gives us a fairy-tale ending without interrogating the symbolic violence that has to occur for Juliet to get it: the exclusion of several characters from the domestic sphere, the repression of unsanctioned sexual energy, the abandonment of one national identity for another, and the further entrenchment of a system responsible for all the misery the novel depicts. However, *The Wanderer* does interrogate many of these systems quite thoroughly and intensively. Juliet's idealized domestic space at the end looks like a fortress to keep the destructive elements out and the vetted elements in, and that exclusionary policy is a rational response to a cruel world bent on destroying the vulnerable. Perhaps it is necessary for such a response that so effectively interrogates a system that values male aristocrats above everyone else.

Notes

[1] Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 50.
[2] Here is a comprehensive list of Juliet's domestic spaces in *The Wanderer*: Mrs. Ireton's house in London; Mrs. Maple's house in Lewes; Lady Aurora's house; Miss Matson's shop; Miss Hart's shop; Mrs. Ireton's house in Lewes (formerly Lady Aurora's); Gabriella's shop in London; Dame Goss's house; Romsey lodging; Rural family's house; the poacher Nat Mixon's cottage; farmer's house; cottage with old woman; Dame Fairfield's cottage; cottage after she fells the Fairfield cottage; Inn; Wilton; farmer's house (procured by Sir Jasper); cottage by Milton abbey; Teignmouth; the Admiral's seat in Richmond, and, finally, Harleigh Hall.
[3] Margaret Doody explores this journey in depth in chapter nine of *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 1988).
[4] To understand the way external forces shape Juliet's subjectivity, we might refer to Louis Althusser's formulation of subjectivity as constituted through its interpellation by ideology —identified, hailed, and claimed as a subject by the complex web of State power and Ideological State Apparatuses that enshrine ideology and give it its power. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays,* trans. Ben Brewster (Monthly Review Press: New York, 1972).
[5] Debra Silverman, "Reading Frances Burney's *The Wanderer; Or, Female Difficulties"*: The Politics of Women's Independence," *Pacific Coast Philology* 26.1/2 (Jul 1991): 71.
[6] For discussions on Juliet's "blackness" in the novel's opening pages see Sara Salih's "'Her Blacks, Her Whites and Her Double Face!': Altering Alterity in *The Wanderer*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 11.3 (April 1999); and Tara Czechowski's "'Black, Patched and Pennyless': Race and Crime in Burney's *The Wanderer*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 25.4 (Summer 2013). Salih is critical of feminist critics who conflate gender and race and argues that Burney is among the female novelists who exploit racial disparities for their own agendas: "*The Wanderer* does not document the inhumanities of the slave trade, but rather the plantocratic tendencies displayed by the English characters establish the opportunistic textual connection between the sufferings of middle-class English women and slaves labouring overseas" (312). Salih points out that the transience of Juliet's "dusky skin" in and of itself points to the flimsiness of the racial metaphor. Czechowski argues against Salih's interpretation claiming that by consistently aligning Juliet with the black poor, *The Wanderer* "is responding to the fraught, anti-Jacobin writings of Edmund Burke, which equated the revolutionaries with both maroon slaves and criminals. The novel interrogates the idea of black as criminal by revealing how the rhetoric and societal panic of the French Revolution, which ultimately had nothing to do with the black poor in Britain, contributed to the entrenchment of this early stereotype" (680).
[7] For more in-depth considerations of the novel's treatment of exile and nationalism, see Pamela Cheek, "The Space of British Exile in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* and Germaine de Staël's *Corinne*," *Gender and Space in British Literature, 1660-1820*, eds. Mona Narain and Karen Gevirtz (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2014); and Maria Jerinic's "Challenging Englishness: Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*," *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, eds. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).
[8] Katharina Rennhak, "Tropes of Exile in the 1790s: English Women Writers and French Emigrants," *European Romantic Review* 17.5 (Dec 2006).
[9] Toby R. Benis, *Romantic Diasporas: French Émigrés, British Convicts, and Jews* (Palgrave MacMillan: New York, 2009), 62-3.
[10] The reader learns Juliet's real name in chapter forty-one when she reunites with Gabriella, and we finally learn her story from Gabriella along with Sir Jaspar in chapter sixty-nine.
[11] Althusser, "Ideology," 117.
[12] Darryl Jones, "Radical Ambivalence: Frances Burney, Jacobinism, and the Politics of Romantic Fiction," *Women's Writing* 10.1 (2003): 10.
[13] For an in-depth discussion of the private theatricals in *The Wanderer*, please see Gillian Skinner, "Professionalism, Performance and Private Theatricals in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*," *Romanticism* 18.3 (2012). Hilary Havens writes specifically about Burney's choice of *The Provok'd Husband* in "Omitting Lady

Grace: *The Provok'd Husband* in Burney's *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.3 (Sep 2015).
[14] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (Norton: New York, 1990).
[15] Helen Thompson, "How *The Wanderer* Works: Reading Burney and Bourdieu," *ELH* 68.4 (2001): 966.
[16] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 172. For Bourdieu "aristocrats are what they are, while those remaining 'uncertified' are what they do" (975). Thompson disagrees with Bourdieu, pointing out that Juliet does in fact labor in the text in order to survive while she preserves her anonymity while still maintaining what Thompson deems a modality of aristocratic display. Rather, Thompson argues, Juliet's "dispossessed essence" "exposes the fragility of the very things upon which Bourdieu predicates the continuity of essence, titles and lineage" (975).
[17] Thompson, "Burney and Bourdieu," 969 (emphasis Thompson's).
[18] William Hazlitt, Review of *The Wanderer, The Edinburgh Review* 24 (1815). See also John Wilson Croker, Review of *The Wanderer, The Quarterly Review* 11 (1814).
[19] Thompson, "Burney and Bourdieu," 972.
[20] In one particularly dismissive section of his review of *The Wanderer*, Hazlitt writes, "*The Wanderer* raises obstacles, lighter than 'the gossamer that idles in the wanton summer air,' into insurmountable barriers… the perversity of her conduct is in proportion to its levity – as the lightness of a feather baffles the force of the impulse that is given to it, and the slightest breath of air turns it back on the hand from which it is launched" (337-8).
[21] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 97.
[22] Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 121.
[23] Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 152.
[24] McKeon, *Secret History of Domesticity*, 151-2.
[25] McKeon, *Secret History of Domesticity,* 233.
[26] McKeon, *Secret History of Domesticity*, 252.
[27] Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 113.
[28] Rennhak, "Tropes of Exile," 581.
[29] Barbara Zonitch, *Familiar Violence: Gender and Social Upheaval in the Novels of Frances Burney* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 117.
[30] Zonitch, *Familiar Violence*, 119.
[31] Luce Irigaray, "Women on the Market," *The Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).
[32] Chloe Wigston-Smith, *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 172.
[33] William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Lines above Tintern Abbey," *Lyrical Ballads,* ed. Fiona J. Stafford (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[34] Suzie Park, "Resisting Demands for Depth in *The Wanderer*," European Romantic Review 15.2 (June 2004): 309.
[35] McKeon, *Secret History of Domesticity*, 252.
[36] Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 179-80.
[37] Wordsworth's *The Excursion* was also published in 1814 and features a figure called "The Wanderer."
[38] Pam Perkins, "Private Men and Public Women: Social Criticism in Fanny Burney's *The Wanderer*," *Essays in Literature* 23.1 (Spring 1996).
[39] Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 12.
[40] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 99.

[41] Charlotte Smith, *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Stuart Curran (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 141.
[42] Silvia Mergenthal, "'The Architecture of the Devil': Stonehenge, Englishness, English Fiction," *Landscape and Englishness*, eds. Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl (Rodopi B.V.: Amsterdam, 2006), 128.
[43] Tara Ghoshal Wallace writes that "Juliet's escape from wandering isolation coincides with an aggressive re-establishment of patriarchal networks" (506), but suggests a more cynical interpretation: "A patriarchal structure that depends on so many simultaneous strokes of good fortune in order to recuperate one of its own seems oddly enfeebled." In "Rewriting Radicalism: Wollstonecraft in Burney's *The Wanderer*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24.3 (2012): 507.
[44] Wallace, "Rewriting Radicalism," 507.
[45] Zonitch, *Familiar Violence*, 136.
[46] Zonitch, *Familiar Violence,* 137.
[47] Zonitch argues against my reading of Juliet's son's birth, writing, "the birth of the heroine's son signals the continuation of the mother's family" (137).
[48] Maximillian E. Novak, "Ideological Tendencies in Three Crusoe Narratives by British Novelists during the Period Following the French Revolution: Charles Dibdin's *Hannah Hewit, The Female Crusoe*, Maria Edgeworth's *Forester*, and Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*," *The Eighteenth-Century Novel, Vol 9*, eds. Albert J. Rivero and George Justice (AMS Press: New York, 2012).
[49] Rennhak, "Tropes of Exile," 586.
[50] Rennhak, "Tropes of Exile," 587.
[51] Salih, "Altering Alterity," 315.
[52] Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s – Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, and Austen* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 170.

Chapter Two

Domestic Subjectivity in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*

> "Without external props, even our personal identity fades and goes out of focus; the self is a fragile construction of the mind." – Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi[1]
>
> "The grandeur of the house astonished, but could not console her. The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease; whatever she touched she expected to injure, and she crept about in constant terror of something or other." – *Mansfield Park* [1]

If Juliet Granville is pathologically in motion and perpetually un-housed, Fanny Price, Jane Austen's diminutive protagonist in *Mansfield Park*, is mostly fixed and static; though like Juliet, she is often compelled to obey the demands of those around her. Fanny often seems on the verge of collapse; her body is frail, her language insufficient, and her agency compromised.[2] Or, this seems to be the case; I want to argue instead that Fanny — a character deeply vulnerable to systems of class and gender in nineteenth-century England — is actually a remarkably inventive manipulator of space even as she herself is worked on continuously by human and nonhuman actants. I will employ Jane Bennett's theories of vital materiality and assemblages to explore how Fanny's subjectivity is shaped by what I am calling domestic assemblages. *Mansfield Park* is a novel profoundly interested in the shaping and repurposing of space. While Fanny, like Juliet before her, seems to behave passively, seeming only to have the power to refuse, she proves herself to be a resourceful manipulator of material things, perceptive to their power and skilled at using objects and collections of objects to broker social relations and facilitate her own domestic comfort.

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[1] Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 13. All subsequent references will appear in-text.

While critics such as Francis Hart,[3] John Skinner, Julie Park, Laura Mooneyham White, Lynn Festa, and P. Keiko Kagawa have written on space in *Mansfield Park*, I want to apply a new materialist approach to the novel which will, I believe, lend a more sustained and nuanced understanding specifically to the dynamics of space on subjectivity construction that is missing from the criticism. White argues that space in Austen depicts "the self and its quest for identity"[4] while Kagawa desires to "refine the construction of Fanny's subjectivity and psychic interiority … to suggest that both are constructed by way of a body's external experience of its spaces."[5] Lynn Festa writes very interestingly about space in her excellent essay "Losing One's Place in *Mansfield Park*" where she explores the influence of materiality on personality in what she considers to be "the novel that presents Austen's most sustained analysis of the effects of economic and social formations on individual development."[6] These critics offer productive perspectives on space and identity, but I want to argue more specifically that Fanny participates in the construction of her subjectivity by deriving agency from the assemblages of nonhuman materiality within the domestic spaces in which she is confined. I focus on how Fanny patiently co-constructs spaces she can inhabit comfortably, recognizing the power to persist in the objects, spaces, and material practices that surround her in order to resist the forces that seek to dominate her.

My thinking on this derives from Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter*. Bennett argues that material bodies are not stable and passive; instead she "theorize[s] a materiality that is as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as must intensity as extension."[7] It is simultaneously mystical and quotidian to feel and discuss the power of everyday materiality. Relationality is a key component of Bennett's thinking. She acknowledges the tendency in thing-theory toward "latent individualism," but rejects that in favor of "a congregational understanding of agency." Relations and connections are not static but are continually severed and reassembled in other ways. Notions of individualism are weakened when we consider how our actions are hampered or helped by everything around us.

Bennett dismisses older conceptions of agency formulated by Augustine and Kant as inadequate, favoring instead a concept of agency that "depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces. A lot happens to the concept of agency once nonhuman things are figured less as social constructions and more as actors, and once humans themselves are assessed not as autonoms but as vital materialities."[8] While Bennett is interested in investigating far-reaching assemblages, I am adapting her thinking to inform my own work on smaller, domestic assemblages. Domestic spaces are fraught with ever-changing assemblages, spatial borders that are always porous and influx, and social boundaries variously constructed by behaviors and material objects. By looking closely at these assemblages, I hope to formulate an understanding of how Fanny Price participates in the construction of her subjectivity in *Mansfield Park*.

In addition to Bennett's work, I will also draw on Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*, Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's "Why We Need Things" in this chapter to explore the varied natures of material practices and objects within the novel. All three theorists view material things as integral to social or personal cohesion; nonhuman objects strengthen our communal bonds and allow us to maintain coherent identities. Additionally, gift-giving, the phenomenology of intimate space, and the psychological power of nonhuman things all have explicit domestic locations within *Mansfield Park*. Subordinating these theories to Bennett is useful because they all illuminate different facets of domestic assemblages in the novel. Not only do nonhuman objects exhibit the vibrancy Bennett detects in detritus or large-scale power outages, but material practices do as well; daily habits, like making tea or cutting roses, can also shape subjectivity while imbuing the nonhuman with power. Importantly, all these theorists attribute agency to objects, from Mauss's declaration that "things have souls"[9] to Csikszentmihalyi's insistence that without objects we "would quickly dissolve in the flux of consciousness."[10] Fanny is shaped by this power

while also using it to her benefit to combat the extreme discomfort she often feels within a space, as she is subject to unjust social codes while also being acutely sensitive to her physical environment.

Spaces of Neglect, Fanny's Domestic Assemblages

Many of the spaces Fanny occupies in the novel threaten her subjectivity and present challenges to her agency. Mansfield Park and the Prices' home in Portsmouth are constructed of people, objects, and assemblages that Fanny struggles to order and negotiate. Neglect and cruelty are human attitudes that seem to be inscribed in the materiality of space in *Mansfield Park*. Within these uncomfortable spaces, Fanny finds ways to resist the mistreatment she faces by recognizing the power in objects to help her resist. Fanny is not merely uncomfortable in these spaces, however; her sense of self is so fragile that threatening spaces present challenges to Fanny's survival. This danger is particularly acute in the scenes at Portsmouth, as Fanny languishes at her parents' house for several months and the narrator hints at the fatal prospect of her remaining there for too long.

The move to Portsmouth is occasioned by Fanny's refusal to accept Henry Crawford's proposal, a decision which angers Sir Thomas and rehearses the dispossession that has been threatening Fanny from the very margins of the novel. Sir Thomas sends her to visit her father's home in Portsmouth so that "a little abstinence from the elegancies and luxuries of Mansfield Park would bring her mind into a sober state, and incline her to a juster estimate of the value of that home of greater permanence, and equal comfort of which she had the offer" (250). At no point in the novel is Fanny's vulnerability more apparent than in this "medicinal project" of Sir Thomas's. Fanny has become more integral to the fabric of life at Mansfield Park and her temporary expulsion feels like a spiritual disinheritance from the only home she knows. Sir Thomas's chilling words to "make her remember that she is not a *Miss Bertram*" (10) haunt the text and especially here, Fanny's

insignificance is reaffirmed. Like Juliet, Fanny cannot yet claim the name of which she will eventually prove herself worthy.

Sir Thomas is correct in assuming that Fanny will find Portsmouth an unpleasant environment and will miss the comforts of Mansfield Park. Fanny is shocked by her family's noise, filth, and general indifference to her return: "Fanny was almost stunned. The smallness of the house, and thinness of the walls, brought every thing so close to her, that, added to the fatigue of her journey, and all her recent agitation, she hardly knew how to bear it" (259). The comforts of the East room and the quiet manners and household routine of Mansfield Park are replaced with a domestic space that is hostile to Fanny's gentle nature. While her family's indifference distresses Fanny, it is clear in the lines above that the paltry material of the home contributes to this pernicious atmosphere. Fanny needs space and privacy to recover from external disturbances, but the Prices' home cannot provide the kind of peaceful retreat she requires. As a result, Fanny's subjectivity is threatened. She can only sit in the parlor, "glad to have the light screened from her aching head . . . in bewildered, broken, sorrowful contemplation" (260), a state which brings the reader back to young Fanny's paralyzing fear and agitation in the second chapter of the novel.

The effects of Portsmouth only grow worse the longer Fanny remains there. Crawford notices her waning health when he visits, and Fanny's own depression is obvious to the reader. The combination of miserable conditions Fanny faces — homesickness, adulterated food, and bad air — have the potential to kill her as Austen's narrator grimly suggests:

> [Fanny] sat in a blaze of oppressive heat, in a cloud of moving dust; and her eyes could only wander from the walls marked by her father's head, to the table cut and knotched by her brothers, where stood the tea-board never thoroughly cleaned, the cups and saucers wiped in streaks, the milk a mixture of motes floating in thin blue, and the bread and butter growing every minute more greasy than even Rebecca's hands had first produced it. (298)

The overall impression here is one of neglect, physical dirt, and discomfort, and the reader can feel the pressure of this unstable space impinging on Fanny's mind. If Fanny's East room at Mansfield Park is an ideal conception of assemblage that brings Fanny comfort, the Prices' parlor is its antithesis, populated by objects that overwhelm and oppress her. Filth permeates every surface, emanating grotesquely from the bodies of her family and the servant. The narrator seems to enter Fanny's mind and convey her impressions here, tracing the separation of elements in a container of rancid milk and relating a sickening description of greasy food. It is no wonder than Fanny cannot eat heartily and that she is losing strength and vigor by the day. The contrast is the imagined loveliness and cleanliness of Mansfield Park and its environs, and any memory of Mary riding Fanny's horse or Mrs. Norris sending Fanny to walk beyond her ability is forgotten. Ruth Yeazell writes that Fanny has a "tendency to organize experience by drawing sharp lines of exclusion … the novel as a whole reveals a similar impulse to draw a world divided by clear spatial and ontological boundaries."[11] These boundaries are perhaps more distinct when Fanny is comparing Portsmouth and Mansfield than any other point in the novel. Portsmouth is not only dirty, but it lacks the moral order and stability that Fanny perceives at Mansfield.[12]

Fanny may idealize Mansfield Park, but Austen's narrator undermines Fanny's affection for it by vividly depicting her experiences of neglect there. This neglect is especially clear upon Fanny's initial arrival in the opening chapters. Unusual for Austen's heroines, we meet Fanny as a child, a rhetorical choice that is perhaps intended to garner sympathy for Fanny in the reader. The force of the transition from her childhood home to Mansfield Park is devastating for Fanny. She is immediately cowed by her magnificent surroundings: "The grandeur of the house astonished, but could not console her. The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease; whatever she touched she expected to injure, and she crept about in constant terror of something or other" (13). The overwhelming impression of Mansfield Park is its size and opulence, and this combination produces

fear and discomfort in Fanny. The seeming paradox of a space being "too large for her to move in with ease" suggests just how sensitive Fanny is to her physical environment. The separation between the material world and Fanny's sense of self is shown to be quite thin or even permeable. Lynn Festa argues for an understanding of Fanny's personality as one formed by objects which "help secure a continuity of the self." Fanny's initial bewilderment in Mansfield Park occurs, because "[n]othing anchors Fanny in a space too capacious to enclose; no objects return her to herself. If objects serve as a kind of bookmark by which one may re-find one's place in reality, then the want of such objects creates a sense of disorientation."[13] Fanny, of course, has no power to injure this place but she feels like an interloper. Mansfield Park and its inhabitants absorb and reflect Fanny's fears and anxieties back to her. She finds solace nowhere and with no one. Fanny's disorientation can be located firmly within her rupture from her home in Portsmouth. Austen's narrator makes it clear that Fanny is deeply homesick, and that the Bertrams are unreceptive to Fanny's needs: "Nobody meant to be unkind, but nobody put themselves out of their way to secure her comfort" (15). This pronouncement introduces the first instance of neglect we see toward Fanny. The Bertrams *should* put themselves out of the way to way to secure her comfort since they are responsible for her removal from her parents' home. Fanny's introduction to Mansfield Park establishes her sensitivity to changes in her material environment, specifically how debilitating it is for her to cross into an unfamiliar space.

Perhaps the key to Fanny's disorientation lies in the embodiment of space that Bachelard describes: "the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting … The word habit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which do not forget, with an unforgettable house."[14] We do not merely occupy spaces but are shaped by the doing and redoing of material practices within a specific space. Fanny regrets her own separation from her house of origin and the rhythms of life she was accustomed to there. The day-

to-day life within a house creates and inscribes habits of order and being within us. Austen gestures to this connection between space, body, and comfort when the narrator emphasizes Fanny's vulnerability and the rest of the household's inability to understand her acute feelings of homesickness and distress:

> Fanny, whether near or from her cousins, whether in the school-room, the drawing-room, or the shrubbery was equally forlorn, finding something to fear in every person or place. She was disheartened by Lady Bertram's silence, awed by Sir Thomas's grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris's admonitions. Her elder cousins mortified her by reflections on her size, and abashed her by noticing her shyness; Miss Lee wondered at her ignorance, and the maid-servants sneered at her clothes; and when to these sorrows was added the idea of the brothers and sisters among whom she had always been important as a playfellow, instructress, and nurse, the despondence that sunk her little heart was severe. (12-3)

Fanny's neglect at the hands of the Bertrams permeates this passage. The family's impressions are that Fanny should be grateful for her good fortune, but the narrator indicates that Fanny feels not only homesick but disoriented and saddened by her removal from a legible domestic space. In Portsmouth, Fanny had roles and was important to the household. She is ripped from that comfort and dropped off in an alien place. The juxtaposition between her newfound insignificance at Mansfield Park and her identity within her childhood home is key to understanding her present suffering; the move from one house to another causes a rupture in Fanny's subjectivity.

Austen's narrator carefully catalogs how other characters within the novel are actively and deliberately shaping Fanny's identity. Before Fanny arrives at Mansfield, Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris discuss the importance of distinguishing her from Maria and Julia Bertram. He tells Mrs. Norris, "there will be some difficulty in our way, Mrs. Norris, as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up … how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her

remember that she is not a *Miss Bertram*" (10). This is a chilling statement, but it is spoken away from the children and likely not directly communicated to them. It is then not language but the material practices of Fanny's rearing that impress the children (including Fanny herself) with a sense of her inferiority. As Sonya Lawson Parrish points out, the Bertrams position Fanny as a servant by placing her in the upper section of the house upon her arrival to Mansfield Park.[15] By locating her within this marginalized space, the Bertrams and Mrs. Norris ensure that Fanny will not be mistaken for one of the family. General neglect by the household at large and Mrs. Norris's blatant cruelty toward Fanny are human behaviors but they interact with several nonhuman actants to shape Fanny's demoralized subjectivity. These nonhuman objects are varied: shabby items no one else wants that Fanny saves and treasures; her positioning within rooms like the white attic and the East room thought too lowly for the rest of the household's use; the absence of a fire in the East room; her horse that is not quite hers since Edmund owns it; and Mary Crawford's necklace forced upon her because she owns very little jewelry. While controlled by human actants in the novel, these nonhuman things exert force upon Fanny to cause her to "rate her own claims to comfort as low even as Mrs. Norris could" (152).

While she attains a certain degree of comfort in Mansfield Park as she gets older, Fanny's ambivalent status within the Bertram home remains unstable. When Sir Thomas begins to pressure Mrs. Norris to take over Fanny's maintenance after her husband's death, Fanny is just as upset by the prospect of living with Mrs. Norris as Mrs. Norris is of Fanny coming to live with her. Lady Bertram, unable to feel true sympathy for anyone and conscious of comfort only as a physical experience, tells Fanny, "you are sure of a comfortable home. It can make *little difference to you*, whether you are in *one house or the other*" (20, emphasis mine). The theme of substitution proffered here (a theme which is echoed throughout the novel) reminds the reader of Fanny's vulnerability to dislocation, as well as demonstrating how little Lady Bertram cares one way or another where Fanny

might end up. Edmund, though from kindlier motives, seconds Lady Bertram's opinion, arguing, "[m]y aunt is acting like a sensible woman in wishing for you. She is choosing a friend and companion exactly where she ought" (20). Both Lady Bertram and Edmund think only of Aunt Norris's desires and are unable to recognize Fanny's objections to sharing an abode with Mrs. Norris. Mrs. Norris's cruel behavior toward Fanny has been established early on, and yet, the Bertrams' attitudes suggest that physical comfort and appropriate familial arrangements are sufficient criteria for Fanny's happiness. Mrs. Norris has unsurprisingly taken steps to ensure she will not be able to house Fanny due to the parsimonious living arrangement she adopts after her husband's death: "she had fixed on the smallest habitation which could rank as genteel among the buildings of Mansfield parish, the White house being only just large enough to receive herself and her servants, and allow a spare room for a friend" (22). What emerges over the course of this conversation is a complicated notion of generosity within Mansfield Park's insular world. *Someone* will take care of Fanny, but the adults responsible for uprooting her from her home as a child of ten are unable to recognize how acutely Fanny feels her domestic disturbances and how crucial stability is for her psychological well-being.

While individual objects and small collections of objects help Fanny resist the novel's many external threats, contained protective spaces such as the East room give her space to exercise her autonomy. Austen gives us extensive descriptions of the East room, an aesthetic choice evocative of shelter writing, a descriptive mode defined by Susan Fraiman as "offering a precise, even tender, account of domestic actions … [and] occurring in the narrative context of domestic dislocation."[16] Fraiman writes that characters like Fanny Price "are outsiders to polite society and at times literally out of doors," and their attempts at cultivating "domestic spaces and domestic labor mean neither propriety and status nor captivity and drudgery but safety, sanity, and self-expression: survival in the most basic sense."[17] Though Fanny exists within an environment of luxury and high status, she is

not, as we are made immediately aware, comfortable within that space or licensed to take advantage of it. Her occupation of the East room, her slow and methodical accumulation of objects with which to adorn it attest to Fraiman's formulation of "safety, sanity, and self-expression: survival in the most basic sense."

Fanny's assemblage of the East room also belies the notion that she is a character devoid of agency or ambition. As she grows older, Fanny demonstrates that she is capable of combating outside threats to her subjectivity and agency. A close analysis of Fanny's behaviors regarding the East room offer us a different conception of agency from what we might typically imagine. Mrs. Norris's order that the East room should have no fire could create an inhospitable room, cold and dim, but Fanny resists this in a move that resonates with Spinoza's conception of the *conatus*, the will to persevere. As Bennett explains, the *conatus* in simple bodies "is expressed as a stubbornness or inertial tendency to persist; in the case of a complex body or mode, conatus refers to the effort required to maintain the specific relation of 'movement and rest' that obtains between its parts, a relation that defines the mode as what it is."[18] And what does Fanny do in the novel but stubbornly persist? She is always negotiating how to act or how to refrain from acting, appearing calm on the surface while disguising her internal turbulence.

Julie Park argues that the central virtue of the novel is Fanny's refusal to act, that "by choosing not to act, she watches and waits instead, an attitude that requires the less-common courage of restraint and reflection. Rather than performed, hers is a life ordained by introspection and principle both."[19] While Park's conclusion is compelling, it overlooks the incremental behaviors Fanny is frequently enacting. As my analysis below will demonstrate, Fanny copes with her discomfort by organizing her physical environment and using that space and those objects to reinforce her sense of self. These same objects, however, can also work to make Fanny's decisions more difficult, since as a poor relation, she is financially dependent on the family and has thus

incurred what she sees as a great burden of metaphorical debt. Bennett writes that "bodies enhance their power *in* or *as a heterogeneous assemblage*,"[20] and *Mansfield Park* demonstrates that Fanny recognizes this power in objects and utilizes it to facilitate her own survival. Fanny's subjectivity is not created by these objects alone but rather is co-created through her deliberate interaction with them. Agency is not an individual singular force but rather, it is Bennett's collaboration of human and nonhuman things.

As she grows up, Fanny gradually assembles a fortress for herself in Mansfield Park's neglected school room, and it functions as a legible domestic space to her. Fanny has control over this space, acknowledged to be hers by the Bertram household, and it operates as both sanctuary and "nest of comforts":

> The room was most dear to her, and she would not have changed its furniture for the handsomest in the house, though what had been originally plain, had suffered all the ill-usage of children — and its greatest elegancies and ornaments were a faded footstool of Julia's work, too ill done for the drawing-room, three transparencies, made in a rage for transparencies, for the three lower panes of one window, where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy, and moonlight lake in Cumberland; a collection of family profiles thought unworthy of being anywhere else, over the mantelpiece, and by their side and pinned against the wall, a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William, with H. M. S. Antwerp at the bottom, in letters as tall as the mainmast. (107-8)

Fanny's inheritance of this motley assemblage of household detritus is foreshadowed in chapter two when the narrator tells us that Maria and Julia "could do no more than make her a generous present of some of their least valued toys, and leave her to herself" (12). While Austen's description of the East room's contents emphasizes Fanny's low social standing at Mansfield Park, it also reveals her

resourcefulness within a social commonwealth that consistently undervalues her. Most of the items listed are failed arts-and-crafts projects that are humble and shabby and have been left behind in the former school room or abandoned elsewhere in the house. Yet, Fanny has repurposed them and lovingly arranged them to create a comfortable space.

Austen, an economical writer when it comes to description, gives us a lot of detail about these objects, a stylistic move that suggests we should take them seriously.[21] Julia's embroidery is "ill done," a possible commentary on the Bertram girls' faulty and insufficient education but Fanny treasures this work despite its flaws, perhaps because she does have love and compassion for her cousins. The transparencies are out of fashion but still, with their picturesque images of English and Italian landscapes, add color to the room and situate Fanny within a literary tradition of William Gilpin, William Wordsworth, and Ann Radcliffe; Fanny's reading habits and curiosity about the world may lead her to imaginatively seek out these locations. Family silhouettes have pride of place over the mantelpiece, and since the narrator specifically mentions Edmund's profile in the following paragraph, it is clear that Fanny considers him the focal point of the room. Even her beloved brother's sketch is placed to the side of these profiles, perhaps as Fanny's way of honoring the Bertram family for their interest in her, compromised though it is. We can detect Austen's fine sense of irony in Fanny placing the family profiles above the fireplace fated to remain fireless as dictated by Mrs. Norris; it is a quiet reminder of Fanny's neglect within Mansfield Park. Finally, the significance of William's sketch can be imagined, considering the intimacy of the two siblings. It is unsurprising that Fanny displays William's rendering of his own space, however undomestic a ship may be in comparison with her own. Likely this image of William's current home helps feed Fanny's fantasies of one day sharing a home with her brother.

Austen's phrase here — "nest of comforts" — calls to mind Bachelard's chapter on "Nests" in *The Poetics of Space* and is accompanied by the image of a tiny bird gleaning found objects and

skillfully arranging its delicate protective enclosure, an image perhaps reinforced by Henry James's condescending remark that Austen is like "a brown thrush who tells his story from the garden bough."[22] John Skinner also observes this resonance with Bachelard and notes the suitability of small or restricted places for dreaming in both Austen's and Bachelard's texts. Bachelard explains that nests are paradoxically fragile yet secure, hidden yet discoverable: "well-being takes us back to the primitiveness of the refuge. Physically, the creature endowed with a sense of refuge, huddles up to itself, takes to cover, hides away, lies snug, concealed."[23] This beautiful description could also be applied to Fanny. She too "hides away, lies snug, concealed" in her East room:

> The comfort of it in her hours of leisure was extreme. She could go there after any thing unpleasant below, and find immediate consolation in some pursuit, or some train of thought at hand. — Her plants, her books — of which she had been a collector, from the first hour of her commanding a shilling — her writing desk, and her works of charity and ingenuity, were all within her reach; — or if indisposed for employment, if nothing but musing would do, she could scarcely see an object in that room which had not an interesting remembrance connected with it. — Every thing was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend. (106)

Fanny's discomfort is brought on by the way she is treated by her family, but the East room is a place where she can retreat and seek solace. Nicholas Dames writes that "[t]he history encoded by these souvenirs is not one of loss, it is one of loss ameliorated and overcome."[24] These objects soothe specifically because, as Dames argues, they possess a kind of "new nostalgia" that allows Fanny to think fondly over the past precisely because it is the past and can no longer harm her. Dames's reading grants us an optimistic way of viewing these objects, of imbuing them with power and acknowledging Fanny's ability to use the material quite deliberately in her on-going project of self-preservation.

Fanny's space offers her the duality of activity and reflection. The objects found there reflect her thoughtfulness and her desire to be helpful; her books and writing desk signify her longing to participate in intellectual life and her plants and projects indicate her interest in cultivating growth and comfort for other lives. The East room's collection of objects conveys a sense of Fanny's moral system to the reader; she is deeply caring, always considering her duty and what she owes to others. This passage also reveals how complex Fanny's status is at Mansfield Park. While fretting over whether to give in to her cousins' desires to help them stage *Lovers' Vows*, Fanny looks at the gifts they have given her. These objects have the power to make her uneasy even as they soothe her. Claudia Johnson distinguishes them as "not merely tokens but active enforcers of relations."[25] Tom's gifts compel her to consider doing what she believes is untoward in her uncle's house. The "debt" that arises from these gifts, even though they are careless trifles for someone like Tom, disturbs Fanny's sense of right and complicates her participation in *Lovers' Vows*. The East room is thus marked by these instances of obligation and guilt, and Fanny finds no easy answers, even in her nest of comforts.

Austen provides us with a much more compromised version of shelter writing when Fanny is in Portsmouth. As I discussed at the beginning of this section, the material privations in Portsmouth have a profound effect on Fanny, reminding the reader again of Fanny's delicate physical and psychological health. Along with these privations, Fanny is immediately disappointed by the lack of attention anyone but William pays to her. A few minutes after her arrival, she is left alone with her father who promptly pulls out his newspaper and ignores her: "She was home. But alas! it was not such a home" (260). Portsmouth never becomes a comfortable space for Fanny, and her family never lives up to her fantasies of filial love.

Despite these privations, Fanny's mental health improves when she is able to create a series of daily habits that involve her occupying the upstairs room with Susan where they can both work

quietly. If Fanny is not able to find perfect comfort, she at least finds some semblance of quiet: "By sitting upstairs, they avoided a great deal of the disturbance of the house; Fanny had peace, and Susan learnt to think it no misfortune to be quietly employed. They sat without a fire, but *that* was a privation familiar even to Fanny, and she suffered the less because reminded by it of the east-room" (270). At first, Fanny identifies the lack of objects in her new space upstairs and contrasts it unfavorably with her beloved East room: "In space, light, furniture, and prospect, there was nothing alike in the two apartments; and she often heaved a sigh at the remembrance of all her books and boxes, and various comforts there" (270). But Fanny continues to think longingly of her books: "the remembrance of the said books grew so potent and stimulative, that Fanny found it impossible not to try for books again" (270). The money Sir Thomas has equipped her with allows Fanny to intervene here as well as in the silver knife dispute between Susan and Betsey. Fanny's subscription to a circulating library gestures to a larger assemblage that transcends even as it enriches the domestic. Fanny finds herself "amazed at her own doings in every way; to be a renter, a chuser of books!" (271). Books are, of course, more than mere objects because they have the potential to contain powerful stores of knowledge in them. Fanny's excitement stems more from just this access: to have the power to select books and to have the opportunity to cultivate Susan's mind by guiding her reading are deeply meaningful for Fanny. The silver knife and the rented books enable Fanny to reshape the hostile environment she finds in Portsmouth. Through employing these objects Fanny exhibits her will to persist. These tools seem impoverished next to Fanny's East room (and how grand that room looks in contrast to the ones she occupies in Portsmouth!), but they are examples of Fanny's ingenuity and help her to endure the privations of her parents' home and to await the possibility of receiving news that Edmund and Mary Crawford are engaged. Fanny's ability to secure these spaces and objects sets her apart from a character like Juliet who is unable to cultivate similar comforts.

I do want to complicate this notion I have just detailed about Fanny's tendency toward acquisition and repurposing by proposing that she potentially learns this behavior from Mrs. Norris. While there is general agreement among readers and critics that Mrs. Norris is an abusive and cruel character (an opinion with which I heartily agree), I do want to proffer an alternative reading of her beyond that of Fanny's tormentor. How does Fanny learn to negotiate spatial dynamics better than other characters in the novel with far more social and economic power than her? Aside from Fanny, there is no more effective manipulator of space in the novel than Mrs. Norris and perhaps there is a way to read Mrs. Norris as a model for Fanny's behavior. Austen comically paints her as a notorious scrounger, from taking advantage of every opportunity to eat at Mansfield Park to the collection of souvenirs she brings away from Sotherton. Maria explicitly characterizes her as a freeloader, asking her in the carriage ride back to Mansfield Park, "What else have you been spunging?" as Mrs. Norris proudly shows off her cream cheese, heath plant, and pheasant eggs to Maria and Fanny. However, Mrs. Norris's avariciousness can be viewed as a rational reaction to her own economic vulnerability especially after her husband has died and she must make her accumulated wealth last.

Even Fanny begrudgingly admits that Mrs. Norris's habits have their merit when she unfavorably compares her mother to her two sisters:

> Of her two sisters, Mrs. Price very much more resembled Lady Bertram than Mrs. Norris. She was a manager by necessity, without any of Mrs. Norris's inclination for it, or any of her activity. Her disposition was naturally easy and indolent, like Lady Bertram's; and a situation of similar affluence and do-nothing-ness would have been much more suited to her capacity, than the exertions and self-denials of the one, which her imprudent marriage had placed her in. She might have made just as a good a woman of consequence as Lady Bertram, but Mrs. Norris would have been a more respectable mother of nine children, on a small income. (265)

We repeatedly see Mrs. Norris's scrounging tactics at work, from her occupation of a house too small to accommodate Fanny after Mr. Norris's death to her enthusiastic acquisition of the green baize after the amateur theatricals. Austen's narrator casts a mercenary light over Mrs. Norris's behaviors, reminding the reader that she is miserly rather than frugal since a lack of children ensured she and her husband never came close to exceeding their income. Mrs. Norris is deeply anxious about scarcity and her attempts to absorb and squeeze as many things as she can from her wealthier acquaintance might be a coping mechanism to allay her financial insecurity. Festa suggests that "[t]he pleasure [Mrs. Norris] finds in parsimony suggests yet another relationship between property and personality, in which the object left unconsumed — a form of possession held permanently in potential through frugality — is itself the desired end."[26]

Fanny too is acquisitive, but the objects she gathers are ones that bring her comfort because of their psychic and social significance. However, it is possible that a perceptive Fanny learns her own acquisitive behaviors from watching Mrs. Norris, although she adapts them in such a way as to meet her own ethical standards. In an odd way then, Mrs. Norris, so parsimonious and grasping, manages to pass on a valuable inheritance to Fanny; Fanny derives no such lessons from Lady Bertram or her mother. Fanny does her part to keep this inheritance alive by passing these lessons on to Susan, ensuring that she will benefit from the comfort such habits encourage while transforming the selfish motivations of Mrs. Norris into behaviors more generous and productive. Fanny's facility with material things might even be more powerful than Mrs. Norris, as we learn when Fanny returns to Mansfield Park after Maria's defection. While Fanny finds herself able to efficiently arrange for her departure from Portsmouth despite her shock over Maria and Julia's rebellions, Mrs. Norris is "unable to direct or dictate, or even fancy herself useful. When really touched by affliction, her active powers had been all benumbed" (304). Fanny is able to improve upon the useful behaviors she observes in others. Her appropriation and alteration of Mrs. Norris's

behaviors suggests ways that neglected women like Fanny can develop survival skills. At the same time, Austen's narrator reveals how flawed Mrs. Norris's material practice truly is, because it is rooted in a deep selfishness that exceeds mere self-preservation.

Vibrant Objects: Gift Economy, Social Hierarchy, and Generosity

Looking at all the unstable spaces that characterize *Mansfield Park* gives us insight into how difficult it is to craft a conception of agency for Fanny that is both productive and effective. In addition to her assemblages, Fanny exerts agency through specific objects and her successful negotiations of the gift economy she encounters at Mansfield Park and among her family and social relations. These negotiations allow her to resist external encroachments while also allowing her to protect her sense of self from the aggressive interference of characters like Mrs. Norris. However, these gift exchanges are never straight-forward and are not always successful. Fanny's sense of obligation to the Bertrams frequently causes her anxiety and even affects her ability to act in accordance with the moral values the family claims to uphold. Mauss conceives of gift exchange as a way to create social cohesion through the conferring of obligation from one member of society to another. It is not merely an exchange of objects, however; Mauss believes that when gifts exchange hands, part of the souls of the people involved go with them: "Souls are mixed with things; thing with souls. Lives are mingled together, and this is how, among persons and things so intermingled, each emerges from their own sphere and mixes together. This is precisely what contract and exchange are."[27] Fanny, unable to afford to give gifts, suffers under the weight of obligation to her cousins. She believes it is immoral to participate in the household's production of *Lover's Vows*, but the obligations she believes she owes her cousins make it a painful refusal and reinforces her sense of dislocation within Mansfield Park. Her participation in the play would be a way of paying back the otherwise unmanageable debt that she sees manifested in the gifts around her.

In addition to the social dynamics of objects, *Mansfield Park* recognizes a power in material things beyond their social or commercial value. Fanny's own recognition of this power sets her apart from other characters in the novel and equips her with a more expansive agency than she might otherwise have. Fanny utilizes the material world in deliberate ways, and she purposefully shapes her sense of self. Csikszentmihalyi's insight that "consciousness is not a stable, self-regulating entity … [that] without external props even our personal identity fades and goes out of focus; the self is a fragile construction of the mind,"[28] is useful in considering Fanny's first difficult transition from Portsmouth to Mansfield. She is unfamiliar with the space and the various people and ecosystems that occupy it. Only Edmund has the sensitivity to perceive that Fanny is not ungrateful but rather feels deeply isolated in her new home. It is Edmund who begins the process of integrating Fanny into Mansfield by the exchange of confidences but also material goods and gifts. Csikszentmihalyi explains that "objects give concrete evidence of one's place in a social network as symbols (literally, the joining together) of valued relationships,"[29] an insight Mauss also articulates. Once he discovers the cause of Fanny's unhappiness, Edmund grants her access to the tools she needs to write her beloved brother William a letter: paper that he lines for her, "his penknife" and "his orthography," half a guinea for William, and finally, the important gift of Sir Thomas's frank so that the Prices will not have to pay when the letter is delivered. Austen tells us that, "From this day Fanny grew more comfortable" (14) since she has a friend and advocate in the house; Edmund begins to intercede on Fanny's behalf with the rest of the family, convinced that she is good and well-meaning.

Edmund's gift giving, whether explicit or implicit, is crucial for Fanny's physical and psychological health. His early gift of the writing materials is the first of many that will help keep Fanny afloat at Mansfield Park. After the beloved grey pony dies, Edmund buys a new mare for himself that is actually meant for Fanny's use in order to satisfy Mrs. Norris's demand that Fanny should never have her own valuable things. Despite his generosity and Fanny's delight over his

actions — "she regarded her cousin as an example of every thing good and great, as possessing worth, which no one but herself could ever appreciate" (28) — Edmund will later disappoint Fanny when he allows Mary Crawford to ride the horse in place of Fanny. Unable to protest and unwilling to behave in an ungrateful manner toward Edmund, Fanny swallows her jealousy. Fanny experiences discomfort again around gift giving when fretting over whether to give in to her cousins' desires to help them stage *Lovers' Vows*. Seeking solace in the East room, Fanny looks at the gifts they have given her: "The table between the windows was covered with work-boxes and netting-boxes, which had been given her at different times, principally by Tom; and she grew bewildered as to the amount of debt which all these kind remembrances produced" (179-80). These objects have the power to make her uneasy even as they soothe her. Tom's gifts compel her to consider doing what she believes is untoward in her uncle's house. The "debt" that arises from these gifts, even though they are careless trifles for someone like Tom, disturbs Fanny's sense of right and complicates her participation in *Lovers' Vows*. This metaphorical debt arises again when Fanny has refused Henry's offer of marriage and returns from her walk to find that Sir Thomas has instructed the sevants to keep a fire burning in the East room counter to Mrs. Norris's order. If we recall the discussion between Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris at the opening of the novel concerning how Fanny should be treated in order to mark a distinction between her and her cousins, it is clear that they succeeded at cultivating that distinction. For Fanny to consider a fire or trifles as objects that instill deep obligation in her reaffirms that she "rate[s] her own claims to comfort as low even as Mrs. Norris could" (152).

Fanny again encounters the complexities of gift exchange when she seeks out Mary Crawford's help concerning a necklace for Fanny to wear to her ball at Mansfield. This series of interactions are interesting, because they give us insight into Fanny's actual negotiations with gift exchange rather than the narrator's references to the past gift exchanges Fanny has had with her

cousins. It is also a highly complex exchange since it involves several different gift-givers and gifts. After Sir Thomas decides to hold a coming-out ball for Fanny, she begins to feel anxious over how to wear a Sicilian amber cross that William gave her. The joy of William's gift is hampered by his inability to purchase a chain that Fanny might wear it on, and though she has in the past worn it on a ribbon, she feels like the formal atmosphere of her first ball demands greater elegance: "And yet not to wear it! … Not to wear the cross might be mortifying to him" (174). Mauss dismisses the possibility of what he calls a "pure gift"[30] since all gifts confer some sense of obligation. In this sense, though William loves Fanny disinterestedly, she feels the obligation to wear his gift although he was not able to also supply her with a chain.

Seeking Miss Crawford's assistance with her quandary, Fanny is surprised to find that Mary has anticipated her want and is on her way to Mansfield to offer Fanny a selection of her own chains. Returning to the parsonage and Mary's room, the two women begin the gift exchange. Austen's language is highly evaluative and suggests all the complex layers such an exchange reveals: Fanny fears accepting a gift "too valuable," and selects the chain which seems to be least valued by Mary despite Fanny's preference for a simpler one: "It was of gold prettily worked; and though Fanny would have preferred a longer and a plainer chain as more adapted for her purpose, she hoped in fixing on this, to be chusing what Miss Crawford least wished to keep" (177). The chain is too extravagant, but Fanny is accustomed to accepting what people want to give her.

Fanny's anxiety is compounded when Mary reveals that Henry gave Mary the necklace she manipulated Fanny into choosing: "[Henry] gave it to me, and with the necklace I make over to you all the duty of remembering the original giver" (177). Mary is trying to be coy here by encouraging a flirtation between Fanny and Henry, but she really pressures Fanny into a kind of emotional labor by demanding a transfer of obligation on Fanny's part from Mary to Henry, a demand that calls to mind Mauss's insight into the tendency of an object to retain traces of its owner even after it has

been gifted somewhere else: "What imposes obligation in the present received and exchanged, is the fact that the thing received is not inactive. Even when it has been abandoned by the giver, it still possesses something of him. Through it the giver has a hold over the beneficiary."[31] Fanny feels the necklace's power, but the result is that she finds the gift to be repugnant and her own wearing of the gift presumptuous and distasteful.

Mary's assistance is not only a failure, but it also adds a new layer of difficulty to Fanny's predicament. As Fanny again finds herself in an uncomfortable position regarding a gift, she decides to seek out Edmund whose taste and judgement she does trust. She finds him in the East room preparing to leave his own gift: a chain that is exactly in line with Fanny's taste: "a plain gold chain perfectly simple and neat." Edmund tells her, "I hope you will like the chain itself, Fanny. I endeavoured to consult the simplicity of your taste, but at any rate I know you will be kind to my intentions, and consider it, as it really is, a token of the love of one of your oldest friends" (179). The use of "token" here is important, because it signifies a physical sign of their friendship. The chain is not meant as a gift of obligation for Fanny, but as a manifestation of their relationship, one that is dependent on mutual love and respect throughout the years, beginning with that day when Edmund found Fanny crying on the stairs and helped her to write William a letter. However, once Edmund learns of Mary's gift to Fanny, he pressures Fanny to accept her gift and to wear it in lieu of his own. Obliged always to submit to Edmund out of love and respect, Fanny finds herself also obliged to submit to Mary Crawford and swallow her jealousy — for as Mauss tells us, "to refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war; it is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality."[32] Fanny values community and it is important for her to always work to maintain social bonds. In her discussion on gift economy in *Mansfield Park*, Linda Zionkowski argues that the Bertrams bestow their patronage on Fanny with the implicit condition that she will work to pay it back, and her work "requires her to prefer the maintenance of community over her own emotional

and physical comfort."[33] Thus, Fanny is compelled to accept Mary's gift because of her connection with the Bertram household.

Fate, or nonhuman agency, intervenes for Fanny, and she finds that the cross will not fit on Mary's necklace and she must wear Edmund's chain with it instead:

> Having, with delightful feelings, joined the chain and the cross, those memorials of the two most beloved of her heart, those dearest tokens so formed for each other by every thing real and imaginary — and put them round her neck, and seen and felt how full of William and Edmund they were, she was able, without an effort, to resolve on wearing Miss Crawford's necklace too. She acknowledged it to be right. Miss Crawford had a claim; and when it was no longer to encroach on, to interfere with the stronger claims, the truer kindness of another, she could do her justice even with pleasure to herself. (186)

Fanny's feeling of being beholden to Mary for her kindness is powerfully felt, but Fanny resists Mary's claims when she feels they displace Edmund's much higher ones. Fanny's anxiety over Mary's necklace displacing Edmund's is severe, and her pleasure at determining that both claims can be met while the greater claims of Edmund and William can be united in a pairing of charm and chain signifies not just Fanny's social discomfort but also her strict moral code and her intense feelings about her brother and her cousin.

Edmund's and William's gifts attain the magical properties of objects and gift giving, qualities that resonate with Bennett's definition of vitality as "the capacity of things — edibles, commodities, storms, metals — not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[34] In her essay "Fanny's Dressing Room in *Mansfield Park*," Kirstyn Leuner writes that the amber cross occupies several places of meaning as both a fashion item and religious symbol. The joining of the cross with Edmund's chain, signals for Leuner "more than sibling affection and religious faith; it

exudes bodily warmth, fertility, magnetism, warnings against entrapment, and feminine sex appeal."[35] However, these material properties of the gift do not entirely get at the "thing" or its meaning; all these gifts possess something beyond the symbolic social meanings enumerated in Leuner's analysis. Mauss acknowledges the power of objects several times in *The Gift*. In the first chapter he writes, "that thing coming from the person not only morally, but physically and spiritually, that essence, that food, those goods, whether movable or immovable, those women or those descendants, those rituals or those acts of communion — all exert a magical or religious hold over you."[36] Fanny imagines her gifts as being "full" of William and Edmund, but it is not merely an association, a projection of meaning onto the jewelry by Fanny's love for both men. As Mauss explains, and indeed, as Austen's own language suggests, the chain and cross transcend mere object status and exert agency within the text. They are not mere gifts but "memorials" and "dearest tokens." Fanny fuses the men with their objects and her own powerful feelings for them. Mary's necklace resists the kind of alchemical shift that Edmund's chain effortlessly achieves. Indeed, the position of Mary's necklace — its unsuitability in Fanny's configuration of jewelry — foreshadows her social positioning at the end of the novel when she and Henry have been exiled as dangerous social forces. The discomfort Fanny's experiences when she is forced to accept Mary's gift suggests that her suspicions about Mary are valid and that like so many other things in the novel that the other characters fail to perceive, Fanny is more attuned to the complicated motives of those around her.

The burden of negotiating complex gift exchange is perhaps most trying when Fanny dares to defy Sir Thomas by refusing to accept Henry Crawford's offer of marriage. All of Sir Thomas's generosity towards Fanny adds up to a kind of unfathomable emotional debt. While dressing her down, Sir Thomas imagines how he would feel if Maria and Julia were to behave as Fanny had: "I should have been much surprised, and much hurt, by such a proceeding. I should have thought it a gross violation of duty and respect. *You* are not to be judged by the same rule. You do not owe me

the duty of a child. But, Fanny, if your heart can acquit you of *ingratitude* —" (216). Fanny's "heart was almost broke by such a picture of what she appeared to him; by such accusations, so heavy, so multiplied, so rising in dreadful gradation! Self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful. He thought her all this … What was to become of her?" (217). That last question bitterly emphasizes Fanny's precarious position in her uncle's home — at any point she might be cast out. And here is where gifting and gratitude become so messily intertwined. When Fanny returns to the East room after the disagreement, "she was struck, quite struck, when on returning from her walk, and going into the east room again, the first thing which caught her eye was a fire lighted and burning. A fire! it seemed too much; just at that time to be giving her such an indulgence, was exciting even painful gratitude" (219). Fanny is told by the housemaid that Sir Thomas has ordered a fire to be lit every day in the east room. She says to herself, "I must be a brute indeed, if I can be really ungrateful!" Fanny repeatedly upbraids herself for her ingratitude in this interaction with Sir Thomas, but his comments reinforce the micro- and macro-power structures that perpetuate the class and gender system in early nineteenth-century England. The fire may represent genuine concern for Fanny's health but it exacerbates her sense that she has been ungrateful even as she maintains unshakeable faith in her moral correctness. Fanny is fully invested in the systems of power that surround her, but even her strict adherence to Sir Thomas's moral code is insufficient to protect her from his anger. As Claudia Johnson proclaims, *Mansfield Park* "exposes not only the hollowness but also the unwholesomeness of [conservative mythology's] moral pretensions … [Fanny] though a model of female virtue and filial gratitude, is betrayed by the same ethos she dutifully embraces."[37]

Fanny's experiences with gift exchange at Mansfield Park prepare her to initiate ones of her own outside of its elegant walls. When Fanny goes to visit her parents in Portsmouth, she is set adrift with no comforting objects to anchor her. As we see in her assemblage of the East room, Fanny recognizes her need to stabilize herself, and she sets about finding objects and establishing

routines that can rescue her from the material and existential instability of her parents' home. She restores peace between Susan and Betsey by purchasing the latter a knife to replace the one they have been fighting over: "a silver knife was bought for Betsey, and accepted with great delight, its newness giving it every advantage over the other that could be desired" (269-70). Though uncomfortable with "confer[ring] favours" (269), Fanny assumes the role of munificent older relation that Tom had previously performed towards her. While Tom's gifts have worked to load Fanny with a sense of obligation, Fanny's gift to Betsey transforms Fanny's relationship with Susan into one of intimacy.

Chaotic Space

Despite the comforts and power of Fanny's assemblages and vibrant objects, the chaos of hostile space and the instability of human emotions often encroach, not just into Fanny's shelters but all the spaces of the novel. Despite the governing order's attempts to contain human behavior within appropriate spaces, humans decide to act in accordance with their desires. If Austen's narrator is often showing us how Fanny performs propriety, she is also often showing us how many of the other characters often eschew propriety for personal desire. The chaos this behavior produces occurs inside Mansfield Park and Portsmouth, but also in the domestic and outdoor spaces of Sotherton, where patriarchy fails to rigidly control the young people's desires. Disorder is deeply upsetting to Fanny, and she often watches, ineffectually attempting to convince her peers to behave correctly, as they perform their desires in subversive ways.

Instability is first introduced to Mansfield Park by Sir Thomas's journey to Antigua. For Maria and Julia, "[t]heir father was no object of love to them, he had never seemed a friend of their pleasures, and his absence was unhappily most welcome." Fanny too feels "relief," but her relief is tempered by her "consciousness of it" and "she really grieved because she could not grieve" for Sir

Thomas's departure (25). Austen's narrator tells us that Sir Thomas also makes the grave error of trusting that Mrs. Norris can act as his surrogate in watching over his daughters or that Edmund's better judgement can protect them. Thus, very early on, we get a sense of Sir Thomas's failure as a patriarch, both in his inability to regulate his slave plantations in the West Indies and his inability to understand his family and regulate their behaviors and rebellions within his home. Austen might be critiquing patriarchy in general here, by displaying how partial any exercise of absolute authority will be in most situations. Mansfield Park is seemingly well regulated and smoothly run, but without Sir Thomas's supervision, it quickly transforms into a more permissive place than the deferent Fanny would like it to be. Sir Thomas has not been able to create a domestic space that can function without him; Mansfield Park requires his oppressive supervision if his moral codes are to be upheld.

Mansfield Park is further destabilized by the introduction of Henry and Mary Crawford, who immediately charm everyone in the household except for Fanny. She is bothered by Henry's flirtations with Maria and by Edmund's attraction to Mary. Fanny is envious, of course, but also acutely perceptive of the Crawfords' corrupting influence on Sir Thomas's household. Mary's first impression of Tom Bertram as the man she should like to win is confirmed by a perfunctory observation of his future property: "a park, a real park five miles round, a spacious modern-built house, so well placed and well screened as to deserve to be in any collection of engravings of gentleman's seats in the kingdom, and wanting only to be completely new furnished" (35). This inventory also makes mention of one of the novel's richest themes — improvement — as Mary confidently assumes that she will have the power as mistress of Mansfield Park to redecorate in her own taste, and the agency to wipe away the previous generation's preferences in favor of her more au courant tastes.

Mary's invocation of improvement explicitly introduces a concept that governs *Mansfield Park* from its opening pages to its conclusion. "Improvement" has multiple valences in *Mansfield*

Park, from the improvement of Fanny's mind through Edmund's educational methods to the landscaping methods of Humphrey Repton that so excite Henry Crawford and Rushworth.[38] These material practices are undergirded by the ideological underpinnings of domestication, a term that denotes the taming of beasts and land but that the OED also defines as, "To make, or settle as, a member of a household; to cause to be at home; to naturalize … to civilize,"[39] and dates this meaning back to the mid-seventeenth century. In a nineteenth-century upper-class social circle the practice of domestication is deeply concerned with how best to cultivate the right kind of property and space as well as the minds of children and women. Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris's primary concern when Fanny comes to Mansfield Park is that she will herself be too uncultivated and spread her bad habits to the Bertram children: "We shall probably see much to wish altered in her, and must prepare ourselves for gross ignorance, some meanness of opinions, and very distressing vulgarity of manner" (10). It is humorous in hindsight to re-read these early sections of the book where Fanny is considered a threatening domestic contagion since she is the most gentle and decorous character in *Mansfield Park* rather than an unruly and chaotic disruption.

Fanny's improvement, however, is not the only one that creates excitement. The fervor for property improvement spreads quickly through the group once Rushworth declares his desire to alter Sotherton. After seeing a friend's renovations, Rushworth laments that, in comparison, Sotherton "looked like a prison — quite a dismal old prison" (39). Amid all the conversation, Fanny's quiet voice of resistance declares her regret to hear that trees will be cut down for the sake of new trends: "Cut down an avenue! What a pity! … I should like to see Sotherton before it is cut down, to see the place as it is now, in its old state" (41). Fanny, who is guided by Edmund's values, views improvement conservatively, as an activity that should be approached with caution and implemented in small measures. Describing Sotherton to Mary Crawford, Edmund says that though "[i]t is ill placed … the woods are fine, and there is a stream, which, I dare say, might be made a

good deal of. Mr. Rushworth is quite right, I think, in meaning to give it a modern dress, and I have no doubt that it will be all done extremely well" (41). While Edmund condones some alteration, he asserts his belief that Rushworth will not go too far with his phrase "all done extremely well," an assertion which suggests his conviction that Rushworth will adhere to preserving the original character of his ancestral estate. A fashionable break with the aesthetics of the past might lead to a more serious break with the tradition and customs that anchor families like the Rushworths and the Bertrams in the social schema. Edmund implicitly makes the connection between space and the political and social order in his conversation with Fanny and Mary concerning potential improvements at Sotherton.

Despite Edmund's faith in Rushworth's and Sotherton's stability, Austen's narrative very quickly upends his expectations. The narrator foreshadows Henry and Maria's affair when Henry responds to Julia's inquiries about Henry's own estate improvements by replying, "I am inclined to envy Mr. Rushworth for having so much happiness yet before him. I have been a devourer of my own" (45). Henry betrays his own voracious appetites in this seemingly innocent statement and the narrator draws our attention to the novel's ethics of consumption. Mary betrays her own moral turpitude and appetite for undisciplined consumption when she speaks so charmingly of trying to fetch her harp from London. These glimpses into the Crawfords' desire for domestic consumption — their desire to order their spaces to conform to their wills regardless of how it might affect others — may not play out until the novel's conclusion but in volume one they hint at the brother and sister's capacity for domestic and social destruction.

Fanny, ever the acute observer of the others' behaviors, quickly notices Rushworth's foibles, Maria and Julia's dangerous attraction to Henry, and the Crawfords' selfishness during the trip to Sotherton. The visit begins with lunch and the requisite tour of the house, an experience that delights Fanny and bores Mary: "Miss Crawford, who had seen scores of great houses, and cared for

none of them, had only the appearance of civilly listening, while Fanny, to whom every thing was almost as interesting as it was new, attended with unaffected earnestness" (61). Miss Crawford's boredom with the house speaks to her worldliness and her disregard for what she perceives as the stuffiness of families like the Rushworths, while Fanny's excitement is indicative of her limited experience and her reverence for the traditional domestic spaces of the gentry. Mary loves wealth because it buys her elegance and convenience, but she does not revere the patriarchal structures that she sees around her perhaps because of the abuses she witnessed in her aunt's marriage. Fanny, by contrast, has Sir Thomas as her model of patriarchal benevolence, and though she cannot love him yet, she is bound by her gratitude for what he has done for her and William, and as a result, possesses strong filial regard for him. Thus, Mary's and Fanny's respect for the domestic spaces of an upper-class social order reflect their opinions about the figures of power within that order.

Though the Sotherton chapel gives Henry coverage from observation so that he may flirt with Maria, the young people chafe to get out of the house and out onto the grounds where they can have freedom from the supervision of Mrs. Rushworth and Aunt Norris. Their foray into Sotherton's grounds results in behavior that deeply troubles Fanny as she is abandoned by Edmund and Mary and witnesses Maria's inappropriate treatment of both Rushworth and Henry Crawford. Free of walls and the regulation of patriarchal surrogates, social order breaks down. Inger Brodey attributes this breakdown in appropriate behavior to "the flawed moral education which preceded them — an education that did not provide them with self-knowledge, internal boundaries, or moral authority."[40] Once the young people believe they have shaken off their restraints, they betray their moral codes, demonstrating that proper conduct is a performance for adults rather than a system of genuine principles.

Exiting the "unmitigated glare" of the pleasure gardens, they enter the "wilderness" which itself is very contrived, consisting of "a planted wood of about two acres, and though chiefly of larch

and laurel, and beech cut down, and though laid out with too much regularity, was darkness and shade, and natural beauty, compared with the bowling-green and the terrace" (65). The artificiality of this enclosure aligns with the appearance of freedom for the female characters in *Mansfield Park*, limited in their choice of husbands and activity. Maria underscores what she perceives to be her own lack of freedom when she complains to Henry in earshot of Fanny that the "iron gate, that ha-ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out, as the starling said" (71). This sense of Maria as a trapped bird appears again when her London home with Rushworth — her "prime object" (29) and what Miss Crawford calls "one of the best houses in Wimpole Street" (267) — becomes a trap or prison from which she wishes to escape with Henry Crawford. Though the novel severely punishes Maria, and though she is, perhaps correctly, blamed for ushering chaos into her family circle and family home by running away with Henry, these moments at Sotherton reveal the symbolic and literal enclosures that restrain her. Because the walk on Sotherton's grounds is only a performance of Maria's and the other young women's freedom, perhaps because it is a performance of freedom rather than an authentic sign of it, Austen's narrator lays the foundation for the instability that will follow Maria for the rest of the story.

Meanwhile, Fanny remains on her bench, fatigued by the exercise, hurt by Edmund's abandonment, and disturbed by Maria's rebellion. Fanny has been performing as an awkward third on the walk, watching as Edmund and Mary spar over the Church, "feminine lawlessness" in measuring distance and time (68), and the cause of Fanny's fatigue. Now, sitting abandoned for an hour,

> Fanny's thoughts were now all engrossed by the two who had left her so long ago, and getting quite impatient, she resolved to go in search of them … It was evident that they had been spending their time pleasantly, and were not aware of the length of their absence. Fanny's best consolation was in being assured that Edmund had wished for her very much,

> and that he should certainly have come back for her, had she not been tired already; but this was not quite sufficient to do away with the pain of having been left a whole hour, when he had talked of only a few minutes. (73-4)

Though Fanny's mind exerts a great deal of effort to formulate her frustration in mild language, it is easy to detect how much she is hurt by Edmund's neglect and the obvious pleasure he takes in Mary's company. Fanny's neglect at Sotherton recalls her feelings about Mary's monopolization of Edmund's mare in chapter seven: "A happy party it appeared to her — all interested in one object — cheerful beyond a doubt, for the sound of merriment ascended even to her. It was a sound which did not make *her* cheerful; she wondered that Edmund should forget her, and felt a pang" (49). In both situations, Fanny's discomfort in outdoor space is made clear. If Maria takes pleasure in the outdoors because it seems to be a space of potential freedom, Fanny perceives it as a space of chaos and permissiveness; Maria's inability or refusal to find comfort in the spaces Fanny cherishes, her desire to break out from what she perceives to be "a cage," suggests that she is unsuited to the kind of domestic harmony her station demands. Her physical frailty and limitations prevent her from partaking in the kind of outdoor activities others enjoy. And while Fanny does not consciously acknowledge that her inability to fully participate in outdoor activities functions as a convenient excuse for Edmund and Mary abandoning her, this is obvious to the reader. There is a wildness to the wilderness that allows Edmund to cast off his habitual courtesy toward Fanny and indulge in his more selfish desires to spend time with Mary.

The rebellions at Sotherton are precursors to the greater rebellions that will take place at Mansfield Park under Mr. Yates's influence. The most explicit threat to Mansfield Park is the amateur theatrical fervor introduced by Yates and enthusiastically taken up by most of the household. A theatrical performance — even one relegated to the privacy of the home — threatens to destabilize the moral order of Sir Thomas's home,[41] and also very directly threatens the physical

order of Mansfield Park. Before the Bertrams have invited the Crawfords to participate or even settled on a play, Tom discusses alterations to Sir Thomas's rooms in order to accommodate a production. Tom explains that Sir Thomas's billiard room

> is the very room for a theatre, precisely the shape and length for it, and the doors at the farther end, communicating with each other as they may be made to do in five minutes, by merely moving the book-case in my father's room, is the very thing we could have desired, if we had set down to wish for it. And my father's room will be an excellent green-room. It seems to join the billiard-room on purpose. (89)

This passage is shocking in its total disregard for Sir Thomas's will contrary to the reverent attitudes that we see consistently held by Fanny and Edmund. Tom, as the eldest child and heir, does not defer to Edmund's assertion that Sir Thomas's authority would oppose the play but assumes instead his right to alter Sir Thomas's space. Indeed, the space "seems to" conform to the necessaries of a performance space "on purpose," and Tom takes this as his justification for rearranging Sir Thomas's rooms. Though we many not think of Sir Thomas's rooms as having the kind of subjective sanctity that Fanny's possess — Austen's narrator never encourages us to — it is useful to consider how Tom's thoughtless occupation might upset Sir Thomas's psyche. After all, his rooms are no doubt essential to his emotional well-being. In this way, Sir Thomas shares Fanny's desire for comfort and the intimacy of private, if restrictive, spaces while his children thoughtlessly encroach on them.

The domestic upheavals these actions introduce are perhaps akin to teenagers in a comedic film throwing a raucous keg party while their parents are out of town, but in Austen's novel, they represent moral turpitude since they brazenly usurp Sir Thomas's authority. Despite the enthusiasm of all but Fanny and Edmund, the young people betray their awareness that Sir Thomas would not approve of their actions. When Mary seeks out Fanny's room as a rehearsal space, she acknowledges

that "[c]ould Sir Thomas look in upon us just now, he would bless himself, for we are rehearsing all over the house" (118). Her remark acknowledges her awareness that Sir Thomas would disapprove of their behavior, but it also carries the suggestion of contagion (Tom himself characterizes their fervor for acting as an "infection from Ecclesford"), of the corruption of the performance spreading through the house from one room to another. Fanny, throughout these activities and preparations, remains opposed to the performance and refuses to act the part of the Cottager's Wife.

Before the contagion of the amateur theatricals threatens to fully encompass Mansfield Park — culminating in Fanny herself giving in to performing — Sir Thomas arrives home from his long West Indian voyage. Any pretense that their activities were morally sound is dropped; the Crawfords scatter, and the Bertram children, as well as the guiltless Fanny, prepare for his angry judgement. After visiting with his family for some time, Sir Thomas "said that he found he could not be any longer in the house without just looking into his own dear room" (125) and finds physical evidence of the play's existence, as well as a ranting Yates to divulge its history. The next day, Sir Thomas has the house "cleared of every object enforcing the remembrance, and restored to its proper state" (129). While Sir Thomas fails in some of his duties as a patriarch, resuming absolute mastery over his dominion is not one of his shortcomings. He swiftly imposes order in his rooms, even going so far as to burn every copy of *Lovers' Vows* that he finds, and "reinstate[s] himself in all the wonted concerns of his Mansfield life, to see his steward and his bailiff — to examine and compute — and, in the intervals of business, to walk into his stables and his gardens, and nearest plantations" (131). Domestic order, recently disturbed, is resumed and Fanny finds comfort in the quietness and insularity of the family circle.

The return of Sir Thomas also means Fanny has to contend with his power. The East room is not invulnerable to patriarchal interference and it occasionally fails in its protective function towards Fanny. In her article "Fanny's Gaze and the Construction of Feminine Space in *Mansfield*

Park," Anna Despotopoulou argues that "from her early childhood, [Fanny] builds a unique feminine space for herself which remains uncontaminated and uninterrupted by male involvement."[42] While Despotopoulou makes compelling points about the moral power of Fanny's gaze, she overstates the efficacy of Fanny's agency, because she is not able to fully combat encroachments within the novel. Lest we forget just how limited Fanny's power is in Mansfield Park, intrusions by disciplining forces do interrupt the sovereignty of Fanny's space such as Mrs. Norris ordering the servants to never light a fire there. Edmund also intrudes on Fanny's space when he comes to the East room to ask Fanny to help him learn his lines for *Lover's Vows* only to find that Mary Crawford has had the same idea, a circumstance that brings delight to the pair and extreme discomfort to Fanny: "*She* could not equal them in their warmth. *Her* spirits sank under the glow of theirs, and she felt herself becoming too nearly nothing to both, to have any comfort in having been sought be either" (118). The room becomes a shelter for the kind of permissive behavior Fanny deplores throughout the amateur theatricals and painfully reminds Fanny of Edmund and Mary's mutual attraction. Unsurprisingly, the East room fails to keep out that most powerful of encroaching forces, Sir Thomas, who invades at Fanny's most vulnerable moment to castigate her for rejecting Henry Crawford.

The failure of space to guarantee social stability culminates in Maria's affair with Henry. The permeability of upper-class spaces in and around London brings Maria and Henry back together after her marriage to Rushworth. Their previous familiarity is reestablished, and Tom later blames himself for the "dangerous intimacy of his unjustifiable theatre" (313). Maria fears her father's authority only when she is directly confronted with it and respects her husband's authority not at all. The price of Maria's temporary freedom to move around as she desires is to be imprisoned for the rest of her life with Mrs. Norris in a secluded rural space, "remote and private, where, shut up together with little society, on one side no affection, on the other, no judgement, it may be

reasonably supposed that their tempers became their mutual punishment" (315). Of all the characters in the novel, Maria is perhaps the most ineffectual at negotiating space, since she is least able to understand the forces that shape it. Treated with great consequence by Mrs. Norris, Maria cannot submit to uncomfortable spaces. Her inability to discern the dynamics of space sets her up at the novel's conclusion as the antithesis of Fanny.

"With What Intense Desire She Wants Her Home": Boundaries and Divisions

Austen's conclusion purifies Mansfield Park and rids it of all these chaotic energies. In Fanny's state of exile at Portsmouth, she finds herself unable to promote the comfort of the Bertrams as they cope with Tom's illness and Maria and Julia's rebellions. Her own health grows worse as she sits in the dust and grease of her parents' home. It is the combination of this domestic discomfort and her mother's and father's indifference towards her that allows Fanny to acknowledge that she considers Mansfield to be home. Just as she works herself artlessly into the East room, so does she work herself into the Bertram family. As tragedy after tragedy unfolds for Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, Fanny is longed for and longs to be with them:

> When she had been coming to Portsmouth, she had loved to call it her home, had been fond of saying that she was going home; the word had been very dear to her; and so it still was, but it must be applied to Mansfield. *That* was now the home. Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home. (292)

It is a bittersweet realization, because Fanny wants so desperately to respect and love her parents yet she has become part of the cloth of Mansfield Park over the years. Though her return to Mansfield Park is colored by the Bertrams' grief and mortification, Fanny cannot help but feel happy and relieved.

Mansfield Park is a rather insular novel, focusing mostly on close relations and necessary social intercourse with people like the Grants and the Rushworths rather than far-reaching social networks. As Shea Stuart has pointed out, the novel, unlike most of Austen's other works, shuts out the normal intercourse of the English village, preferring to rely on enclosure and upper-class connections to shore up its financial and social power.[43] Perhaps it is no surprise then that the novel's conclusion is characterized by a stringent contraction of people and locations. Readers drawn to the erotic energy of the Crawfords must make-do with the sobering marriage of Edmund and Fanny. Portsmouth and London are rejected in favor of Mansfield and Thornton Lacey. Fanny replaces Maria Bertram and Mary Crawford, becoming daughter, sister, and wife to the Bertram family. Tess O'Toole writes that Fanny's marriage to Edmund "merely ratifies a process that has already happened through an alternative method of family realignment, the practice of adoption" that we see when Fanny first comes to Mansfield Park as a child: "it is the position she earns as daughter rather than as wife that secures her adult identity."[44] I would amend O'Toole's point to argue that it is as both daughter and wife that Fanny attains the stable social identity she has always aspired to attain. Susan continues the process of adoption and replacement when she is absorbed into the house to succeed Fanny and even manages "to become, perhaps, the most beloved of the two" to Lady Bertram (321). The Grants are also conveniently done away with after Dr. Grant dies and Edmund succeeds him as vicar of Mansfield. Of this tidy family circle Austen writes:

> On that event they removed to Mansfield, and the parsonage there, which under each of its two former owners, Fanny had never been able to approach but with some painful sensation of restraint or alarm, soon grew as dear to her heart, and as thoroughly perfect in her eyes, as every thing else, within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park, had long been. (321)

This final arrangement, free of anxiety, the abject, or any other undesirable elements, is the culmination of Fanny's efforts and the assemblages she has inhabited to bring about the movement

and stasis that characterizes relational agency as Bennett envisions it. It has allowed Fanny to conquer a rigid class divide, demonstrating her worth not through birth but through her capacity to persist and manipulate the environment around her — to wait and reflect until she can wiggle out or into a slightly more comfortable space.

Despite Austen's neat (or, misleadingly neat) conclusion, Ruth Yeazell's argument about the boundaries and exclusions within the novel haunt my reading of *Mansfield Park*. Clara Tuite argues that the contraction of people and places — what she deems "domestic retrenchment" — is necessary for achieving the imperialist ideological ends of the novel or, at least, is a critique of these imperialist ends: "*Mansfield Park*'s turn inward to the family, and, moreover, to a specifically endogamic family structure, can be seen within these terms to be a strategy of domestic retrenchment — not only as a form of economic and ideological 'making and remaking,' but as a screen that deflects attention away from colonial expansion."[45] While British colonialism has not been a feature of my argument so far, it bubbles beneath the surface of *Mansfield Park* since the Bertrams' wealth relies on Antiguan sugar plantations. Sir Thomas's domestic authority — absolute, if ineffective without his supervision — might look a lot like his colonial authority; he does, after all, bring Tom along for part of his journey to Antigue, reminding us again that Sir Thomas prefers his family above others.

If retrenchment is necessary in *Persuasion* as a means to preserving the physical estate of the Elliots, retrenchment in *Mansfield Park* is a metaphorical preservation of the family, as the Bertrams' social circle, never very expansive, is reduced down to a small number of thoroughly-vetted individuals. Tuite's discussion of the imperialism of *Mansfield Park* is helpful in considering the ethics of domesticity in the novel; how does our awareness of the source of the Bertrams' financial well-being affect our understanding of Fanny's successful attempts to maneuver from a poor and plain relation to a most beloved and privileged member of the family? Though Fanny may have eventually

earned the reader's sympathy, what do we make of the fact that Maria had to be formally exiled and Julia married off in order for there to be sufficient psychic space at Mansfield Park for Fanny? Any concern on the part of Sir Thomas to absorb the financial consequences of taking in Fanny does not appear to be an accurate reflection of his ability to do so but rather is suggestive of his parsimony.

There are, of course, limitations to Fanny's agency, though the primary aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate how interesting and resilient that agency is in the face of so much domination and resistance. Fanny has few options with which to preserve herself from the penury she witnesses in her parental home in Portsmouth: ingratiating herself with the Bertrams or marrying Henry Crawford seem to be her only viable options. Austen herself faced the reality of a small income and dependence on wealthier relations and we can imagine her own interest in a character like Fanny Price who occupies a precarious social position. However, between the subtle invocations of Antigua and its sugar plantations and the displacement of Maria and Mrs. Norris from the estate, it is difficult to feel unperturbed about Fanny's class ascension since it comes at the expense of other lives, even for a reader like me who quite likes her and feels invested in her fate. The postcolonial dimensions of *Mansfield Park*, first teased out by Edward Said in his essay "Jane Austen and Empire" and the scholarship inspired by this work have unsettled feminist readings of Austen's canon and challenged readers to contend with the possibility that Austen was unbothered by or even tacitly approved of Britain's participation in slavery.[46] Even the narrator's wry summation of Maria and Mrs. Norris's fate counterpoised with Henry's and Rushworth's should deeply unsettle a feminist reader as the former are sentenced to a domestic prison while the latter are said to suffer emotionally but face no other consequences: Maria and Mrs. Norris are "shut up together with little society, on one side no affection, on the other, no judgement, it may be reasonably supposed that their tempers became their mutual punishment" (315). While the narrator perfunctorily laments that society does not punish men and women equally for violations of virtue, the matter-of-factness of this lament

renders it hollow. Sir Thomas's faults as a patriarch are openly acknowledged and yet no one in the world of the novel holds him accountable for his daughters' mistakes: "Wretchedly did he feel, that with all the cost and care of an anxious and expensive education, he had brought up his daughters, without their understanding their first duties, or his being acquainted with their character and temper" (314). These daughters, failing to properly absorb the standards of their father's station and expectations, are jettisoned from the moral and physical purity of Mansfield Park, and the deserving Price children — Fanny, Susan, and William — become its spiritual children.

Ruth Yeazell's discomfort with the novel lies in its "impulses to sort and discard,"[47] a kind of moral judgement that relies on the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between physical and psychological pollution: just as the squalor of the Prices' Portsmouth home is rejected and abandoned, so is Maria Rushworth's adultery and Mary Crawford's blithe acceptance of Maria and Henry's promiscuous behavior. Fanny's acute awareness of these boundaries, both spatial and ontological, allow her to successfully navigate them, and her reliance on the material objects that float through these spaces and are exchanged within them helps her to create a sense of self, an identity, that is thoroughly imbricated in the spatial as well as the social schema of Mansfield Park.

Notes

[1] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, eds. Stephen Lubar and David W. Kingery (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 22.

[2] While some early criticism of the novel tends to dwell on Fanny Price's unlikeability — see, for instance, Kingsley Amis's essay "What Became of Jane Austen?" in *What Became of Jane Austen? and Other Questions* (Jonathan Cape: London, 1970) and Tony Tanner's chapter on *Mansfield Park* in *Jane Austen* (Harvard UP: Cambridge, 1986) — feminist critics have intervened with creative interpretations of the text that rescue Fanny from many of these critical attacks. In her book *Romantic Imprisonment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), Nina Auerbach entertainingly argues that Fanny Price is part of a long literary tradition of monstrosity, linking her to Grendel, Frankenstein's creature, and the vampire of European folklore in order to claim that Fanny is a deeply powerful if parasitic force within the novel that ends up winning the day. Marcia McClintock Folsom aligns Fanny with a tradition of peasant resistance, writing that Fanny often uses "dissimulation, false compliance, or reigned ignorance necessary" to navigate Mansfield's terrain of domination and resistance (84) in "Power in *Mansfield Park*: Austen's Study of Domination and Resistance," *Persuasions* 34 (2012). In her very interesting essay "Becoming Fanny Bertram: Adoption in *Mansfield Park*,"

Persuasions 36 (2014), Tess O'Toole argues that Austen characterizes Fanny as physically frail in order to subordinate "*her* marriage plot to an adoption plot … Her weakness and meekness, so atypical of an Austen heroine, are conditions that allow *Mansfield Park* to negotiate the tension between the subject of adoption and the context of the estate, whose ethos implies a commitment to traditional patterns of inheritance" (55).
[3] See Francis R. Hart, "The Spaces of Privacy: Jane Austen," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30.3 (1974). Hart explores the tensions between intimate and public space in Austen's oeuvre more generally.
[4] Laura Mooneyham White, "Traveling to the Self: Comic and Spatial Openness in Jane Austen's Novels," *Critical Essays on Jane Austen,* ed. Laura Mooneyham White (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1998), 199.
[5] P. Keiko Kagawa, "Jane Austen, the Architect: (Re)Building Spaces at Mansfield Park," *Women's Studies* 35.2 (Mar 2006): 135.
[6] Lynn Festa, "Losing One's Place in *Mansfield Park*," *The Eighteenth-Century Novel* 6-7 (2009): 431.
[7] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 20.
[8] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 21.
[9] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Hall (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 20.
[10] Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," 23.
[11] Ruth Bernard Yeazell, "The Boundaries of *Mansfield Park*," *Representations* 7 (Summer 1984): 135.
[12] Claudia Johnson scoffs at the disparity between Fanny's claim that Mansfield consults everyone's wishes and the reality that in fact Fanny's opinions or desires are rarely considered in *Jane Austen: Women Politics and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 116.
[13] Festa, "Losing One's Place," 439.
[14] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 15.
[15] Sonya Lawson Parrish, "Shadows and Houses: Politics and Place in *Our Nig* and *Mansfield Park*," *MP: An Online Feminist Journal* 2.4 (August 2009): 41.
[16] Susan Fraiman, *Exreme Domesticity: A View from the Margins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 20.
[17] Fraiman, *Extreme Domesticity*, 25.
[18] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 22.
[19] Julie Park, "What the Eye Cannot See: Interior Landscapes in *Mansfield Park*," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 54.2 (Summer 2013): 179.
[20] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 23.
[21] In "Jane Austen's Relics and the Treasures of the East Room," *Persuasions* 28 (2006), Claudia Johnson notes Austen's famous inattention to visual description, writing that it is "axiomatic that when objects are made to stand out with specificity in Austen's novels, something is wrong … [Fanny Price] is cathected onto things not because she is enchanted by their material or use value, but rather by virtue of their personal association with people, and that's the problem" (222-3). Johnson goes on to argue that Fanny "draws a false sense of comfort from the thing-friends in her East Room" (229) and "mistake[s] the comforts of Mansfield Park for moral harmony" (226). While I don't disagree with Johnson's more skeptical reading, I think it overlooks the comprehensive effects Fanny's objects have on the narrative and discounts the crucial agency Fanny derives from them.
[22] Henry James, "The Lesson of Balzac," *The Atlantic Monthly* (August 1905): 167.
[23] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 91.
[24] Nicholas Dames, "Austen's Nostalgics," *Representations* 73.1 (Winter 2001): 135.
[25] Johnson, "Jane Austen's Relics," 225.
[26] Festa, "Losing One's Place," 440.
[27] Mauss, *The Gift*, 20.
[28] Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," 22.
[29] Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," 23.
[30] Mauss, *The Gift*, 73.
[31] Mauss, *The Gift*, 11-12.
[32] Mauss, *The Gift*, 13.

[33] Linda Zionkowski, *Women and Gift Exchange in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Richardson, Burney, Austen* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 167.
[34] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, viii.
[35] Kirstyn Leuner, "'The End of All the Privacy and Propriety': Fanny's Dressing Room in *Mansfield Park*," *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture,* ed. Katharina Boehm (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 57.
[36] Mauss, *The Gift*, 12.
[37] Johnson, *Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 96.
[38] There has been extensive and illuminating work done on the theme of improvement in the novel. See: Alistair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971). Duckworth's chapter on *Mansfield Park* examines the way various spatial alterations in the novel, such as the concept of "improvements" and the amateur theatricals, undermine conservative morality that Fanny herself embodies and is rewarded for defending; Inger Brodey draws an explicit connection between the novelty and consumption of Repton's methods and the Crawfords' and Edmund's attempts to "improve" Fanny and argues that Fanny rejects these outward guides for her internal moral code in "Papas and Ha-has: Rebellion, Authority, and Landscaping in *Mansfield Park*," *Persuasions* 17 (Dec 1995); Richard Quaintance challenges the critical interpretation that Austen's use of Repton as a satirical dismissal of a strain of conspicuous consumption in the novel and argues instead that Austen employs his name to articulate a more nuanced critique of everyone's behavior and aesthetic tastes in the novel including Fanny's, "Humphrey Repton, 'any Repton,' and the 'Improvement' Metonym in *Mansfield Park*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 27 (1998); Lorraine Clark brings together a discussion of both landscaping and theatre to argue for the novel's Shaftesburian understanding of how the private soliloquy can benefit public conversation in "Remembering Nature: Soliloquy as Aesthetic Form in *Mansfield Park*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24.2 (Winter 2011-2); and in "Sotherton and the Geography of Empire: The Landscapes of *Mansfield Park*," *Studies in Romanticism* 53.4 (Winter 2014), Lynn Voskuil discusses how ideologies of domestic improvement map onto a broader project of British imperialist expansion.
[39] *Oxford English Dictionary*, "domesticate, v."
[40] Brodey, "Pa-pas and Ha-has," 94.
[41] Critics have long struggled to understand Austen's use of the amateur theatrical in *Mansfield Park*. For some of these arguments, see: David Lodge's essay, "A Question of Judgement: The Theatricals at Mansfield Park," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 17.3 (Dec 1962) discusses how the characters' moral codes are reflected in their participation in the rehearsals of *Lovers' Vows*; Joseph Litvak argues that the "infection" of the theatricals outlives Sir Thomas's attempts to erase it from Mansfield Park: "the theater, or the theatricality by virtue of which it disperses itself and colonizes the rest of the novel, becomes virtually synonymous with the inescapable contest of all social existence and all political postures" (334), allowing the convergence of conservative and progressive ideologies, in "The Infection of Acting: Theatricals and Theatricality in *Mansfield Park*," *ELH* 53.2 (Summer 1986); Paula Byrne discusses the extensive theatrical influences Austen was steeped in and built into *Mansfield Park* beyond *Lover's Vows*, in "'We Must Descend a Little': *Mansfield Park* and the Comic Theatre," *Women's Writing* 5.1 (1998); and Anna Lott argues that Fanny successfully negotiates the rebellious energies introduced by the amateur theatricals by serving as an agent of stability within Mansfield Park, in "Staging a Lesson: The Theatricals and Proper Conduct in *Mansfield Park*," *Studies in the Novel* 38.3 (Fall 2006).
[42] Anna Despotopoulou, "Fanny's Gaze and the Construction of Feminine Space in *Mansfield Park*," *The Modern Language Review* 99.3 (Jul 2004): 570.
[43] Shea Stuart, "'A Walking Ought': Displacement and the Public Sphere in *Mansfield Park*," *Everyday Revolutions: Eighteenth-Century Women Transforming Public and Private*, eds. Diane E. Boyd and Marta Kvanda (University of Delaware Press: Newark, 2008).
[44] O'Toole, "Becoming Fanny Bertram," 55.
[45] Clara Tuite, "Domestic Retrenchment and Imperial Expansion: The Property Plots of *Mansfield Park*," *The Postcolonial Jane Austen*, eds. You-me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (Routledge: New York, 2000), 101.

[46] Tuite points out that even though Said falls into the trap of ahistoricizing Austen by claiming that she might not have been aware of the abolition movement, in fact, many nineteen-century women, such as Anna Laetitia Barbauld, were active and passionate supporters of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery.
[47] Yeazell, "The Boundaries of *Mansfield Park*," 136.

Chapter Three

Independence and the Inhospitable Home in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*

> "That helpless, homeless, friendless, Margaret — lying still on the sofa as if it were an altar-tomb, and she the stone statue on it." – *North and South*[1]
>
> "*North and South* is a book full of pain … the pain of stress and disturbance, of pangs of conscience and sexual torment. It is also the pain of loss, particularly for the heroine, and indeed it seems surprising on reflection that a happy ending could be retrieved from such unpropitious material." – Terence Wight[1]

If Burney's *The Wanderer* and Austen's *Mansfield Park* are primarily interested in showing how beleaguered women can achieve domestic stability through rigorous performances of feminine propriety and a relentless devotion to their moral codes, Gaskell's *North and South* and Brontë's *Villette* reject these conventional formulations of domesticity by portraying two different trajectories for how women can forge a more active agency outside the home. For Burney and Austen in 1814, happiness was finding the right kind of domesticity: a comfortable home, a devoted family circle, and friends from outside who could help ameliorate the inevitable tedium of a serene domestic life; domesticity is something to be desired and sought after even though it still troubles and oppresses characters like Juliet and Fanny. Though Burney and Austen stage thorough critiques of patriarchy, they ultimately accept governing power structures and demonstrate how women of integrity and intelligence can operate within them, while dispensing rigid and unrepentant punishments to those who transgress too far. By the 1850s, Gaskell and Brontë suggest that a domesticity governed by patriarchal conventions is not enough, and their protagonists, unwilling or unable to strive toward an

[1] Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South,* ed. Patricia Ingham (Penguin Classics, 1995), 346. All subsequent references will be indicated in text

idealized Victorian domesticity, reimagine for themselves what domesticity can look like. For Juliet, mobility is an unfortunate necessity while for Fanny it is a threatening but rare occurrence: for Margaret Hale and Lucy Snowe, mobility is a means to a better life and richer subjectivity. Juliet and Fanny ceaselessly work to achieve space within the private spheres of the established social elite; Margaret and Lucy, on the other hand, are rudderless orphans who build their own versions of family while actively seeking out meaning in the public sphere.

While *The Wanderer* and *Mansfield Park* are stories of reclaimed family that reward their heroines' protracted limbos of discomfort by actively building domestic comfort, Margaret begins as a self-confident and happy protagonist whose comforts are methodically stripped away. The implicit characterization of the trope of a female Job that is present in *The Wanderer* is explicitly invoked in *North and South* when the Hales, alone and alienated at a hotel in London, are unfavorably compared to Job on their journey to Milton-Northern (58).[2] Though the novel ends with an understanding of mutual love between Margaret and John Thornton, there is no Austenian recounting of fates, no promise of conjugal bliss, no assurance that Margaret's financial gamble will pay off, no guarantee that Thornton will return to prominence in Milton, and no social commonwealth neatly constructed around the deserving heroine. Rather, *North and South* concludes on a note that resembles a beginning rather than an ending; Margaret is bequeathed an independent fortune and comes to the realization "that she must one day answer for her own life" (406). The novel's final scene portrays an erotically-charged but ineloquent engagement scene, suggesting the potential for future discord. Financial obligation is shifted from the woman to the man, and both Margaret and Thornton are independent enough to laugh away the inevitable disapproval of their families. While *The Wanderer* and *Mansfield Park* conclude with the creation of rigid social groups, Gaskell's conclusion hinges on uncertainty.

In order for the novel to reach this conclusion, Margaret must abandon her desire for an ideal home — a desire that haunts her for much of the novel — and embrace a more active agency so that she may have a fulfilling life. *North and South* achieves this transformation by deploying significant domestic ruptures that result in a profound sense of personal instability for Margaret. These ruptures echo the larger theme of domestic instability with which the novel engages through its depiction of the Higginses' poverty-stricken home and the Thorntons' disparate movements from crushing penury after John's father's suicide to the opulent magnificence they occupy at Marlborough Mills to the downsizing they are threatened with when Thornton's business fails. The novel is structured through a constant negotiation of binaries, beginning with its title, that force Margaret to reevaluate and reconsider the way she thinks about her world. "Answering for her own life" has deep ethical implications that reach far beyond the novel's romance plot and the acts of reproduction and domesticity such a plot implies. *North and South* does not deny the importance of sexual attraction and the influence of heterosexual desire; rather it suggests that these "private" concerns exist alongside, and indeed cannot be extricated from, the "public" concerns of politics, economics, and female liberation.[3]

As Patricia Ingham and other critics have discussed,[4] Gaskell originally titled her novel "Margaret Hale" when it began appearing in serial form in *Household Words* in September 1854. Charles Dickens would urge her to change the title to "North South" because it "appears to me to be a better name than Margaret Hale. It implies more, and is expressive of the opposite people brought face to face by the story."[5] Ingham explains that "as this comment shows, titles, like headlines, are directives as to how to read what follows: the new version suggests an interpretation in which Margaret Hale's story is secondary to a broader theme of class conflict." For Dickens, such a change would hopefully increase audience interest in the story since it would encourage a reading beyond a mere love story.[6] Although Gaskell's preface suggests that she felt somewhat resistant to

some of Dickens's interventions,[7] the title change does conform with Gaskell's fondness for playing with binaries while also instructing the reader to pay attention not only to the dynamics of class at work as Ingham suggests, but importantly, the influence that geographical and domestic space have on human subjectivity. While it is important to take Ingham's point that both "the North" and "the South" have crucial metaphorical dimensions in Victorian fiction,[8] I want also to emphasize the significance of literal place the novel's title implies. As Susan Johnston points out, the novel is a synthesis of "Margaret's *Bildung* and the resolution of conflict between master and man."[9] My readings will focus on Margaret's struggle to shake off her class snobbery while adjusting her conception of "home," recognizing its limitations, and honoring the ethical values represented in both Helstone and Milton. Homesickness is the nostalgic longing for a home that is lost to us; in *North and South*, Margaret yearns for an ideal home that does not exist and the main project of the novel is for Margaret to discover her life outside of the comforts of the domestic sphere to which she has largely been confined. "North" and "South" set up competing ideas of home even as they suggest the impossibility of finding an ideal home.

Gaskell's use of juxtaposition extends beyond the novels' title; she is always counterpoising obvious binaries — north and south, wealth and poverty, industrial and rural, domestic and public, masculine and feminine — not to legitimize the distinctions between private and public spheres but rather to demonstrate how these binaries may be deconstructed and reevaluated so that we may come to a more nuanced understanding of what they mean. As many critics have noted, the novel does not operate in strict accordance with the binary structures with which it traffics. Johnston argues that it is the "interpenetration of intimate space and public space" in the novel that brings about greater equality between Margaret and Thornton and Thornton and his workers.[10] Sarah Dredge asserts that Margaret's relationship with Thornton "becomes the site where paired differences … are debated and revised … In questioning the distinction between male and female

work, the novel undermines the binary division of gender that holds these concepts in positions of opposition."[11] Beatrice Bazell writes that the novel "is not confined to [binaries], and seeks to recognize above all, the factors behind and beyond the ostensible idiosyncrasies of personal and impersonal taste, suggesting the emotional feedback systems inherent in all object relations between the object world and the feeling world, whether those objects be machine-made or hand-made."[12] Hilary Schor argues that conflicts between systems of thinking are the basis of *North and South,* and that it is not only "not afraid of conflict, or deeply attracted to it, or dependent on it" but that "it *believes* in conflictual models."[13] As all these critics make clear, Gaskell's use of binaries encourages the conflicts that the characters in the novel require to learn and grow. Margaret herself is deeply attracted to conflict and tension, directly confronting discomfort in her attempts to resolve it.

Having to adjust to the different social commonwealths represented by the novel's title forces Margaret to accommodate alternative perspectives. The clashes between seemingly straightforward oppositions eventually evolve into complex entanglements that force Margaret to reckon, almost entirely without guidance from a trusted advisor, with significant social and ideological forces. Like Burney's Juliet, Gaskell's Margaret lacks a reliable mentor who can guide her through her various struggles. Margaret cares deeply for her family and friends and acts as confidant to many, but she opens her heart to no one. Her parents rely heavily on her judgement and self-assertion, and her brother is absent, hiding away in Spain to escape court martial for his role in an infamous naval mutiny. Edith and Mrs. Shaw dote on Margaret but they are made of flimsy stuff and cannot appreciate her depth.

Perhaps the only female figure capable of acting as a competent advisor to Margaret is Mrs. Thornton, a woman who quite powerfully runs her son's opulent home and managed to keep her previous home running after her husband's suicide and bankruptcy impoverished her family. Mrs. Hale, an incompetent housekeeper and mother herself, seems to recognize Mrs. Thornton's abilities

and directly asks her to advise Margaret should she need any help after Mrs. Hale's death; yet, Mrs. Thornton cannot overcome her spite towards Margaret to properly do so — her attempt to warn Margaret of what Mrs. Thornton imagines is illicit behavior draws Margaret's ire, and their relationship, never very solid to begin with, is effectively brought to an end. Thus, Margaret is left to struggle by herself to navigate her troubles. Like Mrs. Norris for Fanny, Mrs. Hale functions as a dominant, though flawed, maternal figure for Margaret. She models the importance of building and defending one's home, while also clashing with Margaret when she perceives that the latter might be encroaching on her turf. The tension between Margaret and Mrs. Thornton is representative of the very messy feelings that can disrupt the domestic harmony both work so hard to build. In their clashes, the reader can see a side of domesticity that can easily be glossed over in fiction and in real life because it is so uncomfortable: the competing needs of individuals within a home. Mrs. Thornton, like Mrs. Rushworth, seems prepared to remove herself from her home to make way for her son's future wife. Though Mrs. Rushworth seems unperturbed by the necessity of her removal, Mrs. Thornton experiences grief at what she believes to be her duty.

Milton has significant social and political differences from Helstone, and Margaret must learn to contend with her family's altered class status since education counts for far less in Milton than wealth. As a result of this class shift, Margaret becomes interested in the conflicts between masters and workers, arguing with Thornton but also with Nicholas Higgins about capitalism and its discontents. Differences in class are as eye-opening to Margaret as are gender politics in Milton. Perhaps the most psychologically taxing of Margaret's recalibrations is her conflict between conventional feminine propriety and her desire to be an active agent in the world. In Milton, she witnesses women boisterously calling to her on the street and working to support their families; she experiences the freedom of walking the streets herself without a chaperone and going where she

pleases. This mobility irrevocably changes Margaret's expectations for her own behavior and understanding of how she can move in the world.

The opposition of public and private spaces is a crucial one in the novel, because the constraints placed on what spaces middle-class women like Margaret occupy can be quite severe. For instance, when Margaret is with Mrs. Shaw, she must observe certain restrictions on her movements. When Margaret takes her leave of the Higginses and Thorntons before moving back to London, her aunt insists on accompanying her via carriage and Margaret chafes at "all this preparation for paying two visits, that she had often made by herself at all hours of the day" (358). Margaret grows accustomed to deciding many things for herself, but her aunt effortlessly reasserts control over Margaret's mobility. When Margaret receives word that Mr. Bell is fatally ill, she desires to rush instantly to him in Oxford. Edith, horrified at the thought of Margaret entering his Fellow's rooms at the college without a chaperone, convinces Margaret to wait for Captain Lennox to accompany her. For women like Mrs. Shaw and Edith, company is always required, because they lack judgement and have diminished interior lives; they like dinners and noise to keep themselves occupied. Margaret enjoys society, but she is unfulfilled by the limited possibilities for women in British society beyond the demands of the tea table. As Florence Nightingale's Cassandra laments, "Why have women passion, intellect, moral activity — these three — and a place in society where no one of the three can be exercised?"[14] Though "Cassandra" would not be published in Nightingale's lifetime, her protest resonates with Margaret's frustrations. Active and intelligent, Margaret pushes against a prescriptive feminine role.

Limitations of space and mobility are not the only forces impinging on Margaret's subjectivity. Questions of material comfort are deliberately examined and assessed throughout the novel. Gaskell's narrator hints at the way moral judgments can be levied against excessive ease and

opulence as well as revealing how a meager budget can constrict human nature, as when Gaskell's narrator delineates the conjugal fates of Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Hale:

> It was still Mrs Shaw's characteristic conclusion, as she thought over her sister's lot: "Married for love, what can dearest Maria have to wish for in this world?" Mrs Hale, if she spoke truth, might have answered with a ready-made list, "a silver-gray glacé silk, a white chip bonnet, oh! dozens of things for [Edith's] wedding, and hundreds of things for the house." (17)

This moment represents more than just banal commentary on how people are more likely to envy what others have while overlooking their own specific brand of good fortune; rather, it demonstrates how difficult it is to achieve the right balance of spiritual and material abundance in order to attain happiness. Mrs. Shaw, cocooned in material comfort, idealizes the Hales' love match while Mrs. Hale can only think of her home's shabbiness. Images of beautiful clothes, gifts, and furnishings are conjured up by this list and quickly flitter away. It is difficult to discern a clear moral judgement since Mrs. Shaw generally appears happy with her lot in life, busily engaged with her daughter's impending marriage, while Mrs. Hale creates discord in her home with constant fretting. Later, the family's reduced circumstances in Milton are blamed for Mrs. Hale's nameless illness and subsequent death, leading the reader to no easy answer concerning Mrs. Hale's financial grievances. The only characters we see die young in *North and South* are the poor ones.

At other points in the novel, Gaskell makes it clear how an overabundance of luxury creates morally weak characters like Fanny Thornton, while the showy display of the Thornton household suggests something more ambiguous about John and Mrs. Thornton, characters who are powerful and active but also deeply flawed by a pride that frequently manifests itself in an off-putting arrogance. John Paul Kanwit argues that "household taste is Gaskell's primary way of differentiating between those who have the perception to solve social problems and those who do not."[15] While I

do not completely agree with Kanwit that class taste is synonymous with ethical caliber (for instance, Mr. Hale is fairly ineffectual in many respects yet shares the elegant taste of this daughter), I do think Gaskell continually urges us into a consideration of how they are in dialogue with one another, demanding that we ask ourselves what taste might reveal about a character's interior life: does the quality of a character's "stuff" accurately reflect their subjectivity? Or, as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi suggests, can our material spaces and objects actually create our subjectivities?[16] Taste is also inextricably bound up in class and education as Bourdieu has theorized, and the class conflicts present in Milton also clash with the class distinctions the Hales carry with them from Hampshire. John Thornton is deeply drawn to Margaret, at least partly for how her own class embodiment and manifestations of class can help him to elevate himself above a mere wealthy manufacturer. Margaret, originally so disdainful of "shoppy people" while admiring those people connected to the land (20), reevaluates her own class judgements and by doing so, is able to admire and eventually fall in love with Thornton. Gaskell draws all these issues together, uniting the personal, psychological, and sociological through Margaret's journey.

North and South depicts all these conflicts of class, gender, and ideology by deliberately charting the shifts in Margaret's identity as she moves from place to place. The connection between Margaret's subjectivity and space is a powerful feature of the novel, and it insists on the power as well as the nuances of space to affect an individual's sense of self. While many critics have discussed *North and South* as an industrial or social-problem novel, it is striking for its focus on, in Jill L. Matus's phrasing, "the experience and exhibition of powerful emotion … [and] the destabilizing effects of emotion on consciousness."[17] Matus refers to Gaskell's use of dream-like language to illustrate how traumatic emotional events can devastate her characters' subjectivities and harkens back to discourses on mesmerism and questions of the role of volition in nineteenth-century physiology, suggesting "the precariousness of the coherent and stable subject.[18] Gaskell depicts

Margaret momentarily paralyzed by the violence of her thoughts after a confrontation or trauma. In these moments, we see Margaret struggle to pull herself together, to actively rebuild her sense of self after it has unraveled.

Part of Margaret Hale's appeal lies in her disregard for material refinement and her ability to value most highly the people she respects and loves. Material objects are less important to Margaret than they are to Fanny Price who values humble objects not for their intrinsic value but for the significance of their psychic associations. Margaret instead values the spaces she inhabits, not for their objective worth but for the emotional connections and depth of experience she has in them. When Mrs. Hale expresses her worry that Margaret would be disappointed with the "makeshift poverty" of Helstone after the luxury of Mrs. Shaw's house in London, Margaret comforts her, "I think what you call the makeshift contrivances of dear Helstone were a charming part of the life there" (128). The places she finds the deepest comfort in are among the most humble we see in the novels, and yet we also see time and again how limiting these spaces are, as Margaret must move outside of them and into the wider world to gain perspective and comfort.

My discussion of space in *North and South* will be organized by what I see as the main distinctions of space Gaskell makes in the novel: Margaret's "homes," Helstone and Crampton Terrace, spaces that fall short of elegance and abundance but signify the Hales' values and habits; the great houses, Harley Street in London and the Thornton home at Marlborough Mills, that exude an oppressive luxury; and finally, the public and outdoor spaces of the New Forest, the streets of Milton and London, and the beach at Cromer, that offer Margaret freedom from domestic restraint and intercourse with the wider world. It is through her experiences of these varied spaces that Margaret comes to understand and reject the stultifying domesticity of an upper-middle class life and embrace a more active life of philanthropy and business.

Helstone and Crampton Terrace

Helstone represents Margaret's idealized conception of home and it serves as an imaginative touchstone for her throughout the novel. Though Margaret has come of age in the Shaws' luxurious home in Harley Street, the novel quickly establishes Helstone's importance to her. Her description of Helstone to Henry Lennox signifies this reverence while also revealing a protectiveness over Helstone borne from her awareness of its limitations. When Henry asks her to describe Helstone while gently mocking what he imagines will be her hyperbolic portrait of its perfections, an annoyed Margaret responds, "All other places in England that I have seen seem so hard and prosaic-looking, after the New Forest. Helstone is like a village in a poem — in one of Tennyson's poems … Oh, I can't describe my home. It is home, and I can't put its charm into words" (14). Helstone's environs are perhaps more important to Margaret than its interiors. She describes cottages "with roses growing all over them" (14) and the beautiful walks that abound (15) to Henry. Margaret's deep appreciation for Helstone endures even after she has been expelled again from it; this is made apparent when she describes Helstone to Bessy Higgins, expatiating on its bucolic loveliness and lamenting her inability to articulate it properly: "I wish you could see it. I cannot tell you half its beauty" (100). Although Margaret seems to vindicate Henry's teasing when she reverts to a poetic idealization of the pastoral, Margaret frankly admits that she is unable to articulate the attachment she formed as a child. As Gaston Bachelard tells us, our associations in a space are what render it emotionally vital to us: "the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us … it has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting."[19] Margaret's childhood attachment to Helstone resembles the psychic and physical bond Bachelard describes. This spatial inscription is clear in Margaret as she longs to return to Helstone throughout these opening chapters. When the novel begins, Margaret has long ago experienced a rupture with Helstone, and it is a site of loss and

homesickness. Her idealized description attempts to recapture the home she has lost, reimagining it for herself and others to see.

Despite Margaret's idealization, Gaskell's narrator casts doubt on Helstone's perfections, and it is inevitable that Margaret will face disillusionment when she returns home to Helstone after Edith's wedding. Margaret finds that the domestic peace she expected to find is compromised by her mother's dissatisfaction with Mr. Hale's income. Margaret quickly discovers she must seek comfort outside: "Her out-of-doors life was perfect. Her indoors life had its drawbacks. With the healthy shame of a child, she blamed herself for her keenness of sight, in perceiving that all was not as it should be there" (19). Susan Johnston argues that this Margaret's attempt to cope with the disjunction between her idealized portrait of her home and the more dismal reality she encounters; by going outside, Margaret is able to experience "the distance necessary for her chronic confusion of appearance and reality [to remain] uninterrupted."[20] The domestic joy that Mrs. Shaw imagines exists between her sister and Mr. Hale is strained by his small income and what Mrs. Hale imagines to be the unhealthiness of Helstone's location.

Margaret's impatience with her mother and her desire to flee the house for the comforts of the forest signify her blindness toward the difficulties of her mother's situation. Though Margaret bemoans "her keenness of sight" that exposes her to knowledge of her parents' discord, she fails to see or sympathize with her mother's disappointed hopes. Mr. Hale's occupation and peripatetic habits take him out into the world to visit parishioners and administer help; his life is marked by usefulness and action much as Margaret herself desires to be active and productive. Mrs. Hale, by contrast, is confined to her home with limited social intercourse. The stultifying construction of separate spheres manifests in Helstone in a particularly pernicious way since Mrs. Hale, socially isolated and mentally uncultivated, has little to occupy or excite her. The Helstone cottage has a different valence from Mrs. Hale's perspective since it functions not as an idealized picturesque

space from a poem and more as an impoverished and isolating confinement. Helstone's interior operates as a kind of toxic domesticity for Mrs. Hale, robbing her of her vitality and prefiguring her eventual death in Milton's smoky rooms. Even the name — "Helstone" — invokes hell and the hardness of a rock, suggesting a way of reading Helstone that is much different to the paradise Margaret sees.

Though Mrs. Hale fixates on what she imagines are Margaret's London standards, Margaret herself does not dread the change from her aunt's house to her parents' cottage: "She knew, and had rather reveled in the idea, that she should have to give up many luxuries which had only been troubles and trammels to her freedom in Harley Street" (19-20). Margaret eschews Harley Street's luxuries in favor of the pleasure she will take in being free to roam Helstone, but this emphasis on freedom also contrasts with the prison-like existence her mother leads. Though Margaret encourages her mother to take pleasure in the outdoors, inclement weather often keeps them inside. Mrs. Hale complains of isolation and dislikes mental occupations such as reading; we learn that Mr. Hale was discouraged early in their marriage from reading aloud to his wife in the evenings. It is not difficult to see the similarities between Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Shaw here, but the latter has more resources at her disposal and can thus afford the extravagances that serve as her distractions.

The reader gets further insight into the poverty Margaret refuses to acknowledge when Henry Lennox comes to visit. Helstone's beauty is subjected to Henry's cynical and calculating perspective. Henry, hungrily ambitious and emotionally unconnected to the small cottage, offers a harsh assessment of Margaret's home:

> When she had left the room, he began in his scrutinizing way to look about him. The little drawing-room was looking its best in the streaming light of the morning sun. The middle window in the bow was opened, and clustering roses and the scarlet honeysuckle came peeping round the corner; the small lawn was gorgeous with verbenas and geraniums of all

> bright colours. But the very brightness outside made the colours within seem poor and faded. The carpet was far from new; the chintz had been often washed; the whole apartment was smaller and shabbier than he had expected, as back-ground and frame-work for Margaret, herself so queenly. (25)

This passage aligns Margaret with the natural verdant profusion outside rather than the poverty-tinged interior of Helstone; like the gorgeous flowers that seem to overflow from the garden into the house, Margaret herself is rich in beauty and life. Margaret is deeply troubled by Henry's proposal because it is a recognition of her sexual availability, and the power of this description, which is from his perspective, certainly suggests that he identifies her as an erotic object as vital as the garden that almost seems to overpower the humble cottage. Unlike the resemblance between Mrs. Thornton and her home that we will see later, Margaret stands quite apart from her home, for she is not shabby at all but regal and elegant.

Despite the worldly expectations Henry betrays through his meditations, they do give the reader a less biased insight of Helstone, betraying the physical poverty that goes hand-in-hand with its emotional poverty. Along with the realization that home is not perfectly emotionally satisfying, Gaskell draws attention to the physical limitations of Helstone that do not seem to affect Margaret or her father but cause a fair amount of anxiety for her mother and are apparent to outsiders like Henry. Henry objectifies Margaret as a regal prize he wants desperately to win. This royal characterization also occurs in chapter one when Henry walks in while Margaret is modeling Edith's Indian shawls; Margaret is described as looking like a princess, a moment that visualizes her as a beautiful set-piece (11). In Helstone, Henry also views the house as a "back-ground and frame-work" for Margaret, imagining her as an exotic subject in a painting, but he is disappointed by the inferior views around her. Believing he has to marry a wealthy woman in order to advance in his career, Henry's disappointment over the Hales' wealth is apparent and the narrator's comments on

Henry's calculating nature ("his scrutinizing way") casts him in a mercenary light. Henry's visit to Helstone makes it clear that as much as he covets Margaret's beauty and intelligence, his desire for material wealth and professional success are incompatible with a marriage to her.

Despite the rocky transition that marks Margaret's homecoming, she is devastated when Mr. Hale confesses his decision to give up his vocation and move to Milton-Northern to find work as a tutor: "The one staid foundation of her home, of her idea of her beloved father, seemed reeling and rocking" (36). The foundation of Margaret's home is both her father and his profession, and though Gaskell speaks only generally about Margaret's faith, it is clear from this reaction to her father's revelation that she views the Church of England as an integral part of her family's identity, of her home, "of her idea of her beloved father" (36). Helstone is the embodiment of his rejected faith and his renunciation casts a pall on Margaret's very idea of her home. When Mr. Hale alludes to the early martyrs who suffered for their faith, Margaret responds, "But, father, the early martyrs suffered for the truth, while you — oh! dear, dear papa!" (37). Her unfinished sentence indicates that she believes her father's misgivings are false, that his desire to leave the church is wrong, and this is devastating because his moral struggle endangers his family's survival and is our first major clue that Mr. Hale is an ineffectual patriarch. His cowardly refusal to communicate his decision to his wife further demonstrates his failure to protect his wife and daughter. Margaret is compelled to tell Mrs. Hale instead and bear the brunt of her dissatisfaction. Although Gaskell may have sympathy toward Mr. Hale because she herself was a dissenter, it is difficult for the reader to accept his decision since it so clearly threatens the women who depend upon him. While differences in doctrinal belief are obviously important to people of faith, Mr. Hale discounts the well-being of his family even as he eases his conscience.

The move from Helstone feels monumental and truly difficult for Margaret after her happiness in finding herself there again after so many years in London. While she seems content at

the house in Harley Street, Margaret clearly looks forward to returning home and rebuilding her relationship with her parents; instead, she finds herself faced with another serious domestic rupture that compromises not only her comfort but her sense of identity, stripping her of her nostalgic desire to return to the place of her childhood. Gaskell writes movingly of the way the Hales' impending removal alters the atmosphere of the house:

> The last day came; the house was full of packing-cases, which were being carted off at the front door, to the nearest railway station. Even the pretty lawn at the side of the house was made unsightly and untidy by the straw that had been wafted upon it through the open door and windows. The rooms had a strange echoing sound in them, — and the light came harshly and strongly in through the uncurtained windows, — seemingly already unfamiliar and strange. (53)

The absence of the Hales' things along with the outward signs of disruption (the lawn "made unsightly and untidy by the straw") come together to convey the physical signs of Margaret's mental anguish: the haunting way light and sound move around an empty room, the upending of a well-organized home, render what is so deeply beloved and familiar unknown and demonstrate the irrevocability of Mr. Hale's decision.

Margaret's final leave-taking reminds us that the outdoor space of Helstone is as important, if not more important, to Margaret as the indoors:

> Railroad time inexorably wrenched them away from lovely, beloved Helstone, the next morning. They were gone; they had seen the last of the long low parsonage home, half-covered with China-roses and pyracanthus — more homelike than ever in the morning sun that glittered on its window, each belonging to some well-loved room. (57)

The repetition of adjectives that connote deep emotional attachment here — lovely, beloved, well-loved — are poignant yet futile signs of Margaret's reluctance to go. The seemingly inexhaustible

display of lush flowers and the harmony between the morning light and the window panes elides the flaws disdained by Henry Lennox. The beauty of this image is harshly juxtaposed with mechanical "railroad time" that is utterly undomestic since it signifies work, travel, and transience; it functions here to "wrench" the Hales away from the place that can no longer be considered home and to take them to a smoky factory town. However, despite the violence of this image, the beauty of Helstone endures and stretches out to Margaret, appearing "more homelike than ever" and invoking her intimate connection only to sever it by the insistent forward momentum of the train.

It will take Margaret many more pages to get back to Helstone, on a similar train that took her away. After Mr. and Mrs. Hale have both died and Margaret has returned to London to live with Edith and her family, Mr. Bell invites Margaret to take an overnight trip to Helstone with him. Initially enthusiastic about joining him, Margaret finds her grief renewed when she returns home after so much loss: "It hurt her to see the Helstone road so flooded in the sunlight, and every turn and every familiar tree so precisely the same in its summer glory as it had been in former years. Nature felt no change, and was ever young" (376). The sacredness of nature brings pain rather than comfort as it emphasizes for Margaret the painful changes she has experienced since leaving. The parsonage house, by contrast, has been changed by the new parson to accommodate his large family: "The parsonage was so altered, both inside and out, that the real pain was less than she had anticipated. It was not like the same place" (383). These changes to her former home do not initially upset Margaret. However, she does experience real pain upon reflection later and is saddened by the combination of natural permanence and human alteration. Margaret considers the alterations made to her old bedroom currently functioning as a nursery, and she is overpowered by "a sense of change, of individual nothingness, of perplexity and disappointment" (390). A few days afterward, Margaret is thankful for the visit, but finds "that it was so full of associations with former days, and especially with her father and mother, that if it were all to come over again, she should shrink back

from such another visit" (391-2). The negotiation of memory and present reality is deeply fraught here; Margaret feels compelled to make the visit but experiences poignant grief when she is confronted with facing her childhood home after such traumatic losses. Her struggle to reconcile the past with her present situation is a necessary step in her grieving process, and she realizes that she must let go of Helstone in order to move forward and escape being engulfed by the mysteriousness of time and space.

Our last glimpse of Helstone comes at the novel's conclusion when Thorton reveals that he has paid a visit to Helstone (a trip hinted at when the innkeeper tells Margaret and Mr. Bell that a gentleman has been to visit and informed her of Mrs. Hale's death) and brought back roses that he has dried and retained as a kind of talisman of Margaret's childhood home. Overjoyed, Margaret asks why he journeyed there. Thornton responds, "I wanted to see the place where Margaret grew to what she is, even at the worst time of all, when I had no hope of ever calling her mine" (425). Kanwit views this gesture as evidence that Thornton has come to conceptualize Margaret as more fully human and distinguishes him from his rival Henry Lennox who is only able to view her as an erotic object. The roses are "an indication of Gaskell's ability to think beyond the mere preservation of middle-class domestic spaces."[21] Kanwit's reading also suggests the limitations of Henry's imagination in contrast to Thornton's. Henry can only value what is obviously attractive while Thornton comforts himself with the dried if impotent rosebuds that remind him of Margaret. By reiterating the significance of location once again, the novel's conclusion reveals the strength of its psychological power by demonstrating the imaginative hold place can have on identity. Thornton instinctively grasps the significance of seeing Margaret's birthplace and, convinced his love for her is unrequited, undertakes a pilgrimage there and returns with a holy relic, effectively transforming his love for Margaret into adoration for a saint. Once Thornton comes to understand that Margaret

loves him in return, the relic becomes a token of love and the religious dimensions of Helstone and Thornton's pilgrimage there are altered.

The serenity and attachment Margaret has to Helstone is disrupted by the family's removal to Milton and the house they will rent there. Referred to as Crampton Terrace, the impression of the house is not that of a snug well-worn home but a cramped smoky corner in a cramped smoky city. Crampton is perhaps as homely as Helstone but its aesthetic is offensive to the family's tastes. The drawing-room wallpaper is the primary offender. Margaret complains to Mrs. Hale, "oh mamma! speaking of vulgarity and commonness, you must prepare yourself for our drawing-room paper. Pink and blue roses, with yellow leaves! And such a heavy cornice round the room!" (66). Beatrice Bazell argues that the vulgar wallpaper "is the primary means of introducing the aesthetics and daily lives of [the Hales and the Thorntons]," representing both an ideological clash between them while laying the groundwork for the romantic relationship that will eventually develop between Margaret and John since he intervenes with the stubborn landlord's refusal to re-paper the room.[22] The unnatural flowers masquerade as a gaudy substitute for the verdure of Helstone, and "the defiantly artificial pattern … reinforces how stridently the town affirms the virtues of mechanisation, and how a concept such as 'perfection' could come to trump Nature and become falsely embedded in the vagaries of a mass-produced, but decorative object."[23] Although the wallpaper is quickly gotten rid of, it represents Margaret's first major confrontation with Milton, and her bias towards the South remains intact since she can find no sympathy or beauty in anything foreign so soon after her arrival. As Bazell acknowledges, the wallpaper stands in as an ideological obstacle between the Hales and the Thorntons; the narrator's descriptions of the Thorntons' home, though phrased with more neutral language are still implicitly critical of Mrs. Thornton's gaudy taste. The Thorntons can afford to decorate lavishly, but material fineness is compromised by an inhospitable magnificence.

The class distinction between the Hales and the Thorntons produces tension and misunderstandings between the two families throughout the novel. Initially, Thornton assumes the Hales to be of a lower class because of their financial hardships. However, when he meets Margaret, he is abashed by "her superb ways of moving and looking" and "began to feel ashamed of having imagined that [Crampton Terrace] would do very well for the Hales, in spite of a certain vulgarity in it which had struck him at the time of his looking it over" (63). These "superb ways of moving and looking" that strike Thornton are the effects of embodied class as described by Bourdieu: "Taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied,* helps to shape the class body. It is an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digest and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically."[24] Like Burney's Juliet, Margaret performs a higher class status than what can be perceived by others. Margaret, having been raised by her aunt, embodies a higher class than Thornton expects and he finds himself powerfully attracted to her. We know too that Mrs. Hale is of a good family and that Mr. Hale also embodies a higher-class status when the narrator, during Henry's visit to Helstone, describes him as looking like "a complete gentleman," and Margaret "had always a fresh and tender pride in seeing how favourably he impressed every stranger" (27). It is noteworthy that Thornton is attuned to these class distinctions while, for instance, his mother is not and is dismissive of what she imagines to be the family's class pretensions. John recognizes the greater cultural capital the family possesses and seeks out a connection with them in his desire to improve his cultural fluency.

Helstone's implicit toxic domesticity is made explicit in the rooms of Crampton. Margaret's sensitivity to her family's reduced circumstances must be dispensed with since her primary role is to serve as a support to her mother and father. Margaret often conceals her own feelings and preferences so that household business can be settled, demonstrating an impressive elasticity of mind and fortitude that her parents lack. While moving into the house, Mrs. Hale is appalled upon

first seeing it and cries, "Oh, Margaret! are we to live here?" The narrator very candidly acknowledges the grimness of the Hales' situation, pointing out the atmosphere of smoke, fog, and general dinginess. Mrs. Shaw will express a similar opinion later when she comes to help Margaret move back to Harley Street: "Mrs Shaw took as vehement a dislike as it was possible for one of her gentle nature to do, against Milton. It was noisy, and smoky, and the poor people whom she saw in the streets were dirty, and the rich ladies overdressed" (355). We are told that for the Hales to be reconciled to Milton required "more that could not be had" (66) and "[t]here was no comfort to be given" about the decision that landed them there: "They were settled in Milton, and must endure smoke and fogs for a season; indeed, all other life seemed shut out from them by as thick a fog of circumstance" (67). After the exertion of moving and settling into a new house, the family is left to dwell on the pitiful change in their circumstances.

However, despite the challenges the family faces, Gaskell's narrator delineates how Margaret adjusts her own perspective of space in order to cope with the disruption upon her sense of self. Though Margaret manages to exert herself in order to comfort her parents, the reader is given insight into how difficult the changes are for her when she is finally able to retreat to her own room that night:

> She felt inclined to sit down in a stupor of despair. The heavy smoky air hung about her bedroom, which occupied the long narrow projection at the back of the house. The window, placed at the side of the oblong, looked to the blank wall of a similar projection, not above ten feet distant. It loomed through the fog like a great barrier to hope. Inside the room everything was in confusion. All their efforts had been directed to make her mother's room comfortable. Margaret sat down on a box, the direction card upon which struck her as having been written at Helstone — beautiful, beloved Helstone! She lost herself in dismal thought: but at last she determined to take her mind away from the present; and suddenly

> remembered that she had a letter from Edith which she had only half read in the bustle of the morning. (67)

This passage conveys the depth of Margaret's sorrow at leaving Helstone and finding herself friendless and unmoored in Milton. The home is supposed to be the most intimate safe space we can find ourselves in, and yet the Hales' new home seems so woefully inadequate in creating any kind of comfort for them. Margaret gives in to her pain behind the privacy of her bedroom door. She straightforwardly assesses her room's shortcomings, imagining them to mirror a greater dissatisfaction she finds with life. The sentence "It looked through the fog like a great barrier to hope" is striking both for its melodrama and its authentic representation of how we feel in moments of great struggle and fatigue. Neglecting her own comfort so that she may administer to her mother's comfort, Margaret finds herself exhausted and unsupported by any similar considerate attentions from any of her family; Margaret, so quick to perform the role of dutiful daughter, often acts as a parental figure to both her father and mother.

Rather than giving in to her despair, Margaret, similarly to Fanny Price, seeks solace in material expressions of filial love. While the direction card on her trunk reminds Margaret of Helstone and brings her temporary comfort, this comfort quickly transforms into a sense of loss. Conversely, Edith's account of her joyful life appears serene and lovely in contradistinction to Margaret's current state of lonely despair. Her decision to continue reading Edith's letter demonstrates Margaret's deliberate tendency to briefly indulge in her sadness before shaking herself out of it and finding strength to continue in whatever resources she can find. Margaret's resiliency is something we have seen before, as when she offers herself up to completing tasks for her parents after receiving the devastating news that they must leave Helstone. However, her search for strength is also an act of escapist fantasy as seemingly no two fates could be more different than hers and her cousin's: Edith's letter "was to tell of their arrival at Corfu; their voyage along the Mediterranean —

their music, and dancing on board ship; the gay new life opening upon her; her house with its trellised balcony, and its views over white cliffs and deep blue sea" (67). Such a description conjures sunny warmth, tangy salt air, and the luxurious ease in which Margaret has spent much of her own life. Acting as a kind of spiritual nourishment, this idyllic portrait of Edith's glamorous life leads Margaret to distraction and reverie. Its power dissipates, however, as thoughts of Edith lead her to thoughts of Henry and his inevitable disappointment over her father's decision, and then what Edith and Mrs. Shaw must think, until Margaret finds herself once again mired in her own worries. Margaret's revolutions of mind demonstrate how fragile and unstable domestic comfort can be when the very notion of home is shattered by her family's dislocation.

North and South offers us insight into how others might view the Hale's Milton home through the sensitive mind of John Thornton. Thornton's impression of the Hales, and specifically Margaret's class distinction, is again on display when Mr. Hale invites him for tea. While getting ready to go over to Crampton, Thornton is questioned by his formidable mother about why he is dressing for tea with the Hales. Thornton's response, "Mr Hale is a gentleman and his wife and daughter are ladies" (77), is met with derision and suspicion by Mrs. Thornton who looks down on the Hales because they are poor. Mr. Hale's education renders him respectable to Thornton, but his mother views classical education as a frivolous luxury and assumes Margaret intends to bewitch her son: "Take care you don't get caught by a penniless girl, John" (78).

When Thornton arrives, he is enchanted by the appearance of their drawing-room in contrast to his own:

> [His] drawing-room was not like this. It was twice — twenty times as fine; not one quarter as comfortable. Here were no mirrors, not even a scrap of glass to reflect the light, and answer the same purpose as water in a landscape; no gilding; a warm, sober breadth of colouring, well relieved by the dear old Helstone chintz-curtains and chair covers. An open davenport

> stood in the window opposite the door; in the other there was a stand, with a tall white china vase, from which drooped wreaths of English ivy, pale-green birch, and copper-coloured beech leaves. Pretty baskets of work stood about in different places: and books, not cared for on account of their binding solely, lay on one table, as if recently put down. Behind the door was another table, decked out for tea, with a white table-cloth, on which flourished the cocoa-nut cakes, and a basket piled with oranges and ruddy American apples, heaped on leaves. (79)

The overall effect of this description, as Thornton himself observes, is comfort, warmth, and abundance. The chintz curtains and chair covers, which are described by Henry Lennox as shabby, are here lovingly connected with Helstone, though the "dear old Helstone" descriptor must be the narrator's thought rather than Thornton's since he does not yet know the family well. The open davenport signals the casual intellectual cultivation the Hales carelessly display and Thornton admires. The china vase and the basket of "oranges and ruddy American apples" subtly evoke resonances of empire and global capitalism that feature throughout the novel in Edith's cashmere shawls and the importation of Irish workers during the strikes. The distribution of flora and fruits and the "pretty baskets of work" that serve as stand-ins for flowers recall the profusion of plant life at Helstone and indeed suggest the ways — already present in the "dear old Helstone chintz" — the women of the house might be trying to recreate their lost home. Kanwit suggests that this integration of nature into their home is Gaskell's way of crafting connections between North and South.[25] Thornton surveys an idealized (if financially compromised) domestic scene that combines the feminine comforts of a middle-class home with the influences of bourgeois consumerism.

The intimacy of the Hales' drawing room was not a unique phenomenon but rather a common occurrence in middle-class Victorian homes according to Thad Logan. In her book *The Victorian Parlour*, Logan argues that "the Victorian parlour — extraordinarily rich in detail, situated in

a central position within the theory and practice of Victorian culture — can be taken as a kind of synecdoche for that culture itself, a microcosm of the middle-class Victorian world, miniaturized, as if under glass."[26] It makes sense that Thornton's attraction to Margaret would be firmly established in the mercurial space of the drawing room (or parlour, in Logan's terminology), a space that occupies private and public dimensions. For Logan, the Victorian drawing room's function

> is a complex one. It is the most public space in the house insofar as the reception of visitors is concerned: hence (in part) it is strongly associated with decorative display. Yet the parlour is also an inner sanctum — a room into which tradesman, for instance, did not venture, a room set aside for the private life of the family members, only entered by servants when specifically called or before the family had awakened.[27]

The drawing room, by straddling the separate spheres of Victorian middle-class ideology, in fact undermines them. If the middle-class Victorian home attempts to reinforce gendered divisions by literally sequestering women as Logan argues it does, *North and South* shows us how those divisions are blurred by the impossibility of keeping the marketplace out of the drawing room as evidenced by the unmistakable presence of the material culture, like the china or the American apples, that have been domesticated and yet still contain traces of the economic and colonial realties of British life.

Despite the complex nature of the drawing room and its union of public and private forces, it is clear that Thornton identifies it as a more feminine space and that he sees Margaret as the primary facilitator of its domestic comfort: "It appeared to Mr Thornton that all these graceful cares were habitual to the family; and especially of a piece with Margaret" (80), and he envies her intimate ways with her father. As Ingham points out, Thornton's initial attraction to Margaret stems from his belief that she embodies an ideal bourgeois femininity that could connect him more closely to a class with which he desires to be a part.[28] This scene does not just represent an idealized, female-authored domesticity; the narrator eroticizes Thornton's perspective of Margaret and the materials that

comprise the Hales' domestic harmony just as she eroticizes Margaret's "bracelet on one taper arm, which would fall down over her round wrist" by Thornton's fixation on it. Margaret's sexuality and the comfort of the room intermingle and collapse into one another.

The Hales' drawing room has charms for Thornton beyond the erotic. Perhaps the most significant observation we find in the passage above is "the books, not cared for on account of their binding solely, lay on the table, as if recently put down." This is an important value judgment made by Thornton, because it coincides with what we already know about Thornton's social ambitions: as one of Mr. Hale's first pupils, Thornton desires to participate in the classical education denied to him as a boy when he left school to support his family after his father's suicide. The Hales' books are frequently read and somewhat carelessly treated, signs that they value what is inside the books rather than the social cachet they provide. Just a few pages before this, we get a brief introduction to the Thornton home, and the narrator mentions that "there was not a book about in the room, with the exception of Matthew Henry's Bible Commentaries, six volumes of which lay in the centre of the massive side-board" (77). Though we do see Mrs. Thornton read one of Henry's Commentaries later in the novel, there is something formidable and foreboding about their presence that contrasts with the casually laid books in the Hales' home; Mrs. Thornton likely reads the Commentaries for instruction rather than pleasure. Later, when Margaret returns Mrs. Thornton's visit, she observes "a large circular table, with smartly-bound books arranged at regular intervals round the circumference of its polished surface, like gaily-coloured spokes of a wheel." The effect of the appearances of books in the Thornton home suggest that they are for display only, their bindings expensive and as jealously protected as the furniture and rugs that are described as being "bagged up with as much care as if the house was to be overwhelmed with lava, and not discovered a thousand years hence" (112). The beautifully bound books suggest a similar attempt to display the right kind of expensive things, and were likely chosen by Mrs. Thornton. Thornton, in contrast to his mother, desires to

possess cultural capital in addition to his vast economic capital. The passion and energy with which Thornton pursues his studies with Mr. Hale attest to the former's desire not just for the trappings of a good education but the fruits of such an education and the exhilaration intellectual discourse can bestow — not just to display impressive looking books, but to have read them and pondered over them and argued about them with a respected friend. Margaret functions as a gatekeeper to this intellectual life, capable of participating in knowledge creation (as we see when Henry finds her translations of Dante) and cultivating a refined domestic space that projects the values of an educated family. Thornton is drawn to Margaret for her cultural capital as well as her beauty.

Despite Margaret's efforts to harness control over the unruly space of Crampton and to facilitate comfort for her family within its walls, *North and South*, above all, insists on the impossibility of stable comfort and security within the domestic sphere. Margaret endures in quick succession her mother's death and brother's permanent exile from England, and her performance as dutiful and self-sacrificing daughter begins to weigh too heavily on her. The emotional labor she is expected to perform by her father proves to be too arduous. When Mr. Hale goes to Oxford to visit Mr. Bell, Margaret experiences a relief so great that she goes into a catatonic state:

> It was astonishing, almost stunning, to feel herself so much at liberty; no one depending on her for cheering care, if not for positive happiness; no invalid to plan and think for; she might be idle, and silent, and forgetful, — and what seemed worth more than all the other privileges — she might be unhappy if she liked. For months past, all her own personal cares and troubles had had to be stuffed away into a dark cupboard; but now she had leisure to take them out, and mourn over them, and study their nature, and seek the true method of subduing them into the elements of peace. All these weeks she had been conscious of their existence in a dull kind of way, though they were hidden out of sight. Now, once for all the she would consider them, and appoint to each of them its right work in her life. So she sat

> almost motionless for hours in the drawing-room, going over the bitterness of every remembrance with an unwincing resolution. (336)

Conceived in terms of domestic space (a dark cupboard) and a domestic task (organizing and putting away), Margaret's cognitive processing is imagined as a household chore within a household object. Gaskell is shockingly honest about the toll Margaret's caregiving has taken; her subjectivity is fragile and battered. Ingham remarks that "amazingly, the narrator can admit on Margaret's behalf that her mother's death and father's absence bring relief … She can … reclaim her own selfhood in 'pain,' out of which, unlike the stasis of selfishness, change may come."[29] Gaskell's use of the spatial metaphor of the dark cupboard filled with rebellious objects to subdue resonates with Csikszentmihalyi's claim that "our hold over mental processes is extremely precarious even in the best of times" and that we look to the world of objects as "external props" that allows us to construct fragile personal identities.[30] Though Csikszentmihalyi is referring to actual objects here, it illuminates Gaskell's choice to characterize Margaret's cares as objects that have to be sorted and contained. To objectify her traumas and place them in a mental compartment allows Margaret to endure until she has time to examine them more closely. Once she has had time and space to reflect, she feels endowed with "new strength and brighter hope" (339).

Margaret's "new strength and brighter hope" is destroyed by Mr. Hale's sudden death, as the novel obliterates the possibility of a recovered and idealized home that Margaret has been clinging to since her return to Helstone in the opening chapters. This narrative development emphasizes the fragile connections between identity and the material objects that can act as transmissions of the self to others. As she and Dixon prepare to move to London, Margaret must select the household items she would like to keep as most of the furniture and goods from their home will be sold. She begins the task of weeding through her family's belongings, "turning over articles, known to her from her childhood, with a sort of caressing reluctance to leave them — old-fashioned, worn and shabby, as

they might be" (357). To let go of these items signifies a relinquishing of her family's past, and since her parents are dead, selling these objects feels irrevocable since they are the last material objects she can remember them by. Margaret attempts to ease some of her reluctance by sending one of Mr. Hale's books to Mr. Thornton. Such a gesture is an act of peace toward Thornton but also a way of preventing her father's memory from fading for one of his favorite acquaintances. Margaret enacts this preservation of memory herself when she pays a visit to the Higgins family to say goodbye and asks Mary if she can have something to remind her of Bessy. The water cup Margaret selects seems too humble to Mary, but Margaret is pleased with this simple reminder of a family she grew to love in such a short time. In Margaret's final days at Milton, the narrator focuses on the hold objects can exert; household items that she remembers from childhood, her father's books, and Bessy's cup all embody key relationships and connections that Margaret must decide whether to relinquish or preserve. For a character who has lost so much, these final moments in Milton carry a lot of emotional heft.

With Mr. Bell's death, the novel erases Margarete's last connection with Helstone and her sense that she will ever recapture her ideal of home. Margaret hides from her aunt and cousin "a secret feeling that the Helstone vicarage — nay, even the poor little house at Milton, with her anxious father and her invalid mother, and all the smaller household cares of comparative poverty, composed her idea of home" (363) rather than the house on Harley Street where she has spent much of her life. This insight suggests the significance of the nuclear family for Margaret (and perhaps for Gaskell as well), and the way that her parents and the shared secret of her brother's past render a house a home, even if the relationships within that home are strained and challenging. Margaret's overwhelming desire to have Frederick acquitted of his mutiny charges so that he can return to England is part of her sense of how her family circle should be ordered. Margaret's sense of self is strongly tied to the domestic space her parents occupy, and that is why it is so challenging

for her to learn how to reimagine her life after their deaths. The bitter reality for Margaret is that she must learn homebuilding on her own if she is ever to feel that sense of belonging and comfort again.

Harley Street and Marlborough Mills

In a novel that quite enjoys showing its reader contrasts, there are two fine homes that act as foils to the more straitened means of Helstone and Crampton. Mrs. Shaw's home in London and Mr. Thornton's grand residence overlooking his mill in Marlborough Street offer alternative conceptions of domesticity than we have heretofore examined. These homes also represent alternative conceptions of high living that reveal important class distinctions and aspirations; Mrs. Shaw (though her money comes from her husband's naval profession and hence cannot be considered old money) prefers a more old-fashioned style of living, while the Thorntons embrace an expensive splendor that showcases the labor that made it by proudly overlooking Thornton's factory while employing an army of servants to steadfastly fight the buildup of grime and dirt on its immaculate surfaces.

Mrs. Shaw's Harley Street home embodies an old-fashioned grandeur that emphasizes ease and comfort. Margaret spends a significant amount of time in Harley Street, moving there as a child at nine years old and leaving at eighteen when her cousin Edith marries, only to return after Mr. Hale's death. At the beginning of the novel, Margaret is anxious to leave and return to what she truly considers her home. However, the move to Milton and her mother's death cause Margaret to yearn

> after that old home, and the placid tranquility of that old well-ordered, monotonous life. She had found it occasionally tiresome while it lasted; but since then she had been buffeted about, and felt so exhausted by the recent struggle with herself, that she thought stagnation would be a rest and a refreshment. (322)

The emphasis here is on the absence of innovation and alteration, which perhaps plays with the stereotypes that the South resists change while the North immoderately embraces it. Though Margaret grows to admire the bustle of Milton, she longs nostalgically for the ease of her aunt's house. She has had to act for so long on behalf of her parents that she feels intense exhaustion. Harley Street also represents a happy period in her life that she can still access, unlike Helstone which is lost to her. Edith and Mrs. Shaw view Margaret's return to their home as a matter of course, and when they learn of Mr. Hale's death, Edith declares, "But doesn't it fall out well, that if my uncle was to die, it should be just now, when we are come home, and settled in the old house, and quite ready to receive Margaret? Poor thing! what a change it will be to her from Milton! I'll have new chintz for her bedroom, and make it look new and bright, and cheer her up a little" (347). Edith's new chintz evokes the shabby but beloved Helstone chintz, and reminds the reader of the differences in financial power between Edith and Margaret. Edith has never known want and imagines redoing Margaret's former bedroom without any thought to the cost, a gesture that is simultaneously kind and thoughtless. Edith also imagines that restoring Margaret's bedroom will restore order to her life, and she considers it in the natural course of things that it should be done so that Margaret will be happy and comfortable.

The privilege not to consider the cost of luxury is one that Margaret looks forward to and appreciates even as she can now recognize the difficulty of having less money and has seen profound poverty in the working-class families she has befriended in Milton. To compare the scene in the Bouchers' home to Margaret's return to Harley Street demonstrates the deep material discrepancies of these lives. Having been tasked with delivering the news of Boucher's suicide to his wife, Margaret enters the house where the children are starving and "Mrs Boucher was sitting in a rocking-chair, on the other side of the ill-redd-up fireplace; it looked as if the house had been untouched for days by any effort at cleanliness" (289). Margaret's news reduces the house to utter

confusion as neighbors crowd in and Mrs. Boucher faints. Conversely, in Harley Street Margaret "found herself at once an inmate of the luxurious house, where the bare knowledge of the existence of every trouble or care seemed scarcely to have penetrated. The wheels of the machinery of daily life were well oiled, and went along with delicious smoothness" (363). The impression is of perfect order and control. Eventually this "delicious smoothness" begins to irk Margaret, just as the wealthy Milton ladies' talk of clothing and luxury items bores her at Thornton's dinner party; it becomes clear how a certain degree of ease can enervate rather than comfort and objects can bring weariness when they are the sole focus of one's existence. The narrator draws our attention to Margaret's awareness of these disparities:

> Her thoughts went back to Milton, with a strange sense of the contrast between the life there, and here. She was getting surfeited of the eventless ease in which no struggle or endeavour was required. She was afraid lest she should even become sleepily deadened into forgetfulness of anything beyond the life which was lapping her round with luxury. There might be toilers and moilers there in London, but she never saw them; the very servants lived in an underground world of their own, of which she knew neither the hopes nor the fears; they only seemed to start into existence when some want or whim of their master and mistress needed them. There was a strange unsatisfied vacuum in Margaret's heart and mode of life. (364)

Milton has changed Margaret; her earlier disdain for "shoppy" people has been transformed into a robust respect for people who labor to support themselves and their families. Margaret's sense of class distinction has changed, and she comes to respect the lives she used to disdain. She cannot forget — and most importantly does not want to forget — the people she has met. The luxury of Harley Street, while comfortable and soothing, also threatens to restore Margaret to an ease which she no longer desires. The novel draws a clear distinction between ease and comfort; ease deadens

the faculties and sympathy, as we see in Fanny Thornton, Edith, and Mrs. Shaw, while comfort soothes the mind and heart after a rough day out in the world.

Rather than suffocating its inhabitants with excessive elegance and an erasure of the labor that makes it, the Thornton home rouses admiration by a parade of magnificence. Margaret, though impressed by the house's handsome and "scrupulously clean" exterior is perplexed as to "why people who could afford to live in so good a house, and keep it in such perfect order, did not prefer a much smaller dwelling in the country, or even some suburb; not in the continual whirl and din of the factory" (112). Margaret again betrays her regional biases, preferring the serenity and cleanliness of a natural setting to boisterous urban living. When Mr. Hale voices a similar sentiment to Mrs. Thornton, she responds proudly, "I am not become so fine as to desire to forget the source of my son's wealth and power" (159). Both Thornton and his mother take pride in where his wealth comes from and his desire to live in close proximity to his factory distinguishes him from other powerful men who prefer to hide the smoke and dirt that create their fortunes. This information also distinguishes Thornton from the luxury Margaret grew up in, where the servants seem to disappear when they are not needed to perform a task. Living by his factory allows Thornton constant access to and surveillance over his operations, but it also allows him to revel in what he has built, to cling tightly to his image of himself as a self-made man.

Thornton imagines that Margaret orchestrates the comforts of her home, perhaps because his mother so powerfully dominates the atmosphere of his. Mrs. Thornton's physical appearance seems an extension of her pride and strength, as when Margaret and Mr. Hale are on their way to visit the Thorntons' home for the first time and the narrator tells us that "unconsciously, Margaret had imagined the tall, massive, handsomely dressed Mrs. Thornton must live in a house of the same character as herself" (111). She is fiercely proud of her son's accomplishments and also her own role as mistress of his home. Mrs. Thornton does not value fine things in and of themselves, rather she

views them as a means to further bolster Thornton's standing as a first man of Milton. Margaret's first impression of their home is characterized by its opulence:

> Everything reflected light, nothing absorbed it. The whole room had a painfully spotted, spangled, speckled look about it which impressed Margaret so unpleasantly that she was hardly conscious of the peculiar cleanliness required to keep everything so white and pure in such an atmosphere, or of the trouble that must be willingly expended to secure that effect of icy, snowy discomfort. Wherever she looked there was evidence of care and labour, but not care and labour to procure ease, to help on habits of tranquil home employment; solely to ornament, and then to preserve ornament from dirt or destruction. (112)

The emphasis here is on Margaret discomfort at the house's extravagance. Like young Fanny Price who finds herself astonished by the grandeur of Mansfield Park, Margaret finds the Thornton drawing-room inhospitable since it makes the visitor feel like an interloper who might dirty the rugs. The room's garish light further develops the novel's tendency to work with binaries as it echoes John Thornton's observation that the Hales' home lacks reflective surfaces: "Here were no mirrors, not even a scrap of glass to reflect the light" (79). A surface reading of this opposition juxtaposes the differences in wealth between the two families as well as the cold restraint both John and Mrs. Thornton exhibit with the warm hospitality of Margaret and her parents. At a deeper level, however, it demonstrates the different philosophical perspectives of the households; Mrs. Thornton uses homemaking to position her son as a formidable and authoritative man, valuing their house only insofar as it elevates him. Susan Johnston points out that the Thorntons' household demonstrates their voracious acquisitiveness in service of establishing their social standing, a quality that chafes against the novel's principles of acquiring wealth so that one may lead a good life. Thornton must learn the balance between acquisition and reasonable material accumulation if he is to win Margaret's favor.[31]

A further demonstration of the Thorntons' domestic practices unfolds when they host a dinner party. The narrator tells us that one of "Mrs. Thornton's rigorous laws of hospitality" is to provide more than enough food for each guest. Margaret finds this abundance "oppressive," but though "careless to abstemiousness in her daily habits, it was part of [Mrs. Thornton's] pride to set a feast before such of her guests as cared for it. Her son shared this feeling" (159). The drawing-room matches this lavishness, more splendid than when Margaret and her father first visited: "Every cover was taken off, and the apartment blazed forth in yellow silk damask and a brilliantly-flowered carpet. Every corner seemed filled up with ornament, until it became a weariness to the eye" (159). This kind of social display is extremely expensive, and their ability to provide it signals that the Thorntons occupy the highest sphere in Milton. Margaret is alienated by it as she is more accustomed to the refinements of her aunt's style and having learned earlier that day about some of the great difficulties Milton's working poor experience. Christoph Lindner writes that the objects found in the Thornton home give it a museum-like quality: "It is precisely as dead objects intended for display and not for use that they also become unmistakable obstacles for material and social comfort."[32] One characteristic of the middle-class Victorian home identified by Thad Logan is its superfluity: "the very collection of objects that in one sense constitutes the Victorian home also threatens it: superfluity turns the home into a museum."[33] For Margaret, this superfluity is off-putting and John himself identifies it as something very different to the habitus displayed by the Hales' drawing room. The Hales, and especially Margaret, see hospitality and social intercourse as obligations of their class status and education.

Lindner's formulation of the Thornton home may not be quite sufficient, however. While their home may impress guests with its ponderous atmosphere, Gaskell makes it clear that Mrs. Thornton values it as her son's (and his future wife's) domestic space while she is waiting for John

to return from proposing to Margaret. As she begins the painful process of separating linens to suit what she assumes will be the new family arrangement, Mrs. Thornton thinks,

> [Margaret] was to be John's wife. To take Mrs. Thornton's place as mistress of the house, was only one of the rich consequences which decked out the supreme glory; all household plenty and comfort, all purple and fine linen, honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, would all come as naturally as jewels on a king's robe, and be as little thought of for their separate value. To be chosen by John, would separate a kitchen-wench from the rest of the world. (207)

Mrs. Thornton imagines that her son's marriage to Margaret will transform her into an almost transcendent being, one who wears extravagance and devotion like a robe. Gaskell may be subtly poking fun at Mrs. Thornton here for the extravagance of this musing, but it is clear that she imagines all material and spiritual wealth as complementing her son's superiority over everyone else. "All household plenty and comfort, all purple and fine linen, honour, love, obedience, troops of friends," that is, nearly every material thing many people imagine as required for happiness are united and available to the woman Thornton chooses. She cannot imagine that Margaret has anything to give or fathom why he loves her deeply. Mrs. Thornton mourns that she must relinquish her post as mistress of the house, but she above all seeks to honor and serve him and stepping away from her domestic duties is one of many sacrifices she has made and is willing to make for him.

Though Thornton's domestic space is imperfect, it does allow Margaret to discern a vulnerability that softens her opinion of him. Just as Thornton felt Margaret's power as she administered hospitality within her space, so does Margaret begin to understand him better in his home. Despite her repugnance at the Thorntons' lavish dinner party, she feels an unacknowledged yet nascent attraction to Thornton in this environment among his "own":

> His whole manner, as master of the house, and entertainer of his friends, was so straightforward, yet simple and modest, as to be thoroughly dignified. Margaret thought she had never seen him to so much advantage. When he had come to their house, there had been always something, either of over-eagerness or of that kind of vexed annoyance which seemed ready to pre-suppose that he was unjustly judged, and yet felt too proud to try and make himself better understood. But now, among his fellows, there was no uncertainty as to his position. He was regarded by them as a man of great force of character; or power in many ways. There was no need to struggle for their respect. (161)

The grandiosity of his entertainment and the presence of "his fellows" endow Thornton with the confidence he needs to enjoy himself. In the drawing room's more feminized space, he is ill at ease while in Mr. Hale's masculine library and his own home, Thornton embodies his own vitality and feels in control of the space he occupies. We could read this as a portrayal of idealized masculinity, wherein Thornton, firmly ensconced in his power, radiates strength and virility thus finally managing to attract rather than repel his heroine. However, this passage also suggests an alternative conception of masculinity, one of openness combined with strength, judiciously balancing mirth with seriousness. Margaret prefers Thornton's earnestness in this setting to Henry Lennox's display of fashionable condescending wit in Harley Street. Thornton here displays a self-possession and honesty that he lacks elsewhere because he is comfortable, not just among his prosperity but among the men he considers peers.

Harley Street and Marlborough Mills embody very different notions of upper-middle class space and the gendered performances within those spaces, too much frivolity in one and too much ostentatious pomp in the other. For Margaret, these spaces are oppressive and while they do not completely lack comfort, she finds them deeply flawed as homes. Neither offer Margaret the kind of life she desires to lead, even though her place in Harley Street is negotiable, as we see toward the

novel's conclusion. It is apparent that Margaret cannot merely relocate to a grander space but has to forge her own space and rebuild her own home among the wreckage of her life.

The forest, urban streets, and the beach:

Margaret consistently finds comfort throughout the novel in outdoor spaces. It is true that oftentimes outdoor space is threatening to her: Henry Lennox's marriage proposal, Margaret's intervention between Thornton and the mob, her initial forays into Milton's raucous streets, and her frightening experience with Frederick at the train station are a few examples. However, Margaret frequently finds indoor space too repressive. Not only does Margaret find comfort in outdoor sojourns, but they seem to bolster her sense of self. Jessie Reeder laments the tendency in Gaskell studies for scholars to assume her characters have a coherent sense of self. Reeder declares that Gaskell's "vision of Victorian womanhood is anything but agentic — her powerful protagonist achieves political ends only ambivalently and only by the deconstruction of hers and other female bodies."[34] For Reeder, the novel is not, as it has so often been represented by critics, a "mid-Victorian moment of female self-assertion"[35]; instead, *North and South* "forces us to understand Victorian womanhood as flexible enough to contain countless contradictory social identities."[36] Victorian women cannot be coherent subjects or effective political agents no matter how much modern-day feminists want them to be. While Reeder argues persuasively that Gaskell shows that maintaining the public/private divide in Victorian studies is untenable and lays bare the problematic nature of the category "woman," she reads scenes of female trauma in the novel without acknowledging the aftermath of these scenes, when bodies heal and subjectivity coheres once again. To say subjectivity is unstable is not to say that an individual has no control over her subjectivity; while Margaret does find that external forces overwhelm her and damage her sense of self, she does reclaim some version of herself. Margaret's struggle to rebuild her identity is a pervasive aspect of

North and South, and Gaskell explicitly represents this struggle throughout as Margaret seeks solace in the external world in order to anchor her sense of self.

It is through Margaret's explorations of the world outside her home that the novel ultimately suggests that a staid domestic life will not suffice for her. Upon returning to Helstone after Edith's wedding, Margaret finds respite outside from her mother's grumblings. Margaret walks, sketches, and attends to the needs of the poor: "She was so happy out of doors, at her father's side, that she almost danced; and with the soft violence of the west wind behind her, as she crossed some heath, she seemed to be borne onwards, as lightly and easily as the fallen leaf that was wafted along by the autumnal breeze" (21). Rather than anthropomorphizing nature, Gaskell's characterization moves from Margaret's child-like joy to figuring her as a harmonious part of the natural scene. Margaret's heartbreak at her father's decision to move the family away to an industrial city is largely due to her understanding of herself as part of the New Forest rather than an individual apart from the natural world.

Margaret's desire to be part of a larger world continues once she arrives in Milton and begins to crave exertion and purpose. Part of her eventual fondness for Milton lies in its chaotic energy. After first moving to Milton, "it was something of a trial to Margaret to go out by herself in this busy bustling place" (71), but she soon looks forward to its vigorous pace and even finds it refreshing. Saddened by her mother's declining health and the stress of hiding Frederick when he comes to visit, Margaret, at Dixon's command, "went out heavily and unwillingly enough. But the length of a street — yes, the air of a Milton Street — cheered her young blood before she reached her first turning. Her step grew lighter, her lip grew redder. She began to take notice, instead of having her thoughts turned so exclusively inward" (131). The material action of walking outside works to relieve pressure on her mind while also reflecting the improvement in her mind by an improvement in her looks. The pressures exerted by indoor space, by domestic and familial

obligations, press down on Margaret and she is grateful to have alternative space — even the air of a Milton Street or Bessy Higgins's home — in which she can escape.

Gaskell's description of Margaret's movement through the Milton streets resonates with Virginia Woolf's *flâneuse* in her 1930 essay "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," in which her speaker recounts the desire to escape from her room at dusk to the winter streets of London to accomplish the quotidian errand of buying a pencil:

> We shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room. For there we sit surrounded by objects which perpetually express the oddity of our own temperaments and enforce the memories of our own experience … But when the door shuts on us, all that vanishes. The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye.[37]

Like Gaskell, Woolf perceives the dynamic tension between the excitement of the public streets and the safety of the private room, the necessity for both the plunge into exciting frenzy and a return to the comfort of "the shell-like covering." The anonymous adventurer is lost in the crowd of fellow city-dwellers and temporarily freed from social pressures. Rather than allowing rigid habits of thinking to endure, the protective covering of the private sphere is cast off and we are made vulnerable to the volatility of the greater world and the excitement it brings to our minds. When Woolf's speaker slips back into her house after her Odyssian adventure, she writes that "it is comforting to feel the old possessions, the old prejudices, fold us round, and shelter and enclose the self which has been blown about at so many street corners, which has battered like a moth at the flame of so many inaccessible lanterns, sheltered and enclosed."[38] The self, so recently dispersed across many potential identities, is reconstituted with the freshness of its journey. Margaret Hale,

returning to her home, does not find this comfort since she is immediately thrust back into her burdensome role of caretaker for her family. As these descriptions from both Woolf and Gaskell suggest, domestic space is not entirely productive or protective.

Flânerie is not the only activity that allows Margaret to reshape her sense of self, as we see in the scenes at Cromer. Gaskell chronicles her recovery after a tumultuous three years in a chapter called "Breathing Tranquility," and describes Margaret sitting "long hours upon the beach, gazing intently on the waves as they chafed with perpetual motion against the pebbly shore, — or she looked out upon the more distant heave, and sparkle against the sky, and heard, without being conscious of hearing, the eternal psalm" (404). This scene returns to previous themes Gaskell has touched upon, specifically the strange infinitude of nature that has the capacity to alienate and comfort, and Margaret's need to sit still while she reorders her mind. The dark cabinet where she formerly hid her cares is exposed to the radiance of a natural scene. The beach is a boundary between human life and the overwhelming natural mystery of the ocean — it represents the fluid yet undeniable impasse between the self and that which is not. This primal connection with the threshold of the sea is echoed in Matthew Arnold's mournful lines from "Dover Beach":

> Listen! you hear the grating roar
> Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
> At their return, up the high strand,
> Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
> With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
> The eternal note of sadness in.[39]

As Arnold's lines suggest, her communion with the sea touches a higher plane of being and "enabled Margaret to put events in their right places, as to origin and significance, both as regarded her past life and her future. Those hours by the sea-side were not lost, as any one might have seen who had

had the perception to read, or the care to understand" (404). The narrator offers a critique of her aunt and cousin's inability to understand Margaret or what she has been through, though the penetrating Henry Lennox is aware of the changes made in her. Freed of all burdens and obligations, Margaret is content to imaginatively float while her mind puts everything in order. Margaret is not saddened like Arnold's speaker who concludes his poem by entreating his new bride to retreat with him away from the tumultuous world; rather, she moves from despair to renewal. The various traumas that threaten to dismantle her identity are processed. As it has throughout the novel, outdoor space offers Margaret tranquility and the ability to restore herself.

The final stage of Margaret's trajectory is her acceptance of the bitter reality of her parents' deaths and her resolve to triumph over her sad circumstances and act with purpose since Mr. Bell's inheritance makes it possible for her to be an independent woman. Margaret's great insight from her time on the beach in Cromer is "that she must one day answer for her own life, and what she had done with it; and she tried to settle that most difficult problem for women, how much was to be utterly merged in obedience to authority, and how much might be set apart for freedom in working" (406). As helpful as her meditations have been, she knows that she must reconstruct her life if she is to be happy. Margaret begins to assert herself to her aunt and cousin and establishes her right to "answer for her own life."

Pre-dating the "new woman" novels that would begin emerging in the 1880s,[40] *North and South* engages with some of that literary movement's concerns around women's struggles to be more active political and cultural participants in Victorian England. Gaskell's novel carves out a space for a young woman to live a self-determined and fulfilling life. Deirdre d'Albertis examines *North and South* through the lens of Victorian female philanthropy, pointing out that Gaskell herself was involved in many philanthropic projects in Manchester, and she employs philanthropy to explore the complex interactions they allowed women to have with the public. Contrary to the trope of the

"Angel in the house," women like Margaret Hale were able to circulate unsupervised in public if they were doing so under the auspices of charity. However, there was anxiety around female philanthropy and D'Albertis argues, "Around the opposition between streetwalker and district visitor … women's class identities within the urban scene were re-formed and consolidated."[41] Public women of any kind threaten to be marked out as prostitutes, illegible to the observers around them. Margaret herself is rendered illegible by her public movements, suspected by Fanny Thornton as acting out of love when she protects John from the angry mob or chastised by Higgins when she presumes the privilege to call at his house when she pleases. As upsetting as these misunderstandings are for Margaret, she continues to occupy these spaces, becoming more comfortable in them as she begins to understand Milton's social codes and behaviors.

Margaret does not stop at charitable work, a contested but still acceptable sphere for women, but actually decides to propose a business arrangement to Thornton. Earlier in the novel, Margaret debates with Thornton over working and living conditions in Milton. Her decision to invest in his factory suggests that she may exert this more powerful influence to continue advocating for improvements in how workers are treated in Milton, moving beyond the Southern notion of female philanthropy encapsulated by the figure of Lady Bountiful into a more substantial and political role in the North where she can dictate positive systemic changes.

Margaret's self-assertion culminates in organizing a meeting with Thornton to discuss the prospect of investing some of her fortune into Marlborough Mills. Gaskell brings us back to the drawing-room — that ambiguous and evocative space where Thornton first began to feel significant desire towards Margaret — where Margaret meets with Henry Lennox to work out the details of the loan. For all Henry's flaws, Gaskell is clear that perception and intelligence are not among them, and he retreats from a second meeting when he realizes Thornton is his romantic rival. Margaret stumbles through an explanation of the arrangement: "She was most anxious to have it all looked

upon in the light of a mere business arrangement, in which the principle advantage would be on her side" (424). Thornton ceases to conceal his overwhelming emotions and the scene shifts from a business to a marital negotiation. There is no formal proposal; Thornton demands she respond, for "if you do not speak — I shall claim you as my own in some strange presumptuous way" (424), language that has proprietary and erotic dimensions since it stakes Thornton's claim over Margaret while acknowledging the problematics of such a claim. Thornton's continues to employ mercantile language when he displays the dried Helstone roses. Margaret demands he give them to her, and his response is transactional: "Very well. Only you must pay me for them" (425). This exchange suggests that both Margaret and Thornton have currency and power in the arrangement. Her acceptance of his cloaked marriage proposal is the price she must pay for the roses, powerful symbols of Thornton's love for Margaret. The novel's final lines are gentle reproaches to one another about what Aunt Shaw and Mrs. Thornton will think of their engagement.

Although *North and South* satisfies the requirements of the marriage plot, it does so in such a way that suggests that Margaret and Thornton's marriage will be one of not just intellectual or spiritual equality but one of economic equality as well. It gives us an unconventional proposal and acceptance and an acknowledgement of the difficulties that they will face when their engagement is made public. Rather than a promise of social harmony and cohesion, the novel simply ends. Margaret and John's partnership reimagines gender and class relations within a society that is facing serious social ruptures along with significant economic shifts. It also suggests ways in which Margaret and John's shared domestic space might be configured in unconventional ways, since Margaret insists on a more active life that may preclude a traditional domestic role and resist the ideological divide of separate spheres.

Notes

[1] Terence Wright, *Elizabeth Gaskell: "We Are Not Angels": Realism, Gender, Values* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc, 1995), 105.
[2] Job is invoked a second time when Mr. Hale considers its pedagogical implications for Nicholas Higgins. See page 224-5.
[3] I offset private and public in quotation marks to acknowledge the constructedness of these concepts as well as the fallaciousness of them.
[4] See Ingham's introduction to *North and South* for a cursory discussion of the title change.
[5] Dickens, qtd. in Ingham's introduction, xii.
[6] Interestingly, Gaskell's publisher Chapman and Hall offered somewhat opposite advice for a name change to Gaskell before *Mary Barton* was published. Originally titled "John Barton," Edward Chapman urged her to change the title, and according to Annette B. Hopkins, "taking the safe and conservative position, no doubt felt that a murderer was not exactly what the public, in that day, would look for in the hero of a novel intended for family reading. Confronted with this problem, the author cleverly saw Mary as a key to the resolution. This necessitated some quick shifting of emphasis; Mary had to be pushed more into the foreground. When this happens, Mary becomes alive-in the latter part of the story when she begins to know her own heart. But the scar left by this major operation remains." See "*Mary Barton:* A Victorian Bestseller, *The Trollopian* 3.1 (Jun 1948): 11.
[7] See Gaskell's short preface to *North and South*: "On its first appearance in 'Household Words', this tale was obliged to conform to the conditions imposed by the requirements of a weekly publication, and likewise to confine itself within certain advertised limits, in order that faith might be kept with public" (5).
[8] For discussions on the allegorical and symbolic dimensions of north and south in the novel, please see Roberto M. Dainotto's chapter "Lost in an Ancient South: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Rhetoric of Latitudes" in *Place in Literature: Regions, Cultures, and Communities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).
[9] Susan Johnston, *Women and Domestic Experience in Victorian Political Fiction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 104.
[10] Johnston, *Women and Domestic Experience,* 129.
[11] Sarah Dredge, "Negotiating 'A Woman's Work': Philanthropy to Social Science in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40 (2012): 85.
[12] Beatrice Bazell, "The 'Atrocious' Interior: Wallpaper, Machinery and 1850s Aesthetics in *North and South*," *The Gaskell Journal* 26 (2012): 42.
[13] Hilary M. Schor, *Scheherezade in the Marketplace: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 150.
[14] Florence Nightingale, *Cassandra: An Essay by Florence Nightingale* (United States: The Feminist Press, 1979), 25. Nightingale wrote "Cassandra" in 1854 before she left for the Crimean War, the same year as *North and South* began its run in *Household Words*. Nightingale published it privately, but the essay would not become publicly available until 1928 as an appendix to Ray Strachey's history of the British women's rights movement *The Cause* (Mark Bostridge, "Women of the World Unite," *The Guardian* online, accessed 26 March 2016).
[15] John Paul Kanwit, "'Mere Outward Appearances'? Household Taste and Social Perception in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*," *Victorian Review* 35.1 (2009): 201.
[16] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, eds. Stephen Lubar and David W. Kingery (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).
[17] Jill L. Matus, "*Mary Barton* and *North and South*," *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35.
[18] Matus, "*Mary Barton* and *North and South*", 41.
[19] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 14-5.
[20] Johnston, *Women and Domestic Experience in Victorian Political Fiction*, 107.
[21] Kanwit, "Mere Outward Appearances," 191.
[22] Bazell, "The 'Atrocious' Interior," 37.
[23] Bazell, "The 'Atrocious' Interior," 38.

[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 190.
[25] Kanwit, "Mere Outward Appearances," 206.
[26] Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiv.
[27] Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 27.
[28] Patricia Ingham, *The Language of Gender and Class: Transformation in the Victorian Novel* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
[29] Ingham, *Language of Gender and Class*, 73.
[30] Csikszentmihalyl, "Why We Need Things," 22.
[31] Johnston, *Women and Domestic Experience in Victorian Political Fiction*, 114-117.
[32] Christoph Lindner, "Outside Looking In: Material Culture in Gaskell's Industrial Novels," *Orbus Litterarum: International Review of Literary Studies* 55.5 (2000): 386.
[33] Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 9.
[34] Jessie Reeder, "Broken Bodies, Permeable Subjects: Rethinking Victorian Women's 'Agency' in Gaskell's *North and South*," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 9.3. (Winter 2013): 2.
[35] Reeder, "Broken Bodies, Permeable Subjects," 3.
[36] Reeder, "Broken Bodies, Permeable Subjects," 3.
[37] Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177-8.
[38] Woolf, "Street Haunting," 187.
[39] Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach," *Matthew Arnold,* eds. Mariam Allott and Robert H. Super (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), ll 9-14.
[40] Anne Heilmann designates 1880-1910 as the first generation of "New Woman" writers. See *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).
[41] Deirdre d'Albertis, *Dissembling Fictions: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Social Text* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 47.

Chapter Four

Homelessness, Mobility, and Self-Exile in *Villette*

> "To be home-sick, one must have a home; which I have not." – Lucy Snowe[1]

> "*Villette* stages the necessity of a voyage out of the domestic novel, as if the centripetal impulse of the genre threatened to collapse the narrative, causing it to cave in on itself as around a black hole." – Karen Lawrence[1]

While Juliet Granville crossed the English Channel from France to England in order to seek her family and home, Charlotte Brontë's protagonist Lucy Snowe in *Villette* makes the reverse journey; bereft of family, connections, and a physical dwelling, Lucy leaves England to create a life for herself on the continent, settling in Villette, Labassecoeur, Brontë's imaginative rendering of Brussels, to teach in a girls' school. Brontë's use of first-person narrative theoretically should give us greater access to Lucy's interior world and to some extent it does. However, Lucy's narration is not a straightforward transmission of her thoughts to the page. Lucy's complex psychology, her tendency to hold back and mislead the reader, her refusal to let us know her, the way we know, say, Jane Eyre or even Fanny Price, make her difficult to comprehend. This tendency to withhold is one of the most fascinating and frustrating aspects of the novel. Despite Lucy's confidences, her narrative aporias tease and haunt the reader. Lucy refuses to speak of her greatest traumas — the extinction of her family in England and M. Paul's ambiguous fate in the novel's final chapter — because these traumas signify not only great personal loss but also a symbolic loss of feminine identity in Victorian society: we assume that Lucy will never be daughter, sister, wife, or mother. She seems fated to be

[1] Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. Helen M. Cooper (UK: Penguin Random House, 2004), 402. All further references to *Villette* will appear parenthetically in-text.

homeless — to have, as she poignantly tells the reader, "no true home" (400). And yet, she does create a home for herself. Lucy, so proud to be English and so critical of the Labassecoeurians, finds that England is inhospitable to her situation as a poor and plain woman bereft of connections. Villette, for all its shortcomings, offers Lucy the possibility of independence, borne from her intelligence and resilience but also her ability to use her imagination to negotiate difficult spaces so that she can achieve greater agency and material success.

The ambivalence around "home" is quite pronounced in the novel, both explicitly in Lucy Snowe's narrative and implicitly in the relative absence of stable domestic spaces within the narrative. Only Burney's *The Wanderer* rivals Brontë's distrust of domestic space in *Villette*, but even Juliet comes to be reconciled to domestic bliss and safety. While Gaskell treats domesticity with distrust and tempers it with the necessity for a life outside the home, Brontë definitely rejects the possibility of a satisfying marriage plot and conventional domesticity for her protagonist Lucy. Beyond the Brettons' cozy homes at Bretton and La Terrasse and Madame Walravens's foreboding Gothic mansion, homes are nearly absent in the novel; we hear about them, of course — of people going to and from them — but moments of domesticity are scarce. Shanyn Fiske attributes this scarcity to Charlotte Brontë's deep and profound grief over the deaths of her siblings Branwell, Emily, and Anne, who had all died in quick succession between September 1848 and May 1849. Brontë began writing *Villette* in 1852 and published it in 1853. Fiske argues that the deaths of her siblings resulted in a feeling of alienation from Haworth, a persistent homesickness that clings to and colors Lucy Snowe's journey.[2]

While reading an author's life directly into a text should be handled with care, it is reasonable to assume Brontë's grief would have permeated her fiction since her relationships with her sisters were very close and their writing lives were intimately bound up together. Not only did the siblings begin writing together and collaboratively with their juvenilia, but when they matured into adult

writing, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne performed their labor in the same house and even in the same room, publishing a book of poems together and penning *Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights,* and *Agnes Grey* respectively across the table from one another. The metaphorical tropes of storms and shipwrecks that haunt Lucy's narrative might also echo Brontë's personal tragedies; the very vagueness with which Lucy recounts her traumas makes room for Brontë to allude to the deaths of her beloved siblings. Lucy's self-exile to the Continent also mirrors Brontë's creative exile to Villette for her novel's story, a creative choice which suggests, among other things,[3] that England had, at least temporarily, failed to provide Brontë with inspiration. Her early death precludes the possibility of knowing whether she would have made a creative return to England.

Biographical considerations aside, *Villette* consistently offers compelling evidence that Brontë's novel is subverting, and possibly rejecting, the marriage plot and the idealized portrait of domesticity that the genre demands. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the feminine types surrounding Lucy ("the little girl lost," "the coquette," the male manqué," "the buried nun") fail to offer her an expansive female subjectivity, and "[i]n struggling against the confining forms she inherits, Lucy is truly involved in a mythic undertaking — an attempt to create an adequate fiction of her own."[4] Karen Lawrence argues that the beginning of the novel "offer[s] the domestic as a kind of annihilating setting … *Villette* stages the necessity of a voyage out of the domestic novel, as if the centripetal impulse of the genre threatened to collapse the narrative."[5] Sonjeong Cho envisions Lucy Snowe not as a traditional domestic heroine at all but rather as a female artist, alternating between "compulsive storyteller," "neurotic writer," and skilled actress. Cho suggests that the novel occupies a generic space between the Bildungsroman and the Künsterroman in order to expose "the problematic relation between romance and vocation."[6] The boldest break with the domestic novel is Brontë's refusal to narrate a straight-forward marriage plot.

While Lawrence and Cho both offer productive readings of Lucy's nonconformity as a nineteenth-century heroine, I am more interested in exploring how Lucy embraces discomfort and unhappiness to cultivate spaces of power and creativity that allow her to exert agency and resist external encroachments. Though small and quiet like Fanny Price, Lucy quite aggressively rejects the need for material comfort that Fanny desires and so carefully cultivates, and instead fashions herself after Job, bereft of riches and family. The physical world of the novel is at times overwhelming, and there has been much scholarly debate on how materiality impacts Lucy's subjectivity. In her article "Choseville: Brontë's *Villette* and the Art of Bourgeois Interiority," Eva Badowska locates the novel in the conspicuous consumption and fetishism of the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, arguing that "the novel suggests that the bourgeois subject, though it comes into being through its relations with things, is defined by the nostalgic notion that its true interiority has been lost under the pressure of things."[7] Jonathan Shears and Jen Harrison also point out the overwhelming and unstable "thingness" of *Villette*:

> The desire to 'shape' in *Villette* is continually undermined by the locomotion of objects and the anxiety that it is the subject, rather than the object, which lacks agency. Sudden recognition of the thingness or solidity of object matter is registered with unease: not quite entering the subjectivity of another but neither residing comfortably within one's own.[8]

Like Badowska and Shears and Harrison, I am interested in the relationship between materiality and subjectivity in the novel, but I aim to demonstrate how, much like in *Mansfield Park*, subjectivity is not lost but rather *forged through* "the pressure of things," as well as the assemblages of material, natural, and social forces.

Jane Bennett's theory of vital materialism, specifically assemblage theory, offers a way into understanding how *Villette* is engaging with Lucy's subjectivity creation by giving us insight into how the material world exerts pressure and agency against and despite the human. I disagree with Michael

Klotz's reading that "Lucy's passivity in *Villette* is discernible in a repeated image: the unwanted imposition of objects that threaten the spaces she occupies,"[9] because it emphasizes Lucy's lack of agency. Instead of this focus on Lucy's passivity, I would like to consider how she circumvents or manipulates the material world in the novel. Like Fanny Price, Lucy is acutely aware that materiality is imbued with an agency all its own, and her passivity can be read as a recognition that she must wait until a given assemblage is more amenable to her manipulations. Unlike Fanny, however, Lucy is skeptical of material comfort and seeks out a materiality that produces dis-ease rather than comfort. For Lucy, discomfort is not just an experience to be endured but a condition within which she thrives. All her tragedies and setbacks spur her to make difficult choices that, successfully completed, expand her agency and power.

Spaces of Confinement: "All Within Me Became Narrowed to My Lot"

The complexity of space in *Villette* is impressive, and at the risk of oversimplifying it, I will break it down into a taxonomy of three types of space in order to analyze how Lucy works with and against the space she encounters in England and Villette: spaces that confine Lucy physically and psychically, spaces that allow her interiority to expand, and spaces of performance that allow her to practice the authority she deeply craves. While these categories are not so distinct as my organization suggests, they help structure my way of thinking about Lucy's space. Spaces of confinement are quite common in the novel, and as readers sympathetic to Lucy's plight, we might chafe against them, as Lucy herself clearly does. The power of Gilbert and Gubar's reading of Lucy's confinement and her buried life cannot be discounted; however, the spaces Lucy occupies in *Villette* are not entirely oppressive. In certain ways, they offer Lucy perspective on her sense of self and how she fits into the larger world by allowing her to negotiate complex social relations that are themselves dependent upon very specific spatial dynamics. The Brettons' two homes, for instance, are viscerally

comforting to Lucy, and help cultivate her desire for a more conventional life, one that includes bourgeois sensibilities such as a comfortable house and a tall handsome self-made man as her husband. However, Lucy's unsuitability within these spaces, and her striking discomfort within prolonged exposure to stable domestic space, renders their comfort fleeting. Ultimately, Lucy must abandon her desire for the marriage plot if she is to find her version of a happy ending, a fact she recognizes and works to discipline herself into accepting.

Lucy is not homeless when we are first introduced to her but rather comfortably housed in her godmother's home in the town of Bretton, England. Lucy gives no sense of her life between visits to Bretton, but she gives us plenty of detail about the home, the family, and the frequency of her visits, and she explicitly states her fondness for her godmother's house:

> When I was a girl I went to Bretton about twice a year, and well I liked the visit. The house and its inmates specially suited me. The large peaceful rooms, the well-arranged furniture, the clear wide windows, the balcony outside, looking down on a fine antique street, where Sundays and holidays seemed always to abide — so quiet was its atmosphere, so clean its pavement — these things pleased me well. (7)

The atmosphere at Mrs. Bretton's home is one of tranquility and understated elegance that extends to the town itself: light, spacious, and clean, Lucy clearly has a deep affection for this space that endures well into her adult life. Liana Piehler acknowledges the importance of place and identity in these passages, noting that, Lucy, rather than introducing herself by name, opts instead to open her narrative "with geographic placement and spatial composition, both forms of description and enclosure. Any sense of personal identity is carved from the description of spaces and her possible responses to them."[10] This simplistic representation of home and self will be quickly undermined, but for now, it prepares us to expect a conventional heroine who will seek and find a successful marriage and home. Just as Gaskell introduces us to Margaret Hale in her aunt's luxurious and

comfortable home, we first see Lucy not in her family home but rather in the home of her surrogate family. As Judith Lowder Newton points out, the novel "begins in that ideal interior … which … in much fiction by women functions as an emblem of the heroine's reward at the end of the novel — the life of comfort, quiet, and order conventionally supposed to define the experience of a genteel married woman."[11] As Piehler and Newton both recognize, Brontë seeks to begin with more conventional domestic expectations for Lucy Snowe, identifying her with a safe domestic bourgeois space and kind, graceful relations. Lucy's peaceful beginning will be marred, like Margaret's, by dislocation and tragedy that will haunt the rest of her journey. Unlike Margaret, who consistently functions as an essential member of whatever family unit she is currently part of, Lucy is always alienated from the life of the family, and as Gilbert and Gubar point out, "[i]nstead of participating in the life of the Brettons, Lucy watches it."[12] The space of the house, comforting and soothing, is also paradoxically marginalizing for Lucy.

Brontë's decision to use the name of Bretton for both the town and the family's surname encourages the reader to collapse the public space of the town and the private space of the Brettons' home into a single entity, wherein the domestic displaces and relegates the public to the marginal and unknown. The public sphere of the town is a place where Graham and Mr. Home disappear to; this public space, however, is not depicted as important or interesting within the confines of Mrs. Bretton's home since the reader, along with Lucy Snowe, never ventures outside. Nicholas Dames writes that it is important that Bretton, "the name of Graham and his mother, is the name of their English town; like Polly and her father, 'home' is literally inscribed upon them, is constitutive of their identity."[13] Polly's last name is "Home" and Brontë's use of the surnames "Bretton" and "Home" should immediately signal to the reader the importance of home in the novel and the home's implicit connection to both a fixed point in England and an intangible "Englishness" that the Brettons transport to Villette when they move there. The symbolic order of nation, family, and

home also effectively delineates Lucy's subtle but clear marginalization within the Brettons' home; if the Brettons and the Homes are clearly marked as domestic figures as Dames suggests, then Lucy's surname marks her as an isolated figure in its evocation of cold purity and implicit transience. Her emigration to Villette is a disavowal of her past and a reconfiguration of her identity, while the Brettons emigrate as mother and son. "Bretton" does invoke more than a straight-forward Englishness, however, since the word is a cognate with Breton, the descriptor for people from Brittany, an area of France directly south of southwestern England. The linguistic resonance and physical proximity of Bretton/England and Brittany/France further complicate the already complicated symbolism of the Brettons, because it marks them simultaneously as English and foreign, suggesting the slipperiness and multiplicity of national identity that also haunts the pages of *The Wanderer*.

Lucy's isolation within the Bretton home is exacerbated when Polly comes to visit and Lucy is sidelined in favor of the more charming dramatic arc of Graham and Polly's friendship that plays like a marriage. Polly herself is so deeply homesick and affected by her father's absence that Lucy swears "no furrowed face of adult exile, longing for Europe at Europe's antipodes, ever bore more legibly the signs of home sickness than did her infant visage" (14). The novel certainly touches on female displacement beyond that of Lucy Snowe's (Madame Beck's school, for instance, is a collection of temporarily displaced girls and young women), and Polly presents a case of the profound and painful displacement humans can experience when they are first separated from home or beloved family as young children. The space of Bretton threatens to destabilize Polly's subjectivity even as Lucy's sense of self is contained by its safety and stability. Polly's adjustment to Bretton is agonizing to witness, and Lucy comments more than once on the danger of Polly's attachment to her father, describing it as monomania and Polly herself as a "precocious fanatic or untimely saint" (14) as she prays vigorously for her father's safety.

Polly soon attaches herself to Graham, "a handsome, faithless-looking youth of sixteen" (19) despite his somewhat dismissive and occasionally cruel treatment of Polly. Newton offers an insidious reading of the dynamic between Polly and Graham, calling their childish performance of marriage "a condensation of powerlessness and pain."[14] Newton suggests an understanding of Lucy's reading of this playing at domesticity as an unconscious rejection of the type of love and marriages that underpins the plots of Brontë's earlier novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*. While reflecting on Polly's character, Lucy muses, "One would have thought the child had no mind or life of her own, but must necessarily live, move, and have her being in another: now that her father was taken from her, she nestled to Graham, and seemed to feel by his feelings: to exist in his existence" (29). Polly strikes Lucy as being a conduit for the feelings of men, first for her father and later Graham: rather than cultivating an autonomous self, Polly serves as the paradigmatic and miniaturized Angel of the House, content to construct her interiority as contingent on her masculine counterparts.

The spaces and characters who occupy the first few chapters fall away once Lucy returns home and experiences the unspoken tragedy that marks her out as a homeless young woman. While describing her removal from Bretton, Lucy obliquely refers to a conventional imagining of ideal Victorian girlhood, ensconced in happy comfort and domesticity. Yet, as she so often does, Lucy simultaneously destabilizes and dismantles this ideal portrait:

> I betook myself home, having been absent six months. It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass — the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?

> Picture me then idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft. However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must somehow have fallen over-board, or that there must have been wreck at last … For many days and nights neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (39)

At the beginning of this passage, Lucy blithely acquiesces to the audience's comfort and expectations, encouraging us to imagine the scene we expect while making it clear that we are nurturing a fantasy. The passage also introduces the concept of burial for the first time, a literal and psychological behavior that Lucy employs and invokes throughout *Villette.* Employing the sea imagery on which she often relies, Lucy represents her domestic tragedy as a shipwreck, her boat violently over-turned and her comfort irrevocably destroyed. The home is figured as a ship, her family as its crew, and as both ship and crew are lost, we can supply the rest. The ship is perhaps a more apt metaphor for home than a more traditional imagining of home, since it is more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of nature and fate. The fatalistic tones of this passage — "there must have been a wreck at last" — is less striking when considered alongside the preceding paragraph's ambiguous suggestion of domestic infelicity: "the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted." It is difficult to imagine Lucy's home life as a happy one, and she explicitly tells us that she does not wish to tell us the actual state of things. As Lucy will relate to Polly much later in the novel, Lucy believes that "Some lives *are* thus blessed: it is God's will: it is the attesting trace and lingering evidence of Eden. Other lives run from the first another course. Other travellers encounter weather fitful and gusty, wild and variable" (418).

Lucy returns to the notion of righteous suffering in chapter fifteen "The Long Vacation" when depressed from her caretaking duties in the Rue Fossette: "I concluded it to be a part of

[God's] great plan that some must deeply suffer while they live, and I thrilled in the certainty that of this number, I was one" (174). Using the same fatalistic language here as she does in the long passage above, Lucy reveals what to modern readers might sound like a cynical and deeply sad worldview: that some are meant to suffer and others are meant to be happy and she, Lucy Snowe, is one of the former, meant to wander homeless and bereft. However, this notion of suffering is both a burden and a blessing for Lucy; she is meant to suffer, yes, but as one of God's chosen, part of his divine plan. Lucy explicitly identifies with Job when she first meets Ginevra, telling the spoiled young woman that she is "[a]s poor as Job" (61). Lucy's conviction that she is meant to suffer and to triumph despite that suffering become central fixtures of her identity and frequently give her the strength to encounter moments of profound despondency. The tensions between Lucy's fate and other characters' happiness are clearly delineated within the domestic spaces in which they are located with Lucy constructing herself as an outsider and interloper.

Lucy is not fated to complete unhappiness, and the blend of comfort and confinement she experiences at Bretton is revived when she felicitously reunites with Graham (now, Dr. John) and Mrs. Bretton in Villette at their new home La Terrasse. While the circumstances may seem like the type of unrealistic contrivance Victorian novels are sometimes mocked for, Lucy's reunion with the Brettons functions to recall home for Lucy, to remind her and the reader that the past is always with us. The Brettons save Lucy from the despairing loneliness of her life in Madame Beck's pensionnat even if she (now an adult) often feels gently pushed to the margins of their familial happiness. Even the domestic texture of their home proves itself to be intimately known and beloved by Lucy when she wakes up there after her illness. Lucy describes her fainting spell as a divorcing of her soul and body and waking up is a "racking sort of struggle" (185). The connection between Lucy's interior self and memory and the objects that surround her, some of which she herself has created, offers insight into how Brontë may have understood the power of the nonhuman to impact human

subjectivity. The moment of her coming into being, a reconstruction of her subjectivity, occurs in a room that is strikingly uncanny, both deeply familiar and unfamiliar.

For Badowska, the pincushion Lucy notices and remembers having sewn carries great weight, achieving the status of a fetish object in its power to tether Lucy to the symbolic and historical forces that organize families.[15] Kathryn Crowther also focuses on this moment, pointing out that it is specifically the "memory of her own labour that restores [Lucy's] sense of self and memory"[16] when Lucy recalls the pincushion and the handscreens she decorated during her childhood stay with her godmother. The furniture "dawned on me by degrees," "appeared to grow familiar," and "[s]trange to say, old acquaintance were all about me, and 'auld lang syne' smiled out of every nook" (186). Lucy interestingly cast these objects as old friends, recognizing in them their power to soothe her and recall her to her identity. Falling back to sleep and waking up in a different yet familiar room, Lucy accepts the truth of her surroundings — "I knew — I was obliged to know — " and she is "compelled to recognize and to hail, as last night I had, perforce, recognized and hailed the rosewood, the drapery, the porcelain, of the drawing-room" (189). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's insights concerning the necessity of objects to shape our subjectivity are particularly useful here: "Without external props even our personal identity fades and goes out of focus."[17] Badowska has persuasively argued that objects in La Terrasse help Lucy to reconstitute her identity, even as her intimate knowledge of these objects simultaneously reminds Lucy and the reader that she was always a peripheral figure in the Brettons' domestic space.

The Brettons' identities seem stable and transportable, anchored by their domestic possessions, while Lucy Snowe, free and unencumbered, is vulnerable to a dissolution of her identity as implied by her surname. Lucy's unstable sense of self contrasts with the more robust identities of Graham and Mrs. Bretton, characters who may strike the reader as unflinchingly bourgeois, capable of surmounting any difficulty through hard work and endurance, relying on one another for love and

support. We see the way Lucy's identity is constituted through the Brettons' domestic objects, but Lucy never gives the impression that the Brettons suffer the way she does. They are attractive and happy, free of anxieties beyond how tidily their lives can be arranged. They embody Englishness, and by extension, home for Lucy.

While Lucy admires and loves this aspect of the Brettons' lives, she recognizes that she does not share it. She is an alien visitor to their bourgeois comfort, capable of withstanding and thriving in the uncomfortable space of Madame Beck's, priding herself on her ability to do so and finding herself attached to her way of life there. When the Brettons insist she stay longer, Lucy tells us, "I could have cried, so irritated and eager was I to be gone. I longed to leave them as the criminal of the scaffold longs for the axe to descend: that is, I wished the pang over" (253). Lucy feels like an interloper at La Terrasse; she does not truly belong there and must return to Madame Beck's to work. The happiness at La Terrasse does not belong to her, and she forces her more fanciful side to submit to the steely and cruel "Reason" that lords over her: "This hag, this Reason, would not let me look up, or smile, or hope: she could not rest unless I were altogether crushed, cowed, broken-in, and broken-down. According to her, I was born only to work for a piece of bread, to await the pains of death, and steadily through all life to despond" (255-6). Lucy's invocation of "the criminal on the scaffold" figures the Rue Fossette as a prison counterpoised with the Elysium of La Terrasse. While this metaphor paints a somber portrait of Lucy's expectations, it also demonstrates how powerfully she commits to accepting them.

Lucy's acceptance of discomfort, her awareness that her fate is to suffer and endure, is established early on in *Villette*. After she takes a position as a caretaker to the invalid Miss Marchmont, Lucy finds that

> Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all … I forgot that there were fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever-changing sky

> outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick-chamber; I was almost content to forget it. All within me became narrowed to my lot. (42)

This description is deeply claustrophobic, but it allows us to see Lucy's resilience — her ability to adjust her emotional needs to fit her physical space and the psychological pressures of that space. Piehler argues that Miss Marchmont's house "seems to shape Lucy's self, her soul. The experience as seen through her spatial metaphors drains her of any and all vitality and narrows her potential."[18] While I agree that Lucy is externally worked on by her environment, I see this as a way that Lucy shores up her vitality and potential. The way Lucy describes this shrinking is fascinating — "All within me became narrowed to my lot" — it hints at Lucy's chameleon-like nature, her ability to contain her desires while also suggesting the impossibility of completely doing so in the tell-tale line "I was *almost* content to forget" (emphasis mine) the world outside. The assemblage of objects and forces in and outside Miss Marchmont's house — "the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick chamber," "the tiny messes" eaten, the violent spring storm, Lucy's "crib in a closet within her room" — act to yoke Lucy to Miss Marchmont in such a way that she is content to tie her fate to the older woman. Her familiarity with her employer allows Lucy to feel affection for her, to admire her virtues and passions, and to be met with affection in return — something Lucy craves and only receives in small morsels throughout the novel. Her experience with Miss Marchmont gives Lucy the opportunity to be useful and productive, a lesson she will carry with her for the rest of her working life. Miss Marchmont's house functions as an ambiguously-defined domestic space for Lucy since she does find some kind of happiness there, impoverished though it may be. The night before she dies, Miss Marchmont promises Lucy that she will "begin by trying to make you happy. I will endeavour to do something for you, Lucy: something that will benefit you when I am dead" (46). Miss Marchmont's death, which could have promised Lucy some kind of independence or greater stability, occurs before she can amend her will, and Lucy's fate is left to Miss Marchmont's miserly heir.

Lucy's ability to function and in some measure thrive within a space that is cramped both literally — Lucy sleeps in a "crib in a closet within [Miss Marchmont's] room — and figuratively — "All within me became narrowed to my lot" — may be explained by her relationship with Miss Marchmont and the latter's ability to give Lucy intellectual companionship. When she transitions to working for Madame Beck in the Rue Fossette, Brontë complicates the notion of domestic space even more, demonstrating how complex notions of privacy, safety, and comfort can be when home and work exist in the same space. After Lucy successfully acquires a position in Madame Beck's pensionnat, she immediately learns about Madame Beck's "system for managing and regulating" her school: "'Surveillance,' 'espionage,' — these were her watch-words" (80). Surveillance is new to Lucy and acts as a further constraint on her interior life. Once Madame Beck believes Lucy is asleep, she rifles through her few belongings, makes duplicates of her keys, and examines her face and body while she sleeps. Lucy acknowledges the necessity of Madame Beck's surveillance but still feels offended by it: "The end was not bad, but the means were hardly fair or justifiable" (76-7).

Lucy's ethical stance changes once her interior life begins to develop in richer ways and Madame Beck's surveillance becomes more threatening to Lucy's sense of self. Shaw argues that Lucy is not initially bothered by Madame Beck's snooping because "she has no personal life to invade; she is outside the circuit of desire. Once she does have something to hide — her letters from Dr. John, for instance — she cares very much indeed."[19] Lucy knows her character is good, and early in the novel, this is all Madame Beck can discover about her. These methods of surveillance begin to bother Lucy, as Shaw points out, because they refuse her privacy by invading her secrets, and Lucy wants to protect her private life from these intrusions. Lucy eventually earns her privacy from Madame Beck after the latter must leave the pensionnat for a fortnight to attend to family and returns to find everything running smoothly. As a reward for her "steadiness," Madame Beck gifts Lucy her liberty, and "every slight shackle she had ever laid on me, she, from that time, with quiet

hand removed" (331). By relinquishing her surveillance of Lucy, Madame Beck grants Lucy fuller agency within the walls of the Rue Fossette. Lucy's dedication to the dignity of her work seems to finally earn Madame Beck's trust (though as a reader I do not fully trust her promise to Lucy). Privacy is a privilege, and by earning her right to such a privilege from Madame Beck, Lucy comes closer to autonomy.

Madame Beck's invasions of privacy mark just one of the domestic conflicts inherent in Lucy's life in the Rue Fossette. The expectations of what Lucy's labor entails are liable to shift and change without Lucy's approval. While Lucy takes some kind of pleasure in caring for Miss Marchmont and even Madame Beck's children, her experience taking care of Marie Broc during her first long vacation at Madame Beck's is quite different and threatens to rob Lucy of her physical and mental health. Left nearly alone at the pensionnat, Lucy struggles to administer to Marie Broc's care. Lucy describes the disabled girl as a "hapless creature" and a "heavy charge," "warped" in both mind and body with a "propensity" to evil: "A vague bent to mischief, an aimless malevolence made constant vigilance indispensable … it was like being prisoned with some strange tameless animal, than associating with a human being" (174). We see Lucy's tenderness when she takes care of Madame Beck's children, especially little Georgette when she is recovering from an illness. Lucy is overwhelmed by the embraces of the child: "Feeling of no kind abounded in that house; this pure little drop from a pure little source was too sweet: it penetrated deep, and subdued the heart, and sent a gush to the eyes" (134). Because Marie Broc is unable to interact with Lucy in this way, Lucy receives no emotional fulfillment from her labor and can only deduce that Marie Broc "did not seem unhappy" (173).

Having been recently elevated from a children's nursery maid and instructress to English teacher, Lucy feels unfairly coerced into attending to Marie Broc. She protests to the reader that "these duties should not have fallen on me; a servant, now absent, had rendered them hitherto, and

in the hurry of holiday departure, no substitute to fill this office had been provided" (174). Rather than traveling with friends or family as her other acquaintances are, Lucy is "prisoned" in the gloomy "forsaken garden — gray now with the dust of a town-summer departed" (173). The lush and tiny wilderness of the garden is transformed into a "forsaken" and desolate space, mirroring the future Lucy sees for herself: "I found it but a hopeless desert: tawny sands, with no green field, no palm-tree, no well in view" (173).

It is not the summer heat or domestic labor that renders Lucy so depressed; rather, it is the absence of intellectual stimulation. Marie Broc and Goton, the lone servant on the premises, are not adequate companions for Lucy, and her solitude at the pensionnat is a heightened version of what Jane Eyre experiences at Thornfield Hall with Adele and Mrs. Fairfax: a child unable to engage an adult because of differences in capacity and life experience and a servant who cannot or will not push past the surface of idle chatter to assuage the protagonist's loneliness. Goton prepares Lucy meals and urges her to summon a doctor when she begins to fall ill, but Lucy never suggests that she views Goton as a fully-realized person. Though Goton is present in the house, Lucy sees her apart, assuming Goton cannot hear, see, or help her, and the house transforms from a merely empty space to a terrifying Gothic space that bridges this world and the next: "The solitude and the stillness of the long dormitory could not be borne any longer; the ghostly white beds were turning into spectres — the coronal of each became a death's head, huge and snow-bleached — dead dreams of an elder world and mightier race lay frozen in their wide gaping eye-holes" (177). While some of this description can be attributed to hallucinations from Lucy's illness, it also suggests how powerfully susceptible she is to her own imagination even as she is always attempting to suppress her more fanciful tendencies and desires. With no productive labor or social intercourse, Lucy struggles to master the confinement of hostile space. The Gothic tones of this description belie the notion of Lucy as a strict dispassionate Protestant, aligning her with the Catholic superstitions she is always

attacking and employing elements of the Gothic that pervade the novel. Images of the Gothic at Madame Beck's and in the Catholic church captivate Lucy's imagination even as they alienate her from her sense of self.

Perhaps it is the influence of the Gothic and its associations with Catholicism that drive Lucy to seek shelter in a Catholic church and its confessional space. After she is relieved of Marie Broc's care, Lucy leaves the Rue Fossette to cultivate a more hopeful sense that she has not been abandoned by her deity: "I was sure this hope would shine clearer if I got out from under this house-roof, which was crushing as the slab of a tomb, and went outside the city to a certain quiet hill, a long way distant in the field" (177). But Lucy is "arrested" by the bells of a church and decides to go inside, not hesitant at all about entering the Catholic church. She describes the church as "bread to one in extremity of want" (177) and asserts that confessing to the priest "could not make me more wretched than I was; it might soothe me" (178). She candidly tells the priest she is Protestant but is so afflicted that she has sought comfort anywhere she could find it. These are moments of serious spiritual danger for Lucy, since she is driven to a church and faith toward which she normally feels great disgust. Gilbert and Gubar argue that "Catholicism seems to represent the institutionalization of Lucy's internal schisms, permitting sensual indulgence by way of counterpoise to jealous spiritual restraint and encouraging fervent zeal by means of surveillance or privation."[20] She even admits to the reader that she feels particularly vulnerable to Catholicism's allure. Reflecting on Père Silas's invitation to visit him at his home the next day, Lucy writes, "Had I gone to him, he would have shown me all that was tender, and comforting, and gentle, in the honest popish superstition. Then he would have tried to kindle, blow and stir up in me the zeal of good works. I know not how it would have ended" (180). Bereft of a comforting domestic space, Lucy is pulled to the comfort Père Silas and Catholicism can offer her. Lucy is saved, of course, by seemingly divine

intervention when she faints and is taken to the Brettons' home at La Terrasse where her Protestant English identity is recalled through the familiar objects she encounters there.

The Brettons' two homes, Miss Marchmont's two small rooms, Madame Beck's pensionnat, and Père Silas's church present substantial challenges to Lucy's sense of self, as they confine and limit her. However, these spaces also offer Lucy crucial shelter at vulnerable moments, allowing her refuge in moments of great need when her emotional or physical survival is most severely threatened. These experiences also show us Lucy's skill at negotiating difficult space, as she is able to survive even when the space she is occupying presents as hostile or confining. Lucy also faces the greatest moments of conflict within herself in these spaces and her struggle to act in accordance with her principles renders her deeply sympathetic.

Spaces of Expansion: Natural and Urban Assemblages, Flânerie, & the Gothic

While Lucy struggles to contend with the spaces in *Villette* that are hostile and confining, there are several productive spaces in the novel which offer more positive ways for Lucy to shape her sense of self. Natural phenomena — storms or the Aurora Borealis — and urban spaces and public spaces — the street, museums, and the theater — also allow Lucy to imagine a larger fate for herself, because they thrust her out into the greater world where she can observe and occasionally enact masculine performances of authority such as the flâneur and the dilettante consumer of art and culture. In a general sense, private spaces help to harness Lucy's subjectivity and to facilitate her self-discipline, while outdoor and public spaces encourage her to rebel against the performance of a femininity grounded in social convention and a bourgeois work ethic.

Jane Bennett's writing on vital materialism is helpful to understand how Lucy negotiates agency in a social position that is granted so little power. In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett writes that "While the smallest or simplest body or bit may indeed express a vital impetus, conatus or *clinamen*,

an actant never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces."[21] And while Bennett's project is to focus on these nonhuman assemblages and how they interact with the human, I want to consider, as I did in chapter two with *Mansfield Park*, how vital materialism and the symbolic power of the material interact. I agree with Bennett that the nonhuman has agency, but I think it is difficult to consider this nonhuman agency without also considering how humans understand and attribute significance to the nonhuman. For instance, Lucy's imaginative world is powerfully shaped by her vision of a divine will made manifest through violent or magnificent natural forces. Contemplating what she should do after Miss Marchmont's death, Lucy walks alone in the dark, "in the absence of moonlight … I should have quailed still more in the unwonted presence of that which to-night shone in the north, a moving mystery — the Aurora Borealis. But this solemn stranger influenced me otherwise than through my fears. Some new power it seemed to bring" (49). This power tells her to "Leave this wilderness … and go out hence." While the presence of the Aurora Borealis is a natural phenomenon that is not itself influenced by human activity, Lucy sees it as a life affirming sign that she will endure beyond her present unhappy circumstances.

Lucy's sensitivity to the natural world continues to influence her in significant ways. While at Madame Beck's school, Lucy relates the effects of stormy weather on her most private feelings: "Certain accidents of the weather, for instance, were almost dreaded by me, because they woke the being I was always lulling, and stirred up a craving cry I could not satisfy. One night a thunder-storm broke; a sort of hurricane shook us in our beds" (121). As the Catholic girls gather inside and pray in fear, Lucy crawls out of her window and sits on the casement while the storm rages around her. We can recognize here language that returns to the imagery of shipwrecks, but it is joyous rather than tragic:

> I could not go in: too resistless was the delight of staying with the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man — too terribly glorious, the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts.
>
> I did long, achingly, then and for four-and-twenty hours afterwards, for something to fetch me out of my present existence, and lead me upwards and onwards. This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head. (121)

Lucy is acted upon by the agency of the natural world, but she perceives this to be divine intervention even if she cannot fully understand it. In both these instances, in England walking alone at night and at Madame Beck's during the storm, Lucy is made acutely aware of the expansiveness of the world, of the possibilities that she might escape the perceived smallness of her fate to find something more fulfilling, that her destiny might be overturned and she might be rescued and made happy. In some sense, these moments resonate with Margaret Hale's communion with the natural world, especially during her time at Cromer. Unlike Margaret, however, Lucy is unable to reconcile her outdoor desires with her indoor life. Indoors, Lucy is mostly able to suppress these desires, as she does in Miss Marchmont's two small rooms or Madame Beck's classrooms, but out in the open, her soul seems to expand and her desires to intensify, and her misery within those small restricted places becomes clear to her. We can understand Lucy's interpretation of these phenomena, but Bennett gives us the added insight of understanding how Lucy copes with a material world that she cannot fully comprehend.

Natural space does not have to invoke the Burkean sublime to reveal Lucy's nature to the reader. The garden at the Rue Fossette, for instance, becomes a refuge for Lucy, a place where she can escape to indulge her private thoughts and cultivate a space of reflection:

> Behind the house at the Rue Fossette there was a garden — large, considering that it lay in the heart of a city, and to my recollection at this day it seems pleasant: but time, like distance,

> lends to certain scenes an influence so softening; and where all is stone around, blank wall and hot pavement, how precious seems one shrub, how lovely an enclosed and planted spot of ground! (117)

This passage is remarkable for Lucy's honesty about the faultiness of her memory. She acknowledges the malleable nature of memory, influenced by temporal and geographical distance, as well as the moderate expectations of city-dwellers when it comes to the luxury of verdant space. Lucy claims a section of the garden for herself, a shunned path referred to as "l'allée défendue" — the forbidden path — and she arranges it in the manner of Fanny Price ordering her East room, a character who excels in the reclamation of neglected and unloved space, in order to make it comfortable: "I made myself gardener of some tintless flowers that grew between its closely-ranked shrubs; I cleared away the relics of past autumns, choking up a rustic seat at the far end. Borrowing … a pail of water and a scrubbing brush, I made this seat clean" (119). Though the garden is outdoor space, Lucy domesticates it by appropriating it for her use.

Demonstrating Lucy's resourcefulness, this scene in the garden also suggests that Lucy is unable to find privacy inside the Rue Fossette and so must cultivate it in a spot abandoned by others, even though it is not impervious to Madame Beck's surveillance. Unlike the violent weather patterns that rouse her unhappiness, Lucy reflects that she feels more hopeful. However, her thoughts in the garden still entreat the reader's sympathy when, comparing the view of the moon to a memory from childhood, she laments: "Oh, my childhood! I had feelings: passive as I lived, little as I spoke, cold as I looked, when I thought of past days, I *could* feel. About the present, it was better to be stoical; about the future — such a future as mine — to be dead. And in catalepsy and a dead trance, I studiously held the quick of my nature" (120). Echoing Jane Eyre's protest to Rochester that, "I have as much soul as you — and full as much heart!"[22] Lucy's protest reminds the reader that she feels deeply and powerfully despite the penury of her circumstances; she continues to

protect and nurture what she believes is the core of her vitality and passion while also trying to firmly encase that passion — the way she attempts to when she seals and buries Dr. John's letters — in a controllable emotional space that mirrors the orderliness and confinement of her domestic space in the Rue Fossette.

Urban spaces also offer productive assemblages with which Lucy can participate and nurture her soul by offering her the mobility and agency she so desperately craves. After leaving Miss Marchmont's house earlier in the novel, Lucy makes her foray into London. Exploring the metropolis alone, Lucy feels "elation and pleasure … Prodigious was the amount of life I lived that morning." Just as Lucy is capable of shrinking her subjectivity to fit Miss Marchmont's two small rooms, she is able to expand her subjectivity to occupy the large scope of London's streets and sights: "Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstacy of freedom and enjoyment; and I got — I know not how — I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last … To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure." Lucy states her decided preference for London's churning, grinding, laboring side: "The city is getting its living — the West-end but enjoying its pleasure" (54). Lucy identifies with the working folk since she too has to earn her bread. London's expansiveness as an urban assemblage is far greater than what Lucy has experienced before, and its power fills her with ambition and daring. Lucy prefers labor and exertion to pleasure and ease, and she boldly decides to sail to Europe to find work: "I had nothing to lose. Unutterable loathing of a desolate experience past forbade return. If I failed in what I now designed to undertake, who, save myself, would suffer? If I died far away from — home, I was going to say, but I had no home — from England, then, who would weep?" (55). At this point, Lucy has made it clear that she has no connections left, no friends, no one to care for her well-being. Homeless and alone, claiming England only as an origin point or substitution for home, Lucy embraces the possibilities of her unencumbered life.

The possibility of greater agency for Lucy resides outside of England. Belgium may seem like an odd place for an Englishwoman (even an Englishwoman who was herself educated in Brussels) to set not just *Villette* but also the posthumously published *The Professor,* for which Brontë was unable to find a publisher in her lifetime. Anne Longmuir and Richard Bonfiglio have written about the question of why Charlotte Brontë would have decided on this specific foreign location for two of her novels. Longmuir argues that Belgium was an interesting location for Brontë to explore British identity even if she ultimately rejects it as a productive space to bring together Anglo-Continental values. Belgium represented "a potential British space in continental Europe" where British values and influence could prosper and hopefully spread to other parts of Europe in order to "create a bulwark against French expansion."[23] Longmuir points out that Belgium, having established national sovereignty in 1830, escaped the revolutions of 1848 that raged across Europe, signaling it as an Anglicized and stable space for British travelers and ripe for potential colonization.[24] The Brettons reconstitute their English home in their new Belgian home, creating "their own 'little Britain' in Belgium," a country that had a history of being colonized by Spain, Austria, and France prior to Britain's colonial interest in it.[25]

Richard Bonfiglio is also interested in how British domestic space might make incursions into Belgian ones, arguing that Brontë employs a "portable domesticity" that she relocates in "foreign settings to explore the relationship between liberal self-cultivation and narrative form in shaping cosmopolitan sympathies in the mid-Victorian period."[26] Digressing from Longmuir's argument, Bonfiglio asserts that the Belgian novels "are less invested in defining an English national culture than in cultivating an ethical orientation towards perceiving national differences on the level of home."[27] By utilizing this "portable domesticity," Lucy is finally able to achieve self-actualization through her residence in the Faubourg Clotilde rather than through a marriage with M. Paul. Both Longmuir and Bonfiglio offer useful insights as to how the desire for home is never entirely left

behind; the creation of a home necessarily entails a negotiation between competing cultures. Taking Longmuir's and Bonfiglio's insights as crucial to understanding the foreign dimensions of *Villette*, I would add my own perspective that Brontë's decision to locate Lucy's story in a fictionalized version of Brussels allows Lucy the freedom to circumvent cultural limitations that might otherwise impede her agency. Cultural and religious demands still haunt Lucy, but as an emigrée, she is somewhat protected from conforming to social conventions by her isolation within a foreign culture. Thus, Villette becomes a place where Lucy can enact greater mobility and agency than she could in her home country.

An example of Lucy's greater access to mobility is her participation in flânerie, the practice of peripatetic observation in which a male figure invisibly moves through cityscapes and records what he sees, popularized by Baudelaire in mid-nineteenth-century Paris, but also rendered in British popular culture by Charles Dickens's Boz and Pickwick in 1830s London. Deborah Epstein Nord writes that "[i]f the rambler or flaneur required anonymity and the camouflage of the crowd to move with impunity and to exercise the privilege of the gaze, the too-noticeable female stroller could never enjoy that position,"[28] though she could still participate in urban spectatorship, albeit in a vexed way. Janet Wolff argues similarly that the conventional understanding of the flâneur is as an inherently male figure since women on the street could always be mistaken for a prostitute: "it emerges, then, that the flâneur, the central figure of modernity, was inherently gendered male. And the account of urban experience, now seen through the eyes of the flâneur and his cohorts, instantly renders women invisible or marginal."[29] According to Wolff, the dominance of the flâneur and the impossibility of the flâneuse in the cultural imagination around the nineteenth century has more do with the discourse on modernity than with the realities of urban life: "in the literature on the topic, a crucial aspect of urban wandering is the 'reading' of the urban environment and the production of texts" and these acts of wandering and recording were dominated by male thinkers.[30]

However, Lucy does perform as a flâneur by Wolff's definition, since she does in fact "read" the urban environment around her and records her observations for an acknowledged reader. Embracing the masculine performance of flânerie, Lucy reveals her pleasure in performing as a flâneuse, a female version of the strolling man of leisure, in both London and Villette. She does not traverse Villette, as Margaret Hale traverses Milton, to attend to the poor or visit with friends, but she instead strolls for the pleasure of discovery. Whatever observers who see her might think, Lucy's wanderings lack the erotic dimension typically associated with female ramblers. Wolff's discussion of the limited possibilities for women to circulate in this way suggests that Lucy is in fact performing a male role when she strolls and explores London and Villette, much like the unnamed speaker of Virginia Woolf's "A Street Haunting" who seeks the creative refreshment of a twilight London scene. Flânerie offers Lucy a role in outdoor space that combines the active and the imaginative sides of her personality in order to experience freedom and pleasure.

Lucy's flânerie is not as unrestricted as Baudelaire's or Boz's, unfortunately. Her time is limited by her professional life and Madame Beck's surveillance. Furthermore, she is still dependent on Dr. John's masculine authority in order to navigate urban space safely. In Lucy's first foray into Villette, she is menaced by some unknown men on the street, and manages to make it to safety thanks to Dr. John's guidance. Later, she is exhilarated by her new-found mobility at Dr. John's side and participates in what Janet Wolff describes as a necessary part of flânerie, which is the transmission of information to a reader. Oh her way to a concert, Lucy notes the contrast between "the walled-in garden and school-house, and of the dark, vast 'classes'" and the "best streets of Villette, streets brightly lit, and far more lively now than at high noon. How brilliant seemed the shops! How glad, gay, and abundant flowed the tide of life along the broad pavement!" (233). The comparison between the dreary pensionnat and the bright bustling town makes it clear that Lucy finds painful restraint in the former and joy in the latter. While attending Dr. John on his daily

errands, she feels "amazed at his perfect knowledge of Villette; a knowledge not merely confined to its open streets, but penetrating to all its galleries, salles, and cabinets: of every door which shut in an object worth seeing, of every museum, of every hall, sacred to art or science, he seemed to possess the 'Open! Sesame'" (221). Although this signals a shift from laboring London to her own pleasure in Villette, Lucy cannot help but admire Dr. John's knowledge and freedom to move and explore the little city. Villette's public space is constructed of layers of rooms and corners that are not themselves private but are not immediately present to onlookers either; they suggest the entrée of the initiated, the person who knows the password ("Open! Sesame") that in and of itself invokes the Orient in its reference to *The Arabian Nights* and thus enhances the sense that Lucy envies Dr. John's greater mobility and authority as an educated bourgeois man. That Lucy desires this mobility for herself is evidenced by her decision to leave England for Villette; however, her conceptions of the ways gender limits women and her personal experience of being endangered on the street, as well as the material reality of how women are denied lucrative employment in the period, restrict her from circulating as widely and comfortably as Graham does.

Lucy does manage to transgress conventions of female propriety and embrace unchaperoned mobility when she is drugged by Goton at Madame Beck's direction. Lucy unexpectedly wakes up from her impaired sleep and is "alive to new thought — to reverie peculiar in colouring … Imagination was roused from her rest, and she came forth impetuous and venturous … She brought upon me a strange vision of Villette at midnight" (496-7), and she is enticed to leave the pensionnat and venture forth to the summer park where the inhabitants of Villette are commemorating their independence movement. The dangerous and repressive Gothic atmosphere of the house gives way to a scene of carnival as Lucy slips from Madame Beck's fingers (as Lucy imagines, at least), "cross[ing] the threshold and step[ping] on the paved street, wonder[ing] at the strange ease with which this prison has been forced" (498). Lucy attributes to the opiate and the unstoppable force of

her imagination (similar in its tyrannical power to her Reason, "this hag") what she cannot claim as her own agency. Lucy again feels a sense of inner turbulence and desires movement and life rather than serenity, as she did while visiting London and deciding to embark for Europe or when she crawls out of her window to watch a raging storm: "This solemn peace is not what I seek, it is not what I can bear; to me the face of the sky bears the aspect of a world's death" (499). Lucy cannot quiet her desire to occupy a more stimulating space within a larger fate, and she embraces an unsanctioned flânerie in order to evade, at least for a night, the pressure of conventional behavior.

In two fascinating chapters, "Cloud" and "Old and New Acquaintances," Brontë combines elements of flânerie, carnival, and the Gothic to create an outdoor space for Lucy to explore and observe during a short period when she is "drugged to the brink of frenzy" (504). Her identity concealed, her movements unfettered, Lucy engages in a type of carnivalesque revelry. Differing somewhat from Rabelais's carnivalesque, which Bakhtin defines as a "temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank" and the "creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times,"[31] Lucy seizes unfettered access to the people she is curious about but always holds at a remove. She takes pleasure in viewing the Bretton and De Bassompierre families arriving in their carriage without herself being seen, camouflaged by her simple dress and her precaution of "bind[ing] down the broad leaf [of my straw-hat] gipsy-wise, with a supplementary ribbon; and then I felt safe as if masked" (501). While Lucy does not mix openly with her social betters (who are, after all, her friends and family), she is able to observe them in a "frank and free" way by concealing her identity and taking advantage of the anonymity of the crowd.

Her senses addled by the opium, Lucy finds herself craving a long drink of water, "hindered from pursuing" her route as "now a sight, and now a sound, called me aside, luring me down this

alley and down that" (501), while voices and musical instruments combine "as a sea breaking into song with all its waves" (502).Vigilant and resistant to being recognized by any of her acquaintance, Lucy imagines herself (and perhaps she truly is) discovered by the bookseller Miret and Dr. John. She shrinks from their attention so that she may be free to experience the fête as a spectator, passing through anonymously and free to observe the behavior and dress of others. Even in an opium haze, Lucy clings to her sense of spiritual and personal isolation, as "[a]midst so much life and joy, too, it suited me to be alone — quite alone" (502). Upon returning to the Rue Fossette, Lucy wonders if the door will yield again to admit her, and, repeating similar language she used to describe Dr. John's perambulations around Villette, Lucy presses the door and, "[a]s soundless, as unresisting, as if some propitious genius had waited on a sesame-charm, in the vestibule within" (518). The repetition of the orientalist word "sesame" positions Lucy as the initiated and knowledgeable flâneuse, capable of traversing unobserved and yet aware of her surroundings, equipped with the correct "Open! Sesame" that will grant her curious eyes the correct entrée and a safe return home.

While gender demands often function to restrict her mobility, Lucy's ambiguous class status occasionally permits her to circulate freely in urban space alone. Sent on an errand by Madame Beck to the older part of the city, Lucy looks forward to "the prospect of a long walk, deep into the old and grim Basse-Ville" (429), and she is free to imagine the crumbling neighborhood's history of success and decline:

> Rich men had once possessed this quarter, and once grandeur had made her seat here … But wealth and greatness had long since stretched their gilded pinions and fled hence, leaving these their ancient nests, perhaps to house Penury for a time, or perhaps to stand cold and empty, mouldering untenanted in the course of winters. (430)

Lucy's description of the houses as "ancient nests" invokes a tragic notion of domestic space, starkly contrasted with Gaston Bachelard's "nests" and Fanny Price's "nest of comforts" because these

crumbling homes signify the loss of material wealth and the subsequent inability of families to cultivate domestic comfort and the happiness that living in a comfortable space can bring. The houses might be abandoned or they might serve as imposing yet decaying shelters that allow families to maintain the appearance of abundance despite the fact that the lives within the homes are less glittery than they once were. Lucy has the power of her gaze which allows her to move beyond her own concerns and imagine the other worlds.

The Gothic tones of Lucy's adventure to the Basse-Ville continue once she enters Madame Walravens's house to deliver Madame Beck's gift. "Cross[ing] the inhospitable threshold" (430), a description which suggests the failure of "Numéro 3" to welcome outsiders, Lucy is left to wait for the mistress of the house:

> Well might this old square be named quarter of the Magii — well might the three towers, overlooking it, own for godfathers three mystic sages of a dead and dark art. Hoar enchantment here prevailed; a spell had opened for me elf-land — that cell-like room, that vanishing picture, that arch and passage, and stair of stone, were all parts of a fairy tale. (431)

Lucy's description of the salon where she waits is framed by religious invocations of the trinity and the magi, but it also embraces the existence of a supernatural tradition that belongs to England's pre-Christian past, opening up a world for Lucy that is peopled by fairies and elves as well as darker forces.

Lucy's description of Madame Walravens's body, dress, and jewels is even more fantastic, concluding, "Hunchbacked, dwarfish, and doting, she was adorned like a barbarian queen" (432), a description which invokes Brontë's orientalism but also Lucy's penchant for the Gothic. While the Gothic space of Père Silas's confessional threatens Lucy's religious identity, the influence of other manifestations of the Gothic act to encourage Lucy's imagination and develop her interiority. Subject to Madame Beck's bidding and threatened by Madame Walravens's unpleasant reception,

Lucy empowers herself by undertaking an interpretation of Madame Walravens and transforming her into a Gothic horror. Rather than feeling insulted by her condescending treatment, Lucy imagines instead how the existence of so fantastic a figure can be read: "Just as [Madame Walravens] turned, a peal of thunder broke, and a flash of lightning blazed broad over salon and boudoir. The tale of magic seemed to proceed with due accompaniment of the elements" (432). Madame Walravens is a perversion of the idealized matronly figure we find in Mrs. Bretton. She is not comely or elegant or hospitable. She barely seems to notice Lucy at all except to make sure she knows Madame Beck's gift is unwelcome.

Gothic tropes and influences had, of course, been utilized by women writers decades before Brontë wrote her novels, from the entertaining excesses of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to the more politically challenging works of Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle,* Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman,* and Jane Austen's parodic *Northanger Abbey*.[32] All these works feature the vulnerability of woman writ large, threatened by brutal or foolish men, unable to assert her agency fully, and, as in the case of *Northanger Abbey*, subject to the possibility of real danger in seemingly banal places and faces.[33] Brontë's use of the Gothic in her novels, specifically *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, works to expand the subjectivity of her heroines by expanding their imaginations, demonstrating how women can make sense of a threatening world by transforming those threats into productive forces. Jane's discovery of Bertha Mason in Thornfield Hall's attic is indicative of Rochester's capacity for cruelty specifically, but on a more global scale it illustrates the terrifying potential men have to control and abuse women. Though this discovery allows Jane to assert her own power, that power is exercised against Bertha's expense since she cannot escape Rochester and Thornfield Hall.

In *Villette*, the Gothic looms rather large, in the pernicious Catholicism discussed above, but also in Lucy's imagination, coloring everything from the legend of the Nun who is reputed to haunt

Madame Beck's garden to the terrifying projections Lucy sees when she suffers from hallucinations. In her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry," Ann Radcliffe distinguishes terror from horror, in that "[terror] expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life; [horror] contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them."[34] Radcliffe defines terror in a Burkean sense as "the union of grandeur and obscurity" the result of which is "as a sort of tranquility tinged with terror, and which causes the sublime." Radcliffe's essay refers not to the grand sublimity of the Alps or the crumbling edifice of an abbey, but rather to the domestic hauntings Hamlet and Macbeth grapple with when they are forced to reflect on their experiences and behaviors. In an interesting sense, Radcliffe locates terror in the home and the intimate spaces where characters experience great psychic pain and existential torment. Lucy experiences terror within her new city, but like Shakespeare's great tragic heroes, she also finds it in what comes to be her domestic space — Madame Beck's pensionnat — and we can certainly find an expansion of the soul and awakening of the faculties in Lucy's experience of the Gothic, suggesting that in *Villette*, the Gothic terrors of sensationalist fiction and the domestic terrors of Victorian realist fiction are not incompatible but rather work together to shape female subjectivity.

Spaces of Power: Agency, Authority, and Performance

Despite the power of Lucy's spaces of subjective expansion, she cannot be sustained by what they have to offer; they are too chaotic and uncontrollable. Lucy's ability to thrive in discomfort is a recurring theme in *Villette*, and an influential element of her subjectivity construction. We see hints of Lucy's tendencies to dominate others when she forcefully instructs her hired boatman to take her to her ship despite her uncertainty and fear (55-6), or when she impatiently demands that Ginevra "hold her tongue" while the latter complains of seasickness while crossing the Channel (63). Though she is poor single woman travelling alone, the dangers and annoyances of Lucy's journey compel her

to stand up for herself by asserting authority over other people with whom she is interacting. Lucy rarely speaks openly of her ambitions (insights into her desire are discussed above), but it is her ambition — both to be free from the authority of others and competently mobile — that drives her to attempt to wrest control in threatening situations.

The first major instance of Lucy's ability to dominate space comes when Madame Beck asks her to take over an English lesson. Her first reaction is to have "shrunk into my sloth, like a snail into its shell, and alleged incapacity and impracticability as a pretext to escape action. If left to myself, I should infallibly have let this chance slip" (85). Lucy attempts to say no, and Madame Beck challenges her, silently but forcefully: "It seemed as if a challenge of strength between opposing gifts was given, and I suddenly felt all the dishonor of my diffidence — all the pusillanimity of my slackness to aspire" (86). Lucy is awakened by Madame Beck's masculine-like power and spurred to meet her challenge; Lucy's reaction suggests a competitive and masculine desire for power and authority, as it is a reaction to a challenge from someone Lucy has unconsciously been inclined to view as a rival. Madame Beck coerces Lucy into the classroom for the first time, untested, unequipped to deal with the cruel rebellions of the young women, and Lucy prevails by exerting abusive authority over the most popular among them, ripping up one girl's essay and locking another one in a small closet. Though she emerges "hot and a little exhausted" (89), Lucy can "never forget that first lesson, nor all the under-current of life and character it opened to me" (87). Lucy's abilities are challenged — her "latent diffidence" gives way to her desire to dominate a space. Her first experience in front of her pupils gives her insight into what she must come to understand if she is to achieve financial and professional independence. These insights also deeply gratify Lucy, because, like Madame Beck, she loves to hoard knowledge and information, to understand what makes other people tick and how she might manipulate them to her own ends.

We see Lucy triumph over uncomfortable space again on Madame Beck's fête-day. Charmed by the appearance of the pensionnat in preparation for the celebration, Lucy withdraws from company and takes pleasure in the tidy classrooms: "their walls fresh stained, their planked floors scoured and scarce dry; flowers fresh gathered adorning the recesses in pots, and draperies, fresh hung, beautifying the great windows" (146). The effect is much like that of the house in Bretton: clean, peaceful, harmonious. However, this peace will never do for long in *Villette* and M. Paul interrupts Lucy's leisure to demand she act in the amateur play; he locks her in the attic and she is forced to learn her lines. The attic is "hot as Africa," filled with boxes, lumber, and old dresses, covered in cobwebs and vermin, and allegedly haunted by the Nun of the garden (148-9). However, as we see in the hostile classroom, Lucy manipulates this confining and threatening space into something more productive. Freed from her timidity by her humble surroundings, Lucy earnestly performs her silly part with gusto: "Perfectly secure from human audience, I acted my part before the garret-vermin" (149).

Once the clutter of the attic is replaced with the beautifully decorated ground floor and an audience, Lucy is intimidated and struggles to act; she eventually regains her self-control, refusing to dress in drag, jokingly challenging Zelie St. Pièrre to a duel, and performing her role with enough verve to unsettle M. Paul. Caroline Franklin views Lucy's refusal to dress as a man especially noteworthy:

> It is significant that [Lucy] relishes acting a man's part … where she can take the sexual initiative denied her by her culture, while insistently retaining the markers of female identity. The compromise costume she concocts of masculine jacket, waist-coat and cravat with a skirt anticipates the businesslike garb adopted by the "new woman."[35]

Adopting an entirely masculine costume would unequivocally mark Lucy's masculinity here as performance, as play, as transient. By insisting instead upon adorning her feminine clothes with

masculine touches (vest, collar, cravat, and paletôt), Lucy rejects M. Paul's authority and asserts a more complex and ambivalent gender expression that combines femininity and masculinity in a way that feels comfortable for her and suggests a subtle queering that will continue throughout her performance. Her intent while performing is equally ambivalent, as she performs in a love triangle with Ginevra and Dr. John, envious of both, desirous of both:

> There was language in Dr. John's look, thought I cannot tell what he said; it animated me: I drew out of it a history; I put my idea into the part I performed; I threw it into my wooing of Ginevra. In the "Ours," or sincere lover, I saw Dr. John. Did I pity him, as erst? No, I hardened my heart, rivalled and out-rivalled him. I knew myself but a fop, but where *he* was outcast *I* could please. Now I know I acted as if wishful and resolute to win and conquer. (155)

The delightfulness of this internal monologue lies is its deliberate interweaving of what Lucy imagines is real and what she is pretending is real for the performance. Infatuated with Dr. John and fascinated by Ginevra in "real life," Lucy is unable to act on any of her feelings for either person off the stage. Her performance, located on a makeshift stage, allows her space and freedom to perform the complicated feelings she cannot discuss or act upon. M. Paul's scandalized response to their performance, though written off by Lucy as Catholic prudery, in fact accords with Paul's ideological bent; he seems to discern the truth under Lucy's performance.

Perhaps Lucy does accept the legitimacy of Paul's rebuke, because she soon laments the freedom and authority of her performance and resolves not to indulge in a similar expression of them again. Reflecting on the performance, she writes:

> I took a firm resolution never to be drawn into a similar affair. A keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature; to cherish and exercise this new-found faculty might gift me with a world of delight, but it would not do for a mere looker-on at

> life: the strength and longing must be put by; and I put them by, and fastened them in with the lock of a resolution which neither Time nor Temptation has since picked. (156)

As this passage makes clear, the "world of delight" does not accord with Lucy's notion of herself as a female Job, one of God's chosen sufferers, and she contains any aspect of herself that contradicts the narrative she is crafting about herself. She does not bury her desire to perform, as she does Dr. John's letters, but she does "put them by" and "fasten[s] them in with the lock of resolution." Again, these are spatial metaphors that enact containment and compartmentalization. Lucy acquiesces to difficulty, dis-ease, and exertion.

That Lucy's desire for and assumption of masculine authority troubles M. Paul is made manifest again when he comes upon her in the art gallery gazing at a painting of Cleopatra. Lucy is alone, and she is quite consumed by the painting, judging it harshly, as the sensual, dark-skinned woman it depicts morally offends her. Although Lucy tells us that she does not have the education to evaluate art properly, she feels great pleasure in "examining, questioning, and forming conclusions" (222) about art, and it is clear that she recognizes the painting's erotic power: "[Cleopatra] ought likewise to have worn decent garments; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case: out of abundance of material — seven-and-twenty yards, I should say, of drapery — she managed to make inefficient raiment" (223). The way Lucy describes the figure is so strange, as she seems to be blaming the painting for how the artist painted it, an attitude which suggests both Lucy's internalized sexism and her frustration with male aesthetic authority. M. Paul comes upon her and articulates his distaste for Lucy's unchaperoned presence in the gallery and her audacity to judge a work of art that ought to be judged by men. He chastises Lucy: "How dare you, a young person, sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a garçon, and look at *that* picture?" (225). The narrative's emphasis on "*that*" implies the eroticism of the Cleopatra figure and suggests that Paul is uncomfortable with Lucy examining a painting meant to be viewed by men (though he also seems to

make an allowance for an older woman), perhaps painted with the intention of eliciting erotic pleasure from male spectators.

When M. Paul ushers Lucy over to a series of four paintings depicting women in their "proper" domestic roles, she also judges these paintings harshly for being "insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers" (226). Lucy dislikes them from an aesthetic perspective — "They were painted rather in a remarkable style — flat, dead, pale and formal" — but Lucy also disapproves of the painting's ethos, finding it, as she remarks, "insincere" and "bloodless." If Lucy despises the Cleopatra's arrogance and indolence, she also despises the conventional parade of feminine expectations. Lucy quite confidently owns her critical judgement. We might also read this scene, as Jonathan Shears and Jen Harrison do, as a way for Lucy to destabilize Paul's masculine authority. She flatly rejects his disapproval that she is viewing the Cleopatra and even takes pleasure in his "inability to exercise psychological and moral stewardship outside the schoolroom."[36] Lucy frequently notices Paul's need to be respected and beloved, and it is even something she admires about him. He assumes his authority over Lucy will automatically transfer from Madame Beck's schoolrooms to the art museum, but Lucy, in a different space and under different conditions (having recently spent time with the Brettons who love and respect her), is quite a different person. Her desire for authority chafes against his and she delights in provoking him. Despite his attempt to distract Lucy from the Cleopatra, she returns to it, asking him his opinion on the painting and scoffing at his insistence that she instead study "the four pictures of a woman's life": "Excuse me, M. Paul; they are too hideous: but if you admire them, allow me to vacate my seat and leave you to their contemplation" (228). Lucy quite forcefully — and perhaps teasingly — dismisses Paul's judgement on what she is allowed to see. Though she will seek his guidance on some topics, she quite confidently relies on her own judgement here.

Lucy's freedom to interrogate men's judgements within certain spaces manifests again when Dr. John takes her to the theatre to see a well-known European actress perform the role of Vashti. Like the art museum, the theatre becomes a space of authority for Lucy, exciting her and pulling her out of her state of inconsequence: "The theatre was full — crammed to its roof: royal and noble were there; palace and hotel had emptied their inmates into those tiers so thronged and hushed. Deeply did I feel myself privileged in having a place before that stage" (285). Lucy feels privileged to see the actress performing Vashti, to be among those granted access to the hallowed space of the theatre, access that she has experienced too infrequently to take lightly.

Once the performance begins, it only mildly impresses Lucy. However, as the play progresses, Lucy becomes enthralled by the acting, remarking that she finds in Vashti

> something neither of woman nor of man: in each of her eyes sat a devil. These evil forces bore her through the tragedy, kept up her feeble strength — for she was but a frail creature; and as the action rose and the stir deepened, how wildly they shook her with their passions of the pit. They wrote HELL on her straight, haughty brow. They tuned her voice to the note of torment. They writhed her regal face to a demoniac mask. Hate and Murder and Madness incarnate, she stood.
>
> It was a marvelous sight: a mighty revelation.
>
> It was a spectacle low, horrible, immoral. (286)

The description of Vashti (which goes on for over three pages) reads as Lucy's manifesto of what art should be and do. The space of the theatre, like the space of the art museum before this, inspires Lucy to usurp the critical authority of the masculine gaze. Gilbert and Gubar read Lucy's comparison between the two characters as a difference between real and false artists: "Unlike the false artists who abound in *Villette*, Vashti uses her art not to manipulate others, but to represent herself. Her art, in other words, is confessional, unfinished — not a product, but an act; not an

object meant to contain or coerce, but a personal utterance."[37] Even though false artists like Ginevra or the painter of the Cleopatra fascinate Lucy, she finds them morally reprehensible. But the stage, which before this allowed Lucy to see her own potential as an artist, offers Lucy a glimpse at the real artist Gilbert and Gubar describe. The actress is submerged and Vashti is embodied as she experiences and resists the grief she is performing: "To her, what hurts becomes immediately embodied: she looks on it as a thing that can be attacked, worried down, torn in shreds" (287). Contrasting Vashti favorably with the Cleopatra, Lucy demands, "Where was the artist of the Cleopatra? Let him come and sit down and study this different vision. Let him seek here the mighty brawn, the muscle, the abounding blood, the full-fed flesh he worshipped: let all the materialists draw night and look on" (287). Lucy is critical of "all the materialists" and not merely the mediocre painter, demanding that they learn from Vashti what true art is, challenging them to move beyond shallow eroticism to authentic artistic expression. Within the theatre, Lucy's confidence unfolds and fills the room as her imagination expands. She is not merely "Lucy Snowe," but a privileged theatre attendant, capable of making her own critical judgements and comparing the performance to other art she has seen.

Lucy's own critical abilities are set against the judgments of men, and she notes that "Vashti was not good, *I was told*" (287, my emphasis), a critical judgement she clearly disagrees with even though she does not explicitly say so. Her denunciation is buried deep within her panegyric on Vashti, and the reader cannot help but dismiss the authority that deems her performance as "not good" after Lucy describes how deeply moved she is. Lucy, perhaps identifying quite personally with Vashti's performance because she herself experienced the exhilaration of acting on stage in M. Paul's amateur theatrical, does not shrink from asserting her own critical abilities to the reader. Lucy wonders what Graham thinks:

> Dr. John *could* think, and think well, but he was rather a man of action than of thought … it amused and enlightened me to discover that he was watching that sinister and sovereign Vashti, not with wonder, nor worship, nor yet dismay, but simply with intense curiosity. Her agony did not pain him, her wild moan — worse than a shriek — did not much move him. (288)

Dr. John cannot recognize Vashti's "strong magnetism of genius," and thus cannot judge her performance as carefully as Lucy can. She finds him wanting here, although concealing his lack of insight under a veneer of praise with her comment that he "*could* think, and think well." Vashti does not disturb Dr. John because she strikes him as a novelty rather than the rebellious and dangerous force that unsettles yet delights Lucy. Later, when Lucy asks him what he thinks of Vashti, "he told me his opinion of, and feeling towards the actress: he judged her as a woman, not an artist: it was a branding judgment" (289). Dr. John proves that he does not consider women artists, and that he is incapable of recognizing the possibility for women to enact the kind of masculine agency that Lucy desperately craves in her own life.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that Vashti must be exorcised from Lucy's narrative through the fire that interrupts and ultimately halts the performance; the space of the theatre must be purified by the transgressive authority of Vashti's performance. The "blind, selfish, cruel chaos" (289) that envelops the theatre does not spread to Dr. John and Lucy, as he is a man of action and she "would not have moved to give him trouble, thwart his will, or make demands on his attention" (290). The fire also presents an acceptable alternative to Lucy or Vashti for Dr. John: this episode delivers him the grown and unimpeachably feminine Polly Home de Bassompierre. Lucy can be left alone by Dr. John while he rescues Polly, a decision that demonstrates his trust in Lucy's ability to take care of herself even as it marks her out as insufficiently feminine; Dr. John desires a woman who needs rescuing. The theatre thus represents the moment in the narrative when Lucy's and Dr. John's

incompatibility is made irrevocably clear and the marriage plot for a character who is not our heroine is set in motion. Though Lucy loves Dr. John, his inability to recognize and value her desire for agency and mobility signifies Brontë's rejection of him as an appropriate erotic fascination for Lucy. She is able to sit still in the chaotic theatre while Polly needs to be rescued from it.

The Faubourg Clotilde: "a wonderfully changed life, a relieved heart"

The final space in which we see Lucy is her own boarding school in the Faubourg Clotilde, a gift from M. Paul and the most ideal space Lucy occupies in the novel. Though Brontë does not say as much, it seems to function as a betrothal gift, given as a material promise that Paul loves her and plans to return to her. The house is small, neat, and silent, much like Lucy herself. It is "freshly and tastefully painted," "pretty," and "scrupulously clean" (534-5). Lucy delights in Paul's generosity and the house perfectly suited to her tastes; the aesthetic of the house accords with Lucy's taste, and, like Edmund's gift to Fanny of the perfect chain, signifies how well Paul understands Lucy's nature. Significantly, Paul's gift places her in a position of authority while also cementing her subjectivity as one inherently tied to labor: Paul "claimed my hospitality … he said I should offer him chocolate in my pretty gold and white china service … With what shy joy I accepted my part as hostess, arranged the salver, served the benefactor-guest" (537). Lucy may accept her part as hostess with joy, but it is a position that nonetheless requires deference and obedience to Paul's commands. Paul's gift is also carefully calibrated to please Lucy's independent nature — he has paid to have the house cleaned and furnished, but he leaves Lucy the responsibility of paying the rent. Lucy finds a home in M. Paul's affection and dedication to her: "I was full of faults; he took them and me all home … We walked back to the Rue Fossette by moonlight — such moonlight as fell on Eden" (541). The promise of a home for Lucy when Paul returns from his journey to Guadeloupe transports her to Paradise, even as knowledge of Genesis brings to our minds the transience of Edenic happiness. For a brief period, Lucy is happy and identifies a potential location of home-building.

Brontë refuses us the satisfaction of the marriage plot, however, and Lucy, so accustomed to disappointment and pain, scorns our pleasure along with her own:

> Man cannot prophesy, Love is no oracle, Fear sometimes imagines a vain thing. Those years of absence! How had I sickened over their anticipation! The woe they must bring seemed certain as death. I knew the nature of their course: I never had doubt how it would harrow as it went. The Juggernaut on his car towered there a grim load. Seeing him draw nigh, burying his broad wheels in the oppressed soil — I, the prostrate votary — felt beforehand the annihilating craunch. (543)

Helen Cooper's endnote for this passage suggests an interpretation of this reference to the "Juggernaut" as "a destructive power causing blind sacrifice,"[38] and it does seem as though Lucy will be crushed by her disappointed love for Paul. This devastation does not occur, at least on the page, and Lucy's characteristic resilience prevails. She tells us, "The great Juggernaut, in his great chariot, drew on lofty, loud, and sullen. He passed quietly, like a shadow sweeping the sky, at noon. Nothing but a chilling dimness was seen or felt. I looked up. Chariot and demon charioteer were gone by; the votary still lived" (543). Though she characterizes herself as a "votary," Lucy is not sacrificed and the "great Juggernaut" passes her by, perhaps overlooking her humble love.

Paul's presence in the narrative is curtailed as Lucy acquires prosperity in her professional venture. She attributes her success to "a wonderfully changed life, a relieved heart" (544). Paul's "legacy" insulates her from the vicissitudes of life: "Few things shook me now; few things had importance to vex, intimidate, or depress me." Lucy acquires a legacy from Miss Marchmont's formerly stingy heir and is able to acquire a second house to enlarge her school: "I ventured to take the house adjoining mine … My externat became a pensionnat; that also prospered." Lucy achieves all of this alone, though she is "nourished" and "refreshed" by Paul's letters. She has been busy not only in cultivating a successful business, but also at home-making: "I have made him a little library,

filled its shelves with the books he left in my care: I have cultivated out of love for him (I was naturally no florist) the plants he preferred, and some of them are yet in bloom" (545). Lucy refers to this time of Paul's absence as "the three happiest years of my life" (543), and while she acknowledges "the paradox" of this, she is fulfilled by the idea of Paul, his letters, and their future together. Monica F. Cohen suggests that "by erasing the figure of the lover from the home scene, Lucy reveals that the domestic ideal ultimately has nothing to do with romance, or the egocentric concerns that sexual engagement would entail, but has at its roots something more communitarian."[39] Lucy formulates a safe and fulfilling domestic space without a patriarch even as the figure of the patriarch is embedded in her home.

Although the novel concludes with two marriages (Ginevra and De Hamal, and Dr. John and Polly), it does not end with Lucy's, our protagonist and the heroine of *Villette*. If we consider carefully the significance of Lucy's triumphant descriptions of her professional success and happiness, the absence of a traditional marriage plot should not be so odd; however, the dominance of the marriage plot in nineteenth-century fiction makes it strange when we arrive at the end and are only treated to an ambiguous explanation of Lucy and Paul's fate. Employing similar metaphoric language of tempestuous weather as she does in chapter four to describe her family tragedy, Lucy describes Paul's return voyage thusly:

> That storm roared frenzied for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks; it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance. Not till the destroying angel of tempest had achieved his perfect work, would he fold the wings whose waft was thunder — the tremor of whose plumes was storm.
>
> … Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again

> fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life. (546)

The "sunny imaginations" Lucy speaks of are the gentle ones who should be protected from the ugliness of the world, such as Paulina Home. The ending of the novel can be read as an oblique tragedy where M. Paul's ship is caught in a storm and he is drowned, sealing Lucy's fate as a Victorian female Job, left to her faith and her own capacity for endurance and hard work. However, it is possible to interpret the ending quite differently, as many critics have. In her discussion of Lucy's narrative power, Margaret L. Shaw acknowledges the difficulty of interpreting a text that "seems to move inconsistently between allegorical elements and realistic detail. Whenever Lucy discovers or broaches very private aspects of her life, she either suppresses information or uses allegory."[40] The dilemma for the reader is to decide whether Lucy is telling the truth or concealing a painful experience behind metaphor. Emily Walker Heady argues that Brontë's recurring use of allegory and typology encourage a Biblical reading of Paul's fate, and points out that Brontë's parents had themselves utilized storm imagery while writing letters to one another during their courtship period: "Since Charlotte had read her mother's letters in 1850, just before she began *Villette,* the association in this letter of shipwreck with the sinking of domestic and material hopes that we see in the novels' conclusion seems justified."[41] Mandy Swann views the ending of *Villette* as consistent with the novel's blend of Homeric and Biblical renderings of the sea as a place of death, renewal, and suffering: "the violence of the sea is defined as the proper home of the novel's heroine, the sea of suffering, and *this* raging sea as Lucy's home, define her superiority and authorize her heroic status; but they also mean that the ending of *Villette* must be tragic."[42] Swann's perspective on the tragic framework of Lucy's story neatly aligns Brontë's imagery with her content, rendering Lucy thoroughly undomestic as it catapults her into the heroic paeans of ancient literature; Lucy cannot be a domestic heroine if she eschews domesticity. All these critical perspectives are persuasive and,

hence, demonstrate the difficulty in arriving at any interpretation of the final pages of the novel with anything like real conviction.

However, I am compelled to read the ending as formally harmonious with its beginning, when Lucy's family is lost in a metaphorical shipwreck. Why, with such an explicitly metaphorical framework at the beginning, would we choose to read the ending literally? Perhaps Lucy might want us to, or Brontë is challenging our reliance on Lucy, but as Swann and Richard Bonfiglio both suggest, the ending as we have it prevents *Villette* from becoming a recognizably domestic novel.[43] It rejects traditional domesticity and insists on the untenableness of a safe and stable Victorian domestic space while also offering an alternative domesticity that does seem stable and that combines work and leisure with the public and private spheres in such a way that Lucy can control and order. As Gilbert and Gubar remark, "The ambiguous ending of *Villette* reflects Lucy's ambivalence, her love for Paul and her recognition that it is only in his absence that she can exert herself fully to exercise her own powers. It also reflects Brontë's determination to avoid the tyrannical fictions that have traditionally victimized women."[44] And while Brontë does refuse to encase Lucy in an idealized marriage, she does not necessarily refuse her marriage, because we can also read the ending as a refutation of the marriage plot without accepting that Lucy and Paul do not marry. We simply cannot trust Lucy's narrative sleights of hand. She refuses to tell us exactly what happened to M. Paul, and though Brontë's original version concluded with his death, accepting that he has died seems like too straightforward a reading of a deeply complex and ambiguous text. We can understand the ending to be a refusal of readerly pleasure that does not close off the possibility of Lucy's pleasure in the world of the novel.[45]

I view the ending as engaging with the kind of narrative trickery Lucy has been playing with from the beginning, and as a kind of "doubling down" on Lucy's personal narrative of a patiently suffering Christian. This reading gives Lucy ultimate agency because it recognizes that the power to

please and disappoint us is all her own. Such a reading gives us the freedom to imagine Lucy ensconced in happy domesticity if we would like or imperiously ordering her space as Madame Beck does. Lucy's story can be read as an instance of Roland Barthes's "intermittence of skin" that is crucial to the reader's pleasure of the text: "this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance"[46] grants us pleasure in its elisions if we choose to peer in lasciviously and imagine what lies underneath the delicate beauty of Lucy's own pensionnat in the Faubourg Clotilde. Perhaps our greatest pleasure as feminist readers is that Lucy acquires property on her own merits, outmaneuvering Juliet's inevitable slide below coverture and Fanny's spiritual inheritance of Mansfield parsonage, and even improving on Margaret's fortuitous bequest in *North and South*. Like all the protagonists in my project, Lucy uses her talent, wit, and determination to survive to endure her various domestic disturbances, traveling far and taking risks in order to attain a room of her own and financial independence.

Notes

[1] Karen R. Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 27.
[2] Shanyn Fiske, "Between Nowhere and Home: The Odyssey of Lucy Snowe," *Brontë Studies* 32 (March 2007).
[3] See Richard Bonfiglio, "Cosmopolitan Realism: Portable Domesticity in Brontë's Belgian Novels," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40 (2012), and Anne Longmuir's "Reader, perhaps you were never in Belgium?': Negotiating British Identity in Charlotte Brontë's *The Professor* and *Villette*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 64.2 (Sept 2009) for interesting discussions on Brontë's potential motivations for locating two of her novels in Belgium. See also Margaret L. Shaw, Caroline Franklin, and Angela Poon for discussions on Lucy's experience of outsider dynamics in *Villette*.
[4] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination,* 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 419.
[5] Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages*, 27.
[6] Sonjeong Cho, *An Ethics of Becoming: Configurations of Feminine Subjectivity in Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 125, 128, 103.
[7] Eva Badowska, "Choseville: Brontë's *Villette* and the Art of Bourgeois Interiority," *PMLA* 120.5 (Oct 2005): 1510.
[8] Jonathan Shears and Jen Harrison, "The Ideas in Thing Town: *Villette*, Art and Moveable Objects," *Literary Bric-à-Brac and the Victorians*, eds. Jonathan Shears and Jen Harrison (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 194.
[9] Michael Klotz, "Rearranging Furniture in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*," *English Studies in Canada* 31.1 (Mar 2005): 20. Klotz later acknowledges Lucy's influence on the material when she awakes in Mrs. Bretton's parlor and

finds her own influences on the objects she finds there, but his focus on Lucy's passivity (especially in the Fauborg Clotilde pensionnat, see Klotz, 24) in the novel limits her agency by relying too heavily on more conventional notions of agency as movement and dominance rather than the subtle manipulations we see Lucy enact.

[10] Liana F. Piehler, *Spatial Dynamics and Female Development in Victorian Art and Novels: Creating a Woman's Space* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 44.

[11] Judith Lowder Newton, *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1981), 86.

[12] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 403.

[13] Nicholas Dames, *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 116.

[14] Newton, *Women, Power, and Subversion*, 87.

[15] Badowska, "Choseville," 1516.

[16] Kathryn Crowther, "Charlotte Brontë's Textual Relics: Memorializing the Material in *Villette*," *Brontë Studies* 35.2 (July 2010): 134.

[17] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, eds. Stephen Lubar and David W. Kingery (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 22.

[18] Piehler, *Spatial Dynamics*, 46.

[19] Shaw, "Narrative Surveillance and Social Control in *Villette*," 815.

[20] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 414.

[21] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 21.

[22] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* ed. Stevie Davies (New York: Penguin, 2006), 292.

[23] Longmuir, "Negotiating British Identity," 175.

[24] Longmuir, "Negotiating British Identity," 177.

[25] Longmuir, "Negotiating British Identity," 178-9.

[26] Bonfiglio, "Portable Domesticity," 600.

[27] Bonfiglio, "Portable Domesticity," 608.

[28] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 4.

[29] Janet Wolff, "Gender and the Haunting of Cities (or, the Retirement of the Flâneur)," *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, eds. Arunda D'Souza and Tom McDonough (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 19.

[30] Wolff, "Gender and the Haunting of Cities," 24.

[31] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 10.

[32] In the article "Gothic Desire in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette,*" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39.4 (Autumn 1999), Toni Wein argues that Brontë more directly draws from Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* and reworks male gothic traditions to subvert gender and sexual desire within her novel: "For Lewis, both dangers and delights lie in substitution's resemblance to a pornographic economy of exchange. Lewis sees women as counters in that system of barter. Forced to enter into an economy of exchange that demanded she relinquish autonomy while it promised her some range of mobility beyond the confines of the home, Brontë responds by making the nun the figure through which erotic desire becomes buoyantly disembodied and endlessly deferred, the possession of the self through substitution" (735).

[33] See Claudia Johnson's chapter on *Northanger Abbey* in *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

[34] Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 16.1 (1826): 149.

[35] Caroline Franklin, *The Female Romantics: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists and Byronism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 152.

[36] Shears and Harrison, "The Ideas in Thing Town," 183.

[37] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 424.

[38] In the Penguin Classics edition, Helen Cooper glosses this reference thusly: "The image of the Hindu god Krishna at Puri, India, which is annually dragged in a procession on a large chariot. Devotees sometimes hurdled themselves under it to be brushed to death. Thus the word 'juggernaut' often means a destructive power causing blind sacrifice" (618).
[39] Monica F. Cohen, *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 45.
[40] Margaret L. Shaw, "Narrative Surveillance and Social Control in *Villette,*" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 34.4 (Oct 1994): 817.
[41] Emily Walker Heady, *Victorian Conversion Narratives and Reading Communities* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 64.
[42] Mandy Swann, "'The Destroying Angel of Tempest': The Sea in *Villette*," *Brontë Studies* 38.2 (April 2013): 153.
[43] Bonfiglio, "Portable Domesticity in Brontë's Belgian Novels": "*Villette* offers a more radical model of portable domesticity narrated from a feminine perspective relying more heavily on [Andrew Miller's conceptions of] optative reflection rather than a perfectionist narrative. Lucy Snowe achieves a sense of independence through a continuous process of renunciation and regret, drawing heavily upon the optative to realize her own singularity and not realizing individual or social stability through the institution of marriage. The novel's frustrating conclusion intimating the death of Lucy's fiancé represents Brontë's effort to resist the perfectionist narrative of marriage as a solution to the novel's epistemological concerns" (611-2).
[44] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 438.
[45] I am indebted to a fellow attendee at the 2016 Victorians Institute Conference for this insight.
[46] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 10.

Coda

A Room of One's Own and the Utopia/Dystopia of Female Space

> "There could be no doubt that for some reason or other our mothers had mismanaged their affairs gravely. Not a penny could be spared for 'amenities'; for partridges and wine, beadles and turf, books and cigars, libraries and leisure. To raise bare walls out of bare earth was the utmost they could do." – Virginia Woolf[1]
>
> "Perhaps all unsheltered people are angry in their hearts, and would like to break the roof, spine, and ribs, and smash the windows and flood the floor and spindle the curtains and bloat the couch." – Marilynne Robinson[2]

What conclusion is there to draw after a thorough exploration of the hostility of domestic space? Is there hope for middle-class women who fail to fit into conventional domestic roles or who outright reject them? Juliet, Fanny, Margaret, and Lucy all find ways to negotiate their worlds and their spaces to varying degrees of comfort, but their narratives still feel the pressure of the marriage plot and domesticity; they are confined to (as I characterize them in my introduction) perverse domesticities. These protagonists are reacting to difficult circumstances that alienate and isolate them from family members and community.

The four novels my dissertation explores are of course not representative of all women's writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* models a female utopia that unapologetically depicts a community of women in the early Victorian period who have little need of men. Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694) and Sarah Scott's *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent* (1762) had imagined their own versions of female communities in the eighteenth century that would make space for women who did not or could not

marry where they could be productive. In *Cranford*, we meet a community of women who are typically disregarded by society yet form their own exclusive club that delights in the relative absence of men. The opening of *Cranford* quite famously declares, "In the first place, Cranford is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses, above a certain rent, are women."[3] As comically delightful as this introduction is, it draws attention to the exclusionary practices of class that operate in the town. While the spinster is rescued from ignominy, the narrative still acknowledges the members of the community who are excluded.

However, as Patricia Ingham points out, the utopian vision of female community is compromised, because Gaskell draws attention to the patriarchal structures that govern the Amazons' lives since their financial support comes from men.[4] The Cranford ladies are strict economists, and though Mary Smith frankly owns their "unacknowledged poverty,"[5] it is an important part of their social code to conceal it. They bear up under the discomfort of their unacknowledged poverty so that they can continue to survive. They style overly expensive household expenditures as "vulgar," and this rejection of consumerism helps them maintain their independence. The strict economy the women practice is not enough to save them from financial ruin, as when Miss Matty's bank fails, and she lacks the skills and opportunities to thrive on her own. Although women dominate the psychic space of *Cranford,* they fundamentally lack access to education and power. And so, *Cranford* illuminates the flaws in a female utopia that must still reside within a society controlled by men. The Cranford ladies may be able to hide from the men they abhor, but they are still governed by them and contained within domestic roles.

Virginia Woolf's 1929 polemic *A Room of One's Own* addresses the wealth disparities between men and women when Woolf's speaker is confronted by the differences between the luncheon she eats at a men's college at Oxbridge and the dinner she eats at the fictional Fernham. While the luncheon at the King's College consists of "partridges, many and various" with "their retinue of

sauces and salads, the sharp and the sweet, each in its order," wine pairings, and dessert described as "a confection which rose all sugar from the waves,"[6] dinner at Fernham is a "homely trinity" of beef, greens, and potatoes" which suggest "the rumps of cattle in a muddy market, and sprouts curled and yellowed at the edge, and bargaining and cheapening."[7] Woolf's speaker, contemplating the relative lack of great women artists, connects the physical poverty of their lives to artistic poverty: "The human frame being what it is, heart, body and brain all mixed together, and not contained in separate compartments as they will be no doubt in another million years, a good dinner is of great importance to good talk. One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."[8] As Woolf goes on to explain later in the essay, many brilliant women are marred by their physical and intellectual poverty, and their art, while great, cannot often overcome the personal challenges of the artist.

Woolf's essay interests me in the context of my project, because it conceives of so much of the world as differentiated by spaces that prohibit women or that welcome women but are themselves impoverished or lacking in some way. Woolf's speaker gets into trouble in the first few pages of her essay when she is corralled by a flustered beadle who expresses "horror and indignation" when he spots her walking on the turf at a college in Oxbridge, a space that is not for women but for "Fellows and Scholars" who could not be women at this time.[9] Woolf's speaker next attempts to enter the library when "a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College."[10] Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael must be content with remaining out-of-doors, reflecting on the centuries of labor and money that went into building the beautiful structures that continue to refuse to admit women.[11] Not only are women fated to substandard resources in their colleges, but they are prohibited from accessing the superior resources of the men's colleges.

A Room of One's Own directly confronts the legacy of space and separate spheres. Woolf's entreaty that women should have a private space that will allow them to work and cultivate a rich interior life is inspired by her own analysis of female-authored literature and what she perceives to be its limitations — limitations that she accounts for by the discomfort engendered by a lack of gender parity. As Woolf delineates images of second-rate spaces that are allotted to women, she demands a freedom from the limitations of domestic space and the intellectual stagnation they promote. Women must not be defined in relation to men but in relation to reality. As many of these texts suggest, domestic space diminishes, even while it protects, if it is not tempered by intercourse with the outside world.

Women today are often still defined by their relationships to men and their connection to their homes and duties as mothers. Domestic space remains a potential place of confinement, cruelty, and abuse, and women writers continue to find ways to adapt the troubled space of the home to tell compelling stories about how women survive. If *Cranford* is a utopian female space, Marilynne Robinson's 1980 novel *Housekeeping* is a dystopian one; populated mostly by women, with even fewer men than *Cranford*, Robinson's book reveals the way female households survive when they are fractured by death and abandonment. *Housekeeping* tells the story of a young girl growing up in a deeply unstable environment. Abandoned by her mother, who commits suicide by driving her car off a cliff, Ruth grows up with her sister Lucille in their grandmother's house, parented first by their grandmother and then by their Aunt Sylvie after their grandmother dies.

As suggested by the title, the novel is deeply concerned with domestic practices, beginning with the opening pages when the narrator describes the town where her grandfather moved and the house he built there. Ruth is acutely aware of domestic space. She explains that her grandfather had grown up "in a house dug out of the ground, with windows just at earth level and just at eye level, so that from without, the house was a mere mound, no more a human stronghold than a grave, and

from within, the perfect horizontality of the world in that place foreshortened the view so severely that the horizon seemed to circumscribe the sod house and nothing more."[12] As a result of this confining shelter, Ruth's grandfather

> began to read what he could find of travel literature, journals of expeditions to the mountains of Africa, to the Alps, the Andes, the Himalayas, the Rockies … One spring my grandfather quit his subterraneous house, walked to the railroad, and took a train west. He told the ticket agent that he wanted to go to the mountains, and the man arranged to have him put off here, which may not have been a malign joke, or a joke at all, since there are mountains, uncountable mountains, and where there are not mountains, there are hills.[13]

Her grandfather's childhood home cultivated his desire to live in a dramatically different environment: he moves from a hovel in the Midwest to a house on a hill in the mountains of Idaho. It is in this home where the narrator and her sister find themselves.

Ruth's grandmother is a traditionally good housekeeper, cultivating a home for her family with appetizing food and clean sheets. This kind of meticulous housekeeping seems especially important in a world like Fingerbone, where the climate is harsh and the lake is prone to flooding the town. Ruth's grandfather's death — he is killed when his train crashes into the lake after a bridge collapses — introduces a greater element of instability than even the weather can bring, and his wife's domestic rituals seem to impose some kind of order and comfort:

> Her bread was tender and her jelly was tart, and on rainy days she made cookies and applesauce. In the summer she kept roses in a vase on the piano, huge, pungent roses, and when the blooms ripened and the petals fell, she put them in a tall Chinese jar, with cloves and thyme and sticks of cinnamon. Her children slept on starched sheets under layers of quilts, and in the morning her curtains filled with light the way sails filled with wind.[14]

Despite these thoughtful cares, Ruth's grandmother is unable to keep her children near her. Her daughters all leave once they are old enough and seem to take her for granted: "She had never taught them to be kind to her."[15] Part of housekeeping, of mothering successfully, seems to be that your children expect such things and are unable to fully appreciate them, Ruth suggests.

Ruth and Lucille experience the same graceful care from their grandmother, but after she dies, the household is destabilized first by the entrance of Ruth's great-aunts and then Sylvie, her mother's sister. Sylvie's housekeeping is of a much different style than her mother's, unconventional and even bizarre, as she likes to sit with the lights off and eat saltines out of her coat pocket. "Sylvie talked a great deal about housekeeping. She soaked all the tea towels for a number of weeks in a tub of water and bleach. She emptied several cupboards and left them open to air, and once she washed half the kitchen ceiling and door."[16] Sylvie engages in strange, herculean feats of cleaning while neglecting to throw away newspapers or bringing a cat home to deal with their rodent problem. Ruth is not bothered by Sylvie's housekeeping, but Lucille is, and their divergent views eventually result in a rift between them. Ruth begins to see Lucille as being fundamentally different from her, as being "of the common persuasion."[17] She wants to be liked by the popular girls at school, while Ruth is content to occupy Sylvie's strange world where she can remain anonymous and undisturbed. Their house is a threat to Lucille's desire to fit in with her peers, but Ruth is afraid of being abandoned yet again and Sylvie's housekeeping, faulty as it is, is proof that someone in the world is committed to taking care of them. Lucille's rejection of their home and Sylvie's care sends her to find community elsewhere, with girls at school. Ruth, on the other hand, is awkward and unable to make friends with anyone besides her sister: "I ate lunch wherever I could find enough space to seat myself without appearing to wish to insinuate myself into a group, or a conversation, and I read while I ate."[18] Lucille begins to pull away from Ruth even in their house, preferring to eat her meals in her bedroom and leaving Sylvie and Ruth to themselves.

Sylvie's incompetent housekeeping is perhaps indicative of something more reckless in her personality that ill-equips her to take care of two young girls. Sylvie convinces Ruth to go on a night excursion with her which results in Ruth left alone in an abandoned homestead in the mountains for several hours. The fragility of the decaying house makes Ruth reconsider the faith she has in her own home:

> The appearance of relative solidity in my grandmother's house was deceptive. It was an impression created by the piano, and the scrolled couch, and the bookcases full of almanacs and Kipling and Defoe. For all the appearance these things gave of substance and solidity, they might better be considered a dangerous weight on a frail structure. I could easily imagine the piano crashing to the cellar floor with a thrum of all its strings. And then, too, our house should not have had a second story, for, if it fell while we were sleeping, we would plummet disastrously through the dark, knowing no more perhaps than that our dreams were suddenly terrible and suddenly gone … It is better to have nothing, for at last even our bones will fall. It is better to have nothing.[19]

If *Housekeeping* is about the fragility of family, Ruth's meditation on the fragility of domestic structures is a natural progression of this kind of thinking. Ruth begins to understand that she cannot trust the physical structure of her home, because material objects may convince people that we are safe within them, but as the decaying homestead makes clear, physical objects must be maintained and if they are not, as their family home is not being maintained by Sylvie, then they began to fall apart. The trappings of civilization — books, furniture, décor — give the illusion of safety and stability, but it is concealing the possibility of a dangerous reckoning when we are betrayed by the physical world we thought could keep us safe.

Ruth begins to wake up to the potential danger of Sylvie's instincts, and we the readers may begin to grow tense and on edge for we fear for Ruth's safety as well as the townsfolk. Sylvie's

"transience" upsets Lucille, and it begins to disturb the town. Even though Sylvie has a home, she retains the habits of her transient lifestyle, and Fingerbone fears that "she was making a transient" of Ruth.[20] Ruth explains that inhabitants of Fingerbone, a town that has always been subject to weather-related ravages, fears transients as a threatening Other; they "wandered through Fingerbone like ghosts, terrifying as ghosts are because they were not very different from us."[21] The town begins to recognize that they have to try to re-domesticate Ruth: "Neighbor women and church women began to bring us casseroles and coffee cakes. They brought me knitted socks and caps and comforters."[22]

Eventually, Sylvie's eccentricities draw enough attention that her custody of Ruth is endangered. Ruth, the narrator, looking back on the situation, realizes that Sylvie's efforts to conform to a traditional domesticity in order to keep Ruth are doomed. "Still, she persisted in her housekeeping. She polished the windows, or those that still had panes, and the others she covered neatly with tape and brown paper."[23] Sylvie's failure to be properly domestic is recognized by the other residents of the town. It signifies her as an unsuitable parental figure.

Ruth begins to recognize that rather than Lucille, who seeks normalcy and stability, she is more like Sylvie, and that, in fact, Sylvie does make a transient of her, or at least encourages her to embrace her latent tendencies to drift. Ruth and Sylvie finally reject domesticity by setting their house on fire and leaving town to become drifters: "Now truly we were cast out to wander, and there was an end to housekeeping."[24] Ruth asks herself, "When did I become so unlike other people?"[25] The moments she imagines explain her strangeness lie in the experiences she chose but also the ones she could not have: her conception, her mother's abandonment, and her decision to cross the bridge with Sylvie and leave Fingerbone behind. The house in Fingerbone persists in Ruth's imagination. She imagines Lucille living there, "fiercely neat, stalemating the forces of ruin. I imagine doilies, high and stiff, and a bright pantry curtain, there to rebuke us with newness and a

smell of starch whenever we might wander in the door."[26] Throughout Ruth's narrative, her mother haunts her. She cannot let go of this or the fact that she herself abandoned Lucille. She keeps imagining Lucille in her new life, with babies or living a glamorous life in Boston. She imagines upsetting Lucille's fastidious domesticity as the latter sighs with exasperation.

Housekeeping is about many things, but what haunts me most about this book is its depiction of certain women's inability to conform to the expectations of motherhood and domesticity, but also, the destructive potential of domesticity as a practice and cultural expectation. We obviously cannot know what led Ruth and Lucille's mom to commit suicide, but the burdens of single parenthood might have something to do with it. Domesticity can be a comfort or a burden, and it functions as both in Robinson's narrative. It is also a tool that others wield to control wayward women, to try to discipline them into certain behaviors. Ruth and Sylvie (and perhaps Molly, the third sister who is wholly absent from the text) cannot conform, so they choose a different path.

If *Cranford* models domestic space that is capable of creating agency and purpose through a strict and carefully maintained domesticity, *Housekeeping* reveals how materiality can overwhelm and impinge on certain psyches. If *A Room of One's Own* entreats access to education and the hallowed halls of educational institutions for women, *Housekeeping* reveals how stifling spaces and communities of all kinds can be. While eighteenth- and nineteenth-century domestic fiction has much to teach us about domesticity and gender, it certainly does not exhaust questions about how these two forces shape one another. The marriage plot may have declined in power (at least in literary fiction, though certainly not in film or television), but the question of how space and materiality shapes us, and how we negotiate the forces of materiality that Jane Bennett and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi so effectively theorize has not yet run out of steam.

Notes

[1] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ed. Susan Gubar (New York: Harcourt, 2005), 23.
[2] Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (New York: Picador, 1980), 158.
[3] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, ed. Patricia Ingham (New York: Penguin Classics, 2005), 5.
[4] Gaskell, *Cranford,* xxi.
[5] Gaskell, *Cranford*, 7.
[6] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 10-1.
[7] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 17.
[8] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 18.
[9] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 6.
[10] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 7-8.
[11] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 8.
[12] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 3.
[13] Robinson, *Housekeeping,* 4.
[14] Robinson, *Housekeeping,* 11-2.
[15] Robinson, *Housekeeping,* 19.
[16] Robinson, *Housekeeping,* 85.
[17] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 93.
[18] Robinson, *Housekeeping,* 136.
[19] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 158-9
[20] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 177.
[21] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 178.
[22] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 179.
[23] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 199.
[24] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 209.
[25] Robinson, *Housekeeping,* 214.
[26] Robinson, *Housekeeping*, 216.

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